

The Delray Democrat

From Each According to His Gullibility¹

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Most Americans reject the so-called communist creed: “from each according to his ability; to each according to his needs.” Many of us also reject, but are powerless to reform, the “crony capitalist creed” that defines our current economic system: “*from each according to his gullibility; to each according to his greed.*”

Crony capitalism is why billionaire CEOs are taxed at a lower rate than their secretaries and why huge corporations pay little or no tax. It’s all “perfectly legal” because they own the Republican Party and rent key Democrats.

Americans weren’t always so accepting and powerless. When FDR’s New Deal took aim at the crony capitalism that had caused the Great Depression, it infuriated the plutocrats, bankers, and business magnates of the day. They denounced him as a “socialist” without understanding that he was actually saving capitalism. He defiantly responded that he “welcomed” their hatred, and the American people elected him three more times.

Had he not died at the relatively young age of 63, FDR might have presided over the creation of a *second* Bill of Rights, one that would have addressed economic inequality. As he explained in his final State of the Union [address](#), the “political rights” provided by our Bill of Rights guaranteed “rights to life and liberty” but are “inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.”

Many of the economic rights he proposed are today part of the social safety net provided in most European countries but remain mere pipe dreams here. Perhaps that’s why America ranked No. 19 in the 2022 “[World Happiness Index](#),” behind all of Scandinavia and most of Europe.

Of course, FDR did preside over the creation of an American middle class that was the envy of the world and lasted for nearly four decades. Then crony capitalism resurfaced with the election of the man Bette Davis once called “little Ronnie Reagan.” She added that “little” referred not to his height but “his acting talent.” One cringes at the thought that – had he not refused the role – Reagan and not Bogey might have been Rick in Casablanca.

That said, a grade B actor is still a far better actor than your average politician. Aided by dog whistle appeals to racism, Reagan divided American workers and managed to deceive a generation of Americans into believing that “government was the problem and not the solution.”

Four decades later, “Reagan Democrats” continue to vote against their economic interests, waiting in vain for the “trickle down” from Republican tax “cuts” that overwhelmingly benefit the wealthiest Americans and the largest corporations. And today many are voting against their very

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lives as well.

Florida's Republican governors and legislatures have refused federal funding to expand Medicaid to the 800,000 Floridians who earn too little to afford insurance but too much to qualify for Medicaid. As a consequence, a recent [study](#) estimated that 2,776 Floridians had died prematurely and unnecessarily over the prior four years.

They died, and Rick Scott [reportedly](#) took advantage of a tax loophole to escape estate and gift taxes. He wasn't alone, and it's all perfectly legal. It's crony capitalism: "from each according to his gullibility, to each according to his greed."