

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 150 TRANSCRIPT

David Feldman/Steve Skrovan: From the KPFK Studios in Southern California, it's the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello David. How did you celebrate your patriotic day of devotion, which President Trump declared his inauguration?

David Feldman: Every four years I sit down, I watch the inauguration. I love America. I watched Trump being sworn in. Like every other inauguration, my eyes welled up. In fact, I'm still crying.

Steve Skrovan: We also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello. You got to do more than cry, David. You got to mobilize.

David Feldman: Yes.

Steve Skrovan: He's "Mobilizing His Tears," that'll be the new song. On today's show, we're going to talking about the future of work, specifically the digital labor economy represented by platforms such as Uber and Task Rabbit and you know the rest. We're going to be doing that with Trebor Scholz, Associate Professor at The New School in New York City. We will also, per usual, check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber, the Batman of the corporate crime beat. We will also get to some long overdue listener questions. But the digital revolution has changed a lot about the nature of work. As a worker in this economy, what rights do you have? What are ways workers can shape their own workplace? And here to tell us about it is our first guest. David?

David Feldman: Trebor Scholz is a scholar, activist, and associate professor for Culture and Media at The New School in New York City. And as an expert in the new digital labor economy, his work [Uberworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy](#) introduces the concept of Platform Co-operativism a more humane workplace, which takes the worker-owned cooperative idea to the App Store. Here to tell us how all of that could happen is Professor Trebor Scholz. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Professor Scholz.

Trebor Scholz: Thank you for having me.

Ralph Nader: Indeed. This is very important, listeners. It may be new to you. The jargon may be new to you, because these digital companies have proliferated with jargon and acronyms. But hang in there. You will see what the future is, unless Professor Scholz's proposal, along with many others, to replace at the local level Airbnb, Uber and a lot of other digital companies with local cooperatives for a digital age. That's what's called Platform Co-operativism. It should be much easier to setup, because it doesn't require big buildings and a lot of inventory. He, with others, have just come out with a book called Ours to Hack and to Own, The Rise of Platform Co-operativism, a New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet. This is extremely important. Let me give you some preliminary figures. One-third of all the workers in this country are part-time or temp employees. They don't make a decent living with few exceptions. They don't have benefits. They don't even have a forty-hour a week. And increasingly, the strategies of the digital companies, including companies like Google and Facebook and many others that you know about is to get as much of this labor free. Overall, half of the people in this country make less than \$30,000 a year, 75% of them have no savings whatsoever. You see, we're a poor country. We are a highly technological, highly financialized third world country. We want to start with Professor Scholz with this question. You are discussing the most important economic issue in the country, because the goal of all these companies is jobless workplaces, jobless warehouses as much as possible for Amazon, jobless delivery systems, autonomous vehicles, pilotless drones, jobless billings, everything to get rid of workers. The new designee for the Secretary of Labor by Donald Trump is a restaurant chain abuser of workers. And he was quoted in saying that "Robots are far better than workers. They don't get sick. They don't have vacations. They don't have to have benefits." This is the man in charge of labor policy for the United States of America, if he gets confirmed. Let me ask you this first question. I want to start with Amazon, because I think Amazon is really the boldest and most defiant company to get rid of paid employment and to get rid of local businesses hollowing out communities, because they can't make it against Amazon. In your book, which is called Uberworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy - it's an optimistic subtitle - you have several pages devoted to Amazon, basically the business model of Amazon. And I couldn't stop reading it twice. For example, you have a quote from the former *Wired* editor turned drone manufacturer, Chris Anderson, on page nineteen, where you say "Users happily do for free what companies would otherwise have to pay employees to do." And you add "It's a capitalist's dream come true. It's not outsourcing. It's crowd sourcing. Collectively, customers have virtually unlimited time and energy. Only peer production has the capacity to extend as far as the long tail can go." Tell us about Amazon's plan for the American worker.

Trebor Scholz: I think there are two things at play in what you just described. On the one hand, they are concepts like crowd sourcing, which basically is a digital version of traditional piecemeal work, where you can basically put thousands of people to work paying them extremely little without any commitments. They work for you for ten minutes, fifteen minutes an hour. And there's no binding relationship, no contract. Amazon runs one of those crowd sourcing platforms that's

called Amazon Mechanical Turk. And they have novice workers. They are people who start working, they make something like \$2 to \$3 an hour.

Ralph Nader: \$2 to \$3 an hour? What about the minimum wage?

Trebor Scholz: \$2 to \$3 an hour.

Ralph Nader: What about the minimum wage?

Trebor Scholz: Precisely, right. That should be illegal, you would think. But then the legalities of it are just gray zones, because they are not employees, but they are independent contractors - at least that what these platforms like Amazon claim. Therefore, they don't fall under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. That makes these work arrangements be situated in this very blurry gray areas, legally. As a result of that basically, this is kind of hidden work, right? People aren't really aware of the workers that say clean their Facebook feed of pornography or other undesirable material but in fact, it is. It is Amazon Mechanical Turk workers, among others, who do this kind of work, and you never think about it. So, it's invisible labor. These workers are completely hidden behind the screen of the Internet. And these companies like Amazon basically try to give themselves this image as Tech Companies when in fact they are really Labor Companies. They basically step back and distance themselves from any kind of tension that occurs on these platforms between these quasi employers and the workers, because they say "Hey. We just provide the platform." That's I think part of it. And then the other section that you spoke to, in a way applies more to Facebook, this kind of free labor that you mentioned. We started at The New School, started discussing this in 2009, thinking "Should these Facebook users really be paid?" The answer is that it's probably quite impractical and if not impossible to actually pay these one billion people directly from the company. But what is entirely possible and quite interesting is a proposal that was made through a report in the French Finance Ministry, which in 2013 suggested to impose taxes on the value that French citizens create for these platforms MySpace, Torque, Apple, et cetera on French soil. Technically, that's entirely possible to track. And this certainly got the attention for these companies, which unfortunately never led anywhere, because of political struggles, a lack of political will to actually push that through. But I think this would be an interesting way to go.

Ralph Nader: Where do the tax returns go?

Trebor Scholz: They would go to the government. They would go to the French government.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. So the consumer would still be providing the inventory, the personal data that Facebook uses to make billions of dollars and make Mark Zuckerberg worth more than \$35 billion and counting. It still doesn't solve the problem of why consumers are giving their personal information massively, daily, voluntarily. When are they going to straighten up and organize, especially since they can organize on the same Internet that they're being exploited by.

Trebor Scholz: Yeah. No, I completely agree with you with that spirit. I think this is where this model that I'm proposing of Platform Co-operativism also comes in, because it is very much also about cooperatives' data ownership to think about how did the platforms that we are using every day. If you get up in the morning and you pour your coffee or your tea and you go on your mobile phone or your computer, the platforms that you are accessing, which are just really owned by a handful of people. Chances are they would all fit into a Google Bus. What would it be like if the people that actually rely most on those sites would also own them? You could think of multi-stakeholder cooperatives platforms like that. Let's say the cooperative news platform, or a cooperative social networking site. As it turns out over the last few years, actually these examples exist. These companies exist. It's just that they really need to become more visible and draw in more users.

Ralph Nader: Okay. Before we get to your solution, which you just outlined briefly, and the book of many contributors edited by you and Nathan Schneider called Ours to Hack and to Own, The Rise of Platform Co-operativism just to make it concrete for our listeners. You pose a very logical question. What if Uber drivers setup their own platform? Or if a city's residents controlled their own version of Airbnb? This book shows another kind of Internet as possible and that the new generation of online platforms it's already taking shape. However, let's face reality. Even in the history of cooperatives, where you can show it's a better deal for consumers. They can decide not to sell tobacco in their stores. They can get a refund or a rebate every year. It's still has not spread very widely. The organization of stock-held corporations like the supermarket chains and like Airbnb and Uber - the organization is so overwhelmingly more intricate and more aggressive and more able to push fledging platform cooperatives around and undermine them and low-ball them. I want really to get our listeners properly indignant. This is a massive transformation downward of our economy. Uber has a 160,000 part-time drivers. They are being squeezed. Already Uber's gone from 20% to 25%. Uber said, "These aren't workers. We don't have responsibility for their benefits. We're just a software company." Of course, cab drivers are losing jobs. And the next area is truckdrivers. I want you in very clear language, Professor Scholz, tell our listeners what's coming, if we don't organize cooperatively. What's the scenario over the next thirty years of Jeff Bezos and his jobless economy?

Trebor Scholz: Economists have spoken to this quite clearly, from Picketty on the one hand to many others. And many describe a future that has by 2030 with extremely heightened inequality. By then, inequality that is even today hard to imagine where you have on the one hand the 1% who would make something like €34,000 or \$36,000 something a month and you would have the top 10% that would make around 9,000 a month. And then you would have the rest that would make essentially live on free Internet and beans for some €800 so \$900. You see, that kind of

development is also in parts facilitated through technologies and facilitated through the introduction of what we now call - what some people call - the sharing economy, this on-demand economy that creates jobs that are built on this myth of flexibility and autonomy, basically creates exaggeration, where people can actually still have subsistence but make incredibly little money. And there is absolutely no way to - much, much harder to organize. If you think about for the last two hundred years of organized labor - so most of the achievement of organized labor of unions has actually fallen by the wayside. And all the rights of workers have stalled, because of this re-organization of the labor market side, where basically the shift from employees - not that we want to romanticize that employment relationship, but it came with rights under the Fair Labor Standards Act - to independent contractors. As you pointed out, fifty-five million now are freelancers and day laborers that don't have these kinds of contracts, these kinds of protections. And what happens for one is that these kinds of emerging forms of labor can really only be sustained through these networks of care around the worker. How could somebody have a completely unreliable schedule, if they're wouldn't be a family to buffer this to support the worker? I think it's similar to Walmart really, supported by food stamps and the state. So these companies basically manage to profit off that as well. So, I think what this vision that I would see and project and probably much accelerated through the current administration is one where inequality comes to a level that you think it couldn't be bearable anymore. I think this is really where we need to think about how to organize on the one level; and then on the other also think about economic models that are based on self-organization and self-governance. And this is where platform cooperatives come in.

Ralph Nader: Okay, I find the book very fascinating, but I find the jargon bloodless. My experience is, unless you have a message that generates social indignation or violation of decency, instincts of fair play, a future of supporting yourself and work, and unless you have an alternative - which we're going to discuss very soon: platform co-operativism - very little is going to happen as the juggernaut of the Airbnbs, the Ubers, the Amazons, the Facebooks, the Googles continue rolling over the economy. And so here's my question. How do you turn this language, which has to use a lot of the language of these jobless-directed corporations as well as some unfortunate academic language...

Trebor Scholz: (Chuckles)

Ralph Nader: How do you turn it into social indignation? If you are on the stump in Central Park, like they were in 1910, and you had a minute or two to get people upset, because of what these companies are doing - and they really even don't care. They're not planning for it. They're lobbying against any kind of reforms. They go from full time jobs of the old economy to part time jobs like Walmart, heavily relying on corporate welfare. There was a study not long ago that the average Walmart supermarket, because they move people over to food stamps, Medicaid, housing assistance, energy assistance, cost the taxpayers a million dollars a supermarket, okay? Then they move to part time and eventually robotics, artificial intelligence gets rid of their job altogether. How do you really get people upset? I'll tell you why. I know the answers to these questions, I'm asking you, have you ever been on NPR with this book?

Trebor Scholz: Not yet, no.

Ralph Nader: Have you ever been on PBS?

Trebor Scholz: I've been on syndicated national shows yeah, but not on those.

Ralph Nader: Okay, the big programs are Ashbrook, Diane Rehm until she retired, Terry Gross and the television interviewer, Charlie Rose. Have you been on those yet?

Trebor Scholz: I have not been on those, no.

Ralph Nader: Okay, have you been on *60 Minutes* or any network news program?

Trebor Scholz: No, no, no.

Ralph Nader: Okay. Have you been on *Marketplace*, which is on NPR? It's supposed to focus on new developments as well as new responses.

Trebor Scholz: This is a good list. And I think we could probably go on, but I have been on those shows so I think these ideas should be on those ...

Ralph Nader: Okay.

Trebor Scholz: ... I agree with you but for the ...

Ralph Nader: Okay, because I want to help you with this, so I have to know what your answers are. Since the process is from old full time jobs with some security benefits to part time jobs with few benefits and little job security to no jobs. From paying workers to getting free workers on the Internet and from getting their inventory from suppliers called consumers like Facebook free, tell us about with real examples Platform Co-operativism that's emerging in this country. And I'm going to say, listeners, the way I read this, this should be much easier to set up than storefront cooperatives. Am I correct, professor?

Trebor Scholz: I think first I should say that there is really enormous excitement around these ideas, right? In 2014 I wrote this essay framing this idea and suggesting to bring this model to the Internet. And there has really been enormous resonance not just in the United States but really all over the world, where you have chapters started, supporting this idea. We have a consortium at The New School, which has dozens of organizations in it that supports this ecosystem. And I know we've convened at event where a thousand five-hundred people showed up to inspire others. I think what people are actually quite interested in is the near term alternative that is behind this proposal. It has been in activist circles, the critique is pretty clear right? We've heard those critiques before. But what is very rarely offered is a concrete near term alternative to which you can contribute. And I think this is where this really makes sense and inspires people.

Ralph Nader: Okay, tell us specifically ...

Trebor Scholz: Yeah.

Ralph Nader: ... in examples how Platform Co-operativism gets started in a community, how it works. But before you do that give our listeners your website so they can get more information.

Trebor Scholz: The central website for this is platform.coop. That's a good starting point. Examples, there are many. And they are very different, because like I said, so they can be a Taxi Platform Coop. And that example would be Green Taxi Cooperative in Denver, which is very interesting. Brings immigrant workers from seventy nations together for this Taxi Cooperative that basically functions just like Uber. It has an app. You can order your taxi, but you basically benefit the cooperative. Here in New York, in Queens you have Up & Go, which is a website/app, where you can order basically services like pet care and cleaning services, eventually also babysitting and every single worker, whom you get in touch with through this app belongs to a cooperative. One of the financially very successful Platform Co-ops is called, Stocksy United. And that operates in Canada, where it's basically a platform for photographers that sell their – it's stock photography site, so photographers apply to this cooperative. And if they accept them, they show their photography on the site and sell it on the site. And the photographers are co-owning the platforms.

Ralph Nader: Two quick questions. How does this deal with full time work? It seems these platform cooperatives are still part time work, although the members get more of the revenue than they would if they were with Airbnb or Uber or Amazon. I assume they get a better deal. But they still are not getting a full time job, are they?

Trebor Scholz: This is just about for comparing what the situation of these photographers would be without a site like that in comparison to the existing. This doesn't solve all the problems. This is not the silver bullet for full employment and actually communism or whatever you've mentioned. But it does benefit the photographers in that it basically gives them 50% of the profits throughout the annual cycle and a small percentage is deducted to operate the site itself. There are platforms like Loconomics in San Francisco, which is a cooperative that connects freelancers or massage therapists and you name it to clients. And it's also a cooperatively run service, that means that the benefits, the profits from that also go to the freelancers in a clear way. These are just like a few. This Stocksy, for example, made \$7 million in revenue last year. These are not marginal operations. They can be quite good revenue stream as well, which can really support workers in a significant way.

Ralph Nader: Then you have municipalities getting in on this right? Municipalities, give some examples.

Trebor Scholz: The city of Barcelona has signed on to Platform Co-operativism as a model and has included it in their policy for the city. And concretely this means that they basically created a budget to move a cooperative book chain online, so that they can also compete with the likes of Amazon. They're basically creating a platform coop supported by the city. And Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the British Labor Party, has included this ideological framework and business model in his digital manifesto, so as is basically planned for the Labor Party.

Ralph Nader: For more examples of what's going on listeners, again give the website Professor Scholz.

Trebor Scholz: It's platform.coop.

Ralph Nader: As a lawyer, whenever I see economic oppression, I always ask the question: what's the nature of the contracts between sellers, buyers, employers, workers, brokers, investors, banks, savers? Underneath all are the contracts. Once you challenge these companies, they resort to this fine print contract that you click on or you sign on the dotted line. I was amazed, because I've gone through a lot of books on economic repression. This is one of the first books that I've seen. This is the book Uberworked and Underpaid, where on page 74 and 75 you do talk about fine print contracts. And you quote the finest researcher in this former professor of law Margaret Jane Radin in her book Boilerplate: The Fine Print, Vanishing Rights, and the Rule of Law. How are the contracts being revised to be fairer in platform cooperativism?

Trebor Scholz: I think that's a big difference even to traditional cooperatives, which are often burdened with prejudices from people who have experience with cooperatives. I think they are really substantial contributions to the commons in that, for example, a platform coop like

Loconomics puts their bylaws online. This is completely new territory. They thought for several years about physically what would the bylaws look like that basically tried to prevent, for example an exit strategy. For Silicon Valley this is very common. Many companies are basically just building up to themselves to Google or Amazon. How do you prevent this happening in the case of these platform cooperatives? And these people really found ways to literally put this in the bylaws and make it impossible that if the coop becomes very successful, somebody could sell out. That's very interesting. And you can find those bylaws online if you go to Loconomics and "bylaws." If you search for that, you will find those. And they really spell out completely pioneering way of operating a business like that.

Ralph Nader: Are you aware of the National Cooperative Bank, which we helped get through Congress in 1978 under President Carter? Its mission is to provide loans and advice to co-ops. I suppose these platform cooperatives need some financing to get underway. I don't see anything in your book on the National Cooperative Bank.

Trebor Scholz: I think that platform cooperatives would never shy away from any available funding source. But an issue with credit unions and banks is sometimes that these institutions find those business models too risky. They are not really willing to invest, because they see it's a startup like any other. In New York City, in some ways 94% of all startups fail. It's a risky thing to support; and it's very new. I think this has been the experience of some co-ops that basically in these institutions find them too risky.

Ralph Nader: You're right, which is exactly why we got passed through Congress the National Cooperative Bank. It was originally called the National Consumer Cooperative Bank in Washington DC. And it's ready to consider requests for loans. You might want to crank that in on your website. What's your website again for people to get much more information, more specific examples?

Trebor Scholz: platform.coop.

Ralph Nader: Now, I want to end with this question because I know some of our listeners are raising a very fundamental question - and you referenced Mr. Stallman in your book. He's one of the early birds on Linux. And you referenced him on page 150. This is a paperback, listeners, so you can get a break on the price compared to a hardback. This book is called Uberworked and Underpaid. What about disengaging completely? Going back to the real economy, the way it was in 1980, have your own on-the-ground co-ops, your own farmer to consumer marketplaces, make credit unions more democratic, get renewable energy wind power in your local area, have community health clinics right on the ground, no virtual reality - and rely so heavily with the emphasis on prevention of disease and trauma. What about disconnecting?

Trebor Scholz: Right. I would absolutely subscribe to all of these things you listed. When it then, however, it comes to withdrawing from the Internet or having this - that show of refusal, I would support that also - but I would also like to remark that that's a question of privilege. I think if I look at my students, for example, I couldn't recommend that to them, because it basically would significantly disadvantage them in their job search. It would be unrealistic. I think for people like Richard Stallman and others, I think I welcome the sentiment. And I think it's a wonderful thing to do, if they are able to do it. I think it shows that you have a degree of privilege, if you can do that.

Ralph Nader: Amazon is working overtime to hollow out communities and drive out small business. Hardly a day goes by without our hearing about businesses, bookstores and more just shuttering, because they can't handle Amazon. And the anti-trust laws are antiquated, and they can't deal with a company like Amazon. You favor a conference on the future of local economies and the business model of Amazon Corporation, which not only has changed what we think of when we hear the word - we used to think of the great equatorial forest in Brazil, but it's run by a man, Jeff Bezos who owns the Washington Post, who has multi-hundred million dollar contracts with the CIA, who is deep into cloud computing, who sees no off-limits to where his jobless economy is going - do you think we should have a conference on this to see how local community main street America can fight back?

Trebor Scholz: Absolutely. And projects like Rhizomatica, for example, are looking into building this local resilience of networks, building mesh networks and things like that but also make more resilient to cyber attacks, I know which is another issue you are interested in. So I think what you're proposing makes perfect sense. And I think it should bring all the stakeholders to the table, so the Platform Co-operativism movement, as well as the creative commons, the pro-commons movements, the economy movement, because one thing is clear that it really needs a broad movement. It needs very generous alliances and friendships and support networks to push back against this administration in the next four years.

Ralph Nader: Before we close, Steve and David, what occurs to you when you listen to our conversation with Professor Trebor Scholz?

David Feldman: The only Amazon we should be clear-cutting is the one owned by Jeff Bezos.

Trebor Scholz: (Laughs)

Ralph Nader: How about you Steve?

Steve Skrovan: Yeah.

Trebor Scholz: Let me say one thing though. I think what's important is for the spirit of these platform cooperatives that the first goal is not to destroy Uber or Amazon, right? I mean it's not an easy task to take on a sixty billion dollar business. I think that these cooperatives, they will not be destroyed by Amazon, and they will also not destroy those companies. I think there is a way in which these models can coexist. You basically can carve out a part of the market that creates a bit more of a fair working conditions instead of taking on and saying basically we are here to level the field.

Ralph Nader: I think you need higher ambitions, with due respect Professor Scholz. You need higher ambitions. We're not talking about destroying. The word is "displacing" with local economies these giant firms. I think the vision of Jeff Bezos: down the line he'd like to be in charge of a giant network of robotic squids, and he's the only person left that was a human being at the top of the company. We're dealing here with loss of livelihoods, which often involve health and safety, family disintegration. We want to aim at displacing these giant absentee robotic insensitive multinational corporations. Steve, you were saying something.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. One of the questions that we kind of got away from Ralph that you were talking about: Professor Scholz, you go into Washington Square Park and you get on top of a soap box. How do you explain this to the people, who are gathered around you in clear layman's language?

Trebor Scholz: Yeah. I think it's quite straightforward. Basically, the idea is to bring worker ownership to the digital economy and democratic governance. So concretely in layman's terms imagine - as we said already - Uber drivers owning the platform or embedding cooperative values in the codes and operating as a cooperative. There, you create economic resilience and a fairer workplace.

Ralph Nader: I think you would be a very perfect interview subject for *Yes* magazine, which chronicles the growth of local economies which are now at the level of tens of billions of dollars. I described some of them a few minutes ago. Have you interviewed by *Yes* magazine?

Trebor Scholz: A few times. Yeah, they covered this a few times.

Ralph Nader: Excellent.

David Feldman: I have one quick question. I know we're short on time. You're dealing with students. They are being taught the myth of the entrepreneur. And how much of the myth of the entrepreneur is really identifying with your oppressor?

Trebor Scholz: How much is this myth identifying with the oppressor? Can you elaborate a little bit?

David Feldman: Not you, but how many students - this generation, the millennials - they're being trained in the virtues of entrepreneurship. But aren't they being manipulated to identify with their oppressor and then blame themselves for their own failure?

Trebor Scholz: Right. I think this is maybe also when we talk about challenges to probably all of these models is really this Commanded Individualism. Jodi Dean calls it the term of Commanded Individualism, which basically suggests to them - and I find this absolutely in my students - this idea that you have to have an individual career. You stand for yourself. These waters that are polluted by Ayn Randian ideas. And you have to have individual living, individual careers, individual futures, instead of thinking about it collectively.

Ralph Nader: That's a good phrase to entice our listeners to want to find out more command individualism.

Trebor Scholz: Commanded Individualism.

Ralph Nader: Commanded Individualism. All right, one last time, give the website. Listeners, start little town meetings on this, get your municipality involved in Platform Co-operativism. I'm sure Professor Scholz and his associates can give you step-by-step help on forming them. And don't forget the Nation Cooperative Bank in Washington DC for a loan.

Trebor Scholz: Thank you very much, Ralph Nader. The site is platform.coop.

Ralph Nader: This has been a very pioneering discussion. And I think people will look back on it and say, "Why didn't we hear about this earlier?" And we'll try to get other public broadcasting outlets to cover you and your colleagues, who are basically sounding one of the most important economic warning signals circulating the globe today. Thank you very much Professor Trebor Scholz, the author of Uberworked and Underpaid and the coeditor with Nathan Schneider of the book you need to have, Ours To Have And To Own: Platform Co-operativism, A New Vision For The Future Of Work And A Fairer Internet. Thank you very much, professor.

Trebor Scholz: Thank you very much for having me.

David Feldman: Ralph, I live in New York City now and I'm in an apartment on a floor with about fifteen individual apartments. And there's a recycling area. And I see magazines being thrown out and books. One guy on my floor is a doctor. Wouldn't you think there would be a natural human instinct to form a cooperative on our floor? I'm a doctor. I can treat you. Here're some magazines. Here're some books. Why don't we cook for one another? Why don't we help one another? What has happened? Why don't people have natural cooperative instincts?

Ralph Nader: It does. It's called the barter economy. There are people who setup bartering systems and the time dollar of Edgar Cahn - who we've had on the show - has that as well. They get free legal services in return for medical services in return for cleaning their house in return in return. Once you computerize it, it works very beautifully. Go back to the time dollar and look up the barter economy. The barter economy is much bigger in the commercial area. For example, big suppliers bartering goods, exchanging goods, not by money but by bartering supplies.

Steve Skrovan: My wife belongs to something called the Repair Café out here in Los Angeles in Pasadena. And at least once a month people gather there and they bring things that need to be repaired by people. And you repair my thing, I sew you something. It really is an exchange of services with actually no money changing hands.

Ralph Nader: By the way, aren't you amazed week after week how NPR and PBS are out of it?

Steve Skrovan: Yeah. Here's what I'm thinking, they're probably thinking that this is too heady. It's too complicated, and they don't have the time we have to air all of this stuff out.

David Feldman: They also frame the narrative.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, that's right. They have a lot of stuff that can simplify. *Marketplace* is a simplifying juggernaut. You've heard of it. They know how to simplify this stuff and clarify it. It's just they don't want to, because it displaces big corporations.

Steve Skrovan: Their underwriters.

Ralph Nader: Yeah.

David Feldman: There used to be one third rail: Social Security. Now there's a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh. I mean, foreign policy, Israel. We need to get back to one third rail.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking to Professor Trebor Scholz who's book is entitled Overworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy. We will link to that and more of Professor Scholz's work that was mentioned on the show at ralphnaderradiohour.com. But now we're going to take a short break and check in with the corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. Russell?

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington DC, this is your corporate crime report morning minute for Friday January 27, 2017. I'm Russell Mokhiber. Costco Wholesale will pay 11.75 million dollars to settle allegations that its pharmacies violated the Controlled Substances Act, when they improperly filled prescriptions for controlled substances. The settlement resolves allegations that Costco pharmacies filled prescriptions that were incomplete, lacked valid drug enforcement administration numbers or were substances beyond various doctor's scope of practice. The settlement resolves allegations that Costco failed to keep and maintain accurate records for controlled substances at its pharmacies in centralized fill locations. Costco acknowledged that between 2012 and 2015 certain Costco pharmacies dispensed controlled substances inconsistent with their compliance obligations. For the corporate reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Now, we're going to get to some listener questioned I promise. But before we do that, David and I just want to cover a few things with Ralph. Beginning Ralph - because it's been a pretty tumultuous week already - what was your take on Donald Trump's inauguration, his inaugural address in particular?

Ralph Nader: He means what he said on the campaign trail. This is a man who's not going to engage in ambiguities. Look at his inaugural speech. He's not going to wishy-wash. In just two and a half days, he's already hammered away on his immigration, on the wall, on blocking universally Syrian refugees from coming in, on drug prices being too high, on trade. He is supporting the pipelines in the upper Midwest, so watch out. He's not a guy who's going to back down. He's put the worst people you can imagine in charge of the Labor Department, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Education Department, National Security advisors. These are billionaires, or if they're not, they're ideological corporatists. Or if they're not that, they are people who want to dismantle and break up services for the American people that are saving their lives, preserving their health, extending their safety. They want to deregulate the EPA, which means people will die. They want to deregulate the controls on unsafe pharmaceuticals, which mean more people will die. Hold on to your seatbelt, this is going to be a very dangerous administration. The rule of law is going to mean very little. And he's coming in like a juggernaut

that he promised to be on the campaign trail. The Democrats I don't think are up to him. They don't have the labor unions vigorously on their side, because Trump has met with the labor union chiefs and told them, "We're going to give you a lot of jobs and infrastructure, and besides you better remember 30 to 40% of your members voted for me." I've noticed a far weaker oppositional stance by the AFL-CIO and the labor unions. That does not bode well for the Democratic Party.

David Feldman: Could you talk about The Shock Doctrine that I think Milton Friedman and the Straussians came up with out of the University of Chicago? This is a self-inflicted shock to our system, where certain opportunists take advantage of Americans' just being cold-cocked by a crisis. 9/11 was used to invade Iraq. Trump is the shock to our system, where we just can't move, right?

Ralph Nader: What's happened since the Great Depression, when economic shocks led to regulation, now economic shocks or national security shocks lead to more concentrated global corporate power and more corporate state-ism. In other words, since the opposite of where our country should be going in reaction to bad behavior by corporate and governmental entities; and we're seeing that because the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton, which clearly was a major factor in handing Trump the Electoral College, even though she won the electoral vote. She should've landslided Trump. And day after day he was giving her outrageous opportunities to landslide him. She didn't take advantage of it nor her counselors, who were coasting in the belief that she was easily going to win. Look at the polls.

Steve Skrovan: People that I talk to about that very thing Ralph will tell me, but we just live in this racist, misogynistic country.

Ralph Nader: Those are just minority viewpoints now. And they're shrinking.

David Feldman: We should not be shocked by Trump. In other words, they want us to be shocked by him, because it will paralyze us.

Ralph Nader: He should be seen as a corporate enabler with a few populist e-mails like "Drug Prices Are Too High For The American People." But for the most part, he is installing the very people who like to have representatives doing their dirty work. He is putting the billionaires and the corporatists and the militarists right in charge. There's no more pretense. They can't camouflage it. It's a great opportunity for a spectacularly progressive rebound in 2018 and 2020. But we have to find ways to push the Democratic Party, to have viable third parties, develop these kinds of progressive coalitions and have enough grassroots effort, so you can change incumbents between elections. That's what we did in the '60s. We changed bad corporate incumbents into consumer advocates, because they had a finger to the wind from back home. They heard the rumble of the people.

Steve Skrovan: All right very good, let's go to our first question. Comes to us from a Jason Kishineff, and he says, "Ralph once did a show where he was suggesting that Jewish-Americans contact Congress and ask them to have former Mossad agents testify and others who have different opinion on Palestine than the Zionists." And he wants to know "Who should we ask Congress to interview please? I would really like to do what I can to help these people."

Ralph Nader: I think I have the perfect website for you, go to centerpeace.org, C-E-N-T-E-R-P-E-A-C-E.org. That's the website for the Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace run by former congressman, Robert Wexler, who's the president. And here's what they have for you. They put full-page ads in the *New York Times* again and again in the last two years. And they have featured the pictures of the heads of the Israeli Defense Forces, retired. Chiefs of staff, the former heads Israeli's FBI, the Shin Bet, retired, and the former heads of the Israeli CIA, the Mossad, retired. And in one ad that you can get off their website, they had five former military chiefs of staff opposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu's regime and pushing for a two-state solution. You had five former heads of the Shin Bet, Israeli's FBI, who were saying the same thing. And they say this publicly in Israel. And they get no press in the United States, no surprise. And you have five pictures and names of the former heads of Israel's intelligence agency. Let me give you two quotes: the former head of the Shin Bet, Avraham Shalom says the following quote "If we do not turn away from adhering to the entire land of Israel, including the West Bank and Gaza and begin to understand the other side, we will not get anywhere. If we don't change this, there will be nothing here." Quote by Yuval Diskin, "The unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents an existential threat. We need to reach an agreement now before we reach the point of no return." Avi Dichter, former Shin Bet director said "Any intelligent person realizes that a one state solution with the six million Jews and seven million non-Jews, mostly Muslims, is irresponsible." The former head of Mossad, Meir Dagan said "Netanyahu and Bennett" - he's part of the coalition - "are leading us to a bi-national state, which is a disaster and dangerous to Zionism." Then Danny Yatom, former Mossad Director says, "Without a peace initiative, the fighting and violence will continue and our isolation process will deepen." This ad and other ads are all available on centerpeace.org and you can just send these ads to your member of Congress, your Representative and your Senators and ask them, "Why they don't have public hearings representing these peace movements by people whose military intelligence experience cannot be challenged and can speak with authority to counteract the baleful influence over congress of AIPAC." It will be interesting to see if AIPAC can stop these Israeli leaders from testifying. And in one of the ads of the Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace, it has the population breakdown of Palestine: 2015, 52% Jewish, 2020 49% Jewish, 2030 44% Jewish. And then the subtitle of the ad is "Israel can remain a Jewish democratic state only if the Palestinians have a demilitarized Palestinian state." I would add, if it's going to be demilitarized there should be a peace keeping United Nations task force between the two states.

Steve Skrovan: Ralph, we spoke to Miko Peled a couple of weeks ago, who thinks the two state solution ship has sailed, that Israel has no intention and never probably did - in his opinion - of a two-state solution. And that's why the settlements keep going on. Did his argument have any resonance with you?

Ralph Nader: Well, I don't think that's possible. I don't think Israelis have done all they've done for decades in order to become a minority in their own new bi-national state. This is not South Africa. I think the two-state solution is still the way to do it. Robert Pollan, a professor of economics at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who's been over to Israel many times. Thinks that 80% of the settlers in the West Bank are just there for economic subsidies for housing and services, and that if they can be relocated on other land with similar subsidies, they would move. The hard line is the 20%. And there will be adjustment in terms of land exchanges. Whatever happens fifty, hundred years from now to get a bi-national state, maybe. Look at Scandinavia. They used to have wars against each other. Now they're like brothers and sisters. Norway, Denmark, Sweden. Whatever happens decades from now, I think the transition status should be a two-state solution.

David Feldman: This comes to us from Richard McLachlan, "Ralph, although America greatly outspends number two China by a great deal on the defense budget, isn't it safe to say that perhaps China uses a greater amount of their money far more effectively than our corrupt corporate war machine? China seems to take a hard line on corruption, including executions. If indeed this arms race is much closer than we are led to believe, should there be cause for concern about the return on our investment as well as our actual security?"

Ralph Nader: That's a unique question, I must say, Richard. First off all China doesn't pay as much for its weapon systems as the US government does. The price, for example, of missiles in China is much lower, just like the price of ordinary consumer goods are lower. They do crack down on corruption with much tougher sanctions. They don't just have golden handshakes - as they called in the US - where they revise the Lockheed-Martin contracts for the F-35 upward, when there's huge cost overruns. But I don't see the cost factor being an input in terms of the need to have rigorous arms control reductions and peace treaties with China, as we started to do with the Soviet Union. We have to talk about waging peace, otherwise there's going to be a conflict in the South China Seas. And same as like Donald Trump can't wait to have a fight by sending our aircraft carriers over into South China Seas, which they believe, and international law believes requires freedom of the seas and not obstruction by Chinese dominated little islands that they're fortifying. But that's a real flashpoint. And we've got to watch that very carefully, otherwise - if Trump is insulted by the head of China he'll go crazy the way he does against former overweight Ms. Universe winners.

David Feldman: Do we sell fighter jets to China, or do they make their own?

Ralph Nader: As far as I know we have not sold military jets to China. We have transferred a lot of technology for aircraft via Boeing contracts with China. And they have a lot of other ways to get our technology. I don't think that they want to be dependent on our spare parts much less than on our weapons. They have not caught up to us yet, but we're fomenting an arms race. I mean, if

we keep talking belligerently, and we keep trying to have superiority one arms sector after another, what do you think Russia and China are going to do? They're going to unleash their own brilliant scientists and engineers and try to catch up. And then we're off to deficits and war mongering and potential military conflicts.

David Feldman: I remembered two years ago when Russia seized Crimea, you said well we shouldn't get involved with this. Do you kind of sympathize with Trump appeasing Putin?

Ralph Nader: His agenda may be his business relationships with Russia, so we can't judge it on diplomatic merits. But at least he's not willing so far to pick a fight with Putin, which Hillary Clinton couldn't wait to do. We would've really had flashpoints. They are pushing NATO more aggressively against their western boundary of Russia, which hasn't been penetrated in two World Wars and took about fifty million Russian lives. They're very sensitive to that. Wouldn't we be, if we had that situation on the Canadian or Mexican border? Crimea was part of the Soviet Union. And when the Soviet Union broke apart, the head of the disintegrating Soviet Union gave Crimea to Ukraine. It's like if New York State broke apart and the head of New York State gave Staten Island to the new breakaway nation of Long Island. And so you know there's a historical precedent for basically saying "Look if you the West are pushing to militarize Ukraine and turn it into a hostile border neighbor, we're going to take back Crimea, because it was always ours." Of course that isn't discussed widely in the US press, is it?

David Feldman: Seems to me - and then I'll shut up - the split between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party on foreign affairs is the Democratic Party kind of wants to do business with China and demonize Russia and Trump wants to demonize China and do business with Russia.

Ralph Nader: So far, but it's too early to tell in the Trump Administration. He's got people like the Secretary of Defense, former general Mad Dog Mattis, who thinks Russia is a bigger threat to our national security by far than Donald Trump does, and so does Donald Trump's national security advisors. So, let's wait and see.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you for your questions. That's our show. Keep the questions coming in either Ralph's Facebook page or on ralphnaderradiohour.com. I want to thank our guest today Professor Trebor Scholz, who's book is entitled [Uberworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy](#). As I said before, we'll link to that at ralphnaderradiohour.com.

David Feldman: A transcript of this episode will be posted on ralphnaderradiohour.com.

Steve Skrovan: For more from Russell Mokhiber go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. We'll talk to you then Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Indeed and more and more of our listeners seem to want to summons their Senators and Representatives to town meetings back home of their own making with the people's own agenda. I just want to remind them that I have a draft copy of a formal summons to your two Senators and Representatives in the little paperback that I just put out Breaking Through Power: It's Easier Than We Think.