



Reclaiming Socialism, or: Economic Democracy (Recovering a Stolen Word)

Brian Rush

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Imagine getting up in the morning and going to work for a company that, just by virtue of the fact that you work for it, you own part of. Imagine that the company's president and other officers have to stand for election every year or two years, and you and all the other employees of the company vote them in or out. Imagine getting an accounting on a quarterly basis of the company's profitability and receiving a payout of your share of those profits – your due as a worker-owner.

Imagine that you get tired of working for the company you own part of and decide to strike out on your own. Imagine that there are on-line services readily available where your skills demand high pay from independent clients, so that being self-employed and entirely your own boss is a matter only of doing the work. Or let's say that you and a number of friends have an idea for a new business. Imagine a non-profit organization or perhaps a government agency set up just for that purpose, ready to provide you and your friends a low-interest loan, free advice, and lots of other assistance so you can do that – as long as your new business is a workers' cooperative.

Imagine a world in which nobody is obscenely rich and nobody is poor, and the average person makes about double – maybe triple – what most people make today.

I can imagine that easily enough. Can you?
Would you like to live in a world like that?

I sure would. We're ready for it. We just have to believe it and reach for it, and reclaim the word that stands for it.

That word is "socialism."

It's being misused today to describe something it's not, a world of giant bureaucracies, stagnant economies, and secret police. That's not what it means. It means a world in which ordinary people – probably people like you – own the businesses that provide your livelihood, instead of the economy being owned by a few hogs on Wall Street who see you as their peon.

That's what socialism is about.

It's about finally freeing ourselves from the vestiges of the old aristocracy, preserved without the titles in high-rise offices and gated communities.

It's about democracy in the workplace, not just the polling-place.

It's about ending the lie that we live in an era of austerity. We don't. We live in an era of abundance, with technology capable of producing more wealth than ever before – but we also live in an era when a small, powerful, greedy elite see that wealth as belonging to them instead of to all of us, and that's the reason so many people today are struggling.

The world is rightfully ours, but like the word “socialism” it’s been stolen from us.

This book is about taking it back.

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