

The Great Simplification - Frankly 15 Transcript

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Nate Hagens

It is that time of year again, election time. Where, kind of like a football match, we have our beers and our refreshments and we look at CNN or Fox News and watch as the results come in on our team. Who's going to win? Are we going to be in a really bad, depressed, angry mood? Or are we going to be elated because our team, our tribe, is going to dictate the decisions of the next couple of years?

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Nate Hagens

The purpose of this Frankly, is that no matter who wins, we, as 330 million Americans, face an uncertain future that affects all of us, and that the two political parties in the way the system works today are unable to solve these things. And we are going to have to intervene and support and change the way we interact with each other because the government is of the people, for the people, by the people.

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Nate Hagens

And we've forgotten that. So no matter who wins, number one, our nation just passed \$31 trillion in national debt as interest rates are going up. And the interest alone now is surpassing our entire military budget, which is by far the largest in the world. We've been able to continue to increase our debt ceilings and add to our borrowing from the future because interest rates have been so low.

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Nate Hagens

This may not be the case for much longer. And what ends up happening is the party that's in control wants to spend more and help. The other party wants to slow things down and digs their heels in and we end up having potential government closures and eventually there's a vote. And if you look at all the debt ceiling through the past, they've always been voted to be increased.

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Nate Hagens

We take that for granted. We can always do that. But the amount of debt we have relative to the interest on that we use GDP to pay down is eventually going to hit a wall. And the reason it's going to hit a wall is number two, no matter who wins, we are past the peak in oil production in the United States.

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Nate Hagens

We are accessing the light tight oil, the shale oil, which is the source rock. And in effect, our technology has acted like a larger straw. And so we feel like we're getting a lot of liquid out. And we are. But we're that much closer to the slurping sound, which also will make it difficult to pay back our debt.

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Nate Hagens

Which leads me to no matter who wins, we will have an issue with economic growth. We have lived in economic growth like a fish swims in water. We get the massive productivity of mining fossil sunlight and adding it to our economies. On top of that, we have the productivity from new technology and innovation. And then you combine that with energy getting more expensive and more costly, which is a drain on productivity and materials and minerals like lithium and copper and fossil water are getting more expensive.

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Nate Hagens

That's also a drain on productivity. If that whole composite starts to decline, we offset that with debt. So this is how we've been able to extend debt. X U.S. government debt. The economy stopped growing 15 years ago. So we are kicking the can by debt to enable us to pay back prior claims. This also is no matter who wins, going to hit a wall in the not too distant future.

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Nate Hagens

Also, no matter who wins, we face a new environmental paradigm. 2022, statistically speaking, will be the coolest year of the rest of our lives. We don't know how fast or uneven that climate will warm, but we do know that sperm count is dropping not only in America but around the world by 1%. We know that plastic outweighs all the animals in the world.

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Nate Hagens

Insects are declining up to 2% a year. There are lots of environmental realities that, no matter who wins, are part of our existence. On top of that, no matter who wins, we face algorithms and social media power that increasingly polarizes us. For profit companies own the data, the private data about us as individuals, and what ends up being sensationalized is things that are violent or extreme or angry or shouting, when in real life, in person with people we have social filters that ostracize such behavior.

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Nate Hagens

But on the Internet, not only is it not ostracized, it becomes viral and it is shared. And so we have no common information commons anymore. And if we don't know what's true, we have no chance of solving these broader issues. On top of that, no matter who wins, we have a very large gap between the median and the mean wealth and income in this country.

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Nate Hagens

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Approximately 60% of the population of this country could not pay for a 500 to \$1000 emergency if they came across it. We have massive wealth disparity. People are drawing down their savings. Most people don't have savings. And this is while we're using debt and energy and technology to continue our productivity, there is an expiration date and there's going to be wider and deeper poverty.

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Nate Hagens

This is not a political thing that either party can solve. No matter who wins, we are entitled, polarized and addicted. This nation had 40-some-million Adderall prescriptions last year. So these things, when we hear about these problems, we typically respond to them with ideology. My tribe will fix these things in this way or not fix them if they don't care about them.

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Nate Hagens

The point of this short Frankly, is that our governance system itself is a miniature superorganism, and it cannot solve these issues. It's possible that we could have some systemic future thinking No Labels Group or Problem Solvers Caucus that is looking ahead, educating on the systemic risks. But it's really more like a football game that the players have to compete against each other and they're precluded from a third party or a different path forward.

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Nate Hagens

And it's almost in the same way that the market and the economic system will kick every can possible until we hit a cliff. The same thing with the political system. We need a different way of governance. If we're going to have any chance of open societies going forward, because whether it's a left initiated or on the right initiated authoritarianism means the end of open society, and that is what's at risk.

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Nate Hagens

I don't know the answer, but no matter who wins, we have to stop treating this as a football game and rooting for our side over the other side because we have to start evidencing a different form of interacting with our fellow humans locally. Locally, we can make changes. We can choose people who are decent and caring and use respect and discourse and diplomacy.

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Nate Hagens

Where I live in central Wisconsin, is the lands where the Native American people here were the Ojibwe and Ojibwe leadership doesn't mean power or authority. It means caring. And so I think we have to have a gut check. And instead of casting stones, looking at what's happening on Fox News or CNN and rooting for that, we have to roll up our sleeves, start doing the hard work, having conversations in our neighborhoods, in our communities, in our regions.

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Nate Hagens

And that's the only way that our political superorganism is going to be able to get a governance structure in place to solve some of the other issues. This is not my forte, but I do recognize that politics is where the rubber is going to hit the road on all these biophysical issues, and we are unprepared. So whoever you're rooting for on Tuesday, I wish you well on that.

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Nate Hagens

But I also hope that you can start to talk to people in your own neighborhood about the things that matter to you. And I expect you will find that even if you politically disagree with them, you might agree on some deep truths about our future. And at the end of the day, those people are going to be your neighbors during The Great Simplification.

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Nate Hagens

I'll talk to you next week. Thank you.