

The Irony Law of Socialism

September 17, 2018

Under capitalism, said the old socialists, “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” Today’s socialists admit this hoary “immiseration thesis” is old hat.

“The socialist argument against capitalism isn’t that it makes us poor,” explains City University of New York Professor Corey Robin in the *New York Times*. “It’s that it makes us unfree.”

Unfree?

Nick Gillespie at *Reason* tries to make sense of that breathtaking inversion of the usual anti-socialist argument, which Gillespie characterizes as the invocation of “Stalin, the Great Leap Forward, or even Hugo Chavez.”*

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But is there really anything new here?

“When my well-being depends upon your whim, when the basic needs of life compel submission to the market and subjugation at work, we live not in freedom but in domination,” writes the tax-funded socialist professor. He wants “to



establish freedom from rule by the boss, from the need to smile for the sake of a sale,” which is so very not new. It’s reminiscent of Oscar Wilde’s “The Soul of Man Under Socialism,” which imagined rescue “from that sordid necessity of living for others.”

How real-world socialism “frees” us, though, is palpably oppressive: by burdening business and labor and trade with taxes, prohibitions, regulations.

And constant bullying.

The ironies abound, too. Gillespie notes that “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez may rail against the gig economy, but just like Bernie and Warren she uses Uber every chance she gets.” Jim Carrey praises “free” medicine in Canada, acknowledging no costs.

The cost of “free stuff” is *actual* freedom. And the cost of actual freedom is paying for what you get, and not getting what you won’t pay for.

That’s the Irony Law of Socialism.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

* Gillespie also says it is unpersuasive. Well, unpersuasive to whom? As always, many arguments for the truth are necessary.