The Pentagon System

by Noam Chomsky

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period, such "industrial policy" was masked by the Pentagon system, including the Department of Energy (which produces nuclear weapons) and NASA, converted by the Kennedy administration to a significant component of the state-directed public subsidy to advanced industry.

By the late 1940s, it was taken for granted in government-corporate circles that the state would have to intervene massively to maintain the private economy. In 1948, with postwar pent-up

Like all advanced societies, the U.S. has relied on state intervention in the economy from its origins, though for ideological reasons, the fact is commonly denied. During the post-World War II

consumer demand exhausted and the economy sinking back into recession, Truman's "cold-war spending" was regarded by the business press as a "magic formula for almost endless good times" (Steel), a way to "maintain a generally upward tone" (Business Week). The Magazine of Wall Street saw military spending as a way to "inject new strength into the entire economy," and a few years later, found it "obvious that foreign economies as well as our own are now mainly dependent on the scope of continued arms spending in this country," referring to the international military Keynesianism that finally succeeded in reconstructing state capitalist industrial societies abroad and laying the basis for the huge expansion of Transnational Corporations (TNCs), at that time mainly U.S.-based.

The Pentagon system was considered ideal for these purposes. It imposes on the public a large burden of the costs (research and development, R&D) and provides a guaranteed market for excess production, a useful cushion for management decisions. Furthermore, this form of industrial policy does not have the undesirable side-effects of social spending directed to human needs. Apart from unwelcome redistributive effects, the latter policies tend to interfere with managerial prerogatives; useful production may undercut private gain, while state-subsidized waste production (arms, Man-on-the-Moon extravaganzas, etc.) is a gift to the owner and manager, who will, furthermore, be granted control of any marketable spin-offs. Furthermore, social spending may well arouse public interest and participation, thus enhancing the threat of democracy; the public cares about hospitals, roads, neighborhoods, and so on, but has no opinion about the choice of missiles and high-tech fighter planes. The defects of social spending do not taint the military Keynesian alternative, which had the added advantage that it was well-adapted to the needs of advanced industry: computers and electronics generally, aviation, and a wide range of related technologies and enterprises.

The Pentagon system of course served other purposes. As global enforcer, the U.S. needs intervention forces and an intimidating posture to facilitate their use. But its economic role has always been central, a fact well-known to military planners. Army Plans Chief General James Gavin, in charge of Army R&D under Eisenhower, noted that "What appears to be intense interservice rivalry in most cases...is fundamentally industrial rivalry." It was also recognized from the outset that these goals require "sacrifice and discipline" on the part of the general public (NSC 68). It was therefore necessary, Dean Acheson urged "to bludgeon the mass mind" of Congress and recalcitrant officials with the Communist threat in a manner "clearer than truth," and to "scare hell out of the American people," as Senator Vandenberg interpreted the message. To carry out these tasks has been a prime responsibility of intellectuals throughout these years.

international terrorism, Qaddafi and crazed Arabs generally, Sandinistas marching on Texas, Hispanic narcotraffickers, etc. The absurdity of the pretexts did not prevent them from having a certain effect though with only temporary success, a problem that must be faced.

As in earlier efforts to sustain the Pentagon system, the Somali intervention may serve other purposes. The U.S. supported Siad Barre through his worst atrocities because of its interest in Somali bases for the intervention forces aimed at the Middle East and for possible operations in Africa; such considerations might remain of some importance (not much, I suspect, alternatives being readily available). Furthermore, in large parts of Africa and the Middle East the rise of Islamic fundamentalism (which may well be accelerated by the intervention) is a matter of growing concern, for traditional reasons: like secular nationalist tendencies, liberation theology, labor and peasant organizing, democratic socialist political initiatives, some military regimes, and other

Public acquiescence was largely secured by fear. By the 1980s, however, the cry that "the Russians are coming" was losing its efficacy. The problem of the vanishing pretext was a troublesome

one throughout the decade, heightened by the erosion of public tolerance in the face of growing economic problems. Major propaganda efforts were undertaken to conjure up new demons:

potentially independent forces, Islamic fundamentalism falls under the rubric of "ultranationalism," a term that covers any threat of deviation from the subordinate role assigned to the service areas, whatever its political coloration. Nevertheless, it seems likely that at the current moment, the prevailing factor is the domestic one, the crisis of state industrial policy, as the more serious commentary and reporting often indicates obliquely.

Industrial Policy for the 1990s

The decline of the traditional form of industrial strategy is a serious matter. To convince the taxpayer to subsidize advanced industry by the methods designed in the early postwar years is becoming increasingly difficult. It is not surprising, then, that we now hear open discussion of the need for "industrial policy" -- that is, new forms, no longer masked by the Pentagon system.

The old methods were running into difficulties for reasons beyond the loss of the standard pretext and the erosion of tolerance on the part of people suffering the effects of Reaganite spend-and-borrow abandon. The Pentagon system of industrial subsidy and planning has obvious inefficiencies. These were tolerable in the days of overwhelming U.S. economic dominance, less so as U.S.-

intervention are required (see Year 501, South End Press).

based corporations face serious competitors who can design and produce directly for the commercial market, not awaiting possible spin-offs from high tech weapons or space shots. Furthermore, the cutting edge of industrial development is shifting to biology-based technology. That is one reason why the West, with the U.S. in the lead, is insisting that GATT agreements and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) provide enhanced protection for patents ("intellectual property"), thus locking the Third World into dependency on high-priced products of Western

agribusiness, biotechnology, the pharmaceutical industry, and so on. It is important to ensure that TNCs control seeds, plant varieties, drugs, and the means of life generally; by comparison,

electronics deals with frills. Public subsidy and state protection for biology-based industries can not easily be hidden behind a Pentagon cover. For such reasons alone, new forms of state

problems than Reaganite ideologues. Not that Reaganites were reluctant to use state power to protect the wealthy from market forces. The primary mechanisms were the usual military

Keynesian ones. To mention one striking case, a 1985 OECD study found that the Pentagon and Japan's state planning ministry MITI were distributing R&D funds much the same way, making similar guesses about new technologies. A major Pentagon funnel was SDI ("Star Wars"), which was openly advertised as a state subsidy to the "private sector," and lauded by the business press for that reason. The Reagan-Bush decade ended in fall 1992 with a well-publicized improvement in the economy, attributed in the business press to a sharp rise in military spending much of it for computer purchases. While almost all industrial societies became more protectionist in past years, at great cost to the Third World, the Reaganites led the pack, introducing more import restrictions than all postwar administrations combined. British MP Phillip Oppenheim, ridiculing Anglo-American posturing about "liberal market capitalism," notes that "A World Bank survey of non-tariff barriers showed that they covered 9 per cent of all goods in Japan -- compared with 34 per cent in the U.S. -- figures reinforced by David Henderson of the OECD, who stated that during the 1980s the U.S. had the worst record for devising new non-tariff barriers" (basically, ways to strong-arm competitors). He adds that OECD figures show U.S. state funding for non-military R&D to be about one-third of all civil research spending, as compared to 2 percent state funding in Japan. The Thatcher record is similar.

The Reaganites also conducted the biggest nationalization in U.S. history (the Continental Illinois Bank bailout) and enabled the steel industry to reconstruct by effectively barring imports and undermining unions to reduce labor costs. They are leaving Washington with heavy new restrictions on European Community steel exports that the EC claims violate international trade rules;

administration sharply increased export-promotion by means of Export-Import bank credits in apparent "violation of the GATT," Eximbank chair John Macomber concedes. They conducted

Washington's justification is alleged EC dumping, but the EC responds that total EC steel exports had fallen below the "voluntary quota" (the Reaganite non-tariff barrier). The Reagan

In the 1992 electoral campaign, the Democrats showed more awareness of these issues, gaining support from sectors of the corporate world that recognized them to be more attuned to real world

"what was effectively an `industrial policy'" (contrary to official rhetoric) that rebuilt the U.S. computer chip industry by such means as an agreement "essentially forced on Japan" to increase purchases of U.S. chips and by establishment of the government-industry consortium Sematech to improve manufacturing technology, the Washington Post reported, quoting Charles White, vice president for strategic planning at Motorola, the second-biggest U.S. chip maker, who said: "You can't underestimate the government's role."

Despite such achievements, the Reagan-Bush faction remains hampered by ideological extremism, unable to face current problems of industrial strategy as directly as their political opponents, some elements of the corporate-financial world assume. Clintonite thinking on this issue is reflected in the choice of Berkeley Professor Laura Tyson as Chairperson of the Council of Economic Advisors. Tyson was a founder and codirector of the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy, a corporate-funded trade and technology research institute that advocates unconcealed state industrial policy. She has "longstanding relationships with Silicon Valley companies that stand to benefit from the policies she advocates," Times business correspondent Sylvia Nasar notes.

In support of these policies, Roundtable co-director Michael Borrus cites a 1988 Department of Commerce study showing that "five of the top six fastest growing U.S. industries from 1972 to

biotechnology, jet engines, and airframes were each the by-product of public spending for national defense and public health." The record goes back to the earliest days; "defense" and "public

1988 were sponsored or sustained, directly or indirectly, by federal investment," the only exception being lithographic services. "The winners" in earlier years, he writes, "computers,

health" are the familiar Newspeak disguises, perhaps a shade less deceptive than "free market neoliberalism."

England. And crucially, the rabble must be kept from interfering with the plans that will determine their fate.

problem. The Clinton Mandate for Change promises no change in these respects.

suffer, "the country" -- in the Newspeak sense -- will, again, do just fine.

such condemnation as a tribute to their fiery independence of power.

the start, though largely concealed from the general public by the doctrinal managers.

public subsidy) shifted from one component of the Pentagon system to the others.

Such familiar lessons of economic history can no longer be concealed, as the Pentagon system and the Cold War ideology have eroded. The interventionist measures of the Reaganites reflect these needs, as does the increasingly open discussion of "industrial policy." A recent study of the National Academy of Sciences and Engineering proposed a \$5 billion quasi-governmental company "to channel federal money into private applied research"; that is, publicly-funded research that will yield private profit. Another report, entitled The Government Role in Civilian Technology: Building a New Alliance, calls for new efforts to extend "the close and longstanding" government-industry relationship that has "helped to establish the commercial biotechnology industry." It recommends a government-funded "Civilian Technology Corporation" to assist U.S. industry to commercialize technology by encouraging "cooperative R&D ventures in pre-commercial areas"; "pre-commercial," to ensure that profit is restricted to private wealth and power. The ventures will be "cooperative," with the public paying the costs up to the point of product development. At that point costs change to gains, and the public hands the enterprise over to private industry, the traditional pattern.

"America cannot continue to rely on trickle-down technology from the military," Clinton stated in a document issued by his campaign headquarters in September 1992 ("Technology: The Engine of Economic Growth"). The old game is ending. In the "new era" planned by the Clinton administration, Times science writer William Broad reports, "the Government's focus on making armaments will shift to fostering a host of new civilian technologies and industries" -- just as in the "old era," but then behind the Pentagon mask. "President Clinton proposes to redirect \$76 billion or so in annual Federal research spending so it spurs industrial innovation" in emerging technologies -- which, in unmentionable fact, were largely funded through the

Pentagon system (and the National Institute of Health) in the "old era." A minimum of \$30 billion is to be taken from the Pentagon's research budget as a "peace dividend" over four years for these purposes, Broad writes, noting that: "Significantly, the initiative would spend the same amount of money as Star Wars, \$30 billion, in half the time."

Also significantly, Clinton's advisers knew all along that Star Wars was "only tangentially related to national defense" that its prime function was to serve as "a path to competitiveness in advanced technologies," as publicly explained in Congressional Hearings (Clinton's close associate Robert Reich, now Secretary of Labor, writing in 1985 in the New York Times under the heading "High Tech, a Subsidiary of Pentagon Inc."). As noted earlier, the function of Star Wars as part of the system of public subsidy, private profit, was made clear to the business world from

"We're now going to develop an economic strategy much in the way we developed a national security strategy to fight the cold war," Kent Hughes, president of Clinton's Council on Competitiveness, proclaimed. It is necessary only to bring out the striking continuities as old policies are adapted to new contingencies, and to reinterpret the "cold war" as what it was. A related matter is the traditional business demand that the public via government, pay the costs of the infrastructure required for private power and profit, everything from roads to education. By now, even such enthusiasts for Reagan's party for the rich as the Wall Street Journal are concerned by the consequences of the policies they advocated, such as the deterioration of the state college

systems that supplied the needs of the corporate sector. "Public higher education -- one the few areas where America still ranks supreme -- is being pounded by state spending cuts," the Journal

That Clinton will be able to address these problems is not at all clear. Frivolous Reaganite policies left the country deeply in debt at all levels, from the federal government to households. Interest

worriedly reports, echoing the concerns of businesses that "rely heavily on a steady stream of graduates" for skilled personnel and on applied research that they can exploit. This is one of the

on the federal debt has skyrocketed, now reaching the scale of the days when the costs of the World War had to be faced. Had the borrowing been used for productive investment or R&D, it

Thatcherite England, the other "revolution" much admired by the privileged. A National Science Foundation study at the peak of the mania estimated that R&D expenditures declined by 5

could have been justified. But it was not. Rather, it was largely frittered away in luxury consumption, financial manipulations and swindles, and other Yuppie fun-and-games-much as in

long-predicted consequences of the cutback of federal services for all but the wealthy and powerful, which devastated states and local communities. Class war is not easy to fine tune.

The Wall Street Journal reports a study by Battelle Memorial Institute showing that research spending will remain sluggish because of "a slowdown in weapons development." "Government

spending over the past five years has swung toward space and energy programs, and away from weapons development" the principal author of the report said. That is government spending (the

percent for companies involved in mergers and acquisitions compared to a 5 percent rise for others. Meanwhile real wages declined, hunger and deep poverty rose rapidly, the jail population zoomed, and the society began to take on a distinct Third World aspect. Given the debt, even the kinds of "moderate increase in infrastructure spending" and other devices that Clinton advisers are willing to contemplate, reflecting business concerns, may not be feasible.

Who Decides? For Whom?

The standard rhetorical cloak for the new "economic strategy" is that its goal is to provide jobs. That is not false, as long as we recall the meaning of the term "jobs" in Politically Correct

Newspeak. Whether the strategy will provide jobs, and for whom, is debatable. What is not debatable is that the driving concern remains the unmentionable seven-letter word, and that the

public is to be excluded, completely, from any participation in formulating this "economic strategy." The latter principle follows from the guiding doctrine of elite democratic theory: the public are to be spectators, not participants in managing public affairs, which are none of their business. The urgency of preserving this principle is highlighted by the curious confusions that the public

The guiding doctrines, of course, have far more general application. To mention one interesting case, in Poland "Public resistance to privatization, especially among workers, has been evident

since early in the post-Communist period," the director of Russian and East European studies at George Washington University, Sharon Wolchik, observes: "A 1990 survey, for example, found that only 13 percent of workers, but 37 percent of directors, favored private ownership of their enterprise," with over one-third of both workers and directors favoring state and employee ownership. But the attitudes of the population are inconsequential in the "new democracies" -- one reason, perhaps, why "the Communist era is looking better and better" to Poles, as another academic specialist observes (Jane Leftwich Curry).

manifests, reviewed earlier.

These are important features of the current era, discussed in earlier articles here (see my Z articles in May, July/August, November, and Edward Herman's "Doublespeak," November 1992).

Nixon's dismantling of the international economic system was one of several factors leading to a huge increase in unregulated capital, beyond the power of governments to control. The rich

While state managers may attempt to adapt the traditional devices of public subsidy and protection to new contingencies, they will surely continue to support the main lines of policy: extending the globalization of the economy and establishing more firmly the decision-making apparatus that is taking shape to serve the interests of the supranational industrial and financial institutions.

societies are no longer immune, as European central banks learned a few months ago. Even the United States, still the world's largest economy and most powerful state, is facing these problems. The U.S. can freely disregard IMF "advice" as the Bush administration showed in October when the IMF prescribed deficit-cutting measures including new taxes, and "fundamental" health care

Whether in Somalia, or Poland, or any other choice that one may make, the concerns of the general population are as incidental to the architects of policy as in the days of Adam Smith's

reforms — the kind of "advice" on structural adjustment that amounts to orders for the Third World, however harmful the consequences, Doug Henwood notes, reporting the U.S. rejection. But it is not beyond the reach of international bond investors, who "may now hold unprecedented power — perhaps even a veto-over U.S. economic policy," the Wall Street Journal reported immediately after the election. This consequence of the huge Reagan-Bush deficit will serve as brake on any odd ideas that Clinton advisers might have about spending, the Journal noted reassuringly; spending of the wrong kind, that is, not directed to the needs of "the country," in the technical sense.

Related developments of the past several decades have accelerated the globalization of the economy, along with its immediate corollary: a growing superfluous population at home as production shifts to high repression, low wage areas (and, at the same time, productivity gains reduce the need for industrial workers). The superfluous people are becoming less significant as a market as

advanced industrial societies. The model pioneered by Henry Ford -- wages high enough for domestic workers to provide a market -- may decline along with the national economies on which it

well. Increasingly, production can be shifted to poor and oppressed populations and directed to the relatively wealthy, a small sector in the traditional Third World, a far larger one in the

was based. Rhetoric aside, these are not likely to be serious concerns of the "principal architects" of policy, any more than they have been in the past.

unemployment, workers are willing to "work longer hours than their pampered colleagues in western Germany" at 40 percent of the wage and with few benefits, the Financial Times cheerily explains. Capital can readily move; people cannot, or are not permitted to by those who applaud Adam Smith's doctrines when it suits their needs. Jobs may disappear in the West; "jobs" in the technical sense will do just fine.

The U.S. (like other states) will continue to defend U.S.-based corporate and financial interests while seeking to maintain a global environment in which they can flourish. That requires, in particular, that the Third World be kept in its service role. Meanwhile at home, state power will continue to be employed to dissolve popular structures (unions, etc.) that might serve the needs of

the general public and enable them to interfere illegitimately in the management of public affairs It will also be necessary to find ways to control the growing "Third World at home," no small

The reversion of much of East Europe to its traditional Third World status offers new weapons against U.S. workers (and Western workers generally). As widely reported, GM plans to close two dozen plants in the U.S. and Canada. Meanwhile it bas opened a \$690 million assembly plant in East Germany with great expectations, heightened by the fact that, thanks to 43 percent unofficial

phrase of business historian Alfred Chandler. In an important critical analysis of the GATT World Bank economists Herman Daly and Robert Goodland point out that in prevailing economic theory, "firms are islands of central planning in a sea of market relationships." "As the islands get bigger" they add, "there is really no reason to claim victory for the market principle" -- particularly as the islands approach the scale of the sea, which departs radically from free market principles, and always has, because the powerful will not submit to these destructive rules.

As in the past, political institutions are taking shape to reflect the realities of private economic power: the IMF and World Bank, G-7, NAFTA, and other elements of the "de facto world"

government" described by the international financial press as the executive for the "new imperial age." These processes allow major decisions to be insulated from parliamentary institutions, which may be infected by public influence This important development carries forward the long-term project of safeguarding wealth and privilege from public interference and overcoming the

influence them. A good part of the popular concern in Europe over instituting EC structures has to do with "the democratic deficit," "the fact that policies escape parliamentary control at the national level and do not come under equivalent control at the Community level" (John Lambert). The same problems are arising here, though they are less discussed in our more depoliticized

threat that democratic forms might have actual substance. Increasingly, the general public are not even aware of major decisions that will determine their fate, hence are in no position to

Much of world trade (close to half, by some estimates) consists of intrafirm transfers -- centrally managed trade, internal to particular TNCs and guided by a highly "visible hand," to borrow the

Neither at home nor abroad does the real world bear much resemblance to the dreamy fantasies now fashionable among intellectuals about History converging to an ideal of liberal democracy that is the ultimate realization of Freedom. Consider NAFTA. One may debate the consequences, but no one doubts that they will be large in scale. The NAFTA is an executive agreement reached on August 12, 1992, just in time to become a major issue in the electoral campaign. It was mentioned but barely. The Trade Act of 1974 established a Labor Advisory Committee (IAC), based in the unions, which is required by law to provide advice and information to the executive branch before any trade agreement is reached. The LAC was advised that its report was due on September 9, J992. A complete draft of the text of this elaborate treaty was made available one day before, on September 8, making it impossible for the LAC to formally meet, as directed by law. One could hardly con conjure up a more striking example of utter contempt for democracy. Furthermore, the LAC notes, "the administration refused to permit any outside advice on the

The situation in Canada was similar. The British Columbia Teachers Federation wrote a sharply critical report on the treaty draft noting the "impossible limitations on the operation of this committee, "with absurd time constraints and exclusion of entire provinces from any review of the lengthy and complex executive agreement.

Despite the contemptuous dismissal of both the law and the public, LAC did provide a review of NAFTA, concluding that while the treaty would be a bonanza to investors (as all agree), it would severely harm American workers (about 70 percent of them, even by the analysis of the advocates). It will also very likely harm Mexican workers as well, the LAC report notes, as do other studies. One predicted consequence of the agreement is a rapid increase in rural migration to urban areas as Mexican corn producers are wiped out by U.S. agribusiness exports, depressing still

further wages that have fallen some 60 percent during the past decade and are likely to remain low, thanks to the harsh repression of labor that is a crucial part of the highly-touted Mexican

The treaty is also likely to have harmful environmental consequences; production can shift to regions where enforcement of laws is lax or non-existent, and regulations imposed by parliamentary bodies can be overridden as "unfair restraint of trade," processes already underway in the Framework of the U.S.-Canada "Free trade" agreement. In general, the LAC report concludes, "U.S. corporations, and the owners and managers of these corporations, stand to reap enormous profits. The United States as a whole, however, stands to lose an enormous amount." The country will

On a wide range of issues, the LAC report observes, NAFTA "will have the effect of prohibiting democratically elected bodies at [federal, state, and local levels of government from enacting measures deemed inconsistent with the provisions of the agreement," including measures on the environment, workers' rights, health and safety, etc. The LAC report calls for the treaty to be renegotiated, offering a series of constructive proposals.

Neither the contents of this important critical analysis, nor the scorn for law and democracy shown by the Bush administration, were reported. These matters are of no interest to the ideological

institutions, or more accurately, are of negative interest -- suppression is necessary, in the interests of "the country." Citizens know next to nothing; indeed, subversion of democracy has reached such remarkable heights that they do not even know that they know nothing. Congress abdicated responsibility. The Clinton camp had little to say. In such ways, we can approach the long-sought ideal: formal democratic procedures that are utterly devoid of meaning, as citizens not only do not intrude into the public arena, but have scarcely an idea of the policies that will shape their lives.

It is a striking fact that although these critical issues have been kept almost entirely out of the public domain, 60 percent of the public do have an opinion about NAFTA, opposing it by nearly 2-to-1 in October 1992. As usual, that was irrelevant to the presidential campaign, then in its final weeks. It was enough, however, to frighten the Wall Street Journal, which ran a fevered front-page story warning of the "diverse coalition of grass-roots foes" that is "fighting' Nafta'," including the labor movement, populist farm groups, and environmental and religious organizations.

More generally, people have little specific knowledge of what is happening around them. An academic study that appeared right before the presidential election reports that less than 30 percent of the population was aware of the positions of the candidates on major issues, though 86 percent knew the name of George Bush's dog. The general thrust of propaganda gets through, however.

These dangerous elements "hit pay dirt," the Journal reports ominously, receiving funds (a magnificent \$50,000) from a branch of the Unitarian Church.

The corporate world is, naturally, shaking in its boots at the thought that its monopoly might be challenged. The lesson for the rest of us is obvious.

When asked to identify the largest element of the federal budget, less than 1/4 give the correct answer, military spending. Almost half select foreign aid, which barely exists; the second choice is welfare, chosen by 1/3 of the population, who also far overestimate the proportion that goes to blacks and to child support. And though the question was not asked, virtually none are likely to be aware that "defense spending" is in large measure welfare for the rich. Another result of the study is that more educated sectors are more ignorant -- not surprising, since they are the main targets of indoctrination. Bush supporters, who are the best educated scored lowest overall. The study also shows that Republican propaganda (however fraudulent) passed through the media

"economic miracle." Property rights are well protected by the agreement, LAC and other analysts note, while workers' rights are ignored.

With regard to all of these issues, two distinct questions arise. What will be the likely consequences of the policies under consideration? Who decides? The answer to the second question is clear: the "principal architects" of policy are the traditional ones. The public has essentially no role, and with the recent advances in destruction of democracy, no knowledge.

As noted, the first question can be debated. Perhaps, as the scant media coverage generally takes for granted reflexively, the NAFTA will benefit all; the Clinton and the Reagan-Bush factions are expressly seeking to improve the lives and prospects of the general public, differing only on how to achieve this result; all are committed to free trade, which is obviously the greater good; etc.

with greater effect than the Democrats counterpart, an inconvenience for the charges of "liberal bias" that are particularly relished by the liberal media, which -- as usual -- greatly appreciate

earnestly seeking to improve the lives and prospects of the general public, differing only on how to achieve this result; all are committed to free trade, which is obviously the greater good; etc. Maybe there really is a tooth fairy. Perhaps. No matter what one believes, it cannot be doubted that the policy questions require careful scrutiny and analysis. And that they will not receive, certainly not on the part of those whose lives and fate are at stake, unless they organize to do something about it.

Economics watch

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