



Hemphill: Our economic woes are self-inflicted

By Allen Hemphill

A private company in San Diego County, Poseidon, has tried for many years to build a plant to convert salt water to fresh water, a necessity in this semi-arid desert community. It has been delayed for years due to the Coastal Commission, city and state regulators, and lawsuit suit after lawsuit by The Surfrider Foundation.



Allen Hemphill

Delays. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year.

Could the Hoover Dam could be built today? The national highway system? The national railroads? No chance!

SDG&E has been trying for years to build a new electric power line from the east. The recent power outage has demonstrated a need for that. Can they do so? They

have been stymied by cities, counties, environmentalists and every kind of barrier anyone can imagine.

Ten years after the attack of Sept. 11, 2001, we are not celebrating the completion of the reconstruction of the towers, but the opening of two reflecting pools! The Empire State Building was completed, from first shovel to ribbon cutting, in 15 months! There are many reasons why the new construction of the World Trade Center is taking so long — here is one: There were 20 government agencies involved in just the cleanup of the site! Surely all government agencies have cooperated as much as possible in the reconstruction of the site because of the emotions involved, but bureaucrats are bureaucrats, and rules are rules. It even takes time to get rules waived. After all, there are procedures that must be followed, and approvals that must be obtained.

The state Legislature, knowing how to produce jobs but unwilling to do it except in specific cases where the barriers are both visible and unpopular, has fast-tracked the permit process for a new football stadium in Los Angeles.

The big corporations have the staying power to fight through the barriers at a high cost because, in the end, the corporations can pass all of the time and money delays on to the consumer. The small guy gives up and never gets to complete his projects because he does not have the banks of attorneys, rooms filled with environmental investigators, and public relations specialists on retainer to hold public meetings to gain public support.

The very large, very visible problems are just what we can see. We can't see the home remodeling or business expansions that are not being done because it simply is not worth the hassle.

This is a failed system, constipated by bureaucracies, civil and environmental. The big projects eventually get done by the lobby-intensive corporations at extreme costs borne by the consumer, and the smaller and much more numerous projects, employing many more actually productive people never start because the bar is too high.

Our economic woes are self-inflicted.

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