

So, as the year draws to its close, various agencies are releasing estimates which conform to what we insisted, when the notional value of derivatives was estimated at \$4-5 trillion, that no one knew what the size of the problem actually was.

For over the month of November, it was first reported that derivative exposure of banks was in the order of \$7.5 trillion, and then the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, part of the Treasury Department, and thus part of the U.S. government, reported its finding that such exposure was nearer \$12 trillion. This is roughly the same as the total accumulated debt of the U.S. economy as a whole, and nearly twice the size of the Gross National Product, so-called, and three times the size of the federal government's debt.

How can it be that a pile of liabilities, whose extent is still not fully plumbed, sprang up, from relatively nothing in 1987, to at least \$12 trillion six years later, and no one noticed; no one wanted to know, hey, what on earth is going on here? What are you characters getting us into now?

How come the decision to employ so-called non-constructive means in the Upper Mississippi and Missouri river valleys has not been greeted with howls of protest? It is a long way from the coastal centers of population, to be sure. It is the land of farmers, and the communities which service farm labor, the concern of a mere minority, according to some. It might have some effect on the food supply, and food prices, but now we've got derivatives, so that can be handled. We can hedge against the effects of price movements, and as for those who don't have enough food, and can't afford to buy it, they do not count. They, two-thirds of the world's population though they may be, do not constitute "effective" demand. That kind of decision signifies that there is no longer existent any commitment to defend the integrity of the United States as a nation. That might sound extreme, perhaps, but it is nonetheless true.

The logistical heart of the nation

The area bounded by Paducah, Kentucky and Cairo, Illinois in the south, where the Ohio River meets the Mississippi, to the confluence of the Illinois River and the Mississippi in the north, near Grafton, Illinois, cut in two by the intersection of the Missouri and the Mississippi, constitutes the logistical heart of the nation, and therefore, given its sheer size and topographical and industrial layout, its economic heart also. The four rivers which come together there are the means whereby, over more than 200 years, successive generations have bound the cities and settlements of the coastal regions to the north, east, south, and west into a functioning whole. Still, to this day, more than 50% of the U.S. population lives within less than 100 miles of a coastline, whether that be on either one of the oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, or the Great Lakes.

The confluences of the great rivers of the country, on that single stretch of the Mississippi, are the key nodal points in the entire ground transportation system, such as it is, and

1960s plans for plentiful power, water in the 1990s

In 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower addressed the United Nations on the subject of water and power development proposals for the arid Middle East: "The ancient problem of water is on the threshold of solution. Energy, determination, and science will carry it over that threshold" (U.N. General Assembly, Aug. 13, 1958). At the same time, government and private plans were in the works for guaranteeing that water and power infrastructure development projects would be advanced in the United States—and for continental North America—to be sure that the United States, Canada, and Mexico would have a continuing supply of plentiful water for the 21st century.

In 1962, the book *Project Plowshare* presented the ways in which atomic power could provide energy and earthmoving muscle to build the water systems, ports, canals and other big projects to further economic development (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962).

In 1966, the book *The Coming Water Famine* was released by Texas lawmaker Jim Wright, advocating the North American Water and Power Alliance (Nawapa) approach (New York: Coward McCann, 1966). Wright later became Speaker of the House of Representatives and was driven out of office by scandals in the 1980s. Wright credits Donald McCord Baker, former water planning engineer for Los Angeles County, with the original idea for Nawapa, and reports that Baker enlisted the Ralph M. Parsons Co. to develop the proposal.

thus in the national organization of production and distribution over a territory which extends about 3,000 miles east to west, and 750 or so miles north to south. To found a so-called policy on the grounds that nature has first claim over this area, is to assert, in effect, that human activity will not be defended there, unless humans submit to the periodic ravages of the uncontrolled and unrestrained rivers that come together there. While at the same time, refusal to act against derivatives, asserts further that human activity will continue to be subordinate to whatever usurious looting swindles the financial community dreams up.

No surprise then, that such excitement continues to reign over monthly movements in reported unemployment, while government series show that for 10 years, the full rate, in-