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Monkeying Around With the Economy

Remember those stories about Nero playing the fiddle while Rome burned? Actually, if he was really playing, it was probably a lyre, a small harp-like stringed instrument. Fiddles weren't around yet.

Well, showing how little the art of governance has improved since then, we're now borrowing money from China to (among other things) buy cocaine for monkeys in the name of creating jobs while running up the national debt to \$14 trillion.

Or, perhaps worse, President Obama might get the money here at home for his failing jobs programs by grabbing even more money out of the pockets of America's key job creators.



Fully one-third of the high-income taxpayers whom Obama and the Democrats are targeting for tax hikes in January — on income, dividends, capital gains and inheritances — are the nation's small business owners, the people who create the bulk of the new jobs in the U.S. economy.

As part of the recent non-stimulating stimulus bills, Wake Forest University received \$71,623 to "study how monkeys react under cocaine." There's also a grant of \$181,000 to see how cocaine enhances the sex drive of Japanese quail.

That's \$252,623, enough loan money in this down economy to pay for a year's rent at a dozen storefronts, a strong incentive for the launching of startup companies that could well have the potential of hiring hundreds of people off the unemployment rolls.

Instead, what we'll get for our money out of this particular jobs spending is a few high monkeys, a covey of stoned quail, and a bit of temporary employment for a handful of grad students and a few crack professors.

To add to this monkeying around, taxpayers are now picking up the tab for over two million cellphones and prepaid minutes for people who are allegedly unable to purchase this new necessity out of their own pockets.

Let's just hope that those guys hanging out on our most dilapidated street corners with complimentary cellphones stuck to their ears all day are chatting with their mothers, checking in to see if all's okay at home, and not conversing with their customer base.

Still, none of the aforementioned is saying that monkeys aren't interesting or that we can't learn things by studying them. It's just that snorting monkeys aren't what belongs in a jobs bill if we're trying to get our biggest bang in terms of employment growth.

Last year, for instance, researchers at Wake Forest University School of Medicine reported that adult male monkeys exposed to cocaine while in the womb have almost no impulse control.



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And it's not temporary. For years, they freak out more than the average monkey after they've been exposed to cocaine in the womb, and it's just males who are affected, not females.

In one of the experiments to measure impulse control, researchers gave monkeys the choice between pushing a lever that delivered a single banana pellet immediately or a lever that delivered several banana pellets but required the monkeys to wait up to five minutes before the reward was delivered.

Male monkeys who were exposed to cocaine in-utero had "no patience or impulse control whatever," preferring what was immediately available over what was a larger reward that required a brief wait.

This lack of impulse control wasn't displayed by male monkeys who hadn't been prenatally exposed to cocaine, or by female monkeys, whether they'd been prenatally exposed or not exposed.

Another study shows that subordinate monkeys are more likely than dominant monkeys to reach for cocaine when confronted with stress. That's something President Obama might want to use in his push for greater social leveling and more redistribution of wealth, arguing that drug use might decline in the more miserable sections of town if we were all more alike in terms of things like cars, houses, wealth and income.

He could gloss over the fact that such a redistribution, centrally directed by the nation's top Ivy Leaguers, would slash incentives at the top, middle and bottom, thereby reducing our productivity and overall standard of living, like in Cuba or East Germany.?

Ralph R. Reiland is an associate professor of economics at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.



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