There has got to be a better way to allocate well-being and motivate constructive action than 'profit'.

Under profit, the incentive is to acquire as much as one can for one's self and ones' own. But since money is a scarce, somewhat restricted commodity, who profits does so always at the expense of others. Egregious profits, profiteering, correspond to and require egregious deprivation, poverty for others. The myth is that profit leads to quality but manifestly that is not so. Profit-seeking leads to corner-cutting, crowd-pleasing, cheapening by pandering to appearance, image and the senses rather than substance. Profiteers live by the leaden rule: They do unto others as they would not have done unto themselves.

What are the alternatives? How can we more equitably distribute well-being in society while still motivating socially useful, desirable actions, without disproportionately rewarding a few and penalizing many? What would a society be like that directly encouraged and rewarded socially constructive desirable activities rather than using indirect, grossly ineffective means such as the monetary system with its undesirable, unanticipated consequences? Social good and social necessity are not constrained commodities. There is more than enough of each to go around. Providing for one social good, satisfying one social need, does not preclude providing for, satisfying others. But time, labor and resources are limited, scarce and informally rationed. Squandering any of these latter on frivolous, wasteful, meaningless projects means their loss cannot be recovered for more meaningful ones.

Of course the problem is assessing, determining and distinguishing legitimate need from whimsical want and wanton extravagance. At present, demand - who has enough surplus to pay for what - determines how resources are allocated. But why should the captains of piratical commerce determine which social needs are met and which not? In general, the wants and extravagances of the wealthy do not remotely coincide with the desperate needs of the impoverished.

Planned economies have failed because of poor, insufficient, inappropriate planning; but laissez faire economies similarly and equally fail because galloping socio-economic inequality foreordains revolution and revolt. Injustice, inequity, socio-economic disparity have and will always drive the tectonic plates of political change.

Cases in point: America's healthcare system is a national disgrace. Physicians, healthcare providers, insurance and pharmaceutical companies, profiteer shamelessly to the detriment, and regardless of the needs, of the rest of society. We, the most technologically advanced culture on the planet, are also among the most ethically and morally challenged. What's good for the people is subordinated to what benefits the providers, corporations and their stockholders. Our healthcare system puts the lie
to the myth that benefiting the well-to-do benefits the mean. Rather than
the exception, it is but one of many examples that disproves that rule.
The tragedy of the commons, that a greedy few can ruin the common good
for all, is not just ever-present greed but the utter failure of civil
society to constrain the exploitation of subsets of a population for the
benefit of others, the failure to assure all its citizens are treated
equally well.

As a nation, we seek to place caps on malpractice judgements but refuse
to constrain economic injustice, and malfeasance by healthcare providers,
insurance and pharmaceutical companies. Vital orphan drugs, for which
insufficient market is claimed, are ignored to focus on the treatment of
marginally significant conditions among the financial elite. We cut
funding for education, refuse to endorse universal healthcare, destroy
selected hapless, defenseless third-world countries so contractors and
political supporters can 'rebuild' them at our expense, then give tax-
cuts to the wealthy because 'it is their due'. But taxes are the debt we
each owe society, a license fee for the privilege of exploiting our
fellow citizens for personal gain. The more we gain, or have gained, the
more we owe in direct proportion to the advantage we have taken of our
fellow citizens. Anything less is sanctioning larceny by the well-to-do
against the less-well-off.

Of course the other side of the issue is that tax monies ought to be
spent exclusively for the betterment and well-being of the citizenry, in
direct proportion to their need, generally in inverse relation to their
tax obligation. The welfare of the people is NOT achieved by further
enriching the already rich but by providing meaningfully for those with
vital needs.

How did this happen? Whence cometh the dominance of the cult of the
individual? What happened to the sense of a common good's being more
important than any individual's profiting? How did it happen that an
individual's rights and suffering are as inconsequential to the
juggernaut of excess accumulation as are ants crushed beneath the heels
of collective indifference, mashed into the concrete by the sidewalk
stroller.

What has become of the obligation, the duty of the well-to-do to care for
the less-well-off, to provide for those broken, damaged or abused, lives
wrecked or tattered in the wake of their passage! Article V of our Bill
of Rights provides that private property shall not be taken for public
use without just compensation. But one's well-being is not so well
protected. Unjust, inequitable accumulation of well-being at the expense
of others is utterly, morally and ethically wrong. There has always been
and will always be those typified by the vanity license plate, ME4ME, the
self-absorbed egoists of this world who, regardless of the needs and
rights of others, parasitize others' vulnerabilities for their own gain.
Malignant as persons with such character flaws are, they are not the
principal problem. The problem is the rest of civil society, the majority,
who fail to constrain the actions of the piratically rapacious few.

Our legal and legislative system, our courts and executive, have utterly
failed the people of this nation by allowing the cult of the individual
to take precedence over integrity, compassion, honesty and a sense of responsibility for the common good. Profit, not professional responsibility, prevails.

A nation that hoards, cheats, defrauds or steals from its own people or other nations in order to take their resources is, or should be, a pariah. The welfare of a nation is achieved, not by exploiting other nations for their desirable resources, but by becoming a respected, reliable, honorable member of the world community; by sharing its wealth and privilege with the needy of the world, not by bestowing those on their elites, foreign or domestic, to assist them in suppressing their disadvantaged minorities. Neither is the welfare of a nation achieved — locally, nationally or internationally — by violating the principles of sustainable resource utilization or by raping other nations' environments for their limited resources. Rather it is achieved by exercising leadership by example in halting unsustainable exploitation of non-renewable resources.

What profiteth it a nation if it gains the world and loses its soul? America has lost its soul; not just sold it for a handful of colored beads, it has lost it in the forests of self-service.

More generally, our planet is at serious risk from mankind's excess: consumption, population and waste production. If nations such as ours continue to seek to command, control and grab for themselves the little that is left, the viability our species' survival is seriously in jeopardy.

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