

How the right use government - to redistribute income u...

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There's a [first rate article by Dean Baker](#) on the Real-World Economics Review Blog in which he argues:

As we mark the 100th anniversary of Ronald Reagan's birth, his most important legacy has gone largely overlooked. Reagan helped to put a caricature of politics at the center of the national debate and it remains there to this day. In Reagan's caricature the central divide between progressives and conservatives is that progressives trust the government to make key decisions on production and distribution, while conservatives trust the market.

This framing of the debate is advantageous for the right since people, especially in the United States, tend to be suspicious of an overly powerful government. They also like the idea of leaving important decisions to the seemingly natural workings of the market.

It is therefore understandable that the right likes to frame its agenda this way. However, since the right has no greater commitment to the market than the left, it is incredible that progressives are so foolish as to accept this framing.

In reality, the right uses government all the time to advance its interest by setting rules that redistribute income upward. As long as progressives ignore the rules that are designed to redistribute income upward, they will be left fighting over crumbs. There is no way that government interventions will reverse a rigged market. For some reason, most of the people in the national political debate who consider themselves progressive do not seem to understand this fact.

That's why creating progressive tax systems - really progressive tax systems - coupled with systems that ensure real wages can rise (and as Dean Baker argues, most anti-inflation measures are disguised attempts to do the opposite) - is so essential to the economic justice debate.

And putting it there has been one of the big successes of the [Tax Justice Network](#) over

the last few years.

But as Dean Banker argues - and I recommend the rest of his post - we've got a long way to go before enough people do so.