

The Zen Art of Firewall Economics

The Deprivatization of Desperate Human Necessities

A Centrist Compromise between Capitalism and Socialism

A simple but powerful idea.

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Introduction

No academic field is censored more than economics. New economic ideas are blocked from publication. No economist can keep a job at a university while praising anything other than full bore Capitalism. No economist can stay employed at a Private Sector financial firm without repeating the lie that unregulated private markets can regulate themselves. No economist or educated financial professional actually believes that myth. The myth is a cover up that they repeat in public. It's an excuse for deregulation.

Every CEO knows that there is an adversarial relationship between labor and capital. They say the reverse in public, but you can tell that they don't believe their own spin because they make management decisions like someone who takes the adversarial relationship for granted. They sound like Milton Friedman but they act like Marx. If management really believed that owners and workers were in the same boat, management would raise wages and wait for profits to rise.

Students of economics see the lies and complain. They know they are being censored. The entire field of economics has been held back for decades. Any innovation gets crushed before it sees light. You can't publish an idea like FE in an economics journal and keep an entry level teaching position at a university. Writing a paper about anything that debunks the old Chicago School spin will prevent you from finding employment as an economist. Rich people hire economists to tell them what they want to hear.

How can an idea like FE see light? Under the old system it was not possible. You had to be an economist and get published in an academic journal that is only read by other economists. Very few people would ever see it. In order to launch a book outside of the university you had to convince a publisher to take it and risk money on it. The publisher had to promote it in the old fashioned marketing way. You had to convince a for-profit publisher that a book on economics would make money. The publisher would have to risk becoming the enemy of everyone who profits from keeping the truth about

economics secret. FE would never see light with a traditional strategy.

Enter the internet. As long as the author doesn't care about making money from an idea, the idea can see light. It can go around all the traditional roadblocks and screens. The author can market the idea on social media. The author can even be anonymous. It's a perfect meritocracy for ideas. The internet will do more for democracy than the printing press. Even illiterate people can watch a video. You had to be able to read to benefit from early printing.

FE happened before the internet, but when social media happened, I knew that it had a chance to be seen. I saw a technology that would make it possible for one person with a revolutionary idea to break through institutional restrictions. This book is not just about FE. This is an experiment in democracy. The big prize is a new world where ideas, even unpopular ideas, even ideas that have no institutional support, even ideas that power wants to suppress, can break out and be judged fairly in an uncensored democracy where information is free.

ONE

An important clarification. In the pages that follow I will be calling for the Public Sector administration of markets for Desperate Necessities. I will be arguing that the Private Sector is not appropriate for important markets like health care, education, and retirement pensions.

Some of my real life experiences that I will be writing about may not sound like someone who favors the Public Sector at all. What I am describing actually happened to me, but what I saw does not represent a typical Public Sector environment. My entire career in the Public Sector was during the so-called Reagan Revolution.

The Public Sector was beaten down and cut to the bone by conservative Republican administrations throughout my entire career. The Public sector that I describe here is a broken one. This is what public services look like after being gutted by decades of suffering under Reagan's "government is the enemy" scam.

We have decades of evidence now that a strategy of cutting the Public Sector to the bone, privatization, and Trickle Down Economics is terribly destructive to the health and welfare of the American People.

I am not describing a healthy Public Sector here. This is the bombed-out commons that Reagan left us. Please remember that when I describe some of the ugly things I found in my Public Sector jobs.

This book is not a textbook. I write for the general public. I make my case for Firewall Economics as if I'm talking to three generations at the dinner table over the holidays. Firewall Economics was my baby in graduate school. I came very close to publishing FE as a paper in a social work journal, but I never did. Academic journals are where good ideas go to die.

FE cannot advance until it is exposed to the general public. I give my books away online. I have no boss. I am free to spread the word. My ebook on political literacy has 100,000 hits. Thank you to all the people that shared the link.

FE is a straightforward idea. I can describe it in a few short pages that anyone can understand. I will do that, and then explain how FE came about. I will show you how it fits into the history and the future of economics. I will show you how many of our seemingly intractable political problems of today can be solved by a straightforward application of FE. FE is a compromise that the political left and right can both live with.

If Capitalism and Socialism went to arbitration, FE is the compromise that would come out. You will see how logical and easy to understand FE is and say "Surely anyone could have thought of that." I get the credit. I thought of it first. It came from the Jane Addams School of Social Work at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Social Work. No economists were involved in the development of this original economic model. Social Workers 1. Economists 0.

One more thing before we go. I like to capitalize important terms and concepts. Capitalism, Socialism, Private Sector, Public Sector, Left, Right. I do that as a sort of outlining/memory tool to help readers assign bits of information to logically consistent categories. Capitalized terms are fundamental categories.

I actually have a Chicago Manual of Style or whatever its called somewhere in my library but this book is not going to be that formal. I can't decide when to write 1000 vs. One Thousand etc, but that's not important here. There are times when I have to sound a little technical but I try to write I'm explaining FE to my brother at Thanksgiving. I kept all of my college papers. They make me laugh now. College students and professors never miss an opportunity to use a bigger word. I don't need big words to describe FE. I think I found all of the typos. If I missed one, send me an email and I'll fix it. You can do that with ebooks.

THE DEFINITION OF FIREWALL ECONOMICS

Firewall Economics restricts all commerce for the sale of goods and services that are considered to be Desperate Human Necessities from Private Sector For-Profit Markets. Only Desperate Human Necessities are restricted. The definition of a Desperate Human Necessity is any good or service that a consumer cannot refuse to buy at an exorbitant price without borrowing money and going into debt.

Firewall Economics is an economic model that recognizes that all economic systems are mixtures of Capitalism and Socialism. The US economy is a mixed economy. FE is not much different than what we have now in the ratio of Public to Private. What would change is the way we choose what markets get administered by the Public Sector. Necessities go to the Public Sector.

In our present stage of the evolution of democracy, the mix between Capitalism and Socialism is settled by blunt political force. When the right is in power, the mix is

low on Socialism and high on Capitalism. When the center-left is in power, the mix is higher on Socialism and lower on Capitalism. (The left is never in power in the US.)

There are advantages and disadvantages to both. The disadvantages of conservative administrations fall disproportionately on working class people. Left-wing administrations clip the wings of upper-income taxpayers and the owners of significant wealth. (There IS an adversarial relationship between workers and owners. More on that later.)

Using blunt political force to determine the mix in an economy is not efficient or rational. Political polarization prevents compromise. Both sides fail to trade off things that they do not need in exchange for things that they value. If a compromise happens, it gets negotiated by blunt political force and not by a rational analysis of the needs of both sides.

Capitalism and Socialism have different advantages and disadvantages. Capitalism is competitive and suitable for accumulating wealth, but Capitalism is terrible at providing a safety net for the general population. Socialism is cooperative and better for building a safety net, but too much Socialism can discourage ambition and innovation.

When the mix of Capitalism (competition) and Socialism (cooperation) is done with blunt political force, they cancel each other out to a large extent and waste resources that could have been used to provide things like health care for the left and business infrastructure for the right. Blunt political force is inefficient. Rational compromise is efficient.

Let's get rational. Bore down on the values of the left. Why does the left fear Capitalism? The left knows that too much Capitalism will cause some people to be deprived of the necessities of life. Most people will get them, but what about the poor, or people even temporarily out of work? Every wage earner is only a medical emergency or a layoff away from disaster. No person should go bankrupt because they lack the money to purchase Desperate Human Necessities on the open, not subsidized, unregulated, cash market. Necessities need to be administered through the Public Sector.

Corporate America does not want to give up these markets, but Capitalism is unsustainable without doing just that. An incentive would be to lessen restrictions on private markets for goods and services that are not necessities. The left does not care if a billionaire corners the market on things like luxury cars and suburban mini-mansions.

How does FE define what is and is not a necessity? A Desperate Human Necessity is a good or service that a consumer cannot refuse to buy, at an exorbitant price, without borrowing money. If a private, for-profit water company raised average rates from \$35.00 to \$500 a month, everyone would have to pay it. Low-income people would have to get a loan and be caught in a never-ending debt trap. Water is a Desperate Necessity. When the seller has the buyer over a barrel, what he is selling is a necessity. If you can't say no to the seller's price without doing damage to your health and safety, that is a Desperate Necessity.

FE is a rational solution to the problem of providing a basic reliable safety net to

everyone. Workers who lose their jobs would get food. They would not lose their modest homes or go without food or healthcare. Their pensions would be protected, and they would be large enough to keep poverty away in retirement.

FE is not perfect. FE does not cure economic inequality. There would be some redistribution of wealth, but not enough to put a dent in the present top-heavy wealth distribution of today. Inequality is a serious issue that will have to be addressed by other interventions, but that is not a reason to reject FE. FE is a compromise intended to prevent a hard landing for extreme Capitalism that would devastate both owners and workers. FE is not revolutionary. It is evolutionary. It secures the safety net. It doesn't cure inequality. It doesn't cure cancer.

(A note of warning to anarchists who hate government in general: Anarchy does not bring a stateless utopia. It brings rule by organized crime, like Trump. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Government is the only thing strong enough to protect the 99% from the 1%. Corruption is a problem that threatens our very existence, but Anarchy won't fix it.)

FE is simple. Let wealthy investors play casino with fancy condos in downtown Chicago, but not with the price of electricity to heat average-sized homes and apartments in Peoria. Investors and speculators can make lots of money on other things, just not things where they have people over a barrel.

TWO

I believe that FE will be the next logical step in the evolution of economics. Marx predicted Capitalism to Socialism to Communism. I predict Capitalism to FE with more and more Socialism replacing Capitalism in the mixed economy over time. I do not see private markets going away altogether. The next step is FE. It will not happen overnight, but the conditions necessary and sufficient to bring it about are with us today.

I want to begin by describing how FE would impact some of the pressing political issues of today, but first a review of the definitions of Capitalism and Socialism, the two major political philosophies of our time.

Many people still equate Socialism with Communism. Communism has no democracy. Socialism thrives in a real democracy. Modern nations with a healthy share of Socialism are almost always democracies. Scandinavian countries are a good example. Socialism is all around us. Taxes are socialism. Public roads are socialism. The way the military is run is pure socialism. When something is controlled by the Public Sector, that is socialism. Social Security and Medicare are socialism.

FE is about dividing up individual markets for different goods and services between the Private Sector (Capitalism), and the Public Sector, (Socialism). The Private Sector and the Public Sector differ significantly in how they are administered. The primary goal of the Private Sector is to make a profit. The primary goal of the Public Sector is to fill the needs of every individual first and find a way to pay for it second. Neither method is good or bad, they just work better for different things.

Left and Right. The Private Sector is the religion of the Republican Party. The Private Sector goes on the Right. The Public Sector is the religion of the traditional Democratic Party. The Public Sector goes on the left.

To understand Public Sector budgeting and administrative strategy, we need to flashback to my graduate school days. My master's degree in Social Work was all about a specialty in Policy Planning and Administration. The best way to describe it is a Public Sector MBA.

Government agencies have missions and budgets just like private businesses do, but there are significant differences. Public programs must serve every customer. They can't cut corners by turning people away. Everybody rides. Public Sector programs don't have to show a profit, but they can't run a deficit. A pizza house can borrow money when income temporarily falls below costs. Public programs can't just call the bank and use a line of credit.

Public agencies get a fixed budget for the fiscal year. That budget is based on an estimate of how many people are expected to need that service. If more people show up than expected, the agency or program is required by law to serve every one of them. Private businesses have a huge advantage over public agencies because of this difference.

When Republicans call for balanced budget legislation at any level of government, this is what they really want. The Private Sector and the Public Sector compete for markets. The Private Sector can borrow money to navigate through a crisis. The federal government can run a deficit, (borrow/print money), but most state governments have balanced budget rules. States can't run a deficit like the feds.

This is how Public Sector programs get privatized. A public program gets stuck on a temporary crisis, runs out of money, and a private for-profit business bribes a politician to privatize the program. The bill to the taxpayer goes up because the private program will take a profit and add that to the operating costs. Private Sector programs are not more efficient. That is a myth.

Private Sector enterprises have profit as their top priority. Serving everyone is the top priority of Public Sector programs. FE asserts that these two budgeting strategies work well for different things. No rational person wants necessities like Medicare to start cutting people off when more people get older faster than we budgeted for. Necessities belong in the Public Sector.

No rational person expects a pizza house to cut their prices in a recession until they are low enough that even the unemployed can get a pizza. Having someone cook for you is a luxury. Private businesses should be able to charge whatever the market will bear for things that are not necessities. You don't have to buy a pizza. You do have to purchase health care.

What government looks like today is a bare-knuckle political battle to determine the mix of private vs. public in the federal budget for all markets for every good and service at the same time. That is way less efficient than FE because the two different budgeting strategies actually work against each other. We are mixing competition with

cooperation.

What we get is ugly. Private businesses get taxed more than is necessary, and public programs run out of funds before they cover everyone. Private companies pay extra taxes to other private companies who run privatized safety net programs on a cost plus profit basis.

Why do nations that have Public Sector health care programs pay half of what we pay in the US with everyone covered? Because Public Sector programs are more efficient in the provision of necessities. Private companies think they want in with markets for necessities because they see a captive consumer, but they always hit bottom when confronted with universal coverage. That's when they go for a bailout. The bailout is public money.

Now I can understand why a Republican who owns a private prison would want public money to pay for his business, but I can't understand why a Republican who owns a plumbing supply business would vote for that. Republicans think privatizing everything is good for the entire Private Sector. The plumber is paying extra taxes to cover the profit slice of the private prison budget.

This is where I start bringing in specific examples of markets that do better in the Public Sector, but I will also bring up examples of markets that are not necessities. FE would not apply to them. Conservatives should sign on to FE. Most of the economy is not about necessities. All the Private Sector has to do to save Capitalism is to move out of protected markets. Consumer demand is not limited to bare essentials, and consumer spending is about 3/4 of the US economy.

Let's compare the performance of our two budget strategies on how they impact our problem issues of today. Health care in the US still has a substantial private sector footprint. Medicare is public, but most workers get their health care through their employer and a private for-profit insurance company. A public health care system would relieve all those employers of that burden. Why do Republicans block it, and why do employers fear it.

Small business owners favor public health care. Large corporations do not. Many large corporations are actually self-insured. They invest in the for-profit health care market. The extra 50% that we pay for private health care is a big racket. Many companies use supposedly increasing health care costs as an excuse to skip pay raises. Since about 1980, worker productivity has risen a great deal. Computers are probably the biggest reason. Wages have been flat since then. All that increased productivity brought big profits to the Private Sector as the owners of corporate stock got more work out of fewer people. They hid the money in the private health care system.

Who are the winners and losers of using Private Sector budgeting to run a market for a necessity like health care? The uninsured get hurt. Every worker pays twice as much. Small businesses and big corporations compete for good employees. Small companies can not compete with big corporations when it comes to providing health care to employees. Larger risk pools are cheaper than small ones, and private health care companies are partially owned by the big guys who don't want Main Street employers to

be able to provide health care.

Only a tiny fraction of the population, the wealthiest 1%, benefit from private health care. Private health care is inefficient, and just morally wrong. It's against the law in some European nations. Use health care as a perfect example of the rationality of FE. Some things should just not be for sale. FE is a rational method for selecting those things. The things that should not be for sale have something in common. They are all Desperate Human Necessities.

Sidebar: The Affordable Care Act is not public health care. It's private health care subsidized by public money. Private insurance companies still control it. There is still a profit added to the cost of providing the service. The Democrats wanted a Public Option that did more to eliminating the private middleman, but the Republicans blocked it. The ACA is better than what we had before, but a National Health Service with no Private Sector insurance companies at all is the only way to reduce costs and cover everyone. We are many decades behind Europe here.

FE makes it easy. It's not necessary to have a political battle over funding each and every good or service. Just use the Public Sector to administer markets for necessities. Investors can make money on other things. Stop investing in private prisons. Stop trying to corner the market on home heating oil like the crooks at Enron did. Start investing in pizza chains and video games. Any investor who thinks that people will stop spending discretionary income on things they don't actually need after their necessities are covered doesn't know the American consumer.

Let's go to another market example. Private Sector, for-profit prescription drugs are a huge racket and a crime against humanity. Do you remember the EpiPen scandal? Mylan, A Private Sector drug company, raised the price of a single dose of a drug to stop allergic reactions from about \$13.50 to something like \$700.00 overnight. The CEO got called before Congress. He took the fifth and refused to testify.

I will not use the guy's name. Remember the evil grin on his face? They couldn't touch him, and he knew it. Under the kind of Capitalism that we have now, what he did was legal. In fact, there is a good legal argument that his legal obligation to his stockholders required him to do it. FE would have blocked this. Prescription drugs are desperate human necessities and should be protected from the profit motive.

European countries have lots of good laws to prevent price gouging on prescription drugs. Governments there carry more negotiating power and sometimes just set drug prices. Many US drug manufacturers sell their drugs in the US at very high rates while they sell the same medicines overseas for a fraction of US prices. (Bernie Sanders and the Democrats just introduced a bill to make US drug companies stop doing that, but The Republican party opposes it.)

The Private Sector cannot be trusted with markets for desperate necessities. What happens if a private drug company locks in a patent on a cancer drug, and then decides to charge \$100,000 for a daily dose? Private health insurance would refuse to pay, and the bill would eventually go to the taxpayer. The government would have to pay as the insurer of last resort, or some people would just die.

The Veterans Administration can negotiate lower drug prices from drug companies by negotiating as a massive single buyer. Republicans refused to sign on to the Affordable Care Act unless this kind of government leverage was blocked from the ACA. Both the Republican Party and the centrist wing of the Democratic Party get a lot of money from the drug companies.

Update: Breaking news, December 9, 2018. The Washington Post reports today that the Epipen scandal has exploded into a wider investigation. It seems that the major generic drug companies have been caught forming a cartel and are fixing the prices of generic drugs.

Update: December 27, 2018. Senator Elizabeth Warren just called for the government to manufacture generic drugs. That's FE. I do a lot to bring FE to the attention of the Congress. She may be familiar with it. I can only hope.

Profit corrupts markets for Desperate Necessities. It's all around us. Once you understand FE, you can read the paper and see how FE would prevent a lot of pain.

Both parties would actually benefit from adopting FE, but they don't understand it yet. Centrist Democrats would pick up a lot of support from the progressive left, and the Republicans would have something to trade for things that they want that are still within the spirit of FE. The core of the main

philosophical argument against the Republican party is that they have no heart and leave a massive hole in the safety net. After FE, that argument is no longer valid. Republicans would still be vulnerable to the issue of inequality, but not on the safety net.

Sidebar: Privatization is easily misunderstood. When a Public Sector agency is privatized, it doesn't go from a program funded by public money to a program funded by private money. Privatized programs run on the same public money as before. They just cost more to the taxpayer because the profit slice is added to the bottom line.

Privatized programs have many other problems too. Liability is one of them. If a private prison guard kills an inmate, is the government responsible? This has not been decided to any satisfaction in the courts. There is no clear answer possible and the fact that there is no clear answer is evidence against privatization.

If a private prison is found liable, they can just go bankrupt and reform into a new private company with a new name and lobby government for the same contract. (Corporations have limited liability. The offending administrators might get fired, but the liability of the stockholders is limited to the value of the stock. That's what corporations are for. Limiting liability.)

The whole thing goes to the civil court instead of the criminal court where people can actually go to jail. No defendant can go to jail from civil court. Civil court is only about deciding which side has to pay money to the other side. Private companies frequently use shady arbitration clauses to keep them out of court altogether. Can an inmate be bound by an arbitration clause?

See how ridiculous it gets? On the other hand, if the government is liable, then the court is giving the private company the power to put the government at great risk when the government has no power to control the private employees. So much for the

privatization of government programs to provide necessities. Prisons are necessities too. They are necessary for public safety, and the logic is clear. Any public program that is funded with public money has a public responsibility and should be administered by the Public Sector.

Let me move on to retirement pensions. There is a TV commercial running today that has a woman telling a broker that she is having a recurring nightmare. "I'm 85 years old, and I have a job where I have to wear a giant hotdog suit." Her IRA does not make her feel secure. The broker says his IRA will make her feel more secure than other IRAs. All IRAs and 401ks are bets on the stock market. Some have low yield bonds, but IRAs are mostly stocks. You can lose a fortune overnight.

Pensions are not just for retirement. Every worker needs to feel a sense of security at work. Our pension system is so weak that we worry about retirement every day. We have two pension systems, one public, and one private. Let's compare them.

Public Social Security does not care how many times you change jobs. It does not depend on the ups and downs of the stock market. You don't need to hire a middleman to pick your stocks as you do with a Private Sector IRA. The dollar amount is locked in with Social Security. An IRA is not secure. 401Ks and IRAs are bets on the stock market.

The Social Security Administration pays 99% of its budget out in benefits. Overhead costs are 1%. Private Sector health care overhead costs run about 25% across the industry. Private health care administrators make millions. It's a terrible myth that the Private Sector is more efficient with markets for desperate necessities.

IRAs are never secure. A politician says something stupid and the market falls 1000 points in a day. Even if it goes back up the next day, you are never free of stress. Pensions are supposed to make you feel secure at work, not just in retirement. Imagine going to work on Monday while the market is falling like a rock. Are you distracted? Are you productive? Thank God for Social Security. Only a small fraction of the US workforce can even afford to invest in an IRA or a 401k.

Research comparing nations in South America that dumped public pensions for IRAs found that workers got about half the return they got under public pensions. (The People-1. Chicago School of Economics-0. Assuming that screwing people was not the goal of the Chicago School of Economics all along.)

We can put people on the moon, but economists can't imagine a profitable market that doesn't involve Desperate Necessities. By the way, The University of Chicago is a Private School, is dependent on fat cat corporate donors, and has no public administration. (University of Illinois -1. University of Chicago -0.) Education is a necessity.

Jobs. There is an adversarial relationship between workers and owners. Marx was wrong about a lot of things, but he was right about that. Wages go up, and profits go down. Profits go up when wages go down. Labor is an overhead cost in private business. For workers and administrators to be on the same side, you have to remove the profit motive, and that is what happens in the Public Sector. There are other tradeoffs too. The

Public Sector can get political, but the profit motive is gone. Cutting wages does not make a public agency look more productive, even on paper.

But aren't public agencies bureaucracies. Yes, and so are corporations. Bureaucracy simply means specialization. All big organizations have job descriptions and departments. Bureaucracy has a bad reputation cooked up by conservative anti-government propaganda mills that never mention that IBM is a bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy is not perfect. It has problems like middle managers getting pinched between a ton of responsibility and an ounce of authority, but the advantages outweigh the disadvantages many times over. Conservatives that complain about bureaucracy in the Public Sector use it in every Private Sector organization they control.

The Democratic Party is more comfortable with the Public Sector and Public Sector strategies to protect employment. Look at the data. The Democrats are the job creators, not the Republicans.

With FE, some jobs would move from the Private Sector to the Public Sector. These would be jobs that involve markets for desperate necessities. Since the 1980s, Public Sector jobs have been cut to the bone. Unlike the Private Sector, these jobs would be union jobs with excellent benefits. Public Sector jobs are the last holdout of the unions. Restoring these union jobs would raise the wages of all working people. Union wages set the floor that Private Sector employers must compete with. Since the Reagan revolution started busting unions, wages for everyone have been flat.

Conservatives have cut the Public Sector way too much. A more balanced labor force with more Public Sector jobs is more resilient in a recession. Public Sector jobs stabilize the shock. Layoffs happen to government workers also, but cutting labor costs is not the first move in a recession.

Making it harder to cut workers loose is a stabilizing force in a temporary economic downturn. When Private Sector employers panic in a recession and start sending workers home, it creates a vicious cycle. Spending stimulates the economy. People can't spend when they're out of work. The last recession was worse because most US jobs were Private Sector jobs and not Union.

I promised to use no graphs. A good one should go here. You can google it. Look up job creation Democrats vs Republicans. It's not even close. Democrats create more jobs. Republicans cause recessions by deregulating banks and cutting taxes for the rich. That causes a temporary boom followed by a bust/recession. Google a graph of the deficit over the years. Google the debt across time. Republicans run up the debt. Democrats pay it off. After the Democrats pay off the debt, Republicans criticize them for spending the money it took to bail out Republican banks and failed corporations. Look at the graphs for job creation. Look up a graph of the deficit/debt. Compare the years that the Republicans were in power with the years that the Democrats were in power. The cycle repeats. Wall street gets drunk on easy money. There is a temporary boom followed by a bad recession. The Democrat clean up the mess. Republicans

criticize Democrats for spending money to clean up the mess.

The Public Sector uses a Planned Economic strategy. The Private Sector hates the idea of Planned Production. FE only wants a Planned Economy for Desperate Necessities. Wall Street can still waste money competing with 300 kinds of cell phone cases, but not with necessities.

We don't want 50 companies selling flu shots. We need one company selling them at the lowest possible cost after quality is assured. The weakest conservative myth is that competition is more efficient in all things.

8 companies try to make widgets. If seven widget companies fail to make the best widget at the lowest price, the private market drives them into bankruptcy. All of the money that went into ramping up for production is lost and wasted. Loans don't get paid back. The cost of the bad loans gets passed on to future borrowers. Widget stockholders lose big money.

Cutthroat competition makes the price of a widget to the consumer a little less, but it increases the cost of production to the general economy a lot more than that. Now factor in the extra global warming we cause by wasting raw materials.

The taxpayer pays for the production of the safety net. The taxpayer is the producer and the consumer. This is a place for cooperation, not competition. Why compete with yourself? If you want lower taxes paying for the safety net, you want a Planned Economic strategy.

The best example of a Planned Economy is US industrial production in World War II. It's no secret that a centralized planned economy that looked a lot like socialism in America won the war.

A Centrally Planned Economy is an economy where decisions on what goods and services to produce and how to produce them are made by the federal government. That does not mean that the government has to own the means of production. During the war, the feds told the automakers to build tanks, but the government did not own the automakers. War was so important that the feds had to make sure that no resources were wasted. Necessities like health care are that important too.

In an emergency, but only in an emergency, the feds step in to suspend inefficient competition and put production numbers before profit. When people can't afford Desperate Necessities, that is an emergency. The entire US industrial machine was centrally planned during the war. Defense contractors still made a fortune, but all of the tanks got made.

Everything was scarce during the war. Analyzing how FDR dealt with wartime scarcity is a good way compare a planned economy to an unregulated market. Food and gas were scarce. He didn't let the open market decide the price of a loaf of bread or a gallon of gas. He rationed them. That's how a planned economy deals with scarcity. A wide-open marketplace would have allowed wealthy people to hoard bread while millions starved. Rationing is like socialism. First, everybody rides. We can work out the rest after that. Universal coverage comes first.

Industrial production won WWII. All those workers making tanks in defense plants had enough to eat, and enough gas to get to work. If the rich had been allowed to hoard scarce resources, production would have been less efficient, and we would have lost the war. Democratic Socialism won the fight against Fascism.

Again. FE calls for a Planned Economy only for Desperate Necessities. The government does not need to own the means of production in the slice of the economy that is planned. Central planning is Socialism, but socialism can be Democratic. Only Communism and Fascism are not compatible with Democracy.

Consider production decisions against national and global priorities. Without some degree of centralized planning, the Private Sector will produce whatever goods and services that will maximize profit, at the expense of everything else. If electric cars are less profitable than gas-powered vehicles, then electric cars will not be produced, even if burning fossil fuel blocks out the sun and kills the earth. That's an emergency. The feds need to step in and tell the automakers to make electric cars now. Not after gasoline is \$10.00 a gallon, now.

Under full-bore capitalism, the car people have no choice. The first company to take a profit cut and make electric cars will be run out of the market by the competition. The government has to make them all change at once.

Auto executives are not evil. They want to make electric cars. Let me use the prison analogy. Prison researchers discovered that the reason inmates hide shanks in their cells is not that they want or intend to stick somebody. They keep shanks because they know that many other inmates keep them. Inmates like it when guards sweep for shanks. Guards tip the good guys when a search is coming. That lets the defensive shank holders throw them out on the gallery before the search comes. Prison rule number two. Let the guards see that you are a good guy. Everybody knows rule number one.

Rules and regulations can help everybody when everybody is afraid to go first. If all automakers were required by law to transition faster into electric cars, the playing field would be leveled, and they would get after it. Central planning works when things are too important to play casino. Fighting global warming is that important.

General Motors just closed a big factory because they had transitioned into small cars and the price of gas went down. Making trucks is temporarily more profitable again. The government recently relaxed fuel economy standards. Now, who did that help? Everybody knows that gas will go back up again.

Short-sighted consumers are buying trucks. They get burned when gas goes back up. Workers at the plant lose their jobs. GM takes a big hit when they should be (and want to be) making small cars, and the planet warms up faster because we burn more gas. Put the government restrictions against gas guzzlers back on and everybody benefits.

Rules are essential, especially for competitions. Imagine a football game with brass knuckles. Do you want to play? Will the best team win? Is it worth getting into shape to play? Does winning mean anything? You need rules and a referee or the competition suffers.

I was trained as a Public Sector policy analyst. Let me describe what that is in a bit more detail. Policy analysts predict what will happen if you adopt policy X. They anticipate unanticipated consequences. They study the effect of program decisions like X and what happened in the past when administrators chose to do X. What are the trade-offs of X, the advantages and disadvantages.

Example. A social worker is running a group home for girls who are wards of the state. The board of directors is loaded with conservative church ladies. The board objects to providing adolescent girls with birth control. This is what a policy analyst would say to the board.

PA: "With all due respect, I hear you saying that you don't like birth control."

Board: "That is correct. We don't want to encourage sex."

PA: "How can I say this without offending you? It is my job to know what usually happens when well-meaning people chose this policy. What you propose is very dangerous. Many studies confirm that when service providers restrict adolescents from obtaining confidential birth control the probability that they will become sexually active actually goes up."

Board: "Why is that?"

PA: "There are many theories, but the important thing is that we know it backfires. Let me tell you about Jamaica. In Jamaica, the teen pregnancy rate is one of the highest in South America. They are not permissive. The mothers are super strict. They are so afraid that their daughters will get pregnant that they tell them absolutely nothing about sex. Birth control is forbidden. Social workers beg mothers to educate their children and help them to make rational, informed decisions.

On the other hand, we know that the Scandinavian countries do just that. They do a lot of sex education and provide free birth control even without parental consent or notification. Teens are sexually active at the same rate as everywhere else, but teen pregnancy is very low. Since teen pregnancy is lower, teen abortions are lower too."

Board: "We had three abortions last year. Maybe we should bend so we don't break."

That's a true story. I was there. No program administrator or politician can know the history of every policy proposal. Policy people study the unintended consequences and value trade-offs of different policy moves that have been implemented in the past. They also take into consideration the environmental factors affecting the agency at the time. What works for one type of program is not necessarily a good idea for another.

It's not just about the history of individual policy moves. There are clusters of them that live around political and philosophical schools of thought. We study the value trade-offs, the differential blow-backs, the economic and social costs of doing X.

Conservatives fear policy people when they don't need to. Policy people in Washington work in federal agencies and workers that are under a certain rank are civil service. They can't be fired with a change of political administration. This is what Trump calls the Deep State. He can't terminate the EPA scientist who wants big oil to stop blocking the sun.

The civil service system was created after the Civil War to stop political corruption. Before the civil service, every government worker in Washington had to pay bribes to political bosses, and they all got replaced with every new president. What Trump calls the deep State is actually a reform against political corruption.

Public Sector people get called other things too. Bureaucrat I already covered. Technocrat. Definition: "An exponent or advocate of technology. A member of a technically skilled elite." What's wrong with that? People who work at the EPA should be experts. Appointing political supporters with no expertise in what an agency does to lead that agency should be illegal. When conservatives do that, the real objective is to disable the agency.

My doctor is a technocrat. He's an expert. That's a good thing. I thought science, technology, and expertise were job one for the new economy. Politicians say that all the time. My daughter is a computer programmer. She's an expert. She won't work for you if you make fun of her ability. Technocrat is a compliment.

My favorite put down: Policy is Social Engineering. Guilty as charged. We are trying to use a rational scientific method to improve the quality of life for everyone. We shape behavior with tax laws and subsidies for solar power. We influence personal choices without the consent of the person we are trying to persuade. (Like advertisers do.)

Social engineering happens all the time. Laws against murder are social engineering. The only difference between what Public Sector policy analysts do, and what corporate America does, is the behavior that is being encouraged or discouraged. Policy people will tell you straight up what they are really selling. Advertisers are no so honest. Policy people want you to stop smoking. Advertisers want you to smoke. (FYI: The Reagan revolution was funded by tobacco money.)

Then there is the Big Government criticism. A centralized planned economy for Desperate Necessities doesn't have to be bigger. Size has nothing to do with it. We can just target crucial markets. FE is efficient. FE could actually make the public sector smaller.

Another excellent example of how Public Sector administrators differ from Private Sector administrators is the post office. Compare how a Private Sector post office operates to our traditional public post office. By the way, the post office was designed by our founding fathers to facilitate political communication. Affordable mail is essential for democracy. They never intended it to be privatized.

Universal coverage is job one. If you live in a shack way out in the sticks you get the mail and you get it at the same price as a person who lives across the street from the post office. Rural delivery is expensive, and it needs to be subsidized with tax money from the general revenue fund.

Public postal workers are union. They have good benefits. They can't be fired for political reasons or because it's cheaper to lay off older workers who make more money and replace them

with new hires at the starting wage. (Union busting is the real reason conservatives want

to privatize the post office. Unions give campaign money to Democrats.)

A private post office would cut off rural delivery on the first day. Profit would be job one. They would bust the union if they could. Saturday delivery would be out. Books would no longer ship on the cheap rate. Slower delivery would happen because it's cheaper. Postal rates would go up because the private company would have a monopoly. (Monopolies over utilities are dangerous in the Private Sector. They have the consumer over a barrel.)

Postal rates for big bulk customers like giant online retailers would go down while rates for individuals and small shops would go up. (Like the Robber Barons did with private railroad rates in the early 1900s.)

Who benefits from this private post office? Only the stockholders who own it and their giant corporate customers who get lower rates. Everybody else loses. The Republican who owns a small business gets burned, but she still thinks that privatization is better for small business too. The government builds the infrastructure that small business needs. If the roads are private toll roads, the Main Street baker pays a toll to deliver bread while the giant corporate bakery franchise gets a bulk use deal at a fraction of the base rate.

The post office, roads, gas, power, police, fire, are public infrastructure. They belong in the Public Sector. I said fire. Let me tell the private fire department story. I first heard of this nightmare in the Air Force. I was a fireman. It's real. I confirmed it.

They had a private fire department in ancient Rome. If your house caught fire, they would arrive and start negotiating before putting out the fire. The fire department would offer to buy your home at 10% of the market value. No water until the deal is done. Take your time. Everybody sold. The head of the fire department got rich and rose to the top of the Roman government. Welcome to Rome, an extreme case of what happens when you expose Desperate Necessities to the profit motive.

Once again. It's not necessary to evaluate markets for every good or service independently to determine which markets need Public Sector protection. Just start with Desperate Human Necessities. If a consumer needs it, and they can't refuse to buy it at an exorbitant price, without borrowing money that they can't afford to pay back, then that good or service is a Desperate Necessity. Let's do some examples.

Pick the necessities. Basic food-yes. Fancy food-no. Basic medical care-yes. Botox injections-no. A mortgage at a reasonable rate for an average home-yes. A mortgage for a second home vacation spot-no. A \$10,000 used car to get to work-yes. A \$45,000 pick up-no. You get the idea.

Some things are going to be tricky like a cell phone. Is that a necessity? I don't have one. Borderline cases can be decided democratically. And the government doesn't have to build a factory to make cars. They can just restrict the interest rate on the first say \$10,000 of your work car payment to a lower reasonable rate that doesn't include a bank profit.

Here is a better way. The government can nationalize consumer banking for necessities. Consumer banking is a necessary part of the public infrastructure, just like a

road or a utility. Take note. If consumer banking had been restricted to the Public Sector when we faced the recent great recession, it would have been prevented.

The recession was caused by a private bank scam that used the Desperate Necessity of home mortgages to defraud consumers and force the government to bail out private banks with public money. The government paid a fair price for the private banks and gave them back. They should have taken ownership of them. We will have to do that eventually, or more bailouts are coming.

Look carefully at what the private banks did. They suckered lots of people into bad mortgages. They got a fee up front on every new loan, even the ones they knew that the borrower could not repay. They bundled all the mortgages, good and bad, into big blocks of bonds. That's like grinding all the good meat with the rotten meat and selling it to a burger chain. Somebody gets sick, but you can't trace it back.

They got a Private Sector rating agency to rate the mortgages as a AAA investment. (All the financial rating agencies are private. They get paid by the people they audit. Elizabeth Warren started the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the first Public Sector agency to tell consumers and investors when the meat smells bad, but the Republican Party blocked it from taking off.) Once again, who did that help? Only the big private banks. Main Street businesses would benefit from an honest rating service.

Back to the housing crisis. The private banks knew the meat was rotten. They sold bundled mortgages short at the same time they were selling more of them. (Selling short is when an investor places a bet that the investment will go down or fail.) Big banks made money when the bubble inflated, and they made even more money when the bubble broke on the watch of G. W. Bush. He gave them the biggest bank bailout since the Great Depression. See the strategy yet? Privatize the profits. Use Public sector money to cover the losses.

Many nations use Public Sector banking and not just for consumer banking. A Public Sector Federal bank can steer credit to companies that make the things we need like electric cars. Companies don't have to sign on to federal projects, but they always do. They line up for government contracts like crazy. The difference is that when the Public Sector is weak like it is now, the feds don't have enough leverage to prevent private contractors from cutting corners and holding the feds hostage for cost overruns. Again, a weak Public Sector causes inefficiency. The Private Sector is not more efficient.

There is a reason that big money fights the nationalization of even consumer banking. About 40% of our economy is in banking and finance now. How's that for overhead? Banking is a utility. Imagine a water company that charges 40% overhead. Banks skim 40% off the top of everything.

We pay an extra sales tax every time we swipe a credit card. The credit card company skims about 2% off the top of every sale. It costs them the same amount to process a ten dollar transaction as a thousand, but they don't charge a flat fee. They charge a friggin percent. A public bank would not do that.

A public bank could release close to 40% of our GNP back into the economy.

Now that's what I call a stimulus. Think about the Social Security Administration with its 1% overhead. The feds don't need 40% off the top to transfer money electronically.

But would the feds get to decide who gets a business loan? Not if we just nationalize consumer banking. But with full nationalization, Enron would not have happened, and electric cars would be rolling off the lines at \$15,000. Tell WalMart to recognize the union if they want that loan. We have some interest free money to loan startups that locate in areas of Detroit that need to rebuild.

It's the people's money. Borrowers should be selected by Public Sector people who are accountable to a democratically elected Congress. We might be too early for the nationalization of investment banking, but consumer banking should go there now.

Since the 80s there have actually been efforts to privatize the military. Private contractors initially did things like kitchen duty, but the Iraq war had real private soldiers. Mercenaries even guarded the big shots and politicians who dropped in to see the war up close.

If all the troops were private citizens, could they refuse to fight and quit when things got too hot? Could they vote to form a union and go on strike? The military is public. Before you hear another conservative claim that the Private Sector is more efficient, I need to show you some numbers.

Any reader can look this stuff up online. I do not give sources for most of the things I look up and cite, but I think that with all this new technology, people should learn to do that for themselves. I don't use any numbers that are hard to find. Nothing that I cite is really disputed. I only cite numbers that are available in many places and are generally not debatable.

I wish more people would fact check politicians online. A candidate claims that his party reduced crime. Pause the TV and look up a graph of the crime rate over time etc. If an expert is introduced as working for "The Foundation for Truth, Justice, and the American Way," look up that think tank and see if the speaker is coming from the left or the right. Cable news does not require guest speakers to state their political bias. Soon you will just know that The Heritage Foundation is super right wing, and founded with Koch Brothers money. Know your think tanks.

Set up Alexa or something and ask it to look up stuff for you while the TV is paused. "Alexa, how many times did Trump declare bankruptcy? Alexa, is immigration up or down this year? Alexa, who is George Soros? Can felons vote in Kansas?" If you ask Alexa the definition of Firewall Economics, she can't tell you because I can't write my own Wikipedia page. I'm casting a hint to the winds.

Here are the numbers for private military contractors. Easy to find. A Master Sergeant regular Army with 20 years active duty in the Army earns about 4,189 in a month. A Private mercenary doing the same job rakes in about \$15,000 to \$22,000 in the same month. Look it up. They fight side by side. Imagine how the regular army soldier feels about that.

Then we have the same old liability problem. If the Private Contractor goes wild and shoots up a group of innocent civilians, is the US government liable? It happened.

The last that I heard it went to court and the shooters got away with murder.

I want to bring up the profit motive in war. Military manufacturing should be controlled by the Public Sector. We do that now, but control is weak. If a Private Sector defense manufacturer needs a war to increase profits, they will pay lobbyists to push politicians in that direction. It may not be necessary to make our fighter planes in a government-owned factory with federal employees, but we need to increase Public Sector control here and reduce Private Sector power over defense decisions.

Leaving the profit motive under-regulated will make a nation less secure, not more. Defense contractors can get us into bad wars that deplete our resources and ruin our reputation around the world.

I was an Air Force sergeant. I love planes. As a kid, I had models of many generations of Air Force planes hanging from strings in my room. I'm fascinated by the evolution of jet designs. I know the advantages and disadvantages of swept wings vs. straighter wing angles and all kinds of other variables. There are museums full of Air Force planes that have one thing in common. They never saw combat. They were designed to fight a just in case war with an imaginary adversary.

The so-called cold war was expensive. Generation after generation of military hardware took budget priority over domestic spending. Our infrastructure crumbled at home. We still don't have universal medical coverage. We lost the war on poverty. Social Security alone is not enough to retire on without reducing our standard of living. Cold war spending did not make us safer. We are more vulnerable to attack because we wasted a mega-fortune on imaginary wars.

Two things still happen. The Republican Party uses false patriotism and fear mongering to get votes, and defense contractors lobby for business. We let them sell military hardware to other nations and keep the profits. They sell planes to countries that might eventually use them against us. It should be a crime to pay a bribe to a politician to get permission to sell weapons overseas. Legislating government control of the military only works if corruption is punished severely.

Sidebar: I've always hoped that defense contractors had the good sense to build self destruct mechanisms into the weapons they sell overseas. There are computers and GPS units in everything now. We know the codes to read those computers because we build them. I'll bet that we can track every tank we ever sold to Saudi Arabia. If they turn it on, we can see it. If we can make electronic contact, we can disable any weapons system. Nations that buy modern weapons on the international market should realize this before they spend a fortune on hardware.

War is going extinct. Google a graph of war deaths over time. The world is not as dangerous as the spin doctors tell you it is. We don't need to make all this military hardware anymore. We can use our resources to build social infrastructure. The World Wars are over. Democracy won, but the troops are still stationed all over the world, and we are still cranking out war machines.

We converted industrial production to war manufacturing during WWII, but we

never retooled. The Cold War was an excuse to keep the war machine going. Defense contractors used to complain about a missile gap. The USSR was getting ahead of us. It never happened. We were always way ahead. I was there. I saw it.

A Russian pilot defected in 1976 and flew their latest Mig 25 fighter plane to Japan. He gave it to us. We took it apart, put it back together, and gave it back to the USSR. It had radio tubes in it! Ancient technology. We were decades ahead of their latest stuff. I was in the Alaskan Air Command at the time. There never was a missile gap or any other kind of gap in anything military.

In Alaska, the USSR sent planes to see if they could slip into our airspace. It happened all the time. They never got close. Old Russian bombers with turboprop engines got chased back by cutting-edge American jets. We billed the Russians for the cost of the fuel to chase them back. We were always ten steps ahead of them.

They came on Christmas Eve. We anticipated it and made them look stupid. My firemen were standing by on the runway in their crash trucks. Our pilots were in their planes with engines running. We chased them back before they could level off. We knew how safe we are in the US. We listened to politicians on the radio begging for more money for more defense spending because the USSR was supposed to be catching up.

They take a fortune from the treasury to make us safe, but no matter how much they spend, they never say it worked. When they ask for more money, we never ask them why the last pile of money didn't make us safe as they promised. It's like a drunk uncle who keeps coming back for another loan.

Imagine taking your car to a mechanic for a brake job. He says you better do a valve job or your engine is going to explode. You pay him. Then he says you need a transmission rebuild. You pay him. Then he wants to replace the computer. You ask him if all that is really necessary and he says "your engine didn't explode did it."

A boy in a medieval village wants a job guarding the town against wolves. They pay him a wage to sit on his butt. No wolves. He comes back in a year and wants a raise. He gets it. No wolves. He gets a raise every year for five years. No wolves. The mayor confronts him. The boy says "hey, you don't see any wolves, do you. It's working." The Pentagon can take half of all the tax money for a year and still say we aren't safe. You don't see any Russians, do you?

One more Cold war story. Private contractors make a lot of parts for the hardware they sell us. They charge the government obscene prices for parts, and they bribe enough politicians to get a monopoly. (Remember, a Private Sector company bribing a Public Sector politician does not prove that Public Sector control of the military is bad. It proves that corruption needs to be punished more severely.)

I was stationed at a tiny air base in Galena Alaska in 1976. We had F4 fighters there to scramble on the USSR when they flew to close to our protected airspace. The runway was short. It was about as long as the deck on an aircraft carrier. I was a crash fireman. We caught those planes with cables stretched across the runway. Planes snagged those cables with arresting hooks just like carrier landings. Rock and roll at 50 below.

Air Force regulations clearly stated that every short runway must have 2 barrier systems to stop our jets from going off the end of the runway. In Galena, the end of the runway was just a few feet from the Yukon River. If a jet got wet, the pilot would not survive. The water is cold, and the river moves at about 30 miles per hour when it's not frozen.

Barrier stop number one is the cable. One cable. Miss it, and you might crash. Very little room to go around. F4s are fast. To land on a short runway, you have to slow down to a speed that makes it hard to abort your landing for a Moose on the runway and go around. Those pilots were good.

Barrier number two was a joke, a waist-high net at the end of the runway. It was held up by aluminum rods. They were simple. A tube with one slight bend and a little spring to fasten it to the net. Full disclosure, I heard the rest of this story second hand, but it's true. I would trust my life to the sergeant that told me what was going on.

The cost to Uncle Sam for a replacement pole was \$750.00. There were over a dozen of them on the barrier net. They wear out at 50 below. They got serviced. They got changed regularly just like everything else in the Air Force. The crew in the alert barn proved that they could make one from scratch, up to specs, in fifteen minutes, for pennies. It was an aluminum pipe with one bend and a spring. They wrote a report to the Air Force to make a point. The Air Force agreed with them and sent it up the chain of command.

I'm not saying that firemen should have been allowed to make their own parts. That would be unsafe. I'm saying that military contractors charge crazy prices. An Air Force unit of trained machinists could have made the part better and cheaper. It's easier to supervise airmen than to trust a private contractor.

My point. When politicians criticize the Public Sector for corruption, they're right about corruption but wrong about the Public Sector. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Corruption ruins any system of organization. The Public Sector needs more power to push Private contractors away from raiding the federal budget. Paying contractors obscene prices for goods and services make the nation less safe, not more.

The military industrial complex is a mix of public and private, but the corruption comes from the private side. Even corrupt politicians don't have to ask private contractors for bribes. Private contractors send hundreds of cash-laden lobbyists up to Congress to fish for takers every day. Strong laws to stop corruption will not come from the Private Sector. The legislative branch of government makes law. All law comes from the Public Sector.

It's not just utilities and infrastructure that get damaged when privatized. Deciding what goods and services to protect is important. It can be difficult for some markets and simple for others. Sometimes public protection is obviously the right thing to do, and sometimes just comparing private to public models next to each other makes the case. The internet is one of those cases.

The internet is a utility now. You can't do business without it. You can't do anything without it. The internet is private, and it's all tangled up in ways that would not

be a problem if it was run as a Public Sector utility.

The first thing that the Private Sector asked when the internet happened was how do we make money with it. They still haven't figured that out. At first, the tech companies didn't show a profit at all. That exploded. The tech bubble burst. It crashed the stock market. Then they started making money by selling our personal information to retailers, politicians, scammers, Russians, you name it. That's about to end.

The reason that investors can't make honest money from the internet is that it's impossible. The net needs to be provided for free by the Public Sector, just like roads. Imagine if roads were just invented and the Private Sector just built the first ones. How wide should a road be? Should they all be the same width? If company A's road crosses company B's road and the driver has paid a toll to A, can B stop them for another toll? If A owns half of the roads in farm country, can they set the tolls higher at harvest time?

The government owns the roads. We have been through all that with roads, and we know how to avoid the tangle that happens when the Private Sector controls our transportation system. Please pay attention here. We don't have to go through all this confusion with every market for every good or service. We know that the things we end up putting in the Public Sector have something in common. They tend to be Desperate Human Necessities. I just heard the whole world say "of course. It's so simple." I'm hearing voices.

One more thing about the internet. The net is a special case. This is the information age. (Agricultural age-Industrial age-Information age.) You can't really sell information. The information age is incompatible with capitalism. Capitalism can't run without scarcity. If I sell you some information, you have it, but I still have it too. I can make an infinite number of identical copies.

Capitalism runs on supply vs. demand. If the supply goes way up, the demand goes way down, and the price falls way off. If the supply is infinite, the price falls to zero. The information age will not be about capitalism. Selling information that can be copied with no loss of quality is harder than selling sand in the desert because sand is plentiful but actually finite.

So how do we get people to write code if anyone can copy it? The coder should be paid a salary by the Public Sector. She should be in the union and be civil service. Everything that she makes can be free to the public. You want software for your business? It's free online at www.USsoftware.gov. She can get a bonus for every download. Music could be there too, and novels, and all kinds of art. When someone writes an excellent algebra book, it can be free to schools, and the author should get a big promotion with a parking spot. Intellectual property creators should be compensated up front. After that, it can all be free.

Elections are a necessity in a Democracy. This is a special case too. Administering an election is a service that is provided by the Public Sector, but the way it's done today needs to be changed. Election rules are local. There are over 3000 counties in the US, and every one of them seems to have a different set of rules for elections. That's fine for countywide elections but not for federal elections.

We need one set of federal rules for federal elections. Suffering through all this confusion doesn't make election tampering harder. It makes it easy to conceal. Imagine how many lawyers and watchdogs it would take to cover 3000 sets of rules.

Voting machines are manufactured and sold by Private Sector vendors. These machines are being hacked. We should sacrifice quick election returns for the security of paper ballots. I'm an election judge. We had about 150 voters at my polling place the last time I worked the polls. Our machines were a big hassle with punch tapes and security procedures etc. We counted the ballots a second time by hand at closing, and it took 30 minutes. Why do we need a machine for 150 ballots?

We should use paper, and the ballots should be kept in a safe forever. Ballots get destroyed. Procedures in some districts actually call for that. Why? Why can't we open the safe and do a recount at any time after an election? The fact that somebody wants them destroyed should tell you that something is up.

Do away with the secret ballot. It's not worth it. Give us a receipt that proves who we voted for. GW Bush would not have been president if Florida had receipts. No Iraq invasion? Out of Afghanistan? No banking scam? No great recession? We'll never know. The reason for secret ballots is to prevent vote selling. That's what they say. I call BS. There are ways to do a receipt with a voter code that only the government and the voter knows.

One more voter reform. When something stinks in an election, don't just recount the same ballots, do the election over. It's that important. A do-over would have stopped Trump. When they do recounts, they just run the ballots through the same machines again. It usually takes a court to get a hand recount, and a hand count is what we should be doing in the first place. Use paper and count the ballots by hand. Machines do not save money or time, and OMG, the hard drives are sometimes connected to the internet.

Let's switch to markets that FE does not apply to. Investors can make all the money they want in markets that are not about Desperate Necessities. That should be most of the economy. If I haven't lost all the conservatives by now I'm lucky.

There is big money in sports. I think it's a racket, but FE has more important things to worry about. Nobody gets hurt if four baseball tickets cost more than a car payment. Welcome to Saint Louis. Cards fans like me will do anything and spend anything to spend three hours at baseball heaven. A small group can spend more money on draft beer at Busch Stadium than it would cost to feed somebody for a week. Does FE care? Nope. Not a necessity.

Watching the game on TV is actually better. You can't see much from the \$42.00 nosebleed seats, but it's live and in person. You get to burn up in the heat just like the players. Want air conditioning? The city tore out everything around the new stadium to build Ballpark village. Huge bars and restaurants with giant screens right across the street from the outfield. The food and drink are way too expensive but OMG, it's across the street.

To get people to spend money on things that are not necessities, you need them to

do something irrational. Sports markets prove that it's not that hard to get people to do that. People buy stuff for all kinds of reasons, even when they know it's irrational. Nobody is ever satisfied with necessities. They don't bank the change after they pay the rent.

I think people know what they are doing on a subconscious level. They avoid confronting it and go shopping. Consumer spending will still be around with FE. I'm sure that people know what's up. They go to the baseball game and waste money to be around all the other people who are doing the same thing.

When I confront them with the idea that we're being played like a violin, they don't deny it. I thought I was the only Cards fan that thought the games could be fixed. When I tell people that I worry about that, they tell me that the fix is probably in. Baseball is not professional wrestling. It's supposed to be real competition. We delude ourselves because we are playing out a tribalism script, and we are having fun. Sports are a goldmine for investors and FE would not block that market.

This is where I explain why I think baseball is at least a little bit corrupt. Skip this part if you don't want me to ruin it for you. It didn't stop me from watching every Cards game. I'm hooked since childhood. FYI: We just signed a slugger for 2019. The Cubs are toast.

So what's the point of attacking the integrity of baseball? The point is that there would still be lots of markets for goods and services that are not necessities after FE. If consumers were perfectly rational, they would save more of their discretionary income, but consumers are not rational. Investors need not fear FE. In fact, FE would make the Private Sector more profitable by stabilizing market competition.

Here I go. Skip this if you don't want to know. Call me paranoid, but I think baseball players gamble on the games they play in and I think they do things on the field to nudge the score one way or another. How hard is it to tell your buddy to bet x on y online before the game? Gambling is legal. Your team is ahead by one point. You have already bet on the other team. A ball is hit to you but not close enough to make it an easy play. You purposely fail to get there in time without exposing yourself. The trick is to hold back just a little at just the right time. At just the right time is the operative phrase.

I think statistics can expose gambling. When you watch every game, you see patterns that can be checked with statistics. Teams have rooms full of statisticians now. Money ball. Sabermetrics. Having all that math power is not enough by itself. You have to know what questions to ask. They have the statistics of science, but they don't understand research design. They confuse correlation with causation. They have a million variables to control for.

Disclaimer: I'm about to make suggestions to the stats department, but I have not been down there to see what they do. I can only deduce the situation from what I observe by watching all the games and second-guessing every management call from the safety of my recliner of no accountability.

I just know that one of the Cards is gambling. How do I know that? Statistics and probability math. After a year of watching him, I saw a pattern. The following year I

kept score. I took stats. To make a long season short, this guy choked in the clutch at times that were way too similar to be random. His timing of when he "failed to make the play" was not random. It very frequently happened when it hurt the Cards. It didn't always happen

at crucial times, but it was way more than random.

He found all kinds of ways to fail when it seemed impossible to detect it, but statistics can. He rarely failed when we were ahead or behind by 4 runs or more. See? Now I don't know if the Cards can do stats like that. If they can, then they may know something that the fans don't know. Maybe gambling is all over baseball, and the owners treat it as a cost of doing business. The fans don't want to know. The market for sports is safe for investors.

One more rant/example. I don't think baseball statisticians understand research design. They don't seem to ask the right questions. Pulling pitchers is a good example. I'll be short. This is my favorite theory of why the Cards trip over their own talent.

Starting pitchers used to go about 100 pitches before getting pulled for a reliever. Then pitchers started throwing 100 miles per hour. Did managers reduce the 100 pitches to 85? No. Every arm goes out eventually and a pitcher has multiple surgeries over three or four years. How does a manager know when to pull the starting pitcher? That decision has become the biggest call in baseball. It decides the game.

Cardinal managers leave them in too long. They seldom pull a starter when he is ahead. They wait until he is behind, and then give the reliever the mound with two runners on base. My stats tell me that the lions share of the runs that the Cards give up happen within the last five pitches of the starter. I wonder why they can't see that. The reason is, they can't ask the right research question to test with the stats. Data is just data. It's not information until it is interpreted. They can't think like a scientist doing research.

Here is what I found out. They had stats that showed that in games where the starting pitcher went deep into the game, the Cards tended to win. They interpreted that statistic poorly. Correlation is not causation. What other interpretation would account for the data?

My take: The reason that we win when starting pitchers pitch deeper into the game is that those are the days when they have good stuff. Pitching longer does not cause them to win. When a pitcher starts to slip, you should pull him out before he throws those last five pitches that give up runs and leave runners on base for the relievers.

The Cards thought the relievers were the problem. They actually kept the starters in longer to "protect the weak bullpen." What that did was ensure that there were runners on base when the relievers came into the game. A vicious cycle of failure.

Collecting statistics is easy. Interpreting the data is hard. I drink water every day that the Cards lose, but I'm not going to stop drinking water. BTW, if the Cards read this, I can email you the pitching changed from here for free.

SKIP TO HERE:

Sorry about the baseball rant. My point is that discretionary consumer spending is not rational enough for private sellers to fear FE. In fact, FE would be good for consumer confidence. Confidence increases consumer spending.

People spend money on things they don't need when they feel secure. A strong social safety net makes people feel secure. We save money and hold back on consumer spending when we know that one medical incident can break us. We put cash after necessities into IRAs and college funds for the kids because college is super expensive and Social Security is only a supplemental pension.

Education, health care, and retirement pensions are necessities that should be in the Public Sector. When health care and college are free, and Social Security is enough for a full pension, then consumers are more likely to buy a bass boat with a 200 horsepower motor.

Before a man gets to the place where he runs the numbers on a bass boat, his purchasing power has already been attacked from all sides. His job can only afford to pay him 2/3 of his salary because the employer has to pay for his medical insurance and maybe half of his private retirement account. Even if he has the money, the credit card company is waiting to slice 2% off the top as soon as he swipes his credit card. Stores hate that too. Stores, employers, and consumers benefit from FE.

More examples of markets that are not Desperate Necessities. Let me look around the room. Furniture. Some furniture is a necessity, but nobody starves if the couch is ten years old. We all furnished our rooms with Goodwill furniture in our 20's. I don't see a need for the Public Sector take the profit motive out of furniture.

TVs, electronic hardware, cable, satellite, cell phones etc. The internet is probably a necessity now, but cell phones are not. I don't even want one. See? I'm talking about real Desperate Necessities. Video games? Now I know that my daughter would get desperate if I hid her PlayStation whatever, but she can't eat Minecraft or Pokemon.

More markets that are not necessities: All you have to do is turn on the TV and watch the commercials. I'll do that now. Perfume. A vacation in Jamaica. Hair restoration. Donuts. Expensive camera. Leather jacket. Drones. Jewelry. (It's almost Christmas.) Cosmetic dentistry. Basic dental should be a necessity but not cosmetic. \$30,000 SUV with 2 TVs and WiFi. Heath club. Driving to the gym is only rational in a blizzard. Soup. Food: Generic and store brands are necessities. Fancy food is not. Laptop computer. Basic laptops are a necessity, especially for students. Fancy computers are not.

Remember that decisions about what goods and services qualify as necessities would be decided democratically. Congress would make the calls, and they are not set in stone. The party in power can change the list. The House of Representatives has the power of the federal budget. Federal protection of markets for necessities should be administered from there. If a market needs a federal subsidy, it needs to be supervised by the feds.

There might be a better way to do that in the future through direct democracy, but it's too soon for that. Imagine if we could put the list of necessities that Congress selects for protection up for a popular vote. We could have a general election and vote yes or no.

Back to the TV. More markets that FE does not protect: Beer. OMG, I just lost Dad. Beer is not a necessity. Italian restaurant chain. Video game. Water purifier. (Not a luxury in Detroit.) Weight loss program where you buy their food. Cell phone application. Bicycle. Dog walking service. Nutritional supplements. Teeth whitener. Pizza delivered. Dedicated screens for video chatting. Movies at the theater. Coffee maker espresso machine. A giant pet store chain selling everything pets don't need. A sell your timeshare service. Soft drinks. Brand name aspirin. (Generic aspirin is way cheaper.) Diamond anniversary bracelet with a stone for every child. (Save it for college tuition.) Golf swing training video. Battery driven power tools. Cosmetics. Robot vacuum cleaner.

You get the idea. Just watch the commercials. Look at the stuff in the stores. Most of the US economy is consumer spending that has nothing to do with Desperate Necessities. Establishing a basic safety net for low-income consumers and everybody else would not put a dent in investor profits. Investors can gradually transition to markets that are not Desperate Necessities.

I want to explain FE from a historical perspective. Where did FE come from? Where does it fit into the history of economics? But first a word about how good ideas get ruined over sidebars and minor details when authors go too far. All I want to be held responsible for is the basic definition of FE. If I make predictions that seem to me to follow logically from FE, and my secondary predictions are later proven false, that should not be a reason to reject FE, only my secondary predictions.

Implementation is everything. Good ideas can be poorly implemented. I doubt if Marx would have approved of how the USSR implemented his economic model. Marx was in favor of democracy, not a totalitarian state. Marx identified the adversarial relationship between labor and capital. He also predicted that blue collar workers would always vote from the left and be the enemy of the right-wing political parties. Marx underestimated the power of propaganda. He was wrong about that detail, but his central idea, the adversarial relationship, gets discredited because he was wrong about something else that does not threaten his central thesis.

In other words, this is where I should stop writing and go fishing, but I won't. I should be able to prevent being picked apart over secondary details by getting in front of any future spin designed to discredit FE with a cheap shot like that.

Critics have always used this logical fallacy to discredit good ideas. Freud is my favorite example. Freud thought everything was about sex. He was close. It's about reproduction and subconsciously pushing your DNA into the future.

Recent neurological research using modern brain scans makes Freud look very close to spot on about the intensity of subconscious drives. Freud was a neurologist. His

theory of the functions and structure of the brain were way ahead of his time. The Id-Ego-Superego model lines right up with what we learned from MRIs and other scanning methods.

I'm oversimplifying now to make a point without going into too much detail. I want to show you where Freud was right before I show you where he went off the rails.

The Id describes the primitive human brain. The Superego mirrors the rational part of the brain that evolved later to restrain primitive impulses with logic. The frontal cortex behind your forehead is the brake that stops your primitive lizard brain from slapping a cop.

Here's the rub: Older more primitive structures do not get deleted with evolutionary progress. Newer structures get built on top of the old ones. It's almost like there

are layers in there. Newer layers evolve to cover older layers. We are evolving from competitive savages to modern cooperative humans, but information cannot just bypass the older structures and go straight to the rational brain. The older competitive brain is being moderated by the newer cooperative brain. The Superego talks the Id out of aggressive strategies that no longer pay off at this stage of human evolution.

(Sidebar: Remember, Public Sector-Cooperation. Private Sector-Competition. That is why the Public Sector grows over time. We are making evolutionary progress. Progress is real.)

If you want to catch up on modern brain research, try this book. It's comprehensive but written for the general public. "Behave, The Biology of Humans at our Best and Worst" by Robert M. Sapolski.

I'll cover the political controversy of Evolutionary Psychology, Sociobiology, etc. later. Early proponents can sound reactionary. I have always been a critic of their politics, but I have a theory about how they went wrong. They commit the naturalistic fallacy. Once we get past that, we can take advantage of the new science without the politics. I will untangle the Noble Savage question and show that biology, evolution, and anthropology can be spun in any direction. Do I expect feminists to be comfortable with evolutionary psychology? Yes. Stay tuned.

Freud didn't have a way to study a living brain. It's a miracle that he got that close without modern technology. I think he did it with anthropology. Read his Totem and Taboo. But my point here is that he went too far. A lot of his ideas were dead ends. His imagination extrapolated implications from his basic concepts that bore no fruit and left lots of crazy loose ends for his future critics to use against him. He should only be held responsible for his basic ideas.

Interpreting dreams is bunk. Hypnotism is bunk. Freud's original theory focused on child sexual abuse causing problems in adult life. Victorian society wouldn't buy that. He changed to the idea that kids are sexually attracted to their parents. The Oedipus and Electra complexes came out of that wrong turn. Feminists really beat him up over his hysterical woman dead end. He wrote a lot. He had a family to support.

What do you do if you have one good simple idea and you need to be productive

for the rest of your life? I wish he would have written a disclaimer as I did. Since he didn't, critics can spin against his main ideas by saying that if he was wrong about all those other things, he must have been wrong about everything.

My other example of extrapolating too far from a simple good idea is religion. Imagine a primitive society with very poor literacy and no science. Very few people can read or write. Codes of moral conduct that work for everyone are passed down by word of mouth. A moral leader comes up with a new and improved code of conduct. How can he get the people to follow it? (In primitive times it would have been a he.)

There was no science, especially social science. Philosophy was primitive. Even the man who imagined the moral code would not understand that it came from millions of years of cultural evolution. He feels in his gut that it's wrong to do XYZ. It's real. That feeling was selected by its survival value. He's right.

He asks himself where the feeling came from. How do I know this? Here comes the prescientific magic. The great turtle in the sky flew over me in a dream and selected me to pass the word. He tells the myth to everyone. They follow the myth and prosper because not doing XYZ works for everyone as it has survival value for the tribe.

Hundreds of years go by for the flying turtle people. Then science happens. Science proves that turtles can't fly. People lose their faith in the moral code altogether. If the original teacher was wrong about the turtle, then he must have been wrong about not doing XYX. They start believing that no moral code is real or even possible. Turtle is dead. Nihilism sets in. They throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Humans are not comfortable with what they don't yet know. Brain scans prove that. Jesus would not have been happy to see future Christians going to war with each other over minor disagreements like the Trinity being one thing or three.

I'm a Christian. I subscribe to a cooperative moral code that was promoted by Christ. I don't care if he was the first source of the philosophy. I don't care about the magic. I reason that man is not the most intelligent thing in the infinite universe, but I don't try to imagine what that intelligence looks like. I know that a cooperative behavioral arrangement between people works better for everyone than cut-throat competitive anarchy. If archaeologists dig up the bones of Jesus and prove that he could not have risen from the dead, I will not abandon the philosophy of cooperation.

I understand that extrapolating too far from a simple good idea is a universal human problem. I want to go on record as getting in front of that phenomenon when it comes to FE. This is not about me. It's about the logic of FE. I wrote the definition. I can speculate about where it might or should go from there, but if I am wrong about the extrapolations, please let the main idea of FE remain unmolested by the mistakes of my wandering imagination.

Where did FE come from? I was an undergraduate double major in psychology and sociology. I took a lot of history and philosophy classes. I loved political science, economics, anthropology, etc. My original goal was to get into experimental psychology, but sociology was my favorite subject. I took my graduate degree in Social Work where I found a good home.

I was really into social psychology, but from the start, I sensed a fundamental philosophical divide between psychology professors and myself. I felt the same division with psychology textbook authors. They seemed to be morally challenged. Compassion was thin. They were conservative.

I was right. Psychologists I worked with over the years were hedonistic. They were in short supply around human service jobs. They used good science from social psychology to get high paying advertising jobs. They participated in torturing prisoners. They have no code of ethics compared to social workers.

Psychologists generated a lot of good science in the 70s, but everything turned out to be a problem with the individual. Environmental and social causes were downplayed. I couldn't get individual psychologists to come right out and say something right-wing like economic inequality is just individuals making poor choices, but it was there.

The sociologists got it right. Blaming the victim is not the answer. The sociologists were good socialists, but you couldn't get them to say that. They were afraid for their jobs. The students knew that. We had fun chasing them into a corner philosophically and demanding that they come clean. It was fine to say that capitalism causes poverty, but going all in for socialism was taboo for teachers.

Textbook writers were not going there either. People in the US equate Socialism with Communism. Explaining that Communism hates democracy and socialism works well in a democracy wasn't enough. College presidents can come from majors that don't know that. Political pressure affects who gets to teach. Tenure is rare.

(Political cycles affect science, especially psychology, sociology, political science, and economics. During conservative times every problem is a problem with the individual. During progressive times all problems come from environmental issues as reflected through oppressive social structures.)

In my undergraduate days, no matter what a sociology course was labeled in the course catalog, they all centered around the evils of capitalism. Students pulled hard to the left. Teachers sat the fence. Capitalism vs. Socialism became my lifelong obsession. I'm a little OCD. I've spent more than one lifetime turning the variables over and over in my head. I love thought experiments. I read everything I can find that has anything to add to the subject.

My classes had code-words for Capitalism and Socialism. Theoretical proponents of the political left were called Power Conflict Theorists. They were Marxists. Proponents of the right were called Functionalists. They were Capitalists. Talcott Parsons was the big voice of Functionalism. He has gone way out of favor now, but he was still hanging on in the late 70s.

When we argued left vs. right in sociology the issue on the table was Social Stratification. Social class. The division of labor, inequality. Structural functionalists believed that inequality is functional and inevitable. Power Conflict theorists believe that inequality is just oppression.

The roots of the philosophical divide between these two sociological models are rooted in differing views of human nature. Structural Functionalists on the right bet

everything on the premise that early man was a savage. Power Conflict theorists bet everything on the premise that early man was a noble savage. (That before civilization, there was no inequality.)

Keeping the left and right straight is tricky, but at this point, I'm just describing how both sides saw the divide back then. At the time, the right believed that proof of a brutal and savage human past would be a winner for Structural Functionalism. I will argue the opposite later. I say that evidence of savagery in early human history just proves that man began as a savage and is slowly evolving from a primitive savage to a cooperative social animal.

The human nature question comes to us from a classic argument between Hobbes and Rousseau. Historically, the right supports Hobbes, and the left supports Rousseau.

Hobbes argued that since man is naturally selfish and brutal, he could only be prevented from destroying himself by a strong central authoritarian government. He probably meant a king, a monarchy. Rousseau

argued that man is not a savage by nature and that when a man acts like a savage, it is because he is being oppressed by a government that is too strong.

That's how the sides lined up for us in the late 70s. I couldn't see it then, but the whole thing was inverted. Take a look. The right was calling for a strong central government. Not today. The left was against a strong central government. Not today. The sides have flipped.

The reason the left and right don't line up the way they did at the time of Hobbes and Rousseau is that they lived during a different stage of social evolution. We are always moving left. Yesterday's left is today's right. Rule by tribal chief warlord evolved to rule by kings and then to rule by democracy. Rousseau was rebelling against the oppression of the monarchy. He was progressive in his time. The original Republican Capitalists were progressive compared to supporters of a monarchy. A Republic is to the left of a monarchy. Democracy is to the left of a republic.

Evidence that early man was a brutal savage is not evidence for the conservative right because of two things. 1. The sides have flipped. 2. The naturalistic fallacy. The naturalistic fallacy is committed when philosophers confuse what IS with what OUGHT to be. If archaeologists were to find that early man was a ruthless, selfish, antisocial, baby killing machine, that does not mean that we have to embrace that lifestyle and label it as good.

Archaeological evidence that early man was a warlike, antisocial, back-stabbing predator is entirely consistent with the theory that our species started out super competitive. But, we are evolving in a drastically more compassionate direction. We used to be nasty, but we make progress so fast that our social behavior has outrun our hunter-gatherer brains.

It's a good thing for the left that we don't need to be the descendants of noble savages to justify our politics because contemporary anthropologists just proved that early man was a brutal savage. The anthropology is in. Early man was a savage. 25% of the population died in violent combat. There was inequality. It was not a stateless utopia.

We don't lose one person in four to war anymore. The fact that we are making rapid social progress is evidence that an optimistic, progressive worldview is well grounded in hard science. Anthropological evidence that early man was a brute is positive evidence for the progressive left, not the right. We are not slaves to nature, we transcend it.

Sidebar: Contemporary evolutionary psychologists start their books by recognizing the folly of the naturalistic fallacy, but as I read them I still get confused. They still occasionally set off my gut level blame the victim alarm, but I may be too sensitive about it. I can frame the statements that scare me in ways that offend me, and I can re-frame them in ways that do not.

Steven Pinker gets so close to where I want him to go, but then he says something that feels politically confusing. He gets progress. He wrote "The Better Angels of our Nature." He's spot on about all the social progress that we have made in the last few centuries, but I wonder if he thinks evolution stops at capitalism. Socialism follows capitalism. It's already here. Our mixed economies have more socialism and less capitalism as we move forward. Democracy increases as we move in that direction.

The primitive savagery of early man is evidence to support progressivism. Progress is everywhere. The number of people killed by war has fallen exponentially since WWII. Look it up. Progress moves from right to left. We didn't go from women having the vote to women losing the vote. We went the other way. We moved away from slavery. Education is improving. Medicine is improving.

There is even progress in inequality but not because of capitalism. Capitalism was an improvement over feudalism, but progress over inequality is now restrained by capitalism. Capitalism is not on the cutting edge of human evolution. We are past that now. Humans have been here for millions of years. The last 200 years were super progressive. Compared to millions of years, 200 years is the blink of an eye. Pinker writes convincingly about progress. I'll borrow some of his figures here.

30 years ago there were 23 wars, 85 autocracies, 37% of the world was in extreme poverty, and there were 60,000 nuclear weapons. Last year we had 12 wars, 60 autocracies, 10% of the world population was in poverty, and nuclear weapons were down to 10,000.

There are many other examples. Life expectancy doubled in the last two centuries. Progress came with sanitation and vaccinations. Agricultural technology fed the world. Some writers actually blame agriculture for all of our modern problems. To think that it is better to improve the gene pool by allowing periodic famines to shake out the weak is a terrible example of what happens when someone commits the naturalistic fallacy.

This is where I would put a graph of the number of deaths in combat around the world over time. Google it. There was a blip in the World Wars, but then it falls off to a trickle compared to all of history. Remember, hunter-gatherer males lost one in four men to combat. We have the archaeological evidence. There was no noble savage. Man gets

less violent over time. Evolution favors cooperation over competition over time.

Progress is real. Postmodernism and the dystopian movie makers are wrong. We suffered from a terrible philosophical pessimism after the wars. God was dead. Nihilism infected our culture. All values were suspect. Let us recover from the pessimism. We should never abandon our faith over something that man does to man. The timeline of evolutionary history is long. To embrace extreme pessimism over such a short time is not necessary. Zoom out and see the big picture. We are transcending our violent roots.

One more thing. Evidence for the brutality of early man is not evidence for Big Government. When conservatives hoped that early man was a brute, they didn't realize that their fear of Big Government was inconsistent with that. The Leviathan of Hobbes is Big Government. Now that we know that early man was a brute, we must remember that we are no longer as socially primitive as early man. With social progress, we should need less and less external behavioral controls as we mature.

If we need to increase external behavioral controls today, they need to be increased to cover white-collar crime. Working class people have had the Leviathan in the faces since the 80s, but not the 1%. Conservatives passed picky laws for the workers and issued slaps on the wrist for bank fraud and tax evasion.

THREE

Now back to descriptions and definitions of Structural Functionalism and Power Conflict Theory. FE came out of a compromise between these two sociological models. If Functionalism and Power Conflict Theory went to arbitration, FE is the rational compromise that would come out.

STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM (The Right.)

STABILITY: Social patterns contribute to stability.
Society is maintained.

HARMONY: The parts of society work together in harmony for the good of the whole.

EVOLUTION: Social culture and structure adapt to new needs and demands. If something is dysfunctional for the society, It will be eliminated.

Functionalists think of society as an organism. Organisms adapt. Everything is about the survival of the organism as a whole, not the individual parts. An organism seeks equilibrium.

Human nature is the problem. Individuals are inherently selfish. They need structural limits to keep them from behaving like a savage and destroying group solidarity. Social organizations and culture provide the necessary limits. All conflict is caused by human nature. Primitive man was not a noble savage. Hobbes was right.

Social organizations, institutions, and culture are necessary to make society functional.

POWER CONFLICT THEORY (Marx as described by me.)

Human social behavior is driven by conflicts between groups over scarce resources. Conflict theory came from Marx in the 1800s. Conflict happens between groups or classes who own the means of production and those who do not and must sell their labor to survive. Owners exploit workers. There is an adversarial relationship between workers and owners. When wages go up, profits go down. Owners and workers do not live in the same boat. There is no trickle down.

Remember that Marx was not about totalitarianism like the USSR. There are nations today that are more Socialist than Capitalist that have healthy democracies.

Our debates in sociology and social work classes followed a pattern that repeated itself. The official title of the class or what the class was supposed to be about did not change the focus. There were no classes labeled Socialism vs. Capitalism, but they all went there. We all knew, and our instructors could not deny that Functionalism was code for Capitalism. Power Conflict Theory was code for Socialism.

Sociology and social work students confronted instructors with the elephant in the corner. Poverty comes from Capitalism. The system is rigged to a large extent. Upward mobility is harder for low-income families because of institutional barriers, and not because low-income families don't work hard enough.

Right-wing politicians blame the victim. Horatio Alger style (pull yourself up by your own bootstraps) myths blame the victim. Class war is real, it was started by the rich, and social workers do everything they can to fight for the oppressed.

Functionalist arguments were generally weak, but some had merit. All arguments between Functionalism and Power Conflict Theory were fundamentally about inequality. Functionalists would say that inequality is more than inevitable, it's functional. (Cue the movie line: "Greed is good")

Their argument about motivating people to do difficult things like studying medicine was their strongest pitch. Without social stratification, everyone makes the same salary. Where is the incentive for a student to study for years, and take on that much debt, to get a medical license? Who would be a doctor? We need doctors. We need to pay a premium to bright, hardworking people to train for jobs that are more important than other jobs.

The left comes

back and counters that medical school is free under a national health service. We point out that upward mobility is not determined by fair competition. Rich kids go to medical school. Poor kids go to automotive school etc.

My favorite punch was my slavery analogy. Do a thought experiment. Imagine a plantation with slaves. The workers ask the owner why a system such as slavery is fair. The owner has read Talcott Parsons. "Well you see, everything is about the survival of this business. Paying you zero wages is the only way I can make a profit. If I pay you a wage, my competitors will undercut the price of my cotton. If that happens, the

plantation will fold, and all of you will all starve. That's just the way of the natural world, so it must be right."

To this day I can't go a month without tweeting that if slavery were still legal, the Republican Party would oppose abolition with the argument that eliminating slavery would be a job killer for black people. This crazy logic runs all through conservative arguments. (If Illinois were to raise the minimum wage, Illinois jobs would leave and go to other states where labor is cheaper. Keeping wages low is the way we make a profit. If we don't make a profit, we close down, and your job is gone.)

The left counters that with the race to the bottom argument. Workers are forced to compete with each other until they live just above the survival line. Unions are the only way that workers can protect themselves from the race to the bottom. Unions and worker protection laws like a fair minimum wage are essential for social justice. Globalism accelerates the race to the bottom. Until unions achieve global solidarity and worker protection laws are enforced internationally, the race to the bottom will drive workers into poverty.

This is where conservatives ignore the naturalistic fallacy. They argue that competition has always been with us, so it must be functional and good. We got plummeted with this fallacy in the 80s. We didn't understand how to refute it, but we do now.

Two common logical fallacies slip through deductive analysis with traditional political arguments. The Functionalist right commits the Naturalistic Fallacy. The left commits an Optimistic Fallacy. The formal name for it eludes me. I took an entire undergraduate class in formal logic. I have searched the logic books. I might still have a blind spot for it. It might be the Slippery Slope fallacy. Today I'll go with the fallacy of Appealing to the Consequences of a Belief. Here is an example.

One of my psychology professors was lecturing about sociobiology. Everybody hated sociobiology because it seemed to justify racism, rank-ism, class-ism, inequality, etc. I followed him after class and chastised at him all the way across the quad. He was not having any of my lip. He quoted papers reporting that black people score lower on IQ tests, and that proved that black people are less intelligent. I was a straight-A student. He gave me a B. I got over it.

I know lots of other ways to chop up that racist argument now without appealing to the optimistic fallacy, but my argument then was not valid. I was right, but not because the conclusion was morally unacceptable. I argued that any evidence that leads to a racist conclusion must be rejected period because it is a slippery slope. You see, just because experimental results point to a conclusion that you do not want to be true, that alone can not prove that the hypothesis is false. Call it the fallacy of wishful thinking.

Many of our arguments from the left committed this fallacy. We never got called out for it, but we should have been. Even my angry professor didn't call me out on it. I missed it, even after completing Dr. Kenneth Kennard's logic class. If we had recognized the fallacy then, we would have been able to build sounder arguments. Just appealing to emotion is not enough. We argued from the facts, but we could have been even more

convincing. Showing fiscal conservatives that bad policy wastes money gets their attention.

Let me address the IQ controversy. The IQ tests that the researchers were using were culturally biased. More importantly, nobody at that time had a clear idea of what intelligence is. They still don't. There are many socioeconomic variables to control for. Racist conclusions are easily refuted. It didn't take long for the early sociobiologists to go underground.

By jumping to extreme conclusions and committing the naturalistic fallacy, early sociobiologists prevented us from learning from recent biological advances. Especially today, biologists and brain researchers are finding gold. I read a lot of evolutionary biology, and the information fills in a lot of gaps for me.

I hope that the new generation of evolutionary psychologists will not repeat the mistakes of earlier writers who used anthropological results to justify right-wing policy as natural and therefore justified. I can see the temptation to spin the new science to the right.

Anthropologists have recently proven beyond a reasonable doubt that early man was a brute. There was no noble savage. Brain scans show that the modern human brain still functions in ways that are way out of date when compared to our level of social evolution. We have competitive brains in a cooperative world. Our brains are evolving, but not as fast as our social behavior.

We are hard-wired for Machiavellian political maneuvering to enhance the survival value of our DNA. We don't reason like scientists are supposed to. (Even scientists don't.) We don't seek the objective truth at all costs. We chase after what we want to be true. When we find even a weak reason to BS ourselves that what we believe is correct, our brains give us a hit of happy chemicals.

The temptation for conservative evolutionary psychologists to jump over the naturalistic fallacy and declare political victory for conservative ideology is real. It confirms what they want to believe. It relieves them of any responsibility to advocate for social reform.

Most of contemporary psychology is about lowering the expectations of the people they see in therapy. Cognitive psychology is just Stoicism. Albert Ellis was a victim blamer. Just get tough. Life is hard. Nobody promised you a utopian existence. You just need to frame the problem in a way that puts it in a perspective that lines up with realistic expectations.

Cognitive psychology does not recognize that sometimes it's appropriate to ease a client in that direction, and sometimes it's not. In the initial stages of therapy, unconditional support, and stabilization are essential. Only when the client is strong enough should the therapist begin to phase in a strategy of taking responsibility for recovery. That's what therapists are for, to make that difficult call. Cognitive psychology is one-sided and dangerous when used in every situation. Never push when you should pull, and always err on the side of pull.

'It's no coincidence to me that cognitive psychology became fashionable during a

conservative political cycle. I never liked it. It makes me angry because it rubs my social work values the wrong way. My smell test is a thought experiment about rape. If someone came in for therapy and reported being raped, you would never slap them in the face with something like "Just put it in perspective. Rape happens. You need to take responsibility for processing it and move on." Always validate someone's pain. People don't lie about their pain.

This kind of therapy also discounts anyone who resists oppression and fights for social justice. Cognitive psychology was perfect for the Reagan revolution. (Protestors are just spoiled kids with an undeserved sense of entitlement. Feminists need to accept the fact that nature made them female. War happens, etc.) Psychology is still too conservative for me. I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I have a license to do psychotherapy and a real code of ethics to help me do the right thing. Google the code of ethics of that psychologists use and compare it to the social work code of ethics.

That's where we were in the late 70s and early 80s. The debates between the left and right went on and on. Professors tried to apologize for Functionalism, and we banged the table for Socialism. We rarely called it Conflict Theory.

Every class ended in the same official conclusion. The official conclusion is what they wanted us to write on the exams. We were to understand that 1. Functionalism and Power Conflict Theory (Socialism and Capitalism) are both appropriate in different situations. 2. Capitalism is better for some situations, and Socialism is better for other situations.

In more detail: The two schools are really talking about different things. Conflict Theory is talking about inequality. Functionalism is talking about how a healthy society functions when all is going well. Socialism works better in a crisis. Capitalism works better when there is no crisis. The seeds of FE were right there, but the students and I paid little attention to the official conclusion. We were all about ending poverty and the cause of poverty was capitalism.

The official criticism of Power Conflict Theory read like this. Criticism: Just as structural functionalism was criticized for focusing too much on the stability of societies, conflict theory has been criticized because it tends to focus on conflict to the exclusion of recognizing stability. Many social structures are extremely stable or have gradually progressed over time rather than changing abruptly as conflict theory would suggest.

Students were not impressed. It seemed like a cop-out. If stability came at the price of extreme inequality of both wealth and opportunity, then stability simply preserves a sick system. Change is needed. Progress trumps stability. Capitalism causes poverty. Stabilizing Capitalism stabilizes poverty and social injustice.

Professors couldn't say it, but they didn't want us to buy the official conclusion. Stability is what you want when you are wealthy and powerful. There is an adversarial relationship between labor and capital. You have to pick a side, and social workers side with labor.

Sidebar: There is another undergraduate argument against Capitalism that should be discussed before we go to graduate school. My argument for FE assumes that frugality is required for any economic system to work. Efficiency is good. I'm a Midwestern kid. I'm a fiscal conservative. FE has efficiency designed in.

Classical Socialists don't think that Capitalism is inefficient like I do. I could be wrong. There is a strong argument for the premise that what's wrong with Capitalism is that it's way too productive. The argument holds that Capitalism does not distribute the wealth that it creates fairly, but it creates enormous wealth.

If that is true then there is no need to consider the expense of the social safety net at all. Conservatives would be wrong to assert that it is necessary to cut X to fund Y. Could it be that we are so rich as a nation that sparing any expense for the safety net cannot be justified by any economic argument?

If we are that rich then the only motivation for not funding the safety comes down to simple oppression. If the oligarchs can afford to give us universal health care, and they refuse, then they are just trying to keep us from feeling too secure.

There is a lot of historical evidence of that strategy being implemented to pacify rebellion. War makes people feel insecure. In peacetime, people with a strong safety net can strike. If you don't need your employer for health care, you can strike for a living wage and stay out for a long time. US middle-class upward mobility has been blocked before. There was a big socialist movement at the turn of the last century. The two World Wars broke it up. The timing was some coincidence. European monarchs perfected the use of diversionary wars to block political swings to the left. Kings use war to silence dissent.

Oligarchs using tight budgets in peacetime as an excuse to withhold public services may be a better alternative than war, but if the idea that we can't afford social services is a myth, then classical Socialists are spot on.

I don't need to go so far as to say that Capitalism is too productive. FE can pay for it'self. I need to include that argument because it was part of the discussion that led to FE. I don't disagree with it. I just don't need it. FE is a realistic, rational small step forward. One step at a time. It's not my strategy to call for revolution and replace Capitalism in one stroke. FE is evolutionary, not revolutionary.

I went on to graduate school where we had the same argument in every class. We just called it different things. The left was called Systems Theory. The right was conservative policy. I never saw Systems Theory as anything radically left. Talcott Parsons also used a systems model where society was like a living organism. Systems Theory was code for the reality that we are social beings and not rugged individuals.

I specialized in Policy, Planning, and Administration. We compared Public Sector administration with Private Sector administration. Privatization was bad. Centrally planned economic interventions were the best way to fight poverty. We had one Republican white male with a golf scholarship. We ran him out of there in the first week. Social workers are Democrats.

We learned how to run a public agency. We learned how to make a public sector

budget. We lobbied the state government to support programs and spending that are in line with what social workers advocate for. We worshiped social work values. We have an official list written in stone.

We learned how to push legislation by researching and writing the legislative history of a bill. That was before computers in research. We had to dig in massive volumes of government rules and regulations. We used typewriters. (1980). Our professors were celebrities. They advised elected officials. They were working policy analysts who helped Democratic legislators at the state and national level. We were all fired up.

We hit the floor running at one of the worst times for social workers in US history. We face-planted right into the so-called Reagan Revolution. Reagan declared Big Government to be THE problem and proceeded to use the military to increase the size of government way more than any of his predecessors. He ran on a balanced budget philosophy and proceeded to increase the national debt and federal deficit more than all past presidents combined.

He cut social spending to the bone. There was a federal regulation that required kids to get vegetables in school lunches. He went around the rule by calling catsup a vegetable. He did a massive tax cut for the rich that caused a recession and a banking crisis, just like Bush and Trump. He had no heart. He once complained about people who were not completely blind being eligible for disability by saying: "Those blind people could see if they would just try harder." Reagan was the enemy of social workers. The public couldn't see the scam. Public opinion in the US went to the right. Even the Democratic Party shifted right to survive. The Clintons would invent a centrist strategy that coddled corporate Democrats. Democrats that won elections had to vote Republican Light.

All social problems became problems of individual adjustment. Propaganda flooded the TV. Reagan told Joe six pack that it was morning in America. All those lazy welfare queens were going to have to work. Even Bill Clinton kicked mothers and children off public aid. Drug addiction was a character disorder. War on crime was declared. Prisons filled up with minor drug offenders. Three strikes laws hit. People got life for a joint if it was their third offense. One in four black males went to prison in a war or drugs designed to strip the black community of it's right to vote.

Republicans called social workers bleeding heart liberal whiners. We laughed. Social workers have thick skins. We have to play the long game. We don't expect people to love us, even the people we help. We support each other emotionally. Many people do not even understand what we do. My parents never understood us. Many of my co-workers reported that too. Conservative parents still ask us who we are going to vote for and say things that offend us without realizing it.

The real mission for Reagan was slashing taxes for the rich and weakening laws that regulate big corporations. Social workers in policy predicted a recession. We were right. The tax cut ran up the deficit and created a bubble that exploded into a recession. That's what Republicans do. Look at the graph. You can google charts now. You couldn't

do that then. Now you can slap a chart right on a Republican trickle-down tweet. I do it all the time. Cut and paste.

Let me take a few paragraphs to rant about the crack epidemic. We know now that the Republican strategy was to declare war on drugs and lock up black people. I won't even take the time to defend that theory. It's a fact. There are lots of films about it that anyone can watch. Let me say what I saw. I was there.

I was a social worker in inner-city Chicago in 1984-1986. One summer, Reagan sprayed paraquat, a nasty herbicide, on all the marijuana fields in Central America. There was no pot on the streets of Chicago for an entire summer. Roaches were going for big bucks. Then, after months of this, before the weed came back, they started selling crack. People fell to addiction in weeks. Stimulants like cocaine and amphetamine and nicotine are super hard to kick.

Then they started building prisons. The police got a change in the law that they could profit by confiscating cars and cash that were alleged to be involved in selling drugs. You know the rest of the story. Lots of black and white Democrats lost the right to vote. The black community took the biggest hit. They were 11% of the population, but the prison population was and still is 50% black.

There is prison reform legislation pending now after 40 years. This is the second Jim Crow. Prison reform will only happen if the Democrats elect progressive Democrats in the next election. Corporate Democrats would probably trade the leverage for a tax on supersized sodas. The prison industrial complex spends a fortune on congressional bribes.

Back to grad school. The Reagan revolution pissed us off. We had the most radical class that the school of social work had ever seen. This was a time when students wanted MBAs, not MSWs. The average class size in the school of social work was about 250. We had only 80 grad students, but all of them came to fight.

Our professors had political juice. We lobbied the state legislature. Legislators knew that some of us would be running the state agencies that they budgeted for. We had the union vote in our Democratic Party pockets. Illinois is a solidly blue state. All of Cook County and Chicago is Democratic. That's 50% of the population of the state.

Health care reform was a big focus in our classes. We all became experts in health care administration, both public and private. The Policy department was drilling us to be public sector MBAs. We believed that the Republican wave would be over soon. We saw ourselves as administrators of the first public sector US National Health Service. We would soon be running the US version of the British NHS. We were already a half-century behind Europe.

We lobbied Blue Cross and Blue Shield headquarters in Chicago. We actually went up to their penthouse in the sky to tell them that they should give up on private health care delivery. Our professors had juice. They had to see us. They were afraid of us. OMG. That was fun.

This story is from memory, but my memory for that day is good. The dialogue

can't be exact, but it's very close. I'll never forget it.

We pulled our cars into the parking lot under the high rise building. We were warmly greeted by parking attendants in military-style jackets with epaulets on their shoulders. They parked our cars for us. Mine was a ten-year-old rusty Chevy Nova that only I could drive. I told the attendant that if he turned it off, he couldn't start it again without me. He assured me that he could, and he did. I didn't even know I was supposed to tip him. My car was waiting for me when I came out. Anyway, putting on the Ritz was the last thing that Blue Cross should have done in anticipation of our gang of crusading Marxists. We knew they did not understand us. We had the element of surprise.

We were seated in a dining room with crystal chandeliers. They tried to serve us lunch, but nobody touched it. I don't know what a five-star lunch looks like, but the food was fancy. We looked at each other and said: "They think we're lobbyists. This is how they suck up to lobbyists." Then somebody said: "We are lobbyists. We don't take money, but we're lobbyists now." Our professors smiled and told us to argue our points as if we were in class.

They had two presenters assigned to tell us all about Blue Cross. They looked like Barbie and Ken. Everybody listened and took careful notes for an hour. They asked us leading softball questions. We answered politely. They knew we didn't like public health care. They said they could understand that, but they were going to show why they were making it work for everybody, including the poor and uninsured.

They had a top-notch committee working on all the problems with private health care that we were concerned about. It was only a matter of time until every American would be able to afford a private health care insurance with the money they were going to save by using the new HMO system. Then they explained an HMO like we were HS students.

We were cutting edge policy experts on HMOs. People smiled at each other. Nobody smiled wider than our professors. They underestimated us. First, they tried to grease us, and then they underestimated us. There were no questions during the presentation. Everybody saved their shots for the end. Poor Barbie and Ken. They were just PR people reading a script.

Then they brought out the Blue Cross budget for last year and put it up on the big screen. A professor assured us that it was real. They had already seen it. They made Blue Cross play it straight. Barbie went over it line by line. They spent a fortune on this. They increased last years funding for that. They spent money on lots of humanitarian sounding quality assurance surveys. They put healthy food in the cafeteria. They gave employees profit sharing bonuses. They were throwing money around like it was water. And then they hit us with the big shot. They were losing money. How could they be an evil corporation if they were losing money?

A student raised her hand. Everybody get ready. We're going in. She stood up to make her point.

BC: You have a question?

Student: I do. You say that for every dollar you took in in premiums, you paid out a dollar twenty-seven in claims. Is that right?

BC: Yes. We took a loss last year. We put quality service before profit. The insurance business is risky. Too risky for the Public Sector I might add. We have teams of mathematicians we call actuaries that calculate risk, but this is still a risky business. We have the resources to attract expensive actuarial talent. The Public sector can't do that. The Private Sector is always more efficient than the government because we don't have the burden of the state pension system. Our actuaries are contractors.

Student: But you are losing money?

BC: We did last year. We have to comply with a lot of government regulations. We are over-regulated. Government regulators have no experience with our internal day to day operations. They won't let us self regulate. We don't expect that. But a lot of regulation expenses are wasted on things that are not a problem.

Student: And that's why you lost money.

BC: Keeping customer premiums as low as possible means that it's actually rare to have yearly premiums exceed claims paid out. Last year was typical.

Student: So in a typical year, premiums do not exceed claims paid out. In a typical year, you lose money.

BC: In a sense, yes, but our programming budget is very complicated. Many variables contribute to our financial stability.

Student: That's just where I was going. You paid more in claims than you took in in premiums, but what did you do with all that money that you were holding through the year? Did you invest it? Did you get a nice return? You made an overall profit for the year by using customer premiums to play the stock market. Can you show us how much you made on your investments?

The look on my professor's face was way beyond proud. We all laughed in a sort of respectable but not really respectable way. The presenter blushed. A suit came in and took over.

Suit: All insurance companies put money to work. It would be irresponsible to our stockholders to let it sit on the sidelines.

Student: Is that legal? (We knew it was.)

BC: It's not only legal, we are required by law as a corporation to do everything we can for the stockholders.

Student: So since a Public Sector health service doesn't have the option of playing the stock market for extra cash, the public system is inefficient?

BC: I've never heard anybody put it that way.

Student: One of your expenses is the dividends or whatever funds you have to pay to your stockholders. Those expenses would not be an expense to a public health service. Why can't we add that to the balance sheet as an advantage for the public side?

BC: Point taken.

Student: A private company can go bankrupt. Part of your cost of doing business

is to invest in market security for your company. A private company can borrow from a bank in a crisis, but the bank is free to charge whatever the market will bear. A private company never wants to end up in that situation. They invest resources in financial security cushions that are only required in the Private Sector. That makes a private company less efficient around that kind of risk. A Public Health Service gets a yearly budget from the legislature. They can go back to the legislature for help in a crisis. Private companies go right to the government for a bailout in a crisis too. They know that the government can't let people go without medical care. Using private companies that need bailouts defeats the stated purpose of using a private company. Why should taxpayers bail out a for-profit company when the Public Sector can just run the program without the profit slice? If the risk lies with the Public Sector anyway, why do we need a private middleman? There is nothing efficient about the Public Sector propping up a weak company with taxpayer money and then giving the company back to private investors as soon as the company recovers. If the taxpayers pay for the company, they should own it. The Private Sector Competes with the Public Sector under a double standard. Without that double standard, the Private Sector cannot compete. Privatized human service delivery is impossible without the government giving a break to Private Sector vendors. It's a myth that the Private Sector is more efficient. The truth is that the Private Sector lives on corporate welfare.

The suit made a brief speech about how good it is to hear all sides of the issues. We were out of there in ten minutes. We hugged each other in the parking garage. We high fived the attendant with the epaulets. We drove back to Champaign. The student who made the speech was a hero around campus. That took guts. It was one of the best days of my life. About halfway home, the idea for Firewall economics gelled in my mind. All economic systems are mixed. The trick is in the mixing. Use Socialism for Desperate Human Necessities. Use Capitalism for everything else. There are lots of markets to make a profit in, just stay away from necessities where the seller has the buyer over a barrel.

When we got back to class, I put FE on the chalkboard. Everybody loved it. To this day I have never failed to win a vote for FE from anyone who wanted to listen. I would spend decades trying to find a way to publicize it. I would give up for years and try something new. This book is something new.

Social media really got FE out there. I promoted a website and got 100,000 hits. firewalleconomics.com. I've been told that most of the California legislators have seen it. My twitter is JazzDad55. Sometimes I get too excited and poke a toe across the spam line, but I've learned to be tasteful and hold back. I know how to refute every cheap Republican spin. I love slapping a chart right under a Republican spin that counters the conservative tactic of assuming political illiteracy. Social media empowers democracy. Get in here and join the daily fight. We are winning.

Let's talk about education. Education is a necessity. You can't refuse to buy education. The consumer is over a barrel. FE puts education in the Public Sector. Education functions as a barrier to social mobility. They say it's the best way to gain

social mobility, and it is, but the flip side is that somebody wins and somebody loses.

The educational system is used by the 1% to block upward mobility for the 99%. Any student who is not rich that breaks through the educational barrier and achieves upward mobility will be crushed by massive debt. The super rich do not oppose free college because it's expensive. They oppose it because the tuition barrier stops the middle and working classes from catching up to them. The rich may not even be conscious of their true motivation.

There is an instinctive human drive to give your children an advantage.

Student debt is a racket that hurts every American except the bankers. Student debt is even protected from bankruptcy. The only way to beat the system is to graduate. If a student borrows money for college and fails to graduate, they are trapped in debt. Even when they graduate, it takes a decade to dig out of the debt trap. It's a deterrent. It's a massive tax on uppity working class people who don't accept their place in the pecking order.

Even worse, phony for-profit scam colleges are still ruining lives. It's not just Trump University. There are tech schools and job training programs that charge unconscionable tuitions and fees to train people for low paying jobs. They are really scams that prey on federally subsidized loans. Half of the student loan debt is in these scams. FE would stop it.

All federally subsidized student loans would go only to students in public colleges under FE. Vocational job training would be done by the public junior college system.

No federally subsidized loans for Harvard. The function of super expensive private colleges is to block upward mobility for middle and working class students. When taxpayers pay to back up loans for these students, they are subsidizing their own repression.

Think like a sociologist. What does a student get for the fortune they spend on Harvard? The answer is networking. A wealthy father sends his daughter to Harvard so she can meet and marry the son of another rich man. Students compete to get into the most elite fraternities and sororities. They date each other. It's selective breeding. The rich build a wall to keep blue-collar sons from marrying their daughters. The wall is made of money.

A bright blue collar student can borrow the money, but even if he graduates, he will lack the social connections to make the private school pay off. Fraternities are under no obligation to let him in. Their function is to keep him out. Fraternity brothers are lifelong networking clubs. They hire each other. Taxpayers should not have to subsidize that.

FE would not make private schools illegal as I would, but they would get no financial help from the Public Sector. We need to transfer our public resources to public universities.

College tuition at public universities should be free, and employer discrimination in hiring based on where a student went to school should be as illegal as discrimination based on race or gender. Think about it. Education is the gateway. Only the Public

Sector can be trusted to keep it fair. If a state university is accredited, then an accounting degree should meet the same national standards as any other public college.

Let me say a word about merit. Today the surgeon that opens your chest was partially selected by the rich boy network. Merit is a good thing in many jobs, and we don't have the best surgeon in that job right now. We selected him or her with a system that selects for the family income of the student. The number one predictor of educational achievement is the income of a student's parents. Even rich people should want the best surgeon. FE works for the rich too.

Let's move on to grade schools and high schools. We have a large public school system for grade schools and high schools, but it's unfair. It's funded and run by local governments with property taxes instead of income taxes. It should be run and funded by the feds with one set of federal rules. A student's zip code can stop any future upward mobility instantly, no matter how hard the student works or how bright she is.

The best surgeon who could save your life could be born in the wrong zip code. We have neighborhood grade schools. That is why the most significant predictor of educational achievement is the income of a student's parents. Affluent families pay higher property taxes than working-class families. Kids in grade schools in wealthy neighborhoods get a big head start. The school budget can be \$1,500 a year per student in one school and \$15,000 across the street.

Inequality of educational opportunity starts in preschool! People turn their lives and budgets inside out and upside down to buy a house in a particular neighborhood. They buy the same house that they can get cheaper somewhere else. Real estate people love it. The property tax collector laughs. Schools are funded by property taxes. We should all agree to stop competing with each other on how much we can afford to spend on property taxes. Fund schools with income taxes.

FE would help every parent at once. When the public school system is the same no matter where you live, you can buy any house you want. It's like shanks in prison. We all agree to let the guards collect all the shanks, so we don't have to be afraid of somebody else shanking us. We don't buy homes in expensive areas because we want to push down the other kids. We do it to keep somebody else from pushing our kids down. I'm afraid that you will compete with me, so I compete with you.

Once we realize that we are better off cooperating, we will. Why don't our institutions encourage us to cooperate? Banks and private schools make a massive fortune from our instinctual drive to push our kids to the top of a mountain that no longer exists. Tribalism no longer serves any function to human evolution. It has become a liability. The bankers know that, and they exploit it for a profit.

Everyone knows the argument about local school funding prolonging racism by segregating primary and secondary schools by race and class. When we desegregated the schools in the south, white parents who did not want their children to be in school with black students pulled them out of public school and put them in cheap private schools. FE withholds all public financial support from these substandard private schools. Making them abide by one set of federal standards would close them anyway.

Destroying the public school system in the south crushed educational opportunities for poor white students and drastically limited their prospects for upward mobility. They cut their own throats. Junk private schools in the south are responsible for maintaining the poverty of every low-income student in the south.

Local administration means local standards. Do you really think that a local school board in Mississippi is going to teach things like US labor history? Political literacy suffers. Look at the last election. Poverty is in the red states. Cheap private high schools are fertile ground for right-wing political propaganda. Many private schools in the deep south are fundamentalist religious schools that teach an ethical code that does not resemble the teachings of Jesus. Keeping Civil War era hate alive helps the 1% in the south and the north.

Every citizen is entitled to the exact same education under FE. The only way to do that is to fund schools with income taxes instead of property taxes and administer education at the federal level. Any parent who gets a sick feeling in their gut from that proposal needs to recognize that their primitive gut is prompting them to give their child an unfair advantage by using race or class to hold other children back. It's a natural impulse, but we must transcend it.

There is something we can do right now even without FE to escape the education racket. Refuse to play it when it doesn't pay. Every student is different, but when you run the numbers and do a rational analysis, only a few would actually benefit from a Harvard degree, even today. Our guts tell us that Harvard pays off for everyone. Harvard thrives on that myth. A degree from a public university is fine for 99% of all students.

Most law students don't need to clerk for the Supreme Court. Most medical students don't need to intern at the most famous hospital in the world. A fancy private university is still the only way to get on a train like that. You pay for the networking and the referrals from famous people. But those careers are few and far between. Most students don't need to pay an extra \$40,000 a year to reach their education and career goals.

All the jobs that require fancy private schools are in the, wait for it, Private Sector. Public Sector careers are civil service. Where an applicant went to school is not supposed to be a factor in hiring decisions. Ideally, even politics is not supposed to be involved. It still is at high levels, but the Public Sector is way ahead of the Private Sector on this issue.

It doesn't matter where you went to school. There is a job description for every position with specific qualifications listed. It says a bachelor's degree in subject X or Y. It doesn't specify a bachelor's degree from a private school. The salary range is predetermined. There is no pay discrimination by race, sex, gender, etc. Civil service is the closest thing we have to a blind meritocracy. No private school networking required.

How do you plan for college if you don't want to play the private school scam? My daughter is 16. She's already a computer programmer. She did the math and science. She took a Java class with adults when she was in junior high. She builds robots at the robot club. She taught her laptop to sing. She composes complex harmonic vocal

arrangements with computer voices. (Vocaloid.) Computer science is probably not a good example to make my point because most fields are not the meritocracy that computer science is.

You don't even need a degree to be a programmer, but she will get one. Coders are in high demand. All the employer cares about is that the employee can make the code work. Our original college plan was for her to stay at home, do the first two years at our first-rate junior college, and then transfer to a nearby state university for the last two years. We can graduate her with no debt.

Now we are planning to do the last two years away at the University of Illinois where I received my graduate degree. The U of I has always been expensive for a public university, but the state has cut public education so much that the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is almost as expensive. We'll throw in the expense of four semesters of apartment living, and she can go there.

There is no reason why most students can't use that strategy. Is a fancy private school worth it? No. We don't have to play that game. The game only survives because we get defensive and play it.

A woman takes on \$100,000 debt for a business degree from a private college. She owes \$100,000 at graduation. She opens a pizza restaurant. She borrows another \$100,000 to open the store. She could have just built the store with the first loan. She didn't need a referral from a professor. She didn't need help from the father of a sorority sister. She could have learned how to run a business at a public college.

Sidebar: I read a few books about the pizza business. They estimated 20% profit after overhead. My grandmother's brother had a family pizza restaurant. It was a chain, but his son told me it was 70% profit after expenses. People love pizza.

Universities need to be in the Public Sector. All education needs to be in the Public Sector. It will be in the future. By supporting the private education system, we perpetuate the scam that consumes most of our family wealth. We don't do it offensively. We do it defensively. Once we see the racket and refuse to play, we can be freed from it.

Hey, conservatives. Think of all the extra consumer spending that would be freed up if people didn't have to save every spare dollar for the college fund. Make education free. FE raises consumer confidence. It's not just about how much you make. It's the insecurity that curbs discretionary spending.

Update: March 12, 2019. A big scandal just broke out. Rich parents are paying crooks millions to get their dumb kids into elite Private Colleges. 50 people have been arrested. The defendants are rich and sometimes famous. There are two scams. One is where students get a medical excuse to take the college entrance test alone. They hire someone else to take the test for them, or the crooks might have the student take the test and correct the answers for them later. The other way is to buy them a sports scholarship in a sport they don't even play. BTW, the scam is also a fake charity. It's tax deductible for the rich parents.

Money talks. Private Colleges are supposed to give students a good reputation and enhance their career. How can you tell if they bought their degree? Ever wonder how

Trump got an MBA from the most prestigious business school in the world? Ever wonder why he threatened his high school with legal action if they released his grades or his SAT scores? People question his ability to read.

Stop giving government money to Private Colleges. Give the money to Public Colleges and make them tuition free. Stop taxing the working class to fund Private Colleges for the rich when taxpaying workers can't afford to send their children there. Private colleges get public subsidies. Their students get the same federal benefits as students in Public Colleges, and the government helps Private Colleges in many other ways too. Taxing workers for Private Colleges makes workers pay for their own oppression.

At this point, the definition of FE should be clear enough that someone who has read this can watch the news and begin to see how lots of problems could be prevented by FE. If you see a story about private health insurance premiums going up, you remember that countries that keep health care in the Public Sector pay half as much to cover everybody.

When you see elections being tampered with, you remember that FE has one set of federal election rules that make it really hard to push voters off the roles by sending them tricky letter scams.

When you see a story revealing that only the richest 10% have enough money in a 401k to retire on, you remember that FE strengthens Social Security and does everything possible to keep retirement funds out of the Private Sector.

When you see a story about improving the infrastructure of roads and bridges, your red flag goes up when Republicans want the Private Sector to build the roads and charge tolls.

I'll spend some time later on individual issues in real time as they come across the daily news. That does it for part one. Part two picks up as I get ready to finish my graduate work, get a job, and find a way to promote FE.

FOUR

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I'll spend some time later on individual issues in real time as they come across the daily news. That does it for part one. This section picks up at the time when I got ready to finish my graduate work, get a job, and find a way to promote FE.

My policy professors used to joke that our graduate education prepared us to be legislators and our preparation was way more appropriate than law school. Most legislators at the federal level are lawyers. We even had studies showing that after the time they spent fundraising, legislators used 80% of their remaining time to do casework. That's what social workers do. A voter has a problem with the VA. A local zoning board puts a pig farm in your backyard. The feds continue to confiscate your tax refunds after your son is in the Army and you no longer owe back child support. Your checks stop because Social Security thinks you are dead. Casework.

Our professors thought we would set the world on fire. What do you do when you're trained to be a senator, and you're just getting starting? All of us had student loans to pay off. Our first move was to find a job, any job. I interviewed for entry-level social work jobs at small community programs. No joy. I was overqualified for caseworker jobs and not likely to get an administrative position because there was only one of those and it belonged to the person interviewing me.

I considered going for a PhD. I could teach FE. I talked to some people about it. They scared me away. I was too radical. Even after tenure, I would only be able to publish research papers in social work journals that nobody reads. If I was going to write about FE, it was going to be as an individual.

I did my graduate internship at an Area Agency on Aging. It was a federal agency administered at the regional level. We had 14 counties in Illinois. I chose it too quickly. It was an unpaid internship, but it was close to home. I worked there full time for seven months. That was seven months that I could not earn an income. My debt increased again. I was naive. I didn't know that you were supposed to pick an agency for your internship that you intended to work for after graduation. Nobody told me that. FE was not going to get launched from there.

It was a well-managed agency. They didn't need me. They had plenty of talent. I did manage to break the boredom by reforming the Meals on Wheels program. A single private vendor had 12 of the 14 counties. I ran the numbers on unit cost and found them to be way above the national average. I recommended that the agency build a commercial kitchen and cook the food themselves. They did that after I left. I finished my internship and got my masters degree.

My next desperate step was to approach the Democratic Party, but that was not going to pay a wage. I didn't have time to get active. I didn't even know where I would be living yet.

I went to the state capital to apply for a civil service job. I got one, but it took nine months. By that time I was upside down on my student debt. There was no way to pay a

fraction of your income then. You can do that now. It would have saved me. Republicans in the state legislature had a freeze on all state hiring. Reaganomics was everywhere.

I was a local rock musician. That was my only income in graduate school and after. I had the GI bill when I was an undergraduate, but it ran out after four years. I had no debt until graduate school.

I played bass in a rock band four nights a week and did nothing else for nine months. I had so much fun that my guilt begged me to get a haircut and get a real job. I never quit music. I'm 63 and still playing blues guitar in Saint Louis.

I got the call for a state job. Child Protective Services Worker at the Department of Children and Family Services. I was a veteran, I had a master's degree, and I got an A on the test. I could pick any spot in the state. I later found out that the only other master's degree belonged to the head of the whole agency. I needed job experience.

I told them to send me to the hood in Chicago. I went there for an interview. The boss tried to discourage a white man from central Illinois from going into the projects by himself to talk people out of knocking their kids around. I told him I could do it. He became my friend, along with a dozen others that were only in it for the kids.

It was a thankless and politically dangerous job. Your role is to advise judges on whether to remove children from an allegedly dangerous home or leave the family together. Judges have the call, but they rely entirely on you. Judges never see the family at home. Social workers do.

If you advise the judge remove a child, you're the bad guy who broke up a home. If you leave a child in there and the child gets hurt, they investigate you like a criminal to see if you did something wrong. Since the average caseload was three times what one worker was supposed to be able to handle, it was never hard to find something that the worker missed, and scapegoat him/her for what happened.

Even though it's physically impossible to do so, workers are required to see every family in their home once a month. If you drive an hour and they are not home, it doesn't count. One or two days a week you have to testify in juvenile court. You have to guess what cases are likely to explode and concentrate on them. If you guess wrong and you didn't visit the one that blew up this month, you get shamed in the news.

Workers have too many cases because Republicans in the state legislature hold back funds. The state is forced to go after federal money. They do that by opening more cases. They don't have enough workers to cover all of those cases. The state gets paid for each new case. Some are trivial, and some are severe. The Russian roulette explodes on the workers and not on the politicians. Evil.

The job was killing me. Our supervisors wanted us to lie. My strategy was to never lie about not having time to see all the families. That was not a way to get promoted, but it covered my butt. Every so often, people that did not follow my advice guessed wrong and got burned.

I lasted two years. I wanted to get involved with the Democratic Party in Chicago, but that was a dead end for FE. FE looked very radical at the beginning of Reaganomics. All of the administrators that I talked to liked it, but they had no juice or the motivation

to discuss it with any power brokers.

I tried to show people how they could use the concept of FE to argue for things that the Democrats wanted. I asked the right people how I could pursue a job working for a legislator as a policy analyst. I realized that I would need to work my way up through the Democratic Party and get recommended by a power broker.

I was good with that until I discovered that I would have to do political fundraising in Illinois. Now, remember, I'm all about the Public Sector, but I'm about Public Sector jobs that are civil service. Any public job over a certain level in Illinois is a political appointment. Money changes hands with political positions. I would have to traffic in bribes. No.

I was not going to be a policy advisor for a legislator. I'm an ethical snob. The old- I'll play the game until I'm the boss and then I'll set them straight- rationalization does not work on me.

There were opportunities to go to Washington DC and work my way up from the ground floor in the think tank lobbyist track, but I never really considered it. I was upside down in debt. There was no way I could afford to live in DC. I concentrated on finding a social work job in Chicago that I could be comfortable with and get out of debt.

FE was going to be on the back burner for a long time. Did I get real and stop tilting at windmills? No. A good idea will find a way to break out into the open with a lot of help, and a lot of luck. What FE desperately needed then was social media. Social media was 30 years in the future. I rationalized that if I documented it accurately, I would get the credit for thinking of it first, even after I'm dead. That was enough to keep me motivated and look for a way to get it exposed.

My next job was at the Hines Veterans Administration Hospital on the west end of Chicago. I was only there a year. During that time I took a big test and got my first state social work license. Licensed Social Worker. The highest level is Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I got that one at my next job after the VA.

The hospital was too big. There were 40 social workers and only 8 clinical jobs. Clinical jobs involved doing general counseling and psychotherapy in the psychiatry ward. The other positions were caseworker jobs. It would have taken years to get a clinical job. Somebody had to retire. There was a long line in front of me. The original Hines was a 2000 bed hospital that was built to hold vets from WWI. I think they were at 800 beds when I was there. They put me in the emergency room on evenings and weekends. There was no job there, and I refused to play paper games to justify the position.

It was occasionally challenging. Psychiatric emergencies happened when PTSD vets suffered an after hour crisis. I was one of the few staff members who was also a vet. The big problem there was homeless vets. There was nothing available for simple homelessness. Vets on the street found a way to get admitted to the psychiatry ward for a night or two. I joined the group of social workers advocating for the VA to build them some housing. A domicile building did get built after I left.

The VA impressed me as a good organization. The care at Hines was excellent. There are so many VA hospitals that one of them gets in the news once in a while for doing something wrong. Part of that is politics. The VA is the closest thing in the US to a national health service like they have in England. Republicans are always trying to privatize the VA. The VA can also lean hard on drug manufacturers to keep prices down by negotiating as one big buyer. Even Medicare can't do that thanks to the GOP.

The VA also trains a lot of new doctors. They must have been one of the first hospital systems to put medical records on computers. You can go to any VA hospital in the country, and they can pull up your treatment record.

Social workers have war stories as you well know by now. One of my best social worker days happened at the VA. They asked me to work Christmas. I got triple time. Not time and a half, triple time. Weekend and holiday pay combined. (I was in the union.)

A homeless vet came to the ER. A cab brought him in. They put him in a wheelchair and there he was. He was a double amputee from Vietnam. Nice guy. He was embarrassed. I asked him why he was at the VA on Christmas Eve. He told me that he lived in one of the little surrounding suburbs. He lived in a house that used to belong to his parents. He lived on his VA disability and was not in trouble financially. The city evicted him on Christmas Eve for having a trashy yard with high grass.

I asked him if they ever came to his door to complain. The city had never seen him. They didn't know his legs were gone. He couldn't keep the yard nice like the well to do people on his street because he had no legs. They didn't call him on the phone. They just left ticket after ticket on his door until they reached a certain number and a judge that had never seen him issued an order to evict him.

This is the kind of thing that happens when people don't make a person to person contact. I broke out laughing at the city. The entire ER staff broke up too because they knew what I was going to do. I was the highest ranking fed in the hospital at the time. Social workers at the VA are GS-11 to GS-13. I can't remember the name of the suburb, but I called the city and asked for the mayor on Christmas Eve. I told them who I was and that it was important that he talk to me on the phone. He called me right back.

I told him that his people had just evicted a homeless Vietnam vet double amputee from a home that he owned free and clear because he didn't cut his grass enough. He apologized and told me I could have anything I wanted for the man. I asked the vet what he wanted. He just wanted to go home.

I put the mayor on hold and explained to the vet that we had Mr. Mayor by the short hairs. I told him that he should ask for way more than that. Imagine the story in the papers. He just wanted to go home.

I put the mayor back on and told him that the problem was going to happen again. The mayor gave the guy a lot. He agreed to have city workers clean up the yard. There would be regular lawn service even if the mayor had to pay for it himself. The vet would put up in a motel while a crew fixed things on the inside that needed fixing and made wheelchair accessible. The city social worker would see him on a regular basis to get

him whatever services he needed to maintain independent living. I was free to follow up.

Somebody came and picked him up. He was back home in an hour. Social workers don't get easy pitches to hit like that very often. It wasn't the mayor's fault. He was super cooperative. I should have held out for a dispatcher's job at the fire department. It was a good day.

I know that I should have just transferred to a smaller VA. I could have found a clinical job that way. I could have moved to any spot in the country. I could have moved to Hawaii, but I saw an opening in Southern Illinois at Chester Mental Health Center for a real clinical position in psychiatry. Chester is the flagship psychiatric hospital for the state of Illinois. The job was union and civil service. I left the VA. It was a mistake.

I knew what I was getting into, but I didn't plan on retiring from there as I did. Chester is a forensic hospital. It's a maximum security psychiatric facility. Patients are violent. Before I got there only two or three social workers had ever lasted long enough to retire. Everybody got hurt once or twice. The plan was to stay a year or two, get out of debt, and move on.

There are four kinds of admissions to Chester. Voluntary, Involuntary, Unfit to Stand Trial, and Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity. There are lots of state psychiatric hospitals around Illinois, but when a patient gets violent at one of those wards, they get sent to Chester. Chester looks like a college campus, but it has a barbed wire fence and lots of guards.

Voluntary means the patient is free to leave. I only saw one of those in all my time there.

Involuntary is for patients that have been legally committed to a psychiatric unit by the court. They must be a danger to themselves or others.

Unfit to Stand Trial: A person gets arrested, and the court refers them for a psychiatric examination. If the examiner decides that they are psychiatrically too unstable to participate in their trial, the judge can send them to Chester to be stabilized. They go back and forth to court until the judge and the doctors decide that they are stable enough to proceed.

FYI: It's not easy to fake mental illness to avoid prison. That's part of what happens at Chester, but when you actually live with a person 24 hours a day, you can make an accurate diagnosis. Chester staff have decades of experience doing just that.

Even if a person succeeds in convincing a judge that they are not responsible for their offense due to a psychiatric problem, they end up serving a lot more time at Chester or another hospital than they would ever have to serve in prison for the same offense. A judge can legally keep an NGRI patient in a psychiatric hospital for as long as it takes for a psychiatrist to say that it's safe to let them go. This is a trap because psychiatrists are reluctant to take a chance on patients that have been violent in the past. It's safer to keep patients inside than risk being shamed on the TV news for releasing a patient that went out and hurt someone.

One more thing about Unfit To Stand Trial. This is tricky, but it happens all the time. A patient can be mentally ill, but not know that he is mentally ill, and still be trying

to look mentally ill in order to convince a judge that he is mentally ill. It's a triple play.

Hospital staffers are experienced observers of mental illness. They know what it looks like. There are patterns of behavior. Certain behaviors go with other behaviors. People who try to convince other people that they are mentally ill will display behavioral stereotypes that cause mental health professionals to suspect malingering.

You can miss a triple play by immediately concluding that a patient is not mentally ill when you see patterns of malingering. They may be mentally ill, but think that they are not, and still feel a need to appear mentally ill in order to avoid trial. They don't need to mangle, but they think that they do.

It took me a while to get my head around the triple play. I also got stumped at first by falsely equating mania and anxiety. Bipolar people have mood swings. It was some kind of up/down analogy in my reasoning that tripped me up. The manic phase of bipolar disorder, the up phase, can be euphoric. Folks don't want medication when it stops euphoria.

I had two undergraduate majors. One was psychology. That was rare with social workers. It helped me a lot as I tried to learn everything there was to know about psychiatry at the time. Psychiatry is more like neurology than psychology, but they overlap.

Licensed Clinical Social Workers and Psychologists do not prescribe medication. Psychiatrists are medical doctors. They prescribe all medication. Modern psychiatry is neurology. It's not about scars from relationship problems between a child and their parents. Psychiatrists treat brain abnormalities with medication. Patients at Chester benefited from supportive counseling, but almost all of those patients had severe neurological issues. They could not function without psychiatric medication.

The debate over the medical model is silly. Some disorders have neurological causes, especially psychotic disorders. Some do not. The medical model applies only to psychiatric problems with neurological causes. All mental health problems cannot be reduced to neurology, but some can. These patients were rare. 250 patients selected from a state with 12,000,000 people.

Patients at Chester were treated by interdisciplinary treatment teams. Psychiatric nurses, pharmacists, clinical social workers, psychologists, and even recreational therapists formed treatment teams. We staffed each case monthly. Every team professional submitted an oral and written report. The treatment plan was compiled by the primary therapist who was a clinical social worker or a psychologist.

I was essentially a case coordinator for a neurologist, in addition to being the person that is always available for the patient to talk to. It was not so much about- do you hate your father. It was about medication management. The psychiatrist made a diagnosis and prescribed medication. Diagnosis and medication was an ongoing process. We correlated a patients behavioral and cognitive condition with their diagnosis and medication blood levels. We fine-tuned the diagnosis and medication until we achieved stability.

Chester was about brain chemistry and biology. The psychiatrist was the boss, but

the entire treatment team learned to understand complicated neurological subjects like neurotransmitters and receptor sites. We became familiar with the pros and cons of dozens of medications. We knew the diagnosis that each drug was prescribed for and we knew the doses. Everyone discussed drug interactions and side effects. Symptoms were compared to the official diagnostic manual.

We had a state of the art laboratory in-house. Medication blood levels and many other tests were done on the premises. The hospital was well funded. The psychiatrists were the highest paid state employees in Illinois. The cost of one of those beds was about \$100,000 per year.

I begged, borrowed, bought, or checked out every neurology and psychiatry book I could find. I still do that today. If you stop, you get left behind. Psychotropic drugs alone evolved through three generations in the time that I was there. The medications get better over time, but not cheaper. They target symptoms more precisely and produce fewer side effects. Some of those medications cost \$30,000 per year for one patient.

Brain research is moving fast. Since I retired from inpatient psychiatry, enormous advances have been made. We are reaching a golden age of knowledge about the evolution and function of the hardware and software of the human brain. This new science needs to be applied to psychotherapy. That's not happening fast enough for me. That's another book.

I was never going to get a policy position with the Illinois Department of Mental Health. It was actually called the Department of Human Services. I quickly hit an administrative ceiling. I advanced to the position of Social Worker IV. That's as high as you can go and still be civil service. Anything above that is political patronage. People buy those jobs.

To make matters worse, Chester is in Republican Randolph County. I don't even pay bribes to Democrats. Republican rule on the state and federal level got worse the whole time I was at Chester. I knew that FE was pinned down until the Republican wave was finally over. I planned to spend two years at Chester, get out of debt, and look for another place to work from. I didn't know it yet, but I was stuck there for the long ride.

I started at Chester in the fall of 1988. Reagan was about to leave office after 8 years of Republican economics. Republicans that follow the Chicago school of economics are about supply-side economics. A better label for it is Trickle Down Economics. They cut taxes for the rich and deregulate business. It usually causes a recession, a banking meltdown, and a war.

Reagan cut taxes for the rich and deregulated business. The subsequent recession, banking crisis, and war would not fully develop until George HW Bush took office. Meanwhile, the Republicans attacked every social program and cut domestic spending to the bone. They beat the Unions down hard. It was not a good time for Democrats, Firewall Economics, or the American working class.

To survive, the Democratic Party moved to the right. The Clintons invented a middle of the road, Republican light, corporate wing of the Democratic Party that we call DINO. Democrat In Name Only. Clinton called it The Third Way, The Blue Dogs.

They got their money from Wall Street.

Bill Clinton was so far to the right that he tore down our welfare system, something no real Democrat would ever do. He passed NAFTA. Union jobs flew overseas. The corporate wing of the Democratic party is still in charge today, but it's going away. The DINOS blocked out Bernie Sanders. Progressive Democrats are still fighting to regain party leadership.

FE is a modern centrist philosophy, but compared to Reaganomics it looked like a far left Utopian dream. In 2019 it sounds like common sense. The time is now for FE. Progress always moves left. Yesterday's left is tomorrow's center. In the future, FE will be criticized for not going far enough.

Let me bring up a few things that happened during the Reagan revolution. It took decades for a lot of these crimes to come out. We had no social media. So many atrocities were committed during this time that I can only mention a few.

Reagan got in by using what we call the southern strategy. All the way into the 1960s, a big chunk of Democratic Party support came from the south. When President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he did so at the cost of giving up democratic votes in the south. He predicted that the Democrats would suffer for decades and we did. Reagan and the Republican Party learned how to appeal to southern racism to trick white working-class voters into voting against their own economic best interest.

It worked. Look at a map of the poorest states today. The Poverty map looks like a map of the Civil War. The southern strategy is finally going away. Republicans still use it, but people see it for the disgusting crime that it is. Republican strategists are desperate now. They use blatant voter suppression of the black vote to make up for the votes they lose after the south wakes up.

The Democrats were glad to lose the southern Dixiecrat vote. It was more of a liability than a benefit, and it was just wrong to cater to them. Racism has no place in the Democratic Party. The good news is that we have already paid the price of freedom with decades of Republican rule, and we can finally take over the leadership without dancing with the devil. The Dixiecrats can no longer prop up the corporate wing of the Democratic Party.

Reagan deregulated the banking industry. That caused investors to invest in risky high return junk bond investments. Deregulation led to a stock market crash on Black Friday, October 19, 1987. We used to have lending institutions called Savings and Loans. They're gone now. They went bankrupt after being drained by white collar criminals using junk bonds. Lots of people went to prison. Good old deregulation. Notice the pattern. Republicans cut taxes for the rich, deregulate banking, and end up starting a war to cover it up.

Bush II did it again. Obama cleaned up his deregulation mess and put regulations back on the banks. Obama fixed the Bush II recession. Trump and the Republicans took the banking regulations back off. Here comes another recession.

Republicans think wars fix the recessions they cause. Reagan invaded Panama after running up the most massive budget deficit in the history of the US. It could have

been worse. Reagan almost started WWII by provoking Russia. The Communist Party sold out to rule by organized crime instead.

Reagan committed treason with the Iran Contra Affair. If a Democrat had done it, the Republicans would have called it something worse than an Affair. Congress passed a law that restricted arms sales to Iran. Nicaragua had a socialist government that Republicans hated. Congress had forbidden the US military from helping the Contras, a right-wing army with death squads, from overthrowing the government in Nicaragua.

The Republicans sold arms to Iran and gave the money to the Contras in secret. There were congressional hearings. Lots of Republicans were sentenced to prison. George HW Bush became president after Reagan and pardoned everybody.

As we emerge from four decades of Neo-fascism, let us never forget how far they set us back. FE should be old news by now. England has enjoyed universal health care since the end of WWII. Europe is way ahead of us. Social evolution in the US was stunted in my lifetime. All we got from the Trickle Down Scam was the worst economic and social inequality in US history. The wealth gap is worse than just before the Great Depression. Seven or eight old men control most of the wealth.

Trump and the Republicans made a last desperate attempt to stop the evolution of Democracy. They stole a presidential election just like Bush II. They deregulated the banks again. They slashed taxes for the rich. They appointed a lot of Republican judges for life and stacked the supreme court. They try desperately to find a new war but so far they have been stopped.

People are disgusted. Republicans can't win elections without two things, political illiteracy, and tampering with the vote. They use gerrymandered districts to steal elections without winning the popular vote. They run TV ads with psychological tricks that appeal to remnants of tribalism and other primitive human fears. They bet the farm on Trump. They robbed the bank and got away with a lot, but they sew the seeds of their own demise.

By getting a clown like Trump to rob the bank in broad daylight, they exposed the whole Republican playbook. Political literacy blocks Neo-fascist campaigns. I've been waiting all my life for real political literacy to be taught in high school. My dad says that some people just have to learn the hard way.

Working class voters could have just checked out a book on basic political science or even simple US history from a public library and read all about the Trickle Down Scam, but they didn't. It would have been decades before political literacy in the US caught up with Europe, but Trump taught us the lesson the hard way. Living through it helps. Bombs didn't fall on us as they did in Europe. They lived through Fascism there. They know what to look for.

FYI: Fascists use a strategy that assumes that voters can't understand what policies go on the political left vs. the right. They appeal to the extreme right and the extreme left at the same time. They hope that voters don't see the contradiction. They block the media from explaining the inconsistency. Hitler, Mussolini, and Trump used this strategy.

After the Fascist wins, he/she throws the left under the bus and rules from the extreme right. People forget, even in Europe. The French just let one in. Macron is a banker and a Fascist. Marine Le Pen, his opponent in the last election, is an out in the open Fascist. She is the daughter of an infamous Fascist.

Macron courted the left and the right at the same time. Once in office, he gutted the pay and benefits of working people. (austerity) The French are rioting in the streets. Learn history or repeat it. France was once occupied by Fascists.

After the 1980s the progressive left was pinned down. FE was going nowhere even with high-level political representation. Social workers ran for cover. Community service jobs like community organizing were gone. The only way to work as a social worker was to be a counselor or caseworker at some level and deal with the casualties of capitalism one person at a time. All structural or institutional change was impossible. We knew that fighting capitalism one person at a time was just what the capitalists wanted us to do. It transferred responsibility from an oppressive system to the individual and the social worker.

Blaming the victim became institutionalized. Poverty became a disease of the individual. People who failed to thrive under capitalism had character flaws. Cognitive psychology replaced supportive counseling methods. Social workers rebelled by letting their clients in on the scam. We encouraged angry people to get politically involved and fight back.

Many social workers quit. Even now most of the social workers that I talk to are more concerned with making nice incomes by billing insurance companies for psychotherapy. They're too young to remember social action. Social work needs to recover. It will happen. We need social workers to run the new US National Health Service and the new Department of Human Services. We need them to get politically active and run for office.

Even if I had found a policy role in a progressive DC think tank with plenty of juice during the dark ages, FE would have face-planted against the Neo-fascist machine. Every good idea has to wait for history to catch up. If it takes longer than I have left, that's fine. My role is to keep FE alive until the time is right. I didn't give up on FE when I got stuck at Chester. If I had to wait, I would take it on full time in retirement.

How did I get trapped inside a maximum security forensic state psychiatric hospital for two decades? I planned to jump off after two years. During that time two things happened that I couldn't change.

Management became my enemy over patient abuse. I interviewed for several jobs to get me out. I always got hired until they called Chester and then I got rejected. I don't know what my evil hospital director told them. The other jobs would never tell me. I don't quit jobs until I have another one.

The second thing was worse than that. The state passed a pension law that no rational person in my shoes could turn down. Just like the prison pension, the union got us 20 years and out with half pay. I could even use my prior military time and my 2 years with DCFS. I had to gut it out and hang in there for a pension that was even better

than the military.

There was no possible way to retreat.

Management hated me, but I was in the union, and they couldn't fire me without a valid reason. I knew that the last thing management wanted was for me to leave anyway. They knew I would approach the press about the patient abuse that infected the hospital. I dug in for a fight. I won, but I got rattled beyond belief. I come from a military family. Compared to what they went through, the abuse war was bearable.

Sidebar. The book is about FE. I will refrain from a blow by blow report. That's another book that nobody wants to read. Writing about this is not easy.

Everybody at the hospital knew that the guards regularly beat some of the patients. Everybody was afraid of the patients. Guards could intimidate therapists and administrators from reporting abuse by implying that the guards would not protect them adequately if a patient attacked them. The guards ran the hospital, especially after hours. There were no cameras. Cameras were not allowed. I was denied cameras on the BS grounds that it violated the rights of the patient who was being beaten. There were no cell phone cameras yet. I could have filmed the place with a hidden phone.

The abuse had been going on since the beginning of time. The hospital was modern and about 20 years old, but the old hospital was inside Menard Correctional Center, a maximum security prison down the street. Menard was built around the time of the Civil War. Cells on the psychiatry gallery were so small that you could touch both sides with outstretched hands. They were small because they were one-man cells. The cell itself could make a man mentally ill and violent.

At the old place, the guards controlled the psychiatrists so much that legend has the guards prescribing medication. Guards had the power to put a patient in solitary and over medicate them if the guards were angry or just wanted to intimidate someone. Guards couldn't prescribe medication at Chester, but they could have a big say as to when a patient got put in restraints, got released from restraints, or needed an extra dose of medication on the spot. PRN medication.

The legal authority and responsibility to make those clinical decisions belonged to the mental health professionals. We had to sign off on restraints and releases. I refused to be intimidated. I made the calls myself. The guards hated me.

I had a copy of the official hospital policy in my pocket. I knew I was right, and so did everybody else. That's what social workers are for. I had a license that could be revoked for looking the other way. Even if I folded, management could wait for me to violate a law and then go for my license just to get rid of me. I'm no hero. I was stuck with my back against the wall.

They should have let me go to another job. I even started a PhD. program in Saint Louis to get out of there. They blocked it. I had nothing to lose. I threw the book at the sons of bitches. I called the State Police. It took years, but that began a process that brought reform. Not comprehensive reform, but reform.

To be fair, I had advantages. We were in deep southern Illinois. It's a sparsely populated area. Prison jobs are paybacks to the local economy from Republican

politicians. The Menard prison is the biggest employer. Jobs in the psychiatric hospital were way better than prison jobs, but the prison guard mentality infected most of the guards. The loudest guards were all talk. They seemed to be men who wouldn't last too long in a street fight. I was a football lineman, a wrestler, and a boxer when I was a kid.

My wrestling skills came in handy. I could wrestle a patient safely without either one of us getting hurt. I got jumped like everybody else, but I learned to take care of it myself. The guards couldn't scare me. The patients knew that I was trying to stop the abuse. I had fewer attacks than anyone else. I tried to teach the good guards how to restrain a patient safely and professionally. They couldn't do it.

Trying to help a patient who is attacking you takes a lot of psychological sophistication. It was hard for me to do. The locals didn't understand that mental illness can actually prevent an attacker from having any kind of personal responsibility whatsoever. There were people in that river town that still believed that patients that suffered from schizophrenia were possessed by demons.

To keep your brain from switching from helping mode to fighting back mode when stressed by a violent patient takes training. Training was provided, but it had no effect. In an ideal world, we would hire only educated people who are motivated to do that specific job in a strictly professional way and pay them a lot of money, but like Menard, Chester was in part a jobs program for the locals.

The State Police met with me in a police car out on the highway. I felt like an idiot. Why did the State Police have to hide? I'd find out later that the guards had juice with the local Republican Party. I wanted cops to come to the hospital and put a little fear into the director. They took notes and left. No call-back. I hung them out though. I pulled out a notebook and wrote down the time and told them I was documenting everything that I told them. At such and such a time I informed officer X that I observed XYZ etc. Always do that. If you didn't document it, it didn't happen.

I went back and told the right people that I'd met with the State Police. I was told that I'd be fired if I talked to the press. I knew that, but it showed me where the short hairs were. Why should I have to involve the press? Felonies were being committed on state property. I just passed the buck to the State Police. If something happened after that, the State Police were not going to be happy with the evil director. Maybe my chess forking move would stop the abuse. No.

My union, the same union that the guards were in, protected me. I helped them do it, but they followed the law. Without union protection, I would have been fired with no legal leg to stand on. Illinois is an AT WILL STATE. Except for protected classes like sex and race, any employee can be fired for any reason. The fired employee is not even eligible for unemployment.

My license did not protect me. If you are ordered to do something that is forbidden by your license and refuse, you can be

fired, and there is nothing that the state will do to protect you or that license. If you hurt a patient by not following the license law, you will lose your license. The license only protects the patient, not the practitioner.

This loophole needs to be reformed. If you are a patient in a hospital and a nurse refuses a doctor's order to give you the wrong medication, he/she can be fired. If the nurse is in a union, he/she is protected.

When the state fails to backup state licenses, they render them useless. We issue licenses for a reason, to keep bad practitioners from committing malpractice. It's wrong and stupid to put all the responsibility on the practitioner. Commit malpractice or get fired should not be a choice that a practitioner ever has to make. FYI: Never go to a hospital where the nurses are not union.

FIVE

Back at the ranch: Management did everything they could to make my job miserable, but I had allies too. I was able to do my job as it was spelled out in my job description. I didn't get demoted. The union defended me. The only job duty that I was actually prevented from doing was appearing in court. I didn't care.

It was my own fault. The director knew that at one point I started law school and quit. I actually left in the first week, but it scared management just the same. I did a lot of legal prep stuff as an undergrad. I was only shopping at law school. It was all about power. I just left and went to social work school.

Therapists at Chester testify in court every 90 days when each involuntary patient goes to court. The judge can release them or commit them for another 90 days. The psychiatrist and the therapist testify. The patient never has a real lawyer. They have a public defender that's always the same guy. He's a rubber stamp. The state tries to prove that the patient is still a danger to himself or others. The patient usually disagrees.

In all my years I never saw one patient get released. The local judge never rocked the boat. He didn't want to anyway. A discharged patient going out and hurting someone would ruin a judge's career. People got released from regular state psychiatric hospitals all the time, but not Chester. They would send patients back to the sending state hospital first and discharge them from there. A patient has to earn their way out of maximum security before they can be considered for release. That was department policy, but that's not what the law says.

The law says that every involuntary patient gets a hearing every 90 days. The hospital has to prove that they are still a danger to self or others or discharge them. I don't remember when I said it, but I was only half kidding when I told my boss that I knew a way to get every patient in the house released, in a fair court, with one legal move. It turns out that I was correct. There was and probably still is a legal defense big enough to drive a truck through. After that, I was banned from being anywhere near the courtroom. I actually told my patients what to say in court, but I knew they couldn't understand it.

In a real trial, the prosecution/state has to prove that the chain of possession of any evidence used against the defendant is free of any possible tampering. The sheriff can't take the murder weapon home with him. The evidence that the hospital used to prove

that a patient was still dangerous was the documentation in his medical file. Medical files were never locked up. They were kept in an unlocked file cabinet all the time. Any guard could get a patient's file and mess with it. Almost every employee in the hospital had patient records in their possession on a daily basis. Patient records were not electronic. They were paper files. There was no clear chain of possession. The public defender never brought that up.

In addition to that, all reports/ documentation of patients getting violent were written by the staff on duty at the time, but they were nowhere near under oath. The writer/reporter/witness could not be cross-examined. Anyone could just make stuff up, write it in the patient's record, and that report could be used in court. The patient could not confront their accuser. Guards don't testify in court. When they write something in the chart, it's never challenged.

It was a kangaroo court, and everybody knew it, but management could have trusted me not to force a release on a technicality. I would never have used cheap shots against them as they did to me. Did I ever see a patient get held over that should have been released? Yes, but only very very rarely. I had no problem with sending patients back to the regular state hospital before release. Still, I was never allowed anywhere near a courtroom.

Did management trust me? No. Did it bother me? No. It saved me from having to testify against my patients in front of a judge. What a luxury. Patients were free on the unit. Therapists were exposed on the open ward. Locks on therapist's doors were forbidden. A patient could barge in and attack a therapist. Nurses were kept in protective cages, not therapists. Sex discrimination? No. Lots of therapists were female, and lots of them got hurt.

The hospital was and is in the Public Sector. Before this starts sounding like an argument for private hospitals, let me assure you that it's not. At the end of this section, I'll show you how a private hospital would have been much worse at dealing with the abuse.

I can't write about Chester without including Sam. (Not his real name). I don't know if I would close Chester if I could. I don't want the patients back in Menard. There is another forensic state hospital in Elgin Illinois near Chicago. They could expand. Are they better? I don't know. I feel a need to ask for the hospital to be in an urban area. Chester Illinois is really a part of the south. It's culturally like eastern Kentucky.

Understanding contemporary mental health is hard for some of the locals. It's hard for anybody, but the hospital is where it is. A racist should not be taking care of a black patient from inner city Chicago. There, I said it. I don't know how to soften it. People who are culturally stuck in the past will see mental illness as a character problem and not a neurological phenomenon. Modern psychiatric science has not penetrated many rural areas. Don't put patients there. I'm not insensitive to rural people. I'm sensitive to the needs of my patients.

If you draw a line across the lower third of the state of Illinois, only 4% of the population lives there. Chester is the flagship forensic psychiatric hospital for the state

of Illinois. Half of Chester's patients come from Chicago. That's 6 hours one way by car. Patients that are Unfit To Stand Trial have to be transported in chains to Chicago and back for regular court dates. Chester has a whole fleet of vans and special transportation security guards just for that.

I know that moving the hospital north would cause a lot of Chester employees to be displaced. I would have just moved north, but locals have deep roots. There is no perfect solution, but I am convinced that the locals are not appropriate for a modern psychiatric hospital. Patients come before jobs.

Here we go. This is hard. Sam was my first patient. The way they treated him showed me how backward the locals really were. You have to be qualified to treat psychiatric patients. Sam got beat up a lot, mostly at night, and on weekends. I was the first person to keep statistics and look for patterns in the data. Patients "went off" way more often on weekends and night shifts than during business hours. I confronted the hospital administration. The director had a Ph.D. He looked me in the eye and told me that he didn't understand my statistical logic. Statistics don't prove anything.

Statistics are no smoking gun, but they can show probable cause to do an investigation. Did I have to have enough proof for a conviction to before I called a cop? He was bought and paid for.

FYI, with today's tiny cameras, I'd have gotten a video somehow, rules or no rules. Behind the culture of silence, the guards were beating the patients after tying them down in restraints. It was common knowledge. There were no recordings. No cameras were allowed anywhere on the property. I fought for cameras failed.

Let me say this right here. If it was other patients that put the marks on Sam and all the other victims after hours, then why were no other patients identified? My statistics were more than enough to establish probable cause to investigate each and every one of these incidents.

Sam couldn't speak. He lived in a hole. It was a plain concrete room with a drain in the middle of the floor. They cleaned it with a hose. He had an iron cot with a rubberized mattress. If he was on suicide watch, he got one of those suicide blankets instead of a good one and lived in his underwear. How somebody could tell when a person that can't speak is suicidal is still a mystery to me. It was illegal punishment.

The pattern with Sam was that he would attack staff, get restrained, and be heavily medicated. Restraints are straps that tie a patient to his bed. Sam pissed off the guards by regularly smearing the wall with his feces. Even though Sam couldn't talk, it didn't take me long to suspect that Sam was way more aware of his environment than the staff suspected. Are you ready? Sam smeared feces because that was all he had to write with. He smeared a single Christian cross, a crucifix, on his wall and nothing else.

The cross started a behavioral script. He smeared, the guards took it down and boom. My God, he was trying to communicate. Sam was a lifer. He'd been in there for decades. He was there when I retired. They had been beating that man for years. The guards do not understand psychology or psychiatry or schizophrenia. The guards thought Sam as trying to intimidate them. My guess: Sam had schizophrenia. People with

schizophrenia hear voices. He thought he heard the voice of God telling him to put up that cross and defend it.

Here was the problem in a paragraph. The guards used intimidation to control patient aggression. Their friends and family were prison guards. That was all they knew. The prison was Chester's employer. The intimidation strategy doesn't work with psychiatric patients. It creates a vicious cycle of violence and abuse. Even without educating the guards to the idea that psychiatric patients lack a great deal of personal responsibility, I couldn't even convince them that the intimidation method should be abandoned because it just doesn't work. I did have some success with some guards. Most units had about 30 violent incidents in a month. My unit might get 1 or 2.

We went months and months without a single incident sometimes. My success didn't change the culture.

Back to Sam. Social workers know that the history of psychiatry is full of horror stories where deaf people and people who can't speak get misdiagnosed. I sat down with Sam right away and looked him straight in the eye. I said Sam, the history of psychiatry is full of horror stories where people who can't speak get misdiagnosed. Are you in there buddy? Are you trying to tell us something with the cross? I know they hurt you at night and I promise to do whatever it takes to stop it. Are you in there? He mumbled.

I told him to tap once for yes and twice for no. He either couldn't understand or didn't want to. I didn't expect him to trust me right away. I told him I believed that he was in there and I would find a way to prove it.

I cut a crucifix out of paper, put it up in his room, and forbid the staff to remove it. (A wooden cross or even a plastic one was too dangerous.) They left it up. The frequency of Sam "going off" went way down. A crucifix. Did anybody check his record? Sam was Catholic.

Was he ever able to communicate with symbols? No. Did he have schizophrenia? My gut says yes but how could I know? How could he be diagnosed? He could have been having epileptic seizures for all I know. Schizophrenia is a psychotic thought disorder. You diagnose abnormal thought patterns from speech.

A tentative diagnosis like rule out schizophrenia would have been a better diagnosis. Sam was calm around me. He always smiled at me. God bless Sam. May God forgive the animals that hurt him. May God forgive us all.

Consider this: If there is some kind of heaven, and admission depends on some sort of moral test, then severe psychiatric patients would get a free pass. There can be little guilt where there is little personal responsibility. A just God would not punish someone for something that they had little or no control over. Sometimes patients expressed existential fears. I would try to comfort them with that if they could handle it. Every case is different.

One more thing before I get to stop remembering Chester and the source of my mild PTSD. I still have nightmares. A huge turning point in my psychiatric education came a few years in when I discovered how psychiatrists really make a diagnosis. It's sort of the reverse of what the textbooks describe.

Let me start with a brief review of the scientific method, what scientists call the hypothetical-deductive method. This is how we are supposed to do science. We begin with a theory. Then we test the theory/hypothesis with an experiment. If the experimental results do not support the theory, we modify the theory. We then do another test of the revised theory with another experiment. Maybe we got a little closer to where the data supports the theory. Maybe we got further away. We modify the theory again. We go round and round, but we START WITH THEORY. Theory-Data-Theory-Data etc. Psychiatrists are supposed to go from theory/tentative diagnosis to data/medication response, but they go in reverse.

(BTW, recent brain research proves that the human brain is hard-wired to reason in the opposite direction for what the scientific method calls for. It happens subconsciously. Even scientists struggle with experimental logic. The human brain is wired to search out information that proves what we already believe and want to be true, not the other way around.

The brain is not hard-wired to be objective. It's wired to find a rationalization for what we already believe. When it fabricates a rationalization, even a weak one, it squirts out a little chemical reward. It gives us a buzz because we have convinced ourselves that we don't have to do the hard work of rearranging our beliefs.

Psychiatrists are supposed to start by interviewing a patient with an open mind. They are supposed to identify symptoms and behavior patterns first and then consult the official diagnostic manual (DSM) to match the system cluster to a diagnosis. Only then are they supposed to look up what drugs are used to treat that diagnosis/clinical hypothesis.

At that point, they test the tentative diagnostic theory by administering a drug that is certified to treat that diagnosis. If symptoms do not respond in a way that is consistent with the initial diagnosis, the psychiatrist is supposed to consider diagnostic modification and test again. Just like a scientist, they are supposed to repeat the cycle until the data are consistent with the theory or diagnosis.

That's not really what they do. Psychiatrists go in reverse. First, they try different drugs until they find a prescription and dose that moderates the behaviors that they find problematic. They change drugs and doses until they like the results. They attach the diagnosis that the drug is supposed to treat after that.

I can only comment on what I saw at my hospital, but I'll bet that happens all the time in other places.

Patients arrive with a diagnosis from the last psychiatrist who treated them. That diagnosis is always the starting point. Once a diagnosis is written in a patient's chart, that diagnosis is hard to change, and it will never be taken out of a patient's history. A psychiatrist will never say in writing that a prior psychiatrist was wrong. Never.

Patients can be brought in front of a judge who can see the old diagnosis. It's just an opinion, but it's forever. We changed the diagnosis of many patients more than once, but it's swimming upstream. Some disorders have stigmas. If a patient was ever diagnosed with one of those disorders, it's a scar for life. I can't confirm this, but we

were under the impression that a police officer can see some of those things on his/her computer when they stop a driver. Mental illness is not a crime. Where is the due process?

Now for some good news. After a few years, the state started to investigate and pressure the hospital to stop the physical abuse. The Inspector General's Office moved into the hospital. They had an office in the building. The State Police were in the house. They actually fired one or two guards. Administrators publicly spoke out against abuse. Training was improved.

Now understand, the Republican state representative for the area was probably a check on how far the IG could go. Those Chester jobs and prison jobs were his pork. The IG was not perfect, but they played the balance well. They were there for about a decade. They made a real impact on the culture before they pulled back.

The hospital actually lost its accreditation for three years during my early years. After that, it was downhill for the goon squad. A national hospital accreditation team came in every three years to inspect and certify. I got them aside and told them about the abuse. We lost accreditation. Was it me? I can't prove it, but that never happened before. I believe the hospital lost a small fortune in federal matching funds or something because the director was crushed. I think it ended his career. He never got promoted after that. It probably wasn't because he failed to stop the abuse. It was probably because he failed to keep me quiet.

I spent years waiting to escape with a pension. I finally got there. I'm free. I've been away for a long time. Do I think that the abuse flared up again? I have no way to know, but I believe that the conditions that caused it remain.

Were/are any of the other forensic psychiatric hospitals better? There were only three full forensic hospitals in the country at the time. One was in California. We had some contact and even training with them. I was sure that they were ahead of us.

Were there any good people in my hospital? Sure, but my overwhelming conclusion is that patients deserve to be taken care of by people who live in this century. I would move the hospital to Elgin Illinois by expanding the forensic wing at the Elgin State Hospital. Let them put a minimum security prison in the Chester hospital building.

Back to FE. What would the very same problem look like in a private psychiatric hospital? First of all, no private company would ever want to start one. The workman's comp alone would stop them. Chester paid out more in workman's comp than pensions. A private company puts low labor costs as job one, not patient care and staff safety. Psychiatric drugs are super expensive. A private company would cut the medication budget to the bone. That would cause more violence and create more injuries to both patients and staff.

A private company would cut labor costs to the bone like they do in private prisons. They would also hire the cheapest employees, not the best ones. Any clinician with more than a year's experience would not be hired. God only knows what kind of quack they would try to use as a psychiatrist, and they would need a dozen of them. Guard salaries would be minimum wage. That would attract the wrong kind of

employee.

Private contractors have a habit of ignoring licensing requirements when they hire. That leaves the state open to litigation and accrediting problems.

Let me show you an example of what happens when state services get privatized.

After retirement, I worked for two years at Menard Correctional Center in Chester. Prison medical services were privatized. I had to hold my nose to try it, but I was in the union, and I needed some money. We had a baby just before I retired. Tuition saving starts early. I can't work in the Public Sector after retiring from the state system, so I tried the private contractor gig.

OMG, what a nightmare. The private contractor was politically connected. Rumors put the bribe numbers in the millions. They got the state to pay them up front for a whole years operation. They fought like mad to hire as few people as possible and fire people or drive them off quickly because they got to keep the money that those people left behind when they quit. When somebody resigned, the private company would drag their feet when hiring a replacement. The longer it took, the more money they got to keep from the original contract.

They hired very few people but when they did it was always someone just out of school or whoever they could get to work for cheap. I had no business trying to work in there. I was curious. I knew other retired professionals who tried it. They all quit after a year or so. Republicans push privatization. Nobody cares what happens to inmates.

The contractor was taking the state to the cleaners. Republicans sell privatization on the scam that it's cheaper. It can't be cheaper if you pay the contractor up front. Any savings that they screw the inmates out of doesn't go back to the state.

I know that people don't like murderers, but most of the inmates were drug offenders. The private contractor was covering up cancers for as long as possible to save money by treating patients at later stages. The private contractor made money when an inmate died. That's the incentive. Private Sector, for-profit hospitals are evil AND more expensive. All health care delivery and administration needs to be within the Public Sector.

SIX

Let me put one more marker down before I move on from psychiatry. I want to go on the record with my vote on the cause of schizophrenia. I spent decades reading about schizophrenia, the most serious disorder in psychiatry. Maybe I got it right. Here is a description of schizophrenia by Katie Hurley LCSW.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM 5), the lifetime prevalence of schizophrenia is approximately 0.3%-0.7%. The psychotic features of the disorder typically emerge between the mid-teens and mid-thirties, with the peak age of onset of the first psychotic episode in the early to mid-twenties for males and late twenties for females.

The DSM 5 outlines the following criterion to make a diagnosis of schizophrenia:

1. Two or more of the following for at least a one-month (or longer) period of time, and at least one of them must be 1, 2, or 3:

- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Disorganized speech
- Grossly disorganized or catatonic behavior
- Negative symptoms, such as diminished emotional expression

What causes schizophrenia? It's been a mystery for like 2 centuries now. I read everything. Early arguments centered around Nature vs. Nurture. There was a time when it was fashionable to blame the diagnosis on purely environmental factors. Your mother gave you mixed messages or something. (Maybe that's where the idea that schizophrenia is a "split personality" comes from. No.) Later on it was fashionable to blame the disorder on purely genetic factors. There's a bad gene etc. It's 100% inherited etc. By the time I got into psychiatry it was fashionable to blame a combination of environmental and genetic factors. My curiosity raged over what such an interaction would look like.

Big point. Schizophrenia is correlated with poverty. Some disorders like bipolar disorder (a mood disorder) are not correlated with socioeconomic status. Rich people get bipolar disorder just as often as low income people. Schizophrenia thrives in impoverished areas.

Big point. I found a respected theory that schizophrenia is caused by something going wrong in the second trimester of pregnancy. Remember the part environmental and part genetic premise? How about a developmental cause? A problem with fetal development in the second trimester seemed to be a way out of the nature vs. nurture question. Developmental problems can be both genetic and environmental.

Big Point. Folic acid is a supplement that women take in pregnancy. The second trimester developmental theory had several probable causes that were being debated. Lack of folic acid was one of them.

Here was my question: What do pregnant mothers in middle class homes do differently than mothers in impoverished areas.

Diet. Social workers know that there are food deserts in low income

neighborhoods. Without a car, they can't get fresh vegetables. People walk to the gas station to get food. They buy blue cool aid in a plastic bottle that's not juice. Milk is expensive there. Chips and cold cuts. Slim Jims. Donuts.

No orange juice. Real OJ is very expensive. Guess what's in orange juice? Folic acid. Do pregnant mothers in poverty take vitamin supplements and folic acid? I wish that they did, but no. That's way more common with the middle class. It's all part of good prenatal care. We have no national health service that covers everyone. Prenatal care is not always easy. The US has a high infant mortality rate because of our privatized health care system. Let me look up a typical year. 2014: US-5.8 deaths per 1000 live births. Sweden: 2.2. My source is the CIA website, not a leftist think tank. Google US infant mortality.

My bet is that schizophrenia is a developmental disorder caused by a lack of folic acid in the second trimester of pregnancy in mothers who have a genetic predisposition for schizophrenia. You need two things to go wrong at the same time. You have to be born with a certain genetic predisposition, and you have to fail to get enough folic acid from your diet or a supplement. The first factor is probably not related to socioeconomic status but the second factor is.

Folic acid tablets are cheap, but the risk of birth defects is still small enough to be overlooked by a family in poverty. Dietary supplements are a middle class thing. Families in poverty see more immanent threats than that. (1% of the US population gets schizophrenia.) That's why social workers do home visits. We convince mom to take the folic acid. They might not know about it and they might not know that it's cheap.

If I'm right, then the Republican Party is saving pennies on prenatal care and spending billions on inpatient care for schizophrenia. Schizophrenia beds are the most expensive health care expense in US health care delivery. I once read that schizophrenia beds took half of the US health care budget for an entire year in the 90s. With FE, there would be good prenatal care in every neighborhood.

Free folic acid and a good nurse to convince a mother to take it is not expensive. This is what happens with the privatization of public services. Private vendors always go for the short term gain. They have to plan short term because their stockholders can dump them in a heartbeat. Investors want to see growth in every quarter. Private vendors are more expensive than Public Sector delivery, especially in the long run.

Most of my Chester patients were diagnosed with schizophrenia. Most patients have milder forms of the disorder than my people. Most patients with schizophrenia can be treated at home with medication. They are no more dangerous than anybody else on your block. I saw the most severe cases in the state. They were not typical cases.

During the last four decades the Reagan small government movement closed many Public Sector psychiatric hospitals. The Private Sector's answer to mental illness was to forcibly discharge patients with little or no access to community care. Patients who were once in public hospitals are now in public prisons. The prison system is now our number one provider of psychiatric care. That's what happens with privatization and that's why we need FE.

Psychiatry and mental health are very political. It's no coincidence that the extreme Communist left sends political prisoners to psychiatric hospitals, while the extreme Fascist right sends psychiatric patients to prisons. We don't play politics with cardiac patients. We need to protect psychiatric patients from neoconservative politics.

Capitalism is about competition. People who suffer from a mental illness can't compete. We need to confront capitalists with this question: What do you want to do with people who can't compete. There are lots of other categories of people who can't compete. Children, the elderly etc. Would you treat all of these groups the same? This is the Achilles heel of capitalism. This is where the left will attack the right. The right should embrace FE. FE gives capitalism a soft landing. Profiteers don't have to give up all of their for-profit markets, just the ones that put people over a barrel.

Let me say something about the structural unemployment excuse. Classical economists are always blaming the victim for unemployment. When a worker's job becomes obsolete, classical economists expect the worker to find a new skill, retrain themselves, and take responsibility for the business cycle under capitalism. That is never easy and sometimes it's impossible.

The Private Sector feels no responsibility for these workers. If the market for the good or service being produced by the company tanks, the workers get cut. If the same market soars, the workers don't get a raise. The company takes the up side and the workers get the downside risk. Stockholders get the best of both sides of the business cycle. Workers are treated like employees when profits are up and like private contractors when profits are down.

Structural unemployment is the excuse that capitalists use when they are confronted with the fact that the Private Sector treats human workers like they are a disposable commodity. Whenever you hear someone say that people are our most important national resource, think about how we treat other kinds of resources that we use in production. Coal, iron, steel, corn, soybeans, etc. Commodities are exploited and squeezed to the breaking point to maximize profit. Why should we be good with treating workers like soybeans? Private Sector budgets treat labor costs like a commodity. It's just an overhead cost. If the market price beans goes down, you can store them until it goes up. Beans don't eat.

Structural unemployment is a rationalization for cruelty. Workers can't always retrain or relocate. Old fashioned farmers in India are committing suicide in droves because they can't compete with modern industrial agriculture. They can't make enough money to survive. Do we blame the victim? Many of them are elderly. They can't move. They can't retrain. A living wage is a Desperate Human Necessity. If all people are to be guaranteed a living wage, that will have to come from the Public Sector. The government must set a fair minimum wage. The Private Sector has a conflict of interest.

There is an adversarial relationship between labor and capital. Every Private Sector manager knows that. They deny it, but their behavior proves that they know it. If CEOs really believed that labor and capital are in the same boat, then they would raise wages as high as possible under the expectation that higher wages would drive up

profits. Every CEO agrees with Marx, but they won't admit it.

Another thought experiment. What would have been different in the Great Depression of 1929, if the feds understood FE and implemented a recovery plan based on it? President Roosevelt's New Deal was very close to FE. He used the feds to prop up markets for Desperate Necessities, but he also propped up all the other markets. He had to please Wall Street too. FE would have left those markets alone. FE would have used the feds to bail out home mortgages, but it would not bail out the investment banks.

In fact, the best time to nationalize a market for a Desperate Necessity is in a recession when the Private Sector can't make a profit on it. But instead of the feds bailing the market out, they should just buy it and keep it. FDR put the risk for all those home mortgages on the public. But after the economy recovered he sold them back to the Private Sector. If the taxpayer pays for it, they should get to keep it. We don't need to buy out all the producers of Desperate Necessities when the price is high. We can wait for a recession and nationalize those markets on the cheap.

Imagine a drunk uncle who owns a store that has lots of ups and downs. He wants you to lend him money on the down but he keeps ownership and never gives you any extra money when he's on an up. You take all the risk and he gets all the profits. This is what the Private Sector does. Nationalize the risk and privatize the profit. FE let's them play casino with most markets but not necessities.

One more thing here. When Private Sector managers object to nationalization they call foul on the grounds that the government is so strong compared to the Private Sector that the Private Sector can't compete. By saying that they admit that the Private Sector is not more efficient than the Public Sector. They have always known the truth but they conceal it with lots of professional spin. The Public Sector has a big advantage. That's why we should use it to provide Desperate Necessities more efficiently.

Let me touch on the psychology of living under capitalism. The thing that grates me the most is that everybody is always in hustle mode. I think I know why. It's not just the alienation that comes from doing the same simple tasks all the time. Every verbal transaction feels disingenuous. Everyone is subconsciously lying, politicking, selling, spinning, and holding something back out of fear. I catch myself doing it. Everybody does it. We are conditioned to compete with each other for the scraps that are left after the oligarchs lock half of everything away in an offshore bank.

Where does our fear come from? It's instinctive and the oligarchs know how to provoke our primitive emotions. We can't feel secure in the richest country on earth because they don't want us to. Why do we feel insecure?

When humans evolved from competitive individualism toward a cooperative social structure, we developed specialization. Sociologists call it the division of labor. Cooperative specialization is super productive but it runs on trust. If an individual gives up self sufficiency to do a specialized task, he/she can no longer survive without the group. Specialization requires a solid social contract. I agree to specialize and only do job X if the community promises to feed me when job X isn't needed on any particular day.

We live in constant fear that the group will throw us out after we have long forgotten the general skills to be self sufficient. We spend our lives trying to impress and please the group. We try to make ourselves valuable and indispensable. Status anxiety happens when the social contract feels weak. Psychologists who work for the oligarchs tell them all about our vulnerability.

The real reason that a rich nation refuses to maintain a solid and secure safety net is not that it's expensive. It's not. A weak safety net makes the social contract feel insecure. That insecurity is used to motivate workers to run the hamster wheel and be afraid to strike for a living wage. Status anxiety makes the 99% bite each other for the leftover crumbs that the oligarchs throw out. The cure for status anxiety is a secure social safety net. That's why neoconservatives oppose it.

Want proof? We have lots of hard data to prove that suicides go way up under every Republican administration and back down with every Democratic administration. (Why Some Politicians Are More Dangerous Than Others, 2011, by James Gilligan) Not most Republican administrations. All Republican administrations. When I say way up, I mean way up. Not just a statistically significant increase. That's how workers feel under full bore capitalism. Capitalism slows human social evolution by turning up the fear in the environment.

Another thing or two. I think fiat money scares the oligarchs and I think the oligarchs know that the old protestant work ethic is not as important as it was in the agricultural age. Both of those changes enable social reform. One at a time.

We have been off the gold standard for almost a century. The rich fought against that, but FDR did it. Money is only backed by faith. That causes inflation but there is more. If all money is just an electronic record in a computer, some crazy leftist might get power and erase all that money with the click of a mouse. That possibility probably makes the 1% pull the rope even tighter. Give them health care and they'll want it all.

By the way, inflation hurts the rich more than the 1%. Inflation narrows the inequality gap. If all money is worth 10% less, rich folks lose more money because they have more to lose. Fiat money is really just political power credits in a computer. Gold bars would feel more secure. You can't bury political power credits in the backyard.

The work ethic comes from the agricultural age. Back breaking labor kept us from starving. People who refused to work hard were considered to be moral degenerates and even evil. Life was super labor intensive. The work ethic is still strong. It lasted through the industrial age when we worked like dogs in factories and all the way into the information age. Agriculture is mechanized now. A few people can feed everybody. The factory jobs that are yet to go robotic are done with cheap third world labor.

What keeps the average American on the hamster wheel when all the work is done and a dozen rich white men have all the money? The 1% keep stoking that work ethic like we're still dirt farming Kansas in the dust bowl. By keeping the level of insecurity high, the haves think they can prevent a revolt that would tax the rich to pay for a 20 hour work week, free college, and a retirement age of 45.

Most of our jobs involve a huge chunk of busywork. We spend a great deal of

energy trying to justify our jobs. We carry an armload of papers when we walk to the water cooler. Why can't we have a 20 hour week? When farmers got tractors, they got rid of their horses. You can't get rid of people. When you can't get rid of horses that you don't need, you lock them in the barn and feed them just enough to stay alive. You have to humor them too. If they feel neglected they'll kick the door down.

There is probably enough wealth concentrated in a very few hands to double the standard of living of the average American overnight without lowering the standard of living for the very rich. How much money can one person spend? The rich know that. They fear any redistribution of wealth, even one they can't feel, because they think we would take it all. Inequality like this is unsustainable. A redistribution is coming. Instead of releasing some of that wealth gradually for a soft landing, human nature makes them double down with each new threat from below. FE would give them a soft landing. Soft landings are better for everyone. Evolution is better than revolution.

There are two classic ways to prevent revolution from below. One is to make sure that workers have just enough of a safety net for Desperate Necessities to keep them complacent. Otto Von Bismark, 1862, President of Prussia, used that strategy. It worked until the safety net got too thin, but the logic is sound. The Bismark strategy is not used in the US.

American oligarchs use a strategy of give them an inch and they'll take a mile. They reason that a broken worker is no threat. Driving down expectations is supposed to prevent revolution. This strategy fails after inequality gets so extreme that austerity arguments look ridiculous. That's where we are now. We have social media. Communications are worldwide. We can see that every other first world nation has a real safety net. The extreme left does not want the oligarchs to discover FE. FE uses a modern version of Bismark's strategy. Every time the oligarchs double down on repression, they cut their own throats.

Now beware. Every good idea can be used for evil, including FE. With FE, the oligarchs could simply try to put necessity labels on as few goods and services as they can. Don't let them do that. There could be an ongoing political battle over what is and is not a necessity. (a Desperate Necessity is something a consumer can not refuse to buy at an exorbitant price without going into debt for it.) My definition of what is and is not a necessity is clear, but that won't stop power brokers from fighting over markets. If progressive Democrats are in power, more things will be designated as necessities. If neoconservative Republicans are in power, fewer things will be designated as necessities. FE won't work without active Democratic participation.

My voting strategy is to vote as far left as possible in a primary, and vote Democratic in the general election. I pull as far left as I can without throwing my vote away. I'm not a fan of third parties in general elections. When people tell me that they think a candidate is too far left, I tell them this.

The left has never been in power. One candidate can't pull us very far left, but one moderate Republican can pull us too far right, and they usually do. You have to pull as hard left as you can to get anywhere near the center. Think of my rifle example. The

target is 100 yards away. The wind blows hard across the target from left to right. Adjust your aim for the wind. In order to hit the center you have to aim far left. The wind in DC is made of money. The wind in DC blows hard from left to right.

The right has a big wind/money advantage. To elect the center you have to vote as far left as you can. All candidates both right and left end up governing from a spot to the right of what they ran on. No candidate ever governs from a spot to the left of what they ran on. Vote as hard left as you can without throwing away your vote on a third party candidate in a general election, and beware of Republicans posing as moderate Democrats. They instantly jump to the right after being elected.

I'm always looking for ways to use new technology to promote FE. Social media helped a lot. I wrote a book on political literacy and gave it away on firewalleconomics.com. I included a whole chapter of FE. My website has been up for almost a decade now. Thousands of curious people have been there. I use twitter to promote my website too. I respond to tweets that are good examples of the Private Sector making a mess in markets for Desperate Necessities. I attach my link to my responses.

I have little paragraphs about every controversial subject in politics and economics in a file so I don't have to write the same arguments and examples over and over. I try not to cross the spam line but sometimes I feel like a pamphleteer. That's what we did in debate class. We had 3 by 5 cards with responses to anticipated arguments. The opposition would make a point about X and we would pull out the Y card with the appropriate counter argument. My card file is extensive. I've also lived long enough to remember the history of unanticipated consequences to every Republican scam.

For example, today the Republicans announced that they want to spend a ton of money on missile defense. It's Star Wars time again. I remember Reagan doing that and I know just what to tweet. Reagan spent 1.5 Trillion dollars on missile defense that was a complete ruse. We didn't have the technology to hit an ICBM missile with a surface to air missile then, and we still don't. Even our current Patriot low altitude ground missile system is shaky. When Israel used it the Pentagon claimed it worked at 99%. We later learned that it was way less than that. Our current Star Wars type ICBM interceptor missile only works about 50% of the time, and that's with a perfect sitting duck target set up.

Reagan used Star Wars to trick the USSR into a race to see who could waste the most money in missile defense. Legend has it that it worked as a bluff, a 1.5 Trillion dollar bluff. The wall came down after Star Wars and the USSR retracted back into Russia. I'm not sure the Russians fell for the ruse, and even if they did, they're not going to get fooled again.

Missile killing missiles can easily be defeated with decoy missiles. One ICBM killing missile is very expensive. Even a cruise missile costs more than a million dollars a shot. One missile killer missile going after a real Russian ICBM that is surrounded by a hundred decoy missiles is going to miss. We would have to kill every decoy missile

with a multi million dollar shot. It only takes one ICBM to get through.

Republicans love missile contracts. They just broke next year's budget by cutting corporate taxes and taxes on high incomes. They just gave 1.5 trillion to the rich, and now they want another 1.5 trillion for missiles that are a ruse. Defense contractors love the cold war. A trillion is a thousand billion. We don't have universal health care yet and they want to break the bank. The Republican objective is to do just that, to break the bank. A broken economy is a good excuse to hold off on the social safety net. This time, the Star Wars sucker might be us. Russia can sit back and watch us bleed ourselves out. It won't work if they don't bite, and they won't bite again.

So I point out that the Military Industrial Complex is evil, for-profit, and needs to be reformed to where Private Sector contractors are not running the Pentagon. FE would fix this one too. I tweet that argument in a paragraph, and attach a definition of FE with a link to my website. I'm not associated with a university or a think tank. I can't get on MSNBC. Is that strategy working? Yes. Can I do better? I hope so.

I'm always looking for new ways to promote FE. Here's another one. We are entering an era where economic theories can be tested with computer simulations. We already design modern aircraft with CAD, computer assisted design. We don't have to risk a test pilot's life before we know if a new design will fly. Computer simulations tell us if the plane will fly. There are computer simulation games that are just as complicated as real world economic models. There are farming simulators that look more complicated than FE. Remember the Capitalism simulation game? Monopoly on steroids. Why can't I run a computer simulation test on FE?

That was my initial question. I did some digging. There are universities that do computer simulation testing with economic models. It's early, but it's starting to happen. FE could win the respect of the academic community.

Universities, conservative think tanks, and every power broker to the right of Bernie Sanders would do everything in their power to block computer simulation testing for economic models. To get a better understanding of how threatening that is to Capitalism you need to know how economists test their economic theories without computers.

They use a lot of fuzzy math. Mathematical proofs for things like the Laffer Curve will make the fat cats happy and a professor of economics rich. (Laffer said that lower taxes for the rich bring in more taxes than higher taxes. It's been debunked.) Buy Laffer had a ton of fuzzy math proofs to dazzle people into believing it. When people see more math than they can understand they assume that the math must be correct. Nobody wants to admit that they don't understand the math. Remember Credit Default Swaps and Derivatives? Same scam. Every TV pundit on the stock shows said "nobody can understand derivatives but they are brilliant." Derivatives are simply gambling on the outcome of something that has no value outside of the bet.

Economics is a social science. The social sciences have a reputation for being a "soft science." Math, physics, biology etc. are considered hard sciences. Hard sciences are supposed to outrank soft sciences. Professors of the so called soft sciences use

mathematical proofs to make their scientific work appear “harder.” Psychologists do this a lot. Social scientists like sociologists use math too, but they also use other research methods like field research. Field research is sort of the opposite of mathematical modeling.

Sociology and anthropology researchers made a lot of progress by using field methods. Economists need to try it. If you want to measure what Capitalism does to people, you might want to interview them in their homes. Economics should have more in common with sociology and social work than with mathematics. Social behavior is the most complex phenomenon in the world. Economists won't even admit that economics is a social science. They reduce everything to individuals making trading decisions based on their own hedonistic self interest. Where is the social in that. You don't steal from your mother when you can get away with it. Social behavior trumps hedonism. The other social sciences are way ahead of economics. Give tenure to professors of economics in Public universities and let them tell the truth.

Funding for the social sciences in general is only a fraction of the funding we allocate to the so called natural sciences. Capitalists are not going to fund a fair criticism of capitalism. They fund the so called natural sciences in anticipation of advances in the things they want like military hardware and computer algorithms that pick stocks. We must demand that the social sciences get funded. The social sciences are only a century old. Sociology is in it's early stage.

Of all the sciences Sociology is the most complex. I'm referring to the work of Thomas Kuhn on the history and philosophy of science. From simple to complex we start with math to physics to biology to psychology to sociology. The simple sciences are the oldest because they are actually easier. They have fewer variables. You need a computer to crunch the data in sociology. Early math involved a stick in the dirt. Sums don't change. There's no opinion with math. Modern math is not easy because it's been perfected and loaded with complex procedures. Math is more developed because it has been making progress for centuries. Sociology happened about a hundred years ago.

The social sciences are just getting started. Physics brought us nuclear weapons. Sociology will bring us a moral code that works for everyone. Biology brought us heart transplants. Sociology will show us how to provide universal health coverage so that everyone who needs a heart can get one. Psychology brings us knowledge about how the brain works. Sociology will show us how to build a social infrastructure that will help us sublimate primitive impulses. Sociology is the science of how to live together in peace.

I've been told that there is a way to get a university to run FE through a computer simulation test, but I have mixed emotions about the plan. The technology is new and I have no way of knowing if FE would get a fair test. It costs a lot of money to pay a university to run the test. I don't take money. I give away all of my books for free. There are no advertisements on my website. I could do a crowd funding campaign to raise the money for a test but it doesn't feel right. For now, I'm looking for another strategy.

If I can find a university that can run a fair computer simulation for FE, I could apply for a grant. As soon as I'm done with this book I'll start my search for that

university. I see more computer simulations popping up, but they seem to be motivated by a marketing motive, to get us to buy more stuff that we don't need. I need a simulation program where capitalism is not job one, and FE can get a fair test.

I know that I need to make a You Tube video. This is your economy on Capitalism. This is your economy on FE. When the Republicans try to rewrite history, I could debunk the spin. I use graphs on twitter. I could use lots of visual aids on youtube.

Graphs work great on twitter. All you have to do is make a copy of the graph and slap it under the Republican spin to debunk it. You can google graphs on anything. When republicans claim that they create more jobs, you slap on a graph that proves them wrong. When they say that their tax cut for the rich trickled down, you show a graph that proves the opposite. Data are a wonderful thing.

I need to do a You Tube video. I need to get up to speed with new technology. You Tube is TV now. Nobody watches TV. We hate commercials. The cable barons watered down the content and upped the commercials so much that young people made their own TV. They make their own content and share it with each other. How cool is that. Watch what this generation does to neoconservative Capitalism. Polls show that most of them prefer socialism to capitalism but they are looking for something new. That could be FE.

I sent FE to China and Cuba. It's perfect for the third world. As socialist nations look for a way to let some free market activity in, they couldn't find a better strategy than FE. You can build up on FE. FE would feel natural in a third world nation. People in Cuba and China don't flinch at Public Sector control of markets in general. Government control of only Desperate Necessities would feel more liberating than restricting to them. I'm still waiting for China and Cuba to return my email. I'm not kidding. I found an email for university economics departments in China and Cuba. I sent them a paper on FE. You never know. I'll talk to anybody who will listen about FE.

Those are all bottom up strategies for promoting FE. I plan to add a top down move. I'm going to send a link to this book to every member of congress. They taught us how to lobby in graduate school. I should approach legislators and academics and preach FE. Maybe I could do live interviews and take videos. I need a top down component to augment my bottom up efforts. I might get embarrassed, but I'll get better with practice.

In this spot I want to apply FE to current events. Today is January 18, 2019. We are two years into the Republican/Trump coup. Trump is a Russian spy. The government has been shut down for a month. The Republican leadership tries to verbally distance the party from Trump while they protect him. The government shutdown is exactly what the Republicans want. They want to beat up on the Public Sector. This is a new strategy for gutting the feds, stop the paychecks. They hope that lots of talented and dedicated public servants bail out and run to the private sector. It won't work.

I want to share my working hypothesis on the Trump coup. This is my best guess after connecting the dots. Before I lose readers by sounding like a "paranoid conspiracy theorist" I want to say that I'm very familiar with what paranoia looks like. I'm not paranoid. I have both feet on the ground.

The myth that only paranoid people try to connect the dots and deduce a

conspiracy was promoted by the CIA in the 60s to discourage dot connecting. Conspiracies happen all the time. People who think that the moon landing was faked are not the same as people who think that the Republican Party and Trump laundered Russian mob money to tilt an election.

This is a good example for debunking the small government movement. Republicans and Libertarians want the biggest and most powerful nation in history to be run by a small government. By small they mean weak. That is a recipe for disaster. When the central government is weak, you don't get a stateless utopia. You rule by organized crime.

That's what happened when the USSR collapsed. The Russian mob filled the vacuum. Now the reach of the Russian mob is in DC. The Republican Party has either signed on with the Russian mob, or they are being blackmailed by it. Citizens United opened the doors to foreign campaign money. Thank you GOP. We can no longer trace campaign money. This had to happen.

The Republican Party wants to get away from Trump. Why they can't is a mystery. He's destroying the GOP. The Russian money got laundered through the NRA! The NRA is not about guns. The NRA is campaign money bank for the GOP. If Russian money went through the NRA, then every Republican in congress had to know that. If lots of chunks of that cash got handed out to Republican congressional candidates, then any investigation into Trump is going to expose the whole GOP. Trump probably has dirt on every Republican. An investigation into Trump's Russia connection will probably expose decades of corrupt Republican money laundering. He's got the GOP by the Eustachian tubes. This could be a constitutional crisis.

Don't forget. The GOP had a lot to gain from this coup. They got two supreme court judges and lots of other judges appointed for life. They got a huge tax cut for corporations and the very rich. They robbed the bank. No matter how many Republican members of congress go to prison, the big bosses, the oligarchs who ordered the robbery, will stay free. That's how mob bosses roll.

Republicans who run for office are not independent politicians. We will never know what one individual believes. Everything that a Republican Senator says is handed to him prepackaged by the oligarchs. They are only paid spokespersons like lawyers advocating for a client. That's why some of them make you wonder how they got that far. Think Sarah Palin. The hire faces. Reagan was a face. Look at the resumes of Republican vs. Democratic candidates. Republicans only want spokespersons.

The possibility that the GOP is entangled with organized crime seems to solve another dilemma for me. It might be the reason the Democrats get elected by talking left and then end up somewhere to the right of what they campaigned on. Remember how frustrated we were when Obama the whole congress and he seemed to choke? Bill Clinton ran to the right. We got so frustrated with him. Maybe the Democrats have no spine thing doesn't come from weakness. Maybe it comes from fear.

Maybe Obama wasn't afraid of the GOP. Maybe he was afraid of organized crime. Maybe our corporate Democrats are not the wolves in sheep's clothing that we suspect.

Maybe our corporate Democrats are intimidated by the mob.

Organized crime has been in bed with the GOP for decades at least. Nixon had big time mob connections. J. Edgar Hoover protected organized crime at the FBI. JFK and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated after going hard after organized crime. Bobby Kennedy dragged the mob in front of congress. Think about what has changed since Nixon and Hoover. The things that organized crime used to sell are becoming more and more legal. Gambling, drugs, and prostitution. In the 80s, organized crime infiltrated Wall Street. We are seeing the results of that now. The savings and loan crisis. Enron. Banking deregulation. Flash crashes. Insider trading. Pump and dump operations. Pyramid schemes.

The Trump investigation is turning over a lot of rocks in New York. No wonder the investigation is taking so long. Do we even remember that Robert Mueller and James Comey are Republicans. Trump acts like a mob boss but he is just the tip of the iceberg. All Trump had to do to protect himself was to pass out chunks of that Russian money to Republican legislators and candidates. When a mob boss orders a murder, he makes sure that all of his subordinates are in the room when the shots are fired. That way none of them can squeal without implicating themselves. Trump wove them into the criminal fabric. He has something on the entire Republican infrastructure. He can bring down the GOP.

Sidebar: I think China does this too. Did you know that Republican Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell is married to the daughter of a Chinese shipping billionaire? She looks half his age? She is now the Secretary of Transportation. Now imagine if candidate Obama was married to someone like that.

My point is this: When you weaken the government, you don't get the stateless utopia that Republicans and Libertarians predict. You get rule by organized crime. The mob fills the vacuum. All the Republican spin about small government is just code for less law. All law comes from the Public Sector. Less law is how they avoid paying fair taxes. Less law is how they get away with dangerous consumer products and polluting the earth. Less law is how white collar criminals get less time for fraud than street corner pot dealers get for selling a dime bag. Look at the Trump scandals. This is what small government looks like. Criminal cases can't go to arbitration. The judges that can stop Trump work for the Public Sector. Shutting down the government is his desperate attempt to stop those judges.

The Republican Party is using Trump to damage our Public Sector infrastructure. The Private Sector and the Public Sector compete. Shutting down the government means shutting down the Public Sector. The core Republican philosophy can be reduced to anarchy. They think that anarchy emboldens neoconservative full bore Capitalism, but they're wrong. Anarchy destroys Capitalism too. Without a legal infrastructure contracts can not be enforced. The wild west was not a good place to do business. The Republican Party of today is imploding. FE could give them a soft landing. It's their call.

It's January 24, 2019, and I see good things for a top-down strategy to get Democratic senators to read about and consider FE. The Republicans shut the government down. It's been over a month. The FBI is investigating the Republican Party and Trump while not being paid. People are angry with the GOP.

The Democratic Party is moving left. There are already a dozen Democrats running for president, and they're all trying to sound progressive. Some of them are corporate Democrats in disguise, but all of them are trying to look progressive. Some are Democratic Socialists like Bernie Sanders. Some are calling for a wealth tax on the very rich. All of them call for universal health care.

We need to weed out stealth Republicans posing as Democrats by separating the candidates into two groups, those who take dark corporate money and those who fund their campaigns without it. Some candidates like Bernie Sanders will only accept small individual contributions, but some will get money from Wall Street.

This is a good time for me to approach new progressive Democrats and beg them to help me promote FE. This is going to take guts. "Hello Senator, I'm the crazy retired social worker who thinks he can make peace between Capitalism and Socialism. I'm just sublimating my competitive drives into something socially acceptable. I'm an unknown writer. I have no political juice. I'm not a campaign donor." This strategy is going to require a fair and level playing field if my idea has any chance of being considered by anyone in my lifetime. Forgive my romanticizing, but I do believe that FE will eventually be implemented. It just feels like common sense. It might never see it in my lifetime, but I see it in the future.

The struggle between Capitalism and Socialism is more important than any other issue in the modern world. I've always been obsessed with it, and I'm a little OCD. I think about it all the time. I turn the trade-offs over and over in my mind while I look for my car keys. It's no coincidence to me that the entire subject has made no progress at all over the past century. Progress is blocked by right-wing think tanks that fear social progress.

We demand that the restrictions placed on the social sciences by neoconservative forces be lifted. We want more than equal funding. We want a free exchange of ideas, and we want the social sciences to be encouraged and culturally valued even more than the so-called hard sciences that feed industrial technology and neglect human relations. Technology is super productive, but we can find better uses for it than unsustainable consumer capitalism and conspicuous material consumption.

We are in our second month of the longest government shutdown in US history. 800,000 federal workers get no paychecks. The FBI and the Coast Guard are on food stamps. This is not about a stupid wall. The wall is the excuse for the shutdown, not the cause. Libertarian Republicans are all about shrinking the government to a size so small that they can drown it in a bathtub. Their words, not mine. The shutdown is an attack on the Public Sector by the Private Sector.

Republicans are using Trump as a diversion. Trump is not in charge. The

Republican Party is calling the shots. They have enough incriminating information on Trump to get him to do anything that they want. They got tax cuts and judges, and now they want to do as much damage to the Public Sector as they can before we throw them out and put a few of their scapegoats in prison. They want people to distrust the government. Think about that. That's what an anarchist does. That's what a terrorist does.

The border wall is a weak diversion. This is an attempt to weaken civilization itself. This is an attempt to undermine public trust in the social contract. This is an attempt to reverse human social evolution. We are evolving away from brute competition and toward more social cooperation. Progress moves left.

Libertarians encourage people to drop out of society. They love it when people go off the grid, move to Alaska, and stop voting. The Neoconservative strategy is about lowering expectations. People who don't expect the Public Sector to take care of Social Security won't gather pitchforks and torches when the Republicans kill it. When stressed, it seems easier to identify with the oppressor and avoid the cognitive dissonance created by demoralizing policy moves than to live with the stress of righteous indignation.

Libertarian Republicans play the long game. They put a frog/us in a pot of cold water in 1980. They have been gradually turning up the heat since then. We are about to boil, but people are used to the water temperature. "It's only a little hotter than last year. Trump is worse than Bush, but he too will pass." We think every Republican administration is as bad as it can get, and they always give us something worse. They steal elections in the open.

This administration has gone so far to the right that we suffer at the hands of a narcissistic, Fascist, racist, traitor, sociopath that wants to be a dictator. When the Republicans run their usual strategy of going two more clicks to the right after every election cycle, they end up in Fascism. They have run out of room on the right.

The most extreme political position on the right is Fascism. Fascism is when there is no democracy, and the wealthiest 1% control the government by breaking it's back. The most powerful nation in the history of the earth cannot function without a strong central government. When Libertarians crush the government, we don't get a stateless utopia. We get ruled by organized crime. Look around. That theory is no longer just an untested theory. History proves it.

People think that Hitler's fascism was a strong central government. It was when you look at how the 1% treated the working class, but there was no law to restrain wealthy industrialists from enslaving the working class.

When Libertarians in the US call for small (weak) government, they use a double standard. They want firm government control over workers and no government control over investors and employers. Once again, we're not all in the same boat. There is an adversarial relationship between labor and capital.

Remember the adversarial relationship when any politician calls for anything universal. Small government for what side? Less regulation for what side? Tax cuts for

what side? Judicial restraint for what side? Austerity for what side? What side are you on?

The Private Sector and the Public Sector compete with each other. The shutdown is a shakeout. Republicans want talented federal workers to leave for the Private Sector. They want a wave of workers to quit and be replaced by fewer workers with less experience. That would weaken the ability of the Public Sector to compete with the Private Sector.

Republicans fear the so-called deep state. What they fear is a federal official who is civil service and protected from political pressure. A career lawyer at the EPA can bust a polluting company hard when she knows the system well. Deep State is code for Civil Service. The civil service protects the public from corrupt political pressure designed to block the government from protecting the public.

People who want to crush the government have one kind of an advantage over people who want to build and maintain a social infrastructure, and, supporters of government have a different type of advantage over the anarchists. The push and pull between these two forces is the dialectic process of social evolution.

Government is about cooperation. Law is about cooperation. Cooperation can be fragile. Not as fragile as a house of cards, but fragile. It's harder to build and maintain than it is to destroy. That's the advantage enjoyed by the anarchist. They're always trying to pull that one corner base card out from under a government house of cards.

Any form of cooperation involves a trade-off between freedom and security. When Libertarians appeal to our innate fear of enslavement, they're playing that card. They say freedom in a black and white nonspecific way. It's too easy to pull at that corner card. Think with your head, not your gut.

Ask: Freedom from what? Freedom to do what? Freedom for who? There is no nonspecific all-encompassing freedom. Do they mean freedom from federal prosecution for killing workers with unsafe factory conditions? Do they mean freedom for the federal government to interfere with family planning? They probably don't mean freedom to quit an abusive job and take your benefits with you to the next one. What they really mean is freedom for the rich to dodge taxes. Freedom is a general term that can be spun in any direction. A law against murder restricts the freedom of a murderer to kill. Insist that candidates be more specific when they speak in general terms.

People who wish to build and maintain a social infrastructure have a different kind of advantage over the Anarchists. Well, two advantages. The first advantage is that they are just dead on correct. The other advantage is that they are on the right side of history. Competition is in our DNA, but so is cooperation, and cooperation is winning.

We are evolving away from a culture that embraces a wild west, every man for himself, cut-throat competitive ideology. We get more social with every generation. We get a little more to the left as we mature. Libertarians can't really turn back the clock. They're swimming upstream. They can cause a crisis that throws us back temporarily, but the backlash and the overreach come right back to bite them a little later.

Neoconservative Republicans don't want to see the truth. They make it even

harder on themselves. Instead of slowing progressive evolution by making rational compromises and preparing for a soft transition, they double down and trade short term gains for long term losses.

One theory as to why this happens is this: Wealth inequality is out of control to the point that a handful of cranky old Libertarian billionaire white men are completely dominating the Republican Party. (A Libertarian philosophy makes rich people feel justified in having an enormous fortune while other people go hungry.) When you're looking death in the face, you feel a need to leave a legacy. Since Libertarianism is their religion, they build a church to it in the form of a Neoconservative political organization. They think they are doing something pious.

These old men can't play the long game because they don't have that much time left. They want to see a Libertarian utopia before they die. They believe the scam. They drank the Cool-aid. When they order their bought and paid for Republican congress members to push a radical right-wing bill, they don't take no for an answer. They don't care if there are enough votes to get it done. They don't care if their Republican legislators get elected again. They make their legislators go for the throat no matter what.

It's an all-out offensive before they die. Those old men are trashing the Republican Party, but they don't care. They're just trying to smash the government, and they would pay a member of any party to do it. It's like a mob boss hiring a hit man. The boss will never go to jail.

Can you see now why the Republican Supreme Court Citizens United decision is backfiring on the Republican party? With unlimited campaign contribution limits, the Republican Party will reflect the values of a tiny group of super-wealthy donors. The Party has become so extreme that no Republican can get elected in a fair election. The egos of a handful of rich white men have destroyed the Republican brand.

Citizens United will break our democracy if it's not reversed. It opened up political campaigns to secret foreign donors. The Russian government just laundered millions to the GOP through the NRA and probably flipped an election. The oligarchs and the Russians found a common interest. They both wanted to crush the US government.

When I was a college student, the left warned everyone that the Republican party contained the seeds of Fascism. Everyone laughed at us. Republicans went on the record for protecting Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, etc. Republican candidates in debates scolded Democrats for calling Republicans phony moderates. History proved that the Democrats were right all along. There are extremes on the left and the right, but the Republican Party is the only party that has ever gone to extremes.

Can we stop this at Trump, or will we get a Mussolini in the next decade? I think we've hit bottom and we're coming up. Trump did more to establish political literacy than writers like me ever could. Sometimes you just have to learn the hard way.

Republicans have think tanks full of policy analysts that have the same policy

education that I do, but they don't listen to them when they warn the Libertarians against overreach. Policy analysis is all about anticipating unintended consequences. When you go full out after a political theory that you want to be true without researching its history, you hit unintended consequences. You don't anticipate the side effects that go with your short term political gain.

The GOP took a lot of collateral damage because of Trump. They got tax cuts and a lot of Neoconservative judges, but the backlash destroyed the party brand.

I have a funny story about unintended consequences and not thinking a plan through. I messed up once at a gig. Nothing is more dangerous than someone acting on impulse when they feel like they're doing a truly heroic thing. The brain floods itself with feel-good chemicals and blocks out rational analysis. Righteous indignation feels good too, but self-sacrificing heroism is a rush.

In the 80's I played bass in a great country rock band based in my original and since divorced hometown of Bloomington Illinois. Duke Babb was the lead singer. He's a big guy with a great voice, and he's a great band manager. Ken Callahan was on drums, a young kid who was so good that he eventually joined the Jayhawks. They hung with the Rolling Stones. The guitar player was the legendary Vernon Harker. Vern was a giant, not fat, good looking, the nicest guy in the world and a great guitar player. Vern is big. We call him Animal. He's in Atlanta now, probably eating a dozen eggs for breakfast. Vern taught me guitar without knowing it. I copied everything he did. A few decades later, I could sound like Vern.

Duke got us a sweet national level gig for four days in a ski resort in Winter Park Colorado. It was peak ski season. We had a blast. There was a super attractive woman bartender there, and Vern sat at the bar for four days trying to charm her. I thought it was a harmless flirt. He got nowhere for four days, and Vern is one charming guitar player. All of a sudden, on our last night, right before we were supposed to finish our last show and pull out, she decides to rock Animal's world. His frontal cortex turns to jelly. She gives him a fifth of whiskey, and he drinks it all on stage.

I'm pissed. Not jealous, pissed. The Animal married. He's drunk. He's a man. His wife is a sweetheart. His wife and my girlfriend work together. They are BMFs. Vernon loves his wife. She loves him. The bartender is a bitch. She waited until he had one foot out the door and he's gone for good. I have to intervene. I'm going in.

Intervention by me is not without risk. If Animal got angry, the probability of severe physical injury to the bass player increased significantly. It could break up the band. Our friendship was important to me. The hero juice gushed in my brain. No matter what happened to me, I had to save their marriage. I loved Kate and Vern. What would I want Vern to do if it was me? I was going in.

Vern issued a declaration. We're staying the night. The band agreed. I'm all alone. I demanded that we get on the road as we had planned. Vern objected in a less than diplomatic manner. I humored him into a room. I told him to be faithful to Kate. He was too drunk to fight. Thank GOD! I won. We got in the van and took off. I felt like a hero. Enter unforeseen consequences.

There's a reason they call it Winter Park. A blizzard hit. We were on top of a slick, snowy mountain in the dark. This was no sissy mountain. It was 9,000 feet high. We were in a straight-back truck that Duke converted into a band-mobile. About halfway down, our lights went out. The alternator quit. We couldn't see, and we couldn't turn back. Vern passed out in his bunk. He missed the whole thing.

We pulled off the road and onto a little side area. It was about three in the morning. Not much traffic. No cell phone. No CB. One foot to my left was a 7000-foot drop. The band lit into me for causing our untimely demise. They had a point. The hero juice was all gone. Use your brain. Think. I had to find a plan fast.

A car went by. It had lights. Time to double down on the hero thing. "Listen up men, I have a plan. The very next car that comes by, we jump right in behind it and follow it's taillights to the end of the road at the bottom where we can get help. We did it. It worked until the person driving the car saw a straight-back truck tailgating them with its lights off, on the side of a mountain, in the dark, in a blizzard, etc. We had to stay right on his bumper. If we fell back even a little, we would lose his lights and not be able to stop. If we lost him, we died. We were so committed.

The driver up ahead didn't understand our dilemma. He freaked and sped up. He tried to shake us on the side of a dark slick mountain in a blizzard. He went faster and faster and teased the safety envelope for a car. We had to match his speed in a truck. Our safety envelope was not as big as his. We would have gone over the side before him in a speed contest. He was on two wheels in a curve.

It suddenly occurred to me that the other driver was doing what I would have done given the same circumstances. I had designed my escape plan on impulse without examining it for any possible unintended consequences. I almost killed us.

We made it down but we ain't through yet. Duke finds a payphone and calls for help. He gets back in and tells us that the State Police are on their way. The band relaxed and began to party. About twenty minutes later I mentioned the irony of waiting for the police while we were guzzling beer and smoking pot. We got everything stashed one second before the cop showed up with a tow truck. He had to have been able to smell band party. My unintended consequences were still happening.

We're still not done. We got the truck fixed and found a bad tire with a slow leak. Duke bought the tires at Western Auto back home, so we found a Colorado Western Auto where we could get a free fix under warranty. Vern was still passed out in the back of the truck. Remember that Vern looks like a mountain man, giant beard and everything.

We forgot that he was back there when we gave the keys to the attendant who drove the truck into a bay. Vern woke up and saw a stranger driving our vehicle with no band rats in sight. He thought it was a hijacking. Vern scared the guy senseless.

At least my hero juice came back. You see, Duke kept a fully loaded hog leg .22 pistol in there. Kenny and I hated that. We kept taking the bullets out, and Duke kept putting them back in. We had recently removed the slugs and dumped out the powder. We put the rounds back together empty and put them back in the gun. A startled,

hangover/drunken super Vern might have shot the guy. A sober Vern would never have done that, but accidents happen.

Kenny and I had considered the unintended consequences of a loaded gun in the band truck policy. Duke had not. Did that success make me feel vindicated for making two quick plans on the mountain? No. Vern was probably too drunk to do anything with the bartender, and he was faithful sober. There was a better plan available, and I missed it.

Policy people study the history of all kinds of legislative proposals. They know the unintended and unforeseen consequences of all of them. Republican and Democratic legislators should listen to their policy advisors. If the Republican party ever does pay attention, policy advisors will tell them that a soft landing for Capitalism like FE is a rational strategy for labor and capital.

Even Republican legislators follow their values when they're free to do so, but values are complicated. All values conflict with other values in specific situations, just like all laws conflict with other laws in specific situations. Just as judges have to decide which laws must bend to make room for conflicting laws that are more important to a specific situation, legislators need to do that with values.

A good judge would not convict someone of jaywalking if the defendant was dashing into traffic to save his dog. Policy analysts anticipate situations where values conflict and advise legislators to build flexibility into their policy proposals and legislative actions. There needs to be a human in the loop. People are not machines. Policy people are good at showing legislators how to escape all or noting reasoning. Policy advisors get people to think in trade-offs mode instead of a "my way or the highway" blunt force power mode.

Every day I see news stories about problems that FE can prevent. I caught this one on my local news so I can't confirm its accuracy, but the general idea is clear. A teacher had a student with strep throat. The boy had no medical insurance. She took him to a clinic where he was refused treatment. She took him to another hospital and passed him off as her son. She got arrested for insurance fraud. FE would have prevented this. She protected her school from strep throat. Is there a better example of why the Private Sector should not be allowed anywhere near Desperate Necessities? A National Health Service helps everyone, and it's cheaper than private insurance.

I know that she had no authority to give permission to treat him, and emergency rooms have to treat people with or without insurance, but this was not an emergency. When people without insurance have to go to the ER for conditions that are not an emergency, the cost is astronomical compared to clinic visits. That's another reason why US health care costs are double that of European nations. The extra costs of using the ER for primary care gets passed on to people who already have health insurance by raising their premiums.

That boy could have infected an entire school. Save a penny and spend a dollar. Short term Private Sector planning. Shareholders have to see growth in every quarter etc. Now imagine if that boy works in a restaurant. Even rich people eat in restaurants.

Do you want the person making your food to have strep? If that worker gets sick, do you want to give him a paid day off or do you want him to make your burger when he's sick? Do you want him to have access to cheaper primary care or do you want him to go to the ER?

Why aren't flu shots free to everyone? Why are there never enough flu shots? Because Private Sector drug companies can't make a profit on flu shots. There's no profit in it. They don't work very hard at flu shots. Once again, profit is a dangerous motivator for everything health care and everything that's a Desperate Necessity.

The federal government needs to run the flu shot program as part of the Center for Disease Control. Profit is not the primary goal in the Public Sector, and that's a good thing. Imagine if the CDC had to turn a profit or be shut down. Infrastructure is more than bridges. Social infrastructure is essential for labor and capital.

Update. This just in. It's January 25, 2019. The Republicans caved and let the government open again. Democrats feel good. They feel like we won something, but we lost. This is how the Republican leadership rolls. Even if Trump is finally stopped, and the Democrats get their way on every issue up to the next election, the Republican Party will still get away with doing significant damage to the Public Sector.

This is planned chaos. Republicans do something extremely unpopular, we catch them, we stop them, and their punishment is to stop doing the unpopular thing. They keep robbing the same bank, but when we catch them, they get sentenced to probation without returning all of the money.

Republican power brokers never get busted. They blame scapegoats and fall guys. The spin is predictable. It's never the Republican Party that committed the crime, it's always a problem with some rouge individual. Bad guys that take a hit for the team and keep quiet through five years in a white-collar lockup expect to see real cash after they're released.

When the Democrats take power after a Republican crime spree, they pardon their Republican predecessors. Think of President Obama saying "let's just move forward." Corporate Democrats never prosecute Republicans after they leave office. Republicans fix an election, do damage to the Public Sector, and get thrown out of office, but justice is never sought. It has to be the corporate wing of the Democratic Party that says just move on.

Everything that Trump and the GOP did was a brutal attack on the federal government, and they're going to get away with it. They slashed taxes for the rich. The Public Sector runs on tax revenue. They stuffed the Supreme Court. A conservative court can block Congress. They can rule a law unconstitutional. We can pass Medicare for All, and the court can trash it. Judges are appointed for life. Judges who are appointed for life by a president who is later convicted of treason and imprisoned do not have to step down from the court.

This stuff is permanent damage by design. Republicans run the same evil play over and over. They pay a crook to rob the bank. They take the money and bury it in the

yard. The crook takes the heat. The crook goes to prison, and the Democrats think they won something.

"Made whole" is a legal term that means restore the victim to a state exactly like before the defendant hurt them if that's possible. Sometimes it's possible, and sometimes it's not. A thief steals your favorite horse. He gets caught. Paying you for the horse is not being made whole. Buying you another horse is not being made whole. Giving you back the same horse is.

The American people deserve to be made whole again. It's possible in this case. When Trump is convicted, the GOP should have to put back everything that they broke or stole. The tax cuts should be reversed. All the Trump judges should be removed. Every executive order or change in federal regulations should be restored to where it was before Trump stole the election. We should do the election over. We can restart the four-year cycle from here.

Corrupt politicians should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law even after they leave office. Vice presidents should not be able to pardon presidents after they succeed them.

We can restore much of the damage done by the Neoconservative coup, but some of the damage is permanent. We can't repair the lives they ruined by building concentration camps at the border. We can't reverse the killing they supported in Yemen. Some things are possible to restore, but they will take a long time.

Many people have lost their trust in the social contract. Giving people a sour opinion of government, in general, is the primary objective of Libertarian anarchists. Understanding the fallacy of throwing the baby out with the bathwater is difficult. Exploiting low information voters by spinning the fallacy is evil. Republican think tanks appeal to the dark side of human nature.

The Electoral College has to go. The last two Republican Presidents got in without winning the popular vote. Gerrymandering must be stopped. Do away with districts altogether in federal elections. Elect senators and representatives by a statewide popular vote. Elect presidents by a nationwide popular vote.

People forget that it took a constitutional amendment to elect senators. They used to be appointed. Do a constitutional amendment and do away with two senators per state. Apportion senators by population just like the house. These are old laws designed to appease slave states before the Civil War. The north won. Slavery lost. It's time to break free of concessions to slavery.

Expect Republican opposition. The Republican Party still hides behind the legacy of slavery. They're not the party of Lincoln anymore. They can't get elected without the slave state advantage. They can't win in a straight popular election. They need those two senators from states with tiny populations. They need those gerrymandered districts. Change has to happen. We can do it now, or we can do it later after suffering even more damage to our democracy. Even after two stolen presidential elections, we hear nothing from the corporate wing of the Democratic Party about fixing the Electoral College. Election reform will come from real progressives.

February 1, 2019. Nationalize the banks. Just a few years ago progressives got laughed at for saying that. All of a sudden it seems like common sense. There's a spot in the Washington Post today about the German Deutsche Bank. It's Trump's bank. They're the only bank that will do business with him. The bank is notorious for laundering money, especially Russian mob money. They allegedly set up offshore tax shelters that hide millions.

The Democrats want to see the books. The bank recently refused to do that when the Republicans controlled all three branches of government, but now that the Democrats have the House of Representatives, the bank might have to comply.

Private Sector banks are a magnet for evil. Banking is a necessity that belongs in the Public Sector. FE nationalizes consumer banking.

I was recently exposed to some interesting historical material about banking in England. I've read a lot about the history of banking and finance, but I didn't know this. England lost its empire in the two world wars. To make up for the lost revenue, the English Parliament turned a blind eye to banking fraud. They used some of their former third world colonial nations as tax havens by installing weak banking laws. Banks were chartered in tiny puppet countries, but the profits went to London.

Germany lost African colonies in the wars. We see the same pattern in Germany. Even without a loss of empire, the temptation for private banks to hide and launder money is too high. A Public Sector banking system is much easier to audit and regulate.

There's a movement in the US for individual states to create their own banks again. It's catching on. A state bank can borrow directly from the fed at low-interest rates only available to banks. Without a state bank, the states must borrow from private banks who borrow from the feds at cheaper bank rates. State banks take out the middle man. You can read about the movement at publicbanking.org.

If the Democrats get to see the books at Deutsche Bank lots of dirty money will be exposed. Even if the Republicans block it, Republican obstructionism by itself should be enough evidence to show Republican voters that it's the GOP that protects the swamp. All bankers are Republicans. A few claim to be "moderate" Democrats, but they support Republican economic policy 100%. A Wall Street hedge fund thief that proclaims to be on the liberal side of culture war wedge issues is only hiding behind a smokescreen. That's what wedge issues are for.

Let me do a little sidebar here. Here's an excellent example of why globalism is problematic. There's no fully developed global legal system. You can't do business without enforceable commercial law. Contracts have to be backed up by police power for commerce to be possible. If we globalize markets before a globalized legal structure is in place, we get chaos. If somebody owes you money, refuses to pay, and says "sue me," you can't.

Suppose Country A imposes a 15% income tax, and Country B refuses to make its banks report the names of its depositors. Country B creates a tax shelter. Suppose a business in Country A gets ripped off by a company in country B. Where can the

business in Country A sue?

Until a functional global court is in place, nations will race to the bottom on environmental and labor issues. Can China use child labor? How about slave labor? Who do you sue when a cheaper overseas manufacturer puts lead paint on toys? You have two choices. You can try to monitor individual markets for dangerous goods, or you can just refuse to trade with any nation that refuses to sign on to a functional international court. You don't trade with countries who pay workers less than the US minimum wage. Unregulated competition hurts all markets, and it's just evil.

February 4, 2019. Trump just gave a state of the union speech where he blasted Socialism. Republicans never specify what specific policies they include under Socialism. The Democrats need to learn not to run from this spin. Say that every economy is a mix of Capitalism and Socialism. Universal health coverage is Socialism, and we support that.

Throughout my life, the general Republican spin has been that needy people who get help from the government are undeserving. But, when Private Sector philanthropists give things to needy people, those people are considered to be deserving. Government help is undeserved, but charity is deserved. These are the very same needy people doing the very same things. Why are they deserving only when they have to beg for charity. We need to end the era of spinning a false divide between the worthy and the so-called unworthy recipients of social support.

Almost all of us are one paycheck away from needing the safety net. We need the safety net because Capitalism has ups and downs that don't discriminate between people of strong or weak character. We didn't choose an economy heavy with Capitalism. It was imposed on us when democracy was still very weak. When the business cycle throws us out of work, we deserve the safety net, not charity. Republicans bashing Socialism is old spin. Basic political literacy inoculates voters against cheap propaganda tricks.

Let's talk about corruption. I already said that FE won't fix inequality. It won't fix corruption either. It won't cure cancer, but that's not a reason to reject FE. That said, I have some ideas about fighting corruption in government.

A Socialist government can be just as corrupt as a Capitalist government. Corruption would look a little different, but it happens. There are more controls under Socialism, but politicians get bribed in any form of government. Corruption is an even bigger issue than Capitalism. Let's examine the psychology of corruption and find a way to block it.

No candidate can get elected in a system that runs on bribery without playing the game. We have to make bribery unprofitable. Members of Congress make a lot less money from their congressional salaries than they do from campaign contributions and other business deals that monetize special favors and insider information.

If raising regular congressional salaries to a level that can compete with outside income can prevent members of Congress from taking dark money then we would be

wise to do it. OMG, he just called for raising congressional salaries through the roof. Not exactly. My plan involves raising salaries but not without taxpayers getting a whole lot back for their investment.

How much money are we talking about? We can use a team of accountants to find out how much dark money changes hands in a year. I think we already know. Take the average and increase congressional salaries by that much in exchange for a candidate voluntarily entering into a contract for super financial transparency. In exchange for the bigger direct salary, a member of Congress must agree to have every financial transaction monitored by the feds for the length of their term.

I think we'll find that even though the givers of dark money give a lot of money to Congress, they get a lot of bang for their buck. A few thousand dollars in dark money can return millions in corporate profits. It's well worth it for taxpayers to see that bet and raise it further. Taxpayers can easily outbid even a giant multinational corporation. The things we lose by letting dark money pushers go unchecked are far more valuable than the price paid by lobbyists. If it weren't so insanely profitable, there would be no dark money offered.

Congressional salaries are super low when compared to the level of power and responsibility of the job. The average congressional salary is \$174,000. College football coaches in big schools can make \$3,000,000 to \$8,000,000. Members of Congress are the most powerful people in the world. Paying them like a high school principal is just asking for someone to try and bribe them.

Candidates who don't want to play the dark money game get blocked out by those who will. The system selects for candidates of low character. This is another example of my argument that a weak central government doesn't produce a Libertarian stateless utopia. It breeds government by organized crime.

What would a voluntary transparency contract look like? We have lots of electronic technology that can monitor someone's financial transactions. There are many ways to do it. The details can be worked out by Congress. Let me propose a rough draft.

No cash. All financial transactions must be done electronically and be visible to the feds. No gifts are allowed over one hundred dollars. All large financial transactions must be approved by a federal ethics oversight board. Member finances are subject to regular audits. Campaign contributions are forbidden. Members run publically funded election campaigns. Members are prohibited from campaign fundraising. Penalties for violations are very severe.

What does the member of Congress get for a temporary loss of privacy?

A much larger salary than the customary \$174,000, and it's all clean.

Credibility. Voters know that their congressperson can't take dark money.

Campaigns are publicly funded. Members don't have to spend hours on the phone raising funds. They owe dark money lobbyists nothing. They can vote their conscience.

Members who take the deal would never need an excuse to reject a bribe. Most dark money lobbyists would not even bother approaching them.

Members who take the deal would be immune from phony financial smears. Their

books are visible to the feds. That proves them innocent when they are. Other smears would be hard to fake too. It's hard to falsely accuse someone of having an affair or doing any other scandalous act when the defendant lives under voluntary super transparency.

Would some people find a way around the deal? The deal is voluntary. Would some people take the deal and find a way to cheat? Some would try, but the deal makes it a whole lot harder and severe penalties deter deal breaking.

Would people who take the deal get enough extra salary to compete with dark money candidates. Yes, if we do a large enough pay raise. We can also keep increasing salaries until more and more candidates and members of Congress take it.

The deal is voluntary. It involves a loss of privacy, but some jobs require a loss of privacy when it's in the best interest of the public to do so. Truck drivers don't have to volunteer to be drug tested. We drug test some occupations because those occupations are dangerous to society. There are other reasons besides drugs to suspend employee privacy in other sensitive jobs. Nothing is more dangerous than a senator on the take.

I propose a voluntary transparency contract for Congress only because it's the best way to get one implemented. If we have to wait for legislation to make it mandatory, we'll have to wait for the worst of the hardcore dark money traders to sign on. A voluntary contract would enable members of Congress who are tired of the cash game to expose the greedy by signing on to it first. Candidates who adopt voluntary transparency can use it as a dynamite campaign issue when their opponent refuses to swear off dark money. "I didn't make the rules" would no longer work as an excuse.

Once again, there are many good ways to design a transparency contract. This is just my way of showing people that it can be done. If I ran for Congress, I'd volunteer to be as transparent as possible. I'd let the feds put a chip under my skin and cameras around me 24/7 if I could. It should just be part of the job for someone with that much power.

Corruption is part of the primitive dark side of human nature. As individuals acquire more power the propensity to abuse power increases. We need strong laws to reduce the temptation to put personal gain over public duty. Here's another place where the left gets tangled up in Hobbes vs. Rousseau when they don't need to.

Untangling Hobbes and Rousseau makes a lot of things line up better for me. Having done that, I see a better and symbolic understanding of what the ancients called original sin. The left hates the idea of original sin. They use it to discredit theology. If you adopt a highly symbolic conceptual frame of original sin rather than a dogmatic and literal interpretation, it's much less threatening. It could be no more than a primitive pre-scientific gut-level understanding that man is evolving from competition to cooperation. That's not threatening. It's a long way from condemning babies that have yet to be baptized.

Our criminal justice system is upside down. Powerful people are more easily

tempted because they have more opportunities to indulge their greed. The more power, the more temptation. Laws should be tougher on the powerful than the powerless. White collar crime should be prosecuted more than blue collar crime. We do the opposite. We spend the vast majority of our law enforcement resources prosecuting kids for recreational drug use in criminal court. Bankers get slaps on the wrist in civil court.

We spend a fortune on prisons, but most of our investment is wasted. Fraudulent bankers and insider traders do a lot more damage to our economy than street-level criminals. Street criminals should be prosecuted too, but a Wall Street banking scam can crash the entire economy in one shot. White collar criminals hurt everyone at once. Blue collar criminals hurt all of us too, by upsetting the general moral environment, but the damage from white-collar scams like Enron and Bernie Madoff is global.

Prosecuting white collar cases is more efficient than filling the courts with social problems disguised as character disorders. The cost of busting one Enron scandal is nothing compared to what it costs to lock up a million recreational drug users and people who bounce checks to pay the rent. This economic argument is valid even without bringing up the higher level moral premise that a justice system that runs on upside down prosecutions is fundamentally immoral.

February 8, 2019. There's a story in the paper today. Private Sector airline mechanics are complaining about being pressured to return planes to service before they're safe to fly. This is one of my favorite examples of why some goods and services should not be provided by Private Sector for-profit companies.

I saw what Public Sector aircraft maintenance looked like in the Air Force. It was much safer than what you get with a private airline. Balancing profit with safety should be a crime. The Air Force doesn't have to do that because it's not trying to make a profit. I was naive at first when other airmen told me about maintenance problems in private airlines. I couldn't imagine implementing a safety program that was much different from what we had in the military.

No Air Force plane can take off without a massive and redundant safety check. Every possible thing that can go wrong is anticipated and inspected several times. Inspections have backup inspections. There are multiple levels of safety checks. Every critical spot on the aircraft has a numbered red flag pinned to that inspection spot. Crewmen pull those flags after inspection. Pilots walk around and personally inspect the plane before flying to see if all the flags have been removed. If they see a flag, they abort the takeoff.

Every flag can be traced to one individual who has personal responsibility for that flag/inspection point. Even a low ranking airman can keep a plane from taking off by refusing to pull a flag. If the airman assigned to that inspection point thinks there is a safety risk with that inspection point, he/she can and will refuse to pull that flag. It's their duty. Failure to stop an unsafe takeoff brings disciplinary action. If a general runs out and orders an airman to remove a flag because he needs that plane in the air, the airman can refuse without repercussions. The general would be in trouble, not the

airman.

Enter the Private Sector for-profit version of aircraft maintenance. An aircraft that's on the ground can't make money. Private Sector mechanics are under pressure to sign off on things that aren't safe. There are Air Force vets that refuse to fly on private airlines. Private airlines will not promote a mechanic who won't play along.

I'm sure the union protects private mechanics if they have one, but the union is their only line of defense. (Sounds like my union nurses example. See the pattern.) My initial skepticism about problems with private aircraft maintenance abated when DC-10 airliners started crashing.

A little disclaimer. It's safe to fly. My point is that profit and safety have an adversarial relationship. The more safety, the less profit. Safety costs money. What I write about the DC-10 is what I remember from what Air Force mechanics told me at the time. I searched the net for confirmation. I found nothing but evidence for what they told me, but I'm only using media sources, nothing official. Public safety is a necessity that belongs in the Public Sector. This is another example of the logic of FE.

DC-10s started failing in 1972. A problem with the cargo door was suspected. They grounded all the DC-10s and took them apart. Air Force scuttlebutt had it that some of the cargo doors had missing bolts. Not loose bolts, missing bolts. Half of the bolts were completely missing on some aircraft that were still flying. We were shocked. We knew it was impossible for a problem to go that far without being detected and reported without a massive cover-up. It went beyond neglect. It was criminal. Even worse than that, it was evil.

I asked the mechanics why an airline would let something like that go? If people die, they get sued. Air Force mechanics will eventually be airline mechanics. They know all about the industry. They believed that the airlines were entirely motivated by money and that airline accountants have data to prove that it costs more money to take care of an injured passenger for life than to pay a family a lump sum for killing a passenger. Now that's cold.

Ask a professor of economics. Capitalism is considered by Capitalists to be amoral. Not immoral, amoral. Amoral is part of the definition of Capitalism. (Amoral means Capitalism has nothing to do with morality at all. It's not morally negative or positive. Economists believe that morality is not even an issue with Capitalism. Capitalists just make money. Let nature and natural selection sort out morality. Do you recognize Social Darwinism here?)

Enter social work values. OK then. If that's what Capitalism is, and Capitalism is not going away soon, then Capitalism should at least be restricted from markets for Desperate Human Necessities.

FE logic applies to all markets, not just the airlines. In fact, the government doesn't need to own the airlines, only the safety part. Airline mechanics should be employed by the federal government just like Air Force mechanics. They need to be in a union that will protect them from being fired when they refuse to enforce passenger safety regulations. Airlines who pressure mechanics to cut corners should be prosecuted

by the feds. Repeated violators should be shut down.

One more thing. The Air Force is no great lover of Democratic Socialism. Every branch of the military is mostly populated by conservative Republicans. All that was required to achieve an excellent safety protocol was the absence of the profit motive. It's all about the incentives that are built into any economic system. Airlines don't want to crash planes. They have to cut corners because their competitors will.

Corporations have a legal obligation to their shareholders to do "amoral" things to maximize profits. Unrestricted Capitalism hurts everyone, especially Capitalists who can compete on a fair and level playing field.

Imagine this: You're the most talented basketball player who ever reached the NBA. When you get there, you find that the NBA has a no blood no foul rule. The more talented players in the league would oppose that rule and call for a fair game. Weak players would benefit from no blood no foul. Cheating hurts the excellent more than the mediocre. Political conservatives that call for unregulated wild west Capitalism are representing the mediocre.

Capitalists who can compete without cheating and consumers who get cheated should come together politically, and FE is a logical place to start. Companies that make the best widgets shouldn't have to pay bribes to sell them, and consumers should be able to get the best widgets without having the cost of bribes passed on to them through higher prices.

Update: March 12, 2019. Don't sue me. I'm just quoting Rachel Maddow. After a decade or so of no American being killed in a Private Sector airline crash, planes are falling again. Compare the safety records. Obama and the Democrats had a problem with batteries causing fires on planes. The Democrats grounded all of those planes. The batteries got fixed even though commercial planes don't make money when they're not flying. Now it looks like we have a problem with the autopilot on 737s. The whole world is grounding them but not us. Trump and the Republicans are letting them fly. Pilots have a confidential place where they can report problems without being fired. Pilots have been reporting that this autopilot tries to crash planes and it has to be turned off.

That's not all. Trump has yet to appoint someone to run the FAA. He tried to give the job to his own private pilot but that got blocked. Now we hear that the FAA, Boeing, and Trump have been on the phone negotiating a fix for the autopilot software. They expect it soon, but it was delayed for a month during the government shutdown. A government that's too weak to stand up to unregulated Capitalism can kill you.

Not done yet. During Obama's Democratic administration, he ordered the Secretary of Transportation to override the FAA and the Private Sector airlines. He ordered the planes grounded. The Secretary of Transportation can keep the planes on the ground until they're fixed. Our current Republican Secretary of Transportation won't do that. She's Elaine Chao, the wife of Mitch McConnell, the ranking Republican in the Senate. She's also the daughter of a Chinese shipping billionaire and she looks half McConnell's age. Make your own conclusions. Private Sector profits take a huge hit

when all those planes go in the shop at the same time. That's more money than the Private airlines will have to pay to the families of the people they just killed. Welcome to Capitalism.

Update: March 15, 2019. Passengers refused to board 737s. Other nations don't want them landing at their airports. Trump and the Republicans caved. They grounded the 737s. Republicans sound like it was their idea all along, and passenger safety comes first for them. I get that strange feeling again that life is a computer simulation designed to teach us to be good to each other. Boot-camp for angels. You can learn this stuff from books. You don't have to learn it the hard way by sticking your hand in the fire. Lots of people have already done that and they warned us in writing. That's a big advantage with humans. We can even imagine bad results with thought experiments. We have grandparents who already tried lots of things that didn't turn out well. Listen to your ancestors. That's what they're for. Don't mix bleach with ammonia. Don't use Capitalism to administer the provision of Desperate Human Necessities like transportation safety. Hoover tried that at the start of the Great Depression. It was a disaster. There are lots of books that warn us against it but Republicans are still trying to repeat the same mistake. Grandpa told me that. Thanks Grandpa. Ever wonder why humans live longer than their reproductive years? That's why.

I need to talk about Trump again. I hate it when he gets into my book, but he's the best argument for Democratic Socialism. I'm tired of Trump getting framed as a charismatic figure. He's a stooge. I want to debunk the myth that tyrants rise up from the grassroots. In fact, even proletarian revolutions fail without help from some faction at the top.

Movements can start grass-roots, but they get picked up and co-opted by political machines at the upper levels of power. Power players that pick them up are usually right wing. When a left-wing movement is picked up and supported by power, it's generally because one faction of the power elite wants to use working class support to defeat an even more right-wing rival faction.

Hitler was a nobody until he was picked up by wealthy German industrialists who were afraid of surging Socialist and Communist movements between the wars. Hitler was only a puppet, just like Trump is now.

The German monarchy abdicated after WWI and the German people had no experience with Democracy. Political murder went unpunished. Dozens of super polarized political parties emerged on the left and the right. Germany almost went over to the communists.

A left-wing revolution was a real possibility in post-war Germany. Membership in the German Communist Party exploded, and political literacy was in short supply.

(Communism is the extreme left. Communism is Socialism without democracy. Fascism is the extreme right. Fascism is Capitalism without democracy.)

German industrialists used Fascism to fight Communism. They were desperate. Hitler could spin a passionate speech, so they hired him and told him what to say and do.

There was no Hitler the man, only a man reading propaganda speeches written by the industrial Fascists who funded him. Republicans use actors too. Reagan was a classic.

There is no Trump the man, just a man who Republican bankers and Wall Street industrialists hired to give passionate speeches written by Libertarian anarchists. Their pitches are false populism designed to divide the American working class with wedge issues like race, gender, religion, etc.

Trump didn't rise up from a grassroots movement. He was selected by Libertarian Republicans to block a progressive wave that has the Republican Party on the ropes. Republicans know that inequality is out of control and revolution is possible. When they go full on Neo-Fascist like this, you know they're just as desperate as German industrialists after WWI. The Wall Street class is taking the gloves off, but this ain't Germany in the 1930s. This is America. Watch what we do to Fascism.

The progressive wave is strong. At this point in history, it may be possible for a democratic movement to start grassroots and make it all the way to power without taking any help from the 1%. Bernie Sanders did it two years ago. He was blocked by powerful corporate Democrats, but he funded himself without dark money. Corporate Democrats tilted the primary election. Without that fix, Bernie Sanders would have been elected president instead of Trump.

The next presidential election will be decided in the Democratic primary. We just elected a wave of progressives, and they're pressuring the Democratic Party leadership to dump the dark money corporate wing. This is going to happen, and soon. Successful progressive small donor fundraising is proof that you don't need corporate money to win an election. Progressives can win with or without the corporate wing of the Democratic Party, and they don't have to run a third party candidate to do it.

Progressives are on guard for stealth Republican candidates. Dark money is flowing to candidates who run as a progressive Democrats but intend to sell out after reaching office. I saw one candidate today. He calls himself a progressive. The pundit asked him if he's for universal health care like Medicare for all. He says yes, but he "still sees a place for private insurance in the health care system." Smoked him out.

The big test is dark money. Progressives reject any candidate who takes corporate money. FYI: Obama and Clinton both accepted lots of campaign money from Wall Street bankers and slid to the right after being elected. We don't need to compromise with so-called moderate Republican voters. The voting majority is to the left of center now. Every individual policy position of the progressive wing is supported by public opinion. We don't have to water any of those positions down to win anymore.

The Republican Party calls our progressive movement left-wing extremism. The trick is to make them say what specific issues Republicans consider extreme. The only reason that universal health care seems extreme to the GOP is that the Republican Party has moved so far to the right that anything short of Fascism rubs them the wrong way. The only thing extreme today is the Republican Party.

We can beat back this right-wing surge and declare victory, but we will still lose.

We can stop the bleeding, but that's not enough to heal the wound. The primary objective of the right is not just to win on any of these extreme and ridiculous policy fights. Their primary goal is always to push back on democracy and lower working class expectations.

The rich are afraid of democracy because inequality has never been this extreme. There is political pressure to tax wealth and not just income. Affluent investors see themselves on the dry side of a dam that's about to burst. Adding more concrete to the dam only increases the pressure, but they see no other alternative. Their fear blinds them to better strategies that involve compromise. They double down.

Oppressive regimes get desperate. Once they discover that public opinion is lost, they panic and implement waves of demoralizing atrocities designed to beat down optimistic expectations. There are periodic waves of demoralization throughout history. It works. Workers become demoralized and lose the confidence necessary to advance democracy.

Trump's extreme behavior is designed to scare people, not to actually achieve any of his radical policy changes. Working people react by thinking, "can they really do that?" They can't, but Neo-Fascists want us to believe that the 1% will do desperate things if they have to, even if they have to break the law in plain sight. They want workers to feel that the law will not protect them. The oligarchs pay subordinates to do the actual dirty deeds. They stand clear just like mob bosses. Once again: You don't get a stateless utopia with a weak central government. You get rule by organized crime.

Political energy and economic resources that Democrats have to spend fighting crazy right-wing policy attacks are precious resources that could be used to advance real reform. The Republican strategy is to keep progress on the defensive. Progressive leaders need to call attention to this strategy. Show voters how to see through it. Tell people not to be discouraged. Our Democracy is not yet complete, but it's stronger than the oligarchs want us to believe. We have the numbers. We are the 99%. All we have to do is vote and take power.

Democrats and Progressives need to stop chasing the spin. When Republicans say that government is broken, Democrats should never jump on and echo the frame. Corporate Democrats do that all the time. Republicans want to reduce public trust in our democratic institutions to suppress the vote. Democrats should say, "weakening the government has been the Republican strategy since Reagan. Government is fragile now. Our broken government needs to be fixed, not abandoned. Republicans want to fool us into throwing out the baby with the bathwater."

The most powerful nation in the history of the world is not going to run smoothly without a strong central government. There is a Private Sector and a Public Sector. One of those sectors is going to administer a strong federal government. There is no third sector, and the adversarial relationship between labor and capital ensures that compromises are not always possible.

FE makes compromises easier. FE is a preemptive compromise that keeps Private Power and Public Power apart in disputes over Desperate Necessities. That's what

distinguishes it from so-called public/private partnerships. FE protects Desperate Necessities from brute force political battles. Fight over other things.

FE will be a standard policy in the future, but even after FE becomes popular, the right will backslide. FE can and will be blocked when the right has too much power. Elections have consequences. Some policy disputes are intractable. After all the compromises are rejected, we can have rule by the Public Sector or rule by the Private Sector, but one of those sectors is going to rule.

Social problems are always exacerbated by Capitalism. There are no honest private sector solutions for social welfare problems. Private Sector spokespersons will tell you that Capitalism is not in the business of providing social welfare services. When the Private Sector is in power, the safety net gets cut. Conservatives might go through the motions by promoting deceptive Private Sector programs, but those programs will put profit over people. Private Sector programs in social welfare are magnets for fraud and corruption.

And the blatant hypocrisy. The Private Sector admits that Capitalism is not about improving the social welfare infrastructure and then they ask for control of the health care system. They want to Privatize Social Security. They want to privatize the entire safety net, but Privatization is about more than profits.

The oligarchs don't want these markets just to make a profit on them. They want to control them so that the Public Sector can't. They want to reduce the political power of the Public Sector and the federal government as a whole.

For example, a National Health Service would be full of civil servants that are in a union. Health care is a big chunk of the US economy. Control of markets like that brings political power. Workers with safety net benefits that are independent of their employer can demand higher wages, strike, leave a job before they find another one, and even take the risk to be self-employed. Do you see the irony of the Republican Party claiming to be the party that promotes "freedom"?

March 8, 2019. Something happened today that I have to write about. This is core to understanding FE. There's a headline today: "Democratic Socialists are selling us a system that no longer works." This is the old Red Scare spin. Spin like this usually ends up by implying that a modern social safety net is a slippery slope that will turn the US into the USSR.

Let me say something about the USSR. When the wall came down, Republicans started pitching the collapse of the USSR as a failure of Socialism. 1. The USSR was about Communism, not Socialism. 2. The US fought a Cold War with the USSR. We did everything we could to break that system by force. Breaking a system by force simply proves that the loser is militarily weaker than the attacker, not morally inferior. Hitler defeated France in WWII. Was that a failure of Democracy? No.

For the record, I think that Communism is a terrible system, but being defeated by force does not prove that any system is immoral, or ineffective in providing the necessities of life for its people. The USSR should have embraced Democracy, but

failing to embrace Democracy is not the reason that the USSR collapsed. It collapsed because the US spent a lot of blood and treasure to crush it by force.

The USSR did not fail in the way that Republican spin doctors imply. The USSR and the US played a game of chicken to see which nation would be the first to collapse under the weight of an arms race. Both sides wasted loads of precious resources on military spending after WWII. The USSR ran out of money first. That proves nothing about the morality and or economic effectiveness of Socialism. In fact, it may be the opposite. Military spending competes with domestic spending. You have to cut the safety net to build bombers. Isn't that a moral race to the bottom?

Look at what happened in Russia after the USSR collapsed. Russia fell into anarchy, and the vacuum was filled by organized crime. Capitalism was supposed to take off and fix Russia. Look up the definition of Fascism. Russia is Fascist now. The extreme left has become the extreme right.

That must have been the goal of the Republican Party all along. We were told as children that the USSR intended to export Communism to the entire world and that the US was NOT about the global expansion of Capitalism American style. Look what we did after the USSR fell. We expanded American power over the entire planet by any means necessary.

If a democratically elected Socialist government took power in South America or Southeast Asia, we invaded or supported a coup by a right-wing dictator. To imply that the collapse of the USSR was due to a moral flaw in the philosophy of Socialism is not just false, it's evil.

We have got to debunk the anti-Socialism spin for good. Did you know that Republican think tanks that design slick propaganda tricks like the Red Scare are tax-exempt under the excuse that they do public service? We involuntarily subsidize people who throw sand in our faces by paying taxes when they don't.

The Red Scare deception is older than I am. My teachers exposed it and inoculated us to it even at the grade school level. It's 2019 and voters still fall for spins like that. I was 13 in 1968. Nixon put bumper stickers on cars with spins like this: "I Fight Poverty I Work." That's the old welfare queen spin. It implied that an unemployed person was just too lazy to work. Unemployment benefits were welfare, and welfare was Socialism. I saw through it. It's not hard.

1. Unemployment insurance is insurance, not welfare. Premiums are paid into a risk pool. 2. Hard working people lose their jobs when the business cycle goes into a downturn. It's not related to personal character. It's not about being lazy. The system moves individuals. Individuals do not move the system. The system is stronger than any one individual. Social workers call spins like the welfare queen Blaming the Victim.

I saw through Republican spin at 13 by applying Sunday school Christian values from my Methodist church. I was the only member of my family to attend church. My mother sent me. She dropped me off and picked me up. My father fell for "I fight Poverty I Work." He fell for it because he's a lifelong Republican.

The human brain imprints a political ideology in adolescence and locks it in hard

for life. At 13, my brain was still flexible. The sheer audacity of that brutal Republican spin made me a lifelong Democrat,

but I will change my vote if the Democratic Party keeps failing my periodic moral audits. Third party voting throws your vote away. I vote Democratic in general elections, but my heart is to the left of the DNC. I vote Progressive in the primary. The Democratic Party leadership is on probation with me now over the corporate wing of the party.

It's hard for the human brain to be objective, but when you know that, you can force it to face reality with the assertion that self-delusion can hurt you. Propaganda tricks like "I fight Poverty I Work" fail when voters develop insight and self-examination skills.

As people acquire these skills, labels like Capitalism and Socialism are recognized for what they really are, general rules of thumb for getting us into the ballpark when debating specific issues. But that's all they are. Think general vs. specific. Capitalism and Socialism only get us into the ballpark. Specific policy proposals can be framed and spun to the left or right by splitting hairs and reframing those proposals around different and conflicting values that are loaded with emotion.

Political rules of thumb are necessary but dangerous. Imprinting a rigid political ideology is actually functional to the human brain. Republicans know that, and they take advantage of it. We can't spend every minute of every day making political decisions from scratch. A logically consistent political ideology is an efficient tool for processing difficult political decisions in a Democracy.

Hiding behind a closed mind is lazy thinking, but it saves energy. We have jobs. We can't spend all day researching policy proposals. We rely on trusted party politicians to advise us when voting. We guard our trust very carefully. Professional advice is dangerous but necessary. We have to trust our stockbrokers to tell us what to invest in, but some stockbrokers sell us out for personal gain, and so do some politicians.

Workers can control policy in a Democracy, but we can't all major in political science, history, law, social policy, economics, political psychology, sociology, etc. We're vulnerable to propaganda, and spin doctors take advantage of that. Even college students can graduate without taking classes that cover these subjects. Business majors really miss this stuff.

When I hear the Red Scare spin, it makes me cry out for mandatory political literacy training in high school. They didn't teach it at my high school. They were so conservative that you had to pass a constitution test to graduate. You had to answer all of the questions "correctly." They warned us about test questions like this: True or False, "The objective of the USSR is to take over the entire world and spread the Communist Revolution to every corner of the globe." I had to lie and tell them what they wanted to hear.

Civics class was about how a bill gets passed in Congress, not about policy differences between the political Left and Right. History teachers were not allowed to go there. Teachers apologized for administrators who warned them not to answer questions about the differences between a Democrat and a Republican.

I was lucky. My friend's dad was a union mailman and a politically active Democrat. I asked him to teach me the left and right. He explained it clearly and fairly. I didn't accept his ideology on the spot. I read history to test it, and he was right. Republicans vote for corporate money and Democrats vote for labor, at least through the 70s. Democrats fought for working people over Wall Street from the Great Depression until 1980.

Democrats voted labor until Reagan scared the Democratic Leadership into center-right exile. Since then the Democrats have been split between Progressives and Corporate Democrats who compromise with Wall Street. You can tell them apart because Progressives don't take money from Wall Street. Obama did. Bill and Hillary Clinton did.

My short free book on basic political literacy has 100,000 hits. I put a free PDF copy online, and lots of lovely people passed the link around. Firewall Economics-Political Literacy for Democrats is online at firewalleconomics.com. The DNC should take the time to teach people the political history of the Democratic Party.

Voters need to know left from right. Every Republican spin depends on confusing the left and right. The same advertising people that sold us cigarettes branded Jesus as a right-wing Republican, the exact opposite of what Jesus taught. (Mercy over blind justice. Compassion over aggression. Cooperation over competition)

Republican spin doctors know that the human brain likes an ideological automatic pilot. Once their data miners identify a voter as Christian, Republican advertisers just spin the idea that cutting aid to the blind is the Christian thing to do. They wager that the Christian voter will avoid the philosophical labor required to test the spin. It's emotionally hard to do a moral audit on a pitch coming from your own ideological group.

Religion and political ideology are at the core of the human ego. With politics and religion, we have a moral duty to do the mental labor required to weed out false prophets, but it's an uncomfortable kind of hard work. Propaganda designers know that, and they will risk it all on the probability that blind obedience is enough to seduce us into lazy thinking.

Moral auditing gets easier with practice. Start with what is proposed and test it for consistency. Look for hypocrisy. What values does the proposal reason from? Do those values conflict? For example, locking refugee children in concentration camps. Republicans appeal to Fundamentalist Christians. Would Jesus do that? No. Something is wrong.

OK, Suppose you're not a Christian. Republicans appeal to "family values." Would a Republican who is not a Christian put children in concentration camps? Eisenhower would not have done that. Not even Nixon. Reagan probably not. The Bush family probably not. No Republican before Trump would have done that. Something is wrong. Now you have a problem called Cognitive Dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is the source of that uneasy feeling in your gut when two of the core ideas that are central to your moral ego conflict with each other. The idea that

Republicans like you are good people can't live next to the idea that Republicans think it's fine to put babies in prisons. One of those ideas has to go, OR, you have to find a new idea that helps you believe that those two conflicting ideas CAN live together. That's called rationalization, and that's what the human brain is hardwired to do. Psychologists that work for Republican spin doctors know this stuff, and they sell it to the dark side.

The human brain likes to conserve energy. We have brain scan research to prove that the brain is hardwired to BS us with weak excuses before doing the rational labor required to sort out conflicting information about our core beliefs. It's worse than that. Once the brain finds even a weak rationalization for a conflict of moral ideas, it squirts out a little chemical reward buzz. It's a frigging positive reinforcer for BS creativity skills.

The brain loves to avoid mental labor, but there is good news too. Now that you know how your primitive lazy brain works, you can control it. Turn off your gut/autopilot temporarily. Sort out the contradictions rationally and consciously. Do it on paper if you have to.

Write down conflicting ideas and argue one side at a time. I'm a Republican but Republicans jail babies. Do they? Maybe Trump is the only Republican that would do that. OK. Is Trump is a rouge Republican? But the Republican party protects Trump. Wait. Who is the Republican party? I don't know one Republican who would jail kids. Is it just the Republican leadership then? Maybe we just need new leaders so we can act like Eisenhower Republicans. Does the Republican leadership really want to protect Trump? Could it be that Trump is all mobbed up, and they are afraid of him?

You keep sorting....I'm worried that the Republican Party is going further right over time. If that's true, specifically, how does that rub me the wrong way? If the Republican Party doesn't represent my values, I have nowhere else to go. Third party votes are wasted.

This is the way to fend off propaganda. You don't have to resolve everything completely. Living with ambiguity is OK. Exercising reason is an ongoing process that makes you immune from BS. Sort it out consciously and rationally. Don't follow your gut. All political propaganda targets the gut.

Make candidates stick to individual issues instead of pitching generalizations like Freedom, Patriotism, The Work Ethic, National Defense, etc. The left has them too. Climate change. Social Justice, Inequality. General images target the gut. Demand specific proposals on specific issues. Make candidates say "I propose a one time 10% wealth tax on billionaires to fund free college. "I'm against inequality" is not enough and it's slick.

Learn to live with uncertainty and ambiguity. We all have conflicting ideas. We don't have to understand everything about everything all the time. Avoid single issue candidates. Single issue candidates use wedge issues to divide and conquer. Suppose you hate plastic bags. Don't vote for a candidate just because they want to ban plastic bags. But do vote for a candidate who disagrees with you on plastic bags if he or she refuses to

take dark money. See the big picture. Play the long game.

Do I blame my Republican parents for drinking the Republican Cool-Aid? No. Advertisers sell political parties just like they sell cigarettes. Hedonism, status symbols, pride, and individualism are easy to sell. Advertisers use the best science that money can buy.

I got excited about the cool science in my social psychology classes, but I never saw anyone become a social psychologist. I think

I know what happened. People took an undergraduate degree in psychology and went into advertising. (You need a PhD. to be a real psychologist) All of the propaganda tricks come from social psychology.

Advertisers pound us with ads that are carefully crafted to poke our most primitive emotional drives. New science gets snapped up by the dark side first. Nuclear science went into bomb-making before cancer treatments. Social psychology sells political propaganda before helping people to live together in peace. The latter will be the future of social psychology.

In summary, after we achieve widespread political literacy, FE will not be controversial. FE will be taken for granted by the left and the right. This may not happen in my lifetime, but it will happen. All good progressive ideas start out to the left of popular opinion, but they always get implemented by the major political parties later on. Progressives in the 30s knew that Social Security and the eight hour day were not radical proposals. They planted the seeds.

Progressives try to anticipate the future and prepare the way forward. Progress is happening, but we are still way behind the rest of the developed world on social issues. The Reagan Revolution is over. Let's move on. Social workers have been waiting forty years to say it: "We told you so, but you didn't listen. Reagan has been proven wrong beyond the shadow of a doubt. It doesn't trickle down. Please trust us in the future."

3-11-2019. This is a bad day. Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House, a lead Democrat, the third in line to the Presidency, just said she opposes the impeachment of Donald Trump. The Democratic leadership is caving again. The power of the Private Sector over the Public Sector has reached critical mass.

It reminds me of Obama, another Corporate Democrat who had all the cards and gave half of them away before negotiations even started. When Obama got in, the Democrats had control of all three branches of government. The Democrats went for health care reform. Obama began negotiating by declaring that a public option was off the table. Just like Pelosi, he didn't have "Republican cooperation," so he folded. We don't want these people to fold. We want them to fight at least half as hard as Republicans do.

Why would Pelosi fold like that? Because she's a Corporate Democrat. Two-thirds of her campaign money comes from wealthy individuals and corporate political action committees. We've been sitting here for over two years screaming for justice. Every day we hear about another Trump felony that should be an open and shut case. The Mueller

report drags on and on.

Could the mob have something going on with the Democrats too? Could the corporate Democrats be afraid of the organized crime? Pelosi didn't dodge this one. She came right out and declared that she was against impeachment.

We know that Trump is mobbed up. We understand that the Republican party is mobbed up. We know that Wall Street is mobbed up. We know that there is a high probability that the mob has assassinated Democratic political figures in the past. I'm not paranoid. I lived through Abraham, Martin, and John. We know that Russians individuals who could have testified against Trump have recently disappeared.

All of her reasons for coming out against impeachment are weak. 1. We need to wait until we get enough evidence? What have we been looking at for two solid years? 2. We need bipartisan support? If Trump shot someone dead in the street, the GOP would still refuse to vote for impeachment. Those are his words.

I'm tired of Corporate Democrats using the bipartisan support excuse to keep from acting like real Democrats. I wonder if Obama even wanted Republican cooperation. Maybe he used the lack of it as an excuse to take a dive on public option health-care in exchange for Wall Street PAC money. Wall Street was Obama's number one donor, and Pelosi seems to be doing the same thing. People demand justice. We want a trial, even if we lose. Make Republican legislators vote on this traitor. Make them vote on the record. Let history record the vote.

Now here's the side door excuse that Corporate Democrats want us to believe about Pelosi's move. We don't have enough time. The next election is too close. Even if we succeed in impeaching Trump, we would just have Pence. Pence is harder to defeat than Trump. Pence would pardon Trump to protect him from being punished for his federal crimes. Trump will be hauled into court on state level charges anyway. Pence can't pardon Trump to save him from state-level convictions.

I beg to differ. Democrats accuse Republicans of putting party before country. That's what the Pelosi strategy does. We don't need a Machiavellian chess move, we need justice. There is a time for mercy and a time for justice. This is a time for justice. We need to deter future Trumps from going rogue. Public duty comes before campaign calculations. The best way to win an election is to establish a reputation for doing the right thing, no matter what.

The good news is that Pelosi just conceded a powerful wild card to the Progressive Democrats in the primary. All they have to do is confront Corporate Democrats on this issue. Make them go on the record and say if they are for impeachment or not. That would weed Corporate Democrats from the crowded primary race and block a cheap Republican trick that I see coming: Running a candidate in the Republican primary that criticizes the Democrats for going weak on impeachment.

Republican spin doctors outflanked Hillary on the left, and they can do it again. Most voters can't identify political policy positions that are historically associated with the left vs. right. They can't see contradictions. Trump can talk labor to labor and capital to Wall Street, and only Wall Street can see the contradiction.

Betting on political illiteracy is standard operating procedure for Fascists. Every time the Democratic leadership takes the Democratic left for granted, they expose low information Democratic voters to the Fascist strategy. It's not even necessary because there are more Democrats than Republicans. A united Democratic Party can win without one Republican vote.

Corporate Democrats probably know that. Corporate donors probably prevent them from reaching out to Progressives. Corporate Democrats rationalize the guilt by telling themselves that they are pragmatic heroes that "get things done." I'll bet you a night on the town that more than a little anxiety breaks through that defense mechanism. Attention Corporate Democrats: You don't have to take corporate money anymore. Progressives are raising just as much with lots of small donors. Get Progressive.

April 1, 2019. I haven't written for a week or so because I'm too angry. I don't want to erupt into a hard rant. The Mueller investigation just released a written report. Trump's hand-picked head of the Justice Department won't release it, not even to Congress. This constitutional crisis is brought to you by the Republican Party again. Another Watergate burger. You want treason with that?

When I found out about the stonewalling, I tore into my blog. I had the good sense to take it down but I'm still angry, and I want to put it here. Maybe I'll cut it out later. Here it is. Hang on.

Unelected rulers in the US keep a lid on Democratic progress with a strategy that looks a lot like the way that humans domesticated wolves. Dogs evolved from individually selected wolves that primitive man gradually tamed. The reason that dogs don't get aggressive and attack their owners is that we stunt their behavioral and emotional maturity. Pets are kept in a constant state of pet adolescence. They're never allowed to learn how to survive without their owners.

Human knowledge has progressed way beyond what most people are allowed to learn. Only a fraction of us attend college, and even then, access to information is partially restricted to harmless information that isn't a threat to the ruling class. Major in a subject that wealthy Capitalists are afraid of and your career prospects are limited.

Poor white males in southern states are discouraged from learning that voting Republican is clearly against their economic self-interest. Political literacy is discouraged in many ways. You can take all the business classes you want, but you won't hear anything about the adversarial relationship between labor and capital.

You can take economics without learning that tribalism and competition were functional for hunter-gatherers, but are now highly dysfunctional for modern humans. Any serious discussion resembling the subject of morality is discouraged as unscientific. Altruism gets reduced to individual self-interest. That's just what a Capitalist would encourage you to believe. They dodge moral criticism by claiming that morality doesn't exist. It does.

Remember this point. This is a big one. The reason that Americans are not allowed to enjoy universal health-care is not that it's too expensive. A dog that doesn't need its

owner can run away, and it can bite. Keeping the masses in a perpetual state of limited cognitive and emotional development keeps them tame.

Dogs are never taught how to feed themselves or how to stay calm when stressed. They are totally dependent on humans. The primitive instincts of working dogs are manipulated by humans to motivate dogs to work. Guard dogs guard. Hunting dogs hunt. Herding dogs herd. We train them to do what we want by provoking primitive aggressive instincts and rewarding target behaviors. We maintain their obedience by keeping them dependent on us. Sound familiar? You can't quit a job that controls your health-care and pension benefits.

Be careful with this argument. My argument is not the same as the argument of an anarchist/survivalist who bases everything on the premise that civilization/government is the cause of all evil.

We can have a division of labor without enslaving each other. We can have a government without corruption and oppression. We can have specialization without Rankism. We can have prosperity without obscene levels of inequality. But civilization and government and the division of labor can be used to exploit people who are diverted from gaining access to the knowledge required to function as modern citizens. Emotional and intellectual maturity is actually discouraged by right-wing spin doctors. Glorifying competition prevents low information voters from recognizing old methods of exploitation.

Anarchists throw out the baby with the bathwater, but they light up the target for social reform. When citizens of a modern Democracy learn to recognize lame psychological strategies that right-wing think tanks implement to restrain Democracy, citizens will become immune to those strategies. Republicans and Neo-Fascists promote fearful primitive social behavior in a desperate attempt to postpone real Democracy when real Democracy is overdue. But knowledge is power, and information will soon be free.

I know my rant is angry. The idea that the wealthiest 1% of the population could possibly hold back democracy against the will of the other 99% seems absurd. It's not. Middle-class voters don't vote with the left. The fundamental strategy for Progressives is to get middle-class voters to understand that they're not part of the 1%.

Sometimes they vote with the 1% because they think the Republican ideology can help them to become wealthy. To people who think that way, I always say, "Being a Republican will not make you rich, but being rich will always make you a Republican." That's my favorite line. I wrote that in 1980.

The Capitalist ideology doesn't help you make a billion dollars. The Capitalist ideology is a rationalization for having a billion dollars. Being born rich and or enriching yourself by cutting corners and stepping on the victims of your greed makes one feel guilty. Kings rationalized their power by trying to believe it was God's will. Survival of the fittest is the rationalization of wealthy capitalists. Social Darwinism.

I try to stay away from the hard rant because FE really is a centrist strategy. I don't want to drive people away. I'm not an extremist. Social Stratification needs to fade away,

but it's not going to happen soon. FE only calls for incremental reform, not abrupt revolution. I know the danger of advocating incremental change. It encourages conservatives to commit the naturalistic fallacy of justifying extreme social stratification with the assertion that it's "natural" for our species. Stratification is natural, but so is murder. "Nature is what we are put on this earth to rise above, Mr. Allnut."

The assertion that the 1% can hold back the 99% in 2019 is not only false, it's also on the wrong side of history. It's happening now, but it's a temporary throwback. Middle-class Americans simply must speed up reform by voting for the economic interests of the 99% instead of the rich. Even people who earn \$300,000 a year are not in the 1%. The only people that genuinely benefit from Republican economics are billionaires. A billion is a thousand million. 10 individuals control half of the wealth in the US.

As inequality rises, more and more middle-class voters should be abandoning the Republican Party. Marx thought that economic inequality could not become as severe as it is now without provoking massive solidarity on the left. He could not anticipate the power of modern propaganda. Marx thought that political literacy developed naturally in a vacuum.

The good news is that social media evades mainstream media censorship. Social media makes political literacy free and easy. When middle-class voters realize that the GOP threw them under the bus, the modern Republican Party will lose power. They'll have to move to the center or lose every election. When Republicans double down on the extreme right, they give more power to the Progressive left, and the Democratic Socialists.

There is an adversarial relationship between labor and capital, but there is also an adversarial/inverse relationship between Democracy and Inequality. As Inequality increases Democracy decreases. What we are really fighting over is not so much Capitalism vs. Socialism. What we are fighting over is more Democracy vs. less Democracy.

When voters realize that extreme Inequality is the enemy of their own individual democratic freedom, they will attack Inequality. Inequality should be their most pressing political issue.

Extreme economic Inequality hurts all of us. Even wealthy families need Democracy. What good is money if you have to live in a Fascist state? Extreme economic Inequality is incompatible with Democracy. It always slips into totalitarianism from the right.

The Republican Party has a long history of framing and spinning demands for Democracy as calls for Socialism, Communism, etc. Throughout history, every leftist demand can be reduced to a simple plea for Democracy. When people demanded the vote, that was about Democracy, not Socialism. When people came out against monarchy, that was about Democracy too. When people want access to medical care, they're not trying to overthrow Capitalism. They just want to see a doctor without going bankrupt.

The Republican strategy for deflecting Democratic demands is classic. Take an

appeal for Democracy, label it something else, debunk the something else, and defeat it. Social Security was about Democracy, but Republican spin doctors labeled it Socialism, confused Socialism with Communism (Communism has no Democracy), and fooled a lot of voters into believing that Social Security is not Democratic. Whenever the left asks for something Democratic, check the Republican spin for this trick.

Whenever I see this trick, it reminds me of a propaganda cartoon from 1948 called "Make Mine Freedom." You can see it online. It warns people about "isms" like Socialism and Communism, but it never mentions that Capitalism is an "ism" too. I would add that Democracy is also an "ism." Democracy is another word for Egalitarianism. Egalitarianism still gets a negative spin in the US while grade school teachers present it as a fundamental American value. Capitalism is not about Egalitarianism.

May 1, 2019.

I want to talk about a book. (What Money Can't Buy. The Moral Limits of Markets by Micheal Sandel. 2012.) This book comes closer to FE than any other book that I've found to date. It gives examples of goods and services that most people would instinctively find morally repugnant if someone tried to sell those goods and services for a profit.

Two things about the Sandel book. It calls for a moral test to be applied to every good and service that someone wants to sell for a profit, now or in the future.

The book proposes no specific moral test for goods and services under consideration other than an intuitive gut feeling that to sell that good or service for a profit would be immoral. There is nothing wrong with that test. I just want to add a rational procedure to it. We can be more specific. Goods and services that violate the gut check for marketability have something in common, they're Desperate Necessities.

FE is quantitative and rational. FE is more than a philosophical argument or even an argument from "soft" social science. FE is hard science. We can calculate wages against expenses for Desperate Necessities. We keep statistics about deaths by hunger, and we know what food costs. We know what people earn. We can do the math.

The other good thing about "What Money Can't Buy" is that it adds a new dimension to FE. Some things should never be for sale even if the Seller wants to sell them. Should kidneys be for sale? No. Why not? Because the Buyer probably has the Seller over a barrel. (Until now, I talked only about the Seller having the Buyer over a barrel) If you need money for a child's operation, should you be able to sell your kidney to pay for it? No. Talk about a slippery slope.

Logicians say that the slippery slope argument is a logical fallacy, but we can choose to live in a world without slippery slopes like this. Think of the unintended consequences. A drug addict could sell a kidney for a fix.

The Sandel book is full of things that are for sale that shouldn't be. Let me mention some of them and propose some examples of my own. Sandel is a must read,

and I highly recommend the book. Basic human dignity should also be considered a Desperate Necessity. There are minimum limits to both the Quantity and Quality of life that every human being deserves. It is the responsibility of a civilized society to ensure that minimum Quantitative and Qualitative needs are met.

Should human organs be for sale for transplant? No, but it happens. Somewhere right now a rich man is buying a kidney from a desperate, impoverished mother of three. Why is that immoral? Because the Seller is over a barrel. The Seller can't obtain a Desperate Necessity without selling the organ. Again, this is the flip side of my original argument, where the Buyer is over a barrel.

Should a married couple who can't have children be able to pay the "medical expenses" of a pregnant teenager in exchange for the baby? I say no, but it's legal and it happens all the time.

Should a wealthy nation be able to buy carbon credits on the "free" market and pollute the air? No, but a system of carbon credits is a popular proposal.

Should an unrelated person be able to buy the life insurance policy of an elderly person and wager that the elderly person will die soon enough to make a profit for the investor? No, but it happens all the time. Walmart takes out life insurance on its employees. Walmart gets paid if the employee dies, not the family of the employee.

The insurance example stumps me. Something has changed in the law. What happened to the insurable interest requirement? I was taught that the beneficiary of a life insurance policy could not collect if they had nothing to lose personally by the death of the insured.

If life insurance policies are being traded like stocks and derivatives, then the definition of what is or is not an insurable interest has been distorted to the extent that it turns human life into a commodity. The textbook example of not having an insurable interest is that you can't take out a life insurance policy on your next door neighbor and expect to collect.

Are investors gambling with lives like soybean futures? Are they doing puts and calls on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange? God forgive us. Let's just bundle all those life insurance policies together, get a Private Rating Agency to rate them AAA, and inflate another BS bubble on Wall Street.

The Republicans can time the collapse to coincide with a Democratic administration, and the Democrats will have to pass another bailout. The Democrats will put the fire out like they always do and the Republicans can criticize them for using up all the water again. "Tax and spend Democrats" running up the deficit. I digress.

Should drug-addicted mothers on welfare with several children be paid to be "voluntarily" sterilized? No, but many conservatives would disagree with my conclusion. The mother is over a barrel. She is under duress.

Let me go way down the slippery slope. If everything is for sale under Capitalism and prostitution is legal, then should a woman be forced into prostitution to pay a debt that she can't afford to pay before being relieved of her debts in a bankruptcy case?

Pay attention to that feeling in your gut. This example is emotionally loaded, but

the basic structure of the moral argument applies to many other things that rely on the same moral reasoning. Human dignity is a Desperate Necessity. You can't make someone sell it when they're over a barrel. Buyers can be over a barrel, and Sellers can be over a barrel too.

The primary purpose of civilization is to disconnect Desperate Necessities from microeconomics. The division of labor is impossible without that. Civilization is like insurance, but it's administered through the Public Sector where profit is forbidden.

The author of "What Money Can't Buy" makes a point that I want to add here. Classical economists can't distinguish a Willingness to pay from an Ability to pay. Traditional economic models break down when you introduce the concept of the Ability to pay.

Another major point: All classical models assume equal quality and quantity of Information about what is being bought or sold between buyers and sellers.

If you introduce the concept of Unequal Information, the invisible hand of Adam Smith becomes visible. Unregulated markets don't produce a natural equilibrium of balanced self-interest. Even Alan Greenspan admitted that when he was being grilled by Congress about the bundled mortgage scam that caused the Great Recession.

When a car salesperson knows that the transmission is junk, and the buyer doesn't, the buyer loses, and the ripoff doesn't get made up somewhere else. Ripoffs are not about the survival of the fittest. Weak laws that allow consumer exploitation facilitate the upward mobility of sociopaths at the expense of honest people.

By the way: GDP, Gross Domestic Product, is not a good measure of the economic health and productivity of the US. Every time a car salesperson rips off a buyer, the GDP goes up. Every time a patient gets diagnosed with cancer, the GDP goes up by \$500,000. As long as American Capitalism lets investors profit from immoral acts, the GDP will score that too.

"What Money Can't Buy" is the closest argument to FE that I've found to date, but its appeal to an intuitive gut level analysis of what goods and services need to be restricted from Private Sector exploitation can be improved. Every market needs to be evaluated individually, but FE is a rational shortcut. The same formula that exposes market transactions that have the buyer over a barrel can be used to identify market transactions that have the seller over a barrel. The FE test is simple.

1. What good or service are we evaluating?
2. Can a consumer refuse to buy the good or service at an exorbitant price without going into debt?
3. If the answer is no, then it's a Desperate Necessity, and it is morally wrong to expose it to Private for Profit Markets.
4. ADD: Human Dignity is a Desperate Necessity. Can the potential seller of a good or

service refuse to sell the good or service in question without suffering a loss of Human Dignity? AND: Can the seller refuse to sell without going further into debt?

5. If the answer is no, then not selling the good or service in question is a Desperate Necessity.

The FE test is a shortcut that might not cover every questionable transaction, but it certainly dials in the logic of why we find some commercial transactions morally repugnant. Transactions involving Desperate Necessities that have the seller or buyer over a barrel are exploitative and dysfunctional to society as a whole. They are predatory and parasitic.

The field of economics needs to catch up. It's been censored for too long by powerful financial special interests that don't want consumers to understand the true nature of unregulated Capitalism. FE is just the next step in the evolution of economics. FE doesn't kill Capitalism. It just clips its jagged toenails. It adds a little rational regulation in ways that actually enhance private market competition. Wall Street has nothing to fear from FE. FE is a soft landing for Capitalism. Failure to adopt modest reforms like FE would make a hard landing harder.

There are way more than enough markets for goods and services that don't involve Desperate Necessities to satisfy corporate stockholders. Companies that make the transition before we reach the tipping point will be glad they did. Don't get caught holding Private health care stock the day after we get national health care. Ride the bubble and pick the top at your own risk. The greed of grasping at the last few dollars isn't worth the risk of jumping off too late. The wave of Privatization has passed. Desperate Necessities will be Deprivatized.

EIGHT

My dad used to say that most people get one good idea from a lifetime of daydreaming and almost all of those ideas go to waste. FE is an idea that needs to break out of obscurity. Technology can help. The first technological advance that made it possible for one individual with a good idea to do that was the printing press. The second generation of breakout technology is social media, and it's exponentially more powerful. Everyone is a publisher. Censorship is over. It costs nothing to distribute digital copies. The disadvantage is that a good idea can get obscured by the sheer volume of information.

The gatekeeper and marketing functions that traditional publishers provided is gone. That's both good and bad. Promoting an idea through social media efficiently is a skill set that I don't have. I'm 64. I need help from young people who grew up with the technology. I have a 17 year old daughter who is a programmer. My plan is to hand FE to the next generation. My daughter Mary will help me. She's in charge of outreach. We're updating firewalleconomics.com.

A little brainstorming. What can I do right now? FE is virtually unknown as a political strategy. I know of a handful of state legislators who have read about FE, and some of them have encouraged me to proceed, but this is only a beginning. I'm in the "better to light one candle than to curse the darkness" stage. I'm only beginning to think about a publicity strategy. I need a real plan.

I've been blogging about FE for a decade, but there's no way to know how much of an impact that has created because it wasn't very interactive. 100,000 hits on firewalleconomics.com were mostly directed to my political literacy book. (Firewall Economics. Political literacy for Democrats) The book is free.

Outreach for FE going forward involves promoting the idea on two levels, bottom up and top down. Bottom up strategies include making the information available through ebooks and social media. JazzDad55 is my Twitter handle. I comment on issues that FE can fix. I can find those on any particular day. It reminds me of something newspaper columnist Art Buchwald said. He said that during Nixon he was done for the day before brunch. Political newspaper columnists held a wake when Nixon quit. He gave them so much material. Trump does the same for me and my FE argument.

Top down strategies involve approaching people in power. I'm going to contact every Progressive member of Congress. I'm going to put this book in their hands. I can add their reactions to the end of the book. You can do that with ebooks. I can put this online and update it with reports of how they responded. I can put the book on amazon as I did with my novel. (The Firewall Sedition) I can order printed hard copies of anything I write and give them away. I'm retired and I can travel.

My inner circle proposes a bolder strategy, a Kickstarter appeal. Raise a bucket of money online and use the money to hire a PR firm to promote the book. That one rubs my ethical sensitivity the wrong way, but I probably need to loosen up. What would a PR campaign look like? I hate advertisers. They have blood on their hands. Would the PR campaign be bottom up or top down? Social media covers the bottom up, but I could still use expert help with internet outreach. Young people grew up with this technology. We used typewriters and carbon paper in my college classes. Thank God for word processing software and spellcheckers. We even have grammar checkers now.

I need to build an online community. My website has been up for a decade but I had to block comments and registration because it got flooded with spam. Mary is fixing that now. Before you see this we will be interactive. Log on to [firewalleconomics .com](http://firewalleconomics.com) and join the FE community.

I need You Tube videos. I'm on that too.

I can't get a Wikipedia page without help. You can't write your own. Somebody help me with that.

How do you get a Ted Talk? Do I make a sample video?

Maybe I can get an interview on Pacifica Radio and other Progressive radio stations. I want to be on with Amy Goodman and publicize the link to this book.

This book will be updated periodically as my outreach efforts evolve. It's free and easily accessible on firewalleconomics.com. A interactive discussion about the book will

be there too. I need suggestions and lots of help passing the link around. Please post it in replies to tweets and news articles. Help me get the word out about Firewall Economics.

FE is an economic model. I'm teased by the idea of arranging a computer simulation test for FE. Economists are doing that now. They run computer simulations that predict outcomes and trade-offs inherent in any economic model. They can plug FE into a simulation and compare it to something like unregulated Capitalism. Simulations in economics are cutting edge, and only a few universities do them. (The last time I looked. Things move fast.) I'm open to suggestions from the FE community on how to do this. I can write a grant if funding is a problem. Let's use the super computers to find efficient ways of feeding people instead of using them to rig the stock market.

May 31, 2019. This book sets the table for an ongoing discussion. FE is going to happen sooner or later. It's time to open it up for discussion. This is only the beginning. The blog that follows is open to everyone. Let's debate FE. Follow current events and bring them to the FE blog. We'll dissect the issues of the day and show how FE can fix them. You'll be surprised. Most of our intractable political problems can be massaged into a compromise that all sides can live with. Pass on the links. Email political figures and show them the discussion. We can and will do this.

Go to the Firewall Economics Blog on firewalleconomics.com

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