

PRESERVING THE FABRIC OF OUR SOCIETY AS THEY ROLL OUT THE SHOCK DOCTRINE

The economist Milton Friedman, along with F. Hayek, is one of the villains of Naomi Klein's book. According to her, Friedman has stated that "only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable." Friedman believes that during a crisis, we only have a brief window of opportunity before society slips back into the "tyranny of the status quo," and that we need to use this opportunity or lose it.

This is actually sound advice and in my view the strategy Western survivalists should follow. When I first started writing as Fjordman I focused on how to "fix the system." I've gradually come to the conclusion that the system cannot be fixed. Not only does it have too many enemies; it also contains too many internal contradictions. If we define the "system" as mass immigration from alien cultures, Globalism, multiculturalism and suppression of free speech in the name of "tolerance," then this is going to collapse. It's inevitable.

The goal of European and Western survivalists – and that's what we are,

it is our very survival that is at stake – should not be to “fix the system,” but to be mentally and physically prepared for its collapse, and to develop coherent answers to what went wrong and prepare to implement the necessary remedies when the time comes. We need to seize the window of opportunity, and in order to do so, we need to define clearly what we want to achieve. What went wrong with our civilisation, and how can we survive and hopefully regenerate, despite being an increasingly vulnerable minority in an often hostile world?

– Anders Behring Breivik’s Manifesto, speaking of Naomi Klein’s Shock Doctrine

I suggested the other day that there’s a more fundamental lesson we ought to take in the face of inexplicable violence, rather than just what ideology the perpetrator adhered to. That is, guns and explosives, mixed with a threat to a person’s dignity, can have catastrophic results, regardless of ideology.

But there is an area where ideology is critical: staving off the collapse of the fabric of our society.

Since I left FireDogLake, I’ve been reading more books than I have in years. Partly as a result, I’ve had a curious distance from the negotiations on the debt limit. It has been like watching a really ugly train wreck from 1,000 feet in the air, seeing in advance it’d be ugly, but sustaining a sick curiosity about whether it would be merely horrible, or really, really horrible.

Because (as Paul Krugman has suggested) what our elected representatives in DC are arguing over, really, is whether we’re going to willingly and deliberately launch further into a Depression gradually, or with real gusto.

Meanwhile, the other thing that has been

coming slowly into view at my imagined 1,000 foot perch is the ideology of Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist. For a summary, go here or here (added: or here or here). But as you can see, he—like some others—embraces the idea of using crises to change society, in his case, in radical, terrible ways.

As it happens, two of the books I've been reading use different approaches to show what a mess the US is already in. One—still in manuscript—continues the Kevin Phillips tradition, contextualizing shadow economic stats within a narrative of how, over the last 35 years, America has been gutted.

The other, *Someplace Like America: Tales from the New Great Depression*, tells the stories—with narratives and images—of what the collapse of America looks like at the individual level (I highly, highly recommend it). The authors—reporter Dale Maharidge and photographer Michael Williamson—describe what it means for the \$7 earned from giving blood to be a big deal. They describe a lot of hunger. And they describe more and more people who used to live “in the house on the hill” falling into such straits.

There's one story that really hit home as I watched the debt crisis and Breivik's ideology play out. It dates to a reporting trip Maharidge and Williamson made in the early Reagan years, their first effort to chronicle the collapse of America. They spent a day at a work camp in Texas run by a “foundation” that picks up down and out men and induces them to sign up for a month at the work camp as a way to get them off the street (and also as a way to make \$1,000/day off of their unpaid labor). Maharidge describes the thinking of one of the guys who was about to willingly stay past his 30 day commitment.

“Okay weasels,” Foxface announced, “now fill it back up.”

We set to work regarding the reloading the truck by hand, forming teams that

passed debris.

"I hate this shit," Jay said.

It was a contradiction I couldn't understand. Jay felt enmity, but he was terrified of what he called "the outside."

"But don't you fell they are ripping you off?" I asked.

Jay scratched at the hard ground with a foot, scraping at the dust. When he looked back up, he said, "No-o-o." He paused." "No."

I shut up.

I realized what I was seeing: this was a man who had given up, utterly.

[snip]

He had arrived here a destroyed man, beaten by life and the vagaries of the economy. Now he seemed brainwashed, like the cult members I'd written about for the newspaper. Like a cult, the foundation was exploiting his weakened state of mind in order to manipulate him. The work camp practiced classic sleep deprivation: it worked men hard and then roused them after just a few hours' sleep to do it all over again, seven days a week. Jay said this was how it had been for the previous thirty days.

One must be defeated to be controlled.

That was 30 years ago. But if anything, our society has embraced such approaches to social control in more and more areas of life. It's certainly the kind of thing we can expect to see more of, as this Depression gets worse.

Particularly given the way Republicans and many Democrats have refused to offer an alternative.

And to some degree, this is where our focus

needs to be. Progressives have been pretty impotent trying to combat the Depression-embracing policies of DC's politicians. Saving Social Security and Medicare (maybe) may be our only win on this train wreck. And while in the medium term, I think Progressives can shift the way our society thinks about taxes—and specifically, taxing the really rich, and while I think if the corporatists don't succeed in entirely shutting down elections, we might vote a lot of them out next year, there's not much we can do politically at the moment.

Meanwhile, those aiming to take advantage of crisis have gotten their wish and they've been preparing—whether far right or “just” neoliberal—a range of policies to capitalize. Yet, if this front page article in the hometown of one of the guys most active in pushing this crisis is any indication, folks aren't necessarily going to fall for it. Even in West Michigan, people know when they're being looted.

But to get there—to make it through this crisis without the Breiviks of the world getting their way—we're going to have to limit the number of people who end up like Jay, quite literally embracing his slavery. Americans are pissed off and are beginning to fight back—but we have to make sure they fight, and fight in constructive ways, rather than give up.