

October 13, 2010

Capitalism Saves Chilean Miners

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In joyful images beamed worldwide, rescue operations to save 33 trapped Chilean miners appear to have been hugely successful.

No one in history has survived underground as long as the 33 Chilean miners have in the 69-day ordeal, and over at the Wall Street Journal, a few columnists are quickly declaring it a victory for free-market fundamentals.

"Well at the risk of being too confrontational for people, I would be willing to call this an enormous victory for free-market capitalism," Daniel Henninger told James Freeman and the [Opinion Journal](#).

From the drill bit and fiber-optic cables which were made in Pennsylvania and Japan, respectively, to projectors used on Samsung cell phones from Korea, Henninger praises the incredibly "vibrant" Chilean economy for opening up to the possibility of such miracles. "It all came together out there in that desert to bring these men up from half mile down."

"A lot of this innovation came out of Chile right? And it's the Chileans themselves who have to claim the victory here," Henninger said.

Americas columnist Mary Anastasia O'Grady meanwhile, made note of the response, background and leadership of Chilean president Sebastian Piñera, as compared to Barack Obama.

O'Grady stated "What you have in Chile is a president who was once an executive at a very large corporation. He knows how to take charge -- and he knows how to execute."

"He went there, immediately began working on the kinds of things Dan's talking about -- bringing in the expertise needed to try to locate the miners, that took almost two weeks. Then of course once they found out they were alive, they had this enormous task of trying to get them.... He was able to organize and execute that because of his leadership skills."

What's interesting to note is that Sebastian Piñera is the brother of Jose Piñera, the architect of Chile's private pension system and Distinguished Senior Fellow at the [Cato Institute](#).

"That's right, we should contrast the effort to bring in the talent and expertise from all over the world in the United States," said Freeman. "As people looked at the gulf spill, it's good to see it's not as bad as some people feared, but we did have this issue with the Jones Act, basically keeping out foreign ships from possibly cleaning up with the spill."

"Remember we had this huge foreign ship that was being offered that had the incredible capacity to sweep up oil," Henninger reminded. "The Dutch especially are apparently the world's leaders in cleaning up oil spills -- they too were pushed away by the Obama government."

"You know I would even include the disaster of Katrina as well, that was a self-contained thing here. Some of us were writing at the time after this *monumental* disaster from the hurricane -- why not bring in the private sector and its distribution capabilities -- Staples, Target and so forth? People laughed at that. But that is precisely what the Chileans have done with this rescue is bring the private sector to bear with the best technologies, the best minds available, and save these people. Why the United States keeps the private sector at arms length is a mystery."

Well actually, the ever so destructive and self-serving unions are behind the protectionist Federal statute to keep shipbuilding

in the US. Consequently, in all their infinite wisdom, US shipbuilders have hurt consumers, priced themselves out of the international market and build only 1 percent of the world's largest commercial ships -- but that's for another day.

For those on the Left, every disaster leads to an urgent call-to-arms for more government. In the wake of the West Virginia mining disaster earlier this year, [Arianna Huffington](#) attributed it, along with virtually every other accident under the sun, as a direct result of small-government and corporate greed. But as I wrote at the time:

Since 1970, approximately 250 coal-mining fatalities have occurred in the U.S. due to accident. In contrast to the centralized, government-controlled utopia of China (where the average coal miner produced about 2.2 percent of a coal miner in the U.S. in 2003) - even when using the highly questionable numbers given by the Chinese government, approximately [4,750 coal miners](#) in China died in 2006...alone.

The moral of the story being: you can cry for bigger government, but all you'll get is more regulation, more corruption, more inefficiency, more disasters - *along* with an economy crippled by regulation, should progressives have their way.

Fact of the matter is every single disaster cannot be prevented. But a nation can either live in a free and open system to help mitigate these unforeseen disasters - or set itself up for failure with a centralized system of power and exponentially worse consequences. As Henninger reminds the Opinion Journal, the rescue miracle, and "victory," would never have been possible in neighboring states such as Venezuela, Bolivia or Ecuador - where virtually all that thrives is big government.

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