

TURNING POLITICIANS INTO FATHER XMAS

"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

John F. Kennedy in his inaugural speech,

Introduction

With the help of Western Civilisation, each generation is becoming richer than the one before. And this growth in wealth is spreading all over the World. The United Nations (UN) expects the average wealth of the citizens of the poorest nations to grow sixfold between 2000 and 2050.

By 2050, this will mean that these citizens will be as rich as the citizens of the richest nations were in 2000. In the same timeframe the wealth of the citizens of the richest nations will double.

Although we might not feel it, today's generation is significantly richer than their parents' generation, who in turn were significantly richer than their parents.

So, with all this additional wealth, how did we respond to John Kennedy's appeal to abandon selfishness and work for the country to help all citizens.

We have failed. Our greed and envy have increased as we demand significantly more from our politicians. Today we blackmail our politicians by telling them that we will not vote for them if they don't meet our demands.

A Strong Feedback Loop to Curb our Greed.

It doesn't matter how rich or poor we are, our desires will always exceed our ability to purchase them.

At the family level, we have a limited amount of money, even if we borrow money, so it is obvious to us that we cannot buy everything we want. Consequently, each family will rank its desires and will move down this ranking until they run out of money.

Invariably, the first desire you cannot fund is one that you really wanted but you understand the funding of that desire will not happen until you either receive more money or you change the ranking of your desires.

This feedback loop provides two benefits. First, it stops us being greedy and demanding everything that we can think of. Second, it encourages us to carefully rank our desires and look at the benefits we receive with the attendant costs.

An awfully expensive item might be left unfunded so we can buy, say, three other desires with the money left over. Ideally, collectively the benefits of the three items outweigh the benefits of the one expensive desire.

No Feedback Loop to Curb our Greed at the National Level.

There is no such feedback loop at the national level.

Both citizens and their politicians damage the above feedback loop by using the Term “Government Money” rather than “Taxpayers’ Money”. This encourages most citizens and far too many politicians to believe that there is an inexhaustible supply of money.

Our greed then runs amok as we demand everything we want without any idea where the money is coming from. We are like teenagers who are in town shopping having stolen their parents credit cards.

Because of the institutionalised combative structure between politicians in power and those in opposition, there is no bipartisan stand made by all our political leaders to curb these out of control teenagers. Their response is worse – they encourage this poor behaviour.

The politicians realise that they can ‘buy’ votes by giving these teenagers what they want. Not to be outdone and to win the very same votes the opposition politicians will give the teenagers more than is offered by the other politicians. So, a bidding war ensues with little thought given to how these ‘presents’ will be funded.

Rather than having a feedback loop that controls irresponsible spending, there is no feedback loop and little control resulting in the nation seeing runaway spending – just to buy votes.

Instead of being leaders and looking after our nation responsibly, our politicians turn themselves into Father Xmas, spending more and more to buy votes.

The Results – The Citizens

The citizens mistakenly believe all these gifts from the politicians are free. They aren’t. Every additional present they get will be paid for by higher taxation. Most don’t understand there is no “free lunch”.

If they realised that they were paying, they would curb their demands in both quantity and quality. Their greed demands lots of presents and all the presents must have a “Rolls Royce” quality – something that they would not demand if they were paying for the gifts themselves.

Also, there is no discipline in their ranking of the presents they need – they will demand anything that is “free” – even if they don’t really need it!

This rampant gift giving discourages any conversation about the role of governments that is primarily needed to look after the nation. Yes, this national role might be funding the poorest citizens – say the bottom 15%. But such a role does

not explain why 84% of Australians receive some form of government handouts today.

And remember this largesse did not occur with the past two generations who were significantly poorer than the present generation. We all need to re-embrace the concerns of John Kennedy reflected in the quotation at the start of this Reading and grow up and look after ourselves and think of the nation.

The Results – The Nation

So, who pays for these gifts – we do of course? Our politicians lack the courage to bluntly tell us that we cannot afford these presents. In the family situation both parents will tell their children “We would like to buy this for you, but we cannot afford it”.

At the national level, the spoilt brats divide and conquer. On being told “No” by one side of politics they immediately ask the other side of politics who then acquiesce for political reasons knowing that they are damaging the nation.

The PIGS nations (Portugal, Iceland, Ireland, Italy Greece, and Spain) went bankrupt when they could not pay for all the gifts given to their citizens. The irresponsible behaviour of Father Xmas politicians came home to roost and not only hurt the nation but every citizen.

This pain was minimised, by other EU countries ‘bailing out’ the bankrupt countries. This action undermined any lessons that might have been learnt.

The responsible EU nations such as Germany, France and the UK used their responsible citizens’ money to prop up both the irresponsible nations and their greedy citizens. What sort of lesson did this send to all EU citizens? It was probably the best marketing campaign for all citizens to become irresponsible and bankrupt all the EU countries.

Were these politicians thinking of their nations or were they pandering to their greedy citizens for political reasons.

Misbehaving Politicians

By now you might begin to see that many are involved in hurting the nation, but all politicians are more aware of these problems than most citizens. They are also the best ones to fix the problems. But for decades, as these problems worsened, they have done nothing.

They behave like hamsters running on a treadmill. The treadmill is the political game, but the treadmill no longer helps the nation. Their focus is largely on ‘playing the game’ irrespective of the results that hurt the nation. No politician wishes to get off the treadmill reorientate it to serve the nation and then start running again.

To put it bluntly the political elite, which includes politicians, the Media and academia, have lost the plot and all three groups are hurting the nation. Because they are so close to the game, they have difficulty seeing the damage they are causing.

Not so for the “Man in the Street”. He is far enough away to see the adverse results and to understand the political system is broken. However, with little knowledge, he doesn’t see a way to fix the system. For the past forty years, such people have been deliberately voting for people who do not belong to the political elite hoping that they can go in and fix the machine.

This is better than doing nothing, but with the political elite not even recognising the problem and having a vested interest in maintaining the status quo there is little chance of our political system being fixed.

As a result, our politicians continue to misbehave while hardly recognising their poor behaviour.