

LINKS, 7/28/11

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Here's Melissa Harris-Perry talking about the Pew study on net worth from the other day.

Our Dying Economy

Nicholas Shaxson (the author of *Treasure Islands*) has a post on a probably-doomed attempt by developing countries to have more of a say over international tax policy.

According to Jay Rockefeller, the Republicans shut down the FAA primarily to help Delta ensure its workers never unionize.

A few days ago I linked to an article arguing that Microsoft's profits largely stemmed from tax avoidance—facilitated in part by their purchase of Skype. Here's a longer article laying out MS' tax dodging. It seems like it'd be a useful strategy to lay out how all the companies engaged in the worst kind of tax cheating are doing it because they're not really doing much as companies anymore.

Our National Security State

Ron Wyden and Mark Udall are basically trying to force Eric Holder and James Clapper to admit that it's a bad thing to interpret laws—notably, the PATRIOT Act—in ways that the public doesn't understand. I suspect this won't make it out of the Intelligence Committee. So I wonder whether Harry Reid will make good on his promise to let them raise it in the full Senate. Me, I think the bill would be more effective if Holder and Clapper each had to write "I will not use smart phones to track innocent Americans' locations" once for each time they have done so.

ACLU has a new report on secrecy out I plan to return to. In the meantime, Steven Aftergood has some interesting things to say about it.

The Treasury Department says Iran is funneling

money to Al Qaeda. I'm more interested in the questions Blake Hounshell raises in reporting the issue, though, than actually convinced Treasury isn't just making shit up.

Justice and Injustice

A judge just ruled that Shirley Sherrod's lawsuit against Andrew Breitbart can proceed.

Your Daily Murdoch

Now why do you suppose James Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks were getting briefed by Britain's Defense Secretary? And does anyone actually believe Murdoch's top execs haven't gotten similar treatment here?

It's not so much that Piers Morgan doth protest too much. It's that the traditional media is bending over backwards to accept his version of the claim that he never authorized anyone to hack a phone. Not to mention they're accepting a very carefully parsed answer—Morgan's "I have never hacked a phone, told anyone to hack a phone, nor to my knowledge published any story obtained from the hacking of a phone" leaves a whole lot of knowledge of hacking on the table.

Apparently, the plan for the cover-up in the UK consists of generalizing the inquiry into journalists' conduct generally, with a series of seminars about the ethics of journalism, which I presume will ensure that public opinion magically starts to side with Murdoch, not his victims or rule of law.

The Guardian reports that NotW is suspected of hacking the phone of the mother of the girl for whom "Sarah's Law"—a sex predator transparency law—was named after. It also says Rebekah Brooks gave her the phone! If you saw Brooks' testimony before Parliament, she used NotW's championship of Sarah's Law as PR spin.

Free for All

Marion Nestle assesses McDonald's new Happier Meals and finds them unimpressive, largely because they still offer soda. Interestingly,

though, it appears Happy Meals aren't selling like they used to partly because kids are snobbier about toys and partly because the dollar items on McDonald's menu ends up being a cheaper way to feed kids.