

## Ralph Nader Radio Hour Episode 84

### Forrest Pritchard, Jim Naureckas

From the KPFK studios in Southern California it's the Ralph Nader radio hour.

[intro]

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the Ralph Nader radio hour. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and of course the man of the hour Ralph Nader. Today we are going to present another chapter in our ongoing discussion about food, I think somebody in this crew is very hungry, and we are also going to be critiquing the mainstream corporate media, that will be in the second half of the show when we talk to Jim Naureckas, who is the editor of "Extra" which is the news letter but out by the group "FAIR" which stands for: Fairness and accuracy in reporting" and as always, we will be checking in to see what the bad guys are up to this week with Russell Mohkiber corporate crime reporter, and if we have some time left we will get some more of your listener questions. David.

**David Feldman:** Our first guest is Forrest Pritchard. He joins us from Georgia. Mister Pritchard is a seventh generation farmer and New York Times best selling author. He has devoted his family farm "Smith Meadows" to farming organically and sustainable and raising free ranch cattle, pigs, goats, sheep and chickens. His book Gaining Ground: A Story of Farmers Markets, Local Food and Saving the Family Farm made the New York Times best settler list and was named "top read" by Publishers Weekly, the Washington Post and NPR's The Splendid Table. Mister Pritchard's new book is called "Growing Tomorrow: Behind the Scenes With 18 Extraordinary Sustainable Farmers, Who Are Changing The Way We Eat". We want to thank him for taking some time out from his book tour to speak with us. Welcome to the Ralph Nader radio hour, Forrest Pritchard.

**Forrest Pritchard:** The pleasure is all mine, happy to be talking to you guys.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes indeed, welcome Forrest Pritchard. I'm looking at this remarkable book of yours which is like no other one that I have seen. You went around the country interviewing 18 extraordinary sustainable farmers and solicited some of their best recipes and you had little nuggets of wisdom from these farmers. I find it really delightful you went to work to do that. Now on a larger scale, I think what your intent was, and not just to show a few farmers, but to encourage consumers to recognize this could be a real economic movement, which I have called displacement, that is the more farmer to consumer markets there are the more billions of dollars are spent in that manner the fewer billions of dollars are going to be spent for giant agro business supermarket chains, and the food processes who take the life out of the food and put some unsavory additives in it at the same time. So I'm looking at this book as a precursor of really getting people to realize that when they spend their dollars at these farmer markets, direct farmer to consumer markets, and there are over 8 thousands of them in the country and they are growing, that they are part of a real powerful community economic movement that weakens the big guys and preserves the small farmers. So tell us Forrest Pritchard about what inspired you to do this book after your best selling Gaining Ground when you took over a money losing farm that your grandparents and others in your family background had and turned it into a robust economic enterprise.

**Forrest Pritchard:** Right, well I'm saying, just like you alluded too, the hope of the customer connection and understanding the collaborative value of a dollar, that dollar isn't just a dead end into a sandwich or car or mortgage payment, that we can do so much more, and extend our dollars, you know to build our values with our dollars, I kind of did that artistically with Gaining Ground when I put

that story out there, it was a hopeful story, of our individual farm, but I also knew it was an American story of all the farms in the 70's and the 80's and 90's or you know, in excess of a hundred thousand American farms, for one reason or another were forced to sell and that reason usually extends back to commodity fluctuations, high mortgage rates, young farmers choosing not to farm. Whatever the reason it all kind of coalesced, and I had to put that message in the bottle like anybody has to whatever your message is, you send it out to the world, and the world either receives it or doesn't. And it was one of those experiences where a hundred thousand bottles washed back against the shore, with empathy, with compassion, with desire to participate, you know, and mostly people weren't farmers, usually people from cities and suburbs and small town far and wide, who weren't family farmers who probably had been in the families that they said, yes, you know, we want to help, we want to collaborate, we want to rebuild our communities. And one of the more sensible place to do that is around food, so that is really where the, the spirit of Growing Tomorrow comes from, it's to say, look, this isn't just one farm it's not one economy, it's not one little midge, it's from Puget Sound down to Georgia, and Cape Cod, and Santa Fe. It's urban beekeepers in Dallas, Texas, and urban gardeners in Detroit, Michigan, and it's people that are doing not just talking, but they are doing.

**Ralph Nader:** Right, and it's a beautiful book. You go through 18 of these farms, for example the Potomac vegetable farms and you have three recipes, Garlic Yogurt Tomato bites, pear cucumber and sesame slaw and prosciutto wrapped cantaloupe with balsamic glaze, and then you go in to the, you know, what they think about their farm. And you have little side bars that say, "Did you know less than 2% of the population is directly responsible for growing America's food, while an additional 15% processes, distributes and sales the farmers produce, and I might add, the farmer doesn't get much of that dollar, by the time. [crosstalk]

**Forrest Pritchard:** Yeah, about 11 cents.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, 11 cents and sometimes even less, for tomatoes and that is why Forrest Pritchard, with whom we are talking, wants to emphasize that he is talking about direct farm to consumer without a middle, a series of middle men as they are called, or processors, and the second farm was Nicola's farm in Orchard and three nice recipes there: fresh linguini with spring radishes and pees, homemade pasta and lavender and lemon bow mint tea. How did you pick these farms and they are really all over the country? There is a map a, color map, in the book that shows where they are from.

**Forrest Pritchard:** Right. Yeah it was a kind of Venn Diagram of sorts. I'm a farmers market farmer myself. That is how we market our produce. And I started looking around. I said this is my local farmers market. What would if farmers market dream team and local, if we can have national farmers market, You know, so I kind of took a couple You know overlapping circles, and geography of mistily, of ages, of mutual generationality and especially of different types of fruits, vegetables, meats, sea food, honey, you name it, it's right there in the book. And where those diagrams overlapped was where I looked and this country is so early to grow such healthy nutritious food. It's such a robust ability that frankly it wasn't that hard to find these farmers, that they are out there from coast to coast.

**Ralph Nader:** Are you an advocate for the notion that really nutritious food is delicious? Because you know, in today's schools they are trying to get the children to eat more nutritious food, fruits and vegetables, and the children just shove it aside, they've had their tongues cultivated since infancy to crave fat, sugar, salt products. And how do you overcome that? I mean, I was raised on very nutritious food and my mother always said, "If you want delicious food that leaves a great taste in your mouth after you swallow it, make sure it's nutritious." But food process seems today is just the opposite. What do you think?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Right. Well I mean that has to start at home. I mean a kid isn't going to go to the grocery store and shop for themselves. Or it has to start with leadership within our school programs. One or the other has to start with parenting or whoever the role model is, whether it's in schools or homes. And I always tell people, you know, "Don't worry about, you know, whether it's expensive or sustainable or any of this stuff," I say, just the problem is, just take it home and compare it to the package food, take some fresh food home from farmers market and tell me with the straight face, that it does not taste better, you know. And tell me that that's not a value. You know, anybody that has grown food, they understand that value, anybody that has shopped in farmers markets understands that the greatest value of all is that it tastes wonderful at the end of the day.

**Ralph Nader:** You know Peter Bahouth, who used to run Greenpeace, wrote a memorable article on the journey of a tomato raised in Mexico, and it finally gets to New England, in the store. And after you read that article, you never want to buy a tomato that hasn't been produced more than 30 miles from where you live. Give our listeners a sense, what happens especially in the winter, when produce is heavily imported from Mexico, what happens while it's being produced, how it's treated, how it's been shipped, and how can it possibly be economic, if it's shipped 3 thousand miles away? Give us a tour of a Mexican tomato.

**Forrest Pritchard:** Sure, sure. Well I mean for example, you know, we think about as the American farmer, we get up on an airplane and we look down at 30 thousand feet, everything looks all hunky dory. But the fact is 50% of the crops that are grown in this country are corn and soybeans, not destined for human food, but destined for feed and fuel. We back that number a little bit, 85% of our food is grown in Mexico but 15% is being imported. That is bumping up against 30 to 50% of our fruits and vegetables, right? So that kind of gives you some overarching perspective about how much of this food is actually being grown by our American farmers. So we take that food and the carbon, the carbon footprint is catastrophic, I mean from the green house, the propane that needs to be fueled to heat these green houses, the amount of pesticides and herbicides, and then the 15 hundred to two hundred, two thousand five hundred miles it takes for that food to get to your plate, the trucking the warehousing. I mean the economics of it to get a slice of tomato from Mexico to your Subway sandwich shop in Chicago or McDonalds, well McDonalds all the way down doesn't quite even use tomatoes too much, but it's devastating. And the farmers as we alluded to earlier in America are only going to be getting 11 cents of that, a farmer in Mexico is gonna be getting even a smaller fraction of that.

**Ralph Nader:** It's a system based on exploitation, from beginning to end, and the closer it gets to you the consumer the bigger the profits like in Safeway or Giant Foods or your supermarkets. It's a food processors that make the most money, isn't that right?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Yes, it's about 30 cents on any dollar. When you spend a dollar on food, let's break that dollar down: about 30 cents goes to processing, another 25 cents goes to the retailer, about a nickel goes to packaging. Another nickel goes to marketing. Another 18 cents goes to distribution. Another 15 cents goes into trucking, and then when we get down to the people that actually produce this food, we are left with about a glorified dime. You know, it makes you wonder how we kind of prioritize value in our food system.

**Ralph Nader:** Well we are talking with Forrest Pritchard, the author of the new book which just came out on October 20-th by the way, called Growing Tomorrow by the Experiment Press in New York City. It's really beautifully done, in color, and the subtitle is "behind the scenes with 18 extraordinary sustainable farmers who are changing the way we eat" Farms like the Garcia Organic Farms, the Riverview Farms, Red Lake Nation Foods, Kiakuava Family Orchards, Texas Honey Bee Guild, Nick Muto and Backside Bakes. Let me ask David and Steve: Do any of you like hot food?

**David Feldman:** Yes.

**Ralph Nader:** OK, let me put this challenge down, on page 120 of Forrest's book he has a "Did You Know?" Did you know the world's hottest chilly pepper is called the Carolina Reaper, a golf ball-sized dynamo four hundred times hotter than a jalapeno? Four hundred times. Are you game? David? Steve?

**Steve Skrovan:** It sounds more like a weapon than a food.

[laughter]

**Ralph Nader:** And what's the antidote, Forrest?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Casonut of capsain, and that is a tongue twister, try and say that three times fast, but the caso of course is natural component of milk. The trick you do is dipped in yogurt or dairy which of course was Indian food as happening for thousands of years, they balance those spicy curry with some yogurt.

**Ralph Nader:** And this is taste of what is in this book, and various recipes are in conjunction with color pictures. Tell us about wild rice pancakes with apple topping. From the Red Lake Nation Foods.

**Forrest Pritchard:** Incredible story, it's just fascinating and this book is American history, the living American history. So Red Lake Nation is a Native American tribe. It's sovereign territory within the state of Minnesota, about three hours north of Minneapolis. And they own acreage that roughly adds up to the size of Rhode Island, if you can imagine. So what they do from a cultural standpoint is for eons they have cultivated wild rice. And what they used to do is go out in birch bark canoes and wait for this rice. And this again is wild rice, and this is the grain as opposed to a fruit, which is our white rice, which is a little more common rice. So they go out in birch bark canoes and use sticks. And they kind of tap the sticks and the rice would fall in the canoes. Well, it's 2015 they are not harvesting it on big scale in canoes anymore. They got these modified combines. But, these farms, are just enormous rice paddies out in the middle of Minnesota, growing hundreds and hundreds of tons of wild rice every year, and shipping it all across the country.

**Ralph Nader:** I was with a public gathering the other day with, Winona LaDuke, who you may know.

**Forrest Pritchard:** Aha.

**Ralph Nader:** She comes from a reservation in northern Minnesota. And she gave me some packages of wild rice. And in your book describing the Red Lake Nation Foods, page 209 you say quote: "Minnesota is a Lakota phrase combining "Minne" which is a word for water with "Sota" which is sky tinted, that is why I always like to say Minnesota, not Minnesota. "In a land of ten thousand lakes," you write, "rice is nature's length between water and heavens, earthly abundance reaching skyward, in the wooded eddying back waters. The wind moves and I imagine the sound of rice falling against birch bark clicks like rain drops on a hot summer day." end quote. And in reading this Forrest, I imagine millions of young children who are looking at their smart phone and playing video games, or text messaging to them selves, never going out doors, never even playing out doors much anymore, never looking at the horizon, at the moon, at the stars, at the sun. What do you say to young people when you talk to them about what they are missing, in their ruptured connection with nature?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Right. I think nobody, not yourself or anyone likes to be told that they are doing it wrong. So you have to promote, what is desirable in life. And to be starting out for example, as a young farmer, in 2015 there's been no more optimistic or helpful plan to reconnect with nature. The consumer base is passionate, it's driven, the average age of the American farmer is 58.5, and there has been no greater diversity of opportunity between farmers market, farmer table restaurants, TSA's, You know, retailers like Whole Foods. So for those young people that want to put down their iPhones and

they will, You know, and the first people that want to log out of Facebook and they will and they are, and then want to find alternative, the alternatives just have never been finer in my opinion.

**Ralph Nader:** And you know, if they would only give themselves this experience, of course for urban children, that's more difficult, then for suburban and or exurban or rural children. They are going to have more fun, they have more fun running through the woods chasing their dreams and listening to the birds and figuring out which birds are associated with which songs and I mean it's just so much more delightful but they never seem to get the opportunity unless they can go, you know, like from New York city, there's a program that brings this kids to farms in New England for four weeks or so. And there have been reports where this kids, it's the first time they have ever put their feet on dirt on soil, first time ever. And they just jump with joy, and jump into the lake or into the streams. That is a tragedy of it, if they only knew what they were missing.

**Forrest Pritchard:** I think you are referring to the Fresh Air kids, it's what that program is called. And what a concept, that we have to call it fresh air. (laughter) You know. That we have to export kids out of the city for four weeks to get some fresh air, but yeah just another place you know, we can go with our dollars and it's so transparent, you know, the deep lasting value of what we can accomplish like this.

**Ralph Nader:** You know you have on page 71, You have Nicola's Ozark Forest Mushrooms, Salem Missouri, and you have a little side bar that says, Nicola's rural wisdom, this is worth listening to quote: "I think a lot of people are afraid to ever be by them selves, completely away from other people, but being alone every once in a while is important, it helps You remember to like Yourself" end quote. Lot of wisdom in that.

**Forrest Pritchard:** When she told me that, I was just struck, by that, so in society where we are so interminably connected, You know, updating this, and checking that, and pinging and binging, and answering the phone, here is a lady who is out in the middle of rural Missouri 40 minutes from the nearest cell signal, OK, and has found the satisfaction to honor her self, honor her environment by just being quiet, by being contemplative.

**Ralph Nader:** In that case she describes in your book I'm quoting here now, quote: "We've got so many humming birds here, and owls, and whippoorwill, have You ever seen a whippoorwill? Her eyes late up at the mention, strange little birds, only come out at night, the head of an owl, the body of a pigeon, and what a voice." end quote. How do people get this book? Forrest how do they get this book, apart from the book store.

**Forrest Pritchard:** Sure, of course. Yeah. Fortunately it is in bookstores nationwide, from Barnes and Noble and Books-a-Million, from the real biggies down to your local book stores, and my goodness if you don't support local book stores then it's going to be bad, so. Short of that of course, it's on Amazon, which is an afterthought, but yeah if no other options do that, and then we've got a web site Growingtomorrow.com where you can get autographed copies, and so such like.

**Ralph Nader:** And how do they get in touch with you?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Yeah, really easy, forrestpritchard.com, trying to make it as easy as possible.

**Ralph Nader:** That's Forrestpritchard.com. Tell our listeners many of whom may be from cities, are small farmers growing are there more small farms are they closer to markets? What's the trend here?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Yeah. The trends are all positive. Like any census, you can tease out facts on one end and then facts on the other end and competing facts, that is the nature of censuses, and we've got, it take about five years sometimes to sort all that information out. But a couple of trends are

pretty concrete. The number of farms has been going down for a while but then leveling off pretty strongly. The number of small farms, small acreages, have been slightly on the increase. A lot of those are finding a great deal of traction, and looks being dubbed as a green belt, which is green kind of dealt way around urban areas, which has always been a very sensible agricultural urban relationship, where farmers protect the outskirts of the land and the cultivate and nourish the people in side of the city in the exchange for services. You know that's primarily where a great deal of traction is going on.

**Ralph Nader:** Give us an idea of acreages, like how large is your farm? How large are some of these 18 farms? And when you say small farm, what are you talking about?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Well, I was very intentionally again going back to that Venn diagram idea, of overlapping diversity of scale I think is incredibly important, because in our culture we value things like houses and shopping malls over farm land. And that is emblematic, weather you are in Lincoln Nebraska, or New York City. So in this book, I have two farmers that don't own any land at all, two producers I should say. One is Urban Bee Keepers in Dallas; and one is a sustainable fisherman Nick Muto, off of Cape Cod. So we can grow food without actually owning any land. I've got a farm in downtown Detroit, Michigan that operates on seven acres and for the price of a one dollar a year lease with the city of Detroit. And that goes all the way up to size of my farm for example which is 500 acres and bigger then that. So the point is, I mean economics, land access, these are getting to be arguments that we don't have to be having. What we need to be not having is arguments, we just need to be doing, seeking opportunities 'cause the opportunities are there.

**Ralph Nader:** Couple of quick questions. What are the Ag schools, the university Ag schools, what are they doing in terms of this movement, are they encouraging it?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Well, we have, make no mistake, our traditional Ag schools have been sponsored and you know, research has been sponsored by large industrial food and manufacturers and stuff like that. So anytime you do that, there is also place in DC called K street, for lobbyists. You know, so that is going influence policies. But the rise of sustainable agricultural programs just in the last five years is noteworthy. Places like University of Missouri, University of California, University of Davis have been very proactive. So some of these major land grant universities that used to be devoted solely to how can we grow more corn, how can we put, you know, more efficient tractors in the field are now looking at permaculture, organic sustainable systems as a true viable component of our food landscape.

**Ralph Nader:** And your farms, the farms you've chosen in this book Growing Tomorrow, are they near minimal use of herbicides, fungicides, pesticides, nitrogen fertilizers, where are they, how close are they to organic?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Yeah, yeah. So organic wasn't a requisite to be in this book. It's a book about sustainable farmers. And to nutshell it, I described sustainability as a three legged stool, You take away any leg and the stool falls over, okay? Easy way to remember it is, it's three E's: it's the economics, it's environment, and it's energy. Now, what that means is we all understand the relationship with herbicides and fossil fuels to the environment, and so all these farmers have a strong bent against or away from using commercial fertilizers, chemicals, fossil fuels, tractors, things of that nature. It didn't have to be exclusive to that. The second is the economics, these farms had to be actually generating profit from what they are doing, so it's all nice to talk about you know sunshine and rainbows and butterflies, and everybody likes that until you've got to pay your bills, right? So these farms actually generating a profit. And third was the human energy component, because farming is so enterprise and experiential intensive, so it's incredibly easy to burn out. You know, it's incredibly easy to over extend ourselves. So the farmers had to be operating within their own personal energy levels, or else really what is the point of putting books out there like this, just to encourage people to sign up for something

that is not going to work for them. So that is kind of the energy, environment and economy, that played into the best sustainability choice.

**Ralph Nader:** And then when you are selling you'd like to sell direct to the consumer, but some of these farms sell to co-ops like there are lot of food co-ops in Minnesota, Saint Paul area, and to CSA's. So you got three outlets, direct consumer, the CSAs where families sign up for a summer's worth of produce, and co-ops. Can you give us your views on all that?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Yeah, yeah. And there is if you want to include food to table restaurants in there and maybe agri-boards (?). And those might also be components to that, you know, in 1996 when I graduated from college and started kind of rebooting our conventional farm and taking it to course of direct marketing, farmers markets was kind of that ancient cultural intersection, you know, extending way back in time when people got it. You go to farmers markets, you buy food, and some of these other options co-op, CSA, big national organic chains like Whole Foods, etc. Even Chipotle to a certain degree, weren't an option right? So farmers markets were the sensible place for me to go, 'cause I was going to save my farm, you know, I was going to do it one way or the other. I was going to make it happen, but now starting out a landscape that is so much more diverse. Customer demand and customer education is so much greater that farmers really do have these diversified options to sell their products at the place that makes the most sense for them.

**Ralph Nader:** Well back in 1960 Forrest we were fighting for clean, safe food, nutritious food, it was like voices in the wilderness, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest started, an offshoot of one of our groups under doctor Michael Jacobson, and put out this very widely circulated newsletter which I hope You get called Nutrition action and when ever we put out these book we get on the Phil Donahue show and even Mike Douglas show and Merv Griffin show, mass audiences, it's really a shame that those shows are not current today to put You on and reach a huge audience, and I'm talking about selling hundred, two hundred thousand books with one show, but this is a great gift for the holidays listeners, it's called "growing tomorrow" with recopies, wisdom and the kind of horizon that gets You say, You know when I participate in this farmer to consumer market place I'm building a new economy, I'm building a sub economy that's displacing the giant agro business economies who treat food like digits on their accounting platform and take the nutrition out of it, and put color in additives and preservatives into it, and misleadingly market it so it doesn't even taste good, that is why they have to use so much sugar, salt and fat. So thank You very much Forrest Pritchard good luck on Your book, and one more time Your website where they can reach You.

**Forrest Pritchard:** Really easy ForrestPritchard.com and the book is available nation wide and support your local book store.

**Ralph Nader:** And Your farm is where in Virginia?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Yeah, we are in a, Virginia, west Virginia, line it's called sniff meadows and it's sniffmedows.com.

**Ralph Nader:** Good, if You are anywhere near there, listeners drop by, You take visitors, You even have a bed and breakfast that Your mama is running, right?

**Forrest Pritchard:** Just say Ralph Nader sent You and will take care of You.

**Ralph Nader:** OK, thanks very much Forrest.

**Forrest Pritchard:** My pleasure, take care.

**Ralph Nader:** Buy buy now.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been talking to organic farmer and author Forrest Pritchard, his latest book is [Growing Tomorrow: Behind The Scenes With 18 Extraordinary Sustainable Farmers, Who Are Changing The Way We Eat](#). Go to [growingtomorrowbook.com](#) to pick up a copy. Go to [ForrestPritchard.com](#) to find out more about his farming philosophy. Before we leave this topic, David I want to say when I was doing all the interviews for the documentary "An Unreasonable Man" about Ralph, a lot of the people - I've never said this to Ralph -- would say. "Man, that guy could eat," when they were talking about Ralph, and Ralph when you were running down some of those recipes I could sense that your mouth was watering.

**Ralph Nader:** Well I've always from my upbringing equated nutrition with delicious food, so when people ask me what do you think of this dinner, I don't just say it's "delicious," I say, "It's nutritious." Once you combine the two, you make much better choices in terms of food for yourself and your family.

**Steve Skrovan:** Very good.

**David Feldman:** I'm wondering if instead of people using Visa or MasterCard there is a piece of plastic called "Ralph Nader Sent Me," and it's used in the sharing economy.

[all laugh]

**David Feldman:** Right, if somebody said to me, "Ralph Nader sent me," "Oh come on in have a meal here. You want these books? I was going to donate, but here, take these books."

**Ralph Nader:** Actually, you know, his mother, Forrest Pritchard's mother, always dreamed of having a bed and breakfast. But they never had the money, and she had to have a full time job elsewhere. The farm wasn't producing much money, was losing money, and just think of this: this farm now has come back big time and they built a Bed and Breakfast right on the farm, and her dream has been realized.

**Steve Skrovan:** That's a great story.

**Steve Skrovan:** You are listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Let's check in now with our corporate crime reporter, somebody else asking a great stories Russell Mohkiber. Russell?

**Russell Mohkiber:** From the national press building in Washington DC, this is your corporate crime reporter morning minute. From Thursday, October 22. 2015. I'm Russell Mohkiber. United Parcel Service will pay 4.2 million dollars to resolve allegations that they routinely falsified delivery records regarding state and city government packages for years. Earlier this year, UPS settled similar allegations with the federal government for 25 million dollars. The case was brought by a former UPS employee Robert Folk, under the federal False Claims Act in the False Claims Act of 19 states. The law suit alleges the UPS fraudulently obtained payment for delivery service not actually performed. For example, UPS allegedly entered false delivery times into it's tracking system to make it appear that packages were delivered on time to government customers when in fact they were not. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

**David Feldman:** Thank You Russell. If you missed any of this episode on the radio, remember you can go to [RalphNaderradiohour.com](#) and catch up with our conversation with Forrest Pritchard or any of the other informative conversations we've had on our previous 83 episodes. We provide links to guests and their work. You can submit questions, and we have also added a new feature: a downloadable PDF transcript of the show starting with the episode from three weeks ago we did with software expert Eben Moglan and Paul Hudson a Flyers Rights. You'll see the link posted just above the audio player on your computer. You may have to give us couple of days to get the transcript up there, but it will be up

there and it's another way to be in touch with what we are doing here on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Steve?

**Steve Skrovan:** Thanks David. Jim Naureckas is the editor of Extra!, which is the monthly newsletter of media criticism put together by the group FAIR, which stands for Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. He is the co-author of The Way Things Aren't: Rush Limbaugh's Reign of Error. He has worked as an investigative reporter for the newspaper *In These Times* where he covered the Iran-Contra Scandal. Personally, I receive the online FAIR bog weekly in my inbox, and it's one of the things in my inbox I actually enjoy opening. It's succinct, incisive, witty and kind of like The Daily Show has the way appealing way the hypocrisy of how the corporate media treats news stories. So it's my pleasure to welcome you, to the show. Jim Naureckas.

**Jim Naureckas:** Thanks for having me on.

**Ralph Nader:** Thanks for coming on Jim, I want to start by saying something about extra. Extra basically puts the eagle eye on the foibles of the press and how they slant, or not cover, or distort the news. And they also have a weekly radio program, which I think is marvelously done and try to listen to it every chance I get. Before we get into several of your recent critics in your new letter, Jim, describe the program and how people can tune into it.

**Jim Naureckas:** Well it's aired on 150 stations across the country and Canada, but you can also hear it online at fair.org. It's called Counter Spin, and look there and there will be links to hear the show, we are also beginning to transcribe the show, so you can read back episodes of it, if you prefer.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes. Well let's start with three of your recent commentaries: one is called "Washington Post Reduces Palestinian Victims to a Word Problem," the second is a New York Times on the Transpacific Partnership "Too Secret for Critics to Have a Right to Complain About," and the third is "The New York Times Continues to Obscure Responsibility in the United States Bombing of the Hospital that was Run by Doctors Without Borders" in Kunzu, Afghanistan, with the horrible loss of life. Let's start with the Palestinian-Israeli situation. There are many, many people in Israel and Palestine, who want a peaceful two state solution, but they are not in the ascendancy, especially in Israel which is the dominant military power and the occupier of the West Bank and in effect invading Gaza, and embargoing Gaza and controlling it in so many ways. The tragedy of this problem with the media as you pointed out on more than one occasion is that they start, when there is violence, as if the Palestinians provoke it. Every thing starts with the Palestinians. And then the Israelis are retaliating. And you get right to the bottom of it. You want to describe the situation? Because, I think over the years four hundred times more civilians have been killed by Israelis against Palestinians than Israeli civilians being killed by Palestinians.

**Jim Naureckas:** There definitely is a disparity. And the violence against Palestinians is ongoing and it's treated by the US media as kind of the non-story when that is all that is happening, the sort of day to day killing of Palestinians, usually unarmed, is not considered a major story. When the violence, it begins to hit both sides, then it becomes a story. And often the violence against Israelis is the only story or the main focus of the story. That's what that report that you were talking about sent by the Washington Post's article with the headline the lead and the first row of paragraphs were all about Palestinian terrorists and against the Israelis. And only after I think 6 paragraphs did the report acknowledge that there are Palestinians being killed too. And you had to really work out the math in the description to figure out that the Palestinian victims of what they call "clashes with the Israelis" which is, stone throwing, protestors being gunned down by soldiers with automatic weapons. That was actually the largest group of fatalities and the violence. And they were described as "the rest," by the Washington Post. Not names, not details, just sort of passed over as etcetera basically. To

illustrate the power of selectivity, US media have a powerful spotlight to shine on whatever event they want to highlight in the world. And you can really distort by focusing on one group of victims and leaving another group of victims in the dark.

**Ralph Nader:** And it's not just the Washington Post. It's just a pattern. It's AP, it's the New York Times. Especially the Wall Street Journal. It always starts with the Palestinians, I mean, for God's sake, you know. It's just remarkable to watch and very sad.

**Jim Naureckas:** The word "retaliation" is something very powerful, because it creates a sort of moral description of what's going on where you have some people provoking and some people are retaliating. And the violence has been going on for decades in the Middle East so you can always start at a particular point and say, here's where, you know, start the clock and treat anything after that as retaliation.

**Ralph Nader:** Sometimes Jim when reporters are called to account on this they say you know, "The Palestinians don't have much of a public relations operation, and the Israeli government has the superb public relations operations." And I say to them, "Yeah, but you've got the great Israeli human rights group, B'Teslem..."

**Jim Naureckas:** Right.

**Ralph Nader:** That puts out the truth on all of these casualties...

**Jim Naureckas:** Right.

**Ralph Nader:** ...and they put it out to the Western press. But it does not seem to get down to the print level for readers in this country.

**Jim Naureckas:** Israel does have a very powerful PR apparatus and in fact there is a major reporter in both the Washington Post and the New York Times, whose spouse is part of the Israeli public relations apparatus. And we called to attention these conflicts of interests at both papers. And they have sort of dismissed it as irrelevant. But it seems to me that if your spouse is for a living lobbying for better media coverage for a particular country, it's very difficult for you to do a fair job of covering that country, without being influenced by your loved one's career.

**Ralph Nader:** True enough. Let's move on to the New York Times on the Transpacific Partnership, which you have in your headline: "Too Secret For Critics to Have a Right to Complain About." Watch this one.

**Jim Naureckas:** Yeah, this was a report in the New York Times that was sort of sneering at the critics of the Transpacific Partnership, as they announced the final language had been reached. Many groups from environmental groups, labor groups, groups concerned with healthcare, many other groups were coming out and warning about this deal as a bad deal for the public. And the New York Times was saying: "Well, how can you criticize it, when you haven't seen the deal?" And the fact is: this deal has been negotiated in secret mainly by corporate lobbyists from various countries.

**Ralph Nader:** For years.

**Jim Naureckas:** The New York Times is critical of the people who have been shut out of process for criticizing the process that they have been shut out of. And the New York Times is basically saying, "Why don't you wait a few months or more to find out what is in it?" when it will be a done deal, and there will be no time to organize against it. And the irony is that we actually have seen quite a bit of the TPP deal as it was being negotiated, because a lot of people have leaked it to Wikileaks. And you know the opposition by to environmental groups got to see the chapter on the environment, and were

not impressed with what they saw, is in form what they have seen on Wikileaks, but none of that made it into the New York Times account.

**Ralph Nader:** For those of you listeners who don't know what TPP is: it's basically more than a trade agreement with 12 countries like Canada, the US, Vietnam, Pacific Rim countries, Japan. It's been completed and president Obama sometime next year is supposed to send it to the Congress for ratification. This is an agreement that doesn't just reduce tariffs and quotas. It subordinates our health safety and workers' standards to the supremacy of the commercial trade. So that if there are food labeling requirements in California, Brazil, that exports food to California, can say. "Those are too onerous. You have to repeal them because they violate NAFTA or they violate the World Trade Organization. So these agreements have the force of federal law when they are approved by Congress and they have real enforcement teeth. In fact, our taxpayers were threatened with a four billion dollar fine under the World Trade Organization tribunals in Geneva, Switzerland, totally secret, if we did not repeal the wildly popular congressional law that required country of origin labeling on meat products in your supermarket. So you would know whether the meat product came from Mexico, Canada, the US, Japan, Brazil, Indonesia, whatever. So that's what all of these groups are objecting to, the subordination of worker, consumer and environmental rights and improvements to these commercial tyrants that are given the special privilege in these agreements. But isn't it strange, Jim that here is a prominent newspaper that should be up in arms about the secrecy over the years when the corporations get these drafts under the TPP and the hotel corridors that they help draft. It's OK for the corporations to get them. But think that New York Times would be the tribune of openness. What's going on here? Why are they tolerating this?

**Jim Naureckas:** Well, it's what, the critic that's FAIR makes is that we have a media system in this country that is overwhelmingly owned by the wealthy,, by the multinational corporations often by individuals who have deep pockets the owner of the New York Times, the major owner of the New York Times is sometimes the richest person in the world, depending on how Microsoft stock is doing.

**Ralph Nader:** You are talking about who there?

**Jim Naureckas:** Carlos Slim. Mexican billionaire.

**Ralph Nader:** From Mexico? Who is worth over 70 billion dollars yeah.

**Jim Naureckas:** And their major revenue stream is not from readers but from advertisers, that is the major source of their income, and so giving who owns them and who funds them, it's really not surprising to us that the bent of the major media is towards defending and protecting corporate interests. It would be surprising if given their structure that they would provide a platform that would be critical of the profits of some and the entities that benefit from it.

**Ralph Nader:** You know Jim I have to disagree with that, in part, because I think your comments apply the Wall Street Journal editorial page but, you know I read the Times every day and they have marvelous editorials denouncing the attack on the civil justice system by insurance companies and corporations. They go after credit card fraud. They go after the pharmaceutical industry's staggering price increases. They go after BP and the oil companies on that editorial page. And they do have some good op-ed there. I think in this case when it comes to trade, it's ideological. It's Tom Friedman, the cheerleader for so called "free trade" in his book The World Is Flat. Because I have sat with the editorial board of the New York Times after NAFTA and WTO were passed and I said to them, "Doesn't it bother you you can't send your reporters to those tribunals in Geneva where decisions are made that may require us to roll back our health, safety, and worker protection laws? That these are closed court rooms? Is that a price worth paying for what you say is loosening up free trade around the

world?" You know what they told me? They said, "Yes!" In other words, here they are, they can go on to every US court room unimpeded and cover the proceedings. But they are banned from going to these tribunals under NAFTA and the World Trade Organization, and they go along with it. So, I do think that it's an ideological thing. It's like they all took economics 101 back in the 70's and 60's where they think it's still free trade instead of corporate-managed trade, the global corporations. They haven't even caught up with the late Paul Samuelson, who wrote the text book that I studied at Princeton and was a great supporter of free trade. He changed his mind before he passed away. He said, "This is no longer comparative advantage. This is absolute advantage." China has modern technology, hard workers and capital. They have all the advantages, and they pay their workers 70 or 80 cents per hour. And that's what makes it an absolute advantage, sending high value products to the US. So I think it's a little bit more than you know just their advertisers. What do you think?

**Jim Naureckas:** There are certain shibboleths that, you have, to adhere to to be considered a serious thinker in Washington, and free trade is certainly one of them. Now, there is the idea of the "you need to reform social security." If you don't believe the entitlements are out of control and need to be reined in, then you don't have a seat at the adult table at Washington conversations. It's sort of taken for granted that that's the right answer to the question.

**Ralph Nader:** I think you're right on that. What do you think of public radio and public television? Do you ever get on any of the programs the public radio and public television?

**Jim Naureckas:** It has been a very long time since we have been on. I think in some ways public television, we call it public television, public radio, in this country takes a place of truly public television and public radio. We did couple of studies in the past year or so of the boards of the public radio and public TV stations. And it is astonishing how packed this are with corporate interests, with corporate executives, largely from the financial industry. They are the large majority on almost every board that you can find on your local PBS or NPR station. And that is because the fundraising at these institutions focuses on getting millionaires to write them big checks. And that is what keeps the lights on there. And they also depend very heavily on corporate underwriting which would be called "advertising" if it was on a regular station. But they refer to it as "underwriting" because it's public television.

**Ralph Nader:** You know all the time you wouldn't you hear public radio, it's maddening how almost like every four minutes or every five minutes you hear "Support comes from..." Then they list it all. I remember when public radio got under way and public television. One of the arguments was it was going to be advertising free. And it's just maddening how many "Support from..." items are listed in any given hour.

**Jim Naureckas:** Did you know that when they air BBC programs they're cut? You are not getting the complete program because they have to make room for commercials, which they don't have on the BBC. And so you are seeing a cut-down version of these shows on American television so that the ads from you know the oil company or the Archer Daniels Midland could be squeezed in.

**Ralph Nader:** You are talking about when PBS and NPR borrow BBC programming and they put them on, and they are not the whole program, because they all have to interrupt to say, "Support for these programs comes from..." Well, you know, the support from Congress is shrinking isn't it?

**Jim Naureckas:** I think that Congress strictly, the Republicans in congress are very aware of to them the danger of truly public programming. Where you have journalists who don't have to look over their shoulders at what a corporate outcaste is going to say about their report. And so they have made sure first that, if any thing airs on PBS that is, you know, a shot at the ideology of particular Republican

congressman, and that covers a lot, it will come up when they have the funding come up again. And they have made sure that the funding is insufficient, so that you have to go to the corporations, hat in hand, to get a contribution from them in order to get a program on the air. Almost every program that airs on PBS has a corporate sponsor.

**Ralph Nader:** It's like the News Hour, the News Hour on PBS.

**Jim Naureckas:** Yeah that is willing to say, "yeah this its the kind of programming that our corporation will but it's name up against."

**Ralph Nader:** Isn't the taxpayer budget contribution to PBS and NPR less then 15%: one-five?

**Jim Naureckas:** It's small. You know, and both the government and the people who send tax and regular people send checks in and get a tote bag in return, they are paying for the infrastructure. They are paying for the studio and for the broadcasting tower and so on, and the actual content is paid for, largely by the corporations. And so they are the ones who really have the say on what goes out over the air. And very, more often than in the past, you are seeing corporations being able to give money to programming on PBS that boosts the corporation. You know they are not, as you know, just polishing their image by being up against quality programming. They are actually able to get programming out that is propaganda for their product. One of the most...

**Ralph Nader:** Like at Milton Freedman series or William F. Buckley on PBS.

**Jim Naureckas:** One of the most, outrageous examples was the couple of years ago NOVA did a report on drones that was funded by Lockheed Martin, the drone manufacturer.

**Ralph Nader:** That's amazing. They have done such a good work NOVA and...

**Jim Naureckas:** Yeah, no it's, and it's sad to see them sort of prostituting themselves by taking money from a weapons manufacturer to do a "gee whiz" program about weaponry.

**Ralph Nader:** And how good was the program? On drones?

**Jim Naureckas:** It was "Gosh, look at this fancy new technology!" They did talk about that drones sometimes kill civilians. But then they promised that drone manufacturers were looking into better optical sensors that will prevent this from happening in the future.

**Ralph Nader:** I see. One minute on C-Span. What's your view of C span? Before we close.

**Jim Naureckas:** Well I think C-Span you get an unedited view on some of what goes in Washington through C span that you are unlikely to get on CNN or certainly Fox News, and that is good. We have looked in the past at, like, their book show, the range of ideologies that is represented in terms of their book guests, leaves a lot to be desired. I still think that overall, it's you are getting a window into something that you would otherwise be in the dark about.

**Ralph Nader:** Jim Naureckas, why don't you tell the listeners how they can obtain your wonderful publication "Extra!" and how they can connect with you, give you leads for future stories.

**Jim Naureckas:** Sure. It's all at fair.org. You can subscribe there. You can read some of our back stuff. You can listen to our radio show "Counter Spin." And our contact information is there, so we do actually depend very, very greatly on a network of supporters to, to give us tips on what is going on in the media.

**Steve Skrovan:** Jim, I have a quick question, which is more on the personable side. You are a journalist. What was it in your journalism experience that turned you in this direction, to critique the media, to take this particular point of view, to tell the stories from that angle?

**Jim Naureckas:** Well, you know, I started as you said, covering the Iran-Contra scandal. And it was a very interesting time because it was a big crack in not only the Reagan administration, but the whole ideology of US foreign policy as the defender of democracy. It was really tarnished. And you could see it was a story that people were very excited about. And there was a pullback from it, where people decided that this is no longer a story we are going to pursue very aggressively. The Reagan administration produced the Tower Commission Report, which was basically a cover up and few were kind of like, "Oh that makes sense," you know. The major media outlets were very almost eager to accept a reassuring story, even if it wasn't very plausible, that left the system, you know, with its foundations intact.

**David Feldman:** I always thought Contra-gate was like the Kennedy assassination where the press looked into the abyss and said: "Ohh, ok we are not going there." Right? Isn't Contra-gate just scary.

**Jim Naureckas:** Yeah, no, that is very true. As an impressionable young reporter it made me think that the big story was the institutions that were supposed to inform the public and in this case they decided not too. And that was really telling.

**Ralph Nader:** Well thank You very much for an illuminating exchange, Jim Naureckas, editor of "Extra" and I hope that listeners will support this effort because if you don't watchdog the press, the press full of advertising revenues, will not watchdog big business and big government on your behalf. Thank you, Jim.

**Jim Naureckas:** Thank you, Ralph.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been talking to Jim Naureckas editor of "Extra" the monthly newsletter of media criticism from Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting, otherwise known as "FAIR." Go to [fair.org](http://fair.org).

**David Feldman:** Ralph, can I ask you about Contra-gate, if you don't mind, and Arthur Lyman? Do you remember Arthur Lyman, the attorney, the counsel for the Contra-gate committee, saying that we knew there was stuff on Reagan, but we didn't want to go there because he was about to negotiate a deal with Gorbachev that we didn't want to jeopardize?

**Ralph Nader:** Oh yeah, they could've impeached Reagan, but they argued on Capitol Hill at that time was look, Nixon had to resign. We just can't keep filing impeachment resolutions against presidents. And he lucked out. Ronald Reagan had four leaf clover in his pocket. He is lucky in so many ways. But they had the goods on him this is very serious. Even the Democrats didn't want to go after them and impeach him. They just had enough with the Nixon, Watergate scandal. And this was much worse.

**David Feldman:** Wasn't it also just America deciding that we are an imperialist nation and that it's more important that we have the strong military than to investigate ourselves, and I think everything changed after Contra-gate.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, it was like the air controllers strike against labor unions. Yeah, remember when senator Inouye looked into the camera? He was on the committee, senate committee investigating the the Iran contra, he said, "Looks like there is a secret government within the government." Oh boy, he was right on precipice on that one, huh, David?

**Steve Skrovan:** Well that's our show. I want to thank our guests today, organic farmer Forrest Pritchard, go to [forestpritchard.com](http://forestpritchard.com) and Jim Naureckas from the "fair" blog. Go to [fair.org](http://fair.org). For Ralph's weekly blog go to [nader.org](http://nader.org). Remember to visit the country's only law museum: the American Museum of Tort Law in Winsted Connecticut. Go to [torthmuseum.org](http://torthmuseum.org). Remember, a transcript will be posted of this show on [RalphNaderradiohour.com](http://RalphNaderradiohour.com). And subscribe to us on iTunes and Stitcher. The

producers of the Ralph Nader Radio Hour are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Mathew Marran. On behalf of David Feldman, I'm Steve Skrovan. We'll talk to you next week, Ralph.

Thanks Steve, thanks David. And listeners mobilize. There is nothing like the grassroots sending the message to the powers that be from Wall Street from to Washington.

[closing tune]

**David Feldman:** Special thanks to John Richard, Mathew Maren. Our graphic designer is Jimmy Lee Worth, our editor is Jimmy Lee Worth, our board operator is Jimmy Lee Worth.

**Steve Skrovan:** Oh what the hell. Let's make him our producer.

**David Feldman:** Our producer is Jimmy Lee Wirt. And thanks to our executive producer, Alan Minsky. And most importantly special thanks to mister Ralph Nader, [www.nader.org](http://www.nader.org)

**Steve Skrovan:** Our theme music "Stand Up, Rise Up" is written and performed by Kemp Harris.

**David Feldman:** If you are listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour as a podcast and would like to listen to it as a broadcast...

**Steve Skrovan:** ...call your local radio station and say I want the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

**David Feldman:** He is Steve Skrowan...

**Steve Skrovan:** I'm Steve Skrovan, he is David Feldman.

**David Feldman:** Until next time...