

Government just keeps spending

The more things don't change

[Washington Times](#), By Cal Thomas, July 16, 2026

French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr knew what he was talking about when, in 1849, he coined the phrase “Plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose” (“The more things change, the more they stay the same”).

It has been repeated and attributed to various people, but Karr appears to have said it first.

The quote is especially true in modern politics.

I recently found an April 1976 interview I conducted with Ron Paul, the father of Sen. Rand Paul, Kentucky Republican. I was a reporter for the local NBC station in Houston, and Mr. Paul appeared to have won a primary runoff election for a House seat.

Regardless, the final ballot count was delayed. Would you care to guess why? It was because of a malfunctioning vote counting computer in Brazoria County.

A Ron Paul campaign billboard I have never forgotten depicted an overweight “Uncle Sam” with the caption “Put big government on a diet.” If only.

A much younger me asked Mr. Paul what he felt was his greatest strength in the race. He replied: “I think one thing was clear cut. Government is too big, and the people are fed up with it. The usual politicians will not [get us] out of it.”

One of the problems with overthrowing the establishment, I said, is that you then become the establishment (take note, Democratic Socialists of America). What is to prevent somebody from running against you in two years and saying, “Throw that politician out of office”?

He offered this defense: “We’re going to stop spending and stop the taxation and stop the controlling of people’s lives.”

How is that going?

I asked Mr. Paul to identify the greatest source of fat in government. “The biggest is [the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare]. But it’s big everywhere — every agency, everywhere you can think of. We’re spending too much money.”

He was right then, but what would he think now? In 1976, the federal debt was approximately \$629 billion. Today, it is \$39 trillion and counting. In 1976, the defense

budget was \$90.5 billion. Today, it is \$838.5 billion. Welfare spending 50 years ago amounted to \$331 billion. Today, it is \$1.82 trillion, including federal, state and local spending.

Yes, inflation is part of it, but not all of it. A quote often attributed to Benjamin Franklin — though there is no clear proof he ever said it — warned that unlimited spending and debt had led other countries and could lead ours to the end of the republic: “When the people find that they can vote themselves money, that will herald the end of the republic.”

At play here is the darker side of human nature, driven by the political promotion of envy toward what others have earned — wealth that some now claim a “right” to share.

In that long-ago interview, Mr. Paul was onto something. His son has tried to carry on his father’s economic legacy.

Although Ron Paul encountered resistance from the establishment of his day, Rand Paul has faced far greater resistance. There are so many entrenched interests, along with the spirit of entitlement promoted by the left, that many politicians will not even address the rate of spending growth, much less make real cuts.

It is because they fear the wrath of their political opponents, who will accuse them of starving grandma.

Perhaps Vice President J.D. Vance’s Task Force to Eliminate Fraud will deliver tangible, lasting results. Given past efforts and Congress’ desire to keep spending, I would not count on it.

Plus ça change, plus c’est la meme chose.