The False Promise of Big Government: How Washington Helps the Rich and Hurts the Poor

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I. Introduction

This lecture is not about making government “small,” or about depicting it as “bad.” The lecture is about the automatic assumption that bigger government is a necessary aid to the average person.

II. The Myth that bigger government is needed by the poor and average person to counteract the injustices of the private sector

A. New Deal roots of the myth
B. The historical staying power of the myth – e.g. Great Society, 2008 recession

III. Addressing the Myth

A. Contradictory facts, admissions
B. Big government responds to big power – e.g., relationship to big business
C. Big government becomes end in itself
   1. Size of government is proxy for social remedies – e.g., education, poverty
   2. How big government can betray the poor
   3. How big government can backfire on stated intentions
D. Big government crowds out social institutions vital to poor and average person
   1. The benefits conferred by the mediating institutions of civil society
   2. How government can undercut those institutions
   3. How social erosion hurts the poor