

# We Love Free Stuff ... As Long As Someone Else Is Paying For It

It's become Democratic Party orthodoxy, at least if you're a progressive running for president: First, you righteously demand that the richest Americans pay their "fair share" which is a top tax rate of *at least* 70 percent. Then you promise "free" college at public universities for everyone. After that, you say that health care is a right and demand "Medicare for all." For good measure you throw in that everyone who wants a job will be guaranteed a job, maybe even a guaranteed annual income, and of course, in the short run, an increase in the minimum wage.

This is why Howard Schultz, the former Starbucks CEO, says he won't run for president as a Democrat and is contemplating a run as an independent – because the party has moved so far to the left that he doesn't recognize it anymore. In today's Democratic Party, a centrist like Schultz is considered out of the mainstream; in their eyes, he's the radical. Hello?

"I've been a Democrat, but I am no longer," he said. "I don't affiliate myself with the Democratic Party, who's so far left, who basically wants the government to take over health care, which we cannot afford, the government to give free college to everybody, and the government to give everyone a job. ... We can't afford it."

This is blasphemy in progressive America, where they love diversity except diversity of political opinion. But if Shultz thinks the American people are too smart to be suckered in by pie in the sky socialism, he might want to think again. A recent Hill-HarrisX poll found that 59 percent of registered voters support a 70 percent tax bracket for the wealthiest

Americans – and that includes 45 percent of Republicans! And a Fox poll shows an even higher percentage, 70 percent of registered voters, support the idea.

And then there's the new progressive congresswoman from Minnesota, Ilhan Omar, who thinks a 70 percent tax rate may be too low. "We could increase the taxes that people are paying who are the extremely wealthy in our communities. So 70 percent, 80 percent, we've had it as high as 90 percent," Omar said before adding the mandatory mantra of the progressive left: "The one percent must pay their fair share."

Elizabeth Warren, another progressive who wants to be president, isn't happy with merely raising taxes on *income*. She wants a two percent annual *wealth tax* on Americans with a net worth of more than \$50 billion.

So let's review some familiar statistics: Households in the top 20 percent of income pay 87 percent of all federal income taxes. The bottom 50 percent pays about three percent. So who's not paying their "fair share"?

And so despite all the bromides about how fair-minded we Americans are, let's not forget this tidbit of reality: Voters love free stuff, as long as someone else is paying for it.

Taking shots at wealthy Americans is nothing new, of course, in Democratic politics. Dividing Americans by how much money they make, turning the middle and lower economic classes against the wealthy is part of the liberal/progressive playbook. Waging class warfare is what they do – for votes.

And they know that socialism isn't a scary concept anymore, especially to young Americans who never heard of Venezuela or Margaret Thatcher, let alone her famous line about how the "problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money."

All this left-wing economic insanity got me to thinking about

one of my favorite books, the 1957 classic by Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*.

It's a novel about how the government of the United States punishes successful business people, how it sees them as the villains of society, and how a mysterious heroic man called John Galt convinces business leaders to walk away from their companies as a "strike" by productive individuals against the "looters."

Rand's said her goal for writing the novel was "to show how desperately the world needs prime movers and how viciously it treats them" and to portray "what happens to the world without them."

What happened in *Atlas Shrugged* is that the most successful business people did in fact drop out of society and guess what ...without them the economy collapsed; America sank into a great Depression.

And imagine if, in real life, the wealthiest Americans followed John Galt's lead and said something like, "You might be able to confiscate our wealth but you can't stop us from dropping out. You can't make us keep our businesses open. You can't stop us from furloughing workers as a protest against your toxic class warfare malarkey."

What would all those Americans who think that socking it to the rich is a great idea, think then?

In my less generous moments, I root for the kind of chaos that would ensue if the rich said, "We've had enough!" And I (admittedly ungraciously) think it might actually be fun to see those suddenly scared faces when they learn that Lady Thatcher was right about how the party ends when the government runs out of other people's money.

Like the ending of *Atlas Shrugged*, they'll be begging the rich to come back, to open their businesses, to resuscitate the

economy and give them back their jobs.

Where have you gone John Galt? With so many progressive presidential wannabes vilifying success and offering “free” stuff in exchange for votes, America needs you now more than ever.