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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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Responsibility and self-respect

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George Bernard Shaw said, "Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it." Are we willing to abandon self-respect for a handout? Are we willing to surrender risk and reward for indentured servitude to the government? Are we willing to exchange freedom and opportunity for a welfare state?

We condemn the woman who recently gave birth to eight babies; eight babies the taxpayers will have the privilege of paying for. Do we have the right to disparage her? Is she really that different from the rest of us? Might she actually be a mirror, a mirror showing us ourselves? What do we see in that mirror? Do we see responsibility? Do we see self-respect? Why are we able to criticize other people's irresponsibility while failing to recognize our own?

We build homes in flood plains, then demand the government pay to rebuild when the floods come, as we know they will. Is that more responsible than having eight babies at one time? We build homes along the coast, in the path of hurricanes, again demanding the government pay to rebuild following each year's storms. Is that more responsible than having eight babies at one time?

This lack of personal responsibility too often goes to the extreme. Illegally enter a railroad

yard and get hit by a train. No problem. It is the railroad's responsibility to keep you out. Dump McDonald's coffee in your lap. No problem. McDonalds has no right to expect you to know that coffee is hot. Drive drunk after leaving a bar and get in a wreck. No problem. It is the bar's responsibility to stop you from driving drunk. Could we learn something from the playbook of football coach Don Shula, who said, "The superior man blames himself. The inferior man blames others."

About ten years ago, my wife and I visited Belize. Outside Belize City is their primitive national zoo. The national animal, the jaguar, is caged in nothing more than a 2" x 4" welded wire fence that I could easily put my hand through. I asked our guide why they allowed such unsafe fencing. He said the fencing was perfectly safe; there was no way the jaguar could get out. I explained my concern was not with the jaguar getting out, but the zoo's liability if someone was injured sticking his or her hand through the fence. Puzzled, he asked how anyone could blame the zoo if they were dumb enough to stick their hand in a jaguar's cage.

You know, he had a point. Dumb enough to stick your hand in a jaguar's cage in America? No problem. It is the zoo's

responsibility to protect you from your stupidity.

Why is it unreasonable to expect someone to understand that hot coffee is hot? That breaking into a railroad yard might be dangerous? That sticking your hand in a jaguar's cage might cost you your hand? That driving drunk might kill someone?

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. said, "I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty."

What would our Founding Fathers say to these people? To those who build in a flood plain or hurricane path? Don't rebuild. Rent a moving van. Dump hot coffee in your lap. Learn a lesson and move on. Get hit by a train while committing a crime. Hope you live through it. Stick your hand in a jaguar's cage. Don't be surprised when it is missing. Drive drunk. Lose your driver's license and learn how important it is. Not so complicated, is it?

Our Founding Fathers were self-sufficient, accepting responsibility for their choices. Can we become self-sufficient once again? Can we accept responsibility and regain our self-respect?

Could we sum up the Founding Father's values as, "The freedom and opportunity of choice, accepting responsibility for those choices?"

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