

## ALSUP'S FABLE:

# The Black Snake Gets To Eat Us

The federal courtroom - where a hearing was held on CalTrans' **planned atrocity in Richardson Grove** - was more like a classroom. The judge, William Alsup, is a white haired Clinton appointee in his fifties. An ersatz environmentalist who has written a book on the Sierras, Alsup had all the arrogance of a college professor, and spent several hours showing up our legal team as totally unprepared to ace his upcoming final exam on *Global Defense Highway 101*.

One nice thing, unlike Eureka courtrooms, there was no gun toting bailiff to tell me to take off my hat. I sat in the back where I could groan and grumble at the BS and keep my hat on. I came with friends who did their best to shush me. Didn't they remember that I made a specialty of getting ejected from places when the crap was more than I could take. But who noticed? It was all so civil and normal up front. I was in the back row where future drop-outs sat. The good students were too busy at the front of the room, hanging on teacher's every word.

The debate revolved around anything but environmental ethics and CalTrans' compulsive spending of *free* federal money. The war-making feds as usual were interested in shoring up a highway capable of taking their Abrams tanks on a fast track to civil intervention. These tanks **just happened** to weigh the same **40 tons** as the Supertrucks that were the ostensible excuse for this Global Defense Highway. But when the judge left off his *lecturing professor talk* to mention something real, it was about safety considerations! You know - the horrifying death toll suffered by those who passed through the Grove.

**Not!** In my Piercy homesteading days I think I went through the grove something exceeding **7000 trips** and the only accident I saw was right before the Grove. Meanwhile trucks keep falling regularly off the road between Piercy and Leggett and CalTrans could care less. A road which makes the idea of their Global Highway ridiculous. But then the feds use attack helicopters now, tanks are there to **hold down** the peasants. Pause for a moment to keep the Faith: this is actually the death throes of disaster capitalism-colonialism. You can tell because Humboldt County supervisors have been all for it, busy as they are now over-seeing the destruction of the local marijuana economy.



I could see that this Judge obviously needed help and in between whispered exclamations of rage I would raise an occasional hand. Call on me, Prof., I have the answer. But his major concern seemed to be over a technicality. Was the 2018 Environmental Assessment *new material* or was it just a *rehash* of CalTrans original EA and its 2013 revision? If it was *new*, then our lawyers were correct in pointing out that CalTrans published it without a hearing, or at least a warning, soliciting comments. If not, onwards tanks and trucks.

Teacher, teacher, call on me. Judge Alsup was a smart enough cookie to benefit from some scholarly objections. Just the kind of professor who could always appreciate how intelligent I was. I mean, Judge, if there is nothing new in their 2018 EA, you should hold CalTrans in contempt for wasting your time. Hadn't the original been rejected - and here it was again? You don't really think, dear Judge, that putting that big old growth Redwood tree - the one that the gas guzzling Highwaymen had left out of their original survey - putting it back on their little map was enough? I think, actually, he did. I had the sinking feeling that we were sunk.

I started to wish that I had worn my big papier-mâché frog hat. Guns or no guns, that would have thrown a little disruption into the mix. I would have had an **obligation to speak for the frogs**. The law and its rigmarole, much like voting, is something we can find amusing, riveting even, but it's not something you can believe in. Established power was the real law. I

certainly had no respect for the law's pretensions. It was simply ruling class sociology. I never noticed that *justice* let alone *environmental ethics* was anyway involved in all these legal theatrics. I had witnessed this shit in the past. This event was to be no different. You'll see. Read on.

The CalTrans legal team was happy the way the Judge was carrying their ball and didn't have much to argue about. They weren't worried. They would get their way like they always did. Meanwhile our legal team scurried around, trying to satisfy the Judge's demands. Our side was hoping for a technical knockout, a passing grade on their test paper. **Then**, after a slight re-adjustment, CalTrans, or the Timber Company, or whoever, **could resume** bleeding the earth. That is the comfortable narrative for neoliberals. It was so frustrating that I noticed that one of our prominent environmental battlers was raising her hand too. And then, all of a sudden the Judge, paid attention to us. About a dozen or 15 of us raised our hands when Alsup asked how many of us were here because of the Grove. Most of the people in the courtroom! Yeh, let's take a vote, Judge. We know its politics after all. Time for some pseudo-democracy to placate the mob.

Then he dropped his bomb. He thought he was letting us down easy when he warned us not to expect much. Just because we were all, including himself, environmentalists, what could that matter? No children, there was no Santa Claus and no Earth First! either. The Redwood trees, like slaves of yore, had no rights that the state - him and CalTrans in this case - had to actually recognize. All "they" had to do was to - briefly - **consider** the environment and their duty was done.

**Reason of state**, as old Henry Kissinger would have said. That was just about all she wrote. One more Global Highway/Pipeline to choke the earth with. Except they were choking us **here**, where **we** lived. In Alsup's legal fable, **Consideration** was all the trees deserved, those last remnants of the ticky-tack housing boom after WW II. **Consequences** were for later generations. Welcome to the Heart of Darkness, or to update it- the military-industrial colonialism, the Heart of Climate Catastrophe. Of course, he was dead wrong, noted one of our fearless leaders: we still had CEQA, all you water protectors.

**And then** there was another consideration: resistance, intervention, refusal to allow a useless atrocity to take place, whatever the legal Climate Changelings and the Magic of the Law required. It's more than stressing or depressing, it's horrifying. It's time to clench a fist, utter our magic words: **Earth First!** and gather together to stop this Black Snake from eating our life force.

**-Paul Encimer aka thepeopleswhistle**



## A Golden Age Made of Green -Continues from front page

**Poland** is very much like Hungary. It is a place that has experienced humiliation and devastation in the '90s during the transition from communism to capitalism. An experience of decades under the Soviet regime makes it easier for a new regime that is as authoritarian as the previous regime. Now, this current regime is a very interesting regime because, on the one hand, they have done something that has not happened in the West of Europe. They have shunned **austerity**, by increasing pensions and increasing minimum benefits for the poor. But at the same time, they've done this in a **paternalistic, neofascistic, xenophobic way**.

**This strategy** is not new at all, because if you think about Benito Mussolini in the 1920s and 1930s, he introduced the **first universal public pension** fund system in the world. And he did look after the working class, on the basis of a social contract: *We will increase your living standards, we will protect you, but you will have to forfeit all your democratic rights, all your trade unions' rights, you will belong to me, the Duce, and you will belong to your employer, who is my main funder, the Fiat factories and so on.* That was the deal. Now, if you look at the attitude of this Polish government, it is **patriarchal, misogynist, xenophobic**, but it looks after workers and families by lifting minimum wages and minimum pensions, and at the same time demands complete allegiance and loss of democratic rights from the population. Welcome to a **postmodern** 1930s.

The original idea of the New Deal, the original idea of the Keynesian FDR, was to energize idle cash and to put it into good use for public purpose. That must be the main priority of an International Movement. We live in a world which is awash with cash. We have the highest level of debt but also the highest level of savings. The problem is that these savings are not being invested in what humanity needs—good-quality jobs, green transition, green energy, green transport. So, that's what we need to do at the global level.

And the way to do this is to answer some basic questions. **What kind** of monetary system do we want? Because the one we have is broken. **What kind** of financial system do we want? **How do** we fund anti-poverty drives across the world, in our countries here in the West, but also a transfer of wealth from the Global North to the Global South, and further the green transition? These are questions that the left and the progressives have not answered at the global level. The globalists know what they want. They want to shift all the pain onto the shoulders of the weakest of citizens around the world. We know what the fascists want.

Our International Movement rejects both globalism **and** nationalism, in favor of internationalism. What does that mean, beyond the slogan aspect of it? Well, it means

that the idea that you can simply eradicate borders for goods and capital, **but not** for human beings, well, it hasn't worked. It has transported parts of the Third World into the West with whole communities that have been devastated through war and deindustrialization in Europe as well as in the United States. And at the same time, it has created massive depredation and exploitation in the Third World, in developing countries, except China, which is using a particular industrial model that somebody like Trump does not like. The solution **is not** tariffs. The solution **is not** to stop trade. The solution is to impose minimum living wages in the countries that want to trade with you.

So, we are going to fight them on the beaches—and when I say "them," I mean the fascists, those that Steve Bannon is organizing. They're going to face up to the fact that we're going to be there, and we're going to be undermining their "movement" with arguments that appeal to rationality and to humanity. Steve Bannon's "Movement" is reaping a harvest of anger, using that anger in order to weaponize a far-right, hatred-based agenda in order to maximize the power of strongmen, like Salvini, like Kurz, like Zeilhofer, like the Vox people in Andalusia and, just like Mussolini and their ilk in the 1930s, to turn it against the people whose anger they have harnessed. Whereas our narrative is one of unity, one of solidarity between different people, solidarity with the migrants, with the refugees.

Our International Movement has to answer some basic questions. **What kind** of monetary system do we want? Because the one we have is broken. **What kind** of financial system do we want? **How do we** fund anti-poverty drives across the world, in our countries here in the West, but also a transfer of wealth from the Global North to the Global South, and further the green transition? These are questions that the left and the progressives have not answered at the global level. The globalists want to shift all the pain onto the shoulders of the weakest of citizens around the world. We know what the fascists want.

We need to have—and, you see, it's not impossible, because it has happened before, if you think of what happened in the Bretton Woods Conference, which was, of course, not a very progressive event, but **nevertheless** they gathered. They banned entry to all the bankers. **No banker was allowed into the Bretton Woods Conference**. In 1944, preparing the groundwork for the Fifties golden era of capitalism, they put the financial genie into the bottle. You know, bankers hated that period, because they could not do crazy things with your money. So, we need to revive the ambition of 1944 and come up with a New Deal for the world.

**-Yanis Varoufakis,**

Former Greek finance minister who recently attended the Sanders Institute gathering in Burlington, Vermont, where he, Senator Sanders & others launched the **Progressive International**, sometimes dubbed the **Green New Deal**. His conversation was presented on **Democracynow.org**