

Socialism

Modern socialism arose in the nineteenth century and was grounded in the writings of Karl Marx. Marx emphasized social ownership over individual ownership. Marx argued that the control of the means of production including both physical and human resources should be under social control. The greater part of society is composed of those engaged in labor and therefore social control equates to control by the working people in society. The control of production exercised by working people would lead to a democratic system but not democracy, as we understand it today. Marx believed that a socialism system would result in a minimal governmental apparatus and no need for armed forces. People would willingly contribute what they were able and would receive in return what they needed. The resulting system would be called communism. Socialism in Marx is based on an inevitable historical process.

More recently socialism as a political philosophy has been influenced by Richard Tawney and Anthony Wright. Modern socialism adheres to Marx's belief in social ownership of the means of production. The primary focus of modern socialism is on the ideal of social equality. Socialism is viewed as the completion of democracy by extending political democracy into economic life and creating economic democracy. Socialists argue that the extension of democracy into the economic sphere is necessary because capitalism depends upon exploitation of resources to enhance the wealth and power of individuals at the expense of society. Socialists argue that there is no way to morally justify this concentration of wealth and power. Socialists see liberals' ideas about individual rights or freedom as defective. Thus, modern socialism is based on a moral critique of capitalism rather than on an historical process.

Freedom socialists believe needs to be reinterpreted so that all can enjoy it. Central to this interpretation is the abolition of property rights, which are seen as a restraint on true freedom. This interpretation is broadly construed to include not only physical and financial property but also intellectual property. In the latter case, it is argued that an individual's talents and abilities are the result of a random event to which the recipient made no contribution and therefore has no exclusive claim to them. Further, the products of society should be the result of planned production directed at meeting human needs. From this view social justice requires an equitable distribution of goods with which to meet universal human needs. Modern socialism places the

primacy of the state, as the embodiment of society, over the primacy of the individual.

Adapted from lectures by Jeremy Shearmur of the Australian National University.