



Episode 1,378: What Is Socialism, Anyway? Pinning Down a Slippery Term

Guest: C. Jay Engel

WOODS: All right, let's get down to the bottom of this. Obviously, this needs to be done, given that everybody's talking about socialism. And I was just in a Twitter – I mean, not like a nasty Twitter fight or anything, but a real disagreement with somebody who was at least civil, who, somehow Eric July, I think, threw him over to me. That Eric July. [laughing] Leave me out of it. Fight your own fight. But anyway, I was glad to jump in, because the topic was: was Hitler a socialist? And this guy saying, no, no, none of the experts say he was a socialist. So then I wound up jumping in against my better judgment.

And what happened there was it really was just a question of how we were defining the term. Of course, I understand Hitler did not favor abolishing private ownership of the means of production. My point was, if today we're going to call Denmark socialist, then Hitler's a socialist, if that's what we're going to call socialism. So if you can't stick to the strict definition of socialism when it comes to Hitler, but then when it's Denmark, well, Denmark's such a nice place, we'd love to call this socialism. No, no, no. I mean, I'll grant you, if we are honest about Denmark and we say Denmark is not strictly socialist, all right, then Hitler is not classically socialist either. But they're heavily interventionist, and that's really what people mean today by socialism.

So let's try and disentangle this, because I was just reading the way the Socialist Party responded to the – in fact, maybe I read this in an article of yours – the announcement by Bernie Sanders that he's going to run for president, and they came back with: look, folks, let's just make clear, this guy ain't no socialist. He's just a reformist. He doesn't want to abolish capitalism. So with all this going on, it's no wonder people are confused, and so we're going to try and set them right in this episode, I think. So what do you as the author of, I would estimate, I would round it off to somewhere in the neighborhood of 800,000 articles on this subject, how would you prefer we begin this conversation?

ENGEL: Well, I think the best way to do it is just to look historically. And I think part of the reason that they've had to shift and move the goalposts over the years is just the catastrophic devastation that socialism has received theoretically, but also practically. And so when you want something so intensely and it continues to fail, you have to move the goalposts. And so socialism is going to fail. Mises predicted it. And all types of other interventionists, whether you call them socialist or not, they're going to fail. But if you want to overcome the capitalist structure of the economy, then you're going to have to keep moving the goalposts. And so this is something that I think we're going to face now and in the future as government intervention continues to fail.

So I think the best way to start is just to look historically, I mean, if you look at the greatest treatise on socialism that's ever been written, which of course is Ludwig von Mises', he defined it as the state ownership of the means of production. And so I think that's the best place to start: state ownership of the means of production. So, of course, what that means is, there is one entity that is the single owner, it holds the title to all the production factors in the economy. So like as Austrians, we're quite aware of the fact that there's multiple stages in the capital structure. All across time, there's all these stages, and there's all these production factors that need to come together to eventually produce consumer goods. But under a socialist order, the government is the single entity that owns all of those production factors, and therefor – and we can get into the failures of socialism underneath Mises' theory, but I think that's the best starting-place definition.

Now, as we're probably going to talk about, that's not the operative definition today, like if you look at the Democratic Socialists of America, etc. That's not – I mean, and this is where it gets tricky, because there are some hardcore, orthodox, purist Marxists that would define it that way, but then there's other more popular-type renditions of socialism, like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and *Jacobin* magazine, and of course, they would never define it that way anymore.

WOODS: Right, because pretty much nobody favors that kind of system. They may favor Medicare-for-all and think that that's socialism, but generally, pretty much nobody favors –

ENGEL: Well, there's that one really obnoxious Twitter account that everyone's seen. It's the World Socialist Movement, and they respond to every – I think everybody's seen their responses, where they just say, well, that's not real socialism. I think I've unblocked them and blocked them over the years. But so there are some, but for the most part, when it comes to mainstream Vox or something –

WOODS: Oh, yeah, I'm talking about people that you would actually encounter in the newspaper, that you would encounter in American life. And you really do not – because could you name anybody who works for that organization? I mean, nobody even knows who they are. So that's what I mean. Basically, people have abandoned that outlook. Now, I myself always talk about abolishing private ownership of the means of production, because I don't want to open myself up to the socialist who says, well, we don't ultimately favor state ownership of the means of production. The state's going to wither away, and then we'll just collectively run the economy. But then, you know, this is preposterous, because how are you going to have millions of people collectively running an economy that requires billions of decisions? That that would not be possible. So some kind of elite, some kind of oligarchy is going to have to do the running. And if that's not a state, maybe you could call it another word if that offends you, but it seems to me like it would be a state. But just to not give them that wiggle room, I don't even say that.

All right, so that's the classical definition of socialism, and that is the definition that Mises gives. It has to do with the ownership of the means of production, and so by "means of production," we're talking about capital goods, factories, all the stuff that goes into creating things. They're not saying – and you know, here's a funny thing. I'm talking too much this interview. But here's the funny thing: I've been at the Mises University a program, which is the weeklong program that Mises Institute puts on every summer, which that thing, that helped make me who I am, for better or worse, years ago, when I went there in the early '90s. But I've been on the faculty of that thing for a solid I guess probably dozen years at least now.

And one misconception people seem to have, even after a week there – we would quiz them, and they still thought that the socialist calculation debate meant that – and the idea that there's no private property in socialism – we would say to them, all right, but I could go to a store, a convenience store in Poland in 1968, and I could buy myself a tube of toothpaste and a comb for my hair and whatever, and there were prices on those things, because they thought there were no prices on anything, that there couldn't be prices for anything. And they were confused about this. And the point is, they're not saying that everybody shares your toothbrush. You can have personal items like that. But when it comes to things like the means of production or land, that's where you get state involvement and so on. So we definitely want to make sure people understand that. All right. I'm sorry, I'm talking too much. Jump in.

ENGEL: Well, yeah, let me jump in. So I mean, Marx did differentiate between private property and personal property. That's the distinction that you're making there. Because yeah, if you look at what he was complaining about, namely capitalist exploitation, a lot of it was worker-oriented. So when it comes to all the things that needed to be done to actually produce the consumer goods, the personal property, everything that contributed to that effort was, under Marx's understanding of things, exploitative, the relationship between the capitalist and the worker. So his focus was on just that process, that production process and all the factors, those things needed to be owned by the government, not the toothbrushes, what you say. So yeah, just that distinction between personal property and private property is a good issue of clarity that we should make.

WOODS: All right, so now that we've got this cleared up, I want to fast forward, way fast forward, because once you have 1989 and then you get the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of Soviet Union happening within a couple of years of that, then really nobody is defining socialism that way anymore. They are defining it in terms of so-called democratic socialism. But even democratic socialism, it's not like we're going to have state ownership of the means of production plus a democracy. It's we're not going to have state ownership of the means of production. So how do we classify democratic socialism? In fact, maybe we should think about, because you've done some work this, classifying the different approaches to interventionism, period.

ENGEL: Yeah, I think the best way to think about all of this is really the concept of interventionism. And I don't think people realize the extent to which the Western world has really adopted the model of interventionism. And it's kind of an arcane, unique word that that not a lot of people talk about, but Mises really latched on to the concept of interventionism. And that's where you still have private ownership, but you really have a government that oversees things, and it sticks its hand where it finds necessary in order to make the process better, to make it more fair to work out some of what they consider to be problems of the distribution of the wealth and things like that.

So when it comes to interventionism, that's of course an extremely broad and vague phrase, and it captures, I mean, for Mises it really captured everything under an economy in which private owners had the ability to make decisions over the economy, but the state could get involved and the state could kind of – you know, I was going to say hold their hand, but not hold their hand; they would make them do certain things and invest in certain ways and prevent certain activities, things like that. So really, the Western world has experienced an intervention is paradigm, and that's sort of been the model. Every step that the US government has taken, the European Union and anything in the West, we haven't really adopted a traditional socialist or Marxist order. We've really adopted various forms and types

of interventionism. There's what you could call right interventionism, if you want, military intervention; then on the left, there's the social democracies of Europe and efforts toward health care, universal health care, minimum wage policies, all that stuff. So everything can be classified under interventionism.

And this is one of the tragedies of the narrative that goes on in the Western school systems and the Western media, is everyone conceives of our economy as a capitalist one. They define it as capitalism. They say, well, we're not really Marxist, we're not really socialist, so we're just capitalist. So when people experience the failures of government interventionism, well, what do they do? They attribute it to capitalism. So then when you have even more difficult times, you have the result of the stock market crash in 2008, the financial crisis and things like that, and some of the pension problems and some of the more systemic and devastating ramifications and consequences of government intervention, well, everyone's going to blame capitalism, because that's what we've been told that we have over the years. And so it's really a tragedy of our inability to use nuance that we find ourselves in this situation where socialism is popular again, because we always think about – generally speaking, I grew up this way – that the only alternative to capitalism was socialism. And if capitalism is going to fail, well, we only have one thing left.

WOODS: I do want to point out that we – or I guess I was on my own for this episode. I very recently covered the socialist calculation problem. In fact, it was Episode 1356, so we'll mention that on the show notes page, TomWoods.com/1356. We called it "A Stake Through the Heart of Socialism." And there I just go through and explain what it was that Mises found about socialism, as classically understood, that made it basically impossible, and which is why generally these regimes always had some kind of a safety valve, where they could let in just enough capitalism so the whole thing wouldn't go completely by the boards. But he said that if you had a whole world that was just socialist, that had no private ownership of the means of production, then certainly it would collapse instantly. You wouldn't have this long lag.

But let's talk about today. So today, socialism is viewed increasingly favorably, and particularly by younger folks. And what we get told is, see – they say, and you've probably heard this CJ, yourself, we get told younger folks don't think about the Soviet Union or North Korea or Venezuela when they hear socialism. They think Sweden, Denmark, and so on and so forth, maybe even Canada. And the thing is, it would be easier for me to believe that if it weren't for the fact that there are people like David Sirota, who was just hired by the Bernie Sanders campaign, who said Venezuela is true socialism, and it's really successful, you stupid capitalists. If these people hadn't defended Venezuela down to the moment where it was simply embarrassing to continue to do so, it would be a lot more believable when they say, *Oh, we'd never mean Venezuela*. Well, then why were you defending them ten minutes ago?

ENGEL: Well, yeah, I mean, they like to point to things where everyone seems happy, and they like to point to things where they say, *Oh, look at that success*. One of the things that I've considered over the years is that for a few minutes, if you take away a capitalist order and you heavily intervene or even switch to a traditionally socialist economy for a few minutes, everything is going to be fine. It takes time for the consequences of government-heavy state involvement for it to set in. And so yeah, as Venezuela became more socialist, obviously, if you're going to be a preacher for socialism, you're going to point to things like that.

One of the things that I've — because everyone points to Scandinavia, and I just read a report the other day about the increasing failure of Finland's health care system. And of course, they have a heavily government-involved health care arena. And it's basically crashing in on itself. But one of the things that I've noticed is that the defenders of socialism or so-called socialism, universal health care, things like that, is they always point to Scandinavia. And they'll say, you know, *You see, you stupid capitalists, all your propaganda isn't working. Obviously, everything's fine over there.*

One of the things that I want people to take away from these types of conversations is that we should never compare scenarios like that to the devastating consequences of complete state ownership of everything. We should compare those universal health care systems to what they would be under a capitalist order. Because really, if you think about just the fact that there is capitalism, there is prices, the government necessarily competes for those resources, as Mises talked about in his interventionism book, the government competes for those resources, and therefore it uses prices. So yes, their involvement makes the health care situation worse than it would be under a complete free market, but because there are elements of free market and there are elements of capitalism there, you're not going to see the same devastating consequences if they had gone full socialist like the Soviet Union or Venezuela or what have you. So we have to be careful what we're comparing to, and that's one of the frustrating things about a lot of the narrative in outlets like Vox, is just they're so selective, and they frame their arguments in such a way as obviously to give themselves the victory.

WOODS: Before we go on, I want you to tell me something about *Austrolibertarian*, which is your publication that is both electronic and print. And I want to say it is a gutsy move in this day and age to release a print publication, but I believe that there is still a niche market for those things. There are still old-fashioned people like me, who still like to get a magazine in the mail and sit down and flip through a magazine, rather than stare at a computer screen for another two hours a day, when you've been doing that all day already.

ENGEL: This project came to mind because obviously I was really interested in the rising socialist movement. And so I obviously found *Jacobin* magazine, and come to find out, they have 42,000 print subscribers around the Western world. And I thought, wow, there's 42,000 people willing to buy a socialist publication. There's got to be half that in the liberty movement. There has to be some sort of audience for this. And of course, I put all my time and effort into producing this thing, and one of the things I was kind of self-surprised by was that over 80, maybe even 85% of the new subscribers all chose the print version. So yeah, you would think in the digital age that it would be a gutsy move, but very few people are actually selecting the digital-only plan.

So that's interesting, and it's something that I want to grow over the years. We've got some great contributors, a lot of Mises U. alumni and other great writers, Ben Lewis, who was on your show recently. But I want this thing to be a competitor to *Jacobin*. And when you do a print publication like this in this day and age, it has to be very aesthetically pleasing. It has to be thick. It's got to be glue-bound. It has to have a lot of color and design and artwork. And so that's kind of one of the things we're going for, is producing this print magazine with obviously economics, political theory, reviews, cultural commentary, etc. So that's what I've been putting my efforts into, and I'm very happy to see how it's coming along.

WOODS: It's really great, and I want to encourage it. So first of all, what's the website or what's the easy way for people to get there?

ENGEL: Well, the best way is just Austrolibertarian.com, and if you just go to Austrolibertarian.com, there's a magazine tab up on the top, or you can just go to the site Austrolibertarian.com/magazine, and it should take you right there, and it'll give you everything you need to know and more. That's the best way to find everything that I write and everything that I'm producing and all of my fellow contributors and editors.

WOODS: Well, I mean, I can say I buy a lot of digital products, so I buy a lot of courses on things or I do buy a lot of PDF books and stuff like that. But when I get something print, it's just I feel so much more organized. I can put a stack of them on my desk. I know where they are, whereas I've got these things all over my computer or some of them are attachments in an email, and I don't even know where half of them are. And I think maybe the reason you're getting this good response for the print is that some people feel this same way that if, ugh, if I get another digital thing, I'll forget that it's there, I won't know where I put it, or I'll have to search my inbox for it. To heck with it. You know, the old way of doing things wasn't so bad after all.

So anyway, let's get back to our job of classifying, categorizing, and clarifying here and think maybe about the term "capitalism," because there, capitalism can mean – I mean, one of the things socialists complain about is that so-called right-wingers pretty much call anything they dislike socialism. So they don't like Medicare; they call it socialism. But isn't that true on the left with capitalism?

ENGEL: It is, and this is where it gets really nuanced, and you kind of have to choose your definitions. I mean, there's no such thing, really, as an objective definition. We all choose our words and choose the operating definition. That's part of the struggle with language, is we have to choose these things. But I think the best way to define capitalism is basically just the way Mises did: private ownership and control of the means of production.

And once you have that definition there, you realize it makes the transition to understanding things like interventionism really easy, because one of the things about the interventionists, the so-called planners of freedom, as Mises labeled them, is that they were heavily critical of socialism because it limited the freedom of man. And they said, while there are downsides and detriments to a completely laissez-faire, unhampered, free-market economy, we have the ability to intervene and just oversee and make sure that the capitalist system is doing what we need it to do. And so they endorsed a hampered market. They endorsed a capitalism where there was private ownership and control of the means of production, but they were also heavily involved and they would intervene in various ways into the economy.

So I think as libertarians, we need to always be sure that our capitalism includes the qualification, so to speak, of a free market. Not only do we want private ownership, but we want the private owners of the means of production to respond in any way that they feel is productive to buying signals, to the profit opportunities, all those things. And so we don't just want capital. We don't just want private owners. We also want them to have the ability to be free to do what they want with the property that they own. In fact, if you read Hans Hoppe's *Theory of Socialism and Capitalism*, the extent to which he emphasizes the fact that, if someone is an owner of something, he therefore has the legal right to do with that property what he desires, that's the free market. And so we're not just capitalists in a broad sense, in

the sense that we oppose socialism. We're also capitalists in that we endorse the idea that the owners of the factors of production should be able to do what they want. So we're advocates of laissez-faire, unhampered, free-market society, as well as private ownership.

WOODS: It doesn't help that sometimes I hear capitalism blamed for things that clearly non-capitalist institutions are doing. So capitalism causes war. But how could it? I mean, no corporation would have the pockets deep enough and would be able to brainwash the public into thinking that they are somehow a legitimate ruler that can tax you and whatever. I mean, no one's propagandized into believing that about Exxon or anything when they're in school. So we get that. Or we get the World Bank somehow must be for capitalists. Or I even had — I cannot get over this. Richard Posner, who was like a right-of-center judge. Richard Posner wrote a book called *A Failure of Capitalism* after the financial crisis of 2008. And when you ask him: but the Federal Reserve is obviously not a capitalist institution; it's not privately funded or established — it was created by Congress. How could it be? And his answer was: yeah, but it's a part of capitalism. What does that even mean? So it's extremely unclear, and it doesn't help.

ENGEL: Yeah, I mean, basically, it's just that vague, meaningless definition, where, anytime you see someone benefiting, anytime you see someone taking a profit, or anytime you see someone doing things allegedly for themselves and not for this vague ideal of society as a whole, it's labeled capitalism. And it makes it very easy to agitate against people that have things that you don't. It makes it easy to create narratives. It makes it easy to gather crowds. It makes it easy to fundraise for political movements whenever you can agitate like that. And so capitalists and capitalism is a bogeyman, and when you call things that people don't like "capitalism," it's so easy to cast it in a negative light, and you can use it to your advantage. I mean, that's the way I see it.

WOODS: Well, given that this is the way we're defining these terms — oh, you know what? Actually, let's leave that aside for a minute. I was going to ask you something else. Maybe I'll do that at the end. Instead, we should delve more deeply, then, into what the average person today saying "I support socialism" is really saying. What does that person say — See, the thing about socialism in the classical sense that I could respect is at least there are standards. At least it's a philosophy with principles. They want collective ownership of the means of production, whereas the democratic socialists, what does it mean? You want 30% of the budget to go to this? But why not 31? Why not 29? It just seems like arbitrary. Whereas libertarians, I know exactly where they stand, and they've got a good reason for it, whereas this just seems muddle-headed, mushy, and it could just as easily be 47% spent on X or whatever. It just seems completely arbitrary. What is it that these people believe? I mean, they say they just want to help people.

ENGEL: Yeah, I think that's one of the things, and this is where it gets tricky, because you have — I mean, obviously, you have the intellectuals; you have the socialist intellectuals. And believe me, Tom, I've spent a lot of time — so *Jacobin* magazine is kind of their print magazine for the layman. But then they have sort of something that's analogous to our *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*. It's called *Catalyst Journal*, and that's where all the Marxist academics, it's kind of their sister publication. And Bhaskar Sunkara, he debated Gene Epstein at the Soho Forum a couple months ago, he created *Jacobin* magazine, but he also more recently created this *Catalyst*. And so I do pay attention to some of the intellectual contributions that the academic Marxists are making.

So on one hand, you have to recognize that they exist and they are making more fundamental arguments for Marxism and for a socialist economy. But on the other hand, to answer your question, you have people like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who's sort of a bumper-sticker socialist who hasn't really studied, she's got no philosophy of life, she's got no philosophy of the economy. I think the best way to think about it is, if you look back at one of Murray Rothbard's essays, "Left, Right, and the Prospects for Liberty," he talks about the fact that in the transition away from the ancient regime, you have this old, state-driven economy and liberalism and how it came out of that culture and tried to make things better for individual property holders, but then you also had this other leftist movement, the rising socialists, and they wanted to pursue the same ends of so-called freedom as the liberals back then, but they wanted to use state means to accomplish those ends.

And so I kind of see that as analogous to the situation today, where these people, they have these pie-in-the-sky ideals of what they want things to be like, where everybody has a lot of wealth and everybody's happy and everyone has this \$100-an-hour job and they've just got everything that they want in life, they have the luxuries of life. And they have this kind of utopia in their mind, and they think that government is the proper means to pursuing those ends. But this is one of the things that Mises pointed out in his *Liberalism* book, is we're always characterized as having different goals in mind than the socialists, but that's not true. It's just that we think that a capitalist economy, we think that productivity under a capitalist structure is going to provide more prosperity and more wealth for the masses than socialism. So the socialists will declare the ends that they want. They'll list a whole bunch of things that they want about fair wages and better working hours and guaranteed jobs and a safety net, and all these other things. But at the end of the day, none of those things can come about by government policy. They are all the result of rising wealth in the economy. And of course, that can only happen by capital investment.

WOODS: You're kind of a youngish guy, is that safe to say? You don't have to say your age.

ENGEL: I'm 28. I'm youngish.

WOODS: Yeah, that's pretty youngish. Yeah, I mean, if I had – I mean, strictly speaking, it's conceivable that I could be your father. I mean, I'd be a young father, but you know, it's conceivable, so to speak. It could have happened. But I'm not obviously, but the point is, I consider you but a pup. As I get older, I hear 28, I think, my gosh, this guy is a youngster. So I'm always curious when I have somebody like you who writes about this stuff so prolifically and passionately, what was it that got you thinking this way? I mean, maybe it was a series of things, maybe it was a slow evolution, or maybe it was just a thunderclap from above. What was it in your case?

ENGEL: I think that's a great question, and I don't really have a solid answer to it. I haven't spent a lot of time thinking about it. But I guess a couple things come to mind. I mean, there's always the element of being interested, of course, in leaving a better world to my children. I've got four children. And in terms of culture and prosperity and opportunities and all that, I do believe, of course, that an Austro-libertarian paradigm best serves that purpose. But I'm not really someone that spends a lot of time thinking about making the world a better place, so that answer is somewhat forced, although it is certainly true.

But I think a large part of why I'm fascinated by all of this and how I got into it all is because I've always had this dissenting spirit about me. That's probably the most honest answer. I've

long had this impulse or this instinct that the majority of what the masses accept as a way of doing and thinking about things is just completely wrong. So it's a certain demeanor that encourages me to dissent from whatever is popular at the time. So everyone's saying that there's a certain professional track that must be taken, so I tend toward entrepreneurship and doing things my own way. There's sort of a social emphasis on the social goodness of public schooling, so I'm a huge proponent of homeschool. Actually, I was homeschooled myself, so I was raised in an extremely healthy setting of dissent, and that's probably part of all this. And then, of course, there's what's popular at the socioeconomic level. So socialism, collectivism, public- and government-oriented solutions to things, and even a general anti-capitalist mentality, as Mises put it.

So arguing against all of this as part of my impetus for dissent requires a deep understanding of things. It requires the ability to sort of maneuver through all the arguments and not only oppose the ideas that confront us, but also to have solutions and positive answers in terms of economics and ethics. So that's probably the core of what drives me. I mean, dissent is healthy, but I think that dissent also needs some sort of understanding, some sort of a tool and framework for understanding the world. And if you're going to oppose the things that are popular, I think it's also important to have answers to their questions, because you're always going to get pushback. You're always going to get people that are completely perplexed and outraged, even, that you would dare dissent from popular opinion. And I think that having the answers to all those questions and being able to interact with the nuances and the trends in the course and development of the historical aspect to some of these concepts, I think it's really important to me as well.

So I think that's a good summary of why I'm interested in this, but I think more people should, too. These are questions that are extremely important, and it's not something that we should just leave to the intellectuals. It's not something that we should just leave to the academic setting. I think it concerns all of us. It concerns us in different ways, but I think all of us sort of have this personal obligation, and part of self-improvement is understanding the way that things work and how to interpret the world around us.

And if we can transition too, just real quick at the end, one of the things I wanted to do is I wanted to talk about democratic socialism a little bit more. So if we have time to do that, I'd like to –

WOODS: Yeah, please do. Yeah, yeah, say whatever you like.

ENGEL: Yeah, so one of the things that I've been really curious about is the extent to which they're not really socialist in the orthodox, traditional sense. They don't endorse a state ownership of the means of production, but at the same time, they don't really seem to have much of an interest in this Elizabeth Warren, Hillary Clinton-type left interventionism, either. I mean, while they do find things like universal health care somewhat favorable, if you actually read the literature of *Jacobin* magazine and the Democratic Socialists of America, they actually want something much more radical. And that's why even the DSA is having these internal debates right now and these polls taken with its members about whether they should endorse Bernie. And over half of them are saying no, because Bernie kind of wants to use the federal government to mandate things from the top, and they're very opposed to that.

So there's this kind of proletariat aspect to their identity that's actually distinct from the old Marxist proletariat. And so it's interesting to see this, because I think it's coming through in

their strategy and in their local efforts, as well. And I know Austro-libertarians talk a lot about secession and local efforts. Well, these democratic socialists are spending a lot of time on that, too. And so the deeper I've gotten into it, the more I've realized that they want something much more holistic, and they're actually focusing on sort of restructuring corporate life and not having bosses and not having things like that. They want worker ownership of companies, and you'll see that pop up in their literature. So I'm really curious about the shifting tone and the shifting nature and characteristic of the new socialism under sort of an Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez world, because it's really different even from the Elizabeth Warren, left interventionism types of 20 years ago.

WOODS: Well, I'll just say, as you know, of course, Mises himself was a great classifier, and he was interested in looking at socialism in its various forms. And syndicalism is something that makes a substantial appearance in his book *Socialism*, and I know in some of your writing you've made a connection. You've talked about what Mises has to say about syndicalism and you've connected it to this. If you want to expand on that, we'd be glad to hear it.

ENGEL: Yeah, I think this is important, because if you really look at the literature in the Democratic Socialists of America — and you can look right at the frequently asked questions and what they define as socialism. And Mises dismissed syndicalism as kind of loony. It wasn't really worth much consideration at all, because one of the differences between socialists and syndicalists at that time was that socialists had an entire social theory, and syndicalists just had one basic suggestion, which was — and I'm quoting from their slogan — "the railways to the railway men and the mines to the miners and the factories to the factory hand." That's their slogan; that's the syndicalists' slogan.

But if you read the DSA literature and *Jacobin* magazine and stuff, I've kind of compared the democratic socialist movement to sort of a neosyndicalism, where they don't necessarily want worker-owned industries, but they do want worker-owned businesses. So they don't want bosses; they don't want any hierarchies. And you'll see this all over the place. And one of the problems that they have with bosses and capitalists is that there's a hierarchy. And so if you look at their literature, they say that each business should be owned by the people actually laboring, should be owned by the workers. And this is part and parcel of their defining characteristic today, and it's something that I think we're going to hear more about, is worker-owned businesses. Because in that way, I think the democratic socialists, what I call sort of neosocialists, are actually neosyndicalists. That's their major caveat, is they don't want worker-owned industries, but they do want a worker-owned Walmart, so to speak, or a worker-owned Panera Bread, things like that. In fact, in one interview with CNBC, one of the chairs of the Democratic Socialists of America said: think of it like a bakery. We're not telling the people to go and demand higher wages and demand more bread. They want to actually own the bakery. And so I think that's going to become more of a clear defining characteristic of democratic socialism in our time.

WOODS: And with that, I'm going to refer people to AustroLibertarian.com, which is an outstanding new venture I strongly urge people to support, and to check out the show notes page, TomWoods.com/1378. I'll link to a couple of pieces by CJ; I'll link to that episode I just did on the socialist calculation problem in case you missed it, and of course, to *AustroLibertarian*, the publication itself. So thanks so much, CJ.

ENGEL: Coupon code WOODS gets you \$10 off an annual subscription.

WOODS: Oh, come on now. Come on, people. Now, that alone, that should clinch it for you. All right, thanks again.

ENGEL: Thanks, Tom.