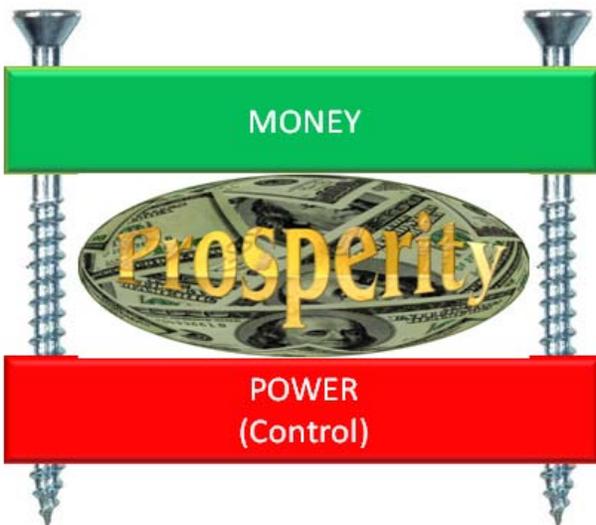




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GREED

over

Common Sense

Once upon a time in a country named America, times were prosperous. The great conflict, World War II, was in the rear-view mirror and the future was bright and shiny. Every day millions of people, lunch pails in hand, kissed their family members, got into their cars, and drove to high-paying factory jobs. They made every type of product required for their society, and in turn, bought products from other local and national suppliers. The money cycled within the American economic system, and everyone who wanted to work, could find a job. Every manufacturing job generated six to ten other jobs in health care, banking, services, transportation, and synergistic manufacturing.

The government's share of the economy was less than twenty percent of GDP. Regulation was light handed, and entrepreneurship and business startups boomed across the country.

Since there were opportunities of every type, the less affluent did not envy those with money. They worked and studied hard, determined to elevate their own status. America had a thriving middle-class, generated and maintained by a production economy.

Communism reared its ugly head in Europe, and was our biggest enemy. Russia and China embodied the communist empire. For many years, the cold war added to economic wealth as all sides built huge

industrial/military complexes, machines of war, and atomic bombs. Each country participated in a surreal game called Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), where the participants in a nuclear war would annihilate each other. Life in Russia as a peasant was hard, and for those better off, still devoid of personal freedoms.

At its core, communism is about presumed equality, with everyone regardless of status enjoying their share of the economic pie, left over from the elites. If the pie was large, perhaps the peasants had a little more. This concept was very ingrained, and the idea of personal incentive anathema (detested and rejected). In fact, most thought the following Russian joke was either hilarious or sick, depending on one's perspective, but I will repeat it here for context. I was unable to trace the original author.

"God came down from heaven and appeared to a Russian peasant, saying, 'You can have anything you want, just ask.' Images of great wealth and personal stature flashed through the peasants' mind. God then delivered the caveat. 'The one condition is that whatever you receive; your neighbor will get twice as much.' The peasant, rethinking, replied, 'Put out one of my eyes.'"

American exceptionalism prevailed. In a turn-a-round from historic practices, where the victor occupied the vanquished, our factory system rebuilt Germany and Japan. Democracy and freedom really worked, and eventually, even the Berlin wall fell, and communism faltered as Russia fell apart.

However, prosperity has a partner named greed, and as American prosperity grew, so did the greed. The rich wanted more wealth, (we all did), and government wanted more power and control. Each segment set out to acquire those objectives. Government passed regulations, used by businesses as an excuse to move jobs off shore. People loved big government while hating business. They forgot the lessons learned from communism/socialism and the common sense of free enterprise. Prosperity suffered. Government ballooned to twenty-five percent of GDP, taking productive capital out of the economy.

On a family trip, we developed a frequently used descriptive phrase, "Greed over common-sense."



**Over
Common Sense**

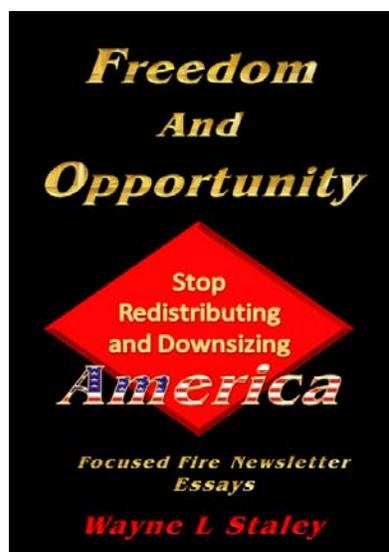
This illustration appears to border on hyperbole. Downsizing and redistribution, the forces that changed America, were processes not an event. It took less than thirty years to reduce the greatest nation on earth to one struggling in the world economy. In context of historical time, it was/is an explosive event. The economic destruction was the result of internal greed instead of nuclear bombs. Forgotten is the lesson that work and production generate wealth, and without that wealth, there will be nothing to redistribute. We have bought into the fuzzy concept of income inequality, where citizens share equally, regardless of their level of contribution or personal responsibility.

The great thing about prosperity is that it is fungible and exchangeable, and we are still the greatest country in the world in terms of resources and freedoms. We need to stop fighting among ourselves, and recognize that prosperity is the path to resolving many of our social ills. It means rediscovering a basic truth; prosperity results from circulating wealth within our own economic system. By responsibly using our natural resources and freeing American ingenuity, our economy has the capacity to provide opportunities to every citizen. We can start by expanding our manufacturing capacity instead of transferring it to China and Mexico. Although robots replaced many production jobs, it still requires the creation of jobs servicing these industries and society in general.

There are two missing ingredients. They are effective leadership and the lack of a national mission. Wandering around aimlessly will not strengthen America, but perpetuate bleeding prosperity and expose us to the predatory actions of Russia, China, and ISIS.

Come on, fellow citizens. We are out of excuses, and need to work together to pull the economic wagon out of the ditch. We can stand prosperity, and owe opportunities to our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

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