

The sultry heat of mid-July may have been caressed by a few fresh breezes around the opening days of Water Festival but, on the recession and economic front, a tepid, airless stagnation prevails.



Many of the business owners with whom I work feel as if they're in suspended animation. The Bush-beaters remain convinced that his administration's wild spending, coupled with his administration's utter failure at solving the economic crisis early on, are exactly what's to blame. The righties blame Barney Frank and the Democrat congress for the mortgage meltdown and they have a point; the lefties blame the Wall Street greedsters for the whole mess and they have a point. Now, a scant 120 days into the new administration, blame is beginning to shift onto Obama and company because, after throwing gazillions more after the frittered Bush billions, guess what, things aren't any better. This gang can't seem to shoot any straighter than the gang they replaced. And, as usual we, the people, are caught in the middle.

Maybe, just maybe, the problem is that we're trying to find a solution to this crisis through programs and policies instead of through good, old-fashioned American creativity, ingenuity and yes, imagination.

We created one of the greatest economic/market systems in human history and it worked pretty well until selfishness and dishonesty shot holes in it. We lived through most of the twentieth century; even the last part of it, as thinkers, inventors and teachers. But the first decade of this new century has changed us to consumers and user-uppers. While the French and the Swedes and the Koreans are working on smart energy, we are using up our smarts deciding which Korean or Japanese flat screen to buy at an inflated price.

While Toyota's Lexus sustains and grows its "relentless pursuit of perfection," we engage ourselves in the relentless pursuit of decent American car dealers we can shut down so that our new administration can push through its all-too-hasty solution for GM and Chrysler. How much imagination does it take to figure out what's needed to get us to buy American cars: They have to be built as well as the Japanese and German ones that outsell them and, they have to have the refinements and simplicity of style that the offshore competitors purvey. The former can happen when selfishness leaves our unions and when the competitive spirit reoccupies the souls of management. The latter, well, that's where the imagination and creativity are needed. Big time.

Other than an American's car, there is only one thing more important and that's an American's home. The roofs over our heads are our castles and, mortgage deductibility (unique in the universe to the USA) made it easier.

No part of our system is more screwed up. A sad and sorry combination of incautious consumers ran headlong into a banking system gone wild and it's brought the results we see: Foreclosures, short sales, homes under water (worth less than the amount of mortgage owed on them) and bankers actually going as far as suggesting to their customers that they can't help them unless and until they default!!!! Talk about a lack of imagination and the death of ingenuity. Someone tell the bankers, please, that creativity isn't making commercials about how

much you care about us all. It's fixing the part of the system you broke so that we don't have to see pages and pages of foreclosures in our local newspaper. Get working on that instead of protecting yourselves.

Not being one of those pundits who actually roomed with the Founding Fathers, I can't be certain I know their hearts but, I'm betting, they never, ever thought this would be a land of 31.99% credit cards and superstores full of Chinese products.