

# The Founding Fathers on What to Do With Poor People

1. "I am for doing good to the poor, but...I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it."

-Benjamin Franklin, 1766 (*On the Price of Corn and Management of the Poor*)

2. "The government of the United States is a definite government, confined to specified objects. It is not like state governments, whose powers are more general. Charity is no part of the legislative duty of the government."

-James Madison, Jan. 10, 1794 (speech before the House of Representatives)

3. "Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition."

- Thomas Jefferson, 1787 (*Notes on the State of Virginia*)

4. "Let your heart feel for the afflictions and distress of everyone, and let your hand give in proportion to your purse."

- George Washington, Jan. 15, 1783 (letter to Bushrod Washington)

5. "Having been poor is no shame, but being ashamed of it, is."

- Benjamin Franklin, 1749 (*Poor Richard's Almanac*)

6. "I deem it the duty of every man to devote a certain proportion of his income for charitable purposes.... However disposed the mind may feel to unlimited good, our means having

limits, we are necessarily circumscribed by them.”

– Thomas Jefferson, 1806 (letter to Drs. Rogers and Slaughter)

7. “Repeal that [welfare] law, and you will soon see a change in their manners. St. Monday and St. Tuesday, will soon cease to be holidays. Six days shalt thou labor, though one of the old commandments long treated as out of date, will again be looked upon as a respectable precept; industry will increase, and with it plenty among the lower people; their circumstances will mend, and more will be done for their happiness by inuring them to provide for themselves, than could be done by dividing all your estates among them.”

-Benjamin Franklin, May 9, 1753 (letter to Collinson)