

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 371 TRANSCRIPT

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

David Feldman: [laughter] Hello there. Marty Allen, yeah.

Steve Skrovan: I did a little Marty Allen there. I just jumped right into Marty Allen for all you people... who are not very young. And we also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. Again, this is a unique program for listeners.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. If we had to make a list of the people who have profited off of Donald Trump's presidency, we'd be here for a while. For some, they got financial gain, others, political power or a boost to their careers. One man on that list saw his public image go from walking punchline to elder statesman. And that was President George W. Bush. What a gift Donald Trump was to George W. Bush. I'll bet Bush never dreamt that he would see someone be worse at being the president within his lifetime. Donald Trump has played a convenient rodeo clown for the presidency, distracting the American public from the atrocities of administrations past. So what is George W. Bush's true legacy? Well, if you ask our guest, Steven Markoff, Bush's legacy is a whole bunch of crimes, and we'll be discussing Mr. Markoff's book *The Case Against George W. Bush*, which lays out the case for three crimes that he alleges Bush committed during his presidency. Then if we have time, Ralph will answer some more of your listener questions. As always, we will check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's put George Bush on trial. David?

David Feldman: Steven Markoff is the founder of several public service educational websites, including ProCon.org, which is incredible. And he's the author of *The Case Against George W. Bush*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*, Steven Markoff.

Steven Markoff: Good morning. Thank you, David.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much, Steven. It's very rare that someone goes back and presents the case against violations by high political officials as you have done. There's a tendency in American society of well, let's have bygones be bygones and forget about it. As you say in your preface, "Chronicling how Bush as president and our commander-in-chief use secrecy, fraud, and deceit to scare our country into the Iraq War, which helps us better understand and study his actions in hopes that the lessons learned will help keep our nation from falling prey to such presidential trickery in the future." That was one of the reasons for your book.

And it is a book that has a very powerful foreword by Richard Clarke, who was the national security anti-terrorist advisor in the White House to both President Bill Clinton, and for quite a while, President George W. Bush, he was a holdover and he makes it very clear, and I think this is also your position based on all the documentation, that there were three violations that Bush can be prosecuted for, perhaps. The criminal laws are not suspended for presidents after they

leave office and there's really no statute of limitation. And he said one, "First, Bush ignored warnings about the serious threat from al-Qaeda prior to 9/11." They were very detailed warnings, by the way, as you show in your book, *The Case Against George W. Bush*. Second, Mr. Clarke said, "Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq in violation of international law when Iraq had uninvolved in 9/11 and offered no imminent threats to the US." And third, "Bush authorized the use of torture and denied prisoners due process, both acts in violation of international law." But one might add there were violations of US statutory law quite apart from violation of the Constitution. So the first question is why did you write this book and why did you write it the way you did – full of documentations, one after the other, official statements, inquiries, admissions, all readily footnoted?

Steven Markoff: Well, I started off in the project after I read Clarke's book, *Against All Enemies*, that he put out I think it was around 2007. And I read the book and he seemed to write a lot of things that happened in the Bush administration that seemed quite wrong, illegal, improper, call it what you will. But he wrote it from a perspective that I don't often see, which is really from an unbiased perspective. He didn't seem to be concerned at all with politics. He didn't seem to be concerned with the politics of the players. He just wrote what he saw. And my gift or curse in life seems to be to try to understand things. And I started looking at what he wrote about, and I quickly figured out that although he had a great grasp of the issues of [the] George W. Bush White House, because he was intimately involved with it, he was just one man and all he could write about were things that he knew about. And he was quite busy his whole career there.

So I started putting together what I thought were facts and documentation. I documented the book because, frankly, I'm a nobody in this situation. I wasn't in the Iraq War. I didn't have a seat at the table. I wasn't involved in the administration. And I figured out that what I had to say, just from my own sensitivities, wasn't really very valuable. So I decided to document what third parties had to say. And I was quite shocked to find out after all of that documentation. I think that if you put out information that isn't sourced, it has a far lower value than sourced data. I've never used WikiLeaks as a source because when you read something on WikiLeaks, it may well be valuable, but the problem is there's no responsibility. You can't find out who said it, you can't find out when they said it, and you can't find out the background of why that particular sentence was written. So I went the other way.

In my book, I've quoted pieces from 90 different authors. Most would be well known to this audience. I quoted out of President George W. Bush's book. I quoted from Condoleezza Rice's book. I quoted from our Vice President Dick Cheney's book, and a lot of people. And what I was really looking for was published quotes that were specific to a date and time. And I thought that way, people could read the book and make up their own conclusions from a lot of very specific data.

Ralph Nader: I must say it's an extremely special type of writing style and documentation designed to inform people and change their minds if they swallowed the propaganda that Saddam Hussein, the dictator, had weapons of mass destruction, and he was dealing with technology that could reach the United States. Just for our listeners, I thought a good example was your page 236 and 237, where you start by saying, "9/16/2003. Cheney failed to dismiss widely discredited

claim that Hussein might have played a role in 9/11.” And then you go to 9/17/2003, where you cite, “George W. Bush clarifies Cheney’s statement. Hussein has been involved with al-Qaeda.” And then you go to 9/25/2003 with the title: White House concocted faked letter showing Iraq al-Qaeda link to 9/11 attacks. And that was followed by a statement by Colin Powell who said just the opposite, that he had “not seen a smoking gun concrete evidence” of Hussein’s ties to al-Qaeda.

I’ve never seen an advocacy book work the documentation this way. And it’s quite, quite devastating, which leads me to ask, this book has been out some months now. What kind of reaction from [US] Congress, from the press, from the [US] Justice Department, from international legal institutions, Geneva Convention? That’s what would be fascinating about this. What kind of reaction to this lawlessness, to this criminal invasion of Iraq, that took over a million Iraqi lives and thousands of US soldiers killed, injured or subjected to diseases that were prevalent over there, like sand fly disease. What kind of reaction?

Steven Markoff: Well, that’s the amazing part. It has been the thundering sound of silence. When I finished the book, I offered the book to everybody that I had quoted, which was, I mentioned, about 90 authors. I offered it to Condoleezza Rice. I offered it to Dick Cheney I offered it to the [George W.] Bush [Presidential] Library. I haven’t heard from one person about the book. The initial run was 3,000 first editions. I think we’re just about sold out and going into a second edition. But from all of the power and the information set forth, as you just mentioned, where quote after quote features things that are absolutely not true, there has been no response at all to it, which is frightening in many ways.

Ralph Nader: Well, what’s interesting is that the legal profession, I suppose, haven’t responded. The law schools, the deans of law schools, professors of international law, the American Bar Association. No response from them either?

Steven Markoff: No response from anybody. And I think part of the problem is everybody’s dealing with their own worlds and their own problems. But the other is the politics under particularly Trump have been so fiery that people think a lot of good thoughts but are afraid to bring them out for fear of being satirized or made to look bad in the public light. And that, to me, again, is the scariest part of all of this. The other part about the book that really surprised me is normally when you write an advocacy paper or a book, there’s a lot of facts on the other side. As they say, you know, there’s three sides to every story. But in all of the books that we went through and we went through 130 published books, plus government reports, plus other reports, there is really no data that counters what I’ve quoted in the book, but still, this sound of silence from the world.

Ralph Nader: What kind of coverage did it get? Were you interviewed at NPR, PBS or commercial radio, TV, *the New York Times* [Book] Review, *the Washington Post*, *the Wall Street Journal*? What kind of coverage?

Steven Markoff: None of those. And I’m not sure why. I think they may be afraid of the topic, which is shocking because that’s what they’re supposed to do. What I would love to do is face off

with somebody that is a great W. Bush supporter. And I'd love to see some facts and data that refute any parts of the book--not just opinions, but actual facts and data.

Ralph Nader: Well, lest anybody think this is a left-wing attack on George W. Bush, I mean, you have all kinds of statements by Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, congressional inquiries, and you even on page 238, say, Congressman Ron Paul a Libertarian, Congressman Ron Paul, no connection between Hussein and 9/11. Real reasons for Iraq War include, this is Ron Paul being quoted, "Oil, neoconservative empire building, and our support for Israel." And you quote the September 11 commission [9-11 Commission], which says, "No collaborative relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda." Of course, Ron Paul famously said Bush and Cheney lied us into the Iraq War. These were boldface falsifications. And in your documentation, you show how Bush didn't wait for the UN inspectors to finish their job. It was just a matter of weeks before he then launched his invasion in March of 2003. Did you get any response from the Iraqis, the victims of all of this?

Steven Markoff: No, but my wife and I are scheduled to go to Pakistan later this year, depending on the virus. And in the trip, we hope to go to Iraq. I've never been there and I would love to talk to some of the people in government there. And I joke with my wife that I'll bring a suitcase full of books.

Ralph Nader: Well, this is a pretty extraordinary aftermath of your book. I mean, what does this say about any kind of institutions that are committed by their own position to the rule of law, domestic law, constitutional observance, international law, and all you got was a deafening silence.

Steven Markoff: I thought it was interesting yesterday when I happened to – I check Fox News [Channel] regularly, and one of the feature stories was why [Joe] Biden's dog had bitten two people, that it showed there were problems in the White House of pressures and emotions. And all of the pressures that we have and the problems we have in this country and internationally, that they're talking about why a dog bit somebody, I thought, was emblematic of really a lack of seriousness in presenting real people's problems to real people.

Ralph Nader: Well, it certainly reflects an amazing decay. Because usually in the past, like on the Vietnam War, there are mavericks in Congress. Senator Wayne Morse, for example, and others who would speak up early, stand tall, challenge Lyndon Johnson. Nobody in the Congress?

Steven Markoff: Nobody in the Congress. I would love to be challenged by a member of Congress. I would love to be challenged by a member or friend of the George W. Bush administration or anybody, because I've documented virtually everything on these path of these three crimes.

Ralph Nader: Well, for example, on page 284 in your book, you cite January 13th, 2005. The federal government's own National Intelligence Council's report. And they suggest that a war in Iraq would create terrorist haven. Well, ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] certainly fulfilled that projection. So this is a continuing situation here. People in this country might think it's a

matter of the past and let George W. Bush and Dick Cheney regale their retirement with big speech fees and book advances and accolades from people like Bill Clinton, who seems to make a small hobby of praising George W. Bush and talking about his charities. In the meantime, the wreckage goes on. The wreckage in Iraq goes on. The wreckage in Libya, Hillary [Clinton]'s war goes on. And it's all over the Middle East and it's boomeranging against us. All empires devour themselves. [It] devoured our budgets for public works or infrastructure for years because of the huge allocation to the military budget. Well, you're a persistent person, Steve Markoff. What are you going to do about this deafening silence? Or what can you do?

Steven Markoff: Well, what I have been doing is I'm trying to go public. I love being on your show because of your audience and your audience thinks about things and they're hearing about the book. And I think that's very valuable. I've just put out more money for digital advertising to try to get to the people, the decision makers. I'm going to be sending out free books to some of the people that you mentioned that my publisher did not, and I'm just going to keep at it. I mean, to me, this is very important.

And let me bring in one other point that a lot of people don't think about. There are a lot of people that look at George Bush since his presidency and they say, "Well, gee, now he's been a pretty good guy. He's really been helpful. He's been more of an elder statesman. And we should kind of give him a pass because he's been a nice guy." Well, if you have a neighbor that murders three people, and after the murder, you know he brings in stray dogs and he's nice to people and he brings you a cake when you move in. He's still a murderer. And I think that one of the problems, that I'm going to go off my script of documentation for just a minute and say, I believe that one of the reasons that Donald Trump was able to attack our democracy in the way he did is that he looked back at George W. Bush and said to himself, "Look at all the terrible things that guy did, and he's never had to pay for it." And I think, and again, this is my speculation that doing nothing to bring George Bush to justice through a legal process emboldened Donald Trump.

Ralph Nader: I think you're right. It emboldened Barack Obama. He expanded the illegal drone warfare to killing people who he didn't even have evidence that there were an imminent threat to the US. They were called signature strikes. They would spot some young men in a roadside in Yemen talking, and they'd say, "Oh, our algorithm means that these young men fit the profile of terrorists conspiring. Push the button." And it pushed the button from Virginia, and they vaporized these young men. This was all reported in *the New York Times* in the celebrated page one article, signature strikes. You're right. The lawlessness of Bush set the stage for the lawlessness of Obama and the lawlessness on an even bigger scale, domestically at least, of Donald J. Trump. Well, let's ask another aftermath question. Have you been able to put any letters to the editor or any op-eds in various publications about this book?

Steven Markoff: I have written some and they have not been published.

Ralph Nader: Well, you see, censorship comes in many forms. One of it is a colossal moral indifference to official crimes at the highest levels of our government. Did *the Nation* magazine, *the Progressive* magazine, *Washington Monthly*, *In These Times*, certified progressive antiwar rule-of-law type magazines, did they give you any attention?

Steven Markoff: The answer is no.

Ralph Nader: Don't you find this incredible?

Steven Markoff: I find it—I wouldn't say incredible, I would say very depressing. That here we have documented evidence that seems to have less value to public, at least to the producers for the public, than wild opinions, lies, made-up stories, and it's just quite sad. But somebody has to do it. Somebody has to put the data out there, because there are people that have read it. We have sold a fair amount of books. It's a niche market, we understand. But the problem is getting people to act when they have all these other issues that they're dealing with in their daily lives.

Ralph Nader: It is for sale. No one censored it in the bookstores or on Amazon[.com] or Barnes & Noble[, Inc.] website, did they?

Steven Markoff: Nope, no. It's widely available. You can buy *The Case Against George W. Bush* at Amazon and many other booksellers.

Ralph Nader: And what about this proposal? Sometimes when members of Congress get letters from their constituents, they pay more attention than they would to people writing them letters outside their own district or state. What if some of our listeners wanted to send your book to their senator or their representative, would you cooperate with that?

Steven Markoff: 100%. I would love it. I think it would be a valuable service for the country and for the American public.

Ralph Nader: Well, why don't you give them your website and see if they would send you their letter to their representative, and then it could be included in a book directly to their office?

Steven Markoff: That would be terrific. Probably the best they can send it right to my personal website, which is S as in Steve, C as in Charles, Markoff, MARKOFF@aol. And if they wanted to offer the book and if it was accepted, I would send it out at no cost to as many people in office as I could.

Ralph Nader: Well, that's a very important invitation, listeners. But it would be good if you conveyed some words to your senator about the book, about what you want the Congress to do to reopen hearings, whatever, just so when your senators and representatives get these books by Steve Markoff, *The Case Against George W. Bush*, they'll think it came as it did come in a personal way, not simply requesting Steve to send a book. So send a paragraph or two to this website. And say it again, Steve, slowly.

Steven Markoff: My email is S as in Steve, C as in Charles, Markoff, MARKOFF@aol.com.

Ralph Nader: And you'll do this for the listener at no cost.

Steven Markoff: At no cost.

Ralph Nader: Now, I wanted to take this opportunity, Steve, to have David Feldman read a letter from Tomas Young, who was the severely injured veteran from Iraq War, sent there by Bush and Cheney, and became the subject of the celebrated documentary produced by Phil Donahue called *Body of War*. And just before Tomas died, after agonizing pain and multiple operations and trying to be an advocate for peace at public gatherings, he wrote a final letter on March 19th, 2013 to George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. It was written in a way that would certainly get to their offices or to other addresses so that they couldn't say they didn't get the letter, and it was also given some media treatment so that it would have been picked up by Bush and Cheney's secretariats. This letter that David is going to read, I think, drives home the emotional intelligence, the moral claim, in addition to the deadly casualties and destruction of an entire nation of Iraq. And this letter received no acknowledgement and no response from either George W. Bush or Dick Cheney. David, can you read this, please?

David Feldman: Yes. This is the letter, Tomas Young's letter to Bush and Cheney. *The Last Letter*. To: George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. From: Tomas Young.

“I write this letter on the 10th anniversary of the Iraq War on behalf of my fellow Iraq War veterans. I write this letter on behalf of the 4,488 soldiers and Marines who died in Iraq. I write this letter on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of veterans who have been wounded and on behalf of those whose wounds, physical and psychological, have destroyed their lives. I am one of those gravely wounded. I was paralyzed in an insurgent ambush in 2004 in Sadr City. My life is coming to an end. I am living under hospice care. I write this letter on behalf of husbands and wives who have lost spouses, on behalf of children who have lost a parent, on behalf of the fathers and mothers who have lost sons and daughters and on behalf of those who care for the many thousands of my fellow veterans who have brain injuries. I write this letter on behalf of those veterans whose trauma and self-revulsion for what they have witnessed, endured and done in Iraq have led to suicide and on behalf of the active-duty soldiers and Marines who commit, on average, a suicide a day. I write this letter on behalf of some 1 million Iraqi dead and on behalf of the countless Iraqi wounded. I write this letter on behalf of us all—the human detritus your war has left behind, those who will spend their lives in unending pain and grief.

I write this letter, my last letter, to you, Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney. I write not because I think you grasp the terrible human and moral consequences of your lies, manipulation and thirst for wealth and power. I write this letter because, before my own death, I want to make it clear that I, and hundreds of thousands of my fellow veterans, along with millions of my fellow citizens, along with hundreds of millions more in Iraq and the Middle East, know fully who you are and what you have done. You may evade justice but in our eyes you are each guilty of egregious war crimes, of plunder and, finally, of murder, including the murder of thousands of young Americans—my fellow veterans—whose future you stole. Your positions of authority, your millions of dollars of personal wealth, your public relations consultants, your privilege and your power cannot mask the hollowness of your character. You sent us to fight and die in Iraq after you, Mr. Cheney, dodged the draft in Vietnam, and you, Mr. Bush, went AWOL from your [US] National Guard unit. Your cowardice and selfishness were established decades ago. You were not willing to risk yourselves for our nation but you sent hundreds of thousands of young men and women to be sacrificed in a senseless war with no more thought than it takes to put out the garbage. I joined the Army two days after the 9/11 attacks. I joined the Army because our

country had been attacked. I wanted to strike back at those who had killed more than 3,000 of my fellow citizens. I did not join the Army to go to Iraq, a country that had no part in the September 2001 attacks and did not pose a threat to its neighbors, much less to the United States. I did not join the Army to “liberate” Iraqis or to shut down mythical weapons-of-mass-destruction facilities or to implant what you cynically called “democracy” in Baghdad and the Middle East. I did not join the Army to rebuild Iraq, which at the time you told us could be paid for by Iraq’s oil revenues. Instead, this war has cost the United States over \$3 trillion. I especially did not join the Army to carry out pre-emptive war. Pre-emptive war is illegal under international law. And it was you, Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney, who started this war. It is you who should pay the consequences.

I would not be writing this letter if I had been wounded fighting in Afghanistan against those forces that carried out the attacks of 9/11. Had I been wounded there I would still be miserable because of my physical deterioration and imminent death, but I would at least have the comfort of knowing that my injuries were a consequence of my own decision to defend the country I love. I would not have to lie in my bed, my body filled with painkillers, my life ebbing away, and deal with the fact that hundreds of thousands of human beings, including children, including myself, were sacrificed by you for little more than the greed of the oil companies, for your alliance with the oil sheiks in Saudi Arabia, and your insane visions of empire. I have, like many other disabled veterans, suffered from the inadequate and often inept care provided by the Veterans [Health] Administration. I have, like many other disabled veterans, come to realize that our mental and physical wounds are of no interest to you, perhaps of no interest to any politician. We were used. We were betrayed. And we have been abandoned. You, Mr. Bush, make much pretense of being a Christian. But isn’t lying a sin? Isn’t murder a sin? Aren’t theft and selfish ambition sins? I am not a Christian. But I believe in the Christian ideal. I believe that what you do to the least of your brothers you finally do to yourself, to your own soul.

My day of reckoning is upon me. Yours will come. I hope you will be put on trial. But mostly I hope, for your sakes, that you find the moral courage to face what you have done to me and to many, many others who deserved to live. I hope that before your time on earth ends, as mine is now ending, you will find the strength of character to stand before the American public and the world, and in particular the Iraqi people, and beg for forgiveness.”

Ralph Nader: Wow. Well, Steve Markoff, what's your response to that?

Steven Markoff: Well, I think I have two responses. Number one, I have nothing against George W. Bush. He may be a nice guy. He may be a good father. He maybe perhaps treats animals and his friends well. I'm looking at this as a prosecutor looks at somebody that they believe has broken the law. And so the second part is what I think should happen to George Bush is I think that there should be two serious nonpartisan inquiries. One, in the United States for what I believe was his criminal negligence in disregarding this incredible amount of intel he received that we would be attacked by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. And in disregarding it did nothing to protect us, and of course we were attacked on 9/11. And number two, there should be another nonpartisan investigation internationally regarding war crimes and crimes against humanity. I think they're separate issues. I think they should be looked at separately. And I think that if the conclusions of those investigations provide enough evidence, then I think he should be tried as

anybody else would. And if there's not enough evidence, then he should be left alone to enjoy his last years.

Ralph Nader: And the Iraq War veterans should have a role in this endeavor, would you say?

Steven Markoff: I don't think it's necessary. I think that there's so much data. I think injecting emotion probably would not help an independent investigation. Certainly somebody should be there from Iraq because they've seen the damage firsthand. But again, I think that the best investigations are really impartial, where the investigators are only looking at the facts and don't have a political bent one way or the other.

Ralph Nader: I was mentioning that in building up the public opinion necessary for doing what you're suggesting, the Iraq War veterans should be in the forefront because they speak truth to power from their own experience and the loss of their comrades. But, you know, Tomas Young's letter, which David just read, was released to the media. And apart from one or two small stories, it got the same treatment your book got. It got deafening silence. It's not every day that a war veteran in his last dying moments dictates a letter like this and it was ignored. So this kind of moral numbness seems to be a very pervasive phenomenon. And, you know, you can have great documentation for a prosecutor's case, but the law tends to become dynamic from the moral impulses of its society. How would you address that? Did any religious leaders react to you at all?

Steven Markoff: No. And you're asking a very important question for our country and for all other countries. How do you get people energized to look at things that are outside that their daily struggles as bad as they may be? And I don't know the answer. You are correct in my view that one of the ways that disk would get some traction would be to have those fought in the Iraq War and their family members and those on both sides of the war to come forward and to start asking questions. Well, wait a minute, what were we doing there? Is it true it was all about oil? If it was all about oil, why we're lied to? Why did the government continue to lie about the Iraqi War? Was there a commission that really looked at the facts instead of doing it with one eye closed? Which is what I believe. But you're talking about a very difficult issue.

You wrote a very famous book, back I think was around 1965, about I think it was the [Chevrolet] Corvair, if my memory serves me right. And that book by itself caused a tremendous positive social change in America. It got rid of a car that was documentedly dangerous. The problem is today having the same public outcry created by information and data. And it looks like today, the world is much more interested across the board in emotions and angry people and screaming, threatening people than it is by people sitting down carefully looking at documentation, looking at the facts and coming to reasonable conclusions.

Ralph Nader: Well, there's been a definite decline in the moral articulation of these matters in our country since Vietnam. I mean, there were all kinds of people speaking out against Vietnam, leaders from all segments and backgrounds in our society, not as much as the peace advocates wanted. And there were, of course demonstrations and rallies and strikes and sit-ins and considerable turbulence, even in Congress, before it finally cut off aid from the executive branch. And that's the way the Vietnam War ended. They just cut off the money for the war. And it's

inconceivable that that would not have happened in the invasion of Iraq, especially since the war was not declared. It was not an attack on an enemy backed by a powerful force. It just didn't happen. So there's obviously a consistent decline in the ability collectively of our society and its peoples to stand up against these kinds of violent transgressions. Some people have called this the biggest strategic foreign policy disaster in our history because it continues to boomerang all over a huge part of Asia and Africa against us, not to mention the repercussions on millions of innocent people to this day. Steve, David, what are you thinking about all of this?

Steve Skrovan: I wanted to ask, you may not know the answer to this, Steven, but can George W. Bush travel to foreign countries anymore, or would he be arrested?

Steven Markoff: I'm under the impression, and I've read, but I don't have verification that there are a few countries that he will not go to. There're not arrest warrants for him per se. But I'm told and have viewed op-ed pieces that in certain countries, he's concerned with his safety if he goes there from a legal perspective. One of the things that needs to be done, and I actually talked to Human Rights Watch last week and I offered a grant. Somebody needs to sit down, a competent, probably human rights lawyer and gather up all of the attempts to prosecute George W. Bush and others around him so we have a starting point and then walk back and say, "Okay. This is where we are. These are all the cases that have been filed against George W. Bush and others. This is the reason they didn't work" and decide what to do to continue this.

But I think it's really Ralph's suggestion that we need people to write their elected representatives and tell them that it's time that we looked at this closely. Obviously, from my standpoint, I'd love them to offer the book and I'd love people to read the book, because I think it's hard to read the book and not be outraged by not only the things that were done, but how openly they were done and how well-documented these outrages are. So I realize & that's a bit self-serving, but I see, the energy has to come.

Ralph Nader: Well, the focus on the Congress of course is well taken because Congress was the great institutional default. They did not use their constitutional authority to basically control the rush to the criminal war of aggression. After all, only Congress can declare war. Only Congress can authorize funds. Only Congress can appropriate funds. Only Congress has the constitutional oversight function. They abandoned all of them. They became inkblots. And to recycle an aroused public's concern about this and focus it on Congress is a historical reassertion of a long overdue accountability by the public.

Steven Markoff: Well, let me remind you of one point. Back in the fall of 2002, Congress gave George W. Bush the power to go to war. The problem with that was...

David Feldman: A democratically-led Senate, by the way.

Steven Markoff: Yes. And the problem was that they were given false and incomplete information.

Ralph Nader: And it had nothing to do with Iraq either.

Steven Markoff: I believe that it did. I think that they gave him the power to go into and after Iraq, although several of the senators at the time said, “Well, we gave him the power, but we know it won't be used unless it's appropriate” or some weasel words to that effect.

Ralph Nader: Well, as Bruce Fein, our international law expert, stated on this program in the past, Steven, that doesn't amount to a declaration of war. They can't weasel around this with some authorization for the use of force, which is focused on the backers and attackers of 9/11. If they tried to link it to Iraq, you rebutted that with the documentation in your book that there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. So anyway, that's for another program. But I just wanted to point out also to show that this is not just coming from one part of the political spectrum. Judge [Andrew] Napolitano, who is the regular legal contributor on Fox News, a former state judge and the author of many books on constitutional law, which he has taught, stated publicly that during the Obama administration, he said, “What is the Justice Department waiting for? They should be pursuing George W. Bush and Dick Cheney with criminal prosecution for their criminal invasion of Iraq.” And he's quite a conservative scholar. So it does come from many angles of political backgrounds. David, do you have a comment or question?

David Feldman: Well, I just wanted to point out that the Senate gave the war authorization in 2002, and it was in October, I believe, because they wanted to do it before the midterms and the Democrats gave him the war authorization and they ended up losing—the Democrats lost the Senate. Tom Daschle, who is now a lobbyist, lost to Trent Lott. They try to placate the Republicans, and they ended up losing control of that.

Steven Markoff: I think that I have a slightly different take. I think that the W. Bush administration did a great job lying to and conning our Congress. They said things that scared Congress, and I think rightly so, that were simply lies and untruths and we're known such at the time. They said that it was covered, I think, earlier in the show that somehow—and not even somehow, that Hussein was connected to 9/11, which was totally untrue and known to be untrue by the administration. So I think that if I were a Congress member back in, I believe it was October of 2002, and I was told the horror stories by top government officials, I could see myself—

David Feldman: But the Democrats—I'm sorry to interrupt you, but in 1991, when did we go to war the first time before?

Steven Markoff: 1991. The first, '91.

David Feldman: Yeah. There were a lot of Democrats who voted against that war authorization. They knew they were being lied to by Bush about the incubators being stolen in Kuwait. They were much more distrustful of the first George Herbert Walker Bush, who actually served in the military and they knew to vote against the war in Iraq.

Steven Markoff: Well, back in the 80s is a really interesting story about how the United States propped up and kept helping Saddam Hussein, including sending them Scud missiles. And it's an amazing story in itself that has been kept from the American people.

Ralph Nader: Well, you actually, in your book, have the vote count member of Congress by member of Congress, don't you?

Steven Markoff: I do. Yes.

Ralph Nader: So, there were quite a few Democrats who voted against the Bush-Cheney move into Iraq, David. Unfortunately, we're out of time. We've been talking with Steve C. Markoff, the author, the compiler of *The Case Against George W. Bush* with a foreword by Richard A. Clarke. And Steve, before you leave, can you slowly, again, give your website. So anybody who wants to send a short letter to their senator and representative can send that to you and you will accompany that letter was a free copy of your book, *The Case Against George W. Bush*.

Steven Markoff: And not only will I send a free copy to the representative, but I'll also send a copy to the letter writer for the trouble that they've taken to do that. My name is Steve Markoff. My URL to write to is S as in Steve, C as in Charles, Markoff, MARKOFF@aol.com.

Ralph Nader: What a generous offer, Steve. Listeners, now you'll get a free book to you and a free book accompanied by your words to your senators and representatives. Thank you very much, Steve.

Steven Markoff: Well, thank you. It's been a pleasure to explain some of these issues.

Ralph Nader: And you did very well.

Steven Markoff: Thank you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Steven Markoff. We will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Let's take a short break. 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, April 16, 2021; I'm Russell Mokhiber. Remarkably, there has never been a book about the processed meat industry and the cancer risk it poses to consumers, until now. French filmmaker Guillaume Coudray is just out with *Who Poisoned Your Bacon Sandwich?*--a detailed investigative report into the use of nitro-additives in meat. Coudray reports that most mass-produced, processed meats on the market in the United States, and now even many artisanal products, contain chemicals like nitrates and nitrites that react with meat to form cancer-causing compounds. Since the 1970s, the meat-processing industry has denied the health risks because these additives make curing cheaper and quicker, extending shelf life and giving meat a pleasing pink color. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. Ralph, our very own David Feldman has a question for you.

David Feldman: The infrastructure bill that President Biden is introducing, is it enough? And Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, came out in favor of an increase in corporate taxes to help pay for it.

Ralph Nader: Well, first of all, Amazon has escaped taxes like no other giant company, perhaps with the exception of General Electric [Company]. But they evaded or avoided depending on your viewpoint sales taxes early in their rise and put all kinds of bookstores—brick and mortar bookstores would have to pay sales taxes at a 6%, 7%, 8% disadvantage. And you know, the margins on books are such that that got Amazon a big leg up as they refused to pay sales taxes, and they had their lawyers making the argument, and there were other arguments contrary. And then it was off to the races by using international jurisdictions and profit shifting. Amazon pays very few taxes. So, I guess Jeff Bezos has been feeling some heat from the public as more reporters are listing companies that don't pay any federal income taxes in recent years. And there are 50 major ones who have escaped paying any federal income tax. A lot of times when you accuse Apple [Inc.] of paying very little federal income tax, Tim Cook roars back and said, “Of course we'd pay billions of taxes” where he's including things like sales taxes, maybe tariffs. He's evading the issue. So I suppose Bezos wanting more infrastructure for his airplanes and trucks and internet sales practices. And he said, “Well, I better come out and support this because why not have the taxpayer pay for this infrastructure? It'll just make Amazon more profit.”

David Feldman: Janet Yellen, the [US] Secretary of the Treasury, she used to be head of the Federal Reserve, is suggesting that there would be some kind of international baseline tax for corporations to prevent countries competing with each other to bring corporations, you know, by giving them tax breaks.

Ralph Nader: Well, that's a good idea. But you know, there are tax havens like Ireland, Luxembourg, and various islands who will never agree to that. And so there'd have to be sanctions imposed by the large countries that would have agreed to that. But her numbers are too small to begin with. And I don't think it's going to go anywhere. It's much better for Janet Yellen to push for a financial transaction tax, which could raise \$350 billion nationally. A very tiny sales tax less than one half of 1% on all of these trades of stocks, bonds, derivatives, whirling through the electronic world that don't pay any sales tax while people go into stores and pay 6%, 7%, 8% sales tax on necessities and wants of life. Pretty severe double standard. And I think she needs to lend her prestige and powerful position behind that. There's already a bill in Congress by Congressman [Peter] DeFazio and others. Bernie Sanders supports it. Elizabeth Warren supports it. But it needs some Biden administration push.

Biden announced to great fanfare and the press swallowed it, a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure bill, but it was over eight years. So, if you divide it by eight, that's less than 300 billion a year. In a \$21 trillion economy, that's not much of a job-producing budget. 300 billion a year? Does anybody know how much a major bridge costs, for example, these days? And I'm trying to advise the press not to be so gung ho over the number because the Republicans want to take advantage of the number without saying that it's spread out over eight years and it's financed over 14 years, long after Biden leaves the scene. We need to ask ourselves, how much do we want to invest in the next two or three years? And it's an investment. It's not spending like the Republicans like to call it spending. It's a capital investment from which there will be enormous

returns and economic activity as well as health and safety. Safer bridges, safer roads, and other safety provisions in that bill

David Feldman: Yellen's suggestion of a baseline tax to prevent countries from competing with each other to lure corporations through tax breaks. Would you support something like that in the United States where states and cities can't compete with tax breaks to corporations that race to the bottom?

Ralph Nader: Yes. But the problem is we don't have a global constitution that can compel all the countries once a vast majority agree to a treaty that's enforceable. It has to be a negotiated process. And these smaller countries who are making out tremendously by taking these big US companies and other European companies and having them so-called domiciled there for tax avoidance or evasion purposes. So it's not likely going to work. However, it's good that she's raising the issue because it might improve the willingness of individual countries to raise their corporate tax, which are at all-time lows. Our corporate tax is now at an all-time low. It's 21% in theory and 11.5% really after they take advantage of all the loopholes. And yet, the top rate for an individual is 38%. And this double standard is simply not defensible. Why should corporations ever be taxed less than individuals in terms of tax rates? That's an argument that Democrats should learn to use. And Obama left office with the federal tax rate on corporations, the maximum rate, 35%. Trump took it down to 21%, put more loopholes in [that] took it down to 11.5% effective rate. And now Biden is proposing just to raise it to 28%. Good heavens. You'd think he'd at least raise it to the 35% under the Obama-Biden administration. Such is the cowardliness of the Democratic Party.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah. And it's interesting because it's not like corporations want to pay a lower corporate tax. They don't want to pay any corporate tax. So, you know, maybe Bezos thinks that "Yeah, pick any number you want. I'm not going to be paying it anyway, because I've got very clever accountants."

Ralph Nader: That's true. They really don't want to pay any tax. They believe in the homily that corporations don't pay taxes; people do. Really? Well, if that's true, if it's so easy to transfer corporate taxes to people, why do they oppose it so vigorously? Why don't they in effect say, "Hey, the Constitution interpreted by the Supreme Court says we're like persons, we're people; corporations are persons under the law and persons should pay their full share of taxes." Never mind this corporations don't pay taxes; people do. They want it both ways. To avoid taxes, they want the corporation to be viewed as an artificial person, as a fiction, because it's not a real flesh and blood human being. But for purposes of transferring taxes, they want to be viewed as artificial entities that obviously not being of *compos mentis* like human beings can't pay taxes. It's only people, their consumers, who pay taxes or their workers.

Steve Skrovan: Well, something you always said to me, Ralph, when I was interviewing you for the documentary many years ago, we were talking about like The Heritage Foundation and these corporate think tanks and their economic philosophies. And you said these think tanks aren't happy because their glass is only 97% full.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. They're really never satisfied. They've adopted the commercial ethos of enough is never enough. Enough is never enough. You're worth 10 billion. You want another 10 billion. You made huge profits. You want to make more huge profits. It was a tribute to John Bogle who started the mutual institution known as [The] Vanguard [Group, Inc.] many years ago based on his Princeton University senior thesis. When he wrote a book and he started it out with an anecdote where he was at some party where there were rich people and there were authors and someone came up to a prominent author and said, "You know, this venture fund guy, he made more in two hours and you've made selling all your books." And the author looked at the person, said, "Well, that's probably so. But you know, I have something he'll never have." And the person said, "What?" And the author said, "Enough." And that's why John Bogle's last book, which I urge everybody to read, is called *Enough: True Measures of Money, Business, and Life*.

Steve Skrovan: This is a change of subject here because one of the things our listeners were very excited about with your conversation with Michael Eric Dyson is the idea of this conference on corporatism and racism. And a lot of people were suggesting, you know, people have a speakers like Reverend [William J.] Barber [II], Jesse Jackson, Andrew Yang, Cornel West, Trevor Noah, Chris Hedges, Jimmy Dore, Michael Moore, Michelle Obama, and others pitching people from the indigenous community. What do you think is going to happen? Will we be able to have a conference once we all come out of the mineshaft here?

Ralph Nader: Certainly a Zoom [Video Communications, Inc.] conference. It makes it very easy in terms of people's schedules and logistics compared to an in-person conference for which there's no real substitute. So we do intend to start the ball rolling here and getting a conference through Zoom for at least 12 people, including many of those you just mentioned, about the subject of corporatism, that is, commercial values dominating all other values, leading to systemic racism in one area after another in our political economy.

Steve Skrovan: Okay. Very good. Thank you for your questions. I want to thank our guest again, Steven Markoff. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you, podcasts listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* website soon after the episode is posted. Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* when we speak to the president of *Harper's* magazine, John R. MacArthur. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody

[57:52]

[Audio Ends]