



Plunder and Deceit: Big Government's Exploitation of Young People and the Future

By Mark R. Levin

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#1 *New York Times* bestselling author and radio host Mark R. Levin delivers a "bracing meditation" (*National Review*) on the ways our government has failed the next generation.

In modern America, the civil society is being steadily devoured by a ubiquitous federal government. But as the government grows into an increasingly authoritarian and centralized federal Leviathan, many parents continue to tolerate, if not enthusiastically champion, grievous public policies that threaten their children and successive generations with a grim future at the hands of a brazenly expanding and imploding entitlement state poised to burden them with massive debt, mediocre education, waves of immigration, and a deteriorating national defense.

Yet tyranny is not inevitable. In *Federalist 51*, James Madison explained with cautionary insight the essential balance between the civil society and governmental restraint: "In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."

This essential new book is, against all odds, a likeminded appeal to reason and audacity—one intended for all Americans but particularly the rising generation. Younger people must find the personal strength and will to break through the cycle of statist manipulation, unrelenting emotional overtures, and the pressure of groupthink, which are humbling, dispiriting, and absorbing them; to stand up against the heavy hand of centralized government, which if left unabated will assuredly condemn them to economic and societal calamity.

Levin calls for a new civil rights movement, one that will foster liberty and prosperity and cease the exploitation of young people by statist masterminds. He challenges the rising generation of younger Americans to awaken to the cause of their own salvation, asking: will you acquiesce to a government that overwhelmingly acts without constitutional foundation—or will you stand in

your own defense so that yours and future generations can live in freedom?

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Editorial Review

Review

"Levin's book is precisely what the nation needs to force a public discussion of these issues and to keep statist hands off the remote...it honestly amazes me how, in a relatively short book, he can present power packed information on all these critical issues as thoroughly as the densest textbook yet in a style as readable and riveting as any best selling novel." (David Limbaugh, NYT bestselling author of *Jesus on Trial*)

"Everything that has made Mark Levin one of the conservative movement's most influential voices is there in his new book *Plunder and Deceit*. There's championship level rhetoric, Mr. Levin's trademark unapologetic zeal, as well as his relentless flood of facts and data...*Plunder and Deceit* is more than a book. It's a manifesto. The likes of which you'd expect to be written by an Old Testament prophet pleading with the emerging generation to return to the righteous path their ancestors strayed from....Mr. Levin has authored a Rosetta Stone for a true conservative to win back the White House in 2016." (The Washington Times)

"A clarion call to young people...arresting...Mark Levin has hope because the liberty activists he seeks to inspire will be on the side of the angels. And he has made certain that they will be armed with the facts." (Andrew McCarthy, NYT bestselling author of *The Grand Jihad*)

"Mark Levin writes beautifully, and he writes about important things...*Plunder and Deceit* is an excellent, engaging, engrossing survey of the damage done by Permanent Washington and its incompetent, self serving denizens...a bracing meditation." (National Review)

"[Levin] hits nearly every bit of stale, media perpetuated conventional wisdom in his neatly organized chapters, with an eye toward proving how all of these widely accepted falsehoods fit together into single unified deception...His crisp, well documented, beautifully written book offers a grim diagnosis followed by an inspiring conclusion. It's not a fatalistic work – it's a call to arms for a difficult battle." (Breitbart.com)

"Mark Levin has done it again...a frightening look into exactly what today's thoughtless and greedy ruling generation of Americans are leaving behind for the next generation — their own children." (The American Spectator)

"Once again Mark Levin, the constitutional scholar and radio talk show host, has written an important book that should be in the library of every thoughtful conservative...lucidly presented and meticulously documented...Be prepared to be uncomfortable, outraged, and motivated, if you buy this book, as I heartily recommend." (American Thinker)

"This book is required reading for any parent with college age children...crisp and compelling." (Conservative Review)

"Every American adult should buy or borrow a copy of *Plunder and Deceit* for a young person they know. Our mission as Americans must be to educate, inspire, and engage; with Levin's latest masterwork, we have every tool we need to help the next generation succeed. We must not delay." (Doug Ross)

"In his elegant and moving new book, *Plunder and Deceit*, Levin takes his message to the next generation."

(Ben Shapiro, NYT bestselling author of *The People vs Barack Obama*)

"Levin...has five bestsellers under his belt. With this release, it will be six, and it deserves to be...Full of history, it's also packed with easily recallable statistics anyone can use...It's a handbook for candidates and citizens alike." (Townhall)

"In his eye opening new book, *Plunder and Deceit*, Mark Levin explains the future President Obama's so called "progressives" are building for your kids." (The Daily Caller)

"Mark Levin's new book will no doubt be a bestseller...his latest work should be required reading for every recent college or high school grad...[he] explains in elegant, but easy to understand terms just how Washington and the elites who infest the nation's capital are stealing our future." (PJ Media)

"I encourage all parents, who care about this nation, its security, sovereignty, economic structure, and founding principles, to pick up a copy for their sons and daughters." (David Bossie, Breitbart.com)

About the Author

Mark R. Levin is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestsellers *Plunder and Deceit*, *Liberty and Tyranny*, *Ameritopia*, and *The Liberty Amendments*. He is a nationally syndicated talk-radio host and president of the Landmark Legal Foundation. Visit MarkLevinShow.com.

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Plunder and Deceit

ONE

PLUNDER AND DECEIT

Children sweeten labours, but they make misfortunes more bitter: they increase the cares of life, but they mitigate the remembrance of death.

—British philosopher and statesman Sir Francis Bacon¹

CAN WE SIMULTANEOUSLY LOVE our children but betray their generation and generations yet born?

Among the least acknowledged facts of American modernity is the extent to which parents, acting in their familial capacity, naturally and tenaciously guard their young children from threat and peril, to the point of risking their own physical and economic security in extreme cases; however, as part of the political and governing community—that is, the ruling generation—many of these same parents wittingly and unwittingly join with other parents in tolerating, if not enthusiastically championing, disadvantageous and even grievous public policies that jeopardize not only their children's future but the welfare of successive generations. To be clear, not all parental decisions are impactful or consequential in the lives of children; obviously, not all decisions are equal. Indeed, the most attentive and nurturing parents are not and cannot be conscious of every decision they make inasmuch as the totality of such decisions is likely incalculable even on a weekly or monthly basis. Moreover, in the healthiest families, the most considered parental decisions, based on seemingly prudential judgments, can and do produce unintended consequences. Of course, the same can be said of decisions about public policy and governing in a relatively well-functioning community.

However, there are accepted norms of behavior, a moral order—born of experience and knowledge, instinct and faith, teaching and reason, and love and passion—that provide definition for and boundaries between right and wrong, good and evil, and fairness and injustice, applicable to families and societies alike. Hence, a harmony of virtuous interests, informed by tried-and-true traditions, customs, values, and institutions, and cultivated within families and the larger community, preserves and improves the human condition, one individual at a time, and one generation to the next. Broadly speaking, this is the civil society.²

Edmund Burke, a political thinker who was born in Ireland and moved to England, where he became a prominent statesman in the eighteenth century, explained that the civil society relies on an intergenerational continuum of the past, the living, and the unborn. He wrote that “as the end of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living but between those who are dead, and those who are to be born.”³ In fact, Burke went further, warning that those who forsake the intergenerational continuum condemn themselves, their children, and future generations to a grim existence. “One of the first and most leading principles on which the commonwealth and the laws are consecrated is, lest the temporary possessors and life-renters in it, unmindful of what they have received from their ancestors or of what is due to their posterity, should act as if they were the entire masters, that they should not think it among their rights to cut off the entail or commit waste on the inheritance by destroying at their pleasure the whole original fabric of society, hazarding to leave to those who come after them a ruin instead of a habitation—and teaching these successors as little to respect their contrivances as they had themselves respected the institutions of their forefathers.”⁴

History confirms Burke’s observation. To embrace the moral order as parents nurturing their children, yet to abandon the moral order as members of the ruling generation, thereby contributing to predictably deleterious public policies with prospectively calamitous outcomes, is a decadence that leads to unstable and potentially oppressive or even tyrannical conditions which, in the end, degrade and disassemble the civil society and consume their children’s generation and generations beyond. Reformation and recovery may be possible but difficult and complicated, and typically only after the exaction of an enormous human toll.

Burke’s commentary was motivated by his reflections on the decade-long French Revolution and his revulsion at the anarchy and horror it unleashed. In the ensuing more than two centuries, and up to this very moment, the world has witnessed much worse. This is not to say that all instances of civil and societal dislocation take the form of bloody revolution or civil war. Obviously, there are varying pathologies peculiar to particular doctrines, cultures, governing systems, and so on. There are also differing events and circumstances, some building over time and others descending more abruptly, that contribute to the character of the discontinuity. But violence is the ultimate exposure.

Before Burke, Charles de Montesquieu, a French philosopher whose life predated the American Revolution but who was hugely influential on the Constitution’s Framers, also wrote of the disastrous aftermath of the civil society’s abandonment. He explained: “When that virtue ceases, ambition enters those hearts that can admit it, and avarice enters them all. Desires change their objects: that which one used to love, one loves no longer. One was free under the laws, one wants to be free against them. Each citizen is like a slave who has escaped from his master’s house. What was a maxim is now called severity; what was a rule is now called constraint; what was vigilance is now called fear. There, frugality, not the desire to possess, is avarice. Formerly the goods of individuals made up the public treasury; the public treasury has now become the patrimony of individuals. The republic is a cast-off husk, and its strength is no more than the power of a few citizens and the license of all.”⁵

In modern America, the unraveling of the civil society had been subtly persistent but is now intensifying. Evidence of rising utopian statism—the allure of political demagogues and self-appointed masterminds

peddling abstractions and fantasies in pursuit of a nonexistent paradisiacal society, and the concomitant accretion of governmental power in an increasingly authoritarian and centralized federal Leviathan—abounds. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the ruling generation's governing policies are already forecast to diminish the quality of life of future generations. Among other things, witness the massive welfare and entitlement state, which is concurrently expanding and imploding, and the brazen abandonment of constitutional firewalls and governing limitations. If not appropriately and expeditiously ameliorated, the effects will be dire. And the ruling generation knows it.

An August 2014 Wall Street Journal/NBC poll found that “Americans are registering record levels of anxiety about the opportunities available to younger generations and are pessimistic about the nation's long-term prospects, directing their blame at elected leaders in Washington. . . . [S]eventy-six percent of adults lack confidence that their children's generation will have a better life than they do—an all-time high. Some 71% of adults think the country is on the wrong track . . . and 60% believe the U.S. is in a state of decline. . . . This widespread discontent is evident among just about every segment of the population. Fifty-seven percent of those polled said that something upset them enough to carry a protest sign for one day. That included 61% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans, as well as 70% of adults who identify with the tea party and 67% of self-described liberals.”⁶

It is past time and, therefore, imperative that the ruling generation acquaints itself with James Madison's uncomplicated and cautionary insight, written to bolster the proposed Constitution's ratification at the state conventions. In Federalist 51, Madison explained the essential balance between the civil society and governmental restraint: “But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections of human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”⁷

However, why do so many loving parents, as part of the ruling generation, abandon the civil society for the growing tyranny of a voracious central government that steals their children's future, thus condemning their children and unborn generations to a dangerously precarious and unstable environment, despite a large majority acknowledging the national decline for which they blame politicians?

There are a number of possibilities. For example, language itself can contribute to the problem. The words “generation” and “ruling generation” and “future generations” can be imprecise and, for some, elusive. They can be thought of as merely theoretical and conceptual, or an unreality. Hence, the growth of numerous offshoots intended to provide context and clarification: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z, etc. That said, it is neither my purpose nor my desire to give them each exposition and fill these pages with distractions about sociological constructs.

Nonetheless, despite inexact nomenclature, there are differences relating to various age groups, some big and others inconsequential, just as there are similarities and shared interests. This is also true of individuals generally. More to the point, and importantly, parents are constantly thinking about and talking about their own children, and interacting with them in their everyday lives. Obviously, children are of flesh and blood, and their existence and condition are reality. Given that the future is not the here and now and future generations are images or ideas of amorphous groups of strangers, born and unborn, parents can delude themselves that their own children's immediate welfare, which they work to protect and improve, can be detached from the well-being of future generations.

This psychology also makes it easier for parents, as part of the ruling generation, to downplay or ignore the

longer-term and broader ruinous effects of contemporary public policies and reject any role or responsibility in contributing to them. It is a contradiction that usually originates with governing elites and statistes, who relentlessly reinforce and encourage it. They self-righteously advocate public policies that obligate future generations' labor and resources to their own real and perceived benefit, empowering governmental abuse via social engineering and economic depredation. They disguise the delinquency as compassionate and premised on good intentions, often insisting their objectives will improve the prospects of those most severely burdened by them—"the children." Moreover, the mastermind's tactics are disarming if not seductive. As I wrote in *Ameritopia*, "[w]here utopianism is advanced through gradualism . . . it can deceive . . . an unsuspecting population, which is largely content and passive. It is sold as reforming and improving the existing society's imperfections and weaknesses without imperiling its basic nature. Under these conditions, it is mostly ignored, dismissed, or tolerated by much of the citizenry and celebrated by some. Transformation is deemed innocuous, well-intentioned, and perhaps constructive but not a dangerous trespass on fundamental liberties."⁸

Certainly, not all parents or members of the ruling generation downplay or disregard the soaring costs and heavy burdens of scores of public policies on their children and future generations. Many are acutely aware of the gathering storm of societal and economic disorder and wish to do something about it. For them, the difficulty lies in not knowing how to effectively influence the omnipresence and complexity of a massive governing enterprise that is less republican and more autocratic, an ambitious project indeed. The masterminds and their flatterers are progressively immune to regular democratic processes and pressures, such as elections and citizen lobbying, unless, of course, the electoral results and policy demands comport with their own governing objectives. Otherwise, they have an escalating preference for rule by administrative regulation, executive decree, and judicial fiat as the ends justifies the means.

Many in the ruling generation have themselves become entrapped in economically unsustainable governmental schemes in which they are beneficiaries of and reliant on public programs, such as unfunded entitlements, to which they have contributed significantly into supposed "trust funds" and around which they have organized their retirement years. They also find self-deluding solace in the politically expedient and deceitful representations by the ruling class, which dismisses evidence of its own diversion and depletion of trust funds and its overall maladministration as the invention of doomsayers and scaremongers.

In his two-volume masterpiece *Democracy in America*, French historian and scholar Alexis de Tocqueville, writing about the species of despotism that might afflict America, observed: "Our contemporaries are constantly excited by two conflicting passions: they want to be led, and they wish to remain free. As they cannot destroy either the one or the other of these contrary propensities, they strive to satisfy them both at once. They devise a sole, tutelary, and all-powerful form of government, but elected by the people. They combine the principle of centralization and that of popular sovereignty; this gives them a respite; they console themselves for being in tutelage by the reflection that they have put in leading-strings, because he sees that it is not a person or a class of persons, but the people at large who hold the end of his chain. By this system the people shake off their state of dependence just long enough to select their master and then relapse into it again."⁹

Thus mollified, many in the ruling generation are by and large inattentive and heedless about the bleak prospects inflicted on younger people, who will neither benefit from the government's untenable programs, into which they are or will also be forced to make "contributions," nor possess the wherewithal to pay the trillions of dollars in outstanding accumulated debt when the amassed IOU bubble bursts during their lifetimes or the lifetimes of future generations. Still, it is argued that millions of people benefit from such programs. Of course, trillions of dollars in government expenditures over many years most assuredly benefit the recipients of subsidies or other related payments. But this does not change the arithmetic. The eventual

collapse of a colossal government venture will indiscriminately engulf an entire society and economy, including its millions of beneficiaries and benefactors, resulting in widespread disorder and misery. While this alone is daunting, no less derelict and pernicious are the other seemingly myriad ideological pursuits and social designs loosed on society by a ubiquitous federal government.

There is no comparable corporate structure shoring up the civil society and counterbalancing the federal government's discrediting and impositions. The federal government makes, executes, and adjudicates the laws. It even determines the extent to which it will comply with the Constitution, which was established in the first place to prevent governmental arrogation. Oppositely, the civil society does not possess mechanical governing features that, at the ready, can be triggered and deployed in its own defense. Ultimately, a vigorous civil society and a well-functioning republic are only possible if the people are virtuous and will them.

Therefore, what parents and the ruling generation owe their children and generations afar are the rebirth of a vibrant civil society and restoration of a vigorous constitutional republic, along with the essential and simultaneous diminution of the federal government's sweeping and expanding scope of power and its subsequent containment. If the ruling generation fails this admittedly complicated but central task, which grows ever more difficult and urgent with the passage of time and the federal Leviathan's hard-line entrenchment, then the very essence of the American experiment will not survive. As such, it can and will be rightly said that the ruling generation betrayed its posterity.

But what will be said of the younger generation—that is, the rising generation—say, young adults from eighteen to thirty-five years of age, if their response to the mounting tyranny of centralized, concentrated governing power is tepid, contributory, or even celebratory? Do they not wish to be a free and prosperous people? Do they not have a responsibility to preserve their own well-being and that of subsequent generations by resisting societal mutation and economic plunder?

The rising generation seems wedged in its own contradictions. While it is said to distrust ambitious authority and question the so-called status quo, further examination suggests that in large numbers its members sanction both through their political behavior and voting patterns. Although they self-identify as political independents, Pew Research reports that the rising generation “vot[es] heavily Democratic and for liberal views on many political and social issues,” including “a belief in an activist government.” Furthermore, when asked “would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, just 19% . . . say most people can be trusted.”¹⁰ But what is activist government if not trust in a relative handful of political masterminds exercising extraordinary power and commanding a large army of civil servants to manage the lives of millions of individuals? Paradoxically, there is no age group more enthusiastically reliable and committed by political deed to an activist if not fervent governing elite than the rising generation, and no age group more jeopardized by it.

Anomalies can be difficult to unravel; however, a few observations are merited. As a general and logical matter, younger people's dearth of life experiences and their quixotic idealism make them especially vulnerable to simplistic appeals and emotional manipulation for utopia's grandiosity and social causes, which are proclaimed achievable only through top-down governmental designs and social engineering and, concurrently, the detachment from and deconstruction of societal traditions, customs, and values, for which they have little or modest conception and investment. Consequently, while in the main and abstractly the rising generation may be distrustful of authority and people, younger people are also especially susceptible to seduction by demagogic politicians, propagandizing academics, charismatic cultural idols, and other authority and popular figures propounding splendid notions of aggressive government activism for and through such corresponding militant causes as “social justice,” “environmental justice,” “income equality,”

and other corollaries of radical egalitarianism.

In *Liberty and Tyranny*, I explained that this way of thinking “all but ignores liberty’s successes in the civil society in which humans flourish, even though [we are] surrounded in [our] every moment by its magnificence. . . . Liberty’s permeance in American society often makes its manifestations elusive or invisible to those born into it. Even if liberty is acknowledged, it is often taken for granted and its permanence assumed. Therefore, under these circumstances, the Statist’s agenda can be alluring. . . . It is not recognized as an increasingly corrosive threat to liberty but rather as co-existing with it.”¹¹

Inasmuch as the proclaimed injustices and imperfections of the civil society are presumably illimitable, so are the infinite reactionary governmental prescriptions and interventions allegedly required to abate them. Therefore, government activism and social designs in this context are perceived as routine, indispensable, and noble. However, the erosion of individual sovereignty, free will, and self-sufficiency necessarily give way to dependence, conformity, and finally tyranny.

Although the pattern is not unique to the rising generation, younger people often find self-esteem, purpose, passion, and, frankly, coolness when associated with or devoted to causes and movements self-proclaimed as righteous or even sacred. Eric Hoffer, the brilliant longshoreman philosopher, writing about the nature of mass movements, declared: “The prime objective of the ascetic ideal preached by most movements is to breed contempt for the present. . . . The very impracticability of many of the goals which a mass movement sets itself is part of the campaign against the present.”¹²

These utopian causes and movements are evinced by demands for assorted forms of expanded statism—increased governmental usurpations and empowerment—which invariably contribute to the deterioration of the civil society. To be clear, however, the rising generation is among the most devoted advocates of activist government. Consequently, it cannot be said to rebel against authority, although its members may believe that they do, but sanction its exercise and abuse in an incrementally severe centralized government, the latter of which, and its effects, have steadily emerged as the predominant characteristic of the actual status quo.

In particular, undergirding the rising generation’s ethos in this regard is the relentless indoctrination and radicalization of younger people, on a daily basis and over the course of many years, from kindergarten through twelfth grade to higher education in colleges and universities, which engrains within them a vulnerability to exploitation and zealotry. It builds among them acceptance or even clamor for self-destructive policies and conditions that ensure future economic and political instability.

Even the most diligent parents have little effective input into what their children are taught in these classrooms. Indeed, they have no adequate or routine influence in the selection of teachers and professors, curriculum, or textbooks, which principally advance, either openly or through insinuation, a statist agenda and ideological groupthink hostile to the civil society and the American heritage. The immunization of formal education from parental and community input is a monumentally disastrous event. Professor Bruce Thornton of California State University observes that the project is deceitful and insidious: “The founding of the United States . . . was not about things like freedom and inalienable rights, but instead reflected the economic interests and power of wealthy white property-owners. The civil war wasn’t about freeing the slaves or preserving the union, but about economic competition between the industrial north and the plantation south. The settling of the West was not an epic saga of hardships endured to create a civilization in a wilderness, but genocide of the Indians whose lands and resources were stolen to serve capitalist exploitation. Inherent in this sort of history were the assumptions of Marxist economic determinism and the primacy of material causes over the camouflage of ideals and principles.”¹³

In fact, Thornton's point about the perversion of formal education as a format for class warfare proselytizing is the modern American version of a central theme in *The Communist Manifesto*. Its authors, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, argued: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."¹⁴ They continued, "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, that each time ended, either in the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."¹⁵

By cultivating agitation and balkanization almost nothing about the civil society is said to be true, right, or lasting and, therefore, worth preserving and perpetuating. Instead, much uproar is generated in the quest for utopian abstractions and societal transformation—the fundamental cause around which younger people have been encouraged and trained to rally, to their detriment and the jeopardy of subsequent generations, and to the benefit of the statist.

The ominous signs of the rising generation's imperilment from these ideological contrivances are already abundant. For example, respecting contemporary social and economic conditions, Pew Research reports that today's younger people "are . . . the first in the modern era to have higher levels of student loan debt, poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of wealth and personal income than their two immediate predecessor generations had at the same stage of their life cycles."¹⁶ Specifically, at the end of 2012, individuals under 40 had \$645 billion in student loan debt, an increase of 140 percent since 2005.¹⁷ In 2014, unemployment for individuals between the ages of 16 and 19 hovered around 20 percent¹⁸ and the underemployment rate for recent college graduates stood at 46 percent.¹⁹ Among those aged 25 to 32 today, 22 percent with only a high school diploma are living in poverty compared to 7 percent of individuals aged from approximately 49 to 67 years of age who had only a high school diploma in 1979 when they were in their late twenties and early thirties.²⁰

In a separate study, Pew also found that "Young adults ages 25 to 34 have been a major component of the growth in the population living with multiple generations since 1980—and especially since 2010. By 2012, roughly one-in-four of these young adults (23.6%) lived in multi-generational households, up from 18.7% in 2007 and 11% in 1980."²¹

Furthermore, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), an appendage of Congress, reports that without a dramatic change in federal government spending, "[t]wenty-five years from now . . . federal debt held by the public [will] exceed 100 percent of GDP. . . . [D]ebt would be on an upward path relative to the size of the economy, a trend that could not be sustained indefinitely." In addition, "[b]eyond the next 25 years, the pressures caused by rising budget deficits and debt would become even greater unless laws governing taxes and spending were changed. With deficits as big as the ones that CBO projects, federal debt would be growing faster than GDP, a path that would ultimately be unsustainable." The CBO concludes: "At some point, investors would begin to doubt the government's willingness or ability to pay its debt obligations, which would require the government to pay much higher interest costs to borrow money. Such a fiscal crisis would present policymakers with extremely difficult choices and would probably have a substantial negative impact on the country. Even before that point was reached, the high and rising amount of federal debt that CBO projects under the extended baseline would have significant negative consequences for both the economy and the federal budget."²²

Thomas Jefferson presciently warned against such immoral collective behavior: "We believe—or we act as if we believed—that although an individual father cannot alienate the labor of his son, the aggregate body of fathers may alienate the labor of all their sons, of their posterity, in the aggregate, and oblige them to pay for all the enterprises, just or unjust, profitable or ruinous, into which our vices, our passions or our personal

interests may lead us. But I trust that this proposition needs only to be looked at by an American to be seen in its true point of view, and that we shall all consider ourselves unauthorized to saddle posterity with our debts, and morally bound to pay them ourselves; and consequently within what may be deemed the period of a generation, or the life of the majority.”²³ A few years later, Jefferson expressed even more trepidation: “[With the decline of society] begins, indeed, the bellum omnium in omnia [the war of all against all], which some philosophers observing to be so general in this world, have mistaken it for the natural, instead of the abusive state of man. And the fore horse of this frightful team is public debt. Taxation follows that, and in its train wretchedness and oppression.”²⁴

The laws of economics, like the laws of science, are real, unlike the utopian images and empty assurances of expedient and self-aggrandizing politicians and bureaucrats. There is a point of irreversibility from which no generation and the larger society can recover. Moreover, just as economic and political liberty are intertwined, spreading economic instability leads to political turmoil and, ultimately, societal disorder or collapse. In the interim, as this process unfolds, the dissolution of constitutional republicanism—including representative and consensual governance, dispersed authority among federal branches and between the federal and state governments, and the empowerment of a pervasive federal administrative state incessantly insinuating itself into the lives of the people—becomes regular and routine. The ensuing amalgamation of governmental control, and the escalating police powers discharged to coerce and subjugate the individual through multitudinous rules, regulations, taxes, fines, and penalties, confounds and benumbs much of the citizenry. Furthermore, the designed societal transformation and decay of enlightened self-government are portrayed as compassionate, progressive, and inevitable.

Nonetheless, the federal colossus will not reform itself and self-surrender its design. Its advocates, surrogates, and beneficiaries neither admit failure nor entertain circumspection. They are increasingly fanatical as they insist on more zealous applications of their ideological preoccupations and societal schemes.

The time is urgent for the ruling generation and the rising generation—that is, parents and their progeny—to step up in defense of their joint interests and in opposition to their common foe—a government unmoored from its constitutional beginnings and spinning out of control. The statist abuses and exploits younger people and subsequent generations, expropriating the fruits of their labor and garnishing wealth yet created, as a cash cow for voracious, contemporary governmental plundering, and manipulating and constricting their prospects and liberty even before they are of age to more fully pursue and enjoy them. The ruling generation, upon sober reflection, must stir itself to action in order to untangle the web of societal and generational conflicts produced by the statist’s endless and insidious social engineering and encroachment, even though it requires some level of economic self-sacrifice and partial withdrawal from governmental entitlements and subsidies.

The equally formidable struggle for younger people is first to recognize the constant and self-reinforcing influences of statist manipulation and exploitation, break loose from them, and then rally against them in their own defense. The rising generation must question, confront, and civilly resist the real authoritarianism that endangers its future and the quality of life of those not yet born, whether preached in the classroom, popularized through entertainment, or idealized by demagogic politicians. Their well-being as a free, self-sufficient, and thriving people is at stake. The real fight they must wage is against utopian statism, which grows at the expense of the civil society and their own security and happiness. Otherwise, the rising generation—and unborn, unrepresented generations that follow—will degenerate into a lost and struggling generation, living an increasingly bleak and hollow existence under steadily more centralized, managed, and repressive rule.

At the beginning of this chapter I asked: Can we simultaneously love our children but betray their generation

and generations yet unborn? The answer is no. I also asked: Do younger people wish to be free and prosperous? Do they have a responsibility to preserve their own well-being and that of subsequent generations by resisting societal mutation and economic plunder? The answer to both questions is yes. It turns out that the ruling and the rising generations have much in common after all.

In the first place and in the end, we must rely on our individual and collective capacity, albeit imperfect and fallible, for sound judgment and right reason. There are eternal and unchangeable universal truths that no professor, politician, expert, or combination thereof can alter or invalidate. The mission of this book, as in my past books, is to persuade as many fellow citizens as possible, through scholarship, facts, and ideas, to avert a looming tragedy—not a Greek tragedy of the theater and mind, but a real and devastating American tragedy, the loss of the greatest republic known to mankind.

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