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Spreading the wealth: a step by step guide to the Swedish socialist model; what it is, what it does, and why America desperately needs it*

Difundindo a riqueza: um guia passo a passo para o modelo socialista sueco; o que é, o que faz e porque os Estados Unidos precisam desesperadamente dele

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Abstract

The goal of the paper is to learn what democratic socialism is and to discuss the history of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), what their model is, and how it works. Despite the fears Americans have of socialism, Sweden is home to some of the happiest people in the world. This must mean the fears that Americans have of socialism are unfounded. The Swedish people benefit from a wide range of socialist programs – programs which, if instituted in America, would be very popular. Once a thorough understanding of democratic socialism has been achieved, this paper illustrates examples of its use in America. It explores the various ways America has already benefited from democratic socialism and how Americans can move away from capitalism and towards a

Resumo

O artigo tem o objetivo de aprender o que é o socialismo democrático e discutir a história do partido social democrático sueco (SAP), que tipo de modelo ele é e como ele funciona. A despeito do medo que os estadunidenses detêm do socialismo, a Suécia abriga um dos locais com pessoas mais felizes no mundo. Isso deve significar que o medo que os estadunidenses têm sobre o socialismo está errado. Os suecos se beneficiam de um gama de programas sociais importantes, programas que, instituídos nos Estados Unidos, seriam bastante populares. Uma vez realizada uma compreensão minuciosa do que o socialismo democrático alcançou, este trabalho ilustra exemplo de seu uso nos Estados Unidos. O trabalho explora os vários meios em que os Estados Unidos já se beneficiaram do socialismo democrático e como os

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model such as this. In the end, two points become clear; one, that democratic socialism works, and two, that democratic socialism has been an American ideal all along.

estadunidenses podem deixar de lado o capitalismo para um modelo como esse. Ao fim, dois pontos ficam claros; um, o socialismo democrático funciona, e dois; o socialismo democrático tem sido um ideal dos Estados Unidos desde sempre.

Keywords: Democratic socialism; Swedish model; America; social programs; Welfare State.

Palavras-chave: Socialismo democrático; modelo sueco; Estados Unidos; programas sociais; Estado Social.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Democratic Socialism is a term that is often derided in America. Just hearing the word 'socialism' brings up images of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin or North Korea under Kim Jong-un. These harsh images, however, are only two examples of what socialism can be. The word socialism is defined as a social system in which the means of producing and distributing goods are owned collectively. The whole community exercises political power in this system.¹ As long as the government employing socialism listens to the will of the people, and institutes programs that are beneficial, it can and does work.

One of the best examples of democratic socialism can be found in Sweden. Sweden is one of the largest countries in Europe that uses a democratic socialist system. Despite the fears Americans have of socialism, Sweden is home to some of the happiest people in the world. According to a survey of 156 countries and their level of life contentment, Sweden ranked 10th in overall happiness.² Coincidentally, the top four spots go to countries that use this type of system: Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and The Netherlands. In comparison, Americans ranked 13th.³ How could this be? A country based on socialist ideals could not possibly have happier citizens than the ones found in America. This must mean the fears that Americans have of socialism are unfounded. The Swedish people benefit from a wide range of socialist programs – programs which, if instituted in America, would be very popular. The goal of this paper is to learn what

¹ **THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY**. 4. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2011. p. 785.

² HETTER, Katia. Where are the world's happiest countries? **CNN**, [s.l.], mar. 2016. Available on: <<http://cnn.com/2016/03/16/travel/world's-happiest-countries-united-nations>>.

³ HETTER, Katia. Where are the world's happiest countries? **CNN**, [s.l.], mar. 2016. Available on: <<http://cnn.com/2016/03/16/travel/world's-happiest-countries-united-nations>>.

democratic socialism is and to discuss the history of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), what their model is, and how it works.

Once a thorough understanding of democratic socialism has been achieved, this paper will then illustrate examples of its use in America. It will explore the various ways America has already benefited from democratic socialism and how Americans can move away from capitalism and towards a model such as this.

In the end, two points will become clear; one, that democratic socialism works, and two, that democratic socialism has been an American ideal all along.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the early 1880s, Sweden was a class system with a high concentration of capital within a tiny group of wealthy families.⁴ There existed a small middle class, and a mass of peasants living in the countryside.⁵ Poverty was widespread.⁶ It was in this environment that the Swedish Social Democratic Labor Party (SAP) was formed in 1889.⁷ In the beginning, the party was formed on two goals, universal suffrage and the eight-hour workday.⁸ By 1911, the SAP was becoming an important political force in Sweden but was still incapable of achieving its own political goals.⁹ The SAP achieved this power in 1932 during an economic depression.¹⁰ The depression became the SAP's central theme of that election year.¹¹ The SAP proposed an economic plan for combating the crisis. It focused on extensive employment relief programs and state unemployment insurance.¹² The plans the SAP formed helped the party to win its first major victory, which allowed them to create their own form of government.¹³

⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xvii.

⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xvii.

⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xvii.

¹⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

The post-WWII period in Sweden was very prosperous.¹⁴ This prosperity was facilitated by favorable economic cycles.¹⁵ Sweden produced paper, wood, steel, and ships, because the war did not affect the country's production.¹⁶ During this time, the SAP created a number of political reforms, which eventually became the cornerstone of the party's policy of social welfare for years to come.¹⁷ The most important of these were the universal child allowance, universal health insurance, and the national supplemental pension.¹⁸

During the 1970s, the SAP proposed additional reforms, which were aimed at increasing both equality and industrial democracy.¹⁹ The "law on employment protection" (1973) was created, which guaranteed wage earners protection against unwarranted dismissal, and the "law on co-determination" (1976), which gave trades unions the opportunity to participate in important decisions in companies.²⁰

The SAP's proposal to create a wage earners fund was the most significant.²¹ This transferred a portion of a company's profits to a government-controlled pool that, via the purchase of stocks, would place wage earner representatives on company boards.²² The goal was to transfer power into the hands of wage earners.²³ Naturally, capitalistic minded politicians, as well as big corporations, were against this proposal. They fought it for years. The Riksdag finally approved the proposal in the 1980s and created five investment funds for this purpose.²⁴

Giving that kind of power to workers in American companies seems unimaginable. If the United States Congress were to propose laws to that effect, politicians on both sides of the aisle would be against it. They would state that the rights of the

¹⁴ I MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xxv.

¹⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xxvii.

²⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xxv.

²¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xxvii.

²² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

²³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

²⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

corporations were being violated, and that the economy would collapse – all the while ignoring the fact that successful companies in Sweden have been contributing to this type of fund for years.

The rise of the SAP in Sweden can be attributed to many factors. However, these four factors are the most important: 1) the Swedish collectivist attitude; 2) working class economic uniformity; 3) lack of religion; and 4) the SAP's accord/accommodation policy.

The first factor in the SAP's success, Sweden's collectivist attitude, was fully realized during the depression of the 1930s.²⁵ It got its start, however, in the agrarian societies of the 1880s.²⁶ During this time, poverty was widespread.²⁷ As a survival tactic, the agrarian societies began a tradition of collective self-organization.²⁸ This gave them a feeling of independence in relation to the powers-that-be.²⁹ These communities established labor communes, which began exhibiting socialist behaviors.³⁰ They established libraries, put on plays, and even organized bazaars.³¹ The well-being of their members was their focus.³² They would raise funds for members when they became ill or unemployed.³³ Eventually, these groups began providing formal education to members and their families as well.³⁴ These lessons mostly consisted of economics and science lessons to begin with, but eventually moved on to more diverse subjects.³⁵

At first, these labor communes were not looked at favorably.³⁶ Many faced resistance from the church, police, and other authorities.³⁷ These communes, however,

²⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xvii.

²⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. xviii.

²⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 7.

²⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 7.

²⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 7.

³⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 102.

³¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 104.

³² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 126.

³³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 103.

³⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 104.

³⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 104.

³⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 103.

³⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pen-

continued to organize, despite these troubles.³⁸ Over time, these communes became more accepted, which allowed whole generations of Swedish citizens to be “brought-up” with this collectivist mentality.

The early SAP evolved out of these communes.³⁹ The SAP understood the importance of this collectivist mindset and wanted to further strengthen it. For this reason, they began requiring an annual membership fee. By charging a fee, members felt actively involved in the decisions that the party was making.⁴⁰ By 1905, membership fees had become the party’s main source of income.⁴¹ During election years, however, this income alone was not sufficient, so the party turned to fund raising to make up the difference.⁴² Eventually, the Riksdag saw the importance of political parties and approved the introduction of a national subsidy to fund political parties.⁴³ This allowed the parties to stop accepting donations from powerful financiers, such as corporations.⁴⁴ At the time, all political parties were being criticized for this practice.⁴⁵ This decision took the political power away from the corporations and gave it back to the people. In America, the opposite is seen. Large corporate donors dominate the political landscape. This was the central issue in *Citizens United v FEC*⁴⁶, which dealt with the regulation of campaign spending by organizations. The United States Supreme Court held (5-4) that freedom of the press prohibited the government from restricting independent political expenditures by a non-profit corporation. These principles were extended to “for-profit” corporations as well.⁴⁷ The outcome of this case gave corporations unlimited political spending power.

nsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 103.

³⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 103.

³⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 105.

⁴⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 108.

⁴¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 108.

⁴² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 108.

⁴³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 113.

⁴⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 115.

⁴⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 115.

⁴⁶ *Citizens United v. FEC*, 558 U.S. 310, (2010).

⁴⁷ DUNBAR, John. The ‘Citizens united’ decision and why it matters, Non-profits or political parties? **The Center for Public Integrity**, Washington, oct. 2012. Available on: <<https://www.publicintegrity.org/2012/10/18/11527/citizens-united-decision-and-why-it-matters>>.

The second factor that helped the SAP was the economic uniformity of the Swedish working class.⁴⁸ This uniformity allowed the Swedish to see themselves as more equal.⁴⁹ For example, the unskilled workers' wages in Sweden were 80% of those of the skilled workers.⁵⁰ In comparison, American unskilled workers made about 50% of what the skilled workers were receiving.⁵¹ These economic conditions allowed the Swedish labor movement to establish itself as one of the strongest in the world.⁵²

The third factor in the SAP's success was their country's lack of religion. Sweden is a highly secular nation; the Swedish see little connection between religiosity and happiness.⁵³ This lack of religion allowed the government to focus their attention on class issues.⁵⁴ The decisions they made were based on logic and science, instead of religious beliefs.⁵⁵ It is hard to imagine American politicians adopting this way of thinking, even though the founding fathers intended a separation of church and state.⁵⁶ You can regularly hear politicians like Ted Cruz, Mike Huckabee, and George W. Bush, all constantly quoting religious scripture and invoking God when it comes to their policymaking.

The fourth and final factor in the SAP's success is their accord/accommodation policy. The accord/accommodation policy calls for overall cooperation.⁵⁷ Another term for it would be the "open door policy."⁵⁸ Isolation and polarization would be its opposite.⁵⁹ Accord/accommodation is not oriented toward creating agreement between existing views but toward pursuing goals in such a way that it is possible for others to accept them and cooperate or join in with them.⁶⁰ Neither is it an expression of goodwill, but

⁴⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁴⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁵⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁵¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 7.

⁵² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 9.

⁵³ SWEDEN SVERIDGE. **10 fundamentals of religion in Sweden**. Available on: <<http://https://sweden.se/society/10-fundamentals-of-religion-in-sweden/>>.

⁵⁴ SWEDEN SVERIDGE. **10 fundamentals of religion in Sweden**. Available on: <<http://https://sweden.se/society/10-fundamentals-of-religion-in-sweden/>>.

⁵⁵ SWEDEN SVERIDGE. **10 fundamentals of religion in Sweden**. Available on: <<http://https://sweden.se/society/10-fundamentals-of-religion-in-sweden/>>.

⁵⁶ THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE. Did the Founding Fathers Support the Separation of Church and State? **ProCon.org**, Santa Monica. Available on: <<http://undergod.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=001358>>.

⁵⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁵⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁵⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁶⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pen-

rather a philosophy and a strategy for power.⁶¹ This became a main theme for the SAP, according to party leader Albin Hansson when he stated, “Cooperation can be sought from both the left and the right. It is only a matter of keeping the possibilities open.”⁶²

American politicians do not work this way. Cooperation between the two parties is almost never the goal. The Democrats and the Republicans are constantly fighting. They refuse to listen to each other’s positions, and they dogmatically hold to their own, even if it leads to governmental shutdown. This has happened eighteen times, most recently in October of 2013, when they fought over the Affordable Care Act.

Before the SAP was created, the Swedish citizens tended to look at the Riksdag as a repressive instrument, only serving the ruling class.⁶³ However, once the SAP proved its worth to the people, it became the powerful force that it is today. The SAP earned the trust of its citizens by showing that government could be used as a tool for the benefit of society.⁶⁴

3. THE SWEDISH SOCIALIST MODEL

The SAP model of government focuses on the needs of the people. There are many aspects of this system that could be examined. This paper, however, will only examine its five most important themes, which are: integrative democracy, society as the “people’s home,” preventative social policy, social control of the market economy, and the welfare state.

The first, integrative democracy, is the SAP’s focus on democratic decision making.⁶⁵ Above all else, democratic decision making is the party’s objective.⁶⁶ The SAP regards democratic decision making as the highest standard of legitimacy.⁶⁷ They believe rulers must act on behalf of the citizens’ interests, and not their own.⁶⁸ From its inception, the SAP has focused on creating a state in which workers, and then

nsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁶¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 19.

⁶² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 19.

⁶³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁶⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁶⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 410.

⁶⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁶⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁶⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 419.

employees in general, could participate on equal terms in the organization and governance of society.⁶⁹ All voices are to be equal and heard. Political life, social and economic organization are governed by this principle.⁷⁰ Early party leader Rickard Sandler stated this about equality:

The main cause of those faults which disfigure present-day civilization is the private capitalist mode of production which places rights of ownership in the hands of a minority, dooms the majority dependence, and makes the opposition between workers and capitalists the determining characteristic of today's society. This class struggle will not cease until society is so transformed that capitalist exploitation has totally ceased, the class society has fallen and mass poverty has been abolished. These things can only happen through the abolishment of private capitalist rights to ownership of the means of production, and the latter's coming under the control of society, and by replacing the present unplanned production of goods with a socialist production, planned according to the real needs of society in order to increase the standards of welfare.⁷¹

This idea of equality ties nicely with the SAP's second theme, the idea of society as the "people's home." Early party leader Albin Hansson created what became known as the "people's home" model.⁷² This model meant that the social democratic state should be like a home, a family, in which solidarity is natural and mutual help instinctive.⁷³ This model helped to inspire national solidarity.⁷⁴ This model also created the attitude of building broad political coalitions.⁷⁵ The people's home model helped foster feelings of unity throughout Sweden.⁷⁶ Using the "home" analogy was an easy way to help people understand their idea of what society should be.⁷⁷ In the home,

⁶⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 410

⁷⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁷¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 133.

⁷² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 42.

⁷³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 42.

⁷⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 42.

⁷⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 42.

⁷⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 42.

⁷⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pen-

no one looks down upon anyone else, everyone in the family gets equal treatment, all family members are fully supported, and no one tries to gain advantage at another's expense. Belief in the "people's home" meant that it was the SAP's duty to establish guarantees for the well-being of its citizens.⁷⁸ This is why the SAP has created policies which, compared to the programs found in the United States, almost sound impossible. For example, they provide universal health care, free tuition for education through college, paid maternal/paternal leave, five weeks' paid vacation, and free day care, to name a few.⁷⁹

This brings us to the third theme, preventative policies. The SAP believes in putting social programs into place to prevent future adverse effects on society. The SAP believes that their children must become productive adults if their society is to prosper. This is why the SAP invests in their welfare and the welfare of their families.⁸⁰ The hope is that, by spending the money now, the investment in them will be returned by their productivity later.⁸¹ The money the SAP spends on health care and education is not seen as a burden, but as a necessity.⁸² They believe human resources are society's greatest assets, and by implementing preventative policies they believe these resources will not be wasted.⁸³ Swedish corporations have also benefited from this people-first model.⁸⁴ Companies invest more in capital to fully develop their workforce. They, as well, see this spending as a necessity rather than as a burden.⁸⁵ This model is largely credited for the success seen in companies like IKEA and Ericsson.

The SAP's fourth theme is their social control of the market. In Sweden, the market is constantly being adjusted.⁸⁶ The SAP believes that the market must be allowed to change and evolve with the times.⁸⁷ They recognize that regulations on

nsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 45.

⁷⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 42.

⁷⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 43.

⁸⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 413.

⁸¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁸² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁸³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁸⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁸⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁸⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 416

⁸⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

the market are needed and are beneficial.⁸⁸ The SAP set out to equalize market conditions.⁸⁹ They did this by using solidaristic wage policies, progressive taxation, and social welfare programs.⁹⁰ They used the market to fulfill essential human needs.⁹¹ Next, they introduced “framework legislation” into the market. These laws were aimed at supporting the business and its workers. An example was job training programs. The SAP subsidized the cost of labor mobility so that it fell upon society as a whole rather than upon the individual worker.⁹² This market control is the reason why corporations in Sweden are rarely seen to capture regulatory agencies for their own benefits.⁹³ That type of corporate behavior is not completely eliminated but is greatly reduced. Unfortunately, that sort of behavior has become standard operating procedure for corporations in the United States.⁹⁴

Allowing this type of control over the American market would benefit its society. However, American politicians would see it as a hindrance, and the corporations would see it as a threat to their bottom line. American politicians believe that when government starts controlling corporations, personal freedoms become restricted. Politicians in Sweden have made those same arguments.⁹⁵ Party leader Tage Erlander countered such arguments by stating, “It is a mistake to believe that people’s freedoms are diminished because they decide to carry out collectively what they are incapable of doing individually.”⁹⁶ He believed that, instead of taking away freedoms, providing health insurance freed society from the high cost of health care, providing pensions freed society from an impoverished old age, providing housing freed society from slum conditions, and providing full employment freed society from the risk of unemployment.⁹⁷

⁸⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁸⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁹⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁹¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁹² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁹³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 418.

⁹⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁹⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 419.

⁹⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁹⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

The SAP's final theme worth examining is the belief in the welfare state. In Sweden, they have embraced the often-derogatory term "welfare state" and have even forged what they call the "middle way". This middle way is the focus on the strengthening of their middle class by creating a welfare state.⁹⁸

Early in the 1920s, the party was already providing accident insurance, universal health insurance, and universal people's pension.⁹⁹ At first these benefits were modest.¹⁰⁰ The SAP made this compromise towards fiscal efficiency as an appeal to their political rivals.¹⁰¹ The welfare state was only meant to provide a basic minimum, not to encourage negative work incentives.¹⁰² This was because the idea of "full employment" is central to the Swedish conception of the welfare state.¹⁰³ The SAP believes that employment is critical to a person's welfare and sense of belonging.¹⁰⁴ This is why the SAP focuses more on job placement programs, and job training for the unemployed, rather than paying unemployment compensation. The benefit to this strategy is that it generates tax revenues rather than requiring their expenditure.¹⁰⁵

The incorporation of the welfare state eventually became an avenue of upward mobility for the working class.¹⁰⁶ This allowed a strong middle class to emerge by the 1960s.¹⁰⁷ This focus on the Swedish welfare state not only helped improve living conditions over time, but also helped to equalize the distribution of wealth across the social class.¹⁰⁸ The SAP have found that strengthening the middle class has been one of the most effective means of combating poverty.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

⁹⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 45.

¹⁰⁰ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁰¹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁰² MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁰³ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 423.

¹⁰⁴ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁰⁵ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁰⁶ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 45.

¹⁰⁷ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

¹⁰⁸ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993. p. 51.

¹⁰⁹ MISGELD, Klaus et al. (Eds.). **Creating Social Democracy: a century of the social democratic labor party in Sweden**. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1993.

Despite the prosperity that Sweden has enjoyed, a conservative movement against social democracy has grown. For years, social democracy has been an inspiration to progressive and left-leaning politicians around the world. However, the current push against this form of government is highlighting the fact that no form of government is universally accepted, even one as successful as this. Since the 1990s, dissatisfaction with the “Swedish model” has been growing.¹¹⁰ This has led to some of the lowest voter numbers in support of the SAP since the 1930s.¹¹¹ Conservative politicians have further weakened support for the SAP with popular tax cuts and stricter rules concerning sickness benefits.¹¹² These conservative parties have worked hard at assuring the public that they are not the conservatives they used to be.¹¹³ Previous parties have tried to dismantle the welfare state; however these newer conservatives have run on the promise that, instead of getting rid of the welfare state, they will “better” it.¹¹⁴ These new tax cuts have lowered the quality of public programs, which in turn has caused the well-off middle class to “opt out” of those programs by seeking private options.¹¹⁵ This gradual weakening of the welfare state has played into the conservatives’ message that the Social Democratic Party is inefficient, and needs to be replaced.

The slow decline of the welfare state over the years has eroded the SAP’s support. However, the biggest player in the decline of social democracy has been the rise of “anti-immigrant” rhetoric by Eurocentric politicians.¹¹⁶ For many years, one of the main political issues across Europe has been large-scale immigration from non-western (largely Muslim) cultures.¹¹⁷ With the global rise of “Islamic terrorism” from groups like ISIS, this anti-immigrant sentiment has gained popularity.

In 1975, Sweden’s integration policy entitled all permanent residents, including immigrants, to the same rights as Swedish citizens.¹¹⁸ The SAP’s idea of multiculturalism has now left a lot of Swedish citizens feeling unprotected against the “perceived”

¹¹⁰ ROTHSCCHILD, Nathalie. Social Democracy is Dying-Even in Sweden. **Spiked**, London. Available on: <<http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/9599#.V7YrfGVICSM>>.

¹¹¹ ROTHSCCHILD, Nathalie. Social Democracy is Dying-Even in Sweden. **Spiked**, London. Available on: <<http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/9599#.V7YrfGVICSM>>.

¹¹² ROTHSCCHILD, Nathalie. Social Democracy is Dying-Even in Sweden. **Spiked**, London. Available on: <<http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/9599#.V7YrfGVICSM>>.

¹¹³ ROTHSCCHILD, Nathalie. Social Democracy is Dying-Even in Sweden. **Spiked**, London. Available on: <<http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/9599#.V7YrfGVICSM>>.

¹¹⁴ ROTHSCCHILD, Nathalie. Social Democracy is Dying-Even in Sweden. **Spiked**, London. Available on: <<http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/9599#.V7YrfGVICSM>>.

¹¹⁵ GASPER, Phil; ZIMMER, Tyler. Socialism? You Mean Like in Sweden? **Socialistworker.org**, [s.l.] nov. 2015. Available on: <<https://socialistworker.org/2015/11/24/you-mean-socialism-like-in-sweden>>.

¹¹⁶ MILNE, Richard. Danish Election Hastens Demise of Scandinavia’s Social Democracy. **Financial Times**, London, jun. 2015. Available on: <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7ab31dec-168e-11e5-b07f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz4Hj0bkrf>>.

¹¹⁷ PFALLER, Alfred. European Social Democracy-In Need of Renewal, Nine Country Cases & Seven Policy Proposals. **International Policy Analysis**, Berlin, dec. 2009. Available on: <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/06867.pdf>>.

¹¹⁸ JOSHI, Devin; NAVLAKHA, Neha. Social Democracy in Sweden. **Economic & Political Weekly**, Mumbai, vol. 45, n. 47, p. 73-78, nov. 2010. Available on: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25764156>>.

threat of the growing Muslim communities within Sweden's borders.¹¹⁹ This has resulted in higher levels of discrimination against these communities. Many immigrants are now finding it hard to enter the labor market.¹²⁰ Studies have shown unemployment rates within immigrant communities to be as high as 30%.¹²¹ Immigrant unemployment further weakens the welfare state because, instead of contributing to the tax system, these communities are largely dependent on its tax driven welfare benefits.¹²²

Despite Europe's waning support for social democracy, if Americans were to adopt this form of government a great portion of its society would be lifted out of poverty. The problems plaguing American society today, such as high unemployment, homelessness, and wage stagnation would be drastically reduced if Americans were to implement this system. If Americans looked past their fear of socialism, turned away from capitalism, and embraced the Swedish model, American society would finally experience freedom. Not the kind of freedom that comes from military action, but the kind of freedom that comes from not having to choose between paying for groceries or paying for medicine.

4. EXAMPLES OF AMERICAN SOCIALISM

The narrative that Americans are constantly taught is that the United States was founded under capitalist ideals and that any form of socialism would undermine it.¹²³ The more the country moves toward socialism, the farther away from the founding principles they will go. This, however, couldn't be further from the truth.

American politicians use the word socialism as an insult. They constantly talk about the dangers of socialism, despite their lack of knowledge of what socialism really is. Fox News constantly runs stories about President Barack Obama's alleged socialist takeover of America.¹²⁴ This type of fear-mongering in America is not new. Even President Harry S. Truman was accused of being a socialist, for proposing an anti-lynching law which addressed the unlawful killing of African Americans in the south in 1948.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ JOSHI, Devin; NAVLAKHA, Neha. Social Democracy in Sweden. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Mumbai, vol. 45, n. 47, p. 73-78, nov. 2010. Available on: < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25764156>>.

¹²⁰ JOSHI, Devin; NAVLAKHA, Neha. Social Democracy in Sweden. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Mumbai, vol. 45, n. 47, p. 73-78, nov. 2010. Available on: < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25764156>>.

¹²¹ JOSHI, Devin; NAVLAKHA, Neha. Social Democracy in Sweden. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Mumbai, vol. 45, n. 47, p. 73-78, nov. 2010. Available on: < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25764156>>.

¹²² JOSHI, Devin; NAVLAKHA, Neha. Social Democracy in Sweden. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Mumbai, vol. 45, n. 47, p. 73-78, nov. 2010. Available on: < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25764156>>.

¹²³ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹²⁴ FOX NATION. "Obama admits he's a Socialist". Available on: <<http://nation.foxnews.com/obama/2013/05/19/obama-admits-he-s-socialist>>.

¹²⁵ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

Any time a politician proposes a change to the status quo, the standard “insult” is to label them a socialist.

Despite this propaganda, America has always had a history of socialist and social-democratic thinking.¹²⁶ This is not to say that America is a socialist nation, because it is not, but the belief that socialism has never been used throughout its history is false. From the founding fathers through the current day, America has constantly been shaped by socialist ideals and activism.¹²⁷

One of these founding fathers was Thomas Paine. Thomas Paine was instrumental in America's victory against the British during the revolutionary war.¹²⁸ Paine believed in socialist ideals before the idea of socialism was created.¹²⁹ Thomas Paine wrote many books. One of these, “The Rights of Man”, outlined his idea of a socialist society.¹³⁰ In it, he discussed budgets for social security, child welfare programs, public housing, and earned income credits.¹³¹ Above all, Paine believed in social justice.¹³² He explained that those with property owed a debt to society, a debt that should be collected and then redistributed to those lacking property.¹³³ These ideas were hardly popular at the time, and are certainly not popular now. However, one of America's most famous founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, had this to say about this socialist. “You, Thomas Paine, are more responsible than any living person on this continent for the creation of what are called the United States of America.”¹³⁴

This brings us to America's sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln is often regarded as one of America's greatest presidents. What most Americans don't realize is that he was heavily influenced by socialist ideals.¹³⁵ Lincoln considered Thomas Paine as one of his many heroes.¹³⁶ He also quoted Karl Marx in many of his writings and speeches.¹³⁷ During Lincoln's first inaugural address, he stated, “Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.”¹³⁸ This is one of the core beliefs found in the *Communist Manifesto* written by Karl Marx, who is considered

¹²⁶ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. ix.

¹²⁷ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. xi.

¹²⁸ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 46.

¹²⁹ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹³⁰ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹³¹ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹³² NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 56.

¹³³ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹³⁴ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 49.

¹³⁵ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 64;

¹³⁶ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹³⁷ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹³⁸ NICHOLS, John. **The ‘s’ word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism.** 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

the father of the socialist movement.¹³⁹ Lincoln was well versed in Marx's ideas, because he constantly read the *New York Tribune*.¹⁴⁰ This was the foremost left-leaning paper at the time.¹⁴¹ Karl Marx wrote articles for the *New York Tribune*.¹⁴² Lincoln was such a fan of this paper that he even referred to the editor, Horace Greeley, as "friend Greeley."¹⁴³ Lincoln's ties to Marx didn't end with the *New York Tribune*. He also became good friends with some of Marx's closest associates after they escaped Europe as political refugees.¹⁴⁴ These included Joseph Weydemeyer and August Willich.¹⁴⁵ He even commissioned them as officers in the Union Army during the Civil War.¹⁴⁶ This means that two noted socialists helped preserve the Union during the American Civil War.

Throughout Lincoln's presidency, he routinely sought counsel from socialists.¹⁴⁷ Lincoln was so closely associated with socialists that, when he won re-election in 1864, Karl Marx wrote him a letter of congratulation, which Marx said in his own words, "Lincoln so courteously answered."¹⁴⁸

The socialist counsel Lincoln received can also be seen in some of the policies he enacted. This is evident with his desire to free the slaves, but also in the creation of the Homestead Act of 1862, which promised "Land for the landless."¹⁴⁹ This Act allowed any adult citizen to claim a 160-acre parcel of land in the public domain, for free.¹⁵⁰

If asked, Abraham Lincoln would never have called himself a socialist.¹⁵¹ However, America's sixteenth president, who epitomizes the American ideal, kept an inner circle of socialist friends, constantly read Karl Marx, and led an administration influenced by socialism. Socialism was such a major theme of Lincoln's presidency that history can safely say he was a socialist.

Following this trail of American socialism takes us to the election of 1932. This was considered a realigning moment in US politics.¹⁵² The country started moving away from limited federal and state involvement in economic affairs and embraced a

¹³⁹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁴⁰ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 65.

¹⁴¹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁴² NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 64.

¹⁴³ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 65.

¹⁴⁴ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 91.

¹⁴⁵ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 73.

¹⁴⁶ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 74.

¹⁴⁷ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 91.

¹⁴⁸ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 96.

¹⁴⁹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 91.

¹⁵⁰ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁵¹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁵² NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 117.

more human and democratic approach to government.¹⁵³ The great depression had consumed the country. It was in this political landscape that America elected its thirty-second president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). FDR was the first president to fully embrace the socialist model.¹⁵⁴ Coincidentally, he was also the only president to win an election four terms in row. It seems America's most socialist president was also its most electable.

FDR won a landslide campaign by securing 57.4% of the popular vote.¹⁵⁵ Compare that with one of America's most right-leaning presidents, George W. Bush, who actually lost the popular vote to runner-up Al Gore in 2000.¹⁵⁶ FDR understood the will of the people.¹⁵⁷ More than a million Americans, almost 3% of the electorate, cast ballots for presidential candidates who promised socialist programs.¹⁵⁸ FDR constantly read election statistics, so he understood that these socialist policies were very popular with the people.¹⁵⁹ Once FDR took office he sought advice from Thomas and Henry Rosner.¹⁶⁰ Thomas and Rosner were socialists who frequently contributed to *The Nation* magazine, a socialist publication at the time.¹⁶¹ FDR also hired two socialists to his administration, Harold Ickes and Paul Douglas.¹⁶² With this counsel, FDR instituted his "New Deal".¹⁶³ FDR's New Deal created social security, unemployment compensation, jobs programs, and agricultural assistance.¹⁶⁴ These ideas were borrowed from the socialist platform.¹⁶⁵ The New Deal made him so popular with the people that he was re-elected with 61% of the popular vote.¹⁶⁶ Once again, history has shown that socialism works, and when used correctly is very popular with the American people.

While FDR's New Deal got all the credit for socialist ideals at the national level, millions of Americans continued to vote in the 1930s and 1940s at the state level for socialist politicians.¹⁶⁷ For example, Fiorello La Guardia, who ran with the full support of

¹⁵³ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁵⁴ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 118.

¹⁵⁵ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁵⁶ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁵⁷ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁵⁸ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁵⁹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p.120.

¹⁶⁰ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶¹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶² NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶³ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶⁴ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶⁵ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶⁶ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶⁷ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 124.

the American Socialist Party, was elected as mayor of New York.¹⁶⁸ La Guardia followed FDR's example and hired many prominent socialists to his staff.¹⁶⁹ Another state-level politician elected on the socialist platform was Daniel Webster Hoan, who won the mayoral race of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.¹⁷⁰ According to Hoan, the best impact a socialist could make was at the municipal level.¹⁷¹ Once elected, he immediately went to work developing municipal programs to feed the poor and to provide them with housing.¹⁷² Under Hoan's leadership, Time magazine described Milwaukee as "perhaps the best governed city in the U.S."¹⁷³

This brings us to one of the most important examples of socialism's effect in America, the fight for freedom of speech.¹⁷⁴ Despite the first amendment of the constitution's stating, "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...,"¹⁷⁵ laws were passed which did just that.

President Woodrow Wilson's administration (1913-1921) actively engaged in government censorship.¹⁷⁶ Wilson's administration constantly suppressed domestic dissent.¹⁷⁷ His decision to enter into WWI was very unpopular.¹⁷⁸ In response, his administration passed the Espionage Act of 1917.¹⁷⁹ This act made it a crime to express views or to convey information that could be construed by the government as any sort of threat to the war effort.¹⁸⁰ Censoring opposition to the war was the law's true intent.¹⁸¹ Journalists were arrested all over the country for writing anything negative about the war or Wilson's administration.¹⁸² Punishments ranged from two years upwards to twenty years.¹⁸³ *The Christian Science Monitor* in 1920 stated, "What appeared to be an excess of radicalism... was certainly met with an excess of suppression."¹⁸⁴

¹⁶⁸ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁶⁹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁷⁰ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 125.

¹⁷¹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁷² NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 126.

¹⁷³ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁷⁴ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 142

¹⁷⁵ United States Constitution. Amendment I, Bill of Rights.

¹⁷⁶ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁷⁷ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁷⁸ I NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁸⁰ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 145.

¹⁸¹ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 146.

¹⁸² I NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁸³ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 147.

¹⁸⁴ NICHOLS, John. *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism*. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 148.

Victor Berger, founding member of the Social Democratic Party of America, and editor to *The Nation*, quickly became the target of Wilson's administration.¹⁸⁵ As the editor, Berger was cited for "twenty-six overt acts" of delivering public speeches or publishing newspaper articles that were against the war effort.¹⁸⁶ Despite his conviction, Berger was so popular with the people that they elected him to a seat in Congress.¹⁸⁷ He was not allowed to sit, however, due to his conviction.¹⁸⁸ It wasn't until the next president, Warren G. Harding, took office that Berger's indictment was dismissed.¹⁸⁹ This allowed him to finally sit in Congress, when he was elected for a third time.¹⁹⁰ While in office, Berger campaigned for free speech and a free press, and proposed that "Congress put teeth into the first amendment."¹⁹¹ His work ensured that state sponsored censorship would always be a violation of the constitution.

It is hard to believe that modern news stations like *Fox News* owe their ability to openly criticize the president to a socialist. If Woodrow Wilson had won in his fight against free speech, stations such as *Fox News* would not exist today. Instead of criticizing socialism, *Fox News* should be thanking it. Freedom of speech and freedom of press may have been given to America by its founding fathers, but it was a socialist politician who made sure that it could never be taken away.

5. IS AMERICA A TRUE DEMOCRACY?

A true democracy will take every one of its citizens into account when making decisions. The best definition of a democracy would be:

*A society where, based on a belief in the inherent equality of all, all society's members are entitled individually and collectively to determine their own destinies, subject to principle of equitable sharing that requires all the benefits and detriments of social life to be fairly distributed among society's members.*¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 150.

¹⁸⁶ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 158.

¹⁸⁷ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁸⁸ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 165.

¹⁸⁹ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015. p. 170.

¹⁹⁰ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁹¹ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

¹⁹² KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

American society falls short of this definition. Money is the true political voice in this country. Those with the most money make the most decisions. This is an oligarchy. An oligarchy can never be a democracy. An oligarchy is a government in which a small group exercises control.¹⁹³ Often time, that control is for corrupt and selfish purposes.

The Supreme Court recently made a decision, in *Citizens United v FEC*,¹⁹⁴ which further established this oligarchy. The basis of the case was that freedom of press prohibited the government from restricting independent political expenditures by non-profit corporations.¹⁹⁵ The Supreme Court of the United States extended those benefits to “for-profit” corporations.¹⁹⁶ This decision effectively transferred power away from ordinary people towards extremely wealthy corporations. Former president Jimmy Carter had this to say about the decision made in *Citizens United v FEC*:

*It violates the essence of what made America a great country in its political system. Now it's just an oligarchy with unlimited political bribery being the essence of getting the nominations for president of being elected president. And the same thing applies to governors, and U.S. Senators and congress members. So, now we've just seen a subversion of our political system as a payoff to major contributors, who want and expect, and sometimes get, favor for themselves after the election is over. At the present time the incumbents, Democrats and Republicans, look upon this unlimited money as a great benefit to themselves. Somebody that is already in Congress has a great deal more to sell.*¹⁹⁷

Citizens United v FEC gave corporations a free ticket to buy Congress. American politics will never be the same. “We the people” became “we the corporation.” Currently, corporations spend billions of dollars influencing Congress to fulfill their own wishes. Meanwhile, a substantial segment of the population lives in poverty.¹⁹⁸ The average American’s voice will never be heard over any of these corporations.

While all Americans suffer the effects of poverty, African Americans and Hispanics are the most affected.¹⁹⁹ Despite improvements over the years in racial and ethnic equality, economic inequalities are at their highest level since before the Great

¹⁹³ **THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY**. 4. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2011. p. 591.

¹⁹⁴ *Citizens United v. FEC*, 558 U.S. 310, (2010)

¹⁹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁹⁷ ZUESSE, Eric. Jimmy Carter is Correct that the U.S. is No Longer a Democracy. **The Huffington Post**, New York, aug. 2016. Available on: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-zuesse/jimmy-carter-is-correct-t_b_7922788.html>.

¹⁹⁸ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

¹⁹⁹ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

Depression.²⁰⁰ Even more alarming is the lack of social mobility that these groups have shown. These economic inequalities are so entrenched in these minority groups that their ability to achieve upwards social mobility has diminished over time.²⁰¹ With this much income disparity in American society, it becomes readily apparent that the ordinary citizen, despite the guise of “we the people”, has little say when it comes to the decisions that are made each day in this country.

This inequality is anathema to democracy. If America has any hope of getting back to democracy, equality must be the goal. America’s current system of capitalism encourages a “winner takes all” mentality. It’s this mentality that indirectly legitimizes the social economic divisions which are apparent today.²⁰² This system makes it easier to justify the huge economic divide between those who succeed and those who don’t.²⁰³ Because socio-economic starting points are so unequal it has become impossible for individuals to achieve their full potential.²⁰⁴

Equality is also vital for the survival of the planet. This is because societies with higher levels of equality produce lower carbon footprints.²⁰⁵ The health of the planet is important because those living in poverty are less able to effectively deal with the adverse effects of global climate change.²⁰⁶

Equality creates a sense of unity. When great divides between rich and poor are fostered, each side will begin to inhabit different worlds.²⁰⁷ The wealthy tend to segregate themselves from the rest of society.²⁰⁸ This makes them less likely to recognize the common citizenship of the people living in poverty.²⁰⁹ Even worse, because they are separated from it, they begin to believe that poverty is not even an issue that needs to be addressed.

²⁰⁰ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014..

²⁰¹ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

²⁰² HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁰³ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁰⁴ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁰⁵ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013. p. 66.

²⁰⁶ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁰⁷ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013. p. 68.

²⁰⁸ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁰⁹ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

The divide between the rich and the poor in America has never been more apparent. According to a Pew Research Center Report on average, today's upper-income families are almost seven times wealthier than middle-income ones, compared to 3.4 times wealthier in 1984.²¹⁰ When compared to lower-income family wealth, upper-income family wealth is 70 times larger.²¹¹ Until this equality is addressed, America will never be a true democracy.

6. RESTORING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Given the direction that democratic socialism has taken in Europe, its future as a political system is not certain. Whether it will continue to decline or return to its former glory is hard to say. However, I am not prepared to discuss that topic at this time. What I am prepared to discuss is why it is imperative to bring a system such as this to America.

A recent survey found that over 77% of Americans think the U.S. government is broken.²¹² This is unsurprising, given the fact that Congress has allowed the government to shut down multiple times.²¹³ With this much dissatisfaction with the status quo, it is hard to make the statement that this is a government "for the people and by the people."

As stated previously, the American government claims to be a democracy. Again, this is not the case. However, if the United States were to follow the lessons of its founding document, *The Declaration of Independence*, then it would have no choice but to become a true democracy. Two of the most important themes of *The Declaration of Independence* are that "all men are created equal" and that the people have a right to practice democratic self-determination.²¹⁴ This calls for a society where everyone is treated the same and is allowed to live their life as they see fit.

Currently, the system in place in America favors those with money. Capitalism, America's current political and economic system, ensures that "no men are created equal". Only those with the most money matter; often times these are wealthy corporations. The average American stands no chance of having their voice heard over them. For example, on paper, everyone has the right to vote. However, if money buys access

²¹⁰ SALLES, Joaquim Moreira. The Wealth Gap Between Rich and Poor is The Widest Ever Recorded. **Think Progress**, Washington, dec. 2014. Available on: <<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/12/18/3605137/us-wealth-gap-at-its-widest-in-decades>>.

²¹¹ SALLES, Joaquim Moreira. The Wealth Gap Between Rich and Poor is The Widest Ever Recorded. **Think Progress**, Washington, dec. 2014. Available on: <<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/12/18/3605137/us-wealth-gap-at-its-widest-in-decades>>.

²¹² SCHREIBER, Mark; FENDER, Elizabeth. The Will of the People and the Constitution: American Attitudes and Support. **The Heritage Foundation**, Washington, jan. 2016. Available on: <<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2016/01/the-will-of-the-people-and-the-constitution>>.

²¹³ SCHREIBER, Mark; FENDER, Elizabeth. The Will of the People and the Constitution: American Attitudes and Support. **The Heritage Foundation**, Washington, jan. 2016. Available on: <<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2016/01/the-will-of-the-people-and-the-constitution>>.

²¹⁴ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

to government officials, then all anyone gets to vote on are the policies that were suggested by the corporations in the first place.²¹⁵

The blind trust towards this system is misplaced. Most Americans, liberal and conservative alike, actually prefer a more equal society, like the one proposed here. A survey conducted by *The Atlantic* demonstrated this.²¹⁶ In this study, participants were asked to pick between two fictional countries, where one was modeled after America and the second was modeled after Sweden. The results, unsurprisingly, showed 92% of Americans actually preferred Sweden's system over the American system.²¹⁷ This study highlighted the fact that, despite what Americans are taught to say, their beliefs tell a different story.

This has to do with one of American society's closest-held beliefs, that their country is the greatest in the world. To suggest otherwise is considered unpatriotic. Surveys showed that about 28% think that the U.S. "stands above all other countries in the world," while most 58% say it is "one of the greatest countries in the world, along with some others." Only 12% of Americans say there are other countries in the world "that are better than the U.S."²¹⁸ This way of thinking holds the country back. If a society believes that theirs is "the best" then that society's forward progress stalls. Knowing there is a problem is the first step towards fixing it. Unfortunately, this hyper-patriotism is what keeps America from seeing any of its problems. This hyper-patriotism also ensures that America will never look towards another "inferior" country for guidance.

If Americans could abandon this narrow way of thinking they would finally see that 92% of Americans actually want to see this change. Traditions are not a constitutional right and shouldn't be treated as such. Traditions can change. Traditions which promoted the general welfare in one era of history sometimes undermined it in another.²¹⁹ Societies must adapt to the changing times rather than continue the same failed course because of tradition.

If Americans were to embrace this change, they would finally live up to the ideals of *The Declaration of Independence*, by embracing democratic equality. This not only makes economic sense but moral sense as well. Continuing with a political and economic system which is structured to provide an advantage to the wealthy elite, while

²¹⁵ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

²¹⁶ ARIELY, Dan. Americans Want to Live in a Much More Equal Country (They Just Don't Realize it). **The Atlantic**, Boston, aug. 2012. Available at: <<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/08/americans-want-to-live-in-a-much-more-equal-country-they-just-dont-realize-it/260639/>>.

²¹⁷ *Id.*

²¹⁸ TYSON, Alec. Most Americans think the U.S. is great, but fewer say it's the greatest. **Pew Research Center**, Washington, jul. 2014. Available at: <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/02/most-americans-think-the-u-s-is-great-but-fewer-say-its-the-greatest/>>.

²¹⁹ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

disadvantaging the less well-off, is contrary to America's professed value of democratic equality.²²⁰

7. MOVING TOWARDS THE SWEDISH SOCIALIST MODEL

Changing from capitalism to democratic socialism will not be easy. Nothing short of a political revolution is what it will take. This revolution will not happen overnight but is long overdue.

America is suffering the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.²²¹ Millions of Americans remain unemployed.²²² Many of them are homeless.²²³ This economic crisis serves to highlight the inherent instability contained with capitalism and how, as a system, it has not been able to prevent these downturns from occurring.²²⁴

However, America can change course and turn away from capitalism and the problems associated with it. This process would take time and would need to happen in all areas of society. The first thing that would need to change is the way American corporations do business. Currently, corporations are run by small numbers of directors called boards.²²⁵ These boards make all the decisions.²²⁶ They have all the power over what is produced and their only goal is to make as much profit as possible. Instead, corporations could replace their boards with the workers.²²⁷ Replacing the board with the workers who produce the product will finally democratize the corporate world.²²⁸ In this way, the workers who produce the product would make the decisions about production and distribution.²²⁹ Power would be transferred from the wealthy minority into the hands of the majority.²³⁰ By dissolving the corporate model, workers would finally have the directorial power to choose: 1) what combination of private and socialized property would work best for the community; 2) what combination of market and planning would be best to distribute resources; and 3) what combination works best with each community in regards to decision making between the workplace and

²²⁰ KLEVEN, Thomas. **Equitable sharing, distributing the benefits and detriments of democratic society**. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

²²¹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²²² WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²²³ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²²⁴ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²²⁵ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 12.

²²⁶ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²²⁷ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²²⁸ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 108.

²²⁹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 12.

²³⁰ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

the residents.²³¹ This form of social democracy is known as a Workers' Self Directed Enterprise (WSDE).²³²

In this system, an individual must participate in the productive work of their enterprise if they wish to be a member of this new board. If they do not participate, their ideas would still be considered, but they could not participate in the planning of the WSDE.²³³ In this self-directed system, the workers collectively determine what the enterprise produces, how to do it, where to do it, and any related matters concerning this production.²³⁴ All decisions made would also have to be shared democratically with the surrounding communities at the local, regional, and national level.²³⁵ This system would be a true democracy. This system would give workers in the WSDE the power to determine their own lives.²³⁶

This interconnection between the WSDE and the community would have a positive effect on the environment.²³⁷ In a WSDE, the workers would be located near their worksite.²³⁸ They would have families living in the community.²³⁹ The workers would know that every decision they made would directly impact the lives of their own families.²⁴⁰ In this way, companies would be less likely to make adverse decisions on the environment with profits in mind.²⁴¹ Currently, boards are far removed from the factories and towns where their products are made.²⁴² This allows them to make decisions that they know could harm the environment. With this new system, workers would have an incentive to make decisions which are helpful for that environment and are not just profit driven.²⁴³ A system such as this would also allow for more flexibility. WSDEs could adjust any aspect of their company as they saw fit, as long as it benefited society.²⁴⁴

Wage disparities would end with this system.²⁴⁵ Workers would not likely support the income disparities currently seen in companies today, due to the closeness

²³¹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 13.

²³² WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 12.

²³³ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 118.

²³⁴ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²³⁵ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²³⁶ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²³⁷ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 134.

²³⁸ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²³⁹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁴⁰ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁴¹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁴² WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁴³ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁴⁴ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 13.

²⁴⁵ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 135.

created in a system such as this.²⁴⁶ With everyone working together, there would be more of an incentive to provide everyone with a living wage.²⁴⁷

The survival of this new system would depend on lots of different factors. The most important of these would be: 1) favorable government programs; 2) the support of the people; and 3) improved childhood education.

The first factor, support from the government, could come in many ways. The government could institute programs that support WSDEs – especially WSDEs that focus on bringing the unemployed back to the workforce.²⁴⁸ Bringing millions of unemployed Americans back to work would certainly gain mass support. FDR proved this with the success of his federal works program.²⁴⁹ This in turn would cover the second factor of gaining the support of the people.

Subsidies could be provided to WSDEs located in heavy capitalist areas. These subsidies could be used to help prevent those WSDEs from being pushed out by competing corporations.²⁵⁰ Congress could create funds, which all WSDEs would be required to contribute to. These funds could be provided to WSDEs that are struggling,²⁵¹ especially to WSDEs that are in danger of laying off their workers.²⁵² They could use these funds to provide relocation services and job training for workers that are eventually let go.²⁵³ In this way, unemployment would drastically be decreased, and it would be done in such a way that does not hurt the growth of the WSDEs.²⁵⁴

The final and most important factor for lasting success would be improving childhood education. Using WSDE funds to directly fund public schools could accomplish this. By allowing WSDEs to fund education, local governments would finally have access to the funds needed to provide a higher level of education.²⁵⁵ Most states have largely stagnant or declining funding levels. Among the states, vast disparities remain.²⁵⁶ In fourteen states, funding in 2011 was below 2007 levels, even without adjusting for

²⁴⁶ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁴⁷ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁴⁸ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 15.

²⁴⁹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁵⁰ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁵¹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁵² WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁵³ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁵⁴ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁵⁵ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. p. 125.

²⁵⁶ STRAUSS, Valerie. America's School Funding Problems State by State. **The Washington Post**, Washington, feb. 2014. Available on: <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/02/05/americas-school-funding-problems-state-by-state/>>.

inflation.²⁵⁷ President Obama's 2016 budget only showed a slight increase to many programs that have been significantly cut or entirely defunded.²⁵⁸

In addition to funding, this new system would allow schools to work with WSDEs to create a better curriculum that would help the children succeed in this new society.²⁵⁹ For example, this might include courses that stress the importance of social welfare programs through economic planning.²⁶⁰ Even if these exact strategies do not get employed, something must be done. America's current education model is obviously failing. America ranks 35th in math, and 27th in science out of a 64-country study.²⁶¹ One reason for this is the American school system's limited focus on test scores.²⁶² According to the Education Select Committee, "A focus with only a narrow range has negative consequences on the ability to learn other subjects."²⁶³ With a WSDE in place, schools would finally have the autonomy and accountability needed to improve their performance.²⁶⁴ A system such as this is not just wishful thinking; it is already being employed and seeing success with the Mondragon Corporation in Spain.²⁶⁵

No system is perfect, especially not democratic socialism. Challenges will still arise under this system. The challenges, however, would differ greatly from those in a capitalist one.²⁶⁶ The conflicts between the people who produce and those who make the decisions on what to do with that production will no longer exist,²⁶⁷ making society as a whole better equipped to deal with such challenges.²⁶⁸

This system will make it easier for all voices to be heard. No one ideology would rule over the other. Politicians today automatically strike down ideas that don't fit into their idea of what government should be. Democrats and Republicans alike share the guilt. If this type of intellectual censorship is allowed to continue, America will never

²⁵⁷ STRAUSS, Valerie. America's School Funding Problems State by State. **The Washington Post**, Washington, feb. 2014. Available on: <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/02/05/americas-school-funding-problems-state-by-state/>>.

²⁵⁸ BIDWELL, Allie. Report: Federal Education Funding Plummeting. **U.S. News**, [s.l.], jun. 2015. Available on: <<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2015/06/24/report-federal-education-funding-cut-by-5-times-more-than-all-spending>>.

²⁵⁹ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁶⁰ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁶¹ DESILVER, Drew. U.S. Students Improving – Slowly – In Math and Science but Still Lagging Internationally. **Pew Research Center**, Washington, feb. 2015. Available on: <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/02/02/u-s-students-improving-slowly-in-math-and-science-but-still-lagging-internationally/>>.

²⁶² HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁶³ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁶⁴ HATTERSLEY, Roy; HICKSON, Kevin (Eds.). **The socialist way, social democracy in contemporary Britain**. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013.

²⁶⁵ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁶⁶ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁶⁷ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

²⁶⁸ WOLFF, Richard. **Democracy at work, a cure for capitalism**. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

grow. Entertaining different ideologies acts as a counterbalance in keeping a level political playing field. Politicians who dismiss individuals, ideas, and ideologies that they do not agree with take too many options off the table. Abraham Lincoln, one of America's greatest presidents, understood this best when he said, "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country."²⁶⁹

8. STARTING THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION

As stated earlier, adopting democratic socialism in America would take nothing short of a revolution. A radical idea such as this would have to start at the grassroots level. Grassroots communities are a way to get actionable success, even with limited budgets and resources.²⁷⁰ America's 45th President, Barack Obama, understood the transformative power of grassroots movements when he stated, "Change won't come from the top, I would say. Change will come from a mobilized grass roots."²⁷¹

Anti-socialist sentiment is so prevalent in American society today that a grassroots movement to create democratic socialism would have to follow some rules in order to ensure its success.

First, the organization must tell a story. Politicians will often times start their campaigns talking about specific goals.²⁷² However, people are drawn to stories.²⁷³ Even the best activists can't move the masses if they don't have a coherent story to tell.²⁷⁴ This can be accomplished by sharing stories of real people and their struggles. Building an emotional connection with an audience is much more efficient than a 40-page proposal of political goals.²⁷⁵

Second, they must use every tool at their disposal to get their message out.²⁷⁶ Its members must organize press conferences and volunteer activity, and use direct

²⁶⁹ NICHOLS, John. **The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition... Socialism**. 2. ed. New York: Verso, 2015.

²⁷⁰ DRISCOLL, Anne. 5 Tips for Sparking a Grassroots Movement Online. **Mashable**, [s.l.], aug. 2011. Available on: <<http://mashable.com/2011/08/26/grassroots-online-tips/#JxEBSIkzXOqp>>.

²⁷¹ STEINMETZ, Katy. **Test How Well You Know Some of the Most Famous Obama Quotes**. Available on: <<http://swampland.time.com/2013/11/14/test-how-well-you-know-some-of-the-most-famous-obama-quotes/>>.

²⁷² STEINMETZ, Katy. **Test How Well You Know Some of the Most Famous Obama Quotes**. Available on: <<http://swampland.time.com/2013/11/14/test-how-well-you-know-some-of-the-most-famous-obama-quotes/>>.

²⁷³ STEINMETZ, Katy. **Test How Well You Know Some of the Most Famous Obama Quotes**. Available on: <<http://swampland.time.com/2013/11/14/test-how-well-you-know-some-of-the-most-famous-obama-quotes/>>.

²⁷⁴ ROBINSON, Sara. 6 People You Need to Start A Revolution. **Alternet**, [s.l.], apr. 2012. Available on: <http://www.alternet.org/story/154968/6_people_you_need_to_start_a_revolution>.

²⁷⁵ ROBINSON, Sara. 6 People You Need to Start A Revolution. **Alternet**, [s.l.], apr. 2012. Available on: <http://www.alternet.org/story/154968/6_people_you_need_to_start_a_revolution>.

²⁷⁶ GARECHT, Joe. 5 Secrets of Successful Grassroots Organizations. **Local Victory**, [s.l.]. Available on: <<http://www.localvictory.com/grassroots/grassroots-organizations.html>>.

mail and social media. When using social media, they must not become too dependent on the technology.²⁷⁷ Some organizations tend to think that social media are the only form of communication relevant today.²⁷⁸ Groups with an online presence must work to connect their online activity with their off-line activity, to make sure that they are working in tandem with each other.²⁷⁹

Third, they must constantly ask for members.²⁸⁰ One of the biggest reasons why grassroots movements fail is because they become insular cliques.²⁸¹ Members become victims of in-fighting; they become jealous of their roles and don't want to see those roles diminished by new potential rivals.²⁸² This mentality unfortunately goes against the very nature of what a grassroots movement is created to do in the first place, which is to grow.

Fourth, with its newly acquired members, the movement must amplify its message.²⁸³ This is where social media play their most important role within a grassroots movement. Groups can use social media to build a "campaign hub", where all activities can be broadcast. This will allow each member of the organization to stay in contact with the others and also to "amplify" their message to a much greater audience.²⁸⁴

Fifth, the organization must empower each of its volunteers. They must make clear their expectations on what it means to join to every new recruit.²⁸⁵ They must constantly share how they have played a part in the group's success, and share that success with the public whenever possible.²⁸⁶

Finally, the most important rule a grassroots organization must follow is to "create a brand."²⁸⁷ The most successful grassroots organizations are always recognized by

²⁷⁷ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁷⁸ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁷⁹ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸⁰ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸¹ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸² MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸³ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸⁴ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸⁵ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸⁶ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

²⁸⁷ MOSLEY, Walter; GOMES, Rae. 10 Things to Start a Movement. **The Nation**, New York, may 2011. Available on: <<https://www.thenation.com/article/ten-things-start-movement/>>.

their brand.²⁸⁸ Brands are created with logos, eloquent spokespeople, and consistency.²⁸⁹ This is true for campaign-run grassroots movements as well. Most notable was President Obama's grassroots movement, which created his famous brand of "hope and change."²⁹⁰

Keeping up the momentum in the movement will be very important, especially in the beginning. The importance of low-commitment activities cannot be overstated. Activities such as liking and sharing pictures on social media, engaging in thoughtful debate with non-supporters, and even writing academic papers such as this, all carry weight in any grassroots movement.²⁹¹ A grassroots fight for democratic socialism in America is a fight which can be won. No matter how hard the fight gets, ultimately the most important thing that its members must realize is that each successful activity, no matter how little, will help push the scales towards their success.

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²⁹¹ HOLMES, Jack. President Obama, the "Hope and Change" Guy, Criticizes Slogans. **Esquire**, New York, nov. 2015. Available on: <<http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/news/a39393/president-obama-sloganeering/>>.

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