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Subseries: Subject Files

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Filing

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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

August 14, 1991

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3405 Valley Brook Road
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Tracey St. Pierre
Executive Assistant
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cc: Les Novitsky

276

rec 8/12

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Hasten Bancorp
3901 West 86th Street
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Dear Hart:

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On behalf of Steve, thank you for your support. With all of our help, he will be the next Mayor of Indianapolis.

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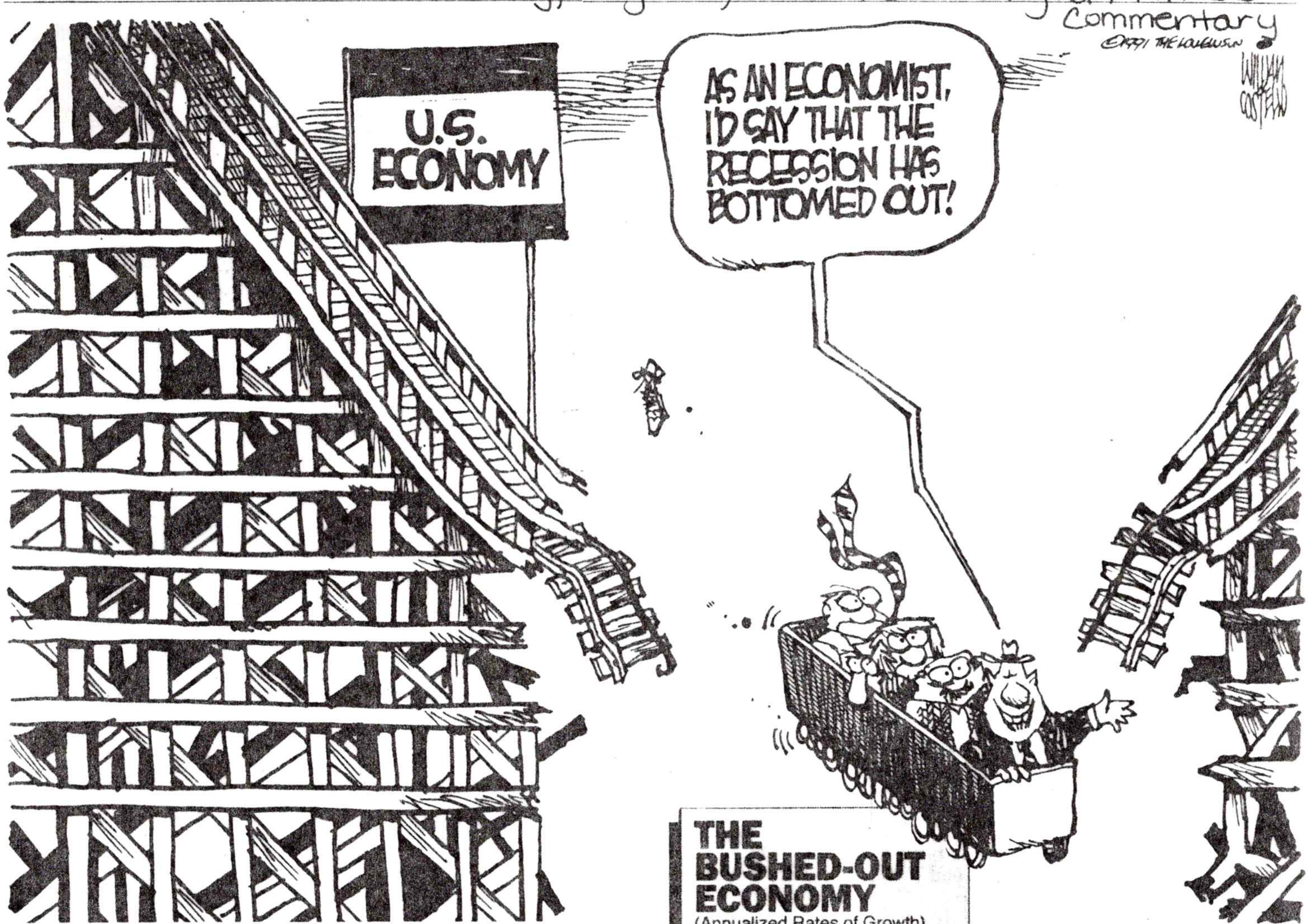
MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

FROM: Allan B. Hubbard ABH/~~JCHP~~

Do you think you should ask Boskin to respond to Warren's assertions?

cc: William Kristol
David McIntosh

WARREN BROOKES Thursday, August 8, 1991 The Washington Times - Commentary



Will Bush economy double dip?

THE BUSHED-OUT ECONOMY
(Annualized Rates of Growth)

	Real GNP	Employment
1983-88 average	4.0%	2.8%
1989-I	3.6%	2.9%
1989-II	1.6%	1.8%
1989-III	1.7%	−0.3%
1989-IV	0.3%	2.1%
1990-I	1.7%	0.7%
1990-II	0.4%	−0.2%
1990-III	1.4%	−0.7%
1990-IV	−1.6%	−1.0%
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1991-II	0.2%	−0.2%
Cumulative Growth Under Bush	0.3%	0.5%

Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics (non-agriculture employment)

The Washington Times

A year ago last month, U.S. Chamber of Commerce chief economist Richard Rahn made the bold call that the U.S. economy was already in recession. It turned out to be deadly accurate.

Now Mr. Rahn is making an equally audacious (and morbid) prediction that the current "recovery" will last only two quarters, to be followed by two more quarters of negative growth (1991-IV and 1992-I), giving us what economists call "a double-dip recession."

If Mr. Rahn is right — and there is growing evidence he might be — President Bush and the Democrats face an altogether different 1992 election dynamic and scenario.

In the first place, the present exploding federal deficit will seem like child's play when Budget Director Dick Darman has to go to Capitol Hill next January in the midst of yet another economic downturn, with possible deficits of $400 billion to $500 billion.

In the second place, unemployment could well be headed back *up* as job growth remains stagnant. In the third place, the housing market and banking sectors, already in a bumpy, slumpy ride along the bottom, could well turn south again as values slide.

In short, the Democrats may well have folded their tents too early. Whoever is ready to go to the March California primary with a good war chest could take the nomination preemptively. At the moment, the most likely prospect is New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, whose own tax-and-spend track record hardly commends him.

> *Mr. Bush's economic performance, by any standard, has been the worst of any president since World War II.*

One thing is clear: Without another war to bail him out, Mr. Bush should be vulnerable, not only because he has no economic growth agenda but because he apparently does not even have a growth "vision" in his mental computer screen.

How else are we to explain a president who inherited an economy growing at 3.8 percent and turned it into stagnant swamp where growth has all but disappeared? In fact, since December 1989, total economic growth for 2½ years has been less than three-tenths of 1 percent *cumulative!* Mr. Bush will go into 1992 with an average growth rate for his three years in office of less than one-tenth of 1 percent. That's an economic disaster. Jimmy Carter's four-year gross national product average was a very solid 3.1 percent.

Mr. Bush's economic performance, by any standard you want to measure, has been the worst of any president since World War II. That alone should disqualify him for reelection, but for the dismal vacuum of leadership in the Democratic Party.

Even that might be filled if the Rahn "double-dip" forecast is correct. Any number of economic indicators support it:

- Commodity prices are flat, indicating weak demand. In real recoveries, they always rise.
- Consumer confidence remains flat, stuck at about 78 percent, still 30 points below its pre-recession level.
- While industrial production has been rising, it is still 3 percent below a year ago, and orders for durable goods fell 1.6 percent in June and are now 7 percent below a year ago.
- The second quarter GNP growth of 0.4 percent was within the statistical margin of error and could just as easily be revised downward to a negative number next month.
- Even the recent strength in new home sales and starts is from a base that is still 60 percent *lower* than at the start of the 1983 expansion.
- The nation's broadest monetary measure, M-2, has plunged to a 13-week annualized growth level of less than 2 percent, suggesting an economy dangerously close to its "second dip."

All this explains why the pro-growth forces around Washington are now urging Mr. Bush to take advantage of the provision in the 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, which allows a suspension of the caps on spending and revenues following two quarters of less than 1 percent growth. Mr. Bush could then put forth a strong pro-growth tax reduction package.

Such a package is already contained in proposed legislation by Sen. Malcolm Wallop, Wyoming Republican, and Rep. Tom Delay, Texas Republican, that calls for cutting payroll taxes, increasing capital consumption allowances and reducing capital gains levies.

Economist Steve Entin of the Institute For Research on the Economics of Taxation says in a new paper that while "the spending limits imposed by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act are admirable," he warns that "the deficit targets and the resulting prohibition of badly needed tax relief are a major impediment to economic recovery and expansion. Congress should enact tax relief targeted at reducing the cost of U.S. labor and capital, promoting investment and work effort and boosting U.S. capacity and competitiveness."

If Mr. Bush does not seize this initiative, he and his party will be sitting ducks, should the Democrats ever decide to sit up and load their guns.

Warren T. Brookes is a nationally syndicated economics columnist.

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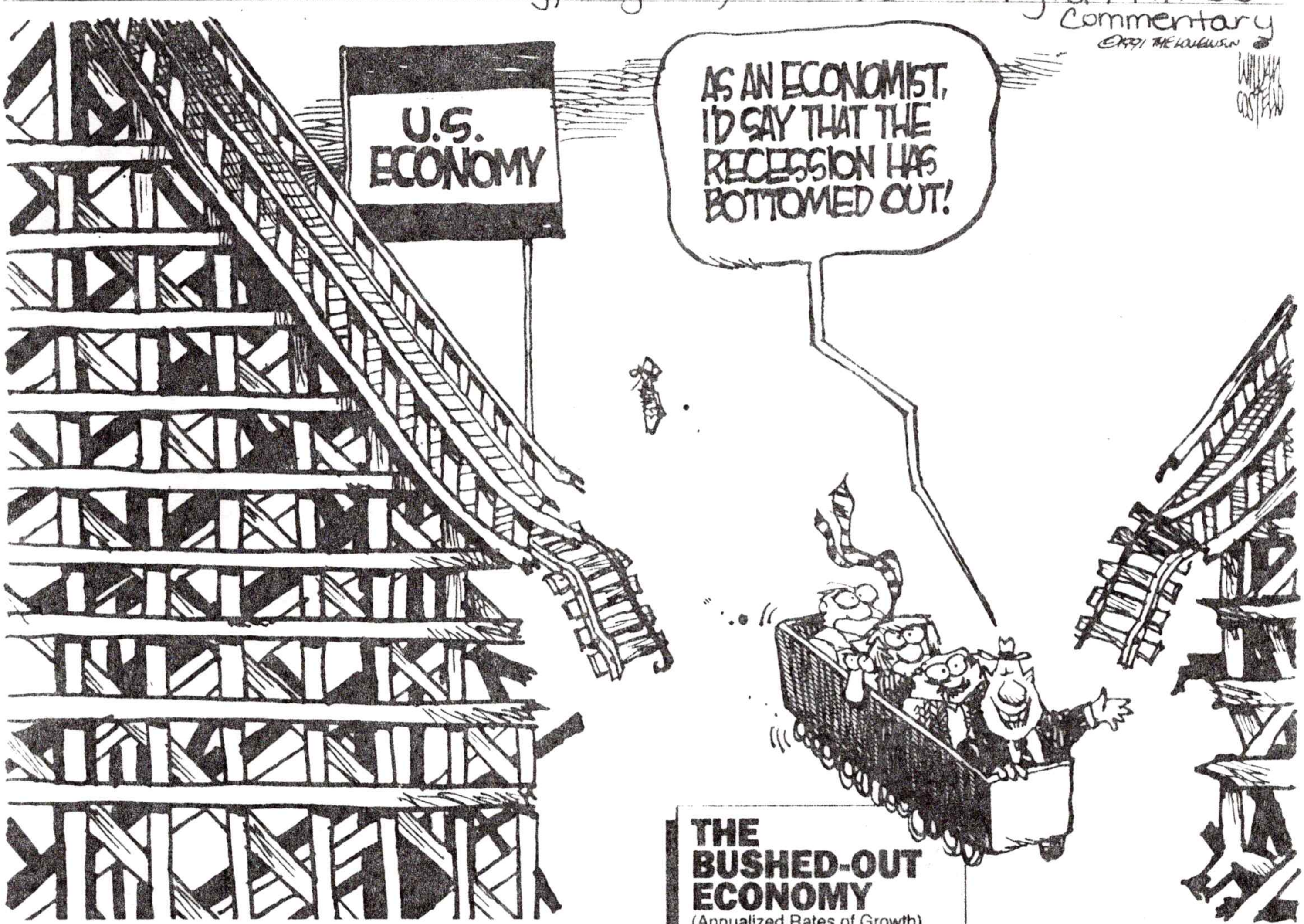

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