

Just in case it matters to you:

- “A FINANCIAL ‘BUBBLE’ IS A MARKET ABERRATION manufactured by government, finance and industry, a shared hallucination and then a crash, followed by depression... Nowadays we barely pause between such bouts of insanity... Our economy is in serious trouble. Both the production-consumption sector and FIRE sector (Finance/Insurance/RealEstate) know that a debt-deflation Armageddon is nigh, and both are praying for a timely miracle, a new bubble to keep the economy from slipping into a depression. We have learned that the industry in any given bubble must support hundreds or thousands of separate firms financed by trillions of dollars in new securities that Wall Street will create and sell, ...legislation guaranteeing favorable tax treatment, along with other protections and advantages for investors, ...and must be popular, its name on the lips of government policymakers and journalists – familiar to those who watch television news or read newspapers...

There is one industry that fits the bill: *Alternative Energy*, the development of more energy-efficient products, along with viable alternatives to oil, including wind, solar and geothermal power, along with the use of nuclear energy to produce sustainable oil substitutes.” And it looks like the ‘perfect storm’ is on the horizon: all presidential candidates are invoking ‘energy security’ in their speeches, Congress has already authorized \$200M annually and promised more for clean-coal, wind energy and biomass initiatives, loan guarantees for ‘innovative technologies’ are in the works, and trade industries are politicking for remediation of neglected infra-structure in transportation & communications systems, water and power. “Some rough calculations of the gross market value of all enterprises needed” to develop and infrastructurally support Alternative Energy ranges up to \$4 trillion, then multiplied up to five times for the “hyper-inflated fictitious value in speculative wealth – money that inevitably will be employed to increase share prices rather than to deliver energy security.” [HARPER’S MAGAZINE – Feb 08]

- RESIDENTS OF ORANGE COUNTY HAVE BEEN DRINKING ‘RECYCLED SEWAGE WATER’ since last January. The Groundwater Replenishment Recycling System, which took ten years and nearly \$500M to develop, is the “world’s largest plant of its kind, exceeds state and federal health standards and is being used to recharge the underground aquifer that feeds the taps of more than 2.3M residents of the region...purifying wastewater that would otherwise be dumped into the Pacific Ocean.” Projections are that the system will consume 50% less energy than ‘importing’ water from other areas, along with protecting supply during the periodic Southern California draughts. The biggest challenge in getting the project moving was “not the technology. Rather, it was in gaining public acceptance and overcoming what recycling experts have aptly named the ‘yuck factor.’ In past years, proposals that met all technical requirements have been killed by opponents who were simply repulsed by the idea, despite abundant evidence that reclaimed water is safe and clean.” [DISCOVER – May 08]
- KIDS’ TEETH ARE UNDER ATTACK. According to a Univ. of Texas study, over 30% of middle school students “show signs of tooth erosion... as a result of acidity in soda, sports drinks, and other popular beverages which slowly eats away at the protective enamel surface of their teeth.” The problem is compounded by the fact that kids also drink these beverages instead of tap water, which then diminishes their intake of protective fluoride. [THE WEEK – Apr 4, 08]
- THE CAFFEINE COMPONENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, MAY BE HELPING TO PREVENT ALZHEIMERS by reducing leakage (caused by high cholesterol) in the ‘blood-brain barrier’– a “filtering system inside the blood vessels which protects the brain from chemicals and other floating foreign bodies.” Research studies also suggest that a daily cup of caffeinated coffee, beyond getting the brain moving in the morning, may be protecting it. [KNOWLEDGE NEWS – Apr 4, 08]

THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK: **“Worry is a misuse of imagination.”**

American high-schoolers rank below average on standardized science exams (16th of 30 countries) and 75% of adults admit they “do not have a good understanding of science.” A recent Harris Poll found 11% of grownups unable to even name a single living scientist – with the exception of Stephen Hawking, whose character had recently appeared on an episode of the animated Simpsons TV show.