

With so many Democrats scrambling for socialist ideas (national health, free college, guaranteed jobs), what is the best strategy for Republicans?

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I will give an answer that likely offends everyone.

It depends on how popular these ideas prove to be and how well the New Democrats can construct policy.

If the Democrats can sell this and then write stable policy, the Republicans might just have to soak it in. If the Democrats go full commie and write a bunch of hash pipe fan fiction then the GOP can attack.

Lets address the first rhetorical issue. Is this "socialism" in the dirty commie context? Probably not. When you look at our economic "peer" states, most have this stuff to some degree. Pretty much all of our major allies do. This presents a peculiar problem in optics for the GOP. If we are the only ones who don't have any of this and everyone else seems to be doing ok, did Socialism actually win and become the world's default economic system?

That might not be a comfortable debating point. Especially if the other side can convincingly point out that the American Conservatives are actually a hindrance to global economic success. It's not like leftist socialists caused the Great Depression or the Arthur Anderson scandal or the 08 crash or the SnL crisis or any one of a dozen other mini-cockups over the last century. Greedy subpar capitalism with healthy doses of cronyism caused pretty much all of those.

Oh there have been some socialist disasters but France, Germany, Japan, Australia, the UK, Denmark, Canada and all of the Scandinavian countries seem to be doing pretty well and they all have lots of free market capitalism too. Always pointing towards Venezuela, Cuba or Greece is not exactly smart because we've always been in better economic shape than any of these states and have substantially better, even exponentially better economic diversification than any of the failed socialist states.

Canada has pretty good healthcare and for every horror story some fear mongering hack pushes I can point to a Canadian citizen that will laugh at them. Again always defaulting to a worst case scenario is dumb because worse case in Canada is a cakewalk compared to worst case in America. In Canada you have to wait, in America your family goes bankrupt.

Socialized Medicine is an inevitability. It's not if, it's when. What has happened in America is that Healthcare markets have become the principal inflationary driver in the US economy and that's been a longstanding fact. Healthcare is making us poorer and strangely enough we have a system that also makes us sicker. We are fatter, more addicted, more depressed, less active than anyone else in the successful developed world and we might actually be getting dumber, on average than

our peers.

That's bad.

The ACA was actually an attempt to fix healthcare without going socialized. Medicare works and so does Medicaid. If they have faults, it's that they get scammed too often. Which could be solved by more draconian punishments for criminal activity. How did Rick Scott go from defrauding taxpayers to the Florida Governor's Mansion to the US Senate? Because he was allowed too.

The ACA, as originally conceived, was actually a decent bill. It had the government option and important re-insurance protocols. Both of which got torched in Committees. The finalized Bill was still better than the previous system, which was not working very well.

The problem with the ACA is actually politicization. Not the policy itself. If Republicans had gotten in and tweaked it into something more functional rather than gutting it they could've stolen the political thunder but instead they fixated on the individual mandate and bemoaned the broken bits that they broke out of political spite. They could've written in those wonderful interstate market proposals that they think are great but every State Insurance Commissioner hates and every HMO refuses to discuss.

Meh.

The problem is that the current system has huge money to be made off of the aging baby boomers. That's money on a timer though. The ACA was meant to shore up the system to get us over the hump. It might have done that if half the country wasn't trying to kill it all of the time. If it fails the only viable option might be an NHS.

The problem with NHS is that they aren't well equipped to handle the Boomers. That seems to be the most common issue with all of them. Again, getting over the hump.

We should also face a basic fact. There is NO "free" Healthcare outside of maybe the gulf states. Every country with an NHS funds it through some tax mechanism, often some kind of VAT. The funding has to be tweaked periodically but one of the major issues seems to be that American Companies refuse to cooperate with foreign NHS systems or at least pretend too but in reality plan on the long term profitability of universal coverage in smaller markets.

If everyone else can do this, why can't we? The problem is not actually in healthcare markets but in all of the other markets that might take a hit if healthcare was actually a public concern. Remember we are the sickest of the industrialized western democracies. Our diets are unhealthy and we are frequently exposed to elements that are bad for us, chemicals, radiation, drugs...

The French smoke cigarettes like its 1972, they drink in the daytime, eat carbs all of the time yet manage to be healthier than we are... we share genetics so what gives? They can do this, why can't we?

The problem the GOP has with healthcare is that they philosophically ascribe to the concept of Let the Buyer Beware. This simply doesn't work with healthcare because the negative downside is Death. Death alters the dynamic. The public is simply done with Death being a "market outcome". People dying, because they are poor is not moral. Jimmy Kimmel's heartfelt plea to Congress struck a nerve because that position is the default position of most of the American People and the balancing act between a babies life and money is and always will be a lose for the party that claims to be Pro-Life.

Abortion is effectively a cost savings to public coffers. No one wants to admit this because it's ugly but the practice saves money. That isn't actually relevant to the deeper issues but economic concerns are a principal driver in the ongoing debate.

To eliminate Abortion in the United States will require Universal Healthcare because of the complexities involved in actual abortion considerations. This dichotomy has been a barrier for years but it's getting worse.

Now the second biggie is "Free College".

We have some elements of tuition paid college now but not enough and often not in the right places. Many states offer Education majors free tuition with the provision that you pull at least 5 years in state and often in rural areas. Others do that for Medical Degrees.

This is the first issue to address. The need for certain degrees in certain places. Often degrees that pay low or are difficult to finish are tied to places where college grads don't want to end up.

It is to societies benefit that we produce certain things and that requires certain skill sets. We need teachers and we need Medical Doctors and we always need Engineers. These are things that a free college plan should produce.

We have plenty of lawyers and plenty of MBAs. These are useful but perhaps not necessary. These are real skill sets though. Colleges today offer programs that are far less valuable to wider society and these degrees shouldn't necessarily qualify for public subsidization.

A major in Renaissance French Poetry has value but perhaps not to the general public. Sports Medicine is a viable degree but it's a half measure that falls well short of public need. Get a full nursing degree or a full medical doctorate.

The monetary model of colleges and universities has changed too. These are all operating as for profit operations and many put education behind funding requirements. The actual "for profit" schools produce often worthless degrees that have very little value in the job market.

Then there is the party atmosphere that exists around many universities. The public is not going to freely subsidize a bunch of young Brett Kavanaughs putting booze in

their butts.

So producing STEM degrees at accredited universities with rigorous timelines is viable. Granting kids 6 years to “find themselves” on the public dime is not.

We've recently gotten reports of institutions abusing the GI Bill to the detriment of veterans. Including some for profit schools enrolling wounded veterans with brain injuries. Much like with Medicare fraud, these institutions need to be hammered for this behaviour. People need to go to prison for this type of fraud.

Realistically we've run into a couple of issues regarding colleges.

The first issue that represents a major challenge is the monetization of students. The Federal Government turns a profit on the Student Loan program and have rules built in the pretty much make defaulting impossible. They can garnish tax returns and wages essentially until a borrower dies if need be. As a result, making college free creates a revenue loss for Washington DC. Monetization goes much farther though. Many universities require freshmen to live in dorms and that necessitates eating in the cafeteria. Those two expenses combined exceed tuition for many in-state students. Are we intending to subsidize student living and dining expenses? This issue crops up with student athletes on scholarships who play ball but can barely afford to eat in the off season. If we do cut money in for food and lodging what are the guidelines placed on that? Many “cafeterias” are actually Food Courts with franchise restaurants serving what is effectively junk food.

Textbooks are a long running scam that now have the schools by the short and curlies. My last few text book purchases were exorbitant and riddled with typos. Are taxpayers now going to prop up this scheme?

Is this even necessary? It would seem that an expansion of PEL grants would achieve a lot of what's desired here. Most Community Colleges are equipped to handle the necessities and are generally geared for the local economy. That means instead of a glut of Accountants we might also have an adequate number of heavy diesel mechanics. That latter job pays well, sometimes very well, and is something many places kind of lack.

When I graduated high school in the early 90's, we were more or less told that we almost had to go to college, if we wanted real jobs. That wasn't entirely true but it was the prevailing wisdom. Once we got to college the options were staggering and I remember certain programs that seemed like goof offs were notoriously hard to get into (think Drama and Dance), specifically because there were so many unfocused students wandering about somewhat aimlessly.

Today my generation are still paying for that college experience because they took out loans to have it. That's problematic but the issue is not that college was too expensive but rather the associated cultural elements of college were designed to make money more than exceptional citizens. For Gen X-era young adults the military offered more value, I think, and offered the option of pursuing higher education later. Not to mention that in the 90's, the Navy and Air Force offered technical training that was only matched by a handful of hardcore engineering schools and

only surpassed by MIT, Cal Poly Tech and maybe Stanford.

We can't enlist 10 million kids in the military every three years though and the military is today as selective, sometimes more so, than most colleges. An Associates Degree is actually helpful for getting in to the Service now.

Perhaps some domestic version of the Peace Corps would fit in to this New Democrat proposal. We had that sort of thing in the New Deal and it seemed to work pretty well then, but this is a different time with different challenges.

So on the first two topics we could do either, if done well we would all ultimately benefit. Let's not kid ourselves though, neither is as simple as throwing money at a problem. That seldom actually solves problems.

Both issues have wider economic impacts in the short term and both are areas where we already have large amounts of white collar fraud.

The problem is the fraud. If we nailed the heads of a couple of fraudsters to the floor we could cut down on some of these problems. Wrist slapping and fines clearly don't work.

This is part of a wider issue with our criminal justice system. We incarcerate huge numbers of people for often petty crimes but let the largest thieves off with fines and a promise not to do it again. This actually encourages stealing from the Federal Government who you would think would be the absolute worst entity to steal from.

This happens because these thieves actually become political donors. They steal so much money they can afford to buy politicians and in a few cases actually become politicians themselves, because they know a good Con when they see one.

Solving this issue will be culturally harder for Washington than embracing some pseudo-socialism.

Now let's address the Guaranteed Jobs premise.

This one is crazy. The government can't guarantee a job. It can't even guarantee jobs to veterans any longer and that's a thing we actually try to do.

Even under a full socialist model there is going to be unemployment. Even full Communist systems experienced periods of under employment and those periods, when prolonged, had a hand in collapsing those systems.

We will have to address the future labor issue. Per worker production has shot through the roof over the last 25 years. Wages have been flat and actual labor hours have decreased but been offset by economic expansion.

The first issue is increased automation. We can now do with one person and machinery what used to take 3 people using more primitive machines. This is not something that will reverse. No decision making business owner is going to

willingly go back to being vulnerable to labor shortages if possible.

Technologists and Futurists keep telling us we are right on the cusp of a technological revolution in automation. Vehicles that drive themselves, machines that keep other machines operational so those machines can continue running assembly lines with only a handful of carbon based humans around to check for bugs.

We've already seen this to a degree. Every grocery store has that annoying self checkout aisle, that never works quite right. Applebee's has started putting tablets on the table that take orders and process your credit card for payment. Both still have an actual human involved in the process but that human handles more and interacts less with the customers and this is in the sectors that have actually expanded in the last 25 years and employ the largest number of human workers, Restaurants and Retail.

Both Washington and Wall Street are going to have problems in the future when automation starts to cause large scale unemployment.

Idle hands are the Devil's playground.

Bored Americans are dangerous Americans.

Yet Washington can't just create jobs out of thin air. Especially if there is no need to fill. A planned education model could help with this as we could use risk assessment techniques and economic forecasting to plan for technical needs over ten and twenty year windows but even that can get wonky. The American Markets can do weird things that are hard to plan for.

At some point in the future we will break a couple of barriers that will have serious economic consequences.

The first is energy. Currently we run on dinosaur juice, which is a labor intensive global endeavor that employs a couple million people. These are good jobs but fossil fuels have enormous downsides both ecological and geopolitical. Over the last decade efficiency in energy production as well as increased access has created a situation where shortages are far less likely. America became energy independent for the first time in decades. We buy from outside now just to save our strategic reserves and lower costs.

Some kid, probably in Japan, is going to eventually crack the magnetic containment issue to make nuclear fusion viable. Or the eggheads at CERN in Switzerland will figure out how to make Antimatter Annihilation Reactors economically feasible. Or the tech behind solar capture and storage will reach a point where it exceeds need.

Any of these outcomes will produce a scenario where energy scarcity will be purely a man-made fiction. Some argue we have that now, man-made scarcity to drive up profits.

Energy scarcity and access has been the major driver of human conflict (at least on the global level) for the last few decades. Solar capture or fusion will eliminate

that and make energy effectively cheap and at some point virtually free.

Capitalism as we know it will have to adapt.

The next barrier is food production. The US produces more food than anyone else right now. It is in fact our single most important market sector and our greatest geopolitical tool. To some degree or another, we feed everyone. Advances in food science though have put us not far from the point where feeding everyone is truly cost effective. We have the capacity now such that famine and deprivation shouldn't actually happen but aren't that far off from where it's unconscionable that it is allowed to happen anywhere.

Water access is a problem but free energy means desalinization is no longer cost prohibitive.

When Food, Water and Energy supplies hit that level, very likely around the same time, we will face something that's never happened before. We will live in a truly Post Scarcity Economy.

Can American style Capitalism survive that?

Capitalism as a concept will be fine but the "Masters of the Universe" will have lost their major asset, scarcity, in controlling markets.

There are jobs in all of this. A completely new energy infrastructure would be needed for fusion and solar capture already employs a million people in China.

This post scarcity society is closer than we might think. Many people reading this will very likely see some element of it in their lifetime.

This is the future labor market American Political planners need to be prepping for. One where increased automation reduces the need for labor but where an entirely new infrastructure will be needed to maintain global competitiveness. We no longer have the ability to control energy markets and soon might not have the ability to control food markets. That means that artificially engineering scarcity for profit reasons may not be viable from a National Security standpoint.

China fully embraced solar capture because they don't have dinosaur juice and energy shortages in modern China are a recipe for civil unrest. The Chinese are just as addicted to their smartphones as Westerners. That decision will not reverse and solar capture is extremely popular in major markets like Australia, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina and Europe. Americans have taken to it too, despite the political infighting that surrounds it.

Obama seemed to have lost on his "Green Jobs" initiative. An attempt to get everyone working coupled with weaning us off dinosaur juice. Yet, ten years later the very Conservative South glitters from a sky view, because the South East is blanketed with Solar Farms. We very likely screwed up not building the panels here but that's in the past now.

There are jobs in future America they just won't be the jobs of the first half of the 20th Century. Many won't be the product of politicians either. Sure we got lucky with the internet, which Al Gore and a bipartisan Senate kinda get some credit for and solar panels have put a lot of people to work. Yet most political schemes for employment fail.

We argue about immigration but that's mostly about demographics more than jobs and the economic underpinning of that argument is actually the deep seeded complaint that wages in this country haven't gone up since Jimmy Carter was President.

The problem isn't jobs, its wages. Regular people don't make enough and the standard political solution seems to be to borrow, both publicly and privately and Americans, as a whole, on both sides of the political spectrum, are coming to the conclusion that enough is enough with the debt slavery. This sentiment gave us both Trump and Occupy!

I hope these progressives can actually do something. The Tea Party utterly failed in reversing the debt cycle trap because they got infiltrated by the Republican pro-corporate establishment. Seduced by the Darkside.

The Clintonian Wing of the Democrats will inevitably try the same thing on these new batches of Mr Smith goes to Washington political novices. There are enough of them, this time, that they might actually pull it off to some degree and they have a Speaker that is less ideological than before.

They just need to write good policy and they need to sell it to the electorate. Pelosi can't sell it, neither can Schumer or Hoyer. One of these kids might though.

That's where the Tea Party failed. They couldn't sell it, and made it worse when they couldn't write it either.

The current Republican Party is an absolute mess. They have a President they neither understand nor trust. Internally they can't agree on anything, not immigration nor healthcare or foreign policy. They let their dumbest members speak in public, repeatedly shooting themselves in the foot. They claim to hate government waste and mounting debt, but every time we give them the keys to the kingdom they produce massive waste and massive debt.

Does it matter how they approach the New Democrats? They don't agree internally, on anything anymore so they will all agree that anything the Democrats offer up is bad, wrong, dumb yet fail to offer up anything else that isn't from the 40-year old Reagan Revolution handbook. Most of which put them in the situations they are in now.

Basically the Republicans need to figure out what they are ACTUALLY FOR and then just be honest about that. It's not a hard concept to grasp but I simply don't believe most of them anymore because all I ever hear is what they are against.

That's why they keep failing. It's all negative all of the time.