

# **WHY SOCIALISM SAYS CRAFTWORK IS "IDIOCY"**

*And What That Says about Socialism*

“

Every large factory which arises  
on the ruin of the shops of the small artisans  
we consider an advance in civilization.

—LAURENCE GRONLUND  
AMERICAN SOCIALIST PIONEER

”

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# WHY SOCIALISM SAYS CRAFTWORK IS "IDIOCY" And What That Says about Socialism

*Socialism's anti-craft bias is revealed in five core aspects of socialism that you may not know about, but knowledgeable socialists do.*

The automatic workshop wipes out specialists and craft-idiocy.<sup>1</sup>

This bit of bah humbug may sound like the words of some villainous capitalist Scrooge, but these are the words of Karl Marx, the central figure of socialism. As one of today's socialist thinkers admits:

Marx completely rejects the craft ideal.<sup>2</sup>

And Marx isn't alone when it comes to socialists rejecting craftwork. *Every* quote in this paper comes from a socialist thinker, and their words demonstrate that socialism and craftwork are at complete odds.

Here's a small additional sample of this reality from Nikolai Bukharin, Paul Argpriadès, and Lucien Deslinières, respectively:

It is not enough that the capitalists should go. It is necessary to establish production on the largest possible scale. All small and futile enterprises must die out. All work must be concentrated in the largest possible factories, works, farms.<sup>3</sup>

By the centralization of services, we will suppress the small workshops where three or four workers labor strenuously without producing a hundredth of what they could produce in a large social factory.<sup>4</sup>

But then, sir, all the small workshops will be suppressed? Absolutely ... instead of small workshops, we will have immense factories.<sup>5</sup>

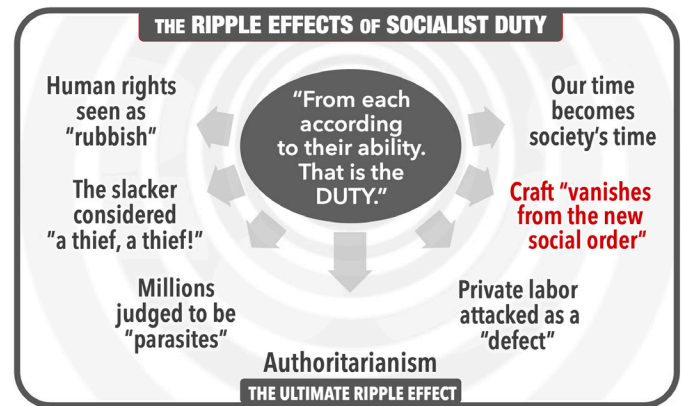
Socialism simply can't be squared with the wonderful goods we find at craft fairs and on Etsy, nor with the people who make them. On the contrary, craftwork violates multiple tenets of socialist philosophy. That's why Laurence Gronlund says:

Every large factory which arises on the ruin of the shops of the small artisans we consider an advance in civilization.<sup>6</sup>

There are four significant conflicts between socialism and craft:

- Socialism says small-scale production like craft literally creates capitalism “continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale.”<sup>7</sup>
- Socialism considers efficiency a moral necessity. By socialist standards, inefficient craft production is an immoral waste.
- Socialism argues that the crux of the problem with capitalist production is that it’s “fragmented”—that there are millions of independent producers. Craftwork is the poster child for this fragmented production that socialism despises.
- Socialism is based on “social control” that limits the number of producers and makes them uniform. Craft is completely incompatible with social control.

Each of these four clashes between socialist philosophy and craft is itself a byproduct of a fifth conflict: socialism’s foundation on the duty of “from each according to their ability.” This duty turns our abilities—our time and talents—into what socialism treats as society’s property. As we’ll explore, it spawns the socialist thinking that conflicts with craft.



Socialism’s anti-craft biases are also a window into this philosophy’s desire for a government of unlimited power. We’ll see some of socialism’s most celebrated philosophers nonchalantly call for the socialist state to destroy craft businesses by the hundreds of thousands.

That core aspects of socialist philosophy are strongly anti-craft doesn’t come as news to knowledgeable socialists. So why is this likely news to you? Because today’s socialists recognize that attacking craftwork would be sales suicide.

But no matter how much time socialist politicians spend glad-handing at craft fairs and downing pints at local breweries, it doesn’t tell us the first thing about socialist philosophy. Such stunts don’t represent socialism any more than a Catholic politician marching in a pride parade represents the Pope.

A philosophy must be evaluated on its core beliefs, not on the Instagram posts of its salespeople. The founding principles of socialism make it a philosophy that’s fundamentally anti-craft. It’s a philosophy whose intellectual leader describes craftspeople as pinheads and whose thinking “requires the demise of craft labor.”<sup>8</sup>

# WHY SOCIALISM IS ANTI-CRAFT

## 1. Socialists admit that Karl Marx “completely rejects the craft ideal.”

Marx (whose thinking has defined socialism for 150 years) is against work of an individual nature. He says craftwork turns people into pinheads.

## 2. Craft violates key socialist principles.

### SOCIALIST PRINCIPLE

### CRAFT VIOLATION

Socialism says  
“small production engenders  
capitalism ... on a mass scale.”

Craft is small-scale production.

Socialism says inefficient  
production is immoral—  
a waste of “society’s time.”

Craft is exceedingly  
inefficient production.

Socialism sees “fragmented”  
(or independent) production  
as the root of social evil.

Craft is maximally  
fragmented production.

Socialism requires “social control,”  
dictating uniform production and  
overriding artist control.

Uniformity is death to craft.  
There is no craft  
without artist control.

Socialism says “work is not an  
individual tool ... but rather is the  
tool of the whole society.”

Craft is work as an individual  
tool: using your time and talents  
to define your life.

## 3. Seeming exceptions to socialism’s anti-craft rule are not true exceptions.

In his novel *News from Nowhere*, William Morris portrays a future socialist society that includes craft. But in reality, Morris expected craft to play zero role in the first, and likely only, phase of socialism.

Morris believed craft would only be present in socialist society if socialism eventually created a world of such abundance that all goods were free and efficient production no longer mattered. His novel assumes this utopian premise just as the Harry Potter series assume magic.

## MARX ON CRAFT

Karl Marx is the most important socialist philosopher of all time. His thinking has defined socialism for the past 150 years. And it still does today.<sup>9</sup> Present-day socialist thinkers Sean Sayers and Paul Adler describe his views:

*"Marx completely rejects the craft ideal"*

Marx completely rejects the craft ideal. ... It's a limited, individual activity.<sup>10</sup>

Marx saw the destruction of craft skills as having an emancipatory significance.<sup>11</sup>

The destruction of craft skills is "emancipatory"—that is, freeing. Marx completely rejected craftwork because it's an "individual activity."

Marx is against craft not only because of its inefficiency but also because he's against professions in which one works individually. He strongly favors "social work," particularly group work in large industry, believing it molds workers into the type of people socialism requires, whereas the individual nature of craftwork does not.<sup>12</sup>

Marx not only rejects craftwork for being an "individual activity," but he even attacks the specific nature of craftwork: the fact that the craft artisan performs all steps in the production of an item. Marx makes the snarky assertion that this style of labor creates workers who have

the knowledge and the consciousness of the pin.<sup>13</sup>

Working as the craftsperson does results in having the smarts of a pin. It makes you a pinhead—an idiot.

### **Karl Marx, "Democratic Socialist"**

Even though Karl Marx considered craftworkers pinheads and wanted to end craft labor, he's called a democratic socialist. Democratic Socialists of America founder Michael Harrington repeatedly labels Marx a democratic socialist and even calls him a "champion of human freedom."

Marx's thinking has defined socialism for the past 150 years. His thinking is tightly linked with every instance of authoritarian socialism. Yet it turns out his goals and beliefs still define today's allegedly democratic socialism. That's because democratic socialism is not a new product in any meaningful way; it's a marketing slogan.

To learn more, see the RFP paper "Karl Marx: 'Democratic Socialist.'"

*“It was necessary to destroy the village in order to save it”*

Socialist G. A. Cohen is a celebrated modern-day Marxist philosopher. He’s been described as “arguably the leading political philosopher of the left” and the “most important interpreter of Marx in the analytical tradition.”<sup>14</sup> In one of his treatises, Cohen examines the implications of Marx’s thinking regarding craftwork.<sup>15</sup>

Cohen concludes that under Marx’s socialism (which, again, has been the definition of socialism for over a century and still is today), craftwork would *not* be permitted as a profession in the first phase of a socialist society. Craft would only return to socialist society *if* this first phase of socialism succeeded in creating an ultra-automated second phase—a society so unbelievably mechanized that everything needed by the world’s population could be produced without a single human actually working.<sup>16</sup>

Cohen explains that what people would do in this perfected socialist society that permitted the return of craft would only “resemble activity which once was labor.”<sup>17</sup> There would be no actual work, but only activities that resemble what was work. In other words, there would only be hobbies.

Should such a fantasyland ever exist, it’s untold centuries in the future. And Cohen admits that those who hope to pursue craftwork as a career in socialist society are not going to be pleased by his conclusions.<sup>18</sup>

During the Vietnam War, a US Army officer infamously stated: “It was necessary to destroy the village in order to save it.”<sup>19</sup> The only way Cohen can find to permit craft in Marx’s socialism follows this logic. This noted Marxist thinker even writes that creating a society that solves Marx’s objections to craftwork first

requires the demise of craft labor.<sup>20</sup>

It’s necessary to destroy craft in order to save it.

*“Wiping out” small operations “one of the strong points” of socialism*

Marx’s animus towards small-scale production wasn’t limited to craftwork. He and Friedrich Engels (Marx’s collaborator, and socialist superstar number two) were against small enterprises of all types. And their anti-small biases applied not only to industry but also to agriculture, where Marx and Engels called for “industrial armies” to replace small farms.<sup>21</sup>

Marx and Engels expected and desired a socialist society that eliminated small production of all types and replaced it with the largest-scale industry and agriculture possible. Numerous demonstrations of this fact are found in their writings.<sup>22</sup> Engels,

for example, argues that the “rational order” of socialism would achieve its “greatest savings of labour power” by suppressing small operations and “fusing” them into large ones.<sup>23</sup>

Socialism’s biases against small enterprises both predate Marx and are not unique to Marxism.<sup>24</sup> But there’s no question the anti-small thinking of socialism’s most important philosopher poured plenty of gas on the fire.

Karl Kautsky was nicknamed “the Pope of Marxism”<sup>25</sup> for being the leading interpreter of Marx’s thought after Marx and Engels died. Here, the “Pope” channels the socialist messiah Marx, stating that “one of the strong points” of socialism is that it creates the possibility of

wiping out in the quickest possible manner [by using government force] the ruins of the outgrown means and methods of production.<sup>26</sup>

## WHOSE TIME IS IT?

Marx’s disdain for craftwork wasn’t a pet peeve. And socialism’s disdain for it isn’t about loyalty to Marx. Socialism is anti-craft because its underlying principles are anti-craft.

*“Labor is not an individual tool ...  
but a tool for an entire society”*

The ultimate cause of the rift between socialism and craftwork is found in socialism’s rejection of the liberal philosophy underpinning capitalist society. Socialism’s anti-craft biases are but one of the many ripple effects of the anti-liberal beliefs on which socialism is based.

The founding principle of liberalism is that we own our lives outright; we’re not born owing our lives or the all-too-brief time of them to others. In liberal society, we spend the time in our lives on our own behalf. Others are likely to benefit from what we choose to do with our time, but they benefit indirectly, not because it’s our duty to work for them.

Because we live in a society based on liberal philosophy, we’re used to thinking of the time in our lives this way—as our property to use in essentially any way we wish. But socialism explicitly rejects this liberal view.

Socialism operates from the polar opposite principle: from the conviction that we should be born owing our time and talents to society. This foundational socialist belief is encapsulated in its famous axiom “from each according to their ability,” which has been the socialist standard of duty for 170 years<sup>27</sup> and remains so today.<sup>28</sup>

“From each according to the ability” isn’t just the moral basis of socialism. It’s a compulsory duty in socialist society. It turns our time into what socialism treats as a societal resource—as *society’s time*.<sup>29</sup>

Socialist greats Fidel Castro and Richard Lahautière, respectively, explain the socialist view of work that results from the “from each according to their ability” principle:

Labor is not an individual tool for earning a living but a tool for an entire society; not the resource of an individual.<sup>30</sup>

Every individual in his sphere, works not for himself, but to accomplish the tasks of humanity, of which he is a member; working on a common goal.... Every man is born to work; every worker is a public servant.<sup>31</sup>

To socialism, you do not work on your own behalf; you work for society. Your work is “not an individual tool”; rather, it’s society’s tool. And as such, socialist society gets to decide how it’s used.

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*The question in socialist society is whether your work is a good use of society’s time. Craftwork fails this test.*

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The question in socialist society is not what you think of a particular job—whether you would consider it a good use of your time. Instead, the question is whether this work is a good use of society’s time. Craftwork fails this test.

G. A. Cohen said that craft would not be permitted as a profession in the first, and likely only, phase of socialist society. Other socialist thinkers agree with his analysis.<sup>32</sup> What gives socialist society the power to make craft (and any other job imaginable) illegal as a profession?<sup>33</sup> It’s one of the many byproducts of socialism’s foundation on the duty of “from each according to their ability,” a duty that morphs our time into society’s property to control.

In our liberal society, the idea of making craft illegal as a profession is as incomprehensible as it is obscene. That’s because liberalism is based on the premise that it’s our fundamental right to use our lives and the time in them as we wish. No matter how many alleged philosophical geniuses think that craftwork is idiocy, we are still free to open a craft workshop if we so choose.

## *Whose time is "senselessly squandered and wasted"?*

That socialism treats our time as society's time isn't some minor thing, and it's certainly no joke. This thinking permeates all of socialist philosophy and is a hidden premise behind many of the statements that socialists make.

Consider what August Bebel, one of socialism's most noted thinkers, labels capitalist waste:

The workshop of the small master mechanic ... an arrangement by which time, power and material are senselessly squandered and wasted.<sup>34</sup>

If you own your life and the time in it, would your time be "senselessly squandered and wasted" by choosing to run your own workshop? Of course not. You would be using the time in your life exactly as you wished.

Small workshops only appear to be "waste" to Bebel because he operates from the socialist premise that our time is society's time, not our own. And from that anti-liberal perspective, all small enterprises are a waste of society's time relative to the efficiency of large-scale operations.

## **FOUR CONFLICTS**

Let's explore four reasons that socialism and craft are like oil and water:

- Socialism says small-scale production like craft creates capitalism.
- Socialism considers inefficient craft production immoral.
- Socialism is dead-set against fragmented production like craft.
- Socialism requires "social control"—a concept at complete odds with craft.

We'll see that each of these conflicts between socialism and craft results from socialism's foundation on the duty of "from each according to their ability." The ultimate problem socialism has with craft is that craft is based on treating your time and talents as your individual property, not as the property of society.

Craft is the archetype of work as "an individual tool," the very thing socialism rejects and that socialism's duty of "from each according to their ability" is designed to snuff out.

*Socialism loathes capitalism;  
craft creates it*

Vladimir Lenin led the world's first socialist revolution. And he's an extremely important socialist thinker in his own right. Lenin laments:

Unfortunately, small production is still very, very widespread in the world, and small production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale.<sup>35</sup>

Small-scale production, Lenin reports, creates the very thing he and socialism hate: capitalism. Small production creates capitalism non-stop and in bulk.

Lenin also hated Karl Kautsky, the "Pope of Marxism" quoted above.<sup>36</sup> The feeling was mutual. But despite the fact these two giants of socialism loathed each other, Kautsky's views regarding small production mirror those of Lenin. Kautsky tells us:

Small production always creates the Will to uphold or to obtain private property in the means of production.<sup>37</sup>

"Private property in the means of production" is a stock phrase socialists use to describe privately-owned businesses—the basis of capitalism. What does small production *always* do? It "always creates the Will to uphold or obtain" capitalist businesses.

Craft and other small enterprises are neon signs for capitalism and the liberal philosophy that underpins capitalism. They light up every neighborhood with examples of the benefits of treating our time as liberal philosophy says it should be: as our individual property that we're free to use as we wish. And when we're free to use our time as we want, the private enterprises that define capitalism are the automatic result.

Why is there a conflict between socialism and craft? Because, as celebrated socialists Lenin and Kautsky tell us, saying "socialism and craft" is like saying "socialism and capitalism."

*Socialism loves efficiency;  
craft is anything but*

The issue of efficiency creates a second major rift between socialism and craft. Craftwork is inefficient production. Socialism considers inefficiency (in particular, inefficiency *by choice*) immoral.

As Michael Harrington, founder of the Democratic Socialists of America, explains, efficient production is

a moral as well as an economic necessity.<sup>38</sup>

This is another consequence of socialism's foundation on compulsory duty to society.

In our liberal society, your time is your private property to use as you wish. As such, it can't be immoral for you to use your time producing goods via craft methods, even though they're inefficient.

But the very starting point of socialism is the rejection of the idea that we own the time in our lives. Because socialism sees our work as society's tool, using inefficient methods is seen as wasting this societal resource.

Che Guevara even says that in socialist society, the meaning of "individualism" should be redefined to be an issue of efficiency:

Individualism ought to be the efficient use of the entire individual for the absolute benefit of a collectivity.<sup>39</sup>

Letting socialist citizens perform inefficient craftwork can't possibly represent "the efficient use of the entire individual for the absolute benefit of a collectivity."

We think of capitalism as a system focused on efficiency, but Karl Marx states that efficiency is of greater importance to socialism than to capitalism.<sup>40</sup> He maintains socialism would make ever-increasing efficiency an invariable "economic law"—something he said capitalism could not achieve, thereby demonstrating capitalism is "becoming senile."<sup>41</sup>

Why is socialist society able to make ever-increasing efficiency an invariable law? Because it would have the power (thanks to socialist compulsory duty) to dictate what we do with our lives, including determining what production methods are valid uses of society's time.

### **Artists: "Pampered Parasites"?**

Not just craftspeople run afoul of socialist sensibilities. Mat Callahan writes that socialism would create a society in which people do not need anyone "to make art for them, and certainly not for an elite corps of pampered parasites."

Democratic socialist Emile Vandervelde wonders, "How many slackers are there who try to disguise their parasitism, by taking the look of the intellectual laborer!"

"Parasites," "parasitism"—hundreds of socialists have attacked all things "parasitic." Vandervelde wrote an entire book on the subject. It's another byproduct of socialism's foundation on the duty of "from each according to their ability."

*To learn more about socialism's ongoing obsession with parasites, see the RFP paper "The Socialist Obsession."*

And why is Marx right when he says that capitalism is unable to guarantee ever-increasing efficiency as socialism, in theory, can? Because in capitalist society, we're free to make our own choices about how we use our time and, as a result, there's no way for society to guarantee we'll make the most efficient ones. And the millions of us who've started our own craft businesses are deliberately choosing inefficient methods relative to those of mass production.

Craftwork is consciously-chosen inefficient production. Craftspeople make a virtue out of what socialism says is a vice. Socialist theory says efficiency is a moral necessity. By socialist standards, craft is an immoral extravagance.

*Socialism demands order;  
craft is "anarchy"*

Socialism and craft are further divided by the socialist attack on capitalism for being "fragmented" and "anarchical." This critical aspect of socialist philosophy could easily come as news to you, but it is no surprise to knowledgeable socialists.

Knowledgeable socialists know that "fragmented" and "anarchical" are curse words in the socialist lexicon. These terms are labels socialists use for their core gripe about production and distribution in capitalist society.

Hundreds of socialist thinkers use such phrases as "the anarchy of production" and "the anarchy of the market"<sup>42</sup> when condemning the fact that capitalist economies aren't centrally controlled but instead are the result of millions of businesses making independent decisions.

In the foundational socialist work *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon*, Prosper Enfantin and his socialist coauthors attack the fragmented nature of decision-making in capitalist society and summarize their view with the words

The cause of evil lies nowhere else.<sup>43</sup>

Given that socialism is against fragmented and thus "anarchical" production, how can craft be anything but "evil" as far as socialism is concerned? Craft is the most extreme form of fragmented and anarchical industry.

Celebrated socialist Charles Fourier devotes the title of his final book to this crucial dimension of socialist thought. He labels capitalism "False Industry" and describes it as

Fragmented, Disgusting, Deceptive.<sup>44</sup>

Fourier also attacks the “Vices of Individual Action in Industry.”<sup>45</sup> Craft is the epitome of such individual action, guilty of all its supposed vices.

Here, Laurence Gronlund and Karl Marx, respectively, speak of “anarchy” when making their complaints about capitalism:

There is [in capitalist society] absolute Social Anarchy. It is this anarchy against which socialism is, chiefly, a protest.<sup>46</sup>

The capitalist mode of production ... begets, by its anarchical system of competition, the most outrageous squandering of labour-power.<sup>47</sup>

And today’s socialists continue to attack what socialists label the “anarchy” of capitalism, as these examples from Chris Williams and Rob Sewell attest:

The market system of production ... is a sprawling, anarchic, and out-of-control monster.<sup>48</sup>

The laws of the system operate in and through the anarchy of the market, as Marx explained long ago.<sup>49</sup>

Socialists universally argue that the problem with capitalist production is that it’s fragmented and thus anarchical. As such, it’s not hard to guess socialism’s proposed cure.

What does Charles Fourier call the “antidote” to the “fragmented” order of capitalism? It’s the “combined” order<sup>50</sup> of socialism. Friedrich Engels explains socialism’s plan:

Anarchy in social production is replaced by systematic, definite organization.<sup>51</sup>

Ending capitalist anarchy calls for “fusing”<sup>52</sup> and “concentrating”<sup>53</sup> small operations into large ones. “Competition will be suppressed” and “production will be centralized as much as possible.”<sup>54</sup>

Let’s apply this socialist logic to the US beer industry. Today, there are over eight thousand craft breweries in the US.<sup>55</sup> The beer industry is over ninety times more fragmented (or “anarchical”) than in 1978, when there were only eighty-nine US breweries.<sup>56</sup> This dramatic increase in the number of independent breweries is the exact opposite of what socialism desires.

Do you think beer drinkers would be pleased if the eight thousand breweries in the US were “fused” and “concentrated” back into eighty-nine? How many would be

pleased if all eight thousand breweries remained but uniformly pumped out Miller Lite?

Today's socialists can fill social media with images in which they're drinking craft beer and fist-bumping craft brewers, but none of this sales mischief alters the fact that socialism is utterly opposed to the fragmented production that craft represents.

In liberal society, millions of us use our time to pursue personal dreams by starting a small business, craft or otherwise. Voila! Fragmented and anarchical production. A key reason socialism demands the duty of "from each according to their ability" is to take control of our time and implement its plan to end this supposed evil—the "anarchy" that results from our using our lives as we choose.

*Socialism requires "social control"; control is death to craft*

The final critical conflict between socialism and craft also vividly illustrates the unlimited power socialism gives government.

Socialism requires "social control"—control by society. Yet the essence of craft is found in craft artisans' ability to make individual decisions about every aspect of their work. There is no way to "socially control" craft and have it remain craft.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain says that if socialism could be "summed up in a single phrase," its choice would be the

conscious social control of all aspects of life.<sup>57</sup>

It's socialism's foundation on compulsory duty that gives socialist society the power to implement this "conscious social control" and make us follow the orders of our social controllers. But even armed with the power of socialist duty, achieving conscious control by society remains a formidable task.

What's easier to socially control? Eight thousand independently-owned hamburger grills or eight thousand McDonald's? What's easier to socially control? Eight thousand small breweries or eight enormous ones?

The reality is that social control of even eight breweries would be impossible if they remained truly independent. The very point of social control is to override independent decision-making.

Yet what makes craft beer "craft" is that each independent brewer makes its own choices and does as it wishes. But this is individual control, and it's capitalism. It's what socialism says is "anarchy" and must be stamped out.

The challenge of implementing social control inevitably results in the desire to slash the number of producers and force uniformity on those that remain. It also leads to socialist plans to drastically reduce the number of product models that are available for any given product category.

How many different designs should be permitted for each kind of product? Che Guevara explains the socialist view:

If there is a need for one million glasses, then one million glasses are produced. The glasses are all the same, and there is no competition. In the capitalist nations the finish of the product is of great importance and creates competition in the market.<sup>58</sup>

From the socialist perspective, a single product design is the best answer.<sup>59</sup> This not only represents the most efficient use of society's time and what's easiest to socially control, but it also eliminates what socialism sees as the evil of competition—an evil inherent in the existence of multiple product designs.

Yet every craft workshop means additional designs for existing products. To socialist thinking, these are superfluous designs. And craft goods compete based on "the finish of the product," which Che attacks as a feature of capitalism, not socialism. If only a handful of designs for each kind of product are permitted in socialist society, then craft is by definition ruled out.

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*"Of the 200,000 textile plants ... the new regime, will have closed up all plants employing less than 200 laborers. ... There would then only remain 800."*

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But implementing social control of production involves much more than suppressing the variety of a product. Karl Kautsky defines the obstacles to social control and overviews the socialist solution:

The larger the number of producers, and the more independent of each other they are, the more difficult it is to organize them socially. This difficulty disappears in the measure in which the number of producers decreases, and the relations between them become more close and uniform.<sup>60</sup>

An industry with many independent producers is a roadblock to implementing the social control socialism requires. The fix? The unlimited power of the socialist state is used to suppress the number of producers and eliminate the independence of those that remain.

Kautsky continues by illustrating how socialism uses government power to implement social control. He makes an example of the textile industry:

Of the 200,000 textile plants, there are only 3,000 which employ more than 50 workingmen. It is clear that the concentration of industry in these latter plants would very much simplify the task of the social regulation of production. It will be still simpler when we consider that the new regime, will have closed up all plants employing less than 200 laborers. Of the 200,000 there would then only remain 800. To control and supervise this number of industries is certainly no longer an impossibility.<sup>61</sup>

Social control is achieved by forcing 199,200 firms to close—the smallest first. As Kautsky is happy to report, once these tens of thousands of small businesses have been wiped out, controlling the remaining 800 “is certainly no longer an impossibility.”

Kautsky’s plan for the craft industry is hardly unique. For example, August Bebel promises that

backward, old-fashioned forms of production, as represented by the small handicrafts ... vanishes from the new social order.<sup>62</sup>

Bebel and Kautsky demonstrate that socialists expect their government to be one of unlimited power. How are 200,000 textile firms turned into 800? The socialist state waves its wand and “vanishes” 199,200 of them.

Implementing the social control that defines socialism requires reducing the number of producers, decreasing the number of products and product versions, and eliminating independent decision-making. This amounts to the death of craft three times over. Socialism’s requirement for social control is another reason that craft and socialism are like oil and water.

## **WILLIAM MORRIS: A BOGUS PROOF THAT SOCIALISM IS COOL WITH CRAFT**

In light of these conflicts between socialism and craft, how do socialists navigate the immense popularity of craft goods today? What are knowledgeable socialists likely to say when confronted with the fact that socialism is anti-craft? The odds are high they’ll respond, “You must be ignorant of William Morris.”

Why cite William Morris in an attempt to show socialism can be cool with craft?

For starters, because there are virtually no other options. Few socialists want to pick a fight with Karl Marx and his stridently anti-craft views. And few can perform the contortions needed to make craft appear congruent with a philosophy that (1) says small operations create capitalism, (2) considers inefficiency immoral, (3) sees fragmented production as evil, and (4) requires social control.

But William Morris seems like an ace in the hole. In addition to being a socialist, Morris was a remarkable craftsman. He also wrote *News from Nowhere*, a novel depicting a craft-filled socialist society.

At first blush, Morris and his novel appear to be important exceptions to the rifts between socialism and craft explored above. But if they are represented honestly, it's clear this isn't the case at all.

The detail that's critical to understand (the detail most socialists fail to mention when citing Morris) is that the crafty society Morris depicts in *News from Nowhere* does not represent his expectations for a socialist society that would follow capitalism. Instead, *News from Nowhere* presents Morris's vision of a second, perfected stage of socialism.

The utopian society Morris portrays is one in which all goods and services are magically produced in such great quantities that everything is free for all. Buying and selling, pay for work, and even money are all unknown—they are ancient history. These starting premises of Morris's novel make efficiency a non-issue, thereby permitting *Nowhere* to feature inefficient craft production without violating socialist theory.<sup>63</sup>

So, what role did Morris expect craft would play in an actual first phase of socialism—a phase that *did not* feature production at superabundant levels making all goods free for the taking?

*None whatsoever.*

E. P. Thompson is the most celebrated of Morris's many biographers and also a noted socialist.<sup>64</sup> In his seminal work *William Morris: From Romantic to Revolutionary*, Thompson explains that Morris expected craft to play no role in the first phase of socialist society—the "transitional stage." Any return of craft would be a

choice to be made after the transitional stage.<sup>65</sup>

Paul Meier is another Morris biographer and socialist. In his noted *William Morris, Marxist Dreamer*, Meier writes:

Not for one moment could William Morris be regarded as a crusader for handicraft [in socialist society].... For him, handicraft was ... a distant utopian expectation.<sup>66</sup>

Contrary to our natural assumption, it turns out Morris is another socialist who believed socialist society would be barren of craft for generations, and potentially forever.

Moreover, even if the second phase of socialist society—that “distant, utopian” future—did ever arrive, Morris did not believe the return of craft should be a given. E. P. Thompson explains that Morris felt that at that point, socialist society “might decide” craft should be permitted to return in “certain fields.”<sup>67</sup> Even in this fantasyland future of free everything for all, opening your own craft workshop could easily remain completely illegal or, in the best case, would only become legal in select fields.

Finally, don’t let the fact Morris was a craftsman lead you to assume he considered it your right to be one also. He didn’t believe anything of the sort. He believed what socialists believe: that the time in our lives should be society’s property to control and to determine approved uses of.<sup>68</sup>

The bottom line on William Morris? Rather than showing that socialism favors craft, Morris’s beliefs demonstrate just how anti-craft and downright anti-liberal socialism is.

Socialists who use Morris to suggest socialism is cool with craft are likely aware of these facts and have a responsibility to make sure we are too. But any true telling of the Morris story sends his usefulness up in flames.

## “DON’T WORRY”

Craftwork violates multiple principles of socialist philosophy, and it’s scorned by Karl Marx.

There’s no meaningful explanation of how craft can be made congruent with socialism. Celebrated socialist philosopher G. A. Cohen tried but concluded that Marx’s socialism “requires the demise of craft labor” until a fantasy future in which work has ceased to exist. Similarly, using William Morris to demonstrate socialism favors craft is disingenuous at best.

What’s left for socialists to argue?

“Don’t worry.”

Don't worry. We'll permit craft despite the fact Marx disdained it.

Don't worry. We won't suppress craft, even though it creates capitalism "continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale."<sup>69</sup>

Don't worry. We won't act on what our philosophy says is "a moral as well as economic necessity"<sup>70</sup> and eliminate inefficient production.

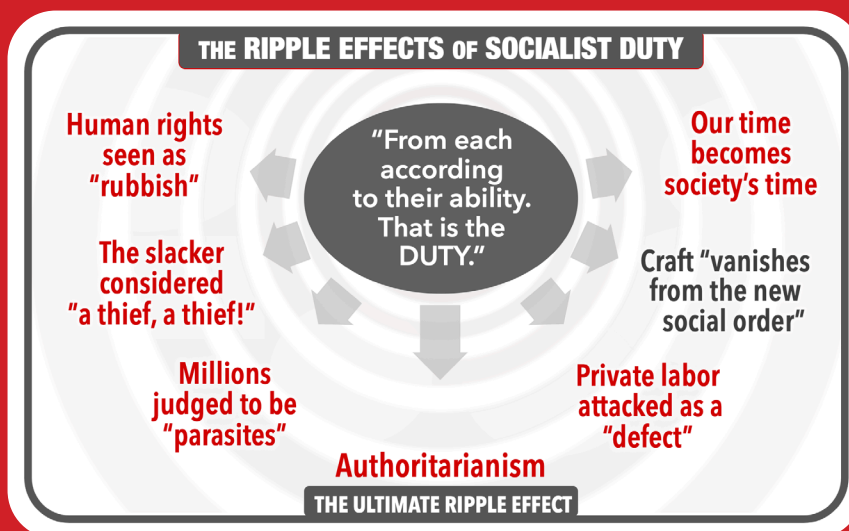
Don't worry. We'll permit the fragmented and anarchical production that hundreds of socialist thinkers attack as the "cause of evil."<sup>71</sup>

Don't worry. We won't implement "social control" and enforce the uniformity that socialism requires.

Don't worry. We won't treat the time in your life as society's property to control, even though this is the fundamental premise of socialism and the means by which a socialist society is created.

There is no basis in socialist philosophy for any one of these exceptions, much less all of them. Promises that socialism *won't* do what socialist philosophy says *must* be done are worthless. And they sure don't change this disturbing reality:

Socialism's foundation on the duty of "from each according to their ability" makes it both anti-craft and anti-liberal.



To learn more about the ripple effects of socialist duty, visit [redflagspress.org/ripple](http://redflagspress.org/ripple)

# NOTES

1. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 144. Marx—ever the joker—named this book *The Poverty of Philosophy* as a parody of Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty*, which was the primary focus of Marx's attention in this work.
2. Sean Sayers, "The Concept of Labor: Marx and His Critics," *Science and Society* 71, no. 4 (October 2007): 449.
3. Nikolai Bukharin, quoted in Morris Hillquit, *From Marx to Lenin* (New York: The Hanford Press, 1921), 39.
4. "Par la centralisation des services, on fera disparaître les petits ateliers où travailler péniblement trois ou quatre ouvriers ne produisant que la centième partie de ce qu'ils pourraient produire dans une grande usine sociale." Paul Argpriadès, *Almanach de la question sociale* (Paris: L'administration de la question sociale, 1891), 37.
5. "Mais alors, Monsieur, tous les petits ateliers seront supprimés?—Parfaitement ... en lieu des petits ateliers, on aura de vastes usines." Lucien Deslinières, *Entretiens Socialistes* (Paris: Choisy Le Roi, 1901), 69.
6. Laurence Gronlund, *The Cooperative Commonwealth: An Exposition of Modern Socialism* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1884), 109.
7. Vladimir Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder (New York: International Publishers, 1940), 10.
8. G. A. Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 3, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 256. See also the points on p. 255, where Cohen lists two aspects of Marx's thinking that indicate Marx "must banish" craft from socialist society.
9. Karl Marx remains the defining thinker for today's socialism. Consider two of the many facts that demonstrate this reality: First, rather than distancing today's democratic socialism from Marx, the founder of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Michael Harrington, repeatedly labels Marx a "democratic socialist." Second, the DSA itself identifies as a Marxist organization (and the DSA's 2017 convention celebrated the fact it had become the largest Marxist organization in the US). For details on both of these facts, see the RFP paper "The 'Keto-Friendly' Political Philosophy."
10. Sayers, "Concept of Labor," 449.
11. Paul S. Adler, "Marx, Machines, and Skill," *Technology and Culture* 31, no. 4 (October 1990): 783. Similarly, Alan Bacon writes: "Marx welcomed the ending of the [craft] system" (Alan K. Bacon, "Morris's View of the History of Industrialism," *Journal of William Morris Studies* 5 [Summer 1982]: 8).
12. In one example of Marx promoting what he saw as the benefits of group work, he writes in *Capital*: "When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others [as the worker does in a factory, but not when working individually as a craftsperson], he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species." Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes and David Fernbach, 3 vols. (London: Penguin Classics, 1978–1981), 1:447.

## NOTES

A good discussion of Marx's view that the social nature of work in large industry develops people who are ready for socialism can be found in Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," 243–46.

13. Here's the complete paragraph in which Marx attacks craftwork and craftworkers as he takes a swipe at another philosopher, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: "The automatic workshop wipes out specialists and craft-idiocy. M. Proudhon, not having understood even this one revolutionary side of the automatic workshop, takes a step backward and proposes to the worker that he make not only the 12th part of a pin, but successively all 12 parts of it. *The worker would thus arrive at the knowledge and the consciousness of the pin.*" Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* 1847 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 144. Emphasis added.

Marx starts this complex passage by reporting what he considers good news: that the factory "wipes out specialists and craft idiocy." G. A. Cohen writes that "idiocy" as Marx uses the term implies "narrow parochialism," not "feeble intelligence" (Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," 248). But when we consider the full paragraph, it certainly seems Marx intended both meanings to apply in his snarky attack on craftwork.

Marx discusses the production of pins, describing a twelve-step process. He contrasts the "automatic workshop" of the factory with production in a craft workshop. In the automatic workshop that Marx prefers, each worker only performs one task, only makes one-twelfth of the pin. In the craft workshop, the craftworker performs all twelve steps in the production of the pin. Marx describes performing the entire process as "a step backward."

And what, to Marx's thinking, is the result of working as the craftsman does, performing all steps in the production process? The craftworker ends up with "the knowledge and consciousness of the pin." Pins are certainly of "feeble intelligence" and, by comparing craftspeople to pins, Marx is saying craftspeople are too, that craftspeople end up pinheads—idiots.

14. Jane O'Grady, "GA Cohen, political philosopher who introduced a revolutionary interpretation of Marxist theory," *The Guardian*, August 10, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/aug/10/ga-cohen-obituary>.

15. Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," 235–61

16. Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," 257.

17. Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," 257.

18. Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," 257. Cohen notes that those who want to see craftwork "as a means of material existence" won't be satisfied with this, the only loophole in Marx's thinking he could find to permit craftwork in socialist society. His loophole only permits craft to be performed "alongside" the real production, not as true production intended to fulfill society's needs.

19. Stephen L. Carter, "Destroying a Quote's History in Order to Save It," *Bloomberg Opinion*, February 9, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-02-09/destroying-a-quote-s-history-in-order-to-save-it>.

20. Cohen, "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," 256. See also the points on p. 255, where Cohen lists two aspects of Marx's thinking that indicate Marx "must banish" craft from socialist society.

21. Above, we saw Marx praise working in a group setting such as the factory as meaning the worker "strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species." NYU professor and socialist Bertell Ollman similarly explains that Marx's desire for "industrial armies ... for agriculture" wasn't only about boosting production. Ollman says Marx's desire was also motivated by "changing the personalities of those involved." One would assume that this personality change was not intended to make them desire their own small businesses—rather, it was about changing them into good socialist citizens. Bertell Ollman, "Marx's Vision of Communism," *Dialectic Marxism*, accessed August 21, 2019, [https://www.nyu.edu/projects/ollman/docs/vision\\_of\\_communism.php](https://www.nyu.edu/projects/ollman/docs/vision_of_communism.php).

## NOTES

22. In the following quote, Marx explains that the overall importance of bookkeeping in society increases as the scale of production increases and there are fewer individual producers. He also says that bookkeeping will be “more necessary” in socialist production (what he labels “communal production”) than it is in capitalist society, thereby demonstrating his expectation that, in socialist society, production will be on a larger scale than is true in capitalist society: “Book-keeping ... becomes ever more necessary the more the [production] process takes place on a social scale and loses its purely individual character; it is thus more necessary in capitalist production than in the fragmented production of handicraftsmen and peasants, more necessary in communal production than in capitalist.” Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes and David Fernbach, 3 vols. (London: Penguin, 1978–1981), 2:12.

23. Friedrich Engels writes: “The greatest saving of labour power lies in the fusing of the individual powers into social collective power and in the kind of organization which is based on this concentration of powers hitherto opposed to one another.” Friedrich Engels, “Speeches in Elberfeld,” in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 4, *Marx and Engels 1844–1845* (Chadwell Heath: Lawrence and Wishart, 2010), 248.

24. Charles Fourier is one of socialism’s most important early philosophers, predating Marx. Fourier attacked small-scale production repeatedly in his work, and in particular individual production like craftwork. For example, writing in the early 1800s, Fourier presented a list of seven “Vices of Individual Action in Industry,” spending four pages detailing them. Craft is the very definition of individual action in industry. Charles Fourier, *Œuvres complètes de Charles Fourier* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1966), 5:26–30.

Socialism’s biases against small-scale production are not limited to Marxism. Beatrice and Sidney Webb were leaders of the British socialist organization the Fabian Society—a group that has long maintained its version of socialism is distinct from Marxism. The Webbs toured the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) a decade after its founding and discovered a great deal they liked in this first socialist society. One of the things they appreciated was how the USSR had eliminated so many small producers. Here they praise the fact the USSR had used state power to do away with small bakeries:

“Perhaps the most outstanding single achievement of the consumers’ cooperative organisation in the USSR is the abolition of the primitive and insanitary cellars and hovels in which was baked the bread that forms so large a part of the diet of all the inhabitants. These small hand bakeries, which were universal in all the cities of Europe a century ago, and still persist, to a greater or less extent, in all countries except the USSR, have been replaced in nearly all the cities of European Russia by large, new and completely mechanised plants.” Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1944), 246.

How is it that the USSR was able to eliminate all small bakeries, whereas that did not happen in the rest of the world? The power of the socialist state.

25. Paul Blackledge, “Karl Kautsky and Marxist Historiography,” *Science and Society* 70, no. 3 (July 2006): 338, 353.

26. Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, trans. A. M. Simons and May Woods Simons (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1902), 168.

27. French Socialist Louis Blanc is typically credited with developing the expression “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need” in the 1840s (though another French socialist, Étienne Cabet, also started using it at roughly the same time). Here’s one example of Blanc’s using this expression in 1848: “Chacun produise selon son aptitude et ses forces, que chacun consomme selon ses besoins.” Louis Blanc, *Nouveau discours de M. Louis Blanc sur l’organisation du travail devant l’assemblée générale des délégués des travailleurs* (Paris: Commission du Gouvernement Pour Travailleurs, 1848), 10.

28. Any number of today’s socialists make it clear that “from each according to their ability” remains the socialist standard of duty. DSA founder Michael Harrington writes, “The goal of socialism, clearly, is to

## NOTES

overcome greed and act on the basis of ‘to each according to his/her need, from each according to his/her ability.’” Harrington, “What Socialists Would Do in America—If They Could,” 445.

Ron Baiman directly links democratic socialism to this standard of duty, defining “democratic socialist” by socialism’s most famous axiom, which includes the duty of “from each according to their ability” as its opening clause. See Ron P. Baiman, *The Morality of Radical Economics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 276.

In a third example, Robert Sewell writes, “Society will be based on the principle ‘from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.’” Robert Sewell, “Why You Should Be a Socialist,” *Socialist Appeal*, September 4, 2015, <https://www.socialist.net/why-you-should-be-a-socialist.htm>.

29. These core socialist values are explored more fully in other RFP papers, including, “The Ripple Effects of Socialist Duty.”

30. Fidel Castro, “Castro Anniversary Speech in Santa Clara [July 26, 1968],” Castro Speech Database, accessed June 7, 2020, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1968/19680726.html>.

31. “Chaque individu dans sa sphère, travaille non pour lui, mais pour accomplir la tâche de l’humanité, dont il est member ; travaillant dans un but commun. ... Tout homme naît pour travailler; tout travailleur est fonctionnaire public.” Richard Lahautière, *De la loi sociale* (Paris: Chez Prevot, 1841), 64.

32. Two additional examples show socialists explaining that craft would not be permitted as a career in a first phase of socialist society following capitalism but would only be permitted should socialism achieve the utopian goal of a society in which all goods are produced in such stunning volumes that they are free:

A first and surprising example is found in the thinking of celebrated socialist William Morris, himself a great craftsperson. As detailed later in this paper (in the section “William Morris: A Bogus Proof that Socialism is Cool With Craft”), Morris is not an exception to socialism’s anti-craft rule as he is often portrayed. Instead, Morris’s thinking is actually a further demonstration of the rift between craft and socialism. Morris expected craft to play no role in a first phase of socialist society. And he also believed that, even if socialism achieved a second phase defined by production volumes so massive that all goods were free, craft would still only be permitted to return in certain approved fields.

Another socialist whose thinking mirrors G. A. Cohen’s is American socialist leader James P. Cannon. Cannon explains that the “artisans of the [socialist] future won’t compete with machine industry—that would be anachronistically absurd—but will ply their crafts as a special form of recreation and artistic self-expression, and to make gifts for friends.” In socialist society, craftwork would only be a “special form of recreation and artistic self-expression”—that is, a hobby. Craftwork would not be permitted as actual work, work that fulfills one’s socialist duty to labor for society. Craftwork is extremely inefficient relative to the production techniques available today. It’s “anachronistic”—that is, obsolete—and is seen by socialist theory as a waste of society’s time. Thus, Cannon states that when anyone performs craftwork in socialist society, it would be “outside his general contribution to the cooperative labour process.” James P. Cannon, *America’s Road to Socialism* (New York: Pioneer, 1953), 73–74.

33. A key element of socialist theory is the plan to ban all work deemed “socially useless,” or what innumerable socialists label “parasitic” work—that is, work performed by those they deem “parasites.” It’s by suppressing “useless” work that socialist theory says socialism would fulfill its many sales promises. Those millions whom socialists believe perform socially useless work would be made to perform approved tasks instead. To learn more, see the RFP paper “The Socialist Obsession.”

34. August Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, trans. Daniel De Leon (New York: Schocken, 1971), 338–39.

35. Lenin, “*Left-Wing*” *Communism*, 10.

36. Kautsky attacked the Russian Revolution in his 1918 work *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. Lenin counterattacked in his *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, also published in 1918. See Albert S. Lindemann, “Socialist Impressions of Revolutionary Russia, 1920,” *Russian History* 1, no. 1 (1974): 43.

## NOTES

37. Karl Kautsky, *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, trans. H. J. Stenning (Manchester: The National Labour Press, 1919), 13.

38. Michael Harrington, *Socialism, Past and Future* (New York: Mentor, 1992), 267. Harrington also explains that, in socialist society, efficiency would not be defined by the “private interest” but on the basis of social goals. This makes it clear that society would be the arbiter of which production methods would be approved as sufficiently productive—a test it’s hard to imagine craft could ever pass.

It’s certainly possible (and, given our love of craftwork, even likely) that those running socialist society would choose to permit some small number of craft artisans in each field. This “craft zoo” would permit those leading socialist society to proclaim their love of craft while still effectively eliminating inefficient craft as a career choice. “Of course we love craft! Of course you can be a craft furniture maker! Just apply for one of the positions of this type, and we will contact you when one becomes available.”

39. Ernest “Che” Guevara, “On Revolutionary Medicine,” trans. Beth Kurti, *Obra Revolucionaria* 24 (1960), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1960/08/19.htm>.

40. In this quote from his work *Grundrisse*, Marx focuses on the importance of saving labor time—that is, working efficiently. He also states that this goal would not only remain “the first economic law” in socialist production (what he here calls “communal production”), but that it will be of greater importance (“a higher law”) in socialist production than it is in capitalist production: “On the basis of communal production, the determination of time remains, of course, essential. The less time the society requires to produce wheat, cattle etc., the more time it wins for other production, material or mental. ... Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself. Society likewise has to distribute its time in a purposeful way, in order to achieve a production adequate to its overall needs. ... Thus, economy of time, along with the planned distribution of labour time among the various branches of production, remains the first economic law on the basis of communal production. It becomes law, there [under socialism], to an even higher degree [even than under capitalism].” Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 172–73.

41. Agnes Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx* (London: Allison and Busby, 1974), 82.

Also, in *Capital*, Marx suggests that socialism means an “invariable” increase in productivity, whereas capitalism does not, making capitalism “senile” and foreshadowing its replacement by socialism. How is it that socialism would guarantee an invariable increase in productivity, making this “an economic law,” as Agnes Heller describes it? It can only be by the centralized control of all production. Socialist society would eliminate inefficient production methods and force the greater and greater concentration of production into larger and more efficient producers. The very reason Marx describes capitalism as “senile” and in need of replacement is that the independent nature of production resulting from capitalism’s foundation on property rights and “private labor” rights means capitalist society cannot force the choice of efficient production methods and the concentration of industry.

From Marx, *Capital*, 3:370–71: “This reduction in the total quantity of labour going into the commodity appears accordingly as the fundamental characteristic of a rise in labour productivity, irrespective of the social conditions under which production is carried on. In a [socialist] society where the producers govern their production by a plan drawn up in advance ... the productivity of labour is in fact invariably measured by such a standard. But what is the situation in capitalist production? ... For capital ... the law of increased productivity of labour is not unconditionally valid. ... [Capitalism’s] historical mission is ruthlessly to expand the productivity of human labour, to drive it onwards in geometrical progression. It is untrue to its mission as soon as it starts to inhibit the development of productivity, as it does here. It thereby simply shows once more that it is becoming senile and has further and further outlived its epoch.”

42. This key aspect of socialist philosophy is also linked to the central flaw of socialist economic theory: the belief that when socialism replaces capitalist anarchy with a neatly organized system based on planning, the

## NOTES

result will be dramatically enhanced productivity creating a world of superabundance. The actual results of socialist experiments have proven this theory to be a massive flub.

Socialists have attacked the “anarchy” of capitalism on countless occasions. Here are three examples:

The opening sentence of Friedrich Engels’s most famous individual work, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, reads: “Modern Socialism is, in its essence, the direct product of the recognition ... of the anarchy existing in production.” Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, trans. Edward Averling (London: George Allen and Unwit, Ltd., 1892), 1.

Noted British socialist J. Ramsey Macdonald writes: “There can be no steadiness of industry so long as there is anarchy in production.” J. Ramsey MacDonald, *Socialism and Society*, 6th ed. (London: Independent Labor Party, 1908), 199.

Terry Eagleton writes: “It is capitalism which is out of control, driven as it is by the anarchy of market forces.” Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 187.

43. Prosper Enfantin et al., *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition*, trans. Georg G. Iggers (New York: Schocken, 1972), 96.

44. Charles Fourier, *La Fausse industrie morcelée, répugnante, mensongère, et l'antidote : l'industrie naturelle, combinée, attrayante, donnant quadruple produit* (Paris: Bossange, 1835).

45. Fourier, *Oeuvres complètes de Charles*, 126.

46. Gronlund, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 52.

47. Marx, *Capital*, 667.

48. Chris Williams, *Ecology and Socialism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010), 146, Kindle.

49. Robert Sewell, “Why You Should Be a Socialist,” *Socialist Appeal*, September 14, 2015, <https://www.socialist.net/why-you-should-be-a-socialist.htm>.

50. In the title of his final work (*Fausse industrie morcelée, répugnante, mensongère, et l'antidote : l'industrie naturelle, combinée, attrayante, donnant quadruple produit*), Charles Fourier lists *combinée* (that is “combined”) as the most important characteristic of the society he desired to see replace the *morcelée* (that is “fragmented”) society of capitalism.

51. Engels, *Socialism*, 81.

52. “The greatest saving of labour power lies in the fusing of the individual powers into social collective power and in the kind of organization which is based on this concentration of powers hitherto opposed to one another.” Engels, “Speeches in Elberfeld,” 248.

53. Karl Kautsky reports: “Where, however, a great industry exists to a considerable degree it is easy for a socialist society to concentrate production and to quickly rid itself of the little industry.” Kautsky, *Social Revolution*, 144–45.

54. “This regime [socialism] will spare human labor, the waste of which is immoral. This savings will be achieved by several methods, including the following three: Competition will be suppressed. ... Idleness will be suppressed. ... Production will be centralized as much as possible” (“Ce régime épargnera le travail humain, dont le gaspillage est immoral. Cette épargne sera réalisée par plusieurs causes, dont les trois suivantes : La concurrence sera supprimée. ... L'oisiveté sera supprimée. ... La production sera centralisée autant qu'il est possible”). Pierre Deloire [Charles Péguy], “De La Cite Socialiste,” *Le Revue Socialiste* 25, no. 1 (1897): 187–88.

55. Figures from 2019 show an excess of 8,300 breweries, of which all but some 110 are a craft operation of one type or another. See [www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/national-beer-stats/](http://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/national-beer-stats/) (accessed September 7, 2020).

56. See [www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/national-beer-stats/](http://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/national-beer-stats/) (accessed September 7, 2020), esp. the graph entitled “Historical Brewery Count.” The figure for 1978 is 89.

## NOTES

57. “Supply and Needs in Socialism,” *Socialist Standard*, July 1984, <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1980s/1984/no-959-july-1984/supply-and-needs-socialism>. Emphasis original.

58. Ernest “Che” Guevara, “On Economic Planning in Cuba” (April 30, 1961), in *Venceremos! The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevara*, ed. John Gerassi (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 149.

59. From the perspective of socialist theory, the superior aesthetics of craft-made items is a negative, not a positive. Craft goods are more desirable than mass-produced ones, creating competition and promoting the consumer mentality that socialism despises. As Che Guevara explains, a single design means no competition. The presence of multiple designs automatically “creates competition in the market.” If one hundred craft artisans are producing purses, that’s hundreds of purse designs competing on the market.

60. Kautsky, *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, 13–14.

61. Kautsky, *Social Revolution*, 144.

62. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, 289.

63. Superabundant production of all needed goods and services, thereby permitting them to all be free for the taking; a society without pay for work, without buying or selling, and without money—these are assumptions that Morris uses as the starting point of *News from Nowhere*. They are also explicit goals of Marxian socialism (as detailed in the RFP paper “The Secret Sauce of Socialism”).

Morris makes no effort to explain how it is that the staggering production volumes required to produce such a world were achieved or are maintained. The vast majority of production takes place off-stage and is simply assumed. This is, of course, Morris’s prerogative because *News from Nowhere* is a novel, and as such, he can make any assumptions he wishes, just as J. K. Rowling assumes the existence of magic in the Harry Potter series.

But it’s the fact that Morris’s story is set in this perfected socialist society that permits Morris to include craftwork in a fashion that doesn’t violate the precepts of socialist philosophy. By assuming the production levels of all goods are so great that everything is free, it creates a scenario in which the citizens of Nowhere are permitted to do essentially any work they wish, as what they do for work no longer actually matters. Morris’s novel depicts the scenario G. A. Cohen describes as permitting the return of craft in a future socialist utopia: one in which the activities people perform only “resemble activity which once was labor.”

64. For examples of the praise for both E. P. Thompson and his book *William Morris: From Romantic to Revolutionary*, see the PM Press website: [https://www.pmpress.org/index.php?l=product\\_detail&p=256](https://www.pmpress.org/index.php?l=product_detail&p=256) (accessed May 23, 2021).

65. E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: From Romantic to Revolutionary* (Oakland: PM Press, 2011), 654.

66. Paul Meier, *William Morris, Marxist Dreamer* (Sussex: Harvester, 1978), 2:352; see also 351. Meier’s contention is supported by Thompson, who writes that Morris considered the issue of craft in socialist society to be a “choice to be made after the transitional stage” (Thompson, *William Morris*, 654). This implies that the first stage of socialist society—the transition between capitalism and perfected socialism—would be barren of craftwork.

67. As Thompson writes, Morris felt that, if the first stage of socialist society achieved superabundance (thereby moving socialism out of the transitional phase into the perfected second phase), society at that point “might decide to return to handicraft in certain fields.” “Might decide” and might not. And not all fields—“certain fields.” Thompson, *William Morris*, 654.

Morris believed that to make the return of craft permissible within the strictures of socialist philosophy, *all* automated production in a given field would have to end and be entirely replaced by craft production. That way, there would never be competition between mass-produced goods and craft goods, and everyone in society would receive an item that had been produced in the same fashion. In this way, equity would be preserved.

Morris’s method for permitting craft within the strictures of socialist thinking guarantees a grim future for craft, even if we assume the utopian world of superabundance. It’s inconceivable that worldwide furniture

## NOTES

production could be moved entirely from automated to craft production. As such, craftwork would never be permitted in this field. Thus, in the socialist future—even in one of limitless abundance—it would remain illegal to have your own craft furniture workshop that you supported by selling products of your creation.

68. Morris called repeatedly for socialist society to be in charge of determining what work is and isn't legitimate and for banning the right to pursue any job not approved by society. He didn't believe it was anyone's right to pursue work of their choosing unless and until society had approved that work as a legitimate use of what socialists see as *society's time*.

In "Art and Labour," Morris writes: "There must be no useless work done"; he calls for "all useless work abolished" (William Morris, "Art and Labour," in *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, ed. Eugene D. Lemire [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969], 115). In "Depression of the Trade," he writes: "If a man will not work *usefully* neither should he eat" (William Morris, "Depression of the Trade," in Lemire, *Unpublished Lectures*, 132). Society would determine what work qualifies as "useful" and what does not.

And, despite being an artist and novelist himself, Morris called for the suppression of numerous jobs in the arts come socialist society. Morris argues that "a new set of idlers" would result if socialist society permitted careers in the arts, such as "picture painting, sculpture, and the lesser or reproductive fine arts, such as engraving. Also imaginative literature, and the study of history and nature.... I feel sure that it would not do for men to be absorbed entirely in such arts. It would tend to disease, to anti-social habits which would burden the community with a new set of idlers" (William Morris, "An Unpublished Lecture of William Morris: 'How Shall We Live Then,'" ed., Paul Meier, *International Review of Social History* 16 [1971]: 15–16).

Morris says it would not do to let socialist citizens "be absorbed entirely" in such arts as painting, sculpture, or fiction writing ("imaginative literature"). To "be absorbed entirely" is a roundabout way of saying to work full time at a task, to make a career of it. He thus says that it would not do to let people in socialist society have careers as painters, sculptors, novelists, etc.

69. Lenin, "*Left-Wing*" *Communism*, 10.

70. Harrington, *Socialism, Past and Future*, 267.

71. Enfantin, *Doctrine of Saint-Simon*, 96.