

The Great Oppression

By
Charles R. Coombs

A slave, when the term is applied to a human being, is a person who may not refuse work or is legally incapable of earning.

A slave has a right to expect a certain standard of treatment, and may be granted rights commensurate with that overarching standard. The slave codes of the South all provided for a slave's humane treatment. This just made good economic sense: Slaves were expensive, and it took about half of what slaves produced just to support the slaves themselves. There were breaches to be sure, but in general slavery can't be defined by the treatment, good or ill, of slaves.

This is important because modern slavery is often justified by allowing slaves certain material and social benefits: An individual slave in America gets to live in, even partially own, a house or other real property, travel as he or she wishes, take whatever job one wants or work not at all, speak freely, and freely exercise religious freedom.

Only government enslaves. It is not possible for a corporation, for example, to enslave or mistreat an employee: One is free to walk off the job anytime one wants to. If an employee feels badly used, he or she can simply quit to find better treatment elsewhere.

What does define slavery is the inability to refuse work or the inability to earn or both. Either in my opinion is fully definitive.

Prisons enslave by denying the right to refuse work. To the extent that it is socialistic, our government enslaves people who are not in prison by denying the right to earn.

One extreme historical example of denying the right to earn is the Holodomor, the "Murder by Starvation" in 1932 when Stalin appropriated the seed corn of the Ukrainian farmers. Stalin decided that things would be better if the Ukrainians' wealth were spread around a little bit. He collectivized, confiscated and sold their entire crop to finance industrial development in the cities, transferring the farmers' wealth to urban industrial workers. Millions starved.

Likewise Jews in the socialist Third Reich had property, in some cases more than most Nazis had. Since the Jews could not be thought of as having earned this wealth, or as really needing it, it was taken from them and redistributed to people who were not Jews.

Of course Jews were also enslaved by being denied the right to refuse work, as at Peenemunde and other government slave labor sites. As the value of their labor declined, they were exterminated, their lives and bodies having also become something the socialist government owned. Sometimes you get just the right dictator and socialism gets out of control.

There are extreme examples, but they illustrate the way socialism, whether fascism, national socialism, or communism, work to enslave people over whose lives they gain possession.

In socialist economies, then, individuals are not seen as having earned wealth: You either have something -- are lucky in life's lottery -- or you do not. If you have not, you are entitled to a portion of that which someone else has. Each contributes according to his ability; each receives according to her need.

When you enforce this by taking money someone has worked for and giving it to someone who has not worked for it, you make a slave of the person whose wealth you confiscated. (Actually, you usually enslave the one you give it to as well, but that's another essay.)

For the most part, slavery is the natural condition of humankind. Most people will accept a certain level of privation in order to be protected from the responsibilities that freedom demands. Even in the post-bellum Old South, many freed slaves remained on or returned to the plantations to live as they had before the war. It's only when it falls into the demented hand of a Mao or a Castro that socialism gets away from you and slavery becomes a bad thing.

Try not to get too upset, therefore, when some talk show host warns that we're losing our freedoms: More likely, we're giving them up to secure a greater benefit than we could while maintaining them. When you see a health care bill, or card check, or cap and trade bill being forced upon the people despite their manifest objection to it, relax. The controversy will blow over, and a fairer distribution of the nation's wealth will ultimately result. When you hear people bemoan the reworking of the Constitution, remember that all democracies evolve into socialism, and our founding documents must be reformed to accommodate this change.

Only accept. You'll be a lot happier, and your nation will thank you.