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## Is There Nothing Government Can't Do?

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The last meeting of the Buncombe County Commissioners went very fast. The agenda was largely proclamations, and most of those repeated the content of the most recent meeting of Asheville City Council. Chair David Gantt was out of town, and Vice Chair Brownie Newman asked that the record be checked to see if that had been the shortest meeting in history.

The item of most interest was the proclamation of May 2016 as Foster Care Month in Buncombe County. Now, everybody knows there are many good and loving parents who open their homes to children who are rescued from horrible and often abusive cases. The county gave awards to a few of these families for the sacrifices, which all of them would consider blessings, they make for children who otherwise would have no chance.

But the tone was darkened by two people making public comment. Lisa Baldwin once again advocated for a girl at her church deemed essentially kidnapped by social services and not released. Baldwin spoke of the strong and multi-dimensional support system the girl would have if returned to her birth mother. "Support system" is the big buzzword these days in social services.

Baldwin was followed by reinforcing remarks from Jerry Rice, who spoke of a grand conspiracy of government constructing more and more facilities to make room for all the people it is going to make dependent on it for life support. He mentioned all the new buildings the county was constructing for social services. He referred the audience to a website on the issue. Because of Baldwin's and Rice's remarks, "returning children to their birth homes" became the theme of the scheduled conversation.

Now, it would be presumptuous for a reporter, or perhaps even a judge and jury, to assume the ability to within a week get to the bottom of an issue so complex as whether or not a particular child is being held unjustly by social services. However, as Rice suggested, the appropriateness of getting more and more people dependent on government services is worthy of discussion.

### **Master-Slave –**

Celebrity pundit Sean Hannity has a litany he likes to go through. Among other things, he says 20 percent of households in America no longer have a single person working. It was big news during the recession when it was announced 20 percent of Americans are now on food stamps.

Government at the time was using tax dollars on an all-out media campaign to increase the number of SNAP recipients. As unemployment numbers go down, so do the number of hours a week needed to qualify as working fulltime. This, in turn, forces employers unable to afford benefits into cutting hours. Pushes for higher minimum wage, when adopted, have the same effect.

When I lost a job I'd had for twenty years in the throes of the Recession, I quickly accepted a temporary factory job and within two weeks rolled my hand in a conveyor belt. What followed clearly drew a party line between Republican and Democrat friends. All intended well. The Democrats referred me to services and told me where to sign up. I could go on unemployment, and I would be taken care of as long as I signed a line which, fortunately, I'd been forewarned, included a commitment that I not return to work any time soon.

I wasn't raised that way. My parents expected me to contribute however I was able. No matter how handicapped or incompetent, it was my duty to give to society in some beneficial way. The Republican friends at the time shared that work ethic, and though there was practically nothing I could do, they spread the word that I was looking for work. A few reached into their own pockets and made up stupid secretarial things for me to do, which was disgraceful for me, but it kept me going and kept the people who billed me happy. Most importantly, it kept me out of the system. Unlike many in the world, I was surrounded by good people at church. One family even opened their home to me.

### **Economics –**

It is not uncommon as people run for office to hear them promise big things. It is sort of like horoscopes. Nobody believes a word of it, but they play along because that's what people in this culture do. But back at ground zero, when I was unemployed and uninsured, there was tremendous pressure on me to sign up for services. Not only could the government pay rent and buy me food, it could make sure I got the best medical attention for my hand. And maybe I could use free counseling, free birth control, whatever.

It sounds crazy, but anybody who has done the white-trash thing knows it's out there. Anybody going to county commissioners' meetings sees it touted, too. "Growing capacity" was a big thing for social services a couple years ago. People from different initiatives would stress the importance of education and outreach to people who "might not know they need or qualify for services." When Obamacare was rolling out, people would get into the system when they signed up. Once in, they could be outreached and educated as described above.

While embraced by people with master's and doctorate degrees, the idea makes no sense. It is well-known that the super-rich have tax attorneys to help them take advantage of legal ways to pay very little in taxes. Therefore, it is fair to say a lot of these programs are paid with taxes collected from the middle class.

But when the middle class is paying 25 percent of its income in taxes off the bat, and government has to keep raising taxes to pay for lots more programming with the accompanying buildings and staff, with so much bureaucratic paperwork it has to pay navigators; the middle class erodes in a vicious cycle. Restated – because government leaders act so much like anybody

who says so is in need of behavioral health services – when people let government do for them what they can do for themselves, it raises the cost of government. When the cost of government goes up, it has to raise taxes. When government raises taxes, it forces middle-class families just barely getting by into dependency.

Families who never thought it would happen are finding themselves on food stamps or seeking government housing. As more people get sucked into the system, somebody has to pay for it, so the middle-class families on the new margin fall off the cliff into welfare, raising costs to be paid by a tax increase affecting those left on the edge when the last few people fell off.

Now, everybody likes the idea of a safety net. Ideally, churches, families, and neighbors would do this. But dependency is so epidemic, churches are having to turn the needy over to the government lest their other functions be economically compromised.

The problem is, for the longest time, the only cranes downtown belonged to government projects. Government, which taxed the productive class out of its ability to invest in new construction, was making sure people seeking government services didn't feel like they were going to some kind of place for poor people. A presenter at a recent commissioners' meeting bragged about the spiffy new reception room in a new building that would make people coming in for services feel like they were going to some kind of upscale office.

At one of those meetings soliciting input on subsidized housing about fifteen years ago, then Community Development Director Charlotte Caplan was advocating what she called "cozy housing," but is now called "tiny housing." Recipients, however, were complaining about not wanting to be stigmatized with unstylish or small housing. One lady said she needed a big kitchen. Dorms won't do, and government would never think of making welfare recipients eat salty ramen like so many working class families.

It bears repeating that big government is not sustainable. It is built off the backs of its people. In the current context, government is taxing the working class so the leisure class can have better than the working class. In less-civilized cultures, this used to be cause for rebellion. In the last century, it usually resulted in a bailout in the form of US Foreign Aid. Nowadays, even companies that are run poorly can turn to government to make those making sounder financial decisions pay for their mistakes. But work horses get tired, sick, and give out. When the hosts all die off, where do the parasites go?

### **Social Concerns –**

This leads to a second problem of big government. It used to be referred to as character. But, again, one increases demand for behavioral health services when one mentions it.

Half a century ago, paranoiacs, like John Birchers, warned against public schools indoctrinating kids in UN agendas. America used to be considered a refuge for persons of conscience. People of principle, like persecuted religious groups, fled here and worked hard to be able to mind their own business.

But then work ethic, conscience, principle, morals, character, religion, and any other trait that might make a person independent and helpful to others became the new evil. Talk of such things

became “politically-incorrect,” “insensitive,” “bigoted,” “racist,” and now is considered, “hurtful.”

It used to be normal for mothers to teach their kids to make friends with other kids, help the less fortunate, respect adults, work hard at school, clean their rooms, and all that. Then, families found themselves unable to survive on dad’s income, so mom went to work and the kids went to daycare. With all these working moms, dads seemed even more irrelevant, and single motherhood became the norm. A number of studies have been conducted by the Cato Institute showing single moms, for the most part, could not survive without Uncle Sam. (Another inconvenient truth they show is that juvenile delinquency correlates directly with single motherhood.)

With moms going to junk jobs in the morning, so many kids were going into pre-K, it is now considered the new normal. Government studies show children develop better when they are socialized with other children and away from home. So much for mom’s religion. Kids learn at an early age about birth control and other things government wants to teach them. They get diagnoses pinned on them and maybe a prescription to be managed for life. They’re not told to buck up, but to whine when assaulted by microaggression. Schools are teaching as virtue what Ozzie and Harriet might have described as being so open-minded one’s brain falls out.

Kids are turned away from studying subjects that led to the Industrial Revolution. Industry, we are told, has a big, fat carbon footprint. It is led by greedy people who give their money to people in exchange for goods and labor when they should be giving it to those who do no work. Kids are taught multiculturalism. They learn the once hard-working and philanthropic United States, in spite of moral equivalence, is, in fact, worse than primitive cultures where drug use proliferates and lifespans run just over forty years.

They go to college where they learn to hate the man. They talk of energy – something invisible, intangible, independent of cause and effect, and thus wholly dependent on whatever the guru says it is – as the real building block of success. If they study something old-fashioned, they might actually get a government job that gives them at least hope of eventually paying off their college debt. Otherwise, they’ll go straight to the government dole.

Samuel Adams had some advice for humans who were willing to reduce their existence to the moral equivalence of that of a dog. “If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen.”