



SOCIALISM MAKES PEOPLE SELFISH

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In the contemporary world, it's taken as a given that capitalism, with its free market and profit motive, is based on selfishness and produces selfishness. Socialism is based on selflessness and produces selflessness.

Well, the opposite is true.

Whatever its intentions, socialism produces far more selfish individuals and a far more selfish society than a free-market economy does. And once this widespread selfishness catches on, it is almost impossible to undo it.

Here's an illustration: In 2010 the United States President, Barack Obama, addressed a large audience of college students. At one point in his speech, he announced that young people will now be able to remain on their parents' health insurance plan until age 26. I don't ever recall hearing a louder, more thunderous, or more sustained applause than I did then. Had the president announced that a cure for cancer had been discovered, it is highly doubtful that the applause would have been as loud or as long.

But what were they so happy about? To be told that you can now remain dependent on your parents until age 26 should strike a young person as demeaning, not liberating.

Throughout American history and, for that matter, all of Western history, the great goal of young people was to become a mature adult – beginning with being independent of Mom and Dad. Socialism and the welfare state destroy this aspiration.

In various European countries and now increasingly in the US, it is becoming common for young people to live with their parents well into their 30s and not infrequently beyond. And why not? In the welfare state, taking care of yourself is no longer a virtue.

Why? Because the government will take care of you.

Therefore: Socialism enables – and as a result produces – people whose preoccupations become more and more self-centered:

How many benefits will I receive from the government?

Will the government pay for my education?

Will the government pay for my health care?

What is the youngest age at which I can retire?

How much paid vacation time can I get?

How many days can I call in sick and still get paid?

How many weeks of paid paternity or maternity leave am I entitled to?

And then each entitlement becomes a “right.”

But we’re not done. There are even more destructive effects of socialism.

Entitlements create citizens who lack a character trait that every human should have -- gratitude. You cannot be happy if you are not grateful and you cannot be a good person if you are not grateful. That’s why we constantly tell our children, “Say ‘thank you.’” But socialism undoes that. After all, why would a person be grateful for receiving an entitlement – who’s going to be grateful for getting what they’re entitled to? So, instead of “thank you,” the citizen of the welfare state is taught to say, “What more am I entitled to?”

Yet the Left insists that it’s capitalism and the free market, not socialism, that produces selfish people.

But the truth is that capitalism and the free market produce much less selfish people. Teaching people to work hard and take care of themselves (and others) – and that they should earn what they receive, produces less selfish, not more selfish, people.

Capitalism teaches people to work more; socialism teaches people to demand more. Which attitude do you think will make a better society?

I’m Dennis Prager.