

# Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog of Brad DeLong. Comments (mostly) welcome, or email me at [delong@hey.com](mailto:delong@hey.com) with "delong-weblog" as the subject.  
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## Waldmann: Social Democracy & Freedom—Noted

**Steve Randy Waldmann:** *Social Democracy & Freedom* <https://www.interfluidity.com/v2/7557.html>: ‘So who is right here? I say Milton Friedman is. “Free speech” stops being real, stops being a practicable ideal, once the consequences of unpopular expression are so great you’ll be banished from the communities you value and be unable to earn a decent living. Both the woke and their discontents should be able to speak their piece.... We want a society where—in practice, not just as a formal, legalistic matter—the public sphere can accommodate a wide range of expression, some of which each of us will find abhorrent. But Friedman’s conjecture that capitalism plus a light-touch state would be an effective way to ensure this state of affairs was wrong. Because it was never really “capitalism”, in his argument, that protected political freedom. It was decentralization.... What we’ve discovered (as any Marxist would have predicted) is that laissez-faire-ish capitalism doesn’t deliver that at all.... Dominant firms will brook no public dissent from the moment’s religion, as preaching that religion is essential to bewildering and misdirecting an immiserated public whose democratic power could, in theory, undo them. It’s a bit, um, rich that Bret Stephens would complain about this from his perch at *The New York Times*.... But perhaps it is understandable that he feels the chill. Elite positions like his are an ever-shrinking game of musical chairs, lots of us would love his life and he wouldn’t love ours. If he (like his editor) were kicked out in a great public scandal, it’s not at all clear that he would land so well. Among elites, the stakes of this game of dangerous speech and righteous counterspeech have become enormously high. (Just ask Steve Salaita, Bret.) You can lose the sort of incomes most of us will never enjoy, and the sort of social place most of us will never experience, if your friends decide they have to sacrifice you in the name of the corporate virtue upon which you collectively depend... .#noted #2020-08-02

Posted on August 02, 2020 at 11:29 in #noted | [🔗 Permalink](#) | [💬 Comments \(0\)](#)

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