The King the Milk, and the Honey (The first draft)

Once upon a time, there lived a king. His kingdom was the richest on earth. It overflowed with milk and honey, yet there was discontentment among some of the king’s subjects.

One day a group of the king’s subjects paid a visit to the king. Thinking himself to be both wise and just, he allowed his subjects an audience to air their grievances.

“Oh king,” they said, “surely a king as wise and as just as you would fix the great injustice that has overcome our kingdom if only you knew that it existed.” The king insisted that in fact he was both wise and just and would do whatever he could to stamp out injustice in his kingdom.

“Oh king,” the petitioners continued,” there is a great inequality that has spread through your fair land. Some of your subjects can only afford to drink milk from the cow while others are able to pasteurize and homogenize it. Some subjects are even able afford to have some of the fat removed from their milk As a result, these subjects are less obese and are able to fair better in our sporting games. They hold honor among their neighbors only because they have access to purified skim milk.”

“Still others are even able to afford to add chocolate powder to their milk. Chocolate carries antioxidants and fights depression, so those who have access to this milk enhancement live happier lives than the rest of your subjects. The injustice isn’t even confined to milk.” They went on. “Some of your subjects are left to eat raw honey while others are able to afford pasteurized honey in cute bear shaped bottles.”

The king, who lived a rather isolated existence, was appalled to learn of the great inequality that had overcome his fair kingdom. After all, the king regularly drank pasteurized skim chocolate milk and ate pasteurized honey. What kind of king would he be if he couldn’t provide the same standard of living to his subjects as he was able to afford himself at their expense?

The king called together his royal advisors and asked them how to alleviate the injustice.

“Redistribution”, said the advisors. “Take chocolate milk and pasteurized honey from those who have it and give it to those who do not.”

The king did exactly as he was told. He took from those who had the ability to purify, skim, and chocolate their milk and gave their milk to those who could only afford whole milk straight from the cow. Next the king gathered up all the bear bottles of honey and divided them equally throughout his kingdom. At that moment in time, there was no inequality. The king was very pleased with himself. He gave his advisors a raise.

A little while later another group of subjects petitioned the king. “Oh king”, they declared, “our kingdom is producing less milk and honey than before. This recession is hurting those of your subjects most who are least able to afford milk and honey. The land is plagued with unemployed people. Some cannot find jobs while others refuse to look for them. Those who used to be our most productive dairy farmers and bee keepers are producing less milk and honey. Something must be done to speed up your kingdom’s economy or surely we will all starve.”

The king called together his royal advisors and asked them how to alleviate economic decline.

“Run a budget deficit to stimulate demand in the economy” they answered. The king did as he was told and borrowed large amounts of money from the kingdom to his west. With the borrowed money he imported milk and honey from abroad and distributed it to those most in need. He gave an extra share to those who had lost their job in the domestic milk and honey industries. The subjects’ bellies were again full of milk and honey. The king was pleased with himself. He gave his advisors another raise.

A little while later another group of subjects petitioned the king. “Oh king”, they declared, “you must fix the problem that has besieged the economy of your kingdom. Our milk and honey producers are having trouble financing upgrades to their capital. They used to borrow money from the kingdom to the west, but now they have no money to lend because they have lent it to you. Without new replacement capital milk and honey production will continue to fall. Fewer people will have access to homogenized and pasteurized milk. Furthermore, the interest payments you are making to the western kingdom have replaced spending on roads and education in your fair kingdom. Milk and honey producers are having a hard time finding skilled craftsmen to work for them. They also have a hard time getting their products to market over the pot-hole filled roads. If you don’t do something about the burden of the public debt surely we will all starve.”

The king called together his roayl advisors and asked them how to alleviate the burden of the debt.

“Print money to finance the debt and promise to pay government workers big pensions later so they will work for less money up front”, replied his advisors. The king did as he was told and ran the royal printing presses. As a result, king was able to pay off his debt to the western kingdom, spend more on infrastructure and education, and afford to buy even more imported milk and honey for those most in need. The king was very pleased with himself. He gave printed off another big raise to give to his advisors.

Shortly thereafter, another group of subjects petitioned the king. “Oh king”, they declared, “the western kingdom was none too pleased to be paid back with worthless currency and they have begun to increase their standing army. We fear that we may be invaded.” While they were with the king another group of subjects approached. “Great king,” they began, “the rampant money printing has led to hyperinflation. Prices are rising so fast we cannot afford to buy milk and honey.”

The king called together his royal advisors and asked them how to alleviate the burden of inflation.

“Price controls”, they replied. The king did as he was told. He mandated that milk and honey prices stop rising. He visited a local market to find that his knights had successfully implemented the policy. The king also raised the minimum wage for milk and honey workers. Across his kingdom prices and wages were fixed so all could afford ample milk and honey. The king was once again happy. He gave his advisors extra vacation days.

A little while later another group of subjects petitioned the king. “Oh wise and benevolent king”, they started, “for the first time in your prosperous kingdom’s history there are massive shortages of milk and honey. Store shelves are bare. People have to turn to the black market to get even a little milk or honey. This underground economy has caused a general disregard for the rule of law by your subjects. People are suckling straight from their neighbors’ cows in the middle of the night and breaking open hives to steal honey. The knights are unwilling or unable to keep order. We hear they are worried that their promised pensions will only be paid with worthless currency. Even black market milk and honey suppliers are now refusing payment in currency. They demand a barter of other goods or services in exchange for milk and honey.”

The king called together his royal advisors and asked them how to alleviate the shortages and lawlessness.

“More government regulations”, they replied. The king obliged and outlawed the consumption of unpurified milk to increase the demand for pasteurization and homogenization. He then outlawed skim and chocolate milk because standardization of production would improve efficiency. He banned purified honey because it isn’t as healthy as raw honey and he could free up honey pasteurizers to help pasteurize milk. Everyone now would consume the same pasteurized whole white milk and eat unpasteurized honey. “Inequality is surely cured”, he thought. Everyone will eat the same honey and drink the same milk. The king was pleased that throughout all the troubles nature and happenstance could impose; he had still made his kingdom the most just in the land. He decided to throw a feast to honor his advisors.

During preparations for the feast, the royal cooks advised the king that there would be only whole white milk and unpasteurized honey at the banquet. “A king has to have chocolate and cute bear shaped honey jars!” screamed the king. “After all, I have worked very hard to make my kingdom the most just in the land. I should be rewarded for my service to humanity.”

The king ordered that milk and honey producers be conscripted to provide skim chocolate milk and pasteurized honey for his feast. The feast went on as planned. The king was very happy to eat his fill of pasteurized honey and drink his fill of skim chocolate milk. That was until a group of subjects interrupted the dinner.

Word had gotten out to the king’s subjects that he was enslaving their kinsman to provide skim chocolate milk and pasteurized honey for himself while he let his royal subjects starve. They formed an allegiance with the disgruntled western king and had come to overthrow the unjust king.

The king was in disbelief. How could they depose him? He had given his royal subjects everything they asked for. After all, he was both wise and just. He had solved the great problem of inequality. Surely the next king would not be either as wise or as just.

How does the story end? You be the judge. Here are your options:

1. The new king uses the same east coast economic advisors as the previous king and the people continue to starve while the politically connected have access to skim chocolate milk and cute bear shaped honey.
2. The new king becomes a puppet for the western king who wishes to enslave his subjects
3. The new king changes advisors, lowers government regulations, maintains a stable currency, runs no debt, and allows people to prosper from their hard work.