P.S. to the NEWS
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THE FAILURE OF SWEDISH SOCIALISM

Socialism is a failure. There is no example of genuine or lasting socialist success. Yet American socialists have been leading our nation down the socialist road by packaging their product under the false label of liberalism and by promoting misunderstanding and self-delusion about the Swedish experience.

That is the conclusion of Arthur Shenfield, distinguished British scholar, now on a speaking tour across the United States. His careful analysis of the real truth about socialism in Sweden is scheduled for publication under the book title "Paradise Lost."

Few countries in the world have such natural advantages for economic, political and social success as Sweden. It has plenty of living space, rich natural resources, a good trading location, a culturally homogeneous population, a stable government, and the absence of war ever since the Napoleonic era ended 165 years ago.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Sweden acquired the worldwide reputation as a model democratic socialist state and society. Three decades of socialism, however, have produced a Sweden which Shenfield calls "a sick economy and a sick society."

The Gross National Product has been stagnant since 1974 and government expenditures are now 68 percent of the GNP. Economic figurs which show a drastic decline over the last few years include manufacturing production, sales, investment, profits, construction of housing units, steel consumption, and shipbuilding.

Sick benefits are so generous that there is now a permanent percentage of some 20 percent of workers on the sick list. Swedes now speak not of being ill but of being "reported ill." A prominent industrialist described it like this: "We have been hit by a bigger epidemic than the Black Death."

"Reported ill" pay is in addition to five weeks a year in paid vacation and holidays. It is extremely difficult for employers to fire anyone because of the very high severance pay required except in cases of gross misconduct.

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To pay for these extravagant benefits, Swedish people are the most heavily taxed in the world. The middle income worker pays 50 percent or more of his earnings in taxes. Fraud in every part of the welfare system has become epidemic.

The confiscatory tax rate has stimulated a big black market in goods and services. Gunner Myrdal, the leading intellectual of the Swedish welfare state, said, "The tax system is turning Swedes into a gang of hustlers. ... The present tax system is making nine out of ten Swedes criminals."

Socialized health service has completely replaced private care and the "free service" produces long waiting lists for treatment: 4 or 5 months for "priority patients" to get hospital beds, 3 years for a non-acute gallstone operation, 7 years for plastic surgery.

Through a combination of controls, rents are kept well below costs of maintenance and replacement. A large percentage of housing units were built in the 1960s or early 1970s, so the nation is consuming its capital investment in housing.

Educational standards have drastically deteriorated. Examinations are frowned on as unegalitarian, and so high school diplomas are now only the equivalent of what used to be reached three years before graduation. College entrance requirements can be met by what is called "experience of life" instead of by academic qualifications.

Crime has grown so fast that the police in cities have been instructed to ignore burglaries and concentrate on violent crimes. Since prostitution is legal and sexual taboos have been eliminated, many women who hold respectable jobs by day now moonlight as prostitutes by night.

The suicide rate is the highest in Europe. Among the age group 20-25, many more die from suicides even than from traffic accidents. Juvenile delinquency, vandalism, and drug and alcohol addiction have risen dramatically.

Some people and nations can learn from the mistakes of others, and some insist on making their own mistakes. We hope America can learn from the Swedish mistake.

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