



So often we choose to ridicule what we find different. We Americans can show such animosity toward what's not harmful to us, in any way, yet we allow our own government to run roughshod over us. Maybe we'd be better off trying to understand. For your consideration...

We're currently in the midst of a toilet paper shortage. When I see that fact mentioned the description always seems to use the words, *dumb, stupid, moronic, idiotic* and a few others. Have we become a nation that condemns everything that doesn't fit our individual idea of normality? Isn't it a little arrogant to insult and demean everything that's even slightly different from what we, ourselves, do and think? When you're so quick to condemn you miss out on a lot of new and innovative ideas. I wish this piece was about just such an event but, sadly, it isn't.

Charley and I were out several hours on Saturday and Sunday. There wasn't anything we needed but I'm a people watcher and I wanted to watch some people. I also wanted to get a sense of how well the thin veneer of civilization was holding up. In Southwest Michigan cracks and delaminations are beginning to show.

What I saw didn't coincide with a lot of the reports I'd heard. Yes, toilet paper was in excessively high demand and yes, some stores were sold out but, the same could be said about bottled water, flour, sugar, canned and bottled, name brand, pop, or soda, depending upon your preference, and beef among other consumables. Most of the beef shelves I saw were empty while a few feet away the pork and chicken areas were untouched. In my six hours of observation, over two days, the number one panic buy I saw was two-liter bottles of pop. That easily beat out toilet paper. I saw several mini vans who's rear suspension was suffering from hundreds of bottles of pop.

Here, in Southwest Michigan, we have a high percentage of non-English speaking residents. That's just a fact of life. Saturday morning, we spent 90 minutes in *Sam's Club* and about 80 minutes into that time Charley said to me, "Have you noticed that, other than the help, you and I are the only shoppers speaking English?" He was right. It wasn't just the normal Hispanic population, either. I recognized Hindi, Arabic, Chinese and several Eastern European languages. English speaking Americans were staying away in droves. The shelves were being picked clean by people who couldn't, or chose not to, speak English. The local *Meijer* showed only a slight improvement.

Boxed convenience food items were outselling canned food by a huge margin, but beef was the clear winner in the high demand "*real food*" category. There was one woman, I was going to use the word "lady," but Charley informed me that was a grossly incorrect evaluation, who had three (3) large carts loaded to maximum capacity. She was proudly and loudly announcing to everyone who wanted to know, and many who didn't, that just yesterday she spent "FIF-TEEN HUN-DRED MOT*** F**KIN' DOLLAS" on a freezer and she needed all this meat to feed her family. She took every single package of beef available. She was one of the very few English speakers.

Now, for the reason I called you here. I'd like to offer my insight into the toilet paper crisis. We Americans tend to avoid acts that we consider distasteful. We no longer cook; we open cans or boxes. We don't raise gardens; we go to grocery stores or, if we don't mind being fleeced, we may frequent a farmer's market. We don't spend time with our children; we plunk them in front of a TV, or a video game and we trust the "education" system to instill knowledge and morality in them.

Also, very few of us hunt. We now obtain our meat from a grocery store. It comes in nice little Styrofoam, shrink wrapped packaging that gives the illusion of being clean, safe, and sanitary. Last on my list is that today, it's become distasteful to even think of wiping our butts with anything other than a specially formulated piece of job-specific paper of the proper thickness, softness, and absorbency. To do so would be traumatic.

In the same vein, I've contended for years, that one could give most Americans, under the age of forty, a live rabbit, a sharp knife, everything required to build a cooking fire, and a complete set of detailed and illustrated instructions, and you know what you'll have? You'll have an American who has a cute, soft, and cuddly pet until the second he or she starves to death.



Should you desire to write a dystopian horror novel consider a time in the future when one's forced to wipe their butts on antique Bloomberg circulars and kill their own food. Zombies or space aliens aren't necessary if you want to arouse teeth-chattering fear. The basics, alone, are enough.

In conclusion, toilet paper isn't the only item being hoarded beyond all reasonability, but it is what stands between man and one of his biggest fears... the dreaded TP breakthrough.

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