



UNDERSTANDING THE JOBS REPORTS – IT AIN'T EASY! – Part, The First –

Stephen L. Bakke  April 12, 2012

ABBOTT & COSTELLO had a comedy routine about fictitious ball players arguing about baserunners. The routine became known as called "Who's On First?" Some of you may be too young to remember this hilarious, legendary routine, but the rhythm of it and the absolute confusion experienced by Lou Costello, fits perfectly as a spoof on recent jobs reports. I found this presented on several sites, but have not seen any official attribution. Obviously it's not original with me.

This is the first installment about Obama's Jobs Reports. After reading this "skit" you will have at least partial insight into why Obama's unemployment figures are improving.

Unemployment Numbers Explained by Abbott and Costello



COSTELLO

I want to talk about the unemployment rate in America.

ABBOTT

Good Subject. Terrible times. It's over 8%.

COSTELLO

That many people are out of work?

ABBOTT

No, that's 16%.

COSTELLO

You just said 8%.

ABBOTT

8% Unemployed.

COSTELLO

Right 8% out of work.

ABBOTT

No, that's 16%.

COSTELLO

Okay, so it's 16% unemployed.

ABBOTT

No, that's 8%...

COSTELLO

WAIT A MINUTE. Is it 8% or 16%?

ABBOTT

8% are unemployed. 16% are out of work.

COSTELLO

IF you are out of work you are unemployed?

ABBOTT

No, you can't count the "Out of Work" as the unemployed. You have to look for work to be unemployed.

COSTELLO

But they are out of Work!!!

ABBOTT

No, you miss my point.

COSTELLO

What point?

ABBOTT

Someone who doesn't look for work, can't be counted with those who look for work. It wouldn't be fair.

COSTELLO

To who?

ABBOTT

The unemployed.

COSTELLO

But they are ALL out of work.

ABBOTT

No, the unemployed are actively looking for work... Those who are out of work stopped looking. They gave up. And, if you give up, you are no longer in the ranks of the unemployed.

COSTELLO

So if you're off the unemployment roles, that would count as less unemployment?

ABBOTT

Unemployment would go down. Absolutely!

COSTELLO

The unemployment just goes down because you don't look for work?

ABBOTT

Absolutely it goes down. That's how you get to 8%. Otherwise it would be 16%. You don't want to read about 16% unemployment do ya?

COSTELLO

That would be frightening.

ABBOTT

Absolutely.

COSTELLO

Wait, I got a question for you. That means they're two ways to bring down the unemployment number?

ABBOTT

Two ways is correct.

COSTELLO

Unemployment can go down if someone gets a job?

ABBOTT

Correct.

COSTELLO

And unemployment can also go down if you stop looking for a job?

ABBOTT

Bingo.

COSTELLO

So there are two ways to bring unemployment down, and the easier of the two is to just stop looking for work.

ABBOTT

Now you're thinking like an economist.

COSTELLO

I don't even know what the hell I just said!

Does that help you understand unemployment statistics?

