



Stealing from Each Other: How the Welfare State Robs Americans of Money and Spirit

Edgar K. Browning

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Almost all Americans would be better off if none of the federal welfare-state policies of the last century—including Social Security—had ever been enacted. So argues economist Edgar Browning, and with good reason: In 1900, government played a very small role in the day-to-day activities of American citizens. There was no income tax. No Social Security. No federal welfare programs. No minimum wage laws. No federal involvement in education. Government was small, spending well under 10 percent of our incomes. But now, federal, state, and local governments spend more than 33 percent of our incomes. Why has government grown so much over the past century? The answer, in Browning's devastating critique of the modern welfare state, is simple: the rise of egalitarian ideology—an ideology that has not just harmed the economy but made us all poorer.

This book examines all facets of the welfare state in the U.S. and its egalitarian underpinnings. Egalitarians claim, for instance, that markets are unfair and that we must have redistributive policies to produce social justice. This reasoning supposedly justifies the two-thirds of federal spending that simply robs Peter to pay Paul. We are stealing from each other. Browning's research and trenchant analysis show that: -Almost all U.S. citizens are harmed by the welfare state—even many of its apparent beneficiaries. -Welfare-state policies have large hidden costs which all told have reduced the average income of Americans by about 25 percent. -There is much less inequality and poverty than is commonly believed. -Most taxpayers will receive less back from Social Security than they put in. Provocative? Indeed. But such conclusions result from the most thoroughgoing economic analysis of the modern welfare state yet written. Written for a general audience, *Stealing from Each Other* covers everything informed citizens need to know about inequality, poverty, welfare, Social Security, taxation, and the true costs of government redistributive policies.

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