

Herd on the Street by Les Swift

In Search of the Recovery

For something that's supposed to be happening everywhere, it's been awfully hard to find.

President Obama has seen it, and so have Larry Summers, Ben Bernanke, and Tim Geithner. The bankers have seen it, on Wall Street, the City of London, and in the European financial centers. It seems like everyone has seen it but me, and I'm starting to feel left out.

I'm talking about The Recovery, of course. You know, that great economic rescue we've been promised, ever since the bottom blew out of the global financial system.

It's all a bit puzzling. Back in 2007, that Lyndon LaRouche guy told us the system had died, but our leaders disagreed. Don't worry, it's nothing but a little bump in the road, they told us.

A few months later, Bear Stearns was given a shotgun marriage to JP Morgan Chase, with a huge dowry from Uncle Sam. I'll admit to being concerned about that one, but our leaders said not to worry, that The Recovery was just around the corner.

Then came September 2008, and all Hell broke loose. Banks were falling like toxic flies, and all of a sudden the guys who had been assuring us everything was fine were having hysterical meltdown migranes, and demanding dictatorial powers and unlimited funding to save us all from a problem that wasn't supposed to even exist.

It's enough to make you suspect that they had not been telling us the whole truth, and maybe none of the truth at all.

A year later, we're regaled with tales about how our glorious leaders pulled us "back from the brink of financial catastrophe," and how The

Recovery has already started—or at least, is just around the corner.

I believed them when they said there was no problem. I believed them when they said the sky was falling, but that they had the solution, even though I was confused as to what the problem was, since they'd insisted that there was no problem. I believed them that they'd saved the day with their bailout. I even almost believed them when they said we were turning a profit on that bailout. So why, I ask myself, am I having so much trouble believing in The Recovery?

Feeling a bit guilty at doubting our leaders, I decided to go out and find The Recovery, to see it for myself.

My first stop was the newspaper stand, since the press guys seemed to know where The Recovery was. I read everything I could get my hands on, but somehow, The Recovery still eluded me.

My next stop was the Federal Reserve. Since Ben Bernanke had seen it, I figured the Fed could steer me in the right direction. Unfortunately, the security guards wouldn't let me in. I assured them I wasn't there to steal The Recovery, but merely to see it, but to no avail. If The Recovery is there, they're keeping it hidden.

I tried the White House, but they were erecting a giant poster of our Glorious Leader, and I couldn't get near the joint. Perhaps The Recovery was behind the poster, or maybe locked in the closet in the Oval Office. Maybe so, but I still hadn't found it.

Fine. I'm sure it must be in the heartland, so I decided to try there next.

I went to one of those fabled industrial cities of the Midwest, and almost immediately saw a long line of people, wrapped all the way around the block.

Finally! I thought. This must be it. Everyone is here to see The Recovery. I took my place at the end of the line, knowing it would be well worth the wait.

Breathless with anticipation, I asked the person in front of me how long we'd have to wait to see The Recovery.

"Ain't no recovery around here," she said. "This is the unemployment line."

"But Obama said The Recovery had started," I sputtered, fighting back the waves of doubt sweeping over my soul.

"Well, McDonald's has a job opening," she replied. "But you'd better hurry. There's already over a thousand people in line there."

Curses, foiled again, as they say in those old cartoons. Wherever it was, The Recovery clearly wasn't in the Rust Belt. So I headed for California.

Things weren't so hot there, either. I passed by row after row of empty houses and boarded up businesses—foreclosure signs and out-of-business signs were more common than street signs. I came upon a freeway and couldn't believe my eyes: There must have been ten families living underneath the overpass. Shaking my head, I kept driving, and then—shades of Hooverville!—came across one of those giant tent cities, with people living in cars, trailers, tents, and even cardboard boxes. Must have been a thousand people, packed into what used to be a public park.

Speaking to these people, it was clear that The Recovery was not in California, either. But it must be somewhere, because our Glorious Leader said so, so I'm going to keep looking. I'll let you know when I find it. I think I'll try Vegas next. Maybe my luck will change.

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