

## Treat the Disease, Not the Symptoms

As with nearly all problems, there are several circumstances that contribute to Idaho having the highest rate of poverty in the nation for young adults from ages eighteen to twenty-four. A few probable causes for this alarming statistic are: Idaho is an agriculturally based State and many young adults in that range may work the family farm; the colleges in Idaho don't have as many professional degrees that lead to the higher paying jobs; many of the people in that age group are newly-wed couples that are struggling to get their feet under themselves as they start their families; and possibly most significantly, we live in one of the most prosperous countries in the world and much of our population has begun to think that wealth is a right everyone is entitled to, instead of a privilege to be earned individually.

The biggest problem in our society often isn't in the circumstances surrounding our people, it exists in the very minds of those we try to help and by "helping" them, we often only succeed in deepening their dependence on others and undermining their self-sufficiency. It is no wonder that people from other countries look at our people with disgust and loathing; they see a people who have lost their initiative, a people who have digressed from the very principles that once made them great. We live in a country of vast opportunities, but we think that that greatness can be achieved just by simply wishing we had it. We live in an age of speed and convenience, where we can get anything, at any time, with minimal effort and many of the people ages 18-24 have not yet realized that the real world does not work like the Internet.

There is not just one, ready-made answer that will magically eradicate this important social issue. Any program put into action will have innumerable effects and,

even with the best intentions in mind, may cause more harm than good. For example: if we were to significantly raise minimum wage, businesses would be forced to fire employees because they would not have the necessary funds to increase the pay of all of their staff. Thus, by trying to make it so that all of the people who are working in the minimum wage jobs can be above the poverty level, you have increased the unemployment level in the very group of people you were trying to help. I think that the best solution to this question is not in giving out more money to those people who have trained themselves to rely on the generosity of society and have gotten to the point where they believe that they should be taken care of with little or no effort on their part; the answer is to re-train them to work for what they get.

I will not dispute that many of the people in this group are hard-working people who are just a little down on luck or who are going to college to get an education so that they won't have to live in poverty for the rest of their lives. I am not saying that we should get rid of the programs that are already in place to help people who have low incomes and are struggling, but I would suggest we change them. My Church has a welfare program set up where anyone can come to them and get help, but in return for that help, they are required to spend some time working at one of the Church's facilities. I think that this is a great system, because it gets the help to the people who need it, but also helps to teach them that you need to work to get things in this world. Just giving away money is a very bad solution, because it is merely treating the symptoms instead of the disease. We need to teach the new generation the value of work. Too many people seem to think that they can have whatever they want without doing anything to get it. To

get at the real source of the problem, our society needs to do more to promote the value of giving everything you have to achieve a goal.

I don't think that living in poverty for a limited period of time, such as while attending college to get an education so I can stay out of poverty for the rest of my life, is such a terrible thing. Having the opportunity to see what hard work and perseverance can accomplish, in rising above the poverty level and becoming the kind of person that you want to be, can be a tremendous motivator for people who are willing to put forth the effort. To try to keep myself out of poverty, I have applied for college and been given a full tuition scholarship to Utah State University, and I went to their campus a few weeks ago to compete for a Fellowship there, which would pay \$1000 annually and would allow me to do undergraduate research with a professor.