

The new Socialist States of America?

Welcome to 2019. This may very well be the year of the political activists and many of the newly-elected congressional representatives like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan that are pushing socialism in America. We can add them to the growing list of prominent people like presidential candidate Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Bernie Sanders who feel that the old American dream has run its course and that it's time to replace it with a socialist one.

You know the kind they mean, one where the levers of power and ownership are placed squarely in the hands of bureaucrats who, in the case of a government-run single-payer healthcare system, would let us know when we can have that hip replacement or get that nasty mole burned off our cheek. Then we can drive back home from the government-run clinic in our government-mandated electric vehicle and switch on the lights in our government-approved house that is powered by a government-owned solar power and wind utility.

On Mondays, we will drop our children off at a government day care facility where our children will learn about how unfair and oppressive we have been to everyone from Native Americans to Blacks to migrant farm workers and to all those homeless people huddled under our bridges. While our sons and daughters are learning these important history lessons we will head to our offices and factories which are employee-owned and government-run. We'll start the day with a pep talk from a representative from the Department of Human Potential and then work a full six-hour day. We will not be judged on what we produced during the day, but rather on the manner in which we did it. Were we observant and sensitive to everyone around us? Did we work in teams or did we fall off the inclusion wagon and make individual decisions?

There are many degrees of socialism, but all socialism requires that the individual cede some control, responsibility, personal sovereignty and decision-making to a government elite. And since the goal of government-owned and operated enterprises is not to create a profit, we can dispense with that irritating need to grow and prosper. Such a relief. There are a few nagging problems with socialism. One of them is motivating the workforce. Another is quality-control. A third is competition from non-socialist enterprises. None of those seem to bother proponents of the *new American socialism*, however.

Take government ownership and management of the healthcare sector (which represents about a quarter of America's GDP). The new darlings of socialism like the 109th mayor of New York City, Bill De Blasio (D) and the newly-elected Governor of California, Gavin Newsom (D), have recently announced that they are embarking on programs to give everybody within their city and state free access to healthcare. They are supported by several Democrat Congressional Representatives and a few of the old guard of the party like Sanders and Warren that have made 'free healthcare for all' their crusade.

There is a dirty little secret that dwells within socialist thought and in most socialist practices; it is quite simply that socialist programs like universal government-run healthcare are built on an economic house of cards that will crumble under their own weight. Countries like Sweden and Denmark (and to a degree the U.K.) are often quoted as models for the U.S.A. when it comes to national healthcare. The only problem with those countries' systems is that they generally operate in the red and limit the choices of the individual recipient with respect to their doctors, their care and their medication. In the case of Denmark, the government decides which pharmaceuticals will be purchased by the government for its citizens. Some drugs which have been approved by foreign drug manufacturers, and some which have gone through domestic trials and been approved by the country's own authorities, don't make it into the government warehouse. And in cases where they are approved, many aren't purchased in sufficient quantities for broad use.

In all fairness to the Danes, most of them are reasonably satisfied with their system - a system where 97% of all hospital beds are owned by the government and where hospital physicians are also employed by the government's national healthcare system. About 22% of all doctors are self-employed but receive payments from the government for performing their duties. They also receive payments from 'outside' patients that elect to use them instead of the government-approved physicians in their geographical areas. A little known fact is that about 45% of the population also carry supplementary private insurance that enables them to defray costs of statutory co-pay costs that are not covered by the State. An additional 20% carry supplementary insurance that allows them to seek the services of private healthcare providers. While the system may work to the satisfaction of most Danes, it is under increasing pressure from an aging population that is demanding more care. (See <https://international.commonwealthfund.org/countries/denmark/>)

Back in the old USA, healthcare worries about coverage, rising costs and a shrinking pool of doctors and nurses continue to plague us, and it is these worries that the single-payer advocates are capitalizing on to move us in the direction of socialized medicine. Our healthcare system is the Trojan horse that will carry the message of the need for *benign socialism* to the upcoming 2020 presidential race. While most of us would agree that something must be done to improve this industry, here, socialized medicine is not the way to go as it would negatively affect a quarter of our total economy. Keep that in mind when you hear the lofty and unrealistic promises from the new Left in the ramp-up to the 2020 elections as they push for political and economic change.

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