

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

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And that strong economy is ... where?

When I hear the news media and television talking heads say the economy is getting strong because the stock market is up, I wonder — where do these people live? Next question: what connection is there between the stock market and unemployment? Obviously, the answer is, none. The stock market is a playground for the rich, and if those investing in it cannot afford to lose it all without going to the poorhouse, then they are in the wrong game.

When people complain to me about the anger of Dr. Howard Dean, candidate for the Democratic nomination for president, I tell them he represents a good chunk of the population. We are angry and we are Democrats, independents and Republicans. We have a rogue president and administration in Washington who are responsible for the spreading of war, loss of life and our tax dollars all over the world. They are ignoring the emergency condition of health care, the terrible loss of jobs (more than 11 other administrations combined), local homeland security, the environment and education and what do they propose? First, to let millions of illegal immigrants stay and work in this country and then, send human beings to Mars and the Moon!! I know a small group of people we ought to send to the Moon and they aren't astronauts.

In fact, the cost and risk of this space proposal are so high it has long been considered prohibitive. Aside from that, it's irresponsible.

Most of us are familiar with the news that in Knox County we may reach 20 to 25 percent unemployment in the next few years. But consider the headlines from just two days of news last week.

"Havana foundry lays off workers," — 205 workers from the town's largest employer, the Internet Corporation, will be out of a job by June. The company is building a plant in Mexico.

"Bittersweet news, Illinois Confectionary institution will close hundreds of stores." Archibald Candy Corporation announced the same day it was closing all of its 228 Fannie May and Fannie Farmer Stores. The week before, the company announced the closing of their Chicago factory, putting 625 people out of work. It's not much consolation that some

of these stores have been bought.

"Six Caterpillar Logistics facilities to close." The closure of one facility in Joliet alone will affect 206 employees, and closure of the five other facilities will throw 221 more into the unemployment lines.

The Labor Department finally figured out that unemployment figures were going down because "with hiring at a standstill, frustrated job seekers gave up their searches." The decline doesn't reflect new hiring but almost 310,000 workers who left the labor force. According to the Associated Press article in the Peoria Journal Star, the economy has lost 2.3 million jobs since George Bush took office, the worst job creation record of any president since Herbert Hoover.

Next, we should peruse the Peoria Journal Star's weekly list of bankruptcies filed in Peoria. Last week 71 entities involving 101 people filed bankruptcy. There were 30 couples and in twelve cases both partners have employment. Seven were disabled and six retired. The startling conclusion is that there were only 12 out of 71 households where there was NO employment.

The list included teachers, a minister, factory workers, Wal-Mart employees, (of course), mechanics, managers, pharmacy technician, state workers, self-employed people and every job across the boards. We are again reminded that it's not as much a lack of jobs as it is available jobs that don't pay a living wage. Granted, some people live beyond their means, but these weekly figures are staggering and frightening.

Do you want to know what I think is unpatriotic? —---company owners and managers who don't pay living wages. —-companies who move their operations to another country.

---companies who abandon their workers and the communities who have supported them.

I know businesses have incredible expenses and rules, but there are owners, managers and CEOs who put their workers and their families ahead of big profits. It's usually just a matter of priorities.

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