Comparing F. D. Roosevelt and B. H. Obama in Developing Welfare

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Abstract

ABSTRACT: Obama’s expert communication skills have been recognized from day one of his campaign to compare him to Roosevelt. Comparisons, however, go beyond rhetoric when studying the similarities and differences in developing the welfare state using measures of antitrust, healthcare, energy and institutional reform in order to prevent or alleviate the grievous effects of poverty. Individually or combined together, these policies take a large share of a nation’s budget and can have a direct effect on the individual and on recession-induced plans to reform welfare. This same effectiveness is the reason why their implementation runs the risk of surrendering to the powers of monopoly; in the case of health in the form of insurance companies and in the case of energy through the position of holding companies in the market. Antitrust is the indispensable tool to prevent this yielding under the supervision of the Supreme Court which oversees its constitutional implementation. Analysis of these policies also serves to describe the current scenario in American politics, how it compares to Roosevelt’s and the lessons to be learnt from the past.

RESUMEN: La experta habilidad comunicativa de Obama ha sido reconocida desde el primer día de su campaña para compararle con Roosevelt. La comparación, no obstante, va más allá de la retórica a la hora de estudiar semejanzas y diferencias en el desarrollo del bienestar a través de las políticas de competencia, sanidad, energía y reforma institucional y así prevenir o aliviar las graves consecuencias de la pobreza. Individualmente o combinadas, estas políticas constituyen gran parte del presupuesto nacional, y pueden tener un efecto directo en el individuo y en los planes que con el fin de atajar la recesión, modifi car el estado de bienestar. Esta misma eficacia es la razón por la que su implementación corre el riesgo de rendirse ante el poder del monopolio; en el caso de la sanidad en forma de las compañías aseguradoras y en el caso de la energía a través de la posición en el mercado de los holding. La política de competencia es el instrumento indispensable para prevenir esta cesión bajo la supervisión del Tribunal Supremo que supervisa la constitucionalidad de su implementación. El análisis de estas políticas sirve también para describir el escenario actual en la política norteamericana, para compararlo con el de Roosevelt y así aprender del pasado.

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Developments in welfare states can also be reactive or proactive depending on the ideological aims and visions of governments or their ability to make social policy (Spicker, 1995, p. 35). Liberalism tended to stress the role of the individual in providing for their own needs; the state should only intervene to help those that were incapable of finding work. Beveridge had plenty of experience in welfare policy having being in charge of the labour exchanges and lecturing on economics at Oxford University and the London School of Economics. Keynes had been an economics adviser to the British government and inspired the New Deal programme in the USA (Crystal, 1998, pp. 105 & 523). Franklin Delano Roosevelt (30 January 1882 – 12 April 1945), and and often referred to by his initials FDR, was an American statesman and political leader who served as the President of the United States from 1933 to 1945. A Democrat, he won a record four presidential elections and dominated his party for many years as a central figure in world events during the mid-20th century, leading the United States during a time of worldwide economic depression and total war. His program for relief, recovery...