Obesity in the Global Village

My number is 1.6 billion. That is 1.6 billion adults (15 yrs. +) are projected by the World Health Organization to be overweight and 400 million were projected to be obese. These numbers are disproportionately skewed by the United States and Western Europe where being in the obese category is much more likely than not if deemed overweight. The impact on social structure revolves around the projected medical costs attached to healthcare incurred by individuals who are overweight and obese. The treatment of obesity and the ailments linked to being overweight or obese were estimated to be 99.2 billion dollars per year in the United States alone in 1995, and include such high cost chronic diseases as type 2 diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, hypertension, gallbladder disease, breast, endometrial, and colon cancer, and osteoarthritis. Because most of the diseases associated with obesity are chronic, that is they develop and produce symptoms over time, excess weight is a killer that drags out treatment heightening medical care costs. Healthcare is increasingly becoming viewed as a natural right within developed republics, and in nations adhering a greater socialist calling than the United States, the pledge for universal healthcare is already a large burden on the state and the citizens it taxes. Rampant obesity and ubiquitous excess weight are a stress, particularly in the Western World, the welfare state is not prepared to address in conjunction with age related diseases and the failing health of the baby boomers. The dilemma proposed is a collapse of a government’s ability to adequately fund a healthcare system, especially if aspiring to universal coverage, besieged by baby boomer claims and the deluge of the younger generations draining funding and resources earlier in their lifespan due to obesity related diseases. This number is the albatross signaling that the political value that a
legitimate government has a responsibility for individual citizens’ health is at odds with the stress tolerance of governing institution. If the value stymies institutional process, as a huge healthcare debt would to social state medicine, then the value will change or the institution will collapse. It appears the challenge of aging populace and chronic obesity and excess weight are going to force citizens and tax payers to rethink a government’s responsibility, at least in the realm of health, to citizens and thereby, greatly reshaping socialist amendments to world governments.

Resources: