

Corralling Random Thoughts

The last time I looked at these final installments was over two years ago—until last night. This task was accompanied by an unbidden, choked kind of chortle that kept popping out; especially when I'd read the parts about being certain these were finally ready to fly, now for a certain 4th time; declarations followed by a steadfast intent to seal and send before changing my mind.

Since penning that naïve bit of certainty, I've come to understand something of a writer's fate. Given advice from those actually knowing—just let fledglings go when you feel them ready lest you forever dote them to death. Well, I can only hope mine got lost along their way to *Newsweek's* portal that spring of 2012 as they were premature—at best. Honestly, this never-ending re-read to re-edit suffrage must be akin to self-flagellation! I procrastinate checking-in on ready-to-go installments; why it's taken over two years to peak in on these final ones, because it's just damn embarrassing to know that when I do—*my lacking will glare back its obviousness*. That unbidden chortle? It captures my one consolation; I got to learn the hard way—every measly trinket. Guess if I live to be 90, that outta be time enough to dote these fledglings into perfect presentation. Ah, precious time.

For years now, I've been sleuthing my way to find what you think. Find also—my way to you and offer the only hopeful rope I know; the only one with room enough for all to grasp. And along my offering way, I've found that I must first scratch an opening in your armor; the kind of stuff I guess we all use to resist change. Installments X and XI attempt to corral some of those random resistance thoughts; thoughts about how or even *if*—we intend to address Superintelligence bearing down and the lead taking us there. As for the final installment, I figured I'd leave that one to the Gods. After all, they were the first partner on the power dance scene.

For me, it was from the thousands of techno-pages I'd read, when I began to notice that only a few of those lines actually inspired my resolve to tackle this endeavor; to actually engage. Each day, I'd ask myself what I'd need to clearly see in order to light a spark. And, it wouldn't be true to have you think my own hefty resolve lesson was the only reason I chose to error in excess. Listed on my own inadequacy register is a fickle ego that doesn't easily shoulder criticism. Had I chose to omit one or two topics or reinforcing lines which may have sparked your resolve but didn't, would have been because I let that wee coward trump me yet again. So for those who need less than what I'm offering—I envy you. But for those who need more, please keep looking. Twelve is all I'm good for but help comes 'round any corner. You just have to choose to let some passion fuel a bit of conviction and then poof! Resolve awaits its bidding.

Impunities Expand.

Newsweek ran a heart-wrenching article some time back from Wole Soyinka titled; *The Butchers of Nigeria*. "How does one convey scenes where killers perform ritual recitations before or after the meticulous throat-slitting of schoolchildren?" As I sit here, the slaughter of Pakistan innocents unfolds. But Soyinka asks what I want each of us to ask ourselves: "how many of the hundreds of cases of impunity need one cite in order to help us remember what we must stop forgetting?" The impunities we face clock in way below heinous and I'm certain we are all truly grateful but it goes for any mass: ***when confronted with a clouding of ethics—impunities expand.*** Transgressions once merely offensive, become brazen affronts until one day, the atrocity meter flares red. So where in this ageless cycle does a now worldly, freer, educated mass—finally rise to prevent what must never be forgotten?

Soyinka's question weighs on my mind. If a sparking to get us to move towards prevention requires an endless citing of impunities, then add my list to others. Today's hammering hits on some of the expanding impunities we face, rant about even, but after our fits subside, hopelessness sets in; rendering valid rants to function as little more than spark retardants.

To Cull a Big Flock.

I'll begin where I left off. Aside from our liability/headache status, other motives are behind the push to shove workers out the door. Though job-eliminating technologies barge through the doors of every type of business nowadays, unionized arenas still hold the prime, flavor-of-the-day herds to cull. And our opinion here swings right past today's fact that Baby-G gorges on any and every job totally mindless of flavor. Rather, we head straight over to bygone realities. Either we feel certain that union labor was the seed that propagated today's fiscal conundrums; why corporations had little recourse but to take our jobs overseas and/or replace us with machines, or else we swing straight over to a certainty that unions are what created a healthy middle; that income disparity would be even wider had union wages not created the medium standard we have up til' lately—enjoyed.

Newsweek covered some pros and cons about unions in their March 17th-2011 edition titled; *Do we still need unions?* Since I work in the union sector but also own a business that provides lifelines to non-union labor, I thought to throw in my two-bits.

I grew up listening to my Dad adamantly vow he'd shut the doors of his business before allowing any union to walk through them. In turn, he was as generous to his employees as his business could afford. And much like the role of a union intermediary, he cared for his employees; shared when business was up, tried to keep as many employed when business was down. In turn—his employees never went union.

By the time my teen years landed, I landed a few summer jobs in Valdez Alaska. My sister's husband worked across the bay where the fully-unionized Trans Alaskan pipeline ended. And as I ate from their table, enjoying fresh seafood and fat steaks freely offered to those workers, I'd listen to him talk about which tasks he could or could not do in accordance to union contracts. Even as a teenager, I could see such excess and stymied outputs—could not last.

When the 80's rolled in, I managed to stumble onto a union job myself where here, industries were in the midst of trimming off the superfluous that came from the unionized 70's but by the time the 90's rolled out, I just couldn't see where there was much left to trim and yet: ***industries pushed for more as though their all-out pact to break unions was irrevocable.*** It worked. *Newsweek's* union article cites "fewer than 7% of private workers are unionized—down from about 25% in the 1970's."

One of the attitudes that flourished in the unionized 70's left a vague but distasteful mark on me back when I was an unwitting kid. Though no longer flourishing—*not my job attitudes are still residual.* And there's a crippling that comes with what we should or shouldn't have to do for a paycheck. But, instead of shaping and sharpening workforces like many companies did, others sunk, with an unalterable vengeance, their teeth into replacing us with as many machines as they can get away with and if they keep it up—***culling the herd is gonna take on an utterly bleak new meaning.***

And What If?

Four months after *Newsweek's* union article, they ran another one with an asking title in; *Who needs Humans?* Author Dan Lyons tells us; "Automation is not just affecting factory workers. These evermore intelligent machines are not just assisting workers but actually kicking them out of their jobs. The recession permanently wiped out 2.5 million jobs. U.S. gross domestic product has climbed back to pre-recession levels; meaning we're producing as much as before—only with 6% fewer workers. To be sure, robotics are not the only job killer out there with outsourcing stealing more gigs than automation." So here's the upside spin: "*Companies that embrace automation might use fewer workers, but that's still better than firing everyone and moving the work overseas. It's not that robots are cheaper than humans, though often they are. It's that they are better.*"

It's now 2019. Lion's article is now eight years old and still—the hype has machine outputs mightier and cheaper than ours. Sure, that hype will reflect a grave truism more and more; *especially*

if we don't start regarding human outputs more fairly. This hype is already true with regards to simple automation. It's already true with government-funded technologies because a bottomless-pit mentality rules that camp but for standard-fare businesses, higher-thinking job-eliminating technologies are *still* at the Baby-G development stage because here, most business is conducted with the idea that their pit isn't bottomless; that they must actually come up with the bucks to pay for those exorbitant, 1st generation upfront rounds. Rounds which include never-ending exorbitant upgrade rounds. How exorbitant? Hard to say: ***the true cost of our riddance is tightly guarded.*** Reports about the actual cost of inception re-cogging and upgrades, 2nd generation hardware and upgrades or futuristic and beyond—aren't easy to find. However, the cost of the absurdly exasperating, dysfunctional actualities our newday work-buddies bring to the scene? Those aren't even whispered about. Besides—***what-if machines become superior? Is this earthly ride intended to be enjoyed only by rich elites armed with expensive machines?*** Who in this near-hell and at what level of existence do they intend to keep around in order to bear witness that they now bask in utter excess? Robots?

Coulda Shoulda.

Had unions not gotten carried away in the 70's, outsourcing our jobs might not have become an attractive alternative and job-eliminating technologies might not be pounding down our doors just yet. Had union contracts not cultivated *not my job attitudes*, industries might not be scrambling to rid themselves of headaches. Had union bosses not fallen prey to corruption, laborers coulda kept their unity; we shoulda required sensible, ethical leads towards a lasting, healthy, middle ground. As it stands, when we lost our faith in unions—we also lost our unity. ***We are now losing our middle.***

In reflecting back on my union observations and experiences, I know my dad didn't want unions through his doors because it changes the employer/employee dance. It provokes a them against us mindset that goes both ways. Today, I run my non-union business similarly to the way my Dad ran his; I care for my employees and give what I can. Ethics will always remain front and center. My employees will always know they are valued. In turn: *they run my business like it's their business.*

I believe corp/industries don't feel it's their responsibility to shoulder the weight of maintaining a healthy middle and I agree. A strong united workforce requiring basic decency and fair pay; *with or without organized unions but backed by an engaged middle requiring noble representation—are those responsible for maintaining a healthy middle.* So while we all scrap over union or anti-union mantras, we need to remember what we must stop forgetting. ***Unions evolved simply because powerdogs couldn't find basic decency on their own.*** It was only yesterday when child labor and sweat shops were as common as slaves, surfs, and indentured servants the day before. It's the same reason that just last night, wage-minimums, anti-discrimination and OSHA were ushered in. It's the same reason that at this very minute—*Wall Street never bothered to implement their own damn regulations!* Powerdogs devoid of ethics are just like greedy rats. They will always but always, gnaw away at anything they can get away with because—that's just what rats do.

How to Spot a Bad Guy.

I suppose we all rant about the operating ways of our governed/corporate ruling-duo now and again but after our fits subside, most of us are eager to move on; find it annoying even when someone else takes their ranting turn—*not instep with our own.* Obviously, this nowhere cycle isn't easy to pull from but I keep thinking we'd stand a much easier chance to make some solid redirects if we'd simply take our ranting turn—***together.*** It's why there's twelve damn long installments. Historical reminders and current event recaps simply help galvanize what's justified to rant about.

If I thought we could afford to keep overlooking inglorious truths, I would never have been compelled to figure out how to write this! As it stands: ***our national debt thumps in as this world's 3rd largest. It expands by the second.*** Think of this actuality like the idiom—*all roads lead to Rome.* Keep it in focus—always. Treasury bills, bonds, our very land or paper money used to try and stave

off this staggering debt rather than chipping it away using a strong working mass hammer—*damn well matters*. Anyone who diminishes this either prefers delusion or works in deception.

I doubt Tomas Jefferson had any idea just how convoluted it would become for future Americans to stay on top of things when he said: "*Whenever the people are well-informed, when things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them right.*" After all, he had no idea of the comunicado onslaught we'd be deluged with. Well, *cie la vie*. If we intend to leave our future a fighting chance, I don't believe we can afford to hold out until bad guys falter and completely expose themselves. Problem is, aside from Gaddafi—today's power-crazed egomaniacs aren't easy to spot. Well, then along came Trump. But aside from a mere handful, most egomaniacs don't gallivant around in gregarious flare much anymore because they've blended into the changes of time democracies require. Oh were the days when everyone donned attire befitting their power-rung and bad guys always rode black horses!

In *Guns, Germs, and Steele*, Pulitzer Prize winner Jarod Diamond writes about the fates of human societies. Obviously, egomaniacs play a huge roll; play with a heavy hand. Actually, he writes about the *predictable* fates of societies. But until recently—*masses weren't free and educated*. So, why aren't experts giving these powerful anomalies respectful due? Maybe some are and I just haven't stumbled onto those reports. Maybe I'm just hopelessly naïve. Well, that's not a maybe but still: ***anomalies like these truly are game-changers and we need experts to punctuate this!*** Without a hopeful sense to nurture, then of course domination will keep playing out as expectedly as herd-control plays out for predictable sheep!

To shed that predictable pelt, we'll need to figure out a way to look more objectively beyond partisan lines. Why? ***Because of our opinion. It still matters.*** High stakes churning is about to hit the fan once again. With only two primary platforms—division is the game but: *disunity does not equate to a vital democracy*. All of us, rigid platform believers alike, must open our eyes to what's making a charade out of our nobly envisioned rise: ***why we are now staring straight down the barrel of an Oligarchy.*** We must look beyond all this duping; focus less on campaign rhetoric and more on the hands behind the scene. Hands that own powerful and intertwined news-syndicates as well as humongous and intertwined investment firms which fund vast and intertwined lobbying, PR, Super PAC's and lawyered powerhouses. Some say—*hands that hold the leash on entire countries*. These are the hands we need to get to know because we're at the other end of the leash. These are the hands that pull the strings of the puppets we'll be presented and those hands damn well come with agendas. The Koch brothers look to jerk us one way, the George Soros gang the other way. Both have the money and the means to divide us for conquering control but they aren't the only ones. With a rising Oligarchy—*partisan platforms will become a mere backdrop*. We need to know whose riding the black horses.

Opinion Extraction.

When the fall of 2011 rolled in, it was to the beat of a protest on Wall Street. Short-sited buffoons ran about squealing "*business is not in business to create jobs!*" Commentators bent on setting our opinion against that beat rushed to gush in our ears "*it's a misguided movement of misguided creatures with too much time on their hands!*" Obviously, high unemployment will always mean there are lots of frustrated and angry people with plenty of time on their hands—*the very ingredients for emergent unrest*.

We should all be grateful, self-serving ilk included, that we still have folks who will get out and peacefully demonstrate why it's not in any nation's interest to treat masses like some inconsequential annoyance. Maybe buffoons plan to weather out brewing storms safely tucked into fortified bunkers enjoying their excesses but it would behoove them to remember: *unemployed masses can't generate the taxes it takes to afford the added protection they'll need, that we will all need, to maintain a peaceable, governed society*. It's an intertwined, consuming/commerce back-scratching existence

and—***it's the only proven way this communal animal will peacefully coexist.*** Anything less is backwards. What part of this don't they get?

Molding our opinion has become an intertwined web of deception. When this protest budded, evidently it budded somewhat like we all do, naturally—awkwardly. This is an important distinction. When we observe folks who seemingly just spring together to passionately rally behind directional pleas but have the added benefit of funds paving a smoother start—these antics are for us. Dubbed *astroturfing*, hidden hands pay people to promote their agendas: *to appear as though our united consensus just blossomed into a genuine grassroots movement—all by itself.*

I learned about this snake-oil pretense shortly before that beat headed down that street so I better appreciate their rough start. Unrehearsed grassroots-scripts left naked with imperfections fully exposed, are now up against well-orchestrated astroturfing and I liken this to a preference; natural versus implants. Well, we better hope natural is our preference because challenges are certainly mounting so regardless of how impressive artificial ones look, plastic is, and always will be—fake.

I'm trying to write for all of us, using essential starting-points I passionately hope I'm hitting so here's a fact-starter that I believe fits the bill. American's mounting frustration is unequivocally warranted. Yes, protests manage to draw sign-wielding wing-nuts but that protest also drew rabid commentators who eagerly spotlighted the ignorant while keeping dimmed—*their focus on core frustrations.* So aside from their personal gain, when commentators suck the life from valid unity efforts, especially during a time when we could really use some, they foolishly muzzle our voice. ***They help keep us silenced.*** To defend, to be prideful we have a voice to unite behind was such a vital concept—*it was stamped right into our constitution.* It's the gore-less option to assert our power to set things right regardless of which platform you personally align yourself with. When this crucial freedom-pillar gets trivialized like it's a fashion no longer in vogue—bite back.

Capitalism at its Worst.

In 1817, *The New York Stock Exchange* made its formal debut. By 1929 it crashed and the great depression rolled in. Four pendulum-swinging years later, the first banking reform laws were ushered in. Billed the Glass-Steagall Act, provisions were introduced to oversee how business should be carried out—*responsibly.* But by 1980 and again in 1999, some fundamental provisions to what is now dubbed the Frank-Dodd Act were repealed. And so today, Wall Street: ***this world's epicenter of stock, money and therefore power***—means it's obviously become the epicenter of greed. Economists credit these repeals for directly contributing to the severity of the financial crisis we've thus witnessed, but—it's not over.

In January of 2017 I was surfing Netflix looking to catch up on a few missed out on movies; this fun little writing stint consumed every idle moment I've had for over 8 years now. So, I landed on a 2015 movie titled *The Big Short* which was based on a 2010 book by Michael Lewis who attempts to tackle the 2008 banking meltdown. But I mention this movie now, because of the update at the end. It is still relevant. *The mechanisms that laid the perfect storm groundwork for that 2008 crisis—are still in place.* As for the fat-rat bankers who laughed all the way to their stock-banked portfolios? Evidently not one—saw a single day behind bars.

Whoever coined the inconvenient truth *corporate socialism/corporate welfare*—hit the mark. Capitalism: *economic system characterized by private and corporate ownership of goods determined by competition in a free market.* Democracy: *governed by the people with an absence of hereditary or unrestrained power, class distinction or privileges.* So, is our capitalistic-democracy on the right track? Well, along with the over \$700 bailout-em-out billions of 2011, billions more of our tax dollars have floated to what is clearly: ***corporations on the dole.*** And our democracy? Well, it's become glaringly obvious: ***there's a growing absence of unrestrained power, class distinction and privileges.***

Annual 2016 salaries for elected Washington elites range from \$174,000 to \$223,000. They are supplied with full staffs and first-class travel accommodations along with health and retirement packages grossly exceeding what they deem we are worthy to have. It literally takes an act of treason for them to land in the slinger.

The folks in congress and the house; about 535 of them, once there—*average a 90% re-election chance because they get lots of backing to keep those seats.* In the 1970's, there was about 608 PAC's (political action committees) donating about \$12 million to help them. The next decade, a bloating occurred. 3800 PAC's armed with 10 times the lubricating power; about \$120 million, came to finish paving—***a permanent class way.*** Today, there's over 4600 Super PAC's showering untold millions onto elites looking to snag another term, or five—a drenching that buys politicians the time it takes to return their appreciation. Here is one more fact worth remembering: it was in 1995—*a mere 23 years ago*, when our U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states cannot impose term limits upon their Federal Representation. Yep, one more dismal turn of events we rolled right over for. The result? ***Our approval of this 90% entrenched representation has plummeted to unsurpassed lows.***

The U.S. Term Limits Advocacy Group found that 78% of us want a return to limits. This is one issue we easily agree needs fixed but still—we do nothing. Why? How is a democracy supposed to remain vital with numbers like that saturated with suspicion? If we are waiting for lifelong incumbents to reign themselves in, then consider what Political Scientist Larry Sabato said in 2007 in an attempt to revive this debate. *A National Constitutional Convention must be used to accomplish amending such entrenchment because, as he logically stated: "Congress would be unlikely to propose and adopt any amendment that limits its own power."*

Cronyism.

Peter Schweizer gives us a lesson about how lucrative insider-trading has become on the hill. In his book *Throw Them All Out*, he tells us: "Few have greater access to inside information than members of congress. K-Street lobbying firms get rich fees from hedge funds for ferreting out intelligence such as whether pending legislation has enough votes to pass. There have been no insider-trading cases brought against members of congress, nor will there likely be—*partly because congress writes their own rules.* The senate's ethics manual devotes an entire chapter to the proper use of mail and stationary but remains silent on insider-trading. It's the only group the SEC doesn't investigate and is the last group of people we should be taking their word for it." As a result, Schweizer showcases stock-gain heydays for politicians from Pelosi to Boehner, Kerry to Bachus. He states: "*Political party and political philosophy matter a lot less than we think. Washington is a company town and politics is business. People wonder why we don't get more change in Washington and the reason is—the permanent political class is very comfortable. Business is good.*"

That's half of the ruling tag-team. The other half, the good ole' corporate cronies, have literally siphoned trillions from *Our tax coffers.* They have the added benefit of a 72,000 page tax-code. How many of us benefit from even 100 of those pages? Rather, how many of these pages landed in our tax-code via crony politics? As for doing business responsibly, by the time you read this, *The Frank-Dodd Act* will have bloated yet again by over 2000 more pages. Lobbyist and Lawyered powerhouse firms must really thrive in that town! Honestly, with our opinion effectively polarized, with all the absurd regulations and loopholes subsidizing such a free-for-all pork-fest, our nobly envisioned democratic rise has been successfully hogtied and attests to one big fat inglorious truth: ***political and corporate elites live a life of unrestrained power, class distinction and privileges.***

Soured.

Polls show that as we head into this next round, we are still soured. That's great news because regardless of post-recession gains, this reckless, unrestrained status quo lead *still*—knows no bounds. So when ruling elites postures themselves as oh-so ethical and all-knowing that to question

them merely provides consolation proof of our limited intelligence—don't bite here either.

Entrenched politicians work overtime to win the privilege of representing us. Work occasionally thereafter, to keep their lifelong incumbency pass active and they do this by reminding us about their valuable aged-wisdom and how altruistic their intent is to be a servant for the greatest system best able to advance humanity. Sure, young-blood lacks aged wisdom but it damn sure isn't worth allowing the continuance of lifelong terms—*the prime reason why crony power effectively rests in the hands of a small but privileged few*. A simple overlapping of terms to provide new-blood some mentored time would easily reel-in this intentionally inflated emptiness. If they truly believe their own words—*they would decline additional terms*. Where is honest Abe? After serving a single Congressional Term, Lincoln returned to his home stating; *"to enter myself as a competitor of another, or to authorize anyone so to enter me—is what my word and honor forbid."*

Entrenched incumbents know a bit of history too so they damn well know Oligarchy doesn't spell Democracy! They know the free-for-all going on won't advance humanity forward but in fact sets the stage for our own grandkids, *and theirs*, to pay the horrific rerun price to this bitter lesson. Term limits are critical! Aside from the fact that their crony politicking hatched an Oligarchy, when we can't trust the representation we pay for—*this most humanitarian experiment will falter and that spells Anarchy: "a state of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority."* Enough already! Twenty plus years have since passed. This isn't some harmless game! This recklessness isn't yet so ingrained that a U-turn back to term limits is hopeless! When the churning begins again, I will once again be looking for Honest Abe. I want to trust our representation again. ***I want us—to stand on our word and honor and humbly serve our founding principles—for us.*** This is still—our ride.

Stay Soured.

Here's another emptiness worth ranting about. The recession exposed just how unstable this world's moneyed-system is and I've been reading where this will be addressed more and more: ***to better prepare for the next one***. So when powerhouse cronies puff to us about how stable their moneyed-lead is; huff to assure us they've got a handle on it, here's a few things we should keep in mind. First, recessions move to a rhythm all their own and I get the idea that only luck prevents recessions from becoming depressions so when the next hits—no one knows where it will end and that includes puffed-up cronies. Second, regardless of where a downward spiral finally fizzles, we are the ones hardest hit—right down to our dinner plate. So what domino started the 2007-09 recession? Experts readily agree: *powerhouse greed caused what ended up rattling dinner plates all across the globe except of course—theirs*.

Today's lead is one that globally connects us with auto-stock trading. Period. I don't know what preventative measures might actually get implemented before the next recession gets here but I do know the Wall Street gang's very lead has the programming of bot-traders set to high-stakes amplified volume. Sure, greed and the need for stature set the tempo for the ageless power dance, it's just that until recently, moneyed-systems were backed by actual value such as gold and silver, commodities or land—not ether-nothingness! History won't be of much help to sculpt our way around this vastland! What we do know from the last status quo round—drowning rats immediately grab for our taxes to bail-out their too big to fail bank cartels, then immediately go a' clamoring onto the safety net of bankruptcy to shield their prized conglomerates.

The average Joe really isn't all that far behind in comprehending why things have gotten—*so far wrong*. At least we understand what it takes to pay the family bills each year and if there's extra, only then—do we take a vacation or upgrade our car. Now that's just one concept the overreaching don't comprehend. And while we can imagine all the cars and vacations we might have taken had the \$700b stimulus packet floated our way—it didn't. Though \$19 million floated to the profitable Whirlpool-Maytag Corp who had no compunction about using our bailout bucks to tie up loose ends to close one shop here—*where 1,100 of us used to work*—to then head off to Mexico for a

grand opening down there. *Can you give some advice on how to be so insensitive?* JA. And as I sit here listening to the washer spin—I know it will be the last Whirlpool to ever whirl in my house.

In trying to understand a snippet about the complexities of Wall Street, I found a quip that said anyone who tries to summarize what's wrong on that street in a soundbite or two—knows nothing. I found another quip that said France, Germany and Italy are all calling for banking regulations based on The Glass-Steagall Act. Guess it's comforting to know that in 1933, those folks were onto something. So is Frank-Dodd an improvement? Don't know but I'd say our homework begins back in 1933. Meanwhile—stay soured.

Twisted Trickle Down.

In 2010, the average corporate executive made about \$11 million. By 2018, that average bloated to around \$18 million. In one day, the average CEO now makes more, by twice, than the average you and I make all year. But, if you're in the top echelons of corporate power—you make a whole lot more. UnitedHealth's CEO raked in over \$100 million; Viacom and Occidental Petroleum's tapped in at \$70 million. Truly, are CEO's really so gifted? At *Wikipedia*, someone there also wonders: "since the 1980s, there's been a dramatic rise in executive pay. It's not certain if this is due to a natural and beneficial result of competition for scarce business talent or—*if it's due to a socially harmful phenomenon brought about by social and political changes.*" Okay. I'm no scholar but I know the answer here.

For-profit corporations sell stocks to support their ventures. Somehow, this concept includes an entitlement mentality. So whether times are good or bad, contracted salaries are still paid. These companies shower their CEO's with handsome salaries—even if they don't have the money to do so. On the other hand, private businesses are generally limited to salaries they can afford—to money they've actually earned. CEOs of publicly traded companies are employees just like you and me but, when their million-dollar contracts; *salaries to entice them to maintain high returns at whatever the cost—like stuffing Baby-G with our lifelines*—are not trimmed back to reflect a poor year, their gluttonous entitlements are still paid for by you and me. We're told not to squeal about this; fat-rats trickle-down jobs. Now there's one part of this back-scratching reality that's well understood! But since we've entered an era where the schemes to replace workers with technology are finally paying off, we should connect another dot: *these payoffs—our wages—now trickle up.* Obviously, their idea of good business isn't to get rid of us—only to turn around and rehire us. *Now that I've given everything to you - you say you want to try something new ~CS.* We're like an old lover being cast aside. So at the expense of our jobs and with a siphon tapped into our coffers, replacement technologies are kept well-fed, fat-rat pockets kept a-bulging, and oversea ventures flourish where cheap labor resides—*where taxes are much easier to dodge.*

Of Mice and Men.

The mammoth AIG Corporation needed \$180 bail-em-out billions in 2008 to stay afloat but in 09, went on to give \$168 million in bonuses to their executives. In 2010, they showered another \$100 million of *Our tax dollars* onto their pets. These un-earned excesses did not trickle-down to rest of the AIG employees but I think those folks got to keep their jobs. I guess I should include one more reason why we're supposed to keep taking it: there's the added hope that in all their gluttonous glory, greedy-ilk just might keep American yacht makers and mansion builders employed! Oh, I'd be remiss if I didn't add this update: AIG, the conglomerate most responsible for a financial world unraveling; the ensuing bankrupting of Bear Stearns, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Lehman Bros, has since paid back their debt—*so long as we don't count the taxes they got an exempt pass on.* As for the overall taxpaying bailout cost up to 2011, that's still being hashed out though roughly half of what is known has since been re-paid. But, here's what I want to know. How much of our bailout

bucks were used to buy those exorbitant, job-eliminating techno-rounds because 10 years later—that's just one more report I can't find.

The 20th century witnessed a surge in laws trying to force corp/industries to find decency. Many did. But how many ethically-deficient rats do we actually have running around like AIG's CEO Robert Benmosche who blubbered; "*the most important thing is that we've got to get companies to self-regulate and do the right thing.*" This is the guy who recently referred to those of us still angry about him using our money for his exorbitant salaries as nothing but a lynch mob. If this guy epitomizes the crony system of *do-the-right thing ethics and self-regulation*, then it's no wonder why things have gotten so far wrong! ***Why are we tolerating a system that encourages exorbitant pay for the mighty few at our expense?*** Where is the saner, more responsible middle between Oligarchy and Socialism? How many millions would be more than enough for CEO's of publicly traded companies to live on and still eat caviar when their overreaching lands them on the bench of bankruptcy? Where is that magic million-mark line that won't impinge upon their gross-decadence basking because wherever that marker is—*CEO's of publicly traded companies need a sanity cap put on them!* And before anyone grabs to raise the capitalistic flagship, it's time we consider how silly that would be when it's taking all hands on deck to bail from the corporate welfare overflow that's got us sinking! Finally but finally, when will too much be just too dam much? ***I'm here to remind you of the mess you made ~AM.***

Be Obscure Clearly.

Newsweek reviewed a book; said it was worth reading but concluded it basically told us what we already know. So, I read the book and sure enough—I did have some idea about the subject which is exactly why I believe this book is worth our attention. *Deadly Spin* by Wendell Potter sheds light on the subversive practices used within the health insurance industry. Yes, we do suspect this industry has prevented our nation's ability to achieve universal, adequate and affordable healthcare which begets another dreary question—how? Potter came out of the health insurance fray at the peak of his career to tell us but emphasizes: "*healthcare is just one example of corporate entrenchment and the use of propaganda to sustain its ravenous greed.*"

Potter says good PR is to be obscure clearly. It subtly convinces us to change the way we think because of course: ***our opinion is still—literally worth everything.*** He says; "We must learn to counter the role of the public relations industry—the *spin machine*—in our public discourse and in our lives." And I, damn well agree.

The introduction of *Deadly Spin* begins with the pitiful but valuable truth from Alex Carey. ***"The twentieth century has been characterized by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy."*** I have memorized this quote, I've used it on the front page of this website's forum, and I've used it to hammer on what it is we're up against. The impunities we face are indeed expanding so if we all memorized this quote, well then! We'd be off to one helluva start!

Potter looks back to help us see forward: "Our founding forefathers so well understood the need for an informed public; they forbade congress from restricting freedom of the press. But 220 years later, we have arrived at a precarious moment. The number of credible news organizations, particularly newspapers, is declining. At the same time, the amount of power behind public relations is greater than ever. Americans are confronted daily, with the daunting challenge of deciphering truth from spin. The day may soon come where credible news will not be free anymore. ***Spin however, will continue to remain freely available—and hard to miss.***"

Is our Power of Forgetting Enormous?

Potter tells us corporate billions now support the PR industry's playbook: *How to influence Lawmakers through the manipulation of Public Opinion.* He tells us PR began in the early 20's to soon

become a formal trade—a *daunting enterprise soon thereafter*. It began when JD Rockefeller needed to turn his character into a generous philanthropist from that of the tarnished *Bloody Ludlow Villain*; a reference to his company-sponsored offensive against strikers which killed Colorado miners, their women and children. So, he hired a pioneer of public opinion-shaping finesse and it worked. Rockefeller is fondly remembered as a philanthropist.

PR then headed off to conquer for the tobacco industry, the marketing of cigarettes to women by equating; “*these torches of freedom come with the added perks of female slenderness, grace and beauty.*” This new way of selling ideas was not something the oil industry could resist; nor could Hitler. He wrote in *Mein Kampf*: “The receptivity of the great masses is very limited, their intelligence is small—**but their power of forgetting is enormous.** Propaganda slogans must therefore stay limited to a very few points until the last member understands what you want him to.” And so began how in modern times, *where speech and choice are supposed to be free*, self-serving agendas must get slicked-up if we’re to buy into them. And when bulging pockets are in charge of the grease tube? You can bet we are being slathered with more coats than we know.

For the healthcare arena, universal care began picking up momentum in other countries before the 20th century. “World health changed abruptly and forever in the late 1800’s when one of history’s most unlikely people, Germany’s Iron Chancellor, ushered in compulsory sickness and social security benefits. This iron chancellor was fully aware: *People who know they are cared for are the best building-blocks for a strong nation.*” And strong would Germany become.

For America, healthcare was first addressed 23 years later when Roosevelt echoed the Iron Man’s sentiments: “*No country could be strong whose people are sick and poor.*” Yet, PR was on a roll and the health of our nation would end up getting snubbed again and again. By 1938, Truman then wrote: “I cautioned congress against being frightened away from healthcare. I had no patience with the reactionary selfish people and politicians who fought every proposal we made to improve the people’s health.”

In keeping with *Newsweek’s* review—yes, we do have a basic idea about the motives that lurk behind the foiling of our nation’s health then as now—Potter just slam-dunks it: “*Powerful special interests became so entrenched in our nation over the years—no president was able to overcome their organized opposition until Lyndon B Johnson saw the 1965 creation of two government-run programs: Medicare and Medicaid.*” Make no mistake: **for the past 50 years, self-serving interests have only become evermore—powerfully entrenched.**

Potter writes: “Unlike developed countries that took deliberate action at their highest levels to create the national healthcare systems they currently enjoy: *America largely forfeited the development of its system to private, financially motivated interests from the very beginning.* The result is that universal healthcare is available today in every industrialized nation except one. Ours. It’s also available in many developing countries.” As for the greasing we have to trudge through, Potter concludes: “*For I believe that unless we do fight back—and with urgency—the 21st century will be dominated by the retrenchment of democracy and the unbridled growth of corporate power enabled by increasingly unchallenged propaganda.*”

We are the fallout generations of one well-honed propaganda playbook. Period. We are craftily being sidetracked from keeping our focus pasted on *crony entrenchment*. Instead, we grovel over whether Medicare/Medicaid was the socialistic precursor that tainted pureform capitalism when all along—ravenous greed shot any unsullied capitalistic experiment in the foot long before Medicare/Medicaid ever got here! Thankfully, these programs finally materialized. We can be grateful our own parents and ill-fated brothers and sisters have something that’s not run through the manipulative ringers of insatiable Wall Street greed. *Today’s experiment isn’t about capitalism versus socialism!* These concepts originated *before* corporate welfare and *before* an Oligarchy came to usurp this democratic way of moving so it’s high time we quit trying to hang our health on some capitalistic-peg that rats long ago already gnawed through!

Why is our health even being traded on that street? *Forbes* ran an article in February 2014 by Peter Ubel where he quotes several doctors summarizing what is generally agreed upon as to why our healthcare system is so screwed-up. "Profit in the health insurance industry is the single greatest barrier to building an efficient, sustainable system of healthcare in this country." "American medicine, from a function of a humanitarian society, has morphed into a revenue stream for healthcare profits; drug and medical device companies, hospitals—insurance companies." Ubel contends: "A more nuanced debate about healthcare costs in the US would do better to distinguish between healthcare related *income and outright profit*. Small companies, all the way up to include the ginormous insurance industry—*should not enrich themselves at the expense of society*. But, they can't ignore bottom lines at their own peril." Ubel concludes: *too much money grubbing — whether by for-profit or non-profit healthcare businesses, threatens our ability to provide affordable care.*"

I gave up trying to understand the healthcare gift we now have. Maybe it's a viable start but it's real hard to know with all the jerking we get. Where is the unbiased, laymen's report to help us find our way here? At www.healthcare.gov? Maybe—but I'm skeptical and I'm not alone. When any 2400-page bill gets concocted, it's bound to be incomprehensible and deceptively expensive because that's how the crony system works. So other than the many lucrative years ahead for corporate lawyers, spinmeisters and lobbyists, who else benefits? ***How about the nearly 50 million of us in low-pay sectors without coverage?*** So I asked my own employees; a prime example of the many hard-working Americans whose wages max-out well below the average medium. They can't understand what coverage they can get that they can afford any better than I can. Meanwhile, they opt-out of any healthcare packet I can afford to offer. So when policymakers yelp about how small businesses ought to shoulder coverage cost just the same as big ones, then just know—*if these nitwits weren't so damn out of touch they'd know we can't even afford to pay overtime!* Welcome to the wall most every small business must try to scale. Our employees are left struggling to find additional hours elsewhere—*just to scrape by*. Low-pay workers are now opting for the fine instead of paying for the coverage which is coming in at 12 times the penalty price. Besides—***just where in their 24hr allotment are they supposed to work a 3rd job just to pay for that coverage?*** Bottom line: healthcare is an off-limit luxury to them. Getting sick—that's not an option.

Nobody disputes the need for universal care so we should quit looking at each other suspiciously; who thinks our government should magically provide, who thinks only the lazy don't have coverage and the last thing they need is another handout. Rather—*distrust erosion is at work*. All of us know the overall health of our nation is critical—***we just don't trust our representation to sculpt a viable, beneficial-for-all, affordable deal!*** And this—is one inglorious fallout-example as to what entrenched representation gets us.

For those still determined to let the Wall Street pack toy with our health, here's something else to keep in mind. Corporate power actually stems from us; not so much by our vote although if you own stock you're provided the opportunity to cast one but if you're like me—you don't. After all, how do we really know one corporate elite from the next? Ultimately, someone votes in CEO's but mostly for their stock value savvy. ***This system doesn't encourage the consideration of humanity first—stock values second.*** Potter offers a great example of this. "In 2008, after WellPoint Insurance spent more on the medical needs of their membership than they had expected, CEO Angela Braly promised that in the future: *"We will not sacrifice profitability for membership."*

So, where does the greed that trumps our health absolutely flourish? Who stands to lose the most if we sculpted a viable system for all? Well, we do notice how gainful insurance powerhouses have remained through all this. We do notice which stocks are consistent top picks; which CEO salaries are top picks too. We do notice the impressive skyscrapers from the wee-windows of our planes as we descend upon our cities and as our taxis race by, we do notice how many of these impressive buildings are home to financial conglomerates firmly conjoined to an insurance backbone. Indeed, Potter's book spells out—what we already know.

Luckily, I have healthcare; compliments of the middle class industrial sector in which I work. Luckily also, there's a few insurance options available to me so I figure since UnitedHealth can afford to shower their CEO with \$100 million—they'll do just fine without me. However, it's unlucky for all of us: **health insurance is an expense fat-rats want to shed and it's a big reason why we are being replaced with machines.** This is one unforeseen, or at least just one more hidden-agenda dot, not being connected to the added price-tag of expecting rats to shoulder the cost of our health.

Who's on first? Naturally! Why? I don't know. Now you've got it!

Today's moneyed-consumerism is yesterday's barter system; it's how we now roll. There's hallmark companies out there finding their way through today's free-for-all melee; ones who still keep their human workforces intact simply because they practice worthy creeds. *They deserve to be acknowledged. They need emulated—now.* Stock-driven greed mentalities have set the pace long enough. Greedy powerhouses affect our lives equally if not more than politicians. **By their avaricious might alone—they've decided to lead today's charge by re-cogging the wheels to a human-less workforce future.** Curiously, by using a wholly new, non-living kind of worker that's never gonna keep the big commerce/governing wheels regularly greased. Truly, if whacking off the hind leg to this country's oxen is the only bright-idea the cream of our policymaking-crop can come up with, then it's no wonder why we've landed in such a mess!

I believe integral governing guides are as overwhelmed as we are by the mounting *Oh Sh*t* challenges we face. But since today's calamities are taking every bit of their attention, tomorrow's calamities not yet imminent—don't get top billing. Besides, they're the ones still giddy about how grand it is to monitor us. Yep—time for another footnote. Truly, the gigs up. The thing is—we're actually not all that exciting to watch. I looked up voyeurism: *persistent observer of sexual things or scandal.* Now I looked up voyeurism because it occurred to me that since we're not all bad guys but rather, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens who unfortunately aren't always having great sex or behaving scandalously, then why would anyone want to watch us from every angle at every moment? Once asked, that's when I considered the possibility that monitoring us—*purely for our safety*—is but a ruse. We are actually providing vicarious relief from the homogenized, techno-robotic life they've succumbed to! Sure can't say I'm sorry I digressed on that footnote!

It's possible our elites will soon get a handle on our out-of-control deficit, world strife, unstable moneyed-system, job markets and! Garner a unanimous concurrence over what to do about our techno-predicament all at the same time but I don't think so and I'm an optimist. Our political tug and pull of the pendulum eventually swings to middle-ground, thereby working, but slowly—too slowly. Technology throws a whole new game and nano-seconds are really fast. Whether you believe honorable intentions rule our days or not, we need to heed Kurzweil's exponential lesson. The fully materialized Super-Goliath won't be our nightmare but rather—our progeny's. However, we are the ones setting the stage for Baby-G to slide right in the driver's seat and take our kids wherever it wants. Our singular—*therefore cumulative effort of purpose*—is to buy our progeny some time and it begins with effective rat control. ***We'll see things clearer when rats are in our rearview mirror ~PJ.***

How to Steer a Bouncing Ball.

During my sleuthing, I found conspiracy theories captivate us. Many of us believe there's a supreme, world dominance conspiracy at work; a mere handful of powerdogs orchestrating all happenings. Maybe but I don't think so. What I do believe is that most of us fully understand just how intrinsic is—government, Wall Street and industry, ourselves and now technology. It's just that I don't believe we typically fuse the unabridged role that we—*and thereby commerce*—actually play. We tend to see our society more like prongs, like a jack instead of the ball; a them versus us when in actuality: ***we are the moving force that on occasion—rolls with intent.*** Usually, we just aimlessly

bounce along whereupon our elitist guides basically can't do much but bounce along with us; *haphazardly attempting to steer*. As for powerdogs with supremacy thoughts dancing in their heads, yeah they exist. Always have. I just don't think they orchestrate every happening but rather—are enterprising by nature. That's why they swing from the rungs they do. They manipulate what they can, when they can, of every side to anything that sparkles. *Dominance is their game*. We need to learn to steer.

The healthcare debacle, and term limits, are two glaring examples of where things have gone so far wrong. I see Wall Street like a hidden passage that with a bit of time and chiseling, became the avenue of cronies to extract power from royalty. Once that transpired, the only opposition standing in the way to their New World Order Oligarchy? ***A Vital, Democratic Experiment***. Indeed—Carey's quote embodies what it is we are up against.

Diamonds well-researched, highly informative book; *Guns, Germs and Steele*—hit *The New York Times* bestseller list. This means lots of us purchased his book; likely even read it. So we must wonder, in such a blessed era where freer and educated masses flourish, why is it that still: *we allow ilk to constantly manipulate our governed ways, pilfer our coffers, and toy with the health our nation like this is their ride—not ours? We should be the ones behind the wheel ~IB*. If we won't allow the grand anomalies of *freer and educated* to teach us how to steer then Hitler is right—*our power of forgetting is enormous*. If we continue to allow an Oligarchy to man the helm, impunities will damn well expand right up to where our line of enough gets breached. Diamond then covers what comes next in a book he calls—*Collapse*.

While our political process scraps its way to trying to right this ship, there's still that unsuspecting current taking *The Human Experiment* towards a calamitous transcendence. Once there, swirling in the froth atop this abyss, a new class-type of humans will emerge and I'm utterly certain we are wholly unprepared for any of it.

Again, I am sincerely yours—Publius

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