

Ecologic

-the green hornet

Capitalism under Assault: Environmentalism – Socialism and the extinction of Mankind

As our country's socio-political-economic system evolves, I can't help but wonder how it will look in the near future as we progress down that slippery slope towards socialism. Socialism may be defined as a social structure where the means of producing and distributing goods is owned collectively or by a centralized government that often plans and controls the economy. Karl Marx viewed socialism as an interim step between capitalism and communism. And communism could be defined as a social system where there is no private property; ownership rests in the hands of the collective or community. Further, communism may be characterized by a popular catch phrase used by Karl Marx; "from each according to his ability to each according to his need". This means that we all put our best efforts towards the common good, not for self-fulfillment or reward.

It seems as though everyone is indicting greed-induced capitalism as the culprit in facilitating the sorry state of the world economy. I guess that could be considered correct but really we're all culpable. Anyone with any kind of stake in the economy was putting pressure on the system to keep that economy rolling; when we ran out of legitimate buyers to build houses for, we found the illegitimate ones through sub-prime mortgages. Our 401Ks benefited nicely with the puffed-up prices until someone decided to take a breath and question what it was exactly that we had built. We collectively determined that the stock market was really worth about half of where it was and then it was so. When Bernie "Madoff" with all that money, we put him and others like him in jail. Things came undone and they are still unraveling.

So what does this have to do with the environment? - Well nothing really. Actually, the natural environment represents one gigantic system that can be viewed as existing for the common good and greed-induced capitalism tends to exploit natural resources. In the distant past, governments have largely ignored the damage or using up, of natural resources for personal or corporate gain; but that has been changing since the early 1960s and it looks as though there may be some significant changes on the horizon.

If you subscribe to the notion that the planet is in peril or headed that way, you might also agree that the imposition of the government along these lines is by necessity the sole recourse. After all, direction and enforcement have to come from somewhere and the government appears to be the most ably equipped to carry that out. It's doubtful that any standards could be agreed upon, set and followed voluntarily without government intervention, especially with such a complex subject. In fact there may be merit to the assertion that the standards could end up being somewhat arbitrary; and who knows if that would even matter.

There are several books that point to the fact that screwing up the environment is the likely cause or contributing factor in the downfall of several civilizations to include the Mayans, Anasazi, the people of Easter Island, Greenland and cultures we may not even know about. If you put credence in this argument, our current activities could put us on the verge of executing that on a global scale; or not – who knows? It seems as though the populace has voiced persistent and increasing concern regarding this and has, by proxy enlisted the support of or otherwise demanded action from our government.

So our socio-political-economic system is being further defined on the heels of an economic meltdown and with an administration that is definitely poised to address the interests of the environment. As we go forward, I think we should expect changes; can't really judge good or bad; just changes - I suppose it's just a matter of perspective.

I'm not so sure that words like Socialism and Communism need to give us the willies necessarily. It seems as though all of these forms tend to blend together to some degree. Our form of government is positioned somewhere along that continuum and seemingly drifting further away from the cowboy days of "pure" capitalism to a more benevolent, albeit restrictive, government involved system. It almost seems as though the bigger things are, the more necessary it is for government regulations in attempts to temper big calamities: big economic crises, big healthcare problems, big environmental issues, etc. In the meantime, let's keep recycling; at least it'll give us something to do as we wait for the big one.