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By Editor
Workers World
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What kind of socialism?

A sea change has been taking place in the United States. At last, the polls show that socialism is no longer the “dirty word” it was once, when even to say publicly that you were a socialist — and especially a communist — could mean being ostracized, attacked, fired from your job, even jailed.



Not since the days of labor leader Eugene Debs (1855-1926) has a socialist fared well in U.S. presidential elections. Yet candidate Bernie Sanders, who identifies himself as a “democratic socialist,” is growing in popularity.

Let us suppose that Sanders could win the presidency. His chances are certainly slim, given the lineup of both parties' richest backers against him, but nothing is impossible. Many social democrats like Sanders have been elected to high office in Europe. They have extracted some concessions from the ruling classes.

But that is not socialism.

Nor is Sanders running for the nomination of a party that professes socialism. The Democratic Party has certainly never endorsed it. On the contrary, it has coexisted with the Republican Party as two ruling-class parties solidly in the camp of capitalism.

The Democratic Party has also been successful in selling imperialist war to the people, getting them to fight and die not for "democracy" but for corporate domination of the world's resources.

For decades, the Democratic Party also was the party of Southern segregation. But in the North, especially with the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration, the party became associated with government programs to alleviate poverty.

What has changed is not the leadership of the two capitalist parties or their commitment to the profit system, but the sentiment of the voters. Many, especially the youth, have come to realize that capitalism is responsible for the mind-boggling wealth gap in this country. They want change.

Sanders stands for the kind of change carried out by social democratic parties elsewhere that have brought welcome reforms, but that have coexisted with capitalist ownership and control of the means of production.

It is this ownership and control that gives the capitalists their power, not only over the economic life but also the politics of the country.

What is socialism?

Which raises the question, what is real socialism based on? First and foremost, a basic overhaul of the economy to bring about socialism can only begin when the working class

flexes its power and takes over the means of production and uses that to solve the problems of poverty and inequality.

There is no reason for poverty in this country — or in the world. The level of productivity capable of meeting peoples' needs is now astounding. A true workers' government could immediately eliminate poverty by expropriating the property of the rich and planning economic development based on human need, not profit.

Why shouldn't the global working class as a whole own and control the means of production? It is all built by workers in the first place.

Why shouldn't the homeless be sheltered in all the empty mansions and condos that are deserted most of the time, while their wealthy owners jet around the world?

Why shouldn't the overabundance of food produced in this country be used to end world hunger, once and for all?

Why shouldn't every young person be guaranteed an income and health coverage while studying how to move society forward in a sustainable way?

Yet — at a time when the planet itself is engulfed in a crisis created by unbridled capitalism — the old political institutions put in place by billionaires' money still dictate policy. This cannot last.

Workers World is committed to building a revolutionary movement for socialism. Elections may be a barometer of shifting opinion, but the movement doesn't end on election day. It grows with every struggle for social justice — with every strike, every protest, every sit-in. The movement builds working-class solidarity against white supremacy, misogyny, the oppression of LGBTQ2+ people and the scapegoating of im/migrants.

Building a truly revolutionary movement holds the key to the future. If you want to fight for real social change, join us!

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