

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT?

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At one extreme are those who say the proper function of government is to protect the people from each other and foreign adversaries; that private enterprise can do everything else better than the monopoly of the state. It was Thoreau who rephrased "The best government is that which governs least", but it has also been attributed to Jefferson and Paine long before him.

Lincoln says: The legitimate object of government, is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all or cannot do so well for themselves in their separate and individual capacities.

At the other extreme are those who say that the proper role of government is to do whatever the majority of the people want it to do; that democracy is the ultimate justification of force. However, beyond these two extremes is yet another concept - government as the representative of the community or society - the people as a whole.

Natural resources are a common opportunity to all people. It is on the land that we live, and from it we produce our food, clothing, shelter, and all other products including those used to produce more products. The value of those resource opportunities (land) do not result from the efforts of individuals or corporations; they result from the conscious and subconscious cooperation of the people at large.

Therefore, the first duty of government is to collect the rent of land from those who have been entrusted with its exclusive possession. The second duty of government is to spend the money in the preservation of order and the administration of justice, national defense, and the operation of those business in which there cannot reasonably be competition - navigable waters, roads and highways, bridges, wires and pipes that run along them. Government has no right to grant private monopolies.

Government should be limited to the value of the land (natural opportunities), which measures that portion of the Gross Domestic Product that is produced by society as a whole. This leaves 100% of the goods and services that result from individual productions to the people who made them. This leaves 100% of the profits from corporate productions to the stockholders of corporations that brought them about. There is no justification for confiscatory taxes like income or sales.

When society advances beyond a rudimentary stage, the results of conscious and subconscious cooperation within the community attach to the land. They provide a source of revenue for the common good. These socially produced values are an increasing fund for the increasing needs of an evolving society. Beyond a certain stage of development these values become sufficient to care for those who are physically and mentally unable to take care of them selves. At later stage socially generated revenue becomes sufficient to fund social security and national healthcare.

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