

Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog
of Brad DeLong. Since 1999.
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Meyer: Is America in Decline?—Comment

William Meyer: *Is America in Decline?* <https://www.bradford-delong.com/2020/09/is-america-in-decline-pairagraph.html?cid=6a00e551f080038834026bde921572200c#comment-6a00e551f080038834026bde921572200c>: ‘I have told many younger people that they don't know what prosperous times actually feel like. They've never felt the economy "roar." So, yeah, we're in *decline* and that's too bad. The truth is, however, that in the USA all the trends that have led us to such a *decline* are fairly ancient. White racism—based on massive economic exploitation of Native Americans, blacks and immigrants only gradually allowed into the "white" tent—has been a significant defect of America from long before our grandparents were born. The malign influence of great wealth has been a problem at least since the New Deal—if you look at the historical record, every aspect of *conservativism* has always been carefully watered and fertilized, if not virtually summoned up out of thin air, by ultra-conservative businessmen of great wealth. Our high-veto point Constitution has always been successfully manipulated to block human progress in our practical politics, and has always been far too susceptible and far too friendly to minority rule—a problem since Ratification. Our professional classes, since they got control of their own destinies in the early 20th century, have been ignoring the common good while entrenching their own profit in the law and in medicine. Yes, for a half century we were making progress in at least specific areas. But the malign aspects of the country somehow got the upper hand in the late 1970s and have never relinquished it since. It would be nice if in my adult life the underlying trends turned positive once more. Well, I can hope anyway...

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