

The Good Old USA

A few years ago, I spent time with a business associate from Australia. Neal described himself as easy-going except when he was playing Aussie Rules football. He claimed to be “right difficult bloke” when it came to that sport. We laughed and agreed that we didn’t want to experience that side of his personality. However, one night over a few drinks, Neal got on a subject that took him close enough to that “right difficult bloke” stage that the next morning he apologized profusely for his outspokenness. That subject was how much most Americans like to complain about their country of origin.

“You’ve been given more than any other people on this earth,” he said. “You live in a big, beautiful country. Your water supply is plentiful. You grow more food than you need. You have wonderful natural resources. You have a growing, but manageable population. Even the poorest of your citizens lives better than the majority of people worldwide.”

Neal added, “While you have problems with homelessness, drugs, crime, poverty, etc., the magnitude of these problems is much less than found in other countries. Bottom line, you Americans are spoiled.”

Even with the recent economic downturn, Neal’s logic still seems on target. The U.S. has less than 5% of the world’s population, but we generate over 25% of the world’s gross national product. Through 2007, our unemployment rate was 4.7% nationally compared to Canada’s 5.3%, the United Kingdom’s 5.4%, France’s 8.6%, and Germany’s 8.7%. Japan 3.9% was lower, but Japan has been able to maintain low unemployment rates because large numbers of women who are casual workers withdraw from the labor force when they lose their jobs - that is, they stop working and do not look for another job.

In the good old USA in 2006, we averaged \$60,533 income per household before taxes. We spent \$48,398 per household. For comparison, 2.7 billion people around the world live on less than \$2 per day, which is considered to be living in *moderate poverty* (*extreme poverty being less than \$1 per day*).

Even with a mild economic downturn, we have an extreme advantage over other countries...the small business entrepreneur. Consider that small businesses:

- Represent 99.7 percent of all employer firms.

- Employ about half of all private sector employees.
- Pay more than 45 percent of total U.S. private payroll.
- Generated 60 to 80 percent of net new jobs annually over the last decade.
- Create more than half of nonfarm private gross domestic product (GDP).
- Hire 40 percent of high tech workers (such as scientists, engineers, and computer workers)
- Grew from 570,000 new small firms in 2002 to almost 650,000 in 2006.

Our forefathers knew what they were doing when they established this country on a system of democratic principles that embraced the melting pot of cultures and the multitude of freedoms that have served us well for two hundred twelve years. As long as we stick to these principles, there is no reason that this system will not continue to provide us (and the generations that follow) with great opportunities.

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