

Socialist Vanguard

January-February 2021 Newsletter

Issue # 122

Edited by Dave Schall

Presenting Democratic Socialist Viewpoints

Deterrence, Justice, Crime, Impeachment

I want JUSTICE! That family deserves JUSTICE! These are calls often times from victims of crime or others demanding a stiff punishment for a crime.

In a broad sense JUSTICE is a principle, people receive what they deserve. Justice is a form of fairness. For relatively small crimes, justice is easy, a person steals \$10, that person should be punished by making s/he repay the \$10. When a loss is an injury or a loss of life, how do we measure a fair retribution? Some will argue the mere fact that one is caught and found guilty is a severe punishment because of the embarrassment and shame. What form of justice is needed when someone engages in a crime against society, but not to other people (drug crimes, traffic offenses, sex crimes, other crimes involving breaking moral standards, but not everyone considers each perversion to be equally serious or shares the morality). Others argue that a severe punishment is necessary as a deterrent to commit the specific crime.

As we begin 2021, we face heated debates over policing and the criminal justice system. The USA is divided by those calling for fairness and respect for all people. Others call for stiffer punishments partly to just punish criminals and partly to deter criminal behavior.

As socialists, we want to influence public policy and to provide for the "greater (or common) good". The "greater good" involves providing safe places to live, and be free of abuse and losses. If punishment deters crime, the more severe the punishment, the greater deterrence. There are often calls for the death penalty or very long sentences. The argument is that severe punishment deters crime!

At this point we bring in science, namely criminology. Crime rates generally do not drop when punishments are severe. Likewise, crime rates do not drop when there are more police officers. **Crimes are committed by people who do not plan on being caught!** Traffic violations are common crimes, violators do not plan to get caught, the severity of the punishment has little effect. The probability of getting caught and delayed is much more of a deterrence. The driving conditions are also important deterrents. What is the condition of the road? Does it have lots of potholes? Is it covered in ice and snow? Speed bumps, road narrowing, road closings are much more effective in slowing down traffic.

Other factors are much more effective deterrents. In the 1930s during the Great Depression with millions out of work, Milwaukee had its fair share of unemployed. Milwaukee stood out among USA cities for having the lowest crime rates. Milwaukee's Socialist Mayor Dan Hoan often spoke about safe Milwaukee, as it was the only city to have its property insurance rates decrease. Hoan, served as Mayor from 1916 to 1940, explained that Milwaukee had gang problems in the 1920s and there was a demand for more police. Hoan, who had a reputation for being stingy, refused to give in the demands and reduced the number of police officers. He rerouted the tax dollars to education, recreation and employment programs. The public instead of being angry at their plight, were busy improving themselves and their communities.

"AN EYE FOR AN EYE . . . LEAVES EVERYBODY BLIND" *Attributed to both Mohandas Ghandi and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.*

This leads us to Trump and his second impeachment. After Trump's behavior on January 6, when he tried to overturn the vote of the Electoral College and led a "call to arms as a mob of his followers stormed the Capitol. Trump did little during his presidency other than sending messages on Twitter and holding rallies, where he told lies, called people names and raised the anger level among many on the far right. The feeling among many was that Trump could no longer be trusted in the White House. In the last edition we called for the implementation of the 25th Amendment, which could remove him immediately. The powers that be decided not to use the 25th, the House then resorted to the impeachment process

Pragmatically, Trump left the White House without doing much more damage. We will have to see what happens. Will Trump be able to play the martyr who was unfairly attacked? Will he be able to rouse the people who stormed the Capitol? Is Trump getting too old to lead? Is Trump too incompetent to be able to organize a mass movement?

Many supporting impeachment want "to send a lesson", history says that impeachment is not likely to produce that result.

Trump had been put to shame, the Democrats who spoke to the Senate made a very convincing argument that Trump was derelict in his duties, several GOP leaders, including Mitch McConnell, made scathing remarks about Trump's behavior. **The 2022 elections will be test Trump's influence on the Republican Party.**

Words for thought

"This note (US Constitution and Declaration of Independence) was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Socialist Values Vs Capitalists : Values v Science

With Trump gone and hopefully forgotten, it is time to revisit **SOCIALIST VALUES!** With the urgency of rescuing the nation (and world) from Trump’s incompetence and having to support a progressive (a corporate, not a socialist agenda), we need to rethink what democratic socialism stands for and what the USA needs! The following are major issues (and problems) facing the citizenry:

took a free market stance that government should not get involved in dictating people’s reproductive habits. Marx was right as most culture have allowed women to control their reproductive status. The result has been a dramatic aging of populations and a reduction of workers in most industrialized societies. This called the demographic transition theory. It is common for mainstream economists to be concerned about the lack of available workers. Logically, promoting immigration is a short-term solution, as less developed countries which are now enjoying better health care and longer life expectancy have surpluses of potential workers. We need to let the demographic Transition Theory to run its course as government trying to directly control such an important natural activity usually back-fires. While the benefit is that we (as a global community) have to learn to get along, the long-term solution is to replace the value placed on economic growth with one that values small communities, less dependent on growth.



GROWTH IS GOOD: This has been a capitalist value and marker for the well-fare of the world. In ancient time (and medieval times) this was the gold standard, as it represented progress and prosperity. As technology progressed, growth and development accelerated. Along with the population increased to the point that humans are destroying the earth. There are many still working hard to find technological fixes, which can accommodate this growth, but there are too many sins that we have surpassed the limits. Nature is fighting back. Too often “technological fixes” have adverse down-sides or are at best short term solutions. Some nations (mostly those with advance technologies) are facing a shortage of people/workers. We need to question the axiom that growth is the only way to resolve this problem. Likewise, many developing societies have too many people. While migration is an obvious answer, it has its limit and feeding a world of 8 billion people and growing is looking more and more destructive! We need to explore the ideals of *Small is Beautiful* (Set forth in a book by E.F. Schumacher)

OWNERSHIP: Marxian socialism (some consider this pure socialism) denounces the private ownership of the means of production. Some states, claiming to be socialist, denounce all forms of private ownership. As socialism has evolved and matured, societies with total public ownership have faltered with most living in poverty and having little hope of enjoying an adequate sustenance. Nations that practice what is often called *democratic socialism* have been much better at providing the basic necessities for their populations. Adam Smith when he wrote the *Wealth of Nations* pointed out the advantages of private ownership, but also warned of the problems (something many free market advocates forget). Greed is a trait found in humans and must be treated as a natural characteristic. Democratic socialism as it has evolved in Western Europe and other nations recognizes this behavior and works to use it as Smith describes as an invisible hand, but also tries to control the tendency so that it benefits societies, rather than leads to permanent problems of poverty, hunger, inequality and criminal behavior. Private property rights can be tolerated, but must be control and regulated for a just society!

POPULATION: Birth Control or Pro-life? If all people are to be promised a comfortable life (safety, food and shelter, to name a few basics), we cannot maintain a world of 8 billion people (or even half our current number). Population gets to a basic need of all living organism, namely reproduction. Once upon a time, humans needed to have lots of children as modern medicine did not exist and scientific knowledge was in elementary. Surviving childhood was difficult, adulthood was also fraught with numerous physical and medical risks. Life expectancy hovered around 40 years. Today, especially in industrialized societies, almost all children live to become adults. Adults live to be 70-80 years old. Thus, we have witnessed a population explosion. Human culture has changed to reflect the demographic changes. Men are seldom praised for fathering dozens of children, women’s value are no longer based on the number of births. Karl Marx, one of the early socialists and one of the advocates for a strong state to control the powers of business tyrants,

Marx arrived at his conclusions favoring public ownership on a systematic, scientific analysis of the world in the middle of the 19th Century. Based on historical experience and a systematic observation of human history in the 20th Century, one must conclude that the *democratic socialist* states have performed much better at providing for the wellbeing of their citizenry than nations that lean more toward protecting private property or those that have prohibited private ownership!

ENVIRONMENT: Another scientific fact that became evident as the world has industrialized, is that the mechanization and exploitation of the world’s resources cannot continue. People must learn to live with nature and not dominate nature! This should be a “no-brainer”. Each person should want to leave the earth as s/he found it if not a little better. However, capitalism, with economic growth being supreme, is destroying the earth as we, humans, want to exploit it at any cost. This is dangerous and foolish. Socialists must be the conscience of the planet. We must educate all of the folly of unbridled capitalism! Again, Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful* can be a good starting point for evaluating changes!

Promoting Democracy!

One of the greatest challenges to fixing the USA is fixing its democracy!

Although Socrates and Plato wrote about democracy in Ancient Greece, Democracy is still in its infancy. We humans are still trying to find what form is best. Abraham Lincoln when he was president most simply defined democracy as being a **government of the people, for the people and by the people.**

Of the people: The *USA Constitution* was written by a group of men, who were bright, heavily influenced by the Age of Enlightenment that was powerful in Europe, privileged with all being men of wealth, and felt that they were chosen to lead by a higher being as evidence of their wealth. Unlike the *Declaration of Independence*, which was a statement of principles justifying a revolution and a breaking away from a powerful empire, the *Constitution* was meant to be a framework of governance of a given land mass. Since its adoption, the *Constitution* has provided a framework of laws governing the people.

For the people: Despite much rhetoric, the USA governance has been for the privileged, not for the common person.

Chattel slavery was recognized for the 75 years after the *Constitution* was adopted. Wage slavery has always existed and laws enacted to help control and regulate workers. Wars were fought to help control the working people. Trade deals and other international agreements have been implemented to protect the interests of the most privileged in society.

By the people: Don't laugh! While there have been regular elections after the adoption of the *Constitution*, seldom has there been opportunities for working people to vote for working people! Elections have been controlled by those with money! There have been occasions when the public has made enough noise to have a strong influence, but it takes a well, disciplined, focused group of people!

Should a democracy work? There are several qualities that make for a strong democracy. The most notable are:

1. Majority rule.
2. Acceptance of the rule of law (rules should be sensible and rational).
3. Free speech.
4. Tolerance of minority opinions.
5. Periodic, and regular elections.
6. Everyone has an equal chance to participate.

Majority rule: This is a weakness in the USA's democracy. Most elections rely on pluralities selecting the winner. The USA President is selected by a majority of electors (this starts with a majority of Electoral College (EC) votes). If the EC fails to come up with a majority, then it is a majority of Congressional representatives. EC membership is based on the number of members each state has in the USA Congress (state EC members are based on the total of Senators (2) and members in the House of Representatives (which are distributed based on a state's

population). Because each state has 2 electors based on membership in the US Senate, smaller states have more clout than larger states, giving citizens of small states a louder voice in the EC. A candidate winning a plurality of votes in a state gets all of electors (two states have a different selection process) (another caveat, once elected to the EC, the EC members are free to vote for whoever s/he wants and this has happened). In the 19 elections since the end of WWII, seven winners were elected with less than a majority popular vote! In some cases there was a relatively strong third party candidate (Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996). In most cases it was a tight election and the loser won the majority of popular votes!

Most elections for other positions are decided by plurality voting (the most votes wins), which discourages minority participations! Plurality voting results in a 2-party electoral system (often resulting in 1-party districts (look at the gerrymandered districts that dominate legislative bodies). When looking at the USA political system and its frequent criticism of one party-nations, one finds that the same abuses exist!

[We need to abolish the EC! We need to rid ourselves of single member districts which discourage voting!]

Acceptance of the rule of law: Generally, the complaint is that Americans are too apathetic and do not resist legislative actions. This leads to peace and stability, but it also allows for **tyranny of the majority** (originally attributed to warnings by James Madison in the *Federalist Papers*, and by John Adams and popularized in the 1850s by philosopher John Stuart Mill). Those who stormed the nation's capitol on Jan. 6 refer to the notion that change is healthy. It is as it can rejuvenate the thinking processes. But change that is based on mis-information, especially when it is presented by a president prone to lying and deception, is dangerous and unnecessarily divisive.

[Change generated by non-violent action and intelligent debate is more viable and healthier!]

Free Speech and tolerance of minority opinions: This is the most difficult principle to follow. A difference of opinion does not make one a bad person, even if the speech is full of bigotry and hatred. It is okay to show one's dislike of an idea or action! Condemning the opposition creates greater division and leads to martyrdom, which can be used to appeal to people's sympathy. If one listens to those who advocated the violence on January 6, one hears theories of victimhood, suffering and oppression. These claims have been critical in enabling organizations like white militias and the KKK to survive. Let them speak, and protest, if they are not shouted down, they will be ignored.

[Avoid inflammatory actions and words. Remember in a media driven society, conflict, noise and bloodshed are what get media attention.]

Periodic elections and everyone can participate: Regularly scheduled elections, that are easily observed by all interested parties and governed strictly by written laws, are essential for a democracy to function and the resulting government to earn support.

[All people should be able to participate by voting and by running for office.]

Activism: Reason For Optimism!

Looking around the world there are several examples of pro-democracy movements. Here in the USA, President Biden held a town-hall meeting in Milwaukee. It was refreshing to see hundreds come out to demand more aggressive action on a number of issues. The protesters were passionate, disciplined and most importantly loud. It was good to see that the activism was on display in 2020 has not dissipated!

Around the world, there is a crisis in Myanmar. This has turned into a tragedy, as Myanmar’s military has begun shooting at protesters and killing many. The protesters are

protesting a military coup and want their democracy restored. It is tragic that soldiers are willing to shoot at their own citizens. Some good news is that some soldiers have quit to protest the violence.

The rebels, who appear to represent a broad segment of Myanmar’s population, are not backing down and remain non-violent. They are an inspiration to all fighters for a more democratic world!

For the past decade it has seemed that democracy has been under attack by right-wing fascists. It seems that the pendulum is shifting! DS

Voter Reform Bills Proliferate In 2021!

Hundreds of bills have been introduced in state legislatures and in the Federal legislature. The few introduced by the Democrats have mostly either been aimed at cleaning up language or expanding the right to vote. Most have been submitted by the GOP and aim at suppressing the votes or reinforcing gerrymandered legislative districts. (In Wisconsin the GOP controlled legislature has authorized

nearly \$1 million tax dollars to have a private attorney draw the new legislative boundaries.)

Rather than trying to win over the voter, the GOP wants to eliminate them, what a commitment to improving our democracy. The GOP efforts follow an election that was considered one of the most transparent and well run in USA history, setting an example for the world! DS

Wisconsin Has 3 in Congress Who Want to Suppress Votes, and to Reject Votes!

Two Wisconsin congressmen (GOP Representatives Tom Tiffany and Scott Fitzgerald) opposed approving the electoral votes from Arizona and Pennsylvania (US Senator Rod Johnson opposed only for Arizona) and said they would do the same for other states (including Wisconsin), if it came up. Their explanation was that there needed to be transparency and their votes were meant to insure that the voting processes would get the appropriate review.

This sounds noble, but what they were not voting to set up a committee to study voting issues. They voted to deny votes cast in Arizona. These members of Congress did not respect the citizens right to vote!

Senator Johnson has been busy showing his true colors and evil intentions. He pushed to have the COVID-19 Relief Bill read word for word on the Senate Floor so that all the Senators would have a chance to hear what was in the Bill! Sounds like a noble idea, but it was probably the first time such a long bill was read to all Senators. How many Senators (including Johnson) remained in the Senate chambers the listen?

While the civilized thing to do would be to dedicate the next two years to educating voters of the disrespect these elected officials have for us voters! If we as citizens followed the old adage of “an eye for an eye”, we would deny them the protections of human rights that we all assume as part of being USA citizens. DS



Cuba Caravan

The Wi Cuba Coalition is holding a caravan in support of normalizing relations with Cuba on Sunday April 25 at 12:00. If you would like to attend, please contact me @ ratcity999@outlook.com.



Dues and/or Donations

It has been a while since we ask for money. We could use some. Please send us dues (Dues are \$10/year (members with limited incomes may pay dues as low as

\$5/year.)). Donations are always welcome. Make checks payable to **Socialist Party of Wisconsin** .

Socialist Party of Wisconsin 2025 N. Martin Luther King Dr #305– Milwaukee, WI 53212 – Phone: 414-332-0654 Email: demsocvanguard@gmail.com Website: <http://www.socialistpartyofwisconsin.org>

In honor of Black History Month, a Milwaukee TV station did a short report recognizing the contributions of Gloria Gilmer, a Wisconsin Socialist <https://www.tmj4.com/lifestyle/black-history-month/milwaukee-mathematician-dr-gloria-f-gilmer-used-creativity-culture-to-help-students-succeed>