

Socialist Vanguard

April 2020 Newsletter

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Edited by Dave Schall

Presenting Democratic Socialist Viewpoints

April Elections

Wisconsin held its Presidential primary and its Spring elections (mostly local offices and judgeships). This year, thanks to the COVID-19 Pandemic, there was a lot of controversy. Should Wisconsin postpone the elections or carry on as scheduled. The GOP controlled legislature (along with the conservative leaning State Supreme Court) wanted the vote to be held as scheduled. With the COVID-19 scares, the GOP conservatives thought that this would give them an advantage. COVID-19 is mostly an urban virus so the GOP felt that the fear would be just that extra vote suppressor needed to give many conservative candidates (especially the incumbent Supreme Justice who was running for another term) a victory. **The GOP's hidden message to Wisconsin's urban voter was Die if you vote, we don't care!**

Voter suppression did not end with the GOP, the Dems under the guise of caring about human life, had their own tricks. In their pleas to postpone the elections, they focused their pleas on preserving life. For the most part the Dems acted too late and added confusion to voters, who had to figure out when will the election be held. Wisconsin's Governor Tony Evers starred in this role. After a few citizen groups went to the Wisconsin Courts to force a postponement of the elections and lost. Evers on the Friday before the election said he was restrained by Wisconsin law from issuing an executive order. Going into the weekend, it seemed the issue was resolved, Wisconsin elections would proceed as scheduled on the following Tuesday. Then on Monday morning the news media reported that Evers issued an executive order postponing the elections. The GOP legislature immediately went to both the Wisconsin Supreme Court and the US Supreme Court to overturn Evers edict. With unusual haste both Courts came out with ruling that same day. The Wisconsin Supreme Court in a 4-2 decision over turned Evers and said the elections must proceed on Tuesday. The US Supreme ruled that absentee ballots had to be received by a certain date and added to Wisconsin law that to be counted the ballots had to have a postmark.

The election was on for Tuesday. The US Supreme Court complicated the election as many absentee ballots were received on time but lacked a postmark, denying many votes being counted. Due to the threats posed by COVID-19, many municipalities reduced the number to voting sites. Milwaukee was the most dramatic as it reduced voting options from the usual 180 locations to just 5, each following very strict rules insisting that voters maintain a distance of 6 feet or more from each other and only a maximum of 10 voters could enter the site at one time. The lines were unusually long and slow. Fortunately, the weather was decent by Wisconsin standards. The GOP with all their voter id requirements could not have come up with a greater method to suppress votes!



What was most disgusting by the arguments of both parties was the minimizing the importance of one's vote. The struggles of different groups in USA history to get the right to vote was ignored, why did women bother fighting for nearly 70 years to obtain something meaningless? Why did the Civil Rights movement endure some very bloody conflicts in the 1960s if a person's right to vote was not valuable? Did those Freedom Fighters in Alabama and Mississippi give their lives for nothing? **Voting is the one power we all have, rich or poor, our votes are equal when tallied!**

Well, the people of Wisconsin won! In a high turnout election and a close race, the incumbent justice lost his seat! Citizens could not be stopped! While the polls were blocked the absentee voting provided the mechanism for votes to be cast! Sorry media pundits and party leaders who deplored Wisconsin's election confusion, **Wisconsinites were not deterred!** DS

Dues Time!

It is time to pay 2020 dues to the Socialist Party of Wisconsin. Dues are \$10/year (members with limited incomes may pay dues as low as \$5/year.). Make checks payable to the **Socialist Party of Wisconsin**.

Words for thought

"Denial is not a policy. We're facing extinction!" - Friends Committee on National Legislation

May Meeting Cancelled

Thanks to the COVID-19 and the shutting down of society by the various governments, The Socialist Party of Wisconsin May meeting is cancelled

May Day Greetings! Workers, Youth and Elderly Unite!

Time To Push Vote-By-Mail!

As we saw in Wisconsin, absentee voting can be done and has the advantage that it ignores disabilities, and many voter suppression games, which involve moving polling places or unfair staffing. Most research finds that it does not favor one party over another. A recent New York Times article claimed that Wisconsin's vote demonstrated that mail voting favors Democrats. This will be used to discredit vote-by-mail proposals. There were several caveats identified in the *Times* report, namely the emphasis that the Democrats gave to absentee and early voting. Another factor is that Democrats, most of whom are based in urban areas, tend to

be more concerned about COVID-19 than the more isolated GOP voters.

The City of Milwaukee has decided to mail out absentee ballots to all voters registered in the city for the November elections. This should be done at the state level, as it is likely COVID-19 will still be a factor in November.

Better yet, the US government should follow the lead of several states and switch the whole nation to a vote-by-mail system. There are several proposals in Congress to do that, but it will take lots of pressure to get such an action passed into law. **VOTE BY MAIL!** DS

What is Socialism in the 21st Century?

A View of Dave Schall

Last month Bruce Andrews expressed his views about socialism. This month I am offering a different opinion. Socialism, as we know it, gained popularity in the 19th Century. In the early half of that century it consisted of many utopian socialist experiments and two branches, one called Jacobian socialism (later democratic socialism) promoted by Frenchman Louis Blanc, the other was guided by the studies and theories of Karl Marx.

Marx was bold calling for a worker's revolution and in 1918 his vision became the theoretical foundation of the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution.

In the latter half of the 1800s, influenced by Ferdinand Lasalle and Eduard Bernstein, democratic socialism became influential in Western Europe, especially Germany.

In the USA, the Socialist Movement was very strong in the early years of the 20th Century under the leadership of Eugene Debs, Victor Berger and many others. However, it was a divided movement. Some wanted to focus on a worldwide worker-led revolution, others focused on providing improvements in people's lives. With World War One, the division became too great. While Socialists uniformly opposed the war, the Russian Revolution provided a live model for a worker revolution. The division led to numerous conflicts within the USA labor movement.

I have been able to visit nations that operated under the different ideals. I visited former communist/socialist regimes in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Cuba. I also visited Albania 25 years after that nation threw out its communist/socialist system. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary, I found people demoralized, though rebellious, feeling oppressed and very poor. Cubans, I found very poor, but defiant (against the USA). Yugoslavia consisted of people proud, but poor and still nationalistic (Serbs disliking Croats, Slovenians at odds with Croats and Serbians,

etc). All three European nations overthrew the communist/socialist regimes. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia broke apart. In Albania, the nation is still very poor, but willingly adopting capitalism.

In Cuba there was a love-hate relationship regarding the USA. Many hated the oppressive policies of the USA government, but wanted to escape to the USA. Overall, the communist/socialist governments preached equality and worker power, but a class system had developed with the Communist Party leaders acting authoritarian. Compared to the USA, Japan, Western Europe, these countries were very poor and economically disadvantaged.

Thanks to the socialist movement in the USA, led by the "sewer socialists" in Milwaukee, a number of reforms (social security, unemployment compensation, clean governments, workplace safety laws, workman's compensation, environmental protections which included both recreational programs and tighter environmental practices, modern transportation systems, progressive taxes) brought worker prosperity.

Under the democratic socialist governments of Western Europe, working people gained more benefits than their American counter-parts. Many have implemented laws that require worker representation on corporate boards. Throughout Europe citizens enjoy universal affordable health care, often free or low-cost college (or technical school) tuition, taxes that are more progressive than those in the USA. Most Europeans are more passionate calling for democracy and democratic values.

Karl Marx, after doing very extensive, in depth studies on the human condition, declared his calls for a socialist society as scientific socialism. **I think that if Marx were living today, he would describe democratic socialist societies as scientific socialist societies.**

Socialist Party of Wisconsin

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