

Ralph Nader Radio Hour Ep 383 Transcript

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

David Feldman: Hello.

Steve Skrovan: And of course it wouldn't be a show if we didn't have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello everybody.

Steve Skrovan: Now Ralph you've got some update for us on the Congress Club before we dive into the body of the show?

Ralph Nader: Yes, I've just written a column on our autocratic government of the *incomunicados* [sic]. They just don't respond to serious citizen letters, petitions, recommendations. I'm talking about members of Congress of both parties. We have dozens of examples and of course federal regulatory agencies and departments. This is the worst I've ever seen in half a century. They don't even bother acknowledging receipts. So after a while more more active citizens just withdraw. The say, who needs it? You can't even find out whether my senator, representative or chairman of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) or the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), or the Attorney General of the Justice Department, ever even got my letter, or my email, or my telephone call. So we're starting from ground zero here with the Congress Club concept, which is to have people fill out a simple application demonstrating their seriousness to be part of the club, and selecting two letters that have been professionally written in order to minimize circumvention by the politicians--one on the broad array of corporate crime enforcement affecting workers, consumers, environment--you name it. The second is restoring the tax schedules from the prosperous 60's to the super rich and the global corporations whose taxes are dwindling down, and down, and down by the decade, creating huge deficits for our future generations, and stultifying any kind of public investments. What you want to do to apply is read the letters; if you agree with them, fine. If you want to tweak them for your particular senators and representatives, fine. I want to make a special appeal to all hundreds of people over the last six years or so who have sent us thoughtful letters and proposals. In other words these are the most responsive listeners, at least as we can determine, and we'd like to have them fill out the application. And, so all you have to do is go to the RalphNaderRadioHour.com, fill out the application and then we now have reached well over a hundred, I believe, applications and we'll be processing them and reporting back to you, and then we get into action. You tell us what letters you've sent to what senators, representatives. We then get on the senators, representatives. If they don't respond to you, we try to get the press interested in these two huge areas of ignored policymaking, or poor policymaking, and we'll start getting, we hope, public hearings, more media, and you'll see the effect of this Congress Club. But it can't get going without you, thank you.

Steve Skrovan: Yes, go to RalphNaderRadioHour.com. On the right-hand side of the page is a button that says Congress Club. Click that, that will take you to the link for your application. The more people we have, the more power we'll have. That's pretty much the formula. Today's show is all about listeners taking action, too. Our first guest will be Bill Crosier from the Foreign Policy Alliance (FPA). Mr. Cosier co-founded the Foreign Policy Alliance with Barry Klein who was a

previous guest on our show. After reading Ralph's book *Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State*. It's available on your local library, independent books store. We're gonna ask Mr. Crosier about the FPA's advocacy and how we can localize foreign policy and his co-founder Barry Klein's plan to eliminate nuclear weapons in the United States.

Our second guest will be Paul Palmer, founder of the Zero Waste Institute. He spent decades at the forefront of the Zero Waste Movement, which is built on a pretty simple concept--the best way to avoid waste is not to waste things. As consumers, most of our options for clothes, tools, food, pretty much everything, are built to fit neatly into our profit supremacist marketplace. Waste and obsolescence are key design features but they don't have to be. We'll ask Mr. Palmer about his work and what he describes as "the outlines of the beautiful theory of remaking industry, commerce and society so that the garbage goes away", and about how we can reduce waste by using things over and over again, perpetually. If we have time, Ralph will answer some more of your listener questions. As always we'll check in with our corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. But first, America's policeman of the world god complex costs tax payers billions of dollars every year. That's billions with a B. It violates our Constitution. It kills people and ruins lives. At the end of the day it doesn't actually make the world any safer or more stable. David?

David Feldman: Bill Crosier is Co-founder along with Barry Klein, of the Foreign Policy Alliance, a nonpartisan organization formed to educate and advocate for turning US foreign policy away from intervention and toward diplomacy, law and cooperation. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Bill Crosier.

Bill Crosier: Thank you very much; I'm glad to be here.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed Bill. Your concept and that of Barry Klein is really pretty traditional and simple. You use existing local initiative authority of municipalities and other local governments to pronounce positions on, in this case, foreign policy, changing our foreign policy. Give us the national overview of how many municipalities have these authorities. Where have they been exercised in the past before we get into the more micro focus on what you're doing regarding the Foreign Policy Alliance.

Bill Crosier: Well thank you. You know, I don't have the exact count, but I know there's over a hundred municipalities. This started back during the Nuclear Freeze movement in the early 1980's, where grassroots diplomacy, citizen action kind of came together. The activists realized that they needed to build a groundswell of support to encourage Congress and the administration to cut back on nuclear spending and nuclear weapons. It was actually remarkably effective. We weren't electing Congress directly on this issue. But the thousands of thousands of people that eventually came together from this grassroots effort were really able to make massive changes in the number of nuclear weapons. We got dramatic reductions, probably three quarters or more of the number of nuclear weapons, both the United States and the Soviets, were reduced largely because of that. The Foreign Policy Alliance is sort of new to the idea of using this. But we're adopting these ideas that have been developed over the last several decades.

Ralph Nader: That was quite a spectacular demonstration of civic action. A lot of it took place under the Raegan Administration. In fact, Raegan got the word when he looked over pictures of hundreds of thousands of people marching down streets in Manhattan and Washington, D.C. And he said, hey, there are a lot of well-dressed Republicans here that want an arms control treaty with

the Soviet Union. He became an advocate. I don't think it involved more than a few hundred thousand people out of over 250 million people at the time. [It was] started by two women in New England who never were civically engaged and had an office in Washington. They started getting media, and as you say, the number of nuclear weapons went from in the 30,000's down to what, about 7,000 or 5,000?

Bill Crosier: I think it was over 70,000 worldwide, mostly in the United States and the Soviet Union, and it dramatically was reduced; still too many but it's a lot less than it was then. Of course we're still spending money on new nuclear weapons and bombers and aircraft carriers and all the other things, too. That's another issue that Foreign Policy Alliance wants to address.

Ralph Nader: It's a very compelling one because Barack Obama and Donald Trump favored spending over a trillion dollars in the coming years so-called renovating, or modernizing our nuclear weapons arsenals. So it's right online with what you're doing. Give us some examples of where activity is most intense. I know you're starting this recently, but have any localities already passed initiatives or resolutions?

Bill Crosier: You know I don't know recently if they have been. I refer people to Lawrence Wittner. He's been involved with Peace Action for decades. It's one of the organizations that were involved back in the 80's; they're still involved in this. They've been helping to get the word out among municipalities and that sort of thing. It goes along with what you've said about the untapped power of the other 1%, meaning the people who are, not the top 1%, but the grassroots activists. So we're kind of starting I guess, over again. Not starting over, but starting up specifically to try to come up with a new and growing movement to reduce nuclear weapons. I'd like to get rid of all of them, but even if we can't get rid of them we want to greatly reduce them. The Foreign Policy Alliance, if you go to our website, foreignpolicyalliance.org, we have a Resolution. It's really kind of amazing, our group, it's not just me and Barry; we have people from all different backgrounds that have actually, we've all come together and agreed on this Resolution that involves cutting back on weapons spending, on nuclear weapons and stop being the policeman of the world and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and reducing substantially some of more than 700 military installations that United States has all over the world, and a number of other things; that's all on our website. (The) citizen action part is again, sort of a new thing we've added, the citizen diplomacy. The information on that is also on our website.

Ralph Nader: What's the website? Give it slowly twice.

Bill Crosier: Okay, foreignpolicyalliance.org, foreignpolicyalliance.org and click on the Take Action tab over on the left column in the menu and it will give you lots of information.

Ralph Nader: Well obviously you're collaborating with the long-time advocates for arms control disarmament, call it what you will, by the Quakers, the National Friends Committee that has a wonderful newsletter. The Unitarians have been on this for a long time. People should realize the enormous achievements by the Quakers and Unitarians throughout American history; I don't think all of them together, number 500,000 people--just to show you what a very few people can do. You're working with them?

Bill Crosier: Not directly, but we refer people to them and I'm very glad they're doing and continue to do those things.. You're right, they've been very effective. There's also websites like [Back from the Brink \[prevent nuclear war.org\]](http://BackfromtheBrink.org) that have been trying to get the word out about the

growing threat of nuclear war. It's not going away. We're still, our nuclear weapons are still on hair-trigger alert, and they're still a threat. Mistakes are made all the time. Not constantly, but over the years we've had a lot of nuclear mistakes made that could have easily resulted in nuclear detonations, even nuclear bombs falling out of US Airplanes for example, luckily that did not detonate. But don't stress the lucky part.

Ralph Nader: That's considered by some specialists as the main threat now, inadvertent release of these nuclear weapons that are still aimed at the US and at Russia. They're probably not as on trigger alert as they once were, but it's still a very serious problem. Now you say, and we're talking with Bill Crosier, who co-founded Foreign Policy Alliance with Barry Klein in Texas... you're taking the position with Barry that six volunteers are sufficient to quickly complete a petition drive in smaller cities. Can you do it electronically, or they got to go door to door with clipboards on heavily travelled street corners?

Bill Crosier: Well good questions. You know the traditional way has been in person with clipboards, and the direct democracy started by the Nuclear Freeze movement, basically did that. We just had sort of a house party, a virtual house party via Zoom last night as a matter of fact. It can be done electronically, and the advantage of that is you don't have to worry about people being able to get to your meeting. They don't have to be physically close to you. It's not quite as personal, but there's really advantages of having small groups like this talking with each other, listening to each other, explaining the concerns that we each have about the nuclear weapons and our military spending, and all of that. So yes it can be done by small groups. In fact I think it's better. I think it's Barry's point also; it's better to start with small groups. It's a way of building a movement that eventually gets the attention of the politicians.

Ralph Nader: All right let's examine this in a little more detail. For any movement like that to succeed, usually you have to get local and national media. You should have a few champions in Congress and state legislatures here in Texas and Austin. You should see from time to time really dynamic new leaders emerging, many of them with no prior experience except a determination to be informed and to put all this on the initiative ballot. So let's start with members of Congress. The chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee is Jim McGovern. Most people don't know because he has been subservient to speaker Nancy Pelosi and not being the old Jim McGovern, is that he was a major advocate for peace years ago. He came out of a training session that made him very, very determined. He's from a liberal district in Massachusetts, doesn't have to worry about being challenged in the primary. And, he has not introduced a Department of Peace proposal, which I've urged him to do. He has not created any initiative or network in the House [of Representatives] for reduction of the bloated military budget, which takes over 50% of our operating expenditures in the government. In other words, he's done nothing. Yet if you had a conversation with him, he'd know all about the Freeze movement. He'd know all about the Peace movement. Do you have any champions in Congress, and have you connected with Jim McGovern to remind him of his past?

Bill Crosier: No we haven't, but that's a good idea. I'll tell you, I'm sure who is connecting with him and other people in Congress are the military contractor lobbyists. They still have incredible influence. I think the best way to counter that though is again with grassroots citizen diplomacy. Barry Klein has been a really strong proponent of local ballot initiatives and just getting resolutions from city councils adopted, because there are direct consequences to cities, for example, of all this money going towards the military instead of going to real needs that people

have in cities and countries all over the country. For example, getting a local ballot initiative can get a lot of local attention, and a lot of press that helps get the attention of people in Congress.

Ralph Nader: Massachusetts, where Jim McGovern is from, is a town meeting form of government in many towns, so they could pass resolutions as they have in the past, 1980's and later, on issues of arms control and foreign policy. Do you have any other champions? You know, Dennis Kucinich who was former Mayor of Cleveland before he went to Congress and introduced the Department of Peace bill and was *the* peace advocate on Capitol Hill, is now back in Cleveland. He's running for mayor. I'm sure he'll have some allies on the city council. So keep Cleveland in mind. He's running against other candidates, none of whom are incumbents, so it's an open seat. He is right now the front-runner. But how about Lloyd Doggett?

Bill Crosier: Yes, he's here in Texas.

Ralph Nader: Yes, former Texas Supreme Court Justice, progressive. He's on the House Ways and Means Committee, the tax writing committee. Has he responded to you?

Bill Crosier: You know I haven't contacted him myself. He's not from the Houston area, but of course he is from Texas, and we should contact him, you're right. We're making a list of people that we want to contact and focus on, and how best to get their attention through grassroots diplomacy and grassroots action.

Ralph Nader: All right, let's move over to the press. How do you propose getting local, state and national press?

Bill Crosier: We haven't gotten a lot of luck with letters to the editor, but we think that we need to be doing more of that in a more organized fashion. Papers tend to publish a fraction of the letters that are sent to them. But if you send a whole lot of people a lot of letters on a given topic in a short period of time, they're more likely to publish at least one of them. So that's one of the things we want to do, and get more people involved in that. Of course talking to the editorial boards of the papers if they're willing to give you time; sometimes they will, but you get started with a smaller scale first, I suppose.

Ralph Nader: Letters to the editor, and maybe some op-eds, maybe calls into radio talk shows, local radio talk shows. In a letter that Barry Klein wrote to me on October 8th, 2020 which prompted this program, he said, "With publicity and a few success stories to drive the narrative, I think hundreds of petition drives could be launched in the next two years. The results could be very impressive, and major donors would likely step forward to fund petition drives in big cities". Do you think that's too optimistic?

Bill Crosier: No, I think it is realistic. I think that's a really good thing that we should be doing. This is sort of a new idea we've been discussing. Right now we're trying to get more people interested in talking to their individual city councils. That will in turn get publicity from local press, and get the politicians interested, and the national people in Congress interested as well.

Ralph Nader: Have you tried to use cable? You know, in most communities there is a community cable show that allows relatively easy access. Have you worked that at all?

Bill Crosier: No we haven't, actually, but that's another good idea. One of the things we're doing right now is just getting ideas from people and seeing who is interested in pursuing which ones. I

do know some people involved with our producing one show on our local cable access TV channel. We should be doing more of that as well, you're right.

Ralph Nader: Europeans do a left/right coalition, right?

Bill Crosier: Right, we are part of a left/right. That's the amazing thing we need to emphasize; this is not a left versus right issue, or a Democrat versus Republican, or Libertarian, or independent issue. People across the political spectrum agree on the major points that we have at the foreignpolicyalliance.org on reducing nuclear weapons, reducing military spending, stop being the police of the world--those sorts of issues.

Ralph Nader: Well it's a time when the Congress is at its lowest point in overseeing military spending. They don't have any hearings now about the disasters in Iraq and Afghanistan the way Senator Fulbright did on the Vietnam War when it was undergoing. They rubber stamp huge appropriations for these foreign military activities without serious appropriation hearings. Authorization is very proforma, and it zips right through without any debate in the [US] House and of Senate. They were pushing it 50 billion at a time with the B. So you really are starting at a low ebb here. What makes you think that a fraction of one percent of the American people are gonna rally to your cause? If you call a meeting in Houston, and you got a hundred seats in the auditorium, you think you can fill it?

Bill Crosier: I think we probably could, but we're gonna be starting with house parties including virtual house parties while the pandemic still has some threats to us; like we did one last night. I think that's the way to get started. Different people have different interests. You have to find out what they're interested in. But for example, the economic aspects of our military is really amazing. As you've mentioned, we're spending over half a trillion dollars, over 500 billion dollars on the military now largely because of military contractors and their lobbyists. They're the ones that are getting to the people in Congress. We need to make sure that the people in Congress hear that people are concerned about that spending. Especially with the pandemic, we've greatly increased our national debt. And cities have been hurt; counties have been hurt, because the money that could be going to them to help with real human needs is going to the military. Of course it was going towards the pandemic; fighting that was important. But that means we need to be focusing on other things too, besides do we really need to be building up weapon systems still for the cold war instead of thinking ahead and stop building the nuclear weapons and maybe think about cyber terrorism and stuff like that. We don't need to be spending billions of dollars on nuclear weapons.

Ralph Nader: Well I think a natural alliance would be Veterans for Peace; they have chapters in most states in the country. They're based in Saint Louis. Go to Veterans for Peace. Then there are the Iraq War veterans groups, people who came back and can talk with some authority about the folly of this kind of aggressive, unlawful militarism without congressional declarations of war violating international law, boomeranging on our own security interest, creating more hatred and antagonism as the slaughters move from one country to another, breaking these countries up into chaotic divisiveness, militias being formed. These are veterans that can really talk from their own experience on this. Are you getting in touch with them, Veterans for Peace?

Bill Crosier: You know actually I talk with them quite a bit. We worked with them back during the Iraq occupation. You're right, they're very interested in that. Some of them, are not as active right now, but they've seen war first hand and they know what it's like. You're right, they're very

interested in getting our military spending under control, supporting the VA for example, but not putting more troops in harm's way for useless military adventures.

Ralph Nader: How are you raising funds for this?

Bill Crosier: Right now we're just doing it through our own individual donations. We haven't been--we really don't need a whole lot of money right now. We're gonna be probably needing more, but we're not doing advertising; we're not hiring lobbyists. It's all grassroots.

Ralph Nader: Steve and David, what do you think? It seems to me that Bill and Barry are climbing a steep cliff with slippery sliding holes here. Does this have a sense of a rising burgeoning movement, or are the people asleep here? We're talking about less than 1% needed to really make this Foreign Policy Alliance a major force and get into elections in terms of debates and discussions, instead of just ignoring foreign policy by the two-party duopoly.

David Feldman: I'm curious how we combat the media when the government warns us that a country has a nuclear weapons program. We get terrified. How should we evaluate that threat and what steps should citizens take when they read about a country hell bent on developing nuclear weapons?

Bill Crosier: Well, you know, we need to use other things other than the military in solving conflicts. Our whole country has been immersed in this idea that conflict can only be solved with force. It's just so pervasive. And the Foreign Policy Alliance believes very much in using diplomacy. It hasn't been used nearly as much in recent years. It can do amazing things. You don't necessarily get everything. But it involves working with leaders of other countries who have their own needs and interests and trying to come up with a solution that works for everybody. So everybody doesn't get a hundred percent of what they want, but both sides, or multiple sides can get a lot of what they want. As an example, the Iran Nuclear Deal that was negotiated by the United States and several other countries, including European countries with Iran, is a good example of what diplomacy can do. It's more effective in the long run to work out an arrangement, an understanding between countries that we can agree on, rather than using nuclear, or even conventional weapon systems and our armed forces, which creates resentments, creates terrorists, and makes our country less safe in the long run.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, and of course the Israeli military government is trying to break up this Iran nuclear accord. They had an alliance with Donald Trump who withdrew from it, tried to undermine it even though it involved all kinds of countries, not just European countries. It involved China and Russia. And Israel has been waging an undeclared war of sabotage inside Iran. So you have diplomacy on one side, militarism on the other. I think it's quite clear in terms of history of mankind that diplomacy would have averted a huge amount of carnage in war. World War I is a perfect example where an assassination in Sarajevo of the Grand Duke led one step after another with no diplomatic interventions of any gravity to World War I, and over 20 million people dying. So there is kind of a curled upper lip among circles in this country when you use the word diplomacy, like it's weak; it doesn't work. You have to have peace through strength. Yet the history of diplomacy has been far superior to the history of war making, wouldn't you think?

Bill Crosier: I agree, and that's one of the main points of the Foreign Policy Alliance. It's right in our Resolution on our homepage at foreignpolicyalliance.org, to emphasize diplomacy, law and cooperation and international relations, and dispute resolution.

Ralph Nader: Certainly, President Eisenhower was a big advocate after World War II, because of what he saw of diplomacy. He toppled some governments, unfortunately because he was under pressure from the militarists in his administration. But his condemnation of the military industrial complex rings through the ages now, as a very prescient farewell address. Steve?

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, well what I was gonna say dovetails neatly with what everybody is saying here, because the narrative for justifying these wars, and we're just getting out of Afghanistan 20 years later, and it looks like the Taliban has a good chance of taking over that country again. So you go okay, what have we done in 20 years except kill a lot of people? But the narrative that seems to sell these wars is, if we don't fight them over there, we'll have to fight them over here. And, that's a very powerful message. I'm curious Bill, how do you counter that narrative? Not just saying, this thing bad happened, don't do this, we shouldn't be doing that. How do you create and craft a positive vision of a world that counters that negative narrative?

Bill Crosier: You know one of the things we can learn from is for example the Marshall Plan after World War II. We went in and we actually aided countries that had been destroyed by our forces and by Germany's and Italy's. We can get so much more positive results with helping people instead of killing them. I think, for example, we got involved in Afghanistan to push the Soviets out. But that created a lot of resentment also, and I think that we invite terrorists; we invite people who have friends or relatives killed by our military for example, and then by drones. It doesn't even have to involve personal contact. We create terrorists that want to get back at the United States. And, you don't do that with diplomacy. If we can do things to help the people in other countries--that's what we say/we claim we're trying to do--let's help them directly instead of killing them. We can get so much more done.

Ralph Nader: Or course, in answer to your question Steve, these people just want us out of their backyard, which we've been in for over a hundred years after World War I in the Middle East and elsewhere. They really don't want to take over the United States, [chuckle] or send troops over here to overthrow our government. Really, when you think of what we've done to these countries over a hundred years--backed dictatorships, undermined democratic movements, invaded, attacked--it's amazing that their sense of retaliation is as minimal as it is at the present time. So they just have one message, and the reason why the Taliban with only 35,000 fighters, no air force, no navy, no heavy weaponry, are gaining again, in Afghanistan, is they have an invincible message, even though they're autocrats. The message is expel the invader! It resonates everywhere, in Vietnam, everywhere. So I think that should be part of your message Bill and Barry, that the lessons of history are in the side of waging peace, not waging war. You want to give the website once more, twice, slowly and what they can get on the website to connect and develop their own initiatives all over the United States at the local level.

Bill Crosier: Yes, thank you, foreignpolicyalliance.org; go to the left column [and] click on the Take Action item on the menu. That's foreignpolicyalliance.org and you'll be able to find all kinds of ways you can get involved.

Ralph Nader: Thank you. We've been talking with Bill Crosier who has co-founded the Foreign Policy Alliance with Barry Klein. He was a former president of the Houston Peace and Justice Center. Thank you very much Bill, good luck to you.

Bill Crosier: Thank you Ralph. I appreciate all you're doing.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Bill Crosier. We will link to the Foreign Policy Alliance at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Let's take a quick break. When we come back we'll talk to another activist, Paul Palmer, about how we can reduce waste by using things over and over again perpetually. 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, July 9, 2021; I'm Russell Mokhiber. Miami's top prosecutor pledged last week to have a grand jury examine the collapse of an ocean front high rise, suggesting that even as the search continues for survivors, the focus was quickly shifting to the question of accountability. That's according to a report in the *Washington post*. The announcement by Miami-Dade State Attorney, Katherine Fernandez Rundle, did not address whether criminal charges could ultimately be filed as they have been in other mass-casualty events that were found to be the result of negligence or incompetence. But while Fernandez raised the prospect of potential criminal investigations, she said the grand jury inquiry would be used to determine what steps we can take to safeguard our residents. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. Let's talk to Paul Palmer about how we can reduce waste by using things over and over again perpetually. David?

David Feldman: Paul Palmer is a chemist and the founder of the Zero Waste Institute. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Paul Palmer.

Paul Palmer: Thanks.

Ralph Nader: Welcome Paul. Your letter to me of September 23, 2020 prompted having you on this program. So thank you for your letter. I want to make sure our listeners aren't confused here. We have mountains of solid waste that we create every year in this country. Until recently China took a lot of the solid waste that was put on ships in New York Harbor and elsewhere and shipped to China. They would reprocess and get what they could out of them and create new cardboard boxes to put televisions sets, and computers and ship them back to the US. Well, a few years ago China said we've had enough of this, we don't need it. So it's created something of a crisis. So when you talk about solid waste in this country, words like "well let's incinerate it for *energy*; let's dump it in remote landfills; let's recycle it; let's precycle it;" instead of having products wrapped three, four times, let's just have them wrapped once in the supermarket. You go much more fundamentally here. But I am a little bit confused about the distinction you draw between recycling and what you call zero waste. Can you elaborate that with our listeners?

Paul Palmer: Sure, I certainly can. I want to make it clear that if we're discussing zero waste, and I take the "zero" to be meaningful, not just a word, you shouldn't imagine that that means coming up with a magic solution. Zero waste is a complex concept involving ownership of goods, reuse of goods, the status of goods, and the theoretical place of reuse in our society, and a number of other abstruse concepts, even thermodynamics. I will try to give a gloss today, but there's no way we can do justice to the broad concept of zero waste in just a few minutes. That would take weeks and actually years to reprogram the wasteful consumption of shiploads of raw materials into a rational, scientifically controlled manufacturing sector. Under today's form of capitalism, manufacturing is a Wild West of decision-making. You can make anything you want for the best

or most trivial of reasons and release it for sale into the marketplace, and no one says boo. In the 60's, Vance Packard gave us the concept of planned obsolescence and it's gotten worse since then. Every product has an early failure defect built into it, just so that it can be discarded early. But no one does anything about it. The socially necessary response is not hard to find. We need to change the design of all products. There's nothing easy or simple about this, but it must be done before we drown in the muck of all our used-up materials and our discarded products. The problem arises precisely at the design phase. We can no longer afford to allow any designer to design just anything that he wants with the assumption that it will somehow, someday be taken care of by the garbageman. We must control design so that it fosters reuse, not discard, and this is the heart of zero waste theory.

Ralph Nader: Let's start with automobiles. How would you apply zero-waste theory design to automobiles? Because in Germany by the way, I understand there's a law where the auto companies have to take back some of these used automobiles. I'm not familiar with the details, but let's talk about your design theory. Listeners should know that Paul Palmer is a chemist and he started a company implementing his ideas, which we'll talk about in a moment. But how would you deal, if you were the director of redesigning the auto company's products; what would you do?

Paul Palmer: Well Ralph, first of all I want to caution you about that kind of question, which I've received thousands of in my life. It's always, what would you do with this, what would you do with that? And like I said, zero waste is not a magical solution. It's hard work. So the really fundamental answer, I'll get to some ideas to answer you more directly in a moment, but the more fundamental answer is that I would have the auto industry funding research institutions in universities throughout the country where knowledgeable, qualified PhD students and researchers would work on this problem, and would design ways that all the parts of an automobile can be reused. Now I'm not gonna give you *the* magic answer, but I have thought about this. So for example, there is more and more plastic that they want to use in cars and a lot of it goes into shrouding and cowling. Let's take for example the part of the car that covers the wheels. That's being made out of plastic nowadays in order to lighten the automobile. But what happens when a car has been around for 10, 15, 20 years or whatever, when the owner no longer can use it and no one can use it, because there's something wrong with the engine, who knows. Anyway, that cowling is simply smashed up and it disappears. Now that is not a zero-waste approach. The zero-waste approach would be to have that cowling over the wheels standardized. There might be a hundred different designs. But when you want to design a car, you have to choose for example, this would be one approach, you would have to choose one out of those hundred designs and it would be off the shelf. There would be warehouses full of older versions, or older recoveries that you could choose from, and you could reuse one of these hundred designs. Instead, we have ten thousand designs for this and there's no chance of reusing any of them. They're just smashed up.

Ralph Nader: How about this approach, the auto companies have been using in recent years some internal passenger occupancy materials from industrial hemp, which they've been importing from Canada, China, France [and] Romania. Industrial hemp can be reused again and again as the Interface corporation is doing now with its carpet tile out of Atlanta, Georgia. They basically are pursuing, I think, what you have been recommending. They want to take all their old carpet tiles that are in buildings around the country and the world and reuse them again and again instead of using plastic, for example, inside your passenger vehicle. Is that what you're talking about?

Paul Palmer: Well Ralph, maybe what I should do is use the simplest, most illustrative example that I always like to turn to which is bottles, because everybody knows about bottles. Everyone uses them, and everyone probably is familiar with what the recycling community recommended for bottles, namely you put out a big dumpster and you throw your glass bottles in there and you smash them up. Now every bottle has a history. If I have emptied a wine bottle, I know where that wine bottle has been. There was a wine bottle cleaner and re-user in Berkeley who took in wine bottles from wherever he could get them and he had to wash each one of them out with sodium hydroxide and then he had to know where to get rid of the sodium hydroxide. It was all very hazardous and very excessive. Whereas if an individual has just emptied a wine bottle, he or she knows exactly what was in that wine bottle. It wasn't full of cigarettes, or pus, or mucus or dirt. It was just wine and it can be rinsed out and reused again. Now how are you gonna reuse a bottle? Well, what does a bottle do? It's a container. It contains. The way to reuse it is to fill it up again. That is how a rational society would use containers. We wouldn't have these millions of different shaped, and different kinds of containers. We would have some standardization and each person would be responsible for refilling their own container. I proposed having a refilling station, a refilling store instead of a supermarket that we have today, where hundreds of products, every kind of liquid that people use from motor oil to paint, to all kinds of foods including wines and beers, would all be stored in bulk. They would have delivery stations where something like, you find in a bar for draft beer. I had a lot of designs for this. You would take your empty bottles, fill them up, each individually according to the particular product that it held. You would then take it to your cashier, check it out. You could have a card do it all automatically. That is something that we need in order to effectuate zero-waste approaches.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Paul Palmer. Given what you just said, what is your distinction between recycling, using the bottle example, and zero waste?

Paul Palmer: Well, that's easy. In the bottle example, what recycling says to do is smash up the bottles, turn them all into broken glass, incidentally of all different colors and all different histories and even different molecular constitutions. But anyway, broken glass, which is among the cheapest of materials in the world; it's basically melted sand. Then you have to take that broken glass at some great expense in fuel. You have to transport it to some factory, then again using fuel you have to melt it all down again. You have to make new bottles in new designs. Then you have to bring it back to a manufacturer to refill again; bring it back to a store to be purchased by the same person who threw the bottles into the dumpster in the first place. It's a ridiculous, wasteful way of handling anything.

Ralph Nader: All this requires more energy of course.

Paul Palmer: Totally, a huge amount of energy for no reason. The original person had the bottle in their hands and they could fill it up if they had the ability to do it. If society would just give them the ability to do it. This is a simple concept, but it illustrates zero-waste fairly well.

Ralph Nader: Let me read a paragraph from your letter to me, "This is Paul Palmer. I was the first person in the world to publicly use the term 'zero waste' when I started my company Zero Waste Systems, Inc., to recuse and resell every single chemical excess the Silicon Valley was mistakenly discarding. This company was profitable on the first day and thereafter. We found new homes for hundreds of tons of otherwise irretrievable former chemical discards. At one time, we had the largest collection of laboratory chemicals in California, all for sale at half price. All

were formerly or potentially discarded, valuable, expensive, nominally toxic, and were most often brand new in unopened bottles”. Well, this raises a lot of curiosity. First of all, is this company still operating so successfully and profitably, Zero Waste Systems, Inc?

Paul Palmer: No, it’s not. It actually suffered an unfortunate kind of a criminal takeover. But I’m not gonna go into that today. So there was a long lawsuit and ultimately the company fell apart. But I did write a book called *Getting to Zero Waste* back then, which gave all of the instructions for how to start a chemical reclaiming and reuse company. So far as I know, not one single person, or one company in all the world has ever taken me up on those instructions, and has ever started a similar company.

Ralph Nader: Since you’ve demonstrated profitability with your company that you started, why aren’t other start-ups occurring using the same techniques?

Paul Palmer: Well, that is a ticklish question, isn’t it? I don’t know the answer to that. I did give instructions to some entrepreneurial students from Mondragon University that came to visit me. I gave them copies of the book.

Ralph Nader: That’s out of Spain?

Paul Palmer: Out of Spain, yeah. The Mondragon Co-op has a number of universities that it sponsors.

Ralph Nader: It would seem that Apple should have a strong interest. It’s floating on oceans of profits buying back its stock in hundreds of billions of dollars, yet its waste products are toxic. They expose workers who have to take these aged machines, computers, iPhones apart in other countries. You know the problem; it’s a horrific problem. Why isn’t Apple--it’s almost like the US Mint in the kind of profits it’s making--why aren’t they looking into what you are proposing and you demonstrated in the early years of your start-up company in California, right near Apple.

Paul Palmer: Well I suspect you know the reason, Ralph. Apple is actually on the opposite end of the spectrum for reuse. They’re actually forbidding third parties to repair any of their products. They’re making them unrepairable. They’re actually seeking to make them legally unrepairable. So I’m sure you understand that Apple is in business to pump out products, to have them go out into the marketplace at high prices and then be thrown away. I remember that the first Apple smartphone as I recall, was all made out of black plastic. Then two years later they said, oh who wants a black smartphone. You have to have a white one, and so they made a white one. People actually threw away their black ones to get white ones. So that illustrates what the basic problem is. The manufacturing sector doesn’t want any of this; they won’t want their goods to be reused.

Ralph Nader: You put your finger on a way to jumpstart this whole effort. Apple is an out-of-control company. The reason why it makes so much profits is because it’s developed a corporate model that monopolizes a large portion of the market. They have sweat labor, maybe a million workers in China barely making ends meet in factories of their contractors over there. They are extremely stingy in their charitable contributions. They don’t know what to do with their money, so instead of shoring up their workers and protecting the environment, they are buying back their stock, which increases the metrics for executive compensation, doesn’t produce anything worthwhile--no jobs, no improved environment, and they’re very high profile. They got Donald Trump to exempt them from incoming tariffs on their imports of computers and iPhones from

China, saving them billions of dollars. They pay almost no federal income tax. They game the tax havens around the world. So sometimes like when I went after General Motors, people say why do you go after the biggest auto company? Because [if] you change them, you change the whole industry. What do you think of Paul Palmer designing a strategy, a technical strategy with environmental groups who can design a civic grassroots strategy, focused on the giant Apple corporation, which seems to violate everything that you are recommending should be done, including as you say, trying to make its products unrepairable by design and now apparently trying to get some legal sanction for this? What's your reaction?

Paul Palmer: Well, I love the idea Ralph. I would love to see that happen. But, you know, I'm a scientist. What I've been doing for many years is analysing what is going on, analysing how design works. I'm not a fundraiser and a publicist.

Ralph Nader: No, no, no, we agree. I just said you would be the technical source. There are major environmental groups that would like to see this done. After all, they work night and day trying to stem the mountain of solid waste, fighting incinerators that put poison in the air, rationalized as producing energy.

Paul Palmer: Ralph I wish that were true.

Ralph Nader: You don't think they're interested in zero waste?

Paul Palmer: No, they have been totally hornswoggled by this recycling theory. Recycling is a corporate scam, and it has never solved a single problem of waste. Generally, they like to talk about 50%, 90% even sometimes 100% hundred percent. They've been pushed to even get up to 5% in every single case; usually if you analyse it, it's 1 or 2%. Recycling is just completely useless, but it serves a great purpose. It puts the public to sleep. It allows this delusion of stasis as I call it, which I'm sure you're quite familiar with--the delusion that we can just continue our normal wasteful consumption. We can take endless automotive trips. We can fly through the skies with even new kinds of airplanes. We can just waste everything because at the end of the story there's going to be a magic solution called recycling. We just take whatever we produced, and we just magically somehow destroy it. Recycling is a destruction theory.

Ralph Nader: Paul you do distinguish between recycling and reuse. I mean if you have an industrial hemp shopping bag and you go to the supermarkets or the co-ops, you don't take any plastic bags. You don't take their paper bags; you keep using your own industrial bag. You like that, that's reuse, right?

Paul Palmer: Well any kind of reuse, yes, that's genuine reuse, works for me. I have three principles of reuse that I've come up with, which are standardization, modularization and I call "repair-ization" making things possible to be repaired. But I don't want to get into the hemp question, which overlaps with a different political question. Even if we made cars completely out of plastic it wouldn't matter. It's not an anti-environmental concept. If we're going to reuse those parts, not the plastic, not some kind of chipped-up resin, but the plastic parts themselves as they have been made. And if we're gonna reuse them endlessly for the next hundred years, we don't have to be limited to using plastic coverings from cars for another car, we can use them on tractors and combines, and maybe on airplanes. I don't know, helicopters. We can design so that these parts are interchangeable. Then we're not making thousands of parts and throwing them in the ocean to create the plastic gyre. We're just making one part that is used forever, and if we make it

out of plastic, it's no problem. But I understand the impetus towards using hemp. But I don't really want to confuse that with reusing all the parts.

Ralph Nader: Let's try to clarify this whole situation. First of all listeners, Paul Palmer has a PhD in physical chemistry from Yale in 1966. He has a website called www.zerowasteinstitute.org, that's zerowasteinstitute.org where he lays out in his words "Many changes in design which could turn a wasteful use of resources on its head. Whenever this progressive change is brought up it's immediately ambushed by use of the corporate deflection of recycling. It is essential that this waste of effort be opposed." To be continued. We're out of time Paul. We've been talking with Paul Palmer, PhD chemist from Yale who believes in zero waste, has put it into application in a company he started, and is looking for people who can look over what he's proposing and see if we can take the problem of mountains of solid waste to a new level of environmental respect. Thank you, Paul.

Paul Palmer: Thank you Ralph. Bye now.

Steve Skrovan: We've been talking with Paul Palmer. We will link to the Zero Waste Institute at RalphNaderRadioHour.com. So let's do some listener questions now. This question comes from Kathy Derosas. Hello Mr. Nader, on Monday on KPFA.org during your radio show you were discussing Medicare and how as a citizen I can write a pledge to my [US] senators to access Medicare for All. How do I start the process? Thank you. Kathy.

Ralph Nader: Well I asked Russell Mokhiber who is the editor of *Corporate Crime Reporter* and you've heard him on the show every week. He wrote back, Kathy with this answer. "Unfortunately there's no bill in the Senate for senators to join. There's a campaign urging everyone to call Senator Sanders, that's Bernie Sanders, and ask him to reintroduce his bill into the Senate so that senators can join on as co-signers. He urges people to call Senator Sanders and ask that he introduce his Medicare for All bill. Sanders's phone number direct at the office is 202-224-5141. That's 202-224-5141. Parenthetically Kathy, I have no idea why Bernie, who campaigned on full Medicare for All or single player in two presidential campaigns all over the United States, didn't put this bill in when the Congress opened for business in January. Here we are over six months and there's still no bill. So he needs to hear from the people, 202-224-5141. On July 24th, in communities all over the United States, there will be marches and rallies for Medicare for All to put the heat on Congress to pass universal health insurance that is more efficient, more life-saving, provides free choice of doctor and hospital, and gets rid of foot long, or yard long computerized inscrutable bills, waste, and huge corruption. July 24th, March for Medicare for All! The website for more details is..."

Steve Skrovan: m4m4all.org. Thank you for your questions. I want to thank our guests again Bill Crosier and Paul Palmer. 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 the 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. Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we'll welcome David Vine to discuss his new book, *The United States of War*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you everybody.

