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From Here and Back Again: Socialism, yech!

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There are many words bandied about in everyday talk that are not true to their meaning. In common language, a “theory” is taken to mean some wild-arsed idea that isn’t true, just imagined. In science, theory, like principle or law, represents empirically based explanations accounting for currently known facts or phenomena or historically verified experiences. It is testable and tested, it is verifiable or falsifiable; thus the theory of relativity, the theory of gravity, the theory of germs, the theory of evolution, but not the theory of creationism.

So what has this got to do with socialism, a word bandied about for years as “bad” because it is wrongly equated with communism and currently because (gasp) there is a “socialist,” Bernie Sanders, running for a presidential nomination. We are often misled in such cases of word usage as theory or socialism by power figures who benefit from such tactics.

Socialism isn’t communism. Socialism organizes society so that government owns and controls major industries as opposed to individual or corporate ownership. Do we have such a system, or is anyone advocating it? NO. Communism carries it further by being a totalitarian system where a single party controls state-owned means of production.

Do we have such a system, or is anyone advocating it? NO. We do have the obstructionist Republican Party, cooperating with and advocating for the rich, but even that is not yet communism, or the similar fascism, though Donald Trump uses the same tactics and lies (especially fear and us vs. them) as many previous demagogues did.

Also, a recent Princeton study concluded the U.S. is no longer a democracy, but rather an oligarchy or plutocracy run by the wealthy in conjunction with the government.

Looking at Bernie Sanders’s record and what he advocates, it is clear he is a “social democrat.” A social democracy contains both capitalistic and socialistic practices and is practiced successfully in many countries in the world. The social democracies of Scandinavia, in particular, have the happiest people, the best educational systems, the best health systems, paid maternity leave for both men and women, no debt after college graduation, and more.

But I’ve heard Americans say, “Why look to other countries to learn? We’re Americans.”

From the 1930s, when big corporate America entranced and rewarded religion to join them, the rise of Christian nationalism pushed aside the biblical concerns for social welfare and substituted Christian capitalism and, with it, concern for big business and trickle-down theory. Look at the inequity in our Third World country, the U.S., and see how well that has worked.

At the same time corporate America decries social welfare, while loving war and profits, it is interesting to see how much it holds its hand out to you and me. For example, *The New York Times* reported that state and local governments provided at least \$80 billion to big corporations each year, with about 48 receiving more than \$100 million each. The Cato Institute reports the federal government provides big corporations about \$100 billion each year. Hedge fund managers get a federal tax break so they are taxed at about 15 percent, while 68 percent of the recipients to whom we provide the break earn more than \$460,00 per year.

And when they and big banks get into trouble, they get bailed out by us (just like you and me?!), and the top employees get bonuses and golden parachutes, or key positions in government.

The government, and I'll say it, largely the Republicans, pass laws to shield the gun industry and chemical giants like Monsanto and Dupont from liability suits. It's nice to have such friends to provide money for election campaigns, allowing for lifetime politicians. Look at who profits from war and health and, therefore, disapprove of universal health care.

Please do not be taken in by the labeling of Bernie Sanders as a "socialist." He is a social democrat whose focus is on social justice. In this election, it comes down to who is voting for your interests as opposed to those of corporate America, who is voting for peace rather than sending our children off to war, who cares about the people rather than getting re-elected. And who really tells it like it is without spreading fear and divisiveness.