

Never Enough: America's Limitless Welfare State

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Since the beginning of the New Deal, American liberals have insisted that the government must do more—much more—to help the poor, to increase economic security, to promote social justice and solidarity, to reduce inequality, and to mitigate the harshness of capitalism. Nonetheless, liberals have never answered, or even acknowledged, the corresponding question: What would be the size and nature of a welfare state that was not contemptibly austere, that did not urgently need new programs, bigger budgets, and a broader mandate? Even though the federal government's outlays have doubled every eighteen years since 1940, liberal rhetoric is always addressed to a nation trapped in Groundhog Day, where every year is 1932, and none of the existing welfare state programs that spend tens of billions of dollars matter, or even exist.

Never Enough explores the roots and consequences of liberals' aphasia about the welfare state's ultimate size. It assesses what liberalism's lack of a limiting principle says about the long-running argument between liberals and conservatives, and about the policy choices confronting America in a new century. *Never Enough* argues that the failure to speak clearly and candidly about the welfare state's limits has grave policy consequences. The worst result, however, is the way it has jeopardized the experiment in self-government by encouraging Americans to regard their government as a vehicle for exploiting their fellow-citizens, rather than as a compact for respecting one another's rights and safeguarding the opportunities of future generations.

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