

Editorials



Linda Chavez



Food crisis engineered by government policies

As if a housing crisis, rising energy costs and a soft labor market weren't enough to cause economic anxiety for the average American, now consumers are feeling the pinch of rapidly escalating food costs.

The United States has long prided itself in being the breadbasket of the world, and Americans traditionally have paid a smaller share of their income on food than citizens of other developed countries. But the days of cheap milk, bread, beef and poultry may well be over — and Uncle Sam is partly to blame.

In 2007, the cost of a gallon of milk increased 26 percent; eggs went up 40 percent; and a loaf of white bread went from \$1.05 to \$1.28 from 2006 to 2008. Steep increases in the price of oil have contributed to these higher costs, but the federal government has played a pernicious role as well. By mandating that oil companies increase the amount of ethanol they blend with gasoline, the government has not only artificially increased the cost of corn — which is what most U.S. ethanol is made of — but has driven up the cost of other grains as well.

Inflated corn prices encourage farmers to divert more acreage to corn, which means they plant less soy and wheat which, in turn, drives the prices of those commodities up. The aggregate price of wheat, corn, soy oil and soy meal in the U.S. will be \$61.7 billion higher in the 2007-08 crop year than it was in 2005-06.

Corn prices affect a host of other food prices as well. If you've ever looked at the ingredient labels on everything from bologna to canned tomato soup, you'll see corn syrup is a common ingredient in many processed foods. Corn is also a common grain used in feed for cattle, poultry and hogs. As a result, prices for meat and poultry are going up, but even with higher prices, some companies in the meat industry still can't make a profit, and many are being forced to cut jobs and close plants. I've seen this firsthand as a member of the board of directors of Pilgrim's Pride, the nation's largest chicken producer, where we already have had to shut down one plant and close six distribution centers to cope with record losses directly attributable to soaring feed costs.

But what is most galling about the impact of government-mandated ethanol production is that it does little or nothing to solve our energy problems. Ethanol proponents argue it is cleaner than petroleum — which improves air quality — and it and other alternative fuels will reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil. Both claims are dubious.

Corn-based ethanol is inefficient as a fuel for automobiles, reducing vehicle gas mileage by 20-30 percent in vehicles using E85, the highest ethanol content fuel. Fewer miles-per-gallon of gas essentially eliminates any savings achieved, even by mixing ethanol with gasoline in the lower 9 percent ethanol blends required in all U.S. gasoline today. And of course, it also takes energy to produce ethanol — for farming and distilling the corn and transporting the final product to the pump — and much of that energy will come from carbon-based fuels.

None of these arguments has stopped the aggressive ethanol lobby from getting its way with Congress, however, and pressure increases in presidential election years as Iowa farmers encouraged candidates to pledge allegiance to ethanol during the Iowa caucuses.

If ethanol really were the miracle fuel its proponents claim, you'd think there would be huge profits in producing it in the free market. But that's not the case. Consumers not only pay for ethanol at the pump, they're paying taxes to subsidize ethanol production in the U.S. — and they're paying a hidden tax to keep cheaper, foreign sugar cane ethanol from competing with the domestic corn-based product. Subsidies to gasoline blenders amount to about 51 cents per gallon, and the government imposes a 54-cent tariff on foreign ethanol so it can't provide a cheaper alternative for U.S. consumers.

And matters will only get worse as government mandates higher bio-fuel content in U.S. gasoline from the current 9 percent to 15 percent by 2015. Ethanol won't solve the energy crisis, but it may well lead to a food crisis in the U.S. and elsewhere.

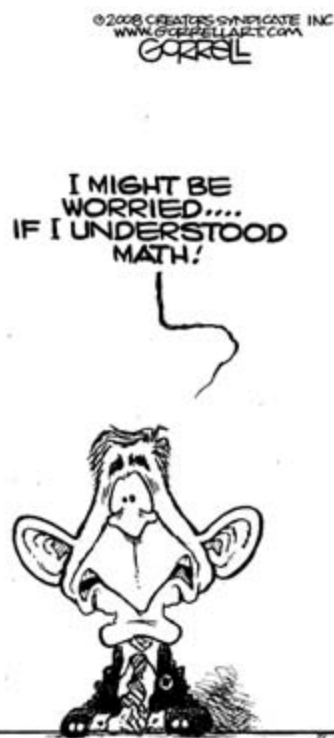
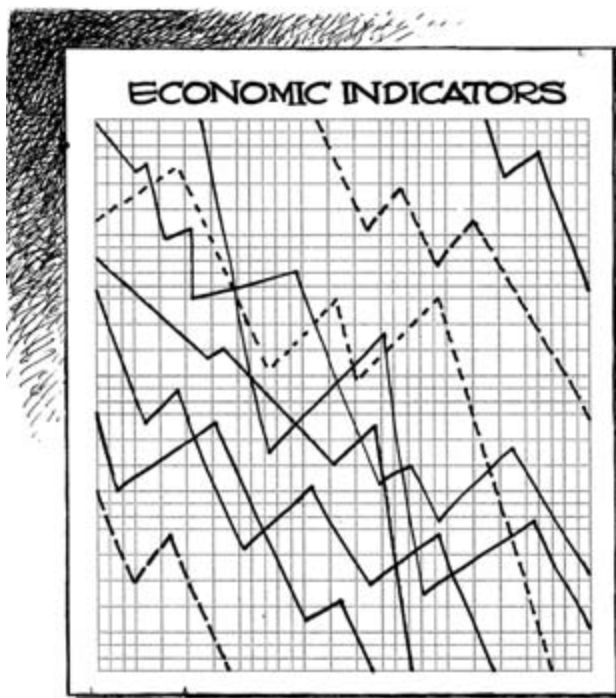
The U.S. Agency for International Development reports that the cost of providing wheat, corn, cereal and other foodstuffs to poor nations has gone up 41 percent since October 2007, which will mean we can provide less assistance to starving people around the world. Federal policy is literally diverting food from the table to the gas tank — and it's time we stopped it.

Linda Chavez is the author of "An Unlikely Conservative: The Transformation of an Ex-Liberal" and a columnist with Creators Syndicate.

From the Bible

"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Psalms 34:1



Michelle Malkin



The Clintons' truth deficit disorder

Seinfeld's George Costanza famously quipped: "It's not a lie if you believe it." This is how a Clinton — take your pick, Hillary, Bill or Chelsea — makes it through the day. Better living through self-delusion.

Seeking to burnish her foreign policy leadership credentials, Sen. Clinton has repeatedly peddled a harrowing anecdote about dodging sniper fire during a trip to Tuzla, Bosnia, in 1996. She brought her then-teenage daughter Chelsea on the dangerous mission. And entertainer Sinbad. And singer Sheryl Crow. And, oh, yeah, there was 8-year-old Emina Bicakic, a Bosnian girl who calmly embraced the intrepid first lady and read her a poem on the tarmac — while a huge contingent of children, parents and other on-lookers surrounded them with not the least bit of concern about flying bullets.

When Sinbad, the Washington Post and every fact-checker on the Internet and under the sun debunked her tall tale, Sen. Clinton doubled down. She dissed Sinbad as a mere "comedian." She asserted that she and her compatriots ran for safety with "our heads down." She clung to her story that she "had to be moved inside because of sniper fire." And she embellished further: "There was no greeting ceremony, and we were basically told to run to our cars. Now, that is what happened."

When video of the cheery greeting ceremony surfaced last week showing no such thing, Hillary's Truth Deficit Disorder kicked in, and the symptomatic excuses poured forth. She "misspoke." Besides, she pooh-poohed, "I say a lot of things — millions of words a day — so if I misspoke, that was just a misspoken."

Priceless campaign slogan: The more she speaks, the more she "mis"-speaks. Finally, truth in Clinton advertising! (In our family, by the way, we call this condition "diarrhea of the mouth.")

And Hillary's not done. She sniffed that her Tuzla hustle was just a "minor blip." A "minor blip" that she just happened to tell, retell and adorn in her 2003 autobiography, in Dubuque, Iowa, in Waco, Texas, and in Washington, D.C., over the past three months to illustrate her bravery, fortitude, expertise and massive foreign policy experience edge over Barack Obama.

In a radio interview last Tuesday, Hillary blamed her congenital dissembling on being "sleep-deprived." If that is so, then Hillary has been a walking zombie for years.

This is the woman who insisted for more than a decade that she was named after the late, great mountain-climber Sir Edmund Hillary — never mind that she was born six years before he scaled Mt. Everest in 1953.

This is the woman who told "Dateline NBC" that daughter Chelsea was on a jog in New York City when the jihadists struck on 9/11 — never mind that Chelsea later wrote a magazine essay revealing she watched the attacks on television from a friend's apartment.

This is the woman who claimed to have "helped start" the federal Children's Health Insurance Program — never mind that the program's original sponsors noted Sen. Clinton fought the initial bill and had no role in writing the legislation.

This is the woman (echoed by her husband and daughter) who bragged that she was the "first" to call the disaster in Darfur "genocide" — never mind that several other senators had done so in 2004, while her first press statement referring to Darfur as genocide wasn't until March 2006.

This is the woman who claimed to have organized "instrumental" meetings in Belfast and baldly asserted she "helped to bring peace to Northern Ireland" — never mind that key negotiators dismissed her as "totally invisible," "cheerleading" and "a wee bit silly."

And we haven't even gotten to the Whitewater era yet which, not coincidentally, is when her Tuzla imaginary bullet-dodging adventure took place — timed to distract from all of her and her husband's dishonest, dirty dealings.

At least Hillary "It's my mother's fault I lied about being named after Sir Edmund Hillary" Clinton and Bill "I have vivid memories of black churches burning that, uh, OK, never burned" Clinton can be proud of raising a daughter who didn't fall far from the reality-challenged tree. Asked in Bloomington, Ind., last Monday to explain how she survived the nonexistent sniper fire, the first daughter, with a promising future in fiction writing, responded smoothly: "We were well-protected by our United States military and the United States Secret Service."

Behold the Democratic choices for president: One candidate whose 20-year spiritual guru has an adversarial relationship with America, and another who has a life-long adversarial relationship with the truth.

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Thank you for reading the Lampasas Dispatch Record

Playing the race canard

It being a free country and all, no one has to have a "conversation" he doesn't want to have, a fact that explains our longstanding non-conversation on race: the one we're going to continue not having, never mind the pundits and Barack Obama.

A conversation has at least two participants. That's one more than most American liberals desire. A liberal, black or white, doesn't by and large want an exchange of viewpoints on racial questions of consequence. What he wants is a microphone and an audience — preferably white, but he'll take what he can get. This audience he proposes to instruct as to the collective iniquity of white America in its dealings with non-white America. That isn't all he wants. He wants utter silence from the audience. No back talk.

You couldn't characterize a one-sided lecture as "conversation," and yet it's pretty much what we get every time the matter of race intrudes itself into public affairs. The habit was born in the 1960s, when so many of our present, er, moral leaders came into political consciousness. It was never the way of the counterculture to accept contradiction. America was wrong about almost everything, and if you didn't agree, all that showed was your ignorance; not to mention, your racism.

Demagogues like Al Sharpton and the Rev. Jeremiah Wright are hard to take, but easily a harder job are those enlightened whites (they'll happily identify themselves as such) who see all racial questions as matter for flagellation of the supposedly less enlightened.

Put the ordinary white and the ordinary black together in real, not just pretend, situations — the workplace, for instance — and nine times out of 10 you find they care about the same things: family, sports, job, animals. God, too. No such occasion automatically produces instant brotherhood. On the other hand, simple tolerance isn't such a bad outcome to cross-racial encounters. Can't we all just get along here? Yes. Maybe. Provided we keep the ideologues, the worst of whom are white, not black, from turning all bi-racial encounters into mass scoldings.

As if I don't think I've encountered a truly bigoted white in 20 years. On the other hand, the universities and the media — two overwhelmingly white institutions — keep the attacks on bigotry flowing liberally, you might say.

My political convictions

I have sent the following letter to the Republican National Committee in Washington, D.C., and thought Dispatch Record readers might be interested in these remarks.

Dale DeShazo

Re: Your survey and request for contribution

I am not completing and returning your survey, because I feel the questions are designed in such a way as to obtain only a desired answer that almost all conservatives would agree to. There seem to be a lot of other questions that should be asked if the Republican Party really wants to regain control. Please permit me to expand a bit.

The Contract With America was an excellent starting point in correcting what has been wrong with American politics, in my opinion. The Republican Party's elected ones all too soon abandoned the principles it contained and could not resist politics as usual. I am becoming more frustrated as a conservative, given the senseless earmarks, special-interest influence, corruption of some (both parties) elected officials without sufficient penalty, and I could elaborate further.

For a time I have wondered if it is time for a major third political party. It seems we have gone to extremes of both the conservative and liberal thinkers, yet a significant number of Americans are somewhere in the middle. Though I consider myself a conservative, I believe I also have a strong conviction that America is too wealthy a nation to ignore the poor of both our nation and those of other nations. However, I feel there is too much waste in government spending, inadequate accountability of those responsible for enforcement of the programs guidelines. I feel the World Bank does not lend but gives and requires no accountability, and certainly does not want to investigate fraud and misuse of its own programs. I feel the U.N. is not in our best interests, and directly conflicts with our purported efforts in humanitarian aid and our system

William Murchison



I was watching only the other day an independent film (you know, like Al Gore?) on bias in higher education, and, lo, a bearded academic had the gall to inform us that "whiteness" is "an oppressive social category." I think they used to call this condition "institutional racism." You were a racist by mere participation in the life of an institution traditionally dominated by the white folks. See how easy to qualify! You didn't have to wear a bedsheet to earn the stigma once reserved for plantation overseers or Confederate privates.

Alas, the parties making such accusations never made known their intellectual premises. Mere assertion does the job. The white man, especially the Southern white man, gets no credit for honorable performance, or, for that matter, civilized emotion. Witness Duke University and the Great Lacrosse Charade — the mendacious prosecution of three college students for alleged gang rape on the say-so of a black stripper whose "plight" inspired 88 faculty members, in a newspaper ad, to cry out against the Duke campus' "racism" and "sexism."

It's trendy, in other words, to advertise your own repudiation of white "advantage" by attacking the advantaged whenever the chance presents itself.

So no conversation about race. Not until the great majority of those who learned their politics in the '60s are tucked away six feet under. Maybe not even then, such is the tenacity of their example. White America casts off segregation (and good riddance). It opened doors all over our national home to those previously denied admission. It now looks not unkindly on the presidential candidacy of a man of mixed race. Pretty good work for a bunch of institutional racists, mightn't we want to acknowledge?

William Murchison is a columnist with Creators Syndicate.

Letters

of values, though we are assessed a very large share of its budget.

I can't but wonder how a candidate can expect and accept often very large but structured contributions, and not be expected to influence legislation. Surely those contributors expect something in return for their significant amounts.

While I have voted for Republican nominees for a lot of years, I really consider myself an independent conservative. I regret that I often feel I vote not for the candidate I really think is a well-qualified one who will vote and serve the interests of America, but the one who is just different than the opposing candidate. It seems a poor choice many times.

The parties have become too quick to condemn the other, usually with mean-spirited rebuttals, some that are even venomous in nature. Is it unreasonable to expect that these elected ones work together for balanced legislation and programs? The atmosphere is one of total animosity for any who don't agree, from both sides. This serves only to further alienate the voters, causing increased division and hatred among Americans.

I don't know if you really want to hear these comments or not. Nor do I know whether this letter will be trashed and ignored by the Republican Party, but I fear it may well be. And, I recognize that I may even be wrong in my thinking. However, I believe many, many Americans might feel much the same. Please consider that my thoughts are submitted humbly and with the best of intentions for our wonderful country and my countrymen.