

“No state has an inherent right to survive through conscript troops and, in the long run, no state ever has. Roman matrons used to say to their sons: "Come back with your shield, or on it." Later on, this custom declined. So did Rome.” *Robert A. Heinlein, The Notebooks of Lazarus Long*

August 21, 2009

Quote Of The Day

by Brad Warbiany

Earlier today, I provided one more reason why corn-based ethanol mandates/subsidies might be the [dumbest government program ever](#). Chris Edwards of Cato@Liberty suggests that Cash for Clunkers might win that honor. I have to hand it to him, he provides [a few good reasons](#) supporting his case. All good reasons, but I'll stick with ethanol, because at least Cash for Clunkers is dead.

That being said, I hadn't thought about this criticism of Cash for Clunkers:

Taxpayers were ripped off \$3 billion. The government took my money to give to people who will buy new cars that are much nicer than mine!

I love my truck. It's a 2000 Ford Ranger XLT, which I bought used six years ago, and it's been paid off for more than four years. It qualifies for Cash For Clunkers, and it's certainly worth less than \$4500, so I'd have made a net gain by joining the program. I chose not to take part, for a few reasons:

1. I like the truck — it meets every need I have for a vehicle, and it the most comfortable thing I've ever driven
2. I don't want a car payment — despite being able to afford it
3. The vehicle I want next — a Jeep Wrangler — wouldn't have qualified as a higher-mileage vehicle
4. I refuse to buy new cars. I'll let some other sucker take the early depreciation hit

But I never thought to what extent my tax dollars actually *subsidize the purchase of cars far nicer than what I drive*. I've criticized the program before, because the only people that were likely be able to afford a brand new car weren't exactly poor, and were probably getting rid of a spare vehicle cheap enough to qualify. Couple this with the fact that it hurt charities and the poor by artificially draining the used car market, and it's about as simple of a reverse-Robin-Hood program as you can design.

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