

YWA LESSON PLAN & MEETING AGENDA

THE *Truth* TRUTH ABOUT SOCIALISM

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Introduction:

Why You Need to Know the Truth about Socialism

In 2016, over two million people under the age of thirty voted for Bernie Sanders—a democratic socialist—in the Democratic primaries and caucuses.¹ Membership in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has spiked far above its typical low number (around 6,000 members) in the past couple of years, gaining prominence when Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez won her primary.² Today, the DSA has between 40,000 and 60,000 members most of whom are under 30. Startlingly, polls show³ that “a large majority of millennials have a favorable opinion of socialism,” and a near majority prefers socialism to capitalism.⁴

Socialism’s claims of “free stuff” and “social equality” understandably draw in new generations of young Americans who do not remember decades of failed socialistic nations like the generations before them. These young Americans are not aware that socialism is not just a promise of “free stuff” or “equality,” it is a system that requires your full cooperation in giving the government control and decision-making power in most areas of your life. In socialistic societies, the government might control how much of your own money you will give up, where your money is spent, when and if you can receive medical treatment, what kind of businesses you have and how much profit you make, just to name a few. In effect, the government increasingly controls your personal prosperity, your ability to choose, and ultimately your own freedom.

The events of the past century have proven socialism to be a failed system that depresses economic growth, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Socialistic systems diminish the value of human beings, their achievements, and their freedoms. In contrast, countries that promote limited government in society and an economy consisting mainly of free market principles, creates a foundation of economic freedom. In turn, “increases in economic freedom have gone hand in hand with increases in political and civil freedom and have led to increased prosperity.”⁵

As you encounter the current trend of socialism in America today, this lesson will help you answer these critical questions:

What is socialism and how does it affect societies?

What are the harmful economic and social problems that socialism creates?

How do I intelligently and confidently respond to all the “promises” that socialistic narratives offer today? i.e. free health care, free university education, equality, fairness, etc.

¹ Blake, A. (2016, June 20). More young people voted for Bernie Sanders than Trump and Clinton combined — by a lot. The Washington Post. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/20/more-young-people-voted-for-bernie-sanders-than-trump-and-clinton-combined-by-a-lot/?noredirect=on>

² Kurtzleben, D., and Malone, K. (2018, July 26). What you need to know about the democratic socialists of America. NPR. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/26/630960719/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-democratic-socialists-of-america>

³ Kight, S. W. (2019, March 10). Exclusive poll: Young Americans are embracing socialism. Axios. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.axios.com/exclusive-poll-young-americans-embracing-socialism-b051907a-87a8-4f61-9e6e-0db75f7edc4a.html>

Also: Newport, F. (2018, August 13). Democrats more positive about socialism than capitalism. Gallup. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/240725/democrats-positive-socialism-capitalism.aspx>

⁴ Lee, E. (2018, December 3). What Americans must know about socialism. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/commentary/what-americans-must-know-about-socialism>

⁵ Friedman, M., & Friedman, R.D. (2002). Capitalism and freedom: Fortieth anniversary edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. p. ix, 4



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Background: **History of Socialism** **The What, Where,** **When, and Who**

The claims and promises of socialism can really be confusing. Many people who call themselves “socialist” claim that fairness, equality, and economic security are why they support socialist policies. Also, they often assert that anyone who opposes socialism is against these ideals; not realizing that free markets, given a fair chance, produce the same qualities.

In reality, these ideals are all desirable objectives on which everyone can agree. However, many Americans who value these same ideals cannot support socialism because of the inevitable “dangers to other values they see in the (socialistic) methods proposed.”⁶ Many who believe in fairness, equality and economic security also know that the precious values of individual liberty (such as the right to own property) are threatened by socialism’s principles, and that socialism stagnates economic prosperity.

Ultimately, the argument between socialists and capitalists (and those who are somewhere in between) is not about whether or not we should reach the ideals of equality and economic security, but how to achieve them and at what cost.



What is Socialism?

Although the main goals of socialism have shifted somewhat over the past century, it ultimately centers around two main things:

1. **Placing more control in the hands of government and less in the hands of citizens**
2. **Government-led and -enforced extreme redistribution of income among citizens**

In the early 20th century, socialist societies focused on nationalizing the main segments of the economy or in other words, on transferring the principle segments of industry or commerce from private ownership to public ownership (state-owned and -controlled). This nationalization in turn led to the necessity of instituting a government-controlled central planning body to lead the economy.

In the latter part of the 20th century, proponents of socialism mainly focus on government control and extensively redistributing individual incomes through taxation and social welfare systems.⁷

From where did Socialism come? A Brief History ...

The Industrial Revolution— Late 1700s to Early 1900s

From the late 1700s to the early 1900s, many countries around the world shifted from agrarian and handicraft economies to economies dominated by industry and machine manufacturing. The Industrial Revolution, as this process of change was called, began in Britain (1760 to 1840) and spread to other parts of Europe, North America, and Japan.⁸

The industrial revolution corresponded with new theories on how economies should function and the role that government should play within them. In 1776, Adam Smith, (1723-1790) “the father of modern economics,” changed economic theory forever with his book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. His book analyzed how a successful market system could combine a person’s freedom “to pursue their own objectives” along with the “extensive cooperation and collaboration needed ... to (also) produce our food, our clothing, our housing.”⁹

Smith believed that a nation’s greatest wealth came from producing goods and services which raised the standard of living for ordinary people to make their lives better.¹⁰ Smith also believed that the healthiest and most sustainable economy is based on exchanging goods and services within market institutions that are guided by an “invisible hand.”

“The invisible hand” refers to people’s natural desire to interact with each other through trading, shopping, and bargaining, combined with their natural primary concern to provide

⁶ Hayek, F. A. (2007). *The road to serfdom: Text and documents: The definitive edition*. B. Caldwell (Ed.). Routledge, London: University of Chicago Press. p. 83-84

⁷ Hayek, F. A. (2007). *The road to serfdom: Text and documents: The definitive edition*. B. Caldwell (Ed.). Routledge, London: University of Chicago Press. p. 54-55

⁸ Industrial revolution. (2019, June 21). In *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution>

⁹ Friedman, M., & Friedman, R.D. (1980). *Free to choose: A personal statement*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Inc. p.1

¹⁰ Today we use Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to assess the health of a nation’s economy. GDP is the value of the goods and services produced in a country within a certain time period

for themselves and their immediate family and friends. According to Smith, the combination of these two natural motivators in the market will end up benefiting everyone who participates. And ultimately, “no external force, no coercion, no violation of freedom is necessary to produce cooperation among individuals all of whom can benefit.”¹¹

The First Socialist Movements— Late 1800s and early 1900s

The growth of industrial capitalism increased economic output and raised living standards around the world. However, working conditions in factories were often unregulated, unsatisfactory, and even abusive to the working class.¹² Reactions against labor exploitation led to the creation of the first socialist movements to reform the capitalistic system and elevate conditions for the poor working class. From this movement came the first socialist political parties and trade unions.

German-born Karl Marx (1818-1883) was the first major proponent of a socialist system and critic of capitalism. In his most famous work, *Das Kapital*, he set forth his own economic theories in the late 19th century that changed the future of economic systems.

Marx agreed that industrialization benefited society and offered a higher standard of living. But he saw profits going to the owners of the industry, not the workers. And, as more workers competed for jobs, worker bargaining power diminished and drove wages down. In contrast, capitalists (the landlords, merchants, traders) dominated places of power in the market, politics, and society. Between the declining power of workers and growing power of capitalists, a working man’s only hope was for trade unions and political parties to support them.

Marx believed that one day labor parties and workers’ organizations would be powerful enough to overthrow capitalism and establish control over the economy. Under their control, total revenues and profits of industry would be divided among the entire population, eliminating inequality and establishing a “democratic” control of industry.¹³

Lenin, Stalin, and the First Central Planning System

The first country to create a new economic system based on the tenants of Marx’s socialism was the Soviet Union. In 1917, Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), a student of Marxism, led the Bolsheviks to establish the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as a communist state under the control of one¹⁴ party.¹⁵ The communist party created a new system of complete government ownership over the country’s most important means of production and opposed private property ownership and factory and land owners.

Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) became the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1922. After Lenin died in 1924, he also became leader of the USSR and created the first central “command” planning system.¹⁶ This system was the main source of control over the economy.

One of the great leaders of economic theory, F.A. Hayek (1899-1992), describes the takeover of socialism from the point of view of private business, saying socialism caused “the abolition of private enterprise, of private ownership of the means of production, and the creation of a system of ‘planned economy’ in which the entrepreneur working for profit is replaced by a central planning body.”¹⁷ The central planning system was organized in this way:

¹¹ Friedman, M., & Friedman, R.D. (1980). *Free to choose: A personal statement*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Inc. p. 1-2

¹² Industrial revolution. [Video file]. (2019, July 1). Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/industrial-revolution/industrial-revolution>

¹³ Stuart, E. F. (2018). *Capitalism vs. socialism: Comparing economic systems*: Course guidebook. Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses. p. 1, 18-19

¹⁴ The one party was called the Russian Social Democratic Party

¹⁵ Resis, A. (2019, July 8). Vladimir Putin: Prime Minister of Soviet Union. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica online*. Retrieved on June 26, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Lenin>

¹⁶ Stuart, E. F. (2018). *Capitalism vs. socialism: Comparing economic systems*: Course guidebook. Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses. p. 2, 65-66

¹⁷ Hayek, F. A. (2007). *The road to serfdom: Text and documents: The definitive edition*. B. Caldwell (Ed.). Routledge, London: University of Chicago Press. p. 83-84

- The body was led by the Communist Party under Stalin's leadership as the General Secretary (The last GS was Mikhail Gorbachev). Although the government had a prime minister elected by a legislature, the legislature had to be approved by the Communist Party, and the prime minister had no independent power.
- The General Secretary presided over a small group of communist party leaders (called politburo) who made policy and decisions for the economy. Although the General Secretary and politburo were elected by the Central Committee, which was elected by a communist party congress convening every few years, only citizens who were members of the Communist Party were allowed to vote in elections.
- The workers who headed certain industries--factory managers, farm managers, school principals, hospital administrators and store managers--“were given a target goal for each monthly planning period” Ex.: a shoe factory manager was tasked to produce a certain number of shoes per month as his “output target.” In the communities, party members were set up to watch locals to make sure plans and decisions were carried out.¹⁸

By World War II, the USSR had reached successful rates of economic growth with an infrastructure and industrial base capable of eventually defeating the armies of Nazi Germany. In fact, at this time, Stalin had created the second largest industrial economy in the world.¹⁹ Over the next half century, his central planning system would be used as the “template” for nearly all future communist economic and political systems around the world.

Socialism After World War II

After the second World War, the soviet system was imposed upon the countries of eastern Europe, and their market economies were turned into government-owned and planned systems. In contrast, the U.S., bolstered by its industrial base which had supported troops and built defense plants during the war, had become the most prosperous country in the world.²⁰

Following the war, the U.S. exerted greater leadership at home and around the world, with an emphasis on determining the best way to balance its own economy and rebuild Europe. Today the U.S. has an economy which favors private enterprise and limited government intervention, ranking 12th and “mostly free” on The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom (2019). And, although the U.S. has economic challenges like any nation, it is the world's largest economy with the highest GDP in the world of 20.5 trillion in 2018.²¹

By contrast, although the soviet system had a degree of economic success from an intense focus on rapid industrialization, it came with a high price of human suffering and death. When Mikhail Gorbachev took over the Soviet Union in 1985, its standard of living was much lower than most other countries of Eastern Europe. “Shortages, food rationing, long lines in stores, and acute poverty were endemic.”²² The soviet socialist system would continue to fail until its bankruptcy in the 1980s and dissolution under Gorbachev in 1991.

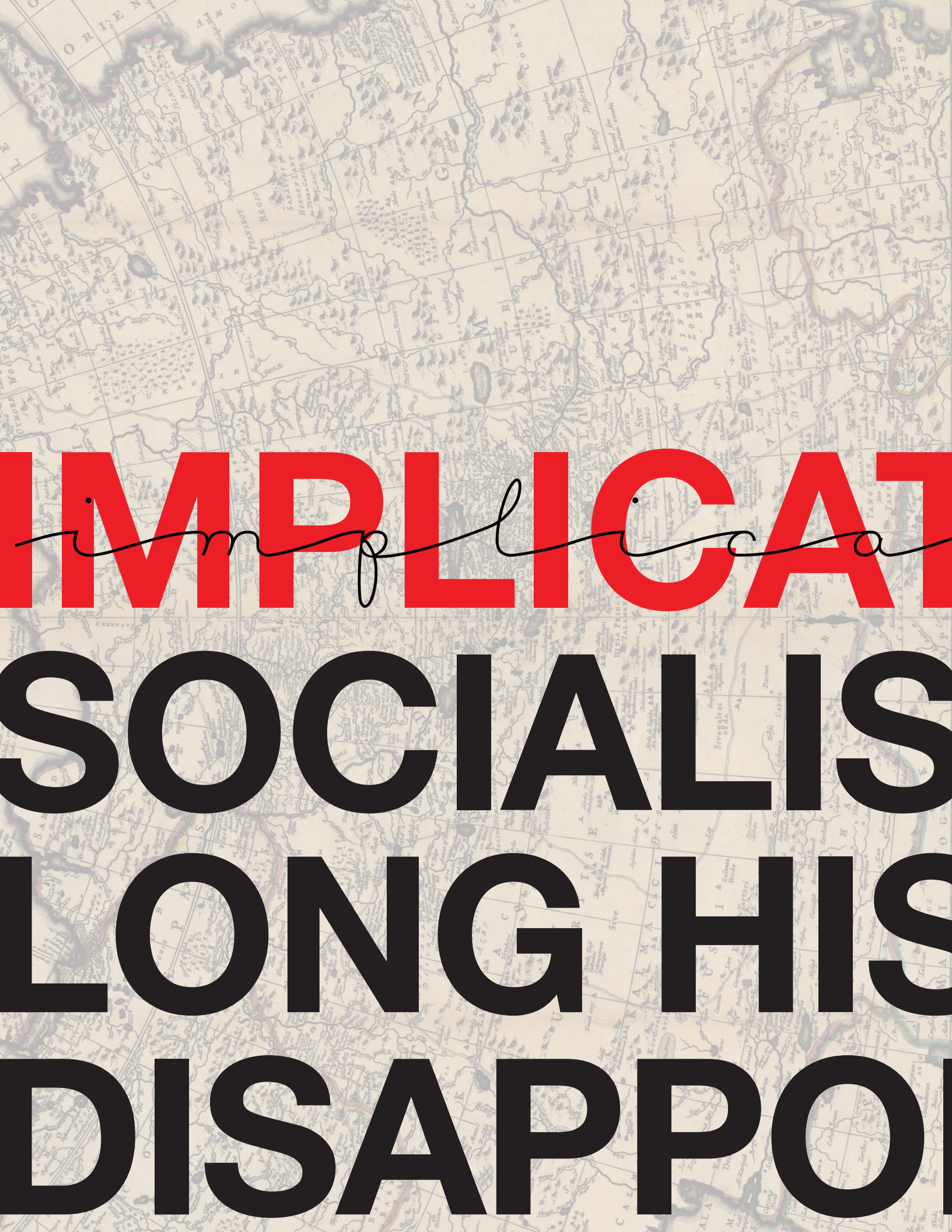
¹⁸ Stuart, E. F. (2018). Capitalism vs. socialism: Comparing economic systems: Course guidebook. Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses. p. 73-76

¹⁹ Joseph Stalin. (n.d.) [Video file]. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/russia/joseph-stalin-video>

²⁰ The postwar United States, 1945-1968. (n.d.). Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/postwar/>

²¹ World Bank. (2019, July 1). Gross domestic product 2018. [Data file]. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>

²² Aron, L. (2011, June 20). Everything you think you know about the collapse of the Soviet Union is wrong: *And why it matters today in a new age of revolution. Foreign Policy. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/20/everything-you-think-you-know-about-the-collapse-of-the-soviet-union-is-wrong/>



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Implications: Socialism's Long History of Disappointment

Almost 100 years has passed since the first planned socialist economy. Since that time, the world has had ample time to see the dangerous and foolhardy results of socialism and its policies.

Highly socialist countries, such as China, the USSR, and Cuba, experienced sharp declines in output, especially in the industries taken over by the state. Agricultural countries whose private farms were forced into state-ownership were meant to produce “more food with fewer workers so resources could be shifted into other industries.” But this is not what happened. Instead, “food production plummeted, and tens of millions of people died from starvation in the USSR, China, and other agricultural economies where the state took command. Planning the nonagricultural parts of those economies also proved impossible.” In China and the Soviet Union, the “the lack of food and reliance on central planning, rather than market mechanisms” resulted in millions of people dying from starvation.²³

Countries with less extreme forms of socialism, but which still promote policies of increased taxes and state control “also generate less output, although the shortfall is not as drastic as with the highly socialist countries.”

We see this “shortfall” in studies that compare the economic freedom of various countries with their different levels of real GDP.²⁴



²³ Council of Economic Advisors. (2019 March). Economic report of the President. p. 382-384, 395

²⁴ Council of Economic Advisors. (2019 March). Economic report of the President. p. 382-386

Why Socialistic Systems Fail (some reasons)

1. Lack of Economic Freedom:

Extensive research and historical accounts demonstrate that countries with more economic freedom also enjoy increased economic performance. Economic freedom is assessed by:

- The amount of government spending, taxation, and state-controlled enterprises in a country
- The extent a country provides legal protection for citizen property rights
- The measure to which citizens are free to trade with other countries
- The extent of regulations on the domestic economy
- The nature of policies that control inflation²⁵

Studies suggest that if the U.S. started implementing highly socialist policies, such as that of Venezuela, it would decrease U.S. real GDP by at least 40% in the long run or around \$24,000 a year “for the average person” over time. Adopting less extreme socialistic policies (like Nordic levels of 1975 discussed in Section V.e.) would reduce real GDP by at least 19% in the long run.²⁶

2. Lack of Economic Incentives:

Economies and people need incentives—something that motivates individuals and businesses to apply their knowledge to create and maintain productive assets.²⁷ But socialist policies distort incentives. Lack of incentive to innovate products or to work to earn money occurs when people realize that what money they “take home” has little to do with how much money they actually earn. The higher a country’s tax rates and the more that its

“goods and services are distributed free of charge, then the more “disincentives” created in the economy.”²⁸

3. Knowledge Problems:

Market prices that occur “naturally” within economically free societies reveal important information about what consumers want and what it should cost. On the other hand, “planning and regulation do away with the information embodied in prices...”²⁹

Fundamental information problems are created by “high tax rates, large state organizations, and the centralized control of resources.” When government regulations and public spending programs force lower prices or free distribution on certain products or services (like healthcare and education), less is made or offered with less quality. And often, goods and services are misallocated to consumers with “comparatively little need.”³⁰

²⁵ Council of Economic Advisors. (2019 March). Economic report of the President. p. 404

²⁶ Council of Economic Advisors. (2019 March). Economic report of the President. p. 385, 404

²⁷ Perry, M. J. (2016, March 22). Why Socialism always fails. American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.aei.org/publication/why-socialism-always-fails/>

²⁸ Council of Economic Advisors. (2019 March). Economic report of the President. p. 382, 388, 391

²⁹ Boaz, D. (2010, April 4). Regulation and the knowledge problem. [Blog]. Cato Liberty. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/blog/regulation-knowledge-problem>

³⁰ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 383

Case Studies:

The following case studies reveal socialism's long history of disappointments and failed promises.

- **The USSR under Lenin and Stalin:**

Although the soviet system created some economic growth, forced industrialization of the Soviet Union “caused the worst man-made famine in history.” In the early 1930s, millions of Russian peasants were forced to move off their lands and join state-owned farms. Those who refused to follow Stalin's planning system were executed or sent to labor camps. In the chaos that followed mass restructuring, a “catastrophic famine swept across the Soviet Union” which was made worse when the state took all available farm food and animals and established “a cordon... around the Ukrainian republic to prevent escape.”³¹

Though Stalin did produce a larger output of food during his “Reign of Terror,”³² *it is estimated that a total 7 million people died during the Soviet famine.*³³ Video about Joseph Stalin and his “Reign of Terror” in the USSR:

- <https://www.history.com/topics/russia/joseph-stalin-video>

Furthermore, the enormous industrial enterprises rapidly created under Stalin suffered from major problems in organization, coordination, and communication. Without outside pressures (a natural lack of demand for products or supply of labor) forcing the industries to scale back or cut production costs as necessary like capitalist enterprises do, output declined. Because centrally planned production does not allow the market to decide

what products people want (demand) another problem is the “anticipating and satisfying the need for many different styles and forms of products... that will end up meeting the requirements of real people.”³⁴

- **East and West Germany:** After World War II, Germany was divided by Allied powers into East and West Germany. The U.S., Great Britain, and France governed West Germany, and the Soviets governed East Germany.³⁵ East Germany was transformed into a government-controlled and planned economy similar to the soviet system. Between 1948 and 1961, between 2.5 and 3 million East Germans, including many skilled and educated laborers and professionals, moved to West Germany for better lives. After the Berlin Wall was built and raised, between 1961 and 1989, five thousand East Germans escaped to West Germany, though more attempted to leave and failed. Some were shot as they attempted to escape. The two-state system in Germany lasted until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.³⁶

Before division, East and West Germany was one unified country with the same culture, language, and people. Today, the West and East have many differences, and though many factors have contributed to the differences, they are an interesting study of long-term effects of different the economic systems. According to a study done by The Berlin Institute for Population and Development, states in former West Germany are “considerably richer” than those in the former East, and “ordinary households own far less than half of the wealth accumulated by those in the west.” In addition, in the former East, wages are lower, there is less property ownership, productivity is 73% lower, and risk of “slipping into poverty is about 25% higher.”³⁷

³¹ Applebaum, A. (2017, October 13). How Stalin hid Ukraine's famine from the world: In 1932 and 1933, millions died across the Soviet Union—and the foreign press corps helped cover up the catastrophe. The Atlantic. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/red-famine-anne-applebaum-ukraine-soviet-union/542610/>

³² Joseph Stalin. (n.d.) [Video file]. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/russia/joseph-stalin-video>

³³ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 400

³⁴ Stuart, E. F. (2018). Capitalism vs. socialism: Comparing economic systems: Course guidebook. Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses. p. 75

³⁵ The era of partition: Allied occupation and the formation of the two Germanys, 1945–49. (n.d.) In Encyclopaedia Britannica online. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany/The-era-of-partition>

³⁶ Berlin is divided. (2019, August 12). [Video file]. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/berlin-is-divided>

³⁷ Connolly, K. (2015, October 2). German reunification 25 years on: how different are east and west really. The Guardian. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/02/german-reunification-25-years-on-how-different-are-east-and-west-really>

• **North and South Korea:** The Korean Peninsula was also divided into two separate occupation zones with different economic systems after World War II. In the North, the Soviet Union governed with a communist regime and in the South, the U.S. set up an anti-communist, more liberal system. Striking contrasts in ideology, as well as the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between the states since 1953, have kept the Koreans divided. Today, South Korea benefits from a strong economy and is making progress towards becoming a “fully democratic nation.” North Korea, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has remained “economically underdeveloped, as well as a virtual police state ruled by a single family for three generations.”³⁸

• **Maoist China:** During the “Great Leap Forward” from 1958 to 1962, the Communist Party of China led the country’s transfer from an agrarian economy to an industrialized socialist economy. At this time, economic output greatly declined. For example, per capita (per person) output of cotton, oil (for eating), and meat dropped 55%. Per capita output of grain fell 21%. During the “Great Chinese Famine,” about 45 million people died from 1959 to 1961. When agricultural lands began to be privatized secretly, “grain output in 1979 was six times higher than the year before.”³⁹

• **Cuba under Castro:** The period between 1957-8 and 1963-4, when 70% of farmland was nationalized in Cuba, was characterized by an enormous decrease in agricultural output. For example, beef production fell by 45% and corn production by 39%. Pork fell

by 84% and Yucca production by 50%.⁴⁰ Disincentives greatly reduced agricultural production in Cuba. Workers had low motivation to work for the collective good since their income had little relationship to how productive they were on the farm or to the amount of wages they were given.

• **Venezuela and Chavez:** Venezuela is a modern industrialized country that elected Hugo Chavez as its leader to implement socialist policies. In 1999, Venezuela nationalized important sections of the economy like oil production and healthcare, construction, banks, and supermarkets. He also implemented dramatically higher tax rates and imposed socialistic policies such as price controls and dramatic increases in welfare programs.

Just like other highly socialistic countries, the result has been less output in industries that were nationalized, demonstrating that the lessons from state-controlled agriculture carry over to oil and other modern industries like healthcare.⁴¹ Venezuela has also experienced mass poverty, utility service interruptions and blackouts, falling oil production, and financial mismanagement in government enterprises. About two million people have fled the country in recent years in search of a better life.⁴²

³⁸ Pruitt, S. (2019, January 15). Why are North and South Korea divided?: Why Korea was split at the 38th parallel after World War II. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/news/north-south-korea-divided-reasons-facts>

³⁹ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 397, 399

⁴⁰ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 396-397

⁴¹ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 383, 401-402

⁴² Stephens, B. (2019, January 25). Yes, Venezuela Is a Socialist Catastrophe: In the age of A.O.C., the lesson must be learned again. The New York Times. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/25/opinion/venezuela-maduro-socialism-government.html>

The Shades of Socialism Today

Today, many countries are a mix between free market and socialistic ideas. A good way to determine whether a country is socialist is to observe the degree to which its:

1. “means of production, distribution, and exchange are owned or regulated by the state; and
2. the state uses its control to distribute the country’s economic output without regard for final consumers’ willingness to pay or exchange (i.e. giving resources away ‘for free’).”⁴³

Shades of Socialism in countries around the world:⁴⁴

- Great Britain, France, and Sweden all have significant government-led income redistribution, a comprehensive social welfare system, and considerable state involvement in healthcare, education, housing, transportation, and utilities.
- China, over the past 40 years has tried to combine a communist type control over the economy with private industry in farming and manufacturing.
- Taiwan and Singapore (and South Korea as discussed above) have “used a strong central government to develop a modern, capitalist economy” and compete in the global economy.
- Although the U.S. is largely a private enterprise economy, politicians try to introduce socialist policies through, for example, universal health care, Medicare for All, and the New Green Deal.

Most modern-day socialist systems do not promote full state dictatorship like the most extreme cases of socialism described in the last section. Even so, the fundamental

problems of socialism still exist within countries whose policies impose high taxes, high-regulation, and centralized control of main resources. Whereas in highly socialistic societies private industries are directly transferred to state control, in the “modern” socialist state, the government will attempt to control private assets through different means like:

- imposing a high amount of regulation on businesses,
- acquiring individual incomes through high-tax rates, and
- redistributing the income to others through large social welfare schemes.⁴⁵

These policies lead to sluggish and/or failed economies as the state decides how money is spent, how much is spent, and “when and where the services are received by the consumer.”

⁴³ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 383

⁴⁴ Stuart, E. F. (2018). Capitalism vs. socialism: Comparing economic systems: Course guidebook. Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses. p. 2-3

⁴⁵ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 383, 388, 404-405

⁴⁶ As translated and quoted in Hayek, F. A. (2007). The road to serfdom: Text and documents: The definitive edition. B. Caldwell (Ed.). Routledge, London: University of Chicago Press. p. 77

⁴⁷ Authoritarianism. (n.d.) In Encyclopaedia Britannica online. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/authoritarianism>

Socialism's Antagonistic Relationship with Freedom

Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.

-Alexis de Tocqueville, 1848⁴⁶

F.A. Hayek wrote that it is rarely remembered that the origins of socialism were authoritarian. Authoritarianism requires blind obedience to an authority and opposes individual freedom in thought or action.⁴⁷ During the French Revolution in the late 18th century, socialistic political messages were used to beat back liberalism and crush individual freedom of thought. In his book about socialism, aptly named *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek writes:

The French writers who laid the foundations of modern socialism had no doubt that their ideas could be put into practice only by a strong dictatorial government.⁴⁸ To them socialism meant an attempt to “terminate the revolution” by a deliberate reorganization of society on hierarchical lines and by the imposition of a coercive “spiritual power.” Where freedom was concerned, the founders of socialism made no bones about their intentions. Freedom of thought they regarded as the root-evil of nineteenth-century society, and the first of modern planners, Saint-Simon, even predicted that those who did not obey his proposed planning boards would be “treated as cattle.”⁴⁹

After a series of democratic revolutions against European monarchies in 1848, a “new freedom” was promised by anti-revolutionaries who redefined the commonly-accepted meaning of “freedom” for their own political arguments. Whereas revolutionaries were fighting for “freedom from coercion, freedom from the arbitrary power of other men, (and) release from the ties which left the individual no choice but obedience to the orders of a superior to whom he was attached,” socialists promised a “new freedom ... from necessity, from... the ‘despotism of physical want’... (and from) the ‘restraints of the economic system.’” In actuality, this “new freedom” meant the placement of power in the hands of a few, fewer choices available to individuals, and the call for an equal distribution of wealth.⁵⁰

Writing during this time, the famous French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville saw socialism as being completely in conflict with freedom. He observes in 1848 that “Democracy extends the sphere of individual freedom. Socialism restricts it. Democracy attaches all possible value to each man; socialism makes each man a mere agent, a mere number.”⁵¹

We also see these concepts during the early 1900s in Soviet centrally planned economies. As Soviet state-owned enterprise supported laborers and their families, the state would also determine where a person would work. Where they worked then dictated where they lived, went to school, bought food, and even how they spent recreational time. Everything was controlled by “the enterprise director and served as a tool to organize and motivate workers.”⁵² As written by Elie Halevy in 1966 in *The Era of Tyrannies: Essays on Socialism and War*, “The socialists believe in two things which are absolutely different and perhaps even

⁴⁶ A dictatorial government is one with overbearing or oppressive authority and control of power

⁴⁷ Hayek, F. A. (2007). *The road to serfdom: Text and documents: The definitive edition*. B. Caldwell (Ed.). Routledge, London: University of Chicago Press. p. 76

⁴⁸ Hayek, F. A. (2007). *The road to serfdom: Text and documents: The definitive edition*. B. Caldwell (Ed.). Routledge, London: University of Chicago Press. p. 77-78

⁴⁹ As quoted in Hayek, F. A. (2007). *The road to serfdom: Text and documents: The definitive edition*. B. Caldwell (Ed.). Routledge, London: University of Chicago Press. p. 77

⁵⁰ Stuart, E. F. (2018). *Capitalism vs. socialism: Comparing economic systems: Course guidebook*. Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses. p. 78

⁵¹ Halevy, Elie (1966). *The Era of Tyrannies: Essays on Socialism and War*. Translated, with an introduction by R.K. Webb. New York, NY: New York University Press. p. 208

contradictory: freedom and organization.”⁵³ Much like the “democratic socialism” messages which redefined the concept of freedom during the French Revolution, today’s proponents of socialism use strategic, though faulty, messaging to win their converts.

Nobel laureate economist, Milton Friedman wrote in 1980 in *Free to Choose* that the U.S. Democratic Party tried to change the meaning of words in order to strengthen government power.⁵⁴ In particular, the party used a concept of “equality” that is “almost the opposite of the concept of equality Jefferson identified with liberty and Tocqueville with democracy.”⁵⁵ Instead of equality meaning “equal before God” or “having the equal freedom to pursue opportunities,” socialistic parties have “rewritten” equality to mean that all people should have the same level of living and income and “should finish the race at the same time.” The attempts to redefine “freedom” and “equality” are very similar to the strategies and arguments used to promote socialism today.

It is important to point out that Friedman believed that competitive capitalism and freedom are inseparable. He further believed that economic freedom, inherent in capitalistic-free market systems, is a necessary condition for political freedom to be present. In his famous work *Capitalism and Freedom*, he writes that “... increases in economic freedom have gone hand in hand with increases in political and civil freedom and have led to increased prosperity; competitive capitalism and freedom have been inseparable.”⁵⁶

According to the Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom, the majority of the 88 countries scoring as “repressed” or “mostly unfree” are also:

... either communist, former communist, or of some variation of a socialist economy. They are also the

world’s poorest nations. Even countries that were never officially communist, like Egypt and Greece, but which adopted socialist economic policies, are today among the poorest and most corrupt.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Friedman also added: “which Jefferson and many of his contemporaries viewed as the greatest threat to democracy.” p. 131

⁵⁵ Friedman, M., & Friedman, R.D. (1980). *Free to choose: A personal statement*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Inc. p. 130-131

⁵⁶ Friedman, M., & Friedman, R.D. (2002). *Capitalism and freedom: Fortieth anniversary edition*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. p. ix, 4

⁵⁷ Holmes, K. R. (2017, October 31). Communism: A hundred years after the Russian Revolution, it lives on more than you think. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/communism-hundred-years-after-the-russian-revolution-it-lives-more-you>

KNOW YOU

A CONSERVATIVE

PERSPECTIVE

CONTEMPORARY

ARGUMENTS

ANSWERS

AND

OUR FACTS:

INNOVATIVE

TECHNICAL

PROGRESS

FOR ALL

THE REST

OF THE

Know Your Facts: A Conservative Perspective on Contemporary Arguments—Answering Bernie, AOC, and the Rest

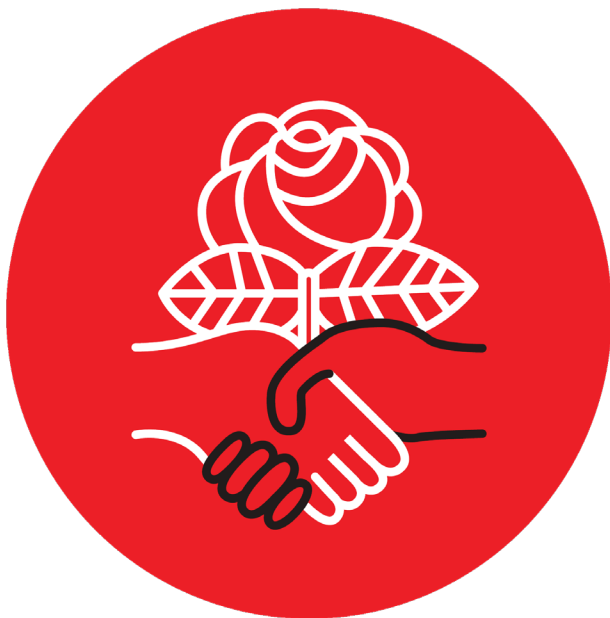
“The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people’s money.”

-Margaret Thatcher

When Bernie Sanders ran in 2016 he demanded “single payer health care, free public college, campaign finance reform, and racial, economic, and climate justice” According to an analyst at CNN, “Bernie provided solutions to all their (millennials) problems—without detailing the price or conceding the lessening in individual liberty.”⁵⁸

Sanders believes that all of the above “free stuff” should be paid for by the wealthiest Americans—the top 1% of people who own about 40% of America’s total wealth. But what he fails to point out is that the top 1% also already pays almost 40% of individual income taxes in America.⁵⁹

The following section will help you to understand the truth about the most prominent contemporary arguments for socialism today.



⁵⁸ Lee, E. (2018, December 3). What Americans must know about socialism. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/commentary/what-americans-must-know-about-socialism>

⁵⁹ Lee, E. (2018, December 3). What Americans must know about socialism. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/commentary/what-americans-must-know-about-socialism>

Does AOC's Green New Deal reflect socialism?

The answer is a clear “yes.” The deal proposes to cut carbon emissions between 40 to 60% all across U.S. economic sectors, like in electricity, transportation, and agriculture, and at the same time create jobs to help the economy. However, it “lacks specific details as to how to accomplish that goal.”⁶⁰

New York Times columnist David Brooks described the plan as “the greatest centralization of power in the hands of the Washington elite in our history.”⁶¹ Ultimately, the deal calls for the elimination of coal, natural gas, oil, nuclear energy, and the internal combustion engine. To understand the massive impact of this plan, consider that these sources provide 83% of America’s electricity and 92% of the transportation fuel market.⁶²

The Green New Deal is more about the federal government controlling the economy of the United States and raising taxes than it is about changing the climate. Consider that millions of individuals will be required to act in accordance with new guidelines in many industrial sectors that will emanate from a central source – the federal government. One example of the “planning” needed will be the manpower required to install the mandatory and massive upgrades to the nation’s infrastructure. In conclusion, you have to ask how the federal government will ensure this “mass cooperation,” if not by a collective coercion.

While details of the cost of the plan are few, it is safe to assume that it will be astronomical; even so the cost comes with no guarantee on what outcomes will be achieved. Scientists

predict that even if all of America’s CO2 emissions are eliminated, the net result would be a global temperature decrease of only 0.11 degrees Celsius by the year 2100.⁶³

As a college student, I like the sound of free tuition and loan forgiveness. Why shouldn't education be funded by the government and free to all?

Well, why not? It certainly sounds good. Bernie Sanders and other left-leaning politicians have presented an enticing possibility of free university education. However, they have told only part of the story. And the untold part of the story is where the problems lie.

Before getting into the issue, let’s first acknowledge there is a problem. Tuition costs are too high, and paying for an education is a daunting and difficult challenge. The endless flow of financing from the federal government has allowed colleges and universities to continually raise tuition rates. And, the federal government has proven time and again that they are willing to provide loans with little consideration as to the likelihood of repayment, thereby exacerbating the problem. Heritage Foundation President Kay Coles James, a former university dean, describes it like this:

⁶⁰ Loris, N. (2019, March 22). Green New Deal Would Cost a Lot of Green. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/environment/commentary/green-new-deal-would-cost-lot-green>

⁶¹ Brooks, D. (2019, February 11). How the left embraced elitism: The progressives' Green New Deal centralizes power. The New York Times. Retrieved on August 13, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/11/opinion/green-new-deal.html> and Loris, N. (2019, March 5). The great hypocrisy of the Green New Deal. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 13, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/energy-economics/commentary/the-great-hypocrisy-the-green-new-deal>

⁶² Loris, N. (2019, March 22). Green New Deal would cost a lot of green. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/environment/commentary/green-new-deal-would-cost-lot-green>

⁶³ Loris, N. (2019, March 22). Green New Deal would cost a lot of green. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/environment/commentary/green-new-deal-would-cost-lot-green>

*... colleges continue to raise tuition. Because federal loan money is handed out with little scrutiny as to the student's ability to pay it back, colleges have had free rein to raise prices at rates often double the inflation rate. Flush with all that money, their first spending priority often isn't the classroom but the bureaucracy. From 1987 to 2012, America's higher education system added more than half a million administrators, doubling the number of administrators relative to the number of faculty.*⁶⁴

James and other conservatives have offered solutions such as:

- Less federal involvement in higher education so that the seemingly endless supply of money is significantly restricted.
- Income Share Agreements (ISAs), which allow students to get financing through the educational institution and pay it back at a pre-determined percentage of their income. So, in lean times they would pay less and in good times they would pay more.⁶⁵

Remember also that “free” is seldom really free--much of the tax burden that results from repaying these “forgiven loans” falls on middle- and lower-income citizens.⁶⁶

Finally, there is an integrity issue. All of these loans were not only given, but they were also *accepted* on the condition that they would be repaid. What message does it send to the hordes of young people who accepted these loans if the agreement they entered into was essentially meaningless. Even worse, the loans are “forgiven” on the backs of other hard-working Americans. Imagine being someone

who could not afford to attend a college and then being asked (forced) to help pay loans for the children of doctors, lawyers, engineers and other high earning professionals.

In summary, restoring private lending would require both the lenders and the borrowers to be more responsible with loan amounts and colleges would rein in costs to create more affordable choices for students. Private lending would also limit taxpayers' exposure to billions of dollars in loan defaults.

Hasn't socialism provided real solutions to wealth inequality around the world?

A great way to answer this question is to examine the effects of former President Obama's policies on wealth inequality after eight years of his Presidency. Although Obama is not an avowed socialist like AOC and Bernie Sanders, he is a progressive with almost unprecedented interest in “spreading the wealth.” In a speech to the Center for American Progress, he described income inequality as the “defining challenge of our time.” He added, “Over the course of the next year, and for the rest of my presidency, that's where you should expect my administration to focus all our efforts.”⁶⁷

Unfortunately, Obama's policies of increased regulation, government spending, and higher taxes produced the opposite of his goals. Consider the following:

- Median household income in the U.S. fell by roughly \$1000 in inflation-adjusted dollars through 2014
- Discouraged workers dropped out of

⁶⁴ James, K. C. (2019, July 16). The high cost of “free” college tuition. Townhall. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://townhall.com/columnists/kaycolesjames/2019/07/16/the-high-cost-of-free-college-tuition-n2550145>

⁶⁵ Cohn, S. (2019, February 15). Forget taking out a student loan. Purdue University has come up with a new way to pay for college. CNBC. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/02/08/purdue-university-introduces-first-income-sharing-agreement-for-students-.html>

⁶⁶ James, K. C. (2019, July 16). The high cost of “free” college tuition. Townhall. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://townhall.com/columnists/kaycolesjames/2019/07/16/the-high-cost-of-free-college-tuition-n2550145>

⁶⁷ President Obama on inequality. (2013, December 4). [Transcript]. Politico. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/story/2013/12/obama-income-inequality-100662>

the labor force, resulting in a labor force participation rate that hit a 40-year low in 2015

- The number of Americans receiving food stamps exploded from 33.5 million to a 2013 high of 48 million under Obama's policies
- The number of Americans living in poverty increased by nearly 7 million during the Obama presidency
- The number of black Americans living in poverty increased by 1.4 million during his presidency
- He is the first President in U.S. history to not reach at least one year of 3% GDP growth at the historical average.
- The lowest income households in the U.S. did not regain their pre-recession (2008) incomes during his presidency while the upper income households did, thus widening income inequality in the U.S.⁶⁸

By any credible standard, this is a dismal record when it comes to eliminating income and wealth disparities. Now take a look at a sample of socialism's global record in closing income and wealth gaps:

- In the 1990s, after decades of dismal growth and various government entanglements due to socialist "red tape," India rejected state socialism and converted to a free market approach that resulted in the world's largest middle class (more than 300 million). The free market did what decades of socialism could not do – pull millions out of low living standards to a healthy middle-class lifestyle.⁶⁹
- With the aim of reducing poverty and inequality by taking from rich landowners to give to poor workers, Venezuela's leader Hugo Chavez nationalized industries such as agriculture, oil, banks, supermarkets,

construction, and other key sectors. The dictator imposed other common socialist policies such as price controls and dramatic increases in welfare programs. The net result has been mass poverty among many other problems, not income equality.⁷⁰

In summary, the poor have become poorer under socialism. The well-to-do, for the most part, remained relatively stable in both systems. Socialism had a net negative impact on quality of life and the equality of financial well-being.

I'm struggling to pay for medical bills and health insurance, why shouldn't I support Medicare for all and Universal Health Care?

Some have proposed Medicare for All to nationalize the U.S. healthcare system (which makes up more than 1/6th of the U.S. economy) and give free healthcare to citizens. This proposal "would create a monopoly government health insurer... and centrally set all prices paid to suppliers, such as doctors and hospitals."⁷¹

The President's Council of Economic Advisors found that if this policy was implemented and financed through taxes, that "GDP would fall by 9 percent, or about \$7,000 per person in 2022."

"Free stuff" is not really free and requires incredibly high tax rates for support. In addition, studies "on the productivity and effectiveness of single-payer systems suggests that 'Medicare for All' would reduce longevity and health, particularly among seniors,

⁶⁸ Perry, M. J. & Hemphill, T. A. (n.d.) The Obama economy and the shrinking middle class. American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.aei.org/spotlight/the-obama-economy-perry/>

⁶⁹ Lee, E. (2018, December 3). What Americans must know about socialism. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/commentary/what-americans-must-know-about-social>

⁷⁰ Stephens, B. (2019, January 25). Yes, Venezuela is a socialist catastrophe: In the age of A.O.C., the lesson must be learned again. The New York Times. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/25/opinion/venezuela-maduro-socialism-government.html>

⁷¹ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 385

even though it would only slightly increase the fraction of the population with health insurance.”⁷²

Here’s another startling fact – the nation is currently indebted to foreign governments and various internal debtors to the tune of about 22 trillion dollars.⁷³ That’s trillion! The Medicare for All plan as outlined by Senator Bernie Sanders would cost an estimated 32 – 38 trillion dollars.⁷⁴ It seems unimaginable that anyone would take a plan with this cost seriously. According to Kenneth Thorpe of Emory University, compared to what most Americans pay for health care today, a fully funded program—as envisioned by Sanders—would cost more for 71% of the nation’s working families, including low-income families⁷⁵ Medicare for ALL would provide extensive and excessive benefits such as:

virtually all hospital and physician care, preventive services, mental-health services, dental and vision care, prescription drugs, and medical devices. And, except for brand-name drugs, there would be absolutely no deductible, co-payment, or other out-of-pocket expenses. The plan would not only provide far more extensive benefits than private insurance plans or today’s Medicare; it would provide benefits in excess of those offered by other national-health-care plans around the world.

One of the problems with this type of “government takeover plan” is a secret that their proponents do not want you to know—about 75% of Americans are satisfied with their current private health plans⁷⁶ and close to 91% of Americans have health insurance today

(2017).⁷⁷ So, any honest broker must ask if it is worth overturning a moderately good system for a tremendous gamble that would come at an astronomical price. To date, democrats have offered no serious ideas as to how to pay for plans of this type.

Here are some examples of problems of universal healthcare systems:

- In 2017, Canadians were on waiting lists for 1,040,791 total procedures. Often, wait times are lengthy. For example, the median wait time for arthroplasty surgery (hip, knee, ankle, shoulder) ranges from 20 weeks to 52 weeks.⁷⁸
- In the British National Health Service, cancellations by the healthcare provider are common. Last year, the National Health Service cancelled 79,495 elective operations in England for nonclinical reasons on the day the patient was due to arrive. The same year, it canceled 3,925 urgent operations in England, including 150 urgent operations canceled two or more times.⁷⁹
- In Canada, private insurance is outlawed (as it would be under Sanders’ proposal). In 2017, “an estimated 63,459 Canadians received non-emergency medical treatment outside Canada.”⁸⁰

But what about the Nordic countries—aren’t they proof socialism works?

Nordic countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway are often cited, mostly by twentysomethings, as examples of socialist

⁷² Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 385

⁷³ Desilver, D. (2019, July 24). 5 facts about the national debt. Pew Research Center. Retrieved on August 14, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/24/facts-about-the-national-debt/>

⁷⁴ Tanner, M. (2019, April 17). The questions Medicare for All supporters must answer. National Review. Retrieved on August 14, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/04/bernie-sanders-medicare-for-all-plan-questions/>

⁷⁵ Thorpe, K. E. (2016, January 27). An analysis of Senator Sanders single payer plan. [PDF]. Emory University. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.healthcare-now.org/296831690-Kenneth-Thorpe-s-analysis-of-Bernie-Sanders-s-single-payer-proposal.pdf>

⁷⁶ Reinhart, R. J. (2018, February 2). In the news: Americans’ satisfaction with their healthcare. Gallup. Retrieved on August 13, 2019. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/226607/news-americans-satisfaction-healthcare.aspx>

⁷⁷ Berchick, E. R., Hood, E. & Barnett, J. C. (2018, September 12). Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2017: Highlights (U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports, P60-264). U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2018. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-264.pdf> and <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-264.html>

⁷⁸ Barua, B. (2017). Waiting your turn: Waiting times for health care in Canada. [PDF]. Fraser Institute. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/waiting-your-turn-2017.pdf>

⁷⁹ Baker, C. (2019, May 31). NHS key statistics: England, May 2019. [PDF]. House of Commons Library. (Briefing paper, number 728). Retrieved on August 13, 2019. Retrieved from <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7281/CBP-7281.pdf>

success stories. To say the least, this assertion is a myth. At one time, the Nordic countries embraced socialistic principles, but today their policies differ significantly from socialistic policies and although they emphasize social welfare, they have economic freedoms much closer to those of the U.S.⁸¹ Consider the words of former Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen: “*Some in the U.S. associate the Nordic model with some sort of socialism. Therefore, I would like to make one thing clear. Denmark is far from a socialist planned economy.*”⁸²

In fact, the Nordic countries, along with Iceland, made the top thirty countries in Heritage Foundation’s 2019 Economic Freedom index. In an economically free society: “individuals are free to work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please ... governments allow labor, capital, and goods to move freely, and refrain from coercion or constraint of liberty beyond the extent necessary to protect and maintain liberty itself.” Needless to say, countries that rank highly in these areas are not socialist in the classic sense of socialist.⁸³

Take Sweden as an example. During the time period of 1970–1990, it would have been proper to refer to Sweden as a socialist country. But a backlash against these harmful trends was soon to begin. After decades of experimentation with socialist policies, the business climate in Sweden became so toxic that IKEA Founder Ingvar Kamprad left the country for Denmark and later Switzerland in order to find a more business friendly climate. And thankfully, over the past several decades the Swedish people have enacted many pro-business measures such as tax reform and reductions in social welfare spending.

Sweden is not an anomaly among the Nordic countries in regard to being pro-business. According to the World Bank’s annual *Doing Business* report (2016), which ranked 189 countries according to ease of doing business, Denmark ranked third, Sweden eighth, Norway ninth, and Finland tenth. This report, considered one of the more authoritative in the world, takes into account categories such as starting a business, obtaining permits for construction, and acquiring business credit; as well as type of tax policies, contract enforcement, and cross border trading. All of which are conditions related to economic freedom.

In addition, many of the things that people admire about the Nordic countries—like low income inequality and poverty, and high levels of economic growth—were present before socialist policies began to develop.⁸⁴ Here are a few other interesting facts from the President’s Economic Council of Advisors’ report of 2019:

- “Nordic healthcare is not free, but rather requires substantial cost sharing.
- Compared with the U.S. rates at present ... labor income tax rates in the Nordic countries today are only somewhat greater.
- Nordic taxation overall is greater but surprisingly less progressive than U.S. taxes.
- The Nordic countries also tax capital income less and regulate product markets less than the United States does, but they regulate labor markets more.
- Living standards in the Nordic countries, as measured by per capita GDP and consumption, are at least 15 percent lower than those in the United States.”⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ren, F. & Labrie, Y. (2017, June). Leaving Canada for medical care, 2017. [PDF]. Fraser Institute. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/leaving-canada-for-medical-care-2017.pdf>

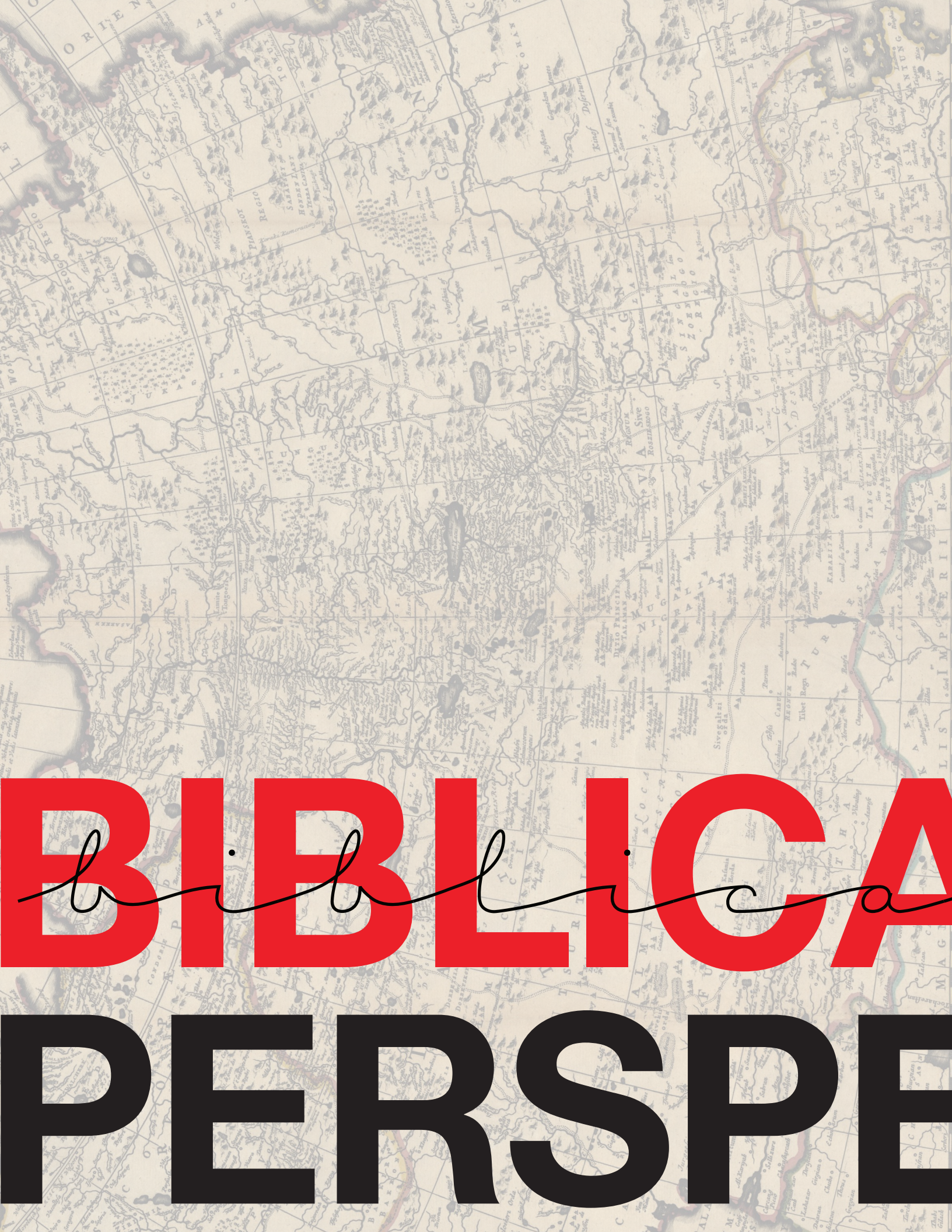
⁸¹ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 404

⁸² Greenlee, K. (2019, July 26). Native of Scandinavia debunks myth of Nordic countries as socialist. The Daily Signal. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.dailysignal.com/2019/07/26/native-of-scandinavia-debunks-myth-of-nordic-countries-as-socialist/>

⁸³ The Heritage Foundation. (2019). 2019 Index of economic freedom: 25th anniversary edition. [PDF]. Washington, D.C.: Miller, T., Kim, A. B., & Roberts, J. M. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from [https://www.heritage.org/index/about and https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2019/book/index_2019.pdf](https://www.heritage.org/index/about-and-https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2019/book/index_2019.pdf)

⁸⁴ Geraghty, J. (2018, March 12). Ten reasons we can’t, and shouldn’t, be Nordic. The National Review. Retrieved on August 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/03/ten-reasons-we-cant-and-shouldnt-be-nordic/>

⁸⁵ Council of Economic Advisors. (March 2019). Economic Report of the President. p. 385



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Should I feel guilty making and enjoying the profit from my work?

Of course not! Not only does the Bible say that “the laborer is worthy of his wages” (I Timothy 5:18) but also Solomon said, “This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun ...” (Ecclesiastes 5:18). God’s only admonition is that we do not “fix (our) hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (I Timothy 1:17) He also wants us to first seek His Kingdom and righteousness and “all these things will be given you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)

Biblical Perspectives

*Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is
freedom.*

(II Corinthians 3:17, NIV)

As followers of Christ, all that we believe and all that we do, should be based on Biblical foundations. So, what does the Bible say about socialism? While the system of socialism had not yet been developed during Biblical times, we can look at socialism’s main characteristics or arguments to determine the Biblical perspective:

But shouldn't we take care of the poor or needy?

Of course, we should! The Bible says: "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:17-18) However, Jesus was referring to us as individuals (or as the church) to willingly open our hearts to care for others in real need, not for the government to coerce citizens into giving up large amounts of their income for the government to redistribute as it sees fit. As Paul said, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (II Corinthians 9:7, NIV)

Watch this Video Was Jesus a Capitalist? By Lawrence Reed, President Foundation for Economic Education:

- <https://www.prageru.com/video/was-jesus-a-socialist/>

Does God care if we live under a system that diminishes our freedom and requires us to relinquish too much control to government?

Yes, He does. Although we are to respect the authority of government (Romans 13:1-7), God requires that our allegiance be to Him first and foremost. He commands us to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30 NIV) He sent His only Son to die for us that we should "live for Him who died and rose again on (our) behalf" (II Corinthians 5:15) and that we might be controlled by the love of Christ. (II Corinthians 5:14)

Jesus died for our sins to secure our freedom in Christ. In fact, Paul says, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Therefore, do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1) Instead, Paul calls himself the "bondservant" of Christ and asks, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

What is really that wrong with so much government legislation, regulation, or interference?

It eventually takes away people's freedoms and resources, making them slaves to the government system. In Romans Chapter 8, Paul explained the relationship of mankind to the law. He says that if we live in Christ guided by the Holy Spirit, we have been set free from the "law of sin and death" by the "law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus." As we walk in Christ, The Holy Spirit governs our mind, will, and emotions, making us not only obedient Christians, but also law-abiding citizens. This sentiment is expressed beautifully in II Corinthians 3:17 - "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

One of the primary challenges to human government is how to control the passions of mankind. When there is no *internal regulator* of the human appetite, laws and penal codes must be enacted and then strengthened as men become increasingly wicked. As this pattern spirals onward, government grows and increases power over citizens until it becomes difficult to determine who (the people or the government) is truly in control.

Government usually begins to tighten its stranglehold on citizens through gradual encroachments on free speech, religion, and other natural rights. An example of gradual encroachment is the outrage sparked by recent mass shootings in the U.S. Although the outrage is certainly right and understandable, some of the people or politicians then beckon political action to strengthen gun laws that in turn chip away at the 2nd Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. American Founder John Adams expressed this poignantly when he wrote "**Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people.** It is wholly

inadequate to the government of any other."

In the Biblical time before the Kings, Israel had lived with God as their leader. There were, of course, judges and other administrators to keep order, but primarily, God reigned Supreme. Then, because they wanted to be like all of the other nations, the people asked for a King. With reluctance, God acquiesced and instructed the Prophet Samuel to no longer resist their demands. This passage, out of I Samuel Chapter 8, reveals the natural usurpation of individual rights that is irresistible to governments as they grow large, entrenched and immovable.

So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This will be the manner of the king who will rule over you: He will take your sons and appoint them to his own chariots and horses, to run in front of his chariots. He will appoint some for himself as commanders of thousands and of fifties, and others to plow his ground, to reap his harvest, to make his weapons of war, and to equip his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and vintage and give it to his officials and servants. And he will take your menservants and maidservants and your best cattle and donkeys and put them to his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves."

-Samuel 8:10 (NIV)

A vintage map of Europe and Asia, showing various regions like 'REGIO SPANSCOT' and 'MURIA'. The map is detailed with geographical features, rivers, and place names. Overlaid on the map is the text 'YWWAAME' in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters.

YWWAAME

SCHIEDU

ANDAG

MEETING

JULY

AGENDA

YWA Meeting

Schedule and Agenda

01



Welcome

1. *Collect contact information from newcomers*
2. *Introduce Young Women for America*
3. *Event and meeting announcements*

03



Pray

1. *Pray specifically for this issue and the people who are affected by it*
2. *Pray for any other current events or issues*
3. *Pray for our country and leaders*

02



Educate

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>The truth about socialism</i> | 5. <i>Pass out Talking Points</i> |
| 2. <i>Background: The What, Where, When, and Who</i> | 6. <i>Discussion Questions (See Next Page)</i> |
| 3. <i>Implications: Case Studies</i> | 7. <i>Share the resources listed in "Going Further" for those who want to dive deeper</i> |
| 4. <i>What Does the Bible say about this?</i> | |

04



Closing

- Closing*
1. *Remind everyone of next meeting date/time*
 2. *Take photos for social media*

A vintage-style map with a grid overlay, featuring various geographical labels and a color palette of muted greens, browns, and greys. The map is the background for the entire text.

GOING

FURTHER

RESOURCES

FOR KNOW

MORE

ER:

RCEES

OWNING

Going Further: Resources for Knowing More

01



*Capitalism
& Freedom*
**By Milton
Friedman**

02



*Free to
Choose*
**By Milton
Friedman**

03



*The Road
to Serfdom*
**By F.A.
Hayek**

04



*An Inquiry
into the
Nature and
Causes of
the Wealth
of Nations*
**By Adam
Smith**

05



*“Comparing
Free Enter-
prise with
Socialism”*
The Heritage
Foundation
Special Report No.
213. April 30, 2019.
**By David R.
Burton**

06



November 30, 2018.
*“What
Americans
Must Know
About Social-
ism”* *American
Spectator*: [https://
spectator.org/what-
americans-must-know-
about-socialism/](https://spectator.org/what-americans-must-know-about-socialism/)
**By Lee
Edward**

Talking Points: **How Should I Respond?** Know Your Facts and Biblical Perspectives

Biblical Perspectives

Should I feel guilty making and enjoying the profit from my work?

Of course not! The Bible says “the laborer is worthy of his wages” (I Timothy 5:18) but also “This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun...” (Ecclesiastes 5:18). God’s only admonition is that we do not “fix (our) hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (I Timothy 1:17)

But shouldn’t we take care of the poor or needy?

Of course! Jesus said: “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:17-18) However, Jesus was referring to us as individuals and the church to willingly open our hearts to care for others in real need, not government coercion of citizens to give up large amounts of income for the government to redistribute as it sees fit. “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (II Corinthians 9:7, NIV)

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A Conservative Perspective on Contemporary Arguments— Answering Bernie, AOC, & the Rest



Does AOC's Green New Deal reflect socialism? The answer is a clear “yes.” It would be “the greatest centralization of power, in the hands of the Washington elite, in our history” calling for the elimination of coal, natural gas, oil, nuclear energy, and eventually, the internal combustion engine. Consider that millions of individuals will be required to act in accordance with new guidelines in many industrial sectors that will emanate from a central source – the federal government. And, the cost for the plan would be astronomical. Even then, scientists predict that even if all of America’s CO2 emissions are eliminated, the net result would only be a global temperature decrease of only 0.11 degrees Celsius by the year 2100.

Why shouldn't education be funded by the government and free to all? The endless flow of financing from the federal government has allowed universities to continually raise tuition rates. And, the government is willing to provide loans with little consideration of repayment, exacerbating the problem. Much of the tax burden that results from repaying “forgiven loans” falls on middle- and lower-income citizens. Restoring private lending would require both the lenders and the borrowers to be more responsible and cause colleges to rein in costs to create more affordable choices for students. Private lending would also limit taxpayers’ exposure to billions of dollars in loan defaults.

Hasn't socialism provided solutions to wealth inequality? Obama’s “progressive” policies of increased regulation, government spending and higher taxes produced the opposite of his stated goal of wealth equality. Consider that median household income in the US fell by roughly \$1000 in inflation-adjusted dollars through 2014; Discouraged workers dropped out of the labor force, resulting in a labor force participation rate at a 40-year low in 2015. Consider also that during Obama’s presidency: the number of Americans receiving food stamps exploded from 33.5 million to a 2013 high of 48 million, the number of Americans living in poverty increased

by nearly 7 million, the number of African Americans living in poverty increased by 1.4 million and the lowest income households in the U.S. did not regain pre-recession (2008) incomes while the upper income households did, widening income inequality in the U.S.

Why shouldn't I support Medicare for all and Universal Health Care? This proposal “would create a monopoly government health insurer ...’and centrally set all prices paid to suppliers, such as doctors and hospitals.” If this policy “were financed through higher taxes, GDP would fall by 9 percent, or about \$7,000 per person in 2022. “Free stuff” is not really free and requires incredibly high tax rates for support. In addition, “evidence on the productivity and effectiveness of single-payer systems suggests that ‘Medicare for All’ would reduce longevity and health, particularly among seniors even though it would only slightly increase the fraction of the population with health insurance.” Almost 70% Americans are relatively satisfied with their current private health plans and close to 91% of Americans have health insurance today.

But what about the Nordic countries— aren't they proof socialism works? At one time, Nordic countries embraced socialistic principles--today their policies differ significantly from socialistic policies and although they emphasize social welfare, they have economic freedoms much closer to the U.S. In fact, the Nordic countries made the top 30 countries in Heritage Foundation’s 2019 Economic Freedom index. Some facts: “Nordic healthcare is not free, but rather requires substantial cost sharing. Compared with the U.S. rates at present ... income tax rates in the Nordic countries today are only somewhat greater. Nordic taxation overall is greater and is surprisingly less progressive than U.S. taxes. Living standards in the Nordic countries, as measured by per capita GDP and consumption, are at least 15 percent lower than those in the United States.”

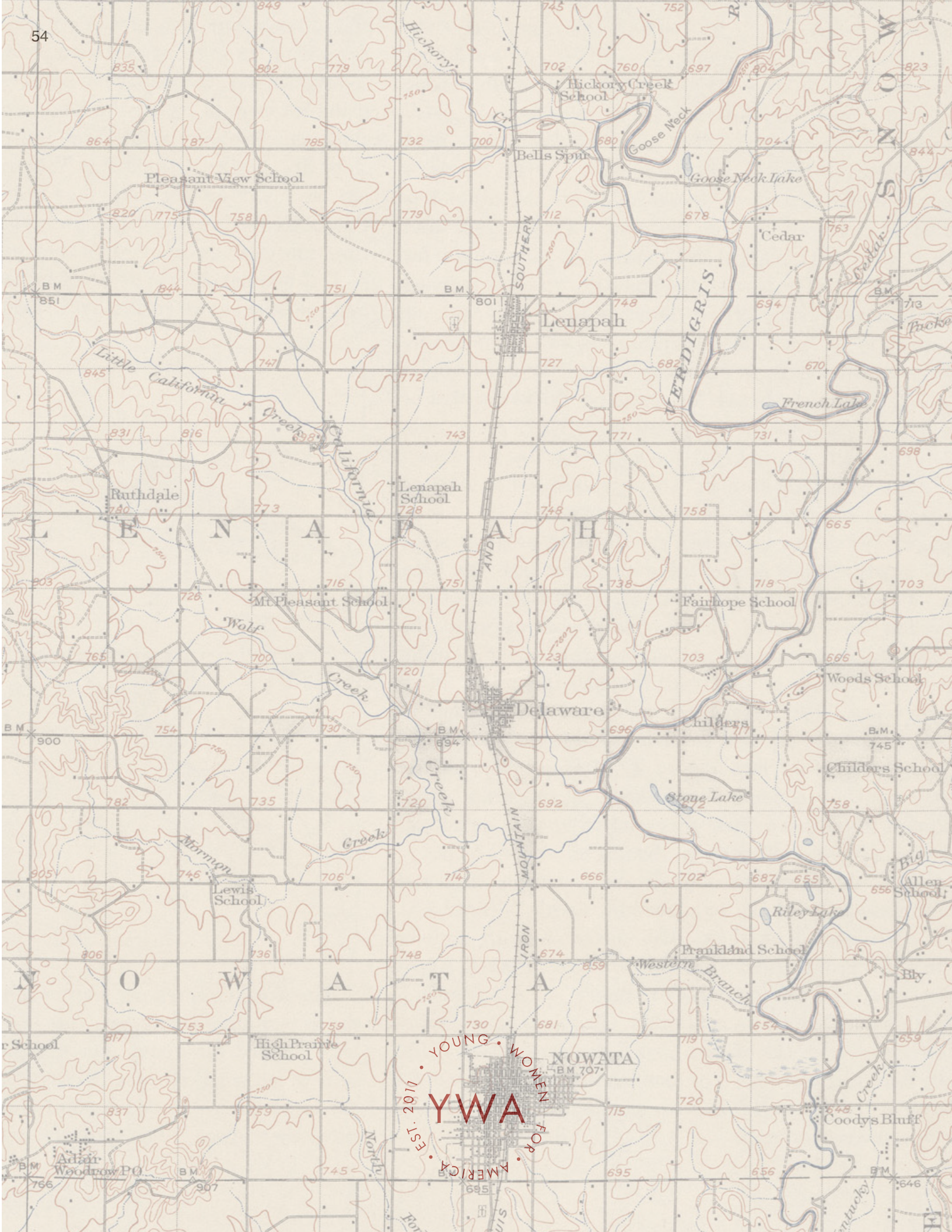
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YOUNG WOMEN FOR AMERICA
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