**David Corzo - 20190432 - 2021/25/02**

**Socratic Discussion #4 - What government can do to make people happier.**

**Synthesis:**

The two central ideas of the articles are basically that new data indicates that while lockdowns have saved lives and mitigated coronavirus transmissions, these measures are destructive in the long term, which means that the lockdowns have some unintended consequences which government bureaucrats ought to consider. Data indicates that people are substantially less happy, have more mental issues, and are more prone to drug abuse. The economic consequences of the lockdowns have created, as the article states, more problems than what they solve. Things such as unemployment, mental health problems, and drug overdoses have increased substantially. The articles' main concern is that government is not considering the full effect that lockdowns have on the economy and on people, and these long-term effects must be mitigated in order to restore the economy and maximize the wellbeing of people. Both articles advocate heavily that government ought to make changes to the way they are handling the pandemic, one of the changes for example is to speed up the process of mass-vaccinations, which is the only way to be on our way back to normality. The second article even calls on the new administration to act, since the last one did not. The effects of the lockdown have affected people in many ways, and it is very important that we ask government to reconsider the lockdowns given the circumstances and to speed the vaccinations until heard immunity is achieved, so we can put all this behind us and hope for a brighter future.

**New concepts:**

* Unemployment insurance payments: “it is a government program that provides cash stipends to **unemployed** workers who actively seek employment” . The author advocates that this program is causing extra spending of ‘other people’s money’ and congress ought to be careful and efficient with taxpayers’ money because it will need it to restore the economy later on.

Source:<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/u/unemployment-insurance.asp#:~:text=Unemployment%20insurance%20provides%20cash%20stipends%20to%20unemployed%20workers%20who%20actively%20seek%20employment.&text=Workers%20who%20meet%20specific%20eligibility,employee's%20regular%20wage%2C%20on%20average>

* Cronyism: “the appointment of friends and associates to positions of authority, without proper regard to their qualifications.” The author calls out the government for the corruption it has shown lately and advocates that this cronyism needs to be stopped.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronyism>

**Author description:**

* Ethan Yang is a writer at the American Institute of Economic Research, he holds a BA in Political Science and a minor in legal studies and formal organizations, he currently holds the position of Coordinator of students for Liberty and being the Director of the Mark Twain Center at Trinity College.

Source: <https://www.aier.org/staffs/ethan-yang/>

* Veronique de Rugy has a Phd in economics and is currently the contributing editor at Reason, she is also a senior fellow at the Mercatus Center in George Mason University. Her work spans from US economy and taxation to the federal budget and other related topics.

Source: <https://reason.com/people/veronique-de-rugy/>

**Context description:**

The context of both of the articles is during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. Both articles systematically treat the topic of what government did right and what it did wrong, during the pandemic the government declared state of emergency and mandated everyone to be quarantined and for the economy to lockdown to prevent transmission of the virus. New programs were created to mitigate the effects but have backfired. In addition, some politicians acted incompetently and thus created new economic problems that are now in desperate need to be solved.

**Questions to the author:**

1. If it were up to you to lead the nation for a month, what do you think you could achieve? Would you end the lockdowns completely or partially start to reopen?
2. In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to address the drug overdose problem aside from reopening and ending the lockdowns in the long term?

**Sources of information:**

In the reading: National Bureau of Economic Research Paper cited in the American Institute for economic research:

The paper provides an in-depth econometric analysis that explores and studies the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy and how the governmental measures have impacted people in terms of mental health, death rates, drug abuse, and other such variables. Using econometric tools such as regression models, they have been able to measure if the problem has gotten worse or better. This new study rather conclusively shows what such effects have been.

Source: <https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28304/w28304.pdf>

External sources:

Given the nature of the articles, both essentially suggest the same thing, that government ought to implement more coherent and less destructive measures to handle the pandemic. One place to start is to take a look at what the countries with the lowest coronavirus numbers did to handle it. Why is Taiwan ranked the best country in handling the pandemic? For example, Taiwan instituted measures even before the coronavirus hit, making everyone wear masks and other measures, their lockdowns have not been as severe as the other countries because they have mitigated it since the beginning, they did not wait around until it is a big problem and then do something about it, they acted immediately, even without a single coronavirus case, Taiwan had learned from SARS in 2003 and thus handled it better and had built in preparations.

<https://www.movehub.com/blog/best-and-worst-covid-responses/>