

The Entitlement Morass: Determination to Dependence to Despair

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It is possible to receive almost two years of unemployment checks then switch over to long-term disability. The food stamp program (SNAP) budgeted at \$78 billion annually is a joint federal-state temporary assistance effort used by 56% of recipients for more than five years. Other assistance programs include Women, Infants & Children (WIC) costing \$7.1 billion annually, Children's Nutrition Program (CNP) amounting to \$20.5 billion annually and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for unwed mothers and others at a cost of \$56 billion. Free cell phones are available; not sure about free tattoos or flat screen TV's. The unemployed have no job search requirements and can pursue the art and skill of looking busy without having personal income other than government stipends.

These words may sound cynical for there are many among us that need assistance to subsist in our economic, social and political world of reality. But consider that there are now 10.9 million disability recipients that receive \$128 billion annually. In August of 2013, there were 8.3 million people receiving SSI payments. Homeland Security Employees routinely pad their paychecks to the extent of \$23 million annually as recently reported.

Hundreds of Long Island Railroad (LIRR) people retired with 20 years service at age 50 on partial retirement income. These retirees then filed disability claims and received close to what their compensation was prior to retirement. A doctor who had been paid to confirm various reasons for disabilities will be advising fellow prison inmates about health issues over the next eight years. Over 600 retired LIRR employees will lose their retirements in this fraud scheme that has consumed hundreds of millions of dollars.

In Hale County, Alabama, one in four working-age adults receive disability. As a percentage of the population, 9% of West Virginians are on disability, 8.2% in Arkansas and 8.1% in Alabama and Kentucky are recipients of disability checks. By comparison just 2.9% of residents of Alaska, Hawaii and Utah are legally 'disabled'. One report states that less than 1% of workers return to productive work once they have qualified for and receive disability checks. The new career entitlement for many retirees turns out to be disability, real or imagined.

Have we, as a society, descended into a culture of total dependency? Have millions of our workers traded the nobility of creative employment for the forlorn failure of self-determination and respect? The allure of free everything in a liberal milieu may be a curse instead of a consecration. Vast segments of our populace are dependent on government for essential

segments of life support. As Obamacare becomes fully functional, even more of our dependence will be upon government.

We are paying millions of dollars for paid 'navigators' to explain the new complicated healthcare plan to participants. A recent Cato Institute report states that we spend about \$41.3 million annually on advertising to recruit food stamp recipients. The Washington Times reports that the IRS has issued bogus payments of \$13.6 billion for people making claims under the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in the past year. The government has reported that they have no way of determining incomes for healthcare subsidy applicants.

Few of us have probably heard of the Cloward-Piven strategy. Hatched by married Columbia University Professors Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, their theory was published in May 1968 in 'The Nation' magazine. The title of the article was, "The Weight of the Poor: A Strategy to End Poverty." Under this deceptive name, the theory advocated overloading government budgets with welfare to the point of collapse. The result would be a guaranteed annual income for all regardless of whether or not they worked; are we going there?

Let us never forget that each escalation toward greater government dependence is not an inspiration for more opportunity. It is the threshold of the trapdoor to the abyss of lost dignity, diminished independence, liberty, freedom and self-determination.