

Socialism Attacks the Family

Editor's note: This article first appeared at .

Last year, “socialism” was the most looked-up word at . That is hardly a surprise. It clearly reflects growing interest, especially with the remarkable surge of lifetime socialist Bernie Sanders, who won a pile of states in pursuing the Democratic Party presidential nomination. He earned over 13 million votes nationwide. Many of those voters have only a hazy idea what socialism entails, but most surely know that it gives the government more control over the so-called “means of production” as well as your wallet and your property, but not as much as outright Communists crave.

American interest in socialism was growing well before Bernie Sanders. A telling marker came in 2011, when a major study by the Pew Research Center found that 49 percent of Americans aged 18-29 have a positive view of socialism, exceeding those with a positive view of capitalism. What those voters might not realize, but which I know for certain, is that socialism undermines marriage and family: I’ve published an entire book on the subject. What I learned from mining the origins of the movement is that this is not an accident: The founders of socialist movements always intended their system to have this effect.

Intended Consequences

Most obviously, socialism undermines the family economically. Socialism is ineffective, unproductive and impoverishing. It creates not economic prosperity but backwardness, and often genuine deprivation (see Venezuela). In that way alone, socialism adversely affects what sources as diverse as Pope Francis and Ronald Reagan have described as the “fundamental cell” of society: the family.

But surely socialism’s founders didn’t realize that their

system just flat-out didn't work, right? Actually, they believed that it did—and in one sense it does: It weakens families for the benefit of the state, exactly as its creators meant it to.

Since at least the early 1800s, when the effort began in earnest, extreme-left radicals have sought to undermine the natural-traditional-biblical family—the Western Judaeo-Christian model anchored in a man and woman as parents of a household. The steady assault on this timeless model has been a long march that culminated in the chaos of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and in the antics of the nature-redefiners of today's secular left, which employs bullying, state coercion and demonization to forcibly redefine everything from marriage and parenting to biological sex (or as they now call it "gender"), and whether a child in the womb is even considered a life.

Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* wrote of the "abolition of the family," which even in 1848, they could flaunt as an "infamous proposal of the communists." What, precisely, they meant by that is a complicated subject. But complexities aside, there is no question that efforts to redefine the family structure have been long at work, from Marx and Engels to sordid figures such as Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Alexandra Kollontai, Margaret Sanger, Margaret Mead, Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Betty Friedan, Kate Millet and assorted '60s New Left radicals from Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn to Mark Rudd and Tom Hayden. They included groups ranging from the Bolsheviks to the Frankfurt School of cultural Marxists to the Planned Parenthood eugenics "progressives" to the Weather Underground and many more.

Socialists on American Soil

A glance at this list of dubious characters reveals a mangled mosaic of the wide-ranging left. Among them, the earliest and maybe most revealing of the socialists specifically—at least

from a family-focused perspective—was perhaps Robert Owen.

Owen (1771-1858) was an English utopian-socialist who made his way to American soil. On July 4, 1826, as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the geniuses of the Declaration of Independence, both dramatically breathed their last gasps on the 50th anniversary of their eloquent achievement on behalf of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Robert Owen stood atop his new ideological colony in New Harmony, Indiana and delivered his “Declaration of Mental Independence.” It is a document you surely didn’t read in school, but perhaps you should have, because it foretold the spirit of our modern age. Owen proclaimed:

I now declare to you and to the world that man up to this hour has been in all parts of the earth a slave to a trinity of the most monstrous evils that could be combined to inflict mental and physical evil upon the whole race.

I refer to private property, absurd and irrational systems of religion and marriage founded upon individual property, combined with some of these irrational systems of religion.

There it was: property, religion, marriage. This was Robert Owen’s unholy trinity.

Owen’s acolytes began their new civilization by scrapping the Christian *Anno Domini* calendar, marking 1826 as their new Year One. He was imitating the Jacobins, who had likewise “reset” the calendar in 1794 amid their bloodcurdling de-Christianization of France. (Mussolini and Pol Pot would later follow suit.) Owen established what the 1960s hippies would call communes. Owen’s socialist communes pooled not only profits but people, replacing the nuclear family with the collective family. His socialism was cultural as well as economic, as socialism and its enthusiasts always would be.

The New Harmony colony floundered within just two years, with

Owen curiously absent from his creation for sustained periods, thus setting the standard for future leftist-utopian chieftains: They rarely live according to the rules and systems they create for others. Socialism and communism have always been for “the people,” “the masses,” the ruled, but rarely for the rulers. Castro, Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao—given the choice, they never lived the same way with the same rules and equal salaries as the serfs. Indeed, how could they? Their socialist-communist cocoons were always intolerable because they were bankrupt and unnatural. No one chooses that misery.

But the unnatural is what so many leftist utopians pursued then and in the years and centuries ahead. Even as Robert Owen’s New Harmony commune quickly collapsed, a dozen or so imitators sprang up around the country. Rarely did any of them last more than four years. Owen’s leftist vision remained alive and undeterred. “The social system is now firmly established,” he asserted.

An uphill stream of Owen-like dreamers on the left would keep the flame alive, from the 1820s to the 1960s in their own communes, and into the 21st century with their own versions of marriage and family. Never learning from failed projects of the past, they would always convince themselves that the previous project simply wasn’t done quite right—not yet. When they implemented their commune, their utopia, their more enlightened and modern view of marriage and the family, it would surely work this time around. Such is the socialist faith.

Polyamory and Lemonade Seas

Charles Fourier (1772-1837) was another merry socialist who reviled property, marriage and religion. He dreamed of collectivizing the masses in communes where they could undergo fundamental transformation. (He also believed that human efforts would someday turn the seas to tasty lemonade.) A forerunner to 1960s New Left radicals on American college

campuses, Fourier openly advocated the abolition of monogamous marriage, and championed polyamory, homosexuality and other forms of what Margaret Sanger and the 1920s American progressives would celebrate as “free love.” Fourier’s lead disciple in America, Albert Brisbane, practiced what his master taught, proving himself exceptionally progressive by maintaining several mistresses and fathering three illegitimate children.

Predictably, the Fourier-Brisbane communes would work about as well as Owen’s ideological colonies and the ones that followed. There were probably 40-some such communes that sprang up around the country in this period, and quickly dissolved. No matter, leftists never give up. All they need is more power than the previous group of ideological colonists, and then they’ll get it right the next time. It is the governing spirit of their ideology. Just wait for their better, more enlightened ideas on marriage, family, sexuality, gender and on and on. Forward!

On the heels of Fourier came John Humphrey Noyes and his Oneida colony and their newfangled designs for the family, which included group marriages that shared both intimacy and children.

Socialist Ancestors of the Gender Wars

All of these nature-redefiners plowed new ground for new versions of the family according to each of their ideological conceptions. To borrow from Pope Francis, they were engaged in “ideological colonizations.” Each new generation came up with its own socialist colonies, all the way to the Red Family Colony in Berkeley in the 1960s established by Tom Hayden and Robert Scheer. The ’60s New Left also launched its glorious “smash monogamy” movement, which was an exciting form of marriage that would be (and had to be, they insisted) non-monogamous.

In short, these were the bold ancestors of today's same-sex marriage movement and "LGBTQ" sex-gender redefiners. They all shared in common, then and today, the rejection of any notion that there is a single natural, traditional and biblical model for the family.

"It is not possible to speak of 'the' family," insisted Friedrich Engels. Indeed, just ask the broad range of leftists in the current-day organization "Beyond Marriage." They agree wholeheartedly with Engels on that one. {eoa}

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