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By: Alieta Eck MD, http://www.aapsonline.org/index.php/video/238

Imagine the amazement of an Ecuadorian Auca Indian on his first visit to a modern American grocery store. He described the wonder of walking down the aisles, filling his cart with his colorful choices. Once his purchases were scanned, his American host handed him a plastic card which he was instructed to give to the young lady at the register. Not only did the card allow him to take all the groceries “for free,” but the clerk gave the credit card back to him! This visit to the store cost him absolutely nothing. America is a wonderful place!

Now it might be completely understandable that a man brought up in the jungles of South America might not comprehend the concept of credit, but when an American brought up in the US education system believes similarly, one must wonder what is in the curriculum. Our people have the idea that the government gives things out for free. But the stark reality is that credit cards come due, the balance needs to be paid, and our government simply does not have the money. Any wise consumer knows that borrowing money to buy groceries cannot go on for long.

Whatever happened to thrift, a solid work ethic, and living within one’s means? In the past 50 years, the sense of responsibility of the American people has diminished, rewarding politicians who appeal to the childish sense that Big Brother has another program to meet their needs. Voters choose those who will promise more benefits from the public coffers. ObamaCare was touted as affordable or free medical care. Of course, it is neither.

In 1965, the era of massive “entitlements” began—some earned and some bestowed upon those who cannot or will not earn enough to live on. But, as Governor Mitt Romney candidly remarked,48% of Americans now receive a check or some other aid from the federal government— in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, or other programs. This massive government spending has now reached the point where the government spends $1.40 for every $1.00 it receives in taxes. The nation cannot pay off its credit card each month as we borrow $188 million per hour. The majority of the American people do not think that this is a big deal. The only explanation is that they are thinking like children.

In February 2012, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke warned of the coming crisis. He said: "Under current law, on January 1, 2013, there's going to be a massive fiscal cliff of large spending cuts and tax increases.” He has no solutions, and Congress can only spout the same tired remedies of taxing the rich more and eliminating fraud and abuse. Sensible thinking is not emanating from the White House.

Physicians and hospitals are gearing up to adjust to what is coming. Medicare is scheduled to lower the fees by 27%. Those practitioners who are heavily dependent on government money will face the greatest upheaval, and those who have managed to avoid the government programs will fare better.

The United States Treasury funds failed government programs and wasteful projects, hastening our arrival at the fiscal cliff where taxes rise and government spending falls. One solution is to stop inventing “green energy jobs” that give taxpayer money to friends and campaign donors. Another is to revisit the idea of making the safety net more comfortable and more permanent. This hurts taxpayers and recipients alike.

We taxpayers will need a game plan to tighten our belts and demand that the government treat our hard-earned dollars with respect. We must plot our exits from the bloated national programs that cannot live up to their promises. We must return to our noble roots of self-reliance and strong moral character, and plan as though the federal government programs will fail. We must and can nurture strong community roots where neighbor helps neighbor.

Tumbling off a cliff leads to great injury, but with some grown-up thinking, perhaps we can avoid it.

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