

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

The Democrats' land-grab agenda no one is talking about

The latest cornerstone of freedom
to fall victim is property rights

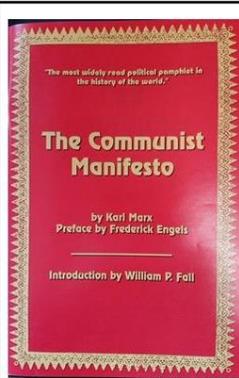
By Cliff Maloney - Wednesday, July 31, 2019



From the chambers of Congress to the controversy of the campaign trail, the Democratic Party's long-foreseen character arc into the not-so-secret weapon of the socialist movement is complete.

As if Bernie Sanders' calls for \$10,000 tax increases and Kamala Harris' recent vows to bring "executive action" to gun control weren't enough, the Democrats' strategy of scoring political points by exploiting the deepening scorn for America's institutions continues to find alarming amounts of success.

And now — as if pulled straight from the Communist Manifesto — the latest cornerstone of freedom to fall victim to this venomously un-American appeasement campaign is none other than property rights.



1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal liability of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equable distribution of the populace over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, &c, &c.



Mike Gravel, former senator from Alaska and 2020 candidate, is currently selling “Private Property is Theft” yard signs to fund his campaign. Meanwhile, as his tasteless catchphrase occupies the frontyards of America (in a mesmerizing display of unintended irony), congressional Democrats are fighting to expand yet another government program in their attempt to bring more private land under federal control.

Earlier this summer, Democrats on the House Natural Resources Committee voted to mandate permanent spending of \$900 million per year for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which purportedly “safeguard[s] natural areas, water resources, and our cultural heritage, and [provides] recreation opportunities to all Americans.” In truth, the fund’s goal is to seize more of the 2.6 million acres of privately owned land that remain within national park boundaries.

Facing this new threat, there is no better time for those who believe in freedom to step forward. Private property is an American tradition and a fundamental component of a free society. In the words of John Adams: “Property must be secured or liberty cannot exist.”

Fortunately, this tradition is still appreciated by most Americans. A poll taken last year by the Institute of Justice, for example, found that more than three-quarters of Americans oppose civil asset forfeiture, a practice that allows law enforcement agencies to seize one’s private property prior without conviction of a crime.

As it turns out, Americans have every reason to be concerned over this issue. Between 2001 and 2014, the net assets in the Justice Department and Treasury Department forfeiture funds jumped from \$763 million to nearly \$4.5 billion — a whopping 485 percent increase.

Between this and congressional Democrats’ newly initiated crusade against the landowners of America, the state of affairs could not be a more direct affront to the vision propounded by the Founding Fathers. They understood that property rights are fundamental to self-ownership and self-determination. The government’s circumvention of these rights deprives the individual of the agency needed to live an autonomous life.

The individual also loses his or her incentive to contribute to the greater economy — to invest, invent and produce; this explains why the protection of property rights is strongly correlated with economic prosperity. According to the Fraser Institute's 2018 Economic Freedom of the World report, for instance, countries with the most robust property rights have an annual income 32 times higher than those with weaker protections for property rights.

Among the more recent (and notorious) examples of this astounding disparity is that of Venezuela. In 2001, then-President Hugo Chavez issued a decree for the expropriation of private Venezuelan farmland, his first step toward dissolving the property rights of his fellow Venezuelans. In his words: "To those who own the land, this land is not yours. The land is not private, but property of the nation."

By 2005, hundreds of private companies fell victim to Mr. Chavez's [runaway nationalization](#), bringing the country's industrial sector to the brink of extinction. Within two decades, the most prosperous nation in Latin America had retrogressed into an economic wasteland, characterized by poverty, bankruptcy, mass starvation and a pandemic of violent crime. In a desperate attempt to reclaim freedom, millions of Venezuelans are now seeking refuge abroad, often leaving their families behind.

All of this begs the question: Is this truly the left's blueprint for the future? "Private Property is Theft" may make a catchy campaign slogan, but such reckless rhetoric only leads to a dark and perilous path.



- *Cliff Maloney is president of [Young Americans for Liberty](#).*



CUBA - FEBRUARY 02: Cuban President Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez President of Venezuela talk as they sign agreement on culture affairs between both countries in Havana, Cuba on February 02nd, 2006. (Photo by Jose GOITIA/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images)

(Pictures and links added – TWOW Admin)