

Obama At The Chocolate Factory

On September 28 the Associated Press reported that the Department of Labor had “found” 386,000 more jobs created between April 2011 and March 2012—conveniently making it possible for Obama to claim that there are now as many Americans employed as when he took office in 2009, about 133 million. The Obama-adoring mainstream media was, not surprisingly, giddy about the discovery, and no doubt PBS veteran Jim Lehrer will make sure he tosses Obama a softball question mentioning the statistic during the first presidential debate on October 3. (There is no need to watch, of course, as MSNBC has already declared Obama the winner of the debate.)

Before anyone gets excited about Obama’s success on the job front and misty-eyed recalling the messiah’s 2008 victory speech in Chicago’s Grant Park, it is worth noting that going from 133 million workers, down to 129 million, and then back up to 133 million is not much to brag about. When Ronald Reagan took office in January 1981 there were about 91 million American workers. When he left office there were 107—a net gain of 16 million. When George H. W. Bush left office there were 110 million workers—a net gain of 3 million. The greatest increase came during the Clinton years; he left office with 132 million Americans working, for a net gain of 22 million.

George W. Bush came into office with 132 million workers, quickly increased it to 133 million, then saw it fall to 130 million after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Tax cuts in 2003 boosted the count of American workers to 138 million by 2008, but the housing collapse caused the number to plummet to 133 million. After eight years, Bush left office with only one million more workers than when he entered the White House.

So, Reagan was +16, Bush the elder was +3, Clinton was +22, and Bush the younger was +1. Obama now stands at 0, starting with 133 million Americans working in January 2009, falling to 129 million workers in the third quarter of 2010, and slowly getting back up to 133 million in time for election day 2012.

In other words, almost four years after Obama’s inauguration the nation is merely back where it started as far as the number of Americans working. *But it is also an additional \$5 trillion in debt.* For \$5 trillion the nation has no more jobs than when Obama was handed the keys. One can arguably be charitable, accept that Obama inherited a mess, and give him credit for getting the 129 million back up to 133 million. Fine, but let’s do the math: \$5 trillion in additional debt divided by 4 million jobs equals \$1,250,000 per job. It would have been cheaper—and a lot more effective—to have given \$250,000 to 20 million people and said, “Here, go start a business.”

“But four million jobs over four years is good, isn’t it?” Actually, no, it isn’t—and certainly not by Reagan or Clinton standards. There are currently 23 million Americans who are either unemployed or underemployed (working part-time because they cannot find full-time employment). If the economy creates one million new full-time jobs per year (Obama’s slow pace) it would take 23 years to create jobs for those 23 million

people! But the nation also produces 1,750,000 college graduates per year, and they certainly want jobs too. After 23 years, we'll have 40,250,000 college graduates. Now toss in 125,000 immigrants who are given work permits each month. That's another 34,500,000 job-seekers. Add them to the 23 million unemployed and the 40,250,000 college graduates, and we will need 97,750,000 new jobs over 23 years. And we're not even counting high school graduates who choose not to go to college but still need jobs, or illegal immigrants who are not given work permits. Let's round off the numbers to 100 million jobs over 25 years, or a need for four million jobs per year.

Granted, about 2.5 million Americans die each year, but most of them are not in the workforce—they are retirees. Between two and three million workers retire each year, and those retirements open up jobs for younger replacement workers. Nevertheless, one million new jobs per year is simply nowhere near enough to keep up with college graduates, high school graduates, and immigrants, even after allowing for deaths and retirements, let alone enough to also put back to work the 23 million Americans who are currently seeking full-time employment. And should the millions of people on welfare ever decide to go to work, we will need even *more* jobs. We need to create at least three million jobs per year, and even at that rate the economy will not get back to “normal” for years.

After four years of Obama we may be back up to 133 million American workers, but we are *not* better off than we were four years ago because population growth, college graduates, and immigrants have added more job-seekers to the population than the four million jobs that have been created. We may again have 133 million working, but we *also* have more people *not* working than we had in January 2009. Don't expect Jim Lehrer to mention *that*.

While watching Obama pat himself on the back during the debates and listening to the talking heads in the media gush over the “progress” being made on the job front, remember the *I Love Lucy* episode with Lucy Ricardo and Ethel Mertz wrapping chocolates at a candy factory. Imagine that every piece of chocolate on the conveyor belt is a job-seeker, and Obama is only capable of wrapping every third or fourth piece.

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September 29, 2012

<http://www.forecast-chart.com/chart-nonfarm-payroll.html>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NPzLBSBzPI>