

A Place Upstream, if you can find it

Written by Bruce Enberg

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A large sink hole opened in a DC street only blocks from the White House, it turned out to be a washed out sewer line from an improvement project done back in '96, that's 1896. This is not an unusual situation for American cities that are dependent on drainage projects done during during the Progressive Era, or at best during the New Deal. As little as possible has been done to make America work since the Reagan Revolution defined 'government as the problem, not the solution'.

The estimated \$3 trillion shortfall in maintenance is just public infrastructure like the thousands of bridges waiting to collapse, but doesn't include privately held assets like high pressure natural gas lines that are nothing but ticking time bombs. There are also the abandoned chemical waste dumps, the overloaded and failing mine waste containment ponds, or those unregulated fertilizer and chemical plants waiting to go off like a small nuke. Then there's the actual nuclear plants and their massive hot fuel containment ponds waiting to do a Chernobyl dead zone on a large swath of North America.

"But we don't have any money for that", whine the conservatives. Stuff a glowing enriched plutonium fuel rod where the sun don't shine. The fact is that the US government can and should by any and all unused production and put it to work. There are 20 million people without full time work, they could go to work tomorrow. US factories are at 80% capacity, buy everything they can make if it can be used to improve the infrastructure of the United States. And you can bet if the Uncle Sam were to let bids somebody would step up to produce it. Instead of factories at 80% of capacity, they would find a way to produce 200% of capacity.

Where would the money come from? The US is selling Treasuries at near zero interest, and failing that we can print our own money. As long as the creation of money doesn't exceed the supply of goods and services available there will be no serious inflation. Building the economy

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will produce the additional the revenue needed to 'pay it back', especially if the ultra-rich are no longer allowed to dodge taxes. If the rich were required to pay the current tax rate on on their income and not dodge taxes that alone would bring in an additional one trillion dollars a year without addressing offshore or corporate tax evasion. And the top marginal tax rate on really huge incomes needs to be 100%. The 'Death Tax'? Don't wait for them to die to take back the excesses of the last 30 years, unless they prefer it to be a Death Tax, then accommodate them.

Of course you would need to do all the other things that are required for a successful economy, like a trade policy, a manufacturing policy, an education policy, a farm policy, an energy policy, a banking policy. You get the idea, put smart people in charge, tell the conservatives to sit down and shut up. That is the ones you don't put in prison, and there are plenty in line for a long stint in orange.

So much for what we should be doing. Let's look at what is really happening in terms of the US becoming a third world country: a company from the People's Republic of China is seeking to purchase the biggest pork processor in the US. Gee, why would they want to do that? Pork is a favorite in China and since they have more middle class people than we have people, they need more ribs and chops. It takes corn to make nice fat pigs and we produce a lot of corn. China actually has as many acres of corn as we do, but half the yield. They would like to shift their acres to other crops, so they will get one of their colonies to produce the pigs. That would be us.

Factory farm pork production has actually been leaving the US because manure runoff has been a problem for the locals downstream. A big factory farm can produce the equivalent of the sewage from a mid-sized city, which they prefer to hold in storage ponds waiting for a big rain storm to overflow the pond. The Chinese might actually do a better job with this since they aren't crazy like US corporations, or maybe it's in one of those 'free trade' deals that state and local government can't interfere with them in anyway.

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Where does China get the money to buy something this big? Well, they aren't paying for it in Chinese Yuans. Just as they don't really loan us money the way the right would like us to believe, they are paying in USD from the \$700 billion trade deficit that we run year after year. Every time you buy anything at Walmart you are helping China take over the world. Remember when we had to fight Communism? Communism won thanks to the Conservatives.

Twitter @BruceEnberg Or meet me upstream from the 'manure holding pond', if there is such a place.