

Explosion of Productivity Needed

“This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.” – President Lyndon B. Johnson, [State of the Union address](#), January 8, 1964

52 years later, and the war has been lost. The poverty rate in the US has hovered between 10-15 percent for the past half century. More alarming, the two institutions that contribute the most to economic prosperity, marriage and work, are in decline. Since Johnson’s declaration of war, the rate of children born outside of marriage has skyrocketed from 7 to 40 percent! The workforce participation rate for men is at an all time low, 68%.

A new paradigm is needed. A war on poverty, whose main weapon is redistribution of wealth, is clearly unbiblical. I emphasize, it is evil to take from someone who has worked and produced, and give it to someone else who refuses to work and produce. Assisting those who are poor but not capable of working is entirely another discussion.

Since war results in wounding and death, a war on poverty kills four things:

1. **Incentive to work.** Why work, when one can get the goods and services that one wants and needs without labor? With the welfare state, an entitlement mentality is likely to gain ascendance in a large proportion of the population.
2. **The human dignity that results from self reliance.** We were created with the ability and desire to work to provide for ourselves and others. When we do not work, our human dignity is diminished because we are not behaving as God designed us.
3. **Productivity of the non-worker.** A “war on poverty” greatly diminishes productivity while consumption goes on unabated. It is axiomatic that without production, there can be no consumption.
4. **Enthusiasm and productivity of the worker.** Nothing kills the spirit of a producer more, than knowing that some of what he or she has produced will be removed by force (taxation) and given to someone who chooses not to exercise an equal amount of effort to produce.

What would happen if we could restore the foundational principle that man was designed by his Creator to work and provide for himself? What would be the consequences of implementing II Thessalonians 3:10, “If a man does not work, neither let him eat?” What great good could come about if we returned to a Biblical view of welfare, where those who cannot work through no fault of their own were assisted by their family and the church (I Timothy 5) as a “safety net?” What would happen if we returned to our founding principle of limited government, where the role of civil government would be to insure justice, provide for defense and punish evildoers?

Instead of a “War on Poverty” I propose an “Explosion of Productivity!” At least four things would come to life:

1. **Incentive to work.** Why work? Because you know that the fruit of your labor will be under your control. You will be able to distribute the fruits of your productivity as you deem proper.
2. **Human dignity.** You will be blessed by the joy that comes from knowing that you are laboring as you were designed to. You are honoring the Biblical way that God has designed man to obtain the goods and services that he and his loved ones want and need. You will be blessed as you serve your fellow man with the gifts and talents that God has given you, and you will reap accordingly.
3. **Productivity.** In order to have something to consume, you will produce something that others want or need. Through trade, both of you will gain and be blessed.
4. **Zest for life and work.** All of us will joyfully produce as we realize that our earnings will be ours to save, invest, give, or use for our needs and wants.

Forget the lost war but learn its lesson. Man was designed to work. Let him fulfill that destiny and he will produce amazing things!