Social Policy and Planning Implications

Presented by Donald G. Reid During the Discussion

What Exactly is the Green New Deal?

March 21, 2019

Hosted by American Resistance Sevilla & ClimateRecovery.org

Seville, Spain

I make three points.

1. The social analysts I have been reading over the last few years suggest that capitalism, as we know it, is in decline and will end in the near to medium term. These same authors do not see Marxian socialism as a replacement. What are some of the indicators for capitalisms state?

* There has been a steady flow of capital from the bottom to the upper socio-economic class over the last few decades. The latest indication of this transfer of wealth from bottom to top is the Trump tax cut that essentially went to the wealthy. (A recent report by OXFAM indicates that 42 people own as much wealth as the bottom 50% of the worlds population, that is 3.7 billion people).
* The oligarchs in the US now control government through huge donations to candidates and political parties turning democracy into plutocracy. The corporations have also defeated labor unions who provided the major resistance to capitalism’s deterioration over the last few decades. Capitalism is now devouring itself because the usual resistance is now gone. The great recession of 2008 is an outcome of exorbitant corporate power.
* The oligarchs now own and set the editorial policies of the major media.
* The great recession of 2008 was the recognition that some financial corporations have become ‘too big to fail’. The government bailout of these financial corporations amounts to the nationalization of their debt but not their profits. Corporations that are not allowed to fail violates one of capitalism’s major principles, creative destruction.
* Most of the functions of government have been turned over to private enterprise that need to find new markets (market saturation) completing the commodification process. Government as an arbiter of the market is now seen as the problem not the solution.
* Advancing technology has all but eliminated the blue-collar working class and now has its sight set on doing the same to middle-class jobs. (Although the unemployment rate may be in normal range the employment participation rate is at an all-time low).

1. ‘Trumpism’ and ‘grievance politics’ is a first attempt at providing an answer to the decline in capitalism and democracy. Essentially, it is a futile attempt to retreat to a bygone era (Make America Great Again) which is not possible, maybe not even desirable. Grievance politics takes on the features of populism, nationalism, xenophobia, isolationism, and authoritarianism. Trumpism is founded on emotion not reason. It might provide some psychological satisfaction to some for a while, but it will not resolve the fundament problems in the system.
2. The Green New Deal (GND) is the first positive political attempt to provide an alternative to the decline in capitalism and to Trumpism that gets its energy from negative, divisive, politics. The majority of the negative effects the decline produces is born by the lower socio-economic class. Not only does the GND attempt to address the climate change and global warming issue but also other social inadequacies of the predatory, corporate, capitalist system that has been incrementally replacing classical capitalism since the 1970’s. Some of the positive and negative features of the GND are outlined below:

* The GND is forward looking and positive rather than a futile attempt to return to some mythical bygone era.
* The GND would be considered as a social democratic platform in any other country than the US. American citizens may need to come to terms with their traditional anxiety around the word ‘socialism’ (which they connect directly to Communism and the USSR) and allow distinctively different ideas like ‘social democracy’ into the social discourse.
* The GND is not Marxian socialism. It says nothing about the nationalization of industries or utilities that Marx would advocate. Marx’s version of socialism would not address climate change or the new technologies that are affecting our social world today. It would address the issue of inequality. The GND focusses on climate change and the social inadequacies of the present system, such as healthcare and inequality.
* The GND has one flaw in my view. It promises to provide well-paying work for everyone or job training during unemployment. This is a policy dragged from the industrial era into the post-industrial world. This type of policy has the potential to continue to exacerbate the frustrations (as it does today in the grievance society) of the unemployed who know this is an empty promise. As society transitions to the technological new world where human labor is not central to the production process, a new approach with new language is needed. The GND should talk about provision of income not work guarantees they cannot fulfil.