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Serfs on the Plantation, Part 1

by Jacob G. Hornberger

Bill Clinton wants Americans to sacrifice more. Larger "contributions" to the government will save the welfare state and the managed economy, Clinton tells the citizenry. Sacrifice more, and permanent prosperity will be just around the corner.

Most Americans see through the sham and deceit of the term "contributions." They know the difference between contributions and taxes. If they fail to contribute to their church, nothing happens. If they fail to pay their taxes, they have their bank accounts seized, their homes attached, and their wages garnished by the Internal Revenue Service. They also know that if they forcibly resist the efforts of the IRS, they will soon be in "the hereafter" for having "resisted arrest."

Unfortunately, however, most Americans fail to recognize the true nature of their relationship to their government. When Clinton calls for sacrifice through the payment of higher taxes, the average American views the president's plan this way: "He wants us to pay a higher portion of our income to the government."

When they think in this way, the American people delude themselves. They fail to recognize that "their" income does not, in fact, belong to them. Instead, it belongs to their government. And they fail to recognize the true nature of their existence: serfs on the United States governmental plantation.

Think back to the slaves of ancient Egypt. Every day of the year they toiled to construct the pyramids for their pharaoh. No one can question that they were, in fact, slaves. For they belonged to the pharaoh. Their lives and efforts were unconditionally subject to his commands.

Suppose the pharaoh had decreed, "From this day forward, you will have to work only nine months of the year for me. The other three months you will be on your own." Would the people then have been free? Of course not. The pharaoh would still have had ultimate control over their lives. They would still have been slaves. The pharaoh would still have been their master.

What if the pharaoh had said, "You will work for me only one day of the year. The rest of the time will be yours." Again, though conditions for the people would have dramatically

improved, they would still have been under the control of their master. Despite the relative prosperity, they would still have been his slaves.

The United States government has the same economic control over the American people as the pharaoh had over his people. The lives and incomes of the citizenry belong to the national government. Our political masters decide how long we must work for them and how long we can work for ourselves. Some of our modern-day pharaohs have been kind masters. They have required that we work only three months out of the year for them. Others, like Clinton, are not so kind. They require that we work even longer for the bureaucracy. But make no mistake about it — the pharaoh, not the individual, determines how long he must labor for government and how long he is permitted to work for himself.

There are, of course, constraints on our pharaoh that the ancient pharaoh did not have. Our pharaoh must get legislative approval before he can order the serfs to work longer hours for him. However, this doesn't change the essence of the relationship between the serf and his master. It simply means that the pharaoh must secure the approval of other governmental officials to ensure that he does not seriously mistreat the serfs.

The Denial of Reality

Denying reality, the average American exclaims, "We live in the freest nation on earth. We can write letters to the editor and publish books." Suppose Egypt's pharaoh had decreed, "From this day forward, the slaves shall be permitted to complain openly about their condition and to write pleas to their taskmasters regarding their poor living conditions." Would this have made the slaves free?

Americans say, "But we have the right to elect our governmental officials, while the Egyptians did not." However, the right of a serf to elect his taskmaster does not change the reality of his condition.

Americans point to their high standard of living and proclaim, "We are free. We are free. We are free." Their perspective is simply a delusion. In the old South, there were slaves who had it better than other slaves. There were the nannies who took care of the white children. There were the carriage drivers who drove their masters to the townships. Others did not have privileged positions — they toiled in the fields. But privileged or not, slaves were slaves.

It is the same under the American economic system. There are the privileged serfs, such as those who are protected from competition from the other serfs through licensing laws. And, like in the old South, there are serfs like William Sculley, president of Apple Computer Inc., and representatives of the United States Chamber of Commerce who are bowing before their masters and seeking privileged positions on the plantation. Demeaning themselves, however, does not change the nature of their condition. They remain serfs, albeit higher-class ones.

Johann von Goethe once wrote that "none are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free." No words could more accurately capture the plight of the American people. Having been indoctrinated for so long in their government-approved schools, Americans rank among the most enslaved people in history. And their denial of reality does not free them. It simply produces a psychosis marked by high levels of alcohol and other drug addiction.

The Life of a Serf

What are the attributes of serfdom in America? One attribute is the power of the national government to determine how long the citizenry must work to sustain the government.

A second attribute of serfdom: the pharaoh's ownership of American children. The government strictly limits parental control over children in America. Once children reach the age of six, governmental officials allow parents to have only nighttime control over them. During daytime hours, children fall under the direct supervision and control of governmental officials. All day long, children must learn government-approved doctrine from government-approved schoolteachers using government-approved textbooks. What happens if a parent refuses to permit the state to indoctrinate his child? They arrest him and throw him into jail (and kill him if he resists arrest, as they did with John Singer in Utah), and then they take total control over the child.

And Clinton is now calling for "national service," a program that ultimately will enable the pharaoh to take complete control — day and night — 365 days a year — over the lives and activities of young American serfs.

The reality of the American condition becomes clear during war. As in ancient Egypt, in time of war, every American citizen is unconditionally subject to the control of his pharaoh. The Egyptian slaves understood this. Americans fool themselves. For example, consider the draft. Here, in its starkest form, is the reality of serfdom. With the draft, the pharaoh takes complete control over his serfs. He can even order them to make the ultimate sacrifice: to die for the "national honor" and the "collective good" in a war thousands of miles away. But deluding themselves, Americans fail to view the draft as enslavement. Instead, they view it as "the freedom to be patriotic," just as their government-approved schoolteachers taught them.

Another attribute: governmental control over self-destructive behavior on the part of the serfs. The people are "national resources." They contribute to the Gross Domestic Product. They bring prosperity to the realm. They sustain the bureaucracy. They fight for their pharaoh. They must be kept healthy. Thus, if a serf takes non-governmentally approved drugs, the authorities severely punish him. He does not have the authority to harm himself without the approval of the pharaoh. And if he tries to commit the ultimate self-destructive act — suicide — the authorities, again, severely punish him. The serf cannot try to exit the world without the approval of his pharaoh.

We Don't Have to Accept It

Abandoning the principles of freedom on which this nation was founded, early 20th-century Americans established America's plantation. They falsely believed that they could keep the freedom of their ancestors while, at the same time, turn over control of their lives and fortunes to pharaoh. We have to live with what resulted: income taxation, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, drug laws, the draft, the national debt, and all of the other attributes of modern-day serfdom.

We have to live with it. *But we don't have to accept it!* As previous generations changed the system under which they lived, we have the power, the right, and the duty to change the system under which we live. No generation can bind another generation into accepting its choice of political and economic systems. And no generation can box another generation, through such devices as the national debt, into a permanent condition of serfdom. Any person who accepts governmental benefits or invests in governmental bonds does so under one implicit risk: a future generation can alter or abolish its form of government and institute new government based on new principles.

We need to abolish America's governmental plantation and free the serfs. This would entail the constitutional elimination of such things as income taxation, the draft, drug laws, licensing laws, and every other political control over people's fortunes and peaceful activities. Only in this way will we taste the sweet fruits of freedom rather than the bitter harvest of serfdom.

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