Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

Common Error No. 7 [1]

Written by **Dr Madsen Pirie** [2] | Saturday 12 January 2008

7. "True socialism has never been tried."

Neither has 'true' capitalism. If it was capitalism that has been tried in capitalist countries, then it was socialism that was tried in socialist ones. We compare like with like. Either we talk about the record of both capitalism and socialism in the real world, with all its compromises and imperfections, or we talk about some theoretical ideal of what each might be, if only the world and the people in it were different.

Too often would-be socialists want to compare capitalism in practice with some idea they have of what a socialist utopia might be like. The truth is that socialism was tried in many countries in different forms and had a deplorable record in all of them. It was characterized by suffering, shortages and the suppression of human freedom. In most cases it was accompanied by mass murder.

This is no accident of a revolution betrayed, but an inherent flaw in the idea itself. It seeks to make men and women into something they are not and do not want to be. It seeks to make them conform to the socialist's vision of what he or she thinks they ought to be. Since real men and women are self-motivated and have their own desires and preferences, in a socialist state they must be forced to behave differently. Compulsion is thus at the very core of socialism.

Capitalism, with its free markets and free choices has, for all its warts, proved more successful, more efficient and more humane. It delivers the goods far better than do socialist economies, and it manages to do so while allowing a far greater range of freedoms. It goes with political freedoms, free media and freedom of association, employment and travel, all of which are denied in socialist countries.

blog comments powered by Disqus [4]

Source URL: http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/tax-and-economy/common-error-no-7

Links:
[1] http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/tax-and-economy/common-error-no-7
[2] http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5779
[3] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[4] http://disqus.com