an advocate of involving government in social enterprise when he has been a longtime spokesperson for Ashoka, the organization that first popularized the term "social entrepreneur" and which has always taken a strong stance against government funding. What are Ashoka's reasons for not accepting government funds? First, government grants rarely come without strings attached, and Ashoka believes these strings result in a number of negative consequences to grantees. Stipulations placed on the grantee often lead to nonprofits reacting to the wishes of government, thus limiting their ability to be proactive to the needs of their beneficiaries. Studies have also shown that nonprofits relying heavily upon government grants are more prone to mission drift in an attempt to acquiesce to the granting agency. Another problem Ashoka cites is that government funds shift rather capriciously as government priorities change. Because the political winds shift in two-, four-, and six-year election cycles, grantees often have little or no ability to ensure that shifting political priorities match their own.

Not only is this topic controversial in terms of the efficacy of social enterprises, it's also likely to become highly controversial in a purely political sense. Michelle Malkin and other conservatives have already dubbed the new Democratic Party support for social entrepreneurship as a "political slush fund" for left-leaning organizations aligned with Democrats. Interestingly, their criticisms are reminiscent of the left's criticism of Bush's White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

Nathan Cryder
Executive Director
Global Gain
Lexington, Ky.

Although I have admired much of David Gergen's career over the years, the last thing social entrepreneurship needs is to become linked to big government. If and when this occurs, it will begin the decline of the movement and the loss of the very excitement and new energy he discusses.

In the private sector, most firms that grow to more than $20 million begin to lose their creativity as they evolve further into gargantuan but highly ineffective monoliths. The same is true of many government programs. Most of the best NGOs are quite small and nimble. They emerge from the grass roots and become able to have significant impacts. Over the past two decades here at the Marriott School, my students and I have launched some 40-plus innovative projects to improve the world, a number of which became NGOs that do microcredit, literacy, square-foot gardening, and other interventions globally. The 16 largest of them raised $24 million in 2007 alone, serving more than 3.1 million poor families. As these organizations expand, we tend to split them off so that they become more self-reliant and sustainable; thus the lifeblood of creativity flows better and new ideas flourish.

Social entrepreneurship needs the vitality and simplicity of structures that are human scale and require entrepreneurial mind-sets to survive. In doing so, they are able to accelerate their movement and build life-changing strategies for the poor, as well as for the agents of change—the social entrepreneurs themselves. This is not about politics or liberals vs. conservatives. Social entrepreneurship is about bottom-up
change strategies that are experimental and purposefully designed to operate on a human scale, where the spirit of sacrifice and transparency are at the core, and love and personal relationships, not bureaucracy, give life to the organization and its outputs.

The United States clearly needs to revitalize both its government and corporate sectors, but establishing a federal Office of Social Innovation and Results would be akin to George W. Bush's fantasies known as No Child Left Behind and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. In spite of wonderful announcements at their launch, both have tended to evolve as mere rhetoric that produced little impact.

Our focus is on thinking outside the box, and adhering to the mantra "If it ain't broke, break it." We are risk takers, not careful plodders within society's norms. Our work is down in the trenches where we labor in solidarity with the poor. The growing interests of Washington, the World Bank, and the United Nations in social entrepreneurship are dangerous signs of an imminent takeover by the establishment.

Civil society is best built by radical innovators who don't fit into formal organizational systems that run from the top down. The truth of the matter is that today's new social enterprises have arisen precisely because of the incompetence and strangled decision-making cultures of the big boys of business and government. Such institutions have reached the point of suffering from a kind of organizational sclerosis—hardened processes, loss of flexibility, and narrowing of vision. They tend to settle in jaded routines, operate cautiously, and shun responsibility. Inviting such institutions to join the cause of empowering the poor by fostering social innovation seems quite ludicrous.

**Warner Woodworth**
Professor of Social Entrepreneurship and Organizational Behavior
Marriott School, Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

I must praise David Gergen's very insightful comments and Jim Phillips' excellent questions. This is one of the best interviews on the subject of how the government can work with social entrepreneurs.

But for limitations of time, I think Gergen would also have described a pioneering fellowship program in social entrepreneurship that he led the effort to bring to Harvard's Kennedy School, Graduate School of Education, and School of Public Health in 2005 and which was established at New York University (NYU) in the following year. These programs have significantly accelerated the interest and activity in social entrepreneurship at Harvard and NYU, and have created a new dialogue on the role of public policy and social entrepreneurship from the different perspectives of the leading U.S. business schools. What is emerging is a greater effort by top-tier universities to have several of their best graduate schools and undergraduate divisions collaborate in interdisciplinary global problem solving. There is great power and promise in this trend of universities fusing academic brilliance with practical problem solving and in the growing link between innovative public policy/public partnerships and social entrepreneurship.

**Gordon Bloom**
Director
Harvard Social Entrepreneurship Collaboratory
Cambridge, Mass.

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**WHERE WERE YOU WHEN YOU DECIDED TO CHANGE THE WORLD?**


A train winds slowly through the jungle. Passengers, mostly Westerners, crowd the front car. They are sitting on wood benches, leaning against lead-glass windows. The tropical heat and motion of the train lull them to sleep.

Minutes pass.
Hours.

Finally, the train approaches a small village. The conductor ambles down the aisle and stirs the passengers from their slumber, handing each a small box lunch.

The train exhalés steam.
The conductor objects.

They hand out their lunches anyway.

"Lunches?" a man inquires.

"We need more lunches!"

There are no more.

The children burst into a violent riot. With sticks, rocks, even bare hands, the stronger children strike down the weaker children, and take their food.

As the passengers stare, paralyzed with disbelief, the train slowly begins to pull away, leaving many small girls and boys lying on the ground.

Lifeless.

For God's sake do something!" a woman pleads.

Frantically, the passengers collect their box lunches to give to the children.

The conductor objects.

They hand out their lunches anyway. A feeling of relief sweeps through the train. Disaster, it seems, has been averted.

"Lunches?" a man inquires.

"We need more lunches!"

There are no more.

The Matale Line is the name of the track that train was on. One of its passengers, a 13-year-old boy, went on to found a communications agency solely to help nonprofits. It is called The Matale Line.

The Matale Line is a collection of communications experts, versed in a range of disciplines, from strategy, branding and fundraising to advertising, interactive and PR.

Each of us believes that good intentions are never enough.

That nothing in the world will ever change until an organization gets a critical mass of the right people to commit to that change.

Our purpose is to help you become that organization.

Every organization has a story. Told right, yours can change the world.

Let's talk.
Call Bill, The Matale Line's founder, at 206.343.9000. Or email bill.toliver@mataleline.com.

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