

January 20, 2014

Robert Samuelson writes on the minimum wage. His short essay explains why there are no simple answers; just simpletons running governments.

... For starters, the minimum wage is a blunt instrument to aid the poor because it covers many workers from families that are well above the federal poverty line. By the administration's figures, 53 percent of workers who would benefit from a higher minimum come from families with incomes above \$35,000, including 22 percent with incomes exceeding \$75,000.

Next, economists still disagree on the job effect. In studies — and their review of other studies — economists David Neumark and J.M. Ian Salas of the University of California at Irvine and William Wascher of the Federal Reserve conclude that higher minimums do weaken low-wage employment. Under plausible assumptions, even a small effect (say, a 1□percent job loss for each 10□percent increase in the minimum) implies nearly a million fewer jobs over three years.

But scholarly research, regardless of conclusions, may be beside the point. Businesses don't consult studies to decide what to do. They respond based on their own economic outlook. They may not react to a higher minimum wage now as they did in the past. Two realities suggest this.

First, the proposed increase is huge. By 2016, it's almost 40 percent. Similar gains usually have occurred when high inflation advanced all wages rapidly. The minimum mainly kept pace. That's not true today. Compared to average wages, the proposed hike in the minimum appears to be the largest since the 1960s.

Second, businesses have been reluctant job creators. They curb hiring at the least pretext. They seem obsessed with cost control. The Great Recession and the 2008-09 financial crisis spawned so much fear that they changed, at least temporarily, behavior. Firms are more cautious. ...

A column by **David Brooks** is more illustration of how complex these problems are. It's why the government efforts always fail.

... If you have a primitive zero-sum mentality then you assume growing affluence for the rich must somehow be causing the immobility of the poor, but, in reality, the two sets of problems are different, and it does no good to lump them together and call them "inequality."

Second, it leads to ineffective policy responses. If you think the problem is "income inequality," then the natural response is to increase incomes at the bottom, by raising the minimum wage.

But raising the minimum wage may not be an effective way to help those least well-off. Joseph J. Sabia of San Diego State University and Richard V. Burkhauser of Cornell [looked at the effects of increases in the minimum wage](#) between 2003 and 2007. Consistent with some other studies, they find no evidence that such raises had any effect on the poverty rates.

That's because raises in the minimum wage are not targeted at the right people. Only 11 percent of the workers affected by such an increase come from poor households. Nearly two-thirds of such workers are the second or third earners living in households at twice the poverty line or above. ...

The Economist thinks it looks like the president will lose in the Supreme Court over his recess appointments.

TO APPOINT people to certain important posts, the president needs the “advice and consent” of the Senate. The constitution offers a small loophole, however: the president may “fill up all vacancies that may happen during the recess of the Senate, by granting commissions which shall expire at the end of their next session.” Through this loophole successive commanders-in-chief—and especially Barack Obama—have driven an 18-wheel truck.

On January 13th the Supreme Court heard arguments about the scope of the president’s power to make recess appointments. National Labour Relations Board v Noel Canning asks whether Mr Obama’s three appointments on January 4th 2012 to the NLRB, the five-member federal agency that resolves disputes between companies and workers, were constitutional. Mr Obama says that the Senate was in recess that day, so the appointments were legitimate. But under the Senate’s own rules, it was in session.

Noel Canning, a soft-drink bottler in Washington state, claims it was harmed by Mr Obama’s appointments. It lost a pay dispute with the Teamsters union when a three-member panel including two of Mr Obama’s recess appointees ruled against it. The bottler appealed, claiming that the NLRB was improperly constituted.

The court of appeals for the District of Columbia agreed. It issued a sweeping ruling that invalidated Mr Obama’s appointments and even called into question thousands of recess appointments that dozens of presidents have issued over the centuries. ...

John Fund illustrates the way the media ignore the IRS scandal and “flood the zone” with Chris Christie bridgegate coverage.

Yes, liberal bias does play a role in explaining why — as Newsbusters.org reports — the major networks have had 44 times more coverage of Chris Christie’s “Bridgegate” scandal than they have had on anything related to the IRS political-targeting scandal that began last May.

Jonathan Alter, speaking on MSNBC, has dismissed the comparison by saying that “there are not ongoing revelations [in the IRS story]. If there were ongoing revelations in the IRS matter, that would still be a story.” He made his claim only four days after news broke that the Justice Department had chosen a significant Obama donor to head its investigation of the IRS, creating the obvious perception of a conflict of interest.

But it’s also true that a large part of the difference in coverage is owing simply to the laziness of journalists, for whom anything connected to a future presidential election trumps delving deeply into more complicated topics. ...

Jennifer Rubin explains why the media types are so biased.

... Beyond political bias, the great shortcomings the mainstream media have are cultural and social biases. College-educated, politically correct, well-heeled and well-spoken, unreligious and pro-choice, these are people who generally don't look or talk like Christie, nor do they have people in their social circles who do. The only reference they may have is a character out of a Martin Scorsese movie. It's an extreme mismatch of habits and style, in the same way that virtually none of media can personally identify with an evangelical who prays every day, goes to church weekly and takes the Bible literally. In short, they lack empathy for such people and, therefore, misjudge how others relate to them.

Just as they took George W. Bush — the reader, wartime innovator and now painter — as a rube and not intellectually curious, they take Christie's public jousting with media and opponents as "bullying." Do the media consider Obama a bully because he criticizes the media and says mean things about Republicans? Oh no! Not the sophisticated, urbane fellow.

Hillary Clinton can keep a "hit list," and Obama can reward friends and excoriate enemies, but they will never be "bullies." They are tough, determined, not "patsies" and many other admirable things, but it is Christie, the media insist, who operates with "fear" and retribution. Evidence is beside the point. Bipartisan achievement is irrelevant. It is simply self-evident to the media elite. Their expectation of a politician is someone who is TV-ready, hair-perfect, voice-modulated and emotionally muted. The bridge story only confirms their stereotype of an ethnic, Northeastern pol — one who outwits and shows up fellow journalists on a daily basis. ...

Dilbert creator, Scott Adams, posts on success stigma. Our colleges are turning out economic ignoramuses.

The other day I asked aloud in this blog if there might be some sort of anti-success trend emerging in society. I think I found it.

Some folks emailed me directly (dilbertcartoonist@gmail.com) to say they believe it is a waste of time to pursue success because it is a zero-sum game. In other words, they believe they can only be successful by making someone else less successful, on the theory that there isn't enough success in the universe for everyone to get a meaningful slice. They tell me it would be "wrong" on some level to pick the pockets of strangers for self-enrichment.

And there it is.

I doubt that sort of thinking would have existed before the massive media campaign against the "top 1%." The power of the top 1% story is in the false impression that rich people stole the money from the poor and middle class, and therefore it would only be fair to give most of it back.

Clearly some of the financial titans are doing little more than picking pockets. But those are the exceptions. Most one-percenters are growing the economy and creating jobs. That's obvious to people who were born in the "rising tide lifts all boats" era. And it's obvious to anyone with a bit of economics education.

But if you are in your twenties, with no deep understanding of economics, wouldn't you believe success is evil? That's the dominant story of their generation. ...

Washington Post

[Minimum-wage mirage?](#)

by Robert J. Samuelson

This minimum wage business is tricky. On its face, raising the wage seems an easy way to fight poverty. Just pay low-wage workers more. After all, some scholarly research finds that, within reasonable limits, there's no job penalty. A higher minimum doesn't reduce employment much, if at all. By and large, that's the position of the Obama administration, congressional Democrats and liberal groups. Unfortunately, it may not be that simple.

[Democrats propose raising the present federal minimum](#) of \$7.25 an hour to \$8.20 this year, \$9.15 in 2015 and [\\$10.10 in 2016](#). [Assuming no job losses, almost 28 million workers would benefit](#) by 2016, [estimates the Economic Policy Institute](#) (EPI), a liberal think tank. That's about 17 million who now make less than the proposed minimums, plus 11 million slightly better-paid workers who would get increases to keep them above the minimum.

Someone working 40 hours a week at the minimum would see annual wages go from \$15,080 now to \$21,008 in 2016. Today's annual wage is about 20 percent below the federal poverty line for a family of three, while the 2016 wage would slightly be above the line for a family of three (though not of four), says EPI. Not all workers would receive big increases, because many work part-time (46 percent), don't stay for a full year or already are above the minimum. Still, wage gains could be sizable.

Economist John Schmitt of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, another left-leaning think tank, says that recent minimum-wage [studies find that "modest increases" have "little or no employment effect."](#) Businesses turn to other ways of absorbing the added costs rather than reducing payrolls or workers' hours, he says. Better-paid workers mean less turnover. This cuts firms' recruitment and training costs; it also raises workers' productivity, because they're more familiar with their jobs. Finally, firms adopt "small price increases."

All this sounds plausible; it may also be incomplete.

For starters, the minimum wage is a blunt instrument to aid the poor because it covers many workers from families that are well above the federal poverty line. By the administration's figures, 53 percent of workers who would benefit from a higher minimum come from families with incomes above \$35,000, including 22 percent with incomes exceeding \$75,000.

Next, economists still disagree on the job effect. In studies — and their review of other studies — economists David Neumark and J.M. Ian Salas of the University of California at Irvine and William Wascher of the Federal Reserve conclude that [higher minimums do weaken low-wage employment](#). Under plausible assumptions, even a small effect (say, a 1 percent job loss for each 10 percent increase in the minimum) implies nearly a million fewer jobs over three years.

But scholarly research, regardless of conclusions, may be beside the point. Businesses don't consult studies to decide what to do. They respond based on their own economic outlook. They may not react to a higher minimum wage now as they did in the past. Two realities suggest this.

First, the proposed increase is huge. By 2016, it's almost 40 percent. Similar gains usually have occurred when high inflation advanced all wages rapidly. The minimum mainly kept pace. That's not true today. Compared to average wages, the proposed hike in the minimum appears to be the largest since the 1960s.

Second, businesses have been reluctant job creators. They curb hiring at the least pretext. They seem obsessed with cost control. The Great Recession and the 2008-09 financial crisis spawned so much fear that they changed, at least temporarily, behavior. Firms are more cautious.

Would employers take the minimum's steep costs in stride — or react by cutting hiring and automating more low-paid jobs (example: supermarket checkouts)? That's the crucial question. Which matters more for low-income workers: added jobs or higher incomes? There's a powerful symbolism to raising the minimum, but the notion that it can be boosted sharply without any job penalty may be a mirage.

NY Times

[The Inequality Problem](#)

by David Brooks

Suddenly the whole world is talking about income inequality. But, as this debate goes on, it is beginning to look as though the thing is being misconceived. The income inequality debate is confusing matters more than clarifying them, and it is leading us off in unhelpful directions.

In the first place, *to frame the issue as income inequality is to lump together different issues that are not especially related.* What we call "inequality" is caused by two different constellations of problems.

At the top end, there is the growing wealth of the top 5 percent of workers. This is linked to things like perverse compensation schemes on Wall Street, assortative mating (highly educated people are more likely to marry each other and pass down their advantages to their children) and the superstar effect (in an Internet economy, a few superstars in each industry can reap global gains while the average performers cannot).

At the bottom end, there is a growing class of people stuck on the margins, generation after generation. This is caused by high dropout rates, the disappearance of low-skill jobs, breakdown in family structures and so on.

If you have a primitive zero-sum mentality then you assume growing affluence for the rich must somehow be causing the immobility of the poor, but, in reality, the two sets of problems are different, and it does no good to lump them together and call them "inequality."

Second, *it leads to ineffective policy responses*. If you think the problem is “income inequality,” then the natural response is to increase incomes at the bottom, by raising the minimum wage.

But raising the minimum wage may not be an effective way to help those least well-off. Joseph J. Sabia of San Diego State University and Richard V. Burkhauser of Cornell [looked at the effects of increases in the minimum wage](#) between 2003 and 2007. Consistent with some other studies, they find no evidence that such raises had any effect on the poverty rates.

That’s because raises in the minimum wage are not targeted at the right people. Only 11 percent of the workers affected by such an increase come from poor households. Nearly two-thirds of such workers are the second or third earners living in households at twice the poverty line or above.

The primary problem for the poor is not that they are getting paid too little for the hours they work. It is that they are not working full time or at all. Raising the minimum wage is popular politics; it is not effective policy.

Third, *the income inequality frame contributes to our tendency to simplify complex cultural, social, behavioral and economic problems into strictly economic problems*.

There is a very strong correlation between single motherhood and low social mobility. There is a very strong correlation between high school dropout rates and low mobility. There is a strong correlation between the fraying of social fabric and low economic mobility. There is a strong correlation between de-industrialization and low social mobility. It is also true that many men, especially young men, are engaging in behaviors that damage their long-term earning prospects; much more than comparable women.

Low income is the outcome of these interrelated problems, but it is not the problem. To say it is the problem is to confuse cause and effect. To say it is the problem is to give yourself a pass from exploring the complex and morally fraught social and cultural roots of the problem. It is to give yourself permission to ignore the parts that are uncomfortable to talk about but that are really the inescapable core of the thing.

Fourth, *the income inequality frame needlessly polarizes the debate*. There is a growing consensus that government should be doing more to help increase social mobility for the less affluent. Even conservative Republicans are signing on to this. The income inequality language introduces a class conflict element to this discussion.

Democrats often see low wages as both a human capital problem and a problem caused by unequal economic power. Republicans are more likely to see them just as a human capital problem. If we’re going to pass bipartisan legislation, we’re going to have to start with the human capital piece, where there is some agreement, not the class conflict piece, where there is none.

Some on the left have always tried to introduce a more class-conscious style of politics. These efforts never pan out. America has always done better, liberals have always done better, when we are all focused on opportunity and mobility, not inequality, on individual and family aspiration, not class-consciousness.

If we're going to mobilize a policy revolution, we should focus on the real concrete issues: bad schools, no jobs for young men, broken families, neighborhoods without mediating institutions. We should not be focusing on a secondary issue and a statistical byproduct.

The Economist

Presidential power

Obama rebuked

TO APPOINT people to certain important posts, the president needs the “advice and consent” of the Senate. The constitution offers a small loophole, however: the president may “fill up all vacancies that may happen during the recess of the Senate, by granting commissions which shall expire at the end of their next session.” Through this loophole successive commanders-in-chief—and especially Barack Obama—have driven an 18-wheel truck.

On January 13th the Supreme Court heard arguments about the scope of the president's power to make recess appointments. *National Labour Relations Board v Noel Canning* asks whether Mr Obama's [three appointments](#) on January 4th 2012 to the NLRB, the five-member federal agency that resolves disputes between companies and workers, were constitutional. Mr Obama says that the Senate was in recess that day, so the appointments were legitimate. But under the Senate's own rules, it was in session.

Noel Canning, a soft-drink bottler in Washington state, claims it was harmed by Mr Obama's appointments. It lost a pay dispute with the Teamsters union when a three-member panel including two of Mr Obama's recess appointees ruled against it. The bottler appealed, claiming that the NLRB was improperly constituted.

The court of appeals for the District of Columbia [agreed](#). It issued a sweeping ruling that invalidated Mr Obama's appointments and even called into question thousands of recess appointments that dozens of presidents have issued over the centuries. Only official recesses between legislative sessions trigger the president's power, the appeals court ruled. Holiday adjournments occurring in the middle of a session do not. And if a vacancy arises before the Senate leaves for a recess, it may not be filled unilaterally by the president.

The White House appealed to the Supreme Court. The solicitor-general, Donald Verrilli, argued that the Senate was effectively in recess on the day in question because it was conducting only “pro-forma” sessions, under “a formal order that no business shall be conducted”. During this adjournment, a lone senator would drive to the Capitol every three days to gavel in and, seconds later, gavel out.

Since Republican senators had pledged to block his preferred candidates, Mr Obama laughed off these pseudo-sessions and installed his nominees—something George W Bush did not dare to do when Democrats used similar tactics on him in 2007. Judging by the debate on Monday, even the liberal justices think Mr Obama over-reached. The constitution does not give a president the power to impose his will on stubborn senators, no matter how badly they are behaving, argued Elena Kagan, an Obama appointee.

Mr Verrilli did not bolster his case when, in response to Chief Justice John Roberts, he allowed that a slightly tweaked Senate order (“It is not anticipated that any business will be conducted”) might be enough for the Senate to establish that it is “available” during holiday breaks and thus avert recess appointments. Why “bother establishing [a rule] at all,” Ms Kagan asked, if it is “so easy to evade”? In the words of Miguel Estrada, representing the 45 Republican senators (who all support Noel Canning), “this case fundamentally is about who gets to decide whether the Senate is in recess, the Senate or the president.”

The president's power to appoint people when the Senate is in recess was created in the days when travel was difficult and the Senate would often be absent for months. Ms Kagan noted that “this is not the horse and buggy era any more” and challenged Mr Verrilli to explain why the clause is not “an historic relic” in an age where members of Congress can jet to the Capitol and reconvene within a day.

Mr Verrilli tried to zoom out from an analysis of the recess appointments clause to Alexander Hamilton’s depiction of the Senate’s authority to reject nominees as “a power that was rarely exercised and would operate, if at all, invisibly or silently”. This spurred an admonition from Justice Samuel Alito: “[Y]ou are making a very, very aggressive argument in favour of executive power” that “has nothing whatsoever to do with whether the Senate is in session or not.” Mr Verrilli parried by paraphrasing another Federalist paper where James Madison registered a worry that Congress might “drain authority and energy from the executive” if presidents are not “fortified” against encroachments from the legislative branch. The justices signalled little love for this argument.

A decision is expected in June. Noel Canning will probably win, though it seems less likely that the justices will endorse the appeals court’s [broad indictment](#) of presidential recess appointments that take place during breaks from formal sessions of Congress (as opposed to recesses between them) and of appointments to vacancies that “happen” before a recess.

How much does all this matter? The power of an intransigent minority of senators to block the president’s picks was severely curtailed in November last year, when Senate Democrats scrapped the filibuster for most appointments. However, even a narrow ruling for Noel Canning could hobble presidents when a rival party controls the Senate. If the Republicans retake the chamber in November, they could prevent Mr Obama from making recess appointments by holding pro-forma sessions whenever they leave town.

National Review

[A Tale of Two Scandals](#)

The media overreact on Christie, but underreact on the IRS.

by John Fund

Yes, liberal bias does play a role in explaining why — as Newsbusters.org reports — the major networks have had 44 times more coverage of Chris Christie’s “Bridgewater” scandal than they have had on anything related to the IRS political-targeting scandal that began last May.

Jonathan Alter, speaking on MSNBC, has dismissed the comparison by saying that “there are not ongoing revelations [in the IRS story]. If there were ongoing revelations in the IRS matter, that would still be a story.” He made his claim only four days after news broke that the Justice Department had chosen a significant Obama donor to head its investigation of the IRS, creating the obvious perception of a conflict of interest.

But it’s also true that a large part of the difference in coverage is owing simply to the laziness of journalists, for whom anything connected to a future presidential election trumps delving deeply into more complicated topics.

That laziness has extended to the “bullying” issue, i.e., whether Governor Christie is part of the long New Jersey tradition of overbearing political bosses. New Jersey voters are split, with the latest Quinnipiac Poll finding that 40 percent of those surveyed think he is more of a bully, while 54 percent think he is more of a leader (his overall approval rating is 55 percent).

But being a bully is often in the eye of the beholder, and a strong case can be made that some New Jersey legislators are themselves verging on bullying in their Bridgegate probe. Compare how a top suspect in Bridgegate, and one in the IRS scandal, were treated by both investigators and the media.

David Wildstein, a top Port Authority executive involved in the September lane closings near the George Washington Bridge, took the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination when he appeared under oath before a New Jersey Assembly committee last week. Committee members kept badgering him for answers, despite knowing he would continue to take the Fifth. He then departed the hearing room with members of the audience yelling “Shame!” The committee, chaired by Assemblyman John Wisniewski, who is also chairman of New Jersey’s Democratic State Committee, then instantly voted him in contempt.

I have no legal or ethical problem with what was done, but why were the normally high-minded liberal supporters of due process and civil liberties so silent as to Wildstein’s treatment?

Consider the tender manner with which liberals insisted that Lois Lerner, the director of the IRS Exempt Organizations Division, be treated during last May’s House Government Oversight Committee hearings chaired by Representative Darrell Issa (R., Calif.). Representative Elijah Cummings (Md.), the ranking Democrat, said that because Lerner had invoked her Fifth Amendment rights, further questioning of her was inappropriate: “The chairman issued a subpoena forcing her to appear; made her stand and swear an oath; and challenged her Fifth Amendment assertion by posing questions to her anyway.” In the end, Lerner had to assert or reference her Fifth Amendment right only three times at the congressional hearing. In New Jersey, Wildstein was forced to repeat his Fifth Amendment mantra before state legislators a total of 15 times.

A full 37 days after Lerner had asserted her Fifth Amendment rights, the Oversight Committee reconvened to consider and debate a resolution declaring her invocation invalid. At this proceeding, Representative Cummings asked that “the committee first take the preliminary commonsense step of holding a hearing to obtain testimony from legal experts before requiring committee members to vote on this very significant constitutional question. Otherwise, as a member of Congress who has sworn to uphold the Constitution, I cannot in good conscience support this resolution.” Cummings and every other committee Democrat voted against the

resolution even though it made no criminal allegation against Lerner. Eight months later, a resolution holding her in contempt of the full House has still not been voted on.

Compare that with the case of Assemblyman Wisniewski, who said to his fellow committee members, before they voted on a finding of criminal contempt by Wildstein: “I just wanted to be clear; for the record — and I’ll make the ruling as Chair — there is no opinion as to whether this trumps the Constitution or doesn’t trump the Constitution.”

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the FBI has found no evidence that crimes were committed during the IRS scandal, even though it has failed to interview many key witnesses and there are clear examples of taxpayer information having being leaked on at least a couple of occasions. Democrats assert that, even if there is ever found to have been some political retribution against Tea Party groups, it was deplorable but not illegal.

But New Jersey Democrats are singing a different tune about Bridgegate. When asked by Paul Mulshine of the Newark *Star-Ledger*, state senator Ray Lesniak, a former chairman of the Democratic State Committee, couldn’t name a single law that Christie aides or appointees broke despite their deplorable behavior. Yet he insisted: “There’s gotta be dozens of state and federal criminal-law violations.”

Harvey Silverglate, a prominent civil-liberties lawyer and author of the book *Three Felonies a Day*, notes that in 2010 the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the sweeping “honest services” federal statute that allowed prosecutors to go after public officials over (in the words of the statute) “any scheme or artifice to deprive another of the intangible right of honest services.” Silverglate told the *Star-Ledger* that the Supreme Court “ruled you have to show some kind of bribe or payments; [in Bridgegate] it sounds like we’re talking about political payback.”

None of this is to excuse the callous and cruel behavior of Christie aides, or — if he is found to have been deceptive in proclaiming his non-involvement — that of Governor Christie himself. But it should make us question the intensity and zeal with which the scandal is being pursued. Michael Murphy, the former top prosecutor in New Jersey’s Morris County and a former Democratic candidate for governor, told me the atmosphere in Trenton now is “a feeding frenzy,” with many reporters convinced that “this is their Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein moment.”

Some journalists are now having second thoughts. Former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw said yesterday that the coverage was too much: “I do think, across the country, however, when they’re looking at long-term unemployment, and they’re looking at the uncertainty of the ObamaCare, they’re saying, ‘You’ve got to move on, guys.’”

Surprisingly, even some MSNBC hosts are agreeing. “The story can now officially be labelled tedious,” Mike Barnicle admitted on *Morning Joe* yesterday. “It’s so overblown. Again, if nothing occurs, nothing comes out, the story dies.” His colleague Joe Scarborough agreed: “I didn’t want to put it at the top of the show, because I thought it was tedious. But Mika [Brzezinski] said some things broke yesterday, where he was, the timeline.” That timeline consumed 18 minutes of *Morning Joe*’s coverage at the top of the prime 8 a.m. hour.

Give Mika Brzezinski credit for believing in the story. On Monday, when *Time* magazine senior political analyst Mark Halperin said that President Obama has never undergone an intense

media grilling on Benghazi and the IRS the likes of what Chris Christie has seen on Bridgegate, she was quick to cut him off. Bringing up Benghazi and the IRS is “flailing for some sort of distraction. It’s Chris Christie. It’s New Jersey. Stick to that story.”

Indeed. For all too much of the media, they have their story. And they’re sticking to it.

Right Turn

The media don’t get Christie

by Jennifer Rubin

The mainstream media don’t get New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. They think he is a bully. Voters [don’t](#) – by a margin of 49 to 26 percent. The media think he’s been mortally wounded by the bridge scandal. Voters haven’t yet changed their minds about him. The media think Republicans outside New Jersey hate him. He’s still ahead in [polls](#), however premature.

Let’s leave aside who is “right,” since we are talking about perceptions. Let’s also put aside whether Christie will win the 2016 presidential nomination. Instead, it is worth asking why the media’s perception of Christie is so different from the public’s.

Normally, one might say the press is out to get a top-tier GOP presidential contender. And maybe they are. But I think something else is going on.

Beyond political bias, the great shortcomings the mainstream media have are cultural and social biases. College-educated, politically correct, well-heeled and well-spoken, unreligious and pro-choice, these are people who generally don’t look or talk like Christie, nor do they have people in their social circles who do. The only reference they may have is a character out of a Martin Scorsese movie. It’s an extreme mismatch of habits and style, in the same way that virtually none of media can personally identify with an evangelical who prays every day, goes to church weekly and takes the Bible literally. In short, they lack empathy for such people and, therefore, misjudge how others relate to them.

Just as they took George W. Bush — the reader, wartime innovator and now painter — as a rube and not intellectually curious, they take Christie’s public jousting with media and opponents as “bullying.” Do the media consider Obama a bully because he criticizes the media and says mean things about Republicans? *Oh no! Not the sophisticated, urbane fellow.*

Hillary Clinton can keep a [hit list](#), and Obama can reward friends and excoriate enemies, but *they* will never be “bullies.” They are tough, determined, not “patsies” and many other admirable things, but it is Christie, the media insist, who operates with “fear” and retribution. Evidence is beside the point. Bipartisan achievement is irrelevant. It is simply self-evident to the media elite. Their expectation of a politician is someone who is TV-ready, hair-perfect, voice-modulated and emotionally muted. The bridge story only confirms their stereotype of an ethnic, Northeastern pol — one who outwits and shows up fellow journalists on a daily basis.

Ordinary people may, if we take the polling seriously, have the opposite reaction. They don’t think ordinary pols are poised or impressive; ordinary people think they are too slick by half and mostly liars. In Christie, they see someone not like every other pol, and, for that reason alone,

they are entertained and engaged. They *like* him. They are or know people like him. *They* want to yell at other pols so they are pleased to have him do it on their behalf. He is funny and irreverent, everything bland pols and media hosts (smiles painted on, every hair and utterance arranged in advance) are not.

So, in addition to any political bias, there is a mismatch between the media and Christie and between the media and the people who like Christie. That's why the mainstream media are horrible at assessing how Christie comes across to ordinary voters. They judge him by metrics ordinary voters don't. When Christie "loses" the media elite, he's not in trouble; if he were to lose the regular Jersey guys and gals, he would be. So far, that hasn't happened.

Dilbert's Blog

The Success Pie

by Scott Adams

The other day I asked aloud in this blog if there might be some sort of anti-success trend emerging in society. I think I found it.

Some folks emailed me directly (dilbertcartoonist@gmail.com) to say they believe it is a waste of time to pursue success because it is a zero-sum game. In other words, they believe they can only be successful by making someone else less successful, on the theory that there isn't enough success in the universe for everyone to get a meaningful slice. They tell me it would be "wrong" on some level to pick the pockets of strangers for self-enrichment.

And there it is.

I doubt that sort of thinking would have existed before the massive media campaign against the "top 1%." The power of the top 1% story is in the false impression that rich people stole the money from the poor and middle class, and therefore it would only be fair to give most of it back.

Clearly some of the financial titans are doing little more than picking pockets. But those are the exceptions. Most one-percenters are growing the economy and creating jobs. That's obvious to people who were born in the "rising tide lifts all boats" era. And it's obvious to anyone with a bit of economics education.

But if you are in your twenties, with no deep understanding of economics, wouldn't you believe success is evil? That's the dominant story of their generation.

Making matters worse, success, money, and abuse of power are all conflated in our minds because that's how the news lumps that stuff.

So while the benefits of success are entrenched in the minds of my generation, the young might be learning that it's something to be avoided.

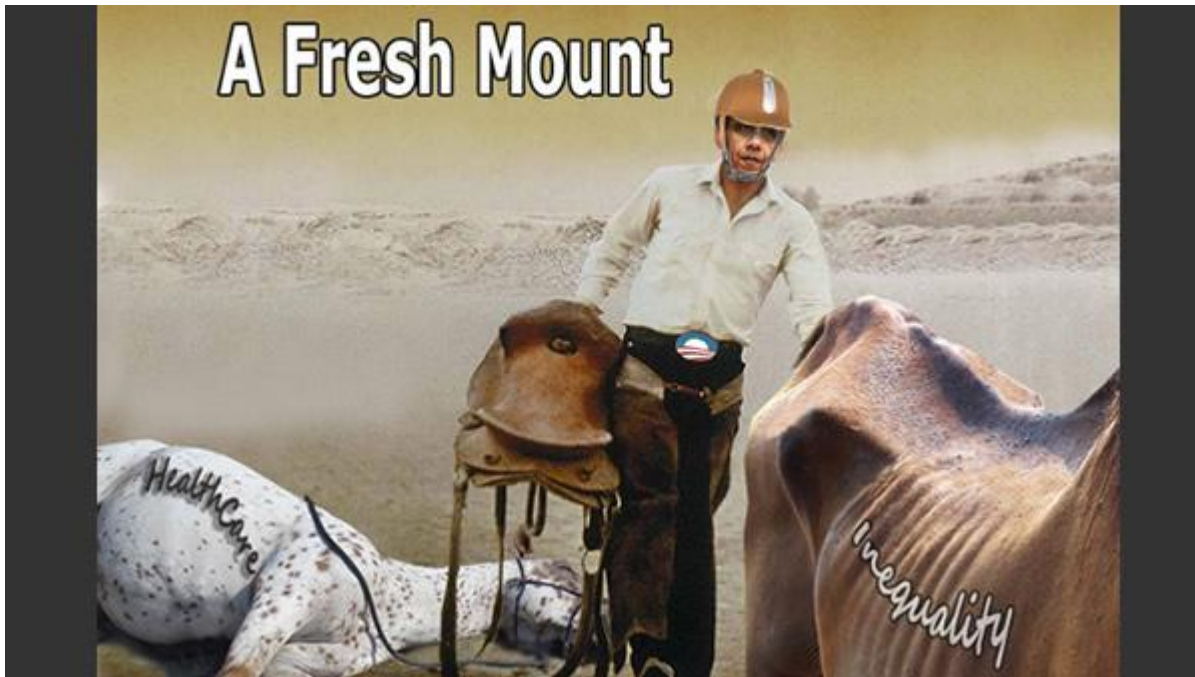
I can't back this hypothesis with data. We're in anecdotal territory. But it's something to keep an eye on.

Update 1:

Another reason success might have lost its luster is that successful people are considered [narcissists](#), and narcissism seems to be more condemned lately than at any time I can recall. (Or maybe that's just me.) But it turns out that, according to one [study](#), a little bit of narcissism actually helps people succeed as leaders. That's a problem because what 20-something wants to be seen as a narcissist? Narcissism is the new racism.

Update 2:

Here's more evidence that success is being demonized by the young. The University of Georgia's Student Government Association is [demanding fewer success stories](#) because it makes those who are less successful look bad.



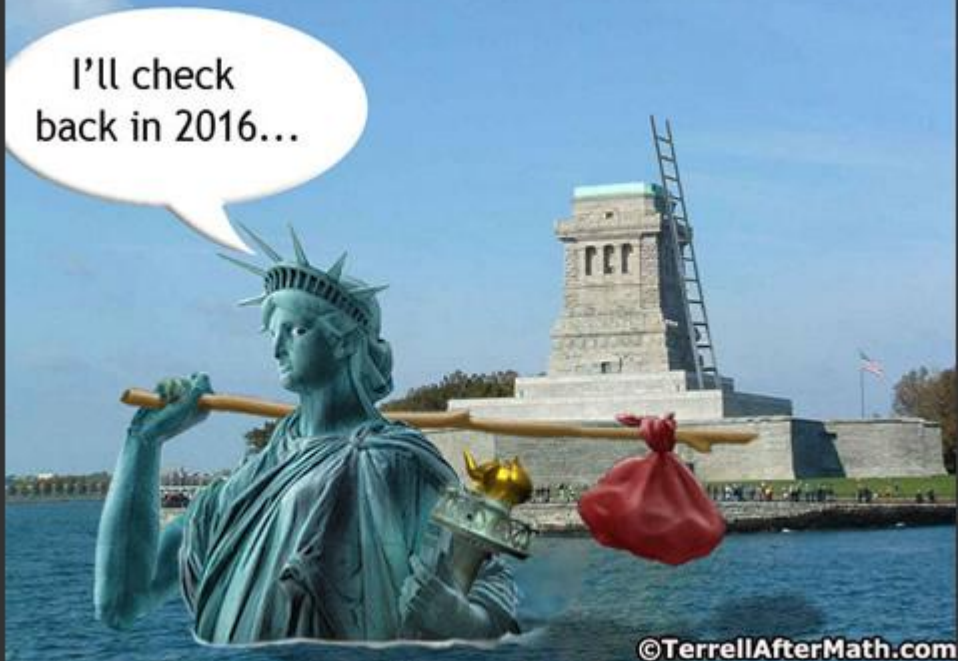


COIN OF THE REALM

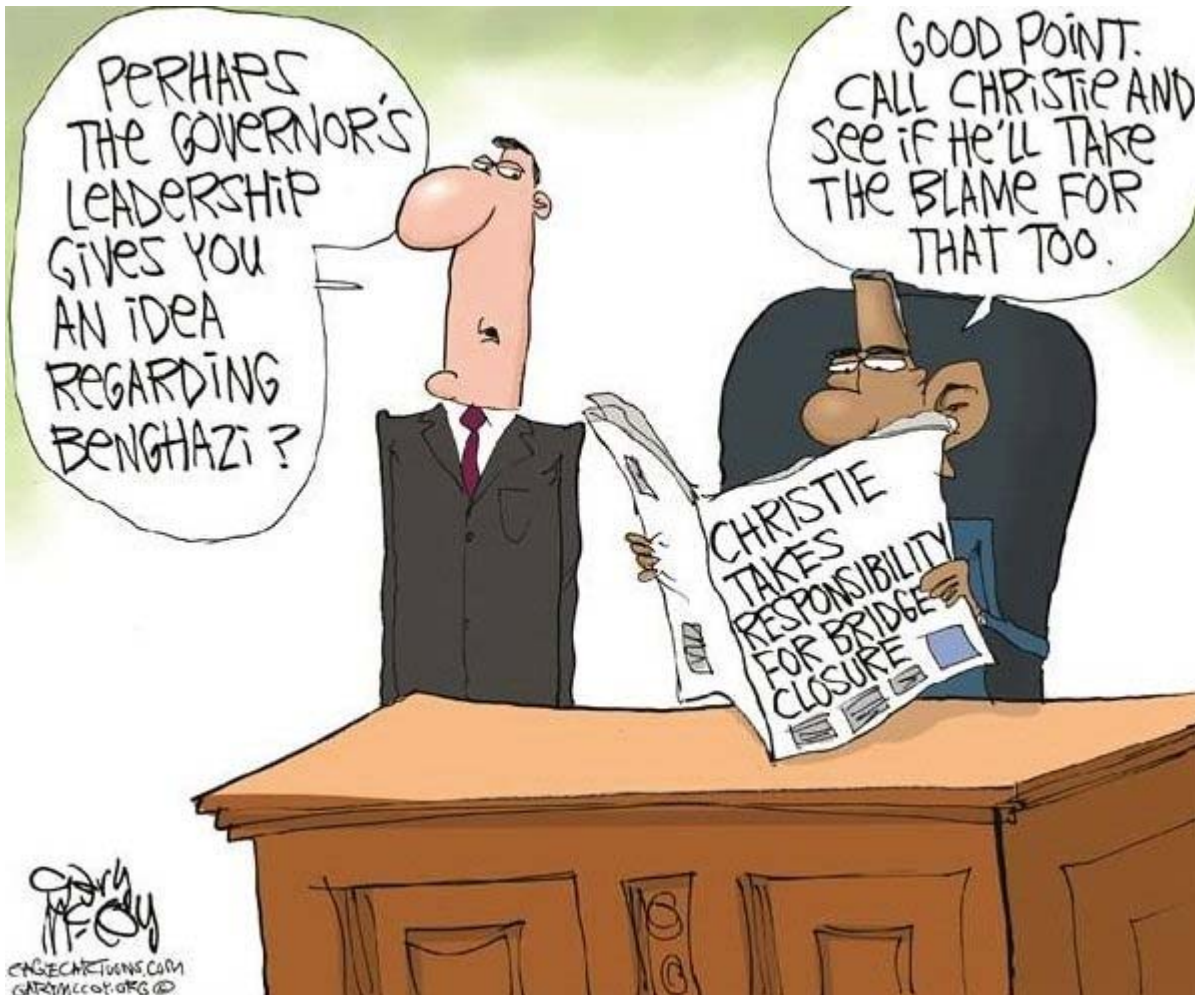


©TerrellAfterMath.com

I'll check
back in 2016...



©TerrellAfterMath.com



Rouhani and Kerry exit negotiations.



Congressional staffer learns she isn't exempt from ObamaCare.

