



The Ends of Freedom: Reclaiming America's Lost Promise of Economic Rights, 2023. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

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Mark Paul is an economist and a faculty member, an assistant professor at the Edward J. Bluestein School of Planning and Public Policy, at Rutgers University. He pursued his graduate education in economics at University of Massachusetts at Amherst Massachusetts. This book he authored provides an alternative view away from the complete laissez-faire attitude towards the economy. Libertarians believe in total freedom from government intervention. Yet in order to maintain some semblance of economic rights for people, there sometimes must be government intervention. The problem of lack of "economic insecurity in America" is confronted by Mark Paul.

American freedom should be explained with an alternative model of economic freedom (p.3). Two Americans stand out for their strong desire to secure an economic bill of rights. One is Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). His 1944 State of the Union address called for a new *economic* bill of rights. Also, Martin Luther King, Jr. was heroic in his fight for civil and political rights for African-Americans. He also pursued economic equality for all people (p.4). Mark Paul provides numerous sets of data and graph to convey his observations of the economy. In particular he illustrates, much information in regard to poverty and wealth distribution. He expands on the meaning of life liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Mark Paul thinks that there is the implied rights that entails sufficient food, housing, clothing, education, medical care, and employment that creates economic security for all.

Over a time period of years, conditions appeared that America was pursuing this to some degree. This was throughout the period from FDR's New Deal until the advent of the presidency of Ronald Reagan.(pp. 47-51). Reagan put forth much deregulation of the economy, dampening union power and lowering marginal tax rates on people with high incomes. The concentration of wealth owned by the richest Americans increased. The Democratic party was an important force that ushered in the New Deal. Eventually the Democratic party came under pressures that caused the party to lose some of its cohesion. Regional attitudes differed in regard to racial integration. Also the Vietnam War caused great stresses.

Thus efforts to push for more social programs suffered a severe blow. Mark Paul has provided a good summary of the relevant history as the background for creative solutions for major social problems. The book then examines economic challenges in detail. Herein are just some of the examples.

The Right to Work

During the Great Depression, various programs employed many but not all of the people. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) provided many jobs. Importantly, "whenever possible employing people in jobs that closely resembled their previous work and that paid them prevailing wages" (p. 116). In more recent times, the Great Recession and the COVID-19 crises triggered the Federal Reserve to take action. The interest rate was kept relatively low in order to stimulate the economy. Trying to reduce unemployment has sometimes been the main priority over keeping the inflation rate low. Mark Paul endorses such a policy for decreasing unemployment, along with the provision of government jobs.

The Right to Housing

"Despite shelter being an absolute necessity for human health and flourishing, millions of Americans struggle, and all too often fail, to find a place to call home" (p. 136). Approximately one in three households in America rely on renting their home shelter (p. 137). To help with mortgages, the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB), was established in 1932. This increased liquidity (pp. 138-139). Mark Paul advocates government intervention to help renters. Furthermore, government should encourage the construction of more homes.

The Right to an Education

Public schools are public goods. In the last century free educational rights expanded (pp. 154-155). Mark Paul wants to see an expansion of access to higher education. All of the nation benefits from having a more educated population. Going back to the beginning of a life span, there should be the right to early education and universal pre-k education.

The Right to Health Care

The reviewer, Paul Gentle, believes the Affordable Care Act has achieved much success. Mark Paul states requiring the means to provide health care for all is “good economics” (p. 188). Since people will be healthier, they will be able to pursue a more enjoyable life. According to Mark Paul, there should be usage of Medicare on a universal basis throughout.

The Right to a Basic Income and Banking

Two items that help alleviate poverty are discussed by Mark Paul. A basic income and access to banking services are necessary. True economic security cannot be secured by one right alone (p.204). The influence of both the state and market are important. Such federal programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) guard the nation against starvation. Public cash assistance to Americans during the COVID Crises was essential to keep many people out of poverty (pp. 190-191). Maintaining Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid must be adequately funded. All must have access to banking services.

The Right to a Healthy Environment.

To cut a long story short, the right to a healthy environment is achievable, fiscally responsible – and necessary. Two of the most famous acts are the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. The Clean Air Act regulates the amount and type of air pollution that legally limits the type and amount of water pollution. These two

acts have been amended many times. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the federal agency that enforces these laws. However individual states also have similar laws that have to also be obeyed. These type regulations is better than relying on a carbon tax, according to Mark Paul. If a carbon tax is invoked, the EPA and state agencies should continue requiring their standards.

Paying for these Programs

The debt-to-GDP ratio is the most useful way of examining the national debt. As the economy of a nation expands, the nation can take on more national debt. Japan is an example of a country with a higher debt-to- GDP ratio. Mark Paul states that the United States has a high debt-to GDP ratio, though it is less than that of Japan (pp. 234-235).

Mark Paul also advocates the use of price controls, something not all economists agree on. He suggests a higher increase in the growth of the money supply. Also, Mark Paul states that much of the American tax system is regressive and needs to change.

Conclusion

Mark Paul believes that individual rights are important. He just wants that extended to economic rights.

What Mark Paul does with this book is to make the reader think. His proposals may be valued differently by different readers. This book does provide good starting points for debate.