

# The Washington Times

## Christmas is for giving

December 10, 2018

That “it is more blessed to give than receive” sums up the spirit of Christmas. Fortunately, there is no shortage of objects of delight to stoke the dynamics of both giving and receiving during the holidays. The humbuggery of the Scrooge contingent notwithstanding, there has never been such a season of abundance, and that’s a reason for good cheer.

Department stores across the nation during the weeks leading up to Christmas teem with a profusion of prosperity. Shelf after shelf of sharply tailored men’s shirts in a riot of color choices are only exceeded by rack after rack of women’s wear in the world’s most fetching fashions.

The angry Antifa types who prefer basic black may contend it’s all an embarrassment of riches, but the fact is it takes a lot of stuff to clothe, feed and equip a nation of 329 million and retailers do a pretty good job of it. They’re well along toward racking up holiday season receipts estimated to hit \$720 billion this season, according to the National Retail Federation.

Moving all those goods requires an economy on the move and, luckily, the United States possesses the requisite energy resources. The nation has just become a net exporter of oil for the first time in 75 years, thanks to an innovative energy boom tapping underground treasure beneath Texas, North Dakota and Pennsylvania. Since importing 12 million barrels a day in 2005, domestic crude drilling has soared, and last month U.S. producers exported 211,000 more barrels a day than they took in, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

As if this milestone wasn’t enough, the U.S. Geological Survey announced Thursday the discovery of new oil and gas reserves straddling the border between Texas and New Mexico that contains an estimated 46.3 billion barrels of unrecovered oil and 281 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. It’s an unexpected Christmas gift to all Americans in the form of affordable energy for years to come — unless the green Grinches, with their hearts two sizes too small, manage to keep it in the ground.

It’s not just the United States that is wallowing in plenty. Humankind is currently experiencing an outburst of prosperity that has a direct correlation with, counterintuitively, population growth. In a recent study published by the Cato Institute, scholars Gale Pooley and Marian Tupy found that between 1980 and 2017, global prices of “50 foundational commodities covering energy, food, materials, and metals” fell by 64.7 percent. During that time period, the earth’s population rose from 4.46 billion to 7.55 billion, an increase of 69.3 percent.

Comparing the resource and population trend lines, the authors conclude that each percent of human population growth the planet has experienced has resulted in a 0.934 percent decline in commodity prices. “Between 1980 and 2017, resource availability increased at a compounded

annual growth rate of 4.32 percent. That means that the Earth was 379.6 percent more abundant in 2017 than it was in 1980,” they write. They titled their work “The Simon Abundance Index,” in honor of the late University of Maryland economics professor Julian Simon, who championed the value of human capital.

It wasn’t long ago when the lights of academia scoffed at the notion that people equate with plenty. In 1968, Stanford University professor Paul Ehrlich published “The Population Bomb,” which painted a gloom-and-doom notion that humankind’s exploding numbers would inevitably deplete the planet’s resources and lead to a future of mass starvation and deprivation. It was shades of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol,” in which the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge, who was told the destitute of Victorian England would rather die than consign themselves to a workhouse, responded, “If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

There are still plenty of modern-day Scrooges who view their fellow men as a scourge to be contained, if not eradicated. Some mingle among the black-clad anarchists now burning down Paris, some are garbed in green medical scrubs at the nation’s abortion clinics, and some intone at the U.N’s climate summit in Poland that human activity is leading to human extinction. All have yet to wrap their minds around the fact that, as the late Julian Simon wrote, “the ultimate resource” is actually humankind.

Abundance, not deprivation, is the auspicious condition of a growing world. Of course, the maddeningly persistent conflicts among the world’s peoples always seem to leave a portion every population in need. Which circles back the spirit of Christmas, which teaches there is more joy in giving than receiving. Ebenezer Scrooge eventually learned that lesson. Perhaps his philosophical posterity will someday, too.