



The Austerity Hoax

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

We are in the most anemic recovery in modern history. The president is talking about boosting the economy and rebuilding the middle class, but Washington isn't doing squat.

In fact, apart from the Fed — which continues to hold down interest rates in the quixotic hope that banks will begin lending again to average people — the government is heading in exactly the wrong direction: raising taxes on the middle class and cutting public spending. It's called austerity economics.

Washington is still acting as if the budget deficit were the most important economic problem. It's not. Unemployment and declining wages are.

American employers added only 157,000 jobs in January. That's fewer than they added in December. The overall unemployment rate remains stuck at 7.9 percent, just about where it's been since September.

The share of people of working age either who are working or looking for jobs also remains dismal — close to a 30-year low. (Yes, older boomers are retiring, but the major cause for this near-record low is simply the lack of jobs.) And the long-term unemployed, about 40 percent of all jobless workers, remain trapped. Most have few, if any, job prospects, and their unemployment benefits have run out, or will run out shortly.

It would be one thing if we didn't know what to do about all this. But we do know. It's not rocket science.

The only reason for employers to hire more workers is if they have more customers. But American employers have not had enough customers to justify much new hiring.

There are essentially two sources of customers: individual consumers and the government. (Forget exports for now; Europe is contracting, Japan is a basket case, China is slowing, and the rest of the world is in economic limbo.)

American consumers — whose purchases constitute about 70 percent of all economic activity in the U.S. — still can't buy much, and their purchasing power is declining. The median wage continues to drop, adjusted for inflation. Most can't borrow because they don't have a credit record sufficient to allow them to borrow much.

And now their Social Security taxes have increased, leaving the typical worker with about \$1,000 less this year than last. Meanwhile, many states are hiking sales taxes, which will hit the middle class and the poor hardest. And deficit hawks in Washington are contemplating additional tax hikes on the middle class.

The only people doing well are at the top — but they



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save a large part of what they earn instead of spending it. And their savings go all over the world in search of the highest return.

It's true that overall personal income soared by 8 percent in the final three months of 2012 compared with an increase of just over 2 percent in the third quarter. But this income didn't go into the pockets of the middle class. It went into the pockets of people at the top. Wages and salaries grew a measly six-tenths of 1 percent.

Most of the rise in personal income was from companies rushing to pay dividends before taxes were hiked in 2013, and from an upturn in personal interest income. Both of these sources of income went mostly to the well-to-do.

So if we can't rely on consumers to stoke the economy, what about government? No chance. Government spending is dropping, too.

The major reason the economy contracted in the fourth quarter last year was a large drop in government outlays — especially military spending, which fell 22.2 percent. That was mainly due to reduced spending on the war in Afghanistan, combined with worries by military contractors about further anticipated cuts. State and local spending also continued to fall.

Personally, I'm glad we're spending less on the military. It's the most bloated part of the government. But right now the military is America's only major jobs program. Cutting the military without increasing spending on roads, bridges, schools and everything else we need simply means fewer jobs.

Government spending continues to drop. The White House has already agreed to major spending cuts, some to go into effect this year.

Coming showdowns over the next fiscal cliff, appropriations to fund government operations, and the debt ceiling will likely result in more cuts.

More jobs, better wages and faster growth should be the most important objectives now. With them, everything else will be easier to achieve — protection against climate change, immigration reform, long-term budget reform. Without them, everything will be harder.

Yet we're moving in the opposite direction — following Europe's sorry example of failed austerity economics. But austerity economics is a cruel hoax. America shouldn't be fooled.

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The Feminist Mystique At 50

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — Now is the time for all good women to pay homage to Betty Friedan, who 50 years ago wrote the game-changing manifesto "The Feminine Mystique."

With that book, Friedan helped propel a revolution led by, of all people, unhappy housewives.

One feels silly even writing such a sentence, but revolutions have to start somewhere. Why not in the checkout line at the Piggly Wiggly? Or wherever Friedan, who was actually writing magazine stories the whole time she was bored, went to shop.

Friedan did, indeed, identify and give shape to "the problem that has no name" — female angst born of privilege — but she also helped launch a flotilla of myths that have many women (and men) still scratching their heads.

As her critics have noted, Friedan didn't tackle any of the legal obstacles to women's equality. Nor did she pay attention to women of color or members of the working class. She mostly noted that women like her — well-to-do, well-educated and stifled by domestic bliss — wanted and deserved more. It simply wasn't fair that men had fulfilling lives, intellectually and monetarily, while women were expected to find satisfaction in the latest invention aimed at whiter collars and cleaner toilet bowls.

Anyone familiar with "The Stepford Wives" can grasp this notion. Thus, thousands of women like Friedan, recognizing themselves in her lament, charged out of their houses and into the streets.

Doubtless I would have been a member of the stampede had I been of age, but as it happens, I was being raised by a widower and assumed that all men delighted in carpooling and cooking. How little I knew of the toils of sad, wealthy women.

Thus, the feminist movement left the station without me except to the extent, as readers sometimes remind me, that I benefited from the protests of my foremothers. Indeed, I am grateful for the suffragists who thought my vote should be equal to any man's. And I am thankful that the workplace into which I entered recognized my value. But the world in which I grew up never suggested otherwise.

In all those years when Friedan and colleagues were demanding an equal rights amendment, I only heard words of encouragement from a lawyer/father who demanded much and often intoned: "An unnecessary law



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is always a bad law." He never once suggested that a girl was in any way less capable than a boy in any arena (the combat exception was so obvious in a household of male warriors that no one bothered to debate it).

The focus of most conversation was on simple principles: Hard work leads to accomplishment leads to self-respect. I could not divine a gender element to these truths. I also saw plenty of working women, including my pediatrician, as well as those who, despite having been professionals before becoming mothers, had chosen to run busy households.

Nevertheless, I was marinating in a culture that was shifting and I was surely absorbing the zeitgeist. But members of my generation also were becoming unwitting hostages to myths that few were brave enough to challenge. My own skepticism came to full fruition the moment I became a mother.

Unlike Friedan, I wasn't tethered to home but to a job. Rather than resenting the prospect of staying home with a baby, I was stricken by the realization that I couldn't.

The "strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning," words Friedan used to describe thwarted ambition, was for me the sense of having abandoned my son.

Revolutions are like children — eager and hopeful in the beginning, then, like teenagers, suddenly riotous and unruly. They have their own ideas about things and pick up friends who are bad influences. Sometimes they need to be spanked. Fine, OK, a timeout.

Fifty years later, Friedan's movement has reached full adulthood and, one hopes, is seeing a shrink. Among lessons gleaned from the couch is that maturation requires recognizing our mistakes and our own roles in unwelcome consequences. What worked for privileged, educated women hasn't worked so well for those at the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum. And while women have the same need as men to lead meaningful lives, the feminist mystique's great failing was in advancing the notion that caring for children posed an obstacle to self-realization.

In a twist to delight The Fates, Friedan's ultimate legacy may well be a stay-at-home dad, grateful for the latest appliance that liberates him to carpool and make organic treats — squealing *oui, oui, oui!* all the way home.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

State Of The Union: Help Is Needed

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (Feb. 13): President Barack Obama took on the great unfinished business of his first term — climate change, immigration reform, Medicare reform, tax reform, the deficit — while adding big challenges on everything from universal preschool to significant new gun laws in his State of the Union address.

The president's speech was unusually long — well more than an hour — and uncommonly poignant even by his own high standards. It ended with an emotional call to reduce gun violence with laws to enhance background checks, curtail "straw purchases" that allow criminals to get guns and to stop the sale of "weapons of war" that facilitate mass carnage and put law enforcement at a disadvantage. He invoked the names of victims of violence to urge lawmakers to vote on these measures. Obama used the ultimate bully pulpit to its optimal effect.

Less convincing were the president's expressions of commitment to bipartisanship and deficit reduction — neither of which has been a hallmark of his first term or his post-re-election rhetoric.

His claim that none of the proposals he laid out would add "a single dime" to the federal deficit defies common sense. Worthy as those programs might be, guarantees of universal preschool and government investments in struggling communities, infrastructure improvements and myriad other government endeavors are going to cost money. ...

He implored Washington to move away from its habit of veering from one manufactured crisis to another. ... But it must be noted that the White House has drawn its own lines in the sand that have made it difficult for the two parties to reach agreement.

... The big priorities Obama laid out were sound; like it or not, he will need Republican help to achieve them.

North Korea's Latest Surprise

LONDON EVENING STANDARD (Feb. 12): North Korea's latest nuclear weapons test was not unexpected, after weeks of bellicose talk, but it is deeply worrying and destabilizing for peace in the region. It highlights not only the risks to peace posed by the isolated Stalinist state but those of nuclear proliferation. North Korea's development of nuclear warheads and of rocket technology shows that such advances are becoming easier; it also has an alliance of sorts with Iran. The problem is how to respond to the latest development.

North Korea is already subject to strict sanctions, which have little effect given its commitment to economic autarchy and its regime's willingness to impose dire conditions on its people. Even previous thaws in relations, where the US bargained food aid for talks, never led to actual disarmament. It is possible more pressure could be brought to bear through the international financial and insurance industries, targeting North Korean ships. But the only real chance for change is if China, its main ally, can be persuaded to take a harder line. Beijing has been outraged by Pyongyang's provocative behavior and has condemned the latest test but it fears instability if there were a challenge to the regime. Yet having a neighbor this dangerous and unpredictable is hardly in China's interests: it must try to rein in this rogue state.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Feb. 14, the 45th day of 2013. There are 320 days left in the year. This is Valentine's Day.

Today's Highlight in History: On Feb. 14, 1963, Federico Fellini's art-house classic "8 1/2," a movie about a movie director played by Marcello Mastroianni, was first released in Italy.

On this date: In 1778, the American ship *Ranger* carried the recently adopted Stars and Stripes to a foreign port for the first time as it arrived in France.

In 1859, Oregon was admitted to the Union as the 33rd state.

In 1895, Oscar Wilde's final play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," opened at the St. James's Theatre in London.

In 1903, the Department of Commerce and Labor was established. (It was divided into separate departments of Commerce and Labor in 1913.)

In 1912, Arizona became the 48th state of the Union as President William Howard Taft signed a proclamation.

In 1913, labor leader Jimmy Hoffa was born in Brazil, Ind.; college football coach Woody Hayes was born in Clifton, Ohio; sports broadcaster Mel Allen was born in Birmingham, Ala.

In 1920, the League of Women Voters was founded in Chicago; its first president was Maud Wood Park.

In 1929, the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre" took place in a Chicago garage as seven rivals of Al Capone's gang were gunned down.

In 1949, Israel's Knesset convened for the first time.

In 1979, Adolph Dubs, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, was kidnapped in Kabul by Muslim extremists and killed in a shootout between his abductors and police.

In 1988, Broadway composer Frederick Loewe, who wrote the scores for "My Fair Lady" and "Camelot," died in Palm Springs, Calif., at age 86.

In 1989, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini called on Muslims to kill Salman Rushdie, author of "The Satanic Verses," a novel condemned as blasphemous.

Ten years ago: In a dramatic showdown, major powers rebuffed the United States in the U.N. Security Council and insisted on more time for weapons inspections in Iraq. Earlier, chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix told the Council his

teams had not found any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. "Dolly" the cloned sheep was put down after premature aging and disease marred her short, six-year existence and raised questions about the practicality of copying life.

Five years ago: A former student dressed in black walked onto the stage of a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University and opened fire on a packed science class; Steven Kazmierczak killed five students before committing suicide. Republican campaign dropout Mitt Romney endorsed John McCain for the party's presidential nomination.

One year ago: A fire broke out at the Comayagua farm prison in Honduras, killing 361 inmates. "Linsanity" continued as Knicks sensation Jeremy Lin made a tiebreaking 3-pointer with less than a second to play to cap his finishing flurry of six straight points and New York rallied to beat the Raptors 90-87, extending its winning streak to six games. Malachy the Pekingese wobbled off with best in show at the Westminster Kennel Club in New York.

Today's Birthdays: TV personality Hugh Downs is 92. Actress-singer Florence Henderson is 79. Actor Andrew Prine is 77. Country singer Razzy Bailey is 74. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is 71. Jazz musician Maceo Parker is 70. Movie director Alan Parker is 69. Journalist Carl Bernstein is 69. Former Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., is 66. TV personality Pat O'Brien is 65. Magician Teller (Penn and Teller) is 65. Cajun singer-musician Michael Doucet (Beausoleil) is 62. Actor Ken Wahl is 56. Opera singer Renee Fleming is 54. Actress Meg Tilly is 53. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Kelly is 29. Singer-producer Dwayne Wiggins is 52. Actor Enrico Colantoni is 50. Actor Zach Galligan is 49. Actor Valente Rodriguez is 49. Rock musician Ricky Wolkling (The Nixons) is 47. Tennis player Manuela Maleeva is 46. Actor Simon Pegg is 43. Rock musician Kevin Baldes (Lit) is 41. Rock singer Rob Thomas (Matchbox Twenty) is 41. Actor Matt Barr is 29. Actress Tiffany Thornton is 27. Actor Freddie Highmore is 21.

Thought for Today: "I am living on hope and faith ... a pretty good diet when the mind will receive them." — Edwin Arlington Robinson, American poet (1869-1935).

FROM THE BIBLE

Even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Matthew 10:30. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Copper Cause

Yankton County Historical Society

The Yankton County Historical Society and its Board of Directors, as well as the Mead Building Committee, wish to extend a huge "THANK YOU" to the dozens of community volunteers who participated in the copper removal project at the Mead Building on the HSC campus on Saturday, Feb. 9.

Thousands of pounds of salvageable copper were removed from the building and placed in a truck, then transported to be weighed and sold. A special "thank you" goes to Slowey Construction for their part in bringing the project to a close.

As a result of this concerted ef-

fort, needed funds were secured to help finance the ongoing Mead restoration project and the magnificent building will be ready to receive visitors at the Community Wide Open House to be held on Saturday, Feb. 16, from 1-3 p.m.

Volunteer lists are being formed for other "hands-on" opportunities as the restoration of the Mead Building moves forward. The future home of the Dakota Territorial Museum, the Mead will belong to all of the people of Yankton and Yankton County and will, we hope, become the area's destination museum.

We are fortunate to have such a huge awareness of the importance of history in our community.

Once again, thank you.

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