

LIBERTY VS. EQUALITY, OR PROPERTY RIGHTS VS. DEMOCRACY?

Libertarians place liberty above all other values, including democracy (self-government) and even the right to life of the disinherited. More specifically, they are primarily concerned about economic freedom, i.e. freedom to manage their property and to exploit natural and human resources without any interference from government or labor unions. / Since the unrestricted exercise of property rights causes economic, cultural and political inequalities, libertarians are antiegalitarian and, therefore, basically antidemocratic, for there can be no democracy of unequals, anymore than there can be a democratic association of foxes and hens. When the libertarians state that equality is incompatible with freedom, what they really mean is that democracy is incompatible with unrestricted property rights: they see democracy as a threat to economic privilege.

(See Dahl 1985.)

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