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Renaë Bartow

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“If I Were a Rich Man” is a song that many a man has in his heart. The American dream is a vision of prosperity felt from generation to generation. The song portrays the desire for bigger and better as well as for self and family as the lyrics express. The Jewish community has embraced the song and the play Fiddler on the Roof as their own. For many Jews, God’s Law stabilizes their daily life through tradition and by creating an inner circle within their community.

Reb Tevye, the character singing “If I Were a Rich Man” is a Jewish, Russian, dairyman. He is a working man trying to support his family in a village in Russia in 1905. In the song, “If I Were a Rich Man” he dreams to be wealthy, so he would not have to work. He thinks of how large and extravagant his house in the middle of town would be. He sings of the animals and livestock he would have, and how they would be the status symbols of their family’s wealth. Owning such a vast amount of livestock for feasting, his wife would be overweight from their good eating. He sings of his wife, Golde, having servants to cook these meals and to clean for her. He sings of himself as the wise man in town that all come to for advice. “When you’re rich, they think you really know (Harnic)!” He ends the song, singing of his tradition and about having the time to devote himself to prayer and religion several hours each day. He would share with others at the synagogue and discuss the truths in the books. This time would be something to have, time he does not have because he must work.

In the song, he speaks of authority figures that fall in the outer circle and suppress Jewish tradition by elimination. The authority figures he speaks of are the special police that take control and force the new revolution ways and dismantle the old traditions. Reb Teyve feels, without these traditions, they would find their lives “as shaky as a fiddler on the roof (Fiddler on the Roof).”

Russia in 1905 was a changing socio-economic environment and was experiencing a severe economic depression. Tsar Nicholas II used the classic economic approach. The taxes that accumulated wealth for the royal family put great hardships on the working population. As the taxes rose there was less disposable income for them to spend on necessary goods.

At this time, the Trans-Siberian Railroad was completed and allowed greater movement from countryside to town. The labor force that had worked agriculturally now began to migrate and work in the urban manufacturing centers as industries expanded. Excess population swelling the cities, as well as advances in industry and manufacturing, resulted in a decreased need for labor and caused the common wage to decrease by twenty percent. The movement of labor from agrarian to industrial caused food shortages and the price of commodity goods to increase in 1904. The larger cities grew quickly, creating problems of over crowding, initiating rampant poverty, crime, and disease. The population pressure and persecution the Jews were living with became unbearable.

Why manufacture, when no one can afford to buy? Industry responded by slowing down production and discharging workers. Father George Gapon concerned for the welfare of the countries industrial workers, organized the Assembly of Russian Workers. More than 110,000 workers went on strike after four members were dismissed from Putilov Iron and Steel Works, in St. Petersburg. Gapon appealed to Tsar Nicholas II with a petition signed by 150,000 people requesting:

- I. Reduction in the working day to eight hours
- II. Increase in wages and an improvement in working conditions
- III. A voice for all people in all socio economic classes
- IV. End the Russo-Japanese War

Vyacheslav Plehve, Minister of Interior, had a deep hatred toward Russia's five million Jews. Though he did not live to see it, his special police were the beginning of the repression and retaliation, driving the Jews into the ranks of the revolution. The communist party revolution overthrew the Czar and took control of Russia.

John Maynard Keynes illustrated with his *Aggregate Expenditures Model* in 1936 that the foundations of the classical economic approach "Laissez-faire" were incorrect. The Russian government needed to be more active to effectively balance their economy. The communist and socialist economic concepts are best described as a Command System. Government controls all property and resources which are equally owned by all citizens in the country. Government is the authority of all decisions concerning property and resources. The business firms conducting business for the Government have virtually no say in the production and goals of the endeavor. The communist and socialist government establishes a board to control the central decisions for the government. The countries today that operate under the command system include China, North Korea, and Cuba.

Recently in China, there have been slight economic changes from the Command System to a market-oriented economy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), lead by Hu Jintao, has stepped in with a strong hand to sustain acceptable job growth, reduce economic corruption and transgressions, and contain environmental adversity and social controversy. He recognized multiple baskets of currency and converted to the exchange rate system in July 2005. China was able to revalue the Yuan (CNY) by 2.1% against the US Dollar. In 2006 China completed a thirteen year hydro-electric project that cost \$24 billion and spans the Yangtze River - the Three Gorges Dam. With power capacity of 18,000 megawatts the dam also controls flooding that has created strife for many years. The National Peoples Congress approved the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year

program targeting a twenty percent decrease in energy consumption per unit of Gross Domestic Product and should increase their GDP 45% by their estimates. Estimated GDP for the year 2006 in China was \$10 trillion.

China has been able to suppress corruption, but North Korea has experienced mismanagement and misallocation of their economic resources for decades. There is no reliable data given by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but it is evident that current economical conditions are critical. Lack of good farming land and shortages of tractors and resources for fuel have created food shortages. This has created malnutrition and poverty in most of North Korea's population. North Korea was occupied by Japan following the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, and is currently a Communist State under the one-man dictatorship of Kim Jong il-so'ng. His large spending for military expenditures uses up resources needed for domestic consumption and investment. Current estimates for North Korea GDP for 2006 are \$40 Billion.

The data seems very questionable and the numbers do not have sufficient accounting records, Cuba has an estimated GDP for 2006 of \$44.54 billion. The Republic of Cuba is headed by Fidel Castro Ruz and his Cuban Communist Party (PCC). The average standard of living remains very low. When the soviet aid was lost in the early 1990's, Cuba experienced serious shortages of food and commodities. This downturn has established an ally, Venezuela, which currently supplies Cuba with oil. Preferential treatment is given to Cuba in exchange for over twenty thousand of their medical professionals and additional personnel help.

The capitalist economic concept is the Market System, allowing for private services and goods to be offered to the consumer to maximize satisfaction and profit. Leaving the market to decide the demand and price of goods offered by the individual or business. The difference between Market and Command Systems is that competition is created within the Market System.

Most countries operate under the market system including the United States of America. USA is the largest and most technologically advanced economy in the world. GDP for the USA is estimated at \$12.98 Trillion for 2006. This country has a remarkably resilient economy which was put to the test after the attacks on the World Trade Towers on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The war against Iraq has made major shifts in our labor and productivity, but our economy is still resilient. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina had little impact in the GDP growth for 2005. The rising price of oil has thus far had negligible negative effect. Some forecast that our economy is headed to a recessional business cycle, but that is yet to be seen.

The ending scene of Fiddler on the Roof, Reb Tevye and his family are packing the wagon and saying their final goodbyes. Their plan is to stay in Warsaw until they have enough money to get to America where they could pursue bigger and better as well as for self and family. In 1906, One-third of the skilled and young Jews in Russia moved and migrated; 152,000 arrived into the United States of America.

The implicit view of the prosperity that is to be had in the United States of America is the dream exclaimed in the song, "If I Were a Rich Man." Leisure time is the opportunity cost of money as demonstrated by many a working man daily in the world. Is a working man farther ahead economically in a free market or command system?

For many immigrants, even today, the command system is "as shaky as a fiddler on the roof (Fiddler on the Roof)." Thousands of Cuban refugees risk their lives annually to immigrate to the USA, because they feel insecure with Fidel Castro and the command system in place with Cuba's current communist reign. They are unable to achieve the prosperity in Cuba that can be obtained in the United States of America. The allegiance to the communist regime is the same today as then; the people move out of the corruption for a better life.

The market system provides guidelines for economic activity, stability, and growth in a capitalist economic system. This system is more successful because it modifies the disbursement of income and provides the ability to produce goods and services that may be under produced or not created at all. Those individuals and business can independently supply to the market and decide what, how, and who will be supplied with their product of service.

Being an American citizen of the greatest free market system in the world allows each of us to choose our path to our desired level of social economic standing through hard work and pursuing opportunities. We are free to work and worship as we choose, without government interference. These freedoms are the genuine American dream.

## If I Were a Rich Man

[TEVYE]

"Dear God, you made many, many poor people.  
I realize, of course, that it's no shame to be poor.  
But it's no great honor either!  
So, what would have been so terrible if I had a  
small fortune?"

If I were a rich man,  
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle  
dum.  
All day long I'd biddy biddy bum.  
If I were a wealthy man.  
I wouldn't have to work hard.  
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle  
dum.  
If I were a biddy biddy rich,  
Yidle-diddle-didle-didle man.

I'd build a big tall house with rooms by the  
dozen,  
Right in the middle of the town.  
A fine tin roof with real wooden floors below.  
There would be one long staircase just going up,  
And one even longer coming down,  
And one more leading nowhere, just for show.

I'd fill my yard with chicks and turkeys and geese  
and ducks  
For the town to see and hear.  
And each loud "cheep" and "swaqwk" and  
"honk" and "quack"  
Would land like a trumpet on the ear,  
As if to say "Here lives a wealthy man."

If I were a rich man,  
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle  
dum.  
All day long I'd biddy biddy bum.

If I were a wealthy man.  
I wouldn't have to work hard.  
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle  
dum.  
If I were a biddy biddy rich,  
Yidle-diddle-didle-didle man.

I see my wife, my Golde, looking like a rich  
man's wife  
With a proper double-chin.  
Supervising meals to her heart's delight.  
I see her putting on airs and strutting like a  
peacock.  
Oy, what a happy mood she's in.  
Screaming at the servants, day and night.

The most important men in town would come to  
fawn on me!  
They would ask me to advise them,  
Like a Solomon the Wise.  
"If you please, Reb Tevye..."  
"Pardon me, Reb Tevye..."  
Posing problems that would cross a rabbi's eyes!  
And it won't make one bit of difference if i  
answer right or wrong.  
When you're rich, they think you really know!

If I were rich, I'd have the time that I lack  
To sit in the synagogue and pray.  
And maybe have a seat by the Eastern wall.  
And I'd discuss the holy books with the learned  
men, several hours every day.  
That would be the sweetest thing of all.

If I were a rich man,  
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle  
dum.  
All day long I'd biddy biddy bum.  
If I were a wealthy man.  
I wouldn't have to work hard.  
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle  
dum.  
If I were a biddy biddy rich,  
Yidle-diddle-didle-didle man.

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