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The U.S. is on a Suicide Watch

- Alan Caruba [Tuesday, January 17, 2012](#)

In 1991, the Soviet Union, arguably the greatest experiment in Communism, collapsed. After Mao Zedong died in 1976, his successors moved to shift its Communist economy to one that embraced Capitalism while retaining centralized government control.

Following World War Two, the recovering nations of Europe were rescued from Communism by the Marshall Plan, but adopted Communism-Light in the form of Socialism. The U.S. was already headed in that direction, creating programs that we now call "entitlements." For most of the nation's history, such "entitlements" did not exist.

What binds together the financial problems of the West is the common thread of infantile behavior and thought. One might call it wishful thinking. Instead of encouraging people to provide for old age and possible illness, politicians decided to turn government into Big Daddy, the eternal source of money for everything.

Need to go to college, start a business, or plan for retirement? Government would be there to help. All this ignored the need to actually pay for these programs. In the case of Social Security Congress began to dip into its funding to pay for other programs! This is what children do.

One can look around the world and see what a failure both Communism and Socialism have been. Governments spending more than their tax and other revenues have suffered grievously from this path to default and that includes the United States of America. It can be argued that, with few exceptions—the Reagan years come to mind—Presidents have been poorly served by their economic advisors.

Politicians make poor economists because, in America, members of the House must think of getting reelected every two years and Senators every six. Moreover, being politicians, they believe that the more federal largess they can bring back to their State and then brag about is the one true path to reelection.

At the very beginning of the nation, Thomas Jefferson said it best. "I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them."

How many commissions and special committees have earnestly produced reports intended to deal with a government grown too large? At the federal level, some two million or more Americans are employed promulgating a deluge of regulations and pushing paper.

Now President Obama says he wants to streamline the federal government.

The real issue is not “streamlining” government agencies by gathering them together under one roof and one administrator, but the failure to end government departments and agencies that no longer serve a useful purpose and whose removal would also remove countless obstacles to economic growth.

In April 2011, Wayne Crews of the Competitive Enterprise Institute warned that “the federal government is on track to spend more than \$3.5 trillion this year. What most people don’t know is that government actually costs about 50% more than what it spends. That’s because complying with federal regulations costs an additional \$1.75 trillion—nearly an eighth of GDP. And almost none of that cost appears on the budget.”

The United States of America, the greatest engine of wealth the world has ever seen, is bankrupt. The national debt exceeds the Gross Domestic Product, the sum total of all revenue generated by goods and services.

The President has asked that the debt ceiling be raised another trillion or so and Congress will comply. That, I submit, is insane.

I also submit that, since Barack Obama was sworn into office on January 20, 2009, the nation has been witness to the economic insanity personified in the man and in the Democrat-controlled Congress that was his partner until 2010 when the control of the House of Representatives was wrested away by the Tea Party movement and its support for Republican candidates.

The only constant in life is change. America’s demography has changed. We have, thanks to medical care and other advantages, a much older segment of the population than ever before, but the nation from the 1930s to the 1960s had committed itself to ensure they would have Medicare and Medicaid at a time when people more often than not died in their 50’s and 60’s. We now have an average life expectancy of 78 years. My parents lived into their 90s.

Politics, not economics, continues to make it impossible to revise and restructure both Medicare and Social Security to reflect this reality. Instead, we had Obamacare foisted upon us which took trillions from Medicare and imposes rules that will let elderly heart attack or stroke victims die rather than pay for a level of care to which they contributed during their working years.

If the Supreme Court declares Obamacare unconstitutional it will go away. If we elect a Republican Senate, the repeal already passed in the House will be passed and it will go away.

But America’s economic problems will not go away until Americans insist that the shackles of Big Government be cut loose to enable the growth of an energy industry that can not only make the nation energy independent, but produce billions in revenue as far as the eye can see into the future.

The tax system with its thousands of pages must be revised to a simpler, fairer program. It makes no sense that forty percent of Americans pay no taxes at all.

It's not that we don't know what must be done. Conservative think tanks like The Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, The Heartland Institute, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, and others have spelled out programs that can and will save America, but the nation must be led by a president who understands that Capitalism involves budgeting, planning, hard work, and—yes—risk.

The federal government is running on “continuing resolutions.” It has not had a formal budget since Obama arrived. This is no way to run the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. America is on a suicide watch and we are just an election away from saving it.

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