

Republican Math Invades Europe!

Written by Alex Baer

Saturday, 13 October 2012 17:20 - Last Updated Saturday, 13 October 2012 17:24

At first glance, it's a jaw-dropping shock -- and then, the longer you stare at it, trying to peer into its mysteries, it becomes even less real than that. Like poking smoke rings with a fork.

And, quite a lot like the wildly erroneous math used in recent years by the GOP to justify pet projects while pretending things really -- *wink, nudge* -- add up.

It appears some of that same logic is seeping into Europe: A woman in France received a telephone bill for almost 12 quadrillion euros -- about 9.25 quadrillion U.S. dollars.

Yes, of course, it's a goof -- one of the more spectacular ones, sure to join the ranks of other astonishing math blunders of its type, right up there with the more subtle, but equally eye-popping, misplaced-or-missing decimal point in the contract, or a spot where "or" should have been used versus "and," followed by billions in shaken foundations.

In this case, the dazzling math goof in phone billing was more than 6-thousand times France's annual economic output.

(Yep, sounds like the Romney-Ryan math team has been there, all right, advising company accountants and programmers.)

The BBC story quoted the woman, a former teaching assistant who had requested her phone company account be closed after losing her job last month, as saying she "almost had a heart attack. There were so many zeroes, I couldn't even work out how much it was."

(Again: Yes, that sure sounds like Republicans, all right: Espouse tightly conservative economic values and concerns about the national debt -- but only *after* putting two major wars, a bundle of skirmishes, and some massive bank bailouts on the nation's credit card!)

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Just for the record, here is how her telephone bill looked, in digits:

- **11,721,000,000,000,000.00 euros.**

Imagine tearing into the usual envelope and spotting that smear of numbers.

World GDP for an entire year, by comparison, is only about \$70 trillion -- woefully short of what was owed. Annual Global GDP is chump change alongside that phone bill.

Wait. It gets *better*.

And, of course, the phone company initially told her there was nothing they could do to amend the computer-generated statement and later offered to set up installments to pay off the bill.

Let's see now... at 5% interest over the course of the payment period -- a special discounted rate, don't you know, for prime customers -- this will take approximately.... carry the 739 centillion....

Um. ☐ We're sorry miss. ☐ Our sun will have burned out by then. ☐ Could we possibly increase your payments slightly -- say, to a million dollars a week, minimum?

They're much more polite in Europe. GOP math practitioners would simply deploy a phalanx of attorneys, and seize the continent, for openers, while funding a think tank devoted to protecting the rights of any mathematical error to exist, from the moment of initial lack of conception.

In the end, the company admitted the bill should have been for only 117.21 euros, and eventually waived the thing altogether -- *very, very* un-Republican of them.

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But then, Europe has been the site of civilized cultures for centuries.

At least that story has a happy ending.

In America, we're still waiting to see how the horrors of GOP math play out -- a euphemism for *wonder how much we'll let them get away with THIS time, both in sham reasoning as well as in the amount of self-payments and bleed-offs to cronies and special friends?*

Of course, in parts of the world, GOP math has already taken hold, and Republicans on Wall Street have been able to make entire countries lurch back and forth with an unending arsenal of accounting schemes and dirty tricks.

There is no longer a need for armies, when one can own a country at the touch of an accountant's or trader's keyboard. *Clickety-clackety-clack, surprise! □ It's all ours!*

Austerity, thy middle name is Republican -- once the top One Percent bleed the treasuries first, that is. Then, the little people can swoop in and do their *austerity thing*, right?

Well, what the hell. Those wars were only supposed to last -- what was it again, Mr. Rumsfeld? Mr. Bush? -- *six days, six weeks, I doubt even six months.*

Republican math -- the gift that keeps on giving. Give it a digit, and it will take the world in (and as) change. *Please count your fingers before leaving the window.*

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And, sometimes, they'll want the money anyway, even after the mistake is clearly obvious to absolutely everyone.

According to a slowly-unwinding tale from the BBC, a woman tried to pretty-up a very old fresco of Christ, painted in a church in Spain, but, according to the story, "the portrait now resembles a crayon sketch of a very hairy monkey in an ill-fitting tunic."

The woman who ruined the fresco now says she'd like royalties, please, as it's become something of a tourist draw.

To her credit, her lawyers say she'd like the royalties to go to charities.

To all you lovers of Republican math, pay very close attention: After you screw things up beyond recognition, way past hope of any possible return or positive resolution...

...you'll be a *lot* more popular if you detour your constant pilfering, shakedowns, and barely sleight-of-hand *take to charities* -- not to corporations, not into your own accounts, and not diverted only to cronies and pals.

Tip: Please start with charities funding math education, as Americans are in 25th place in the world, in math.

Whatever support you lose from the resulting, much brighter Americans who actually understand real math, later on, you might could win back -- and more! -- from doing all those unthinkably good, charitable works.

I know it sounds illogical -- so, do the math yourself. Two negatives can make a positive, you know. Check around. Ask someone *independent*.

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Phone bill: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19908095>

What's a quadrillion? <http://www.quadrillion.com/number.shtm>

and: <http://www.jimloy.com/math/billion.htm>

and: <http://www.kokogiak.com/megapenny/seventeen.asp>

Fresco video: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19358906>

Fresco update: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19674622>