

# Central planners have a long history of controlling birth

Even after all these years of experience, socialism still has a reputation for being a humane alternative to capitalism. It's preposterous because socialism means controlling or stealing people's property, whereas capitalism mean nothing more or less than the freedom to own, accumulate, and trade property.

But that's not all that socialism means. It also means running people's lives. Once you drill down to the implications, it can get chilling and deeply immoral.

## The Anarchy of Human Production

Think of the following. Under conditions of freedom, in which government does not determine the ultimate direction and shape of social evolution, people can procreate as they choose. They can develop private relationships, marry, raise families, and make any of their own reproductive decisions without asking for government permission. This necessarily means that demographics take their own course without centralized direction.

No true socialist society can permit this to happen. People use resources. If you allow their creation to be subject to the randomness of people's choices, you give away everything. If you aspire to control society, you have to control its demographics above all else. You have to end the freedom to procreate without permission.

For this reason, China's one-child-per-household rule was not an aberration; it was a fulfillment of the desire to plan the social order. The opposite policy governed a [communist Romania](#), with a demand that all women bear five children.

It was true in Nazi Germany too. The law called for maximum procreation by Germans. Laws against race mixing were heavily enforced. And non-Germans were seriously discouraged from reproducing and often sterilized. This was “national socialism” at work. It had to control the demographics according to a centrally dictated plan.

A century ago, the U.S. was afflicted by the same impulse. A generation of academics, policy makers, and public intellectuals rallied around a solution to that generation’s demographic panic. Too many of the wrong people were reproducing and getting rich. Something had to be done. So a series of policies were implemented to realize the dreams of the eugenicists.

What were these policies? Sterilization was common of course, but this was only a start. [Minimum wages](#) started as a eugenics program: a high bar to enter the workforce would effectively ban “inferiors and imbeciles” from earning money, and hence starve them out: exterminating them in one generation. (That’s a paraphrase from a mainstream economics book by Frank Taussig that appeared in 1912.)

Other policies inspired by eugenics included zoning (keeping the fit and unfit separated), segregation (same), Jim Crow laws (no race mixing), [working hours limits](#) that targeted women (women in a eugenics regime serve only one purpose), [immigration](#) restrictions (again, designed to keep the national genetic pool pure and prevent “mongrelization”), and even welfare payments that were structured to disincentivize women from working).

## **Eugenics Is Still With Us**

These policies are all still with us, even if the early rationale has been entirely forgotten. Pretty much we are happy to whitewash this ugly history, and pretend as if all this legislation was designed to help people rather than

control and/or exterminate them.

Surely eugenics could never return? Surely we are more civilized than that?

Actually, the demand of the regime to manage demographics never entirely goes away. Controlling the population mix and demographic trends goes with the aspirations to control society. Hence does Plato's own totalitarian vision of the social order require that the state control women from pregnancy and take full control of the child after birth. That certainly implies permission to procreate. No state that seeks to manage people can possibly permit the anarchy of the complete freedom to reproduce much less raise and train the child.

And today, with the "alt-right" on the rise in Europe and the US, demographic fears are a driving force of politics. It doesn't matter whether the concern is from the left or the right, the proposed solution to the anarchy of human reproduction is always authoritarian and fundamentally threatening to human liberty.

## **Mises the Prophet**

Ludwig von Mises, in his devastating 1922 takedown of socialism, spelled this out. He had seen that socialism would necessarily require the nationalization of women and also the complete control of birth. Socialism isn't just about the control of liberty and property but about the control of people and their sex lives. He was largely alone in having this insight (especially among economists, many of whom were responsible for mapping out eugenics plans).

"Without coercive regulation of the growth of population," he wrote, "a socialist community is inconceivable. A socialist community must be in a position to prevent the size of the population from mounting above or falling below certain

definite limits. It must attempt to maintain the population always at that optimal number which allows the maximum production per head.

“Equally with any other order of society it must regard both under- and over-population as an evil. And since in it those motives, which in a society based on private ownership of the means of production harmonize the number of births with the limitations of the means of subsistence, would not exist, it will be obliged to regulate the matter itself. How it will accomplish this need not be here discussed. Nor is it relevant to our purpose to inquire whether its measures will serve eugenic or ethnological ideas. But it is certain that even if a socialist community may bring ‘free love,’ it can in no way bring free birth. The right to existence of every person born can be said to exist only when undesirable births can be prevented.”

This was a very telling criticism at the time it was written. In the English-speaking world, books like *The Passing of the Great Race* were on every coffee table, books that forecast the death of the white race and hence the end of civilization. Demographic panic was everywhere. And it was precisely through this fear that socialism first came to the United States.

## Mises on the Nazis

A few decades later, we saw the results. The full implications of such policies were realized in Nazi Germany. The urge to control demographics led to the building of a killing machine without parallel, all constructed and deployed in the name of science.

The influence of the U.S. experience with eugenics was not lost on Mises, [who wrote the following in 1947](#):

*“The Nazi plan was more comprehensive and therefore more pernicious than that of the Marxians. It aimed at abolishing*

*laissez-faire not only in the production of material goods, but no less in the production of men. The Führer was not only the general manager of all industries; he was also the general manager of the breeding-farm intent upon rearing superior men and eliminating inferior stock. A grandiose scheme of eugenics was to be put into effect according to 'scientific' principles.*

*We are living through yet another round of mass demographic panic. The wrong people are coming here, we are told. "It is vain for the champions of eugenics to protest that they did not mean what the Nazis executed. Eugenics aims at placing some men, backed by the police power, in complete control of human reproduction. It suggests that the methods applied to domestic animals be applied to men. This is precisely what the Nazis tried to do. The only objection which a consistent eugenicist can raise is that his own plan differs from that of the Nazi scholars and that he wants to rear another type of men than the Nazis. As every supporter of economic planning aims at the execution of his own plan only, so every advocate of eugenic planning aims at the execution of his own plan and wants himself to act as the breeder of human stock...."*

*"The mass slaughters perpetrated in the Nazi horror camps are too horrible to be adequately described by words. But they were the logical and consistent application of doctrines and policies parading as applied science and proved by some men who in a sector of the natural sciences have displayed acumen and technical skill in laboratory research."*

## **Demographic Panic and Statism**

We are living through yet another round of mass demographic panic. The wrong people are coming here, we are told. The white race is dying out. We need to enlist experts to tell us who is fit and who is unfit, using the scientific measure of IQ, if nothing else" Such notions are newly popular, and they

are displacing concern for higher ideals like human liberty.

Never mind that the demographic panic is as baseless as the policy conclusion – as it was one-hundred years ago, so it is today. The beauty of a commercial society does not stem from its capacity to fulfill some person's plan for the best end-state of a homogeneous society. The creative magic of freedom is realized in the unexpected delights that emerge from the unplanned interactions of the members of a radical heterogeneous society. Regardless, heterogeneity is not a bug of the social order; it is a feature.

Beware, my friends. They are coming after a fundamental human right.

–

*This article was originally published on [FEE.org](#). Read the [original article](#).*

*Dear Readers,*

*Big Tech is suppressing our reach, refusing to let us advertise and squelching our ability to serve up a steady diet of truth and ideas. Help us fight back by [becoming a member](#) for just \$5 a month and then join the discussion on Parler [@CharlemagneInstitute](#) and Gab [@CharlemagneInstitute](#)!*