

Shutdown Today

Arnold was super frustrated by the latest Government shutdown. Such failures only happened in his country. The shutdowns came when the parties refused to agree on the yearly Government spending bill. Civil servants went unpaid, projects postponed, benefits stopped. Many citizens viewed it as a news item. It rarely affected them directly. A big chunk of the public saw it as political incompetence and entertainment (though not always in that order.)

Other countries could internally agree and compromise. Why not Arnold's? He decided it was because his country was still in its Wild West stage—when pioneers swept over aboriginal lands, where the law was the gun. Shutdowns were politicians facing each other at high noon on a dusty street. Somehow, Arnold had to change his country's culture.

Being a talented neurobiophysicist (and a North American), he first tried technology. He converted violent westerns into ones where conflict was resolved through negotiation. It was a dud—viewers found the films boring. They needed action. Arnold desperately searched for a solution. Eventually, he created one.

*Meanwhile...*the shutdown continued to over 300 days. Civil servants who had remained at work had to find paying jobs. Many government-funded projects fell completely apart and trade was strange, no one regulating it—prices went up, then up again. Air flight shrank to nothing, due to lack of air traffic controllers.

Yet the average person remained unaffected, apart from being entertained by the nightly news, which now included a new reality TV show, ***Shutdown Today***, a situation comedy with real politicians as the characters. The jokes helped citizens endure the measles and polio pandemics. Survivors replaced the Government with village councils, which began their meeting with having a laugh at the latest episode of ***Shutdown Today***.

When the broadcast networks fell apart, the public kept the series going through a Kickstarter campaign. Rarely had a TV show hit helped people through a shutdown. Honours were heaped upon the series' writer.

The writer was Arnold.