

Lake County News-Sun

Good news for new year

By: Arthur I. Cyr – January 3rd, 2013

“Nattering nabobs of negativism,” is probably the most enduring of the many alliterative announcements of Spiro Agnew, vice president in the Nixon administration until forced to resign because of corruption. This particular phrase, penned by Nixon speechwriter William Safire, derogatively denigrated diligent reporters for placing bad news above good.

Why, Agnew asked rhetorically, did the malicious media not put priority on the positive? He denounced “pusillanimous pussyfooters” allegedly allergic to America.

Inspired by the positive points of the spirit of Spiro “Good News” Agnew, below is a list of encouraging developments that definitely deserve more prominent dissemination and sustained reflection.

First, democracy is becoming the accepted way of life for the world’s population overall, not just the privileged few. As recently as three decades ago, the people of Latin America lived almost uniformly in various degrees of authoritarian regime. Today, Castro’s Cuba is literally the only remaining dictatorship in the Americas.

Even autocratic Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has to face the voters, and has lost on occasion. Once tiny Costa Rica was a beacon of freedom south of our border. Now that light spreads throughout the Americas.

Likewise, reasonably honest and genuinely contested elections are spreading in Africa, Southeast Asia, the former Soviet Union and — on the local level — in China. In global context, the dramatic “Arab Spring” therefore is the latest manifestation of a worldwide drive toward fair representative government.

Second, market economics likewise is spreading, as alternative ways of producing wealth and prosperity are discredited. Deng Xiaoping’s declaration of “People’s Socialism” for China in 1992 has become a benchmark event for not only that nation but the Asia region as a whole, and beyond.

The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement between mainland China and Taiwan is an historic result of the free market economic revolution. Virtually all economic barriers have come down. In consequence, Taiwan’s role as source of investment, trade and expertise is vastly expanding.

This should reassure isolated leaders of North Korea, who desperately launch missiles to distract from their disintegrating economy.

South Korea's newly elected first woman president, Park Geun-hye, is the daughter of late President Park Chung-hee. Her mother was shot and killed by a North Korean assassin aiming for her father. She seeks cooperation with the North.

Third, hundreds of millions of people are living longer, better lives. In 1900, the average human life span in industrial nations was about 40 years. By 2000, that span had literally doubled.

Fourth, these remarkable improvements proceed from a base of extraordinary growth in economic production. Yale Historian Paul Kennedy, in "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers," notes that total world industrial manufacturing rose from an assigned base level of 100 in 1900 to 3,041.6 by 1980. For extensive specific data on the improved human condition, from teeth to transport, consult the Libertarian Cato Institute volume "It's Getting Better All The Time", by Stephen Moore and Julian Simon.

Fifth, the scientists at the mammoth laboratory CERN, located in a suburb of Geneva, Switzerland, reported in late 2011 that they apparently had recorded a neutrino beam traveling slightly faster than the speed of light. According to Albert Einstein's universally accepted laws of modern physics, this is impossible.

However, by mid-2012 careful retesting and evaluation revealed they had erred in measurements. Albert Einstein still rules on this point absolutely, not relatively. Continuity remains important to progress.