


The Road to Serfdom: 15 Quotes

F.A. Hayek published *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944 as a response to the Russian communists and the German and Italian fascists of the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s, as well as to those in  other parts of the West that might be tempted by the allure of a society based on total security or equality.

Hayek worried that the impulses for planning and power by the intellectual elite and the desire for security and equality by the people could be ruinous to free societies. He believed that those who argue most for giving the public freedom and security by increasing the power of the state would be the very individuals who would put the public on the road to serfdom. It is impossible for a society to work toward one end, for example equality or material security, and to keep its freedom. In the end, according to Hayek, the masses will become serfs, serving those who hold the power in government.

Below are fifteen quotes from *Road to Serfdom* that will give you an idea of some of his concerns. If you haven't read the book, it's a good one to add to your reading list.

Fifteen quotes from Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*:

1. "As is so often true, the nature of our civilization has been seen more clearly by its enemies than by most of its friends."
2. "...the promise of greater freedom has become one of the most effective weapons of socialist propaganda ... what was promised to us as the Road to Freedom was in fact the High Road to Servitude."
3. "...the system of private property is the most important

guarantee of freedom, not only for those who own property, but scarcely less for those who do not. It is only because the control of the means of production is divided among many people acting independently that nobody has complete power over us.

4. "The common features of all collectivist systems may be described, in a phrase ever dear to socialists of all schools, as the deliberate organization of the labors of society for a definite social goal."

5. "...democratic socialism, the great utopia of the last few generations, is not only unachievable, but that to strive for it produces something so utterly different that few of those who now wish it would be prepared to accept the consequences, many will not believe until the connection has been laid bare in all its aspects."

6. "The [classical] liberal argument is in favor of making the best possible use of the forces of competition as a means of coordinating human efforts, not an argument for leaving things just as they are."

7. "Our freedom of choice in a competitive society rests on the fact that, if one person refuses to satisfy our wishes, we can turn to another."

8. "...socialism means the abolition of private enterprise, of private ownership of the means of production, and the creation of a system of 'planned economy' in which the entrepreneur working for profit is replaced by a central planning body."

9. "Hitler did not have to destroy democracy; he merely took advantage of the decay of democracy and at the critical moment obtained the support of many to whom, though they detested Hitler, he yet seemed the only man strong enough to get things done."

10. "By giving the government unlimited powers, the most

arbitrary rule can be made legal; and in this way a democracy may set up the most complete despotism imaginable.”

11. “The younger generation of today has grown up in a world in which in school and press the spirit of commercial enterprise has been represented as disreputable and the making of profit is immoral, where to employ a hundred people is represented as exploitation but to command the same number as honorable.”

12. “Once you admit that the individual is merely a means to serve the ends of the higher entity called society or the nation, most of those features of totalitarian regimes which horrify us follow of necessity.”

13. “It is essential that we should relearn frankly to face the fact that freedom can be had only at a price and that as individuals we must be prepared to make severe material sacrifices to preserve our liberty.”

14. “Probably it is true that the very magnitude of the outrages committed by the totalitarian governments, instead of increasing the fear that such a system might one day arise in more enlightened countries, has rather strengthened the assurance that it cannot happen here.”

15. “Nothing makes conditions more unbearable than the knowledge that no effort of ours can change them...”