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Thursday, August 19, 2010

RETURN TO REASON

Statism starts with YOU!

Exclusive: Ilana Mercer asserts Americans ask way too much of their government

Posted: August 20, 2010
1:00 am Eastern

By Ilana Mercer

Why did federal regulators not intervene sooner? A tragedy could have been averted. That was the first demand made following the accidental death of eight spectators, and the injury of 12, at the California 200 off-road race. The derby was held in the Mojave Desert, in the Lucerne Valley. The driver of one of the racing trucks lost control of his vehicle, flipped and landed on bystanders, who are in the habit of getting as close as they possibly can to the tracks.

Evidently, what draws fans of desert racing to the sport, attest Phil Willon and David Zahniser of the Los Angeles Times, is the "the danger, dust and noise of watching 3,500-pound trucks roaring past – close enough almost to touch – and then rocketing into the air over treacherous jumps with nicknames like 'the rock pile.'"

It's all great fun until something goes terribly wrong. Then it's someone else's fault.

The "Mad Max" atmosphere at these races – "no guardrails, no enforced rules and no police to hold spectators" – has both fans and opponents of the sport united in agreement. The promoters, "Mojave Desert Racing," had been remiss in allowing the adult spectators the rush they paid for; the Federal Bureau of Land Management has to step in and step up regulation of the permit process. While at it, compel the lords of the land, the feds, to police the events, too.

This tragedy, off-the-beaten-track, well illustrates the dynamics of state encroachment. Statism always and everywhere begins with The People.

[What would it look like if the federal behemoth were severely cut down to size? Read Wayne Allen Root's prescription for the nation in "The Conscience of a Libertarian: Empowering the Citizen Revolution with God, Guns, Gambling & Tax Cuts"](#)

"Americans – with their lawsuit culture, their safety obsession and above all their addiction to government spending programs – demand more from their government than just about anybody else in the world," observes Washington Post columnist Anne Applebaum. "They don't just want the government to keep the peace and create a level playing field. They want the government to ensure that every accident and every piece of bad luck is either prevented or fully compensated. And if the price of their house drops, they will hold the government responsible for that, too."

That Americans expect Mayo-Clinic quality care for every nosebleed is obvious from the health-care

"debate" we've just endured. Considering that the Orwellian named "Restoring American Financial Stability Act of 2010" has entrenched yet more affirmative action in lending, and given that the thieves in the U.S. Treasury have renewed the country's fiscal fealty to the Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae money pits – the Applebaum point worth belaboring is this:

A property is worth what the market will pay for it at the time of the sale; no more, no less. If you bought a home for \$350,000 and nobody will pay you more than \$250,000 now, you are not owed \$100K. In the U.S., however, a quaint notion has been nurtured. It is that an owner whose mortgage is worth more than his house ought to be compensated somehow for that – and for any decline in property values, in general. *Republicans and Democrats, and the conga-line of Americans filed behind them, evidently agree: You have a property title in the perceived value of your property.*

Back to Applebaum:

To put it bluntly, middle-class Americans of the right, left, and center have now come to expect a level of personal financial security that – despite the stereotypes – most people would never demand from their governments. In a review he wrote earlier this month, Brink Lindsey, the vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute – a man who knows what he is up against – pulled up some extraordinary statistics. Most Americans, it turns out, are suspicious of the free market. And most Americans also approve of high government spending. The majority of Americans are wary of global trade, don't trust free markets, and also think 'the benefits from ... Social Security or Medicare are worth the costs of those programs.' And when the sample is restricted to people who support the tea-party movement? The number is still 62 percent.

As for America's fondness for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – which combined account for close to half of the federal government's budget – according to Glenn Beck, only 7 percent of the country will consider slashing the first two welfare programs. And a mere 11 percent of those living in the "Land of the Free" are prepared to pare down Medicaid.

(Column continues below)

Keep the government out of my Medicare! For a while – and in all seriousness – Dick Morris even promoted a similar slogan on Fox News. It was this Republican hack's ploy to alert seniors to the dangers to Medicare from Obamacare.

The sink-hole of debt into which this country has slid, because of state spending, scares its citizens – but not sufficiently to seriously motivate them to dent "defense" spending. Just a fifth will entertain trimming the estimated \$1 trillion the United States blows on defending to the death borders not its own.

Yet more proof that the fatter the feds the happier Americans are: "[According to the latest Society for Human Resource Management/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll, conducted with the Pew Research Center](#), 46 percent said Obama's path would do more to improve economic conditions in the next few years, compared to 29 percent who said policies put in place by Bush would."

Don't take this to mean that Bush was less of a statist than Obama. Not so. My point is simply that Americans have little aversion to the programs of the president who is perceived as more of a big-government guy and is certainly no less of a central planner than was Bush.