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WHY WORK?

By Steve Bakke  May 8, 2018



Here's what provoked me:

The subject of an article in the Minneapolis StarTribune is a great example of the differences between extreme progressives and conservatives. The theme of this article would also be at odds with many in the traditional liberal ranks. It boils down to differences in what is meant by the concept of "freedom."

Here's my response:

Why Work?

A Washington Post article by Elizabeth Bruenig appeared on April 30 in the StarTribune ("*Americans' fixation with work? Maybe give it a rest*"). It was introduced like this: "American's love to contemplate – and legislatively promote, to whatever degree possible – the virtue of hard work." The article objects to American's penchant for work, and government programs that emphasize work requirements for welfare. It's even concerned with guaranteed jobs programs.

The author believes America's emphasis on work tends to preclude enjoyment of a balanced life, and is even punitive by nature – e.g. government benefit work requirements. Rather than work providing dignity, she speaks wistfully of the dignity of rest, and believes freedom is best found in non-work activities. She concludes by imagining independence from the whims of employers and bosses.

This shows stark contrasts between extreme progressive thinking and both mainstream conservative and traditional liberal thinking. And it's all about the definition of freedom. This article reflects an extreme progressive view that work often amounts to unfair servitude – with real dignity seldom present. Freedom and dignity are best experienced in leisure activities, without concerns for financial security.

Conservatives believe freedom comes from gaining independence, intellectual and financial, through hard work. They would see dignity and enjoyment in working hard, and would assure us they can have a full private life in spite of a work commitment.

Both viewpoints would agree on advantages of "balancing one's life," but beyond that there's little similarity. It's amazing how different we can be from our neighbor.