

We Must Remove the word Socialism from Our Vocabulary

by Francis Ardi

As a carry-over from the last century, the term Socialism has become all too cliché. It is a word used in so many contexts that it has now lost any kind of real meaning. Yet we continue to use this word, and it has become a hinderance to nations trying to make progress in assuring that all citizens have certain basic needs addressed.

Many people equate socialism with communism. The term "socialism" evokes a certain fear. Loss of freedoms in particular. After all, the Soviet Union, the best known communist country, was officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Nowadays using the word socialism is no longer politically correct in most situations. "Socialized medicine" in the last century is now referred to as universal health care.

Capitalism is not a system of government.

It is important to know that capitalism is not a system of government. A capitalist nation can be either a democracy, a monarchy or a one-party state like China.

Capitalism is the process by which the wealth of a nation is generated. It is about investing money in starting or expanding businesses. It creates the source of people's incomes. Even government workers depend on taxes derived from what most people earn and spend.

In short, capitalism is the engine that drives a nation's economy and stimulates growth, creativity and dedication, through which all involved are rewarded by personal gain. It is the process of funding ideas to develop enterprises resulting in emergence of companies that sell goods and services and create jobs.

You can say that all nations are capitalist. Even those we describe as socialist like the United Kingdom with its national health service and its state of the art welfare system, Germany and Denmark where there are no college tuition fees. Enterprises generate wealth and taxation channels a portion of that wealth to meet certain human needs and functions of a nation, for example, law enforcement and the nation's defense, human services and transportation infrastructure.

Even China is communist only in that it is a one-party state. It's no longer the true communist China of Mao Tse Tung. China has long embraced capitalism as the way to generate wealth so as to compete and possibly dominate the global economy.

A Brief Look at Communism

It was only in the communist countries of the last century where even the mere concept of wealth was nonexistent. The government owns and runs everything. Each citizen has a role which they perform and in return, their needs are provided for. Everybody earns a basic income and prices are artificial, set at what government considers a necessity or a luxury. Even one's purpose in life is defined by the nation.

In The United States of America The System of Government is Democracy

Representative Democracy to be exact. A nation ruled by elected leaders and representatives in accordance with a written constitution that defines the various functions of government and the roles of its elected and appointed officials.

Democracy defines how and by whom our nation is governed. Capitalism defines how the wealth of a nation is generated. So what does Socialism define?

- Government provision of basic human services like education, health care, welfare and law enforcement.
- Government ownership of certain enterprises like public utilities, telephone, broadcast, airlines, etc.
- Strategic redistribution of wealth through various forms of taxation and profits from government enterprises.
- The artificial economy of a communist country.

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, Socialism is defined as:

1: any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods

2: a system of society or group living in which there is no private property and the means of production are owned and controlled by the state

The mere mention of the word Socialism would strike fear in the hearts of anyone familiar with this definition. If this is socialism let's not even use that word.

We Must Focus on Human Needs

Socialism is an ideology. An ideology is an abstract idea of how things should be. Instead, we need to consider human needs and how to best assure that every part of society has certain essential needs addressed. We as a nation need to concentrate on exactly what's lacking and the best means of solving our nation's problems.

There is only one true ideology – accomplishment of purpose.

A successful civilization is where all its individuals are assured of basic needs. These are food, shelter, clothing and medical attention. A successful society also recognizes every individual as having worth. Worth in the form of talents and abilities and in many cases, ingenuity of one form or another. The majority if not most individuals have something to offer society in the way of productive service by which in return will enable these individuals to fulfill their own needs. Though no free-enterprise nation can provide jobs to all who need work, many have implemented programs to assist jobseekers and provide fiscal support while they are unemployed.

Post-Secondary Education

Everybody in every nation should be afforded the opportunity to achieve greatness.

This is usually by the provision of education for all. Formal education, degree or otherwise, is recognition for one's talents and abilities. Many successful nations provide tuition-free college education. Funds are sourced from taxes and collegiate enterprises like athletic programs. The most well known of these are college football and basketball. Scholarships from foundations are another source of college funding.

Universal Health Care

We all agree that health care is not a luxury. Maintaining life and freedom from disease, disorder and disability is something every individual should be entitled to. Besides, ill health among the masses results in a reduction in worker productivity. Children have a special entitlement to adequate health care, including dental and vision, since they did not choose the economic situations of their parents.

Various developed nations have different means for attaining this end. From the single payer, tax supported system like the British National Health Service (NHS), to various hybrid means involving insurance companies or private sickness funds, the government plays a supervisory role and assures every citizen receives health care, including the unemployed. Such is health care in France and Germany.

Welfare

As long as someone has a job, one will have a place of shelter and something to eat. But if one no longer has a job and therefore no income? This need is addressed by a nation's welfare system. From public housing to rent assistance grants.

Food aid to the poor is provided by the government in the form of benefits like EBT or SNAP, replacing the 'food stamps' of the last century. Food and clothing needs are also provided by private charities like community food pantries.

Primitive Capitalism vs Modern Capitalism

During the last century a nation was considered capitalist when the government provides only the minimum necessary for a nation to function, like the salaries of elected and appointed officials, law enforcement, the nation's defense, elementary education, public works. and infrastructure.

It was only just after World War 2 that England had its National Health Service. Before then, everything was a business, much like in the United States today. Tiny Tim, in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, was born with a deformed ankle and walked with a crutch since his father (Bob Cratchit) could not afford the corrective surgery. You could say England at that time and the United States today could be considered "The Primitive Capitalism of Charles Dickens."

Modern Capitalism refers to a free-enterprise society where companies are investor owned as in any capitalist country. However such nations provide universal health care, free at least to unemployed and disabled people, tuition-free college education, (low cost in the U.K) a state of the art welfare system, and maternity leave. These include Germany, Norway, Denmark and The United Kingdom.

You can say that those 'Socialist' countries are really examples of Modern Capitalism.

Alternatives to Taxpayer Provision of Needs

Despite what many people think, countries where capitalism generates wealth are in the best position to provide the needs of the economically disadvantaged. In many cases, needs are better served by non-government entities like private charities, for example the Salvation Army and Goodwill Industries, churches and foundations.

Among the super-rich, the charitable foundation is the ultimate status symbol. They fulfill the need for fame and the sense of giving back to society. An example is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation dedicated to combating communicable diseases world-wide. A historic example is the Carnegie Foundation which funded public libraries in many cities and towns in the United States.

Other foundations include the Howard Hughes Medical Institute for medical research. Foundations provide for college scholarships, public television programs, victims of rare genetic diseases, scientific research, and conservation efforts to name a few.

Since billionaires have high upper tier income taxes, the government provides tax breaks to incentivize those seeking to establish or contribute to a foundation.

Some super-rich are venture capitalists. They provide a way for ordinary individuals having invented or discovered a new product or way of doing things to establish a new company which is a potential creator of jobs. The popular TV show Shark Tank is a demonstration of capitalism in action.

College athletic programs provide a way for students from low income families to go to college. Many universities offer football and basketball scholarships.

Besides foundations and charities, there is crowdsourcing. Getting groups to contribute en-masse to a worthy cause. This is how a famous musician was able to provide "tiny houses" for the homeless. Though the government stepped in with restrictions on placing these houses on public lands.

Socialism and its extreme form, Communism have been shown to be failed experiments of the Twentieth Century. Centralizing and government ownership of the means of production eliminates competition, stifles creativity and leads to all out complacency and no improvement in quality of products or efficiency of processes.

People in socialist countries are doomed to a life of planned mediocrity with no hope that their situation will change. Children grow up in a stifled environment and mostly do not fully develop their talents and abilities.

Venezuela is a recent example of the failure of socialism to provide for equality among its people despite having oil reserves comparable to Saudi Arabia. We all know that billionaires have a special role in a nation's economy. Government ownership of enterprises hinders the effective decision making processes that allow companies to flourish.

To assure progress towards achieving a society where basic needs are fulfilled and every individual has the opportunity to achieve greatness through effort and dedication, we must eliminate the word Socialism from our vocabulary in discussing ways and means of developing a better nation for ourselves.