

[The lessons of Obamacare](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Worstall](#) [2] | Wednesday 13 November 2013

If Amazon included uncompleted shopping baskets as "sales," Jeff Bezos would go to prison <http://t.co/inFR4NeEK3> [3]

? David Burge (@iowahawkblog) [November 12, 2013](#) [4]

I will admit to rather enjoying the ongoing trainwreck that is Obamacare. It's just so wonderful to see so many of my prejudices being validated.

The first, and the one that will explain that tweet up above, is the way in which the numbers are being openly manipulated to make it look as if tractor production is rising. Given the disaster that has been the website, the website that the Federal Government only spent \$600 million on, there is a certain urgency to being able to show that no, really, lots of people [are signing up](#) [5].

The fight over how to define the new health law's success is coming down to one question: Who counts as an Obamacare enrollee? Health insurance plans only count subscribers as enrolled in a health plan once they've submitted a payment. That is when the carrier sends out a member card and begins paying doctor bills. When the Obama administration releases health law enrollment figures later this week, though, it will use a more expansive definition. It will count people who have purchased a plan as well as those who have a plan sitting in their online shopping cart but have not yet paid.

Quite: us private sector people would indeed be in jail if window shoppers were to be counted as sales.

But there's a larger point here too. It's entirely obvious that the people building the websites weren't entirely top of the programming class. Similarly, that the managers trying to manage the project were less than entirely competent. And that's something of a problem for all the policy wonks who like to think up complicated ways for government to solve problems. Perhaps, maybe, if we put aside our Hayekian objections to anyone really being able to design an economy, there really are plans and schemes that can be constructed, Heath Robinson style, to produce great government works.

But let us take the lesson of Obamacare to heart and note that we don't exactly have the A-Team implementing these plans for us. The programmers will be those who couldn't use Google Maps to find out where Silicon Valley was, the managers those that Ford or GM felt would never rise above chief filing clerk. This isn't a promising workforce with which to implement complex plans. They might be able to administer a flat tax system, or a very simple regulatory system that insisted "don't kill people". But complexity may well be beyond them which is just another argument in favour of that simplicity we all desire anyway.

Or, as I wish I'd originally said myself when some statist was waffling on years ago about the nationalised industries. His point being that there was nothing wrong with said form of ownership, or the unions, government interference. It was just that the management of the nationalised companies was terrible. To

which one answered well, so you agree then that nationalised companies can only attract the terrible managers then? And that thus nationalisation isn't a good idea?

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[6] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

[7] <http://disqus.com>