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## And the Ship Goes Down

By Rob Urie

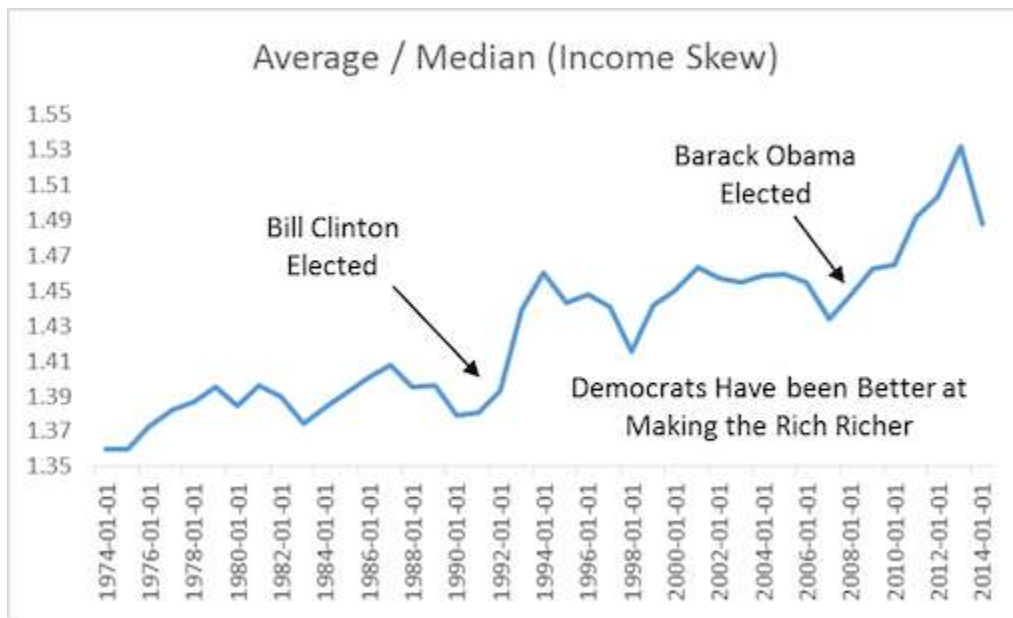
September 9, 2016



The eternal promise of capitalist democracy is a future that somehow breaks from the past. In this alternate universe solutions to global warming, the threat of nuclear weapons, never-ending

wars fought to control economic resources and the just distribution of political and economic power are always but one election away. Hillary Clinton is the agent of ‘effective’ change and Donald Trump is the agent of reactionary change. That the political and economic trajectories of the last half century have been uni-directional in favor of concentrated wealth and power are (1) the predicted outcomes of the theories by which they were sold and (2) antithetical to any notion of democratic representation as it is generally understood.

Without this promise the present exists as a set of perpetually irresolvable contradictions. The ideas for environmental resolution, nuclear disarmament and more equitable political and economic distribution are placed by political operatives in the social ether in order to preclude their realization. Hillary Clinton, a central proponent of wars of choice, economic maldistribution and divisive social strategies to consolidate and maintain political power, poses as their opposite to win election. In theorized contradiction Donald Trump has bravely proposed ‘banning’ the Muslims that Hillary Clinton has spent two decades murdering, slandering the Hispanic immigrants that Hillary Clinton has spent two decades dispossessing and cutting taxes on the rich that Hillary Clinton has spent two decades making richer.

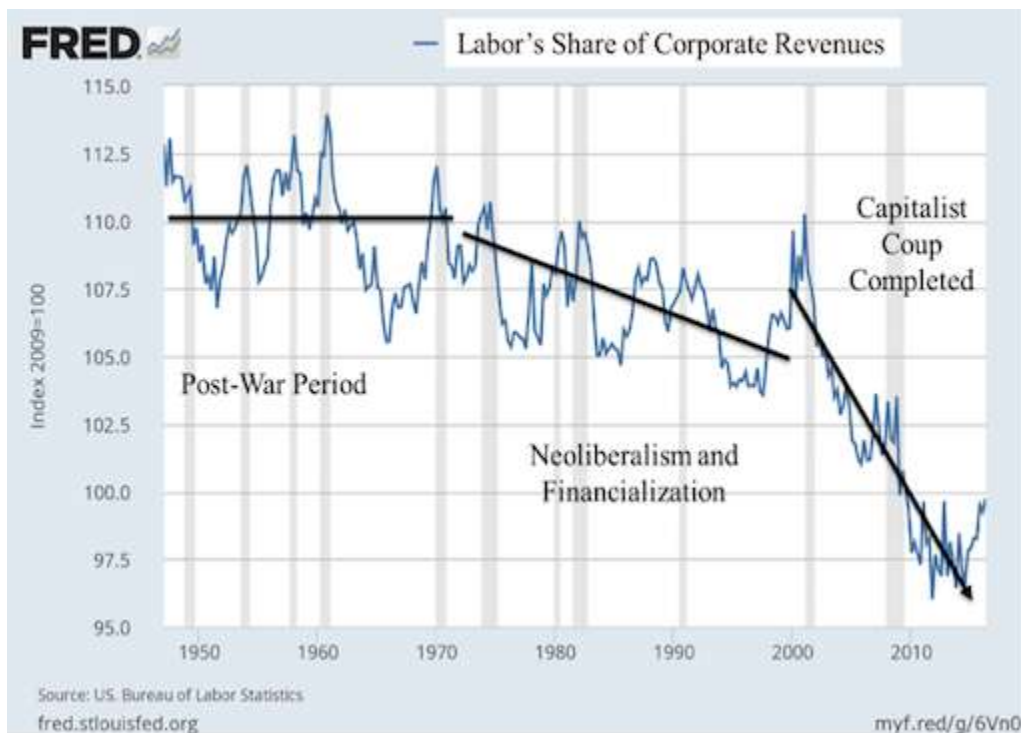


*Graph: the question of why self-serving plutocrats support liberal and progressive political candidates like Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama has been answered: because Democrats are better at making the rich richer. Through the neoliberal / Washington Consensus boilerplate of deregulation, privatization and financialization Democrats have lent their socially progressive patina to redistributing economic welfare to the already rich. While ‘actually existing’ capitalism bears little relation to its theoretical incarnation, outcomes tie closely to the history of state-capitalism as imperial endeavor. Units are Mean to Median Real Personal Income. Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve.*

The question of how we got from there to here, to the current state of broadly distributed social ills undertaken to accrue wealth and power to the privileged few, emerges from imperial history that should have ended with the Great Depression. Capitalist ‘reforms’ lasted not one day longer

than did memories of the Great Depression. By the 1970s deregulation, code for removing social accountability from public institutions, joined privatization, code for redistributing public wealth into private hands, as the ‘democratic’ means of removing the imperial hubris of the Vietnam War and the ‘heavy hand of government’ from control over industry. Jimmy Carter ‘proved’ government incompetence when he crashed the economy with a financial ‘solution,’ sky high interest rates, to the political problem of suddenly expensive oil due to the (long overdue) Iranian Revolution.

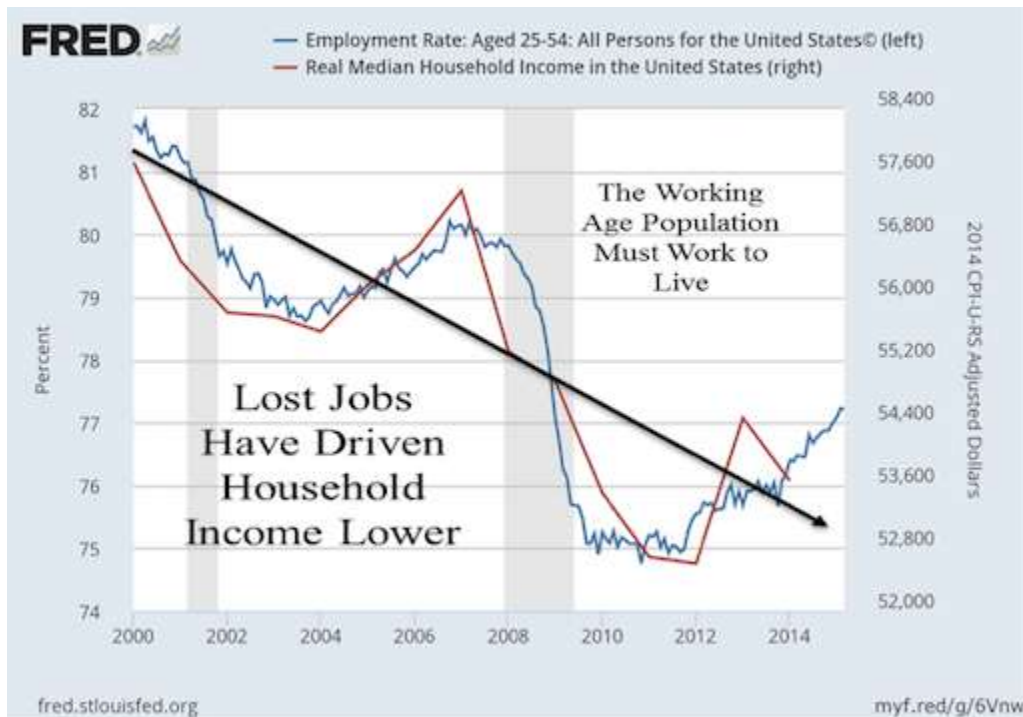
Relevant to present circumstance is that the ‘official’ political powers then promoting political and economic reforms existed to preclude substantive redistribution of the economic power motivating the problems in need of resolution. Singer Willy Nelson was smoking pot on the roof of the White House (‘counterculture’) as Jimmy Carter was deregulating and financializing the economy. As the alleged ‘outsider’ candidate, Donald Trump unites barely considered economic nationalism with cutting taxes on the rich, ‘better negotiated’ (for whom?) trade agreements and nativist strategies to divide the global working class. More relevant still, even a cursory read of economic history would tie capitalist power, the ‘supply side’ of consumer choice, to wars of choice to control economic resources and to ‘manage’ domestic politics through fearmongering.



*Graph: since the 1970s Democrats have explained their turn hard-right as a response to popular rejection of Jimmy Carter’s Left political program. In true Democrat fashion Mr. Carter pushed deregulation and financialization, the economic program of the hard-Right, while posing as a social liberal. This bifurcation of posture and substance—posing as populists while acting as loyal servants of their plutocrat masters, has made Democrats the more masterful proponents of plutocratic interests. With financialization beginning in earnest around 1980, Democrats have taken credit for brief interludes of prosperity within a larger trajectory of economic decline for all but the very rich. Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve.*

So effective is the propaganda that Democrats ‘educated’ on the issues look past Hillary Clinton’s wanton and willful participation in killing 500,000 vulnerable Iraqi women and children through sanctions (‘passive’ murder), her support for George W. Bush’s catastrophic and murderous war of choice against Iraq and her launch of the war that destroyed Libya to believe that she is the solution to her own past. Ideological and / or tribal blinders come into play through the assumption that the same Hillary Clinton who sacrificed a million or so Black lives to mass incarceration out of political expediency and ten or so million factory jobs for the benefit of stock prices and her Wall Street benefactors cares about anything or anyone but herself.

The pretense of choice, as if Donald Trump might not also favor tax cuts for the rich, ‘free-markets’ that function as the ‘natural’ apologia for the existing system of welfare for the rich, and the ‘business’ of American imperial slaughter, is to contain the realm of political possibility. Mr. Trump is indeed frightening, a voice of unconstrained privilege and the ignorant hubris that it empowers. But Donald Trump is Hillary Clinton’s constituency— inherited wealth and privilege as the product of the intelligence and hard work of myth put forward as fact. Had Donald Trump had to pay his debts as a citizen rather than renege on them as a corporation, how rich would he really be? Blurring the line between ordinary opportunist and corporate titan is every bit the reason why Hillary Clinton is the establishment favorite.

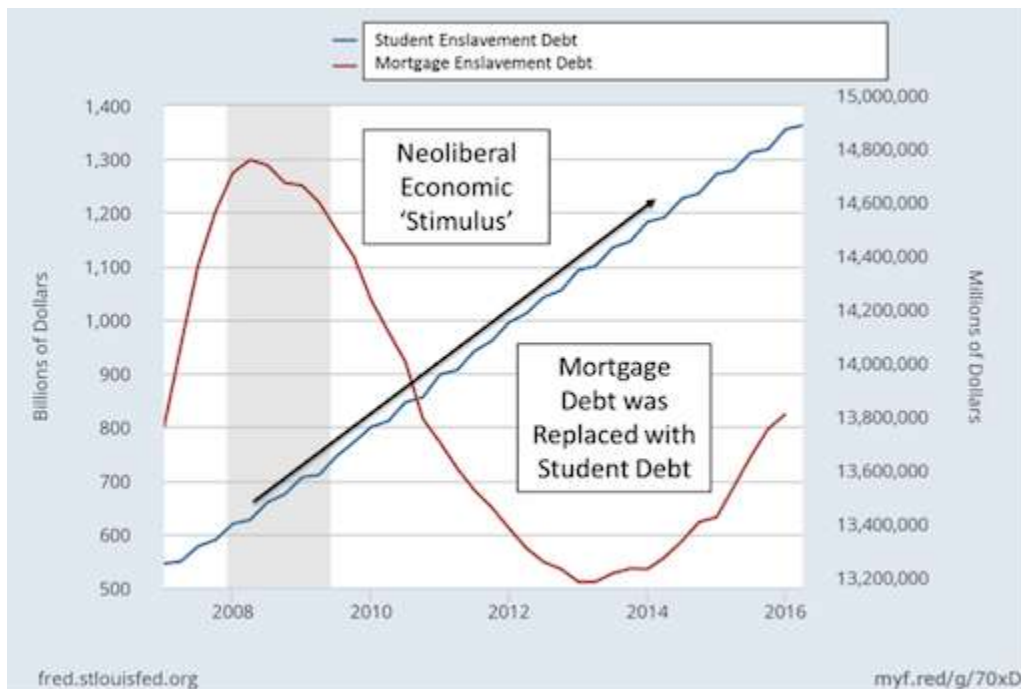


*Graph: because income and wealth averages are skewed by concentration at the very top, median incomes better represent the economic outcomes experienced by most people. For nearly two decades Median Household Income has fallen as prime-age workers have been forced out of the workforce by a lack of jobs. This ties to rising incomes of the very rich (top graph) and to the diminished status of organized labor (graph above) through trade agreements like NAFTA. Bill Clinton passed NAFTA after Republicans had been unable to overcome labor’s resistance to it.*

*Following the initial rise in employment due to the Dotcom stock bubble the effect of NAFTA has been to lower household income by sending factory jobs overseas. Donald Trump's working class constituents can be found among those dispossessed by NAFTA. Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve.*

An unstated paradox of Mr. Trump's claim that he would 'better negotiate' NAFTA is that the intent of the agreement, along with the rest of the Clinton's economic program, was to shift power away from labor to capital. If the goal is somehow different, why would the vehicle for accomplishing it be the same? Once environmental degradation, wars for economic resources and the economic and political dislocations of imperial capitalism are deducted from free-trade 'gains' the improbability of capitalist commensurability becomes apparent. 'Free trade' is social negotiation posed as deference to nature— a rhetorical device to hide selfish motives and calamitous outcomes behind the disinterest of 'natural' economic production.

If the goal of trade agreements were really selfless 'improvement' of the human condition, why would the rich be averse to redistribution of the alleged gains from trade downward? In fact, the self-legitimation with which Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump surround themselves— the stories of knowledge workers and the (Mitt) Romneysque 'productive class,' are belied by the factual redistribution of working class product into the pockets of privileged charlatans like the Clintons and Mr. Trump. Mexican peasants weren't starving and dispossessed until they were made that way. The same is true of American industrial workers. If Hillary Clinton's wealthy backers were serious with their liberal blather about 'inequality,' they could stop taking everything for themselves. Don't hold your breath.



*Graph: panic in establishment circles and the move by prominent Republicans to support the liberal Hillary Clinton is based in some measure on how badly these folks have screwed American youth and the working class. While the trend higher preceded him, Barack Obama has*

*actively promoted the rise in the most onerous debt available— student loans, through the privatization of formerly public education and promotion of neoliberal-scam ‘private’ universities that trade worthless and near-worthless degrees for lifetimes of indebtedness without the possibility of relief. This ties to Bill Clinton’s \$18 million paycheck from Laureate University for lending his name to the corporate charade put forward as a university. Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve.*

With the neoliberal consensus under attack the strategy of officialdom is to define the realm of political possibility from Hillary Clinton to Donald Trump. Mr. Trump’s blatant racist and nativist chatter is seen as a threat to the establishment because it is blatant, not because it is racist and / or nativist. Ronald Reagan began his run for the Presidency in 1980 in Philadelphia, Mississippi where three civil rights workers were brutally murdered in the 1960s to signal that race was to again be used to divide working class interests for the benefit of capital. Hillary Clinton slandered Black children with the dehumanizing term ‘super-predators’ as the Clintons pushed for longer mandatory prison sentences, increased capital punishment and the build-out of mass incarceration. The idea that officialdom is either surprised or horrified by Mr. Trump’s cynical drivel would be laughable if it weren’t so transparent.

Between Hillary Clinton’s email scams— hiding private fundraising and pay-for-play political machinations behind the cover of official government business, mistakes, errors and ‘lost’ evidence; revelations about the opaque and corrupt dealings of the Clinton Foundation— FEMA-like formaldehyde laden trailers for Haitians displaced by the earthquake, really? Really?, and Bill Clinton’s sequential shakedowns of wealthy rubes for use of his name on their scam operations, the Clinton ship is sinking. Liberals and progressives are wholly to blame for (1) supporting such an end-of-empire tool of ruling class interests and (2) for making Donald Trump the only ‘viable’ alternative. Too-clever-by-half is the term that comes to mind. And good luck with that ‘blame the Left’ blather. Formaldehyde trailers, really? Really?