



Bill of Goods? The Ugly Truth about Bernie's 'Democratic Socialism'

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PARIS - Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders thinks what America needs is socialism.

"Healthcare should be a right of all people," Sanders said, and young people should have "the right to go to a public college or university tuition-free." He says new moms should have "at least three months of paid family and medical leave."

Sanders' Supporters

The 74-year-old senator has become a rock star to many Millennials, who believe in his message and like all the free stuff he's offering.

One supporter said, "People are saying, 'he's saying all the things that I need and I want. I want healthcare. I want an education. I don't want to be paying back my student loans for years and years and years.'"

Another supporter admitted, "I have a lot of student debt. I think he's going to do great things for education." And another said she likes Sanders message of "gender equality and equal pay and equality for everyone."

Sanders is careful to call his program "Democratic Socialism," and doesn't mention Cuba or North Korea, where the average person makes less than \$2,000 per year -- or Venezuela, where socialism has resulted in food shortages, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, where Sanders went on his honeymoon.

He talks instead about European social democracies. It's true that European nations have a long history with socialism, and some of it isn't pretty.

Focus on France

France is the land where some joke that communism succeeded. The French have the kind of welfare state Sanders wants and the French government is trying to escape from. It simply costs too much, and it's killing economic growth.

While Sanders has said he would like Americans to work less, France's socialist President Francois Hollande is trying to get the French to work more by ending the 35-hour work week.

But the French don't take kindly to having their welfare yanked by the government. They tend to protest and set things on fire.

French leaders feel trapped. Having built a welfare state France can no longer afford, the government has to keep raising taxes, killing the businesses that it needs to fund the welfare state.

French free market economist Emmanuel Martin says socialism has damaged the French work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit, making people psychologically dependent on the state.

"Individuals cannot be responsible. They need daddy, the state, to do things for them. It's terrible," Martin said. "Because we're not able to be grown-ups in a way. When you see those people demonstrating in the street they're just asking for Santa Claus."

While polls show most Democrats in the U.S now believe socialism has a 'positive impact on society,' half of all French young adults said in a poll they would flee France if they could because the future looks so bleak.

Policy analyst Jacob Arfwedsen says the talented are "voting with their feet. The entrepreneurial young people, they're going to London, they're going to Asia, they're going to the United States."

Capitalism Causes Growth

American Millennials are understandably concerned about their futures. They've entered the workforce during one of the weakest economic periods in decades.

CATO Institute fellow Michael Tanner feels their pain.

"If you're young and your student debts are piling up and you don't know if there's going to be a job for you when you get out of school, the prospect of someone saying he'll give you something, that sounds pretty good," he said.

Millennials have also seen capitalism bashed in school and in the media as the problem and not the solution. But Tanner says, "The fact is, if you want economic growth, if you want those jobs, if you want prosperity, capitalism is what produces it."

Statistics show that the freest economies are the most competitive.

Sanders thinks America should follow Scandinavia.

"I think we should look to countries like Denmark, like Sweden and Norway, and learn from what they have accomplished for their working people," he said.

But what Scandinavia is Sanders talking about? Sweden, Denmark and Norway all have lower business taxes than the U.S., which now has the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world.

Sweden has cut taxes and partially privatized healthcare and social security. Denmark has cut back too.

"I think he's (Sanders) basically wrong about what they are," Tanner said. "Those are not really socialist economies. What they are is capitalist economies, in some cases more fiercely competitive than our own, with social programs sort of layered on top of them."

One study showed Sanders' socialism could cost the U.S close to \$18 trillion.

"The working class and the middle class of this country...deserve a decent standard of living and their incomes should go up, not down," Sanders said.

And the data shows that the best chance for that to happen is with capitalism. It's what some French wish France had more of.