

LINKS, 8/5/11

Banana Republic of America

The S&P is reportedly about to downgrade America's credit. So the wingnut hostage-taking will end up costing us about \$100B. [Update: While we are so badly governed we no doubt deserve to be downgraded, it appears we're sufficiently powerful enough to bully the S&P still. S&P is now claiming they made errors in analysis and it's looking like the ~~TeaParty Tax~~ downgrade is off.] Oops, wrong again. S&P pulled the trigger.

The wingnuts who shut down MN's government last month were responsible for laying off 23,000 people. Meanwhile, Congressman John Mica, who was responsible for laying off 74,000 FAA workers, "didn't know it would cause this much consternation. ... People don't have to get so personal," he said with a sigh. "A lot of people hate me now and think I'm the worst thing in the world for what I did.

Apparently, TeaParty Nation head Judson Phillips thinks government spending creates jobs, but thinks it should only be spent on war toys, not highways.

Adventures in corporatist denial: Here's ALEC claiming recent reporting about their corporate-funded hijacking of state governments are nothing to worry about. And here's the Center for Competitive Politics assuring us we need not worry about a corporation forming and dissolving for the sole purpose of donating \$1 million to Mitt Romney's Presidential SuperPAC. Meanwhile, two ThinkProgress journalists were violently kicked out of the NOLA Marriott where ALEC is meeting.

The Chamber of Commerce is attempting to prevent the NLRB from ruling against employers that fire employees for talking about work conditions on social media.

While George W Bush was dodging the draft in 1972, Rick Perry was getting a "C" in "Animal Breeding"—a course within his major of Animal Sciences—at Texas A&M. But don't worry. If he becomes President, I'm sure Vice President Rick Santorum can handle that aspect of the country.

I've long questioned the assertions that giving 1.3 billion Chinese (or even just the 300 million Chinese considered middle class) our American lifestyle was possible. Here's one reason why: you can never create enough parking spots to affordably match our levels of car ownership. Meanwhile, Moisés Naím has a thoughtful post seeing the source in contemporary turmoil both in the declining middle class in developed countries and increasingly demanding middle class in developing nations.

The city of Central Falls, RI, has just become the municipal equivalent of Ireland. It just declared bankruptcy, but because of a new state law, bondholders will get paid before pension holders.

Justice and Injustice

Five NOLA cops were found guilty today of trying to cover up their role in shooting people on Danziger Bridge in the aftermath of Katrina.

More people are using smartphones to collect evidence of what assholes their bosses are being.

The FBI is finally getting around to investigating News Corp's hacking of Floorgraphics, which Chris Christie refused to investigate.

Surveillance Nation

A security consultant hacked the cell phone of MO's Attorney General Chris Koster—it took him less than a minute—to show how easy it is to conduct Murdoch-style scams. Meanwhile, AT&T just committed to making sure its users have passwords to protect against this kind of

hacking.

Craig Murray, the former British Ambassador who (as he reminds) was fired for whistleblowing about the British policy of cooperation with torture, asks whether Sir Peter Gibson, who heads the whitewash torture investigation, ever saw the documents the Guardian posted yesterday revealing an official policy of cooperating with torture.

German cops say full body scanners don't work.

Fareed Zakaria calls our defense establishment, "the world's largest socialist economy." To some degree, he's calling on DOD to cut pensions the same way other industries have (which I'm not crazy about). But he's also calling out DOD for being too big to fail.

DOJ has written the 9th Circuit to remind it not to tell any secrets when it hears *Jewel v. National Security Agency* later this month.