

The Appalachian Messenger



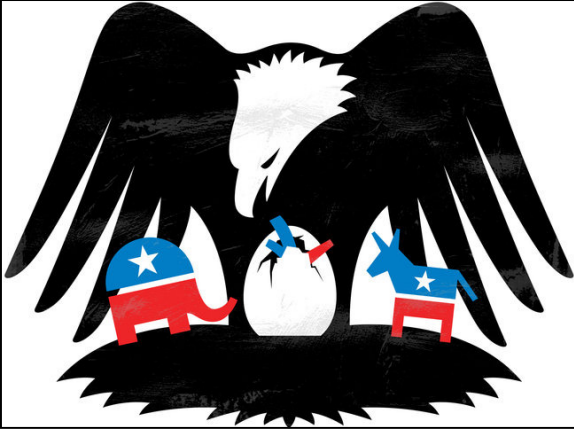
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Party Political Dynamics Made Simple

By Francis W. Porretto



I've been involved in politics, one way or another, for three decades. Over that period, nothing of consequence has changed. The country has continued to slide toward totalitarianism, albeit of a uniquely American sort. The spokesmen of the major parties continue to posture and orate, and now and then a "law" gets passed or a Supreme Court decision is announced, but in the main power is exercised largely by unelected bureaucrats.

Effort exerted without positive consequences is effort wasted. (Don't quibble. Muscle building is a positive consequence.) That recognition, conscious or not, has moved many persons to absent themselves from the whole mess. They don't listen to the news; they don't read the papers; they don't contribute to any political organization; and they don't vote.

It's that last bit that's on my mind this morning.

The non-voter is often castigated as "lazy" or "uncaring." That might be true of some. For many, it's the product of a

rational calculation: nothing changes, so why vote? Yet now and again, a non-voter is stirred off his sofa by the appearance of a candidate, or a party platform, that alters that calculation and gives him hope. More often than not, the stimulus is the non-voter's discovery of a minor party that differs substantially from the major ones.

There have been many minor parties. For a sample, we have the Populists, the Socialists, the Communists, the Conservatives, the Right-To-Lifers, the Constitutionals – I borrowed them for a novel, ("Shadow of A Sword") -- the Consumers, and of course the Libertarians. None of these get a lot of votes per election, but they do get some – and oftentimes their tally is larger than the margin of victory.

That can make a major party candidate very angry...especially if the Republican lost the election, and the Libertarian candidate pulled enough votes to make the difference.

Republican Party candidates have often complained bitterly about such results. They seem to think the GOP candidate has a right to those votes; they act as if the votes that went to the Libertarian were "stolen" from them. They seldom ponder the possibility that he might have to earn them. They seldom pause to wonder whether the only reason those votes were cast at all is that the voters deemed the Libertarian Party (LP) candidate worth the trip to the polling place -- that those voters might have stayed home were he not on the ballot.

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The Humungous Depression

By Robert Gore, *Financial Editor*



dump. In 1999, he pumped because the Y2K computer transition might adversely affect the economy and financial system (it didn't).

If one dates the beginning of a depression from the time when the benefits of debt are, in the aggregate, outweighed by its burdens, the depression began in 2000, with the implosion of the fiat-credit fueled, high-tech and Internet stock market bubble. Unsustainable debt and artificially low interest rates lower the rate of return on productive investment and saving, increasing the relative attractiveness of speculation. Central bankers and their minions refer to this as "forcing investors out on the risk curve," crawling way out on a limb for fruitful returns. They have no term for when markets saw off the branch, as they did in 2000 and again in 2008.

Most people don't see 2000 as the beginning of a depression, but Washington and Wall Street cloud their vision. Stock markets were once essential avenues for raising capital and valuing corporations. Since central bankers' remit was broadened to their care and feeding, stock markets have become engines of obfuscation. The "wealth effect" supposedly justified solicitude for markets: a rising stock market would increase wealth, spending, and economic growth. For seven years a rising market has coexisted with an anemic rebound and one hears little about the wealth effect anymore. The stock market is the preeminent symbol of economic health, so keeping it afloat has become a political exercise. Sure, central bankers and governments know what they're doing, just look at those stock indices.

Let's look at those stock indices. They are measured in fiat debt units, the entirely elastic quantity of which is in the hands of governments and central banks. What if stock indices are valued in a less ephemeral currency, say gold, aka "real money"? By that measure, the DJIA divided by the price of an ounce of gold reached its all-time high of about 41 ounces in May 1999, or just before the depression began. That ratio collapsed to under 7 ounces in September 2011, and currently stands at about 14. If you paid for the Dow in 1999 with gold, you've lost 65 percent on your original investment.

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This Is - By Far - The Biggest Threat To Your Investments

By Paul Rosenberg



Have you ever noticed that nearly all the world's surplus rests on Wall Street... or maybe in the City of London? I think this is something we should pay attention to.

So, let's face it directly for a moment: All the big investment markets are owned and controlled by the Western aristocracy: by politicians, high officials, mega-corps and deep-state operators. These people are fully in control of the markets; they can close them any-time they like.

And in fact stock and bond markets are closed, and fairly often. NASDAQ has closed repetitively for technical reasons, all the New York markets closed for Hurricane Sandy, and nearly every market was closed after 9/11. The markets reopened each time of course, but only because it was in the best interest of the aristocracy. They didn't have to reopen them. These people were – and are – in control.

This being the case, I'd like to familiarize you with two words that you have rarely heard but which are likely to be heard far and wide some day: Systemic Risk. Wikipedia defines systemic risk as "the risk of collapse of an entire financial system or entire market, as opposed to risk associated with any one individual entity, group or component of a system...."

My point is this: Your most serious risk is not from the failure of a single stock or even a group of stocks, but a closure of the market itself.

"They'd Never Do That!"

Of course they would... and of course they have.

Don't we remember what they did to Cyprus, just a few years ago? Haven't we seen their current campaign to ban cash? Didn't we see them save the institutions they owned in 2008, selling average folks down the river? And there's more, including the US Treasury holding meetings on taking control of IRAs and 401(k)s and the IFM discussing "financial repression."

The truth is that the Western aristocracy does what's best for the Western aristocracy. If that means keeping the status quo going, that's what they'll do. If it means turning the status quo off, they'll do that. Shutting it down would be a big and risky step for them of course, but if they face a near-certain loss of control otherwise, you can bet that they'll do just that.

"Oh TINA, Thou Art a Heartless B*tch"

With due credit to William Shakespeare, TINA – There Is No Alternative – may end up being the most heartless wealth-destroyer in history. Why? Because of everything noted above and because of this:

Anyone who has examined the current situation knows that the markets should have tanked years ago and have been held up with massive currency injections from the central banks.

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Hope n' Change

HopeNChangeCartoons.com / ©2016 by Stilton Jarlsberg



Party Political Dynamics Made Simple (Continued from page 1)

In truth, the LP candidate has done exactly what a minor party exists to do: he's animated, voters most of whom would have stayed home if he weren't on the ballot, and most of the rest of whom are disgusted with the performances of Republicans raised to office. In effect, his candidacy tells the GOP, "These are the votes you could have had if you were a trustworthy defender of freedom." He is a linchpin of the political dynamic – a reason for the major parties to sit up, take notice, and contemplate their inadequacies.

But no one likes to dwell on his failings. Political strategists and aspirants to office like it less than most.

The political dynamic arises from the nature of a political party: a mechanism for amassing political power. While it is natural that there are only two major parties, the minor ones are important nevertheless. The dynamic functions properly only under conditions of competition – and the more competitive, the better. The minor party candidates function to represent the sentiments of Americans the major parties displease. They offer the major parties a reason to reconsider their platforms, their selection of candidates, and their behavior in office.

But they who seek power are unhappy with such entreaties. They'd rather not hear them at all. Indeed, they'd rather that no one hear them. So they do what they can, through law and extralegal alliances, to silence them.

When the major parties succeed in locking the minor ones out of the battle, as they have often tried to do (and have occasionally succeeded), the dynamic becomes perverse: the major parties tend toward convergence. The differences between their de facto postures diminishes. Far more attention goes toward securing earmarks, feeding, servicing, or otherwise mollifying constituents at home, wooing important contributors and supra-political power brokers in the media and industry, and of course, staying in power. It takes a rare event, such as the Democrats' nomination of William Jennings Bryan in 1896, to cause a major shift in arrangements or allegiances.

If they could see to it, the major parties would render the minor ones illegal. It would guarantee their grip on power in perpetuity. The major parties would preserve the fiction of independent identities, but in fact they would become a single, silently coordinated "Incumbent Party," whose inner workings would be visible only to a well-guarded elite. Elections would become even more of a sham than they already are. It is due partly to enormous efforts and partly to good fortune that despite considerable major-party effort to that effect, the minor ones continue to appeal to those Americans who see no difference worth mentioning between the Democrats and the Republicans.

The only thing that can defeat an entrenched dynamic is a counter-dynamic of equal or greater magnitude. Accordingly, Americans who want something other than the political status quo should seriously consider a minor party -- any minor party -- rather than resigning themselves to supporting "the lesser of two evils" at a time when the difference between those evils is shrinking toward invisibility.

Were the minor parties, in aggregate, to rise to a status at which they command 10% of the vote, the major parties would undergo a convulsive upheaval. A 10% margin in any election is "landslide" territory. It commands respect. It represents "a mandate to lead." What power-seeker wouldn't lick his chops at the possibility of winning over that disaffected 10%?

Note that I don't advocate supporting a particular minor party. There are differences among them, of course. Some are more focused on one issue than all others. Some are stylistically more to Smith's taste than to Jones's. And some such as the wonderfully irreverent Rhino Party, are just for fun.

What's important about the minor parties is that all of them are "outside the fences." If you want the major parties to stop behaving as if they own this country in fee simple and needn't bother their heads about what you think, selecting and supporting one might be the most constructive means toward that end.

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The Humongous Depression (Continued from page 1)

There is a general awareness that real family incomes have gone nowhere since the turn of the century; it's often offered as a reason for the Trump and Sanders ascendancies. Other, less well-known indicators have also deteriorated or declined. What David Stockman defines as "breadwinner" jobs in construction, manufacturing, white-collar professions, governments, and full-time private services, which on average pay more than \$50,000 per year, peaked in January 2001 and are still about 3 percent below that peak. The growth in employment since 2001 has been in lower paying part-time jobs, restaurants, retail, medical services, and education, which explains the stagnation in incomes. Two other important measures—labor hour inputs and real net investment—have gone nowhere since 2001. An economy in which hours worked and real investment are not growing is an economy that is not growing.

The US economy has been losing altitude for sixteen years. While debt monetization and interest rate suppression have fueled housing and equity booms, they can't mask the underlying deterioration. President Obama will be the first president to have presided over an economy that never achieves 3 percent annual growth. That's by government figures, which must be taken with a shaker of salt. Employment statistics are especially dubious. To the public, they are right behind the stock market as an economic indicator. They are subject to a variety of pertinent criticisms, including their seasonal adjustments and the birth-death model of new business formation, which continues to add to employment although, sadly, more businesses are currently dying than are being born. The government also has a vested interest in understating inflation. Many of the benefits it pays are indexed to inflation, and interest rates on government debt incorporate an inflation premium. Understating inflation overstates the growth of real GDP, probably third on the list of statistics to which the public pays attention.

The Great Depression was not a straight downhill run. There were multiple, widely hailed "recoveries" and stock market rallies, but in 1938 the economy was in worse shape than when Franklin Roosevelt was elected in 1932, and the government was bigger, more intrusive, and more in debt (the same can be said about the government since 2000). Depressing it is to contemplate how government turning a recession into the Great Depression, but consideration of what Japan has done since its stock market topped out in 1989 can leave one pondering the choice of pills, noose, or handgun.

The Japanese have copied every page of the Keynesian and monetarist playbooks: government debt, public works spending, and regulatory expansion, and central bank monetization of assets and interest rate suppression. Multiple recoveries have been punctuated by multiple contractions. Capitalism has remarkable recuperative powers, but screw with an economy long enough and you not only prevent recuperation, you do lasting damage. Japan and Europe—also beset by persistent economic idiocy—have shown little growth or innovation for decades, leaving the economic idiots responsible muttering about supposed, self-exculpatory, secular stagnation. As the US economy glide paths into zero-and-below land, Washington, Wall Street, and the Ivy League's best are muttering the same thing.

Nothing is more telling than birthrates, and in Europe, Japan, and the US, birthrates are below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per couple. When planned, having babies expresses confidence in the future. The Japanese buy more adult than baby diapers, illustrating the demographic crunch and falling dependency ratios (the ratio of able-bodied and employed workers to the population requiring outside support), which understandably increases pessimism and further decreases birth rates among the young.

They see a bleak future and they're not wrong. The global economy hit stall speed with the commodities crash in 2014 and another rendezvous with terra firma looms. Never has the world been more in debt. True recovery won't happen until most of it has been repudiated and written off. **The current depression is already longer than the Great Depression.** By the time it's over, economic historians will be calling it the Humongous Depression.

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This Is - By Far - The Biggest Threat To Your Investments (Continued from page 1)

They know that the system would crumble if any serious portion of that was pulled out or even if interest rates reverted to the mean.

And yet, people stay right where they are, smack in the middle of the risk zone. And why? Because there is no alternative. Where else can they put a million dollars or a few million euros? How many of us even have savings accounts anymore? With interest rates hovering around zero, they make no sense.

There are options of course, but they all involve extra work. Dump your money into the stock and bond markets, and you can move it from place to place with the click of a mouse; you can get instant charts and graphs; and of course you get crisp, clean accountings of everything. All is clear, all is simplified, all is easy.

And so, 99% of the world's surplus has fallen into fully undiversified investments: Regardless of 'market sectors,' they all stay in the same big pot, controlled by an aristocracy that nearly all of us either distrust or despise.

This, at least in my view, is not a good plan.

But... TINA!

Yes, there are alternatives, but they involve work. Moreover, they also involve us taking responsibility for our failures. And let's be honest about that too: Having investments 'in the market' means that you can blame any number of things for your losses, rather than taking blame yourself.

One option is to invest on Main Street... in a local business. Truthfully, that kind of investing can be far more personally rewarding, but it certainly isn't sanitized and sanctified by authority like Wall Street is. If you invest in a dry cleaner that fails, your authority-minded 'friends' might ridicule you; if your Apple stock crashes, it's merely "bad luck."

But while investing on Main Street isn't point-and-click easy, it's far more diversified. And it gives you some personal control over your investments. If, for example, the dry cleaner or the grocer you funded is having problems, you can get involved, rather than watching helplessly from the sidelines.

So...?

So, we face choices. My point is that closing your eyes to your greatest risk - merely because it has an "Approved by Authority" banner draped across it - is a foolish thing to do.

Have A Thoughtful And Reflective Memorial Day

By Ed Grouch MD, Medical Editor



**1 MILE RUN
 100 PULL-UPS
 200 PUSH-UPS
 300 SQUATS
 1 MILE RUN
 "MURPH"**

In remembrance of Memorial Day, each year my Crossfit gym does "Murph".

For those not familiar with Crossfit, they have many benchmark workouts. Quite a few are named after soldiers that have died in combat, and are collectively known as the Hero Workouts.

"Murph" is named after Lt. Michael Murphy, a Navy Seal in Afghanistan. For a summary of what happened the day he fell, you can read it at www.navy.mil/moh/mpmurphy/soa.html. Or read the book "Lone Survivor". He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and deserved that, and every other bit of honor we could heap upon him.

The workout itself was one of his favorites. Please note that to do it "as Rx" you should do it with body armor on.

I should also note that Lt. Murphy referred to this as warmup.

As your humble author is reasonably strong but has very poor endurance, this workout took a while. And I've been sore enough from the pull-ups that I'm still having trouble moving my arms. I did, however, find it a unique and fitting way to honor Lt. Murphy, and all those who have fallen in defense of us, our country, and our freedom.

Pesty Weeds? - Make Pesto

If you're tired of weeding chickweed out of your garden, why not try eating it?

Identifying Chickweed (Stellaria media)

- Spreads and grows in 4" high dense mats, 6"-9" long.
- Bright green leaves slightly teardrop shaped.
- Leaves grow in opposite pairs, perpendicular to each other. The top pair grows "north and south, the second pair grows "east and west".
- Flowers are white and have 5 petals, (but are deeply indented to resemble 10 petals). This is one of the most important identification points, at least while the plant is in bloom.
- Chickweed does not have a milky sap when the stem is broken.
- Chickweed has a line of fine hair down one side of the stem. Also unopened flower buds will be covered with more of this same hair. **This is the most important identification point.**

Chickweed Pesto

Ingredients

2-4 cloves of garlic, minced
 1/2 cup of extra virgin olive oil
 2-3 cups freshly picked young chickweed leaves
 1/4 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese
 dash of sea salt
 handful of walnuts (optional)
 tablespoon of lemon juice (optional)
 lemon zest (optional)

Place in food processor and blend.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



May 28-29—Spring Arts and Crafts Festival, Blairsville, GA. The 2016 Blairsville Arts, Crafts, and Music Festival will take place around the Blairsville Historic Town Square. You will enjoy visiting 60+ arts & crafts vendors from around the region along with some delicious mountain fair food. This year featuring three days of bluegrass, gospel, and country music. The festivities will begin on Friday night with music inside the Historic Courthouse beginning at 6pm. On Saturday, the day begins with a **Memorial Day Parade** at 10am, and the festival goes into full swing.

June 7—The Well Armed Woman, Georgia Mountain Chapter, Hayesville, NC. 5:30 p.m. A women's group dedicated to educating, equipping and empowering women gun owners. For more information please contact Carrie Brekke at practicalpistoltraining@gmail.com.

June 9—The Well Armed Woman, Murphy Chapter, Murphy, NC, 6 p.m. A women's group dedicated to educating, equipping & empowering women gun owners. Christian Martial Arts Center, 56 Valley River Avenue, Murphy.

June 11-June 12—Team Security & Vetting Course, Waynesville, NC. 9 am - 3 pm. This course prepares students with the skills needed to adequately validate and verify personnel in teams and organizations. For information and registration go to readfomag.com/event/team-security-vetting-course-waynesville-nc/.

June 14—Cherokee NC ARES Formal Meeting, Murphy, NC, 7 pm. Our regularly scheduled second Tuesday meeting at the Robert Penland Senior Center, 69 Alpine Street (behind the courthouse) in Murphy.

June 14—DAV Monthly Meeting, Blairsville, GA, 7 pm - 8 pm. The Disabled American Veterans meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7pm in the Veterans Center. Held at the Veterans Building, 78 Old Blue Ridge Hwy. Blairsville. For more information please contact Mike Ruback 954-249-2707.

June 18—Cherokee NC ARES Social Brunch, Murphy, NC, 10 am. Our regularly scheduled meeting on the third Saturday of each month. This is an opportunity for a social gathering and it will not involve any formal presentations or training. All those interested in amateur radio or just a good meal and fellowship are invited to attend. XYLs welcome! Meeting at Main Street USA located on Hiwassee Street in Murphy.

June 4—Family Fishing Festival, Suches, GA. 9 a.m. -12 noon .Rain or shine. Free event open to youth ages 16 and under. Fun-filled morning of fishing for beautiful Rainbow Trout in Rock Creek. Exhibit booths, scavenger hunt, and more! Bring your own fishing gear and bait. Chattahoochee National Fish Hatchery, Rock Creek Road off GA Hwy 60 near Suches. For more information, call 706-838-4723.

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