

SNG-Frustrated white males-8-8-16

What to do for frustrated white males

By Jim Nowlan

The political conventions are over, and the consensus from both parties in in—there are lots of frustrated, even angry white males out there.

What to do for these men appears, however, rather elusive. Neither party has convincing— to me anyway—ideas about what to do over the long term to address growing wealth inequality as well as the structural economic change that leaves many of those without a college sheepskin out in the cold.

The fundamental difference in approach between the parties is that Democrats want to redistribute wealth from the rich to the rest, and Republicans don't, worried that the wealth would be waster by government.

Trump (is he a real Republican?) is a wild card. His economic policy would apparently reduce taxes for all and at the same time increase spending for those left out, deficits be damned.

Economic wealth creation is a relatively recent phenomenon, defined for millennia by war and territorial conquest.

Then, starting about 400 years ago with the Scientific Method, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, economic development came to mean discovery, creativity, innovation and development.

Unfortunately, probably only about 1/100th of 1 percent of us, maybe fewer, are creative and inventive geniuses.

A small additional slice of us are entrepreneurial and build wealth from what has been created.

Let's face it, most of us are just worker-bees. We do jobs that need to be done to put food on the table and keep society rolling. But we don't create.

Wealth that once went to conquerors now goes largely to the creators with lesser amounts to successful small business people, such as those who work their butts off as owners and operators of, say, McDonald's franchises.

In the 1950-60s, America went through a unique period of economic expansion, as the rest of the developed world had been laid prostrate by World War II.

Caterpillar executives in Peoria could sit down with UAW 974 leaders and say, basically, what do you need in the way of wages and benefits? Then CAT would set prices for its earth movers at its union worker costs plus profit.

No longer.

And the jobs on the CAT assembly line continue to disappear. Hope for a manufacturing job renaissance to benefit angry white males is largely a mirage; most such job loss results from robotic displacement.

Nobody seems to know what to do about a growing slice of Americans who may be, as the English say, redundant—not needed!

So what to do?

Since we will never re-create the 1950-60s, I think we need instead a combination of Democratic and GOP solutions if we are to reduce income inequality and provide jobs and hope for the angry white males as well as many others who are anxious about the future.

I wish I had better suggestions than the following, a couple of which I reprise from earlier columns:

- Tax the very top incomes more. Wealth is flowing inordinately to the top. For example, Yahoo CEO Melissa Mayer recently rode her company into the dirt, yet she will, according to Forbes, receive \$122 million in her golden parachute. No wonder people further down the economic ladder are outraged.
- Use the tax revenue to invest in massive infrastructure programs that will provide scores of thousands of good jobs. The century-old pipes in my town's water system are made of wood! I always thought of the Republican Party as the builders, e.g. Eisenhower and the marvelous Interstate system, which is wearing out.
- Increase immigration of the genius creators. The Chinese have, for example, more honor students than we have students; ditto for Asian Indians! The U.S. provides an unmatched system in which creators can flourish. Some of their taxed wealth can be used for investment in education and infrastructure.
- Service workers of the world unite! That's where most of us worker bees now have our jobs. Painful as the adjustments may be for some employers, we should all get behind efforts to increase service worker wages, through minimum wage hikes and worker strikes.

I hope both parties roll out additional, much better ideas this fall than those above for reducing inequality and increasing opportunities for us worker bees. I really think the stability of the nation depends upon doing so.