

A Political Idea for America
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January 13, 2019

A Political Idea for America in Three Little Words:

We need a National Safety Net (NSN) in America that is bigger and better than FDR's New Deal of the 30s (and even bigger than his visionary proposal for a Second Bill of Rights in the 40s). The basic components of it are Medicare-for-All, Living Wage, Affordable Housing, Federal Jobs Guarantee, Free Higher Education, and BIG (Basic Income Guarantee of \$1,000 per month per adult until income exceeds \$ 100,000 per year). These elements, woven together, could and should provide a decent and dignified lifestyle for every American citizen and legal immigrant, effectively ending poverty in America, and laying the ground for a qualitatively better society.

First, a few obvious facts: poverty causes or exacerbates numerous social problems. CRIME is driven by poverty. Many fall into ADDICTION in order to deal with the depression and powerlessness engendered by poverty. Poverty gives rise to a lot of anger and VIOLENCE. SEXISM (including prostitution and trafficking) is often rooted in poverty. JEALOUSY and ENVY frequently grow out of poverty. CHILDHOOD TRAUMA and DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES are frequently the result of an economic struggle for existence that eventually crosses the threshold and enters the home. ECONOMIC ANXIETY (about not having enough money) gives rise to long-term ILL HEALTH due to the stress and strain it places on body and mind. OLIGARCHY and AUTHORITARIANISM stem from poverty because money turns into political power. The list is endless, but the discernible trend is, although it may not be so obvious, that poverty causes and/or increases social tensions and hostilities to the point where the general happiness is decreasing, while (at the same time) the overall wealth of the nation is increasing.

A solution is ready at hand: the re-distribution of wealth using a progressive tax (where the more you make the more you pay) for the purpose of financing a National Safety Net (NSN) is easily attainable by the richest country in world history. During the Eisenhower Administration, for example, the upper tax bracket paid 91% in taxes, which in today's money means that anyone earning over 1.7 million dollars a year paid 91% in taxes (at least in theory). Think about how many people in America today make more than 1.7 million dollars a year! A truly progressive tax could be tailored to generate more than enough revenue to pay for NSN, and that's only the single best general way to pay for it. There are dozens of additional sources of revenue, including a tax on luxury items, tax on financial transactions, value-added tax, ecological tax, etc.

There is also money to be raised by cutting the military budget (at least in half), ending unnecessary wars, eliminating the national debt, reducing administrative-enforcement agencies whose priority it is to disqualify and penalize people. There is also money to be saved by ending waste, cronyism, illegal bribes, bail-outs, pay-offs, kick-backs, and other forms of corruption in government and high places, and the taxes that corporation don't pay on both the state and federal levels, often hiding profits in offshore tax havens such as the Cayman Islands and elsewhere, and all the other “perfectly legal” ways in which big business avoids paying taxes, and even collects corporate welfare and huge subsidies. It's not a lack of money, but a lack of political Will that prevents the enactment of a National Safety Net (NSN).

A good portion of NSN can be paid for by increasing taxes on the upper 1% (who have more wealth than the bottom 90%), but it should be pointed out that a lot of the upper 20% of the American population is living a lifestyle free from a serious concern about the economic circumstances of the bottom half of the country. Many Americans, for example, sustain two houses, take 3 or more cruises a year, scuba-dive in exotic places, golf in Scotland, visit glaciers in Greenland, star-gaze in Nova Scotia, wine and dine in upscale restaurants, and on and on, while the economic bottom half of the population is short money for utility bills, dentist visits, car payments, gas, and simple pleasures for their children. The logic that the country can't afford to end poverty, and that this would make people self-indulgent and spoiled is laughable, except for the suffering it justifies or ignores.

A consumption tax on upper-middle class living (and above) in order to help pay for NSN is an available option. One meal (complete with a few drinks) in a high-end restaurant, for example, often exceeds \$100, while the average food stamp recipient gets about \$125 per month. The upper 20% of people in this country have benefited a lot from a huge increase in economic productivity since Reaganomics, while the bottom 80% have been almost stagnate, or lost ground, so a transfer of some of this wealth back to the people who generated it is definitely in order. Expensive toys and luxury activities in the midst of swelling poverty and pervasive economic fear and misery has an undesirable, late-Roman aspect to it. It's easy to blame the super-rich, while being complicit in the perpetuation of class inequality by not supporting an increase in taxes to re-distribute wealth. One doesn't have to be an ascetic, or a martyr, or a preacher to be in favor of NSN.

A Universal Basic Income of \$1000 per month is insufficient by itself to ensure a decent and dignified lifestyle in America, considering the fact that the average rent for a one bedroom apartment in America (with geographical variation, of course) is roughly \$600 or \$700 per month. Considering further the cost of education and medical procedures and prescription drugs, it is clear that UBI is not a stand alone solution. Monthly cash, regardless of the amount, is an essential part of the solution, but not all of it, and Basic Income (BI) will function best within the more comprehensive framework of NSN.

Moreover, if some Americans blow or waste the money, for whatever reasons, they still need and deserve to be sustained in a respectful way, instead of left to die or deteriorate on the streets. Basic Income is not a replacement for a real national safety net, but it is a key element of it. It's the combination of Medicare-for-All, Basic Income, Housing-for-All, and the other elements of NSN that provide a basis or floor for a somewhat independent and respectable life.

The second most common objection, after the mathematically refuted argument that America can't afford it, is that it would foster laziness and irresponsibility among the population. However, psychological and sociological research shows that when you reduce the economic anxiety about paying bills and fighting for economic survival, then people actually perform better in the workplace and elsewhere. In other words, if you give people some breathing room from the economic struggle for existence, then they become (on the whole) more confident, productive, and creative in all areas of life. Basic Income pilot projects (see the work of Guy Standing), and social experiments all over the world have provided evidence for such positive outcomes, and these results have exceeded all expectations!

It's the feeling of hopelessness, of being trapped in poverty, that pushes many folks into addiction, crime, violence, and creates or worsens many serious social problems (some of which I identified above). True, some people will take advantage of NSN, some will use the monthly money they get from BIG (Basic Income Guarantee), for example, to buy drugs or gamble, but generally speaking, hopelessness or despair due to a lack of money is often the cause of addiction and many other social problems in the first place, not the other way around. Over the long run, across a few generations, addiction and many other social ills will fade or greatly improve by ending poverty and economic anxiety in America

One thing is certain, the more everything depends on money, and the more isolated and alone we become, both of which are clearly happening in America, then the more economic stress will grow, possibly reaching unbearable heights for everyone, or almost everyone, in the near future. Poverty and the threat of poverty are frustrating and disrupting the harmony, peace, and civility of the entire country, so we must put a strong safety net under everyone in order to solve this massive problem of social unrest or social discontent. What we have now in America--by way of a safety-net--is so weak and full of holes that it doesn't function properly.

The argument can be made that the general happiness in most primitive and simple societies is greater-- even though life is often unpredictable and short-- than in super-modern America because a basic egalitarianism (absence of gross inequality) enables solidarity, friendship, and social bonds that enhance the quality of life for everyone. This is not to say that we could or should "go back to the good old days," but only to acknowledge that dividing people into the "have and have-nots," as America is doing,

destroys the joys of community life, from which comes much of the quality of everyday existence in all societies. Today, the struggling poor and sinking middle class are aware--due to TV, movies, social media, and what they see around them--that the "successful" are living it up, so to speak, and this is producing a lot of resentment and social tension for everyone.

Moreover, the meaninglessness, loneliness, and general unhappiness (among the rich and poor) due to a lack of warm sociability and genuine community in America makes those who have money and power less sympathetic and compassionate toward those who don't, thereby worsening the anti-social feelings and alienation among the overall population. The more selfish and isolated we become, the less likely we are to help and share with others, and the more selfish and isolated we become. Depressed and miserable people tend to be less generous or caring. Empathy declines through growing inequality. NSN will break this downward spiral, in which economic inequality feeds on itself toward increasing social unhappiness, by securing a measure of economic independence and dignity for each and every member of society, which is the basis of friendly, cooperative, and enjoyable social interactions.

There is little incentive to work when it is very difficult to get a good job, with numerous disappointments and rejections over time, often for the wrong reasons, and little incentive to be a productive and good worker when you don't earn enough money to sustain a decent lifestyle (relative to the surrounding wealth). We need Living Wages, Federally Guaranteed Jobs, along with Homes-for-All, Medicare-for-All, free colleges and universities. and a Basic Income Guarantee to pay for a variety of social necessities such as clothing, transportation, communication, cell phone, internet, so that every American has a healthy and stable existence. Sure, one can survive (stay alive) without internet service or a cell phone, for examples, but these things are (generally speaking) required for being a well functioning member of a super-modern society, so we should acknowledge "vital needs" as "basic needs" because the minimum standard for a decent and dignified life is historical—that is say, this standard depends on the attained level of wealth that a given society has achieved?

The more a nation grows and prospers, the more each and every member of this society should share in the wealth because no one would be as successful and rich as they are without the support, strength, and intelligence of the country as a whole. Think of NSN as a social dividend, not just an opportunity to have a piece of the American pie, but an actual modest serving of the gross national product. Just as the nuclear family takes precedence over any individual member when a conflict occurs, so society has greater good than any particular family or group of families, which means that an equal basic minimum satisfaction of social needs for all is the first and foremost purpose of civilization. Contra neo-liberalism (articulated by the Chicago Boys and popularized by Thatcher and Reagan), society is not an abstraction, but a concrete totality, the highest

good, the telos of human nature.

After a person has made between 1.7 and 2 million dollars per year (to give a somewhat random but reasonable upper income limit), then s/he needs to find higher incentives to continue to work. Most people like to work, if the work they do has meaning and value for themselves and others. Human beings are strongly biologically predisposed to work (to hunt, to gather, to grow), and those who refuse work in America, with few exceptions, are often unable to deal with the specific "conditions" of work. It is easy to judge others as lazy or obstinate when one knows nothing about their childhood experiences. NSN is there for those who have endured the unspeakable, while the proud and arrogant--those who don't work because they were "born with a silver spoon in the mouth"--criticize and condemn the weak and devastated. Normal, healthy people work spontaneously and gladly-- retirees plant gardens, volunteer, build, paint, and create services and products-- but no one likes to be used and abused at work.

People will become far more creative in all areas of life, once they are free from the fear of impoverishment or economic misery. Craftsman, artists, musicians, philosophers, inventors, designers, and people from all walks of life will have the economic freedom to explore and create a better and more interesting world for everyone. There is tremendous time and energy expended in the American workplace on meaningless and destructive jobs, where most are overworked and underpaid. NSN is an alternative to the authoritarianism, boredom, and drudgery of much of the American workplace. Because of NSN people will no longer be forced to subject themselves to harassment, humiliation, and injury on the job in order to survive, then the quality of the American workplace will significantly improve or people will choose not to work such jobs at all. NSN will end wage-slavery, and encourage (pedal to the metal) the increasing automation of the American workplace through robots and computers that do repetitive and undesirable tasks so that human beings don't have to do them (as much).

The passage of NSN into law means that workers will have the freedom to walk off the job, and to decline work, anytime and anywhere (except in emergency situations), while still being able to maintain a dignified lifestyle, with the opportunity to pursue free training and education and/or secure another job at a living wage. The history of America has been the history of the cruel mistreatment of countless people who have been forced to work in terrible and dangerous situations, often in psychological and physical pain, in order to survive. The past cannot be undone, but we can change the present: no more "forced" work in America. NSN will make work a free decision.

The National Safety Net (NSN) is a systematic solution to many growing problems in America. It needs to be anchored in a dual commitment to World Peace (which requires full enforcement power) and Ecological Primacy (which means that a thing, anything, is wrong if it destroys or undermines major ecological systems). NSN is unsupportable

unless these two fundamental realities (having to do with the survival of Life on Earth) are strong and enduring. A domestic agenda that disregards or minimizes these fundamental necessities is inadequate, which makes any candidate for high office who does not understand and address these issues fatally flawed. So much so that the 6 point domestic National Safety Net proposal is really, when fully unveiled, an 8 Point Agenda: Medical-for-All, Homes-for-All, Free Education, Living Wage, Universal Basic Income, Guaranteed Jobs, Environmental Health, and Global Peace.

Given the fast approaching evils of environmental catastrophe (entailing climate change) and nuclear holocaust, it is impossible for any American to be truly “safe” if the food, water, air, and other vital functions of nature (including wilderness and biodiversity) are not pure and protected, and if the immense technological means of annihilation now spreading around the globe are not monitored and secured, not to mention reduced and dismantled, through international agreements and planetary cooperation. A realistic, sustainable national safety net must deal with these larger issues now, not marginalize or postpone them in favor of a narrowly focused internal progressive agenda. It is foolish and futile (even suicidal) to build a national safety net, no matter how good it is in itself, on an endangered foundation that is collapsing. Thoreau once remarked, “What good is a house if you don't have a decent planet to put it on.”

Some of the building blocks of NSN have become parts of the Bernie Sanders presidential movement. It is to be hoped that this simple but comprehensive campaign platform--summed up in a three little words, National Safety Net (NSN)-- will eventually be accepted and improved by progressive candidates now and in the future. The logic behind this independent program is that the best electoral politics must not only aim at immediately winning more electoral seats, but also it must engage in political education and strive for a vastly superior future. Getting the balance right between strategies and principles, between immediate and longer goals is not easy, but it is an essential part of a adequate political program. Today it's clear that a decent life requires not only a job, or a place to live, or healthcare, or education, or monthly cash, but a balanced combination of these staples within the larger context of a healthy and peaceful planet. The integral wholeness of NSN meets the needs of the present age, recommending itself as part of an effective run up to the 2020 presidential election.

Ultimately, NSN rests on moral principles, or basic rights of citizenship and legal residency, that are economically demonstrable, given the available intellectual and material resources in America. That the citizens and legal members of the richest county in history have an inherent or moral right to NSN requires, more than anything else, debunking the major false objections to its realization, and politically educating the public regarding its economic viability. Hard evidence shows that it is the continuation of poverty, not the elimination of poverty, that is no longer affordable in America when one factors in the costs to healthcare, criminal prosecution and incarceration, psychological counseling and rehabilitation, and all the additional social problems that poverty

generates. NSN should exist now because it makes moral and economic sense for it to exist now, and in fact its implementation is several decades overdo.

All talk about who deserves to share, and who does not deserve to share, the fruits of a productive and abundant society is unacceptable and reprehensible. No one deserves to live in poverty, or to be deprived of basic needs, not when the development of science and technology has rendered such a lifestyle unnecessary or obsolete. Psychological theories and techniques will eventually advance to the point when everyone can be helped from self-destructing, and when everyone can be guided toward finding a constructive life. Until that time, and after that time, NSN should be there to prevent anyone, for whatever reason, from falling below a minimal level of self respect and social respect.

If progressive candidates don't have the courage or the Will to tell the whole truth-- namely, that a National Safety Net is easily affordable and desirable in this country-- because of fear of losing elections, then many may choose to vote for them anyhow (certainly instead of Republicans), but it seems to me that the simple, basic moral truth of NSN must eventually gain a hearing and triumph, if people promote it in a clear, calm, honest, positive, and intelligent manner-- or at least this appears to be the best path toward a livable future, for the voice of Reason is still audible in the majority of Americans, if only as a whisper. There is the possibility of a citizen's initiative or national referendum on NSN?

American history, given it achieved wealth, has reached the point where a true national safety net is a ripe potentiality of this society, and now is the time for the political intelligentsia to assist in its growth. No revolution, no total economic transformation (presupposing as it does a radical leap of consciousness) is required in order to end poverty, and to make some genuine qualitative progress in this country. What is clear to the best and brightest minds is that the productivity of 21st Century American Capitalism, has not only made NSN possible, but ripe and ready to be enjoyed by everyone. To allow it to hang on the vine and rot, while great numbers of people want and suffer, is a missed opportunity for a responsible politics.

The American advertising industry spends billions of dollars per year promoting the (basically unreal) differences between car insurance, breakfast cereals, and countless useless/trivial products. If it's too much of a political risk to call for an end to poverty in the light of such an obscene waste of resources and creative talent, which is ever-present in so many aspects of this culture, then perhaps it's too late to turn around the downward direction of this country? Take a ride around America, see the massive private houses in every state and city that often look like cathedrals or hotels, see the expensive new cars on the highways pulling shinny boats, RVs, motorcycles and ATVs, look at the new high-rise office buildings, medical centers, sports arenas, country clubs, big-box retail stores,

pricey restaurants, fitness-centers, banks and insurance developments, glance at the stupendous opulence everywhere (right alongside the poverty everywhere), then ask yourself: Can and should America enact NSN? Can and should this Capitalist economy be a Provider Economy for all? Can America change its priorities with a rising tax on the privileged that lifts all boats (so that no one is sinking into poverty)?

The cruel lie, "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours," taken to the point of such sadistic inequality as we have today, will be the death of this county, not just the more than 45,000 lives that are lost each year in America due to a lack of proper medical attention, while Sean Hannity-- who keeps insisting that America cannot afford Medicare-for-All-- made 36 million dollars last year. If he was taxed at 90%, leaving him and his family an excessive 3 million dollars per year, how many people could be helped or saved? There are others like Hannity, the filthy rich, whose combined taxed income is needed for those who have too little. The idea that America can't afford to meet the basic needs of all its people is absolutely absurd and pathetic, which is exactly why the Right is focused on taking this truth and turning it into its opposite. The attack is lies, propaganda, nonsense, and it is despicable behavior. America is a post-scarcity society, except for greed and selfishness.

Some intelligent people seem to think that the Capitalist economic system can work well for all, if it's organized and run by proper laws, institutions, and regulations? NSN is an excellent test to help answer this question: Can there be Capitalism without the super-rich and without poverty, where everyone has a decent and dignified lifestyle? No intelligent person (academic eggheads aside) will argue that an economic system that creates and leaves more than half of the population in poverty or near poverty is a successful system in any meaningful sense, so let's see if a New New Deal can save Capitalism, and for how long, as many argue that the New Deal did under FDR more than 80 years ago? One thing is certain, at this historical moment Capitalism has not proven that it results in the greatest good for the greatest number, not if the greatest good is happiness, either in the negative form of freedom from want and suffering, or in the positive form of experiencing the pleasures of human association and autonomous individuality.

Just for the record, and for those who need to be informed, the concentration of wealth in the upper 1% is not only shameful, but criminal because this wealth has been extorted from "the people" (for generations). Work in this country has never been a free contract between employer and employee because most people have never had the option of refusing work in favor of self-sufficient living off the land (and certainly this is not possible today in a country in which everything is owned). Rather, work has overwhelmingly been a forced condition in which a person must choose between starvation or an exploitative job (over which s/he has virtually no control). Fraudulent contracts, or agreements in which one side has all the power for setting the terms, have cheated and robbed the people of the fruits of their labor, and transferred more and more of the Nation's wealth to very few. A progressive tax for NSN re-distributes the people's

money back to the people in the form of collective benefits. If you take advantage of someone because s/he is in weak and dire circumstances, then what accrues to you as a result is not rightfully yours, even if you use this stolen money to pass laws and hire police to safeguard this stolen money.

American society is not based on a legitimate social contract. The great philosopher Rousseau pointed out about 250 years ago that the so-called free or willing contract that underlies modern Western civilization is a “fraudulent” plan by means of which the rich enslave the general population. Rousseau explained how the new-born society of pre-industrial capitalism ravaged the land in search of minerals and other natural resources, building fences and claiming private ownership of the earth, even though everything was taken by force, giving rise to a wretched situation, a state of war, of everyman against the rest. According to Rousseau, the rich suffered because their property was at risk, so “the rich man, thus urged by necessity, conceived at length the profoundest plan that ever entered the mind of man: Let us join, said he, to guard the weak from oppression, to restrain the ambitious, and secure to every man the possession of what belongs to him.” According to Rousseau, the social contract was a “trick” by means of which the rich “legally” instituted permanent inequality.

The historical fact is that Capitalism preceded the design and establishment of the American Constitution. The Constitution was conceived and written by a group of wealthy men (influenced by the upper European class) for the main purpose of securing the flow of capital across a new landscape. Preventing runaway inequality was not their focus (even if a few of the Founding Fathers such as Tomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine did concern themselves with it), and all attempts to deal with growing inequality (over the last 200 plus years) have been an uphill battle to say the least. In other words, the origin of American law and government presupposed the unquestioned correctness of an economic system (endorsed by all the Founding Fathers) aimed at the accumulation and concentration of riches, and this political structure or constituted State still serves this function very well. Even the progress made in the 30s (FDR's New Deal) is unraveling in the face of this underlying economic mandate. Short of Revolutionary change in America, the end of Capitalism, perhaps the most effective push back against the undoing of the New Deal is a New New Deal (NSN) that is strong enough to stop, slow down, or idle this hyper-economic engine that is steaming rolling and crushing the lives of probably more than 80% of the population, as well as unimaginable and untold millions, billions, around the globe?

NSN is an intersection for progressive Democrats, Greens, Democratic Socialists, Socialists, Communists, and Communitarians because it's a large public program based on cooperation and sharing, rather than competition and unlimited private accumulation. There is a good chance that some moderate Democrats can be persuaded to support NSN, and also a good chance that radicals or revolutionaries will support it. Many rank and file Democrats, and many people who don't vote, could be mobilized to vote for something

visionary and tangible like NSN, if we take this message not only into town halls, classrooms and conventions centers, but onto street corners, in front of post offices, grocery stores, where hundreds of millions of ordinary folks are financially stressed and pressured everyday. The message is not too idealistic or extreme for many of these folks; they just need a place to sign, an opportunity to act, a way to make a difference, a path to end poverty or the looming threat of poverty. The political risk of NSN should be taken for the sake of the many, many folks who are suffering and losing their lives in a corporate manufacture struggle for existence.

Of course social media has a part to play in getting the message out, along with celebrities and people of power and influence across this land, but there is really no substitute for street politics in order to reach those who have turned away or turned against politics altogether. NSN information-tables in public places and private places, operated by the compassionate and the awake, staffed by volunteers in every big city and small town in America, who speak clearly and simply with residents, neighbors, co-workers, business owners etc., about the need to end poverty, and the need to end economic insecurity in America, is an important part of cutting through the propaganda of Fox News and Right-wing radio, and in fact direct dialogue with masses of people may be the only way, or the best way, to overcome the money-generated flow of misinformation and lies.

In the last election a number of working-class people, including some union members, wanted to "shake things up." They weren't impressed by the establishment changes that Hillary Clinton represented because they were left behind by the economic prosperity of the last several decades, and they fell for Trump's lies to make big improvements in their daily lives. These folks, together with the vulnerable, the unemployed, the fearful, and the forgotten and suffering everywhere could be persuaded, or are already on board, to vote for the specific, concrete programs and policies articulated in NSN. The Democrats don't get enough support from these people, not because the Party asks for too much, but because the Party asks for too little on their behalf. The simple truth is that the vast majority of people in this country desire and need financial help and cooperation from their government and the nation as a whole, so the Dems should offer it--not false promises a la Trump-- but the real thing, spelled out and ready to go in the form of NSN.

A good electoral strategy is not to appeal to Independents and moderate Republicans in order to tip the scale in favor of Democrats because that requires moving Center or Right, with a corresponding loss of substance (on policies and programs) in order to gain a relatively few votes, perhaps winning a battle here and there but losing the overall war on poverty and an improved quality of life for everyone. Rather, Democrats should go Left because that's where the biggest pool of likely voters for progress on substantive issues is to be found, especially among the roughly 100 million people (or more) who don't usually vote (but who are eligible to vote) because many of them have given up on politics that they believe doesn't serve their vital self-interests (and they are largely

correct about this). If the Democrats don't offer a juicy sustenance to the common people (the red meat of a secure and social existence such as NSN) then the GOP will squeak out victories again and again. The sad truth is that the movement toward the Center from within the Democratic Party is being driven by a small group of elite-donors who are seriously retarding the evolution of the Party, and this managerial class needs to be removed from leadership. The victory by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez represents the new direction that is needed, and the proper strategy to remove neoliberals and Wall St. Democrats from the Party in the primaries?

Some who voted for Trump would have voted for Bernie, if he had gotten the nomination, because these folks wanted big changes. The most astute and politically aware organizers and activists need to stimulate a grass roots movement in this country for significant, comprehensive change such as NSN, and out of this movement will come various intelligent and articulate candidates who will refuse to be bogged down or side-tracked by the smoke and mirror antics of the Republican Party. This new leadership will advance a higher quality of living for the destitute and working-class by lowering the gluttonous standard of living for the upper class. A valuable lesson from Trump's victory is that a lot of people are tired of the small change of electoral politics, and are ready to risk business as usual for significant gains in daily living, especially if the initiative comes from the top, from a presidential candidate who is prepared to present to Congress within the "first 100 days" a plan to end poverty in America through the speedy enactment of NSN. A good way to break through the propaganda of Fox News, and the GOP echo machine, is with a bold, sweeping, no-holds-barred message to the American public that the era of grotesque inequality is over, and a newly elected progressive government intends to use its legitimate power to meet the basic needs of all people throughout this country, regardless of race, sex, education, or work-productivity.

Of course the Political Right will relentlessly attack NSN, but the masses of people will benefit so much from it that it's only a matter of time before it will become law (if we survive long enough as a species) once the message is out there and circulating. A key to its widespread dissemination and success is an unabashed, undiluted, unapologetic presentation of the proposal on moral grounds, supported by an economic calculation proving its fiscal responsibility. The message must not only be sharp but focused, without promising all things (even all progressive things) to all people. The message is essentially the 8 Point Program (improved and strengthened over time), around which a consensus is built by bypassing the deeply brainwashed and the haters in favor of just about everyone else. Of course, numerous additional issues must be addressed and dealt with by a progressive government, but NSN is a solid platform, a common ground, for building a new Democratic, or Left, or Dem-Left Party. What's needed are visionary candidates for a political idea whose time has come, because NSN is self-evident in rational terms, and by no means "radical," except for the lies and ignorance that obscure it.

The task of political education is to reveal the truth, not half-truth, not "acceptable" truth,

not masked truth, but deep truth that resonates in the public mind, that appeals to the moral sensibility of normal people, that trusts in the still remaining rational power of human intelligence because there doesn't appear to be any other way to make progress. It's a mistake to pander to the Right, the Center, or the Center-Right with ideas and positions that won't make much of a difference in resolving the crises we face in this country--even if Dems win elections and implement some corrective measures--because it's getting late in the hour of American democracy. The ruling elite is concentrating its wealth and power evermore, almost independently of the cycles of conventional or traditional politics. A breakthrough is needed by the Left. The people must be offered a big and important piece of legislation that enough of them can believe in, and vote for, in order to re-energize and re-mobilize the county, especially young people, who are idealists by nature, and who don't for a moment think or feel that what we have now--in terms of social fairness, equity, and environment integrity-- is even close to what could be and should be.

Young people, for the most part, are not going to invest time and energy in issues and causes that don't inspire a grand new future. From their point of view the social mess around them, which certainly includes merciless poverty or inexcusable inequality, is so irrational that many don't even want to try and fix it. They want a new society and a new world, which WE do not have the ability to bring about at this historical juncture, but at least NSN is an ideal that transcends (includes and goes beyond) weak, piecemeal organized political struggles, and it will stimulate an interest in a new way of life. It's sad that old crusty social relations slow down historical evolution so much so that countless lives are wasted or greatly limited in the process, but there does appear to be enough people out there who will, through information and organization, gather under the umbrella of NSN.

There is no lack of philosophical visions of the good life, but a shared problem is getting from here to there, from reality to utopia. NSN is a transitional politics in that it sets people economically free (to a decisive degree) for the first in American history to decide what kind of life we want to live. General assemblies, neighborhood gatherings, town meetings, community enterprises and local self-reliance take time and energy, and they are a lot less likely to occur if people are exhausted by the struggle to make basic necessities payable. Once the economic noose around everyone's neck is loosened, and we are all on secure economic footing, then the realm of freedom will extend and expand.

The sad situation is that the corporate-state, and its political arm the Republican Party, will use all available means, entailing vast resources, to stop and reverse even minimal programs and policies for the common good, which is particularly evident over the last 40 years. The war on Obamacare or the Affordable Care Act was no less vicious than the war on Medical-for-All or Single-Payer healthcare. Poll after poll indicates that a strong majority of the electorate supports the various components of NSN, which means that (national) candidates are not losing elections for advocating these views, so let's bundle

together these popular and positive issues into one unifying goal of great value to everyone, building coalitions around this major socio-economic goal. One way to prevent most people from voting against their own self-interests is to give them the opportunity to directly vote for what is clearly in their own self-interests, which means no more mumbo-jumbo centrist Democratic talk about helping people by throwing money at corporations. Enough already!

The protestant work ethic has produced a modern society of workaholics, who believe that it is only through prolonged meaningless and miserable work that one deserves security and fulfillment, which is a psychology that has played perfectly into a capitalist economic system designed to squeeze maximum profit out of human labor. NSN drives a wedge between self-worth or personal identity on the one hand, and obsessive-compulsive work for money on the other hand. During the Great Depression millions of Americans suffered and died in poverty, while an abundance of food and other resources (including labor power) laid waste all around them due to financial arrangements and institutions that had nothing to do with the reality on the ground. Similarly, the reality today is that there is more than enough of the basics to go around for all, if we let go of inner-hang ups about hard work and embrace (and vote for) a political platform that embodies an ethics of generosity, based on a scientific and technological economy of abundance that has already been achieved.

Good riddance to empty, stupefying, and depressing jobs that NSN will free people from, most importantly young people, who will then have the option of living a simple life (for as long as they want) in order to pursue ideas, relationships, travels that will undoubtedly result in a new and better world. It is by ending poverty in America that we liberate the whole of society. Once the basics are covered, then the creative intelligence of young people alone is enough to change everything in a few generations. When the young have housing, cash in their pockets, free higher education—in short,, a guaranteed minimum social survival, then they are not going to sit in their parent's basements and play video games day and night, which is itself the result of boredom and the lack of better opportunities, but rather they will interact, re-imagine the world, socially experiment, and if you don't believe this, then you haven't lived through the 60s.

The Sixties Revolution was halted for many reasons, but chief among them was the pressure to conform to the American workplace that the Movement was deeply rebelling against. Some of the money for many of the resisters came from dealing drugs (mainly marijuana), and when the State bore down on this activity, imprisoning people for decades, there was not enough money from mom and dad (if you were lucky enough to have supportive parents at all) to sustain an alternative lifestyle. NSN will correct this situation, enabling people to not only remain independent individuals, but also to pool

their resources (including money) for collective adventures such as joint business ventures, cooperative farms, urban communes, and countless unpredictable free associations of artistic, intellectual, political, and economic communities. Just think of the possibilities if 50 people, for example, who have healthcare and housing, would utilize even half of their combined 50 thousand monthly income for creative, alternative purposes? Now think about what 300 people could do with 300 thousand dollars per month combined income?

Make no mistake, NSN is a political compromise, one that carves out a minimum economic free zone within the corporate-state. Anything more is probably not achievable in the foreseeable future, and anything less will not provide enough freedom for citizens to reflect on and question the whole of society and the meaning of life. Loosening the grip of the economic choke-hold by the powers-that-be is a pre-condition for re-making society in accordance with the highest potentialities of human nature. The strength of NSN is that it's do-able qualitative change, and once it's done, then the future opens up. The present economy is so tight, with every dollar and penny calculated and controlled, that it is nearly impossible to move, to deviate, to trail blaze. NSN will at least give people an opportunity to try new things, to individualize, to explore and evolve.

NSN is not incremental change, or merely making things "better" that leaves poverty in place, while life in this country (overall) keeps getting more and more frustrating and disappointing. Rather, it's a baseline change for beginning a different kind of life, a band or substratum of economic freedom within the established society that puts us in position to do a lot more, to experiment with new ways of living and working, and this is essential because a single-issue improvement, no matter how significant in itself--for example, Medicare-for-All-- will not reverse the downward direction of America, but with NSN we open a new economy of time, a new self-concept, and a new relationship between work and play, thereby enabling the country to develop long-term vision.

At this particular time in America, if every person had a decent place to live (a house, an apartment, a trailer, or even an RV, not a car), together with adequate healthcare, and \$1000 cash per month, plus the availability of a free higher education with a guaranteed job at a living wage (if one is willing and able), then we would have a society composed of at least semi-autonomous people, which is the economic beginning of a well functioning democracy, where people no longer have to keep their "nose to the grindstone," where they can escape tunnel vision, and mature into an informed citizenry on local, national and international issues, with the vast majority of people doing valuable work in ways that cannot be measured in the narrow terms of what is today defined as productive labor.

Not only is much of the work done today "bullshit," but it is positively harmful to human beings and the natural world. Jobs that despoil nature and deplete natural resources in

order to make useless or frivolous material goods and services need to be replaced by the growth of ecological and humanitarian work, much of which is presently unpaid in America. NSN will enable this kind of so-called unproductive work--which is actually a very big part of the real work of civilization--while providing a reasonable standard of living to those who choose to engage in it. The twisted incentive to work for money for its own sake, as the ultimate end or purpose of life, is the disease of Capitalism that NSN will help to cure. Meaningful existential activity in association with others, or “work” in contrast to “labor,” is a defining characteristic of human beings that flatly contradicts the idea (ideology) that human beings are innately lazy creatures. All of history and pre-history clearly shows the inherent quality in human nature to develop itself and the world through work.

A Green Deal or a Green WPA are examples of the manner in which a Federal Guaranteed Jobs Program, Living Wage, and Environmental Health can work together for a better future. It is less important at this moment to determine the precise number and terminology for the components of NSN, than it is to endorse the political “concept” of a national-safety-net that provides all Americans with a minimum standard of decent living unconditionally (without work requirements or means testing). One thing to keep in mind is that the combination of Homes-for All, Medical-for-All, and Basic Income (of \$1000 per month) provides leisure time for all Americans, which is a key part of what NSN is designed to accomplish.

If we don't enact NSN, or something akin to it, within the not too distant future, then the psychological devastation alone that is overtaking this country as a result of poverty and existential stress is going to crash the current system now in place to rescue those in serious need of assistance. America, with its weak safety net, is not prepared for what's coming. When the emotional bonds between people have all but been entirely replaced by exchange relationships in which everything has only a monetary value, then panic and violence will escalate with each new crisis. Don't think that America is too modern and civilized for massive rioting and violence in the streets when there is a breakdown in the delivery of basic living supplies to a sufficient number of people, bringing forth dictatorial responses on the part of the State. This is the unacceptable risk we face, not a political campaign to enact NSN. One symptom of this psychological breakdown in America that is already clearly visible is the rise of Far Right fascist populism.

NSN is not just an ideal or goal, but also a strategy in two respects. One, most people (those who vote and those who don't vote) already favor the various structural pillars of NSN, and it is logical to think that they would also favor the uniting of these social goods into one coherent platform, once the cost, effectiveness, and social consequences are explained and popularized. Of course there are parts of the country that will oppose it, and vote against it, but it is better to lose a battle (or political seat) here and there, in order to eventually win the war against poverty and oppression. In other words, the strategy of NSN is to take a little longer electoral run up to political power, if necessary,

in order to secure a big prize (a true national safety net), whose articulation and presentation along the way will shorten the path to victory. NSN is not a “bridge too far” for the American people, but it does require organization and political education in order to be reached in the near future. Two, NSN is also a strategy in the larger sense that it is a transforming reform that will stimulate an entirely new lifestyle, potentially ushering in an altogether new kind of social existence with a great deal more joy, love, and meaning than what we have now.

Keep in mind that the State has played, and continues to play, a major role in the creation of Capital in this society through subsidies and 0 % loans it gives corporations, through public investments in scientific and technological discoveries—computers, cell phones, the internet, for examples—that are then privatized, and by transferring the Commons and various parts of the Earth itself to private utilization. The fact of the matter is that much of the wealth of this country in the form of Capital belongs to the people, who fund the State, and who collectively own the fruits of the Earth, for the Earth itself belongs to no one. The re-distribution of Capital in the form of NSN is fair and just because the people deserve a return on their investment in the State, and also deserve a share in the profitable appropriation of Nature. Think of NSN as a “natural inheritance,” in the terminology of Thomas Paine. Isn't it time for a political campaign that tells this truth—namely, the people have already more than paid for the immediate implementation of NSN? The concentration of Capital in the hands of a few is precisely why it appears that NSN is not affordable, whereas in reality the wealth of this Nation does not mostly belong to the 1%, or the 5%, or the 20%. It's overwhelmingly the people's money, and there is probably no better way to spend a good portion of it than on NSN (that rewards everyone except the very rich, who don't need it, and who have accumulated a disproportionate amount of profit under State-Capitalism).

The idea that poor people or nearly poor people don't need cash and other basic social benefits as much as they need purpose and responsibility is a theoretical abstraction. Every human being is born with purpose, an inherent evolutionary drive toward higher and higher levels of complexity, integration and awareness, both as an individual and as a member of civilization. When human nature is blocked and damaged by any number of social factors—childhood traumas being among the most common—then no amount of purpose or personal effort is always sufficient to propel one to “success” because there are numerous social laws and structures in this society to keep one down and out, or at least to make it very difficult to get out of crisis and destitution, especially if psychological issues are also working against a person. NSN breaks the poverty circle by giving people a modicum of economic freedom “first,” on the assumption that the masses of people want to work, want to better their lives, want to contribute to society, once the devastating forces of economic oppression are lifted to a significant degree, and the lingering debilitating impacts of these forces wither away.

There is no shortage of valid criticisms of American society from the Left, but there is not

enough agreement on the best available solution in the given historical circumstances. NSN is not a radical solution, and not a reformist solution, but one that effectively ends massive and mounting economic misery throughout this country. This is a big issue around which there is a good opportunity to bring the subjective condition for change (the will of the majority) into greater agreement with the objective condition for change (the already existing intellectual and material resources). What's needed is a well organized Left (that respects autonomous individual activism) with a plain and positive message that can be conveyed in a straightforward and honest political slogan: National Safety Net (NSN). Think of it as a Golden Mean, not too much and not too little for the present historical predicament. We need to do something now or very soon to free masses of people from widespread economic suffering (for each and every individual only goes around once as far as we know for sure) while at the same time positioning ourselves for the emergence of Another World.

Some on the radical Left think that the real solution for America requires non-violent, massive civil disobedience leading to the overthrow of Capitalism, which may very well indeed be the case, but shouldn't we push the power of the vote to its limit? After all, if enough people vote correctly, then just about anything is possible, even socialism-by-choice. If enough people vote for NSN, and it is prevented from becoming the law of the land by the powers-that-be, then this might de-legitimize American democracy to the point where it precipitates a revolutionary movement? True, the Republican Party has been gerrymandering, disenfranchising, and cheating in electoral politics for sometime now, and the situation is growing worse, but if NSN gets the support of 70% plus of the voting public, then we will probably get either NSN or Revolution? It's much easier to steal close elections. If we can't get 70% or more of the people to vote for NSN, then this has more to do, in part, with the effects of propaganda on the popular consciousness, then it does with the brute force of the military-police at this point. It has been said that the face of Capitalism is liberal democracy when it is not afraid, and fascism when it is afraid. There is a way to find out?

Most politically aware people in this country already know that NSN (or something approaching it) is morally correct and economically feasible (through a rational-democratic determination of national priorities), yet many continue to play the electoral game of too much compromise and appeasement in order to “win,” which is usually (negatively) defined as stopping the Republicans. At 5 minutes to midnight, shortly before election day, when the best scientific poles indicate that only the Democratic candidate has a good chance to defeat the Republican, then vote D for Democrat, but up until this late hour, commit yourself, with the far greater part of your time, energy and Will, to promoting a basic minimum standard of living for every American through political education that recognizes protest and civil disobedience are effective forms of such an education, as well as one-on-one political dialogue in every venue where there is a chance of genuinely influencing someone. Bernie Sanders says, more and more, that “every American deserves a decent standard of living,” so isn't it time to spell out in

specific, concrete terms ((NSN) what this essentially means and requires?

In other words, we cannot ignore the fact that, as Noam Chomsky says, “The Republican Party is the most dangerous organization in world history,” but neither can we ignore the fact that the Democratic Party does not secure a minimum decent standard of living for everyone. Therefore, NSN has an outside/inside strategy with regard to the Democratic Party in the sense that NSN is outside the Party because it stretches this Party, including the Bernie Sanders progressive wing, to adopt or absorb the NSN 8 Point Agenda, but NSN is inside the Democratic Party because--when push comes to shove, in the final analysis, just prior to the elections--it recognizes that there is nothing wrong with voting for the lesser of two evils, if that's what it takes to defeat the Republicans.

Electoral politics should not underestimate the intelligence of the people (at least enough of them) to recognize in a relatively short period of time, through political discourse and political education, their basic self-interests. This has to be the working premise of any progressive electoral politics. The intellectual elitism that the Right so despises is best overcome by a Left that stands up for what it believes in, that does not avoid uncomfortable conversations, that is not timid about appearing idealistic or moralistic, and that does not talk down to people in the sense of withholding from them “more truth than they can handle, or more truth than they are ready for.” Changing or screening the fundamental political message according to the voting habits or demographics of diverse localities is weak politics. Hats off to Bernie Sanders in this regard, who does not equivocate about his basic vision, or change his issues and talking points from one state to the next, or one one audience to the next.

The Democratic Party, or at least the progressive wing, sometimes attempts to move voters slowly and delicately toward worthwhile goals—for example, Medical-for-All--that Party candidates are unwilling to endorse loud and clear, front and center, and it's a strategy that rings hollow, insincere, among much of the population. There is one, overriding, universal message and mission that should be taken into every small town and big city across this land—namely, a concrete social plan to end poverty and the specter of poverty for everyone in America (on a beautiful and peaceful planet). There is nothing to hide about NSN. It's a losing strategy to be indirect, cautious, about essential aspects of the common good. If the people are given a choice between a real (bad) Republican, and a cowardly, opportunistic, or sneaky Democrat, then many will choose the Republican.

It's very good that Democrats won the House in the 2018 midterms because it may now be possible to stop or slow down some of the worst parts of the Republican agenda, but there remains the deeper need to develop a real safety net because without such a profound change in this country none of us are going to survive and be happy for long (and Americans are already among the most unhappy people on Earth). If Bernie Sanders decides to run for president in 2020, then his well crafted message needs to be expanded

to include the 8 principles of NSN because his present platform falls short of establishing a genuine threshold of freedom. NSN sets the minimum requirements for such a life: if a person has a safe place to live without rent or mortgage, full medical coverage, plus \$1000 per month, then it is possible to live an OK or So-So life in America right now, even without additional income. Many retirees are in a similar situation. By affording everyone the same opportunity (as the elderly) to get off the economic treadmill, much of the population will not be content to passively enjoy their remaining days, often in boredom and loneliness, but rather, many will seek to improve their lives and the lives of others, including attending to the needs of the planet and worldly affairs. Some faith in human nature is required for any civilization to function properly!

The philosophy underlying this political proposal for NSN is as follows: a truly free and happy society (that encompasses the highest ideals of Socialism such as economic democracy in which workers collectively own and operate the economy) requires a transformation of human nature, as argued by Rousseau and Marx (particularly the young Marx). Over the last 3 decades of his life, Herbert Marcuse argued that such a transformation entails not only a change in human consciousness, but also a change in human needs, emotions, sensibility, and instinctual structure, which is going to be hard to come by, and there is not much evidence at the moment for change on this socio-biological level, although there are signs of it among the young. The evolution of the human species to its higher nature may indeed be a long journey. In the meantime, there is the saving option of a true national safety net in this country, and we should attempt it now, before there is any further decline in our social relations and in our relations with external nature, for devolution of the human species into nothingness is also a possibility? In other words, it is within our present power to solve or improve many problems spawned by obscene inequality, while other root-problems--for example, sexual oppression and sexual repression--cause strife, jealousy, hostility, and violence that may be more difficult to eradicate. Racism is another deep problem in America that NSN will certainly not extinguish, but the legislative enactment of NSN will help, perhaps more than anything else? Evolution or devolution, no one knows what is going to happen?

There is another large problem with America called Empire. If the wealth of this country—that pays for NSN—comes from the plunder of natural resources and human labor power around the world, notably from Third and Fourth World countries, then this situation must also be corrected as soon as possible. It is unconscionable for a decent minimum standard of living for Americans to be sustained on the backs of outsiders, aliens, or whatever some wish to call fellow human beings. For this reason, NSN ultimately depends on strong international solutions. Anyone seriously engaged in American politics must tie foreign policy to domestic issues, even if the road to this big solution is long, complicated, and uncertain. There must be an aggressive foreign policy to dismantle American Empire because progress on domestic issues requires simultaneously exposing and opposing US imperialism (a colossal undertaking to be sure) in its various economic, political, and cultural manifestations.

NSN is focused on improving the lives of Americans at a time when American-led global capitalism is causing more harm and suffering around the planet than any civilization in the history of the world. A justification is in order: there is the deep problem of ethnocentrism and Otherness in which the more people are unlike one another, the more difficult it is for them to feel empathy and solidarity for one another. This makes it harder to make progress on international issues as compared to domestic issues. However, the argument can be made that American hegemony is most effectively terminated from within, through the emergence of a rational populism that wants and demands social justice at home and abroad. NSN, by reducing a lot of fear and anger in America, will promote the growth of Reason (which is not only technical knowledge but knowledge informed by compassion). In other words, basic security for all will stimulate an intellectual and cultural evolution in America that undermines American Exceptionalism. Let's face it, the struggle for money to survive is making many Americans greedy and mean, even within families, so it's not surprising that concern for the suffering millions, billions, around the world is a low priority for many Americans. NSN is a step on the long path to worldcentrism, entailing an international safety-net (ISN).

What is palpable, and immediately solvable, is the vast amount of economic distress across America, and a lot of it pertains to folks who have, right now, enough money to sustain, but who are anxiety-ridden about the future because their jobs are unstable, and they know that there is no real safety net in America under their lifestyle, no soft place to fall and rest in order to prevent hitting rock bottom. Recent surveys show that the average American would have difficulty dealing with a \$400 unexpected bill, so many are hanging by a thread, so to speak, and many are going into debt in order to sustain what they have, with young people (due to the high cost of education) going into debt even before they have anything. Of course, corporate America desires and enforces this helpless dependency because it gives them power to rule everything, and huge profits are made by putting people in debt. NSN is the basis of a debt-free existence, and the vast overwhelming majority of people will vote for it, if WE (politically aware activists) do the job of political education well enough, or at least this has to be the working assumption of our efforts in the electoral arena (acknowledging well enough that political education, resistance, and movement-building are much larger than electoral politics).

In an undeniable sense, of course, the passage of Medical-for-All would be big progress in America, as would the legal mandate for a Living Wage, along with a lot of other important issues, but it's not until a number of key issues are combined (NSN) into the establishment of a minimum threshold of economic independence that big change becomes decisive change, and decisive change is what's needed in America. Decisive change is change that enables more change, with the potential to eventually change everything. NSN is decisive change because it provides an alternative lifestyle for everyone (who wants it), giving people the option of refusing submission to a tyrannical economy, so we can get on with the task of fulfilling the human destiny of building a free

and happy civilization beyond status quo goals and dreams.

A fair number of people in America already want deep, long-range change, but many of them are not in a position to attempt it, due to a lack of time, space, money, and other resources, so let's secure NSN as quickly as possible (a relatively modest goal), with the assistance of a much larger percentage of the population, then utopian ideals will have a solid economic footing. There is no way of knowing from our present vantage point if the great masses will ever embrace radical or communitarian solutions, or for that matter, if it is possible for such ideals to work (especially large-scale and over time), but if NSN eliminates poverty and the threat of poverty, and allows those who wish to pursue more imaginative ends, then that's certainly a very worthwhile achievement, so long as everything (in the end) is compatible with world justice and ecological laws.

Good economists can shed light on the best way (and the precise numbers required) to pay for NSN, perhaps entailing a combination of taxes, maximum income limits, and so on. Certainly there are many creative ideas to be considered on this matter from folks with various perspectives and life experiences, and this proposal for NSN is an attempt to bring forth these people and their ideas. NSN is, more than anything else, a political concept that sketches essential structures, fundamental features, of a national plan to resolve some of the major crises in this country, not a finished or inflexible document or pronouncement. The rally call is "Whatever It Takes" to transfer wealth from those who have too much to those who have too little under the governing principle of Morality before Economy! After more than 400 hundred years of economic struggle and hardship, we have reached a turning point in history, such that now, due to the enormous advance of science and technology, the economy must conform to morality, not the other way around. The progressive political mandate is to adjust taxes, together with whatever additional sources of money are available, in order to fund NSN. The hard data overwhelmingly shows that America can easily and readily afford NSN now, and if this Capitalist society is to have any moral claim on the present and future, it must free everyone from poverty, and from the threat of poverty. If it cannot or will not meet this demand for a decent and dignified lifestyle for all (NSN), then it doesn't deserve to exist any longer because it has failed to achieve the very purpose and goal of civilization, which is to provide a secure and reasonably satisfying life for all its members. If Capitalism can't get this job done, then it has to go! Times Up! Either NSN, or an alternative economic system?

The question remains: will a campaign for NSN work ? The answer is threefold: One, it has a better chance of succeeding in the field of electoral politics than anything else because anything else (more moderate or centrist) would be too little too late to break the death spiral of American-style corporate capitalism. NSN combines Universal Basic Income (1000 per month per adult) with additional social goods articulated in the 8 Point Plan so that poor and working-class people, who are actually non-incarcerated prisoners of this ruthless economy, will not only be more comfortable and better taken care of, but

also everyone will be granted some genuine freedom, and freedom generates freedom. Two, a campaign for NSN will be an excellent form of political education, even if it fails at the ballot box. It will raise the consciousness of the people, possibly leading to collective revolt, which is the last option for breaking the death-grip of savage corporate capitalism. Three, there is no way to know if a campaign for NSN will work, but it should work by cutting through the propaganda that confuses and misleads people about their own self-interests and the common good. NSN is worth a try? It's definitely not a substitute for the larger task of political education concerning the horrors (internal and external) of American Empire, an education (including protest and civil disobedience) that must continue independently of what happens in the electoral area, but NSN is probably the right tool in the toolbox of present-day electoral politics.

It is the underlying mistrust and fear of government that will incline people to oppose NSN, more than a rejection of any one of its 8 agenda items, or the unification of these ideas into a comprehensive political platform. NSN is a huge government program and resistance to the spirit of such an undertaking goes back to the very beginning of this country. England was oppressing its colonies here on the mainland, giving rise to the American Revolution, whose purpose was to overthrow an oppressive government. The United States of America is founded on an anti-government sentiment that is clearly reflected in the dominate political philosophy of the Founding Fathers: "That government is best which governs least," said Thomas Jefferson. Until this day many citizens see government (on all levels but especially on the federal level) as an enemy of the people, or as a necessary evil. "Government is the problem, not the solution," said Ronald Reagan.

This anti-government sentiment, along with its corresponding conception of freedom as freedom from rules and regulations, the freedom to do what you want to do, where you want to do it, how you want to do it, and so on, sometimes called roughen individualism, is deeply embedded not only in our politics, but also in our culture. Early Europeans spread across this vast American continent, homesteading and practicing wasteful forms of self-sufficiency that were disastrous to the ecology of the land and to the Native American cultures that dwell here. Not only politically, but socially, the invading hordes were isolated from one another unlike anything in Europe. The family unit became the overwhelming reality and influence on individual life. Not only government, but the larger society (beyond the family) became an abstraction, something distant and removed from everyday life, something to be distrusted and feared, especially as folks migrated West. Small communities and towns sprouted, but there was little sense among these Europeans Americans that we were One people, one Nation under rational authority.

Although communitarian elements and cooperative traditions and policies are woven throughout our history, NSN contradicts the conquering politics and culture of the American landscape for the last 400 years or so. Native American traditions and laws might have provided an existing framework or foundation for NSN, and developed us in a very different direction, but the European immigrants who came here, who thought that

they were in revolutionary opposition to the laws and values of Europe, were actually a more barbarian continuation of them, and they did much to wipe out tribal people and tribal wisdom. Thomas Jefferson, to his credit, attempted to incorporate some of the democratic egalitarianism that he observed in aboriginal American cultures (especially the Iroquois Indian Nation) into the framing of the US Constitution, but ravenous capitalist interests dominated, resulting in brutal economic competition and aggression, as ferocious as anywhere on Earth, that has led to merciless inequality.

America is a politically illiterate society in that it contains large blocks of people, tens and tens and tens of millions of them (63 million people alone voted for Donald Trump) who have basically no understanding of politics, no knowledge of the evolution of political ideas and theories since the dawn of Western civilization, since the rise of modern Europe, since the beginning of political movements and political philosophy in the USA, and as Thomas Jefferson noted: "An informed citizenry is at the heart of a dynamic democracy." Politically ignorant people often vote on the basis of slogans, prejudices, myths, and errors that shock and frustrate the politically aware, but such is the dilemma and crisis of our times, due to a society and culture that doesn't like to discuss politics, or recognize its importance in daily life.

The Republican Party, by dressing itself up in the disguise of a Jeffersonian ideal, is selling a false bill of goods, tricking and deceiving people into supporting and voting for ideas and ideals that have nothing to do with its real purpose, which is nothing short of world domination for the sake of the few. The Republican Party is not a legitimate political party because it doesn't even aim at the common good. Political Parties can differ all over the map regarding strategies and tactics for achieving the common good, but if a Party is not even aiming at the common good, then it's not a legitimate Party. The GOP is a masquerade, a front institution that does not reveal its true agenda, but rather it continues a fraudulent social contract with the people, who are not aware that they can't vote for something that doesn't exist, that is to say, you can't vote for smaller or limited government by voting Republican because this item is not on the agenda, not even as a principle or value, except in an empty, phony sense. The leadership of the Republican Party would like people to think that they stand for limited government, but the truth is that they state for global corporate government as an instrument for plundering and enslaving the entire world.

The key to the success of NSN is political education, inside and outside the realm of electoral politics, that stretches back before the American ideal of limited government to Ancient Greek philosophy because the Greeks defined the human being as the "political animal," whose highest calling was democratic participation in the city-state or "Polis." This is a very different conception of society and government than what comprises traditional American politics, but it is one that the American people need to embrace instead of the shrunken ideal of limited government (which is itself a result of the over estimation and over devotion to a capitalist economy that seduced all the Founding

Fathers), if we are to get beyond the unfortunate situation where a great many Americans agree with NSN, but end up voting against it. In other words, too often in America a general disdain for government trumps support for a diversity of government programs that would improve the lives of ordinary citizens. This is where the Ancient Greeks can help.

Plato understood knowledge as an awareness of the Ideas or Forms of reality, and it is the task of political intellectuals, as he makes clear in his monumental book "The Republic" to contemplate the essential nature of society, and to design and articulate institutions and policies that "participate" in the highest ideals of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Intellectual vision and leadership is the way forward according to Plato. He did not answer the question of how to get the masses of people out of the cave (a perceptual world in which people accept images and appearances for reality) and into the light of truth because he thought that an intellectual ruling elite, "philosopher kings," should comprise a small decision making body for the good of society as a whole, but in a society aspiring to democracy, such as America, every individual needs intellectual knowledge and civic responsibility to become a philosopher king or philosopher queen. Each and every person must learn to see the common good, and participate in a democratic government that legislates and enforces it.

Under the influence of Aristotle, the Platonic Ideals became structural potentialities, which are different from mere possibilities. A structural potentiality is the essential nature or telos of a thing. The oak tree, for example, is the inherent end or telos of the acorn, not just a possibility of it, as is a loaf of bread, for example, or any number of other items that an acorn can be made into. A structural potentiality exercises an inner force or drive toward its own realization. In the realm of human affairs, where freedom transcends nature, when a thing is ripe for its next stage of development, then this is when political awareness and moral action are most powerful in terms of effecting real change, of bringing forth that whose time has come. NSN is a structural potentiality for modern-say America, and political education and political knowledge will facilitate and accelerate its actualization. According to Aristotle, reality is the actualization of potentialities, and the very purpose and function of intellectual knowledge and good government is to bring forth that which could be from that which is. We need a "real" safety-net in America, which is not an illusion, not a utopian dream, but the inherent truth or fulfillment of actually existing reality.

The campaign for NSN must deal with America's anti-government sentiment, even hatred for government, by presenting its 8 Point Agenda in a new/old spirit--that of our Tribal Ancestors and that of the Ancient Greeks philosophers--of what it means and requires to be a citizen of a democratic society. There is a very rich political history and theory beneath the best chatter between Democrats and Republicans that needs to become part of the debate about the future of America, and it's not going to come from the Republican Party that ceased to exist as a legitimate Party by the end of the 19th Century with the

ascendency of the Robber Barons. NSN will be promoted by the most progressive wing of the Democratic Party, or by the Left, or by a Left-Democratic coalition, or by a free association of independent individuals, but it must be a political program couched in political philosophy, promoting basic human rights in the context of the highest ideals and demands of participatory democracy, in the tradition of Plato and our Ancient Elders for whom the Good society is identical with the Just society.

When Rousseau wrote his version of a genuine social contract, he drew his inspiration from the Ancient Greeks not only in terms of philosophical theory, but from the actual existence of 5th Century B.C. Athens under Pericles that was a direct democracy where political offices were rotated among all citizens using a lottery system. The Ancient Greek idea of politics was that it was the civic duty of every citizen to be informed about the major issues facing society, whether it be war, commerce, or various cultural matters, and to not only discuss and debate these issues in public venues and assemblies and then to vote, but also to assume executive-leadership positions periodically. Government was not something alien, standing in opposition to the people, restricting their liberty, but rather the government was the people in action, defining the common good, and taking the necessary steps to implement it. This is the Western spirit of democracy that needs to be resurrected in America in contrast to the skeptical and cynical view that prevails across this country. Of course the corporations have buried it, but it's not dead, and a campaign for NSN should revive it as the larger philosophical framework within which the 8 Point Agenda is presented and promoted.

Predating the Greek political ideal is the Native American ideal, with its system of tribal councils, and an Ecological Counsel at the top that represents the lives and interests of all living creatures (human and non-human). It may be possible and desirable (one day) to establish "second-order tribalism," (See the work of Rudolf Bahro) in which an advanced scientific and technological civilization recaptures the primitive values of kinship, reciprocity, cyclical time, and warm, intimate communities. These two great historical traditions, that of the Ancient Greeks and that of our Tribal Ancestors, can extend and enrich American political dialogue today, and NSN needs to be linked to these deeper worldviews, within which we are all rooted, or there is the danger that politics, all politics, even politics that genuinely serves the common good, will ring shallow and false because it does not reach the inner-core of what it means to be human and happy. Expanding the perspective of American electoral politics by introducing ancient political philosophy and Tribal Wisdom into the public debate will appeal to Bernie Sanders' base, who are largely young people and Left progressives, and also to many folks who are searching for the larger meaning and purpose of life.

It is not until the work of Karl Marx that we get the first explicit, systematic critique of the capitalist economic system, in which he argues that private property and wage-labor must be abolished in order to usher in a free and happy society. NSN does answer the

question of whether or not what Marx called Socialism and/or Communism is the final and best Alternative socio-economic system for human beings and for planet Earth? Instead, it moves us toward an answer to this question by “first” eliminating poverty and the threat of poverty in this country. There are two reasons for this approach. One, the journey to Socialism is long and difficult, considering the entrenched power of the corporate-state to engender widespread support for free enterprise, commercialism, markets, and business practices in general. Two, The psychological damage that prevails throughout America, as a result of a protracted and bitter struggle for existence, has not exactly cultivated the qualities and skills in Americans that are needed for cooperatively running economic enterprises on the shop floor, at web-centers, and elsewhere. Signing NSN into law will quickly and hugely reduce selfishness and aggression everywhere, preparing the ground for the better potentialities of human nature to manifest, then we shall see just how far the human spirit of camaraderie and generosity can soar. Can it reach the height that Marx envisioned?: “From each according to their ability and to each according to their needs.”

“Hope springs eternal,” said the 18th Century English poet Alexander Pope, but the reality of the situation has much to do with human nature as a whole. In support of Socialism and Communism there is a long history of primitive societies where tribal members cooperated and shared with one another, and Marx even spoke of “primitive communism,” but the relationships “between” tribes is more problematic, with considerable conflict and violence erupting. Some magnificent efforts were made to form peaceful federations of tribes—for example, the Iroquois Confederacy of North America, but unfortunately this evolutionary experiment was cut short by savage European settlers. There are also numerous examples throughout modern history of people working together with reason and kindness to accomplish the common good, and indeed one could argue that this has been the only way, or at least the primary way, in which real progress has been forged throughout history? Moreover, some will argue that human nature is malleable to the point where human beings can self-create, form ourselves into almost anything we want to be, given the proper goals, incentives, and socialization? The truth of the matter is that we don't know what we are capable of as highly civilized human beings because social evolution is still ongoing, sustaining many blows and retarding influences along the way? The immanent danger, and therefore the most pressing social concern before us, is devolution due to hatred, revenge, fascism, and ugly human qualities that humiliating inequality is producing and/or accelerating. This makes NSN a top priority, even if only as a stop-gap measure against total ecological collapse and nuclear annihilation.

Acknowledging the undeniable role of the capitalist State, especially the American capitalist State, in crushing socialist movements around the world, it could be argued that Socialism also failed in many countries not only because science and technology (what Marx called the “forces of production”) were insufficiently developed, but also because human nature was insufficiently developed? Maybe it wasn't just the brutality of the

State, and a shortage of wealth, but also a shortage of goodness and intelligence that caused insurmountable problems? Considering the current American situation, where there is unprecedented frustration and disappointment with human relationships, where even the slightest offensive gesture or word leads to confrontation, there is probably a better chance for Socialism to work on a grand scale after we have been humanized or re-humanized by NSN? NSN will allow people to cool down, relax, develop respect and positive feelings for one another again, then social activities and projects that require a lot of agreement, patience, tolerance, humility and forgiveness will flow much easier. Employee ownership and operation of the economy of a nation (and the world), and even workers' cooperatives on a local or regional level, presupposes sane and rational individuals (who are not full of fear and fury), and there are just not that many such folks around at the moment.

Marx thought of Socialism as a stage of social organization between Capitalism and Communism. It is possible to think of NSN as a stage of development between Capitalism and Socialism. It would not be wise to push this analogy too far, since NSN does not entail a break with the capitalist economy. America under NSN would still be capitalism, a kind of radical New Deal-ism, if you like, but insofar as NSN involves a national plan that governs the economy as a whole in the interests of basic goods for all, then the harsh divisions between Capitalism and Socialism begin to dull. Bernie Sanders' style Socialism, which is certainly not classical Marxist Socialism, could be a path to Socialism, if only he would push his platform further to the point (NSN) where its implementation would provide every man and woman in this country with enough economic freedom (from enslaving wage-labor) to live an alternative lifestyle, when morality requires it, or when people desire to try new living and working arrangements. Perhaps it would be best to describe NSN as the last stage of capitalism because it is a level of social development within a capitalist society that gives people an opportunity to break out of capitalist society by giving people the freedom to refuse work in this economy, to withdrawal from this economy, or at least to reduce one's engagement in this economy, in favor of less competitive and aggressive ways of living and dying.

Basic Income (of \$1000 per month per adult) is an essential part of economic freedom, but unfortunately it is, at this time, not part of Bernie's electoral platform. Without it, the American people remain subjugated to the capitalist economy, even if they have guaranteed jobs at living wages, and they are kept healthy enough and educated enough to continue to work, because they have no control or determination over the working conditions of their daily existence, and they have no power to reject these conditions. Comfortable and well fed slaves are still slaves! On the other hand, Basic Income (BI) without the other benefits of NSN such as Free Housing will also leave people at the mercy of the Corporate State, because nearly all the money from BI will most likely go to pay the rent or mortgage, which means that individuals remained chained to the capitalist work-economy in order to keep a roof over their heads. What justifies regarding NSN as a new and liberating stage of social development, perhaps the last stage of Capitalism, is

the fact that it makes the basic necessities of life into unconditional rights of citizenship (which means that one does not have to qualify for them, earn them, or even ask for them), and it combines these essentials into a minimal level of social freedom that gives Americans the personal power to refuse economic servitude, and to pursue alternative modes of existence, if they so choose.

Socialist and communitarian living and working experiments and pilot projects are definitely needed, wherever opportunities present themselves, but support for NSN is also needed now from all those who grasp the immediate crisis of American civilization, and the heart of this crisis is income inequality, not so much between nations as within America itself. It is the poverty, and the threat of poverty, that Americans experience among themselves, relative to one another, that is depressing and/or enraging the population, and making it extremely difficult to solve a diversity of social problems, including international problems. The Capitalist State has a vested interest in perpetuating economic insecurity because the ruling ideology of Neoliberalism cannot be enforced without the massive economic dependency of the population.

NSN will give people free time to get together and discuss politics and matters of life and death, then many people will discover or re-discover for themselves that making money and acquiring stuff is not where the greater part of human happiness is to be found. Modern-day psychological and sociological research consistently reveals that happiness, by far, is to be found in lasting and loving human relationships, but this is something, apparently, that the American people need to experience firsthand, and NSN will enable everyone to learn this universal truth through dialogue in the ancient Greek sense of open and critical conversation that sometimes leads to knowledge, sometimes leads to an awareness that we do not know what we think we know, but always sheds light on relevant topics, and is always the indispensable basis of real community and real democracy.

The Socratic and Platonic dialogues took place in open-air public venues, or in the homes of Athenians, usually consisting of small groups of individuals who were either friends, acquaintances, or fellow-residents. This kind of face-to-face, direct democracy, whose origin goes back to primitive tribal associations, is still a good antidote to the megamachine and its echo-chamber, and America still permits such freedom, although public spaces are getting more and more difficult to occupy, even for purposes of political education and dialogue, not to mention protest and rebellion. An individual, or a small group of individuals, does not need permission or guidance from any political organization or political leader in order to do tabling, leafleting, or dialogue in the streets with passers-by. Street politics will not only educate people, but it will attract and connect like-minded people, some of whom will invent creative forms of political activism—for example, Reverend Billy's Church of No Shopping with its dancing in the streets-- growing a grassroots network of people working for real change, a boots-on-the-ground (or dancing shoes in the streets) operation that is the heart and soul of any viable

social movement.

The future is completely open because in a democracy the people are sovereign. To limit the government is to limit the people in their legislative capacity. “We The People” cannot be limited in any way; the people cannot give up or forfeit their legislative power. To use a somewhat dated term, the ruling power of the people is “inalienable.” If and when Americans decide to raise taxes, or re-distribute wealth in whatever fashion deemed appropriate, or to change the capitalist economic system altogether, there are not legal or moral bounds on doing so. The US Constitution only exists and functions insofar as the people permit it to do so, not (the other way around) because it contains in itself a process for change. There is no social contract, no Constitution, that could bind the people--not now, not ever--to a capitalist economy of class privilege that condemns the overwhelming majority to poverty and misery. The notion that such a social contract exists is a fraud, a trick. The future is open, containing the choice of NSN, an alternative economic system, a tribal constitution, a communitarian lifestyle, or whatever presents itself on the horizon of history in accordance with the developing needs and desires of human beings for freedom and happiness, to be directed by the supreme Democratic Will of the citizenry.

The Bernie Sanders campaign needs to make something like the following pitch to the nation: My fellow Americans, we are facing an ecological crisis, with climate change being the most glaring symptom, and also a crisis of world peace, with terrible wars raging around the world, and the threat of nuclear war hanging over all of our heads. At home, economic anxiety due to run-away inequality is causing a multitude of mounting social problems. We need a plan to deal with America's uncertain future. My idea is that of a national-safety-net (NSN) that will ensure Medical-for-All, Free Housing, Free Higher Education, Living Wage, Guaranteed Jobs, Basic Income, Ecological Primacy, and Global Peace--to be paid for by taxing millionaires and billionaires, with some help from the upper 20% if needed. My hope is that this idea will spread around the world, but we need to begin now in America. This will require restoring trust and honor to government with a mandate to implement and enforce NSN. In the spirit of such an undertaking I ask for your vote as President to ennoble and empower the role of government in improving our lives, recognizing well enough that my plan for America can only succeed if it is supported by a political movement in favor of it.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to the realization of NSN is the propaganda against it. Two common arguments against NSN—that America can't afford it and that it would make people lazy--are false, misleading, and outright propaganda, which in no way discounts their effectiveness in influencing popular consciousness. On the contrary, this propaganda is responsible, more than anything else, for the fact that NSN is not already the law of the land. How to deal with the power of propaganda and advertisement to control and manipulate the consciousness and unconsciousness of the people for the sake of the 1% is

a central political issue of our times.

Moreover, given the power of advertisement and propaganda to stimulate and develop the worse aspects of human nature, is it possible that NSN is only a band-aide remedy, so to speak, on a serious disease that is killing all of us. Certainly many will agree that ending poverty, and the threat of poverty, in America are laudable goals, but since selfishness and greed will continue in a capitalist economy, with its profit-driven culture of materialism and consumerism, is it realistic to think that ending economic insecurity will qualitatively change this country? In other words, could it be argued that ending grotesque inequality in America is possible and desirable, without a doubt, but it's not enough to bring about a society in which people are truly free and happy?

After all, does anyone still believe that the “good life” consists in a sea of automobiles that constantly crisscross cities and suburbs in which every mile or two reproduces big box stores, chain restaurants, gas stations, supermarkets, dollar-stores, etc? Ending poverty, and the threat of poverty, in America would not end this everyday existence of traffic, noise, pollution, monotony, and ugliness. In fact, it might make things worse in some ways by generating more shopping, consumerism, and bad development, compounding the isolation, loneliness, and emptiness that goes with such a lifestyle ? Most people in America might agree that what we have right now is not really the good life, but the next best thing, which is high materialistic consumption, but due to very effective propaganda and advertisement they are strongly bonded to this way of life. Would implementing NSN in America really bring about a fulfilling and joyful social existence, or would it just make everyday life in America more tolerable and equally unsatisfying? Perhaps something more radical or revolutionary--the overthrow of capitalism or corporate capitalism or neoliberalism--should be the direct and focused goal, instead of a New New Deal or NSN?

The political logic of NSN deals with the problem of propaganda in a two-step process. First and foremost, there must be a concerted effort by everyone on the Left to enact NSN by allying itself with the roughly 80% of the people in this country who will immediately benefit by its passage into law. The propaganda against the reasonable 8 Point Agenda of NSN is already growing thin, and it will be harder and harder to sustain it, as destitute and working class folks become more informed and better educated concerning their own basic self interests. The Bernie Sanders' campaign is proving this political trajectory, and it's mainly a matter of improving and accelerating this development to the point of electoral victory. In other words, the propaganda against basic equality for all cannot hold sway much longer, regardless of how sophisticated and well funded it is, if an organized Left, a bold and honest political campaign, and a growing social movement continue. The powers-that-be will most likely be pressured to cede this minimum social-economic ground (NSN) in the not-too-distant future in favor of a more uniform exploitation of the 99% percent.

The second-step of NSN is to qualitatively change the America way of life, but this will be a much longer and difficult struggle, despite the fact that many people recognize that materialism, consumerism, and money are not the true ends of life. Those people who want to transform or revolutionize American society in favor of an entirely new kind of society will not find many allies, at this time, among the vast majority of folks who can be counted on, with a little political education and organization, to support the end of gross inequality, but who cannot be counted on, anytime soon, to see beyond materialism and consumerism to an altogether different kind of social reality. Nevertheless, once NSN becomes the law of the land, it will set in motion a process with the potential to eventually transcend the commercial idea of the so-called good life (entailing big houses filled with things instead of people, expensive clothing that mostly hangs in the closet, meticulous yards with electric water-fountains, artificial animal statues, patio furniture that no one uses and so on).

NSN is not a radical idea in the sense that its passage into law will immediately, or in the short term, revolutionize everyday life, but it has the radical potential to do in the long run so by creating a new economy of time in which people will not be forced into wage-slavery, into a job that exhausts their talents and energy, and a small percentage of these people, who already know what is of true value in life, and who, therefore, no longer want to be part of a productive economic system that wastes and destroys human and non-humans lives, at home and abroad, as well as destroys the Earth itself, will initiate and experiment with better ways of living and working, eventually demonstrating and proving to greater and greater circles of the population that an alternative society, Another World, in which people are truly free and happy, is possible and desirable. These catalyst groups will begin the long-range, deep change that is the real promise of America?

There are a fair number of retirees in this country who have a leisurely lifestyle on a social security check of around \$1000 per month because they also have Medicare, paid-off houses, condos, or family guest-homes, and other basic amenities or necessities. The problem is that many (not all) elderly folks only want to sustain daily routines and conformity (pancakes in the morning and nonsense TV at night) because the adventurous or creative spirit has dulled. However, if middle-aged people, and especially young people, were provided with a new economy of time, freedom from the economic struggle for existence, then the most politically and ecologically aware and sensitive people will attempt a very different lifestyle. These folks, and there are a significant number on them, are the real founders of a new civilization.

The propaganda machine has little influence on these folks because they are committed to a very different kind of social reality than what is being offered by the merchandisers, retail marketeers, Hollywood, the rich and famous, mass media, Wall Street firms and advertisers. It's the economic struggle for existence, in which they are trapped, that

prevents these people from changing the world, first for themselves, and second, for everyone else through the power of example. They will begin the creation of a new kind of society, if they are given a secure economic foundation on which to build it. It is through personal experience, both on the part of those who will attempt this new society and on the part of those who will come into contact and interact with those who are developing it, that the false images and promises of the propaganda machine will fade and die. There is no guarantee that the creative forces and faces unleashed by NSN will result in total social transformation, but NSN is a plan and path to accomplish it, short term and long term.

It is unlikely that propaganda can be defeated by counter-propaganda, or ideology, or education alone. Some degree of an alternative living reality appears to be needed to dislodge entrenched propaganda. It's not easy to explain how it is that some people escape this propaganda, and stay true to the real meaning and purpose of human existence (perhaps because of political instincts for good and bad, right and wrong, compassion and generosity rooted in childhood?), but it's an undeniable fact that these people exist in all societies, including America, and they are always eager to undertake a new adventure concerning proper human dwelling on this planet. Some have guesstimated that this amounts to around 2% of the population in America. It's hard to say, but there are a lot of people who are ready, and who already have the intellectual resources to pioneer a completely new lifestyle, once they have the material resources to sustain it, and many others will then circle around as soon as it becomes clear that real freedom and happiness is being actualized on the ground. Young people especially are quick to tune into genuine life-affirming historical movements, and there are numerous individuals throughout the country, from all walks of life, who still dream and long for "more" than what the present economic system offers, regardless of how much money one has, so some of the rich and famous will join the cause for a truly meaningful and joyous social order.

Remember that the ancient Greeks under Pericles took part in democratic general assemblies that began at sunrise and lasted most of the day, roughly every 9 weeks, then they usually went to the marketplace, or to the homes of friends, to discuss important issues further. Many visited the marketplace daily in order to shop and talk. The existence of slaves, who did most of the work, provided the free time for this politically active existence. Today, science and technology could provide such an economy of time for all of us (men and women), if it is made to serve the realization of NSN instead of the ruling elite. Primitive tribal communities, without the benefit of advanced science and technology, also contained free time for dialogue and informed decisions about the common good, while sitting around campfires, walking to the river or stream for water, etc. Work was not full-time drudgery and exhaustion, and as a result these simple societies developed qualities that still comprise the core of a good life. Many of the best characteristics of civilization are the result of an economy of abundant time, so we must reestablish this as the foundation of a society that goes beyond social justice and

economic equality to the substance of freedom and happiness for all.

Toward this goal I conceived the idea of a National Safety Net (NSN) for America about 10 years ago, but it was not until I became familiar with the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) and the United States Basic Income Guarantee network (USBIG) that I realized the emancipatory potential of combining a Basic Income (of \$1000 per month per adult) with the original components of NSN. Today, NSN is comprised of the following political ideals or moral principles: Medical-for-All, The End of Homelessness, Basic Income, Living Wage, Federal Jobs Guarantee, and Free Higher Education. The broader ideals of Ecological Primacy and Global Peace give the domestic political concept of NSN an international dimension that cannot be ignored or minimized. The political power of the proposal is in the integration of its fundamental parts because anything less, any sundering of its wholeness into piecemeal struggles and accomplishments, will not secure the minimal level of individual autonomy that is required for both a safe and dignified life (immediately) and for social evolution to the next higher stage of civilization (hopefully).

