Socialism Is Anti-Democracy

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Common sense politics must peer beneath the superficial attractions of "democratic socialism."

In "Civil Liberties and Socialism Don't Mix," Matthew Harwood explains why those who call themselves democratic socialists may "say they believe in civil liberties" nevertheless "will always be hostile to individual freedom."

In this short *Reason* piece, Mr. Harwood starts out by showing that socialism cannot merely be "a more generous welfare state along Nordic lines." For "socialism" to remain distinct socialists must offer a Unique Selling Proposition. You cannot plausibly push a "new" philosophy and stick

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to pushing the old liberal stand-bys of private property and markets.

Their own pretensions force them back to central planning, to economic planning for *all by a few*.

Which is not democratic, of course. It goes far further, to *anti-majoritarian*.

Actual economic planning requires micromanagement. Harwood quotes socialist economist and luminary Robert Heilbroner, who expresses this requirement as "the necessity to intervene deeply, and probably ruthlessly, into the economy in order to establish the socialist order in the first place."

But it cannot stop there. Once established, a socialist state must feel a "need to continue a policy of painful intervention" to adjust to "the constricting limits of the environment."

"Democratic socialism is not freedom," Harwood concludes. "It is authority paternalistically dressed up in the language of liberation and wielded on behalf of that fuzzy abstraction, 'the people,' regardless of what flesh and blood individuals want."

Sure, democratic socialists may hope that majorities will allow their elites to plan for everybody.

But once that handoff is made, the power obtained, *then* the tyranny.

Inescapably.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.