

Political

Perspectives

graphic by Jared Probst

This is the second installment of a political column that will present contrasting political views of both liberal and conservative views to shed light on both side's opinions.

TOPIC: DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

In recent years, a movement has arisen among the Democratic party pushing for more aspects of socialism to be integrated into our government and society. Referring to themselves as Democratic Socialists and spearheaded by political leaders such as Bernie Sanders, they believe that capitalism and democracy alone are incompatible, amoralistic and instead believe in a combination of socialism, capitalism and democracy. Is this truly the best path for America to follow?



BY SAM WESTON
PHOTO EDITOR

As a society, we have the wrong idea about how socialism could work in this country and not by dismantling capitalism but making it better. Let me preface that liberals and the Democratic Party don't hate capitalism and the ideals of many liberals are, in fact, pro-business in our economic policies but arguing for workers' wage increases, universal health care, and increased taxes on wealthy individuals and companies shouldn't be seen as dismantling our economic system for an entirely new socialist utopia. We have to remember that there's a difference between full on socialism and social programs which can help capitalism do its job, while protecting consumers and workers from being taken advantage of.

Let's start with some programs that work and are essential to our society.

The first example of a social program that we currently have is Medicaid/Medicare.

Publicly funded health care has been the topic of many discussions regarding whether it would work in our society. In places, such as Canada and most of Europe, public health care is seen as a must and it works. Things such as how our infant mortality rate in the United States is the highest out of the wealthiest countries in the world, according to statistics by the Center for Disease Control with a rate of 6.7 percent, triple that of Finland who has universal health care. We also pay more for prescription drugs out of any country in the world while our elderly are the ones paying the most for it because they use the most. Medicare, a social program in threat of many anti-socialist cuts, does not cover most of its outpatient drug prices leaving many elderly paying out of pocket. If we expanded Medicare, we could, in theory, pay for all this but then again that's socialism and that's a bad thing, or is it?

Another example of this type of economic

program that can't go a long way is wage increases

Now, this is the big one. Why should we give more money to workers when the CEOs and business owners worked so hard to get to that point? I thought trickle-down economics would have taken care of that? This argument gets thrown around a lot, but what do we have to consider is the minimum wage is \$7.25 at a federal level, fifty years ago the minimum wage was \$1.60. Seems like a good thing, right? After adjusting for inflation, \$1.60 back in 1968 is worth \$11.64 in 2018, so we are in fact making less than what we were making 50 years ago. Granted, many places don't actually have their wages at \$7.25. Here in the Portland area the minimum is \$11.25, a little below the adjusted 1968 minimum wage. This is because things cost more in Oregon, so in order to pay for everything, we need a higher wage. However, Pew Research Center has shown that wages aren't being adjusted for inflation as we have seen in our 1968 minimum wage compared to the actual one, so we aren't adjusting it correctly, making it so we have less money over all. This makes paying for everything more difficult, such as the things I mentioned above: health insurance, education, food, housing, etc. However, the big underlying factor is how a capitalistic society works: by consumers, well, consuming. You give people more money, they spend more money. We saw this in 2009 with the stimulus package by the Obama Administration, an idea that was meant to give money to the people who lost it to an unregulated banking system.

You can say many things about socialism not working and I would agree with you on that. However, the main idea that I have tried to bring forth is that socialism can work, sometimes and in small doses, but not to take the place of capitalism but to make capitalism work better. We need to remember that consumers are what make up this economic system and protecting them makes the system better.



BY IAN VAN ORDEN
NEWS/OPINION EDITOR

At its core, the argument for further integrating aspects of socialism, or moving to the form of government championed by Sanders and others, is supportive of big government. Socialism, as a concept, pushes for more power to the federal government, stating that many aspects of our lives would be better handled by our government rather than by a free and open market.

This, as a rule, has rarely worked for countries around the world, and never on the scale that would be required here in the United States of America.

In recent years, the biggest debate regarding socialism in America has been over health care, as President Barack Obama created the Affordable Care Act. The idea was to have health care regulated by the government to force health care companies to cover everyone equally. His claim? Cost would go down and existing plans would stay the same or become cheaper than before.

This claim turned out to be false, as people were forced into new plans, into seeing new doctors and prices skyrocketed. An argument could be made that the system was simply badly designed, and it was, but the true issues with the ACA were with its inherent design. One only needs to look as far as another health care source here in America to find why. A report by the National Priorities Project on the United States spending in 2015 sheds some light on the topic.

Social Security is an act created by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1935, that serves as a sort of welfare system for those that have retired from the workforce. It is primarily funded by tax revenue, as a social security tax is placed on the majority of salaried income.

According to the report by the NPP of the country's total expenditures, Social Security, along with unemployment and other similar welfare programs, made up about 33 percent of the country's total spending in 2015. This was the largest expenditure that year, closely followed by Medicare at 27 percent, and then the military at about 16 percent. That means

that welfare programs make up about 60 percent of our total budget.

In other countries around the world that offer programs such as socialized health care, ridiculous tax rates support these programs. A report by CNN Money in 2013 revealed that Denmark and Sweden, two of the most commonly cited examples of countries with social health care, also sported some of the highest top tax rates in the first world, with Denmark at 60 percent and Sweden at 57 percent.

Although many people like to call socialized health care 'free' health care, it's anything but. The money simply comes from another source.

Beyond the monetary cost, there are also valid concerns about defending personal freedoms when a democratic society adopts parts of socialism. Milton Friedman, a Nobel Prize winning economist considered by many to be the greatest economic mind of the twentieth century, wrote about the topic in his book, *Capitalism and Freedom*.

"[My] thesis... is that such a view is a delusion, that there is an intimate connection between economics and politics, that only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible, and that, in particular, a society which is socialist cannot also be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom," Friedman wrote.

Friedman believed that political and economic policies were interconnected, contrary to the popular opinion of the time. That one dictated the limitations of the other. He believed that integrating even aspects of socialism would lead to the loss of personal freedom.

In my eyes, the idea of introducing elements of socialism is a purely negative one, though it is one that we have been embracing for years. In nearly every circumstance, these policies have come with significant penalties, and I have yet to see an example where the benefits have outweighed these burdens. The answer seems clear to me: Stay away from socialism.