

JOHN GALT IS EVERYWHERE AND HIS KILLING SPREE CONTINUES

On Thursday, I wrote about the central role that absolute free market libertarianism, as personified by the fictional John Galt, played in the horrific explosion in West, Texas that took the lives of fourteen people, most of whom were volunteer firefighters fighting a fire at an unregulated fertilizer facility. We have now learned that the facility had a checkered history of ignoring regulations and had 1350 times more ammonium nitrate on hand than the amount that triggers a legal requirement to report the facility to Department of Homeland Security. Of course, the facility's owner chose to ignore that regulation along with the many other regulations he chose to ignore. Sadly, some press accounts of the owner chose to focus more on his role as a church elder (Update: he was even at Bible study when the fire broke out!) than on how his choice to flout regulations and good sense led directly to this tragedy. Whatever the cause of the original fire that eventually triggered the explosion, the plant owner's decision to maintain such a large and unreported amount of highly explosive ammonium nitrate so close to so many people played a huge role in how this tragedy played out.

Those deaths, and their roots in blatant disregard for government regulation in the belief that it harms business, are sadly just a small part of the larger picture of how free marketeers have corrupted the public marketplace of ideas to sow widespread death and destruction so that the "job creators" can go about their usual business of pocketing massive profits while refusing to make microscopic investments in small steps that would save many lives.

Remember the other, larger Massachusetts tragedy that killed at least 50 and injured 722? No? It was discovered last fall that New England Compounding Center in Framingham, Massachusetts had been flaunting the rules on drug manufacturing and in their haste to reap maximum profits shipped out vials of steroids contaminated with fungus. Thousands of patients around the country were injected with contaminated material and deaths and injuries followed.

You would think that since this tragedy played out last fall, the government would have realized the error of letting companies call themselves compounders when they are in reality manufacturing drugs on a large scale. Drug manufacturers are subject rigid FDA standards while compounders are regulated as if they are simple neighborhood pharmacies where the druggist might mix single vials of drugs into a form a local doctor has requested for individualized treatment of a patient. But no, because of massive lobbying on the part of compounders, who have become a huge presence because of the vast sums of money they can earn by working the margins of regulation, lawmakers pocket the proceeds of the lobbying and proclaim themselves powerless to harm the job creators as they bring these products to market. It should be viewed as no surprise then, that a different compounder, this time in Florida, now is recalling all of its products because it has been found to have been shipping product that was contaminated with bacteria. It is not yet known if any patients have been harmed by products from this compounder, but at least today's article on the recall was able to update the death toll from the Massachusetts compounder to 53.

The Boston Marathon bombing and the subsequent search for the perpetrators also was touched by John Galt. Technology has existed for nearly 20 years that can make individual production lots of explosives traceable. But when it came time to implement the technology, the NRA and other

gun enthusiasts managed to limit the inclusion of taggants to plastic explosives and to specifically exempt black powder (otherwise known as gunpowder) from being required to be traceable. The Boston bombs used black powder. If investigators had been able to know within hours of the blast where and when the black powder was purchased, would they have been able to arrest the bombers sooner and without the subsequent death of one police officer and near death of another? The full shutdown of Boston on Friday would not have happened if the brothers had been arrested Wednesday or Thursday through tracing the black powder they purchased. But no, John Galt said that gunpowder manufacturers shouldn't have to spend the extra pennies to tag production lots and the inclusion of taggants in gunpowder infringes the rights of gun owners in a de facto registration of their ammunition, so society has to suffer the consequences of this freedom.

Oh and all that gun freedom. It appears that we have five more gun freedom victims in Seattle today.

John Galt is a very busy guy, sowing death and destruction from one side of the country to the other. But since he continues to make good money, we have to give him his freedom and keep those markets wide open. Praise the lord of the free market and pass the untagged ammunition.