

FINDING ANSWERS and SOLVING PROBLEMS

By Mike Harris

If you were born between 1915 and 1920 society labeled you a Depression Baby. The whole world, not only the U.S., was having a hard time. In Europe Russian communism was thought to be the answer, in opposition, Fascism raised its ugly head. World War One finally ended in 1918. The world had not yet recovered and already the seeds for World War Two were germinating.

It all started in high school, the Great Depression of the 1930's. I grew up half a step above poverty. I found an after school activity, a "Financial Club" led by a volunteer teacher. At our first meeting he made a few statements: "A retail merchant in order to stay in business must work with a 33% margin of profit, the grocer works on a 2% profit margin. How can he stay in business? Go home. I'll see you all next week. Have some answers when we met again."

I and an Irish lad were the only ones with right answers. Time passed. We graduated and dispersed to follow our agendas. I to learn two trades in the clothing industry in New York City, the Irish kid Jimmy to go to the Insurance Industry also in New York City. We both prospered. I started night college at C.C.N.Y

This introduction brings me to the topic for today's essay "Finding Answers and Solving Problems." If you follow the money it won't take long to find an answer. The grocer turns his capital weekly, therefore 2% becomes 100% a year. Extrapolate this by adopting "follow the money" to "who stands to gain" and it's not long before you can solve almost any problem.

Money talked loud, clear, and greedy. Ordinary people were not making enough to sustain a profitable economy. In the U.S. unions became powerful because capital became greedy, by 1950 unions were at the peak of their power. Roosevelt was able to scare private capital into giving concessions to unions just by saying, "Do this or deal with communism." President Roosevelt found a way to start the economy using "scare" as a tool. He, using the power of government, as far as I can remember was the first to invade the free market. By rebuilding infrastructure he created jobs using government capital to encourage private enterprise. By guaranteeing private capital a 6% return on their money, little did he realize the Pandora's Box he opened. While it is true "figures do not lie" it is also true that "liars can and do manipulate the figures" and the proper oversights were not implemented. The liars inflated costs and the government paid.

At the end of World War 2 till now we went from a credit nation to a debt nation with just a few hiccups on the way. It looks now like history will repeat itself. Just as the British

Empire went from #1 after World War One we have dissipated our assets in continuing wars in Viet Nam, the Middle East, and elsewhere on the planet. It was Eisenhower who said on his leaving office, "Beware the armaments industries."

So back to finding answers and solving problems. I have always respected numbers, mainly because numbers are logical, and are in themselves honest. In a long life I found that the formula "follow the money," usually with a little out of the box thinking, leads to finding answers. If numbers are involved it is very easy. However when emotions and feelings are the problem it takes some extrapolation to come up with solutions by changing the formula to "Who or what are the gains or gainers?" It seems to work, even if it gets a little convoluted.

None of the above works if one does not know or hasn't learned to think! Thinking is the hardest work there is and man is inherently lazy. Welcome to the real world of success, **START THINKING!!!**