

M E N ' S V I E W S

Welfare as we know it: Does it work?

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The average family making \$6,000 a month (not on welfare or collecting Social Security) pays approximately \$2,400 a month in taxes. \$1,500 of that each and every month goes to those who are receiving welfare benefits. These transfers occur through our tax system because of our nation's tradition of Christian charity, as an exchange for votes, to prevent domestic unrest, and to increase the size of the economic pie – not necessarily in that order.

Listening to the current political debate and heartfelt stories of single mothers working their way off welfare and other great triumphs over adversity, we are all moved and reminded to be generous when the plate is passed. After all, "There but by the grace of God go I." Yet, even the Lord did not ask for a triple tithe, which is about what we contribute to those in need today.

Of course, the Good Lord was not elected. The Roman Senate, on the other hand, gave rice for votes. That was the political reality then, as it is now. Unfortunately, like our own deficit, the economic burden of this popular rice entitlement continued to grow and led, with other things, to the fall of Rome.

In the Old West, the chuck wagon also gave out rice, or maybe biscuits and beans to wandering cowboys as the practical food stamps of that day. It seems a hungry cowboy with a six shooter best be fed lest he find a cow for his own steak dinner. Their lesson of necessity is that when there is a great disparity between the haves and the have-nots, a minimum amount of welfare is prudent to prevent the type of domestic strife going on as in Mexico today.

The negative income tax, progressive tax rates and tax credits for job creation are all modern variations of that theme. If the government subsidized \$4 of wages for everyone making less than \$8 an hour, the resulting cheap labor would give a great incentive for businesses. For example, a business employing 10 people at \$8 an hour, and the government subsidizing \$4 an hour for each employee, the business could hire an additional 5 people. Those ol' cattle bosses were no man's fool, and the simple rule of the grub line was that you work for food and then rode out after breakfast. This early charity was a temporary work fare administered by the private sector. This approach has the effect of increasing the size of the overall economic pie as current non-workers contribute their labors to the economy at what would be less than the minimum wage.

Perhaps the tough love approach, if generous enough, could be politically viable without causing wide spread discord. It could prevent the fall of Rome and leave charity for true tragedy, church and family.

