

Socialism Destroys

This article is from the "Edifying the Body" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's website, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of Oct. 20, 2018. A version of the article was posted at townhall.com on Oct. 10.

By John Stossel

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Socialism is hot.

Famous actors recently made a commercial proclaiming that "democratic socialism" creates some of the best parts of America.

It's "your kids' public school" (says Susan Sarandon), the "interstate highway system" (Rosario Dawson), "public libraries" (Jay Ferguson), "EMTs" (Ethan Embry), "workers who plow our streets" (Max Carver) and "scientists" (Danny DeVito).

Wow. I guess every popular thing government does is socialism.

The celebrities conclude: "We can do better when we do them together."

There is sometimes truth to that, but the movie stars don't know that America's first highways were built by capitalist contractors. They also probably didn't notice that the more popular parts of government—public schools, EMTs, snow plowing, libraries, etc.—are largely locally funded.

Examples of democratic socialism

"They should wake up," says Gloria Alvarez. She is from Guatemala and says, "I've seen the impact of socialism. My father escaped Cuba. My grandfather suffered under communists in Hungary before escaping."

This week I turn my video channel over to Alvarez so she can give her perspective on democratic socialism's new popularity.

"As a child, I was taught to mock socialism," she says, "but democratic socialism sounded okay. It made sense that government should take care of the economy.

"Then I watched democratic socialism fail in Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Chile, Nicaragua and Uruguay. I learned that every time a country started down the socialist path it fails."

But every time a country tries it, even just a little of it, people applaud.

Stagnation in Cuba

When Castro came to power, people cheered because he was going to help the poor and make everyone equal.

But governments can't plan things efficiently without the prices and constant individual decision-making that free markets provide. The result in Cuba was economic stagnation and horrible loss of freedom.

Cuban refugees who now live in Miami's "Little Havana" neighborhood warn Americans about socialist promises.

Michel Ibarra told Alvarez, "You don't see any future. Everything is stagnated. Health care, education—nowadays they're in ruins."

Venezuela seized businesses

Venezuela didn't learn from Cuba's problems. They voted in Hugo Chavez when he said that "capitalism is the realm of injustice" and promised wealth would be distributed equally.

But when there was no more money left to take from rich people, he did what many governments (including our own) do: He printed more.

That's caused inflation approaching 1 million percent.

When business owners raised prices to try to keep up, Chavez and his successor just seized many of them.

Again, Venezuelans applauded. Taking from the rich is popular. Ramon Muchacho, a former mayor in Caracas, told Alvarez that, when Chavez seized businesses, people were "clapping so hard. They were like, 'Oh, finally there is somebody here making social justice!'"

But government grabbing private businesses creates shortages. Governments aren't good at running supermarkets. One Venezuelan refugee told Alvarez, "It's like the apocalypse. No food. No medicine."

Americans tout Denmark

But in the U.S. socialism still holds appeal.

"Plenty of (socialist) countries are nothing like Venezuela," says comedian John Oliver.

"When I talk about democratic socialism, I am not looking at Venezuela," says Sen. Bernie Sanders, "not looking at Cuba. I'm looking at countries like Denmark, like Sweden."

Denmark is a market economy

So many American politicians now cite Denmark as a socialist paradise that Denmark's prime minister felt compelled to go on TV to say, "Denmark is far from a socialist planned economy. Denmark is a market economy."

Exactly. Socialism, democratic or tyrannical, means government owns or controls businesses.

Business is left alone

In Scandinavia, business is largely left alone.

Governments don't even set a minimum wage. Economic freedom rankings give Scandinavian countries high scores on property rights and business freedom.

Those countries do have big welfare programs, but they are funded by thriving free enterprise.

In addition, many cut back on their welfare programs after they discovered they were unsustainable or discouraged work.

Think about that the next time you hear celebrities saying "Sweden" and praising socialism.

Socialism wrecks lives

As one Venezuelan refugee told Alvarez, "You don't need the government to dictate how to live your life, how much money you should make, how your family should be treated."

Increased government control rarely helps people. It wrecks economies. It wrecks lives.



This article ("Shut Up, They Explain") by John Stossel was added to the article ("Socialism Destroys") for the "Edifying the Body" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's website, churchofgodbig sandy.com, that was posted for the weekend of Oct. 20, 2018. A version of the article was posted at town-hall.com on Oct. 17.

By John Stossel

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Gloria Alvarez, the young woman from Guatemala I wrote about last week, just got blocked by Facebook. Why? Because she criticizes socialism.

After Alvarez joined me in my American studio to make a video we titled "Socialism Fails Every Time," she flew to Mexico City to make a speech.

A few days later she wrote me that "some leftist 'students' posted on a fan-page called 'Marxist and Leninist Memes': 'BOYCOTT Gloria Alvarez in our University! We won't let her in!' "

So Alvarez posted (in Spanish) on her own Facebook page: "My dear Mexican socialists intolerants: Thank you! for trying to boycott my event . . . showing that panic that you have for the debate of ideas. Given yours are so bad, that only with bullets they can be obeyed just like in Venezuela and Nicaragua. You demonstrate once again that you are the intolerant ones against freedom."

She ended her riff with a wise defense of free speech: "Where words are exchanged, bullets are no longer exchanged."

Then her account was blocked.

"You recently posted something that violates Facebook policies," wrote Facebook.

What violated Facebook policies? Was it calling the people who demanded that she not be allowed to speak "socialists intolerants" whose ideas "are so bad that only with bullets they can be obeyed"?

When social media companies block you, the reason is often mysterious.

Facebook did say, "For more information, visit the Help Center . . . Understand Facebook's Community Standards." Good luck getting an explanation that way.

Alvarez suspects she was blocked because her opponents, boycott advocates, complained about her. Leftists are good at launching campaigns to shut people up.

Fortunately, Alvarez has connections. A few days later she wrote, "a friend of mine that has a cousin working on Facebook Latin America (helped) me to unblock my page this morning."

Good.

Except, most of us don't have a friend whose cousin works for Facebook.

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other social-media platforms promote themselves as sites that enhance communication, not censor it.

I shouldn't use the word "censor." When a private company blocks someone, it's called editing. Companies edit to increase civil communication, improve the quality of discussion, delete threats and lies, etc. Editing helps make their sites more pleasant places to visit.

Censorship and the First Amendment apply to governments. America's founders feared government censorship because government can use force, and we have just one government.

But if Facebook blocks me, I still can communicate via Twitter, my YouTube videos or Instagram.

But wait. Facebook bought Instagram. And Google bought YouTube. If these big companies edit me out, it will be hard to reach people.

Conservatives claim social-media companies are quicker to censor conservative speech. That's probably true. The people who work for social-media companies lean left.

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey admitted that, telling CNN, "We need to constantly show that we are not adding our own bias, which I fully admit is more left-leaning."

That's why conservative sites like PragerU have been limited by YouTube. Restricting Prager University's videos is absurd. The site has millions of fol-

lowers. It offers dignified lectures on conservative philosophy. They explain things my Princeton professors never taught me.

The lectures violate neither YouTube's standards nor Facebook's standards. But recently, PragerU discovered that some of its Facebook videos were watched by no one. Zero people.

Facebook later apologized, saying someone flagged PragerU's videos as "hate speech," and at least one Facebook human "content monitor" agreed. He was being "retrained," said Facebook.

Good luck with that.

Right-winger Alex Jones was banned by all major social-media platforms. Milo Yiannopoulos was banned by Twitter.

But I haven't seen enough data to convince me that the sites actively limit conservative speech alone. Facebook just deleted 800 political pages, including some that criticize police brutality.

Leftist Glenn Greenwald tweeted after that purge, "Those who demanded Facebook & other Silicon Valley giants censor political content . . . are finding that content that they themselves support & like end up being repressed. That's what has happened to every censorship advocate in history."

The best answer to speech we don't like is: more speech.

I like being able to hear numerous opinions—even if I disagree with them.