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Seattle Feels the “Bern”

Socialists sow tares among those lacking knowledge and life experience

Because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes; But by a man of understanding and knowledge, Right will be prolonged. --Proverbs 25:19

Reports of gold found in the Klondike region of the Yukon in northwestern Canada, attracted a migration of some 100,000 prospectors between 1896 and 1899—most of whom passed through Seattle on their way to the ports of Dyea and Skagway in southwest Alaska. One of the first to join the gold rush was William Wood, the mayor of Seattle, who resigned and formed a company to transport prospectors to the Klondike. And, that, dear friends, was the beginning of a successful, symbiotic business relationship between Seattle and Alaska, that flourishes to this day.

But beyond necessary and beneficial exchanges of raw materials for manufactured goods, the two far-west “tribes” are different in many, if not most aspects.

Alaska, home to 735,625 residents, encompasses some 571,951 rugged square miles. Seattle, the nation’s fastest growing large city,¹ houses 668,342 people in fewer than 84 square miles. Alaskans, as a lot, are risk-takers, preferring minimal government services or interference. Seattleites, on-the-other-hand, considering their choice of city fathers and ballot measures, prefer dense urban environments with broad-based social safety-net programs and income guarantees.

Not surprisingly, Alaska and Seattle also differ widely in expressed support for leading presidential candidates. According to *The Seattle Times* (Mar 22), Alaska leads the nation in per-capita donations to the Donald Trump presidential campaign,² while Seattle ranks number one among the 50 largest U.S. cities for per-capita donations to Sen. Bernie Sanders.³ At \$893 in Sanders giving per/1,000 residents, only San Francisco at \$785 and Portland at \$638 come close.

The *Times* story notes that the Sanders campaign has now opened an office on Capitol Hill, home to Bernie’s top three giving-per-capita ZIP codes in the Emerald City. But, a short ferry ride away, is one place in King County where voters believe Sanders is a name above all names. Uber-liberal Vashon Island has so far tossed a whopping \$2,258 per/1,000 population into his collection plate.

Last week, after capturing 73 percent of the delegates at the State Democrat Party caucuses, Sanders also managed to attract some 15,000 enthusiastic millennial-aged supporters to Safeco Field for a campaign rally. According to an article in a recent *Federalist* internet post⁴, young voters are turning out everywhere Sanders appears. “The Iowa caucus entrance poll, for instance, found Sanders garnered an overwhelming 84 percent of the 30 and under vote. Exit polls from New Hampshire found 85 percent support for Sanders among voters ages 30 and younger.”⁵ Ibid

Not that long ago, being called a socialist in American politics was a put-down. But now, according to a national *Reason-Rupe* survey, 53 percent of 18-to-29-year-olds view socialism favorably, compared to only a quarter of Americans over 55.

So what is going on? Why is socialism gaining traction?

Pollsters report that millennials don't seem to know what socialism is, and how it differs from other forms of government. While the definition of socialism is government ownership of the means of production (in varying degrees), a CBS/New York Times survey found that only 16 percent of millennials could accurately define socialism. Interestingly, 56 percent of self-described Tea Partiers, the persons seemingly most concerned about socialism, happen to be those best able to define and explain it—accurately.

In the *Reason-Rupe* survey, respondents were asked to use their own words to describe socialism. Millennials who viewed it favorably were more likely to think of it as people being kind or “being together.” By contrast in yet another *Reason* study, millennials were asked if America would be better served with government exercising more control over Uber, Amazon, Facebook, Google, Apple, etc. Needless-to-say, that question didn't sit well with the young-uns.

Although the 2013 election of socialist Kshama Sawant to the Seattle City Council has stirred much interest in socialism, it's more a renewal than an awakening. Leftist groups were operating in the Puget Sound region before statehood—certainly since 1887 when the territory hosted a number of socialist colonies.

By 1905, the Socialist Party had gained enough adherents to field political candidates and publish a newspaper.⁵ In collaboration with the more radical “Industrial Workers of the World,” street demonstrations were staged in downtown Seattle, involving many arrests. Even shootings erupted in Everett and Centralia between police and the “Wobblies” as the striking workers were called.

Recognizing an opportunity to establish a socio-political stronghold in the Pacific Northwest, socialist leaders such as Eugene V. Debs, (1855-1926), a five-time presidential candidate, encouraged followers to make their way to Seattle. By 1919, the local movement had enough muscle to call for a (Seattle) General Strike, involving 110 labor unions. Socialist Party leaders also gave birth to the Communist Party (CP) of Washington that same year.

Not to dismiss the efficacy of social protests on the streets of Seattle in the late sixties, but 1999 was a leap year for social-radicalism in these parts. On the occasion of local World Trade Organization meetings, mobs went on a looting and ransacking spree in downtown Seattle. Unfortunately, Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske put out a “Come to Seattle” sign to distant radical groups when he ordered his frustrated officers to stand down. The timid former chief, is currently President Obama's Commissioner of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency, overseeing a budget of \$12.4 billion and 60,000 employees.

So what can Christians do when their elected leaders are timid, confused, or lack integrity? And, what about the many voters who know not of the underpinnings of America's political system, and worse, do not acknowledge our Maker in any of their ways? We say, PRAY! And then, PRAY! And then, PRAY! Is it not long past time for the local Church to stir up the hounds of heaven?

More so, on June 29, *Believers* are ~~invited~~ URGED to come to the State Capitol in Olympia to join the Rev. Franklin Graham for a time of corporate confession and repentance. We must seek God's forgiveness and ask for His protection and favor to rest upon our state and our nation. It could be history-changing.

This we know: 15,000 locals came to a ballpark to meet with Bernie. Will as many come to the Capitol to meet with our God?

Rick Forcier

¹ Balk, Gene, “Census: Seattle is the fastest-growing big city in the U.S.,” [//blogs.seattletimes.com/fyi-guy/2014/05/22/](http://blogs.seattletimes.com/fyi-guy/2014/05/22/)

² gbalk@seattletimes.com, “Of Seattle's big Trump donors – all 6 of them – 2 are sorry they gave,” 3/22/2016

³ Balk, Gene, “Seattle is tops for per capita Bernie Sanders donations,” *The Seattle Times*, 3/11/2016

⁴ Elkins, Emily, Pullmann, Joy, “Why So Many Millennials Are Socialists,” thefederalist.com/2016/02/15/

⁵ Petry, Gina, “Socialism in the Pacific Northwest is not a new thing. It's a return to our radical roots,” realchangenews.org/2014/06/25/