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The GOP and the Myth of Capitalism

By Mel Carriere
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When I post an article of my own or share one from another author in favor of candidate Bernie Sanders, I can usually expect to be inundated by a flood of contrary comments. Whether these are from paid trolls lying in wait beneath gloomy bridges crossing the fetid stream of misinformation; or deluded, self-immolating fanatics who truly believe that billionaires have their best interests at heart, the crux of their counterarguments is usually wrapped up in emotionally charged power words. A couple of the more effective of these terms are “socialism” – designed to frighten the children with visions of a commie boogeyman lurking beneath their beds, and “capitalism,” which is then used as a comforting security blanket, which the kiddies can use to protect themselves from these drooling, bleeding heart wraiths, if only they will wrap it protectively around them.

But, just like the terms anti-abortion, family values, prayer in schools, right to bear arms (insert your favorite false flag here), capitalism is really just a smokescreen word used to dredge up perceptions of security among those of us who survived the horrors of the Cold War. This country became the great nation that it is, or so the story goes, because of the blessings and bounties of capitalism. Therefore, continuing in this great tradition of the unrestricted free market surely must be in everybody’s best interests.

However, along with the other pretty banners behind which political candidates hide their true nefarious intentions, the word capitalism bears no relation to reality in how it governs the behavior of those who claim allegiance to it. The billionaire bankers certainly were not

restrained by sacred free market principles when they accepted billions in government bailout money, and allegiance to capitalism doesn't deter fat cat sports team owners from accepting public welfare to build new stadiums. Furthermore, adherence to laissez-faire philosophy never has amounted to much with the elected advocates of big business. From its inception that Grand Old Party that serves as the sword and shield of the rich has incorporated policies based upon those same insidious, destructive socialist ideas they decry in Bernie Sanders. Strangely enough, when and where they have done this the result has been prosperity for millions; not necessarily for billionaires but for the masses.

One need look no further than the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, for an example of the Republican party's immediate and ongoing commitment to socialist ideals. The Homestead Act, which he signed into law in 1862, gave 160 acres to claimants who only had to pay a small filing fee. Future amendments doubled, and eventually quadrupled this land allotment. Millions of acres were distributed in this fashion and middle class prosperity, stemming from real estate wealth, probably sprouted into life with this law. But when we get right down to it, the Homestead Act was basically socialist agrarian land redistribution on a scale that would make Mao Zedong or Fidel Castro dance in their little red boots.

Of course, the GOP brain trust would collectively roll over in its sleep at being accused of such heretical behavior, and would find clever ways to re-label that annoying "agrarian reform" term to something more philosophically digestible. But history soon moves us along to Republican Theodore Roosevelt's "Square Deal" policies of trust busting and regulating abusive corporate practices, then works its way up to Republican Richard Nixon's proposals for universal health care, and suddenly the whole GOP powder room starts to stink of that foul "s" word.

As it turns out, most politicians, Republicans included, are not against socialism when the benefits will get them votes from their constituents. They can try to wrap the ugly cardboard box of socialism up in pretty paper with a bow on top and give it to the voters for Christmas, but over the long history of this nation socialism by any other name is still socialism, and guess what? It's not just for Bernie anymore, nor has it ever been.