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EAI January Newsletter, 2013



Ethan Allen Institute

Newsletter, January 2013

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EAI is a 501c(3) nonprofit, educational organization.

Message from the President



Rob Roper
President

Dear Robert,

Bethany Knight recently ran a series of articles on poverty and poverty programs in the Northeast Kingdom. All taken, the five articles provide enough evidence for a damning case against government-run welfare state. However, there was one quote that popped off the pages to illustrate a serious problem – the most serious that I think we face – about perceptions and reality.

Greg MacDonald, described as a thirty-year veteran with the Agency of Human Services, is quoted as saying, “People are kept in poverty because of the economic system we have. **In order for capitalism to survive, you need poverty.**” [Emphasis added]

This is the most frighteningly ignorant thing I think I have ever heard yet I'd be willing to bet a lot of people, including many in the legislature, believe it. Think about it for a second.... Capitalism needs poverty? No. Capitalism needs CAPITAL. Capitalism creates and distributes wealth. The merchant doesn't benefit from the customer who is poor, nor does the customer from the merchant who can't afford to

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Ethan Allen Institute
PO Box 543
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Thank you!

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, January 3, Sponsors will introduce a legislation calling for a moratorium on wind power projects in Vermont. 2:00 pm. Cedar Creek Room, State House, Montpelier.

Friday, January 11, Annual Vermont Economic Outlook Conference at the Sheraton in South Burlington. The luncheon speaker is nationally known author (*The Forgotten Man*) Amity Shlaes. For details contact: 802 879 7774, or rheaps@vteconomy.com.

January 27 to February 2 is [National School Choice Week](#).

COMMON SENSE RADIO

11-noon Weekdays on
WDEV - AM 550, FM 96.1

stock her shelves or invest in better products. Poverty is anathema to capitalism, and capitalism is the antidote to poverty.

Who does “need” poverty to survive? Well, people like Greg MacDonald – the government. The Vermont Department of Health & Human Service has [a budget](#) of over \$3 billion (in a state of 620,000). As Knight points out, just one division of that department, Children & Families, employs 1000 people – none of whom would be necessary without a large, population of poor people.

And, government is doing a good job of generating and perpetuating a permanent underclass to suit its needs. To quote Knight again, “Forty-five years later, Vermont is setting records in the Northeast Kingdom. The area has the highest number of government services and benefits for the poor in state history and the highest percentage of people living in poverty.”

You would think the evidence would speak for itself -- government thrives on poverty, creates poverty, perpetuates poverty – but it does not speak for itself. This is the case the Ethan Allen Institute must make in 2013. And, we will with your help.

If you have not already, please use the “donate” button at the top/left to renew your membership in EAI for 2013. Join our growing community on [Facebook](#). And, please, contact me directly with your comments and feedback (rob@ethanallen.org, 802-999-8145). I want to know how EAI can best serve you and help you achieve your goals as a citizen and in your community.

Thanks for your support, and best wishes for a happy and prosperous new year.



Robert Roper,
President

The “Energy Efficiency Excise Tax”

John McClaughry
Featured Commentary



or [LIVE STREAMING](#).

Call in: 244-1777 or
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ENERGY EDUCATION PROJECT

The Energy Education Project, sponsored by EAI, hopes to help Vermonters make choices based on “realistic assessments of our energy future, not wishful thinking and misleading comparisons.”

Website: energyeai.org

Blog: yesvy.blogspot.com

Facebook: [Save Vermont Yankee](#)

Contact: [Meredith Angwin](#)

802 291-9172

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CONTACT INFO

Mailing Address
PO Box 543
Montpelier, VT 05601

Phone: 802-695-1448
Fax: 802-695-1436
Rob's Cell: 802-999-8145

Web

Website: ethanallen.org

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In January 2007 newly elected Senate leader Peter Shumlin declared war on the Menace of Global Warming. Shumlin said that failure to act boldly to combat the Menace will make our grandchildren’s lives “unspeakably horrid”. The leading component of that war on the Vermont front was to have been the creation of a new “thermal efficiency utility”.

This new governmental bureaucracy was to parallel the electric efficiency utility, Efficiency Vermont, financed since 1999 by a tax on electric bills. Instead of (logically) taxing heating fuel, propane and natural gas, the utility would raise \$25 million through a new tax on Vermont Yankee. This sum, Shumlin explained, would curtail waste, create jobs, and curb greenhouse gas emissions.

The 2007 legislature obligingly passed the thermal efficiency utility bill. But Gov. Jim Douglas, not sharing the Shumlin-VPIRG alarm at the Menace of Global Warming, vetoed it. The legislature let Shumlin’s signature issue drop for the moment.

But now the Shumlin administration has revived the thermal efficiency utility as the centerpiece of next year’s battle against the continuing Menace of Global Warming. The Public Service Department’s Thermal Efficiency Task Force has unveiled a comprehensive draft report proposing sweeping new programs to educate, persuade, regulate, subsidize, mandate and tax Vermonters into spending less money on heat.

It’s curious that the Shumlin administration is so determined to use all these tools to get Vermonters to spend less on heat, all the while declaiming against the very climatic effect – global warming – that, to the extent that it’s occurring, is allowing Vermonters to spend less on heat.

A leading concern of the Task Force is that present weatherization programs only serve lower-income people. Upper-income households can afford to invest in thermal efficiency, but what about middle income families, with 80-120% of median income? How can the state in good conscience fail to subsidize them too?

To close this subsidy gap the report proposes a wide range of programs and services. But of course this requires new money. The Task Force’s leading proposal for raising that money is a new “energy efficiency excise tax” on fuel oil, propane, kerosene and natural gas (but not biomass, since there’s no easy way for the state to tax your woodpile.)

The Task Force proposes that the state collect \$260 million from

eai@ethanallen.org, General
[Rob Roper](#), President
[John McClaughry](#), Vice President

this new tax over next seven years. The tax would be paid by businesses, schools, hospitals and state and local governments, of course, and by the seventy percent of Vermonters who heat their homes with fuel oil or propane.

Matt Cota, executive director of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association, pointedly argues that “we should not use a regressive tax that hurts the lowest income Vermonters, in order to fund retrofits for the richest.” It’s likely that the legislature would have to include yet another new rebate program to alleviate yet another regressive tax burden.

Back in 2007 Sandra Levine of the Conservation Law Foundation said “for every dollar you invest in energy efficiency, you save two or three dollars [on energy] that you would have had to buy.” If so, the logical next step is for “you” to take charge and act. But Gov. Shumlin, his Task Force, CLF, VPIRG and their Green friends in the legislature are determined that not “you”, but the government, must take charge of making everyone’s energy decisions – and send “you” the tax bill.

In a free society, people manage their finances in their own self-interest. Vermonters have been making energy efficiency investments at least since the 1973 oil shock suddenly raised their fuel oil and gasoline prices.

But in present-day Vermont, there are always voices clamoring to create new government programs to mandate and subsidize what government decides is the next “good thing” for everybody, and in this case extracting \$260 million in new taxes over seven years to pay for it.

The Vermont Constitution states that “previous to any law being made to raise a tax, the purpose for which it is to be raised ought to appear evident to the Legislature to be of more service to community than the money would be if not collected.” The “energy efficiency excise tax” on your heating fuel bill fails that test.

*This commentary can be downloaded
from www.ethanallen.org/commentaries and circulated without special
permission.*

* * *

California, Here We Come...?

In a superb article in the Weekly Standard (11/19/12), Charlotte Allen explains in painstaking detail the “Decline and Fall” of the great, golden state of California. And in that explanation is a sobering message for Vermont.

Allen’s news peg is last month’s 54-46 approval by California voters of Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown’s Proposition 30. This constitutional measure raised the sales tax from 7.25 to 7.5% and increased the marginal income tax rate on persons making more than \$250,000 a year to as much as 13.3%. The measure was sold as “save our schools and colleges”, but 60 percent of the new revenues will be available for non-educational spending.

Writes Allen, “[The new tax] represents the culmination of a two-decade-long process in which the nation’s most populous state, once a prosperous industrial and high-tech powerhouse and magnet for immigrants from elsewhere in the country has transformed itself into something else: a high-tax, high-spending, highly regulated and chronically broke welfare state that is fast losing to out-migration both its middle class and the business and industries that create jobs.”

She continues, California “now has the worst state credit rating in America, thanks to chronic overspending, massive state debt, and the clout of the pension-reform resisting unions. California is the American Greece.”

Brown enjoys supermajority Democratic control in both legislative chambers: Assembly (House) 54-26, Senate 27-13.

California’s Democratic Party is a collection of rich liberals, rent seeking capitalists, people with ethnic grievances, poor immigrants, greens, Hollywood, and, most importantly, aggressive public sector labor unions. The California Teachers Association has 325,000 members, each paying about \$1,000 annually in dues, from average salaries of \$68,000. A major function of the CTA, in addition to collective bargaining and electing compliant Democratic members of the legislature, is promoting or defeating statewide ballot initiatives.

CTA has battled against charter schools, making pupil performance a factor in teacher compensation, and allowing low-income kids to escape failing public schools for better independent schools. This year CTA spent \$75 million to defeat an initiative to end automatic payroll deductions to finance union political campaigns. Probably not coincidentally, California today ranks 46th of 52 jurisdictions on NEAP reading and math performance tests.

Trade unions, and thus all unions, are solid supporters of

Brown's bizarre plan to spend \$5.8 billion to build a high speed rail line from Bakersfield to Fresno. No one knows where the money to pay off the initial bonds, let alone to complete this project, will come from.

California's public pension funds are grossly underfunded, leading to citizen rebellions even in San Diego and San Jose. Brown promised to attack the unfunded liability crisis, but so far all he has done is raise early retirement age from 50 (!) to 62 for new employees, and ban final-year pay inflation to increase pension checks.

Not mentioned by Allen, surprisingly, is California's AB 32, a law almost identical to Vermont's Act 168 of 2006. This act requires reducing California's greenhouse gas emission levels to pre-1990 levels by 2020. Brown, then attorney general, took that as a license to threaten legal action whenever his green backers spotted a suitable target – manufacturing, road construction, shopping centers, bottled water, rural housing, (but apparently not high speed rail). This makes any business venture involving energy a hostage to state-financed lawsuits.

Here in Vermont, we can see, though perhaps not so clearly, all the ingredients of California's decline and fall. Ever expanding government. Ever increasing centralization of government in the state capitol. Liberal supermajorities. High income tax rates (Vermont ranks 13th in tax burden). An astounding \$3 billion in unfunded pension and retiree health benefit liabilities.

Then there's our governor's obsession with making Vermont the world leader in the battle against the Menace of Global Warming, by powering the state 90% with renewable energy, at any cost, by 2050. Act 168 is only one of numerous regulatory impediments to doing anything energy- or land-related that might become profitable. Sen. Shumlin was the lead sponsor of a cap-and-trade energy tax system, analogous to the one just implemented in California.

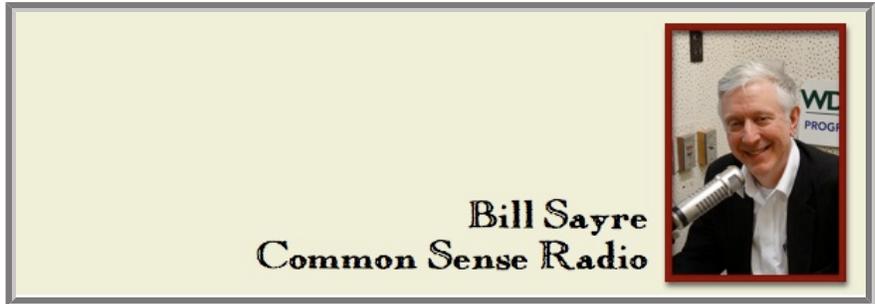
Vermont's governor commands liberal supermajorities in both houses of the legislature: House 105-45, Senate 24-6. In addition, the state has equally powerful public sector unions (VT-NEA, VSEA) and is teeming with like-minded organizations advocating for just about every imaginable liberal cause, from shutting down Vermont Yankee to the fantastic "People's Budget" to the forced unionization of day care workers.

To top it off, the governor and legislature have declared that Vermont will unveil a taxpayer-financed, state-controlled single payer health care system in 2017. This will require as much as \$3 billion in taxes from somewhere, that the Shumlin administration will not disclose.

California, here we come...?

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Bill Sayre takes the mic at Common Sense Radio



Vermont economist and entrepreneur, Bill Sayre, will take the helm at EAI's popular radio show, Common Sense Radio. Sayre, who studied economics under the legendary free marketer, Milton Friedman, has been a fixture in the 11-noon time slot on WDEV for ten years as a regular guest on Fridays. Now he takes the lead.

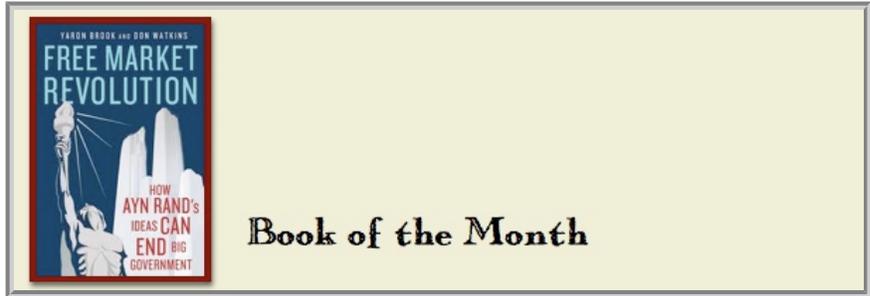
"I'm very excited for this next chapter in Common Sense," said EAI president, Rob Roper. "Bill has experience behind the microphone, intimate knowledge of Vermont policy, and stellar credentials. Working with Bill as an on-air/live-from-the-State-House team is going to make for some dynamic radio. You won't be able to find better, more real-time coverage and analysis of what's happening under the Golden Dome."

Roper, who hosted Common Sense Radio for two years (and True North Radio for a year preceding that), will continue to host the Monday editions of Common Sense Radio, and will be calling in regularly during the rest of the week with real-time reports and interviews from the State House or other locations of interest.

EAI's Common Sense Radio airs weekdays 11-noon on WDEV (AM 550, FM 96.1, and [STREAMING LIVE](#) on the web. Guests for program are announced in advance on the Ethan Allen Institute [Facebook page](#). Tune in!

Book of the Month:

"Free Market Revolution"



[*Free Market Revolution: How Ayn Rand's Ideas Can End Big Government.*](#)

Yaron Brook and Don Watkins. Palgrave/MacMillan 2012. 252 pages.

Our founding fathers' embrace of limited government and free market capitalism is what made the United States most prosperous, dynamic society in history. Indeed, free market capitalism has been the only successful catalyst for the creation of a broad middle class, raising the standard of living of billions through the creation and distribution of wealth. The world before capitalism, as the authors of *Free Market Revolution* point out, "...was marked by unremitting famine, plague, and poverty."

Yet, somehow, those who advocate abandoning the culture and the policies that have led to shared prosperity in favor of those proven to end in mass poverty and violence do so, it seems, with an increasingly conventional morality on their side. The liberals "care"; the capitalists don't. But, in reality, nothing could be further from the truth, and this truth – the morality of capitalism – is what Yaron Brook and Don Watkins delve into in fascinating detail.

Brook and Watkins argue that increasing the freedom of people at large, of consumers in particular, will improve the quality and the supply of many goods which Big Government struggles to provide through coercion. Their review of retirement and health care is especially timely. "Our long term program must be to establish a limited government based on the principle of individual rights, with its economic concomitant, a fully free market."

The authors expand on Adam Smith's observation that a butcher prospers not by cheating his customers and shorting their orders, but by building a reputation for excellence. Capitalism supposes that all parties make free choices, to buy or not to buy. Government seeks to impose

controls on what people buy, how they use the goods, and how many people are allowed to sell – and they never do a very good job of it!

Brook and Watkins have a strategy for ending the growth of government. Their idea is to quit trying to trim around the edges of big government and, instead, attack the core value upon which the growth of government is pegged: altruism. For example, they analyze the financial melt-down of 2007-8 not as a failure of Capitalism, but as the inevitable incapacity of a tangled web of regulation to deliver any value at all. The ultimate solution is, of course, more freedom, not less.

Free Market Revolution is an inspiring read, and provides some great tools for making the case we all need to be making today: the morality of capitalism.

*Let us know what you think of Free Market Revolution. Post your comments on the [Ethan Allen Facebook](#) page. **IDEA: start an EAI book of the month club in your community.***

News & Views

Socialized Medicine’s War on Women: This from our neighboring province where everyone has Green Mountain Care: “Surgery wait times for deadly ovarian, cervical and breast cancers in Quebec are three times longer than government benchmarks, leading some desperate patients to shop around for an operating room.

But that's a waste of time, doctors say, since the problem is spread across Quebec hospitals. And doctors are refusing to accept new patients quickly because they can't treat them, health advocates say.

“A leading Montreal gynecologist said that these days, she cannot look her patients in the eye because the wait times are so shocking. Lack of resources, including nursing staff and budget compressions, are driving a backlog of surgeries while operating rooms stand empty. The latest figures from the provincial government show that over a span of nearly 11 months, 7,780 patients in the Montreal area waited six months or longer for day surgeries, while another 2,957 waited for six months or longer for operations that required hospitalization.

“The worst cases are gynecological cancers, experts say, because usually such a cancer has already spread by the time it is detected. Instead of four weeks from diagnosis to surgery, patients are waiting as long as three months to have cancerous growths removed.” - Montreal

Gazette 11/14/12)

Shumlin Health Care Magic: How Shumlin & Co. will save millions with Green Mountain Care, according to them: “Change how we pay doctors, hospitals, home health providers and mental health providers, to name a few, so that we pay more for helping Vermonters stay healthy, encourage healthy behaviors and avoid having people get sick.”

(VtDigger 12/5 /12)

What that means in plain English: “Limit the dollars we pay hospitals, home health providers and mental health providers, to name a few, hold providers financially responsible for the consequences of the lifestyle choices of their patients, and force providers to limit spending on services by withholding treatment from their patients.” (VHCF 12/7/12)

Global Warming Models Failing: In December a participant in the forthcoming UN- IPCC Assessment Report 5 (AR5) leaked the two unreleased draft chapters on the state of climate science. The IPCC’s First Assessment Report (AR1) (1990) showed a warming of 0.50 deg C by 2012, AR2 showed 0.30 deg C, AR3 showed 0.39, AR4 showed 0.37, while the actual is 0.12 to 0.16.

As critics have been saying for twenty years, the supercomputer models that IPCC relies upon have never been validated, so it’s no surprise that their projections diverge dramatically – showing three times more warming than Mother Earth’s actual behavior.

Furthermore, the effect of solar variation on climate appears to be far greater than assumed in earlier reports. In those reports, the authors accounted for all known climatic forcings, then declared - without scientific evidence - that the large unidentified remainder must be due to human emissions of greenhouse gases, notably carbon dioxide from fossil fuel combustion. Now the AR5 draft shows that as much as half of the remainder is due to complex interactions between solar wind and atmospheric physics, diminishing by half the amount of “global warming” said by the IPCC – without scientific evidence - to be caused by human CO2 emissions.

Matt Ridley’s exceptional article in the Wall Street Journal of December 19 (which EAI has sent to all Vermont editors) concludes “The scientists at the IPCC next year have to choose whether they will admit—contrary to what complex, unverifiable computer models indicate—that the observational evidence now points toward lukewarm temperature change with no net harm. On behalf of all those poor people

whose lives are being ruined by high food and energy prices caused by the diversion of corn to biofuel and the subsidizing of renewable energy driven by carboncrats and their crony-capitalist friends, one can only hope the scientists will do so.”

The WSJ is behind a pay wall, but there’s a good [summary by Steven Hayward](#). - JMc

Dependency in Vermont: The Caledonian Record recently published a 21-part series on the growing dependency on government in the Northeast Kingdom. It is by EAI contributor Bethany Knight, former head of the Vermont Health Care Association. You can read her stories at www.vermontwelfare.com.

Higher Property Tax Rates Coming: “Unless schools make an effort to cut spending or the state makes a change in the base education rate formula, the statewide property tax rate will go up five cents for every \$100 worth of property value. The current rate for commercial property is \$1.38 and the rate for homestead property is 89 cents. Rates can be higher in local jurisdictions, which are based on local spending levels.” – VT Digger (11/27/12) Watch for Gov. Shumlin to attempt to levy another “penalty tax” on residential property tax payers to punish them for not holding spending down. – JMc

Fleeing Vermont: Only two state saw their populations decrease in 2011 and Vermont was one of them. After forty years of increasing tax burdens and restrictive environmental policies, “New statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau show Vermont lost 581 people in 2011... Vermont political leaders have raised concerns for years about an outward migration of young people unable to find jobs and the high percentage of elderly residents. Census data shows Vermont has the second oldest population in the country and the percentage of residents over 65 is expected to grow at a rate 10 times faster than Vermont's total population growth rate over the next decade.” (WCAX 12/20/12)

Fukushima Scorecard: “Wolfgang Weiss, Chairman of the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), said the latest UN report shows ‘that no radiation health effects had been observed in Japan among the public, workers or children in the area of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.’” “With respect to the workers trying to save the reactors at Fukushima, as opposed to the

nearby population, UNSCEAR said, ‘Six workers received total doses of over 250 mSv during their time tackling the emergency, while 170 received doses over 100 mSv. None of these have shown ill effects, and radiation played no role in the coincidental deaths of six Fukushima workers in the time since the accident.’” The Power for USA blog (12/21/12), which quoted the UN report, noted “So, what is the bottom line with respect to the world’s largest nuclear accident? There have been no health problems in the population surrounding the Fukushima power plant, and none of the workers inside the plant have died, or even shown health effects, from their radiation exposure.”

Michigan Right to Work: On election day Michigan voters rejected 58-42 a union-backed initiative designed to give constitutional protection to the state’s compulsory union membership law. Emboldened by voter support, the Michigan legislature promptly acted to make Michigan a right to work state. Gov. Rick Snyder (R) defended “workplace freedom to choose” as essential to the state’s economic growth, pointing to Michigan’s industrial competition with Indiana which in 2012 became the first Midwestern state to enact right to work.

ObamaCare’s Big Problem: “Any cursory reading of the history of the three key provisions of ObamaCare shows that within five or six years of implementations, these reforms collapse the health care market they’ve been forced on. These reforms are guaranteed issue, a must-buy health insurance mandate and community rating. “Guaranteed issue means that you can get insurance anytime you want — once you are sick. Community rating means that the young and or the healthy must subsidize the older and less healthy. This means the cost in premiums for the younger and the healthy skyrocket — creating a massive, additional financial burden that Americas must-pay-because-you-are-forced-to by ObamaCare. “Massive premium price increases on the young and healthy will force them to rebel against what the vast majority of Americans in polls have told the ObamaCare cheerleaders: the public hates the mandate.” - Dan Perrin (HSA Coalition 12/14/12)

The School Staffing Surge: A new Friedman Foundation report examines the difference between public school student percentage growth (1992-2009) to the change in total public school staffing over the same period. Vermont lost 3.6% of its students, while increasing its staffing by an astounding 39.1%, putting it second highest in the country (+42.7%, after Maine). Now, on to unionized government-run health

care!

How IRS Will Enforce ObamaCare: “[Justice] Roberts makes the extraordinary claim that ‘Neither the Act nor any other law attaches negative legal consequences to not buying health insurance, beyond requiring a payment to the IRS’ -- and that the IRS is forbidden from using criminal prosecution to penalize those who refuse the mandate.’ “The problem here is that the IRS can withhold income tax refunds from those who refuse to pay the penalty, and it can choose to apply ordinary income taxes [payments] to the penalty first, before crediting the citizen with having paid his due income taxes -- and then the IRS can impose a penalty for failing to pay those taxes, and then prosecute or garnish wages for failing to pay that penalty.” – Quin Hillyer (CIF 7/4/12)

Medical Tourism: “Starting in January, Wal-Mart will offer employees and dependents heart, spine and transplant surgeries at no cost at six major hospital systems across the nation, with free travel and lodging. It's all part of a growing movement by employers fed up with wildly different price tags for routine operations. In response, businesses are showering workers with generous incentives — including waiving deductibles or handing out \$2,500 bonuses — to steer them to these top-performing providers offering bargain prices.” (LA Times 11/17/12) Compare: “Plan to make Vermont a “wellness destination”, where patients and families can come for diagnosis, excellent treatment, and recreational opportunities.” (EAI 10/17/05)

Obama on Raising the Debt Limit: "The fact that we are here today to debate raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure. It is a sign that the US Government cannot pay its own bills. It is a sign that we now depend on ongoing financial assistance from foreign countries to finance our Government's reckless fiscal policies. Increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that, "the buck stops here.' Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better." – Sen. Barack Obama, March 2006.

Support for School Vouchers: “A proposal has been made that would give low-income families with children in public schools a wider choice,

by allowing them to enroll their children in private schools instead, with government helping to pay the tuition. Favor or oppose?" Favor: Republicans 42%, Independents 54%, Democrats 52%. (EdNext2012, 3000 adults). Curious Explanation: Lower income Democrats want their kids out of filing public schools; upper income Republicans worry about lower income Democrats sending their kids to schools in upper income areas. But most Democratic pols oppose choice, and most Republican pols favor it.- JMc

Reagan on America: "Tonight America is stronger because of the values that we hold dear. We believe faith and freedom must be our guiding stars, for they show us truth, they make us brave, give us hope, and leave us wiser than we were. Our progress began not in Washington, DC, but in the hearts of our families, communities, workplaces, and voluntary groups which, together, are unleashing the invincible spirit of one great nation under God. Four years ago we said we would invigorate our economy by giving people greater freedom and incentives to take risks and letting them keep more of what they earned. We did what we promised, and a great industrial giant is reborn." (State of the Union, 1985)

Final thoughts: A French Actor, Vermont Socialists, and the U.S. Census.

The famous French actor, Gerard Depardieu, is no longer French. He is Belgian – the latest prominent name to flee the new, socialist government's wealth taxes. Prime Minister Francois Hollande called the departing actor "pathetic" for his decision to turn in his French passport, but Depardieu didn't take the unjust insult lying down.

In an open letter he wrote, "I am leaving because you [the French government] believe that success, creation, talent, anything different must be sanctioned." Depardeiu pointed out that he had paid €145 million in taxes over his working lifetime, which began at the age of fourteen as a printer. He reportedly employs 80 people. "I am neither worthy of pity nor admirable, but I shall not be called 'pathetic,'" said the actor. "Who are you to judge me...? Despite my excesses, my appetite and my love of life, I remain a free man."

Free, but in remaining so, not a Frenchman anymore.

This story comes to light as two other news stories graced the

headlines here at home. The socialist organization the Vermont Workers' Center, a driving force behind the single payer healthcare movement, came out with some ideas about to pay for the \$3 billion that program will require in new taxes, largely with the kind of wealth taxes that drove Gerard Depardieu out of France. The Shumlin administration lavished praise on the seventeen page paper. Then, the U.S. Census reported that in all of the country in 2011 only two states lost population. Vermont was one of them, losing over 500 citizens. One wonders as how many Gerard Depardieus were in that number.

People have a right to keep that which they have earned in life and, it is immoral to take that away from anyone by force or without consent. While most Vermonters are charitable in nature and want to do their part to help those in need, at some point our government crosses a line and abuses its power. If the two stories above – rising taxes and fleeing Vermonters -- are related, then many have decided that line has already been crossed, and are voting with their feet to remain, like Gerard Depardieu, free. Free, but not Vermonters anymore.

Best wishes for a Happy New Year!

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