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# Can Socialism Save the Environment?

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## Videos:

“Only Socialism Can Save the Planet”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuTv4IbyzDo> (1:55 minutes)

“Socialism Ruins the Environment”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RT8vPpFVkc> (5:05 minutes)

## Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

## Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. In the BreakThrough News video, Tina Landis said: “The system of capitalism itself requires endless growth and endless profits.” What did she mean by this? Is it true? Why/Why not?
3. In the Stossel video, we learned about a campaign in China to kill sparrows in order to protect crops, but this led to an increase in insect populations, which destroyed more crops. This is an example of unintended consequences. Can you think of any other examples of unintended consequences of government policies?
4. Tina Landis said that under capitalism, even if a company wants to “go green,” they won’t be profitable and will be bought out by another company. Do you know of any examples of this? If so, what are they? Are there any counter examples of a company successfully going green?
5. John Stossel said: “China’s central planners keep making mistakes.” What are “central planners”?
6. Tina Landis said that while individuals should all try to conserve more, “it’s really consumer society that needs to end.” What did she mean by this? What is “consumer society”?
7. In the Stossel video, Tom Palmer said: “All the time we hear socialists say, ‘Well, next time we’ll get it right.’ How many next times do you get?” Do you think the past failures of socialism should rule out any future attempts at socialism? Why/Why not?

8. Tina Landis said: “We need major funding, we need major transformations of society....”  
Should the government be responsible for transforming society? Would you trust the government to do so? Why/Why not?
9. John Stossel said that despite a bad track record, socialists still get credit from the media for protecting the environment. Why do you think this is?
10. Tina Landis said: “The Pentagon is the largest consumer of fossil fuels on the planet and the largest unregulated polluter. They are never required to report their emissions in the U.N. summit reports.” Why do you think the Pentagon is treated differently from private companies? Is it justifiable? Why/Why not?
11. Tom Palmer said that private farmers are “concerned about the ability of the farm to grow food...a hundred years into the future, long after that farmer’s going to be gone. Why? Because the farm has a capital value. That’s the capital in capitalism.” What did he mean by this? Are private citizens better incentivized than governments to protect the environment? Why/Why not?
12. Tina Landis said: “If you don’t look at the global policies of the U.S. and the E.U., of domination of the world and exploitation of the global south, you can’t begin to address climate change, because it’s all related.” What did she mean by this?
13. John Stossel said: “When people have enough money that they don’t have to worry about starving or freezing, they can afford to protect nature.” What did he mean by this? Do you agree? Why/Why not?
14. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
15. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
16. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
17. What else would you like to learn about this topic?
18. For more on this topic, see our previous Both Sides of the Issue pairing:  
Climate Change vs. Economic Growth <https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-climate-change-vs-economic-growth/>