

LINKS, 7/26/11

(This video documents a mother's effort to get her son a Voter ID card in WI.)

Good News for Kids

McDonalds is rolling out new and improved Happy Meals, now with fruits or veggies and fewer fries. These Happier Meals will have 20% fewer calories.

The NYPL has offered an amnesty on overdue fines; but to earn it, the kids need to read. Kids get \$1 knocked off their fines for every 15 minutes they read. I'm wondering if there's a way we could get the NYPL to come up with a debt reduction plan, rather than the yahoos in Congress.

Justice and Injustice

Bunny Greenhouse vindicated! You might remember Greenhouse as the Army Corps of Engineer Chief Oversight Officer who criticized abuses that led to KBR getting a no-bid contract in 2005. She was demoted as a result. But she just got a \$970,000 settlement for retaliation.

Remember that ridiculous \$85 million wrist slap the Fed gave to Wells Fargo last week, in part because its employees lied on liar loans? Joe Nocera asked DOJ why they weren't prosecuting those folks. In response, DOJ sent him a statement on 2010 indictments, none of which had anything to do with Wells Fargo.

Back when I was Valedictorian of Cowpie High, the Administration tried hard to discourage me from making the traditional Valedictorian speech—they were worried I would incite rebellion, I think, or maybe say "blowjob." But even though they distrusted me, I ultimately got to accept the honor. Not so Kymberly Wimberly, (h/t ABL) an 18 year old black woman in ~~Alabama~~ Arkansas who had the best GPA in her class, but nevertheless was replaced as Valedictorian by a white student with a lower GPA.

Jerry Brown nominated Goodwin Liu to the CA Supreme Court.

Bob Fertik expanded on my thoughts about News Corp being a Transnational Organized Crime organization into a worthwhile post. The big question, though, is whether DOJ will treat Murdoch's band of hacks in the same way as they will the mafia or drug cartels under this program.

A MN Court just ruled that letting pesticides drift over another farm's field counts as trespassing. It's be really nice if this rule were applied to Monsanto and their GMO plants.

Our Dying Economy

We continue to treat the long-term unemployed like shit, specifically refusing to consider hiring people who are long-term unemployed.

Cate Long at MuniLand reports on what an infrastructure bank might look like, if we ever raise the debt ceiling. But she notes something disturbing: even though both parties appear to back this infrastructure investment, it's not entirely clear who will own the infrastructure that gets built.

A number of people have pointed to this WaPo/ABC post showing voters souring on Obama's economic policies. But what most surprised me about the cross tabs are the results for the question, "Who do you think cares more about protecting the economic interests of Wall Street?" 59% said the GOP, 26% said Obama, and just 4% said both (they had to offer up that answer). I mean, granted, the GOP has done more for Wall Street, particularly in scuttling things like the CFPB. But are people not noticing the way Obama has refused to hold Wall Street accountable? If that remains true, that, by itself, might make the difference in 2012.

Our Economy's Not the Only One with Troubles

Following a fatal high speed rail crash in Wenzhou, analysts think China will not be able

to compete for rail business internationally, as they were increasingly doing. Maybe that's why China buried the train and has mandated a "in the face of great tragedy, there's great love" theme for reporting on the crash.

The British economy has tanked since Cameron pushed through austerity. It's what we have to look forward to!

Our National Security State

Another one of our CyberSecurity officials stepped down suddenly on Friday. There are suggestions he left because the US government's websites have been hacked recently.

The Third Circuit has ruled that the government can collect DNA from people arrested, but not yet convicted, for a crime.

40 police offices and other units around the country are adopting an iPhone based iris scanner technology to make IDing people in the field easier.

Matthew Olsen admitted in his confirmation hearing to be the head of the National Counterterrorism Center that the "authority may exist" to track Americans inside this country using their cell phone geolocation. Olsen's General Counsel at NSA right now, so presumably he would know.

Apparently, we're still in the habit of kidnapping the family members of alleged terrorists.

John Robb explains why extremist groups—such as the Norwegian terrorist or an off-shoot of the La Familia drug cartel in Mexico—might be attracted to Knights Templar culture: because they offer these groups the "fictive kinship" that makes the group closer to a tribe, but one not bound by normal laws.

Sandy Levinson, over at Balkinization, thinks Tom Friedman's stupid "Radical Center" effort funded by hedge fund money is an effort to set up a David Petraeus run.