

Episode 132: "Combating Woke Capitalism" with Justin Danhof and Matt Schlapp

Speaker 1 ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to The Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting people, interesting things.

Bill Walton ([00:25](#)):

Welcome to The Bill Walton Show, I'm Bill Walton. For years, major corporations, big business has been drifting to the political left, now a lot of us knew this was happening, but it's now become glaringly obvious to everyone now that we have Delta Air Lines, Coca-Cola even Major League Baseball weighing in on Georgia legislature's efforts to protect their electoral process. Many household names are now aligned with the political left, Levi, Nike, Airbnb, BlackRock, Ford, the NBA, Bank of America, Walt Disney, Google, Twitter, on and on, and all now seem to be actively supporting liberal positions on political, economic, and social issues. It's been disguised under the pleasant sounding name of corporate social responsibility, I tend to think a better label for it is woke capitalism.

Increasingly, and this is important for all of us to understand the top echelons of major corporations, the C-suites and the board of directors are filled with people on the left. This trend and its implications is something we all need to know more about. With me to get into this and understand where we might go from here is Justin Danhoff, who's director of the Free Enterprise Project at the National Center for Public Policy, who's a longtime warrior in this battle against the creeping left of corporate America and our other guests, I should say probably co-host is Matt Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union, which sponsors the Sea-Pac Conference and is the founder of Cove Strategy, and Matt's been extremely active inside corporate boardrooms for years and advisor to a lot of big businesses who are doing business in Washington.

So welcome guys, I'm looking forward to this one. Justin, why don't you kick us off? Tell us what you've been doing and it's a lot, so give us an overview about your group and what it's agenda or what its mission is.

Justin Danhoff ([02:37](#)):

Sure. Thanks Bill. We've been fighting the woke for over a decade at the National Center for Public Policy Research, and part of it is because of the mission that we were founded with. Our mission was actually to be a voice where we saw conservatives being the quietest. Conservatives weren't speaking up on an issue we would jump in. A little more than a decade ago, we looked out at the landscape of corporate America and we just started scratching our heads, and we wonder why on so many issues, as you said, that fell under the banner of so-called corporate social responsibility, that big business was now carrying the water for the political left. We were a little confused so we just peeled a few layers of the onion back and saw this thing called shareholder activism. We saw not a single right of center group engaged in it, but we saw more than a hundred liberal groups that were buying up shares in companies and going in and moving them on issue after issue to the left.

Now these days it falls under the banner of so-called ESG, that's environment, social and governance, because the left is so good at branding, who can be against the environment? Who could be against social causes and good corporate governance? Nobody. But if you see ESG folks, know that that is just cover for whatever a liberal policy group is hoping to achieve through big business.

When we looked out at this landscape, we just decided to copy the less model, so I buy up shares in all of the most terrible companies in America so I can be a voice in the room.

Bill Walton ([04:06](#)):

Justin, what's your background? How'd you get into this?

Justin Danhoff ([04:09](#)):

Yeah. I'm an attorney by trade and I actually worked at the Securities and Exchange Commission in my undergrad business education and I started seeing this back in the late '90s even. When I went to law school, when I came out, we worked on this free enterprise project at the National Center and decided to be the pushback-

Matt Schlapp ([04:29](#)):

What I hear from you is you're so smart that you got this law degree, you said, "I am not going to sit here and practice law, I'm going to make a difference?"

Bill Walton ([04:36](#)):

Yeah.

Justin Danhoff ([04:37](#)):

Well yeah, that's right. I spent five minutes in a white shoe firm and got the heck out of there and decided to have some impact because we were really concerned because if you think about it-

Bill Walton ([04:47](#)):

So you came to this as an idealist?

Justin Danhoff ([04:49](#)):

Oh yes.

Bill Walton ([04:49](#)):

You felt like corporations ought to be sticking to their business and not weighing in on political issues, and so you thought we needed to do something about it?

Justin Danhoff ([04:58](#)):

Yeah. We needed to provide the other voice in the room, we needed to counterbalance what the left was doing in this space because frankly they were being incredibly effective, and this is just one tool by the way that the left uses, they use so many tools and it's the march through the cultural lanes, the march through academia is the most parallel to what's happening here, it's a top-down takeover, it's a bottom up takeover and it's outside-in. I work on the outside-in part of the problem, but again, if I put up a pie chart of the leftist groups that engage in shareholder activism, you wouldn't even see our slipper bill, it's really just that outsized, I'll file 20 to 30-

Bill Walton ([05:41](#)):

I think most of us, me included up until the last few years, really thought corporations were on the right. I'm dated, I was a CEO of a company, gosh, 11 years ago, 12 years ago, and at that time it was still a fairly conservative crew. That's changed in the last decade. Matt, you've seen this in your work. How has this evolved as you see it?

Justin Danhoff ([06:04](#)):

Well, as you know there's a lot of different ways to look at corporate America it's a big theme, but if you look at publicly held companies, fortune 50 or fortune 100 companies, and you look at the path to be a CEO, it's so different now, you're a marketer, you're a talker, you look good in your blue suit, you got these short-term gigs with big branded companies and it's a stock play, and if you're giving return to your investors, including to maybe some closely held investors, you're a hero. You pop out after five or seven years, you get the next gig, that's how they approach it.

My experience by and large is, they don't have political ideology by and large, they have a desire to maximize this five-year run. Now, on top of that are some very prominent CEOs that are real left-wingers. To me it's so ironic because their left wing goodness does not stop at ESG environmental, cultural questions, it goes all the way down the line to mandating higher minimum wages and higher tax rates, sometimes policies that are wrong for the shareholders.

Bill Walton ([07:20](#)):

Can we name names?

Justin Danhoff ([07:21](#)):

Of course.

Bill Walton ([07:22](#)):

Who do you have in mind?

Justin Danhoff ([07:24](#)):

Well, you think of Mr. Bezos, he's like the quintessential example of advocating for policies that will make American companies less healthy, and from what I can see, I'm not so sure he gives a lick about America at all. That's the other part of this bill, if you looked at the profile of a CEO probably 10 years before you were CEO, you would've seen a lot of military service, you would have seen people that probably went to church, you would have seen people that were the American story of somebody pulling themselves up from their bootstraps, maybe they get a chance to go to an elite college, but somehow in a corporate culture, they rise up because of their hard work and their intellect and everything else.

Bill Walton ([08:05](#)):

They're really corporate politicians, they're not entrepreneurs, they didn't invent a product, they didn't develop a service, they're typically not engineers anymore, they're talkers.

Justin Danhoff ([08:17](#)):

Yeah. Look, I know of one CEO who when you talk to them, I'm a Trump supporter. I'm a Republican. Meet the son. The son's a big Trump supporter, the whole family is a big Trump supporter, and then I see him signing these letters, what are you doing?

Bill Walton (08:31):

Justin, have you done any analytical? You're a serious think tank focused exclusively on this issue, have you framed it? How many corporations are we talking about? Let's say of the top thousand corporations, publicly traded companies, what percentage does this virus infect?

Justin Danhoff (08:51):

Nearly all. It's really to the point where we are, because if think about it, what matches describe and you hit on is these folks are more politicians than they are business people. Who are politicians listening to? Who are they responsive to? Well, the loudest constituents, the constituents that engage with them, those are who politicians react to, and so that's why we try and engage with business leaders as often as possible.

Bill Walton (09:16):

Let me make it a scene, you're not saying necessarily the CEOs and I don't mean to defend all CEOs, but I think I have to a little bit, it's not necessarily that they're left leaning, it's that they do though respond to pressure and the pressure all comes from the left and that's therefore the way they manage.

Justin Danhoff (09:32):

Yeah. It's an imbalance of pressure, so they don't feel any pain from conservatives. I think that there's some reasons for that, and part of it is the conservative reaction and there's two parts to this, the conservative reaction is, we're going to boycott. Well, take Nike, just one company for example. I remember when they were on the wrong side of the bathroom bill in North Carolina, was this 2016? Well, you could go on Facebook and Twitter and you could see conservatives-

Bill Walton (10:00):

The bathroom bill in North Carolina was when they were mandating unisex bathrooms.

Justin Danhoff (10:04):

Well that anybody could subjectively go into a changing room based on what they said their gender was that day, so growing could -

Matt Schlapp (10:11):

So biology didn't determine the bathroom, it was more what you thought you were.

Justin Danhoff (10:14):

That's right. So conservatives were angered by this, because companies were coming out and saying that that's what they supported too and Nike was one of them. I remember going on Facebook and seeing friends, colleagues saying, "We're going to burn our Nike's and we're never buying Nike again." Well, their stock price went up and their sales went up, and then they signed Colin Kaepernick, this guy who hates police, big Black Lives Matter guy, a washed up athlete, to a \$10 million deal or something like that. Again, conservative said, "We're going to boycott," we didn't. Then when they pulled the Betsy Ross tribute shoe at the behest of Colin Kaepernick, they had already made the shoe, it was already delivered to stores, they pulled it off the shelves and didn't sell it because Colin Kaepernick told them not to.

Well, conservatives did it again. We said we were going to boycott, their sales went up, their revenues went up. They at this point think they can offend our values with impunity because we keep lying to them.

Bill Walton ([11:08](#)):

But we're not their customers. Phil Knight famously said, it doesn't matter how many people hate your brand as long as enough people love it. The Nike customers are urban kids, China, a lot of places that are not going to be filled with Republicans and they don't care. We can make all the noise we want, but he's still going to sell tennis shoes to these kids that want to pay \$400 a pair for them.

Justin Danhoff ([11:34](#)):

Hey, I'll make an admission here. I don't boycott companies because I don't have the time to boycott all of the whoop. Nike fits me best for my running shoes, so I wear Nike running shoes because they fit my shoe the best.

Bill Walton ([11:44](#)):

Okay. We got rid of all our Coca-Cola.

Justin Danhoff ([11:49](#)):

Well, what are you going to drink? Pepsi? They fund planned parenthood-

Bill Walton ([11:52](#)):

No, Pepsi is worse.

Matt Schlapp ([11:53](#)):

Dr. Pepper. No, I feel like I'm going to disagree here a little bit. I think it's a little bit like foreign policy, every option has to be on the table and the problem for conservatives is, let's not think like the centralized planners on the left, which is one of the reasons the conservative movement screws up so many things, is because we all want to get into one big beautiful building and make sure everyone's doing coordinated activity. Business people learned long ago, especially entrepreneurs, competition could be the greatest thing, including experimenting with different options.

My view is, I'll take Coca-Cola for example, Sea-Pac hasn't announced that we're doing a boycott of Coca-Cola, I'll be dandified by another Coke. By the way, it's not good for me. Number two, I'm not going to give them any money now, is that done through an organized effort? No. Is that going to show up in Coca-Cola sales? I think so, because I know I'm not alone.

Bill Walton ([12:51](#)):

You're watching The Bill Walton Show, I'm here with Justin Danhoff and Matt Schlapp, and we're talking about what corporations and what we think we ought to do about it and various lines of action. So there's a vote for a boycott-

Justin Danhoff ([13:03](#)):

Same for Nike. I agree, you're completely right. If I used every penny of my purchasing dollar to only go to good causes, it would be impossible. But I do think there's a symbolic way where we can make these companies, which I know you believe in because this is what you're spending everyday doing, we could

make these companies understand that the path they're on is going to alienate half the country, it's going to create demand destruction for their products, and it's going to raise up this whole idea where conservatives, by the way, it's not conservatives, Americans, people who love the flag, loves cops, loves the military, will eventually realize, this is a lot of money that we're spending by the way, it's not like we're an unsuccessful part of the community, a lot of us have purchasing power and if we start being educated and making those decisions more and more, I think we can have an effect and I think we ought to get real aggressive.

Bill Walton ([14:02](#)):

Justin, I want to come back to that because I want to get a list of things that we might do, but you working through proxies. First, explain what a proxy is and how the left has used them and how that might be an opportunity for us.

Justin Danhoff ([14:19](#)):

Yeah. The right chance to think of elections happening in November for politicians, but there's thousands of elections that take place every single year at publicly traded companies, and there's two important set of votes that conservatives, the evidence bears out are not paying attention to on these corporate proxy ballots. The first is for the board of directors.

Bill Walton ([14:39](#)):

Okay. So when a corporation holds an election, they send out a proxy, and as a shareholder you're entitled to put propositions on the proxy to vote for us, you not only vote for board of director members, but you also vote for proxy items and some of the proxy items the companies put up there, like we want to increase the number of shares outstanding, something like that, but the left has been putting in proxies that the company, I think it first came up 20 years ago South Africa, this company had to divest everything from South Africa, that's an example of a proxy item.

Matt Schlapp ([15:13](#)):

Yeah. Shareholder proposals are voted on at every annual meeting and they're super important. Again, the evidence bears out that the left has coalesced their money and their voting and the right hasn't. A lot of folks get their proxy cards and they just throw them in the trash-

Justin Danhoff ([15:29](#)):

I do that, I have to admit it, it's like every day in the mail.

Matt Schlapp ([15:32](#)):

Yeah. At any given company 30 to 35% of the votes are cast, and again, I'm telling you these are red votes that aren't cast. Let me give you an example because folks say, "Well, how can a shareholder proposal really affect culture?" Well, let me give you a great example, a couple of years ago, Jesse Jackson and the SEIU and a few left wing investment firms, started filing affirmative action shareholder proposals for board members. You have to have set asides for women, you have to have set asides for underrepresented minorities. We'll fast forward to 2020, Goldman Sachs said we're not going to bring your company public, we're not going to help finance your IPO unless your board is sufficiently diverse in our view, and of course they mean skin surface characteristic diversity.

Well, in December of last year, Nasdaq proposed a rule that they're actually going to kick companies off of their own exchange, they're going to de-list companies, if they don't have two diverse board seats set aside. Think about this, the agent of change in three to four years went from shareholder proposals supported by Jesse Jackson to Nasdaq. That's why it's important to stop these things in they're infant seats.

Bill Walton ([16:35](#)):

Did Nasdaq push that through? I heard it was a proposal, that actually if you're listed on Nasdaq now, you have to do what Nasdaq is telling us to do.

Matt Schlapp ([16:46](#)):

It's still on the SCCs plate.

Bill Walton ([16:51](#)):

They want to do that, but it hasn't been-

Matt Schlapp ([16:53](#)):

Yeah, we fully expect the SCC will rubber stamp it. During the notice and comment period, it was very clear that the left was outnumbering the right in comments, and the SCC-

Bill Walton ([17:03](#)):

You were a lawyer, did you actually serve in the SCC as a lawyer or you were an intern?

Matt Schlapp ([17:03](#)):

I was an intern.

Bill Walton ([17:09](#)):

My observation is the enforcement division in particular is staffed with everybody's on the left.

Matt Schlapp ([17:15](#)):

Yes, that's right.

Bill Walton ([17:17](#)):

It's like every lawyer there thinks if you're making a profit, you're doing something illegal or some risky scheme that they're very opposed to businesses.

Matt Schlapp ([17:25](#)):

This is part of the problem we have, which is we're always on defense because, you guys know all about the Chevron doctrine and all the power these independent agencies and boards have and they're radicalized enforcement and legal-

Bill Walton ([17:39](#)):

Describes the Chevron doctrine because I don't think everybody may know that.

Matt Schlapp ([17:42](#)):

Well, you as the lawyer, you can do a better job, but it's just whole idea of, it's actually a Supreme court ruling and the conservative or constitutional approach is to go back and say, "Wait a minute. Where did these independent agencies get so much power and authority?" Think about this, the same people that investigate you and then charge you just the guy in the room next door is now the judge hearing your case all within an independent agency, which has become a little fiefdom in the federal government. It's taken us a while to wake up from the haze of how destructive this has been for-

Bill Walton ([18:18](#)):

Prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner?

Matt Schlapp ([18:19](#)):

Everything, all under the same roof, all paid for by the taxpayers too, that's the crazy part.

Justin Danhoff ([18:24](#)):

Just to put a little legal ease on it, basically you can't really question a decision of an independent agency, the standard is, it has to be a decision or an action that was so arbitrary and capricious that it's outside the balance of logic. Basically they're allowed to do anything unless it's completely arbitrary.

Matt Schlapp ([18:47](#)):

There's not a lot of experience with people finding a way out, so for these companies that are signing up for all of this left wing propaganda, part of it is they're trying to figure out in a highly regulated economy, how do they keep out of being in the top 10 list of companies these regulators want to go after?

Bill Walton ([19:07](#)):

Well, the thing that's striking to me, I was less involved in this political world when I was doing private equity investing, but I began to worry even 10, 15 years ago that the left is marched through institutions, and obviously K-12 offers to colleges, the boy Scouts, on and on and on, but they've also marched through the institutions that govern major corporations. The proxy advisory services, there are companies like Institutional Shareholder Services, they're very much on the left.

Justin Danhoff ([19:41](#)):

Yeah. This is a little bit nuanced, but first conservatives aren't voting and second, when it comes to advising how to vote proxies, there are two services, Institutional Shareholder Services and Glass Lewis, that control 97% of that market. Now Glass Lewis is owned by union pensions in Canada, so that tells you where they are, and ISS is super woke, and how do I know that, they have never once recommended a vote for any of my shareholder proposals, but they support all-

Bill Walton ([20:17](#)):

The proposal from Justin, this is easy.

Justin Danhoff ([20:21](#)):

That's right, where's the trash can? But they support all manner of ESG resolutions. Just last year, I'll give you one prime example, they publicly supported a shareholder resolution at Chevron that asked the company to align its policies with the Paris climate accord, Chevron and American Energy Company. This

would eventually mothball Chevron and all the investors would go broke, ISS, supported that. You know who else supported that? BlackRock, the largest asset manager in the world. It got 52% of the vote because the left has... If you think the presidential election was rigged folks, I've got to tell you, the left has figured out how to read the proxy vote to an extreme level because that's nonsense. 52% of the folks that actually are invested in Chevron don't want the company to go bankrupt. But there's-

Matt Schlapp ([21:11](#)):

A lot there, I would say one of the innovations we have to figure out in working together is, I'll speak for myself, how do I get organized on this one when I don't have any time to? Should there be a way whereby there are some non-profits that are speaking up and doing the work for the shareholders where the shareholders basically give these groups their proxy when these things come up? I think if we could amplify our voice by the millions to 75 million of us that are across the country who loved the country, I think we can make a big impact.

On the specific question of the Paris climate accord, that is not leveraged from the left. The frustrating part is you literally have large companies taking these woke positions and if you get into the economics of it, it is that strangely enough, there's a cancer within their thinking that they're in an immoral business and they got to figure out a way to diversify outside of that business. Why is Ford only going to be making electric F-150s? I don't know anybody who drives an F-150 who wants it to be a plug-in hybrid, maybe there are some, but that's not what a Jimmy in Georgia wants to drive. There is a little bit of an insidious business.

Bill Walton ([22:27](#)):

I think you're saying something that I think is really smart. There's this phrase among business guys that I'd worked with through the last many decades, this idea of called giving back, and somehow you've made your money in your business and now it's time to give back.

Matt Schlapp ([22:43](#)):

Well, and you probably made it doing something that's not very virtuous.

Bill Walton ([22:47](#)):

Well, they may have think that, but basically they're producing widgets or services that people want. The business itself is in the business of giving. You're meeting people's wants and needs and you're using resources effectively because-

Matt Schlapp ([23:02](#)):

You're hiring people?

Bill Walton ([23:03](#)):

You're hiring people, you're paying suppliers. Every corporation that deals well with its community because they want its reputation to be good. There are too many people that suffer from guilt in the C-suites that somehow the corporation, and it's been its main business, is not doing enough.

Matt Schlapp ([23:26](#)):

What you think if you have an issue like the minimum wage, or we shouldn't pay more for gasoline or these types of basic regulatory things, so I'm running SeaPak, I'm running ACU, what do I immediately

think? "Oh, these corporations will love our advocacy," and then when you get to engage with them, you realize they're actually not even for, they're going to be against the policies or at least they're going to be quiet about the policies that would be good for the bottom line. That's how this all got started, it's now become casual and easy for them to take on any left wing position, but it started with them undermining reputationally what they're known, the premiere products that are known for making, they got comfortable with undermining them or being silent about advocating for them. Then that leaves the conservative advocate, the mom, the dad, the person out there in the country who thinks they're advocating for good policy, completely alone, decoupled from the corporate entity who they're speaking up for is going to benefit.

That's why Bill, my strategy is to say, "Let's break it. Let's have conservative activist focus on what makes America great and not what they assume will make American corporations great." The extent to which those two are on the same page, I'm fine, but we shouldn't be their casual lobby live we've been.

Bill Walton ([24:47](#)):

Grassroots.

Matt Schlapp ([24:49](#)):

Grassroots.

Bill Walton ([24:50](#)):

I'm here with Matt Schlapp and Justin Danhoff, we're talking about lines of action to deal with woke corporations and that agenda. Justin, I wanted to follow up the grassroots, but we also kind of got off a little bit on what you're doing with the proxies. How many of you are out there filing items on proxies? How many more should we bring in? How do we make a proxy a battle, something as a way to win?

Justin Danhoff ([25:22](#)):

Yeah, The past decade, we're the only group right a center that's done this consistently every year, every once in a while there's an individual to file some, but there's dozens and dozens of well capitalized groups on the left that engage in this. I mean, heck liberal state pension funds in New York and California are heavily involved in that, and now you're talking billions and billions of dollars. So I'll file 20 to 30 in a given year, the left files four or 500, on all of their issues.

To Matt's point about how do we coalesce our money, well, at the national center, this is the second year we've done it. We've done the legwork for the movement. We have something called the investor value voter guide that focuses on the worst shareholder proposals every single year, and it's very-

Bill Walton ([26:06](#)):

Where can we find that?

Justin Danhoff ([26:07](#)):

nationalcenter.org.

Bill Walton ([26:08](#)):

nationalcenter.org, and what do I click on after?

Justin Danhoff ([26:10](#)):

It's right on the main page, investor value voter guide is right there.

Bill Walton ([26:14](#)):

The worst shareholder proposal ever.

Justin Danhoff ([26:15](#)):

Worst share [inaudible 00:26:16]. This year, just last week, we just published a companion guide called balancing the boardroom, how conservatives can combat corporate wokeness. And these are about the worst board members in America, we profiled them, we explained what they're doing in the corporate culture lane to corrupt it and the worst boards overall and we recommend votes that way too. We have two guides out there that can help make this a lot easier for folks, how to vote their [inaudible 00:26:42].

Bill Walton ([26:42](#)):

Well, let's put faces in positions on this. The corporations, there's obviously the chief executive officers, chief operating officer, there's general counsel, chief legal officer, there's a head of HR, there's the head of the community relations, there's the head of the foundation for the bigger companies, and then we've now got a new position called chief diversity officers, and what's happened is those jobs almost entirely been filled by people on the left, in fact hundreds, if not thousands of companies. Even if you're the free market CEO type believes this stuff, you're going to be sitting with your entire staff that's on the other side of the argument. Tell us about that meeting you had with the chief diversity officer and the other big mucky mucks in the company.

Justin Danhoff ([27:34](#)):

Well, think about first of all, where did they come from? Where did the idea of chief diversity officers even begin? Campus, right? These folks all came from academia because that was the first instance of chief diversity officers. Then they graduate to business, and for years I've negotiated my shareholder resolutions, that's a little secret that the left realizes and the right hasn't is, the power of shareholder resolutions is actually the negotiation with the C-suite. I've had successfully negotiated many resolutions and that's what the left is doing on a lot of theirs as well.

The problem is, since George Floyd there's been a dynamic shift. Normally my negotiations are with IRR offices investor relations in general counsel's offices, since then, but the influx of chief diversity officers, I've had numerous meetings where the chief diversity officers seems to completely neuter the other two, general councils, IR, they're not subservient almost, because it's a fear. The chief diversity officer's power these days where we're running critical race theory trainings at pretty much every large corporation, and diversity trainings on LGBTQ plus issues are all... The HR and the chief diversity officers are really have an outsized role in business these days and it's frightening.

Matt Schlapp ([28:49](#)):

Yeah. I can't agree with you more. We're not going to have a chief diversity officer at ACU don't worry, we might have one to make sure there's enough libertarians on staff, but it used to matter what you thought and it used to matter what your skills were, it used to matter what your experience was-

Bill Walton ([29:02](#)):

Matt, you've dealt with a lot of these corporations, they've been among your clients. Have you seen the change maybe in the government relations officers?

Matt Schlapp ([29:11](#)):

What I've seen most palpably that was problematic was really big tables filled with a who's who of people that understand how Washington works roughly split. Although when Democrats win elections, Republicans get chased out of almost every important job, when Republicans win elections, it's 50 50, so that's just the way the town has always been.

Bill, the one thing that is problematic to me is that, the focus of a lot of these meetings changed from what's the regulatory and what are the legislative threat out there to, "Hey, don't you think it would be good if we took a position on? Name your social issue out of nowhere," and that's become to really dominate. I noticed that the left wing consultants, they get in the door and they stay there because they'll be able to help them make friends on the left and on the hard left. Of course those relationships never pan out, it's always a fool's errand for these corporations to think that somehow they won't get attacked. They have to end up, once you take one of these positions, they take all of these positions and you really can't do everything in this world, so what does that mean? Well, it means that the people that you've hired to actually stop the threats, half of them are spending most of their time going to cocktail parties to give words on silly issues that don't impact-

Bill Walton ([30:38](#)):

It's become a very big business to advise companies on this. Do you know somebody named Nandini Jammi who founded Sleeping Giants?

Matt Schlapp ([30:46](#)):

Oh yeah.

Bill Walton ([30:48](#)):

Anyway, she's a young woman, attractive. She got into the business of going after corporations, I can't remember what her first target was here, but anyway, she was encouraging advertisers not to advertise on conservative news outlets and she was very successful in doing that. Then a couple of years later, she started a consulting business to go to corporations and say, "Pay me and I'll tell you how to avoid what I just did to these other people," and it's a Jesse Jackson move. It's almost as if, "If you don't pay me then be good with that."

Matt Schlapp ([31:26](#)):

I'm good with the fact that there's an honesty to the shake down of it all. I just feel like because there's so much dishonesty in all of this. If you're a left-winger who is in this town and you want to give your consulting services, you are paid more, the more effective you are in those communities, for people who come from the right, the more effective they are in their communities, the more they get cut out of that. In my case, I had very aggressive support for Brett Kavanaugh when he was picked to be on the Supreme court. I lost clients because they're like, "Well, you can't be for that guy. He goes to high school orgies." But if you're a left-wing consultant, you can do all that you want for Kavanaugh or who, you name it, named the most extreme nominee, and they view that as their virtue because you're in good with those folks.

There's a Scarlet A in this country right now for anybody who approaches public policy from a standpoint of the constitution and loving America and supporting our institutions, you will be dinged for that.

Bill Walton ([32:37](#)):

I'm missing it, what does A stand for?

Matt Schlapp ([32:39](#)):

Well, little Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Bill Walton ([32:41](#)):

Okay. We need another letter-

Matt Schlapp ([32:42](#)):

The adultery, maybe that's the wrong way to look at it. How about A for-

Bill Walton ([32:50](#)):

We're going to come up with a better letter.

Matt Schlapp ([32:52](#)):

How about M for Marxism?

Justin Danhoff ([32:53](#)):

Well, it's interesting too because you were talking about paying someone to then tell you how to behave. There's no better example of the imbalance that we're talking about of folks out there watching Google human rights campaign, corporate sponsors. It's a who's who of corporate America, all their logos are there and they're happy to put them there. The very few conservative policy groups on the right, they get a few dollars from business, they can't make that public, they would be tarred and feathered immediately. That's the imbalance, they're proudly give to left-wing groups, give them their logo, any group on the right that gets a few dollars from business, they can't say who that business is, or that the money will go away, A, and the business will be attacked.

For those who don't know who the human rights campaign is, this is a group that is wildly influential in big business. And why are they influential? Because they rate businesses. There's this cottage industry of organizations that send survey questions to businesses, to the point where large publicly traded companies now, our entire departments staffed up, that all they do is respond to survey questions all year long, that's their entire job. They get so many questions from liberal affinity groups, and what are those questions then do? They move the needle. Stick with the human rights campaign, they have something called the corporate equality index. Well, this is an LGBTQ promotion group. A couple of years ago they said, "If you want to keep your perfect score this year, we've added in a new element, and that is you must have a public facing event promoting LGBTQ causes every year."

Well, fast forward to three years ago, they said, "Well, now that you're doing that, you have to have three every single year." If you wonder why every corporation during pride month has the flag up, there's your answer. If you wonder why so much advertising that you see on television and in print promotes LGBTQ causes, there's your answer, but now you better find number three, so you better go find a parade or something or you're going to lose your perfect score. Same thing with trainings on

LGBTQ causes. The HRC a couple of years ago, mandated that if you want to keep your perfect score, you have to have a training for all your employees. Well, then that wasn't enough so now you have to have three every single year, these indoctrination type trainings.

The businesses are literally funding them, go look up their 990, it's public. They're doing quite well, the human rights campaign. They're funding them to tell them how to act. It's the tail wagging the dog, wagging the tail, it's mind boggling. Again, how many survey questions are coming from right of center groups. We're really good at rating politicians on second amendment life, everything else, we're really good at rating politicians, why aren't we rating business?

Matt Schlapp ([35:38](#)):

I agree with this. ACU has been doing these congressional ratings for half a century, we added all these state legislators and this is something that Bill and I have talked about which is, we're so good at whacking the Republican governor who squishes and probably really does squish on something that's important. But what we have to do is figure out the motivation, does that Republican governor do that because he or she wants to upset the base of their party? No, most likely that governor is doing that because he got a phone call from a Jeff Bezos or one of his clones. I shouldn't even joke about that because I think they actually believe in quotes, but anyway, so they get a call and so next thing you know, it's 300 jobs, it's a tournament, it's this and that makes them say in a smaller state, "What can we do?"

Our feeling is, that's why we have taken this step to write these letters to the CEO's demanding that they stop. Now, once again we're only a few weeks into this, we've had very good response, you've had great response for-

Bill Walton ([36:34](#)):

We've had some meetings you can't disclose for who, but you've had some meetings with CEOs of these companies over the Georgia thing, and they made a difference.

Matt Schlapp ([36:43](#)):

They're making a difference and I'll let you know our batting record over time, but we have to get smarter as a group. I like the idea of rating corporations, I like the idea of doing the dirty dozen, they've always done that, the 10 dirtiest corporations. Well, I want to go back to them with the 10 dirtiest corporations that are funding the destruction of institutions that have made this country great.

Bill Walton ([37:07](#)):

Personalizing it, putting a face on it like you mentioned BlackRock, it's Larry Fink, and Larry Fink should be a poster boy for everybody to know about as to what he has in mind, what his agenda is and why it's anti-business.

Matt Schlapp ([37:22](#)):

I can see the bumper sticker right now, think stinks. We can make this thing happen, we've got some marketing we can do here.

Bill Walton ([37:28](#)):

Maybe instead of A we make it FS,

Justin Danhoff ([37:30](#)):

Yeah, that's right.

Bill Walton ([37:34](#)):

We got about 10 minutes left. What lines of action, boycotts one of them, we talked about that you're not as optimistic, they're proxy contests that we can engage, we've got this idea of putting together a list of companies that are engaging behavior, get that publicized and you get it out there. Do we have any websites that do that now?

Justin Danhoff ([37:56](#)):

Well, our balance in the boardroom talks about the worst boards in America, so that puts faces on it. Larry Fink is in there by the way, so is Brian Moynihan, the CEO of Bank of America.

Bill Walton ([38:04](#)):

I hope you had Brian Moynihan. Yeah. Bank of America is now on banking a lot of companies and industries that doesn't like.

Justin Danhoff ([38:16](#)):

Energy companies, gun companies, they're canceling their own clients. Think about how insane this is, Marc Benioff at Salesforce, he does the same thing, he cancels clients he doesn't like. We profile these folks and we'd let you know what they're doing to our culture.

Bill Walton ([38:29](#)):

One of the reasons I wanted to bring you on is we need to publicize more of what you're doing and get more people engaged in it. Matt and I are working on this with SeaPak just to how to take that army of people that are all focused on political things and also get them focused on the bad stuff corporations are doing.

Justin Danhoff ([38:45](#)):

Look, I had this revelation the other day, the conservative movement has really focused on the campus and there's a lot of people that spent their whole life trying to push back on the radicalism of the campus. Well, I think they failed.

Bill Walton ([38:59](#)):

Well. Yeah, we have made a dent there.

Justin Danhoff ([39:00](#)):

We have made a dent, so what I don't want to do is use the same tactics as we face professional sports and corporate entities. I want to use different tactics and I want to look at the tactics of the left and I don't care if it's borrowing or stealing or whatever, we're doing that, we're going to do those tactics, or we're not going to succeed, and part of that is what Bill just said, you have to name the names, we have to name the names of these activist board members, we have to tell them that disgusting and gross things they're funding that are destroying things like girls sports. When you have people like Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova, not our natural political allies maybe, saying, "This is wrong, this is

immoral," we have to make the case very aggressively, we have to change our tactics as a movement because for 50 years we have lost ground, we have not gained ground.

Matt Schlapp ([39:50](#)):

Yeah. To that point, crushing a women sports, a lot of folks probably don't realize there's 400 companies with the support of the human rights campaign that are pushing for the equality act on Capitol Hill right now, which would again, crush not only women's sports, women doing businesses-

Justin Danhoff ([40:04](#)):

400 companies.

Matt Schlapp ([40:05](#)):

400 plus, it's counting, it's growing every day. They're leading companies, it's Amazon, it's Marriott, it's the Bank of America, it's pretty much everyone. They're literally pushing to crush women's sports and not only that, religious freedom, that's at threat in the equality act as well. We need to hammer these companies, because again, they're just signing up because the human rights campaign asked them to, why did they sign up? Part of the answer is they didn't think there'd ever be pushback, so let's be the push.

Or the other piece of this also is, is that they are taking positions that are anathema to half their employees and half their consumers, yet a minority of those employees and consumers on the other side are approaching management and rewarded for approaching management saying, "Look, I'm a member of the LGBTQ community and I want to work for a company that does X." None of the people that have contrary public policy positions are welcomed to say, "Look, I go to church every Sunday and I want to work for a company that does Y," there said, "Hey, that's inappropriate in the workplace. Back off." They could even get fired. That's what's going on with this great silence that's going across this country, which is something I don't think we've seen before is, if you are somebody that are in these classes of people that are somehow disfavored, the idea you could be fired for having positions that would be similar to those of ours around the table, maybe religious, maybe political, whatever, those people, their careers are ending as we speak.

Bill Walton ([41:37](#)):

In most major corporations if you bring up Christianity and your beliefs, you're done.

Matt Schlapp ([41:43](#)):

Yeah.

Justin Danhoff ([41:45](#)):

Well, I like to look at it this way, the cancel culture is partly Gina Carano losing her job at Disney, that's part of it. But it's really what Matt's hitting on, it's the employee at Coca-Cola who doesn't want to go to the critical race theory training, because it's offensive to everyone it touches, telling white people they need to change their melatonin levels, somehow that's nuts, and telling all black people that are oppressed, that's so offensive to everyone involved. The cancel culture is that employee who can't go to HR and say, "This is nuts. I don't want to come to that next training. I disagree with that wholeheartedly." That's the cancel culture, is they're self canceling.

Bill Walton ([42:19](#)):

Well, that is a firing offense, that's what they do. Now, I didn't know we had to change our melatonin-

Justin Danhoff ([42:25](#)):

Oh yeah, they said be less white.

Matt Schlapp ([42:27](#)):

That's all part of it.

Justin Danhoff ([42:28](#)):

By the way, this whole concept of white supremacy Bill, this thing I didn't really understand. I used to think that was just another way to describe like the KKK or the area and race or these things, white supremacy now means to these radicalized Marxist who are slowly taking over this country is, "Hey, if you are a white person and you have power and wealth, that is white supremacy." It's not just white privilege, it's not just that you got that because you're white, it's that now feeds into this idea that white people have the wealth and white people control things. I was thinking on the way out here, I'm positive the next thing we're going to read is that with gas shortages and gas lines, your color will determine when you can go buy gas, it won't be The Babylon Bee saying it. These are the policies that are now being mainlined very aggressively and within these companies, I believe there's almost a freeze on hiring anybody who can't check a box of diversity.

I think it's happening across this country as we speak, it's going to eventually end up in court, but this is insanity. K. T. McFarland's said on her show the other day, I thought this was perfect. Bill she said, your fellow board members, she said, there's only two countries teaching how evil America is. And you think it's China, it's actually more than two, it's China, might be Russia, it's probably Iran.

Bill Walton ([43:57](#)):

You can add Iran to that list.

Justin Danhoff ([43:58](#)):

Do you know who else is doing it?

Bill Walton ([44:00](#)):

Well, we are.

Justin Danhoff ([44:00](#)):

America.

Bill Walton ([44:01](#)):

Sure we are, absolutely.

Justin Danhoff ([44:02](#)):

America is teaching the next generation how evil America is, and with cooperate donations.

Bill Walton ([44:11](#)):

Okay. I got it. We got to do something about it. How many other people are in your coalition? We're talking about forming coalitions with other people so we can bring a critical mass, so we've got your group, Jenny Thomas is working on something.

Justin Danhoff ([44:26](#)):

Yeah. We've got a coalition that we're building, it's growing, it's about a year old, it's called Back to Neutral. Because we're just trying to make the noise that the left is making so that the company themselves choose the off ramp in the middle and say, "Hey, well, let's just stop all of the nonsense, we're not going to do what Matt and Justin won't, we're not going to do what HRC and SPLC want. We're just going to get off and go back to building a better product, creating a better service." And guess what? The companies all say they care about stakeholders now, fine, good business always cared about stakeholders because stakeholders are your customers, they are your investors still, and they are your employees, so good business was always-

Bill Walton ([45:07](#)):

I read that, that was just blathered. Companies have been doing that forever, they just put a different gloss on it.

Justin Danhoff ([45:13](#)):

Yeah. The new model of stakeholder capitalism though is, if you are satisfying everybody, you've satisfied nobody, so you can just pick your constituencies that you want to support and that's what the Larry Fink's and the Brian Moynihan's of the world are doing.

Matt Schlapp ([45:26](#)):

This is going to work. I like the strategy Bill. I think that if we can amp up the noise on the right, it's not just noise, but real effective action, I think we're going to pull some of these companies back.

Bill Walton ([45:39](#)):

Have you written anything, have you written a book on this yet?

Justin Danhoff ([45:44](#)):

People have asked, there is one book on it that's out there, it's by a gentleman by the name of Steve Soukup, it's called The Dictatorship of Woke Capital.

Bill Walton ([45:52](#)):

You recommend that?

Justin Danhoff ([45:53](#)):

I can't recommend it enough. It shows you how we got here, because the interesting part about this is the left didn't do this in some smoke-filled room somewhere, everything they've done is out in the public. All we have to do is reverse engineer it, and we can have tremendous impact. You're talking about-

Bill Walton ([46:13](#)):

Makes me crazy, it's like these are not secretive things.

Justin Danhoff ([46:16](#)):

We were talking about, we've been doing all the wrong tactics in higher education for decades and decades and decades. There's some positive notes here, folks. A, like I just said, the left figured out how to do this and they did it in public, so they gave us the tools. Second, if you think about the cultural lanes that we're talking about, the cultural lanes that have been seated to the left, business' the most recent we've lost. So temporarily logically it should be the easiest to win back because we didn't lose it in the '60s, we've lost it in the last 15 to 20 years. Logically I think it should be the easiest to win back and look it's-

Bill Walton ([46:52](#)):

Well, we can also put political economic pressure on business. I think also we can make, we talked about the Lynskey play the book on them, I think personalizing is, Jeff Bezos, I don't think most people know what Jeff Bezos is up to politically and I think it would affect their ability or willingness to do business with Amazon. Larry Fink manages what, seven or \$8 trillion of money? I think if people knew what he was up to, but I think not saying BlackRock, not saying Disney, but said we're-

Justin Danhoff ([47:25](#)):

Putting you're face on it.

Bill Walton ([47:26](#)):

Face on it.

Justin Danhoff ([47:27](#)):

To think that Mickey mouse is for abortion, this is like-

Bill Walton ([47:30](#)):

Yeah, the Disney agenda's incredible.

Justin Danhoff ([47:32](#)):

How could Disney want less kids watching cartoons and buying their product and going to their theme parks-

Bill Walton ([47:37](#)):

I don't think they're thinking that long term.

Justin Danhoff ([47:40](#)):

Exactly. But it shows you like, some of this is just some common sense, but I think the other thing Bill we have to do is, I think as pro-American free market people, we've always given an assumption that business is at least trying to make profits and we can understand the benefit of that in society and stuff, but I also think we all think commercially, maybe I'll serve on a board or maybe my son or daughter will get a job there, so I'm going to be a little careful with my language. I guess what I'm saying is somebody who's had a lot of this experience, you've had a lot of this experience, I'm done with that.

So if there's consequences to it, I accept them and they might be severe. But what we have to do for half of us who love this country and love what made it great, not saying they don't love their

country, they just want to make it a different country, I want to keep it roughly on the same trajectory it's been on with the improvements we've made over the years. What I'm saying to everybody is, this is the moment to get aggressive. If we get aggressive now, and if we're smart with our tactics, I actually think this is the first elite battle we can win, but we got to win it now and we've got to start now.

Bill Walton ([48:52](#)):

By the word?

Justin Danhoff ([48:52](#)):

Yeah. I mean, if you could go back to 1960s and stop the cultural Marxist revolution in academia, that is where we are right now with big business. This is the moment in time to stop the Marxists march through the corporate culture lane, so let's get activated grassroots, we really need a lot of activism here.

Bill Walton ([49:13](#)):

Justin Danhoff, Senator of National Center for Public Policy Research, thanks. I'm sure we'll be continuing our battle together. Looking forward to it. Matt Schlapp, we're in this game, we're going to win. I love the way we were lining up that this is the most vulnerable place for us to launch a counterattack. Thanks for listening to Matt and Justin and me on this issue about corporate creep towards the left and what we might be able to do to bring it back. Thanks and we'll talk with you next time.

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