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AMERICAN CROSSROADS

The old port of Nyhavn in Copenhagen, Denmark. Scandinavian countries are beautiful, but they are less socialist than people think.

THE 'NORDIC MODEL' NARRATIVE IS A LIE

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OLEKSIY MARK/SUTTERSTOCK

The ‘Nordic Model’ Narrative Is a Lie

JOSHUA PHILIPP

Commentary

Many socialists don’t understand socialism, and many commonly used narratives such as the “Nordic Model” are based on disinformation—and sometimes outright lies. These are among the claims made by economics professors Robert Lawson and Benjamin Powell in their new book, “Socialism Sucks: Two Economists Drink Their Way Through the Unfree World.”

Lawson described the book as “the bastard stepchild of Anthony Bourdain and Milton Friedman.” He said they wanted a style with the energy and carousing of Bourdain, but with genuine substance to explain their premise. In the book, the writers travel through both the free and socialist “unfree” worlds, telling a story of politics through the quality of beer.

The book begins with something near and dear to the hearts of all followers of socialism in America: the mysterious “Nordic Model” touted as that Utopian land across the sea. Thus the writers’ journey starts in Sweden, and the book makes it clear with the title of its first section that the “Nordic Model” narrative is all a clever deception: “Not Socialism: Sweden.”

“It’s not socialist,” Lawson said. By the classical definition, he explained, a socialist system is one in which the means of production are seized by the state, and labor, land, and capital are owned “collectively” by the state. While it’s fair to say that the “democratic socialists” desire this system of state dominance, the “Nordic Model” in no way represents it.

Lawson noted that in Sweden, “they have high taxes,” and with those taxes they do provide some services beyond what the U.S. government provides. Yet, he noted, “except for taxes, it is, structurally speaking, the same kind of economics we have in the United States.”

“It’s a market economy,” he said. “It’s a private market economy with a lot of taxes.”

He noted that if socialists in America really wanted the “Nordic Model,” they should be clear on what that means: taxes around 50

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Robert Lawson, author

COURTESY OF ROBERT LAWSON



Economics professor Robert Lawson, coauthor of “Socialism Sucks: Two Economists Drink Their Way Through the Unfree World.”

percent higher than in the United States to supplement free health care and college with questionable efficiency and stability.

But that’s not what socialists in America are talking about. What they’re talking about is not the “Nordic Model,” Lawson said. What they want is a more complete socialism, meaning that “they’re taking over factories, they’re taking over hotels, they’re running restaurants.”

“That is something that has been done in this world—and we have evidence of how that turned out—but that’s not what Sweden’s doing,” he said.

Of course, there are different elements of socialism. Economics is one part, but socialism also includes cultural policies such as identity politics, and policies in the ideological realm such as its philosophy of struggle under Marxist concepts like “critical theory” and “repressive tolerance.”

In the United States, however, what’s usually talked about on the surface by those who demand socialism is the economic system, while its other forms work as tools to shut down debate or manufacture enemy “privileged” classes for its followers to struggle against.

State Ownership Versus Private Ownership

While socialism is often portrayed as taking power away from big business, and fighting “greed” and “oligarchy,” it doesn’t get rid of the institutions it claims to eliminate—let alone the moral problems within those institutions.

Capitalism is the ability of independent people to engage in trade, while socialism is the system of “state-capitalism” in which an all-powerful regime seizes control of business and bars average people from the free market. Historically, the socialist policies of state intervention have often led to oligarchy, and the systems are often marred by corruption as the greedy few turn from free markets to government positions.

“It’s not either socialism or capitalism,” Lawson said. “It’s a continuum, of sorts.” Many countries have adopted varying degrees of

socialism into their economic systems, and this is defined by how much state control and intervention there is, versus how much they allow in private ownership.

He noted that as a professor of economics, he works on the Economic Freedom of the World index, which rates countries on a scale of zero to 10, with 10 being the most capitalist in the world market. And he noted that while the United States ranks high, so does Sweden—which sits “in the top 25 percent of all the countries rated.”

When it comes to countries where the government owns and controls business and resources, the more the state controls, the more tyrannical the regime. “Those are those Venezuelas of the world, or the Congos or the world, or the Argentinas of the world,” Lawson said. “They’re not the Swedens of the world.”

“From the standpoint of an Argentinian or Congolese citizen, Sweden would be a massive reduction in government ownership and control.”

He noted that while people like Bernie Sanders use Sweden as a talking point for socialism, “most of the world would look up at Sweden and say that they are way more capitalist than we are.”

While the Nordic countries began adopting socialist policies, they also began backing off those policies as they proved unsustainable. Lawson noted that all Nordic countries have backed off their high-tax, social service safety-net programs because of the high price tags.

“In 1960, the United States and Sweden were about the same level of income and had about the same size of government. And what happens is 1960 is both governments got bigger, but Sweden’s got really big and Sweden’s growth rate really started to suffer,” he said.

As things now stand, Lawson said Sweden has much less income than the United States, and the high cost of its social services has shown its negative impact. “Maybe it’s a price they’re willing to pay, but the vitality of the Swedish economy has slowed and not kept pace with the rest of Europe—and certainly not with the United States,” he said.

“Swedes are recognizing that the Swedish economy is struggling to keep up.”

He noted that as things decline, these countries are backing off their social welfare programs and adjusting them accordingly.

State Intervention

Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises wrote in his book “Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis” in 1951, “Nothing is more unpopular today than the free market economy, i.e., capitalism.” He goes on to explain how nearly every faction in society of the time blamed capitalism for the problems they saw in the world, and that the viewpoints of each group typically contradicted the viewpoints of the next.

Yet, he noted, “although capitalism is the economic system of modern Western civilization, the policies of all Western nations are guided by utterly anti-capitalistic ideas.”

Many of the problems people observed in capitalism, he said, didn’t originate from capitalism, but instead from socialist interventionist policies that had been adopted into capitalism. Mises wrote, “The aim of these interventionist policies is not to preserve capitalism, but to substitute a mixed economy for it.”

This “mixed economy” was seen by many of the time as the middle-ground stance with socialism, yet the socialist elements adopted into capitalism became the main points of contention against capitalism.

Lawson noted that “the areas of our economy that we’re the least satisfied with are the ones that government is most involved with.”

“We complain about the quality of our schools,” but government owns and operates most of them, Lawson said. “We’re upset about the cost and the quality of our health care, and that’s exactly the area where the government is taking over.” The same applies to high college tuition costs, where government loans have only acted to drive up prices.

“The more the government tries to sort of engage itself in one way or another—either through loans or through education subsidies and health care—those sectors seem to perform much worse. And we complained more about them,” he said.

When it comes to technology, Lawson noted that the government is fairly hands-off, and “we get great products and are more or less happy with the prices.”

The same applies to many areas of food production and distribution, and with grocery stores that the government leaves alone. Yet, many are terribly unhappy with things like banks, “and that’s one of the areas where the government is most directly involved in.”

“The high cost is frequently the cause of the government,” he said. Among the socialist policies that create these problems are the subsidizing of demand, and the redistribution of money. As examples, he noted the U.S. government subsidizes student loans, which have driven up tuition costs; and it subsidizes parts of the health industry, which also drives up costs.

Then, in addition to subsidizing demand, government policy also “actively restricts the supply.”

“You don’t have to have a Ph.D. in economics to know what happens to prices when you subsidize the buyers, but restrict the sellers,” he said. “It is a guaranteed recipe for higher prices. And that’s exactly what we get in education and health care.”

He noted that market principles such as this book “Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis” in 1951, “Nothing is more unpopular today than the free market economy, i.e., capitalism.” He goes on to explain how nearly every faction in society of the time blamed capitalism for the problems they saw in the world, and that the viewpoints of each group typically contradicted the viewpoints of the next.

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COURTESY OF LUDWIG VON MISES

Ludwig von Mises.

DSA Channels Stalin, Pulls Off Crafty Move With Exclusive Sanders Endorsement

TREVOR LOUDON



Commentary

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) pulled off a deft move at its biennial National Convention in Atlanta in early August.

The United States’ largest Marxist organization passed a resolution declaring that it wouldn’t endorse any Democrat except Bernie Sanders in next year’s presidential election.

Many commentators, including some less-sophisticated DSA comrades, saw this as a bad move. One opposing delegate summed up the argument of many when he or she said: “Trump is too dangerous to take cards off the table right now”; that side narrowly lost the resolution battle.

The argument is that the DSA has backed itself into a corner. If Sanders loses, they reason, the DSA will be unable to endorse the winner. That will mean that the DSA will be sidelined, marginalized from the anti-Trump opposition that will coalesce around the Democratic nominee—which this author believes will be Sen. Kamala Harris from California.

In a move likely designed to heal post-conference divisions over the Sanders endorsement, decades-long DSA comrade Harold Meyerson wrote an essay for The American Prospect, entitled “What the Socialists Just Did—and Why,” explaining why the DSA has done a very clever thing.

Meyerson, a professional journalist who has worked for the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post, starts by summing up the failed faction’s fears.

“It’s a good thing that organizations don’t have children or grandchildren. If they did, you could envision little tykes (well, little infant prodigies) 50 years from now asking their grandparent—the Democratic Socialists of America—“What did you do in the war against the neofascist Donald Trump?” only to be met by an awkward pause.”

Meyerson understands that fear well, but his lifetime of experience on the far-left has taught him to think more strategically. He understands full well that even without a formal endorsement, DSA comrades will work hard for almost any anti-Trump candidate—just as they did for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Meyerson continues: “The vote on the resolution was actually fairly close, though support for Sanders in the primaries is overwhelming within the organization. And its proponents provided a number of qualifications and caveats, making clear that DSA members are free to campaign for the eventual Democratic nominee if they so choose, and that in 2016, DSA locals did campaign against Trump (and members for Hillary) in swing states.”

But here’s the real deal. Meyerson harkens back to World War II, when the Communist Party USA (CPUSA)—then at the height of its power and influence—dissolved itself on the seeming orders of party Chairman Earl Browder. The dissolution of a mighty, disciplined party into a loose collection of “Communist Political Associations” shocked many at the time. Why would a powerful growing party dissolve itself voluntarily into some vague loosely knit “association” when so much was going in its favor?

Meyerson tells us why. It’s the first time I’ve seen the real reason publicly admitted: “In 1944, the U.S. Communist Party effectively, if temporarily, self-abolished so its members could support Franklin Roosevelt’s re-election bid, as part of the fight against fascism. To be sure, that move came at the behest of Joseph Stalin, whose nation was allied with ours in the existential battle against Hitler. ... [T]he U.S. Communist Party understood the gravity of the fascist threat. Why not DSA?”

It was all a ruse, you see. After Roosevelt won re-election, the CPUSA re-constituted itself and carried on just as before. In other words, Stalin told the CPUSA to (temporarily) dissolve so the “communist” issue wouldn’t interfere with Roosevelt’s re-election chances. The CPUSA was intimately interlocked at every level with Roosevelt’s administration and the Democratic Party. This was worrying to millions of American voters, and was a real liability for the Democrats.

In 1944, Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the Chicago Tribune, expressed many voters’ concerns when he claimed that the communist-dominated Council of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was leading President Roosevelt by the nose:

“They call it the Democratic national con-



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) speaks to the crowd during the 2019 South Carolina Democratic Party State Convention in Columbia, S.C., on June 22, 2019.

Moscow has been manipulating U.S. elections for more than 70 years now—almost always in favor of Democrats.

vention but obviously it is the CIO convention. Franklin D. Roosevelt is the candidate of the CIO and the Communists because they know if elected, he will continue to put the government of the United States at their service, at home and abroad. ... The CIO is in the saddle and the Democrat donkey, under whip and spur, is meekly taking the road to communism and atheism. ... Everybody knows that Roosevelt is the Communist candidate.”

So to help Roosevelt get elected, Stalin took the “communist” card off the table. Moscow has been manipulating U.S. elections for more than 70 years now—almost always in favor of Democrats.

History repeats. Now, socialism is the “bogey” of the day, and Democrats don’t want to be tarred with that brush—although they richly deserve it.

Comrade Meyerson explains: “[I] seem to have a political-consultant mind. And that mind tells me that the eventual Democratic presidential nominee needs the formal endorsement of DSA like a hole in the head.”

Meyerson acknowledges that a DSA endorsement can be great for a local candidate in a left-leaning area, but it could play disastrously on a national stage.

“Where DSA is strong and where socialist and progressive candidates can win—generally, in cities with substantial populations of millennials, immigrants, and minorities—a DSA endorsement can make all the difference, producing scads of the most tireless precinct walkers and dedicated phone-bankers. It has made that difference in New York, Chicago, and any number of smaller cities.”

But here’s the kicker: “In nearly every state, and certainly in the nation at large, however, a DSA endorsement would be one more item on the bill of particulars the Republicans would hurl at the Democratic nominee in hopes of revving up more of their right-wing base. In every encounter with reporters, the nominee would be pressed about DSA’s endorsement.”

In other words, a DSA endorsement would give President Donald Trump ammunition against the Democratic nominee. The DSA will use Sanders’s doomed campaign to build DSA membership and further the mainstreaming of socialism. By not officially opting to get behind the Democratic nominee, potential DSA recruits will admire how staunch and principled they are. A DSA endorsement wouldn’t hurt Sanders, but it would surely hurt Harris or any other Democratic candidate and may even cost the election.

When Sanders inevitably fails, better to not publicly endorse the winner, but work for her quietly behind the scenes instead.

Meyerson gets pretty explicit about this strategy—in case some of the slower comrades don’t catch on. He invokes the tactic that Atlanta DSA pursued when pressed to endorse far-leftist Stacey Abrams during her very tight race for the Georgia governorship in 2018:

“I think DSA’s national political committee might take a leaf from the group’s Atlanta local during Stacey Abrams’s 2018 campaign for governor. At the time, the local wasn’t endorsing nonsocialists, and some of its members likely believed—rightly, I’d say—that a DSA endorsement would be one more cross Abrams would have to bear in her bid to carry Georgia. Nonetheless, every other progressive group inside and outside the state was enthusiastically backing her, and many DSA members were eagerly working on her campaign. Here’s what the local said: “For many reasons, we cannot endorse Abrams ourselves, but neither can we stand aside while our friends and allies fight for something they know will make their lives better. We voted to encourage our members, if they feel so moved, to stand up and fight in this election cycle.”

Which is exactly what they did. Many DSA comrades were involved in the Abrams campaign which came within a whisker of success. However, there was no formal DSA endorsement for the Republicans to hang around Abrams’s neck. Abrams got all the socialist support she needed—with none of the stigma of being supported by Marxists. Sophisticated DSAers know their endorsement won’t hurt Sanders and may even help him slightly. They can use the Sanders movement to build their numbers, and if by some miracle he wins the Democratic primary, the DSA can take the credit.

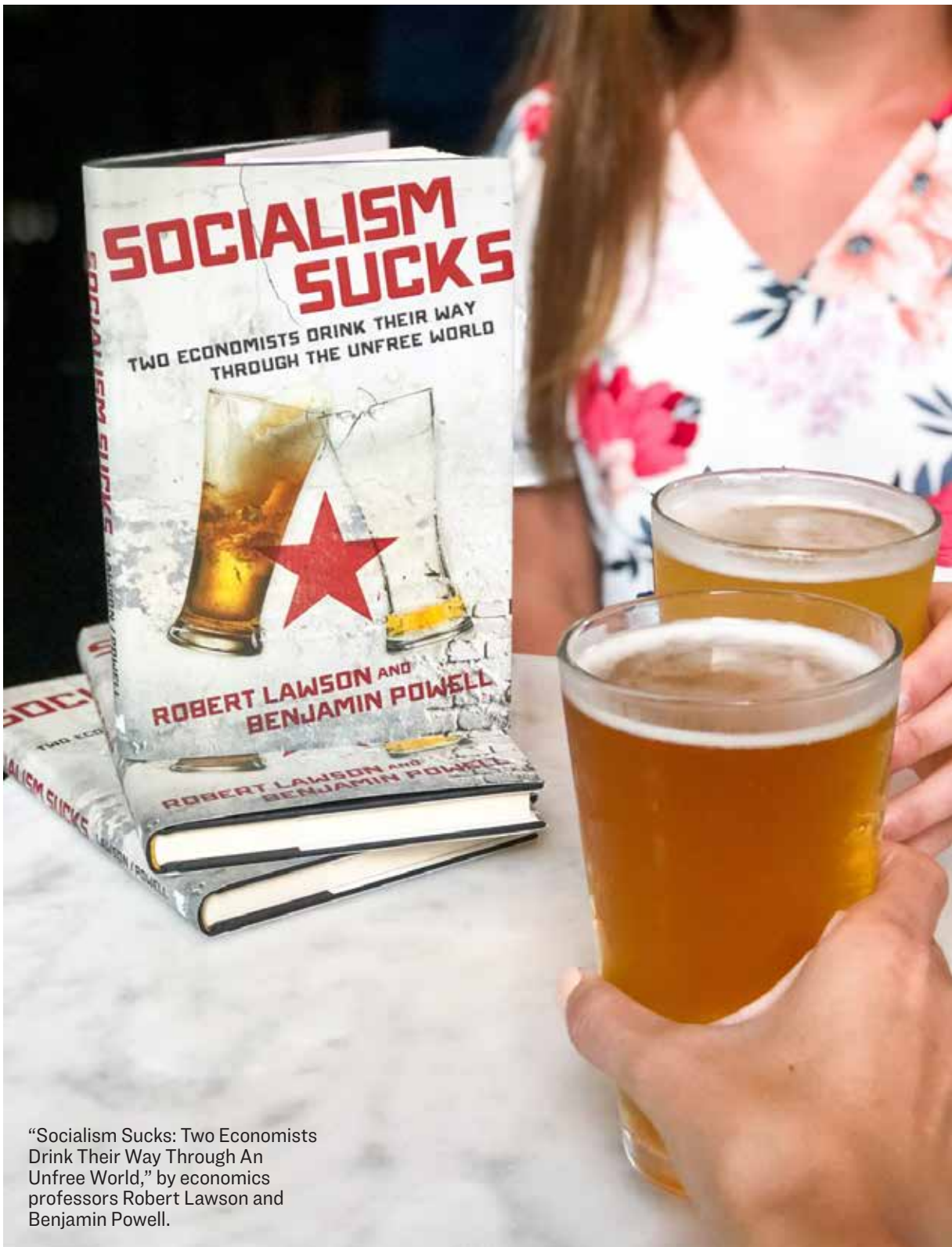
If he loses—which he almost certainly will—the DSA will be spared a divisive battle over endorsing the eventual nominee—who won’t want their endorsement. The Democratic leadership wants to distance themselves from DSAers Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, not give them center stage. The DSA may then get behind whomever is up against Trump, without embarrassing either themselves or the Democratic nominee.

Confirms comrade Meyerson: “In 2020, DSA’s friends and allies—in immigrant communities and communities of color, in groups seeking to combat the climate crisis and save the planet, in organizations of working people seeking a radically more equitable economy and society—will be fighting for their lives to replace Trump with a Democrat. It won’t be a battle between socialism and barbarism, but it will be a battle against barbarism, and the Atlanta statement offers a way that DSA can join it.”

Sounds like a win-win all around. For everybody, that is, except the U.S. voter.

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“Socialism Sucks: Two Economists Drink Their Way Through An Unfree World,” by economics professors Robert Lawson and Benjamin Powell.

THE PERSISTENCE OF POVERTY

MARK HENDRICKSON



Commentary

Poverty is one of the oldest problems in the world. For much of history, it was intractable and grimly inevitable. Today, there is good news and bad news about poverty in the United States.

The good news: Most Americans, even those experiencing financial stress, enjoy a level of affluence scarcely imagined in the year 1900. Indeed, due to the myriad scientific and technological breakthroughs of the past 120 years, the typical American can afford amenities and luxuries that weren't even available to Queen Victoria and other 19th-century monarchs. The average poor American today has an economic standard of living comparable to that of the average middle-class American in 1950.

The bad news: There are persistent pockets of poverty in our country. Statistics about "average" standards of living mask that some poor Americans are very poor. The key question is: Why? For what reasons does acute poverty stubbornly persist amidst our unprecedented affluence?

This important question was raised in a Bloomberg article posted on July 30, entitled, "Stop Blaming America's Poor for Their Poverty," by Noah Smith. That polemical title is less than helpful. The resort to the emotive verb "blame" muddies the scientific waters with ideological ink.

What nasty people would do something as cold-hearted as "blaming" poor people for being poor? It isn't American to kick people when they're down, is it?

Well, Smith's article identifies those culprits: "Many conservatives in the U.S. believe that poverty is mainly a result of bad personal decisions." There are serious problems with the wording of this statement. It meanly, and, more importantly, dishonestly mischaracterizes the mindset of conservative social scientists. Conservative experts on poverty aren't going around "blaming" poor people or trying to lay guilt trips on them.

I have read and listened to some of the leading conservative experts on poverty, and they are compassionate people who, far from turning their noses up and their backs toward the poor, sincerely want to help them.

Nor is it accurate to assert that conserva-

tives "believe" that some people are poor because of certain choices they make along the way, as if such a conclusion is an unfounded superstition. It isn't. On the contrary, it's a simple, incontrovertible fact that some Americans languish in poverty as a consequence of dropping out of high school, having children out of wedlock, getting caught up in substance abuse, or simply being unwilling to work. To deny that is unscientific. The obvious goal of the author is to disparage conservative analyses of the poverty problem—to intimidate conservatives into remaining silent about individual choices and behaviors as factors that contribute to poverty.

Read the book of Proverbs some time, and you will read variations on the message "Lazy hands make a person poor." (Prov. 10:4). The job of social scientists is neither to condemn nor ignore these factors, but to acknowledge that they exist. Inconvenient truths don't fade away and disappear if we ignore them. We must be willing to confront reality as it is, for in no other way do we have a chance to understand the phenomenon of poverty accurately and address it intelligently.

The article goes on to say, "According to [the conservative] perspective, if people were just to work hard, avoid drugs, alcohol, and violence, and stop having children out of wedlock, poverty would be rare." The only quibble I have with this statement is the word "rare." Conservatives maintain that under those conditions, the incidence of poverty in the United States would be lower, and probably significantly lower, than it is.

Indeed, there's abundant evidence that supports such a conclusion. For example, in reading Census Bureau statistics a few years ago, married couples with children had an 8 percent poverty rate, while single mothers with children had a 40 percent poverty rate in the same year. Clearly, marriage makes a difference. But, I do agree with the author: If all those single mothers married, there would still be poor people in the United States.

What Can Be Done?

The question of what can be done to reduce poverty can be broken down into two parts: What can poor people themselves do to climb out of poverty, and what can the non-poor members of society do to help the poor escape poverty?

Having chosen to minimize the role of

Before the federal government decided to launch the War on Poverty, the poverty rate was locked into a long-term downtrend.



▲ A pedestrian walks past tents and trash on a sidewalk in downtown Los Angeles on May 30, 2019.

the first category, the author focuses on the second. He asserts, "... the main causes of poverty are more related to the economy's structure." Here, he finds fault with "the capitalist system" and concludes that the federal social safety net needs to be enlarged. I respectfully disagree.

The question of what the non-poor can do to eradicate poverty has no easy answers. At the very least, though, let's not consume scarce resources doing what doesn't work. The problem I have with the recommendation to enlarge the government's social safety net is that no matter how much money the federal government spends on poverty, the poverty rate remains stuck in the same narrow range.

Take a look at the following chart. This is the most important, if not scandalous, chart in American public policy.

Before the federal government decided to launch the War on Poverty, the poverty rate was locked into a long-term downtrend. Since the War on Poverty began, the poverty rate has hovered stubbornly between 11 and 15 percent for the last 50 years, despite Uncle Sam spending approximately \$25 trillion on anti-poverty programs.

Look at that red line again: Year after year, we have continued to spend more and more, but poverty not only hasn't diminished, it hasn't even improved. Here's the lesson we need to learn: Government is incompetent to cure poverty. American taxpayers haven't been cheap and under-taxed; far from it. But we do deserve a better return on our massive expenditures than what we've been getting for the past half-century.

Smith's article cites a lot of information about Japan in an attempt to buttress his case for a large government-funded safety net. One way of looking at his data is to notice that even though the Japanese people show amazingly low incidences of the problematic behaviors that contribute to poverty in the United States, they still have nearly as high a poverty rate as we do, despite spending a larger share of their GDP on the social safety net than we do. Conclusion: even in Japan, poverty persists despite higher social-welfare spending.

Again: Government is incompetent to eliminate poverty. It can reduce statistical

poverty, but only inefficiently and at enormous cost. (In passing, it should be noted that cross-cultural comparisons are problematical. Japan, for example, has long been a relatively closed economy, which has inhibited integration into the global division of labor. The Japanese economy operates on the basis of old-boy networks, resulting in economic opportunities for unconnected Japanese being hard to come by.)

So, if the federal government can't solve the poverty problem, who can? That leaves the private sector—which was doing a pretty good job of reducing the poverty rate in the United States in the years before the War on Poverty began. One can only imagine how many tens or hundreds of thousands of businesses and millions of jobs could have been created if that \$25 trillion had been left in the private sector.

The author, however, asserts that capitalism won't completely eliminate poverty, because "people fall through the cracks" and "the market doesn't create enough well-paying jobs." He's right, actually. The fact is that capitalism doesn't and can't promise affluence for all. But that's no reason to disparage, criticize, jettison, or replace capitalism, because capitalism, with its free markets, generates more wealth and brings more prosperity to more people than any other economic system. Even Karl Marx acknowledged the superior wealth-production of capitalism.

Not Utopian

We need to remember that capitalism isn't a planned program of economic production. What we call "capitalism" is simply a framework wherein people are free to engage in whatever law-abiding activity they choose (as long as they don't trespass on the rights of others, of course). It was never expected that it would guarantee universal prosperity; capitalism simply guarantees the freedom to strive for prosperity to the best of one's ability, initiative, resourcefulness, and so on.

Socialism, on the other hand, guarantees a job and thus, a source of income. (At least, that was the Soviet version of socialism. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and today's democratic socialists propose to guarantee all citizens an income—even those that don't want to work.) But socialism

inevitably impoverishes, as I've explained before, due to how it alters incentives and lacks an economically intelligible price system to coordinate economic activity and calculate profitability. It shouldn't take a degree in economics to understand that socialism leaves people poorer because production under socialism isn't geared toward producing what consumers want, but instead produces what the political elite in charge command. It can't come close to capitalism in terms of producing long-term and growing prosperity for the masses of people.

So there you have the great irony: Capitalism isn't utopian; it doesn't guarantee that nobody will be poor, but it does result in the widest distribution of affluence. Socialism, on the other hand, is utopian; it does guarantee that nobody will be poor, but in practice, standards of living for the masses of people (almost everyone, that is, except the governing elite and their cronies) will be far lower under socialism than capitalism. Here it is helpful to recall the sage advice: Don't let the perfect (the alleged but illusory "superior justice" of socialism) be the enemy of the good (the most productive wealth-generating system ever known to mankind—capitalism).

Voluntary Charity

How, then, can opportunities for the poor be increased in a capitalist system? To be honest, I don't have a plan, but there are people in our society who can help. These are the would-be entrepreneurs whom excessive government interference (barriers such as taxes, regulations, needless licensing, and taxpayer-supported competitors) too often stifles. Get government out of the way, and new jobs and wealth will roll back the incidence of poverty. Further, some of that new wealth can fund private initiatives to reach out and help the most disadvantaged poor, such as the homeless.

Adam Smith provided a general outline for how to help the poor in his 1759 book, "The Theory of Moral Sentiments." Smith opposed on ethical grounds government programs that take property from some to give it to others. Based on his study of history and his understanding of human nature and economic incentives, he warned that

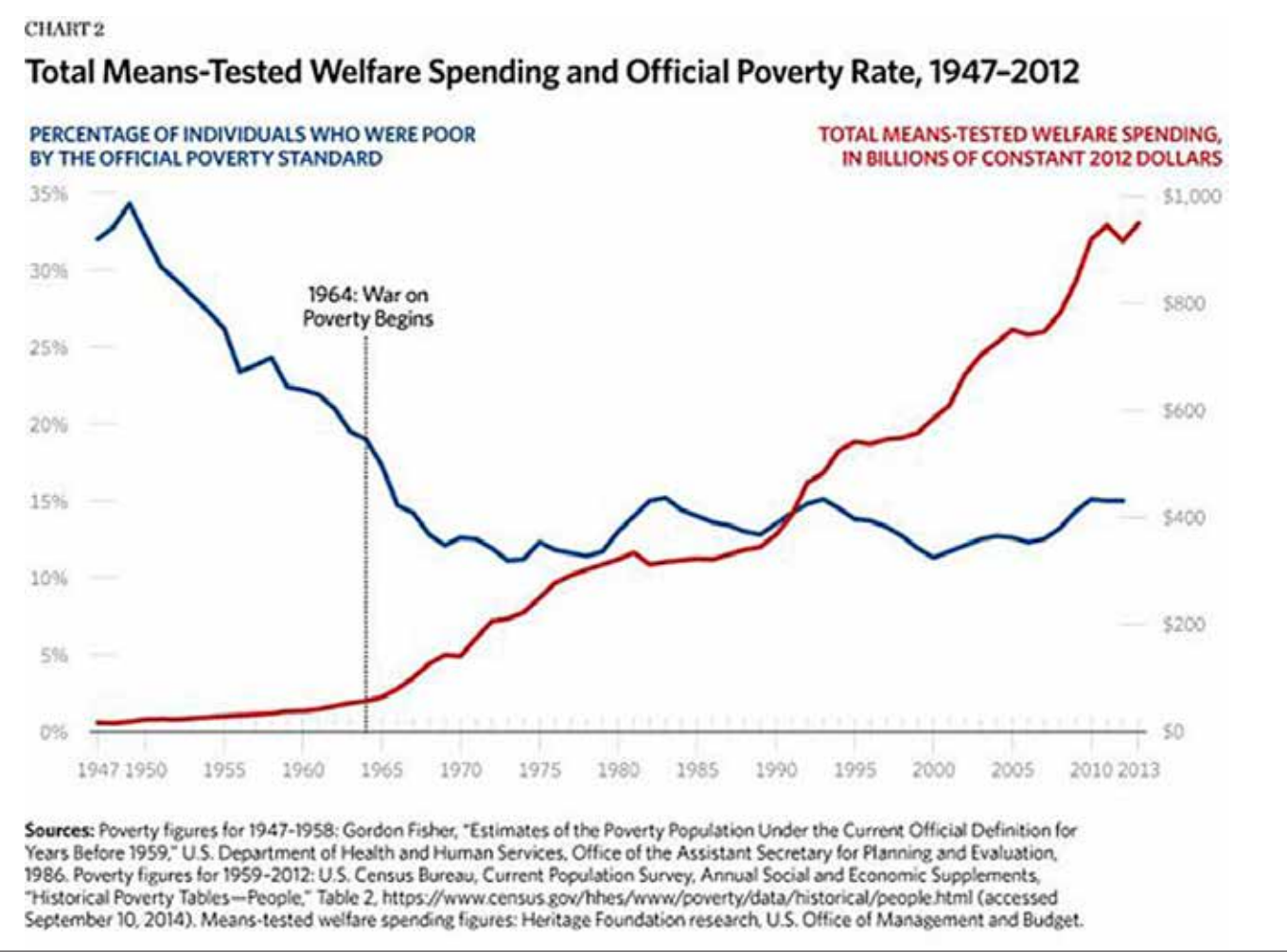
a society that violates justice by abrogating the property rights of any of its citizens is doomed. Today, we see that trampling property rights is exactly what the egalitarians, the social justice warriors, and the democratic socialists strive to do every day, but Smith would denounce such actions as blatant injustices.

So, how can the poor be helped? Smith would say, "Voluntarily." While justice—the preservation of man's unalienable, God-given rights—was, to him and to our founders, the indispensable social virtue, so beneficence—the voluntary reaching out individually or as part of a voluntary civic or church group of citizens—is the crowning jewel of a good society. In fact, Smith endorsed and practiced voluntary Christian charity. A lifelong bachelor who lived modestly, the executor of his estate discovered that he had given half of his annual income to the poor for many years. We should remember that, in addition to its repeated disapproval of laziness, the Book of Proverbs also commends charity: "The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor." (Prov. 22:9)

I don't pretend to know how we can re-instill a spirit of Christian charity in our country, but I hope, for the sake of the poor, that we can. A revival of Christian values and a healthy, free, unencumbered private-property order would do more to reduce poverty than any program or series of government programs could accomplish. This won't happen overnight, and we will never achieve heaven on Earth, but relying on free people and voluntary action will lead to progress against poverty and help us avoid the pitfalls of economic, ethical, and political bankruptcy that other approaches expose us to.

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Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



REPUBLICANS:

Stop Pandering to the ‘Diversity’ Fetish—Rediscover Your Principles

TREVOR LOUDON

*Commentary*

The Republican Party top brass is all in a dither. The “diversity” of the Republican congressional delegation is shrinking.

The recently announced retirement of Rep. Will Hurd (R-Texas) will leave only one black Republican in the Senate and zero in the House. The GOP currently has only 13 women serving in the House of Representatives (there are 184 men), and this is sending the Republican hierarchy into panic mode.

If trying to match the Democratic Party in “minority” candidates is a top priority, then the GOP is, as usual, way out of touch with its base.

The base cares about principles, not melanin. They care about the Constitution, not genitalia.

Sarah Palin was hugely popular with the Republican base not because she was a woman, but because she was gutsy and stood firm for American values. Ben Carson is widely respected not because he’s black, but because he’s an accomplished surgeon, a patriot, and a Christian gentleman. Ted Cruz came within a whisker of the Republican presidential nomination not because he’s part Cuban, but because he’s sharp as a tack and rock-solid for the Constitution.

Yet, in April, the National Republican Congressional Committee’s recruitment chair, Susan Brooks, a four-term representative from Indiana’s 5th District (who is on the verge of retiring), “lectured her party about diversity,” according to *The Guardian*.

“It’s important that we, as a confer-

If trying to match the Democratic Party in ‘minority’ candidates is a top priority, then the GOP is, as usual, way out of touch with its base.

Republicans from the House and Senate walk down the East Front steps outside the House of Representatives for a news conference at the Capitol on April 1, 2009.

ence, do a better job of looking like America, and better representing the very diverse country that we have,” she told *Roll Call*.

Sorry, Susan, but it isn’t. It’s not even close to being important.

I’m a foreigner, but I have addressed around 500 groups across this great nation in the last 10 years. My audiences have almost always been Republicans, libertarians, conservative Christians, professionals, and Tea Party folk—in other words, the Republican Party’s voting base.

The bulk of my audiences were predominantly Middle American white, but I have addressed black majority churches, Latinos for Trump, Cuban Americans, Jewish majority groups, and Chinese gatherings. I have stayed at their homes; we’ve eaten countless meals together, gone shooting together, attended religious services together; and I’ve driven hundreds of thousands of miles with these good folks. I’ve held literally thousands of conversations with members of the Republican Party’s base.

Guess how many times any of them have said something like, “We need more Hispanic, black, Jewish, and women candidates,” or how many said, “The GOP just isn’t diverse enough.” Guess how many of my “minority” colleagues said they felt alienated because the GOP was “too white.”

The answer to all three questions is zero.

What I have heard are phrases like “The GOP leadership is gutless,” and, “When is the Republican Party going to stand up for its own platform?,” and GOP leaders “completely lack principles.”

And here’s a warning directly from the base, President Donald Trump: If you try in any way to curtail Ameri-

can’s Second Amendment rights with “red flag” laws or other Democrat chicanery, you will spark another wave of disgusted ex-Republicans. They’re happy with your economy and the Supreme Court and most of your foreign policies. They’re disappointed that the border wall isn’t built yet—though they understand you’re trying hard. But if you give away their gun rights in any way, they’re going to desert you in significant numbers.

“Diversity” means nothing to the Republican base. It might be a talking point with some of the party’s snooty elite, but it counts for nothing with the grassroots activists who write out millions of small checks, man phone banks, knock on doors, organize rallies, and drag their relatives and friends to the polls.

The Republican base wants their First and Second amendment rights restored. They want secure borders, America-first immigration policies, and full respect for the rule of law. They want low taxes and strong economic growth. They want affordable private health care. They want a sound education system and the end of “political correctness.” They want an end to “minority rule” and identity politics and hyphenated Americanism.

The Republican base wants their country saved. They don’t care who does it. They just want the job done. They don’t care if every Congress member is a white 50-plus male, or if they’re all descendants of Chinese railroad laborers, or Kalahari Bushmen.

By the way, I’m not sorry that Will Hurd is standing down in Texas. He was one of the most left-wing Republicans in the House. He voted with the Democrats almost as much as with the president. He was soft on immi-

gration amnesty even though much of the GOP base in his border district suffers more from illegal immigration than almost anywhere else in the nation. Good riddance, I say. Let’s hope the local GOP grassroots nominate a much better replacement.

The GOP leadership needs to completely abandon its “diversity” fetish. For every vote they gain by nominating a woman or a “minority” to Congress, they will lose 10 by ignoring the real concerns of their base.

Let’s hope that the good people of Indiana’s 5th District choose a replacement for Rep. Susan Brooks, who cares more about restoring the Constitution than pandering to “political correctness.”

The next election is the most critical in U.S. history. The Democrats will run on “identity politics” because that’s all they have. The Republicans have Trump, a great economy, a much better Supreme Court, a much-improved foreign policy, and countless other issues on which to run.

“Diversity” is not an important issue for the GOP base. Many large U.S. businesses, including Dick’s Sporting Goods and Target, have suffered because they put political correctness before the wants of their customers. The Republican Party would be foolish to follow the same path.

Trevor Loudon is an author, filmmaker, and public speaker from New Zealand. For more than 30 years, he has researched radical left, Marxist, and terrorist movements and their covert influence on mainstream politics.

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