How Chickens Aided Trump

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Of course there is no single cause of the Harris defeat, and probably not even one main cause. There was a confluence of many negative factors, but inflation played a large role. This is a story of money, corporate greed, old and new opportunities and, above all, chickens.

The Presidential Myth:

Americans have long believed that the economy is controlled by the President. If prices go *up*, jobs go *down* and family income *stagnates*, blame it on the President and get a new one. This belief is widely held because when prices go *down*, jobs go *up* and family income *rises*, every President has taken credit for it.[1] If it were they who made things better, then it must be they who are making things worse.

Now, if you are Franklin Roosevelt, who put over 20 million unemployed workers on the federal payroll, passed the minimum wage, instituted the eight-hour day, created Social Security and imposed price controls to prevent war-time profiteering, then you could genuinely take credit for the economic upturn that followed, although Roosevelt also got blamed for the late recession

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1 [Manufacturing Booms Thanks to Biden-Harris Administration Investments](#)

dip. Johnson also made a lasting change with Medicare and Medicaid.

There are rare moments when a President can make a significant change. The Eisenhower era act creating the Interstate Highway System was one, and Biden's Inflation Reduction Act went in the right direction but was far too small. Most of the time, however, Presidents are just along for the ride as the economy follows its own internal laws and responds to such forces as monopoly control, COVID or foreign competition. Only Bernie Sanders says that the problem is really capitalism, and we all know what he is.[2]

It's The Economy:

In one exit poll after another, voters said that the economy influenced their choice, but how they viewed the economy is a bit of a conundrum as this CNN exit poll shows.

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Condition of the nation's economy
22,914 total respondents

	Excellent/Good 31%	Not good/Poor 68%
● Harris	91%	28%
● Trump	8%	70%

Were the 91% of the people who said the economy was good and voted for Harris, going to vote for her anyway, and told pollsters it was good out of loyalty to her? Similarly, did the 70% who said the economy was bad, speak from their own experience, or were they just repeating the MAGA mantra? There was probably a good deal of both, but
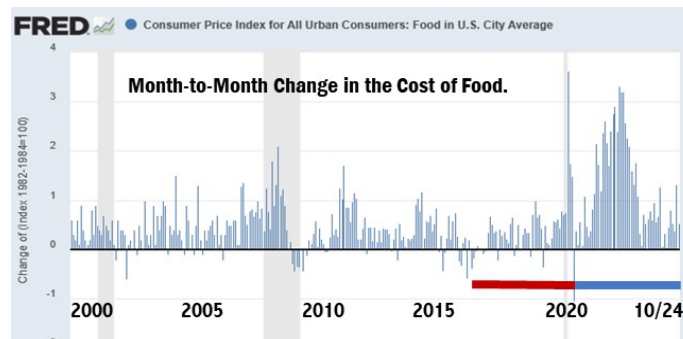
2 Please read Bernie's book "It's OK to be Angry About Capitalism"

the fact remains that 68% of the respondents thought the economy was not good.

Inflation

According to exit polls from CBS News, 75% of voters reported that inflation had caused moderate or severe hardship for them over the past year, with 45% saying they were worse off now than they were four years ago.[3]

The above graph, showing the monthly change in the Consumer Price Index for food, tells the story. The Trump years, starting in 2016, saw only modest increases in food prices and several months where prices actually came down temporarily. Then, COVID hit, bringing disruptions to the supply chains. Once some suppliers started raising prices, they all did. In 2021, Biden got hit with a year of COVID induced rising prices. By 2023, prices had returned to what looked like the usual pattern, but were still higher than the Trump years.

Enter the Chickens

Chicken is the most highly consumed meat product in the US; the average American eats almost 97 pounds a

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3 https://hub.jhu.edu/2024/11/20/how-inflation-impacted-2024-election/

year.[4] A look at chicken prices shows their potential impact on the election. What happened during the Biden Administration was that chicken consumption increased steadily, largely due to even sharper price increases in other meats. At the same time, the price of chicken, which had been more or less steady during the Trump years, rose dramatically right up through the election.
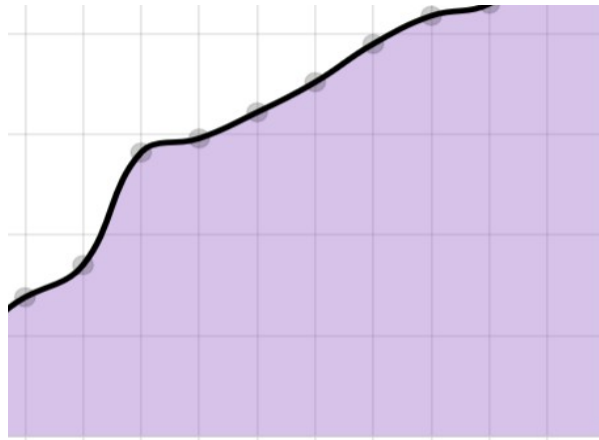
Chicken Consumption

Chicken Price
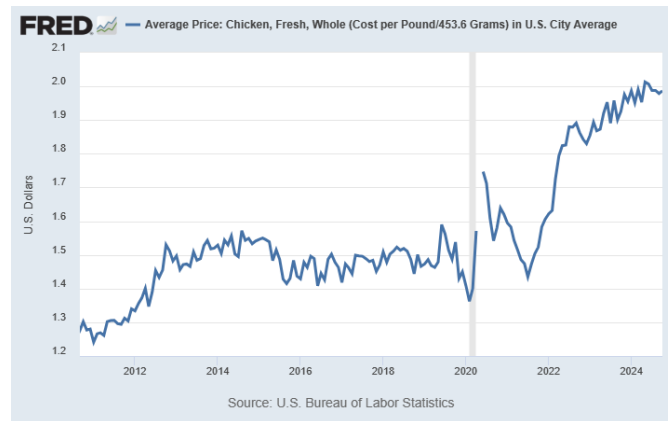
President Biden was well aware of rising meat prices and named the cause. A White House 2021 statement said,

> "Just four large conglomerates control the majority of the market for each of these three products [*beef pork and*

4 Progressive Grocer

poultry], and the data show that these companies have been raising prices while generating record profits during the pandemic."[5]

Unfortunately, Biden's solution was limited to an attempt to increase competition and production with what became one billion dollars in grants to small independent producers.[6] However, poultry production was already heading toward an all-time high. With 14.4% of production currently being exported, the US is the world's second largest poultry exporter.[7] This level of chicken exports indicates a degree of domestic market saturation making it difficult for small producers to break in. One billion dollars in small grants is insufficient to create competition in a $283 billion industry.

How much better might this election have gone if President Biden could have issued a statement along the lines of President Truman's in 1946:

> "The President wishes it clearly understood that as long as there are dangerous upward pressures on meat prices and as long as the Government has the authority to deal with them, price controls on livestock and meat will be firmly maintained."[8]

Price controls on meat? Yes, thanks to Roosevelt, we once had them, but the Republican/Dixicrat Alliance ended them over Truman's objection. The MAGA

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5 White House Briefing

6 The Biden Harris Plan

7 National Chicken Council

8 Truman Library

Republicans, heirs to that decadent alliance of old, have no one but their own progenitors to blame for high meat prices. Bringing back price controls in monopoly industries where market forces are totally absent, should be part of the Democrats' program. Imagine the Democrats calling for a rollback of chicken prices to what they were during the first Trump Administration, and Republicans opposing it.