

How a Texas Highway Turned One College Professor Away From Socialism

Socialism is the flavor of the day, especially among young people. In both 2010 and 2018 [youth support](#) for socialism measured at 51 percent. Although it has remained steady, support for its opposing ideology – capitalism – fell from 68 percent to 45 percent over the same time period.

Given the college activist environment, can these young scholars change their minds and step away from socialism?

The story of famed scholar and author Richard Weaver suggests such a dramatic change is possible.

Weaver, author of books such as [Ideas Have Consequences](#) and [The Ethics of Rhetoric](#), underwent just such a transition. As an undergraduate, Weaver “embraced socialism after being convinced that the future was firmly on the side of ‘science, liberalism and equalitarianism,’” author Jay Langdale explains in the [February issue](#) of *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*. Weaver eventually transitioned from this youthful embrace of socialism and into a cautious, but ever more convinced, appreciation of conservatism.

Weaver’s self-described conversion ‘up from liberalism’ commenced with his association, as a Vanderbilt graduate student, with the Nashville Agrarians. In 1930, the Nashville Circle had published I’ll Take My Stand, a collection of 12 essays which juxtaposed the Southern agrarian tradition against the Northern industrial way of life. Upon completion of his master’s degree in 1934, he had admittedly grown fond of his Agrarian mentors, but he was reluctant to embrace their particular conservative vision.

Weaver's was a slow transition "up from liberalism." It was not until he was teaching at Texas A&M University a few years later that he finally made the conscious decision to reject the socialism and liberalism of his younger days. Langdale details how Weaver, driving down a Texas highway and pondering his position at Texas A&M, suddenly realized:

I did not have to go back to this job, which had become distasteful, and that I did not have to go on professing the clichés of liberalism, which were becoming meaningless to me. I saw that my opinions had been formed out of a timorous regard for what was supposed to be intellectually respectable, and that I had always been looking over my shoulder to find out what certain others, whose concern with the truth I was beginning to believe to be not very intense, were doing or thinking. It is a great experience to wake up at a critical juncture to the fact that one does have a free will, and that giving up the worship of false idols is a quite practicable proceeding.

Given the [imbalanced political views](#) among college professors, coupled with the groupthink which takes place on campus, it's hard to see today's college instructors making a Weaver-like transition away from socialism. Professors' fear of failing to conform to "what [is] supposed to be intellectually respectable" is reinforced by their woke students. A new event of fanatical political correctness on one college campus or another seems to occur every week, with students demanding changes to the curriculum, names on buildings, or the resignation of faculty or staff members who step out of the arbitrary line of political correctness. With all this pressure to conform, is it any wonder that stories like Weaver's are few and far between?

Perhaps a long drive down a lonesome Texas highway is just what modern academics need. At the very least, it might, for a few hours anyway, get them out of their forced ivory tower

conformity and into the real world.

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