

Title: This ■■■■

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Is_self: False



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This is a hell of a paragraph.

Americans are, of course, the most thoroughly and passively indoctrinated people on earth. They know next to nothing as a rule about their own history, or the histories of other nations, or the histories of the various social movements that have risen and fallen in the past, and they certainly know little or nothing of the complexities and contradictions comprised within words like “socialism” and “capitalism.” Chiefly, what they have been trained not to know or even suspect is that, in many ways, they enjoy far fewer freedoms, and suffer under a more intrusive centralized state, than do the citizens of countries with more vigorous social-democratic institutions. This is at once the most comic and most tragic aspect of the excitable alarm that talk of social democracy or democratic socialism can elicit on these shores. An enormous number of Americans have been persuaded to believe that they are freer in the abstract than, say, Germans or Danes precisely because they possess far fewer freedoms in the concrete. They are far more vulnerable to medical and financial crisis, far more likely to receive inadequate health coverage, far more prone to irreparable insolvency, far more unprotected against predatory creditors, far more subject to income inequality, and so forth, while effectively paying *more* in tax (when one figures in federal, state, local, and sales taxes, and then compounds those by all the expenditures that in this country, as almost nowhere else, their taxes do not cover). One might think that a people who once rebelled against the mightiest empire on earth on the principle of no taxation without representation would not meekly accept taxation without adequate government services. But we accept what we have become used to, I suppose. Even so, one has to ask, what state apparatus in the “free” world could be more powerful and tyrannical than the one that taxes its citizens while providing no substantial civic benefits in return, solely in order to enrich a piratically overinflated military-industrial complex and to ease the tax burdens of the immensely wealthy?