

Cowpie Asks

Calf #1

February, 1996

Has the Federal bureacracy grown *that* much?

The Federal government is a huge, red tape spewing, juggernaut, filled to the brim with bureaucrats. They should take a lesson from our fine state and local governments about leanness.

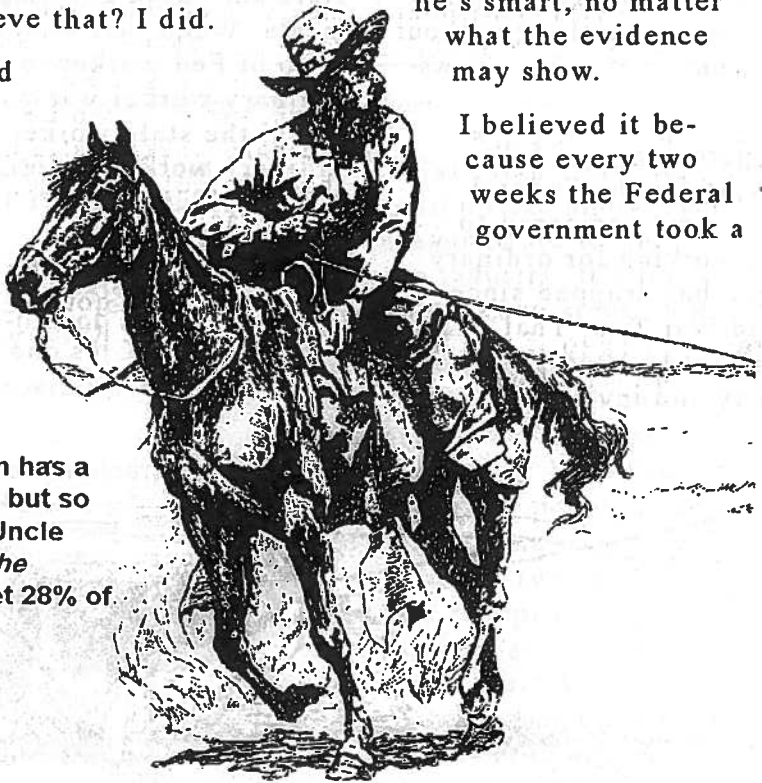
You believe that? I did.

I believed the Federal

bureaucracy was a monster octopus because I *wanted* to believe it. You ever notice how easy it is to convince someone of something they want to believe? You can always convince a man he's smart, no matter what the evidence may show.

I believed it because every two weeks the Federal government took a

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big chunk of money out of my paycheck, money I was just as capable of spending foolishly as Uncle Sam. Now Uncle Sam has a tough job, but so does my Uncle Jack and *he* doesn't get 28% of my pay!

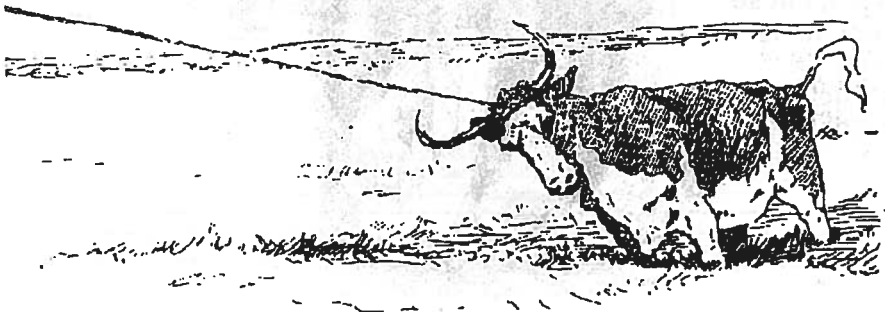
But what I wanted to believe, and what was true were two different things. It is amazing to me at how often that is the case! Here are the facts. Can't write anything without facts, unless it's for a newspaper.

The percentage of folks working for the Federal government compared to folks working for ordinary people has dropped since World War Two. That's right. Dropped! In 1946 if you had a party and invited 63

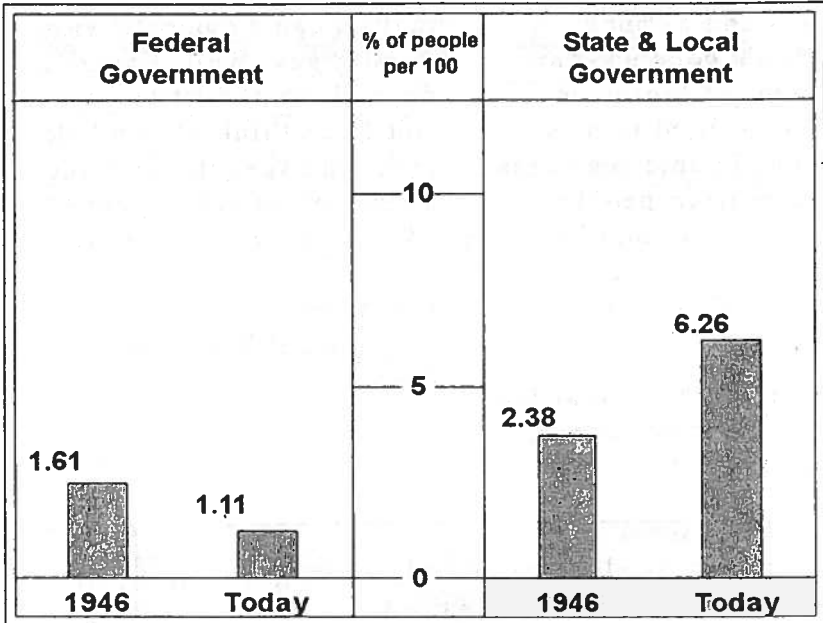
people, one of them would be a Fed. Today, you'd have to invite 90 people! You'd need to hire a room. In real numbers (and since this isn't a lecture on economics, we'll be using real numbers) the number of Federal employees has gone from 2.2 million in 1946 to 2.8 million today.

Now let's take a look at the state and local governments. When that same ratio of Fed worker to ordinary worker was going down, the state worker to ordinary worker ratio more than tripled! Here are those pesky facts again:

- One in 42 worked for state and local governments in 1946. It's one in 16 today.



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You can't prove anything without a chart, so I have obliged.

- 1946: 3.3 million state workers. 1995: 16.5 million.

Between 1990 and 1993:

- state government employment grew 3.3%
- local government grew 5.5%
- Federal employment *dropped* 12%.

Maybe the reason for the local growth is that the Unemployment Offices ran into overtime to help all those out of work Feds.

Since I work for a living, I can't say I'm a

financial expert, but it looks like state and local governments are a real growth industry. It's too bad I can't buy stock in it.

Some of this state and local government growth can be accounted for. Here are just two examples. With the War on Drugs and people getting tough on crime in general (with one or two recent notable exceptions), prison populations are going up, and this requires more guards and prison personnel to keep them in and more parole board members to let

them out. And as our population's gone up, the Department of Motor Vehicles has needed to hire many more People Annoyers. But 16.5 *million* people working for state and local governments? Holy cow! That's enough to start your own country!

People will tell you that the little guy can't get ahead,

that he can't compete with the big guy. Well, I guess it depends on the little guy. But I can think of two little guys who seem to be doing a fine job of getting ahead. When it comes to big fat bureaucracy, state and local bureaucrats got the Federal government beat hands down!

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Note: Most of COWPIE's topics are complicated; we are not suggesting that these issues can, or even should, be over-simplified, nor are we attempting to do so.

Information in this booklet is from an August 1995 article published in the *Los Angeles Times* entitled, "Federal Job Force Not So Bloated."

*Steven C. Markoff, Revised 2/5/96