

Paula
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America, Inc.

UPS strike helps to reveal true power of U.S. corporations

The American flag has adjusted to the growth of the nation from the 13-star design used during colonial times to our present-day 50-star, red, white and blue. And if our star-spangled banner is supposed to change with the nation, there's only one obvious style left.

Corporate sponsorship.

I think we're in a perfectly natural environment to offer the flag up for advertising. We could snuggle a logo somewhere on the blue field or put some nifty company jingle on the white stripes. The "Star-Spangled Banner" brought to you by Ford. Hey, patriotism sells.

Or do we sell our patriotism?

I'm just kidding about the corporate sponsorship (as Francis Scott Key rolls in his grave), but it illustrates an important point on who really moves the world and who can bring it to a screeching halt. A perfect example of this would be events of the past few weeks.

While President Bill Clinton's signature on the balanced-budget amendment was lauded in White House ceremony and declared one of the great advances of America, I doubt very many Americans really cared much beyond the headline. The amendment is supposed to have an impact on Joe Citizen, but whether that impact will be something visible or even tangible remains to be seen. And it probably won't be seen for a while.

It took a lot of negotiating among the nation's highest-ranking political officials to come up with something like that. Yet, like I said, it's prominence has already faded. Joe Citizen doesn't usually lounge on the White House lawn.

But when Joe Citizen can't ship \$50,000 worth of live lobster from Boston to Walla Walla, Wash., by tomorrow, there's one mad Joe Citizen who wants to see some action. And when he reads the front page, the balanced-budget amendment is going to pale in comparison to what's going on with the United Parcel Service strike.

What the UPS strike shows us is how much we live at the mercy of corporate America. Each day's news shows how the UPS is hurting everyone from the CEO who hopes he doesn't lose a multi-million dollar deal because a shipment of 6,000 computer parts is stalled in a truck somewhere, to a bride-to-be who hopes she gets her dress before a Saturday wedding. Hospitals are frantic because they're not getting medical supplies. Farmers are worried because their equipment might not arrive in time for harvest.

And students may be worried when they're supposed to read 30 pages in a textbook from a shipment that still hasn't reached the bookstore. Their back-to-school plans may be bogged down when they can't ship their lava lamp and 40-gallon aquarium from mom's basement to Abel Hall.

This isn't some curse handed down from the federal government. This is thousands of employees from a private company going on strike and holding up 80 percent of the nation's shipping industry.

This is America. Feel patriotic? Order as many flags as you can, but don't expect someone to mail them to you all at once. The U.S. Postal Service, operated by the U.S. government, takes only four packages at a time. And it just can't keep up.

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Haney's
View



MATT HANEY/DN

Jessica
Kennedy

Tick-tock

Despite desire and logic, biological clock keeps ticking

As he entered, his big baby blues searched the room for a familiar face. Upon noticing his entrance, women slowly moved to surround him, swooning at his presence. The women, normally calm and sophisticated, weakened at the sound of his childish laugh.

That's an inordinate amount of power for a three-month-old and a reality for most twenty-something women. The call of the biological clock, as my friends and I are discovering, is loud, penetrating and difficult to ignore.

We met Joey at his uncle's 21st birthday party. The entire room of flirty, playful women became a gaggle of cooing, ogling wannabe mothers. Since that fateful incident, my roommate and I have frequently discussed the resounding thunder of our awakened biological clocks.

I've always known that I wanted children sometime down the line; after graduation, after the start of my career, after a few years with my spouse -- alone. I always figured the decision to have children would be a fully logical and rational one. Ha!

With that initial, quiet, even-unassuming tick-tock a few years back, my desire for rational decision making was to be slowly eroded. Facing

graduation this December and the prospect of "growing" up, the tick-tock has grown into a body-shuddering, mind-clouding urge. Seeing children on the street or, gasp, holding a small child, turns me into a cooing fool.

My roommate and I used to joke about who of our friends would get married first and have kids. As of late, that discussion has rapidly progressed into serious conversations about who'll have kids first, how many and the pros and cons of family size. Our evening walks are filled with debates about the balance of family, careers, economics and world population.

Our mothers remind us "there's no rush," a sentiment we eagerly reaffirm.

There's never a rush until you're walking down the street or through the zoo and a beautiful, wide-eyed child flashes you a big, warm smile. No rush until a baby or child falls asleep in your arms. No rush as you slowly begin to understand there's something bigger, more powerful out there than our little lives.

For a few of my friends, the tick-tock falls on deaf ears. For these women and men, there is no room in their lives for children -- not ever or not for a long time. Sometimes I am

jealous of their ability to focus, but then I think how lonely I would be without the chaos, also known as children.

The call of parenthood (for men as well as women) is magical. It sneaks up on you, embraces you, opens your eyes and warms the heart. The gears of the biological clock have been patiently turning since before memory. The entire phenomenon is completely beyond humankind's control. I see the need to create life as the number one reassurance that there is some greater power out there.

Biologists, philosophers and atheists can pooh-pooh my sentiments all they want or credit my feelings to chemical processes, I don't really care. All their science and all their theories can't explain to me the complete and utter surrender that occurs within me when a baby gazes lovingly and trustingly up at me.

In the end, Mom is right...there is no rush. School needs to be finished, a career started and a husband found. But in the meantime, the biological clock keeps getting louder.

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