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If you had done a poll in November 2000, or in November 2004, I don't think you would have gotten out of single digits with this proposition: "George W. Bush wants to radically revise American law,

including complete repeal of the New Deal, and take us back to the economic legal system that prevailed at the turn of the 19th century -- Robber Barons Redux."

During the past five years, both media and political circles have devoted an enormous amount of attention to social issues and culture wars -- rise of the Christian Right, anti-abortion groups, our debates over moral decline and moral relativism, prayer in the schools, school vouchers, displaying the Ten Commandments, sex and violence in entertainment, bias in the news media, gay marriage and all the rest of it. I sometimes think all of it amounts to a bunch of people saying, "The world would be a much better place if everybody else thought exactly the same way I do." Reminds me of Dr. Henry Higgins in his famous philosophical disquisition, "Why Can't A Woman Be More Like A Man?" Higgins finally discovers the ultimate problem: "Why can't a woman be more like ME?"

Then, of necessity, we have spent huge amounts of time on Sept. 11, terrorism, Iraq, and related and ancillary problems. It is not necessary to review the bidding here, but Iraq is becoming as divisive and unpopular as the Vietnam War.

While we have been absorbed in the silly circus of cultural issues and the riveting questions of the war, we've also been getting our pockets picked. Big time. I am impressed that cartoonist Lloyd Dangle in the strip "Troubletown" managed to get the whole problem into 12 panels, each announcing some piece of economic news accompanied by an American saying, essentially, "What, me worry?" The U. S. is over \$7 trillion in debt (no problem); China buys \$1 billion worth of U.S. treasury bills a day (thanks for floating us); Americans love the prices at Wal-Mart (made in China, cute!); the Chinese save 50 percent of their domestic product; the average American has \$9,000 on his credit cards; our economy is fueled by a fragile housing bubble; the minimum wage is \$5.15 per hour ... ; taxpayers who earn over \$1 million saved \$30K under Bush tax cuts; the war in Iraq costs \$9 billion a month; by 2040, our kids will be unable to do more than pay the interest on the national debt ... ; bankruptcy reform makes it impossible to escape your debts; in Darfur [Sudan], people earn \$1.25 a day.

For those who prefer to get their economic news from a more respectable source than a cartoon, I recommend Bill Greider's op-ed article in the July 18 New York Times, "America's Truth Deficit." He begins with the startling thesis that we face structural economic problems as serious as those that destroyed the late Soviet Union and that, like the USSR before its breakup, our leaders cannot talk about these problems honestly. "[Our] weakening position in the global trading system is obvious and ominous, yet leaders in politics, business, finance and the news media are not willing to discuss

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candidly what is happening and why. Instead they recycle the usual bromides about the benefits of free trade and assurances that everything will work out for the best."

It is a curious thing that as the disadvantages and, indeed, perils of globalization become clearer and the subject of ever-more worried books by respected economists, the mainstream media keep treating the whole problem as though it were about a bunch of protesters in turtle costumes at the G8 summit. If it were not for Lou Dobbs on CNN, one would never even hear it mentioned on television.

Forget what the Supreme Court thinks about teaching creationism in the schools: Think about what it will contribute to the spiraling disasters of globalization by dismantling the entire economic regulatory system built up over the past 100 years. As Greider notes, "Washington defines 'national interest' primarily in terms of advancing the global reach of our multinational enterprises." Problem is, our multinational corporations increasingly work against the interests of Americans themselves. In addition to outsourcing jobs, the companies locate sham headquarters in off-shore tax havens to avoid paying taxes. The only restraints we have ever had on multinational corporations are government regulation and the right to sue the bastards for the various kinds of harm they cause. It is precisely those two forms of control that are being not just undermined but tossed out entirely by an increasingly activist right-wing judiciary.

Recommended reading: Greider's "One World, Ready Or Not"; David Korten's "When Corporations Rule the World"; and Paul Krugman's "The Great Unraveling."

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Posted by: drew on Jul 22, 2005 2:07 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

these times do remind me of the romans at the time of Diocletian. Although history can be a Rorschach test and clearly subject to alternative interpretations, clearly their economy suffered from the moral and financial costs of war, they had problems of growing concentration of land in large estates and the absorption of the smaller farmers, the masses became alienated from the rulers. All were placated rather than responding to their reality- and they faced threats from without having not established functional relations with the non- roman world. Sounds somewhat familiar.

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Bush

Posted by: Tom Degan on Jul 22, 2005 3:18 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

Fifty years from now the president of the United States, whoever he or she may be - who by all odds hasn't even been born yet - will be dealing on a daily basis with the damage that was done by this stupid bastard so many years before. I cannot believe that this great country has sunk so low.

Tom Degan

Goshen, NY

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