

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

## Ills to which America is Heir

### A. Domestic

1. Our current national debt is nine trillion dollars (nine thousand billion dollars) with no leveling off in sight and none expected, predicted, or legislated. The interest expense paid on the national debt is the third largest expense in the federal budget. Social spending is the largest item in the budget.
2. Social Security income will fall short of outlays by 2017 and at that time will be able to finance only 75% of its scheduled benefits. As currently financed, it will be exhausted in 2041. An immediate increase of 16% in payroll taxes withheld would bring the equation into balance but would only extend Social Security for 75 years if no other mechanisms are in place. (Social Security and Medicare Trustee reports, 2007)
3. Medicare in 2006 consumed 3.1% of GDP, 72% of Social Security's expense; it will surpass Social Security's expense by 2028. Medicare costs will comprise 11% of GDP by 2081. To survive at the 75-year horizon, the payroll tax withholding needs to be raised 122% or benefits lowered immediately by 51%! (Summary of Annual Reports of Trustees Social Security and Medicare, 2007). Apparently both Social Security and Medicare will disappear in 75 years by not being able to meet their obligations, all other things being equal.
4. Doctors are decreasing in absolute numbers. Major surgery is being performed by nurse-practitioners in trauma units. Fewer than 50% of graduate general surgeons are going into surgical practice; they are going into surgical sub-specialties instead. Many areas are not served by doctors qualified to recognize the need for, or qualified to perform, Caesarean sections. The population is growing and aging, requiring more medical care per person in the face of ever fewer doctors. Emergency rooms are increasingly the site of primary care. The expectation is that 100,000 more E.R. visits will occur each year for the next 35 years. (Emergency Medical Conference, Oct. 19-22, 2007, Boston) States are requiring doctors to carry malpractice insurance. This gives the malpractice company the same authority as the state medical licensing board in deciding who practices in a state. Twenty-three percent of doctors are native to and medically educated in another country other than the U.S. (Personal writing: "Medicine Needs Medicine") (Emergency Medicine Conference Oct. 19-22, 2007)
5. Public high school students in significant numbers cannot write an understandable, grammatically proper or correctly spelled complete sentence. Some cannot add or subtract. Too few have usable business or industrial skills. Very few can keep a personal bank balance. Only schools in affluent suburban districts come close to Singapore math and science scores, and those schools are closer to Singapore scores than they are to the poorer, often minority populated schools in this country. (Article: "What are Math and Science Scores Telling Us?", "The Bent of Tau Beta Pi"; Winter 2007). We cannot maintain a democracy in the face of what is becoming an increasingly unskilled, ignorant electorate.
- When high schoolers go to college, colleges may have to spend a year to bring them up to college speed. Forty percent of the top high school grads do not finish college. (Time Magazine, Aug. 2, 2007, "Failing Our Geniuses"). This country spends 8 billion dollars per year on retarded students, 1/10th of that on gifted students. Out of a total of 62 million total students, 62,000 of school age U.S. students are gifted.
6. It is expected (Pew Research Report) that the state and federal prison population will grow to be 1.7 million people in 2011. This will be one of every 182 Americans, 192,000 more than there are in prison today, a 13% rise. Our per capita prison population is the highest in the world, higher than Communist China. Total national spending on state and federal prisons has risen from 9 billion dollars in 1980 to 60 billion dollars today. Recidivism within three years of release remains at more than 50%. Stricter indeterminate sentencing, abolition of parole, truth-in-sentencing, "three-strike" laws, lower parole grants, and codified sentencing are primarily responsible for the increase in prison population. (National Geographic program, "Prisons and Gangs"; Executive Summary: "Public Safety, Public Spending", Bureau of Justice Statistics)
7. Criminal gangs terrorize parts of our cities and the lives of too many of our citizens, and monopolize a staggering proportion of police resources. They subvert the operation of our prisons. (National Geographic program, "Prisons and Gangs"). Gangs are shooting into homes in Nashua, N.H. Why isn't belonging to a criminal gang a criminal offense in itself?
8. Motor vehicle mortality is over 45,941 people a year, more than ten times our military deaths in the entire Iraq war; 40% of all teenage deaths are from motor vehicle accidents; 29.3 lives per 100,000 persons in the U.S. population are lost to motor vehicle accidents, primarily teen-agers between 15 and 19 years of age. The economic impact is \$650 billion per year; 38.6% are alcohol related. Both political parties, all levels of government, and society at large have failed to adequately address this chronic, devastating disaster.
9. Gasoline costs a nationwide average of more than \$2.87 a gallon, diesel fuel, \$3.25 a gallon; home heating oil, \$2.769 a gallon. Undesirable hydrocarbon energy is rising in cost; long-term demand will increase air pollution and is increasing worldwide with the U.S. and China the greatest offenders. No crash program is in place on the order of the Manhattan Project to harness clean sources of electrical energy, some of them limitless and free. We have not developed technologies to store large amounts of electrical energy. This is a vital, universal unsolved and unaddressed energy problem.
10. The public has a 11% approval of Congress; at most 30% for the current Executive Republican administration, and a 30% approval for the war in Iraq.

### B. International and Military:

1. We have been in two preemptive wars in the last 40 years, neither of which have we "won". We sustained in excess of 55,000 deaths and 300,000 wounded in Viet Nam. So far we have sustained 4,700 plus deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our wounded in Iraq exceed 28,000. At the present rate of spending, our combined cost for the Iraq and Afghanistan war will be \$3.5 trillion. We can't sustain these present losses in troops and money indefinitely. (Democratic majority Joint Economic Committee, Senate report)
2. Decisions putting us into preemptive war against Viet Nam and Iraq were based on factual error, false premises, false information and deceit. The major, if not the only value of both of these wars, was to warn us to demand exhaustive examination of all the options before we declare or fight any future war - including the current threatened war against Iran. (Situation Room: Jack Cafferty, October 31, 2007)
3. Incompetent management of the Iraq war, from Abu Graib to the Blackwater killings is the responsibility of the Executive branch. Such incompetence has changed the world view of the U.S. from sympathy at the time of 9-11 to contempt and derision today even among our friends. We have emboldened our enemies to make pacts and build up aggressive, advanced military technology. Suffice it to say, we are clearly worse off in every category since beginning the Iraq war. Our accomplishment in Iraq after five years has been the hanging of Saddam Hussein.
4. Diversion from a justifiable war in Afghanistan has left us five years later floundering both in Iraq and Afghanistan. Al Qaeda, the Taliban and bin Laden are very much alive. Current civil chaos is likely to convert Pakistan into still another Taliban stronghold, an unstable one with nuclear power not under our control. Saber-rattling instead of all-out diplomatic efforts has governed our efforts in Iran. The American people are told that Iran cannot be allowed to develop enriched uranium with capability of atomic weapons. Does this mean that if diplomacy fails we will attack them? The government will not say. The candidates will not say what they would do in the event of diplomatic impasse.
5. Are distinctions being made during federal incarceration between abuse and torture? What constitutes torture? Is it ever acceptable to torture enemies of the United States? The public has not had these issues of torture squarely stated so that real, informed public debate can occur.
6. There is governmental failure to heed the national will and take the decisive action which has been expressed by the results of the last election, namely, that the American people want to exit this war. There is no parliamentary remedy for this situation other than impeachment.
7. Federal incompetence and irresponsibility of both major parties over many years have allowed 12 million illegal immigrants to enter the U.S. Neither political party nor federal authorities can agree on or propose thoughtful, workable humane solutions, solutions which are in the national interest. Meanwhile, the incoming tide of illegal immigrants including criminals continues unabated.

We cannot immediately solve any of these problems, but we must begin thinking and acting differently in order to solve them. By civic negligence we have allowed most of these conditions to happen. None of us has wanted to get into politics, and we complain about those who do. Idea by idea, and with unending toil, we can repair the damage. We must forever be involved.

Not only will creative ideas neutralize the negative, these ideas already implemented have offered stunning, unbelievable, breathtakingly positive views of the future. (Program: Hubble Telescope, National Geographic Channel). This future can be ours.

New ideas are always coming, and we have to look at all of them. Evolution is more than biological. It is also evolution of ideas. We are in charge of that evolution, and if or when we go down as a species, it will be because we did not explore all ideas, analyze options, and act.

I dream in the early morning, imagining a human race without war, of humankind recognizing each of us as part of one vast world-wide-family. And I am reminded that I am forever in thrall to an idea, an idea which has no gender and no color, no borders, and no lifetime, an idea which has changed the world forever, and once said can never be unsaid: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...with certain unalienable rights; life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness..."

The present federal government function is incompetent and inadequate to our survival. The two-party system appears incapable of solving our problems. We need a third political party to break the stranglehold of mutually-reinforcing, destructive ideas and ideologies of both prevailing major parties. We need to critically examine a whole lot of new ideas and study without mercy many realities, old and new. And we will have to do this forever.

Daniel C. Wilkerson, Jr. M.D. • 8 Brays Lane • Amherst, N.H. 03031 • 603-673-0324

Copyright 12/1/07

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

PAID ADVERTISEMENT