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## **SENSEI'S BLOGS:**

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### **Joining some dots...**

A recent statistic in a local paper (Source – Harpers Index) piqued my interest. “4 - The average number of arrests made each year since 2001 by all 4,000 US Federal Air Marshalls combined. This works out at \$US200 million per arrest... \$US800 million per annum over the past 8 years. A lot of money for a country where the economy is in dire circumstances. Alongside the Air Marshall programme have gone massively increased security measures for people boarding domestic and international flights worldwide and very considerable restrictions on people entering the US in particular. Our prime minister has recently supported the introduction of full body scans for people boarding domestic and international flights even though Australia has had *no* incidents of terrorism using airplanes as weapons. These and many other intrusions and limitations on personal freedom and civil rights have been initiated by governments around the globe. I am not arguing that security measures are not a valid response to fears about personal safety however the statistic quoted above is indicative of a lack of balance in both strategy and use of resources.

There is also an interesting juxtaposition of circumstances between the above and the massive *increase* in freedom for those elite individuals and firms ‘guiding’ our economies and making vast sums of money along the way. There have been two basic (and warring) economic factions - the Keynesians and the Neo liberals (or market fundamentalists). The Keynes model was paramount for the 30 years or so following World War 2 until it demonstrated its Achilles heel when inflation *and* unemployment occurred simultaneously and it was supplanted by the neo-liberal ‘free market’ concept. This model encourages individuals and companies to pursue their self interest within a competitive environment with minimal regulation.

Naturally enough this saw a massive concentration of wealth and power in a small sector of the population in the US as well as globally. (E.g. American CEO salaries went from 20 to 30 times that of the average worker to between 300 and 500 times that level.) The result of the pursuit of self interest without regulation (ethical or governmental) was the GFC of course. In 2007 40% of US corporate profit came from the financial sector and remember that is not the result of the creation and sale of any actual commodity or service – it is profit made on trading *money* essentially. The culmination of that trading of *nothing* was the derivatives market (which eventually infiltrated the housing market) and the melt down of the financial sector. The pendulum then swung as the little person – you and I... taxpayers – generously funded the bailout.

The US has become one of the most ‘unequal’ countries in the world based on many different measures. (income inequality, education, health, violence, imprisonment, and many others) The UK and Australia have also followed





that trend as those economies have been markedly influenced by the free market philosophy. (See *The Spirit Level – Why more equal societies almost always do better* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett)

So what has all this got to do with Budo? Quite a lot really. Firstly, how convenient for us to be presented with two main options – economic in this instance - apparently at polar opposites and for the world to fluctuate between them. (The bail-out using government spending following the GFC is a *Keynesian* response as is the reintroduction of a raft of regulations). Presenting two flawed options and coercing people to choose between them is a classic manipulative strategy. Locking people into a competitive environment is not an evolved concept.

Our *About Us* section on the AMAI website has this to say... Symbiosis means 'to live together.' There are three kinds of symbiosis. Parasitism – one organism harmfully exploits another. Commensalism – one organism takes advantage of another without necessarily harming it. Mutualism – two or more organisms cooperate to the equal advantage of each other. Ask yourself - which of these most closely reflects the neo-liberal economic philosophy that so markedly contributed to the GFC? And is the creation of an over-regulated 'nanny state' where individual freedoms are increasingly restricted the answer? Clearly not.

Government has mistakenly (and conveniently) come to see its role as one of regulation rather than education. This is part of a vicious circle. Regulation is misguidedly introduced as a 'solution' to an apparent issue... people thwart the regulation because it was not the answer... government perceives people as untrustworthy and introduces more regulation... and on it goes. This trend is difficult to reverse. No single change will create the trust that is necessary to support *mutualism* – it will take many years to unravel and clarify the relationship between the state, business and the people and this requires education, political will and a clear philosophy to guide it. Little of any of these things are in evidence at this time.

**David Dangerfield**

