

WHY MIDDLE-CLASS LEFT LIBERALS SHOULD DUMP THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY: FINDING COMMON GROUND WITH SOCIALISTS

Please make sure these dispatches reach as many readers as possible. Share with kin, friends and workmates and ask them to do likewise.



By Bruce Lerro
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

[su_testimonial name="-P. Greanville" photo="https://www.greanvillepost.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/0liver-cropped.jpg"]Editor's Note: We hope our readers will help us disseminate this article as widely as possible. The reason is obvious: associate editor Bruce Lerro has built here a powerful instrument, part roadmap, part theory, and part

situational rhetoric, to approach and persuade tens of millions of people still very much stuck in the completely useless and self-defeating fake liberalism represented by the Democratic Party and its equivalents around the globe. But while it's worth noting that this material is chiefly aimed at self-defined liberals, the infamous, usually complacent or timorous "extremists of the center", the classifications can also be used when dialoging with people on the right, especially in the United States, where political beliefs tend to be rooted in nothing more robust than plain ignorance. This mass of people, many of whom have grown accustomed to following the abominable misleadership of the DNC cabals—the Pelosis, the Clintons, the Adam Schiffs, the Schumers, and their hacks, and the numerous virtue-signalling fake leftists allied with Wall Street and the Military Intelligence/Media/Academia complex, all sporting the right identity credentials and not much else—are not only wasting their time and betraying their own self-interest, financial and ideological, they are humanity's biggest obstacle to a genuinely progressive politics capable of rescuing America and the world from the profoundly anti-democratic death cult of neoliberal imperialism. So do familiarise yourself with the arguments presented here and get ready to defend them. And please pass this article on to friends, workmates and kin. We are living literally on the cusp of a great, historically unprecedented crisis. The need for change is in the air, and a vast majority of those living in the so-called "first world" are clearly in turmoil, distrustful and disdainful of their governments, and with their livelihoods experiencing sharp declines and no hope for improvement. And, as we know, many are also quite aware, notably the younger generation, that a horrible ecological calamity is brewing against which the current corrupt leadership offers neither understanding nor solution. What was thought impossible just a few years ago is now seen by multitudes as urgent and inevitable. That is happening all round us, whether we want it or not, and the momentum is growing. So join this struggle on the right side

of history. *Do your part.* Start educating and mobilising your fellows. Change is in the wind. [/su_testimonial]

[su_panel background="#f1f4f6" color="#1d1919" border="12px solid #02101f" padding="10" shadow="1px 0px 1px #eeeeee" radius="8" target="blank"]WHY MIDDLE-CLASS LEFT LIBERALS SHOULD DUMP THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY: FINDING COMMON GROUND WITH SOCIALISTS[/su_panel]



BY [BRUCE LERRO](#) / PERSPECTIVES / 17 MAR 2021

Quote from speech by Eugene Debs over 100 years ago in Chicago about the middle-class fear of socialism

[su_testimonial name="–Eugene Debs" photo="https://www.greenvillepost.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Oliver-cropped.jpg"]Many of you in the middle class are opposed to socialism. You still think there is some chance for you under capitalism and you fear that the socialists will take what little you have and divide it among the shiftless and thriftless. You need not have the slightest fear. The socialist has no use for your small capital; it would do (them) not the least good. (They are) after the earth, the trusts, and the machinery of production. Besides, soon you will have nothing to divide. When the big capitalists get through with you, you will be ready for us. You may not be ready yet, but you are ripening very rapidly. When you have been stripped of what you have, when you have become proletarians, when you have become expropriated, you will be

ready to join us in expropriating the expropriators. [/su_testimonial]

B r u c e L e r r o

ORIENTATION

Almost five years ago I wrote an article in Counterpunch: [Lost at Sea: Left Liberals Have No Party](#). In that article I challenged the blithe interchangeability of the words “liberal” and “democrat”. I tracked eight historical changes of liberalism from left-liberal, to centrist-liberal to right-center liberals (neoliberals). I also argued that the words liberal and democracy are used interchangeably by liberals, even though it wasn’t until the 20th century that liberals were clearly for democracy (translated as universal suffrage for white males).

The problem with my article as I see it today is that I lumped upper middle-class left liberals with middle-class liberals. Two years later I wrote another article called [The Greater of Two Evils: Why the Democratic Party is worse than the Republican Party for 85% of the U.S. Population](#). In that article, I outlined how since the 2008 crash the social classes whose wealth grew were the ruling class, the upper-class and the upper-middle-class, constituting about 15% of all social classes. Everyone else was doing worse, *including the middle-class*.

In my first article I slurred the differences between the upper-middle-class and the middle-class, advocating for both classes to get out of the Democratic Party. I have since come to see (as I will get into later) that the upper-middle-class has done very well under the umbrella of the Democrats and it is not in their material interests to leave. This is no longer true of the middle-class. Historically, the material interests

of the middle-class and the upper-middle-class have more in common with each other than the working-class. In other words, the difference between news anchors, lawyers, senior managers on the one hand and high school teachers, librarians and supervisors on the other hand are more differences of degree than kind. After all, they all did mental work, as opposed to the physical work of the working-class. However, in the last 50 years middle-class life has gotten far worse than the life of the upper middle-class. It has gotten bad enough to be able to say it is closer to the working-class. Whether they realize it or not, for middle-class left liberals, the Democratic Party has left the building 40 years ago.

My claim in this article is that:

- 1. Middle-class FDR liberals need to leave the Democrats and be part of building a new party**
- 2. Middle-class left liberals need to form alliances with the working-class and the poor, not the upper middle-class**
- 3. The new party should advocate for socialism**

What follows is why this should be so.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FDR LIBERALS AND NEOLIBERALS

Left liberal values

Left liberals are broadly for the following. They are pro-science as well as for investing in scientific research and development as well as investing in infrastructure. They are for the separation of church and state as well as for the use of reason in problem-solving, such as raising children through what is called "authoritative parenting". They support the matriarchal state: universal health care, unemployment, pensions, food stamps and a minimum wage automatically raised to keep up with inflation. They expect the state to intervene in the economy to soften the hard edges of capitalism, following a Keynesian economic policy. They are committed to

gradual change and a lessening of race and gender stratification. Left liberals support and expansion of unions. This left liberalism has been present in the United States for roughly 40 years, from the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s. Since then, the Democratic Party has slid further and further right to the point that their platform today is a center-right neoliberal party which embodies *none* of these values. The problem is the collective denial left liberals have in ignoring this fact.

Right-wing neoliberal values

Neoliberals are directly opposed to the matriarchal state. They support the economic policies of Milton Friedman and Friedrich Von Hayek with minimum state involvement in the economy. Neoliberals have withdrawn funding from long-term science programs. They have presided over the rise of New Age thinking initiated by Marilyn Ferguson's book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. Neoliberals have become extreme relativists championing the rise of identity politics which began in the early 1970s. Neoliberals have lost hope and have failed to bring the principles of the Enlightenment forward. They have abandoned investment in profits made on manufacturing and instead make their profits on the defense industry, arming the entire world. Under their reign most of the remaining profit is invested in finance capital.

Neoliberals have presided over the destruction of unions over last fifty years. They have stood by and watched the full-time, well paid secure working-class jobs disappear. Work hours under neoliberalism have gone from 40 hours per week to at least 50 hours per week for those lucky enough to be employed full-time. In general, the standard of living has declined in the US so that the next generation can expect to make less than their parents. It's no accident that credit cards became available to the working-class in the early 1970s, so workers didn't have to directly face the fact that their standard of living had declined. [Credit—that is private

debt—was encouraged to prop up a declining aggregate demand due to inadequate wages for the working class.] The civil rights movement spoke to what minorities had in common with organized labor, which was low-cost housing and fair wages. Today we have individualist identity politics where being recognized for your identity along with using politically correct language is all that is asked for. In the 1960s, community college was free. In the last 50 years the cost of college education is so high that student debt appears to be debt for life.

Neoliberals have supported the explosion of the prison-industrial complex which has expanded many times over since the '60s despite the rate of crime going down. The police departments have been equipped with military weapons that make the equipment of police prior to the 1970s pale in comparison. They have presided over the growth of the insurance industry and the pharmaceutical companies which now have almost total control over our physical and mental health. The official diagnostic manual was 50 pages in 1950. Today the same manual is well over 1000 pages. Today upper-middle-class parents are no longer authoritative but instead are practicing a form of “permissive parenting”, which easily results in spoiled, narcissistic children, with helicopter parents fretting endlessly over their little darlings' self-esteem. Please see Table A for a comparison.

20th Century Types of Liberals

Table A

| Left Liberals | Category of comparison | Neoliberals (right-wing) |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Mid 1930s to 1970 | Time period | Late 1970s to the present |
| For it - pensions, unemployment, food stamps, Keynes | Presence of matriarchal state | Against it |
| | Economic policy | Von Hayek, Friedman |
| Investment in science - space program and research | Science | Lack of investment in science programs unrelated to war Presided over New Age thinking |
| Optimism - universalism, Enlightenment | Philosophy | Pessimism - relativism Identity politics |
| Manufacturing Military budget only for US | What are profits made on? | Military weapons for the whole world Finance capital |
| Support of "business unionism" | Place of unions | Presided over the union membership being less than 10% |
| Secure, full-time work with benefits | Standard of living for workers | Insecure part-time work with no benefits |
| 359,555 in 1970 | Prisons | 2.3 million in 2020 Rise of prison-industrial complex |
| Payment between 70-90% of earnings in early 1960s | Taxes on corporations | Pay roughly 30% of earnings |
| Diagnostic Manual 50 pages | Mental health | Explosion of mental health problems. Diagnostic Manual well over 1000 pages |
| Psychiatrists and psychologists in charge | | Rise of insurance and pharmaceutical industry |
| FDR, Truman, Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson | Democratic presidents | Jimmy Carter 1976-80 Bill Clinton 1988-1996 Baraka Obama 2008-2016 |
| Civil Rights Movement 2 nd wave feminism | Stratification systems | Identity politics Pink Pussy cats |
| Authoritative parenting | Type of parenting | Permissive parenting Self-esteem movement |
| Middle-class and working-class life better than before World War II | Standard of living | Not kept up with living standards Middle class and working-class life worse than it was 50 years ago |
| Limited to guns, firehoses, police dogs | Police | Militarization of the police Use of tasers, tanks |
| 40 hours per week | Work week | 50 hours or more |
| Free community college | College | Great rise in cost of college – Explosion of student debt |
| Greater variety of corporations | Concentration of capital | Amazon, Walmart, Google |

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MIDDLE-CLASS AND UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS

Not everyone is middle-class

In the United States, most people think of themselves as middle-class. Last time I checked 80% of the working-class mistakenly thought they were middle-class. Why? Because in

Yankeedom, it's an embarrassment to be working-class. So too, upper-middle-class people, nervous about being seen as well-to-do, play down their wealth. Nevertheless, there are real parameters around what it means to be middle-class, as I'll get to. But first the social class composition. (The myth that America is a nation with no real class divisions (and therefore without class strife), just one happy middle class, has been bolstered by constant repetition in all establishment ideological channels: from big media to the political class itself, and even many labor representatives).

Social class composition

Based on the work of William Domhoff, in his books [*Who Rules America*](#) and [*The Powers That Be*](#), the ruling-class and the upper-class together compose about 5% of the population. They live off stocks and bonds and don't have to work. Their investments are principally in oil, mining, the military and banking. They have been characterized as "old money" and are mostly Republicans.

The upper-middle-class is about 10% of the population. They make most of their money off scientific innovations like computers, internet and electronics. They are called "new money" and are mostly Democrats. Upper-middle-class people are also doctors, lawyers, architects, senior managers, scientists and engineers, as well as media professionals such as news commentators, magazine and newspaper editors, college administrators and religious authorities.

The middle-class consists of about 25% of the population. Occupational examples include high school and grammar school teachers, registered nurses, librarians, corporate middle managers, self-employed artisans and tiny little mom-and-pop operations. *The middle-class is at the bottom rung of the Democratic Party not well-represented at all.*

The working-class is about 50% of the population and consists

of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The skilled working-class include carpenters, welders and electricians, wait-staff and store clerks who are likely to vote Democrat. Their interests are *not* represented by the Democratic Party either. The semi-skilled are bus drivers or train operators and along with unskilled are less likely to vote. The last 10% consist of what Marx called the "lumpenproletariat" who live by their wits as prostitutes, hustlers, gamblers or those on welfare. These folks are not likely to vote either.

Income is not the most important determinant of social class: the nine dimensions of social class

When most Yankees try to understand social class, the first thing they think of is how much income a person has. But this is only one of the nine dimensions of social class, and not the most important one. Most of these dimensions are covered in the work of Marxist Erik Olin Wright as well as some of the followers of Max Weber. The first dimension of social class is technical, and this consists of three parts: a) the proportion of mental and physical work the job requires; b) the amount of independence or interdependence the kind of work involves, and c) the proportion of the work that is mechanical rote work versus creativity. So typically, a good upper-middle-class job will involve mental work, be independent from others and involve creativity. At the other end of the spectrum is unskilled working-class labor which predominantly involves physical labor and working with other people, while the work itself is repetitive. Other social classes have various combinations in between.

The second dimension of social class is political and economic authority relations. This consists of two subcategories. The first is the degree of power the person has over resources, tools, goods and services. A capitalist has control over all these things. Workers usually have control over none of them, except that skilled workers might own their own tools. The second sub-category has to do with the proportion of order-

giving and order-taking involved. The owner of a company *gives* orders and takes no orders. His workers *take* orders and don't give orders. Middle-class people in corporations may give orders to workers but must take orders from senior management. This category is simply – who gets to boss around who and under what conditions.

The third dimension of social class is mobility. How easy is it to move up or down the class hierarchy both within one's lifetime or across generations? The fourth dimension of social class is resources. Most people think of resources in terms of income. But wealth also includes assets such as inheritance, real estate, stocks, bonds and property. Sometimes upper-class people may work only part time, but it would be deceptive to make sense of their class position by some part-time job when they have an inheritance.

The fifth dimension of social class is education. This consists of the number of years of school completed as well as the quality of the school attended. The sixth dimension of social class is status. This is the degree of prestige in which one's occupation is held by others. One reason why income is unstable as an indicator of social class is that some workers can make a good deal of money, such as unionized garbage collectors, but have low status. Conversely, an adjunct college instructor can have high status among the Yankee population but make significantly less money than a garbage collector.

The seventh dimension of social class is lifestyle and consumption patterns. This has four subcategories. The first is health – birth and death rates. As many of you know, working-class people die on average seven years younger than people in the middle and upper-middle-classes. The second subcategory is how people dress, their speech patterns, body mannerisms and manners. The third subcategory is their recreational habits – whether they ski, play baseball or go bowling. The last subcategory is their religious beliefs.

Religions are class divided. In the case of the protestants, there are the Unitarians, Episcopalians and Presbyterians near the top and Baptists and fundamentalists at the bottom.

The eighth dimensions of social class is the degree of awareness people have of their social class. Generally, the upper class and the ruling class are extremely class conscious and are very fussy about who is allowed into their circles. The upper-middle-class and the middle-class tend to be less class conscious. In countries other than the United States, the working-class is very class conscious. But here in Yankeedom, workers see themselves as "temporarily indisposed millionaires". The last social dimension of class is the ability to take collective action. Capitalists at the end of World War II and soon thereafter organized a big campaign to win back the allegiance of workers. The ruling class has exclusive clubs in which they organize class strategy. The World Economic Forum and the Bilderberg group are examples. At the other end of the spectrum, when workers join unions or strike, they are showing class consciousness. No social class fits neatly into each dimension. There are what Wright calls "contradictory class locations" where a person is caught between two classes either between generations or within their lifetime.

Why does class count?

Why have I gone over the dimensions of social class in such detail? One reason is to show that upper middle-class people and middle-class people are not interchangeable. They vary in the technical division of labor, authority relations, class mobility, resources, education, status, lifestyle, degree of class consciousness and their willingness to take collective action. They also differ in their attitudes towards the meaning of work, as well as in their attitudes towards time and eating habits. If we want to suggest that the middle-class should break its alliance with the upper middle-class and get out of the Democratic Party, we have to expand and deepen

their differences as I am starting to demonstrate.

Summary: two reasons why middle-class left liberal should get out the Democratic Party

Summarizing, the first thing we needed to do is to establish that the Democratic Party is a **center-right neoliberal party which has next to nothing to do with being left-liberal**. This is reason A to get out of the Democratic Party. The second reason is that the Democratic Party—besides serving first and foremost the oligarchs concentrated in the top 0.001%—serves the interests of the upper-middle-class not the middle-class. The most obvious indicator of why the middle-class should no longer align themselves with the upper-middle-class is to understand what has happened since the crash of 2008. Both Thomas Piketty and Richard Wolff argue that the “economic recovery” was very class specific. The rulers, the upper class *and the upper middle-class* have done considerably better in that “recovery”. All other social classes, including the middle-class have done worse. The middle-class, economically and in other dimensions, is far closer to the working-class than it has ever been. Reason B to get out of the Democratic Party.

But can these two classes really get along? There is a built-in tension and discomfort about doing mental work and physical work; there are differences in the degree of status in the two classes’ occupations. If we want to move middle-class people and working-class people closer together, we have to understand their commonalities and where the tension points are in their differences.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MIDDLE-CLASS AND WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE

Similarities

The biggest similarity between the two classes is a decline in the standard of living. This includes income, work stability,

increase in hours worked and lack of benefits. Another commonality is sports. Working-class people and middle-class people can unite around being fans of baseball, football and basketball professional teams. In terms of music, rock or country rock might bring these two classes together. Another commonality is that both classes have what sociologists have defined as *achieved* status. Unlike the upper classes, they usually do not come into life with an inheritance. Lastly, both classes see hard work as a virtue.

Differences

One of the major differences between these two classes is that middle-class people make their living primarily by doing mental and/or supervisory work. Working-class people make their living primarily with their hands and their bodies. A second major obstacle to overcome is that middle-class jobs usually have higher status. The third difference is that middle-class people often give orders to working-class people, but the reverse is not the case. This can lead to jealousy and resentment among working-class people. Middle-class people are very individualistic and not likely to organize as a class. There is likely to be tension between the classes when the working-class agitates to start a union or take strike action. There are also differences between the classes around the meaning of work. For working-class people, the meaning of work is less important than the money and material benefits. Some middle-class people might trade off a higher paying job for work that seems socially redeeming to them.

In terms of resources middle-class people today are likely to own their own home and have stocks and bonds. Working-class people's assets are usually a car and possibly a home. Mostly they do not own stocks. Whatever savings account they have, that is it. There are also differences in their health conditions. Working-class people are likely to have eating, drinking and smoking problems and middle-class people are healthier. Working-class people are more likely to go to

gambling casinos and play the lottery. Middle-class people see that as a waste of time and money.

Another tension point is education. Usually, middle-class people will have a bachelor's or master's degree, while working-class people will have no degree or an associate degree at best. Middle-class people will dress, speak and have manners that will be different from the working-class, and this will produce class tensions. Middle-class and working-class people will attend different religious denominations. Working-class religious services invite submission, confessions of being a sinner as well as altered states of consciousness like speaking in tongues, singing and dancing in the church aisles. In middle-class religions, there is less pressure to make you feel like you are a sinner. At the same time, sermons are designed to appeal to what is reasonable rather than to force you to have a revelatory experience which alters one's state of consciousness.

MIDDLE-CLASS PEOPLE MEET SOCIALISTS

Surely you are kidding

Let's suppose middle-class left liberals have enough doubts about the Democratic Party because the party is no longer interested in New Deal ideals, and they're starting to see that the party no longer looks out for middle-class interests either. Let's assume that economic, political and ecological disasters will continue to plague capitalism, and somehow a third party – a mass party – has emerged founded on socialism and is getting up a head of steam. This party has some working-class support as well as some union support. What would it take for middle-class left liberals to join?

Fears Middle-class Liberals Have About Socialists: Dictatorship and one-party rule

In its propaganda war with socialism, capitalists inevitably point out some of what they perceive to be the dictatorial

tendencies of communism – in Russia, China, Cuba, North Korea, etc. – as the archetypal example of socialism. What this propaganda does not do is study the conditions –the historical context–under which one-party rule occurred and what the authorities were up against. I am not going to get into pros and cons of this here because this kind of socialism – whether Stalinist or Maoist – is only one type of socialism. (These two variants –Stalinist and Maoist–are the only ones that have historically managed to attain power and retain it long enough to build a distinctly non-capitalist state. Embattled from day one, and fighting off enemies within and without, the Soviet Union, the first "workers' state", however flawed or not flawed it may have been, and led by the Bolsheviks, survived for three quarters of a century. During that time it recorded huge achievements. It was eventually brought down by a complex combination of factors deserving of a separate essay. Meanwhile, China, after going through several difficult phases, and oscillating between strict socialism and "capitalist roadism", has finally settled on a mix it calls "socialism with Chinese characteristics. The current system, while definitely socialist, in that national production proceeds according to a central plan whose chief objective is first and foremost the benefit of the people, incorporates since the 1980s (Deng's reforms) a large and vital market sector that remains the subject of fierce controversy and attacks. Despite this, China's simply astonishing modernization, its historically unique lifting of almost a billion people from absolute poverty to middle class comfort and security in less than 50 years, and her transformation into one of the most influential nations of the 21st century, has demonstrated the power of socialist organization).

The socialist paradox

Most people, even many of those who see themselves as well educated, particularly liberals, remain a bit confused about the meaning of socialism and socialist formations. Basically, we can distinguish six types of socialism. Starting from the

right and moving leftward there are social democrats and then three kinds of Leninists – Maoists, Stalinists and Trotskyists. Continuing leftward, there are left communists or council communists and the anarchists. In my efforts to convince middle-class liberals of the feasibility of socialism I will address as much as I can what most, or all of these types are in agreement on. For now, let's just say that dictatorial rule is *not* a foundational principle of socialism, even for the Stalinist and Maoist parties that have been called dictatorial by capitalists.

Furthermore, I think it is ludicrous for members of the Democratic Party to complain about the one-party rule of socialists when in Yankeedom there are only two parties. [Actually, a very strong argument can be made, and has been made, that the US has only *one* party with two wings perennially engaged in a fake ideological opposition struggle. This party only represents the native and global oligarchy of what is usually defined as "the West", that is the US sphere of global influence, or "the empire".] The Democratic Party is hardly democratic when it only serves the interests of the about 10% of the population (Republicans serve the ruling and upper classes—and so do the Democrats, as we see with Biden and saw with Obama and Clinton, etc.— and that leaves over 85% with no representation at all. The party I call the "Republicrats", represents no more than 15% of the population. It is one party, the party of capital.

Confusion of personal property with social property

We socialists have a running joke on our Facebook posts, mostly in reaction to over-the-top conservatives who think we want to abolish personal property. We say "yes indeed, we are coming for your tooth brush." That perceived threat is accompanied by imagining that socialists are all having group sex. But seriously, when we socialists say we want to abolish private property we only mean social property. We want to abolish capitalist control over water, food, energy systems,

tools, banking and finance, all the necessities that people need to live. We don't believe resources that everyone needs in order to live should be privately owned. On the other hand, personal property will remain with the individual as it would under capitalism. And we want to increase personal wealth, not reduce it.

Discouragement of innovation

Capitalism has a very shallow and narrow understanding of human nature. Capitalists imagine that people are lazy at heart and unless the carrot is held in front of people – the prospect of being a millionaire – they will do nothing. Further, they look at the types of “leisure” activities a working-class person enjoys after another 50-hour work week and take those as representing what human nature is really like. For example, on Friday night the worker wants to play cards. On Saturday he watches a ball game and have a few beers and on Sunday he sleeps in. For the capitalist this is lazy. What the capitalist thinks is that if workers did not have to work, then playing cards, watching football, drinking, getting laid and sleeping is all he would ever do. What the capitalist doesn't understand is that the entire weekend is not leisure at all. Its *recovery* from the week and *preparation* for the new week.

Under conditions of socialist work, alienation would be minor – and I am being conservative here. The natural collective creativity on the job will arise. People will work less, perhaps 30 hours a week at first. Because workers will control the workplaces as well as decide what to produce, how to produce it, how much they should work and how they will be compensated, work will be a joy, not a curse as under capitalism. There will be plenty of room for innovation, in fact much more than under capitalism where most workers are imprisoned in wage labor and told not to be curious and not have their own ideas about how things should be run.

All this collective creativity gives the lie to the ridiculous capitalist notion that people want socialism because they want “free stuff” with no contribution. All socialist plans have a budget and decisions have to be made about what and how the budget will be spent. No one will “get out of working”. What the capitalist cannot imagine is that under socialism people will *want* to work. The idea of not working would be painful – not liberating.

Equality of poverty

In its heyday, between the 1930s and the 1970s, the Swedish Social Democratic Labor Party was a socialist society which produced great material wealth. The socialist countries that have been showcased by capitalists as poor – the Soviet Union, China and Cuba – were only poor during certain times of their existence. What capitalists fail to inform us of, is that *before* the socialist revolutions, as Michael Parenti points out, those countries were *even more poor*. What material wealth does exist in capitalist societies has taken *hundreds of years* to build up. In China today, absolute poverty was eradicated within *40 years*.

There will be far more innovation than existed under capitalism because under socialism the workplaces will be controlled by the workers and workers’ activities will be guided by an overall plan. To cite one instance, before Yugoslavia was destroyed by capitalists, Yugoslavian productivity under worker self-management was higher than in any capitalist country. The same was true during the Spanish Revolution under worker self-management in both industry and in agriculture.

People are naturally greedy

Cross-cultural research on happiness has found that there is a direct correlation between money and happiness when people move from poverty to a middle-class life. However, the

movement from middle-class to upper-middle-class and beyond is no longer correlated to happiness. In other words, people who are upper class or upper-middle-class are not any more likely to be happy than are middle-class people. This gives the lie to the capitalist notion that people are greedy and that everyone secretly wants to be a millionaire. What is more likely is that people want to be middle-class. They want basics in material security. After that they want other things; creativity on the job, to be able to contribute to society and to be recognized for their work, to mention only a few things.

Socialists will want to abolish religion

I admit that the state socialist attempt to decree the abolition of religion was a big mistake. I also think that doing so was contrary to the principles of materialism Marxists aspire to. While I stand firm in the ontological belief that there are no gods or god, at the same time I understand that the degree to which people wish to hold on to religion as an expression of their alienation of social life. As generations pass and prosperous ways of life become normalized, I predict three things will happen. First, more people will become atheists. Secondly, those who continue to believe in religion will notice that the nature of the gods, or god, will change. The gods or god will blend more with the nature we know because social life will be more likely to begin to resemble heaven on earth. Third, the fundamentalist religions that plague many working-class people will disappear because the working-class will no longer consider themselves sinners or need fire and brimstone to make things right.

Commonalities Between Middle-Class Left Liberals and Socialists

Need for a mass party

We socialists think you'll agree with us that we badly need a

mass party that can speak to the needs of the 25% of us who are middle-class and the 40% percent of us who are working-class. This party will develop a program and a step-by-step plan for implementation of the plan over the next 5, 10 and 15 years. It will be a dues-paying party and we will implement methods for getting input into what the plan will be. The issues will be prioritized, and everyone will have a say in carrying out the plan. Once the plan is set, people will be able to sign up for tasks they agree to carry out over the course of weeks and months. In addition to a thirty-hour work week, approximately five hours per week will be devoted to this "political" work.

Massive support for Unions

We socialists know that you left liberals have supported unions from the 1930s to the early 1970s. However, we also know that it was under liberal presidents that the best organizers of unions, the communists and the socialists, were drummed out of unions in the 1950s. This limited the vision of unions as they turned into "business unions". We also think you should be very upset with the neoliberals in the Democratic Party who have not supported unions for the last 50 years, causing union representation in Yankeedom to be now less than 10%. We hold neoliberals directly responsible for the fact that wages, working conditions and job security are pretty much last in the industrial capitalist societies. The vision of unions needs to be built back up to the ways of the Industrial Workers of the World who saw unions as workshops for how to run a society, not merely a way to sustain and improve everyday working conditions.

Society can be engineered

Like you, we socialists agree with the great project of the Enlightenment that a better society can be engineered by its members. Unlike conservatives, we do not accept that social organizations should be ruled by kings, aristocrats, priests

or any traditional authorities. Neither do we think society is some kind of reform school in preparation for the next life. We also don't think society is best governed by the automatic preservation of traditional institutions that have been here the longest. Like you, we agree in the notion of progress.

The value of science and technology in producing a society of abundance

Like you we are very disappointed and angry that capitalists have chosen to invest their profits in warfare and in finance capital rather than in scientific research that could make our lives better. We also think you should blame the neoliberals for allowing this to happen over the course of the last 50 years. As socialists we have always felt that the scientific method is the best way to know things and that science is a crucial ingredient in Marx's call to "develop the productive forces". For us, the creation of socialism was never any kind of sacrifice or doing with less. Nor are we unrealistic about human nature. We fully understand that the foundation of socialism has to be the production of *more than enough* wealth to go around. With abundance in place, there is no motivation for stealing or wanting what others have.

The value of the state overview

We socialists are in complete agreement with the value you hold about the importance of the functions of the matriarchical state. We also think it is important that the matriarchal state take over the realm of overall planning. This does not mean that all social production and distribution is centrally planned with no feedback from the local and regional levels. We see the relationship between the three in a dialectical manner. The local and regional levels feed up to the state level what products and services are needed. The state incorporates our feedback but then makes adjustments based on the fact that at the local and regional level we cannot see the whole. Once the state produces an overall plan,

that is then fed down to the local and regional levels. It will no doubt take a number of times for there to be a smooth “cybernetic” rhythm established.

Micro-level – the value of cooperative learning and authoritative parenting

We socialists are well aware that you middle-class left liberals have always supported public schools. Some of the more visionary of you might have had the money to send your children to a Montessori school. Some of you might have heard the name Lev Vygotsky and associated him with cooperative learning, which is used in Montessori education. What you probably were never told was that Vygotsky was a communist and he and his followers, Alexander Luria and Aleksei N Leontiev, founded a whole school of psychology, the “socio-historical school of psychology”. They developed a theory of cooperative learning that has been applied not only in school settings but in the design of social intelligence tests, the development of theories of cognitive development and in working with the deaf. Vygotsky’s work could be massively applied to the fields of social psychology, and possibly to therapy, as one group in New York City is currently doing.

Lastly, we admire the way that many of you have raised your children using *authoritative child-rearing methods*. You have avoided both extremes in child rearing. On the one hand are the authoritarian methods of conservative child rearing which raises children who are repressed, frightened and lack curiosity. On the other hand, it is the permissive parenting of upper-middle-class neoliberal parents that has turned out a generation of narcissistic, entitled, ungrateful brats who are the product of neoliberal schooling where the focus was on raising self-esteem in every school program. We think the *authoritative* (as opposed to *authoritarian*) method with its flexible structure, welcoming of dialogue, appeal to reason, rather than emotion is the best way to raise children. We are on the same page with you.

Deeper Differences between Middle-Class Left Liberals and Socialists

Commitment to an antiwar international policy

We socialists have always been against wars because we know they are usually turf wars between capitalists about resources and that it is the workers and the poor people who do the fighting and the dying, not the capitalists. As far as wars go, we know that your class has supported the Cold War and the war in Vietnam. Beyond the 1970s you seem to have treated these wars with less enthusiasm except for perhaps, the war on Iraq. As it stands now, the capitalists in Yankeedom not only make a fortune in military warfare to “protect our borders” but they also arm the entire world. If countries decided to end their wars the capitalists here would be destitute. These wars need to end, not just because of the senseless deaths at home and abroad, but for pragmatic reasons. All this money could go into the trillions of dollars’ worth of infrastructural work that is left undone. Suppose the military was employed on these infrastructural projects. Suppose the military was employed to build low-cost housing in every city. Living in a society of abundance requires the *reinvestment* in the military from wars abroad to infrastructure and natural disaster relief at home.

Anti-imperialist international policy

We socialists are also against imperialist wars where capitalists invade other countries to steal their political or economic resources, land and labor to make a profit. This can be most blatantly seen in Africa. Yankeedom also continues its imperialist ventures in Latin America, regularly attempting to overthrow governments there. Why? For the simple reason that freely elected governments (socialist or not) may have the nerve to set their own economic policy, which might not necessarily be friendly to transnational corporations.

Yankee capitalists want to rule the world and they don't want any competition.

China, Russia and Iran refuse to tow the line and have formed an alliance. The Chinese represent the best hope of the world now. Why are they such a threat to the United States? Because they are making a profit through building infrastructures, not just in China but in other parts of the world. China, Russia and Iran have also withdrawn from the US dollar as a tender of international currency, which costs the western banks in significant loss of profits. Yankee capitalists are slitting their own throats, and ours as well, by acting like big-shot imperialists fifty years after their time has passed and their own territory is falling apart. In attempting to maintain their historically brief global hegemony, the US ruling class is now actively courting an all out war with independent nations such as Russia, China and Iran that will not be intimidated. This could precipitate a nuclear confrontation with no winners, and the end of all life as we know it. As middle-class people we think you can see that nothing good can come from this and we need to rebuild our own society.

Dismantling the Deep State

Unfortunately, most middle-class people don't know any more about the FBI and the CIA and what these organizations do to promote themselves, including what is on television and in movies. The FBI has upended or ruined the lives of socialists for decades. Their role in undermining the old left and even the New Left (created ironically by the CIA to deflect people away from pro-Soviet positions) has been documented in David Cunningham's book [*There's Something Happening Here*](#). The CIA is in a class by itself, the world's most powerful terrorist organization. I will limit myself to three books: [*The Mighty Wurlitzer*](#) by Hugh Wilford; [*The Cultural Cold War*](#) by Frances Stoner Saunders and [*The Devil's Chessboard*](#) by David Talbot. Funding for these organization should be ended, and the sooner the better.

Class Dismissed, Where Left Liberals Missed the Boat.

For socialists of any stripe, social class has been the foundation for understanding capitalism. The capitalist class makes its profits by exploiting the working-class. As Marx points out, workers produce all the wealth, but they are given only about 40% in the form of wages (the first four hours of their labor) which allows them to support themselves. This is their "subsistence wage". But the worker works another 6 hours. Who gets the value from that? The employer. The employer uses the rest of the surplus value produced by the worker to pay the middle-class managers, pay landlords for the use of plant and set aside funds to pay the state in taxes. They claim the remainder of the surplus as profit. Middle-class people have stood structurally between the working-class and the capitalists, giving orders to workers, taking orders from capitalists. There are other social classes as I've discussed earlier but the major dynamic is between the capitalist and the worker.

Middle-class people, like most other classes, do not talk about this because class is about political and economic power between groups. It is uncomfortable and middle-class people among others have been afraid to discuss this. Why? Because they feel guilty, that maybe it is their fault they have a better life? Maybe they owe the workers something? Middle-class people need to get over this, because the fact is, you are sliding south, in the same direction as the working-class. In fact, you now have more in common with working-class people than upper middle-class people.

Race relations: Social Movements vs Individualist Identity Politics

Strange as it may seem, middle-class people have been more comfortable talking about race than class. After all, many middle-class people prided themselves as left liberals by supporting the civil rights movement. This was a social

movement in which racial minorities joined together to fix objective conditions such as higher pay, better housing, legal rights. I suspect most of you did not know that Martin Luther King, a paradigm of middle-class respectability, was a socialist.

However, since the mid 1970s, but especially from the 1990s on, race relations have turned from a social movement into something different. Identity politics is a psychological spin-off from the civil rights movement with a very different agenda. In the hands of upper middle-class, neo-liberals of all colors, including lawyers and university professors, identity politics has been used to win political seats in the Democratic Party. They do this by focusing on the rights of *individuals* to recognition, the right to be called a certain pronoun and rights to declare being offended by this or that innuendo. Identity politics has crippled the ability of working-class and middle-class people to form alliances by dragging meetings through competitive battles as to who is more offended than whom. When an organization as corrupt as the ruling class Democratic Party starts babbling about “white privilege” it’s time to get off that sinking ship. The mess that race relations are today is made worse by the upper middle-class neoliberals seizing on identity politics. Here is yet another reason to dump the Democratic Party and any alliance with the upper middle-class. A terrific short book that lays out the limitations of identity politics is [Mistaken Identity](#) by Asad Haider.

Democracy is economic and participatory more than political representation

Middle-class left liberals in the 20th century have thought of democracy as synonymous with voting. Democracy was having the right to vote for one of the two major parties. For socialists this is a sham. Both parties are ruling class parties and workers have nothing to say about what candidates are running

and what they will do after the election. For us, democracy is economic. We think it is ridiculous to imagine we live in a democracy when we go to work to be bossed around from beginning to the end of the day by the employer. For us, democracy begins and ends in the workplace. Workers should have a say in what is produced, how it is produced, where it is distributed, how long we work and how we are compensated. In addition, within socialism democracy is also present by its involvement in city planning. This includes participatory planning councils at the local level, participating in setting agendas and deciding how city revenue should be spent. Under socialism, political parties will still have their place, but they will operate under direct democracy, not representational democracy.

The future of capitalism

All socialists are against capitalism except for some right-wing social democrats who believe in a mixed economy. For us, capitalism is a system plagued by crises, an irrepressible fountain of inequality and wars, and inherently unstable. Various Marxist crisis theorists have developed theories about how and why capitalism will end. Even non-Marxist political economists have theories about how it will end. Please see my article [*Name Me One Capitalist Country That Works: A Thirty Year Reckoning*](#) for more sources. Where I think we can agree is that capitalist profits should not be made on wars, or on fictitious capital games like derivatives, etc.. It is the neoliberals, not you, who have made profits on fictitious capital and wars over the past 50 years. Rather, capitalist profits should be made on the production of goods and services. We still think that eventually capitalism will fail even if it only produces goods and services, but we can't convince you of that until we are further down the road.

What is the place of competitive markets? Some of you might feel that having markets is a better mechanism for quickly finding out what people need and how those goods and services

have been delivered. As Michael Parenti writes in [Black Shirts and Reds](#), the central planning mechanisms in the USSR were no bargain. At the same time, we know that during the Spanish Revolution, the workers and peasants self-organized in industry and on farms for 3 years, covering millions of people and had better production records than the Spanish government had before the revolution. So, our choices are more than choosing between the state and the market. In the new society perhaps there might be a minor place for markets instead of state planning or worker planning, but the markets should never be among the major players. We can do better than markets.

THE AUTHOR

[su_panel background="#f1f4f6" color="#1d1919" border="5px dotted #02101f" padding="10" shadow="1px 0px 1px #eeeeee"  radius="8" target="blank"] Bruce Lerro has taught for over 25 years as an adjunct Professor of Psychology at Golden Gate University, Dominican University and Diablo Valley College in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has applied a Vygotskian socio-historical perspective to the three books he's written, found on Amazon. Read more of his articles and get involved at [Planning Beyond Capitalism](#), where he is a co-founding editor with Barbara MacLean, or at The Greenville Post, where he serves as associate editor. [/su_panel]

Up to You.

^3000US citizens have no real political representation.

We don't live in a democracy. And our freedom is disappearing fast.

I don't want to be ruled by hypocrites, whores, and war criminals.

What about you? Time to push back against the corporate oligarchy.

And its multitude of minions and lackeys.

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