

Threatening People with Fines and Jail

A question on Quora: “Why are so many American conservatives against the systems that are so effective in countries such as Finland and Denmark?”

First, it’s begging the question by using “effective.” European welfare states have had such success that Denmark has had to cut back on benefits, and Finland has tried replacing standard welfare payouts with a “basic income” that hasn’t worked either. Second, the scales of population and demographics are completely different. Those countries’ populations are less than that of New York City alone, with different ratios of worker ages. So it’s absurd to think that the spending can be copied merely by multiplying by a certain factor, no matter the number of decimal places.

Finally, there’s the fundamental moral argument of why someone should be forced to pay for what another receives. Broad welfare benefits and universal health care aren’t an insurance program whose participants have all voluntarily joined, but a government threatening people with fines and jail if they won’t “pitch in” for what others have voted themselves.