

Government Is as Government Does

Contributed by Wes Riddle
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Sometimes I think people are their own worst enemies, particularly when they buy into an argument that government is anything other than, say, government. Some people trust government implicitly, no matter who's in charge. Others trust the government only when "their man" is in charge. For me, I don't trust the government at all to be anything other than, well, government; albeit, people in charge do make a difference in terms of whether or not that government is corrupt or honest, efficient or not. Bottom line, the government shouldn't be trusted any more than any other impersonal organization or institution, professional or otherwise. It should never be counted on in a clinch. It should never be loved for its sympathy or its aid. It is better by far, and far more prudent, to provide for oneself and to be as self-sufficient as possible—and much better to assume the worst, since government routinely is.

The problem is that people ask government to do things that it isn't supposed to do. They ask the tortoise to run like a jackrabbit, or the hare to tuck its ears inside of its fur-lined shell. People ask government to provide economic goods and savings and contingency funds just like the marketplace would, but equally and without any error, which is by definition not possible. They ask government to provide us perfect safety, and perfect justice, and perfect freedom all at the same time, which not only is impossible but also at odds, each aspect with another. The reason people do this is that they never stop to consider just what and whom they are asking.

Government is, technically speaking, organized force. It is a legitimized way (through politics) for some people, hopefully a majority of "society" to get other people to do some essential or constructive thing that they would not ordinarily do on their own recognizance. Government uses coercion to make those other people obey. Perhaps no one would pay their taxes if they did not have to; and if everybody ran red lights all the time, the roads would be frightfully dangerous or in gridlock. Most people pay their taxes with a little threat of force, for the benefit of restraining criminals or maintaining the structure of society, or at least the law and mechanism for peaceful reforms. The more we ask government to do, however, the more we ask it to enforce and to threaten people implicitly with force, and the more also there will be an explicit use of force to rein in deviants or dissenters.

I doubt many people would intentionally ask a serial killer to his house for a nightcap, or a known child molester to babysit her kid. We wouldn't show a kleptomaniac where the silver was hid or the family jewels were kept, or ask him to hold the safe-deposit box key. Then why in the world would we allow government to do all these things and more? Moreover, by asking limited constitutional government to do more than it is supposed to do, i.e., more than what its enumerated powers would allow then we make of the president our king, and of Congress a Politburo, and of the Supreme Court—an Oracle of Delphi. But they are not properly any of these things. They represent co-equal executive, legislative and judicial branches of government with specific duties to perform and delegated powers from the states attendant to those duties.

Here the people rule (supposedly), or rather they empower their government to do a few things for them—in concept. That at least was the Founders' vision.

In fact, we ask government to do too much. While most of the straws fell off before the one that broke the camel's back, we nevertheless request our government to wipe out poverty and prejudice, and to cure every disease. We ask it to ensure: that no old person goes hungry or homeless; that no child is ever whipped and every young person of every ability and proclivity makes it through high school and off to college. We ask it to make it so: that no woman is ever abused or called sweetheart uninvited; that no man, and especially no woman or minority be unemployed without pay; that illegal aliens be respected and borders remain porous; and that no sick person (legal or not) be without the right of approved and subsidized drugs to swallow in ample quantity.

Let no one ever be sad, or addicted, or saddled with an unwanted pregnancy, or the psychological necessity to marry and stay married. The vows don't make sense anymore anyway, because Government mandates bliss. There is no private space really for two people to share outside of the Government's reach—whether they are one flesh or no, to fight this world and survive, to raise a family and to learn the way of love! They are blessed these days not to have to—not to depend upon the arcane systems invented by the Alpha-male before the process of biological and social evolution drove us to our stunning genetic height. And so Government Almighty may we never be frustrated for who we are. May you Government be my personal safety net and savior always, a present help in trouble whenever we need it, particularly in the midst of cares and credit card debts and lingering responsibility. Watch me on the road and monitor all my transactions and everything I eat. Let me not eat too much or play too hard outside. Search me at the airports and close in all the byways of the nation to keep me safe most of all, for what is freedom but nothing left to lose? Be with the troops also, O Government, as they are helping to spread the same blessings across the globe for everybody else's benefit, according to international law and a declaration of human rights. For what should it mean to be an American, if everybody else cannot have it too? Shield me from unfair or unintentional failure, and these terrible feelings of inadequacy, shame and guilt. Do not let anyone do the wrong thing, like having sex too soon, or with a teacher or co-worker, and report all the salacious detail on TV 24/7, because it sets a good example and is entertaining. Don't let the others drink and drive, or text and drive, or drive and not wear a seatbelt; or ever, ever, ever smoke! Put them in prison if you can, except please do not deport the illegal ones. Because it is bad, very bad, and you the Government know this, and I am but one small, very small individual. And what is an individual but nothing left to lose?

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