

Related Issue 2: Minor Writing Assignment

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In the past century, classical liberalism has faced a plethora of challenges. There is a continuous struggle to confront critics of liberalism. These critics often present strong, well-thought-out arguments. In a diverse, democratic society, liberals must counter with an equally well-reasoned debate. Additionally, during the twentieth century, major economic disasters often cast liberalism as the villain in these events.

Here, the first source is a cartoon depicting that a mixed economy, such as Canada's, places a gigantic over-balanced tax 'burden' on the average citizen. The huge taxes are required, as shown in the cartoon, to pay for the numerous services and privileges – education, healthcare, roads – provided by government. In comparison, the cartoon shows America as having miniscule taxes and also, no services are provided in these taxes. However, the citizens are presented as having a 'burden of freedom'. What is the 'burden of freedom' and how does this cartoon indicate a challenge to liberalism? In a subtle, but direct, way, the cartoon shows how the *freedom to choose*, as in America, is another kind of 'burden'. Increased choices cause confusion and a lack of order in a society. Moreover, without government services, people have no 'safety net'; when difficulties – job loss, medical problems, natural disasters – occur, individuals confront the 'burden' of making choices based on financial ability; without government involvement, everyone has to fend for themselves. This cartoon presents the seductive liberal ideology that less government means less taxes; the corollary challenge to liberalism however is less government means less services.

The second source supports collective ideology or non-liberalism. It is a photo from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Washington DC monument; and the inscription:

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough to those who have too little.

The imagery in the photo is strong – the figures in the monument, depression-era men lined up off to the side, appear as if they have been disregarded by the 'new' economy. The inscription is succinct and powerful -- it

implies that unless everyone is looked after, nothing will be fully achieved. Additionally, the homage to Roosevelt – considered one of America’s three greatest presidents – is potent. The three-pronged thrust of imagery, quotation, and FDR in this memorial to the value of collectivism is hugely conflicting to liberal ideals in free-market-strong America. Additionally, such a socially-sympathetic monument as this commissioned by a government with liberal genetics reminds its citizens their rulers may have socialist tendencies and may even betray their – liberal – heritage. This reality in American history and forever memorialized here in granite has presented a huge frustration to the growth of classic liberalism in the twentieth century.

The third and final source is a quote from the Ford Motor Company PR Department in 1937. In the release, the Company is simultaneously rationalizing recent layoffs and refusing to unionize. Here is liberal irony if ever there was. On the one hand, layoffs are part and parcel of the ‘invisible hand’ of free-market and capitalist principles the company’s founders have fought so hard to preserve and what ‘has guided the company into becoming one of the most successful corporations in our great nation’. On the other hand, ‘prosperous’ Ford workers are agitating for a worker’s union (collectivism, socialism) to ‘solve the problems difficult times have imposed upon [them]’. Mr. Kirkpatrick, the PR guy, explains that the company supports a free market and that “unions serve to undermine the forces” of a free-market economy. The Company and its Founders have prospered under capitalism and sticking to such a successful ideology is not likely to change. Here, the challenge to liberalism is workers becoming destitute without work because of a rigid adherence to capitalist ideology when a ‘kinder, gentler’ rescue – unionization (an everyman’s socialism) – is ready and waiting. When economic confidence and security erodes, regular citizens become hungry and homeless. In the face of this, liberalism shows itself to be inconsistent and unstable. A downward spiral occurs: no employment ... no money ... no economic investment ... no employment The trending down only halts when liberalism is propped up some socialist concepts – job guarantees, unemployment insurance plans, etc.

There has always been a back-and-forth between liberals and socialists. Feelings are strong about which ideas are better and more productive. To compare the above three sources, the first and second explain that while socialism has its downfalls, so does liberalism. In a capitalist economy, with its reduced taxes and

services, citizens can suffer severely. To consider the second source; here, it shows when societies experience economic down times, the economy shrinks causing a chain reaction that can eventually lead to the collapse of a free market based on liberal ideals. The third source shows a hardened supporter of liberalism staunchly maintaining his position even though jobs are destroyed and his Company may be as well because unemployed people have no money to buy what his Company manufactures. This concept connects to the second source showing desperate people can bring an entire society down into misery.

Classic liberalism will continue to encounter challenges from socialist supporters as well as economic downturns. In the modern day, no one economic model is perfect. This conflict brings opportunities for debate and experimentation of new ideas. Until a perfect system is agreed upon, liberalism must hold to its strengths and confront the challenges as they arise.