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Contact Information:

New address:

*Jerry Bannon
Publisher*

*Wonder Springs
PO Box 1381*

Orient, Washington USA 99160

phone: 509.496.5855

blog: www.wondersprings.org

email:

jerryb@wondersprings.org

chronicle@wondersprings.org

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Symbiotic economics: Post Consumer Packaging

What's the plan?

I've heard that a lot since the decision to move to the woods of Eastern Washington. The problem is that my plan and my ability to plan, at the present time has very little to do with present reality. Planning is one of my strong aptitudes. However, all I can do is to continue with the means at my disposal and God willing, in His timing, the resources will be available to implement a plan current within that present reality. So, the daily plan is to cope to the maximum extent possible, with pretty much non existent capital, believing that in due season funds will become available to carry out the planning work I am currently doing.

Therefore, the plan you are asking about, has no basis in the present reality of today, but furthermore, all my planning, positive thinking, good karma, bad karma, attempts to

manipulate the world and other people, do not create reality, only God can create reality. My plan is to see if I can make the plan as consistent with His plan as possible and wait for Him to bring it into reality. So the plan is to persist and persevere until such time that finances are available to proceed forward. That is the plan and to the extent you can live with those facts of life, fine. If you can't, you can worry about them, help out, or get out of the way.

What's the plan for most baby boomer Americans?

"Well, I will work or worked for a job that I really only found marginally fulfilling, if that much, with a bunch of people, I really had have nothing in common with, other than our jobs, until I get, or got in my 30 years. Then I am going to retire retired early and do all the personal things I wanted to do, but never had the time or the resources to do when



I was working worked for a living. Like travel, read, and become someone, I am not really in touch with. However, I have made no significant plan yet to bring that wonderful personality into existence.

“I realize that is quite a task indeed, to cram into 10 30 years of old age, a lifetime of living. Especially when the lifestyle I am currently living, is subject to stupendous change, I mean catastrophes, disasters, illness, and other natural events. When will I realize my retirement really isn't going to allow me to continue to live at the level of existence I now enjoy and have come to expect over my 30 years of going with the flow?

Let's see, not just in America, but pretty much throughout western civilization, we live in a post modern, post Christian, post industrial, post consumer, information age. That information is really of no value, just information noise, unless it is packaged in some sort of rational plan for the future. The facts of present reality, is that brave new world is supposed to just evolve out of this informational chaos into a utopia, where we only work a few days a week and we have all this time to develop ourselves into the good people we believe we would like to be, but never took the time to create. I remember when I was a wee lad, all that cool stuff was supposed to have happened long before now.

Oh, I forgot the biggest post era, post evolutionary. Just like the post consumer world, most people don't know we are living in a post evolutionary world either. But in reality speak, evolution doesn't answer any of the really important questions of humanity, like where did I come from, where will I go when I die, what am I to do while I'm here, and is there really any security in any of this?

Evolution and Christianity are really two different, mutually exclusive, worldviews. But don't tell the leaders or the followers of either sect, for it really upsets them. Because of that upsetting atmosphere and the close relationship between evolution and consumerism, and this series is really about economics, this week we will look at the packaging of the post consumer era, or Post Consumer Packaging.

Probably like the cardboard and the warning literature, in two to nine languages, that came with our 60 inch plasma TV, much of the post consumer world, will be recycled from the pro consumer, evolutionary era. However, many things will be different. For sake of this article, they center around three apices, or loci for those of a more eastern metaphysical outlook. Those three are capital, energetics, and design.

Last week, like many other authors, I gave credit for much of our present economic western world to Adam Smith and the publishing of his book “Wealth of Nations,” in 1776. In that light and consistent with design of this new economy, I would like to focus your attention towards “Capitalism 3.0” by Peter Barnes. I don't know if there are more comprehensive books on this new economy out there in the world of 21st century global free trade, but he does make an honest attempt to define this Post Consumer Economic package, by recycling and redesigning the concepts of the commons and private property, to provide for a better world for us all.

Good news, keeping with the concept of this new world order and the internet, the whole book is available for download for free. A noncommercial licensed copy is available at www.onthecommons.org. Furthermore, the real benefit of “Capitalism 3.0” is that Barnes spends a great deal of the book talking about solutions, not just the problems of rapidly defunking global capitalistic consumerism. In contrast, most of the time authors spend nine chapters explaining what is wrong with their world and one chapter with some vague concept about some futuristic plan.

In the Preface Mr. Barnes describes himself as a businessman and a liberal, in that he believes that there is a role for government to play in societies. He also points out that government hasn't a very good record in protecting individual citizens from abuses of big corporations. He further goes on to point out that it is the citizens, not the stockholders of Waste Management, who should profit or be compensated when businesses pollute our environment.

Here the Harvard Georgetown educated Barnes and this teacher cow college land grant educated personality have a point in contact. I wrote proposals for the chemical hazardous waste

subsidiary of Chem Nuclear Systems before they were acquired by Waste Management. We were a high flying, highly profitable small public company headquartered in Bellevue, Washington, when Waste Management grew as now the modus of operations for global corporations. Chem Nuclear was acquired and merged shortly after I left the company.

My main compatriot in these “clean up the world” proposals and projects was our Transportation Manager Mike. Mike had been appointed to fill a vacant Republican state Senate seat, but was not reelected. Mike considered himself a Right Wing liberal. Since we agreed on not only the problems with the world, but how to fix them, but we came from entirely different backgrounds and points of view, Mike christened me a Left Wing conservative. This is to point out that, me as a self described conservative conservationist and Barnes share many similar views, we just may come at them from very different perspectives.

In that light we will look at the three points listed above and contrast, if necessary, my view with what Peter has to say in his book.

Capital: Peter, as a Harvard educated, New Yorker with contacts to capital in the San Francisco Silicon Valley area, developed a company that centered around communications after his socially conscious solar energy company died when solar energy tax credits were removed during the Reagan Administration.

My business plan after leaving Chem Nuclear centered around zero discharge precious metals mining and refining equipment. The most significant change in gold mining technology in over a century, or so went the talking points. After trying to raise dirt moving capital in the world of Microsoft and other high tech giants, and when out of my own wealth, I realized, that I probably should have tried to search for capital in Silicon Valley, it was too late, I had tapped out all my reserves.

Moreover, my frustration also centered around the fact that because of President Reagan’s tax cuts, people who formally invested in entrepreneurial companies were just plain unwilling to invest in risky startups. Because of

low marginal tax rates they could invest directly in established companies, with limited risk, decent returns, and no chance of being forced into the company to save their investment.

That entrepreneurial problem, dealing with lack of early equity seed money financing of any type of company is still the greatest hazard to long term American economic growth. If you look at Microsoft, Apple, Intel, hi tech, biotech, and similar major companies, they were pretty well funded beyond the developmental stage before the Reagan tax cuts were enacted. The only prominent possible exceptions are eBay and Amazon.com both of which are really consumer service companies, rather than technology enterprises.

Peter’s concept of funding these entrepreneurial endeavors is through usage fees and royalties on the redefined and empowered commons, or common property. This is the best possible way out of this lack of a viable economic future, without burdening citizens with significantly increased marginal taxation. Commons fees also are the best way to fund common’s infrastructure maintenance and development. At the present time, all this infrastructure work is funded directly by taxpayers, while the major beneficiaries, major corporations, get pretty much a free pass.

Energetics: The world moves and grooves on energy, not capital. Now capital can be converted to energy in various ways, but the world still runs on energy, or more precisely energetics. We are not going to run out of energy, but we are about to run out of cheap energy, both in terms of extraction costs and highly related environmental regulations. In most of the world these resources are, or were, part of the country’s common property.

Drilling for oil on the Alaska Wildlife Refuge is not really a good oil man’s dream of where to drill. Throw in opposition from pretty much every environmentalist, conservationist, and affected party, then heap on environmental regulations like none other in the world, and you are pretty much left with oil industry service companies as the major beneficiary, and what a beneficiary they would be.

There is really nothing in “Capitalism 3.0” on energy or energetics. The laissez faire capitalist approach of Barnes’ previous versions of capitalism 1.0 and 2.0 can not make the proper tough

decisions on whether to strip mine a West Virginia mountain for a thin coal seam to power the nation's and the world's unquenchable demand for electricity. Furthermore, it is a decision well beyond free markets or even the national and local political processes. To say that the commons, in this regard democracy, will make the right decision, begs the question, "Is there a good, little alone a right decision?" It all depends upon the situation and your personal, or corporate, or political worldview.

The same can be said for renewable forms of energy. It has been said that we can power all the cars in America with hydrogen and wind generated electricity from North Dakota alone. Well, few people live in northeast Washington and even fewer live in North Dakota, so it must be a good capitalistic concept. However, the major problem with electricity generation in this country now is not at the source, but in the distribution or grid system. Does it make sense, to power southern California's transportation bottleneck, with North Dakota wind, when half the power will be lost to the grid on the way? Again, it all depends upon the situation and your personal, or corporate, or political worldview.

Design: The biggest flaw in "Capitalism 3.0" however, in my worldview is that of design. The allegory behind "Capitalism 3.0" is the concept of Bill Gates, Microsoft, and the computer program. Having recently removed myself from western Washington, in that area it is well known that in terms of item complexity, both a Microsoft computer program and a Boeing airliner have over 500,000 parts all working in unison, performing a specific function. That is design, that just a few short years ago would have been impossible.

I think decades ago I wrote a computer program that had 300 lines of code, and it eventually worked, sort of. Five hundred thousand items of computer code written by perhaps thousands of people all over the world, and it works at all, is absolutely a miracle of modern capitalism. In the same way, would you willingly fly to your trek in Nepal, knowing that one tiny bearing in the jet engines could just fail at any moment. That was the only flaw in the whole airplane, and no other parts for that specific task

were anywhere close to the same reliability. So much for the choice between a death wish and frequent flier miles.

There is a flap in evangelical Christianity on whether intelligent design is a concept that should be supported by Christians. I personally believe that you either support the God as He defines and reveals himself in the Bible, or you don't waste your time and that of other busy people.

However, that intelligent design argument does fit well in this discussion of a new world order of enterprise. Who is going to be the design firm for complex Capitalism 3.0? The US government, the US military, Microsoft, Haliburton, Hollywood, Nashville, the European Union, the Russians, the Chinese, none of them will get my commons vote.

More to the point, I am also not in favor of it evolving out of the chaos of this post something world in which we live. There are way too many weak links in the system, without even factoring in natural changes, to design a system to even get us by with some sense of personal life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The rosy future, looks like a lot longer gambling odds than my upgrade of Microsoft Office, or my next airplane ride.

This is where the God of the Bible comes into play. He claims to be the author of the whole shebang, and He claims to have it all under control. What is really the wise alternative?

The only other alternative now philosophically available is the anti God view of evolution, that says cause and effect really are not related, and that the laws of thermodynamics apply to the world, except in rare and random miraculous leaps in evolutionary organizational complexity.

Except for the God concept, it seems logically to me to not be that difficult of a rational propositional choice.

Capital, Energetics, and Design are not that big of a problem when the God of the Bible is the focus of civilization. The last time that occurred was about 500 years ago. That was not a smooth transition period, but out of the Protestant Reformation came the basis of the American republic based upon "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" as well as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," as penned by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

Next week we shall begin to look more in detail at the way God's world works, rather than what is now in vogue on our post everything planet. What do we have to fear? Fear itself. Fear sufferance, the greatest hindrance to which people never planned to work 30 years in a marginally acceptable job or jobs, only to retire and understand that retirement really is not the answer to which you were looking for either.

Why am I here, what am I to do with my life, where will I go when I die, and where do I find eternal security, are all answerable in the application of Symbiotic economics. I will endeavor to lay out a plan based upon God's reality and then let Him make changes in the plan as we proceed. One thing I have learned in this life's pilgrimage, His ways are superior to my ways, even when it comes to me doing what I always wanted to do in the first place. That is really a difficult plan to follow, because not only am I programmed by original sin to do my own thing, this post everything world has worked diligently to make that self centered person my only plan.