
American Curios: A Socialist in the White House?

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After his crushing win in Nevada, Senator Bernie Sanders - if current trends remain like that- is on track to win the crown of the Democratic Party as his next presidential candidate and open the not-so-far unthinkable opportunity of a self-defined democratic socialist into the White House.

That fact has set many alarms off among the country's political and economic domes, and perhaps especially among the "centrists" and "moderates" who warn that if Sanders is the candidate, Trump will win the reelection, since the label of "socialism" is unacceptable for broad sectors of the people. In order to check this, both Republican and Democrat politicians are resuscitating that old fashion tactic of accusing Sanders and his people of being RED, insisting that this is a concept foreign to the United States and automatically disqualifies anyone who dares to wear that label.

But Sanders is not Red, Nor Socialism is foreign to this Country.

Sanders is what was once called a "social democrat," and he himself has defined his kind of socialism as something with roots in Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal policies. Sanders' political proposals would have been considered centrist 70 years ago, proving how much this country has veered right, especially since the neo-liberal agenda imposed with Reagan.

But his political proposals are not the most alarming thing for the domes, but that Sanders is driving, and is driven, by a growing plural movement led by a coalition of new and old forces - trade unionists, anti-globalisationists, the new wave of environmental activists, civil rights

defenders and more - who are rejecting the neoliberal consensus of the last four decades, and who are not afraid to declare themselves in favor of a socialist option. According to recent screen polls, 70% of millennials say they would vote for a socialist, and most Democrats assure they favor socialism over capitalism.

How they define socialism is another matter. In a country where the concept was translated as "the enemy" for over a century (the first mass raids of migrants in the U. S. were made during World War just to expel foreign "radicals" like Emma Goldman; in the 50's this repression reappeared with McCarthyism and the Cold War), the definitions are not very accurate. But it can be affirmed that it's a denial to neoliberalism and in favor of imposing social rights on market rights; a concept based on social solidarity and economic justice. Sanders says the principle is that "economic rights are human rights."

North American socialism in its broadest sense, without differing between the most radical currents (anarchists, communists) and the reformists (Socialist Party, Democratic Socialists of America), include a very wide range of trends, movements and great figures with a long and deep history within this country. In any list of those who somehow are identified as socialists stand out Martin Luther King Jr, Albert Einstein, Helen Keller, the great mining unionist Mother Jones, the African-American philosopher and journalist Hubert Harrison, the founder of the radical movement Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day, author Jack London, Pete Seeger, Joe Hill, Paul Robeson, among many others.

Perhaps the most influential historical figure in Sanders' political evolution is Eugene Debs - a father of North American socialism, five times a presidential candidate and repeatedly imprisoned during his lifetime as a railroad unionist and political leader in the late 19th and early 20th centuries -, who declared a century ago: "*While there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element, I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not*".

It may be ephemeral and illusory but for now there's an emerging tender and fierce rebellion around Sanders that dares to imagine a country of "bread and roses" for all (phrase of a 1911 North American socialist / anarchist leader).
