



## **A Nation of Moochers: America's Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing**

*Charles J. Sykes*

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# A Nation of Moochers: America's Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing

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## **A Nation of Moochers: America's Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing** Charles J. Sykes

We have experienced a shift in American character: we've become a nation of moochers. Increasingly dependent on the efforts of others over our own, Americans are free to freeload. From the corporate bailouts on Wall Street to the alarming increases in personal default and dependency, from questionable tax exemptions to enormous pension, healthcare, and other entitlement costs, the new moocher culture cuts across lines of class, race, and private and public sectors. And the millions that plan and behave sensibly, only to bail out the profligate? They're angry.

Charles Sykes' argument is not against compassion or legitimate charity, but targets the new moocher culture, in which self-reliance and personal responsibility have given way to mass grasping after handouts. *A Nation of Moochers* is a persuasively argued and entertaining rallying cry for Americans who are tired of playing by the rules and paying for those who don't.

## **A Nation of Moochers: America's Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing Details**

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Author : Charles J. Sykes

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# **From Reader Review A Nation of Moochers: America's Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing for online ebook**

## **May-Ling says**

i could not get past the first two chapters. i thought this would be a comprehensive view of mooching, but instead sykes chooses mooching instances that serve his point - a conservative rant against any concept of welfare. it's the same oversimplification of systemic problems we've seen before. i was willing to stomach it if there was a critical look at the other side of mooching, too. the book jacket seduces you into thinking he's going to do this by taking a hard look at bailouts for large corporations, but you can hear a pin drop on the rich and corporations manipulating tax loopholes to avoid paying taxes. i'm uncertain why the focus on the very poor finding loopholes is where the emphasis is placed when the financial amount comparatively is so nominal. yuck.

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## **Paul Pessolano says**

“A Nation of Moochers” by Charles J. Sykes, published by St. Martin’s Press.

Category – Current Affairs/Politics

For those of you who will have the urge to run out and purchase a copy of this book please be advised that it will not be available until January 2012.

The sub-title to this book is, “America’s Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing.” The crux of the book is whether America has come to the point that more Americans today are more dependent on others for their livelihood, in other words are they dependent on OPM (other people’s money).

Sykes delves into how we have become a “Moocher Nation” and how we can reverse what is happening in the United States today.

He studies not only how a large portion of our population has become addicted to “feeding at the trough”, but how Corporations spend millions of dollars to secure their place at the trough. He investigates how pork programs continue to grow, not only in numbers but also in cash pay outs.

It is indeed a sad commentary when people are given money by the government that they do not deserve but feel bound to take it because, “if I don’t take it somebody else will.”

Sykes will keep you spellbound when he enumerates the waste in government programs, not the least was the aid given to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, to say nothing of the corporate bailout.

This really gets scary when Sykes begins to delve into how long we can continue on this road of self-destruction. More and more is demanded from fewer and fewer. At what point does one say I am tired of contributing, I want to get a piece of the free pie for myself.

An enlightening and entertaining book that should be a must read by everyone. It is certainly a book that brings the economic situation to the forefront and tackles the age old question concerning, “How much

responsibility do I have for the welfare of others?"

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### **Mama K says**

LOVED this book. should be required reading in all high school senior classes, or at the very least freshmen college classes. the book clearly defines how we've become, not a compassionate society, but a dependent one. Of course, all the bleeding hearts will hate what Sykes has to say (and completely ignore all the research he has to back it up), but we all need to heed the contents of this book or by as early as 2025 this country will be BROKE. Favorite quote in whole book--"A compassionate society provides a temporary safety net for the unlucky. it does not provide a soft mattress for a lifetime of dependency." Second favorite quote--"A compassionate society provides opportunities; it does not treat free cell phones or wireless Internet as entitlement. It does not punish work or make it easier to be dependent than it is to get a job and improve yourself." Third favorite quote--"A compassionate society provides the opportunity and freedom to travel. It does not compel you to buy your neighbor a new car." Final favorite quote--"A compassionate society makes sure that people do not starve. It does not buy free lunch for everyone."

We all need to grow up, recognize the difference between "need" and "want" and learn to earn! I wasn't any "luckier" than anyone else. I just WORKED harder! And I'm tired of apologizing for what I EARNED. I had nothing handed to me; I WORKED for it.

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### **Tyler Grant says**

I found this book difficult in a few ways. The book reads like a list of everything the government has ever done wrong and the author is full of righteous indignation. One reason I find the book difficult is that I am proud of our government and country and hate it to such brazen and shameless disrespect for and low esteem of it in seeking to improve it. For nearly every case brought up by Sykes should be corrected.

But therein lies another difficulty I had with this book. In listing every mistake the government has made, he is very unbalanced in the portrayal of government. There is no larger picture, no context. Each case is portrayed as a horror, but the book suffers from simple representativeness bias. Are these cases representative of the job the government is really doing? By not even addressing the counterpoint, and there certainly are some, or addressing the situation within the larger context, the book simply becomes a list of stupid things that have been done, with no relation to the bigger picture. There is no way for the reader to assess how representative these cases are? So some lady defrauded the government insurance horribly. The focus of the book is individual cases. There should be constant effort to eliminate fraud, of course, but how common is it? What percentage of claims are fraudulent? That simple fact is not addressed at all. We are simply left with the emotional horror of what a few people did to cheat the system. I have to admit I'm a bit confused. Unless fraud like this is rampant, the whole argument that the program needs to be done away with is moot. And is he really surprised that there are parasites on society out there? They have always been and always will be and need to be constantly dealt with.

Simply put, Sykes doesn't make his case in the broader context, he just racks up a list of complaints and gets

all indignant about it. His judgment, perspective, and scholarship are all lacking.

Contrast this book with *It's Even Worse than it Looks*, that I'm reading right now. The book is full of supporting facts and statistics and analysis of how well the data truly represent reality, with all the caveats that are necessary. *A Nation of Moochers* will primarily unnecessarily undermine faith in government and stir up anger. It's a marvel to me that when a business makes a mistake, that's capitalism. If the government makes a mistake – and remember that the government is at the end of the day, run by imperfect people – it's a travesty.

I've worked for the federal government and seen the good and the bad. The government is not perfect; it is not super efficient. Take a simple example: speed limits. A perfectly efficient speed limit would change with changing conditions: weather, how many other cars on the road, type of vehicle, etc., and would vary by stretch of road and in time. But that would be too expensive to operate. So rules are made and they are inefficient. If there is no one on the road, you can probably go a little faster. If you can't see because of a storm, the limit should be much lower. So they are annoyingly inefficient. But who would argue that they are unnecessary? The inefficiency is a necessary evil and dealing with it is part of our responsibility as citizens. It's not an issue of individual freedom either, it's an issue how our actions affect others. It's an issue of being a good citizen and member of society. There are many things only the government can do and must do. Citizens need to realize this and not try to expect God-like perfection from the government.

All of that said, I believe Sykes is correct when he says that people are trying more and more to get something for nothing. The case has been made better elsewhere, I'm sure. I support measures that responsibly, gradually, and carefully cut back on carefully selected government handouts. This should be an issue both parties can work together on. However, I've also read that fraud and related issues are only a miniscule portion of the budget and from that perspective are not the highest priority right now, no matter how far it sticks up your craw.

Sykes solution is also pretty simple. Get everyone to step away from the trough at once. How, he doesn't detail. Also restore shame, which is his goal in using the term moochers. Not a viable solution in my opinion. The money has to be cut off at all levels. We can't expect people's behavior to change.

Of course, a better solution would be for everyone to become Mormons. Then dishonesty and fraud would all but disappear and can you imagine how much better society would function???

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### **Anne says**

Well researched and thought provoking.

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### **Book says**

*A Nation of Moochers: America's Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing* by Charles J. Sykes

"*A Nation of Moochers*" explores the "mooching" culture, its societal implications and what can be done to curtail it. The book includes countless examples of mooching from many walks of life guaranteed to make

your blood pressure rise. Thought-provoking, insightful but misses the mark on some key issues but overall a worthwhile read. This interesting 320-page book is broken out in six parts: Part One. Moocher Nation, Part Two. The Joys of Dependency, Part Three. At the Trough, Part Four. Bailout Madness, Part Five. Middle-Class Suckers and Part Six. What's Fair?

#### Positives:

1. Straightforward prose. The book is accessible to the masses.
2. Thought-provoking book that covers many political/economical issues of interest.
3. Generally fair and even-handed despite espousing libertarian principles. Mooching goes on at all levels.
4. A good format. The author provides many great quotes and mixes things up to keep the narrative interesting. As an example, a moocher checklist.
5. The problem of dependency, agreed. "More programs of dependency generate more reliance on ever more and varied handouts, as the habit of dependency becomes ingrained and increasingly attractive to others".
6. Sykes makes it very clear, we have become a "moocher" society. Government reliance is at an all-time high. Many compelling examples and many that will make your blood pressure go up. Infuriating at times.
7. Many great facts and tidbits throughout the book. " By tax day in 2010, nearly half of U.S. households paid no federal income taxes. After years of cuts, credits, and outright rebates, 47 percent of households had no net liability at all". Troubling.
8. The problems associated with a culture of mooching. Well argued.
9. One of the main arguments of this book and I wholeheartedly agree, "The whole point of the rule of law, argued Bastiat, was to make sure that plunder was not more rewarding than labor, and therefore its goal should always be to protect property and punish plunder." The assumption of incompetence.
10. The history of moocher nation, when it was born.
11. The problems of poverty. Good stuff.
12. Examples of government waste and fraud. Disturbing and upsetting.
13. Examples of Corporate Welfare even tax credits to moviemakers, say what? Farm subsidies...
14. Crony capitalism. The new Lobbying Class.
15. An interesting look at union abuses. Bloated pensions. Scandals.
16. The mortgage madness. Many books have been written on this topic alone.
17. The inside scoop on the Great Bailout of 2008-2009 and shame on Goldman Sachs.
18. Middle-class examples. Mooching on parents, parents mooching off children and many disturbing examples that clearly show the system is failing.
19. The debt problem.
20. Compassionate Society defined
21. Links worked great!

#### Negatives:

1. Not once does the author mentions the unconstitutional faith-based initiatives, or as I call it, the ultimate dependency...the dependency on a celestial Santa. Ayn Rand would have agreed with me.
2. The book fails to mention or discuss the ever increasing inequality problem in America. The top 1% owns 40% of all the wealth. I'm not talking about an issue of redistribution, I'm talking about an issue where the superrich have rigged the government to their favor and at the expense of the rest and it's only getting worse.
3. I would put the brunt of the blame for the mortgage crisis squarely on the predatory practices of the banking industry and the lack of government oversight. "As Richard Posner and others have noted, it is one thing to ease the burden of dysfunctional overregulation; it is quite another to use it as a cover for Wall Street to invent bogus new securities that were so lacking in transparency and so fragilely connected to reality that they bordered on the fraudulent."
4. The author doesn't discuss the crass abuses of CEOs, the golden parachutes. As an example, Lehman Brothers was not saved by the government yet the CEO left with a golden parachute worth hundreds of

millions of dollars for a failed company!

5. I do have an issue with the book relying many times with the very same organizations that deny scientific consensus. As an example, the Heritage Foundation does not accept global warming and in fact has purposely misinformed the public to benefit oil companies.

6. The book in my view overemphasized "poor" moochers over the even more damaging "economically elite" moochers who have rigged the system to their advantage.

7. Charts would have added value.

In summary, reservations noted I enjoyed the book. I may disagree even strongly on some issues but in general Sykes provides many great examples and backs it up with some sound thought-provoking arguments. I think the general premise is sound though I disagree with some of the principles. Worth the read and keep an open mind. I recommend it!

Further suggestions: "No They Can't" by John Stossel, "Red Ink: Inside the High-Stakes Politics of the Federal Budget" by David Wessel, "White House Burning" by Simon Johnson, "The Benefit and the Burden" by Bruce Bartlett, "The Age of Greed" by Jeff Madrick, "The Price of Inequality" by Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Red Ink" by David Wessel, "Aftershock" by Robert B. Reich, "The Monster: How a Gang of Predatory Lenders and Wall Street Bankers Fleeced America..." by Michael W. Hudson and "The Looting of America" by Les Leopold.

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### **Abe says**

this book is comprehensive, in fact you been exhausted, in its presentation of mooching, both corporate and individual mooching. the only reason I didn't give it 5 stars is that the single chapter about solving the problem is not nearly in depth enough. maybe that is another book in and of itself, but I wish there was more on it. I am always frustrated by presentation of problems without a good solution. this book has potential to be a paradigm shift in recognition of what mooching is. And how bad this nation has become. How far down the road we are.

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### **Beverly says**

The author argues that we are very close to that point, if we have not already crossed the line: from the corporate bailouts on Wall Street, to pension, healthcare, and other entitlement costs, to questionable tax exemptions for businesses and individuals, to the increases in personal default and dependency, the new moocher culture cuts across lines of class, race, and private and public sectors. Interesting concept, but not new information.

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### **Heather says**

If you come into this book with a personal agenda like thinking this author is conservative or liberal you will be sorely disappointed. There is not one kind of political agenda here. This is not a book for the Tea Party people as some other reviewers have claimed (PS: those reviewers did not finish the book!). One of the nice things about the book is that Sykes takes balanced aim at all political aspects of American life from both the

moochers of Hurricane Katrina to the moochers of Wall Street. Bottom line: "moochers" exist in all the various political forms! He points out in the beginning of his book that "a culture of mooching undermines responsible behavior by rewarding and subsidizing failure, irresponsibility and dependency" (Sykes 19).

If you are curious about the various statistics and examples of this 'moocher culture' then read this book as it will be an eye-opener. Sykes gives countless tale after countless tale of people from all walks of life who feel they are "entitled" to receive free goods and money. Scary! It is a fast read that still packs a large punch. My only real complaint is that he does not spend too much time giving solutions only facts to build the obvious case of the 'moocher' life we have become accustomed to.

The very end of the book Sykes has an example of what our society "should" look like that he calls 'A Compassionate Society'. In this he gives statements such as "A compassionate society makes sure that people do not starve. It does not buy a free lunch for everyone" and "A compassionate society takes care of those in need. It does not assume that we are all incapable of making it on our own"

Let's wake up to the current state of our culture as outlined in this book and do something about it!!

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### **Ryan Young says**

tea party meets ayn rand. heavy on numbers and meanness. not so heavy on the expected psychology of a nation of dependents. skip it and read a web comic. [www.smbc-comics.com](http://www.smbc-comics.com)

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### **Rachel says**

I think this is an important book for many to read in society, although the ones who need it the most, probably will not.

In the majority of the book Sykes chronicles the myriad programs that allow people to be moochers: farm subsidies, school lunches and breakfasts (and probably soon dinners), food stamps, housing assistance, corporate bailouts, student loans, health care spending, etc. What he shows is that the trillions of dollars that American taxpayers give for all these programs simply reward bad behavior and punish good behavior. For example, in one chapter he shows the growing difference between the private sector and government employees. The average salary for government employees is now larger than the private sector. Gov't employees also enjoy pensions and generous health benefits. So while many private sector employees scrimp and save to add to their (401)k, they also pay for the government pensions which employees do not need to add to.

"Poverty cannot be solved simply by providing more money because poverty is not simply a matter of dollars and cents: It is also a product of culture, spirit, and character. Treating poverty as simply a matter of economics runs the risk of cash transfers that destroy the very values and incentives that provide the best hope for the poor to get out of poverty" (262).

Sykes quotes many politicians and uses their rhetoric to show their goals of the welfare system. Instead of having a charitable system that is meant to help people get out of hard times, there are not goals to get people off of welfare and only goals to get more and more on welfare. So welfare is really just giving someone



else's money to someone else.

One of the sections that was particularly eye opening was about how much our children will be paying toward our national debt. According to Sykes, a child born in 2010 (the year Cirdan was born), came into the world owing about \$29,000 toward the federal debt. By 18, he'll owe about \$80,000. By age 30, about \$166,000. No matter how prudent and hard working he is, that is what he'll owe.

This section was particularly interesting to me as a parent. I wonder how I will teach my children the value of hard work in a world that penalizes hard work (if they don't have a job, they can get money through various welfare programs. If they get a high paying job, the more they make, the more the government will tax). So how do I teach them to work hard when everyone in school gets a star because everyone's smart? How do I encourage them to try their hardest when everyone at the soccer game gets a trophy because everyone's a winner?

I think these are questions that will continue to occupy my thoughts for years to come.

The last section was also very interesting. After proving that we are indeed a nation of moochers (which did not take any convincing on my part), he closes by asking how we can reverse the situation. I disagree that it's possible. When I see the numbers on food stamps rising, the numbers of those collecting unemployment rising, etc. I don't think we can reverse it. I think that very few people have the will power to, after being dependent upon someone else, decides to be independent again. I think it would be very hard to reinstate the stigmas once associated with moochers that have seemed to vanish in today's society. Is it possible to reverse our situation and slow down our government spending? I sincerely hope so for my children's sake.

For those of you who do not have time to read the book, he closes with a nice summary:

A compassionate society makes sure that people do not starve. It does not buy free lunch for everyone.

A compassionate society makes provisions so that the homeless or the otherwise destitute are not exposed to the elements. It does not provide no-down-payment, no-income loans so that people can buy unaffordable houses at inflated prices.

A compassionate society provides opportunities; it does not treat free cell phones or wireless Internet as an entitlement. It does not punish work or make it easier to be dependent than it is to get a job and improve yourself.

A compassionate society provides the opportunity and the freedom to travel. It does not compel you to buy your neighbor a new car.

A compassionate society provides a temporary safety net for the unlucky. It does not provide a soft mattress for a lifetime of dependency.

A compassionate society may cushion the worst effect of the business cycles. It does not provide billion-dollar bailouts to the business whose reckless bets go south.

A compassionate society takes care of those in need. It does not assume that we are all incapable of making it on our own.

A compassionate society does not infantilize its citizens or corrupt them by making them a nation of

moochers.

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### **Ietrio says**

Everybody likes something for nothing. Even Sykes looking for appreciation in exchange for badly done research.

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### **Janet says**

I would give a copy of this book to my neighbour but he would not sense the irony ... if it is not tylenol it is cough syrup or TP or laundry soap or coffee or milk or poop bags for his dog or a 100 round mile round trip to go and get his weed.

just an aside ...

The tylenol pissed me off the most as he whined that "some was for his mom you know" ... cannot afford his own analgesics as he is broke and too sick to go to the drugstore. Yet he smokes two packs a day and has to go 50+ yards off our property as we are a non smoking ANYWHERE entity. It would not bother me if it was a two way street.

Okay so good book bad neighbour

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### **Jim Blessing says**

This book read like a Fox News broadcast with inaccurate and oversimplified points of BS.

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### **Jennifer says**

In all fairness, I did not finish this book. I put it aside in disgust, because it is such a gross oversimplification. Once I saw statistics that I knew had been manipulated to serve his point, I completely lost interest. The premise of his book is essentially this: if you are American, and don't live entirely off the grid, and you use any public service- you are a moocher. There is definitely mooching occurring in the United States, but those moochers are not the individuals and/or groups that Mr. Sykes saves most of his vitriol for.

However, if you are a Tea Party member, you will most likely love this book.

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