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THERE'S A LOT *MORE* TO FEAR THAN FEAR ITSELF

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According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, which officially identifies the beginning and ending dates of the business cycle, the Great Recession ended in June 2009. This is an appropriate finding for the 82.2 million persons in the civilian labor force who are married with spouse present (MSP) among whom the jobless rate four years ago was 6.3 percent and today is 4.4 percent. It is inappropriate for the 73.6 million other persons for whom the current unemployment rate is 10.7 percent. As compared to the entire civilian labor force, the rate for these 73.6 million persons today is higher than at any other time since 1948 except November-December 1982.

Why this huge disparity in current jobless rates? Two principal reasons: one demographic, the other personal. Among the 73.6 million other persons are disproportionately large numbers of 16-19 year olds, high-school dropouts, disabled, low-skill workers, and others for whom the jobless rate is much higher than for married persons. On the other hand, the 82.2 million persons MSP typically make and keep a personal commitment in public vowing to care for one another, to provide for one another, over their entire lifetimes. Accordingly, one or both spouses must work especially when there are children at home. Many of persons who are not married spouse present make no such personal commitment.

Why are there so few who thrive today on the record financial gains on Wall Street as compared to the millions on Main Street who are struggling to find and hold a job?

Remember the 1920s? A decade of major economic innovation including automobiles and road construction, radio, commercial air transportation, chemicals, telephones, electric utility networks, in which soldiers returning from WWI had to find their place and role in society. At the same time Prohibition led to widespread bootlegging, gangsters killing gangsters in order to claim the right to provide the liquor to a thirsty American public. That economic boom came crashing down in the 1930s.

Today we have conditions eerily like the 1920s with soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan trying to find their place and role in society and street gangs warring over who controls the illegal drug trade. New economic developments such as social networks, text messaging, tweeting, wireless computing, video games, on-line real-time financial trading across a range of new products are making enormous fortunes for a few on Wall Street leaving behind millions who struggle to find new jobs, often at lower wages, to replace the ones lost to creative destruction and globalization.

What's new and different today are the numbers of babies born to single mothers, the millions of legal abortions, the growing acceptance of physician-assisted suicide, the global scale of human trafficking, the wanton killing of the defenseless persons notably school children and workplace acquaintances, the hundreds of thousands of personal bankruptcy filings, and a much bigger federal government with tens of millions of Americans willingly dependent on monthly checks and other benefits from Washington. Add in such common abuses by consumers and merchants as shoplifting, price gouging, and passing counterfeit goods and currency, along with similar abuses by workers and employers such as embezzling, loafing, and sweating their workers. To this toxic brew insert defrauding insurance companies, spying on industrial rivals, and trading shares of stock on insider information, plus governments that run up huge operating deficits and unfunded liabilities, lie to and spy on the public, expect or demand kickbacks, and use public agencies to intentionally frustrate law-abiding citizens who challenge the politicians and bureaucrats who control those agencies.

Who's left to defend representative government grounded in the rule of law, the inalienable rights of all humankind, and individual freedom with its personal-responsibility corollary? How long can representative government continue when the limits imposed on the federal government through the Bill of Rights are set aside by "pay-for-play" politicians eager to get re-elected, and when the federal debt ceiling is reduced to a formality that big-government advocates insist must be raised to avoid government shutdown?

Washington and many state governments are dysfunctional. What compounds this problem is that millions of Americans either depend on those governments to provide for their needs or are powerless to deal with the entrenched interests that maintain the dysfunctionality. They begrudgingly pay the very taxes that make dysfunction and dependency possible because they know that the one federal agency that can make their lives miserable is the Internal Revenue Service, and they know that the Wall Street gravy train has long since left the station. They are dispirited and afraid. They know that Franklin Roosevelt to the contrary notwithstanding there's a lot *more* to fear than fear itself.

Persons MSP and all others share in this fear. The difference is that the MSP still cling to the work ethic in the hope that they can somehow assure a better future for their children and grandchildren. They still cling to a culture of life and hope. Everyone else increasingly surrender to this fear because there is no such future that motivates them. Their 10.7 percent jobless rate is symptomatic of their capitulation. They cling to a culture of death and despair.

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