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Matthew McConaughey's 'Dallas Buyers Club' Reveals The Murderous Ways Of Government

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"I'm telling you that the cure is the disease. The main source of illness in this world is the doctor's own illness: his compulsion to try and cure and his fraudulent belief that he can. It ain't easy to do nothing, now that society is telling everyone that the body is fundamentally flawed and about to self-destruct." The Fat Man, *The House of God*, by Samuel Shem, p. 215

[Cato CATO +0.82%](#) Institute co-founder Ed Crane recalls that during the '80s when the AIDS epidemic reached its apex, he told those desperate for a cure they had better hope that the federal government keeps its distance. To paraphrase Crane, "You want the creative minds, the outside thinkers, even the slightly crazy thinkers coming up with innovative ways to fight the disease. Government is the opposite of creative."

Figure the federal government's Justice Department sought to shrink [Microsoft MSFT -0.35%](#)'s market power just as a free-market driven Internet was about to do its work for it. Years later that same anti-trust division of the DOJ ruled against Blockbuster's purchase of a rival video chain just as [Netflix NFLX +2.2%](#) was set to render Blockbuster's business model obsolete on the way to bankruptcy for the former high flier. Government is about the 'seen,' whereas entrepreneurialism meant to remove unease from our lives and make us healthier is about the 'unseen' that government bureaucrats logically can't comprehend.

Crane's wise words nearly 30 years ago came to mind while watching Matthew McConaughey's new film based on a true story, [Dallas Buyers Club](#). In it McConaughey plays Ron Woodroof, one of those outside-the-box thinkers who, unable to access an AIDS drug approved by the FDA for limited use, went out on his own to find a way to extend his life.

Woodroof was a small-time rodeo cowboy in Dallas as a hobby, and also an oil-rig electrician. Injured one day at the rig, he awoke at Dallas Mercy hospital to news that he had the HIV virus,

and 30 days to live. In denial at first, the confirmed heterosexual was a heavy womanizer, boozier, and drug user. His memory of a distant encounter with a female reminded him that a male had entered into what they were doing, thus the disease.

Around the time of his diagnosis, the FDA had given pharmaceutical company Avinex permission to test its AZT AIDS drug on a limited number of patients. The problem was that Woodroof wasn't one of the individuals chosen, and while he briefly figured out a way to access AZT through bribes, the FDA's conceit whereby it would essentially block the dying in search of a cure meant that those not picked for the government trial would be left to die. Government is about force, and its force in the form of the FDA can often be deadly. Woodroof was told he could only legally access AZT once the drug "is proven to work by the FDA," and FDA approval could take 8-12 years.

Unwilling to give up, Woodroof drives down to Mexico where he checks into a makeshift hospital overseen by an American doctor Dr. Vass (played by Griffin Dunne) who'd had his license to practice in the U.S. taken away from him. Vass was the outside thinker Crane envisioned long ago, and his AIDS cocktail brought Woodroof back to reasonable health.

Made aware by Vass that his cure was illegal in the U.S., Woodroof returned to the states with copious amounts fully intent on selling his excess to a majority of dying AIDS patients not so lucky as to be allowed by the FDA to try anything and everything in order to live. Though *Dallas Buyers Club* was largely non-political, the story revealed a libertarian bent. Woodroof initially told the doctors at Mercy that the recreational drugs he used were none of their business, and to a federal regulator killing the dying through its obnoxious efforts to limit the ability of people to save their own lives, Woodroof railed "Screw the FDA." Woodroof knew of what he spoke.

Indeed, as Vass made plain to him, the AZT permitted by a witless FDA was going to kill the small number of patients 'lucky' enough to be victimized by a federal bureaucracy totally unequal to a disease it didn't understand. Government kills even when it's not trying to.

Once back in Dallas, Woodroof eventually builds a profitable business selling to the dying that which the FDA doesn't approve. Caught and told that he's illegally selling to patients what the FDA hadn't signed off on, Woodroof responds that his cures aren't illegal, "they're just not approved."

Ever industrious, he begins to sell memberships (hence the Dallas Buyers Club) at \$400/month for unlimited access to drugs not seen as safe by a federal government whose permitted AZT was the killing definition of unsafe. Government, per Crane's example mentioned initially, is conservative in the non-ideological sense of the word whereby it possesses an intensely narrow view of just about everything. Government is also arrogant, and presumes to dictate what we eat, which businesses can merge, and how the ill can return to health. The death toll of this conceit is presumably staggering, and if the film is believed, could claim quite the body count in the mid '80s.

The rest of Dallas Buyers Club concerns Woodroof's energetic efforts to travel the world in search of the AIDS cure. Blocked at every step by a FDA that required applications for new

drugs that, even if approved to save the dying, would reach the market too late, Woodroof devised ingenious ways to bring to the ill in Dallas what federal officials would not allow.

What's amazing is that in a country founded by wise men wholly skeptical of government, we live in a nation today that says it's illegal for the terminally ill to do all they can to extend their lives. It's easy to simply blame the FDA, the film does just that expertly, but the pharmaceutical industry itself shares some of the blame too. Names and companies will not be mentioned, but this writer remembers talking to a [Washington](#) representative of a big pharmaceutical company back in 2004, and in the conversation the FDA's anti-life ways were mentioned.

The latter is almost a tautology considering the drug approval process that the FDA has erected, but the pharmaceutical rep lauded the bureaucracy. It was surprising at the time, but only initially. Figure if one of those innovative thinkers cures cancer tomorrow, that person's ability to bring the drug to market will be impossible thanks to the FDA. Big pharmaceuticals like the FDA precisely because it protects a large market for them, and its approval process ensures that any cure crafted outside a government-infused pharmaceutical establishment will have to be sold to a well-connected drug company if it is to ever be used for its real purpose: the saving of lives.

Dallas Buyers Club is surely a triumph for exposing the murderous ways of government, and for being formulaic in the Oscar sense, it's a fair bet that stars McConaughey, Jared Leto and Jennifer Garner will receive nominations come 2014. This is arguably McConaughey's best role (his lone weakness an inability to cry in a believable way) since *Bernie* in 2011, and *Dazed and Confused* back in the '90s, though to truly reveal his range it's probably time for him to play a character that doesn't have a Texas accent.

Of greater hope beyond awards and box office, *Dallas Buyers Club* will ideally further awaken Americans to the horrors of big government. They're on major display in one of the best films of 2013.