Near the end of January the world’s political and economic elites gathered in Davos, Switzerland. US President Donald Trump, who claimed during his campaign that he was uncomfortable among rich people, managed to be charming and deliver a fairly disciplined speech. He probably scored some points by saying that while he promoted America first, America would not be alone. He later denounced free trade because it is not fair trade. These are words that could win over many working folks.

Unfortunately (even ignoring Trump’s penchant for lying), Trump spoke in generalities. If one looks at his record, one finds a tax plan that greatly rewarded the wealthiest, at the expense of regular folks, destruction of environmental laws (this will destroy the well being and lifestyles of most citizens), and it is hard to read where his sympathies lie other than the negative advertising that already poisons USA elections.

There is not any clear evidence of how successful Russian meddling is, but it would not be a problem if we had a healthy democracy where all voters were properly informed and had adequate choices.

Russia’s leader Vladimir Putin is an former KGB agent and it is hard to read where his sympathies lie other than kissing up to Russia’s economic oligarchs and making Russia great again (sound familiar). What has come out of Russian meddling is that it aimed at undermining the political elites in both parties. The Russian meddling spared both Trump and Bernie Sanders. Trump and Sanders most devoted followers have one thing in common; they have been exploited and largely ignored by the leadership of the two major parties. The fascist in Putin wants to destabilize American democracy (and in other nations) while elevating Russian (and his) prestige. There is no question that Putin is quick to exploit weaknesses. His support for Assad in Syria and the Iranian state has help destroy any stability that existed in the Mideast (the blunders of USA foreign policy have played an even bigger roll in destroying much of the Mideast).

The rise of ‘strongmen” in the governments of Turkey, Hungary, Poland, the Philippines, along with advances by far right (often bigoted) political movements in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, to name a very few, also threatens democratic rule.

On the brighter side, there have been many small, but significant victories for non-violent protests. In Milwaukee the County Executive Chris Abele, tried to make the park system less friendly by adopting parking fees for most of the Parks. (This would have resulted in those attending our annual Picnic paying about $5 to park their cars). At a raucous meeting organized by Milwaukee’s Park People (a citizen group dedicated to keeping parks open for the people) made a lot of noise at a public hearing. The County backed away from the parking fees.

In another Milwaukee Parks issue was resolved by community groups organizing to keep a pool open in a predominantly African Neighborhood.

It is too early to predict, but the gun control protests by teenagers over school shootings give hope for democracy!

Words for thought

“We have to resist the temptation to say that the fantastic good that’s done by foundations and innovators takes governments off the hook.’ - Steven Pinker
Explaining Stock Market Volatility

Could there be other explanations for the sell-off on Wall Street? Let’s look at it from a socialist/working person perspective. First, the economic data that came out reported a 4.1% unemployment rate. While that should be good news, for corporations, this means a tight labor market. The Bureau of Labor statistics reported that wages were finally increasing, something that was lacking during the first 9 years of the stock market climb. That type of inflation may cut into corporate profits.

Trump’s deregulation policies are also destabilizing economies throughout the world. His “America First” programs are changing the flow of goods throughout the world. The denial of human activities accelerating climate change also disrupts the direction of economies. It also provides instability, as many companies (including oil and gas) have been transitioning to a greener economy. All of these create uncertainty and investors want a degree of certainty when investing money.

Trump’s reactionary policies of trying to return the world to some imagined ideals of decades ago are unrealistic and wasteful. In conclusion, there are many reasons to believe that the stock market volatility and decline may be long-term in this uncertain world. Trump’s war on citizens (think tax cuts, deficits, deregulations, cuts to our safety net) may not benefit the economic elites as many GOP pundits would have us believe. Economic markets may have a place in the distribution of goods, but they do not have the heavenly qualities many leaders allege!  

Walker & GOP Show Disdain for Wisconsinites!

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker is up for election this year. Last month it was reported on some efforts by the Governor to mask his meanness over his first 7 years in Office. He has returned to form as he is pushing for changes in several executive bodies, like county boards, to bring corporate profits. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker is up for election this year. Last month it was reported on some efforts by the Governor to mask his meanness over his first 7 years in Office. He has returned to form as he is pushing for changes in several executive bodies, like county boards, to bring corporate profits. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker is up for election this year. Last month it was reported on some efforts by the Governor to mask his meanness over his first 7 years in Office. He has returned to form as he is pushing for changes in several executive bodies, like county boards, to bring corporate profits.