

# Populism

## Presentation Outline

1. What is it.
2. How it Manifests Itself.
3. What Caused it.
4. How to Fix the Root Causes
5. Pandemic Response Learning Opportunity

# Populism

(or whatever)

A movement that arises when elites no longer deliver what people expect of them, yet still manage to prosper themselves\*. Pick your own name from the thousands of such movements which have taken place throughout history.

\* or worse, use their position to prosper at the expense of those they are charged with leading.

# Populism is a Symptom

of:

- Decline of one large group
- Ascendency by another smaller group
- Inequality
- Division
- Isolation / Insulation

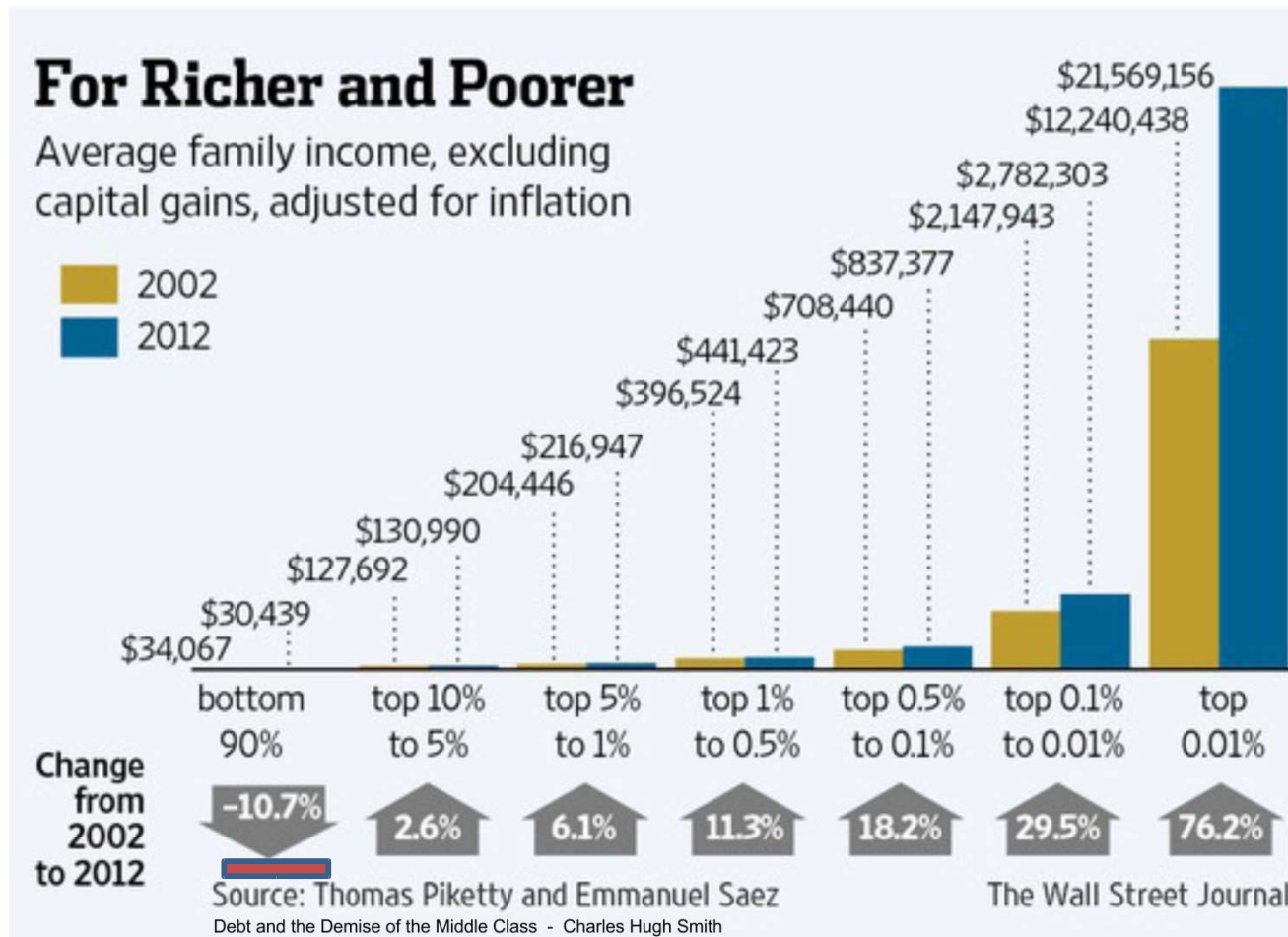
# Loss of Faith

- When a sizable portion of the public of all political and social outlooks lose faith in their leaders and institutions
- Populism can distill into movements centred around left or right wing, conservative or progressive orientations
- Trump or Sanders

# Experience of Populist Supporters

- Declining real incomes
- Loss of good jobs – declining job quality
- Decline of community – both
  - Business infrastructure
  - Residential neighbourhood
- Lower prospects for children
- Lower quality of life
- Being pushed out of their own cities
- Asset (housing) inflation + low wages = perfect engine of inequality

# A Tale of Two Countries



# Collapse of the National Conversation

- A significant percentage of citizens simply do not see their concerns acknowledged
- They are ignored or even disparaged in the media
- Epitomized by failure of Hillary Clinton to reach out to blue collar and low income workers

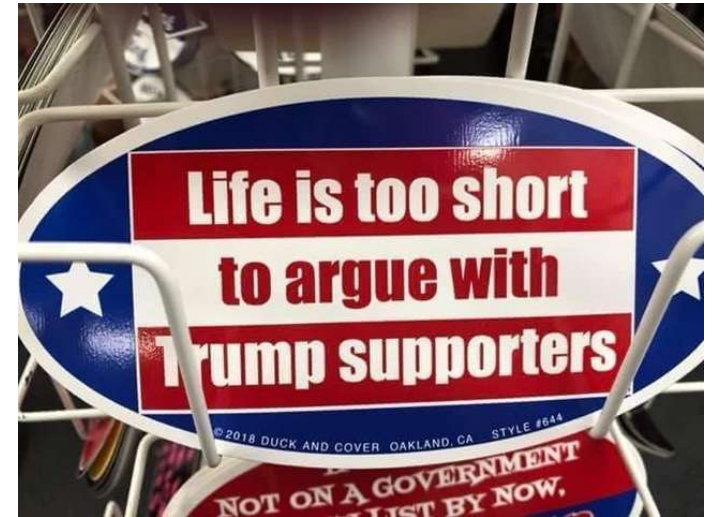
# What Elected Trump

Someone who broke the rules and started naming the elephants in the room

- 1. Illegal Immigration – de facto open borders
- 2. Globalism – loss of good jobs
- 3. Endless Foreign Wars
- 4. Community Disintegration
- 5. Declining quality of Life
- 6. Corrupt media and political system
- 7. No alternative for “deplorables” (Bernie ousted)



What we have here is a failure to want to communicate



# The World of never-Trumpers

- How many have themselves, family members or even know anyone who has:
  - Been killed or wounded overseas (9 million in VA)
  - Lost their job to outsourcing
  - Seen their company close or move due to free-trade
  - Witnessed their community wither
  - Been forced to move away due to housing inflation
  - Seen their children flounder in a gig-job labour market

# What's in a Name?

- Trump managed to take over the Republican Party name and apparatus despite great resistance
- But the party he led could more accurately be called “The We’re Not Going to Take It Anymore Alliance”
- Trump might have been the brand but deep disaffection was the substance

# Trump's Real Record vs Election Promises

- Cut Immigration 8/10
- Build the Wall – end illegal immigration 7/10
- Reverse Globalism 5/10
- Clean up Wall Street 0/10
- Climate Change is a Chinese fraud 8/10
- Stop fighting Endless Wars 6/10
  - ( Zero US Combat deaths in Afghanistan 2020)
- Create better jobs / increase wages 6/10
- Bring back coal 0/10

# Trump Meets his Waterloo

- Trump management “style” of chaos was perfectly ill-suited to dealing with a pandemic and his frontline medical system (CDC) stumbled out of the gate.
- Despite a good team and tremendous vaccine program he lost the war by sowing confusion.
- Masks work; swallowing disinfectant and lightbulbs doesn't.
- Barring this epic pandemic failure, Donald Trump most likely would have won the 2020 election.
- It was a loss for Trump, not the end of populism as 73 million votes attest.

# Mainstream Populism

- What if the Republicans had been led into the 2020 election by a similarly privileged white man with Trump's record except he:
  - was a gentleman, professional & Presidential\*
  - did a reasonable job with Covid-19
- \* was not “temperamentally unsuited to be President”

Separating the politician from the platform: Trump is replaced by a similarly privileged man but one who is both a gentleman and a professional and has the same platform and record of keeping promises on:

- immigration
- no more wars
- the Wall
- globalism
- Reduced unemployment
- Boosted real wages for the lowest income groups

Who wins in 2020?



Biden likely loses to both Romney and Gore if they had run on Trump's platform and record.



# When did the Great Divergence Start?

one man's opinion

- When the level of stratification in our society led to the development of barriers to communication
- The turn from nation building to GDP building
- Leading sectors of development/finance had negative impacts on most people
- Dense urbanization, globalization
- Control of money system handed to private banks



# It is Much Easier to Talk to People Who Share Your Views and Interests



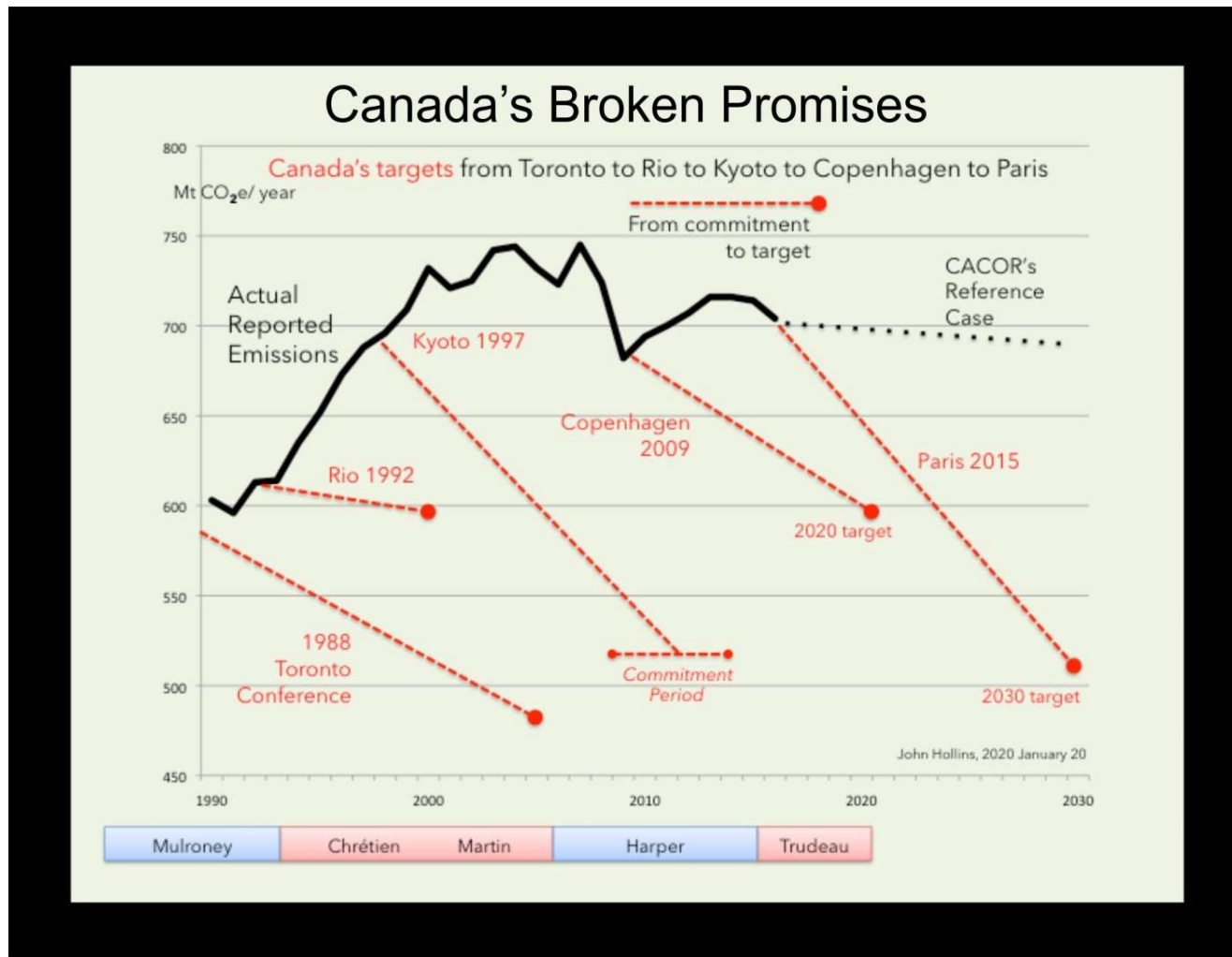
If you are a politician, stockbroker, developer, speculator or media employee in a very hot, rapidly growing market and doing very well, listening to someone talk about job quality, congestion and housing inflation must be downright tedious.

# Democratic Mechanism

- Democratic machinery is worthless if it isn't accompanied by a full spectrum national conversation and clear national goals

# What Constitutes a Systemic Lie?

Not a mistake, not an unforeseen event, not a near miss.



# No Discussion

- No questions on why the absolute failure occurred
- Just more promises to do better than ever
- No math, strategies or goals
- No Pathway, no measurement, no management
- Contrast this to successful Covid-19 responses

# Other Systemic Lies

- Equality Levels
- Quality of Life
- Affordable Housing
- Job Quality
- Debt
- protection from exploitive and parasitic interests\*
- \*non-productive – gain wealth through transfers and inflation and rather than merely participating in a market, they rig the market to benefit themselves
- An elite which treats its people as nothing more than consumers, rent-payers and sources of cheap labour, will face dissension as inequality increases.

# 30 Year Trend

- Globalism has seen an immense transfer of wealth from those who produce it to those who acquire it.
- People forced from cities and homes by housing inflation and stagnant or falling wages
- Americans move out of California, Canadians move out of major cities, British move out of London and are replaced by immigrants

# Shift to Unproductive Jobs

- Loss of jobs to free trade resulted in:
  - Low wage service jobs
  - wealth production is farming, manufacturing, mining, fishing, development, resource based – any real good or service from health to education
  - Non-productive finance jobs
    - Finance sector is a transfer mechanism, not a productive or real wealth creation sector
    - Finance accumulates wealth from the sectors which produce it

Debt at every level

# Gerrymandered Politics is Democracy Disabled

- 90% of voting districts will vote for only one party
  - No discussion of real issues
  - Just energizing base
  - No meaningful debate
- Media with one view
- Lying becomes acceptable when we are all focused on a larger truth from a position of (our own) higher morality
- No common fact base
- Media absolutely desperate for readership hypes and distorts the smallest incidents and comments with no time for actual fact-checking and context reporting.



# Institutionalizing Division

No discussion or exchange of ideas, just efforts to energize the base

## America's Most Gerrymandered Districts

Most gerrymandered Congressional districts in the U.S.  
according to compactness index\*

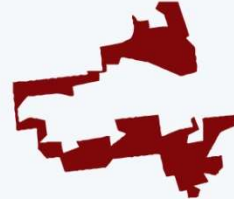
1. Maryland's  
3rd district



2. Texas's  
33rd district



3. Illinois's  
4th district



4. Texas's  
35th district



5. Louisiana's  
2nd district



\* ratio of the area of the district to the area of a circle with the same perimeter

Source: Washington Post



# What of the national conversation?

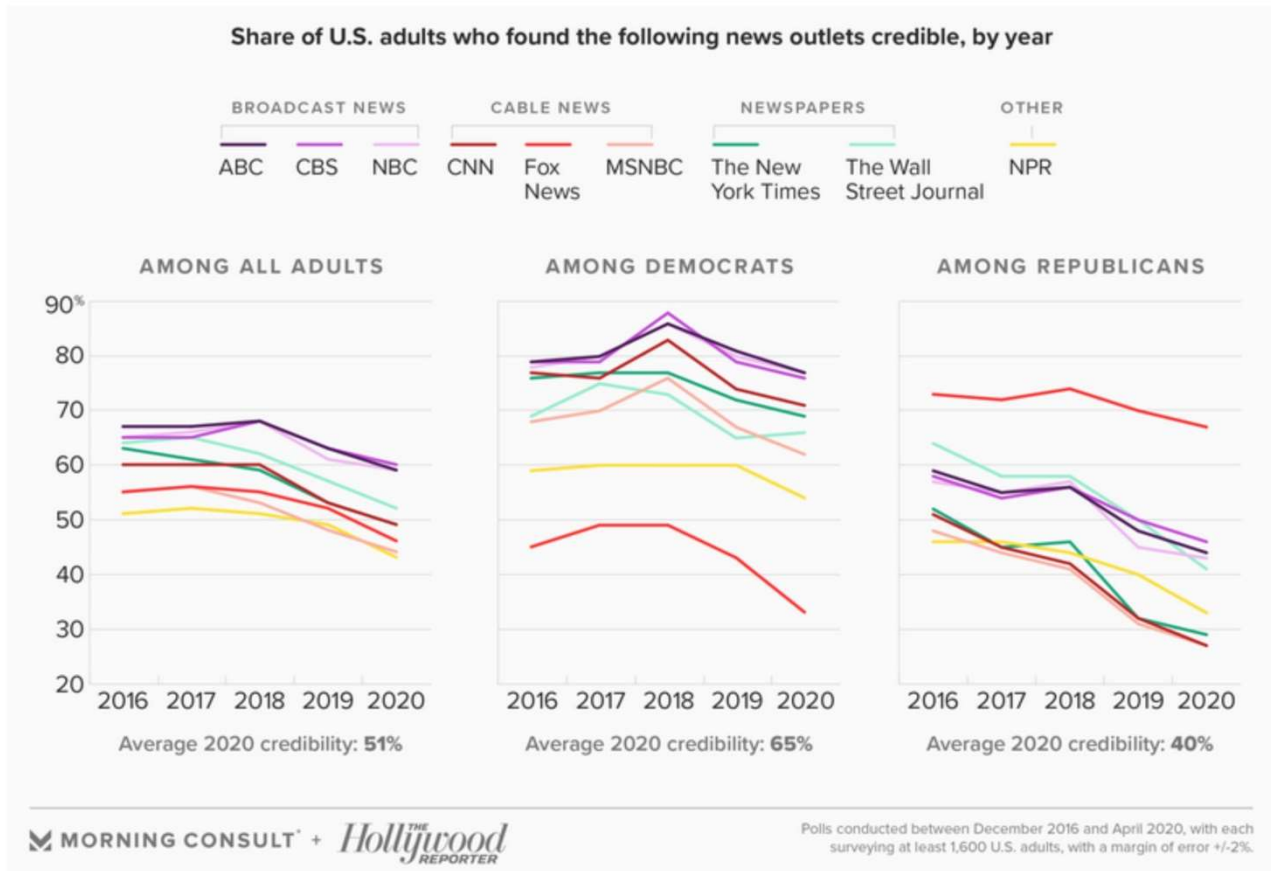
## The Death of the Middle Ground

- “If we could trust our government and the media then we wouldn’t have conspiracy theories. But alas, that’s the way the environment is.” comment on Fox News site
- Who trusts the media for a full context coverage of events?
- Media corporations are corporations beholden to their major advertisers

# Trust in Institutions

- There are very solid reasons for not believing what comes out of the mainstream corporate media where economists are put on the same level as scientists with commercial economics being given vastly more play than science.
- But economics is not science and the constant blaring of its misguided and transparently corrupt messages has eroded confidence in the entire flow of coverage from traditional media sources.
- Instead of being used to describe human welfare and social and environmental balance issues, economics, and its coverage, has become a platform controlled by narrow interests to increase their power and wealth at the expense of all other interests.

# Media Corporations are Big Losers of a Disintegrating National Conversation



<https://morningconsult.com/2020/04/22/media-credibility-cable-news-poll/>

# Politicized News

## The Great Texas White-Out

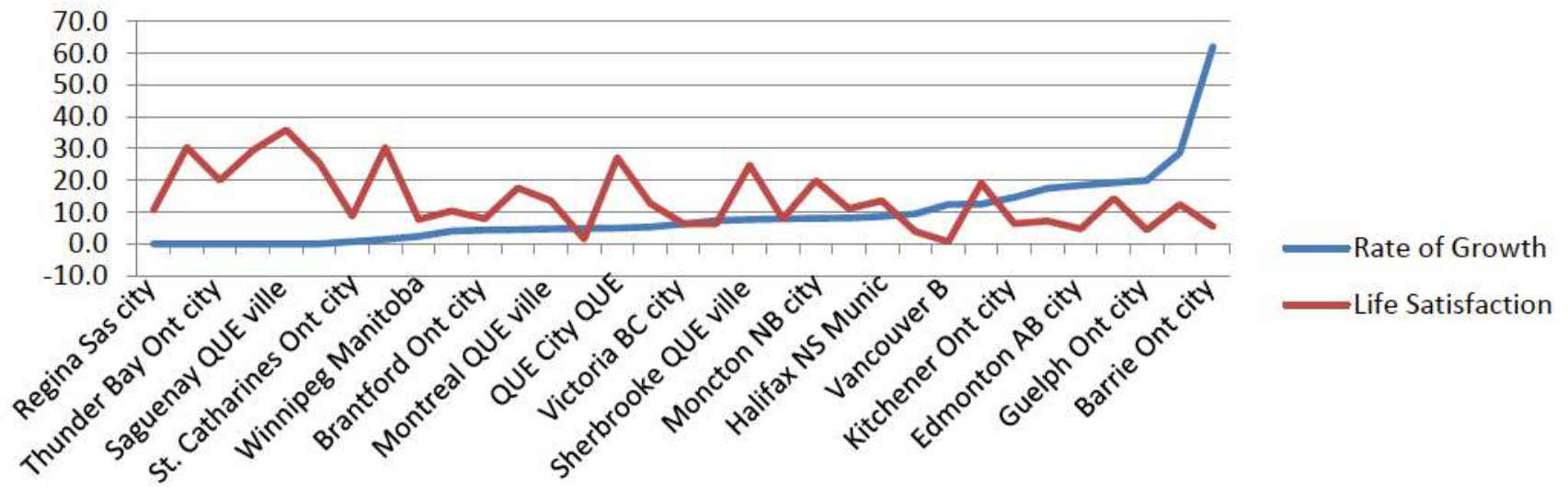
- Fox News - Tucker Carlson (February 16, 2021) Blamed the entire grid problem on wind turbines freezing. “The windmills failed like the silly fashion accessories they are.”
- Wind generators work reliably all over the world but the ones that froze up in Texas were not winterized. Neither were the natural gas, coal or nuclear plants which had to either reduce output or shut down.
- “Green energy means a less reliable electrical grid.” about the isolated and unwinterized Texas grid which is unable to either import or export electricity.
- “People who support wind farms live very far from where the windfarms are going to be located. People who live near where the windfarms are going to be located have a different view.”
- Without a common core of facts and understanding every problem will be taken as a reason to give up and every setback will be seen as a disaster.
- This creates opposing camps instead of a round-table discussion.

# Ultimately, we either go there together or no one is going anywhere

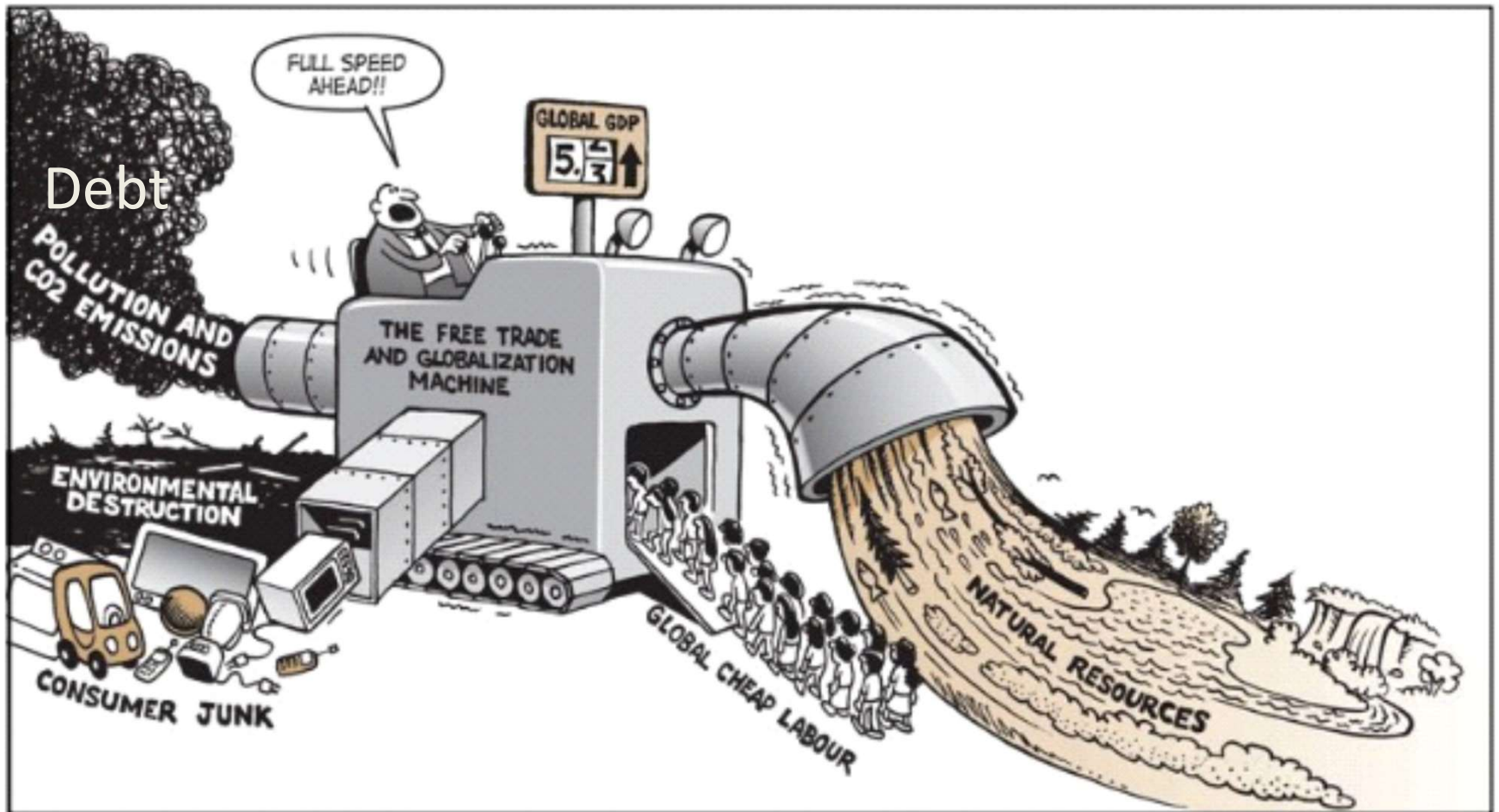
- Angry citizens who hate the system: Why the riots in the Netherlands go beyond a COVID curfew
- "There is a connection and that is distrust in the government, hate against the government, and even more broadly, hate and distrust when it comes to all sorts of societal institutions,"
- According to van Buuren, a lot of societal issues had been simmering long before they boiled over into violence seen across the Netherlands this week.
- Employment precarity and the rise of flexible contracts, in particular, have demoralised young people. Housing, too, has grown increasingly expensive for many. Discontent with the EU has also noticeably begun to increase as has criticism of the country's immigration policies with its multiculturalist society being firmly put under the microscope.
- "Next to that, for instance, is a group of people more from the spiritual New Age movement, who have always been very critical when it comes to big pharma and also when it comes to vaccination," explained van Buuren. "So, they jump also on this train but from a different perspective."

# Growth hasn't been Great

## Life Satisfaction vs Rate of Growth of Canadian Cities



# Globalist Race to the Bottom





# Free Trade as Race to the Bottom

- Jobs shifted from:
  - high wage, high productivity, high quality workerTo:
- Low wage, low productivity, low quality (initially) workers with low to no environmental and labour standards
- Clear national strategy of China to build a modern state with control of resources across the planet
- Western leaders thought they were participating in a market system
- Misnomers like “competitive”, “efficient”, “market forces” used to excuse job losses
- No strategy by western leaders, no goal of productive and broad based economy with high quality jobs and high levels of equality
- “Free trade”, with rigged currencies, good for many countries but not for western nations

# The Current Policy Lens

The Only Truth



\$ GDP \$

## The Immediate Truth

What business and  
governments see

\$ GDP \$

## The Popular Truth

What people live



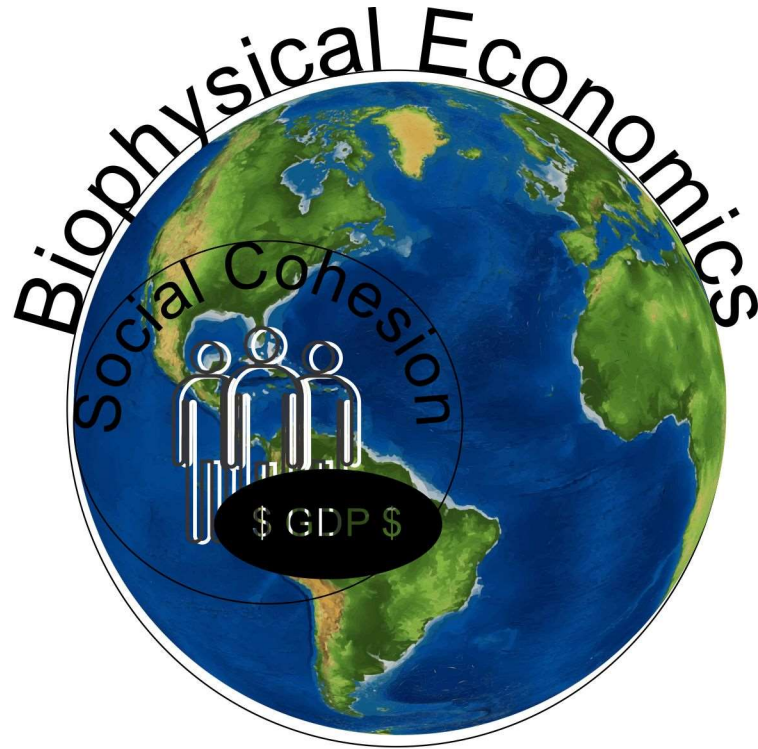
## The Greater Truth

How the planet functions



# Full Context National Policy

The Necessary Truth  
What we need to know  
to prosper



The commercial economy has to operate within a cohesive social structure and the entire human enterprise (Bill Rees) has to operate within a healthy biosphere.

# Covid-19 Changed Things

- Scientific information started to matter
- Leadership started touting experts
- Leaders stood in front of modelling graphs
- Biggest change
  - Leaders focused on public welfare, not growth of the commercial economy

# Levels of Social Policy Clarity on Threats

Crisis	Immediacy	Threat Level	Time To disaster	Clarity of Issue	Reaction Strength	Interest Group Resistance
Titanic	10	10	2 hours	100%	10	0
Pandemic	8	3	6 weeks	80%	7	2
Climate Change	4	10	30 years	75%	3	7
Resource Depletion	2	10	50 years	20%	1	9

Immediacy – speed of reaction occur to avoid catastrophe. Immediate = 10, century = 0

Threat Level – how much of an existential threat it constitutes; Titanic – 10 to passengers, no action means death in 2 hours

Pandemic – high to affected populations, 3 to global population

Time frame – time before a non-effective response produces catastrophic results.

Clarity of Issue – how clearly has society come to see the crisis.

Reaction – how strong and decisive the reaction was.

Interest groups – are there powerful interest groups who oppose decisive action.

# What We Can Apply from the Covid-19 Pandemic

- Looking at successful approaches which minimized economic damage as well as the loss of lives, we can summarize the winning approach as follows:
  - Learn to identify a problem (how to read an exponential curve)
  - Blow the alarm early, activate emergency systems ASAP
  - Involve experts as soon as it is identified
  - Invest heavily in acquiring the best data
  - Formulate a plan for getting ahead of the problem.
  - Execute it with resolve
  - Examine how effective the response was and consider how it could be better and what would have happened if the crisis had been worse.

# Needed: A common vision of the public good

- Stepping away from the GDP metric was central to successful pandemic response.
- Social health indexes and biophysical metrics are critical for dealing with coming threats and to restore a common vision of well-being.
- Thank you.



# The Theme of a Recurring Nightmare

- In your dream, you are groggy and can just barely detect that you are on a gurney in an emergency room
- You don't know what is wrong but there is a buzz of activity around you
- Finally a nurse bends over and says:
- “Dr. Trump will begin operating on you now.”

# Brand vs Substance

- For many, Trump is the brand but what is the real product?
- Fox News: Last August, Trump was questioned at a White House press briefing about polls showing his popularity was declining. Asked to explain, he responded: "Nobody likes me. It can only be my personality. That's all." It was a rare moment of transparency for him.

- It's time to consider how you will provide your family with the basics, the very bottom layers of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs — water, food, shelter, resources, health & safety — if the systems we depend on today start weakening:
- When people are busy moving down the Hierarchy of Needs, that means society is crumbling.
- It's not the economy stupid, it is low unemployment and increasing wages

