

The dismantling of social welfare

Freidman's notion of taxes as theft became the foundation for the current dismantling of social welfare in what has come to be known as "public choice theory." Friedman's ideas and even more so the ideas and world view of conservative economist James Buchanan, have formed the template for the frontal attack against social welfare and the public role of the state through the promotion of what MacLean calls "property supremacy."

5.2 Watch the Nancy Maclean interview, "Democracy in Chains: The Radical Right's Stealth Attack on American Democracy." (12:23)



MacLean, Nancy. "Democracy in Chains: The Radical Right's Stealth Attack on American Democracy," video, 12:23, posted by The Real News Network to YouTube, May 23, 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsBNwMjEo90> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsBNwMjEo90>

5.3 Read "How Privatization Could Spell the End of Democracy." (5 minutes)

Tarnoff, Ben, "How Privatization Could Spell the End of Democracy," The Guardian, June 21, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/21/privatizing-public-services-trump-democracy> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/21/privatizing-public-services-trump-democracy>

Ben Tarnoff's article outlines how the privatization of public goods in the name of efficiency has become a pervasive approach for policy makers who, along with broad swaths of the public, have come to accept the argument that government programs are inherently inefficient despite ample evidence to the contrary. Tarnoff, while challenging this view, also examines the question of how public services are an essential aspect of democratic social life and a key factor in the promotion of economic and social equality.

What is equally interesting in Tarnoff's piece is the role that tech companies and digital technology in general are now playing in re-defining social care away from democratic values and practices.

5.4 Read “In Britain, Austerity is Changing Everything.” (15 minutes)

Goodman, Peter, “In Britain, Austerity is Changing Everything,” New York Times, May 28, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/world/europe/uk-austerity-poverty.html>

[\(https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/world/europe/uk-austerity-poverty.html\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/world/europe/uk-austerity-poverty.html)

In this trenchant and eye-opening piece, Goodman highlights the inherent injustices of austerity policies with respect to who shoulders the burdens. The personal testimonials in the piece make the bitter point that austerity is less an economic policy than a deliberate strategy to destroy the remnants of UK’s social welfare system—an attack against the working class.

5.5 Read “After Carillion—The Struggle to Democratize Social Services.” (6 minutes)

Leys, Colin. “After Carillion—The Struggle to Democratize Social Services,” The Bullet, January 24, 2018.

<https://socialistproject.ca/2018/01/after-carillion-struggle-to-democratize-social-services/>

[\(https://socialistproject.ca/2018/01/after-carillion-struggle-to-democratize-social-services/\)](https://socialistproject.ca/2018/01/after-carillion-struggle-to-democratize-social-services/)

Colin Leys’ article on the failure of Carillion in the UK highlights the lessons that must be learned from the collapse of a major corporate subcontractor of public services. Leys’ proposals for a new vision are based on the re-democratization of government and the reclamation of public services by the state and take direct aim at the assumptions underlying neo-liberal ideas concerning public welfare. His push for greater transparency and the strengthening of both central and local government are an essential aspect of his reform strategy.

The Carillion debacle is only one instance of the damage being done by privatization. For a more in-depth description of this process as it relates to the National Health Service.

5.6 Read “NHS Privatisation Failing Patients Warning.” (4 minutes.)

Pollock, Allyson, “NHS Privatisation Failing Patients Warning,” The Guardian. August 15, 2014.

[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/15/nhs-privatisation-failing-patients-](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/15/nhs-privatisation-failing-patients-warnings)

[warnings](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/15/nhs-privatisation-failing-patients-warnings) [\(https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/15/nhs-privatisation-failing-patients-warnings\)](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/15/nhs-privatisation-failing-patients-warnings)