

Re: Is New Orleans finished ?

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- *From:* bill.sloman@xxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* 3 Sep 2005 17:10:31 -0700
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John Larkin wrote:

> On 3 Sep 2005 09:05:21 -0700, Winfield Hill
> <Winfield_member@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:
>
>>
>> I read that the cost to have built the levees to cat-5 level, as opposed
>> to the cat-3 level it was built to, would have been only \$2.5B, which is
>> about 1/10 of what's going to be spent now by insurers, government, etc.
>>
>
> Cool. All you would have had to know in advance is exactly where,
> among the 3000-miles or so of levees and seawalls in six or seven
> states, it would break.

Don't be silly. Flood defences aren't built aren't built or costed on the basis that you can predict where the "perfect storm" is going to strike. They can be designed to protect particular areas, but the bigger the area you enclose, the more value - in protected area - you get per unit length of levee. There is also the point that effective sea-dikes are big and not particularly steep-sided so they occupy a great deal of real estate.

> Bush should have known this. I'm sure Clinton
> did, and would have fixed it all up if he'd been elected to a third
> term, as he suggested he should have been.

No - he wouldn't have been able to get the republican-dominated house to okay the money, so he could got credit for good intentions without having to irritate people by burying their houses and businesses under effective flood defences.

> I'm certain that fixing all
> the levees was on Jimmy Carter's second-term agenda.
>
> Of course, the people of New Orleans and of Louisiana had no
> responsibility to pay for their own safety, or even to lobby hard to
> have anybody else pay for it. The mayor and Jesse Jackson certainly
> know who's to blame.

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It does seem to take a decent-sized disaster – a few thousand dead and a billion or so in property damage – to get people interested in setting up proper defences against low-frequency events. It took the World Trade Centre to get any serious attention to U.S. airline security, and we've yet to see if New Orleans is enough of a disaster to get you to pay some attention to your coastal flood defences. Granting Dubbya's track record, he'll probably try to use it to justify invading Iran.

- > It's also morbidly funny: the mayor of NOLA ordered everybody
- > evacuated. And had hundreds of school busses parked in neat rows. So
- > now the school busses are under water, and so are the people who
- > couldn't get out.

Precisely as morbidly funny as the levees that were too steep and thin to withstand the storm surge against which they were supposed to protect the city. Earlier in your post you've used the phrase "All you would have had to know in advance". Care to think about how much the mayor would have had to know in advance to order the school busses parked in some place that isn't now flooded?

<snip>

- > Face it: all the oil in the ground is going to be pumped up and burned
- > at the maximum practical rate; it's only a question of who does it.

This is probably true, but it certainly isn't the optimum solution – we are going to have to go over to a less energy intensive life-style at some point, and the sooner we start, the less problem we are going to have with global warming.

Shaw's comment is germane "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

- > After that, China will go 100% to coal, and you know the CO2
- > consequences of that. However much global warming is due to CO2,
- > there's virtually nothing we can or will do to change things much.

We may be able to sequester a lot of it in underground aquifers – not the lot you generate when you drive around in your car, but the CO2 coming out of power generating stations is easier to collect and sequester.

- > We'll just have to get used to it.

This begs a number of questions. If we get the oceans warm enough for the under-sea methane hydrates to start breaking up, you could get a pretty spectacular run-away. That wouldn't leave many of us over "to get used to it" – not enough to sustain any kind of industrialised society.

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- > Some places will get better, and
- > some will get worse. But Earth's climate has always been various and
- > erratic on scales enormously greater than what's likely here.

Check out "Catastrophes and lesser calamities" by Tony Hallam (ISBN 0-19-280668-8) for a geologist's review of the geological record. "Various" and "erratic" don't really do justice to the range of climates that we might end up with.

- > As far as the tax cuts go, I guess we differ as to where we are on the
- > Laffer curve. I do know that if the city and state and the Feds didn't
- > grab 50% of the profit of my company (and define a piece of equipment
- > or building improvements as "profit") I could create a bunch more USA
- > jobs and products and probably pay more absolute tax dollars in the
- > end. And an estate tax would absolutely destroy my business and kill
- > 20 jobs or so; The Brat would have to liquidate, to *make* the assets
- > worthless, to avoid having to write a tax check for a million or so
- > dollars for the value of "goodwill."

Read Jonathon Israel's "The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806" ISBN: 0198207344. The last third of the book is depressing reading. The Dutch regent class thought like you, and pared back the tax rate until the army and navy had been reduced to a level where the Dutch could no longer enforce the dominant trading position that had made the money that had paid for an effective military force. This of course, lead to further economies, and when the French invaded in 1672 they managed to occupy most of the country in very short order. The Dutch managed to throw them out again the following year, but paying for the effort cleaned them out.

Nobody likes paying heavy taxes, least of all to be spent on stuff which may never be needed. This natural desire is exploited by a class of economic witch doctors who invent crap like the Laffer curve, amongst other implausible arguments "proving" high taxes are a bad thing. Granting that you electoral system favour rich candidates, it isn't surprising that these frauds have lots of political influence. Your government warns people about medical quackery, but endorses economic quacks.

Bill Sloman, Nijmegen

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- *Follow-Ups:*
 - ◆ *Re: Is New Orleans finished ?*
 - ◇ *From:* John Woodgate
 - ◆ *Re: Is New Orleans finished ?*

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Re: Is New Orleans finished ?

◇ *From:* Fred Bloggs

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* John Larkin

• **References:**

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* bill . sloman

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* Dirk Bruere at Neopax

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* Winfield Hill

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* John Larkin

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* Jim Thompson

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* Winfield Hill

◆ ***Re: Is New Orleans finished ?***

◇ *From:* John Larkin

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