Foxconn Fraud

Foxconn, the Taiwanese owned company that has made a fortune exploiting Chinese workers, in the name of building screens for TV, computers and other high-tech instruments, keeps demonstrating the folly and stupidity of American states and cities, as they seek to create jobs. Last year Foxconn selected SE Wisconsin to be the location for a factory that would employ 13,000 workers at a median wage of almost $60,000/year. All this will cost Wisconsin governments is $3 billion. SE Wisconsin has had its economic problems thanks to globalization and deindustrialization so the jobs sound like honey to a bee.

SE Wisconsin’s assets include nearness to fresh water (Lake Michigan, relatively good transportation (Milwaukee’s airport is nearby and capable of growth, Chicago’s O’Hare is also within an hour drive from the Foxconn site, there is a major interstate highway and a railroad offering both passenger and freight services). Most of all Wisconsin offers a particularly dumb governor and legislature, controlled by the GOP and proudly proclaiming the Wisconsin in not only pro-business, but open for business. The Foxconn sight is located on a continental divide, which means it will be taking Great Lakes water and discharging the waste to the Mississippi basin. The diversion is a violation of the Great Lakes Compact between US and Canadian governments that was established to clean up and protect the fresh water resources provided to the nations that share the 5 Great Lakes. The Foxconn plant will destroys some valuable wetlands that prevent flooding. Foxconn adds to the lost farm acreage. The Wisconsin Government has found ways of ignoring these environmental protections.

To insure Foxconn’s economic success, Wisconsin plans to spend another $7 million to attract workers from other states to help Foxconn meet its promise of hiring 13,000 workers. Most recently it was announced that many of the 13,000 jobs would not be in Racine or Milwaukee (Foxconn plans to have its headquarters in downtown Milwaukee).

It is likely that Foxconn will be a disruptive force that will not fulfill its promises, but will make off with billions of dollars. It will be another monument to deceptive, dumb politics of the many politicians who cannot bring themselves to use public funds to invest in projects for the public good and operated by the public. Socialist principles should govern public investments; market-based policies are risky and wasteful! DS

Media Fawning Frenzy At Singapore Summit

We have just witnessed what might be the biggest example of “fake news” in 2018. The buildup to the Singapore summit between US President Trump and N. Korea strongman Kim Jong-un entailed the machinations of Trump, first he was going, but then pulled out because the North Koreans were being disrespectful to the mighty USA. Then because it appeared that Trump was being petty rather than strong, the summit was back on.

The major media outlets held their usual cast of expert analysts, who as usual ignored much of the basic truths behind the summit. The summit was historic in that it was a first between a US president and a N. Korean leader. The major concern of most leading up to the summit was the N. Korean nuclear weapon program. A worthy concern, but one magnified out of proportion as a nuclear war involving N. Korea would cause some major damage but would most likely lead to the extinction of North Korea. Kim Jong-un skillfully played on the fears created by the USA media.

By the time the leaders met in Singapore, the results were pretty much-determined thanks to the diplomacy of both North and South Korea and China. The truth is that Trump blew it, instead of making America great again, America has become irrelevant.

Words for thought

“There was also something frankly weird about an American president savaging Canada’s prime minister one day and then embracing the leader of the most totalitarian country in the world.”

Nicholas Kristof
VOTING: THE STRENGTH OF A DEMOCRACY!

American democracy may be one of the oldest in the world, but it is not one of the best, in fact it is one of the worst. Democracy is about the empowerment of people. In the USA (and in most democracies) there are two sources of power available to the average citizen. One is money/wealth. The USA has one of the largest middle classes, but it also has one of the wealthiest upper classes. Two US Supreme Court rulings have given moneyed interests too much power. One came when the SC ruled that spending money was a form of free speech. The second ruled that corporations have the same rights as people. These laws have made it difficult to restrict corporate and elitist power.

The second power citizens have in a democracy is the right to vote. While the power of money has been increasing, the power to vote has been increasing, or at least until recent years. When the US Constitution was written, only free men who owned property could vote. Over the years the franchise has expanded. African American males were given voting rights after the Civil War. States gradually dropped literacy tests and poll taxes). In the early 1970s the voting age was lowered to 18 years old throughout the nation. Since 1970 registration was made easier, absentee voting was made easier and much was done to give citizens more power at the polls. Unfortunately, Americans did not come out in any greater numbers. In the early 1990s, two famous social scientists, Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, released a paper that blamed the low voter turnout on the difficulties presented by the registration process. Cloward and Piven called for a number of changes in the registration process, Congress passed what was called the “Motor-Voter” Bill, as citizens would be registered when applying for drivers’ licenses and other activities at state Departments of Motor Vehicles. Voter registration increased, but voter turnouts did not. Cloward and Piven, being good social scientists followed up with another study that said the strength of political parties was a greater determinate of ones’ voting.

"If God had intended us to vote, he would have given us candidates."

The above chart from a recent study by the Pew Research Center Shows an increase in registration beginning in 1996, but the votes caste a percentage of voting age population have remained about the same. The USA voting turnout for presidential elections places it 26th out of 32 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Two reforms that have helped increase voter turn out are same-day registration and voting by mail. Wisconsin is one of 18 states that allow voters to register at the polls on Election Day and has one of the highest turnouts each election. Three states, Oregon, Washington and Colorado conduct all their elections by mail. These states have seen voter participation increase. Unfortunately even in states with same-day registration and election by mail, numbers are still well below levels seen in most of the developed world.

The US presidential system is archaic and the reliance on legislative districts stifles competition and reduces the choices presented to voters. The saying (attributed to many sources); “If God had intended us to vote, he would have given us candidates.” Best describes the problems of voter turnout.

Ideally, the USA should adopt a parliamentary democracy where the president would either cease to exist or would be a figurehead. Power would then be with a representative legislative body. Another change, which does not require a constitutional amendment, is to adopt a form of proportional representation (PR) that would have multi-member representative districts. Some good news on this front is that one form of PR is catching on. Ranked choice voting is being adopted in Maine, San Francisco, the twin cities in Minnesota and others. The New York Times has run several op-ed pieces and editorials highlighting the virtues of ranked choice voting. Low voter turnouts produce Trumps and Walkers. We need a more responsive democracy!  

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