

MUCH ADO ABOUT SNAKE OIL

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The 1980's was a golden age of comedy as far as I am concerned. Movies such as *Better Off Dead*, *Fast Times At Ridgemont High*, *Sixteen Candles*, and *A Fish Called Wanda* are a few of my favorites. If one particular 1980's comedy film encapsulates some of the things I do in my career it would have to be *Trading Places* with Eddie Murphy and Dan Ackroyd. Who else could take investment scams, unscrupulous investment firms, and make it hilarious? One of the subplots of the film was the manipulation of the commodity markets, to be exact the market for "frozen concentrated orange juice." The con involved high-jacking government crop reports and other market manipulative dealings. Anyway, the whole scheme turns out to be quite a hoot and, unlike other movie reviewers out there that have ruined so many movies by giving too much away I am going to leave it at that. Over the past few months the more I listen to talk radio, the more I am reminded of the malicious *Trading Places* brokerage firm of Duke & Duke. Commodity/alternative investments are more preventable now than I have ever seen. One cannot change the dial on their radio without hearing another carnival barker pitching another get rich quick scheme. Not a day goes by without me hearing from another investor losing his or her collective shirt trading commodities or some other alternative investment.

I am at my wits end with all the garbage that is being pitched by talk show hosts and their pseudo-financial expert/author/trading guru guests. From gold coins, pork bellies, gasoline, foreign currencies, (etc.), radio sales reps have done a bang up job in managing to attract millions in ad dollars from these latest and greatest Wall Street con-artists. I have in fact warned many of them that the losses that people are going to encounter are going to eventually translate into a lower number of listeners for their shows. The typical commercial is a pie in the sky pitch where all the worlds riches will be yours if you simply dial an (800) number. By dialing that (800) number investors are stepping into the world of financial anarchy. No regulators, no rules, zero, nothing, nada. Frankly, I would rather play roulette; at least there I would have almost a 50/50 chance at winning.

During the 1990's we warned our readers about the coming demise of the new economy, the dotcom's and companies like Enron. Wall Street is a sales machine and will pitch you anything that is hot, new, and exciting. Hot, new, and exciting may work in the fashion industry however, it is disastrous in investments. Speculation snake oil salesmen of today are pitching everything from \$150 barrel of oil to the dollar being worthless in under a year, to the merits of stuffing your mattress full of coins. What we have wrought is nothing more than a financial freak-show. I am waiting to hear some guru pitch investments in *Cabbage Patch Kids* and *Beanie Babies*. The merry-go-round of investment scams keeps going round and round with no end in sight because people keep getting on. Do yourself a favor, skip that ride.