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Readers' Forum

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Romney's policies echo those during time of Irish famine

Voters have less than forty days and forty nights to consider if Mitt Romney's vision of a divided America is to become "the way life should be" in the State of Maine and the nation.

Romney needs to work fast to get his numbers right about the 47% of citizens who do not pay a federal income tax. Most of the Americans who pay no federal income tax do pay about 9% of their income to Uncle Sam in payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities).

Even Sen. Susan Collins called Romney's remarks "a terrible distraction" because they could be interpreted as telling senior citizens who worked their entire lives that they had not paid for and earned their Social Security or Medicare benefits.

Romney's disdain for the 47 percent of American citizens who "are dependent upon government ... for food, housing, you-name-it" sounds remarkably similar to the laissez-faire policy of Charles Trevelyan, British relief administrator,

who, during the Great Famine of the 1840s in Ireland, warned of the need to eliminate "the canker of state dependency" manifest in the tendency of all Irish classes to "make a poor mouth."

The British government closed the soup kitchens and food depots in Ireland in the belief that the free market would reduce the people's dependence on the government while at the same time maintaining the rights of private enterprise.

We know too well the consequences of this economic policy from that painful chapter of history. I am a descendant of one of the millions of families who were forced to flee Ireland where the policy of the free trade warriors, by emigration and death, successfully removed millions from "the canker of state dependency."

Nov. 6 provides the opportunity for citizens to cast their votes for a leader whose vision includes all of us, one nation undivided, and mutually dependent.

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