

PROGNOSTICATIONS FOR 2015

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The California Drought Ends but The Hysteria Will Continue. Most current meteorological observations indicate that El Nino conditions are returning to the tropical mid-Pacific. Local observations likewise show that the mean temperature gradient between ocean waters and the continental land mass along the U.S. West Coast has consistently been at a minimum. And, the seasonally static eastern Pacific high pressure cell has decamped to an area southwest of La Paz – a location far south of its position throughout the winter of 2013. As a result, rainfall in previously drought-stricken California has risen appreciably for the current water year beginning July 1, 2014. By December 19, 2014 San Francisco had received over 14 inches of rain, an amount significantly above the 2.09 inches that had fallen by the same date in 2013, as well as the seasonal normal of 7.23 inches. Every indication points to the possibility that when the 2014-15 year ends on June 30, 2015, California will have received at the minimum its normal annual rainfall. Nonetheless, we can be fairly confident that regional water managers will continue to proclaim, along with much media breast-beating, that the golden state is still deep in drought. There is little doubt the California populace will yield to these incessantly yipping border collies, and with all the fortitude of a flock of sheep, continue to believe that drought is a function of human demand and not natural supply, along with its hand-maiden of reasoned resource management.

Privatization and Privilege Grow to Subvert U.S. Higher Education. This is going out a bit on the predictive limb, but most likely in January 2015 Superior Court Judge Curtis Karnow will rule against the revocation of San Francisco City College's accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). If favorable, the ruling will be at best a pyrrhic victory for the 80,000 student community college. Indeed, we can be fairly certain the ACCJC will continue to attack City College's accreditation on the grounds that "the institution is not being run like a business" rather than on the quality of its education program or the qualifications of its faculty. The ACCJC's focus belies the underlying prejudice of a star chamber whose implicit goal is to subvert public higher education in favor of a privatized corporate model based on ever-higher tuition fees, the long-term indebtedness of a financially eviscerated American middle class, and the restricting of university and college degrees to the children of a privileged elite.

The American Presidency – A Lame Duck Gets Some Clout. The 2014 mid-term congressional elections have altered the national political picture very little, with the exception that those incessantly barking "no" will have changed places with their counterparts across the legislative aisle. The obstructionism of the previous minority party has produced a political entropy equivalent to absolute zero – the cessation of all molecular movement. Indeed, when was the last time anybody saw any movement in that comatose body we euphemistically refer to as the U.S. Congress. In contrast, President Obama, as he enters his last two years in office, assumes the somewhat less than exalted mantle of Lame Duck and Chief, a position of surprisingly more power than what he has so-far evidenced. In this new role for the remainder of his second term, the President can be expected to initiate whatever executive action he chooses. Already he has moved to legalize the status of 5 million undocumented immigrants. He has negotiated an agreement with China establishing new greenhouse gas goals. And most recently, he reversed over fifty years of American policy by resuming diplomatic relations with Cuba. These actions foreshadow what we can probably expect from a far more aggressive chief executive. However, Mr. Obama must be careful not to alienate moderate voters and the potential for the next Democratic presidential nominee to carry her party to victory in 2016.