

TWO VIEWS OF MAN AND RIGHTS:

THE FOUNDING FATHERS VS. THE PROGRESSIVES

1. Equality

Founding Fathers – “All men are created equal” (Declaration of Independence).

Men are not created with the same abilities or circumstances and it is not government’s role to attempt to make them the same. They are born with the same rights.

Progressives – It is the government’s responsibility to correct inequality through redistribution & control.

2. Natural Rights

Founding Fathers - “Human beings are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (Declaration of Independence). Men are free to live their lives the way they desire in order to pursue happiness in the way they choose. Happiness is not guaranteed. A “right” is something endowed at birth that cannot be taken away. Using the word “among” indicates there are other natural rights. Property rights and economic freedom are an integral and essential part of man’s natural rights. The Puritan work ethic valued hard work, providing for one’s family, and the right to keep the fruits of one’s labor.

Progressives - A “right” is something you are given and not something that you have naturally. Progressives believe that one man’s right to certain things: a home, income, and health care supersede the right of another man to keep the property he has earned. Government decides which rights to give to people and groups; government can also take those rights away. Property rights are neither sacred nor protected. The right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness listed in the Declaration of Independence are redefined to mean government-guaranteed economic security.

3. Consent of the Governed

Founding Fathers - “That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” (Declaration of Independence). James Madison wrote: “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” The Founding Fathers understood that men were not perfectly good so they needed to form some sort of government to secure their natural rights. But just as important, they needed a government constrained by the consent of the people.

Progressives – The uninformed masses need an elite group to lead them because they aren’t capable of doing it themselves. They treat those that disagree with them with contempt and quash alternative views.

The Progressives plan is to replace our economic freedom with economic equality (Capitalism vs. Socialism). They do this by:

- Redefining rights to be entitlements thereby justifying the redistribution of the private property of some for the benefit of others.
- By labeling profit as greed and instituting a planned economy through limits on profits and production to force economic equality.
- By redefining charity to be the government taking money through taxes to take care of anyone deemed in need rather than the voluntary giving of one’s own resources.

The Founding Fathers knew economic freedom cannot be separated from other freedoms.

The moral superiority of economic freedom is proven by the outcome: More people live better under capitalism than any other system. Central control produces shortages, waste, laziness, and a lack of creative entrepreneurship. It does not provide adequately or abundantly for those it claims to help; instead, it decreases the living standard for all. If a man is not guaranteed the freedom to keep the fruits of his labor, he is not free and tyranny with a loss of all rights will follow.