

## 16C THE FAILURE OF SOCIALISM

While it was unthinkable fifty years ago, the concept of socialism has become much more accepted in American society and seems appealing to many people.

“From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs.” It is disturbing how many young people attribute this statement to the Bible instead of to Karl Marx.

The Bible demands compassion and justice for the poor but does not endorse socialism.

The Bible condemns the rich who exploit the poor but does not offer socialism as the alternative.

The early church shared generously and voluntarily, but did not practice socialism (Acts 2).

According to Kerby Anderson, “Socialism is an economic system in which there is public or state ownership of the means of production, and the primary focus is on providing an equality of outcomes. In socialism, the state is all-important and involved in central planning.” [1]

Socialism has taken a variety of forms: British Fabian socialism, Soviet socialism, Chinese socialism, Scandinavian statism,...

Problems with classical socialism:

1. Sharing is forced, not voluntary.
2. Socialism is typically a utopian ideal.
3. Socialism often develops because of envy or anger towards citizens who own more.
4. Economic growth is often slow. There is no avenue to generate new wealth and improve the standard of living.
5. Hard work is not rewarded. There are no promotions, raises, or profit-sharing. There are no real incentives to work hard, to excel, or to produce more.
6. There is no incentive for healthy competition and improved quality. There is a lack of freedom to experiment and to create new products.
7. Everyone is paid the same, regardless of expertise or education. There are no incentives for workers to take less desirable jobs.
8. There is little opportunity to advance through innovation.
9. There are limited choices in what products are available (no competing brands).
10. In countries with socialized medicine, there are typically waiting lines for surgeries and specialists.
11. There is a lack of individuality and sense of personal worth.
12. No one takes responsibility for public works and assets.
13. In strongly socialistic countries students have limited choice of major and workplace.
14. Government often becomes huge and bureaucratic.
15. Citizens wind up with little discretionary income. There are minimum funds to help others, to support charities, to contribute to missions.
16. Government takes the place of the Salvation Army, local Rescue Mission, and church benevolent work.

17. Often the leaders (the elite) will find a way around the rules and will live at a higher standard than others.
18. Socialism has not been successful in multiple countries: Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua,...
19. Much of socialism is one step away from Marxism.
20. Most socialist scholars have been atheists. Socialism suggests the Kingdom on earth without God and His standards.
21. Socialism fails to address the basic problem: our selfish, sinful nature.
22. Socialism ultimately kills the human spirit.

Workers in the old USSR used to joke: “They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work.”

*What was so beguiling about socialism? Clemenceau said that any man who is not a socialist at twenty has no heart and that any man who is still a socialist at forty has no brain. A person at twenty might see that there are poor and there are rich, and the discrepancy can be painful. But sometime between twenty and forty he will probably learn that the amount of privation is far more dependent on variations in the production of wealth than in its distribution and, moreover, that insofar as policy aims to control the distribution, it runs the risk of impeding production. In other words, that there is no escape from inequality, except through uniform poverty. Contrary to Clemenceau’s dictum, however, socialism has appealed far more broadly than just to twenty-year-olds; so to understand its remarkable attraction we must look beyond economic innocence. [2]*

Don Closson writes-

*Socialists contend that competition is another evil of capitalism, but is competition itself an evil? We can agree that using force, fraud, or theft to compete is morally wrong, but can we really say that all competition is wrong? Scarcity demands competition; as long as resources are limited we will find some competitive means for allocating them. Socialist societies use long waiting lines and bureaucratic red tape to dole out limited goods, and competition is intense for political positions that result in material gain...*

*Socialism is defined by centralized planning, using force to get individuals to conform to its decisions. A system becomes less capitalistic and more interventionist as more and more economic decisions are coerced by the government. It becomes socialistic when basic needs are met only by the government, forcing people to deal with it exclusively. The ideal of capitalism is freedom; the ideal of socialism is forced compliance with government planning. [3]*

Karl Marx outlined the principles of statist socialism:

*Marx advanced the socialist cause by calling for social or public ownership of property and the abolition of private property. He believed that people were best suited to work on state farms, public parks, nationalized banks, or the government bureaucracy rather than for private employers, who would certainly take advantage of their employees, causing them both social and economic harm. Marx was an economic leach on fellow communist Engels, who supported him with his capitalistic father's monies.*

*In other words, socialism is an economic system that downplays the individual in favor of the group, social order, or the State. It is a system in which the State directs the economic activity of the social order through central planning and by placing economic activity under the jurisdiction of the State. Socialism is also known as collectivism or Statism and to Marx, Communism. [4]*

Socialism in the extreme is simply Communism:

*Owning property contradicts one of the fundamental principles of socialism. In the Communist Manifesto, "the abolition of property" is a major item in the plan for moving from capitalism to socialism and eventually to communism.*

*By contrast, the Ten Commandments assume private property. The eighth commandment forbidding stealing and the tenth commandment about coveting both assume that people have private property rights. [5]*

The success rate for socialist countries is negative:

*Dinesh D'Souza reminds us that many countries have tried socialism and all failed. The first socialist experiment was the Soviet Union, then came lots of countries in eastern Europe (Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and East Germany). Add to that countries in*

*Asia (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, North Korea, and China) and countries in South America (Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Venezuela) and Africa (Angola, Ghana, Tanzania, Benin, Mali, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). By his count, there are 25 failed experiments in socialism. [6] Ibid.*

Noebel writes:

*Because capitalism has raised more human beings out of poverty than all other economic systems combined, we should remember the wisdom of Robert Heilbroner, a former Marxist economist who changed his position before the fall of the Berlin Wall: "The Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe have given us the clearest possible proof that capitalism organizes the material affairs of humankind more satisfactorily than socialism: that however inequitably or irresponsibly the marketplace may distribute goods, it does so better than the queues of a planned economy; however mindless the culture of commercialism, it is more attractive than state moralism; and however deceptive the ideology of a business civilization, it is more believable than that of a socialist one."*

*Little wonder that Winston Churchill painted socialism as "a philosophy of failure, a creed of ignorance, and a gospel of envy" whose inherent virtue "is the equal sharing of misery." [7]*

Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises in 1920 analyzed socialism and concluded that it can't work because it is impossible to calculate actual costs, assigned prices, and consumer demand. Economic calculations are impossible for a collectivist planner. Production can't be tuned to

human wants, since many people decide which item to buy depending on the cost. There is no true profit and loss, no true supply and demand. [8]

The Babylon Bee presents a parody of John Lennon's "Imagine": [9]

*Imagine there's no bread,  
It's easy if you try;  
No tacos or hot sauce,  
Nothing cold or fried...  
Imagine no possessions,  
Because all your stuff is redistributed,  
Lots of greed and hunger,  
But, seriously, please,  
Can I have a potato?  
Imagine all the people  
Sharing all your stuff...  
You may say I'm a Commie,  
But I'm not the only one...  
Did you say you don't like this?  
Then it's the gulag for you, son.*

## References

1. Anderson, K., "Socialism and Society,"  
<https://probe.org/socialism-and-society/>
2. Muravchik, J., "The Rise and Fall of Socialism,"  
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3. Closson, D., "Poverty and Wealth,"  
<https://probe.org/poverty-and-wealth/>
4. Noebel, D., "How the socialists are destroying America from within,"  
<https://www.worldviewweekend.com/news/article/how-socialist-are-destroying-america-within>
5. Anderson, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Noebel, op. cit.

8. R. Chewning, Biblical Principles and Economics, Volume 2: The Foundations, Navpress, 1989, p. 95.
9. Babylon Bee, "Imagine...(Communism)"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cg1ISl2u5Lg>