

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Attack on capitalism misguided

Here's a question: Would the world be better off had Bill Gates or Steve Jobs never been born? How about Larry Page and Mark Zuckerberg?

Pope Francis seems to think so.

Despite the fact the above-mentioned men ? and countless others ? created millions of jobs and untold economic benefits, not just for themselves, but for people around the world, it seems the Pope has a problem with those dreaded capitalists.

Francis, who spent many years working among the poor in South America, no doubt genuinely bleeds for those who have been left behind by the system. But instead of blaming capitalism ? which, despite its imperfections, has made even the poor better off than they've ever been in world history ? he might want to get past his quasi-Marxist ideology and look at the corruption in government in many of the poorest countries, surely a bigger source of pain than anything capitalism has ever done.

There he was recently, standing on a platform in Bolivia, comparing global capitalism to the ?dung of the devil,? and condemning the systemic ?greed for money? as a ?subtle dictatorship? that ?condemns and enslaves men and women.?

He was standing next to Bolivian President Evo Morales ? who underscored his world view by sporting a Che Guevara patch on his jacket (Che, you may recall, was a communist killer-for-hire who helped Fidel Castro in Cuba and spent his life fomenting revolution) and Morales, who openly praises Francis for his unfettered Socialism, presented the Pope with a wooden crucifix shaped like the Soviet hammer and sickle. Nice.

After his latest anti-capitalist rants in South America, Rev. Robert A. Sirico, president of the Michigan-based Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, told the New York Times, ?I wish Francis would focus on positives, on how a free-market economy guided by an ethical framework, and the rule of law, can be part of the solution for the poor.?

No such luck, alas. Francis seems happy to join the chorus of class warriors who blame capitalism for all the ills of the world, absolutely convinced that anybody who succeeds does so at the direct expense of those who don't succeed economically.

Any number of economic studies clearly show that while there is still enormous poverty in the world, there is far less than ever before. While capitalism is not the sole reason for the betterment of most people's lives, it's certainly a major part of it and a far, far better system than any socialist and/or Marxist economy.

Perhaps Francis may wish to look at the billions upon billions of assets held by the Roman Catholic Church around the world, much of it enhanced by a tax-free status, and a wealth which has always invested in capitalism to make itself even larger.

It is certainly true that personal greed motivates many ? but not all ? highly successful capitalists. But so what? When they prosper, so do the rest of us, not out of any great feeling of largesse ? although most wealthy people donate a lot of money to charities ? but because their actions create even more economic reactions and in the end we all benefit to varying degrees.

It is not government for the most part that creates wealth in society. It is hard-working men and women who operate enterprises, both big and small, thereby creating jobs for those who manufacture and sell their products and/or goods.

There is little doubt that when it comes to theology, at least as practised by the Roman Catholic Church, Francis must be conceded to be a world authority.

But understanding one discipline doesn't give him special insights into everything else, and his extraordinary railing against those who actually create wealth ? as opposed to government, which tends only to spend (waste?) it ? does neither himself nor his Church any favors, except among the usual suspects (many of whom are themselves wealthy) who spend their energies blaming the dreaded capitalists for everything that is and will be wrong with the world.

We are told repeatedly, even in Canada, that ? largely because of Stephen Harper, apparently ? our own middle class has suffered under the capitalist system.

Actually, it hasn't. Recent Finance Department data show that Canadians had a higher income in 2011 than they did before the recession and the share of Canadians living in low-income families has dipped to its lowest level in decades.

But hey, don't tell that to Justin Trudeau or Thomas Mulcair or, it seems, to Pope Francis. They're not interested in reality.

