



Arguing with Idiots:

How to Stop Small Minds and Big Government

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Publisher: Threshold Editions

Date of Publication: September 2009

ISBN: 9781416595014

No. of Pages: 336

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[Summary published by CapitolReader.com on December 17, 2009]

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About The Author:

Glenn Beck is a nationally syndicated radio host and Fox News television host. He is the author of three No. 1 New York Times bestsellers, *An Inconvenient Book*, *Glenn Beck's Common Sense*, and *The Christmas Sweater*.

General Overview:

Conservatives have found a leader in Glenn Beck and in *Arguing with Idiots*, Beck provides conservatives with the facts and statistics about the big topics at play in American politics today, including gun control, health care, and the environment. Beck answers his critics on the Left as he debates every major issue in this dialogue-formatted guide, which is intended to serve as a handbook for conservatives in confronting their political attackers.

*** Please Note:** This CapitolReader.com summary does *not* offer judgment or opinion on the book's content. The ideas, viewpoints and arguments are presented just as the book's *author* has intended.

In Defense of Capitalism

With the major economic recession of the past few years, the liberals are crying that free-market capitalism has failed. But capitalism is not what has failed; “greed has failed.”

If U.S. capitalism were truly free market, the mess that is the mortgage industry would never have gotten into such trouble. Instead of the government determining what houses are worth or who should get mortgages or how low the interest rates are, the market would have set the rates, “based on risk, reward, and a clear understanding that making bad loans would result in bankruptcy.”

Instead, the government regulates and manipulates the housing market “every step of the way,” resulting in the housing market crash and ensuing recession.

Capitalism is “just a vehicle – we’re the drivers.” When the government regularly steps in to make decisions for individuals and companies, even to assist its citizens, things get nasty.

Bleeding-heart liberals claim that it’s up to the government to care for the poorest and the weakest. But time after time, history shows that Americans helping each other – without government intervention – provides the best way to care for ourselves. For instance, after Hurricane Katrina, private donations to Katrina victims surpassed \$1 billion. FEMA handed out \$6.3 billion, but nearly one quarter of that went to scammers who spent the money on things such as “jewelry, travel, and porn.”

Public/Private partnerships historically haven’t worked, mainly because the motives of private companies and the government are (or should be) different. Here are some examples of failed government-public failures:

1. *Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac*: Fannie and Freddie had an unfair advantage over other mortgage companies because everyone knew that the government wouldn’t let them fail, but fail they did, with \$5 trillion in mortgage liabilities falling on the taxpayers.
2. *Amtrak*: Started by Congress in 1970s, Amtrak loses money every year, but continues to receive government subsidies.
3. *The Postal Service*: Sort of run by themselves, and sort of run by a federally-appointed commission, the Post Office has not been able to implement business strategies necessary to keep in the black, including cutting back to five-day delivery or closing underutilized offices; this has cost the P.O. more than “\$500 million per year for the last 30-plus years.”

Socialist theory supposedly could tackle these problems head-on, but every government that has gone the path of socialism ultimately ends up with “dismal results.” Capitalism works, but it has to be genuinely free market capitalism, without all the government meddling.

The Second Amendment

The Second Amendment reads, “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

Battles are raging over these simple words, and the real debate is over big vs. small government and “where the balance of power in America should reside: with politicians, or with people.” Liberals would have Americans believe that the Second Amendment doesn’t really assure Americans the right to own a gun. “Gun-grabbers” make “bizarre arguments about the punctuation, capitalization, or format of a constitutional amendment they dislike.”

Gun control advocates regularly point to other countries’ gun bans as evidence that we would be safer if regular citizens didn’t own guns. But gun control doesn’t actually work in other countries.

In 1997, England banned handguns. “From 1998 through 2005, the number of deaths and injuries from handguns skyrocketed 340 percent.”

Studies have actually shown that countries with more widespread gun ownership had fewer murders.

Even with police respondents, Americans know that to really protect themselves from a violent intruder, they need a gun because of how long the 911 system takes to get an officer out to your home. “While on hold [with 911] would you rather be holding a loaded handgun – or a wooden spoon?”

Education

For 200 years, education was considered a local and state issue. But then along came Jimmy Carter, and by “the slimmest of margins,” so did the Department of Education. You’d think that, with four times as much money going to public schools as did 40 years ago, things would be a lot better. But they’re not.

With progressives like John Dewey seizing the reins of public education, American students are worse off than they were even a few decades ago; math and reading skills have declined and graduation rates have declined.

Liberals argue against school vouchers for the same reason they hate capitalism: they prefer a government monopoly to prevent free and fair choices for parents. But parents know that when they have a choice between dismal public schools and accountable charter schools, there’s no contest. They shop around the way that everyone shops around for the best prices and quality of any other good or service we buy, and take their money (a.k.a. their children) where they’ll get the best. What’s wrong with that?

Teachers' unions are a big part of the problem; they have "maximum power over the schools with minimum accountability for their failure."

And fail they do, along with our students. The well-intentioned No Child Left Behind Act actually "lowers the bar" rather than levels the playing field. With the high stakes testing system, teachers turn into "cheaters." In order to falsely improve scores, teachers have been caught encouraging "weak students" to stay home sick on test day, changing test answers themselves, and helping solve problems.

In short, the political games being played by unions and government bureaucrats have led "not only to the failing of our children," but may ultimately lead to the "failing of America as well."

America's Energy Future

Everybody is talking about going green. It sounds great, but what's all the hype about? In spite of massive government spending on developing alternative energies, the portion of America's total energy use from renewable energy is the same now as it was in 1981 (about 7%).

"If green energy is as good, cheap and clean as its supporters say it is, then market forces should automatically be making it a growing part of the equation." But it's not.

Part of this is because the green lobby has a real agenda that is much less widely accepted than its pro-environment stance. It's sometimes called the "Watermelon Effect," a core of green policies that "hides a core of wealth-redistribution policies that are as red as Marx's blood."

Big Oil is often vilified as greedy, ripping off everyday Americans. But Big Oil's profit margins (9%) are less than "Microsoft, Apple, Google, Coca-Cola, and Nike." In addition to this, the oil industry pays hundreds of billions in taxes to the government every year. So while "it's easy to drag their executives in front of Congress for their annual tongue-lashing," the government (and stockholders) are benefiting big time from Big Oil's successes.

When the government steps in to regulate the energy structures of the U.S., it doesn't have a good track record. The ethanol debacle is the biggest example of this. Massive government subsidies for corn ethanol pushed farmers to use their corn crops for ethanol instead of for food, which meant that "there wasn't enough left over for food." Prices on everything rose, including non-corn products.

To make matters even worse, corn ethanol has now been shown to be 30% less efficient than gasoline, and, when it burns in an engine, releases *more* greenhouse gasses than regular gas.

We need to let the free market drive which alternative energy sources to develop and promote, instead of artificially creating demand for something that may not even turn out to be all that green anyway.

Unions

When unions first got their start in America, they “gave mistreated and beleaguered workers the right to collectively bargain in the face of tremendous disadvantages.” But now, unions are huge political machines (giving nearly 100% of their lobbying donations to Democratic Congress people) working “against individual rights in favor of special interests.”

Americans who still support unions (and they’re doing it in smaller and smaller numbers, with union membership continuing to decline dramatically) say that it’s because unions help their workers be safer and earn more money than non-union workers. But something hidden in the statistics is the fact that states with more unionization have less private-sector employment growth.

Then there’s the cost to consumers. It’s common sense: if Japanese automakers aren’t having to pay their workers union scale, the U.S. costs of making a car paying union compensation will make U.S. cars more expensive. This puts “U.S. automakers at a severe disadvantage.”

The biggest problem with unions is that they “celebrate mediocrity.” No matter how bad a job a union worker is doing, it’s nearly impossible to fire him. And what’s the point of working harder if the “reward” you’ll reap is the same, guaranteed by the union bosses? There’s no reason to work to be better because your job is secure and your pay is higher. But the end result for America as a whole is shoddy education, bankrupted auto companies, and a government in bed with the unions.

Illegal Immigration

U.S. Code Title 8, Section 1325 states clearly that any individual who crosses or tries to cross the border into the United States other than those places designated as immigration points may be fined or imprisoned. “Approximately two thousand people willfully ignore that statute every day.”

Everyday Americans are pleading with Congress, the judicial system, mayors, etc. to “enforce our laws” regarding illegal immigrants.

One of the major arguments used by activists against the U.S.’s illegal immigration law is that illegal aliens do the jobs Americans won’t do. But this fails to recognize the simplest, most common sense problem with “flooding the market with lots of cheap labor.” Wages for those jobs will go down. In other words, by allowing illegal workers to accept \$3 an hour for work, there’s less demand for fairly paid workers to do those same jobs.

Time and again, when employers have been forced to fire illegal immigrant workers, the playing field is leveled and Americans step up. For example, Swift and Company meat-processing plants (one of those jobs that pro-illegal immigrant advocates say no American wants) lost 9% of their workforce through raids. Immediately after the raids, the company “raised their pay by almost two dollars an hour and hundreds of residents lined up the next day to take the jobs” illegals used to have.

Then there is the cost our nation pays to provide health care for illegal aliens: more than \$4.7 billion per year!

As for crime, “about 17 percent of all those in federal prison are illegal aliens,” even though they “represent only 3 percent of the population.” Most illegal immigrants don’t necessarily want to do violence to Americans, but some do. “Actual terrorists must look at our border with a mix of anticipation and bewilderment.” Our porous borders are a sieve open to those who would do us harm.

Comprehensive immigration reform can only be comprehensive by shutting down the borders and “turning off the job magnet” while enforcing the laws already on the books.

The Nanny State

The Nanny State means well, but ends up using laws to “solve” an issue at the “expense of your personal liberty.”

For example, the Nanny State keeps busy with taxes, regulations of smoking, drinking, eating, or other steps taken by the government to make decisions for you. Often, as in the case of preventing drunk driving, the Nanny State enacts “nuisance laws” that undermine individual liberty by punishing “everyone equally,” not by targeting offenders. A perfect illustration is the ignition-interlock proposed, which requires a driver to pass a Breathalyzer test to start the car.

Rather than honing in on repeat offenders, these types of requirements punish everyone. Nanny State laws “unrealistically” assume that “100 percent of human behavior can be corrected.” This stands in complete opposition to what we know about human nature: there are always going to be people who make bad choices.

Take seat belt laws. Seems okay, right? But what started out as a “secondary law” – you couldn’t be stopped only for not wearing your seat belt, but it could be tacked on to a ticket if you’re pulled over for speeding – is now a “primary” law in some states, meaning you can be pulled over simply for not wearing your seatbelt. Is this because they care about your safety? Probably not. Pulling people over for seatbelt infractions would gift Ohio “nearly \$27 million in revenue a year.”

If someone wants to eat junk food, smoke, and/or not exercise, that's his or her choice. It might seem like the Nanny State's attempt to change the individual's mind is altruistic (and at its point of motivation, it is), but the "Nanny State is poison to a free society, a very dangerous overextension of government that usurps our personal autonomy and undermines a wide variety of freedoms."

Economics 101

Liberals often claim that the rich have it too easy, and that it's time for the richest Americans to pay "their fair share." People who make that ridiculous statement should know these facts

- In 2006, "the richest 1% of Americans paid 39.9% of the country's total income tax bill."
- The top 10% of filers paid 71% of the total.
- The top 50% of earners pay a whopping 97% of the income tax.

In other words, the richest of the rich are already paying *more* than their fair share. We already *have* a progressive tax system.

Additionally, it's important to note that the favorite targets of liberals – the super-rich – are also small-business owners and operators. About two-thirds of them are entrepreneurs and business owners, writing checks to employees and innovating and hiring American workers. If we slam them with even higher tax rates, we are punishing the work they do to help all Americans by taking more of their money.

By *balancing* the federal budget instead of hunting for ways to take more in taxes from hardworking affluent Americans, we would bring our "spending side" down to our "revenues."

The U.S. economy has a myriad of problems, but here's what we can do (both on an individual and a collective level):

- "Get the government out of the way."
- Pay your bills and balance your own budget.
- "Audit every federal agency and find all the waste that can be cut."
- Ensure that taxes only go to pay for the essentials, such as defense and national security.
- Ensure "our politicians put American's future over their own by instituting term limits at all levels."

U.S. Presidents

Progressives talk a lot about bringing progressivism “back” to American politics. Apparently, they haven’t received word that progressivism has never left American politics. The past 100 years in American presidential history show that liberals have had their way for a long time, even when a so-called conservative is in office.

Teddy Roosevelt distrusted the rich and established increasing levels of government regulation and supervision over corporations. In his “New Nationalism” speech of 1910, Roosevelt offered the following “detailed policies”:

- Universal Health Care.
- Social Insurance (now known as Social Security).
- Creation of the Department of Labor.
- Graduated tax (charging higher rates of income tax on large incomes).

Woodrow Wilson believed that the rights laid out in our Constitution weren’t granted by God, as our Founding Fathers did. Instead, Wilson believed that the government granted them. Most importantly, Wilson saw the Constitution as a living document, a product of a certain era, and one that can be changed and altered to suit the times.

Franklin D. Roosevelt made the case that his predecessor (Hoover) had set the nation on a course for high unemployment and simultaneously neglected government oversight of corporations and banks. “Any of this sounding familiar?” Within his first 100 days in office, Roosevelt signed tons of new legislation creating new administrations, acts, and corporations. In spite of all his New Deal spending, here’s what happened with unemployment:

1933: 24.9%
1934: 21.7%
1935: 20.1%
1936: 16.9%
1937: 14.3%
1938: 19%

It wasn’t until World War II that the American economy rebounded. Yet Roosevelt is constantly hailed as one of the best presidents.

Over the years since FDR, the progressive era has continued. Johnson expanded Medicare and created Head Start; Jimmy Carter birthed the Department of Education; even George W. Bush (“progressive-lite”) expanded government with Medicare Part D.

Universal Health Care

The huge debate on health care has been raging for some time now, but apparently people don't want to sit down with the facts. Our health-care system isn't on life support, though you wouldn't know it by listening to the mainstream media or politicians.

Start with the figure of 46 million uninsured Americans.

First, 10 million of those uninsured are illegal immigrants. Then, about 18 million of the uninsured have a household income of more than \$50,000 per year. They *could* buy private insurance, but they choose to spend their money on other things, instead. This is their right, but then they can't complain about not having insurance.

Even if the number of "chronically" uninsured legal American citizens is around 3% of the population, it's "vastly smaller" than the high-pitched debate claims.

Capitalism has provided the highest-quality health care system in the world. While it's true that too many are left out of getting the care they need, the question is "what can rectify" that problem better: a free market or the government?

The answer: free market. The private sector is innovating ways to solve the health-care supply problems by serving those without insurance through:

- eHealthinsurance.com: allows individuals to get dozens of different quotes on health insurance.
- Healthcarebluebook.com: discloses reasonable prices for health procedures and treatments.
- Teladoc and American Well: Pay just \$35 and get to speak with a licensed physician to discuss your symptoms. Virtual clinics are also springing up.
- The No Insurance Club: allows a person to prepay medical expenses and get a low rate in return.

The problems we face as a country don't require academics or politicians. We can tackle them by returning to the Founding Fathers' words of the Constitution, laid out for us here today. And by returning to common sense.

It's vital that we continue "arguing with every idiot" to keep our freedoms our focus.

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