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1 – CALIFORNIA'S SCHIZOPHRENIC ELITES

(Victor Davis Hanson, [Pajamas Media](#))

California is a rich state – as the world found out the last century. It has the best farmland in the world, much of it watered by gravity-fed irrigation from the Sierra. Its timber acreage is vast. There is a lot of natural gas and oil still in the southern interior and off the coast. Silicon Valley, tourism, Hollywood, defense, and Napa Valley all contribute to natural wealth.

The problem is that we have created a strange drone mindset that manifests itself in two ways. Among elites there is almost a “Don’t touch or disturb that!” mantra. The law of the hothouse orchid reigns. Once our grubby ancestors created our infrastructure, we wish sometimes to ridicule and – use – it, less often to leave anything better behind for anyone else.

We want all the dividends of industrial society, but an 18th century wilderness at the same time. So the in-the-know people demand cheap, plentiful, and tasty food, but worry more about a three-inch fish than the farmers and farm workers who keep us alive one more day – and so divert fresh water out into the bay to keep the delta smelt alive.

At the other end of the social spectrum, the underclass seems to be growing. Don’t mention parental responsibility; that’s either Neanderthal or racist.

It other words, our elite is becoming more elite and refined, while our non-elite is becoming more

rough around the edges. But they share a disturbing commonality: both expect something that they are not willing to invest in.

The well-off like nice cars, tasteful homes, good food, and appropriate vacations – but not the oil, gas, coal, nuclear energy, transmission lines, timber, cement, farmland, water pumps, etc., that bring that to them.

The less well-off want their versions of the same things – cool clothes, good music players, neat cell phones, the best plasma TVs, blue-ray players, video games – but are not interested in the hard study and discipline necessary for a society to create the sort of educated work force that makes and deserves such appurtenances.

This recession has really brought out the dichotomies: We spend billions of scarce cash on imported food, fuel, and manufactured goods, but have acres of idle farmlands, vast untapped deposits of natural gas and oil, and millions of feet of unused factory space. Bread and circuses seem to be the answer for the angst of the underclass.

Our elite need to get a little more real, and our non-elite need to become a little less frighteningly real. And the rest of us in the middle? A little more pragmatic, and a little sanctimonious, a little less politically – and environmentally – correct, if all our children are to inherit even a semblance of what we were born into.

2 – BRING BACK THE ROBBER BARONS

(Daniel Henninger, [The Wall Street Journal](#))

Faced with high, painful unemployment as far as

the eye can see, the government naturally is here to help.

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Maybe there's a better way. Let's bring back the robber barons.

"Robber baron" became a term of derision to generations of American students after many earnest teachers made them read Matthew Josephson's long tome of the same name about the men whose enterprise drove the American industrial age from 1861 to 1901.

Josephson's cast of pillaging villains was comprehensive: Rockefeller, Carnegie, Vanderbilt, Morgan, Astor, Jay Gould, James J. Hill. His table of contents alone shaped impressions of those times: "Carnegie as 'business pirate'." "Henry Frick, baron of coke." "Terrorism in Oil." "The sack of California."

I say, bring 'em back, and the sooner the better. What we need, a lot more than a \$1,000 tax credit, are industries no one has thought of before. We need vision, vitality and commercial moxie. This government is draining it away.

The antidote to Josephson's book is a small classic by Hillsdale College historian Burton W. Folsom called "The Myth of the Robber Barons: A New Look at the Rise of Big Business in America" (Young America's Foundation). Prof. Folsom's core insight is to divide the men of that age into market entrepreneurs and political entrepreneurs.

Market entrepreneurs like Rockefeller, Vanderbilt and Hill built businesses on product and price. Hill was the railroad magnate who finished his transcontinental line without a public land grant.

Rockefeller took on and beat the world's dominant oil power at the time, Russia. Rockefeller innovated his way to energy primacy for the US.

Political entrepreneurs, by contrast, made money back then by gaming the political system. Steamship builder Robert Fulton acquired a 30-year monopoly on Hudson River steamship traffic from, no surprise, the New York legislature. Cornelius Vanderbilt, with the slogan "New Jersey must be free," broke Fulton's government-granted monopoly.

If the goal is job growth, we need to admit one fact: Political entrepreneurs create fewer jobs than do market entrepreneurs. We need new mass markets, really big markets of the sort Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie created. Great employment markets are discoverable only by people who create opportunities or see them in the cracks of what already exists—a Federal Express or Wal-Mart.

If the price of rediscovering the American job machine is some people across the land getting really rich, it's a small price.

We live in a world of rising competitors – foreign robber barons – who don't much care about our endless quest for health-care justice. The US on its current path to a stage-managed economy floating in a lake of taxes will keep down the greatest population of intellectual and managerial firepower the world has seen. The rest of the world admits that, with the recent exception of the Chinese, who think we're ready to be taken. We have young people impatient for the chance to do what Carnegie, Rockefeller and Hill did. Let them.

3 – DECENTRALIZE THE GOVERNMENT

(Joel Kotkin, [New Geography](#))

Certain times do call for increased federal activity – legitimate threats to national security or economic emergencies, such as the Great Depression or the recent financial crisis, for example. Other functions essential to interstate commerce – basic

research, science education, the guarantee of civil rights, transportation infrastructure, as well as basic environmental health and safety standards – also call for federal oversight.

But what is happening now goes well beyond the previously defined perimeters of the federal

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government's powers. This marks a departure from our basic traditions

For most of our history the burden of expanding opportunity has rested with the private economy, albeit in conjunction with often necessary protections for workers and consumers. Now the overall control of the economy is shifting to Washington – from government contracts to ownership shares in companies like General Motors and much of the financial sector.

This new order would transform the very nature of American capitalism.

Fortunately, most Americans do not appear ready for unbounded autocracy. This is particularly true outside the coastal urban centers. The Tea Party may have some cranky – even ill-advised – ideas, but they reflect a genuine – and broader – American preference for solving problems at the state or local level.

Indeed, Americans, including some on the left, are instinctive decentralists. We express this tendency physically, first in our decades-old movement to the suburbs, and increasingly to smaller towns and cities as well as rural areas. Even in cities like New York or Los Angeles, local neighborhood identity trumps ties to more grandiose visions of City Halls or regional bodies. The rise of the Internet and social networks has enhanced this decentralizing trend by providing instant linkages and helping *ad hoc* organization among neighbors.

Economic evolution mirrors this trend. Over the past few decades US employment has shifted not to mega corporations but to smaller units and individuals; between 1980 and 2000 the number of self-employed individuals expanded 10-fold to include 16% of the workforce. The smallest businesses – the so-called micro enterprises – have enjoyed the fastest rate of growth, far more than any other business category. By 2006 there were some 20 million such businesses, one for every six private sector workers.

America's entrepreneurial urge, in contrast to developments elsewhere, has actually strengthened. In 2008 28% of Americans said they had considered starting a business – more than twice the rate for French or Germans. Self-employment, particularly among younger workers, has been growing at twice the rate of the mid-1990s.

The remarkable volatility within even the largest companies has exacerbated this trend. Firms enter and leave the Fortune 500 with increasing speed. More and more workers will live in an economic environment like that of Hollywood or Silicon Valley, with constant job shifts, changes in alliances between companies and the growth of job-hopping “gypsies.” Although hard times could slow new business formation, historically recessions have served as incubators of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Much of the most dynamic and meaningful change takes place under the radar of both big business and government. The shift to greater localism can be seen in the growth of local, unaffiliated community churches, regional festivals and farmers markets. Bowling clubs and old men's clubs may be fading, but volunteerism has spiked among millennials and seems likely to surge among baby boomers. In 2008 some 61 million Americans volunteered, representing over a quarter of the population over 16.

No other major country exhibits this kind of localized, undirected activism. Such vital grassroots may become even more important as the country becomes more diverse. In the coming decades we will have to accommodate an expanding range of locally preferred lifestyles, environments, ethnic populations and politics. One size determined by mandarins in Washington increasingly will *not* fit all. South Dakotans and San Franciscans will prefer to address similar problems in different ways. Within the limits of constitutional rights, we should let them try their hand and let everyone else learn from their success (or failure).

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4 – BOOM STATES

(The Daily Beast)

Where are the jobs right now? Which states offer the best chance for hungry workers to find work, or content employees to stay employed? And which are the worst?

For a state to perform well in these rankings, they need to reflect a high projected employment growth rate, show real employment growth over the past three years, and boast low current unemployment rates.

#1: Wyoming

Jobs gained 2006-2009: 4.1%
Current unemployment: 6.4%
Employment growth through 2018: 21.5%
Median individual salary: \$26,496
Hot industry: Outpatient health care
Recent Job Listing: Clinical Manager

#2: Colorado

Jobs gained 2006-2009: .4%
Current unemployment: 7.7%
Employment growth through 2018: 22.4%
Median individual salary: \$29,275
Hot industry: Air transportation
Recent Job Listing: Corporate SEC Accounting Director

#3: Louisiana

Jobs gained 2006-2009: 1.6%
Current unemployment: 6.8%
Employment growth through 2018: 17.1%
Median individual salary: \$21,499
Hot industry: Mining support
Recent Job Listing: Mechanical System Engineer

#4: Texas

Jobs gained 2006-2009: 1.0%
Current unemployment: 7.6%
Employment growth through 2018: 21.2%
Median individual salary: \$24,637
Hot industry: Sporting goods, hobby, book and music retail
Recent Job Listing: Geologist

#5: New Hampshire

Jobs gained 2006-2009: .03%
Current unemployment: 6.3%

Employment growth through 2018: 13.6%

Median individual salary: \$30,302

Hot industry: Computer software engineering

Recent Job Listing: Director of Sales and Marketing (E-Commerce)

#6: Virginia

Jobs gained 2006-2009: 2.9%

Current unemployment: 6.7%

Employment growth through 2018: 15.3%

Median individual salary: \$30,032

Hot industry: Restaurants and bars

Recent Job Listing: Programmer

#7: Maryland

Jobs gained 2006-2009: .7%

Current unemployment: 7.0%

Employment growth through 2018: 13.8%

Median individual salary: \$34,066

Hot industry: Nursing and residential services

Recent Job Listing: Senior Software Engineer

#8: Idaho

Jobs gained 2006-2009: 2.9%

Current unemployment: 8.0%

Employment growth through 2018: 19.9%

Median individual salary: \$23,479

Hot industry: Nursing and residential services

Recent Job Listing: Treasury Analyst

#9: Alaska

Jobs gained 2006-2009: 5.7%

Current unemployment: 8.0%

Employment growth through 2018: 13.7%

Median individual salary: \$28,571

Hot industry: Professional, Scientific and Technical services

Recent Job Listing: Field Superintendent

#10: Kansas

Jobs gained 2006-2009: .4%

Current unemployment: 6.7%

Employment growth through 2018: 12.1%

Median individual salary: \$25,662

Hot industry: Food and beverage retail

Recent Job Listing: Pricing Manager

For the complete ranking of all 50 states:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-03-05/state-employment-rankings/full/>