

## The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter: *Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter*

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*Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.*

### *Latest News from the Hopeful Realist*

**Survey Results:** After cleaning up the data from our little survey on Face Book, we will have some preliminary results for the next *Hopeful Realist Newsletter*.

**The New Occasional Feature:** Hopeful realism in this world depends on people consciously striving for a better future. Many new ideas are needed. So, I invited readers to submit their ideas on specific topics for the **LOOK UP! Biweekly Featured Commentary**. Next issue, I will publish the top ranked mini-essay as a **Featured Commentary**, and I will comment on it and the range of other responses received.

My new eBook, **HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto**, continues being downloaded at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). It had risen to #1 several times in the New Releases category "Science and Math Short Reads." Now it is ranked among all the many not new, a much larger group of course, and the rank fluctuates daily. It is not easy to track how many people are actually reading it.

You can still download the eBook **FREE** via Kindle Unlimited. Please [review and rate](#) it by clicking the button on the lower left of its Amazon page below "Customer Reviews," and say a few words about what you think about it. If you don't do Kindle, email me and I will send you a pdf version directly.

**Note:** Past issues of The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter are archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

### **LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary**

Labor Day has come again and now it is gone. The viability of the labor movement, however, disappeared long ago. We see little if anything in the mass media about the meaning of Labor Day, although a resurgence of efforts to unionize giant corporate exploiters of workers, epitomized by Amazon, is now underway. It is no wonder that we have forgotten the origin and meaning of Labor Day. It was created way back in the late 19th century by the labor movement, and became a federal holiday in 1894. Like most federal holidays, we celebrate it on a Monday, in this case the first Monday in September, which facilitates more travel and shopping.

Its founders intended Labor Day to celebrate the achievements of American workers, although it also marks the end of summer. Those achievements include the reduction of the official workweek from ten-

hour days, seven days a week, and protection from extremely dangerous working conditions. Children as young as five had been working as long as adults but for a fraction of the miniscule adult wage in an era when the full impact of the industrial revolution destroyed many communities and families in order to increase production and profit.

The labor movement changed much of that, resulting in livable wages for workers in factories and firms that were unionized. Farm workers were left unprotected until Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, organized the United Farm Workers in the 1960s. The robust economy of the 1950s epitomized the idea of sharing the benefits of industrialization with the workers who made prosperity possible.

However, from early on, big business interests fought against workers' rights to a fair share of the benefits of their labors. Kim Phillips-Fein demonstrates how that evolved in this issue's selected book, listed below. From the beginning, capital has appropriated labor at home just as it appropriated materials and labor in its process of capital accumulation by colonizing much of the global south. The process continues in different forms, but both Earth-System boundaries and the limits of human exploitation make it clear that it cannot last much longer.

Meanwhile, the global climate/ecological emergency accelerates. The corporate/federal cooperation in sustaining the neoliberal model of endless economic growth despite all the science having proven the catastrophic limits to further growth, continues with 'business as usual' under the guise of 'green growth.' Nevertheless, for survival's sake, humanity must somehow take extreme action to transform the global economy by eliminating fossil fuel as its energy source.

We must respond to the climate/ecosystem emergency now. It trumps every other social, political, or economic issue, most of which must be resolved as part of a viable climate-crisis response. Despite their importance, climate chaos will override otherwise important matters of justice and societal morality. Yet, we cannot achieve an ecologically viable social order without social, economic, and climate/ecological justice. For more discussions of various related matters, go to:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/the-hopeful-realist-blog/>

*Two Featured Images:*



*American Mine Workers Before they were Unionized.*

**LABOR DAY**  
**SALE**  
★ ★ ★ ★

***Workers of the World, BUY: Consumerism over Dignity***

American holidays have been 'commercialized' for a long time now. Labor Day, like so many others means 'go shopping' and 'go on vacation.' After the worst of the COVID pandemic, of course, many of us feel the need to get out and go somewhere. That is certainly understandable; I feel that urge myself. In fact, record travel data indicates that the majority of Americans went somewhere for Labor Day. They went shopping too.

## ***Books and other Sources on the New Great Transformation***

Economic justice in the industrial era has been hard to come by. Political and economic power have a peculiar characteristic. Both economic and political power are inherently positive feedback mechanisms, and they reinforce each other. By gaining power, an entity increases its ability to gain more power. That is particularly true of industrial capital. Industrial power elites' primary goal is capital accumulation. Labor is a cost to that quest and that cost is minimized as much as possible. Without a countervailing negative feedback loop to retain balance, a democracy can lose its grip and succumb to an [autocratic attempt](#), which can easily lead to fascism. That is a very big danger today.

Amazon has become the epitome of modern labor exploitation. However, the process has gone on since the industrial revolution began. The labor movement became a negative feedback mechanism that gradually, as it gained strength, held the power of employers partly in check for a while. But from the very beginnings, big business waged a crusade by big business to restrict the emerging power of labor. Kim Phillips-Fein wrote an eye-opening history of this process:

Kim Phillips-Fein. 2009. ***Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal***. New York: W.W. Norton.

Once the 'Reagan Revolution' gave business interests the dominant power in politics, the labor movement lost many battles and shrunk over the subsequent decades. Now, as a result, the middle class that the labor movement helped create has shriveled up almost completely. That leaves a much more powerful upper class backed up by its new techno-organizational support class, and a growing class of poor, near poor, and newly poor. A college education is no longer a ticket to the now decimated middle class. In response to the growing exploitation of workers, the labor movement is re-forming to fight back for a fair share of the income and wealth of an economy that it helped build.

## ***Quotable Quote***

*The American lifestyle is not up for negotiation*

~ George W. Bush.

GW may be more famous for telling people to go shopping in the wake of the 9/11 attack on the twin towers and the pentagon than for the above quote. But this assertion captures the essence of the culture of industrial consumerism and its mental detachment and alienation from the biosphere or any other element of the Earth System in which we live and on which we depend for survival. The culture of industrial modernism and the consumerism that is one of its key elements, views the natural world as a predator views its prey. But while predators and prey in the natural world may fluctuate in their populations in relation to one another, they stay in relative balance over time. Actually, George, ***Mother Nature*** is not up for negotiation.

We industrial-modernist humans have created a [world out of balance](#); that is why we cannot remain mere predators upon the Earth for much longer. We must find ways to replace industrial modernism by forming ecologically harmonious communities that remain in balance with our habitats.

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe and read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#).