

The Declaration of Dependence

Craig J. Cantoni

When in the course of human events the political bonds that used to tie the people together in freedom have become shackles that have made them dependent on government—then at that critical juncture, it is time to officially declare a state of dependence.

This Declaration of Dependence replaces one of the greatest political documents in history, the Declaration of Independence, which, 241 years ago, gave birth to one of the greatest nations in history.

In the context of those times, the former Declaration was a remarkable document, in that it turned upside down the prior belief that man exists only as a tool and property of the state and is thus subservient to the state. Now, 241 years later, Americans are once again subservient to the state.

The Dependency Index

As many as 70 percent of Americans are net recipients of government largess, receiving more in benefits than they pay in taxes.¹ Besides those who receive an entitlement or means-tested benefit, and direct government employment, millions have private-sector jobs that would not exist except for government regulations (e.g., tax attorneys), or work in an industry that receives government subsidies. If the black hole of the government education monopoly is included, the dependency index climbs to greater than 90 percent.

The political left wants to increase dependency even more, even though the nation has a \$20 trillion debt and many states have such huge public pension obligations that they can't properly maintain the infrastructure needed to deliver basic government services. The political right, on the other hand, wants to increase military spending even more, talking tough about cutting social welfare spending while hypocritically collecting some form of government payment.

Americans can't even go to the doctor without signing a government-mandated privacy form and then having their intimate information compiled with information from other patients and reported to the government and other third parties by medical billing and coding clerks in a backroom—clerks who outnumber doctors and have a certificate in medical billing from a diploma mill, the cost of which was likely paid with a government tuition loan. In essence, citizens are subsidizing other citizens to learn a trade that subtracts from the nation's productivity and well-being, drives up the cost of medical care, and results in patients being spied on.

The Culture of Compliance

Many physicians and others in the medical profession, having sold their Oath of Hippocrates to the government in exchange for a guaranteed income, don't mind federal agents looking over their shoulders as they are examining patients' private

parts. In fact, the American Medical Association, which endorses the nationalization of medical care, makes a lot of money from providing the government with a coding system that the billing clerks use to track medical procedures.

Americans, unlike the colonists reacting to King George III's decrees 241 years ago, obediently comply with such diktats without a second thought—even though King George's demands were in some respects less onerous. Indeed, the king and all of the king's men didn't have the imagination, need to control, or the power to impose the number of diktats that Americans live under today. For example, it didn't cross their minds to make their subjects fill out a form when they went to a doctor for bloodletting.

The people have become so conditioned to coercion that neither they nor their elected representatives even ask whether a social problem can be solved without the government forcing people to do something they don't want to do, such as subsidizing the medical care of strangers. The first impulse nowadays is to resort to force instead of volunteerism, charity, or free exchange.

This conditioning can be seen in the debate over health insurance, where virtually no one in the intelligentsia, media, or government first asked whether the problem of the uninsured could be solved without the use of force. Then Americans wonder why civil discourse is so acrimonious, not understanding that comity is at odds with pillaging and plundering.

When in the course of human events the people become sheep, they will be shorn. But at least the shearing will be done in compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, overseen by well-paid government OSHA apparatchiks who vote Democrat and by well-paid private-sector OSHA consultants who vote Republican.

The Myth of Equality

The Declaration of Independence may state that "all men are created equal," but it is self-evident that all men are not born equal, at least not in terms of intelligence, drive, determination, attractiveness, or the quality of their parents. A corollary is that all human organizations are hierarchical, with the most talented, ambitious, lucky, crooked, or ruthless at the top, and with everyone else layered at different levels below, depending on their respective talent, ambition, luck, crookedness, or ruthlessness.

Contrary to the beliefs of such neo-Marxists as Bernie Sanders and the Occupy Wall Street movement, wealth and power are less concentrated in democratic/capitalist countries than in socialist ones, and certainly far less than in communist ones, where a tiny minority has near-absolute power. They are correct, however, that America is becoming more hierarchical and more unequal in the distribution of income and wealth, with income increasing faster for the capital class (the so-called one percent) than for the

working class, because those with capital get returns on their investments that are higher than the returns on labor. But the neo-Marxists don't acknowledge their own role in causing this to happen—specifically, their tax, regulatory, social welfare, and immigration policies, which are hollowing out the middle class and making it difficult for middle-income people to acquire capital and move up.

Or, maybe this is exactly what the neo-Marxists want; that is, a two-class society without a thriving middle class. After all, with a two-class society, the likes of Bernie Sanders would be in the ruling class at the top, and everyone else would be in a homogeneously poor and dependent class below, just as it was in the Soviet Union and Red China—and just as it is developing in Venezuela today.²

America is well on the way to this socialist “nirvana.” The ruling class consists of those with government sinecures and pensions, as well as those in the private sector with government contracts, or government protections from competition, or government subsidies, or lucrative jobs created by the regulatory state, or financial windfalls bestowed on them by the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury. The evidence can be seen in the wealth in the imperial city of Washington, D.C., which stands in stark contrast to the declining fortunes in the hinterlands.

The numbers on the growth of government are just as stark, although you won't see the numbers in mainstream media. For example, in 1941, there was one government employee at the federal, state, and local levels for every 27.7 citizens. Today, the ratio is one for every 14.6 citizens.³ If the ratio of government employees had kept pace with population growth since 1941 instead of exceeding it, there would be 10 million fewer government employees today. (Note: These figures do not include the private-sector workers who are de facto government workers because they hold jobs outsourced by the government to the private sector.)

Keep in mind that the 10 million excess employees receive compensation (pay, benefits, pensions, and time off) that is about 40 percent higher, on average, than the compensation of their private-sector counterparts. In addition, they have job security not found in the private sector. Equal pay for equal work is the law of the land, but not for government workers.⁴

All levels of government now consume nearly 50 percent of national income, vs. about 12 percent prior to 1930. Unlike businesses that operate in a relatively free market, where survival depends on doing more with less, government not only survives but thrives by doing less with more.

The Entitlement Mentality

As the social administrative state has grown, the American populace has been transformed from self-reliance to dependency, and from there to entitlement.

The prevailing entitlement mentality can be seen all around us, even in parking lots, of all places; and in particular, parking places for the handicapped. Most of the spaces are used by ambulatory Americans who are quite able to walk another 100 feet to a store from a regular parking space, but simply choose not to. This is because the spaces for the handicapped are considered a right by those who park in them, whether they are liberals who drive a Prius with a “Coexist” sticker on the bumper, or conservatives who drive a mammoth truck with an “NRA”

sticker on the bumper. Many of the faux-disabled are morbidly obese and could benefit from parking at the far end of a lot and walking the extra distance.

If you think it's hyperbolic to say that many Americans consider it a right to park in a handicap-parking spot, then run for public office and see what happens if you suggest that the spaces be restricted to the wheelchair-bound, which was their original purpose.

It's a short mental leap from thinking that a handicap-parking space is a right, to thinking that it is a right to get medical care or other needed service at someone else's expense.

Of course the Founders had different ideas about rights, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. That some of them were slave owners and men of wealth and privilege made their intellectual feat even more remarkable, for as they were well aware, their ideas would lead to the empowerment of the common man and lay bare the contradiction of slavery and the taking of native lands. George Washington manumitted his slaves; he provided life-long support for the older ones, and funded training for younger ones to learn trades to make them free and self-supporting.

Something else can be seen in parking lots in every part of town: expensive cars and trucks loaded with gadgets galore. Americans spend more on vehicles than on medical care/insurance, yet think they have a right to drive a status symbol while sending the bill for their medical care to their neighbors. It's a similar story with tuition loans, which, on average, are about \$30,000, or about the same amount as the average car loan. How is it fair to own luxuries while asking others to subsidize your health insurance or forgive your tuition loan?

And how is it fair to live in an unhealthy way while advocating that others pay for the results? Why don't today's churches, schools, media, politicians, and philosophers make this point, instead of defining fairness as collectivism and redistribution, with no expectation of personal responsibility in return?

Envy is the driving force behind such thinking. Envy is such a strong influence on human action that, as behavioral experiments have shown, most people would prefer that everyone be equally poor than everyone be wealthier if this means that some people will be wealthier than others.

Envy is particularly disastrous for society when it is coupled with a lack of self-control. Success depends on the ability to say “no” to immediate gratification and to save and invest the fruits of one's labor for self-improvement, a rainy day, a medical emergency, and old age.

Self-control has plummeted in society as immediate gratification has been encouraged by the government, business, and permissive parents. Easy credit, easy money, a constant bombardment of advertisements on television and the internet, and depraved entertainment from Hollywood have had a terrible effect on society. Indebtedness, obesity, single-parent families, and drug overdoses have all sharply risen, with overdose deaths reaching epidemic levels, especially from opioids and fentanyl imported from China.

Few people see the irony of China exporting fentanyl to the West, because few people study history and know that Great Britain had sent opium to China, resulting in scores of Chinese spending their days in a stupor in opium dens, and provoking what became known as the Opium Wars.⁵

Other lessons of history, such as the fate of overextended

empires that can no longer protect their own legitimate interests, are also lost. It took just one war for the almighty British Empire to become a shadow of its former self. In several years England went from a powerful creditor nation to a debtor weakling. The same can happen to the U.S.

Meanwhile, American media are stuck in the past and thus have sullied their noble and important mission of speaking for the powerless against the powerful. They don't realize that the make-up of the powerless and powerful has changed since the Progressive Era and, once again, since the civil rights decade of the 1960s. Civil rights groups, environmental activists, the welfare industry, government regulators, and law enforcement have become as powerful, elitist, hidebound, self-serving, and corrupt as the stereotypical Robber Barons and corporate fat cats of yesteryear.

At the same time, millions of the so-called poor, disadvantaged, and disabled are plundering their neighbors, as by feigning disabilities, falsely claiming discrimination and workplace injuries, taking out student loans with no intention of paying them back or getting a degree, loafing instead of working in spite of being quite able-bodied, and demonstrating great creativity in manipulating the system to their advantage. Yet you won't see any exposes on this in the indoctrinated and shopworn news media. One needs to watch "Judge Judy" to see the extent of debasement and debauchery in a large segment of society in the cases put before her.

Kleptocracy

The founders understood the dangers of factions but couldn't foresee that the nation would move way beyond factions someday. The polity is now organized around interest groups, or theft rings, which compete against each other, not only to hold onto their government rice bowl, but to fill the bowl with even more government subsidies, handouts, and privileges before another group snatches the loot. They include, among

hundreds of others, the American Association of Retired Persons, the American Medical Association, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Government Employees (the largest federal government union), the National Association of Realtors, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Banking Association, Planned Parenthood, professional baseball and football, the farm lobby, the ethanol lobby, the solar lobby, the sugar lobby, the defense lobby, the welfare lobby, and the mass transit lobby.

We, therefore, the un-free people of the United States, solemnly publish and declare that we have given full power to the central government to make all decisions for us, to coddle us, and to shower us with free stuff until the nation goes bankrupt. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of the divine nanny state, we mutually pledge to the munificent government our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

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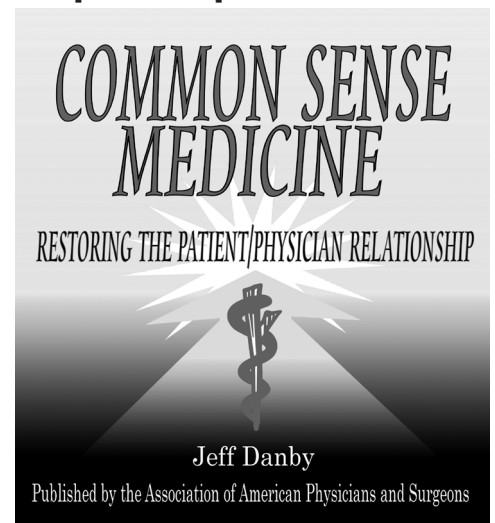
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