

# We're Sitting Ducks

The economic recession of 2007-09 made many Americans aware how dependent upon the government and the present system they had become. Those who had recently bought houses with little down payments were underwater on their homes. Those who had accumulated a large amount of student loan debt as an "investment" saw their "guaranteed" job opportunities disappear. And those who had depended on the stock market for their retirements saw their 401ks drop to one-third of their previous total. It was a wakeup call, and it led many to start developing basic skills they had not been taught growing up.

But for most, the effects of that wakeup call soon wore off. As Hilaire Belloc said, men are blinded by their immediate past, and a little economic upturn made many people forget what it felt like when the safety nets provided by the system were suddenly taken away.

Listen, one doesn't need to be a conspiracy theorist. A little knowledge of history will show you that "things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." Unexpected catastrophes happen. Previously "efficient" and "secure" systems are now the ruins of today. With very few exceptions, people cannot completely dispense dependency on others for some needs. But, our dependence on others to provide for our *basic* needs should be moderate at best, and with the awareness that a present provision for those needs is no guarantee of their future provision.

That's why the following facts are kind of scary:

- Most Americans don't have significant savings. [A recent study](#) found that 43 percent of the U.S. couldn't last more than a month without a paycheck.
- [49% of Americans](#) live in households that receive government assistance.

- [Only 7%](#) of workers are self-employed.
- [Only one-third of households](#) grow any of their own food.
- [Only one-tenth](#) of Americans hunt or fish.

The renowned social critic Christopher Lasch described this situation of dependence in *The Culture of Narcissism*:

*“Having surrendered most of his technical skills to the corporation, [modern man] can no longer provide for his material needs. As the family loses not only its productive functions but many of its reproductive functions as well, men and women no longer manage even to raise their children without the help of certified experts. The atrophy of older traditions of self-help has eroded everyday competence, in one area after another, and has made the individual dependent on the state, the corporation, and other bureaucracies.”*

In other words, we're sitting ducks. We really need to start becoming less dependent on others and more dependent on ourselves, before it's too late.

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