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Responses to Unemployment and Bad Employment

INTRODUCTION

This essay considers what to do about unemployment and bad employment. It does not propose any miracle solutions. We have to do something along the lines of what we already do but we have to do it better.

This essay is not about welfare reform. I am not interested in reforming any particular program. I am interested in a broad outline of what we have to do because (1) employment problems are endemic to modern capitalism and (2) too many people relish becoming dependants of the state. I do not know how this material relates to any specific programs active now such as welfare, and I leave that issue up to experts on those programs.

I first began to think about these issues when I realized: (1) Unemployment was endemic to capitalism, economists underestimated its extent and impact, and Americans want to believe (a) all unemployment is only temporary and (b) there is no endemic problem. (2) We want to pretend there are no endemic problems so we can overlook the link of endemic problems with racism, sexism, ageism, and religious bias. (3) Help programs such as welfare ballooned out of proportion to original intent, hurt many people they were intended to help, and the middle class could not afford them anymore. My original responses were centered on these issues. Then, in the 1980s, as more people could find only bad jobs, and help programs kept growing, I saw that ideas I had for unemployment had to apply to bad employment and related problems, and could.

Because we have some endemic unemployment, and now have some persistent bad employment, we have to help some people somewhat. Just because we have endemic unemployment and now have some persistent bad employment does not mean we have to help as many people as we do as much as we do. The system is out of control to the extent that it hurts more than it helps. Rightists think we should help nobody (except them) and deny the reality of unemployment to support their stance. Lefties think we should help everybody and deny abuse of the system and deny that the system hurts America as a way support their stance. We have to help as much as we can help but only as much as we can help.

In what follows, I call all programs collectively by the terms "help" or "programs". I do not distinguish welfare, unemployment insurance, Social Security Disability, etc. I do not include health care programs in "help". Where I have to distinguish a particular kind of help, I do so. For now, I ignore issues of race, gender, religion, etc. I ignore the fact that unemployment does not fall on all groups equally. To the

small extent that I understand the law as applied to entitlement programs, it might be necessary to amend the Constitution to implement the suggestions offered here. I hope not. But, if it is necessary, then I favor doing so.

GETTING REALISTIC

Before we decide what to do, we should see what we can't do, have some sense why we can't, and appreciate why it failed in the past.

No miracle solutions for unemployment and bad employment are possible because the problems are endemic. There can be no simple policy fix or program fix. We cannot solve the problems by being nasty to unemployed people or poorly employed people and we cannot solve the problems by throwing money at poor people or rich people. I do not have to explain why nastiness and throwing money have failed because we tried both and both failed. It is an empirical issue.

People deny that unemployment is chronic because they don't want to deal with the reality of endemic faults in our economic system and the problems those faults support such as racism and sexism. We want to pretend all unemployment and bad employment is temporary when it is not. We have to get over denial. It is like pretending that diabetes and heart trouble are just a minor cold. It is much better to accept the problem and do something realistic.

Unemployment is endemic to capitalism because of market structuring to alleviate uncertainty. Some bad employment likely is endemic for the same reason but I don't know how much. Before 1970, likely not a large amount of bad employment was endemic. Since 1980, a large amount of bad employment has become endemic because too many people are not smart enough for modern capitalism, too many are untrained, and too many have a bad attitude.

I do not assess all prior programs. Here, it is enough to say programs such as welfare and Social Security Disability have failed. They did not fail entirely. They did not fail because they are bad ideas or were badly motivated. They did not fail because they became "political footballs" although that added to their failure. They failed because we underestimated the underlying problems (we denied the reality of unemployment and bad employment) and because of human nature.

The vast majority of people would rather have a good job than be "on help". Most people would rather have a half-way decent job than be on help. Even a lot of people would rather have any job at all than be on help. But enough people would rather "milk the system" so it fails for everybody. Whatever system we set up is likely to be invaded by people with bad attitudes badly enough so that the system is ruined for everybody. We can't afford this anymore.

It seems that, no matter how we set up the qualifications for help, enough people can qualify that they overload the system beyond what we can now afford. Only a silly person would deny that many people who receive help should not, and the fact that they receive help means that help is undermined for

other people who really need it. Even when we try to prioritize giving help, as long as we have systems like what we have now, they get overloaded and fail.

We have to find new ways to categorize people that need help, to prioritize, and to allow access. That is what this essay is about. I doubt my suggestions are politically doable. I know they are not politically correct for the left or the right.

In different ways, I say the same idea many times: We cannot help all the people who want help. Now, it is likely we cannot even help all the people who deserve help. We need to figure out who needs help the most and give those people what help we can. We need to figure out who can benefit most from help and give those people what help we can. We need to accept that we cannot help everyone. We cannot help everyone who wants help, and cannot help everyone who needs help. We have to figure out how much we can afford. We have to figure out how to help some people even without helping all people. We have to do that so the country can live with itself morally.

If implemented, the suggestions offered here will not make sure everybody who has no job now or a bad job now will get a good job in the future. A lot of people are not smart enough, have a bad attitude, and will not benefit enough from training, to get a good job. A lot of people will be stuck in bad jobs all their lives. As far as I know, nobody knows how many. Nobody knows how having a lot of people in bad jobs affects the economy and democracy. We need to do something like what I suggest here so we can figure out all this. If we don't then we will have even more people stuck in bad jobs all their lives and it will certainly undermine the economy and democracy.

OTHER HELPFUL REFORMS, ALAS UNLIKELY TOO

Without explaining why here, it is unlikely we can successfully reform giving help as long as we depend on private business firms for benefits such as health insurance and retirement. We need to ban private business firms from giving that kind of payment to employees. We need to make one public state-run health benefits system (public health insurance) and we need to make Social Security into the one single retirement benefits system (pension system) for everyone. We need to make sure employees receive only one pension for all of their work history. Of course, private individuals should save on top of what they get from their one pension. They are welcome to buy more health insurance privately or through groups such as unions. But they cannot receive it from employers. They cannot receive any separate pension from their unions on top of Social Security. We need to end tax "breaks" for private retirement accounts such as an IRA or 401K. Reforming the state's role in giving help might proceed anyway even without reform of employer benefits but it is far less likely.

Also for reasons that I don't explain here, it is unlikely we can successfully reform giving help if we do not also reform health care, get a better public system than "Obama Care", reform our schools, and reform our taxes. I doubt much of that will happen either.

LAUDABLE GOALS FROM THE PAST STILL RELEVANT NOW

In the 1950s, before help systems ballooned into craziness, the original goals of giving help were clear and laudable. People then did not know that unemployment was endemic to capitalism and did not foresee that bad employment would become endemic, but that lack does not detract from the value of the goals both for then and now.

Some people have bad breaks. Men and women die on the job, in traffic accidents, and from diseases such as cancer. Women (and men) often were not prepared to support a family in case their spouse died. If we did not look out for families that had bad luck, then it was likely the children would not eat well, children would not do well in school, wives might resort to prostitution, and we would have to spend more on police issues than if we just helped families. Some individuals were so handicapped that they could not work consistently such as stupid people, people who had been in accidents, and people who suffered from a disease. Usually these people did not already have families. People died before the age of 70. The vast majority of people then had good jobs. Not very many people needed help. The people with good jobs could afford to help people who needed help. It was not only a decent thing to help but likely it was cost effective as well. Republicans who blindly criticize all help forget these simple decent ideas and the simple decent folk who held them.

This is what we have to get back to, altered by the fact that we can't help everyone as much as they would like. Who do we want to help most? Who needs help most? Who deserves help most? Who is most likely to make best use of help? What can we afford?

-Help clearly handicapped people.

-Help people who have a record of helping themselves.

-Help people who practice responsible reproduction by not having any more children than they could reasonably have afforded.

-Help people who are likely to learn skills and get off help.

-Don't help people who show evidence of a bad attitude or are not willing to learn skills.

SOME WARNINGS

I need to be clear how I stand on some relations between the state and individuals.

-The state does not owe anybody support for him-herself and the state does not owe anybody support to raise a family. The state should help people who are obviously handicapped but even then the state does not have an absolute obligation.

-The state does not owe anybody a job. The state does not owe anybody a good job so each person can have a spouse and family. In case a person gets only a bad job, the state does not owe anybody enough additional support so the person can have a spouse and-or raise a family. The state can try to help but it does not owe help.

-You do not have a right to a good job, a job, a good family, or any family. Do not think in terms of rights first. Think in terms of responsibilities first.

-The economic system does not work perfectly so that everybody can get a job or a good job. Even so, the state still does not owe anybody a job, a good job, support, or support for a family.

-The state should be careful in giving help to prevent people from getting the wrong idea that the state owes every person enough support to raise a family. The state should be careful in offering help so that people don't become dependent on the state.

-Bad attitude contributes to lack of training and inability to work.

-Bad attitude can be produced by unfairness in the economy, legal system, education, and politics; but those sources cannot be allowed as excuses for bad attitude.

-Bad attitude also can be produced by the typical culture in an ethnic, religious, or gender group. This source too cannot be used as an excuse. The culture of your group cannot be used as an excuse. The rest of society does not have to make allowances for the culture of your group if your group produces people with a bad attitude.

-Education alone will not cure all problems with employment. Even so, we are not doing a good job of training, and we should try harder and smarter.

WE CAN'T KEEP DOING WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW, AGAIN

The present system with its many programs and policies tries to aim the right amount of help at the right people while not giving help to undeserving people. It doesn't succeed well. It doesn't succeed because the public doesn't understand a modern economy, because of endemic unemployment, and endemic bad employment. The public assumes either that every applicant is a conniving leech or he-she is a poor lost lamb who deserves total help and absolutely will use the help to get training, find a good job right away, and never need help again.

Always keep in mind that it is cheaper to put somebody on unemployment compensation or welfare than to put him-her in prison, at least it was in 2015.

The present system fails because it has too many people who can make a case that they qualify for benefits for too long a time. Whenever we set up standards for qualification on an individual basis,

besides the people who really deserve help, too many people can finagle the rules so that they qualify and stay qualified. Following current legal understanding, if a person qualifies, then he-she is entitled to support, and we must give support (that is why they are “entitlement” programs). This view leads to too many people getting help for too long. When we try to stop cheaters using individualist criteria, then we cut off too many people who deserve help, and we still don’t cut off the cheaters.

We cannot have multiple programs with multiple kinds of benefits, or multiple sources of money, often overlapping. We cannot try to give help entirely on an individual basis using standards that were first designed to help angels temporarily in a bad spot and were then redesigned to throttle devils who lived only according to selfishness.

So we have to design a different access method not based on rules that pertain to individual cases.

MORE BACKGROUND BEFORE SUGGESTIONS

America is now deeply in debt. Even if we were not in debt, we should consider what we can afford before instituting any program: social, military, pro-business, infrastructure, or otherwise. Since the Reagan years, we have not done this; instead we simply go into more debt. We have to learn to live within our means.

The best way to consider what we can afford is to decide in advance of any spending on any program how much the federal government might gather in revenue, and insist that we spend only that much. That is, balance the budget. Then, within that limited amount, set aside blocks for particular groups of programs such as “defense”. No block, or program within a block, can ever exceed the allotment for the block. Congress people can then fight over the size of their favorite blocks and programs. This method does not favor domestic entitlement, military, or business blocks. It might be that entitlement eats up the whole budget or the military eats up the whole budget. That is up to Congress and voters. Likely, voters will be surprised by how many (how much) of their favorite absolutely essential programs we cannot afford.

I do not explain why we might be able to afford only so much if we are such a rich country. That is the subject of other essays.

What percentage of our total budget do we want to set aside to help unemployed people, handicapped people, people who have hit a disaster, and people that have ability, training, and drive but cannot find a job due to market structuring?

What if what we set aside is not enough to support the people who deserve support?

How many people we can support depends on the level of support. Do we wish to support people as individuals alone with no provision made for spouse; individual and spouse; individual and spouse with

two children up through college years; or individuals, spouse, and unlimited number of children through college?

What if we can't support all the deserving people even at a low level of support? We need to prepare for the likely possibility that deserving people will not get support. We have to think what might happen to deserving people who don't get support, and what might be the results to society of a lot of capable people who can't find honest work.

Here is one of the central dilemmas and driving forces behind the expansion of social programs: It is easy to rationalize helping a person if the person is single, has no children, and not likely to have children in the near future. It is also easy to rationalize limiting the help given to a single person. Even if the person is not a good person, we can think of reasons why we should support the person. We would rather not help single bad people but, if it keeps them out of jail, we might do it. But what if the person has children, even if the person is not married, and even if the person is a bad parent? The children are not necessarily bad, yet. Can we deny support to children? How do we give support to children? Unless the parent is so bad that we take away the children and sterilize the parent, we have to give support to children through the parent. Recipients know this and use their children to blackmail society to support them. To avoid this blackmail, we have to be willing to deny innocent children. Americans have a hard time denying children or even animals. Yet we have to consider that we might have to. Depending on when the money runs out, we might have to give money to some families but not others. We might give money to families with bad parents yet deny money to families with good parents. Until we face issues like this, we cannot limit social programs and cannot allocate help properly.

FIGURING OUT HOW LONG TO HELP PEOPLE AND WHO TO HELP

We have to support people who are permanently disabled pretty much all their lives as long as they don't do anything to disqualify themselves. Of course, if a disabled person learns a skill and gets a job, then we all can feel good.

What about people who have hit a bad spot and need help for a while? How long should we help able people? Overlook questions of attitude for now.

If the rate of chronic unemployment among honest people is 10% (2% frictional, 8% structural) then, at any given time, we have to support 10% of the workforce and-or their families, depending on what we do with families. 90% of the workforce has to support 10% of the workforce. This level of need-and-help might not be so bad except that the 90% also has to pay for police, fire, roads, tanks, warplanes, soldiers, sailors, parks, guarding the coast, education, keeping up with the Joneses, etc.

Suppose, on average, everyone works from age 20 to age 70. In 2015, standard retirement age is about 67 but I think the age has to go up to 70. Subtracting age 20 from age 70 gives 50 years of work life. If the rate of persistent unemployment is 10%, and everybody faces an equal chance of being unemployed

for a while, then everybody might be unemployed 5 years (10% times 50 years equals 5 years) out of his-her total working life.

Continue to ignore race, religion, and gender. If unemployment fell on all people equally, then everyone would be unemployed for five years in his-her working life. Unemployment does not fall on everyone equally. For a first approximation, suppose we can divide up the labor force into people who are always employed versus everybody else. It turns out the “everybody” else is always unemployed and bears the total burden of unemployment. In making this calculation, we can forget frictional unemployment. (1) In the first of these cases, 92% of people (10% total unemployment minus 2% frictional unemployment) have jobs all their working lives. They have to pay for the unemployment benefits for all the people who are not employed and they have to pay for all other taxes too. 8% of people are unemployed all their (potential) working lives. They pay for nothing but only receive. (2) For a second approximation, really what happens is in-between. In the realistic in-between case: 70% of the people have jobs almost all their working lives; 20% have only a few of jobs in their lives with a little “off” time or “frictional” time in between jobs; and 10% are often unemployed with about as much time off work as on work. The 70% and the 20% pay for the 10%.

How long we want to support people who have hit a bad spot depends on how long we think it is reasonable to be unemployed given the limits state above. We don’t want to subsidize an able person all his-her life even if we can expect 70% to 90% of people to have jobs all their lives. Keep in mind that, if unemployment were equally distributed, everybody would be unemployed five years out of their total work life. If an unemployed person shows willingness to retrain, then it seems reasonable to extend support up to ten years. It does not seem reasonable to extend support longer than that except to people who are permanently disabled.

Below I suggest that we offer help, for any and all problems except physical disability, for as long as 10 years in total in a person’s working life. The help may come in separated episodes. A person may not receive any more help than that despite need. Ten years is long enough to cover any reasonable bad spots, even bouts of unemployment due to chronic unemployment in capitalism, even for groups that face bias. I explain more below.

LEADING UP; WHAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE TO ACCEPT

Essentially, we designate a few distinct qualitative categories, and we rank the categories. If a person and-or his-her family fall into a category, and there is enough money to support the people in the category this year, then he-she (and the family) gets support. If there is not enough money this year to support this category, then nobody in the category gets support even if we think people in the category deserve support. Remember, we can’t support everybody. How we make and rank categories reflects our view of people, the economy, and society. I don’t defend my view here. I think most Americans share it.

Not-very-smart people have to accept that they might not be able to find a job good enough to raise a family. They might have to give up children. We have no obligation to make up the difference so they can have children. If they have children anyway as a way to blackmail us into helping them, we still have no obligation to help. Of course, many not-very-smart people with training can find a job good enough, and I admire them greatly.

People without adequate training have to accept that likely they cannot find a job good enough to raise a family. They might have to give up children. We have no obligation to make up the difference so they can have children. If they have children anyway as a way to blackmail us into helping them, we still have no obligation to help. If they later get adequate training and take responsibility to raise a family, then I praise them.

It would be best to develop a system that separated people with good attitudes from people with bad attitudes, and best not to help people with bad attitudes. We might not be able to do this.

No system is perfect. We have to decide if we want to err on the side of not feeling cheated very much and so not helping as much as we could versus extending a lot of help and so feeling cheated often. We always have to keep in mind the limits to what we can pay, and the likely we cannot help everybody who deserves help within the limits of what we can afford.

COULD WE HELP EVERYBODY WHO DESERVES HELP IF NOBODY CHEATED?

We can't answer this question because our economy and politics are so screwed up in 2015 that we can't get a good idea of how much help we could extend and who really needs and deserves help. Under the real conditions that prevail now, definitely we cannot help everybody who needs and deserves help. That failure is sad. We can, and should, blame the greed, short sight, and bad politics from 1970 through now, both by politicians and the people in general.

If our economy were not screwed up, our politics worked better, and nobody cheated, could we help everybody who needs and deserves help, even given our situation in the total world economy? I think the answer is "yes" but I am not sure. If the answer is yes, it makes our current inability to help all the people who need and deserve help even more tragic.

ONE MORE PRELIMINARY POINT: HELP THE PEOPLE WE WOULD HELP ANYWAY

Pretend people never abuse the system and that we are affluent enough so we can help most people who need help. Accept that about 8% of able people who want a job will not be able to get a job. We have to help some people. Who do we help? Definitely we first help the people who are handicapped, and then we help the people who can't find a job. Among the people who can't find a job, we help the ones who are most needy and for whom help will do most good. To do that, we put people in the order of most-needy-and-most-benefit to least-needy-and-least-benefit. To make putting in order easier, we use categories.

Now imagine that we definitely cannot help all the people who need help and deserve help. We do the same thing but feel worse about it.

That is what I did below but I did it also with the idea in mind that people do abuse the system. We have to make the categories and arrange the categories so that we not only help the most-needy-most-to-benefit first but also try to avoid cheaters. This is all I did. There is no hidden agenda, racist, sexist, ageist, based on religion, anti-baby, pro-baby, or otherwise.

THE CATEGORIES, IN MY PREFERRED ORDER

-People who are physically handicapped or have strong mental handicaps such as schizophrenia, and are single and have no children

-People who are physically handicapped or have strong mental handicaps, and who might be married but have no children by self or spouse

-Single parents who are physically handicapped or have strong mental handicaps and have one child by self or spouse

-Single parents who are physically handicapped or have strong mental handicaps and have two children by self or spouse but no more than two

-Single parents who have faced a recent tragedy such death of a spouse, have one child, the parent is old enough, and the parent does not have a job yet. After four years without a job, families in this category fall into a lower category.

-Single parents who have faced a recent tragedy such as death of a spouse, who have two children, the parent is old enough, and the parent does not have a job yet. After four years without a job, families in this category fall into a lower category.

-Orphans, as long as there are not more than three in the sibling group

-The children of single parents, whose single parent has become physically handicapped or who has developed a strong mental handicap, and who are not too many siblings in the group

-Single parents who have gone through divorce, have one child, the parent is old enough, and the parent does not have a job yet. After four years without a job, families in this category fall into a lower category.

-Single parents who have gone through divorce, have two children to support, the parent is old enough, and the parent does not have a job yet. After four years without a job, families in this category fall into a lower category.

-Any adult who has lost his-her job

-People with bad jobs who are willing to undergo realistic vigorous training to get a better job but with no guarantee they will get a better job

-Single parents who have faced a recent tragedy such death of a spouse, have one child, the parent is old enough, and the parent has only a poor job

-Single parents who have faced a recent tragedy such as death of a spouse, who have two children, the parent is old enough, and the parent has only a poor job

-Single parents who have gone through divorce, have one child, the parent is old enough, and the parent has only a poor job

-Single parents who have gone through divorce, have two children to support, the parent is old enough, and the parent does has only a poor job

I define "old enough" and "too many" below. I do not define "poor job" here. I do not say how much each person in each category should receive. I know that a parent with two children has more need than a parent with one child, but, if we rank a parent with two children above a parent with one child, then people (women) with one child will have another child so as to be ranked higher. Human nature is conniving enough to cause damage. The state cannot encourage larger families. So, ranking one child higher is how the state does not encourage cheating and remains neutral on family size.

PEOPLE WHO ARE LOW ON THE LISTS OR ARE EXCLUDED ENTIRELY

-Anybody can have children at whatever age he-she likes, and can have as many children as he-she likes, as long as he-she can support all the children by him-herself. You can have as many children as you like whenever you like as long as you never expect the state to help out in case you have trouble. The state is not the "parent in reserve".

-I have much sympathy for people with mental difficulties and people who are not disposed to working life in capitalism. I would like to offer support to people like that who are also unmarried. But the idea of "mentally in need" has been badly abused, especially on Social Security Disability. We should end the category of "mentally in need" entirely to protect the funds that we have for other people. I am sorry we cannot help people with mental difficulties but that is what abuse does. I hope these people can find help in private charities.

-Anybody who has a child before the age of 23, and is not wealthy or does not have a secure good job, is not prepared. They presume on the goodness of other people and on the state in case something bad happens. They are greedy. Too many teen mothers and fathers become single parents and assume the state will act in place of the other parent. These are bad attitudes. I am sorry for these young people, and their children, but the state cannot accept the role of surrogate parent for them. I know that some young women will be forced to have an abortion if they know they cannot get help from the state, but that option is better than using a child to blackmail the people in general. I know some young mothers will be forced into prostitution to support a mistake, but I would rather a few young women have to do that so that many other young women learn a lesson and act more carefully.

-People who have more than two children, and are not wealthy or do not have a secure good job, are not prepared. They presume on the goodness of other people and on the state in case something bad happens. They are greedy. People who intend to have several children should wait to make sure they can afford it, and they should make financial preparations in case something bad happens. I am sorry for the people to whom something bad happens, including their children, but the state cannot afford to make up for missing parents in all cases.

-A person who is not smart enough to get a job in modern capitalism or to get a good job deserves some help but we can't afford to help all these people. 30% of Americans have bad jobs and a lot of them are not smart enough. That is a lot of people. We could help only the least smart, say the people with an IQ score of 80 or less. Yet, if we institute an IQ test for help, we will get droves of people who deliberately do badly on the IQ test so they qualify for help.

-We can help other people who are temporarily out of work but only after we help the above listed people first.

-People who have children while they receive support presume on the goodness of the state and use their children for blackmail. They should not receive any help. If they already have two children while receiving help and have another child, they are doubly at fault.

SPECIFICS OF THE PROCEDURE

I cannot defend these suggestions beyond what I have already done. My suggestions here are along the same lines as what I offered in "First Book in Economics" but more forceful.

-I do not distinguish between "married", "living together", "together", "cohabiting", "co-dwelling", etc. I do not care about a status of "married", "unmarried", "single", "divorced", etc. I do not care about the mix-and-match of gender in couplings and un-couplings.

-One person is the focus of help, or one person and his-her children are the focus. If another person moves in with the recipient, then the recipient is not single and is no longer eligible for help. I assume two (or more) adults living together are together, and can support any children among them. I know

that couples sometimes need help too, and I know this policy will keep people apart. I know this policy will lead people to lie about not being together when they really are together. We have to choose. If we allow co-resident adults to receive help, then people will finagle to live together and still get help while other people do not get help because these people do get help. We can make a category for couples who need help, a category low in priority, but it is unlikely funding will ever be enough to give help to couples who need help. If you get together (marry) and have children, then make provisions to support the children as long as you are together.

-See the list of categories above, in my preferred order for help.

-Any handicapped person who learns a skill, gets a job, and becomes self-supporting, of course faces no state interference in family building.

-What follows applies to people of able body and able mind unless noted otherwise.

-(Except for orphans, see below). People of able body and mind may receive at most a total of 10 years help throughout their entire lives. No matter whether they are able to support themselves, or whether they have dependent children, help to them, and all their children if any, ends after 10 years. This much help should cover almost all cases of hardship. This much help should cover people during economic recessions that they can expect in their lifetimes.

-Any person who receives help as a dependent child does not have this help counted in the total amount of help he-she may receive in his-her life.

-Orphans may receive help until they are 18 years old, and the help does not count toward the total they may receive in their lives. This help applies only to groups of three siblings or less.

-For any group of orphans of four or more, no help will be given.

-Any person who has a child before the age of 23 may not ever receive any help, and his-her children may not receive any help.

-Any person who has a child while on help will stop receiving help and may never again receive help.

-No person with three or more children may ever receive help.

-If a person is on help, gets off help, and has a child within three years, that person must wait at least three more years after having the child to get help again, no matter how great the need.

-Any person who receives help must take training continuously for skills that might lead to employment. If a person does not take courses, or does not take them honestly, he-she will stop receiving help and may never again receive help.

-Simply because a person qualifies for help does not mean that person will get help. This scheme is not an entitlement scheme. Who does receive help, and who does not, depends on the categories, the rank of categories, and how much total funding is allotted for help.

-The total (dollar) amount of help for everybody in all categories that is made available by the state each year is apportioned in this way: Begin with the most preferred category. All the people in that category receive help as long as money is available for help. If money runs out for help, then no more help is given. Each year, officials will order all the people in the category randomly (using a computer). People in the category receive help in the order assigned until money runs out. When the first category is done, the next category is processed the same way. Officials proceed down the categories until all the funds for help run out. After that, nobody in subsequent categories receives any help.

-When money runs out: If the money runs out in the middle (of the category) of physically handicapped people, then that is when the money runs out. Some physically handicapped people don't get help, and nobody in any category after them gets help. If the money runs out in the middle of orphans, then some orphans don't get help, and nobody in any category after them gets help. This fact of limited resources is hard to live with but necessary to face.

-Except for people who are physically or mentally unable, every adult who gets help must take training courses to qualify for continued help. The person must take course continually, at least two per year. The person must show sincerity. If any person does not take courses, or does not show sincerity, that person loses eligibility and may not get eligibility back.

-Hopefully private charities will help people who deserve help but could not get help from the state.

-Of course, some people will connive so they use their maximum allotment from the state even if they might have gotten a job. People are clever. This tactic will become a socially-approved way of life in some groups. People in those groups will see themselves as deserving state support for as much as they can get. We have to put up with this much conniving.

INDIVIDUALS VERSUS GROUPS AGAIN

Some readers will not like the idea that we put people into groups and rank the groups. They want all cases to be judged individually, case-by-case. Some readers want to process individually to avoid bias based on race, gender, age, and religion – either against or for. See below. The problem with a case-by-case individualistic basis is that it inevitably leads to abuse and to the system swelling out of control. It leads to abuse of the idea of entitlement. When we judge individually, we have to help ALL individuals who qualify no matter how much money we originally allotted. That is a legal stipulation. Otherwise we are biased and unfair. That is why entitlement programs are called "entitlement". When we set up standards for individuals to get in, then clever people are always able to finagle the standards so that too many people get in, especially too many people who don't deserve help. Then comes a backlash

where we tighten standards to cut out the cheaters, and we also cut out deserving people. Then come the legal issues, and we get back to “if you are entitled, you get the money, no matter how much money was allocated and how much we might be able to afford”.

Suppose we simply helped individual people first-come-first-served until the money ran out. In that case, some handicapped people would not get help while some people who were out of a job for a week would get help. These problems are what led to thinking of the system in terms of entitlement so that, in effect, the money never runs out, and then led to abuse and expansion.

Suppose we label individuals according to priority of need so that physically handicapped people get a higher priority ranking than people who have been out of a job for a week. In that case, we have simply set up groups in another way.

If we want to limit the money we spend, we have to use groups and rank groups. If we have to use and rank groups, then we might as well do it openly and honestly at the beginning.

By using ranked groups, we get an exact and clear idea of how much money goes how far, and where the money stops. By using individuals, we are never sure what problems we are addressing, how much good we have done, and how much more needs to be done.

COMPENSATING FOR BIAS

Suppose any of these statistics, all of which are not far off:

-Young Black men suffer, on average, three times the unemployment over their lives as White men in general

-Young Hispanic men suffer, on average, twice the unemployment over their lives as White men in general

-Middle aged men suffer half-again as much unemployment (1.5 times) as middle aged women

-Women in general used to suffer 1.2 times as much hardship and unemployment as men

-Women earn only about 70% what men earn for comparable work

-Black women used to work more years over their lifetimes than White women

It would be easy to compensate for increased hardship by increasing the time that a person is eligible for help by setting up a “compensation multiplier(s)”. If White men get 10 years of help in total, Black men get 30 years. Women get 12 years for how much they are unemployed, multiplied by 1/.70 for unfair wages, for a total of about 16 years help.

This “futzing” soon gets crazy. Until recently, middle aged women were less employed than middle aged men but now the trend is reversed. So, now, we have to change the compensation multiplier. We might have to change it every year. What if Hispanics feel they are being cheated compared to Blacks? What if everybody feels Blacks are getting a good deal? 30 years of eligibility is a lot. Black women have jobs more often and for longer periods of time than Black men; so they should have a smaller multiplier than Black men. Until recently, White women stayed home more years, and had jobs for fewer years, than Black women. So they should have a higher multiplier than Black women. But White women tend to have better jobs than Black women so Black women should have a higher multiplier than White women. People with bad jobs should have a higher multiplier than people with good jobs.

I understand differences in how society and the economy treat different groups. But we can't do much about it without falling into a morass where abuse reigns, good people don't get help, and the system costs too much. Why should the state make up for bad jobs? That action will only encourage employers to pay less, as it probably already has with some “big box” chain stores.

Difference between groups was one of the reasons that we originally tried to evaluate people on a case-by-case basis, so we could take race, gender, age, and religion out of the picture. But evaluating on a case-by-case led to massive abuse and system overload. If we stick with categories, we will have some unfairness stemming from how unemployment, bad employment, and hardship fall on different groups but we have to live with that bias and we can live with that bias.

The easiest thing to do is to extend the total eligibility over a lifetime to cover nearly all cases of true hardship, even among groups that feel the hardship most such as Blacks and Native Americans. This is what I did when I extended eligibility from five years to ten years (see above). The longer we extend the eligibility, the more likely we are to run out of money, and the more likely that money will go to people who don't deserve help while we deprive deserving people. Ten years of total eligibility is a lot, and it is enough to strain the system. It should be enough to cover all cases for people who have a good attitude and will train to get a job. It should cover most differences due to bias. If any person or family in any group runs out of eligibility, the state can do no more.