

# The In-N-Out Burger Boycott Shows that Under Socialism, Those Who Don't Obey Won't Eat

Last week, Eric Bauman, the chair of the California Democratic Party, [called for a boycott](#) of the popular California hamburger chain In-N-Out Burger.

What was In-N-Out Burger's crime? [Los Angeles Magazine reported](#) that the burger chain had contributed to the Republican Party.

Bauman tweeted a link to the story about the contribution and called the chain "creeps:"

*Et tu In-N-Out? Tens of thousands of dollars donated to the California Republican Party... it's time to #BoycottInNOut—let Trump and his cronies support these creeps... perhaps animal style!*

Californians were not ready to give up eating at the popular chain. John Vigna, communication director for the California Democratic Party, announced the chair's tweet was "just his personal view." Vigna added, "Democrats are very fired up. Chair [Bauman] is definitely giving voice to a feeling a lot of people have right now."

What Vigna calls "giving voice," many of us might call bullying. It is hard to interpret the call for a boycott of In-and-Out as anything but a sign of California's further descent into totalitarianism. Those who don't support the ruling political regime will have their economic livelihood threatened.

Current events and history warn us: A political party demanding loyalty to the party as a condition for doing business is a terrible path to go down.

## **Totalitarians Deploy Economic Threats**

In August, Venezuelan despot [Nicolás Maduro announced](#) that “extraordinary subsidies for gasoline and motor oil will soon be available only to holders of the *Carnet de la Patria*—the Card of the Fatherland.”

The Fatherland Card identifies supporters of the regime; everyone else will pay market prices. Without the subsidy, virtually no Venezuelans can purchase gasoline at current market prices.

Food has already been [used as a political weapon](#) in Venezuela. Without the Fatherland Card, it is difficult to obtain even meager rations of food. Michael Penfold, a business professor in Caracas, observed, “It is really a very powerful control system. They are going to scale this up as much as they can.”

Maduro is simply following the playbook of other totalitarian regimes. Immediately upon obtaining power in 1933, Hitler began to eliminate any opponents, not just Jews. In his book, [The Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany](#), Professor Thomas Childers covers the 1933 “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” which “led to the immediate dismissal of all ‘non-Aryans’ from state-subsidized theaters, orchestras, museums, schools, and research institutions.” Childers continues,

*Jews, at whom the law was aimed, were immediately purged, but even those artists and teachers not directly affected by the Civil Service Law felt the prevailing chill. Many cultural institutions did not wait for the regime to institute*

*changes; they rushed to “coordinate” themselves, voluntarily expelling anyone the Nazis might consider politically undesirable. Newspaper chiefs and magazine editors, reporters, illustrators, musicians, actors, critics, even librarians were sacked.*

Hitler’s goal? Opposition in any segment of society was to be eliminated. Childers continues,

*The regime’s goal, stated openly and acted upon with unflagging zeal, was nothing less than a complete transformation of German politics, culture, and society, coordinating not only governmental institutions but the media, the churches, schools, social clubs, youth organizations, athletic leagues, and cultural institutions of all sorts. The regime sought to mobilize all elements of society, creating National Socialist organizations for women, girls, boys, teachers, students, lawyers, physicians, craftsmen, workers, each with its own uniform, flag, party badges, and slogans (“Barbers, too, Face Great Tasks!”). No one in the “people’s community” was overlooked, and no one could stand outside.*

Childers adds, “Everyone was called on not simply to obey but to believe, to participate.”

In 1936, exiled revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote in his book [\*The Revolution Betrayed\*](#):

*In a country where the sole employer is the state, [opposition] means death by slow starvation. The old principle: “who does not work shall not eat,” has been replaced with a new one: “who does not obey shall not eat.”*

The California Democratic Party is a long way away from being the sole employer of Californians, but they are already demanding obedience. What will happen if their dream of

expanding the role of government continues to be realized?

## The Love of Power

What kind of twisted mindset demands obedience from others? A mindset that loves power.

A few years ago, in an undergraduate principles of economics class, we were discussing Matt Ridley's observation, from his book [\*The Rational Optimist\*](#), that we live far better than did French king Louis XIV in the 17th Century. Ridley describes the opulent lifestyle of the Sun King, who "had dinner each night alone. He chose from forty dishes, served on gold and silver plates. It took a staggering 498 people to prepare each meal."

Ridley compared Louis XIV's lifestyle with a contemporary Parisian "earning the median wage, with a working husband and two children."

Consider this: "The cornucopia that greets you as you enter the supermarket dwarfs anything that Louis XIV ever experienced." Ridley continues,

*You may have no chefs, but you can decide on a whim to choose between scores of nearby bistros, or Italian, Chinese, Japanese or Indian restaurants, in each of which a team of skilled chefs is waiting to serve your family at less than an hour's notice. Think of this: never before this generation has the average person been able to afford to have somebody else prepare his meals.*

Ridley continued to explain more of the advantages of modern living:

*You employ no tailor, but you can browse the internet and instantly order from an almost infinite range of excellent, affordable clothes of cotton, silk, linen, wool and nylon*

*made up for you in factories all over Asia. You have no carriage, but you can buy a ticket which will summon the services of a skilled pilot of a budget airline to fly you to one of hundreds of destinations that Louis never dreamed of seeing. You have no woodcutters to bring you logs for the fire, but the operators of gas rigs in Russia are clamouring to bring you clean central heating. You have no wick-trimming footman, but your light switch gives you the instant and brilliant produce of hardworking people at a grid of distant nuclear power stations. You have no runner to send messages, but even now a repairman is climbing a mobile-phone mast somewhere in the world to make sure it is working properly just in case you need to call that cell. You have no private apothecary, but your local pharmacy supplies you with the handiwork of many thousands of chemists, engineers and logistics experts.*

Ridley's conclusion: The average person living in Paris today has "far more than 498 servants at [their] immediate beck and call."

The clarity of Ridley's thinking transformed some students in the class. Some students were less impressed; others were indifferent.

I was surprised by the ahistorical perspective of those students who did not believe the facts and could not comprehend how far humanity has progressed in the past few centuries. Not surprisingly, these students tended to support a larger role for government. After all, if progress is a given, why not redistribute wealth according to the personal whims of the people.

An even bigger surprise came when one student said he would still rather be Louis XIV than an average person today. "Do you not believe Ridley's facts on progress?" I asked. He responded with a smile, "I do, but I like being able to

exercise power over others.” At first, I thought he was joking, but he was absolutely serious.

Throughout the semester, this same student had no shortage of programs he thought government should be implementing to improve society.

The standard of living we take for granted depends upon minimizing the exercise of coercion. Sadly, this lesson was lost on some in the class.

I’m confident my power-loving former student isn’t cunning and ruthless enough to pose a threat to society. Unlike Eric Bauman, he didn’t seem to be a bully.

Californians think they are on a progressive path. In reality, they are on a path to a totalitarian state where disobedience to the orthodoxy is punished and widespread poverty is the result. That most Californians ignored the call for a boycott is a hopeful sign.

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