

THEME: Our Republic

TOPIC: Redistribution of Wealth, Private Property, and Charity

PREPARATION / PROPS: Decorate with tax forms and booklets, a poster that says “The American Dream”, pictures of anything you can relate to redistribution of wealth including: money, homes, material possessions, businesses, welfare lines, churches, etc.

LESSON: Private property is everything a person owns including, among other things, a home, food, clothing, and money. People have a right to keep the things they worked for and own. If they did not have a right to their property, several things would likely occur according to W. Cleon Skousen. First, people would lose their incentive to gain more property. Second, people who would remain industrious would be deprived of the fruits of their labor – basically, it would be stolen from them. Thirdly, violence could break out and people would steal from those who have obtained good things by being industrious. Lastly, people would end up on a hand-to-mouth survival because having anything would increase their chances of being attacked.

In addition, when people have their property taken from them and given to others, it tends to lessen their spirit of charity and hardens their hearts rather than opening their hearts and lives to the less fortunate. And when people start to rely on the government, they rely less on themselves, their family and neighbors (community), their churches and God.

According to the founders, redistribution of wealth was one of the worst sins of government. James Madison said “Government is instituted to protect property of every sort.... This being the end of government, that alone is not a just government, nor is property secure under it, where the property which a man has in his personal safety and personal liberty is violated by arbitrary seizures of one class of citizens for the service of the rest.” (Saul K. Padover, ed., The Complete Madison, Harper & Bros., New York, NY, 1953, p. 267).

Prior to 1936, the courts held that redistribution of wealth was unlawful and completely outside the constitutional power of the government. In 1936 the Supreme Court began distorting the meaning of “general welfare” by permitting the federal government to tax citizens to benefit the poor and needy. The Supreme Court previously had declared: “No man would become a member of a community in which he could not enjoy the fruits of his honest labor and industry. The preservation of property, then, is a primary object of the social compact... The legislature, therefore, had no authority to make an act divesting one citizen of his freehold, and vesting it in another, without a just compensation. It is inconsistent with the principles of reason, justice and moral rectitude; it is incompatible with the comfort, peace and happiness of mankind; it is contrary to the principles of social alliance in every free government; and lastly, it is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution.” (2Dall 304 [PA 1795]).

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Do you think it is right for government to tax wealthy people to give the money to poor people (redistribution of wealth)? Why or why not? What might people do if they knew that the more money they made to make a better life for their family, the more money

the government would take from them to give to someone who did not earn it?

- Before 1936, courts said that redistribution of wealth was not reasonable, was unjust, was immoral, and went against the comfort, peace, and happiness of mankind. Today, the government regularly takes money from wealthier people and gives it to poor people. That is a drastic change in thought and action. How do you think this change came about?
- What might be some reasons that some politicians like to redistribute the wealth?

ACTIVITY: Tootsie Roll Tax

Materials: Bag of small tootsie rolls with enough for at least 3-4 for each of the kids in your group

Method: Divide the group into two sub-groups. Have one group do jumping jacks to earn tootsie rolls. The other group can use that time to do whatever they want. Reward the jumpers for their hard work with 6 to 8 tootsie rolls. Sit down with everyone and talk about how the other group has no tootsie rolls. Without the jumpers' consent, take half of their tootsie rolls and give them to the ones who did not work for them. Discuss the huge difference between redistribution of wealth (taxes) and charity. Discuss how it made each group feel and relate it back to their parents and the work they do and the taxes the government takes from them.



You can also relate this to school and grades for the older kids. What if they studied very hard for a test and got an A+, but the teacher felt bad for the kids who failed, so she gave everyone C's.

REFERENCES: Bible, 5,000 Year Leap