

"Writing the truth  
as I see it;  
trying not to  
offend  
those who will  
disagree."

# The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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## FDR knew how to help people

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President Franklin Roosevelt would be proud of the assistance our government's Small Business Administration provided to Sun Valley area businesses following the Castle Rock Fire this year. Although the fire did not damage any buildings, local businesses still suffered economic damage as a result of the fire. Rather than just handing out money, the SBA set up a temporary office in Hailey offering business owners low interest (4%) loans "for working capital for overhead needs that the business is not able to pay as a result of the fire . . . such as rent, payroll, etc." What an ideal government assistance program. Offer aid when your citizens need it, allow them to repay it without damaging them further, and quickly return them to the civilian marketplace.

Pocatello's own Aid for Friends is an equally excellent example of what would please President Roosevelt and how assistance programs could better manage their financial resources. Aid for Friends has a Transitional Housing Program which "offers affordable housing while individuals or families are stabilizing into the community". Prospective tenants must have employment and attend Landlord and Tenant Living Skills Training classes. They may stay in this housing for up to two years. What a marvelous Roosevelt pleasing assistance program. Aid for Friends transitions people/families from homeless to taxpaying members of the community. And unlike many other government and non-government programs, their goal is to put themselves out of business!

Why would these two programs please President Roosevelt? Because they are what he envisioned for government aid programs; short-term assistance while getting people back into the civilian workplace paying taxes. When people faced difficult times he believed work programs were better

than simply giving them money. He became President during the early 1930s with the Depression worsening. He rapidly created his vision - The New Deal. One of the new agencies was the Federal Emergency Relief Administration led by Harry Hopkins who believed men should be put to work and not be given charity. President Roosevelt also created the Civil Works Administration giving the unemployed jobs building roads, parks, airports, etc. He added the Civilian Conservation Corps putting people to work restoring forests, beaches, and parks. The Works Progress Administration provided work repairing schools, hospitals, airfields, etc. Other programs were created to help people through the Depression and most were modeled like these; creating short term jobs until people could get on their feet and back into the civilian marketplace.

What went wrong with his vision? Why aren't more government assistance programs like this? Why aren't they modeled after the Roosevelt style projects providing people with temporary jobs and income until they can return to the civilian workplace? How in the world can you get people back into the civilian marketplace if the government pays them not to work and financially penalizes them if they do work? Why is our government managing assistance programs that are no longer a stop gap but a lifetime career choice? How do we help people maintain their pride and return to work when the government incentives are designed for the opposite outcome? Knowingly or unknowingly the government has abandoned the Roosevelt dream; instead creating incentives that are exactly the opposite of what occurred in Sun Valley and occurs in Pocatello.

I may be criticized as callous and uncaring. But that is not true. I think callous and uncaring is removing pride

from people, removing opportunity from people, removing gainful work from people, removing the ability to grow from people. That is callous and uncaring. Yes, people find themselves in circumstances they may never have been able to envision or prepare for. And that is what programs like the SBA in Sun Valley and Aid for Friends in Pocatello are there for. They are there for short term assistance to get people back on their feet. And that is a wonderful use of our tax dollars.

Our political leaders will not be able to fathom this, but there is a finite amount of money available. With a finite amount of money the longer people stay on government assistance the fewer the number of people who can enter programs like Aid for Friends. We can either permanently remove a dollar from the pool of available assistance money or we can create programs which allow that dollar to be re-circulated innumerable times achieving near exponential use of that dollar and near exponential numbers of people helped with that same dollar. Let's help people, not handicap people. Let's return to President Roosevelt's vision; a government that steps in during hard times bridging the gap while remembering the bridge does not continue forever. The bridge ends when you reach the safety of the other side. You no longer need the bridge but it remains available for others who may need it.

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