The Case For Liberty

My Political Beliefs, Part Two

Libertarian Socialist Rants

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In part one, through conceptual analysis, I found out that capitalism is slavery, freedom requires equality of power to exist, the state is a logical contradiction in terms regardless of what economic system it operates under, and that most of the problems in our society stem from social hierarchy. I came to the conclusion that we should have a non-bureaucratic, non-hierarchical society based on free associations and workers' control of the means of production, in other words, libertarian socialism. If you'd like to find out how I arrived at that in full detail, feel free to check out part one, which is linked in the description.

In this video, I'm going to be talking about what a libertarian socialist society might look like, but before I begin, I'd like to clarify that this is in no way some sort of inflexible blueprint. We should be open to experimentation, and we should always seek to change our minds when new information is made available. That being said, let's begin by looking at what the democratic system in a libertarian socialist society might look like.

Democracy Under Libertarian Socialism

Thomas Jefferson said that a democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51% of the people may take away the rights of the other 49%. However, even this is preferable to our current state of affairs, in which the political and economic elite may take away the rights of the vast majority of the population. Under libertarian socialism, the goal is to minimise or eliminate hierarchical relationships of control and subjugation, and that should include not only the subjugation of the general public by capitalists and the government, but also the subjugation within the general public of the minority by the majority. It thus follows that in a libertarian socialist society, the goal of the democratic system should be for the public to directly look for the largest consensus possible.

Suppose a group of people vote on whether or not they support proposal A, and 51% are for it and 49% are against it. Instead of the 49% being forced to comply with A, the 49% would be free to explain why they object to it. If they disagree but are willing to let it slide, they can stand aside and let it pass. They can also modify the proposal, and see if that creates a larger consensus. If they're totally unhappy with it, they can block the proposal, and instead suggest something different altogether. The process would continue until the largest possible consensus is reached.

There are numerous reasons why this model of consensus decision-making is preferable to representative democracy. Here's a list of them.

1. It's a more accurate representation of the public will. This is because in direct democracy, you represent your own views yourself, because the person who is the most capable of doing that is, of course, you.

2. It fosters critical thinking. Because the goal is to create as large a consensus as possible, there is always room for improvement. It runs on dissent. With every single proposal made, people will ask how they can modify it in a way that makes more people happy.

3. It fosters solidarity. Through a constant process of looking for more and more common ground, it unifies people and strengthens connections between them. When practiced on a large scale, this would reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour by some margin.

4. It is the default way for human beings to interact with one another. If you go out with a group of friends, the chances are you will make decisions as a group in exactly this manner, discussing and evaluating the possibilities until you arrive at something everybody's happy with. In this sense, people participate in anarchist activities without even realising it. This isn't some radical concept – we do this as human beings all the time. Consensus decision-making is something that we are naturally accustomed to do, because it makes for healthy relationships between people.

5. People are actually free in this system. It's not an illusion. It's not a choice between either dominating others or being dominated by others. It's not a choice between whether you're whipped by the guy in red or the guy in blue. It's not a choice between whether you are whipped with a cat o' nine tails or a leather belt. It's the freedom to pursue your own creative needs and desires alongside your fellow human beings.

Consensus democracy can be time-consuming, however there are ways to alleviate this. Firstly, people could democratically choose what topics they want to discuss and for how long, planning an agenda for each meeting either at the very beginning or at the end of the previous one. Coordination roles, such as timekeeping, peacekeeping, note taking, and general facilitation, could be carried out on a rotational basis to make the decision-making process quicker and easier. Consensus democracy would be conducted among freely associated groups of people. Seeing as one can't 'freely associate' with the entire population, it follows that it would be carried out on a highly decentralised basis among communities.

So, in essence, a libertarian socialist society would function as a highly decentralised network of self-managing, freely associated, autonomous collectives, operating on direct, consensus democracy. Given that this sort of society would be considerably more democratic and well-organised than the current clusterfuck of bureaucracy and corruption in which the will of the public is deliberately disregarded, it seems pretty ironic that the current public understanding of anarchism is one of chaos and disorder.

So, that's my conception, logically, of how a libertarian socialist society might be structured and organised. Again, I stress, this is how I think it *might* be, but I don't know for sure. I can't tell the future, but to me, this sort of non-hierarchical structure based on decentralised, free associations, seems to be consistent with what the basic principles of libertarian socialism are. If you're aware of any inconsistencies, then please don't hesitate to let me know.

Now, with this foundation set out, I'd like to go through some examples of how it might be applied to different aspects of public life, gradually constructing an image of what a libertarian socialist society might look like from a broader perspective. This, my friends, is what makes the case for libertarian socialism all the more compelling. If we apply this structure to all facets of life, the society that comes as a result of that is truly astounding. I'd like to start by talking about education.

Education Under Libertarian Socialism

In part one, one of the key criticisms I made was about the nature of education in a hierarchical society. The schools we have today have the effect of dulling the creative and critical faculties of the children. They are based on command and obedience. As Johann Fichte, a pioneer of the

Prussian model of education which our schools are derived from, said that the schools must fashion the person, and fashion him in such a way that he simply cannot will otherwise than what you wish him to will. It crushes the freedom of the individual, quite intentionally.

I've heard a lot of people claim that hierarchy is natural, and therefore justified. I'd like to cover this argument fully in another video, but really — is this natural? Do you really honestly think that human beings are naturally accustomed to have their creative impulses crushed and suppressed by force? If that's the case, then why do so many children from many different backgrounds hate going to school so much? Why is it such a chore for them? Do you enjoy it when your creative freedom is smashed? Be honest with yourself. This has nothing to do with human beings. Human beings desire autonomy and self-direction.

With the learning process, information can be categorised into the explicit and the implicit. The explicit information is intentionally absorbed, whereas the implicit information is unintentionally absorbed. In the classroom, you don't just learn about a given subject within a void — you also learn about the environment in which it is taught. For example, if music is taught in an authoritarian way, you will learn music explicitly and authoritarianism implicitly. This is exactly what happens in our schools. Education, however, isn't intrinsically authoritarian. Education isn't oppressive in and of itself, but it's oppressive within the context of a hierarchical society.

In a libertarian socialist society, schools would be radically different from the sterile centres of indoctrination and submission to authority that we have today. Instead of being hierarchical, they would be democratic. Children would be free to pursue their own creative needs and desires, and the purpose of the teachers would be to facilitate this process. Instead of the school shaping the child, the child would shape the school.

'But wait,' you cry. 'So the teachers wouldn't be able to pass on any information to the children? How would we make any progress?'

There's a distinction between the role of the teacher in a hierarchical society and the role of the teacher in a non-hierarchical society. Under hierarchy, teachers give you information according to what the authorities claim your creative impulses are. In a non-hierarchical society, teachers would still give you information, but it would be according to what you believe your creative impulses are. For example, one of my creative impulses is to play the piano, and seeing a knowledgeable teacher who passes on information and techniques to me makes it easier for me to pursue that. That's okay. What's not okay is when the authorities tell me what my creative impulses should be in the first place.

Libertarian education is self-evidently preferable to hierarchical education, because clearly the knowledge that the child has about his or her own creative impulses is vastly superior to the knowledge of the authorities. If people are allowed to pursue their own natural, creative impulses rather than have them curtailed and suppressed, we can guarantee that people will work to the best of their ability — and if people work to the best of their ability, that will clearly improve the general welfare.

Education in a hierarchical society is about compression of the human mind, whereas education in a non-hierarchical society is about expansion of the human mind. So, are there any examples of libertarian education working in practice? Well, although they aren't exactly common, there are democratic schools in operation in the UK and in America. One of the most famous of these is Summerhill in Suffolk, England.

Summerhill was founded by A.S. Neill in 1921, and it still exists today. It doesn't have a fixed curriculum, and instead the children who attend the school get to set out their own path and

make their own decisions as to what they want to do in a humane and nurturing environment. This of course ruffles a lot of feathers because it challenges the false, preconceived notion that our society is built upon; that people are too stupid to run their own lives and thus must be controlled by authority.

Summerhill has run into controversies over human rights because there's no compulsory academia, and therefore the claim is that they are being denied an education. The implicit assumption in this is of course that children won't take any interest in academia voluntarily because they're too stupid to do that. They won't be interested in English, maths or science unless they are pressurised with carrots and sticks to do so. Who's being anti-human?

> 'Conventional schools are based on the principle that children don't want to learn, so they say you've got to come, you've got to do this, you've got to do that, and you've got to do the other. If you start from the assumption that children want to learn, then your whole approach is completely different — and children *do* want to learn.'
>
> — David Gribble (founder of Sands School, UK)
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> 'I think in a lot of cases with students in England, if you ask a student if they enjoy school, they all say, 'I enjoy seeing my friends', or 'I enjoy this lesson'. Students from democratic schools say, 'I enjoy all of school."
>
> — Kim Edwards (English Student Secondary Association, UK)
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> 'We expect that adults, mostly, educate themselves. But for some reason, we think that children are incapable of doing this. If you think about it in terms of the sorts of things that a baby learns, but before the time that they begin school — we would think of those results as miraculous, if a school were able to teach someone who had never encountered language before to talk. But they learned by themselves. They learn to walk, they learn to talk, they learn to make sense of the world, and nobody needs to teach them these things. And somehow, when they turn five years old or six years old, we suddenly think they forget how to teach themselves, and that somehow, they would be unable to learn anything if the adults didn't somehow package it for them.'
>
> — Mikel Matisoo (Staff, Sudbury Valley School, USA)

You start off in school, and they tell you that you're an idiot. And then you leave school and you just assume that other people are idiots as well. And when you're asked about it, you say 'yeah, people are idiots'. When people ask you if you're an idiot, you say 'of course not'. This rhetoric about people being too stupid to manage their own affairs isn't just a part of our school system, though. It's everywhere. Having looked at what non-hierarchical education might look like, let's move on further and turn our attention towards the workplace.

The Workplace Under Libertarian Socialism

In part one, I criticised capitalism for promoting totalitarian workplaces, in which workers are told what to do, how to do it, how long to do it for, how to behave, what to wear, what to say

and what to think by bosses and private owners, and by the time they're exhausted from work they go home and have mindless corporate propaganda drilled into their skulls to distract them from the prison they're living in, meanwhile so-called right-wing libertarians claim that this is somehow a free society. People try to whitewash this totalitarian society with talk of so-called 'free enterprise' and 'free markets'. But really, there is no free market. There is no free enterprise. What we really need is free creativity — and this is completely absent from capitalist society. A truly free society can only be achieved by the self-emancipation of the working class from below, and the complete transformation of the workplace into a non-hierarchical, diverse and free environment.

Workers' self-management follows as a logical progression from democratic education. If you support democratic education, you ought to support workers' self-management, because the same reasons apply. Kids will learn the most when they are emancipated, put in control of their own learning, and given the freedom to follow their own motivations at their own pace, and by making group decisions with their friends they develop a strong sense of compassion with the community. The same principles apply to the workplace. Why wouldn't they? Liberty, equality and solidarity are the conditions in which humans flourish the most — I don't see why that would suddenly change when it comes to the workplace.

Many things are commodified under capitalism, including liberty. You can only have liberty if you have capital. As a result, most of us are never free for a sustained period of time, but we are enslaved by capital. Because of this, you spend your life chasing after liberty going from one job to another trying to accumulate enough capital to be free so that you can do what you've always wanted. But the process of capital accumulation changes you as a person, and on a large scale it requires the enslavement of others. Before you know it, you're lost, you've become a monster, your life has flown by, and you never get to do what you set out to do in the first place.

Under libertarian socialism, the state would be smashed, capital would be completely expropriated, and the commodification of liberty would come to an end. Workers would have full autonomy, free from the coercion of capitalism and the state. This would allow for a volcanic explosion of human creativity and artistry, reaching the absolute pinnacle of free expression and innovation. There would be street art, theatre, music, poetry, film, dance, and perhaps even forms of art we may only discover when our creative capacities are unlocked and expressed to the fullest extent, and they are no longer arbitrarily limited into whatever dreary and monotonous garbage is servicable to power and capital. Art would no longer be a commodity, a tool for the ruling class to keep people passive, obedient and stupid by promoting a culture of control and domination, but instead it would actually be an outlet for people who have something to express!

Under workers' self-management, creative work would flourish, and with the economy functioning as a highly decentralised network of freely associated workers' collectives operating on direct, consensus democracy, the decision making process would no longer be strictly limited to either the CEOs, presidents and vice presidents of the corporations, or the bureaucratic central planning committees of the state. By bringing the decision-making powers down to the public and smashing the elite, we could make some radical progress, in the same way that a lot of scientific progress came from bringing some of the discourse down to the public and away from the hierarchical religious elite. We could have a new enlightenment era on our hands.

There are numerous schools of thought under libertarian socialism, including but not limited to Proudhon's mutualism, Michael Albert's participatory economics, Bakunin's anarcho-collectivism and Kropotkin's anarcho-communism. They have various perspectives on currency

and resource distribution. Personally, I have somewhat of a preference for participatory economics and collectivism, with a non-transferable labour voucher system of some sort, and distribution according to one's contribution. But in all honesty, I'd take any of these. I'd be ecstatic if I got the chance to escape the terrible system we're living in. I'd like to live in a world where people behave as human beings and not as cogs in the machine. I'd like to live in a world where rather than the economic system conditioning human behaviour; human behaviour conditions the economic system. I'd like to live in a world based on liberty, equality and solidarity — and by that I mean a world that is actually based on those principles, and not simply a world in which these principles are turned into tools for political and economic gain by bureaucrats and tyrants.

If we apply this structure to all facets of life, we can create a society that is so much more humane, ethical, advanced, equitable, free and beautiful than the misery and bloodshed we have found ourselves settling for in this day and age. This isn't something that we can vote for. This isn't something we can achieve by electing some self-serving prick in a suit every four years. The idea that salvation comes from above is nothing more than a religious delusion. The only people who can make a democratic society happen are the people themselves.

> 'You the people have the power! The power to create machines! The power to create happiness! You the people have the power to make this life free and beautiful, to make this life a wonderful adventure! Then in the name of democracy, let us use that power, let us all unite!'
>
> — Charlie Chaplin (The Great Dictator)