Caveman Politics

Glenn Reynolds writes in The USA Today, Our caveman politics- *Economic policy based on 100,000-year-old emotions won't fix healthcare.*

> *Trying to run a 21st century civilization based on caveman instincts is a recipe for failure, but unfortunately politics in a democracy seems to be more about emotions than intellect, and those emotions are powerfully determined by caveman instincts.*
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> *Thus, politicians play on them. We hear a lot of talk about people's "fair share," as if society's wealth were a pizza we've all chipped in for (or a mammoth we've all killed together) when in fact it's no such thing. We hear a lot about "caring," when the action in question actually consists of politicians taking money from people who don't support them, and using it to buy votes from people who do. And we even value things, like physical strength and attractiveness in leaders, that had a lot more to do with leadership in the context of a caveman war party than in a modern nation.*
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> *We can't get rid of those caveman instincts, which were bred into us over countless generations. But it would help if voters and pundits were more aware of them, and did a better job of shaming politicians who played on them. The instincts that served our distant ancestors well are now mostly a tool for "leaders" to keep us under control. Socially, at least, we need to evolve beyond that.*

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Perhaps one of the greatest advances is the market system of free trade, pricing and specialization which has rendered the zero sum thinking of the majority of human history (Malthus) obsolete. It was zero sum thinking that generated the need

for conquest and war, racism and slavery.

Zero sum thinking returns during periods of economic stagnation and explains why such periods provided fertile ground for the global conflicts of the 20th century. It is also why poverty has dropped world wide as more nations have embraced the free market alternative. It is disturbing how much of the current economic thinking returns to this intellectual relic.