



## **Riot warnings over food-stamp cuts**

Rollback 'will be close to catastrophic for many people'

By: John Aman - November 3, 2013

The 5 percent rollback in food-stamp funding that hit at the start of November has unleashed a wave of familiar scaremongering.

The reduction returns food-stamp benefits to the level they would have been without the infusion of stimulus cash since 2009. That money is now spent, and the average individual monthly benefit is dropping from about \$133 to \$125.40. Roughly \$7.60.

Democrats and the anti-hunger lobby treat the reduction as a cruel and draconian cut.

Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Fla., contends it “will literally take food right out of the mouths of poor children as well as their families, the elderly, the unemployed and the underemployed.”

The rollback “will be close to catastrophic for many people,” a spokesman for Feeding America, a leading hunger relief organization, told CBS News.

One food-bank executive implied that riots may soon follow.

“If you look across the world, riots always begin typically the same way: when people cannot afford to eat food,” Margarete Purvis, president and CEO of the Food Bank for New York City, told Salon.com.

The sharp criticism ignores the fact that federal food-stamp spending has doubled since 2008 and is now nearly \$80 billion. One in seven Americans, 47.6 million people, are now on food stamps, with 20 million added since 2008.

Unemployment, relaxed eligibility standards and aggressive marketing to recruit food-stamp participants all contributed to the swelling food-stamp rolls. The number of able-bodied adults under the age of 50 without children on food stamps grew by 163.7 percent from 2007 to 2011.

A Cato Institute report reveals that combined federal and state spending to market food stamps is more than \$41.3 million annually. Food-stamp recruiters in Florida have a quota of 150 new enrollees a month.

Talk of catastrophe around the corner over food-stamp benefit cuts also fails to acknowledge that food stamps are “just one of 80 federal means-tested programs that provide food, housing, medical care to poor and low income Americans,” asserts Heritage Foundation policy analyst Rachel Sheffield.

Total welfare spending has increased 16-fold since 1964 when President Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty and is now more than \$1 trillion annually.

Spending debates often focus on just one program at a time and fail “to take into account the total picture of the welfare system,” Sheffield said, noting that the current reduction in food stamp spending is “minuscule in light of total spending.”

More frenzied rhetoric will come as Congress works out the differences between House and Senate versions of a farm bill before year’s end. “Farm bill” is a misnomer, because the measure funds both agriculture subsidies and food stamps, with about 80 percent of its funding going to food stamps.

The Senate version of the measure, which spends nearly \$1 trillion over 10 years, calls for a cut of \$4.5 billion in food-stamp spending while the House has passed a 5 percent cut of \$39.5 billion. GOP support for the House cuts prompted House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to charge that Republicans were “taking food out of the mouths of babies.”

Obama wants a measure that “protects vulnerable children and adults in times of need” and has threatened a veto if it contains the House-passed food-stamp cuts.

The next crisis on the horizon if Congress fails to reach a deal on the farm bill by year’s end will be soaring milk prices. Federal dairy-price supports will kick in if the farm and food stamps legislation is not passed, sending the price of milk skyward, some say, up to \$8 a gallon.

Threats like that – real or imagined – are nothing new when it comes to spending cuts. Just before the 2.5 percent sequestration reductions were set to begin on March 1 of this year, President Obama warned the “meat-cleaver” cuts would trigger Armageddon.

“Border Patrol agents will see their hours reduced. FBI agents will be furloughed. Federal prosecutors will have to close cases and let criminals go,” the president predicted. “Thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off. Tens of thousands of parents will have to scramble to find childcare for their kids. Hundreds of thousands of Americans will lose access to primary care and preventive care like flu vaccinations and cancer screenings.”

### **Cloward-Piven strategy**

The president’s warnings proved false, but his attempt to block spending cuts and grow welfare spending, despite nearly \$17 trillion in federal debt, is consistent with a strategy advanced in 1966 by two socialist Columbia University instructors to create widespread dependency on federal largesse and, ultimately, overburden and collapse the system.

Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven laid out a plan in the May 2, 1966, issue of Nation magazine to recruit America's poor onto welfare rolls and trigger a fiscal crisis that would lead, they hoped, to "a guaranteed annual income and thus an end to poverty."

Their efforts and those of others succeeded so well that New York City welfare lists were expanding by 50 percent annually in the early 1970s. The city, the financial capital of the world, declared bankruptcy in 1975.

Peter Dreier, a 2008 Obama campaign adviser, former ACORN strategist and Huffington Post columnist, updated the Cloward-Piven approach in a 1979 essay in the journal Social Policy. Dreier's article, which became popular within the world of community organizing, called for introducing "unmanageable strains into the capitalist system, strains that precipitate an economic and/or political crisis."

He hoped for a "revolution of rising entitlements" that "cannot be abandoned without undermining the legitimacy of the capitalist class."

Stanley Kurtz, author of "Radical-in-Chief: Barack Obama and the Untold Story of American Socialism," says Dreier offered a "'transitional strategy' for socialism [that] could simply be pegged to a general expansion of government guarantees beyond the system's breaking point."

"Barack Obama," he writes, "cut his teeth in a world in which this was the default political stance."

Obama came into office in 2008 hailed as the first post-partisan president, but he routinely employs class-envy rhetoric to push his agenda, contends Kurtz. He decries "fat cats" on Wall Street and stumps for higher taxes on wealthy Americans, arguing repeatedly that the rich need to "contribute and pay their fair share." Obama's goal, writes Kurtz, is to "polarize the country along class lines, with Republicans marked out as the aggressors."

It's a method he learned from Chicago social agitator Saul Alinsky, author of "Rules for Radicals," a manual for community organizers that acknowledges Lucifer of the Bible as the "very first radical."

In the book, Alinsky emphasized the political utility of ill-will and resentment: "The organizer dedicated to changing the life of a particular community must first rub raw the resentments of the people of the community; fan the latent hostilities of many of the people to the point of overt oppression."

Obama spent almost two decades as a Chicago community organizer closely linked to a socialist network intent on the overthrow of capitalism. Obama himself told supporters before his 2008 election that they were "just five days away from fundamentally transforming the United States of America."