

Welfare Nation

By Bill O'Reilly

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My parents were children during the Great Depression, and it scarred them, especially my father, who saw destitution in his Brooklyn, N.Y., neighborhood: adults standing in so-called "bread lines," children begging in the streets. My grandfather was a New York City cop, and so my dad did not suffer as others did. But he never forgot the brutal scenes and worked hard his whole life to build some financial independence.

Fast-forward to the severe recession of 2008, when millions of Americans lost jobs and equity in their homes. No bread lines, but much pain. The Obama administration responded by pouring trillions of dollars into stimulus and rescue programs, some of which succeeded in stabilizing tottering banks and auto companies. But along with that, the president and his acolytes openly encouraged Americans to use the welfare system. And now the entitlement culture has exploded.

According to the Census Bureau, more people in America today are on welfare than have full-time jobs. There is a culture of dependency being created that is truly shocking. A recent study by the Cato Institute concludes that welfare now pays more than minimum-wage work in 35 states. So why enter the workforce at the bottom if the government will give you the same compensation for sitting on your butt?

Some believe that the Democratic Party, which champions the entitlement culture, is doing so to assure future votes from those receiving benefits. And right now, about half of all American households are getting some kind of compensation from the feds. Some of that, such as Social Security and Medicare, has been earned. But nearly 50 million Americans are receiving food stamps, and 83 million are on Medicaid.

The United States became the world's strongest economy by folks working hard.

Layabouts and people who game the system actually harm our country. Safety nets for the poor and disadvantaged are a must for any compassionate nation, but encouraging folks to go on the dole when it's not absolutely necessary is disgraceful.

And that's what the Obama administration is doing. How else can you explain a 40 percent rise in food stamp recipients in just three years (2009 to 2011, the last statistics available) and a rise of 15 percent in federal disability payments over the same period of time? Is the workplace that dangerous? Really?

As a person who has worked extremely hard for more than 40 years, I don't want my tax dollars going to drunkards and drug addicts. And in America, there is no substance testing for welfare recipients. Every time that comes up, the civil liberties lobby screams.

America has become a much weaker nation since 2001. The wars we have fought to protect ourselves against terrorism have drained our treasury and created a deep distrust of authority. The hope and change espoused by President Obama has led to chaos in the health care arena and a massive entitlement industry that is growing larger every day.

Unless the voters wise up and get back to self-reliance and responsible government, this nation will continue down the Nanny State road. That path is unsustainable. But even worse, it is un-American.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of many books, including the newly released "Killing Jesus." To find out more about Bill O'Reilly and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit www.creators.com. This column originates on the website www.billoreilly.com.