

The Season of Not Demanding

December 28, 2020

Every day, in tandem with these columns, ThisIsCommonSense.org provides a bit of history (“Today”) and a wise or significant saying (“Thought”). Christmas Eve’s Thought is worth thinking about again.

“Liberty is the only thing you cannot have,” wrote William Allen White, “unless you are willing to give it to others.”

While one could argue that trust and love and a number of other important things also require reciprocity, it is true, and *profoundly* so, that *liberty*

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is reciprocal — or non-existent: if you won’t let others be free, they won’t let you be free, either.

Further, the responsibility that is freedom’s flip-side is something we must do together.

That is where the idea of shared burdens comes in. Freedom is not itself a non-economic, or free



good, in that those who won’t leave us free must be fought, sometimes with a lot of time and effort and resources. And even danger.

The key to not turning the burden of defending freedom into a form of oppression itself is to respect individual liberty in doing so — *not* turning our wants into commands.

This year, 2020, the challenge has been bigger than usual. Governments’ demands have been breathtakingly extensive: to *not* work, *not* trade, to *not* engage in business or worship or even going to the beach.

That burden has been so oppressive — and so much worse for some (small business folks and their employees, especially, and those with mental health issues) than others (like retirees, people in government, those working from home) — that surely it is too much to demand of others.

That’s something to consider in this “gift-giving” season: Don’t play the spoiled child, with a *gift-demanding* attitude toward others.

Freedom is the gift we can all afford to exchange.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.