



MUIR REPORT: BRITS, BULLETS & BILL COSBY

Finally did it, bit the bullet and bought an electric car, a Prius, more commonly known as a "Pious". My self-righteousness quotient shot up 90 points. Passing gas stations while driving in the diamond lane and saving the planet at the same time can't be beat.

However, living in Berkeley, it was just a matter of time before someone took me down. I was told electricity generation plants burn coal and oil just like automobiles, maybe more, batteries were far more hazardous to dispose of and the materials used in making them were the cause of pain and suffering and early death among African tribesmen forced to mine these materials.

Just because my energy comes out of a hole in the wall doesn't mean I'm any greener than the guy with an Audi. It's analogous to buying a piece of meat in a store, previously wrapped, and not having to look at the gruesome killing and quartering of the animal.

Damn, the only people I know who are truly green live in Humboldt County, in small trailers or tents and receive an enormous amount of grief over their lifestyle choice. They are lambasted at every turn. Is this what we must do to ensure a clean environment for future generations? In a word -- YES.

My heroes have always been women. The current landscape consists of many kick-ass females, and let's add Chelsea Manning to the list. She won't give in to government bullying. She'd rather go to jail.

Trump is payback for us meddling in Russian elections and giving them Boris Yeltsin, buffoon for buffoon.

Is God a rapist? He impregnated a woman without her knowing it, then sent a buddy around to tell her about it. She had no recollection of intercourse, so she must have been drugged. How is God different from Bill Cosby?

Trump says no man alive can take him down, how about a dead one? Leave it to the Brits to come up with clever signage. They had rows upon rows of protesters holding up signs which spelled out USS JOHN MCCAIN. Some other signs read, "we'll keep him busy while you change the locks on the White House".

Remember the Pokeman craze, when people had to find out where he was and go to that spot? The brainchild of some clever start-up? No, a Google company -- which was experimenting with directing mass migrations of people to one place -- was coincidentally a business which paid Google for the influx of potential customers. Who can you trust?

MUIRWALKER

CHOMSKY: TRUMP IS TAXING CONSUMERS!

Whatever one thinks of Trump, he is a highly skilled politician. He's been very successful with his two constituencies: the primary one - wealth and corporate power; and the voting base - relatively affluent fairly generally, including a large bloc of Christian evangelicals, rural whites, farmers, workers who have faith in his promises to bring back jobs, and a collection of others, some not too admirable.

It's clear why the primary constituency is mostly delighted. Corporate profits are booming. Wealth continues to be concentrated in very few hands. Trump's administration is lavishing them with gifts, including the tax bill, the main legislative achievement, across-the-board deregulation, and rapidly increasing fossil fuel production. He and McConnell (in many ways the evil genius of the administration) are **packing** the judiciary with reactionaries, **guaranteeing** the interests of the corporate sector and private wealth even after these "**glory days**" are past. They don't like his trade wars, which are causing disruption of global supply chains, but so far at least that's outweighed by his dedicated service to their welfare.

To keep the rest in line - the Christian right, white supremacists, ultranationalists and xenophobes, takes the kind of demagoguery at which Trump is expert. Thus many who are understandably aggrieved by the economic policies of the neoliberal years still seem to feel that he's the one person standing up for them by shaking his fist at those they blame for taking away their jobs: **immigrants** and "**the scheming Chinese,**" primarily.

Numerous press reports reveal how the scam works. Thus, in *The New York Times*, Patricia Cohen investigates the attitude of owners of large farms to Trump's trade wars, which sharply cut their exports to China and cause severe financial hardships. In general, she finds, they continue to support the president. "**I get why he's doing it,**" her major informant says: "America has been bullied" by China. And if the trade war persists through the 2020 election, "**I would be OK with that.**" He's sure that Trump will do everything possible to help. Furthermore, "**It makes me feel really good to hear Trump say farmers are important to this country. That's what makes me want to stick with the president.**"

Shaking a fist at the "Yellow Peril" and a little sweet talk carry the day, helped by tariffs which are in effect a tax on consumers (contrary to Trump's pretenses about China paying for them). The New York Fed estimates the cost to consumers at \$1.6 billion annually, **a tax of \$831 for the average American household. Hence Trump's tariffs tax the general public to maintain the loyalty of a prime constituency.**

About the low rate of unemployment: in the (very good) economics journal *Challenge*, relying on Bureau of Labor Statistics figures, economist John Komlos estimates that "**the real unemployment rate in the fall of 2018 was closer to 7.4 percent of the labor force. Among those without a high school diploma, it was twice as high,**" reaching **28 percent unemployed among African Americans.** The prime reason for the discrepancy in figures - all from the same government sources - **is the significant decline in labor force**

participation. Many have **dropped out** of the labor force in their prime years.

The high actual unemployment rate, Komlos plausibly suggests, is part of the reason why "**there is so much despair in the society.**" **Gallup polls regularly measure stress, worry and anger.** The U.S. ranks high by these measures, reaching **new highs in 2018,** by now even higher than during the great recession. In reported stress levels, the U.S. has "**one of the highest rates out of the 143 countries.**" **The U.S. is even above Venezuela in its current distress.**

The "economic boom" is a continuation of the slow recovery that began under Obama. The McConnell-Ryan Congress restricted a needed government stimulus during the Obama years, **wailing about deficits,** but as usual, when they took office it turned out that "**Reagan taught us that deficits don't matter**" (**Dick Cheney**) **when Republicans create them.** Trump's one legislative achievement, the tax giveaway to the rich and corporate sector, provided a stimulus to the economy (without the promised investment). **A Brookings Institution study** by Robert Barro and Jason Furman (conservative, liberal) estimated that the boost of Trump's tax cut law to short-term GDP growth was 1.1 percent for the first quarter of 2019, accounting for the increase from the consensus expectation of 2 percent. The tax cut, of course, exploded the deficit, which can now provide a pretext for cutting social spending.

Analysis from Bloomberg News shows that jobs are growing slightly faster in Trump-supporting rural and exurban counties than in the urban mostly Clinton counties. At the same time, real wages declined slightly in Trump counties and increased slightly in Clinton counties, in both cases a decline from the Obama years.

As an aside, it should be noted that U.S. economic power is in fact astonishing. In recent articles and an important forthcoming book titled **American Power Globalized: Rethinking National Power in the Age of Globalization,** international economist Sean Kenji Stars argues persuasively that in the recent years of globalization, national accounts mean much less than they used to. **A more realistic estimate of economic power is the share of global wealth owned by nationally based multinational corporations. For the U.S., that comes to the staggering figure of about half of world wealth, more than U.S. national economic power at its height after World War II.** How this will be affected by Trump's wrecking ball, with its possibly complex effects on global supply chains, remains to be seen. Again, this colossal wealth, of course, does not devolve to the population.

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excerpted from an interview with by
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