

Probation and Parole, and the United States Economy

Clinton L. Severe

Drury University – CRIM 323

### Abstract

This paper is a personal evaluation of Probation and Parole (P/P) in the United States (U.S.) and its economy. It explored alternatives to Capitalism by contrasting other forms of government, such as Democratic Socialism and Theology. It defines P/P and some of its variables and causes. The reader should gain insight from alternative perspectives.

*Keywords:* Probation, Parole, Economy

### Probation and Parole, and the United States Economy

The course text makes the point that the U.S. leads the Western world and Japan in the percentage of residents (citizens) who are incarcerated. Also, that probation and parole (P/P) exist for economic reasons – because P/P is cheaper than incarceration. The U.S. criminal justice system is in constant flux, and is subject to politics and public opinion which determines the number of almighty bucks spent on the punishment or rehabilitation of criminal offenders.

I subscribe to classicalism and *mens rea*, (accountability for one's actions) but only to the point where the greedy seek to excuse themselves from the consequences of seeking to accumulate riches above the other social classes in society. I point the finger at those who set their hearts upon riches to begin with, because I believe this instigates the stratification that, in turn, tempts the less fortunate to covet and steal. I believe the less fortunate are just as bad if they give in to the sins of the rich - and steal from them. Some people do not trust foreign statistics which point out the lower crime rates of countries subscribing to democratic socialism – socialism that originates in modern times from the Jews (e.g., Carl Marx and Vladimir Lenin). Marx was raised a Jew.

My roots are in Christianity (e.g., Christ is also a Jew). The course text cites the bible occasionally as a source of early penal codes. To me the New Testament hints at an optimum society as having material wealth in common among its members. In the bible Christ explained why it was so hard for a rich man to enter into his (Christ's) society, indicating that his society is not stratified like a Capitalist society. In modern-day Israel, the "Kibbutz" is an example of this doctrine. Modern Israel employs democracy, notwithstanding it being referred to as socialism (democratic socialism). Capitalism, on the other hand, harnesses the greed of those it supports in freely choosing money and materialism above happiness; monies generated from greed which in

turn has to be used to deal with the consequences of stratification's effects. I sustain the Constitution completely, but I maintain that people are accountable for what they do with their rights to choose.

A Positive Psychology class I'm completing made an interesting point about subjective-well-being (happiness). The text maintains that happiness reaches its maximum point when an annual income of \$50,000.00 is maintained. This is the amount in which people feel that all their material needs are being met (an amount from 2009) (Baumgardner, 2009). A good share of the pay scale above this amount goes into the consequential economics aimed at dealing with the effects of greed and stratification, along with increasing the national pride (lifestyle) above other nations. If happiness does not increase above this level then why promote or encourage higher lifestyles? Consequently, the rich pay most of the taxes in order to maintain civility, civility that allows for their increasing materialism. But the lower classes are hardshipped by a higher percentage of their earnings going to taxes than the percentage that the rich pay.

So now you are thinking I must be a communist that believes in the Constitution, right? Actually I think the communists failed to obtain their "classless utopia" because they were not able to follow Marx. For example Brezhnev had sports cars while his labor class was in poverty (info from a Cold War course at Drury). I was born into a brand of Christianity which idolizes a way of life similar to what you would find in a Jewish Kibbutz. Like the communists, my ancestors could not maintain a classless society either.

History shows that human-nature rarely governs itself successfully, and ends up cycling like the rise and fall of prior civilizations (e.g., Romans, Egyptians etc.). Freedom is good, but it does not free us from the consequences of our choices. This cycle of dialectical materialism can be broken by following Christ's economics (in my opinion), but I believe that human nature will

require a second-coming to neutralize greed; until there is an equality of materialism again. An alternative to the neutralization of a second-coming can be achieved by individual allegiance to the existing commandments of Christ, commandments that curb human nature on both ends of the rich/poor spectrum. These commandments include teaching the poor not to covet or steal what the rich have, and teach the rich to take and sell what they have and give it to the poor – and come follow Christ. Christ's doctrine reduces stratification until a society is *at one* with itself, by using the at-one-ment or "atonement". I realize that everyone is entitled to their own belief on the subject (freedom of religion). Islam would probably disagree - may the best God win.

Probation (incarceration's substitute) and Parole (post-incarceration), to me, are both the result of the competition of free-enterprise, competition that results from a stratified society struggling to deal with the consequences of its choices – by reducing expensive incarceration at the risk of losing civility and endangering the public. Greed has to deprive some individuals of their equal economic opportunities in order for the "Positivist" view to be the consequence of the rich. After studying the effects of white-collar-crime at Drury, I can see how the economy can be ruined by a greedy savings-and-loan debacle, or a greedy mortgage lending trend. Granted, the lower working class does not have to go into debt by borrowing or taking out a mortgage to keep up with the Jones - who have obtained material wealth. They would not have any Jones to keep up with however, if there weren't any. This may depress some people as they fall victim to the situations of a consequential failing economy, and in turn may create more substance abusers, abusers who may have not have abused substances under "greedless" conditions. Consequentially, under the conditions of a ruined economy, probationers and parolees cannot secure employment in order to avoid recidivism (returning to prison).

Success in P/P has many variables to consider such as the fluctuating economy and biased client selection (type of offenders chosen for P/P), selection which is influenced by desired political outcomes involving the almighty buck. Substance abusers seem to make up *most* of the P/P problem, and individual states apply P/P differently. Most P/P would not matter (e.g., to each his own) except that more people are killed by unintentional drunk drivers (DUIs) than by intentional homicidal perpetrators (Abadinsky, 2012). P/P alternates from classicalism's punishments (force) to positivism's rehabilitation (sympathy) – as the almighty buck dictates (whatever maintains civility so the rich can gain more materialism).

The most effective P/P for the buck seems to be a combination of the two (classicalism and positivism) – according to the course text. The author describes the correct officer approach to P/P as being “helping offenders while protecting the community – being a social worker with a gun” (Abadinsky, 2012).

References

Abadinsky, Howard (2012). Probation and Parole: theory and practice – 11<sup>th</sup> ed.

Baumgardner, Steve R.; Crothers, Marie K. (2009). Positive Psychology – 1<sup>st</sup> ed.