

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 336 TRANSCRIPT

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

David Feldman: Hello there, good morning.

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

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody.

Steve Skrovan: Now, Ralph we're going to start off the show here--we've got a great show for you, but we're going to start off--you've got some things on your mind, a few issues you want to talk about before we dig into the body of the show. What's on your mind, Ralph?

Ralph Nader: Well, first of all everybody knows that Joe Biden has selected Kamala Harris, senator from California, as his vice-presidential running mate. And although many are pleased about the symbolic move that that represents we should remember two things: that in a poll a few months ago a majority of African Americans preferred Elizabeth Warren over other black female potential candidates. Why? Well, because as black authors of an Op-Ed in *the Washington Post* a few weeks ago [wrote] she has actually walked the walk not just talked the talk. She has fought corporations who are exploiting African Americans in a whole variety of ways--safety, health, insurance and of course economically. She has worked in the housing area; she has worked in the consumer credit and debit area; she has gone after payday loan rackets and rent-to-own rackets; that's number one.

Number two, if you look at Kamala Harris's record, especially as attorney general of California, she registers as a corporate Democrat. She has taken large contributions from Google, Amazon, Facebook [and] Microsoft--campaign contributions. When she was attorney general, which is an office in California with a big staff and a lot of power, she didn't move against Silicon Valley on privacy issues and she certainly didn't move on anti-trust issues allowing a lot of mergers to go through, especially Chase Bank acquisitions. And she was particularly egregious in dropping a case, on a bank called OneWest Bank in California that has exploited tenants mercilessly; driven people to foreclosures mercilessly. And it got into trouble. And it was called OneWest Bank. And it just happened to be run by Steve Mnuchin who is the present [US] Treasury Secretary toady for Donald Trump. And in 2013, a memo from her own top prosecutors in Kamala Harris's attorney general office, wanted to move against OneWest. They said, "it rushed delinquent homeowners out of their homes by violating notice and waiting period statutes, illegally backdating key documents, and effectively gamed foreclosure auctions". Pretty bad stuff on a big scale, and she dropped the case. She didn't move against OneWest and three, four years later guess who contributed to her senate campaign? Steve Mnuchin. Now, a lot of this is all going to come out and it's not going to be particularly edifying of Senator Harris. But on her behalf, I can say that she's very much like corporate Joe Biden.

So, Donald Trump and his horrific travesties and atrocities and disgusting pro-corporate behavior, bungling of COVID-19, [and] lying as a daily practice on matters of significance, makes any Democrat candidate look good. But once he's displaced by a Biden-Harris administration, look for the huge and growing progressive wing of the Democratic Party to become very aggressively critical, because the choice of Harris instead of Warren, in effect closed the door, which was already closing on Bernie Sanders and his mass movement of progressive Democrats--closed the door. Basically, Bernie Sanders is just left with a few planks and not the most important ones, like single payer, at the Democratic [National] Convention.

So, that's one point I wanted to make. The second is pretty mundane: anyone listening who has an auto insurance policy, you must have heard that the auto insurance companies are making big-time money because the traffic is down so much on the highways, and traffic crashes are down, and they are keeping more of your premiums. In May some of the companies rebated fifty bucks to you, but they've got to rebate a lot more. And the key expert on this, who we've had on the program, Robert Hunter, an actuary and a former federal insurance commissioner, is out with a statement on behalf of the Consumer Federation of America calling on the state insurance commissioners to get with it and demand bigger rebates and refunds now, that are owing you, the listeners and everyone else who has an auto insurance policy. So, pick up the phone, call your insurance commissioner and ask, when are they going to act? Out of the fifty insurance commissioners, not counting Puerto Rico, only four, most prominently New Mexico, has told the insurance companies to start writing checks and sending them back to their policyholders. The second quote of reporting of some of these companies is utterly staggering like Geico. Geico in the second quarter of 2020, went from 393 million dollars in profits in the second quarter of 2019, to 2.1 billion in the second quarter. And Geico is saying that they'll give you a rebate only if you renew the policy. That's a tie-in agreement that the insurance commissioners should prohibit. But it isn't just Geico, it's almost all the insurance companies are holding onto your premiums when they should be sending you refund checks. That's two. The third of course was the weekend news last weekend that Mr. Trump is now seizing the authority of Congress. He thinks he's Congress. Remember, he said under Article 2 he can do anything he wants as president. Now, he's taking over Article 1 by seizing the power of the purse and the power of taxing, which is exclusively the power of Congress not the executive branch or the White House. And he's basically saying the Congress is "do-nothing." He's lumping the Democrats, who passed a 3.4 trillion-dollar relief bill last May, in with the do-nothing, intransigent Republicans who control the Senate. And he's telling millions of people, with minimal rebuttal by the Democrats who aren't very good at this communication process, he's telling them that Congress is do nothing; you're hurting; your six hundred dollars a week has expired, and I'm going to do it for you.

Now, what I think the Democrats should be doing is going on national television and showing how they've already done, not only six hundred dollars a week extended until January [and] support for the postal service, they have a major relief package for state and

local governments who are hurting and other things that they've done [i.e.,] for student loans. And the Republicans can't even agree among themselves on what to do in the [US] Senate and they have gridlocked themselves. Now, most people don't know that. There's some vague feeling that the Democrats are more on their side. But the Democrats are stupefying; they're just driving this home given all the hundreds of millions of dollars of money they have for national TV ads and social media. And that's one and then the executive orders or exhortations that Mr. Trump released while he was playing golf in New Jersey this last weekend are unconstitutional, clearly unconstitutional. And some violate the Antideficiency Act, which says you cannot as president shuffle around money from one place to another unauthorized or unappropriated by Congress. And that's a criminal statute, so he is a criminal in trying to do this, and of course his attorney general is not going to prosecute him, but that's just another criminal violation of Donald J. Lawless Trump.

The last point I want to make is rather astonishing. In a survey last February, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) surveyed its own staff and according to Bloomberg News, which now has a copy of the report and it is public; it's about 150 pages, a lot of the staff have told the survey that the FAA is too close to Boeing and too anti-safety. They don't respect the safety judgement of the FAA engineers and other experts. So there you are; we've been saying this all along, and it took two crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia and 346 lives to wake up some people in the FAA to at least conduct this survey. I think it comes at an appropriate time, because by reverse action, the FAA leaders who the staff thought were not held accountable for these crashes in the way they allowed Boeing to regulate and certify itself, that the FAA is moving to let the Boeing 737 MAX disaster plane fly again sometime in late October. I think it's going to take longer than that, because the airlines are cancelling by the week all kinds of orders for the 737 MAX, in part because the airline industry worldwide is contracting and in part because of all the other problems that keep emerging about the 737 MAX that they didn't bargain for when they ordered them from Boeing. I think that people still have a role to declare more and more that they're participating as air travelers in a consumer boycott of the 737 MAX and we have available again the button "axe the Max", which if you go to nader.org, you can find out how you can acquire ten of them in a package and send them to your friends, have your friends put them on their lapels, get up on Facebook or Instagram or whatever and show Boeing one thing--that maybe they can control Washington; maybe they own the FAA, but they cannot control the customers of the airlines.

Steve Skrovan: Well, that's a lot on pack there, Ralph starting with Kamala Harris. You didn't really think that the masters of the universe were going to allow Elizabeth Warren to be in line for the presidency, did you?

Ralph Nader: Hope springs eternal because there was one pragmatic reason for Biden's people to do that, which is she would hold on to more of Bernie's voters. And I think Kamala Harris, with all this pro-corporate stuff and non-prosecuting corporations and how she defied a U.S. Supreme Court order to reduce the congestion in prisons in California.

The prisons were packed with prisoners twice the number that the prisons were built for and she defied that. I think when more and more people realize that she wasn't all that good on criminal justice, whether it's street crime or corporate crime, they may stay home and just not vote. So, I thought there was a glimmer of hope there, Steve that that pragmatic approach would work. African Americans were going to vote for Biden anyway. They showed it in the primary and they're certainly not going to vote for Trump. So I thought and others thought, Elizabeth Warren in addition to her record, her experience, her courage, her taking on the Wall Street control of America in so many ways, corporate welfare, corporate crime, etc., that they would give her an opportunity. But it wasn't to pass and now they've closed out Bernie and so they've not just closed out Elizabeth Warren, they've closed out Bernie and that's a big segment of the Democratic vote.

Steve Skrovan: David?

David Feldman: Well, when Biden was picking his vice-president if he had to choose between Warren and Kamala and was told that you could win with Elizabeth Warren but Kamala is more guardian of the status quo, he'll go with the guardian over the status quo over the person who will help him win?

Ralph Nader: Especially when he's ahead ten to twelve points in the polls and it may be widening. I think if he was very close in the polls, he might have reconsidered the situation, because she's not going to bring California into the fold. California is Democratic big time; they're going to vote for Biden. So there wasn't much to argue for her compared to Elizabeth Warren in terms of the Bernie voters.

Steve Skrovan: But so many people vote by what they think is the--you know it's like they're selecting the next host of *The Tonight Show* and so they're looking at identity; they're looking at, you know they're checking off the easy boxes, because it's more of a casting call than people really understanding what the candidates stand for.

Ralph Nader: Well, you're right, that's true and also likeability. Kamala Harris presents very well. She has a good façade and she is articulate, but when you look at the record, which is what all voters should look at, it gives great pause. We just put up on our website a memorable statement from Martin Luther King, Jr. at the great rally in Washington, D.C., in 1963, the historic "I Have a Dream" speech and he said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character".

Steve Skrovan: Well, on that note let's get into the main show. Today, we're going to talk about the climate crisis, because as of this moment we're careening toward a point of no return. We must cut global admissions in half by the year 2030 if you want to avoid the worst consequences of this crisis. And it's going to require economic change at a speed and scale that has never been accomplished before. Despite the gravity of this problem, the media is not focusing on this issue. Stories about the climate crisis are getting drowned out by stories considered more urgent. That's understandable to a certain extent, but all of the inequalities laid bare by the pandemic are connected to the climate crisis and will be

exacerbated by the greenhouse gases we keep pouring into our atmosphere. Good journalism is so necessary right now. People need to know what is at stake so to talk about this we've invited Kyle Pope, who is the editor-in-chief and publisher of the *Columbia Journalism Review* whose spring 2020 issue focuses on how reporters have covered the climate crisis and more importantly the ways they haven't. Mr. Pope will be our only guest today, but we will as always, take some time to check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. And if we have some time left over we'll try to answer your listener questions, but first, let's talk about how the media covers climate.

David Feldman: Kyle Pope is a seasoned newspaper and magazine editor and reporter. He worked for a decade at *the Wall Street Journal*. He was the editor-in-chief of the *New York Observer* and deputy editor of Condé Nast Portfolio Magazine [now defunct]. Mr. Pope is the editor-in-chief and publisher of the *Columbia Journalism Review* whose spring 2020 issue discusses how reporters cover climate change. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Kyle Pope.

Kyle Pope: Thanks for having me.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed, Kyle. I remember when I was campaigning for the presidency in the Green Party in 2000, I would raise the issue of global warming again and again, and the press thought I was talking science fiction.

Kyle Pope: Yeah.

Ralph Nader: That was two years, by the way, before Frank Luntz, the wordsmith of the Republican Party gave us the phrase climate change instead of global warming. He thought that was too alarming. He told the Republicans, "just use climate change." Well, that's part of the media problem. They picked it up along with the Democrats, using climate change instead of something that's more descriptive of the catastrophe--like climate crisis, climate chaos. And that's part of the problem that I've had with the media, but you go much deeper in your *Columbia Journalism Review* article and you go over time. You're not just talking about the last year or two. And one thing I found pretty amazing; I don't know why it's amazing; it shouldn't be. You write, "In 2012 researchers in Media Matters [for America, a nonprofit organization] found that US News organizations gave 40 times more coverage to the Kardashians than to rising sea levels." During the 2016 campaign reporters neglected to ask a single climate question in the three presidential debates. And in 2018, broadcast news outlets gave more airtime to the royal baby in England "than to the warming earth". So, you divide your analysis in past years up to the fall of 2019 when you said things got a lot better, so let's talk about the period of time before 2019 and what you're doing about it.

Kyle Pope: Yeah. Well, Ralph as you point out this is an extremely longstanding problem that I think is going to go down as one of the great failures of the modern press. The inability to treat this climate crisis as a crisis that it is, is just frankly, looking back on it now, I just find it completely indefensible. I mean the job of journalism is to sort of recognize problems and highlight them and figure out why they happen and then figure out

what to do about it. There's just been a serial failure of journalism until very, very, very recently, and even arguably too late to do something about this. So, I started thinking about ~~sort of~~ what we could do to fix this. I don't know if you want to talk about that now or if you want to still look at understanding---

Ralph Nader: Yeah, I do want to ask you some questions responding to what you just said, Kyle Pope. Why did the media ignore it for so long? Was it because of big advertisements by oil, gas, coal companies? Was it just laziness? Was it just lack of affirmation of the crisis by the scientific community and groups like AAAS [American Association for the Advancement of Science], the main scientific professional organization that should've blown the whistle on this? What was the reason for the neglect?

Kyle Pope: I think you put your finger on all of them. I think it was very complicated and I think this was all part of it. I mean let's begin which I often do. Let's just begin with the assumption that the press's motives weren't terrible, right? They didn't go into this thinking "how could we just sort of pick up the fossil fuel industry's line?" There were definitely times when that was the case, but I don't think generally that that was the orientation. I think that though most news outlets did not sort of recognize and appreciate the sophistication of the disinformation campaign that was aligned against them. I don't think they really had a sense of how focused the oil industry was, and I mean as you say, like even the use of some of the language in sort of countering what was going on. I mean you remember that Mobil for a long time had an op-ed on the Op-Ed page of *the New York Times*.

Ralph Nader: That's right. They paid five thousand dollars for the lower right corner and they basically were part of the best read and most important op-ed of any newspaper in the U.S., yep.

Kyle Pope: Yeah, I mean that was an egregious error and that was a sort of active disinformation campaign. But I just think that there was this sense of like we need to let both sides tell the story and we need to sort of like; ~~not sort of~~ I mean this was almost a different time in journalism where people really tried to stay right down the middle of the lane, which was I think in hindsight, a faulty sort of orientation. Because it sort of you know and we're dealing with a lot of this right now as we debate how we should be covering Trump, which is that in fact, there really sometimes aren't two sides. Sometimes there's one side of truth and then there's the other side. But I think it took a long time for the media to get their arms around that. That's problem one. I do think that the oil industry was a major advertiser, and as you know, I worked at *the Wall Street Journal* for a long time, and I can tell you that I mean nobody ever told me to write or to not write something based on advertising. But there is a kind of institutional bias and momentum and kind of unspoken pressure that comes into play at these places. And you know it and I know it and nobody likes to talk about it but in fact, it's true. One of the things that this is actually one of the benefits of the change in media right now, which is that news outlets are much less beholden to ~~in~~ advertising because the advertising has gone away. That's bad, but it's good in the sense that you don't get that kind of pressure anymore. So, there was this kind of

institutional bias towards these industries; there was a disinformation campaign that was unappreciated. And I just think that there was, you used the term, laziness. And I think that's absolutely right. I think there was just a sense of like there weren't enough science reporters, there weren't enough reporters who really took the time to study what people were saying even though it was pretty obvious. I mean we had Hansen [James Edward from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration] go before Congress and lay it all out [on climate disaster].

Ralph Nader: In 1988.

Kyle Pope: It wasn't that complicated, but it just took a long time for people to sort of get their arms around it. But again, like I can go through all the reasons. None of it is an excuse and all of it's a failure.

Ralph Nader: But part of it is still operating. For example, Congress has been gridlocked between the Republican Senate and the Democratic House. They really haven't had the high-profile hearings that they had in the auto safety period in the mid 1960's. If Congress doesn't have high-profile hearings and there are all kinds of restraints that you mentioned on the press not covering climate chaos, then you don't get this wonderful cycle that works so beneficially when Congress does its job; it raises issues that the press is reluctant to raise. The press then routinely covers congressional hearings and then you open up the system that way.

Kyle Pope: Yeah, yeah that's all true, but look I mean you and I know that waiting for Congress to take action on systemic problems is like waiting for Gadot. I mean this stuff just doesn't happen and the job of the press is to sort of get ahead of this stuff. The job of the press is to identify the problems that Congress needs to be paying attention to. The job of the press is to sort of force Congress to hold these hearings and to take action. And that's been part of this sort of systemic failure.

Ralph Nader: Well, I think to illustrate your point--we're talking with Kyle Pope, the editor and publisher of the prestigious *Columbia Journalism Review* [CJR]--and look at the examples you give them to make your point. I mean these are easily reportable disasters like the floods in Venice, the droughts in India you point out were ready-made for the evening news. Devastating fires in California and Australia led news broadcasts around the world and yet they didn't connect it to climate disruption!

Kyle Pope: Yeah.

Ralph Nader: And you say that sometimes there was almost a blackout of connecting it. Why didn't they connect it? There are plenty of scientists who would go on TV and radio to affirm their judgment in that respect.

Kyle Pope: You know it's really interesting. So, as we've tried to sort of launch this project to get media to do a better job of exactly making this connection, one of the bits of feedback and we're not talking about like ten, twenty years ago. We're talking about in the last year to eighteen months [what] we've been getting from people is: Well, we think that if we

link weather to climate it's going to be seen as political. We think that if we say look, there's some historic wildfires and they're going to get worse and a warming world is one of the reasons why, there's going to be a portion of our audience who is going to say oh, this is an anti-Trump thing, or this is a sort of Democratic Party thing, or it's an extreme environmentalist thing. And frankly, when myself and my colleagues went to talk to people about this and we heard this, we were taken aback, because we thought we had passed that point. You know what I mean?

Ralph Nader: Yeah.

Kyle Pope: We thought that like that issue had been solved but I can tell you that until very, very recently and these natural disasters that you cite, those are the things that have finally forced the media to move. It finally became so impossible to ignore the fact that things were getting worse and it hit people who normally wouldn't be inclined to agree with it. I mean we had farmers in red states who would normally not be interested in hearing what climate scientists think who were having to say "look, this is real and I see it and my family has been farming for three generations and we've never seen flooding like this, or we've never seen fires like this. We've never seen tornadoes like this. And they finally had to admit this is happening and we can't deny it anymore. And then the media in those markets finally picked up their openness and their willingness. I mean we at CJR did a profile of a weathercaster in a red state in the Midwest who talked about how that happened in his community and how for a while he was talking about climate the climate crisis and people would give him a hard time about it. And then finally it became a point where he was like, "they're coming to me and saying you're absolutely right." So, the press, I don't know how much credit news organizations get on their own, but I think the story just became unavoidable and you just couldn't not make the connection anymore. By the way, and I find this totally fascinating on the whole media sort of ecosystem, one of the groups that has been leading the charge on this on connecting the dots between weather and climate, is local TV weathermen and weatherwomen, which is totally fascinating to me. And if you think about it, it's a group of people that we have spent a lot of time trying to work with, because in a lot of these local markets they are the most respected media person in their community.

Ralph Nader: Certainly among the most watched given how much time TV news gives to weather forecasts [chuckle]. Three, four segments are devoted to variations on the weather.

Kyle Pope: Right.

Ralph Nader: Let's talk about what you did about it. Kyle Pope actually did something with Mark Hertsgaard, a long-time writer on climate chaos and environment in general with *The Nation* magazine. You started a group called Covering Climate Now [<https://www.coveringclimatenow.org>] and it is expanded all over the world. Explain.

Kyle Pope: So, as you say, Mark is a terrific, long-time environmental writer who has written for *The Nation* and a lot of other places. And he and I have done some work together

and we were talking about our frustration around the lack of urgency on the media of coverage of climate. And we did what every journalist does when they have an instinct like that which is we said well, let's write something. So we did and we wrote a piece about how outrageous it was and how something needed to change. But then we started to feel like you know what, that's just not enough; we need to get people to move and we need to get people to change their behavior. So we came up with this idea of a kind of collaboration of media organizations. And our idea was let's get, you know if we can get a few dozen or a few hundred news organizations in the U.S. to commit to doing a better job of linking the weather to what's going on in climate and doing a better job of raising the visibility of the climate story, that's what we want to do. So, we went around and talked to people and this thing just caught fire and grew and grew and grew. And now we have, it's the largest media collaboration in history. We have four hundred news organizations from around the world representing an audience of about two billion people.

Ralph Nader: Name some of them.

Kyle Pope: We got CBS News, we got NBC News, we got Bloomberg, we got Reuters, we got ???_____ *Press* (audio issue 00:29:42), we got *The Guardian*. I mean literally in every part of the world we have news organizations that are now part of this. And everybody from the big guys that I just named, to very, very small radio stations and TV stations and newspapers, again, in every continent of the globe. And we have a weekly newsletter that goes out to everybody. And we say: here's the climate; here's what's going on in climate that you ought to be paying attention to; here are some stories from your colleagues and the partnership that you should pay attention to. And this is critical, Ralph, the really good work that a lot of people do, the members make available free to other people and the collaboration. By the way, none of this costs anything; no one is paying a dime; no one is paying a dime to be a member of this. A lot of people are getting a lot of free content. *The Guardian* gets a lot of their climate content, which is excellent by the way [and] free to members of this collaboration as do other organizations. So a lot of people are getting a lot of stuff that they never would have gotten before. We do tutorials; we do webinars; we do what's called certain weeks of coverage where we say, if normally you wouldn't be inclined to really focus on climate, just spend this week doing it, just for a week see what it feels like. And we did the first one of those last September and it was great. It was during UN Climate Summit. And during that week, Google search terms of climate hit an historic record high and probably because of this collaboration. So, Mark especially, who is the executive director now of this project, is a stand-alone for-profit. We were funded initially with help from Bill Moyers. And this is great for your listeners if anybody wants to donate to Covering Climate Now we'd love to have you. But Mark spends a lot of his time talking to news directors and producers and editors about what does your climate coverage look like. We do a lot of connecting of people. You know we had recently people call, somebody called one of our partners from the Netherlands and said they needed help with a story they're doing that had something to do with Brazil [and] could we connect them to a Brazilian partner which we have. It's surreal to make that

connection, so we're just trying to stitch together this network that has previously not really existed.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, some of the questions you want the press to dig into according to your article in *Columbia Journalism Review* and I'm quoting you, "Can we ensure that the disasters we watch unfold are contextualized and explained? Will we hold the villains of the crisis accountable? Are we able to write about solutions to problems without trivializing them? How can we be fast and slow? It's a matter of whether or not the climate story should be told to settle; we must. This issue of *Columbia Journalism Review* is focused on ways of doing the job". But are there some big news outlets turning their nose up at this? I mean are *the Wall Street Journal*, *the New York Times*, *the Washington Post* and Associated Press part of your collaboration?

Kyle Pope: I have to say this gingerly, because we're working on everybody; we're hoping to turn them. I can tell you that Rupert Murdoch is not a fan of this effort. So, if there's a Murdoch Publication, whether it's *the Wall Street Journal* or Fox or *The Times* in the UK; wherever it is, they're not interested. *the New York Times* we've been having a lot of conversation with them. They do really good work [but]they have taken the view that they don't need this kind of collaboration, because they have a staff that's big enough to do it. We've countered to them that you know they can be a really powerful role model for people if they join in. That's definitely been the stance that Reuter's has taken, which again has a huge staff, but they view this as an opportunity for them to help the rest of the journalism business. So, we've had great success, but there are some of these places that for institutional or ownership or just kind of culture reasons we haven't been able to get on board, but we're working on them every day.

Ralph Nader: Well, *the New York Times* has done great graphic spreads to bring home the climate catastrophe. I mean I'm really amazed at the amount of space they've given and the question I have is do they ever share these great graphics with your collaborators after they've printed it in *the New York Times*?

Kyle Pope: No, but they would if they were part of the collaborative. I mean they did to your point they did this piece I don't know if you saw it a week or so ago about heat around the world and what the warming planet means for people who are dealing with extreme heat. It was extraordinary and it was amazing pictures; it was amazing graphics; it was amazing reporting; it was amazing writing; it was fantastic. And you know, more of that please, but I do wish that they were part of our collaborative so they could share it, but right now they're not.

Ralph Nader: People listening may have contacts in the local press. Give the website where they can find out more about what you're offering and be participants.

Kyle Pope: Yeah, coveringclimatenow.org is the website. On there is a list of all of our partners again four hundred and counting. There's a FAQ page that will explain what being a part of the collaborative means, and again, just to make sure everyone's clear, nobody pays a dime; nobody is obligated to give or not give their content although we encourage

people to do that; nobody is obligated to participate in the tutorials or not participate, but we encourage all of that.

Ralph Nader: Well, you have this question I want you to try to answer when you say “Will we hold the villains of the crisis accountable?” Question: who are the villains? How would you hold them accountable from a journalism point of view? I mean you’re not an attorney general or a prosecutor.

Kyle Pope: I’m not although attorneys general and prosecutors are looking at this, at these questions about misinformation around climate. I mean I think this is a big, juicy, journalistic project. You know going around and figuring out where does the fossil fuel industry spend its money on lobbying? Who is it funding in terms of local candidates? What kind of advertising or other support has it been given to local press? Where are local think tanks and even local academic institutions that sort of pose as independent? Where are they actually funded and is the funding influencing what they say? This is what we’re talking about. And I do think this will come; I mean you’ve been fighting these kind of fights your whole career and these are complicated stories. One of the sort of tragedies really is that the need for this kind of reporting is so acute now at exactly the moment that resources and local newsrooms is so terribly low. So, it really is going to take collaboration. I mean I don’t care what city you live in or what your local newspaper is, but unless it’s one of a handful in the country, it’s been gutted. And so, these people really need your support. And you know, one of the heartening things that we’ve learned as we’ve tried to put this collaboration together, is that in newsrooms large and small in the U.S. and around the world, there are people inside those newsrooms who really care about this subject. And sometimes all they needed was somebody like CJR who would back them up and say like look, we’ll have your back if you go to your boss and say we we need to add some resources, and that’s happening, but ultimately, the money really isn’t there. So we need to work together and that’s one of the reasons why we have these collaborations.

Ralph Nader: Well, what isn’t complicated is the Trump and Trumpster’s move over the last three and half years to unleash more greenhouse gases and lift regulations from the emitters especially methane and how many years did it take when the press would dutifully say that a good transition fuel to replace coal is natural gas, but if natural gas is emitting methane, methane is anywhere from twenty to eighty times more devastating as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. And they never would point that out. And of course, he, Trump has now allowed the producers of methane to be even less regulated and more of it is going into the atmosphere. I think the media has been far too soft on Trump. It’s as if, well there he goes again; it’s not news. But they don’t really appreciate the media. It’s an inaction or refusal to act. It’s just as newsworthy as bad affirmative action, like Exxon pouring stuff into the atmosphere.

Kyle Pope: Yeah, No, I totally agree with you and one of the things that we’re trying to do is highlight the fact that this really is a pivotal election for the climate. I mean the science tells us that we are at a tipping point on so many of these problems. And you know this has been building for decades and decades and decades, but it’s here. It’s here now and unless

we do something right now, unless we really focus people's attention on it right now, it's going to be very, very, very hard and maybe even impossible for us to recover. So, that's one of the points that we're trying to make.

Ralph Nader: Well, before we have Steve and David weigh in here, I want to ask you about the Amazon. Bolsonaro, the Trump-like head of Brazil, has scoffed at the Amazon. He has said it's to be developed; it's ours. You know, so the fires are raging; the ranchers are burning more of the Amazon to produce food temporarily, because the soil is so fragile, it's only good for about three or four years and it's a total global disaster. The Amazon has been called the lungs of the earth and I don't think the media is doing anywhere near what it should on this subject. What would you propose be done fast?

Kyle Pope: Yeah. I mean I think institutionally, there's a lot of the same issues that you talked about with Trump as with Bolsonaro, which is like, I mean we've seen it with the coronavirus too, which we eventually got just the sort of blizzard of lies and the blizzard of deceit and the press becomes sort of inured to it. It becomes almost, to call it a joke I think is probably a little extreme, but it just becomes, and the people just sort of roll their eyes and shrug their shoulders. But, I have seen some pretty good reporting about what's happening in the Amazon. It tends not to be broad. I mean *the New Yorker* has done some fantastic work. Again, *the New York Times* has done some fantastic work and it's actually despite a very fractured media environment in Brazil. CJR actually publishes a Portuguese language edition in Brazil, so I'm a little familiar with the media landscape there. They've got some good reporting. I mean there's a reporter ironically for *the Financial Daily* there who has made more trips to the Amazon than any other reporter in the world.

Ralph Nader: As you know, the COVID-19 epidemic is devastating indigenous people in the Amazon, which further complicates the situation as their lands are being dispossessed by illegal movers into the Amazon. But Kyle, I really have to point something out here. I don't think dramatic feature stories, which are usually offered for Pulitzer and other prizes, have anywhere near the impact of daily reporting the issue on the Amazon.

Kyle Pope: Yeah, yeah, I agree with you.

Ralph Nader: You know *The Times* have had a few great features, you know, then it's over. They don't keep on it. And I've had members of Congress tell me that unless there's daily reporting on what they're doing--investing the insurance industry, or what's happening in the public lands--that the feature doesn't work. It's a one-day impact and then it goes away, and the culprits know it too; they know the difference between a feature offered for a prize and on-the-ground continued reporting.

Kyle Pope: No, I agree with you. I think there's a problem with follow through across media where our attention spans have become so limited and the sort of demand by social media to come up with something new every day make follow through really hard. The other issue that we haven't really talked about is that most people certainly most Americans get their news from television so, whatever *the New York Times* does, whatever *the Washington Post* does ;certainly whatever *the New Yorker* does, isn't going to move the

needle in a way that's going to be effective. We have to get these stories on TV; we have to get them on the evening newscast. And you know, unfortunately, they have been among the biggest laggards. Again, I think we're seeing progress; we're seeing subsequent progress now, but it's been very, very slow and I think that's why these stories have been so slow to take hold.

Ralph Nader: Maybe you ought to inform your readers, listeners, viewers that the public airways are owned by the people; they're the landlords and the radio and TV stations are the tenants that pay no rent. They get the license free. You pay more for your auto license than the biggest NBC station in New York. And people have got to start making demands. It's our public property, they got to keep saying that; they've got to call up the TV and radio stations. What is all this nonsense here? Most of it is entertainment and advertising and you give us this little evening news that's full of weather and sports and chitchat and doesn't even have much news in it. And so, anyway I think what you're doing is great. I think other journalism reviews should be as expansive in their horizons. What do you think, Steve and David?

David Feldman: I have a question about money if you don't mind. You were talking about the Mobil ads that appeared on the Op-Ed page of *the New York Times*. With politics there's always money and the problem with journalism is money, so what is the chilling effect we see with Koch Brothers' money, Exxon money, British Petroleum money--not just on the network news but in journalism schools?

Kyle Pope: The Koch Brothers don't give any money to our journalism school or to CJR nor does Exxon, but we've written the Koch Brothers are now being fairly aggressive in contributing to journalism. And you no doubt know this is one of the reasons why, but I mean the climate has changed to the point that when they do give this money, and when this money does show up, they're called out on it. I mean these organizations are called out on it and they're called out by us and other people and I think that's progress. To your broader point, I mean I do think that this is a moment of vulnerability for journalism, that the economic need is so intense, and there's so many places that are just hanging by a thread, that you know people are going to be more inclined to take money from people they editorially they shouldn't be taking money from. So, that sort of falls on us as a watchdog to try to protect against that and to call people out when they do that, but there is a vulnerability now that we have to really pay attention to.

Ralph Nader: Steve?

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, Kyle I want to talk about the Green New Deal. In your estimation, has the media done a good job of explaining that and putting it in its proper context?

Kyle Pope: No. I think they've been too willing to let the right frame it as a personality issue and make it an AOC story, which I think is wrong; I think it's much broader than that. And I think there's also this kind of fake, urgent need to understand economics, like "Well that's great, but where's the money going to come from?" The press doesn't ask that about new military projects; they're not obsessed with urgently knowing how we're going

to pay for it. But I think that's a frame that they bought into. Again, you see some people pushing back on that in the press. I mean there's, I don't know if you, if you guys follow Vox closely, but they've done some terrific explainers on the Green New Deal and some terrific analysis of why it's important and how people need to pay attention to it. But I don't think it's been covered very effectively and I think the press has allowed it to be framed by the right in a way that's not helpful.

Steve Skrovan: Are we beyond denial now? Are we now just in the phase where it's about how urgent it is, how fast to move?

Kyle Pope: I mean it's always hard it's always to generalize these things. I can tell you that if you are a media outlet that's not a right-wing media outlet, and you give prominence to deniers, you're going to get called for it and people are going to say this is not journalism. So, I think that's a sign of great progress, but I think the oil industry and the right have figured that out, even amongst people in the energy business, you don't see them trying to trot out just outright denial that much anymore. Now, the argument has shifted to: well, yes, it's a problem, but we have a lot of problems, and are we really willing to wreck our economy to fix this? Is that really the future you want? That's the new around the Green New Deal and around all this.

Ralph Nader: Indeed, Kyle Pope. There's some promising trends here. One is that wind power and other forms of solar energy are out competing any forms of fossil fuel deployment like coal and oil and gas. And so they're getting a bigger and bigger share of the market and that's good for the climate situation. And the insurance companies for years and the reinsurance companies like Swiss Re, have been very worried about their liabilities and all the damage like rising sea levels and droughts and floods and hyper-hurricanes. But they need to be more aggressive. I know they have clients in the fossil fuel industry so they're sort of torn. They need to be more aggressive, because they can be very powerful on legislatures and public opinion and the growing number of young people sparked by Greta [Thunberg] and others marching that reached several millions a few months ago and last September. The COVID crisis has stalled it obviously but I think it's going to come back. Millions of young people marching all over the world so and then there's Project Drawdown project that Paul Hawken helped start, which is chronically effective work by people all over the country actually reducing the carbon imprint of what they were doing. And in concluding Kyle Pope, you have retained a printing company for the paper edition of the *Columbia Journalism Review* where you say, "Allied printing", I'm quoting ~~Allied Printing~~ the company we've hired to produce the magazine has a zero carbon footprint. Nearly three quarters of the energy used at its facility comes from the wind and solar power. To further minimize our climate impact, we've elected to print half the number of issues we typically would, which helps us offset the cost of ecofriendly printing and distribution. We've also made every effort possible to reduce travel for our writers and photographers". So, you're walking the walk; you're practicing what you preach. Thank you very much for coming on and enlightening us about this great new project by the *Columbia Journalism*

Review in corporation with Mark Hertsgaard of *The Nation*, and once again, just give our listeners the website.

Kyle Pope: Ralph, it's an honor to be on with you. The website is coveringclimatenow.org.

Ralph Nader: Coveringclimatenow.org. Well, to use the cliché this has to be continued. It's not going to go away, climate chaos. Thank you very much, Kyle for your contribution in redefining the scope of journalism.

Kyle Pope: Thanks for having me.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with journalist, Kyle Pope. We will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Let's take a short break, but first let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute for Friday, August 14, 2020. I'm Russell Mokhiber. *Corporate Crime and Punishment: The Crisis of Underenforcement* is the title of a new book by Columbia Law Professor, John Coffee. We are moving from a system of justice for organizational crime that mixed carrots and sticks to one that is all carrots and no sticks, Coffee writes. Coffee offers a series of proposals for ensuring that corporate crime can once again be punished. He describes incentives that could be offered to both corporate executives to turn in their corporations and to corporations to turn in their executives along with prosecutors to play them off against each other. Coffee proposes that whistleblowers be offered cash bounties to come forward and all federal enforcement agencies be able to hire outside counsel on a contingency fee basis. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Yeah, let's do some listener questions. This question comes from Abby Knowlton, and it sort of speaks to the Kamala Harris discussion. She says Dear Ralph, how do you respond to those who continue to repeat the lesser of two evils voting message especially respected intellectuals like Noam Chomsky? It infuriates me that they mindlessly belabor this asinine talking point every election, despite the fact that it has always backfired, particularly in 2016. I turned eighteen years old two weeks before the 2000 election and I walked in a snowstorm to the polling place to vote for Gore. I was appalled by his spineless concession and I still regret ever supporting the Democratic Party corporation. I have been a member of the Green Party for about ten years now. How do you argue against the lesser of two evil stance? I look forward to your show every week. Thank you.

Ralph Nader: Well, thank you, Abby. On behalf of Noam Chomsky, what he says is in the slam dunk red and blue states you can vote for Green Party. In the swing states, like Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, [and] Arizona, he says the difference between Biden and Trump is the difference between a bad administration and a catastrophic, insane administration and he would urge you to vote for Biden. So, he is a bit nuanced on that. My position is every four years the Democrats engage in political extortion and political

bigotry by calling for example, Green Party candidates, spoilers. Well, for years now, the Democratic Party could have avoided that kind of bigotry by adopting rank voting or instant run-off voting. They never supported it publicly. Number two, they could have supported the end of winner take all. They could have supported proportional representation the way they have in Europe; they never did it. They could have gotten rid of the Electoral College by supporting [the] national popular vote movement and get states to pass laws saying that whoever wins the national popular vote is the presidential candidate; we'll give that person our Electoral College vote thereby neutralizing the Electoral College in the Constitution, because the states in the Constitution, have the authority to set rules for federal and state elections. So, they haven't done that so every four years the people who want to vote their consciences are supposed to be excoriated as spoilers and look at the spoiled political system that this fosters. Because the more the two parties discourage people from supporting challengers, the more one bad party will get worse and pull the other less bad party, but still bad party, in its direction.

That's what's happening now. The Republican Party is extremely reactionary and corporatist and warmongering and the Democratic Party has felt that it can support all these massive military budgets that aren't audited, because the Republican Party has given them room to do that on the political spectrum. So, my approach is always vote your conscience; vote who you believe in; support a competitive democracy. And it's certainly up to the two dominant parties to explain themselves as to what they have done to the country and how they've turned Washington into a bipartisan corporate state--Wall Street over Washington, D.C. It's also important to know that nothing stops the Democratic Party from seizing the Green Party agenda, most of which is supported in the polls by a majority of Americans. So, what are they supposed to say?

Steve Skrovan: Yeah.

Ralph Nader: We don't want to adopt majoritarian positions? Go to my website, which is still open for this purpose and this discussion. Votenader.org. It's the 2008 campaign and you'll see over a dozen wildly popular proposals that the Green Party and I were making [when] I was running as an independent, that the Democrats and Republicans took off the table [and] wouldn't even discuss in the debates or in the campaigns--off the table. Votenader.org. How many quadrennials are we going to allow these two parties to drag our democracy down into the dark pits of corporate statism [akin to fascism]? So, you know this is a discussion that continues to go on, but you say to your Democratic Party critics, why aren't you for rank voting? That's a simple way to deal with the problem of "spoiler", which is a politically bigoted word, because it's only applied to third-party candidates, not to Republicans and Democrats. They don't apply it to each other.

Steve Skrovan: I remember the days 2004 the anybody but Bush days when Bush was Satan and now Bush looks like a distinguished statesman compared to Trump. So, the arc of what you're talking about, where the opponent on the right gets worse and worse, has been proven over the last twenty years.

Ralph Nader: Precisely. I mean if there were liberal Republicans thirty years ago who were behaving like liberal Democrats. No more. There aren't any in the Senate [or] in the House to keep be pushed into more extreme reactionary, corporatist, warmongering positions. So, there's a moral obligation there to say enough is enough. But you know for most people coming up in November, most states you know; if you vote green in Alabama it's going to go Trump. If you vote green in New York State, it's going to go Biden big. There's a few states you have to make up your own mind. Vote your conscious or engage in tactical voting.

Steve Skrovan: I want to thank our guest, Kyle Pope again. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel and for Ralph's weekly column, it's free; go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber go to corporatecrimereporter.com. The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky. Our theme music "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our intern is Michaela Squier. Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we welcome author and economics columnist, Robert Frank about his new book, *Under the Influence: Putting Peer Pressure to Work*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody and listeners demand your auto insurance premium refunds. Demand them directly from your auto insurance company and demand that your insurance commissioner go to bat for you. (music 00:57:40-00:58:00)