

## Corpulent Country. Obesity in the USA.

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Over the past three decades, obesity has been recognized as a public health problem in America. Yet despite much publicity, talk, and effort, a recent [report](#) claims that obesity rates jumped in 28 states. The CDC has reported that America is home to the most obese people in the world. On June 29, ABC's Nightline (or should I write "Nightlie'?) aired a piece on the problem during which one of its "investigative" reporters cited about a half-dozen "theories" that have been suggested by "experts" to explain the problem. Unfortunately, all were hocus, even though its cause is easy to discern. To find it, like finding the causes of most American social problems, one merely has to follow the money.

A long time ago, the processed food industry discovered that fat, salt, and sugar enhanced the flavor of their products, and flavorful products, as opposed to bland ones, are not only much easier to sell, they are addictive and cheap to make. The processed food industry swelled with bloat. The amount of money made is gigantic. No one cared whether people were being made unhealthy.

But why is nothing being done about it? The answer can be found by following the money. Physicians may tell patients that they need to lose weight, but doctors make money by treating obese patients. Writers and publishers of weight-control books peddling ineffective programs also make fortunes as does the health-food industry which peddles its own processed foods. Then there's the pharmaceutical industry peddling treatments for the many afflictions caused by obesity, the manufacturers of medical and exercise equipment, and fitness centers. If Americans were healthy, how much money would all of these people lose; how many could stay in business? Healthy people are unprofitable, and profit, not health, is America's game. It matters not that even some retired generals consider the problem a threat to national security; national security itself is a profit generating enterprise. It also matters not that people's lives are impaired and destroyed.

Numerous irresolvable American problems are subject to similar analyses. Any astute reader can list many of them. But two are especially troublesome.

That America's infrastructure is on the verge of collapse is well [known](#). Highways, bridges, water systems, the electrical grid, levees, mass transit, airports, schools, dams, water treatment plants, and waste disposal facilities are all in disrepair. Maintenance over decades has been lackluster. Some have suggested that more than a trillion dollars will be needed to upgrade these. But will it happen?

Consider what Katrina did to New Orleans. The storm itself did not cause the devastation; an unmaintained levee did. Why? Because far more money is to be made cleaning up the devastation and rebuilding afterward than in maintaining the infrastructure to prevent

catastrophes. Even subsequent attempts to rebuild the levees of New Orleans have been judged to be insufficient. Why? Just add up the money to be made should New Orleans be devastated again. The money to be made in maintenance is scant compared to that made in cleanup and rebuilding. Do the lives of the people affected by these catastrophes matter? Not in the least.

And then there is war. War profiteering has been ubiquitous throughout history, and governments have done nothing to restrain it. Wars are cash cows for those industries that make up the military-industrial complex; eliminating war makes the udders run dry. Americans increasingly distrust [business](#), but the Pentagon apparently does not, since it now employs private contractors to perform many functions previously performed by the military itself even though there have been numerous reports of contractor misfeasance. Faulty wiring that has resulted in the electrocution of American troops, and bribes paid to the Taliban are well known. The Pentagon has given cost-plus contracts to the developers of advanced weaponry who build ever more destructive and expensive weapons. The assumption is made, apparently, that the firms involved in these activities want to build weapons and provide services that contribute to winning wars.

But why should that assumption be made? Every consumer knows from experience that companies over-hype their products. Some products don't work at all, many don't work as advertised, and others are designed to fail long before their times. Why would anyone assume that the companies selling weaponry and services to the Pentagon would act differently? When the Taliban is bribed, is it to allow the supplies to get to the troops or is it to ensure that the Taliban has the resources to continue the war? Continuing the war keeps the money flowing; ending the war stops the flow. And why is it that our expensive, advanced weaponry hasn't succeeded in turning the tide of battle? Is it because these weapons were designed to look promising but perform less effectively than promised? Military equipment suppliers, just as domestic ones, can manufacture products that perform just well enough to get sold but not well enough to make a difference. After all, every Humvee destroyed is another Humvee to be replaced. Every missile fired at an insignificant target is another missile to be replaced. Every round fired from an automatic weapon that hits no target is a round that has to be replaced. It matters not that young Americans are dying and being dismembered. War is big business.

So yes, there is an obesity crisis in America, but it is not the one described in the first paragraph of this piece. The real crisis is the obesity of the fat-cats running the nation. Our now highly distrusted businesses and government are engaged in practices constrained by not one moral imperative. The government, even when promoting social programs, such as, for instance, extended unemployment benefits, always justifies them as economic, never as moral, undertakings. Our leaders can't say that something needs to be done because it is morally right and that those who oppose it are immoral to the marrow. Programs always have to have an "economic" benefit, because moral considerations have been completely expunged from this society?

Goldman Chief Executive Lloyd Blankfein (perhaps Blankfiend would be more accurate) claims he's "doing god's work." It is noteworthy that he didn't identify the god whose work he's doing. If any reader of this piece is still trying to identify the "mark of Cain," let me identify it for him/her: It is the dollar sign, and the uppercase S that forms its base stands for? Oh, you know the answer.

Jefferson recognized that merchants have no country; they also have no morals.

Government appears to have allowed itself to be bribed into a similar moral insensitivity. Americans have now come to the recognition that the government cannot be counted on to ever "[do](#) the right thing." The gluttony of greed, a combination of two of the seven deadly sins, the worst of all obesities, has become the controlling American value.

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