1-15-1999

Privatization and the Private Psychology of Social Security

Editor

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Abstract. This article describes a crucial psychological nexus that mitigates against governmental attempts to privatize social security programs.

Throughout history many political entities--from empire to country to terrorist group--have effected variants of social security programs for various proportions of those entities' members. In fact, a broad definition of "political entities" would include military organizations, companies, and labor unions as well. The publicly reinforced premise of these programs is that there would be a source of financial and/or material support for some entity members (members of a society). The support would be available sometimes before and during, but almost always after, the so-called "best years" of members' lives--after the zenith of work productivity, earning power, or physical zest and as the encroachment of impending death looms.

Society's members construct private psychologies concerning social security programs--sometimes congruent with their public discourses, sometimes incompatible. The nexus of these psychologies is that there's a sure thing--at least as sure as a thing can be--to somewhat help with the material challenges of daily living. Depending on one's material situation and self-perception of this situation, the help may be unnecessary, necessary, sufficient, or even grossly inadequate. But it's there. And that's what social security is all about.


Published by Scholarly Commons, 1999