My Heart is in
Burlington
The U.S. Socialist Senator
A biographical analysis on Senator Bernard “Bernie” Sanders and his road to the U.S. Senate 2006

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Spring 2010
In the sainted Lincoln’s chair
Beats a heart which knows no care
For the lot of those who toil in his domain
For the millions poor
Seeking work from door to door,
That they may the honest needs
Of life obtain
Mrs. J. T. Kellie

Citizen to Citizen— that’s how we make change.
From Senator Sanders Unfiltered
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Preface
More than 50 years ago the young Michael Harrington said that a generation from then
someone would write about poverty in America, and it would be just the same as in his time.¹
Senator Bernard Sanders reminded his audience of Harrington’s statement when addressing
the issue of poverty in 2010. The fact is that several million Americans live beneath the
poverty line, without health insurance, without a stable home, without being able to pay for
their children’s education. In a society like this one might ask the elementary question, where
is the labor party? Why have not the laborers and the poor Americans made a revolt? The
question has been addressed for decades. This thesis will survey the reasons for the lack of a
leftist or social-democratic party in America. I will make an attempt to show that although
weak there is a left tradition in the U.S. It is in this context that Senator Sanders is interesting.
Though small, and even somewhat iconoclastic, a movement to the left of the Democratic
Party exists in the United States, Senator Sanders being part of it. What are the traditions he
draws upon? What is his standing? The thesis will try to locate him in a jungle of different
small and larger groupings, parties, and grass-roots movements in contemporary America.

The journey will go through time and look at several important events in the American
history of the radical left, and also the development of main terms and ideologies in this
context. Finally, it will end up with seeing the weak left as a result of a nation building project
that excluded socialism as such. One interesting fact about America is that rather than
building a successful socialist party, some socialist or left values were incorporated into
mainstream American political thought, values like equality, upward mobility, equal
opportunity, and individualism.

Senator Bernard Sanders is a socialist. He calls himself a socialist, and sometimes a
social-democrat. His ideal society is the Scandinavian model, he says, combined with the
ideas of the American Socialist Eugene Debs. The Senator is also part of the Progressive
Coalition in the Senate. He has been part of the progressive political frontier in the United
States for nearly two decades now. As a tool in this struggle he uses what politicians
throughout the ages have held close to their heart, what Michael Kazin calls a populist
impulse. This understanding of Populism gives the term the character of being a
psychological tool to create emotions, and not a movement among people. It is important to
understand it more as a tool for persuasion, he believes.² The term has been misunderstood,
hated, loved, and worshiped for ages. For a politician it may mean everything; it may mean
downfall or victory. The critique of senators in Washington is loud and clear in the American
society. Ever since Andrew Jackson created his front against the “money”-rulers in
Washington, D.C., it has been the everlasting struggle between those who believe in “big government” and those who believe in the “little” independent man. This thesis will portray the senator, it will try to place him among his many forefathers, and it will attempt to explain what kind of socialism that has survived in the United States, under the stars and stripes of the American Dream. A question that will arise several times throughout the thesis as a mast on this analytical ship in this rough sea of different political ideas will be the following: to paraphrase Andrew Jackson, is Senator Sanders the rich, proud and privileged socialist senator, or a lower-class warrior of the common man?

I want to thank everyone who has supported me while writing this thesis. I would like to thank Phil Fiermonte, Senator Sanders’ campaign outreach director for taking time to give me an interview. I would also like to thank The Norwegian Embassy in Washington, D. C. for their support in trying to set up an interview with Senator Sanders.
Senator Bernard Sanders –The Lonely Socialist

All American Progressives should unite for Barack Obama... as progressives we believe this sudden and unexpected new movement is just what America need.

Future has arrived.

Barbara Ehrenreich and Bill Fletcher Jr.

The United States is a large country, divided, but united by common memories: the War of Independence, the Civil War, the impact of immigrants, the Second World War, the Vietnam War, all together memories that create a community, a nation. Every nation has its own nation-building project, with its own set of ideologies, of common symbols that constitute what can be said to form the nation’s ideology. The United States has its own, the American Creed. This ideology is built on principles far from socialism; it is built on individualism and a strong belief that if you work hard, you can achieve anything you wish. How this collides or can be combined with the ideas of Senator Sanders will be the central topic of the further analysis, and one way to approach his political views is to look a bit closer into his life.

Jacques Le Goff wrote the following in 1995 on the art of writing historical biography: “A real biography is first and foremost the life of an individual, and the legitimacy of the biographical genre depends upon respect for the following aim: the presentation and explanation of an individual life in history.”3 Regarding the presentation and the explanation, it is an impossible task to write a truthful presentation of his life as a whole within the range of a thesis of this size; it is also problematic due to questions of objectivity. What should be taken into consideration, and what should be left out? Certainly several parts have been left out because the sources are limited or regarding certain parts of his life, non-existing. He is a strong and colorful character but not of the caliber of a president. He is not well known across the borders of the United States, perhaps he is a victim of censorship, or, perhaps because his role in politics is rather small and unimportant? Whether or not these observations are right or wrong, he exists as a strange and unusual figure and a reminder of something even stranger and more unusual, the weird and wonderful history of the only socialist senator in the United States.
The Brooklyn Years
The peculiar story began not in America but in Poland. His mother and father were Polish-American, from the lower middle class. They immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. Bernard Sanders grew up in an urban neighborhood, in Brooklyn, NYC. The family was Jewish. Bernard Sanders was born on September 8, 1941, into the directness and tough environment of New York City streets. Loudness and screaming are characteristic features of this town. The broad Brooklyn accent Bernard Sanders uses with its disrupted sentences, indicates a certain restlessness, a drive that makes one expect something completely different. Many have said that the speech, like the city, is dynamic. The yelling from cars and the screaming of the horns in the streets were the playground for young Sanders. He was early known by his nickname “Bernie.” In his early years he was introduced to a life without luxury. In several interviews Sanders describes his parents’ economic situation in his childhood as a story of struggling with a tight economy. His parents were first-generation immigrants and the family consisted of his father Eli, his mother Dorothy, and his brother Larry, and himself. They lived in a small apartment: “three-and-a-half-room … on East 26th and Kings Highway.” It was situated close to The New York Community Hospital, not far from the Wyckoff-Bennett Homestead, built in 1776.

With its low-cost apartments, Brooklyn had become a popular place to build a home for immigrants. The family lived close to Marine Park known for its Jewish communities, though far from a more typical Polish-immigrant neighborhood like Greenpoint, closer to Williamsburg and Brooklyn Bridge. In his autobiography, Outsider in the House, he describes how his family searched for the low-price supermarkets, and how they let go of the dream of owning their own house. This upbringing may have been essential to him later on as a politician. The experiences made in early childhood may contribute to building certain opinions as a grown-up and are often used as a framework for political views further down the road. Some politicians seem to create an identity as the poor kid, suffering but working his way to the top. But for some this is reality. One might say that it is very convenient for the single “socialist senator” in Washington to speak of his poor childhood, but that does not make it less true.

Before Sanders went to college he graduated from James Madison High School in Brooklyn as a good athlete, and sports have always meant a great deal in his life. To become a scholar was not the most evident choice of career for Sanders. His father came from the working class, and he had a sincere wish to see his son accomplish economic independence. This was, he felt, safely done by taking a “solid job after high school.” Sanders went to
college nonetheless. In addition to this he worked for a trade union for a short period. And he read a lot, not only what was listed on the syllabus but amounts of classic literature by Jefferson, Dewey, Debs, Lenin, Marx, and Lincoln. His fascination for Eugene Victor Debs was strong and in 1979 he made a 30-minute documentary film on his work. The film was sold to colleges in America, for tutorial purposes.

Brooklyn College was not far away from home. This is a community college. Later on Sanders moved further away from home, to attend the University of Chicago. He graduated with a B.A. in 1964. This was the same year that Charles W. Hamilton took his Ph.D. Hamilton was a Civil Rights leader, co-author with Stokely Carmichael of *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (1967). Jesse Jackson is another distinguished figure who attended the University of Chicago. Senator Barbara Boxer of California graduated from the same university in 1962. A lot of important politicians came out of this environment, several of them were later mentioned as a group of intellectual New Yorkers, among them Michael Harrington, a distinctive figure in the history of social democracy in the United States. In 1962 Harrington had published his book *The Other American*. Historian Maurice Isserman explains the message of the book:

> There were two essential points Michael wanted readers of *The Other American* to understand. The first was that, despite the apparent national consensus about the arrival of the ‘affluent society,’ widespread poverty continued to exist in the United States. There was ‘another America’ of 40 to 50 million inhabitants living in the United States, ‘the unskilled workers, the migrant farm workers, the aged, the minorities, and all the others who live in the economic underworld of American life.’ This ‘invisible land’ of poor existed in rural isolation or in crowded urban slums where middle-class visitors seldom ventured….Michaels second point … was that ‘poverty is culture.’ Poor Americans were not simply distinguishable by their lack of adequate income….It was thus a delusion to believe, as many conservatives did, that poverty could be solved by exhortations to the poor to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps.

This was Harrington’s argument. He writes about a hole in the “welfare state” where poor Americans was not caught up by “social security pensions” or “unemployment compensation payments” because these systems were not created for them. Sanders’ views are not different from Harrington’s, but Sanders has a different method on how to fight poverty. As he said in a radio interview in 1990:

> [W]e will work well with progressive Democrats. But the problem is, and I know the late Michael Harrington, the Democratic Socialist of America believes that the goal is to take over the Democratic Party. I don’t for this reason: To me … deep down in its deepest sense the Democratic Party of today is not … a lot different ideologically than the Republican Party.

If there was one day in Sanders’s youth when he chose to begin with politics it must most likely have been the day he was taken to a meeting by his big brother Larry, with the Young Democrats at Brooklyn College. But, it was later while he went to the University of
Chicago that he started seriously to get involved in political organizations and volunteer work. Three of those were the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Peace Union (SPU), and the Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL). These groups were active in the Freedom Summer of 1964 in Mississippi. But it was still later that he actually went into politics proper, not only as some extra-curricular activity. Sanders described himself as a second-rate student, spending a lot of time on other things than the actual reading assignments. He was also a good athlete and perhaps not the typical bookworm with straight A’s; however, he says that he was not a lazy student. In his article “The Socialist Senator”, Mark Leibovitz has collected some of Sanders’ characteristics: “He has no hobbies. He works. He doesn’t take time off. Sanders doesn’t even eat lunch. The idea of building a fire and reading a book and going on vacation, that’s not something he does.” Another one came from the historian and friend Garrison Nelson: “Bernie is not going to win a lot of ‘whom would you rather live on a desert island with’ contests,” but even if he might not have been the preppy student, with water-combed hair, he seems to have had a great effect on people. His charisma, his openness, and honesty have been mentioned several places. How to define these attributes is difficult, but they seem to matter when it comes to politics. When President Barack Obama endorsed his candidacy in 2006, he spoke to the crowd outside of the University of Vermont and said that he hoped to see him elected to office in Washington and as he said “to be stirring up some topics.” This ability to stir up topics and to be the agenda setter is perhaps one of the reasons why he also became nominated in 1971 as candidate for the U.S. Senate by the Vermont Liberty Union. Sanders was unknown. People asked themselves who this guy was. He was the proverbial man on the street. “I was chosen as the candidate unanimously because there was no competition” says Sanders. This may actually be a profitable thing in local politics, where representation is a main goal and important issue. It may be important to become the man that you can compare yourself to. To represent is to stand in someone’s place, and if someone is perceived as too arrogant, too well educated, or excessively well spoken, it might be a problem for him or her to be a good candidate for the people.

After 1964 he went to Israel to work at a Kibbutz. In a 1991 account to the Associated Press, he explained some of the impact the stay had on his political thoughts as a young man. He said: "What I learned . . . is that you could have a community in which the people themselves actually owned the community. Seeing that type of relationship exist[s], and the fact that these units in the kibbutz were working well economically, made a strong impact on me.” After this he married and moved to Burlington, Vermont.
But to come back to the question whether Bernard Sanders is the “average Joe” or the lower class warrior, it could be of interest to look at what Garrison Nelson wrote by e-mail about his friend:

Bernie has succeeded because he has become the voice of “the little guy” against big corporations. Vermont is the second smallest state in the Union and we often feel bullied by the neighboring big states of New York and Massachusetts. Bernie's willingness to confront corporate power and Republican devotion to that power has given him support among people who feel bullied by those forces.  

So, according to Nelson, he is one taking up the battle for the common man. A typical American trait is the hard-working, self-made man. He is firmly rooted in his religious beliefs and is struggling on his own to accomplish what can be described as the American Dream. This concept will be dealt with more in depth later on, but for now it is interesting to look at this concept and relate it to Sanders. Sanders can be said to inhabit this quality. The mythology of the anti-hero, the stranger in the city, the cowboy, can match him well. Bernard Sanders was in some ways the new man in town, the stranger in Burlington, when he moved there with his wife. Another interesting point to consider is that he called his autobiography *Outsider in the House*, and this mythological slant to his career might have helped him connect with people in Burlington. Vermont is a quiet state, and Burlington is a small American city, so even though Sanders never actually tried to add this attribute to his character, some of his charisma might have colored it that way. He was not a privileged kid, his spoken language was rough, and his appearance unpolished. He was very different from the formal politicians people were familiar with, coming from Washington D.C., and the greater cities. He might have had this effect on people. He may still have and maybe not only on the people of Vermont.

Bernard Sanders’ career has not always been a political one. In 1989 and 1990 he took a pause from politics. This period of his life was not totally without the presence of political interest, Sanders lectured at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government in the fall of 1989. He there taught at the Institute for Policy Studies, in a course on third-party politics. Sanders commented the following on the idea that Harvard is a liberal university:

I know that conservatives worry a great deal about Harvard. They see it as a bastion of progressive thought, the brain trust for the revolution. Trust me. They can stop worrying. Harvard has many wonderful attributes, but the revolution will not start at Harvard University.

Later, Sanders taught at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York but in 1990 he decided to go back to politics. At this point in his life he was pretty pleased with teaching, and making the
educational videos. For him this way of living made it easier to be with his children and it gave spare time to write. Even so, in 1990 Sanders decided to run for a seat in Congress.

The Chicago Years

David Farber opens his book *The Sixties: from Memory to History* with the sentence: “Americans cannot seem to let the sixties go gently into the night.” There are few decades in history that have a hotter side to it than the sixties. Historians have written about free sex, drugs, and women’s liberation stuffed with stories of sit-ins, and seasoned with demonstrations and the speeches of iconic figures like John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King.

Poverty meant something else in the sixties, the seventies, and the eighties than today. When LBJ started his war on poverty, they measured poverty only by income rates. Today the factor of cultural capital has been added, so when Senator Sanders fought, and still fights poverty, other criteria may underline his struggle. In 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson was elected president with 61.1% of the vote; he had already been President since November 22, 1963. The assassination John F. Kennedy shook America. The calm and quiet fifties were over, and a turbulent time stood waiting in the doorway, disguised as a preppy, Ivy League student in a Kennedy suit. It was suddenly the time for the women’s liberation, for a culture that opened up for different variations of a standard living. In the years to come LBJ further developed the ideas that Kennedy had introduced, the Civil Rights Act in 1964 among others. After his election to office he molded what he called The Great Society, a program for the elimination of poverty and fighting racism and inequality for his fellow Americans. But 1964 was not all about War on Poverty, there was another war going on as well. 16,000 American soldiers were stationed in the south of Vietnam. They fought Ho Chi Minh in the North, and went into a full-scale war in 1964. American engagement continued until 1975. Palmovsky describes the impact of the war on American society in his way:

> Had a fundamental effect on U.S. society, which was traumatized by the memory of over 50,000 dead, the brutality of the war which left hundreds of thousands physically or mentally injured, and the defeat of a hitherto confident, mighty superpower by a small, underdeveloped Communist country.

The draft that came as a result of the war made many young men dodge service, by either fleeing the country or getting married. If his purpose was to dodge the draft or not is unknown, but Sanders went to a kibbutz in Israel that year. In all documents, interviews and reports on him there cannot be found any answer to why he went abroad exactly that year. He had his BA but could still have been working in Vermont or Chicago for another year. Was it
to escape the draft? He had strong anti-war values, so those, combined with his religious persuasion might have been the reason.

The scars from the war became ubiquitous and they were compounded by riots across America during what is referred to as the “long, hot summers.” Minority groups raised their voice against what they saw as repression. Malcolm X, leader of a group of black Muslims fought Martin Luther King’s message of non-violence, and among his followers was Stokely Carmichael. They preached Black Power and black separatism.  

Sanders’s major subjects at the University of Chicago were psychology and political science, but a lot of time was spent on campus rallies, among others for the organization Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).  

This activist group was the one which in May 1961 organized what they called “Freedom Rides” into the Deep South. Throughout the four years Sanders spent in college, there was tension among blacks in the United States standing up for their rights. This was also during the time Martin Luther King Jr. made his entrance into the American public and gave his famous speech at the Lincoln Memorial. But the rage was not over. On April 4, 1968, King was shot dead. Later in the summer, on June 5, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated after winning the California primary. Then in the midst of these horrible events came Richard Nixon of the Republican Party with the help of the spoiler George Wallace. Wallace captured enough votes so that his Democratic opponent lost to a third candidate, in this case, Nixon.

This environment and Sanders’ upbringing might have given him a clear class-consciousness. It might have formed his political mind, as he explains in his book: “At a very young age I learned that lack of money and economic insecurity can play a pivotal role in determining how one lives life. That’s a lesson I’ve never forgotten.” But class was not the only identity variable important in Bernard Sanders’ life; religion played its part too. A lot has been said about the intellectual Jew of New York, did it matter for Sanders being a Jew from Brooklyn?

“The myth about Jewish superior intelligence has its origin in the age of biological racism,” says Sander L. Gilman. In his *Smart Jews: the Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* he dwells on this myth. By being Jewish, how much say has Sanders’ religious belief had for his political career? Has he been more accepted to have a revolutionary attitude than others because of the fact that he is Jewish? “Are the Jews smarter than anybody else? How are the Jews different from everyone else? They are smarter and different only in the cultures in which they,” Gilman explains, are needed “to be smarter and different. That there are smart Jews is certainly true; that being Jewish is the equivalent to
being smart is part of the construction of Jewish difference.”

On the other hand Sanders’ connection to the Jewish society in Washington, D.C. is more fruitful to look into. He is a longtime member of AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. This is what is written about him in the Near East AIPAC’s report from November 2006:

VT— Bernard Sanders: Rep. Bernard Sanders (I) defeated businessman Richard Tarrant (R) to win the seat vacated by the retirement of Sen. James Jeffords (I). Like Jeffords, Sanders will be listed as an Independent but will caucus with Democrats. As a member of the House of Representatives for eight terms, Sanders developed a relationship with AIPAC activists and professional staff and has an established record on issues of importance to the U.S.-Israel relationship. He consistently supported aid to Israel.

In 2008 JStreet was founded as a different and alternative road to peace in the Middle East. Its supporters were among others Bill Clinton. For a website called Media Monitors network, Shirley McArthur wrote on November 13, 2009, that Sanders did interestingly not sign a letter to Saudi King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz. This was AIPAC-promoted letters signed as Congress broke for their August vacation. The letters were urging Arab states to recognize Israel’s “legitimacy.” Many reasons can be listed for Sanders not to sign the letter, but it might also show that he is controversial even as within a conservative organization like AIPAC, since he was among the Jewish members not signing the letter.

Interestingly, the letter was signed by only six of the Senate’s 13 Jewish members. Those Jewish senators not signing were Russ Feingold (D-WI), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Al Franken (D-MN), Herb Kohl (D-WI), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Carl Levin (D-MI) and Bernard Sanders (I-VT).

This might have something to do with Sanders contact with Jstreet and its first Gala dinner in Washington on October 27, 2009. 160 members of the House were listed and only 18 of the 44 Jewish members. The list is widely and openly known on the web pages of Jstreet. One of the topic themes for the conference was the following question: “How Can Jews, Muslims and Christians Work Together for Two States?”

**Vermont**

Sanders married Jane O’Meara Driscoll. She came into his life as a volunteer at the Youth Office in Burlington. She established a Teen Center in Burlington, where the teenagers could join in different activities such as dancing and making music. For the younger kids, Jane opened up an afternoon program. They both shared the enthusiasm in doing something for the local community. They married on May 28, 1988, in Burlington. Their honeymoon went to a different destination than most honeymooners go to in the U.S. They did not leave for Las Vegas or the sunny beaches or Hawaii or the Niagara Falls; they went to Yaroslav in the Soviet Union. Even Sanders himself, recalls this as, in his own words “a very strange
They traveled a lot around the world, also to Cuba in 1989. They established a sister-city relationship with Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua, Yaroslav in Russia, Bethlehem and Arad in Israel, Nishinomiya in Japan, and also recently Moss Point in Mississippi due to the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina in August 29, 2005. Jane followed Sanders in his election campaigns. Jane had three children from a previous marriage: Carina, David, and Heather. Their son Levi inherited the strong will to do voluntary work. He has been working for The Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf in Vermont. Originally this was a group consisting of community churches and synagogues forming in 1974 for the purpose of bringing food supply to poor families. Today they bring everything from a five-day supply of groceries to free lunches for children from poor income families, to a clothing-corner. Sanders has a brother and a nephew engaged in politics in England for the Green Party. Jane O’Meara is president of Burlington College, private liberal arts college in Vermont.

To search through his material for the turning point in his early years was not as easy as it could have been if he had been a more well-known figure in American politics. What has been written about him centers around his political achievements and career, and looking for interesting personal events, they are not easily found. It should not be forgotten that when dealing with Sanders’s autobiography, or interviews done with him over the years, and searching in articles about this politician, one is searching through material colored by subjectivity, personal knowledge, and personal feelings towards Sanders. It was difficult to point out the one day, or evening, or moment of epiphany when he decided to go into politics. Just as difficult was it to divide the everyday life of Bernard Sanders, from the life of the Senator. But Sanders does not believe in biographical facts, he believes in achievements, or so it may seem according to what Mark Leibovich pointed to in his interview for New York Times in 2007. He wrote as follows:

He makes no effort to “connect” emotionally in the manner that politicians strive for these days, and he probably doesn’t “feel your pain” either, or at least make a pint of saying so. It’s not that Sanders is against connecting, or feeling your pain, but the process seems needlessly passive and unproductive.

What to choose, then, of important facts in an attempt to create a map of Senator Sanders’ life? His life as an American man, husband, and father has often been entwined with his life as a politician. A lot of politicians have this job their whole life, twenty-four hours a day. They often have money-paying jobs beside their duties in state, or federal government. Senator Sanders has not been different from others in this regard; he also started his political
work when doing something else entirely. This strong connection to the everyday life in Vermont might have given him some votes. According to Mark Leibovitz:

Sanders spoke out against poverty in the third world and made good-will visits to the Soviet Union and Cuba, among other places that U.S. mayors generally didn’t travel to during that time. But a funny thing happened on the way to what many had dismissed as a short-running circus. Sanders undertook ambitious downtown revitalization projects and courted evil capitalist entities known as “businesses.” He balanced budgets. His administration sued the local cable franchise and won reduced rates for customers. He drew a minor-league baseball team to town, the Vermont Reds (named for the Cincinnatis, not the Commies). Sanders’s appeal in Vermont’s biggest city blended the “think globally” sensibility of a liberal college town with the “act locally” practicality of a hands-on mayor. He offered sister-city relations with the Sandinistas and efficient snowplowing for the People’s Republic of Burlington. Before Sanders’s mayoral victory, Leahy says, it was easy not to take him seriously. “Then he got over that barrier, and got elected. He fixed the streets, filled the potholes, worked with the business community. He did what serious leaders do.” He was re-elected three times.55

This love for his city apparently paid off, in the polls. He focuses on a close contact with his constituency. This is in his own words how he explains the choice:

I come home to Vermont every weekend. That’s where I live. I’m always surprised when people assume that I live in Washington. No way. I work in Washington. I live in Vermont. During the six years that I’ve been in Congress, I’ve spent two weekends in D.C. I come home to Vermont for several reasons. That’s where my family and friends are. Vermont is where I want to spend my time I couldn’t be a good congressman if I weren’t in constant touch with my friends, neighbors, and constituents. It’s not just the many town meetings and conferences I hold or the schools and meetings I attend. It’s the walk downtown. It’s the ride in the country. It’s getting a sense of the weather. It’s seeing the local papers rather than reading faxes. It’s watching the local TV. It’s getting a feeling of what’s going on, and what people are thinking about. I know members, especially some who have been in Congress for a while, who believe that they live in D.C. They go back to their districts now and then. But their hearts are in Washington. That is dangerous. When that happens you run the very real danger of forgetting where you come from, and what you’re supposed to be doing.56

But before we can look further into the nature of Bernard Sanders’s socialism it will be necessary to go back to the heydays of third-party movements and independent politicians in the United States.
Why is there no Socialism in the United States?—The Classical Question:

The Role of Third-Party and Independent Politicians

At first glance at U.S. politics only two large parties stand out. That is the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. But outside the spotlights and throughout history other parties and different candidates have existed. To understand Sanders role in this spectrum it might be an idea to distinguish between the direct influence and the indirect influence that an independent candidate like him might have. The direct influence will be on a certain election, or a political issue, or political process. The indirect influence is more difficult to detect or prove. It sometimes comes to the surface many years after the third-party has made its entrance, or it shows in the text, or formulation of a bill as a line co-opted by one of the large parties.

One might say that an independent candidate or a third-party can play different roles. To analyze this further one way is to distinguish between different roles he or she might play. There exist at least four different roles. These roles can be split into two different groups, one consisting of those dealing with indirect influence, and then three others playing a more direct role in political decision-making processes. The first role can be named the spoiler; the second is as the agenda maker, as the source of new ideas. The third role is as the negotiator. The third-party candidate becomes the compromiser between two stands. The fourth role is as winners of congressional districts. This role can be split in two, a) when they tread into a fifth role if they win state elections. Then b) is on the local level, as the local politician. But let us have a closer look at the four roles.

A spoiler is a candidate who by running for an office can spoil for other candidates not far from him or her on the political spectrum. In 1912 Theodore Roosevelt ran in the presidential election. He was supposed to run for the Republican Party but instead the party decided to re-nominate William Taft. In retrospect that became a fateful decision to make. Roosevelt became the spoiler. Roosevelt ran independently under a third-party label, the Progressive Party. It was named The Bull Moose Party after the statement Roosevelt made at the Republican Party convention. He said he was as fit as a bull moose. The result of the election was that the Democrat candidate, Woodrow Wilson won. Roosevelt came second and then last with only 8 electoral votes came Taft. Another candidate who has been named a spoiler is Ralph Nader. In 2000 he ran as an independent candidate up against George W. Bush and Al Gore. Nader won 22,198 votes New Hampshire; votes which could have won Gore the state. This resulted in a loss to Bush. In an article by The Washington Post, he was
referred to by the Democrats as “Consumer advocate Ralph Nader—Who many Democrats believe played "spoiler" in the 2000 election and helped put George W. Bush in the White House.[sic]”

One interesting aspect of the spoiler is who is spoiling for whom? It is an easy card to draw for the losing second party candidate to blame the third candidate for the loss when often it is not easy to decide exactly who took votes from whom. In the case of Perot it has become clear in later analysis that he collected votes from both candidates, and actually was a sign on distrust and a discontent among the American people in the two-party system. Ruy Teixeira wrote about this in his book *America’s Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*; a short summary of his analysis is found on the webpage the Public Opinion Watch. An example from Europe today is the new candidate of the Liberal Democrats in the election 2010 in Great Britain, Nick Clegg. He might spoil the election for the Conservative candidate Cameron.

An independent candidate can also have the role as the agenda setter. It is not unusual for a politician to be an agenda setter. In most instances this is what politicians accomplish at the most. Only a few actually mark a bill with their name on it or get remembered in history for taking a large political step one way or another. But in this connection one has a situation where the politician creates dissent. He or she represents a stand at the outside of the normal political frame of opinion. They often confront the party with propositions that collide or differ, or radically can change the political course of the party line. Their view might also have an impact on people, and thereby it can shift the balance of the political arena from one side to the other. This role has often been given to politicians making use of populism as a strategic tool. There are several different ways of using this tool. And often they do not think that it is possible to implement their propositions at the present moment, and they often believe in the idea that the goals that they set will be reached in due time, perhaps as a co-opted part of a larger party’s stand. It can be argued whether this is a negative or positive influence. It might be negative because the proposition changes author, and another party can harvest credit for the proposition. But in some cases the original author might not mind too much. He or she may have a pragmatic attitude towards politics and think of the common good for citizens, not on the advance of his or her own career. In the 1890s the Populist Party played this role.

In 1892 an influential historical development happened: the People’s Party, more commonly known as the Populists were founded. Historian Gillespie looks at the Populists as reactionary. “The populists looked back nostalgically at a yeoman agrarian participatory
democracy that seemed in the progress of being devoured by urban big business industry and commerce,” Gillespie comments.63 The Omaha platform was made at the second convention in Omaha in July 1892. Workers, reformists, and farmers had already met once earlier that year to make a change in the American political system. 800 delegates came to the convention. Many of the important issues listed by this platform demanded things that later on have been adopted in American politics, like the secret ballot and equal rights for men and women. Gillespie defines co[-]optation as the “process whereby a major party appropriates the ideas of a third party and eventually absorbs the third party itself.”64 One could say a new political sphere is thus formed. Examples of this can be found among issues one might detect in The Democratic Party, like the co-optation of the free silver issue, the income tax and how it should be graduated, and the idea that the railroads should be nationalized.65

Then, the third role a candidate of this sort can play is as a negotiator. In his book Strategic Disagreement: Stalemate in American Politics professor John B. Gilmour writes about compromising in politics. To compromise in politics has not always been the position most admired. In U.S. politics the compromise as a stand is almost inevitable. As Gilmour writes: “Passing important national legislation in the United States almost always requires contending parties and factions to accept compromises that give them less than they really want.”66 To stand outside as an independent is often the only way to avoid compromise. The politician refuses to go further to one side, and ends up in the stalemate position. The same phenomenon appears in elections as well.

When two sets of politicians compete for a single constituency, they are likely to engage in a game of pursuit and avoidance … . When two sets of politicians seek to appeal to distinctly different constituencies and offer divergent policy prescriptions, they are unlikely to chase after each other. Instead we should expect stalemate: no movement, and perhaps even no bargaining. The possibility of joint gains forms the basis for negotiations, and where the purposes of the parties are entirely opposed, negotiations seems pointless.67

But the independent can take the role as the negotiator and then bring up new arguments and a new platform on which to create thoughts and ideas from. To compromise can bring trouble. The politician can be labeled a sell-out, and the danger of not being re-elected increases. Gilmour explains: “A willingness to compromise and to eschew strident language encourages success in negotiations. However bargaining away something valued by a constituency threatens the support and trust of that constituency.[sic]”68

The fourth role is as the winner when the candidate wins a congressional election. To win at the local level is most obvious. This is when the local independent candidate influences the local community. He or she is in direct contact with the community. This bond can create
a voter’s constituency. The local politician might have children that go to the same school as the voters children do. Maybe they belong to the same church community or maybe the husband or the wife works at the same school or university. An independent or third-party candidate can also be a winner of a congressional election then the candidate must win a whole state with a plural vote. In the single-member district this is easiest achieved by creating a broad coalition. To win at this level in politics in the United States one must have good management skills, financial resources, and popular appeal.69

Therefore it was sensational when Bernard Sanders, the independent socialist, won the congressional race in 1990. He was the first independent candidate to do so since 1952, and even more remarkable was the fact that he became the first socialist to sit in Congress since 1929.70 Later on, in 2006, Sanders won the Senate election as well, and by doing so, became the first candidate to do so as an independent. What was different about Sanders was that he won without a strong party structure behind him. This is an extraordinary achievement, first of all because of the system of elections campaigns in the United States, where a good deal of support and money is needed to win. In an interview Phil Fiormonte, campaign manager for Sanders over several years, said that Sanders surprisingly enough was not a spoiler in the election in 2006, but the roles were switched and the candidate for the Democratic Party became the spoiler and took the role as the Third-Party candidate. The turning point for this was really the election in 1988, when Sanders beat the Democratic candidate.
A Brief History of Socialism in the United States

The term political ideology is normally defined as “an interrelated set of attitudes and values about the proper goals of society and how they should be achieved. An ideology has two distinct and at least analytically separate components: affect and cognition.” 71 John T. Jost traces what he calls the “spatial metaphor” of ”left” and “right” to how the members of the French parliament was seated in the 18th century. In his article Josh makes a distinction between liberal and conservative ideologies. One consists in “attitudes towards inequality”; the other is “towards social change versus tradition”.72 He builds further on an observation made by Herbert McClosky and John Zaller from 1984:

Politicians and the policies they espouse … are usually described as liberals if they seek to advance such ideas as equality, aid to the disadvantaged, tolerance of dissenters, and social reform; and as conservative if they place particular emphasis on order, stability, the needs of business, differential economic rewards, and defense of the status quo. 73

In the United States these two ideologies are mainly represented by the Democrats and the Republicans respectively. The left side is called liberal, and the right side is called conservative in the United States. A question often raised by historians and social scientists is exactly how far to the left the Democrats are; how liberal are they? Standing firmly among the Democrats, looking to the left, are there representatives of other attitudes and values? Does an ultra-left exist in the United States? This section will deal with the attempts to establish a political and ideological radical political movement further to left than the Democrats and the focus will be on three periods in American history: the late 1880s, the 1930s, and the 1960s. But before doing so, let us go back to Jost and the end-of-ideology debate.

In his book The End of Ideology Daniel Bell wrote the following about ideology:

Ideology makes it unnecessary for people to confront individual issues on their individual merits. One simply turns to the ideological vending machine, and out comes the prepared formulae….When these beliefs are suffused by apocalyptic fervor, ideas become weapons, and with dreadful results. 74

The criticism of this position have been many; one came from Russel J. Dalton in 2005, when he concludes after having tested Bell against new data from the World Values Survey, that the polarization between left and right exists, but the content changes due to social modernization. 75 The German word for ideology is Weltanschauung, meaning worldview. If you accept the existence of ideologies, it is understood that there also exist different socio-economic cultures in society, such as classes, ethnic groups, and so on. Particularly in the Marxist and Hegelian traditions “of social thought these ‘world-views’ are supposed to be
related to one’s social, and particularly to one’s class, position.” To reject ideologies then would be to at the same time refuse the existence of these other socioeconomic cultures.

There is a surviving myth in America that if you work hard enough, and hold on to your goal, because of the way American society is organized it is possible for everyone to achieve same success. Horatio Alger, Jr. was an American author who lived in 1832-1899 and has often been credited with describing the mentality that the American dream has been built on. This has been achieved by his many “rags to riches” stories. Christopher D. DeSante explains the myth in a speech at Vanderbilt University in 2007.

There are numbers of sayings around this idea. Horatio Alger, Jr., the one maybe most well known talks about the ability to pull oneself up by one’s bootstraps, a third is the idea that if one or two boats rise with the tide, all the other small boats rise up along as well. “Social mobility is a measure of the extent to which individuals in a society can as adults find themselves in a different social class to that of their parents.” This is how one dictionary defines this phenomenon. Professor Samuel P. Huntington writes about American identity like this: “The settlers developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the American Creed with its principles of liberty, equality, individualism, representative government, and private property.” The term was originally used by Gunnar Myrdal in 1944 and later Seymour Martin Lipset “identified five key principles as its core: liberty, egalitarianism (of opportunity and respect, not result or condition), individualism, populism, and laissez-faire.”

If one defines left-wing values as partly the advancement of equality, Seymour Martin Lipset argues in his 1974 book, then American values are similar to values of the Left, equality of opportunity for example. He writes that in “America, the equalitarian is linked to the idea of individualism and anti-statism, not to the idea of collectivism or planning.” As seen in the words of Horatio Alger, Jr.: “In this country, fortunately, there are few places where an industrious man cannot get a living, if he is willing to accept such work as falls his way.” So in a country based on these principles the need for socialism may look as unneeded.

The “end of ideology” writer C. Wright Mills refers to Abraham Lincoln in the book *White Collar*, by the following quote:
Property is the fruit of labor … that some should become rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. For men in the era of classic liberalism, competition was never merely an impersonal mechanism regulating the economy of capitalism, or only a guarantee of political freedom. Competition was a means of producing free individuals, a testing field for heroes; in its terms men lived the legend of the self-reliant individual.\textsuperscript{84}

Honoré de Balzac once said that ‘insignificant folk cannot be crushed, they lie too flat beneath the foot,’ and also John Stuart Mills and Alexis de Tocqueville mention that the Lumpenproletariat does not rise to revolution.\textsuperscript{85}

John H. M. Laslett focuses on the “belief in unique mobility opportunities in America”, and both he and Lipset discussed in 1974 American ideology as a factor that might have changed the conditions for socialism to grow in the United States.\textsuperscript{86} This idea was strongly attacked in both the seventies and the eighties, when social scientists used de Tocqueville to remind us that it was “those with rising expectations” that supported revolutions, and thereby dispel the myth that affluence cleanses the society of socialistic and revolutionary ideas.\textsuperscript{87}

The debate the term socialism evokes touches a word not too unfamiliar for someone trying to understand American society: liberalism. Michael J. Sandel speaks of a public philosophy in the United States; by public philosophy he means “the political theory implicit in our practice, the assumptions about citizenship and freedom that inform our public life.”\textsuperscript{88} Richard Allen Greene calls for the use of an accurate description when he interviewed Senator Bernard Sanders on January 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2007. Greene believed that this politician created “US history”.\textsuperscript{89} “The Senate has had plain speakers before”, Greene wrote, “but it has never before had a politician who calls himself a socialist—not even a ‘democratic socialist,’ as Mr. Sanders specifies.”\textsuperscript{90} The word socialist has strong connotations in the United States.

In 1984 Theodore J. Lowi also wrote an analysis on the question why there is no socialism in the United States. He presented five factors or theories: 1) The absence of feudalism, 2) repression by governments and employers, 3) the ideology of business unionism, 4) affluence, and 5) ethnic pluralism. A sixth factor is “the peculiar constitutional structure of the United States.”\textsuperscript{91}

The absence of feudalism in the United States was presented by Louis Hartz in 1955, an idea viewed as a further development of Tocqueville’ idea that the Americans had never developed a feudal system, no aristocracy, and therefore no “revolutionary tradition.”\textsuperscript{92} Phillip Taft and Philip Ross came up with a theory that the violence of the repression of labor unions
suppressed and buried the socialist movement. Existing politics may also have played a role: when immigrants came to the U.S., they often encountered Democratic political machines which eased the entrance to the job market in return for votes. Seymour M. Lipset also focuses on individualism in particular of the Emersonian kind, as the prevailing culture in the U.S., making it difficult for collectivist ideas to take hold. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote about individualism and man’s connection to nature and was part of the Transcendentalists. He lived from 1803-1882.

In addition to this the Frontier played a role by always offering somewhere else to move, with more land and better opportunities. If everyone could go west there was no basis for the use of solidarity. One more explanation offered is that the conditions in the countries where the immigrants came from often had lower standards of living than the United States had.

Business unionism is a concept that must be discussed and explained. It was presented by Samuel Gompers, who wanted to work within American institutions instead of opposing them. Lowi interpreted the term as an attitude that meant “acceptance of the political system and of capitalism, coupled with a tacit agreement to work within the system toward improved wages, working conditions, and job security.” Gompers was severely criticized, particularly by Emma Goldman, as seen in her essay “The Road to Freedom” from 1925. In some papers on Gompers she commented on the lack of proletarian consciousness in the AFL. The fourth theory was based on affluence in the American society.

The American Dream embraces these ideas. It consists of the idea of a society filled with equal opportunities. The Horatio Alger, Jr. myth and the idea of the self-made man are almost impossible. It has been discussed in various forms, and with various results why this myth still exists, and what impact it has had on the question of why there is not a stronger ideological, political left in the United States.

Within American society there exists a strong involvement in charity work. Charity is organized on a voluntary basis, and it does not usually involve any government structuring or involvement. When the local church organizes food for the homeless, or the local group of elderly women gathers money for charity dinners, a new day center, or for orphanage teenagers to play, one might ask whether there are needs for the government to meddle in the business of the community. Or is this so? The concept of class is highly discussed nowadays. Does it exist? Has it been resurrected? At least in America many Americans refer themselves as part of the middleclass, and by doing so, they admit to the fact that class exits as a term. So, in the further analysis the term class will be viewed as an existing variable.
First Attempt: the Populist and Progressive Era in American Political History 1886-1901

As early as 1827-1828 the first third-party in America was established, The Anti-Masonic Party. It was established as a reaction and response to a western New York Mason Order that had destroyed and dissolved itself. William Morgan of this order had published a book on the secrets of the Free Mason, and he was drowned in the Niagara River. This created uproar. Thus, writes Gillespie was it that “third-party history … began in western New York on a late summer day in 1826.” The Anti-Masonic Party was strong also in Vermont. Sometimes a party like The Anti-Masonic Party created because of dissatisfaction, disintegrated and got co-opted by another party. The Anti-Masonic Party was swallowed by the Whig party in the 1830s.

In 1866 the National Labor Union was founded, and then in 1869 the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor was founded in Philadelphia. When the latter went public in the late 1870s, it welcomed all workers: “unskilled workers, women, blacks, and some members of the middle class.” Then, in 1886, the American Federation of Labor was founded. The AFL consisted mainly of skilled white male workers, and it excluded blacks and women. Samuel Gompers was head of the AFL this year, and Henry George ran for the mayoral candidacy for the United Labor Party in New York. The years that followed were filled with unrest from the workers, the General Strike on May 3, and then the Haymarket Riot led by anarchists, May 4, 1886, the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, and the Pullman Strike in 1894. Then, in 1892 The Farmers Alliance formed the People’s Party. The words that had formed the United States got a new meaning in these years that followed. Liberty, freedom and democracy were defined differently than the Founding Fathers had done by the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, and the Du Ponts who rose to power in the 1880s.

Even if, as stated earlier, the immigrants often abandoned the socialist ideas at the American coast, several explanatory models for why socialist initiatives still survive proves differently. The immigrant model focuses on the German immigration society in particular, and how it brought socialist traditions to the United States. “A large German immigrant population brought to the city an established socialist tradition, a strong community structure, and a vibrant German language press,” David Reynolds argues. He distinguishes between progressives and socialists by saying that “Socialists were part of the working class. Progressives were part of the nation’s elite.”
David Reynolds argues that both the Populists and the Socialists “aimed to educate the largest possible audience in their ideals regardless of whether or not the Party happened to have someone running for office.”

A great deal of ink has been spilt trying to explain why the United States is so different [not having an institutionalized party of the Left.] Despite notable gains and momentum, neither the People’s Party nor the Socialist Party succeeded in establishing itself as a lasting institutional part of U.S. politics. This failure has led many, including many progressives, to simply write off this history as an insignificant blip that that only confirms the strength and permanence of the two[-]party system. We believe that such a conclusion is both unfair and far too politically convenient for those who hope to maintain the two party monopolies. We need to dig deeper to draw useful lessons from this all too often neglected history.

One explanation for why there is no socialism in the United States is that socialism was “a foreign ideology brought over from Europe.” The United States was a country that consisted of a middle class filled with opportunities, and without class divisions or inequalities, as David Reynolds puts it. Is this true?

David Reynolds argues in a different way, when he explains the fall of the Populist and Socialist movements. He states:

Their demise came not as a failure to appeal, but as a defeat at the hands of powerful opponents. In other words, the Populists and Socialists failed to become a permanent part of our political landscape not because large numbers of Americans would not have supported them, but because the powerful and privileged were able to mobilize successful efforts to destroy them.

Historian Robert C. McMath, Jr., holds a more optimistic view of the Populist movement in the 1890s. He argues that despite their loss and failure the Populists “fashioned a space within which Americans could begin to imagine alternative futures shaped by the promise of equal rights. Theirs is a legacy waiting to be fulfilled.” More will be said later in the thesis regarding this legacy, and whether or not the future has arrived. But before entering the future, more historical ground must be analyzed.

Second Attempt: Progressive Parties, LaFollette, and New Deal
In the Presidential election of 1932, Norman Thomas ran for president for the Socialist Party. He got a million votes. Earlier, on what have been known as Black Thursday and Black Tuesday, October 24, and 20, the Crash of 1929 had happened. What was the situation years earlier, in the twenties?

In 1947 Historian Kenneth Campbell MacKay wrote about the coalition of the Progressives in 1924. He focused on Robert LaFollette and his fear of Communist infiltration and wrote: “Cleveland must have presented a colorful picture that Fourth of July in 1924 when the independents gathered to organize the forces of discontent.” Well, how did it
differ? As one participant put it; “the Republican convention was a gathering of Babbits, the Democrats a gathering of Southern gentlemen and Northern sportsmen and politicians. This is a gathering of students.”

By this he may have meant that it was a gathering of the ordinary people of the United States.

At this stage The New York Times had a history of being unfriendly to the Republican, LaFollette, but reported from the gathering that there “was nothing unfriendly” about it. The students were mainly from Columbia, but also from Yale, Vassar, Harvard, Barnard, Dartmouth, and Union Theological Seminary. Among the youngsters sat old giants of the Populists of the late 1890s, Jacob Coxey, John J. Streeter, and Robert Springer. Springer, MacKay tells us,

Who had witnessed the nomination of Abraham Lincoln and felt sure that LaFollette’s nomination would be equally historic, had ingeniously borrowed enough money from a Republican to make the trip to Cleveland from the Old Soldier’s Home in Milwaukee.

In Cleveland that day was another group as well, the “Yipsils”, members of Young People’s Socialist League. The gathering was clearly patriotic and founded on a strong belief in America. But patriotic as they were, they were also clearly independent in thought. In a newspaper article in the St. Paul Pioneer-Press [sic] the arrival of Miss Elizabeth Goldstein is described, MacKay citing it:

Miss Elizabeth Goldstein, who says she lives in Greenwich Village, and looks as if she did, walked in all alone. ‘I’m like LaFollette, I don’t need a party’: she remarked when asked why she didn’t come with the rest of the crowd.

The delegation of participants came from a broad part of the society. The question one might ask is how they managed to come to an agreement? Well, partly it was by self-imposed discipline; partly some of the delegates took control. For instance, it became clear that William H. Johnson, Chairman of the National Committee, had sent a telegram asking LaFollette to accept his nomination as their presidential candidate. “Recognizing you as the outstanding leader of the progressive forces in the United States, we ask, therefore if you will, under present conditions, become a candidate for President of the United States.[sic]”

LaFollette accepted his candidacy and ran for the presidency as an independent, but with a platform on the Day of Independence. As MacKay, so eloquently puts it:

In two days a candidate and a platform had been adopted. The disparate liberal and progressive groups, so hopelessly confused a few days earlier, had been able to agree upon a program without apparent friction or the dissensions and withdrawals which characterized the attempt of a third party in 1920.

So, again, there existed an attempt to build a third party in the United States. But did it last?
Third Attempt: The Radical, and Privileged Academic Youth of 1960s, and 1970s

But all was not well back in the Sixties either. It was a great divide between the working class and the large number of young students who went to college and universities. The divide consisted of an idea that the young radicals were not fully committed to their idealistic cause, and the criticism behind this was based on an idea that if you were young, and went to college you were automatically from an elite in society and the interest the radical youth felt for idealistic causes was merely like jewelry they could wrap around their shoulders for others to see. It was not heartfelt, was the argument.

In general, unions such as the AFL-CIO supported administration policies in Vietnam and were part of the establishment workers often felt that students were privileged and that they were attending college to avoid monotonous futures on assembly lines.125

The movement of the Sixties was led by a young generation, the children of liberals, as Michael Kazin describes them:

Liberal sons and daughters, joined by healthy contingent of “red-diaper babies,” as children of Communists were known, set the dominant tone in nearly every New Left Group—especially Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the shifting array of local committees and national coalitions that mobilized against the Vietnam War.126

This group of radicals was opposing bureaucracy and the enemy was no longer the Big Business, and the banks, but the system as a whole.127 The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), led by Tom Hayden, of Columbia University, produced a manifest called The Port Huron Statement in June 1962. It asks of the students to look beyond the university; it states that “the American political system is not the democratic model of which its glorifiers speak,” and it asks for “a truly public sector” to “be established, and its nature debated, and planned.”128

Rebellious counter-cultures develop and exist in every society; they are often linked up with youth cultures and often smolder away when the youths grow up. This way of seeing leftist movements or radical thought as existing mainly among certain groups of young people in a society has been used by critics of these ideas to discredit them or make them harmless. It is used as a technique to dominate. A danger with this way of thinking is that it leaves no room for the movements themselves to self-exist; they are a result of the natural development of the individual, and hence will vanish when the youth grows up. It agrees with the idea that a radical idea is something that you grow out of.

The power elite ruled on top of this system and it controlled everything, said the New Left. Kazin explains their view in the following way:
At the head of the System stood a slick, self-perpetuating club that radicals called “the power structure” or “the power elite” (the latter phrase was the title of the sociologist C. Wright Mills’s most influential book). Jointly, the members of this club held in their hands the authority of big business, the federal government, the military, the press, and the major universities. Their worldview was described by radical historians as “corporate liberalism”—a smooth blend of demonic sophistry, symbolic legislation, and fantasies of endless consumption. 

The movement was closer to anarchism than ever before in its criticism of the system, government, and political procedures. The word “participatory democracy” “should be the solution to everything.” Power should be given to the people. Still today one of the most distinctive leaders of this era, Tom Hayden holds on to this view. “Obama,” he wrote in 2009, “is caught between the movements that helped him come to power and the Machiavellian elites that all presidents need to placate.” This describes a view that sees the power structure as corrupt, and holds that power is corruptive. Tom Hayden described what he calls the M/M model of social change. This model was used to explain the dynamics of the conflict between the establishment and the social movements in the sixties, over time. He distinguished between what he called Movements and Machiavellians. His definition of movements is “mass gatherings of people outside society’s institutional structures who assemble for the purpose of righting a moral injury that those institutions refuse or fail to address.” An example on a movement in the sixties was what happened August 28, 1963. On that day the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Walter Reuther, President of United Automobile, John Lewis, National Chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee among others, marched in Washington for “jobs and freedom.” They were part of a larger a broad movement in this era.

Martin P. Wattenberg discusses the fact that since the mid-1960s a great number of voters in America have labeled themselves as independents. Is the independent voter non-political, or is the independent vote a protest vote? Wattenberg argues that the independents were not always non-political, but the increasing amount of them should be seen as a signal of how political parties decline in importance in the values of the American public. Wattenberg discusses the thesis that many analysts in the academic literature around voting behavior have leaned on, that the independent voter often is the highly educated one. Wattenberg uses Frank Sorauf and his argument as an example on the theory that the educated voter is too intelligent to divide the “political world into two simple categories, ours and theirs.” Wattenberg later on dismisses this as a rather weak hypothesis. But if that is the voters’ behavior, what about the situation when the elected candidate is an independent? The question then is, does the independent voter, vote for the independent only, or do independent
candidates also collect voters from other parties? As William J. Keefe put it in 1994, “the paramount goal for all major party campaigns is to form a coalition of sufficient size to bring victory to the candidate or party.”138
The Representative of a New Brand of Socialism in the United States- Bernard Sanders

“People’s happiness is influenced by the kind of political system they live in.”

The Race for Office

To run for office in the United States is not a task for the weak or the poor, or so it at least may seem when taking a first glance at the election process, or the campaign strategies. Bernard Sanders made it first to Congress and second to the Senate. How? Political engineering is a term that must be mentioned in this context. In the United States one finds Spin Doctors doing “astroturfing” before the elections. A false grass-roots movement is created with financial aid, and supports ideas, propositions, etc., or it attacks political opponent with rumors and allegations. This movement creates a new public opinion, they alter behavior, and invents slogans, and create maybe a new agenda for the politicians. They work both openly, but also in the shadows outside of the spotlight of politics in Washington, D.C.. This may have been the ticket to Washington, D.C., had Bernard Sanders been a millionaire. He was not, so what then?

Three main explanations will be dealt with in this section. They are as follow: 1) Sanders is a competent coalition builder with remarkable human relations skills. He is a grass-roots movement builder and not just a spoiler, but a negotiator. 2) Sanders is backed by the liberal political environment of Vermont. 3) Sanders represents a public opinion, a group of working-class citizens in the U.S. not usually listened to by politicians in Washington, D.C. He has won the hearts of his people and is their voice. The first and the second explanation show how Bernard Sanders can be understood as a populist, and when emphasizing the third and last explanation, he may be understood as a socialist. The following section will introduce different examples of this argument and will illustrate it from his career as a mayor, a representative in the House, and finally a senator. In this regard it is worth mentioning that the use of the word socialist has negative connotations, but is here used because Sanders himself uses the word. Later in the thesis the word will be debated and an attempt to define a sort of “Sanders socialism” will be tried out. In can be disputed whether or not populism can be seen as an ideology, and it might be more correct to define Sanders’ kind of socialism in light of different typologies of populism. Another point to this is that Sanders himself differs between
calling himself a socialist, an independent, and a social-democrat. In the interview with Mark Leibovich Sanders defined himself as a democratic Socialist after the Scandinavian model.  

The chapter will be split into three parts of which each will be dealing with the different roles Sanders played in the House, in the Senate, and as mayor. Particular by three roles that have been prominent: those of the Spoiler, the Agenda setter, the Negotiator and the bi-partisan politician.

**The Spoiler**
The consensus in American politics has often been debated. In a system where two large parties rule the two large parties may find it important to hold the control of opinions. Frances Fox Piven, political scientist and member of the Democratic Socialists of America, explained the “big tent” effect of the Two-Party system in 2006. It diminishes political “fractiousness and extremism [sic]” she said. And she elaborates:

> This is the much-admired “big tent” effect, which both Republicans and Democrats a like claim to endorse. But while the big-tent party may succeed in muffling conflict, it also has deeply undemocratic effects. When party leaders and their candidates require broad majorities to win public office, they try to hold the allegiance of the diverse groups that a majority must include by avoiding issues that will generate conflict. Instead, they search for the consensual appeals, and especially the consensual symbols, that will preserve and enlarge their voter coalitions. In a large and diverse country, with sharp inequalities of condition and divergent cultural aspirations, this inevitably means avoiding the issues that speak to the interests and symbols important to some blocs of voters for fear of antagonizing other blocs of voters. Hence candidates are inclined to campaign on largely uncontroversial symbols of family or flag or freedom.  

Piven is part of a large group of dissent in America, not content with dealing with large, uncontroversial issues like freedom or family values, issues that everyone to a large extent can agree upon. Michael Harrington is another. Howard Zinn, Barbara Ehrenreich and Tom Hayden are others, and they all corresponded with Frances Fox Piven in letters. The contact can be seen as proof of a counter-movement existing on the outside of the American public arena. When looking at national politics in the United States a more complex picture appears. Sanders was alone in the House as an independent but he was not entirely alone opinion-wise. He is a member of DSA (Democratic Socialists of America), among with 69 others in Congress. According to Deborah Kay Corey who writes for CRC (Capital Research Center), a research center focusing on non-profit organizations in America, The Democratic Socialists influence American Politics by educating and creating community groups, and recruiting young people to the left. One might say that they are working to recruit spoilers. On the other hand this might be evidence on a socialist/labor constituency like the one Rice agued he had detected.
In addition to being a member of DSA and having been supported by Obama, the independent socialist Bernard Sanders has more friends in Congress than he might use as a populist or rhetorical tool by calling himself an outsider. It is easier to be the outsider, and he might have less pressure on coming home to Vermont with results, by standing alone maybe. Mark Leibovich calls him the strange bird out of Vermont. This is what he recalls from his first days in Congress: “When I came into the House, no one knew what to do with me. I was the only representative from Vermont, so I had no one to help me. And I was the only Independent, so no one knew where to put me in terms of committee.” But as time has passed, he has adopted to the routines of the House and later on the Senate. He has even co-founded a caucus, the Congressional Progressive Caucus. He is the only member of the Senate who is part of it. The Congressional Progressive Caucus is a group of representatives both from the House and the Senate established in 1991. Co-Chairs are Raúl M. Grijalva from Arizona and Lynn Woolsey of California. Their principles are the following: “1. Fighting for economic justice and security for all; 2. Protecting and preserving our civil rights and civil liberties; 3. Promoting global peace and security; and 4. Advancing environmental protection and energy independence.”

As mentioned earlier, Sanders focuses on his connection with his constituency. This closeness to the people has given him a sense of what is going on in his hometown. He exemplifies the awareness of the danger of losing contact with the voters by talking about the large deals that they vote on in Congress far from the people that will be affected by the result. By focusing on this he takes the position as the lower class warrior.

In his book, Sanders gives a comment on the word spoiler. He writes that it implies what he calls the “sacrosanct nature of the two-party system.” His defense against the word is of course expected, and contributes to the dichotomy between “us” and “them”, between the “the rulers” and the “people.” The populist approach would be to argue that “they” (the rulers) oppresses “you”, the “people” by creating a false impression of a perfectly functioning party system with two large parties open for every opinion. When a new third candidate then approaches the playground, he or she ruins the rules of the game. This way of playing with the publics feelings of being left out, or suppressed fosters a paranoid idea of being enslaved by the politicians in Washington, D.C. This is what Anders R. Jupskás refers to as socialist populism. He explains it in his paper “In the Name of the People! The Many Faces of Populism in Norway 1045-2010”, “Such parties also apply the typical language of dichotomization where people is contrasted the upper class, the rich and big business.” It will be discussed later on whether or not Sanders can be viewed in light of a populist typology.
Jupskås suggests that rather than seeing populism as an ideology, he suggests the following: “Understanding populism rather requires us to look at the framework – or common discourse.” It may be more correct to step outside the ideological framework, and look at the next context, the political discourse. The politicians have different roles, and play their apart according to how they see themselves, either as the underdog or as part of the elite. They may connect with the feeling of being bound, enslaved, and they use populism as an effective tool to split between what Jupskås calls “friends and enemies.”

There is a difference between promoting oneself as the maverick and being labeled as the outsider. By reflecting upon this difference between being seen as an equal, though different and independent, participant in the political discourse and being called an outsider who is spoiling the game is worth mentioning. This can be exemplified by the different comments about Sanders made by other politicians in Congress. His work in the House has not always been appreciated. He has made some people angry. Politico printed an excerpt from an article by Criss Graff from Vermont on Sanders. Graff writes about the reaction he got when he traveled down to Washington to speak with other representatives in Congress. This is how Graff analyzed the entrance of the independent man from Vermont:

He was the odd man out: an independent in an institution that revolves around the two-party system; a socialist in a chamber dominated by moderates and conservatives; a freshman in a world that favors seniority. As abrasive as ever, his style clashed rudely in an institution that rewards collegiality.

When Graff went to Washington, D.C., he met with Rep. Barney Frank, a Democrat who thought Sanders offended everyone he spoke with; another representative in Congress that Graff spoke to was Senator Jim Jeffords. He felt that Sanders was counterproductive because he was so insensitive in style. But Graff tells a story from 1999 when he met with Sanders in a meeting of the House Banking Committee. The meeting is described like this:

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "this amendment is simple and straightforward. All it does is replace the entire text of the bill." Laughter ripped through the cavernous Wright Patman Room, and then Sanders launched a frontal attack on the bill, claiming it "represents an unnecessary taxpayer bailout for the insurance industry and is a rip-off to the American consumer." The language is vintage Sanders, yet there was a difference. Sanders had two Republicans and one Democrat joining him as co-sponsors. He had lined up support from a wide variety of groups, including the U.S. Business and Industry Council, the National Taxpayers Union and Citizens Against Government Waste. The Republican chairman of the committee called the amendment of the most important of the 18 before the panel. In the end Sanders lost 23-31, but watching him in action that day made it clear that he was no longer an outsider in the House.

So Sanders has learned to play the role as the compromiser as well as the maverick. But Graff holds on to the notion of Sanders as the maverick, in an almost preaching sense he ends his article with Sanders’s own words from 1986:
If you ask me what my dream is as a political person, it is to allow this state to do what no other state in the union has done: to stand up to the establishment, the big-moneyed people, the Democrats and Republicans and show the rest of the country that it can be done. If that happens, my life's work will have been successful.\textsuperscript{156}

In the period from 1991 to 2009 Sanders has sponsored four bills and been co-sponsor on 31.\textsuperscript{157} Some of those concerned the issue of minimum wage. Already in 1989, a bill was passed in both houses for a minimum wage, sec. 2 in H.R.2710, established the wage “except as otherwise provided in this section, not less than $3.35 an hour during the period ending December 31, 1989, not less than $3.80 an hour during the year beginning April 1, 1990, and not less than $4.25 an hour after March 31, 1991.”\textsuperscript{158} The amendment was named Fair Labor Standards Amendments of 1989. Sanders writes about the bill in his book \textit{Outsider in the House}. There he talks about the step to the right taken Congress, when no Republican would support a minimum wage act again before 1996.

In 1996 Sanders voted on a legislation that raised the minimum wage. He mentions his own good position with a good payment as a Congressman. He explains in his book that it is difficult to remember the low-income workers in America when he can spend $50 on lunch.\textsuperscript{159} In 1996 the House passed a bill increasing the minimum wage (its official title was HR 3448: To provide tax relief for small businesses, to protect jobs, to create opportunities, to increase the take home pay of workers, and for other purposes.) Sanders voted yea on this bill. Only 72 voted against.\textsuperscript{160} Later that year another bill was passed, but weakened by 144 no. In 2000 the newest minimum wage increase bill has been passed, saying that the minimum wage should be raised to “$6.15 per hour by April 2001.”\textsuperscript{161} Sanders voted yea on all these bills, but he did not sponsor them.

Then in 1993 he launched a piece of minimum wage legislation. At that time Bill Clinton was President, and Sanders arranged a meeting with him in the Oval Office so Clinton could as Sanders puts it use, the “Independent Caucus,” as well.\textsuperscript{162} Clinton answered in a rather diplomatic way that he was not unsympathetic to Sander’s suggestions. Sanders conveyed the fight of the minimum wage in 2006 as a populist turn by the Democrats. They followed up what the people wanted, Sanders writes, and all done because of the election coming up. At that time Majority Leader Dick Gephardt held a press conference on the issue, and the Republicans were influenced by the sight of low-income workers invited to the conference. The Republicans had lost the battle, and Sanders felt at that point that he had won a longtime battle for a raise in the minimum wage.\textsuperscript{163}
But the cases with minimum wages were not the only issue Sanders worked on in Congress. In 1996 it was clear that highly ranked executives at Lockheed-Martin had been offered large bonuses by the Pentagon. Sanders made a strange companionship again with Republicans and Democrats, Chris Smith (R) and David Minge (D). The amendment was named the Smith-Sanders amendment. In The Rolling Stone, Aug 10, 2005 the issues were expressed in this manner:

In the first few weeks of my stay in Washington, Sanders introduced and passed, against very long odds, three important amendments. A fourth very nearly made it and would have passed had it gone to a vote. During this time, Sanders took on powerful adversaries, including Lockheed Martin, Westinghouse, the Export-Import Bank and the Bush administration. And by using the basic tools of democracy—floor votes on clearly posed questions, with the aid of painstakingly built coalitions of allies from both sides of the aisle—he, a lone Independent, beat them all.

The amendment awoke interest among several known figures in American politics, among others Barbara Boxer and John McCain. But Sanders did not vote. Why? Because as he explains, it was not enough to change it with the amendment; the bill contained a large sum of money to the military. Sanders could not vote yes to a bill of that sort. “Sanders is the amendment king of the current House of Representatives,” says Matt Taibbi, journalist in The Rolling Stone Magazine. Taibbi explains in his article the power of the Committee on Rules in the House. This committee decides which amendments will be accepted and where in the bill. The currant Chairwoman is Louise M. Slaughter from New York. She belongs to the Democratic Party, but is incumbent by her position. She is by far one of the most powerful women in Congress today. The committee consists of 13 members, nine from the majority, and four from the minority. Their chairman is appointed by the Speaker of the House. In 1996 the chairman was David Dreier. The descriptions of the room where these important decisions are being taken are sarcastically and wittily written by Tabbi:

The Rules Committee meets in a squalid little space the size of a high school classroom, with poor lighting and nothing on the walls but lifeless landscapes and portraits of stern-looking congressmen of yore. The grim setting is an important part of the committee’s character. In the vast, majestic complex that is the U.S. Capitol—an awesome structure where every chance turn leads to architectural wonderment—the room where perhaps the most crucial decisions of all are made is a dark, seldom-visited hole in the shadow of the press gallery.

Taibbi comments on the tactic of Sanders, his way of suggesting limitation amendments, limitation of funding, for instance, of certain programs. Sanders was defeated in his amendments, and the reason for this in Taibbi’s opinion was the system in Congress, which he finds undemocratic. But it seems as if the members take it more calmly than Taibbi feel is right. Here is what he writes about it:
Sanders seems to take it strangely in stride. After a month of watching him and other members, I get the strong impression that even the idealists in Congress have learned to accept the body on its own terms. Congress isn't the steady assembly line of consensus policy ideas it's sold as, but a kind of permanent emergency in which a majority of members work day and night to burgle the national treasure and burn the Constitution. A largely castrated minority tries, Alamo-style, to slow them down—but in the end spends most of its time beating calculated retreats and making loose plans to fight another day.\footnote{171}

Have they lost their innocence and idealism on the way to Congress? Sanders seems to think so, according to this quote:

"It's funny," Sanders says. "When I first came to Congress, I'd been mayor of Burlington, Vermont -- a professional politician. And I didn't know any of this. I assumed that if you get majorities in both houses, you win. I figured, it's democracy, right?"\footnote{172}

So how was Sanders as a professional politician, left alone in Congress? And what did he meet? In 1980 Ronald W. Regan was elected president. He presented “Reaganomics” to the American people. This attempt to change economic policy based itself on a smaller government and less regulation of the market. It was a time when the Republicans ruled the Senate from 1981-87. There was a strong leaning to the right in U.S. politics. Then came 1989 “and all that”, as Robert W. Tucker put it in Foreign Affairs in 1991. He argues that the sudden end of the Cold War gave rise to a new and unknown situation.\footnote{173}

If one are to explain Sanders’s rise to power, and the environment in which he acted within in a broader context and in light of the historical events worldwide that followed in the years after 1989, it is presumably a good idea to look at the fall of the Soviet Union. In light of today the Tucker paper becomes a strong exhibit from the years that followed, and how the reactions were on these historical events. By this time no one could suggest the outcome, and the speculation over the decline of the Soviet Union increased.\footnote{174} Along with the politics of Glasnost and perestroika by Mikhail Gorbachev the world changed. Writes Tucker:

Power is not a constant in human history. It may well be that in the international system of tomorrow, power itself will be progressively at a discount and that what military powers can no longer do, economic power also will be unable to accomplish.\footnote{175}

There is a scent of idealism, and hope for a new world order in these lines. “Instead,” Tucker goes on, “it is the capital of goods and a nation’s disposal to employ abroad that must increasingly form the yardstick of power.”\footnote{176} This period in history might have opened up for a dialogue between the far right and the far left and centered the politics somewhat in the USA, and thereby perhaps vaguely have cleansed the doorway for Sanders to enter more easily.

The Progressive Coalition as political scientist David P. Gillespie summarizes “gathered some support from students and faculty of the University of Vermont and other
Burlington colleges and a little from the brie and Beemer liberal yuppies types; but the bulk of its votes came from the elderly, tenants, and working people of the city.”

As Gillespie comments “Sanders was then and still is the first independent or third-party socialist [in] Congress since New York American Laborite Vito Marcantonio left that body in 1951.” In 1993, Gillespie came with the following analysis that when a suggestion came in 1988, that the nominees in future races for the mayoral post should seek endorsement by “one or both traditional major parties,” this might seem like a cooptation of the outsiders ideas and politics into the larger political parties. In 1990 the Progressive Coalition merged with the Vermont Rainbow Coalition, and became the Progressive Vermont Alliance. This, Gillespie writes, “was a deliberate, conscious move toward forging a powerful new statewide party.” Gillespie later on makes a prediction of the future for Sanders’ politics. “The safest prediction,” he writes, “is that future historians will remember the Progressive Coalition and maybe the Progressive Vermont Alliance too as examples, potent ones to be sure, of the non-national significant other third-party type.” But Gillespie was wrong in his analysis, when he brushed off Sanders and the Progressive Vermont Alliance, because Sanders was eventually elected Senator from Vermont, and does now play an active and important part in forming national politics. Despite what Gillespie concluded in 1993, history wanted it different and Bernard Sanders did extend his presence to national policy-making councils in Washington as partly an agenda setter.

The Agenda Setter
Betty Yorburg differs between the explanations set forward by the World War I Generation, the Interwar Generation and the World War II Generation on why socialism failed in the United States. The generation between The Interwar Generation focused more on the electoral system than did the World War I Generation. Yorburg explains: “New Deal Reforms and the electoral difficulties of third parties in this country as a basic failure of the Party.” While the former generation pointed to the amount of social mobility in the United States. Then again the last generation explains it, she writes, out of the economical prosperity; no-one in the United States needed to starve, they argued. If you voted for the least important candidate, you might throw your vote away. Other explanations have been set forward by Social Scientists H. M. Laslett and Seymour M. Lipset:

It is also worth pointing out the crucial importance of who, and when, and in what order the discontented elements in a society are aroused. It was the unique combination of discontent among blacks, students, anti-war liberals, and other elements that gave the New Left its potential power. Unfortunately, it is now becoming clear that is was opposition to American involvement in Vietnam which provided the common denominator for action among these groups, rather than a sense of common grievance against the society generally (women, Chicanos, Indians) than their predecessors,
none of these—save perhaps women, who are notoriously the victims of ‘false consciousness’—play the same strategic role in the economy that either students or blacks do. Once the Vietnam war was pushed into the background as a major issue, in other words, each of these groups has tended to lapse into the more common American pluralist pattern of pressure group activity on behalf of a limited constituency, rather than that of general action on behalf of an aggrieved class.[sic]

These explanations correlate with the roles the politicians play. They are connected in the following way: If socialism failed because of the strong presence of social mobility in the United States the third-party politicians have played the role as negotiators within an environment open to dialogue. If socialism failed because of electoral difficulties, the politicians in question play the role of spoilers. According to the third explanation they might be seen as un-influential anomalies in the political landscape. The fourth explanation opens for the politician to play the role as the agenda setter.

This is rather crucial when analyzing politics in regard of populism. The agenda setter might be involved in a heated moment on behalf of a large coalition of supporters to fight for the passing of one law, or correction of one wrong doing, or in this case, the ending of a war. The problem is constituency. He or she might walk away when the target is in sight, or the goal is achieved. In Congress, politicians might also take this role. They can become lobbyists for special interests but do they have a large overreaching policy? Sanders has been attacked on this ground as well, but his perseverance, his engagement in a broad amount of issues, and his background as mayor might have protected him against these allegations. Mark Leibovich lists four main issues given him by Sanders when Leibovich asked of his main political goals. They were as follows, and these issues have not changed remarkably, as will be shown when asked the same question in the nineties (regardless of the ending of the War in Iraq):

1) Ending the Iraq war;
2) Reversing the “rapid decline of the middle class” (a corollary to “addressing the gap between the rich and the poor”);
3) Reordering priorities in the federal budget; and
4) Enacting environmental laws to thwart global warming.

In a radio interview in 1990 Sanders said the following, which says partly the same, but with a stronger scent of populism to it:

How do you revitalize democracy? How do you bring working people and poor people back into the process? That is the first and most important thing that has to be done. Second of all very important issue to the people back in Vermont I think nationally is the crisis in health care. As you know the United States is one of two industrialized nations in the entire world that does not have in one form or another a national health care system which guarantee health care to all people.
This statement makes it clear that he has had his own opinions on these issues for several decades. And interestingly enough healthcare in the United States has changed since 1990. It is by far not his doing alone; the New Deal incorporated these ideas earlier.

But it is not an easy task to set the agenda in the House or the Senate. Sanders is not alone there. Seymour Martin Lipset and John H. M. Laslett write the following: “…The American system has been remarkably successful in adjusting to protest. With the exception of the slavery issue, the two-party system, particularly, has repeatedly adapted to re-include groups which have moved out of it.”

Has it “eaten” Senator Sanders? The question is of course impossible to answer fully. But partly it can be answered by how he created his coalition. Another obstacle to meet as a politician in Congress is the filibuster. Filibustering has a long history of disrupting and hindering votes and debates. A lot of blogs around the country write about this phenomenon, like this one at Curant.com:

Ah, democracy! It never works better than when informed citizens gather in town hall meetings to discuss and debate the issues of the day. But, oh, democracy! It's never more damaged than when partisan zealots plot to disrupt town hall meetings in order to prevent any honest debate of the issues. And that's exactly what's happening in health care forums held across the nation by members of Congress. We've seen it in Philadelphia; Austin, Texas; Georgetown, Del. Salisbury, Md; and other communities. Taking a page right out of a Nazi playbook, organizers bus in professional protestors and arm them with instructions on how to take over meetings, shut down discussion, shout over any pro-health care reform speakers, and then post video of the resulting chaos on YouTube. It's mob rule, pure and simple.

The Tea Party referred to is a constructed grass-root movement funded by two conservative Washington, D.C., think tanks: Americans for Prosperity, and FreedomWorks. These two are led by Tim Phillips and Dick Armey. This is what they write on their web page about what they do: “Through its Grassroots Training Schools, AFP Foundation has recruited and educated thousands of citizens on how to promote greater economic prosperity.” The think tank admits openly that they create grassroots movements. It is as shown several agenda makers both in and outside Congress.

Strategic disagreement holds the idea that compromise is sell-out. It is better, its supporters argue to pass a better bill later on. Some politicians say no instead of yes to suggestions that might be the better of two evils, in the hope that an even better result will appear on the table late in the process.

The Negotiator and the Bi-Partisan Politician

In comparing the American political system with that of Europe it is important to recognize that party in the United States means a very different thing from what it implies in much of Europe. Parties in the United States, unlike the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats, or the Communist parties in Europe, are loose coalitions of diverse groups or factions, which in most other countries of the world would be separate parties. In the European continent, these groups, called parties, form coalitions after
the election, while still retaining their separate identity, as in Italy, where Left Socialists, Social Democrats, and Christian Democrats have cooperated in the same government.\textsuperscript{193}

This is likewise in Norway today. Norway has the only social-democratic government in Europe today with its Red/Green coalition partners.

In American society there is an on-going battle between those who oppose what they call big-spending Washington and those who would like to see more federal involvement in the national economy. Senator and doctor Tom Coburn is a typical representative of the first group. He works as a physician in Muskogee, Oklahoma, and sits as a senator for the Republicans. Muskogee has one of the youngest mayors in American history, the 21-year old John Tyler Hammons.\textsuperscript{194}

Third parties have had some position in Congress. Except in certain Congresses of the 1830s, 1850s, 1890s, their numbers have been marginal. Those numbers have declined precipitously since the passing of the 1930s Great Depression. Third parties nearly have been shut out of the chambers of Congress since 1945. … Since 1951, except for a handful of independents, the House has been entirely in Democratic and Republicans hands.\textsuperscript{195}

The economists Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter ask the reader to remember John Rawls and his thoughts on pluralism in their conclusion. They argue that in today’s society, disagreement must be tolerated to a much larger degree than before because of the complexity and largeness of modern society. They conclude that the state must treat every group equally and with neutrality. “When it comes to answering the big ‘meaning of life’-type questions, this system of individual liberty generates more, not less, disagreement.”\textsuperscript{196} In Heath’s and Potters’ view, the history of the welfare state “should not be interpreted as a series of battles against the logic of the market, but rather as a series of triumphs over various forms of market failure.”\textsuperscript{197} They are asking for the building of the perfect marked, not the end of the capitalist marked.In 1776, The Declaration of Independence stated the following:

\begin{quote}
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, which among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”\textsuperscript{198}
\end{quote}

The pursuit of happiness has always been a goal for politicians, and there has been strife between the left side and the right side to be the holder of the best version of an economical political system. The search for the best system have been an ongoing debate since the since the dawn of day whether it is has been done by compromise or by fight.

Sanders is a so-called branded politician in addition to being the negotiator. He branded himself as a commercial trademark and by winning over certain groups in his home state Vermont he was able to win a seat due to his great charisma and well-liked style.
Another way to explain this is to back it up with the notion that a local politician can win a seat in Congress or Senate because he is backed by the local public. Often in local elections ideology means less than local issues such as building a new school, or baseball court or saving the local farmers from economic disaster. Localness and familiarity with the candidate can be of good help for the candidate. As suggested before Sanders’ was always the familiar candidate. It created a win-win situation: Sanders was elected again as Mayor and later as Senator, and the citizens got a representative with good knowledge of the condition of Vermont. All in all, Sanders was smart, and could win votes on a different reason than the typical ideological platform. In local election it is normal not to vote so much out of ideological stand, as out of concern for the local environment of the town.

Social entrepreneurs are often ordinary people. What they differ on is that according to David Bornstein they have “powerful ideas to improve people’s lives and they have implanted them across cities, countries, and, in some cases, the world.” Bornstein calls the social entrepreneurs “transformative forces.” There is a difference between NGOs and Senator Bernard Sanders of course; he is inside the governmental establishment, but still an outsider in the Senate. NGOs can be seen as an emerging “mobilization of citizens.”

“Every change begins with a vision and a decision to take action,” Bornstein writes.

An idea is like a play. It needs a good producer and a good promoter even if it is a masterpiece. Otherwise the play may never open; or it may open but, for lack of an audience, close after a week. Similarly, an idea will not move from the fringes to the mainstream simply because it is good; it must be skillfully marketed before it will actually shift people’s perceptions and behavior.

This process is the same that Tom Hayden describes in his M/M model of social change.

If ideas are to take root and spread, therefore, they need champions—obsessive people who have the skill, motivation, energy, and bullheadedness to do whatever is necessary to move them forward: to persuade, inspire, seduce, carjole, enlighten, touch hearts, alleviate fears, shift perceptions, articulate meanings and artfully maneuver them through systems.

David C. McClelland wrote in 1987 the characteristic he found among successful entrepreneurs. They were the following: a) Willingness to self-correct, b) Willingness to share credit, c) Willingness to break free of established structures d) Willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries, e) Willingness to work quietly and f) Strong ethical impetus. So did Sanders incorporate these traits?

The Winner

So how did he do it? In 1985 Tom W. Rice, professor of political science at the University of Vermont, did research on who voted for Bernard Sanders as mayor of Burlington. The paper
was titled “Who Votes for a Socialist Mayor? The Case of Burlington, Vermont,” and was an analysis of the election of Bernard Sanders as mayor in Burlington. He looked at the voters for Sanders in March 1981. The independent socialist won by 10 votes up against the Democratic Mayor Gordon Paquette. Rice calls this election an anomaly.\textsuperscript{207}

Rice found the election in 1981, intriguing from a voting behavior standpoint. By this he meant that to look at who actually voted for Sanders and by looking further into these variables would shed interesting light on the makeup of Sanders’ coalition and “on the types of American Voters most likely to be attracted to a Socialist candidate.”\textsuperscript{208} The variables he used were social class, ideological stand, age, length of residence in Burlington, and party identification. He asked 400 residents in November 1983. He tested five hypotheses: number 1 and 2 argued that the voters had the same characteristics as Socialistic voters in other Western nations. The other three hypotheses suggested that the voters were laborers and liberals. Rice divided his hypothesis into two groups; one was the “traditional” the other was the “local.”\textsuperscript{209} Rice looked at the results from 1981 and 1983 and compared the numbers. He found a difference between members of the working class and the middle-class. “15.1 percent better in each election to be exact. It would appear then that the mayor was able to mobilize at least one traditional Socialist constituency, the working class.”\textsuperscript{210} Another result that matched the traditional groups of hypotheses was that he got votes among those who saw themselves as liberals.\textsuperscript{211}

There has existed a common opinion among political observers that Sanders has attracted young people to vote for him.\textsuperscript{212} There is one major daily newspaper in Burlington, the Burlington Free Press.\textsuperscript{213} Its opinion on the election of Sanders was that he had a large amount of support from the younger voters in Burlington. According to the data found by Rice, this suggestion seemed to be right: Young adults, he found, did vote for Sanders to a larger degree than voters from the age of 36 and up.\textsuperscript{214}

Further more, Rice points to the explanation that many new residents voted for Sanders. Burlington is hosting a university and has always been a city that attracted what Rice calls “artists and counterculture types.”\textsuperscript{215} Some of the reasons for this might have been because of Sanders’ support of rent control and public funding of artists, argues Rice.\textsuperscript{216} But the last hypothesis was that many Democrats voted for Sanders instead of Pauquette. He spoiled the election for the Democrat, and in support of this analysis came the answer that many gave to the question why they had voted for Sanders. They told the interviewer that they were longing for change, and discontent with Pauquette.\textsuperscript{217} Rice was comparing the voter turnout from both the election in 1981 and 1983, and there was a difference in the data. In
1983 the voter turnout for the traditional hypothesis was lower, and the local hypothesis “more powerful in discriminating between Sanders voters and non-Sanders voters from 1981 to 1983”, he describes.218 The strongest indicator on this was how Sanders pulled 48.1 percent of the votes among the conservatives in 1983, compared to only 35.7 in 1981.219 He actually won votes from the conservative camp. So ideology, according to Rice, played a much weaker role in 1983. Rice concludes in this way:

Thus, the Sanders coalition in 1983 is best characterized as a melding of working-class individuals, young adults, and Democrats (plus a small number of independents)…. The Sanders coalition suggests that in the United States a Socialist can gather substantial support among the traditional leftist constituencies—the working class and liberals.220

Rice argues in his survey that among the constituencies where a Socialist candidate was most likely to get support were Democrats and young adults, and surprisingly “independently of their class and ideology.”221 This can be compared with the broad coalitions made by the populist movements in the late 18th century, and later on the Progressives. The bi-partisanship might have been the reason for his success. This will be dealt with more thoroughly later in the chapter. The data shows that a traditional voter constituency existed in 1981 and in 1983 as well, though weakened in 1983. Time played a role here, and there might have been other variables that played a major role in the election to the House and the Senate since these elections were held even later. Fiermonte shows how this was the situation in 2006 as well:

The Sanders coalition consisted of Senior citizens, progressives, Worker Unions, and Veterans. The Veterans made up a strong and large constituency, by arranging the “Night for Veterans.” …So, the typical Sanders voter is from the working class, or he or she is among intellectual progressives. Another type of Sanders voter is a farmer in the large dairy industry of Vermont. He or she is maybe an environmentalist or among the senior citizens, but she or he is not found only among young people.

Sanders held his seat in the House in the middle of what has been named the Republican Revolution of 1994. Newth Gingrich was the brain and author behind the Contract with America. The revolution resulted in 54 seats in the House of Representatives, so in the middle of these Republicans sat the socialist Sanders, alone without a strong party structure behind him. Sanders represented a city of 40,000 people in the House. In his own words this is the explanation on why he has won the seat in Congress:

It goes without saying that I never would have become mayor in Burlington, Vermont, or a U.S. congressman without the help of a dozens of close friends and co-workers who have worked at my side for many, many years.222

Senator Patrick Leahy told Mark Leibovich that the reason for Sanders’ success, did not lie in his socialistic approach but because of his ability to impress the locals in Vermont in a personal way. Sanders became known as Bernie, not the Socialist.223 In 1996 when he stood
up against the moneymaking machine of Newt Gingrich and his support of Susan Sweetser this support was needed. Sweetser was the Republican opponent in the race for a House seat. They gave $500-a-plate-dinners with Dick Armey, former U.S. House Majority Leader and lobbyist and Chairman of FreedomWorks, and Gingrich, with a result of $30,000 on one night. Election campaign starts early in America, so the struggle is long and hard. But this was not the first time Sanders had run for Congress. His first time was in 1988, then in 1990, 1992, and 1994. Fiermonte supports Leahy in his analysis. Sanders’ abilities as a coalition builder were mainly what his outreach director sees as the reason for winning the seat. On the question “How did he do it?” he answered the following:

That is an amazing story! It is a combination of persistence and determination…. He continued the grassroots meetings. 6-700 people came…. Senator Sanders is a good orator and a great communicator as well…. Vermont is a white state, and it is quite homogeneous by nature. This has made it easy for Sanders to win his voters. But Sanders has by no means become a sell-out, he might have mellowed but he works on the same themes as he did in 1981. Another reason for his success might have been that he is fighting for working people. Senator Sanders is no fake, no bullshit.

Sanders is outspoken; in his book Outsider in the House, he states that he will never hire a consultant to advise him on political questions; neither will he let himself be “shaped and molded by a Washington insider … not while [he] has breath in his body.” This attitude has given Sanders a reputation as a “left-wing extremist”, and someone one should not take seriously. This might have changed some during the last few years, as will be dealt with later in the thesis.

Sanders has been criticized for having strange bedfellows in addition to being ineffective and extreme in drafting his bills. Sanders collaborates with both the Democrats and the Republicans; it is said that he votes with the Democrats on most issues, and when looking at the voting record of his from both the period in the House of Representatives and the Senate, this seems to be true to some extent. Strong criticism comes from the NRSC, a political lobby group for the Republican Party. One bill Sanders sponsored in 2005, the Withdrawing Approval of the WTO Agreement, failed 86-338. The group of representatives voting yea to this proposal was a strange group of both Democrats and Republicans. One was Representative J. Gresham Barrett, in Congress since 2002. He voted the same as Sanders on the first and the second Economic Package as well, but he voted no on the Medicare Bill on July 15, 2008. J. Gresham Barrett of South Carolina is a conservative Republican who voted no to the H.R. 3962 Affordable Health Care for America Act on November 7, 2009. So, this strange bedfellow was one of the 86 who supported the Social-Democrat Bernard Sanders in 2005. Barrett and Sanders had different reason for voting as
they did. Barrett is a Hands-Off Government representative who can easily adopt the policy of Sanders when he proposes withdrawal from the World Community. This did not collide with his view on a small and sleeping government. Sanders’ reasons were quite the opposite. He wanted an end to the free market, and by doing so he got support from those who wanted a protectionist approach to national economy. Once again this can be read as an example of the Sanders Coalition building, but also as an example on his role in Congress as an agenda setter in Washington D.C.

Another point to his success in Burlington, and the Senate can perhaps be his view on the voters. He has a strong sense of how voters may look at politicians. In his book he writes: “If you have no influence on your own working conditions, what kind of power can you have over the economics and politics of the entire country? Why bother to vote? Why bother to pay attention to politics?” This apathy from the voters must be dealt with, he says. The method was the following: “Our electoral strategy was straightforward, aimed at creating a broad-based, grassroots constituency. Starting with the low-income and working-class wards, I knocked on as many doors as possible.” This was during his campaign for running as Mayor of Burlington in 1981. His outreach director Phil Fiermonte has this to tell from the 2006 campaign and on how it was organized:

Sanders ran against the wealthiest opponent in 2006. The opponent was Republican Richard Tarrant. The election campaign started two years in advance. Sanders has always understood grass-roots organization, and they have worked as a team. In the campaign we knocked on 76, nearly 85 doors. We had help from many young people, who canvassed in neighborhoods. They made up a group of 15-20 young people. The issues we talked about in the field were taken from polls. We used instant polls each day to find out what interested the citizens.

Sanders follows up by explaining the complexity of the voter constituency that he gathered. “Even though my campaign was geared toward lower- and middle-class people, a number of Burlington’s upper-income citizens voted for me. One reason for this was that I attacked a plan to build high-rise condominiums on the city’s waterfront. … When I vigorously opposed that project many citizens concerned about the environment and preserving the natural beauty of the city decided that my candidacy was worth serious consideration.”

Sanders was in many respects an outsider, not part of the machinery of either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party, he was alone in the battle for money to orchestra for a large, expensive party rally before the nominations. About the funding in 2006 Fiermonte has this to tell:

There is a rule in the United States that there is a limit at $10,000 that self founders can give. Individuals can give this amount, then political action groups can give $48,000, and other contributors’
can give $24,000. But there are always loopholes in this system, and the millionaire got $5 million dollars from friends. Sanders was founded by Labor Unions and Human Rights organizations. So instead of getting a lot of money from a small group of people, Sanders got a lot of people to give small amounts of money. The working-class people managed to collect $75 each but total in was a whole lot more. Obama used a similar concept in his campaign, yes.

But what could be seen as a drawback was really a good thing, because it made him perhaps able to think outside the box. He rallied supporters from other segments of society than his opponents. His caucus became a broad, extensive and different group of supporters than it would have been if he had done the regular things. Although he also created commercial ads on televisions, and had town meetings, he has knocked on some doors that others found too modest, or were afraid to knock on: the poor and lower working classes of America. Sanders writes in his book that “the activities of most progressives revolve around specific issues and action groups.”

He passes judgment on progressives for not being in touch with the real world, and the actual work that being in politics demands. Politics is hard work, not just “theory and ideas.” So, being re-elected is not as easy as being elected once as a comment on politics or an outsider. There is a fine line between being the alternative politician, and becoming a politician re-elected, and melting into the conventional party politics. Some of the answer to Sanders’ success might lay in the voting behavior.

In the Obama election the street-art artist Shepard Fairey helped create a poster, for the Obama campaign, and the result became the Obey Obama poster. This might have been a way to sell the Obama platform to young adults, and Democrats. Do you lose your idealism as you grow up, or can it be argued that the liberal counterculture is something closely connected with youth culture? Is it only the young who are the strongest speakers for liberal policies in the United States? If one takes Rice’s argument as a starting point it may be questioned exactly how important the factor of idealism was in the choosing a political stand. Could it be more helpful to look at age? In a talk on movements in Oslo on October 12, 2009, Tom Hayden defined a social movement as different from a party. Voluntary commitment and spontaneity were two important elements in a movement like this. Machiavellians were a governance craft, with strong rules to remain in power. Hayden explained this as a theory of reform and revolution going on at different phases. The first one is the idea that is created in the margins where there may be no sign of a movement anywhere, and the Machiavellians have full hegemony. Then follows a phase when the base of the movement grows. At this point the Machiavellians divides into two parts, the militant and the moderate movement. As the moment evolves into mainstream, the moderate branch of the Machiavellian group ends in reform, which results in a countermovement, as the movement demobilizes, because the goal
has been reached. What is left at this stage is memory, a legacy that is either co-opted in the public memory, or erased. According to this theory one might say that no radical movement ever dies, but evolves and develops as a memory, in the mind of the citizen, only to rise again when awoken by a new generation. If Hayden is right in his analysis, even the question of the youth culture itself is less important. From there one could argue that the question whether idealism of the 1960s died or not, could become a question on how well tailored, and preserved the memory was. An example Hayden used was how the image of Malcolm X has become a post stamp in modern day America.\textsuperscript{237}

Another possible answer is that he won the seat as a so-called branded politician. He branded himself as a commercial trademark and by winning over certain groups in his home state Vermont he was able to win a seat due to his great charisma and well-liked style. The liberals in America have consisted mainly of the educated middle-class for long time. Sanders was elected by the working class, but also by the educated middle-class, for example he did a lot of election campaigning at the University of Vermont. This gave him support from parts of the “elite” he so eagerly resented. This ‘Harvardesque’ group of voters supported Sanders the socialist as well as Obama the liberal.
Political Issues

Wrong, Mr. Greenspan!

Bernard Sanders in the House 2007

According to otherissues.org, Sanders is a hardcore liberal candidate. They have placed him on the Left Liberal side farthest away from the Right Conservative side in a schematic account of political ideological stands, a system that provide a match result for where a candidate for Congress stand on important issues. What is interesting about this analysis is that it also drags Sanders away from the Populist stand. Here is the model:

![Graph showing political ideological stands]

On the other hand, some views that Senator Sanders holds is a poor match to his other positions like his view on Gun Control. He supports the absolute right to gun ownership. There is a strong tradition in the United States to protect the right to bear arms. The NRA (The National Rifle Association) has its own lobbying group called the Institute for Legislative Action. As it says on its webpage it: “[i]s committed to preserving the right of all law-abiding individuals to purchase, possess and use firearms for legitimate purposes as guaranteed by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.”

Sanders favors the right to bear arms, this may in some opinions collide with his many strong liberal views on same-sex domestic benefits, abortion, death penalty, public health care reform or taxes for whom he calls the wealthiest Americans. His views are differentiated and
open for a middle path between the “hardcore” liberal stand and the hardcore conservative stand, this may instead leave him in the more moderate stand according to the scheme.

One important cause Sanders has fought for is the rights of veterans. In January 2009 Sanders stressed the need for better care of the soldiers coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq. The Veterans Affairs needs more resources when it comes to the improvement of “mental health and [the] rehabilitation services.” But even though Sanders has used a lot of time and energy on promoting the rights of the Vets, and now sits in the Veterans Committee in the Senate, part of the Veterans community tried to stop him in 2005 when he ran for office in the Senate. John O’Neill involved in the swift boating of John Kerry, attacked Sanders in 2005.

O’Neill, who started working with Republicans to attack political dissenters back in the Nixon years but who really came into his own with his role in promoting the wildly disingenuous and broadly disputed “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth” attacks on Kerry’s Vietnam service record during the 2004 campaign, has just penned an anti-Sanders letter that is being distributed on right-wing websites. O’Neill says he’s enthusiastic about the campaign of little-known perennial candidate Greg Parke in the Republican Senate primary, but it’s clear that he is getting involved in the race to attack Sanders rather than to promote Parke.

These attacks and others have been a natural part of the life of Sanders until today. That is partly what being a public figure is about. If one stands strongly for something one must also prepare oneself for the attacks that might come.

On YouTube one can find a clip of a song. It was added September 07, 2009. The song is sung by The Boys of Huntington, WV. This is part of its lyrics:

This plan is your plan, this plan is my plan, providing health care to all Americans, from West Virginia to California to the [Staten] New York Island, From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf stream waters, 
[God blessed America for me.]

The lyrics is a rewrite of Woody Guthrie “This Land is Your Land”, a song that has a special place in the hearts of Americans. It is a folksong from 1940 and it had a political side to it. It was meant “as a grassroots response to “God Bless America”.

The first verse is as follows:

This land is your land, this land is my land
From [the] California to the [Staten] New York Island, From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf stream waters, 
[God blessed America for me.]

The last verse reveals the political content of the song:

One bright sunny morning in the shadow of the steeple By the Relief Office I saw my people -- As they stood hungry, I stood there wondering if 
[God blessed America for me.]
The use of this old national inheritance may be read as a political comment on the situation in the United States today.

In 2007, the filmmaker Michael Moore made the movie “Sicko”. The movie was a political statement to encourage the politicians in Congress to pass HR 676, United States National States Health Care Act. “Sickness does not know Democrat or Republican!” he said on Capitol Hill in 2007 in connection with showing his movie for the representatives. Moore is known for his relentless style. He usually wears a cap, large t-shirts, and casual trousers. That day he had dressed up in a suit, and his voice was without irony and filled with awe, dignity, and solemnity. This was another Moore than the comedian the audience usually sees. “The first word American word was We, We the People, not me, the people,” he said with a solemn face. November 21, 2009 H.R. 3590 with its short name: Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, on a not so short number of pages, 2074 to be exact, was accepted for debate in the Senate. The weekend of thanksgiving gave it a symbolic meaning as well as a historical side to it. The mood in the Senate that evening was influenced by the historical magnitude of the event. Story by story about American citizens were being shared by senators, about women not being able to get health care insurances because of certain pre-existing conditions, having a c-section being one of them, or having survived domestic abuse another one, or having asthma or actually becoming pregnant. All these situations were looked upon in certain states, or by certain insurance companies as a pre-existing condition, hindering the person in question getting insurance.

One committee working with this bill in the Senate is the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions. The Chairman of the committee is Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa. Sanders sits on this committee; he also sits sixth by rank among the Democrats, thought he is listed as independent. Those on the committee are the following starting with the Democrats: Tom Harkin (IA) Christopher Dodd (CT) Barbara A. Mikulski (MD) Jeff Bingaman (NM) Jack Reed (RI) Sanders, Sherrod Brown (OH) Robert P. Casey, Jr. (PA), Kay Hagen (NC), Jeff Merkley (MN), Al Franken (MN) and Michael Bennet (CO). Then from the Republicans: Michael B. Enzi (WY), Judd Gregg (NH), Lamar Alexander (TN), Richard Burr (NC), Johnny Isakson (GA) John McCain (AZ), Orrin G. Hatch (UT), Tom Coburn, M.D. (OK) and Pat Roberts (KS). Sanders belong to two subcommittees: The Subcommittee on Children and Families, and on Retirement and Aging. Until his death Senator Kennedy also sat on this committee.

Senator Sanders was the first member of Congress to take his constituents across the Canadian border to buy their prescription drugs at a fraction of the price they were forced to pay in the United States. Looking back at this landmark trip, Sanders said, "We took a busload of Vermonters, mostly
women, many of them struggling with breast cancer, and we went from St. Albans to Montreal. I will never forget the look on the faces of those women who were struggling for their lives, when they bought breast cancer medicine at 10 percent of the cost that they were paying in the State of Vermont. The drug was tamoxifen, a widely prescribed drug for those people struggling with breast cancer. How do you have a drug manufactured by a company, manufactured in the same factory, put in the same bottles, sold in Canada for one-tenth of the price that that same medicine is sold for in the United States of America? How can that happen?

Already in an interview in 2005, Sanders said the following:

Too often, people on the left look at cultural issues as the most important issues. They are important, but we have to appreciate the reality that tens of millions of people are struggling hard just to keep their heads above water economically. They either have no health insurance or they are paying much more than they can afford for health insurance. They’re desperately trying to get a decent education for their kids. They’re scared to death about whether their pension is going to be there when they retire. To a large degree we’ve ignored those people. It’s important that we reach out to them and let them know that we know what they’re going through and that we’re going to change the system. It is not acceptable that America is the only country in the industrialized world without national health care. It is not acceptable that we haven’t raised the minimum wage in 10 years to a living wage, that we haven’t addressed the major crisis in affordable housing. Homelessness is a problem, sure, but a bigger problem is that millions of people are spending 50 percent of their limited incomes on housing. When you are forced to do that, how do you have money to provide the basics for your family? The middle class in America is collapsing. And it’s about time we started addressing that reality.

He said loudly and clearly that it should not be acceptable that the USA as the only industrialized country in the world does not have a national health care system. Sanders has held this view for a long time, and finally on November 21, 2009, he made the following statement after voting with the 60 to 39 majority to begin the debate in Senate on health care reform legislation:

I voted to proceed on health care reform because our current health care system is disintegrating and must be reformed. Forty-six million Americans are uninsured, and 45,000 die every year because they don't have access to a doctor. We have almost one million Americans going bankrupt because of medically-related diseases, health care costs are soaring and we end up spending almost twice as much per person on health care as any other nation. It is clear that we need real health care reform. While I voted to proceed to the health care legislation tonight, I have made it clear to the administration and Democratic leadership that my vote for the final bill is by no means guaranteed. In the weeks to come I intend to do everything I can to make this legislation stronger and more effective for working families and taxpayers in Vermont and America and something all Americans can be proud of.

In the 111th Congress in during the summer of 2009 the health care reform was launched in Congress. The reform is “A Bill To make quality, affordable health care available to all Americans, reduce costs, improve health care quality, enhance disease prevention, and strengthen the health care workforce.” Its name was H.R. 3200, its short name is H.R. 109 Affordable health choices Act for America (AHCA). Then the Senate’s bill called H.R. 3590 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and finally H.R. 3962 was passed and its name was Affordable Health Care for America Act approved by The House of
Representatives on November 9, 2009. It was signed by President Barack Obama March 23, 2010. The reform was historical, as CNN wrote the day after the:

The bill constitutes the biggest expansion of federal health care guarantees in more than four decades, and its enactment was a giant victory for Obama and Democrats after a brutal legislative battle dating back to the start of his presidency.

The reform should be implemented on or after January 1, 2014. An American health benefit gateway should be established in all states. There will also be given grants to as it says on page 340: “establish community health teams to support the patient-centered medical home.” There will be established a Public Health Fund, that shall be funded by $2,000,000,000 from the fiscal year of 2010 and then increase by $2,000,000,000 each year until 2014 from when there will be granted $10,000,000,000 each year. This is the year when health care reform will be implemented. In subtitle C in the bill there is stressed an increase in the supply of the health care workforce. There will also be funding for this.

In 1990 Sanders talked about his upcoming election to Congress. This was the first time there existed a fair chance of actually obtaining a seat. He had tried to run for a seat in the Senate earlier in the 1972 election, as mentioned earlier then as a representative of the Liberty Union Party. The fact that he got nominated was just as much of sheer luck or coincidence as of political heft and ambitions because he had started talking about issues like the Vietnam War, education, and the economy. These topics have followed Sanders throughout his career. Often in his broad Brooklyn accent he speaks of the rights and life of “the working people, the poor people or the elderly people.” Topics like these are often overheard and underemphasized in media and the public, Sanders often says. When he ran for the seat in 1990, he said in a radio interview to Irwin Mole that he saw his role as the agenda setter of unfavorable topics.

Ah . . . we think we have a good chance to win and become the first independent progressive in the United States Congress, and begin to raise issues that the Democrats and the Republicans don’t have the guts to go near with a ten foot pole so it’s an important election not only for Vermont but I think for the nation.

Thomas E. Patterson wrote in 2003 that American politics was “candidate -rather than party-centered.” This, he said, opened up for the need for populism because the candidates could no longer afford not listen to public opinion. Sanders has been accused of profiling himself as a populist. The word populist has some negative connotations. But when dealing with an American politician not afraid to label himself either socialist or social-democrat, being accused of being a populist might not seem as such a big deal. To try to find something wrong or immoral about Sanders is not an easy task. In searching his campaign contributors, one
finds a long list of contributors from unions and non-profit organizations working justice and equality. It must be said, though, that firms and organizations like these have been accused of corruption as well. The case of ACORN may serve as an example. The story was that large newspapers covered up and “killed” a story about the close connections between ACORN’s Project Vote and the Obama/Biden campaign.\(^\text{267}\) On the webpage opensecrets.org a list of Sanders’s contributors for the last campaigns is open to the public. The two largest contributors for the 2010 campaign are a firm called eScription Inc and Baron & Budd. eScription Inc is a firm that specializes on transcribing medical reports, a software for healthcare institutions.\(^\text{268}\) The other firm is a law firm which “keep a watchful eye on the ways that individuals and communities can be hurt by corporate misconduct and to provide legal assistance to those who have been harmed,” according to their webpage.\(^\text{269}\)

The other contributors are among others the Plumbers/Pipefitters Union, the United Steelworkers, the AFL/CIO, the American Postal Workers Union and the Laborers Union.\(^\text{270}\) For the 1998 campaign many of the same names appear but the amount of money is on a smaller scale. In the 2010 election campaign eScription has a donation budget of $25,200 compared to Association of Trial Lawyers of America which gave him $10,000 in 1998.\(^\text{271}\) The Teamsters Union, the United Auto Workers and the Laborers Union have contributed in a steady flow for nearly every election. In 2002 two private firms appeared on the list: APTA (American Physical Therapy Association) and Foundation-Hearing aid research.\(^\text{272}\) In 2004 Sanders got $4,000 from Bristol Bay Health Corporation, a tribal organization in Alaska.

Sanders sat alone in the House, one against 434 to be correct. His own answer to the inevitable question on what difference he might play there as an independent was this in 1990:

I think you know clearly one person doesn’t change the world, doesn’t change the entire United States Congress. My election is not going to radically change American’s priorities over night. I think this is what it does then …. The most serious problem is they don’t even have the guts to talk about the issues. So you look at the mass media, you look at television, you look at radio, you look at newspapers the reality is of American life, the pain of what is going on in this country, the insanity of what is going on in this country is not seriously debated.\(^\text{273}\)

He saw himself as the voice of the part of people, the invisible people that never get their voice heard in public. Michael Harrington talked about the invisible poor in America in 1962. He wrote that they were invisible and belonged to The Other America. He wrote that

The people of the other America do not, by far and large, belong to unions, to fraternal organizations, or to political parties. They are without lobbies of their own; they put forward no legislative program. As a group, they are atomized. They have no face; they have no voice....\(^\text{274}\)

By saying this he argued that the poor were difficult to reach with welfare programs, but also as a group of voters. So, for Sanders the importance in 1990 was to be their voice, he saw
himself as that shield in Congress for the weaker, for the poor, for the elderly and the unorganized.

Then, you and I may have difference of opinion but if we bring forth our opinion, we deal with the realities of American life, at least the people out there listening and say: Yes, well I agree with this guy, I don’t, but the reason the people in this country no longer vote by the tens of millions is they listen to what goes on in Congress and say: Hey, these guys are not dealing with the reality of my life so what I can at least do is going down there and start raising the issues with as loud a voice as I possibly can. The issues that the Congress chooses not to deal with.  

His vision was this, however: Time would show, of course, whether he was able to shout loud enough in Congress so that the 434 others would listen to him. In 1990 his vision involved not only Vermont. He wanted to make Vermont a model for the rest of the country as well:

You know you have to start talking about these issues. Now, how much success we have had, I don’t know. But clearly to my mind, what has got to happen in this country and we are doing it in Vermont, but it has to happen in the other 49 states, we need an independent political movement outside the Democratic and Republican parties prepared to deal with the real issues that those parties don’t deal with.

The role as the agenda setter slipped nearly unnoticeably over to become a more potent third-party candidate. Suddenly one sees a trace of something else: not a spoiler, not a compromiser, not a local politician but a national participant in nationwide politics with a strong agenda to create a nationwide independent Third-Party movement. But his main agenda could it seem in 1990 was to make people vote. He mentioned that 95% of the poor people do not vote. One reason Americans do not vote is their disbelief in the political system when it comes to who actually sits behind the wheels in Congress. When one takes a quick look at the money spent on lobbying this becomes clearer. In 2008 the health sector used $486,086,241 on lobbying. Finance, Insurance & Real Estate used $458,562,304 the same year. Transportation used $2,015,976 and Labor used $312,191.702 in comparison.

Then one can look into the amount of money spent on lobbying and by whom and from whom. Arlen Specter got $36,200 from lobbyists. And Chris Dodd got $22,125. John McCain was on top of the list of “member[s] receiving the highest number of health-related client-lobbyist "bundles" of contributions since 2007.” He received $427,530 from clients. Henry A. Waxman appeared on the list as well, though further down, with a sum of $5,000 from clients. On the lists of representatives and employees in Congress who have used the revolving door, that is have gotten a job as lobbyist or political advisor after their term, one finds that 23 people in Joe Lieberman’s staff have used this door. When trying to search for Senator Sanders in the lists it came up with the answer that no results were found.
Sanders has had a clear position on idealism and philosophy. He has never been a believer in being a sell-out. Even though it might look as if he has compromised a lot when working on certain issues both in Burlington and in Congress which will be dealt with later, he does not like being a political sell-out. In his own words: “What I am saying is that if we keep compromising our philosophical point of view, if we keep selling out our souls it never happens and by the way, change does not always mean getting elected.” With this statement he opens up another question: the educational role of the election campaign. Sanders wants to educate the voters. The issues raised by the established politicians, says he, are not the real issues concerning the American voter. What are they, then? Of course, this rhetorical attack on the established political environment in Washington, D.C. has a strong scent of populism to it.

Sanders is often voting along with senators he stands far from on the political scale, even so he spoke loudly and clearly in 1990 about the trouble with strange bedfellows. As an explanation for why he had not joined the Democrats, he argued that if one joined forces with a party one suddenly could find oneself “in bed with some people who are not the nicest people in the world.” But difference must be drawn between actively making a compromise with a political counterpart, and passively ending up voting the same as the counterpart, on different grounds. Sanders has happened to end up in the last group often because he stands alone.

The issues that Sanders fronted as important in 1990 was rebuilding of American democracy by increasing the number of voters and health insurances for everyone. Another issue he then found important was closing the gap between the rich and the poor. Today things look different for Sanders. Congress is ruled by a more liberal group of Democrats. In the 2008 election, voter turnout increased by 5 million voters since 2004. The largest increase was among young voters, blacks and Hispanics. The voter turnout went up to 56,8%, the highest since 1968, when the percentage was 60,8. Reasons for this are many, on similarity with 1968 then the United States was involved in a controversial war, just as the Iraq War is today. But reasons for this will not be analyzed here. The reason for mentioning it is that Sanders experienced an increase in voter participation, though it is arguable whether it was his doing or not. The other new development which has also started to come true, one could say, is that the Senate in 2009 voted as mentioned earlier for a new Health Care system.

The Senate Finance Committee voted for the Health Care Reform on October 13, 2009 though, as mentioned in Washington Post the morning after, not all Americans were happy with this proposal: “Labor unions complained that the legislation lacks a government-run
insurance plan to compete with private insurers. Insurance companies said new regulations on their industry could cause premiums to rise higher.”

Olympia Snowe was the only Republican to vote “aye” to send the Senate Finance Committee’s health-care proposal to the full Senate. Final tally: 14-9 in favor of the bill, making Senate Finance the fifth and final congressional committee to report out a health-reform bill. Baucus beamed. It’s an historic moment. This is the farthest health-care reform has made it down the legislative path since Theodore Roosevelt. Now Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) will merge Finance’s proposals with the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee bill, and the whole Senate will debate and vote on health-care reform.[sic]

Senator Sanders comment on the bill passed in Senate was clear in its critique. “This cannot be a sellout to the private insurance companies,” he said.

In 2009 Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Price. Sanders had the following to say:

Statement on Nobel Peace Prize for President Obama October 9, 2009 BURLINGTON, October 9 – Sen. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.) issued the following statement after President Barack Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: “President Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to reduce nuclear arms, ease tensions with the non-Western world and stress diplomacy. “Americans should be extremely proud that we now have a president who is restoring respect and admiration for our country around the globe. At a time when our planet faces so many serious problems the United States must play a leadership role in bringing the international community together against our common enemies of war, terrorism, poverty, AIDS and global warming. “The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Obama is a show of support for his efforts in that direction.”

Sanders criticizes what he calls the “inside-beltway mentality of Washington.” What he means by this is that working with politics in Burlington, or Brattleboro and across Rural Vermont is very different from the well groomed, suit climate of Washington. He describes a typical weekend in Vermont, when he travels around campaigning, trying to meet both old Vermonters and younger students. He finds it comforting to meet so many people with their heart close to their land, and their farms, and their workplace. In 1996 it was mostly about beating the Gingrich agenda. Phil Fiermonte picked him up, and they drove to Brattleboro, then to Bennington, Rutland, and St. Johnsbury. St. Johnsbury is, according to Sanders, the poorest part of Vermont. The population is on 67,000, and 74% of the inhabitants had an annual income on over $20,000 per year. The average monthly payment in Burlington in 1996 was $27,275 compared to Brattleboro at $26,234, and Bennington $22,046, Rutland City $24,610 and St. Johnsbury $21,171. In Vermont State the total the average wage in 2009 was $35,585. The population of the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont consists of rural working class, as Sanders writes: “low-income lawyers, family farmers, veterans.”

Bernard Sanders has had an agenda in foreign politics also. He got elected to the House in the middle of the Gulf War (2 August 1990-28 February 1991). Operation Desert
Storm was initiated by a coalition of 34 nations, among them the United States. It was a new kind of warfare, brought home live on television screens across the world. He had been strongly opposed to the Vietnam War, then in 1991 he was opposing the war in Iraq and he gave the following speech on the floor of the House on January 15, 1991:

Mr. Speaker, let me begin my saying that I think we all agree in this body, and throughout this country, and throughout virtually the entire world, that Saddam Hussein is an evil person, and what he has done in Kuwait is illegal, immoral, and brutal. It seems to me, however, that the challenge of our time is not simply to begin a war which will result in the deaths of tens of thousands of people, young Americans, innocent women and children in Iraq, but the real challenge of our time is to see how we can stop aggression, how we can stop evil in a new way, in a nonviolent way. If ever there has been a time in history of the world when the entire world is united against one small country, this is that time. It seems to me a terrible failing, and very ominous for the future, if we cannot resolve this crisis, if we cannot defeat Saddam Hussein in a nonviolent way. If we are not successful now, then I think all that this world has to look forward to in the future for our children, is war, and more war.

The early 1990s were very strange indeed: The Cold War had ended, but a new world had been shaped in the ashes of the old with new enemies and new coalitions. In the years to come the world would see a development away from wars between countries, and more towards war between groups hosted by different countries. It was the coming of something one could call the Age of Terrorism. Sanders saw this in 1991, and his speech stands today as an early warning of what came afterwards. Today the number of fallen is 5257 in Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. October 7, 2009 Sanders released the following statement in the ongoing war in Afghanistan:

Eight years after the start of the war in Afghanistan, a reassessment was underway in Washington about the size of the American military force and its mission. As the Senate Foreign Relations Committee heard from a panel of experts on al-Qaeda, President Obama conferred with his national security team at the White House. Some on Capitol Hill welcomed his willingness to explore alternatives to a major troop buildup. “My great fear about Afghanistan is that we will get bogged down into a never-ending quagmire there with more and more loss of life and billions more spent,” Senator Bernard Sanders said. “We need to be a lot clearer as to what our goals in Afghanistan are, and what our exit strategy will be. I am glad that President Obama is rethinking our options there and looking at alternatives to a major increase in troops. Obviously, we have to be vigilant in the fight against terrorism, but we’ve got to do it in a smart way.” American forces have been in Afghanistan since 2001. “We need a national debate about what our goals are,” Sanders said of war that already has lasted twice as long as the American involvement in World War II. “I don’t think the alternatives are simply to pull out tomorrow, or to put in tens of thousands of more troops.”

Sanders is still up front when it comes to opposing American warfare, but there can be detected a small degree of a more moderate attitude towards the Obama administration. In 2007 he issued this statement:

I agree with President Bush that we need a new strategy in Iraq but, in my view, that strategy must involve fewer American troops in the region, not more. Our soldiers and their families should not continue to pay the price for the Presidents failed policies. Our troops should come home as soon as possible and it is time for Congress to use its constitutional and budgetary authority to make that happen. While we should continue to financially support the Iraqi government and their military, we
simply cannot allow President Bush to make a bad situation even worse by sending more American soldiers into the quagmire of Iraq.299

The tone is harsher in 2007 as he points out that the policies of the President had failed. In 1991 the reason for not going to war was not only ideological, but put in an economic perspective where Sanders was opposed to using a large sum on war, when the amount of poor and unemployed in the United States was so high. He spoke in the House of money being used on bombs rather than using it on Medicare, education, or Social Security. As he stated: “Mr. Speaker, I predict that in order to pay for this war, there will be more cutbacks in Medicare for the elderly, and even an effort top cut back on Social Security payments.”300 To run two wars outside of the borders of the country would cost the United States $136 billion in 2009.301

In 2003, Sanders voted no on the HJ Res 114: To authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq where 133 members of the House voted No.302 Among those who voted no was then Rep. Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Barbara Lee and Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr.303 In his book, Sanders deals with an aspect of war critique. To go out and say that he opposed war in the House was one thing but at the same time he was forced to meet the young soldiers and their families in Vermont when they were sent off to war:

I recall, with deep hurt, seeing off a unit of the Vermont National Guard as they departed for the Gulf. I was booed by a few people there, one of the few times in my political career that had ever happened to me. War is a very strange phenomenon. I do not claim to understand its psychological effects. Here I had done my best to prevent young Vermon ters and other Americans from getting killed, and I was being booed for my efforts.304

2009 he seems to have gotten used to this as he addressed the departing soldiers for Afghanistan in October, 2009. He said “We know that you are going to serve the state and country faithfully and effectively, as you have in the past, and most importantly we want you home safely as soon as possible.”305

Sanders have for several years worked to pressure Wall Street to control more of their financial businesses. He as early as in 2007 confronted Alan Greenspan with the predicted losses of jobs, both in the industrial sector and in more normally “safe” white collar jobs. In a clip from C-Span one may see the whole attack. Sanders starts in a quite aggressive style and end up with the following question to Greenspan: Do you give one wit of concern for the working class citizens of this country? And Greenspan defends himself: Congressman, we have the highest standard of living in the world. Where Sanders disrupt him by yelling: No,
we do not! You go to Scandinavia and you will find that people have a lot higher standard of living in terms of education, health care and decent paying jobs. Wrong, Mr. Greenspan.\textsuperscript{306}
The Populist Tradition in the United States

This plan is your plan, this plan is my plan, providing health care to all Americans, from West Virginia to California, Boys of Huntington

Compromiser or Outsider, Socialist or Populist

Was Sanders an outsider or a compromiser? Has he been a politician who has bent with the wind just to collect voters? A typical word to use as a negative mark on a politician by many is that he or she is a populist. There exists leftwing populism as well as rightwing populism. Populism is a highly discussed word, used both with negative and positive connotations.

Anders Ravik Jupskås, PhD student at the University of Oslo, has made a diagram where he distinguishes between the different types of populism and their different characteristics. Even though this survey has been made to match the Norwegian arena it can be useful as well in the analysis of Sanders. I will try to make a simplified version of it and see if it matches with U.S. relations.

No party or movement would like to be referred to as populist, argues Jupsås in his “Faces of Populism” from 2010. It is also easy to agree with him when he argues that populism is not “a kind of ideology.” He argues that populism should be understood as a: “set of values guiding the form and method of political communication.” Some social scientist speaks about “socialist populism” as a subgroup of “Populism.” It has the following facets: it sees the people as the underdogs, and the underdogs are confronted with “the economic and bourgeoisie political elite.” Socialist populism is often found combined with Socialism or Marxist-Leninism. To decide whether Sanders is a socialist or a populist is according to this viewpoint fruitless. Rather, it will be more meaningful to try to define his type of socialism in view of the typology of populism, to try to detect what traditions he draws upon. This might add to some light in the process in understanding how Sanders reached the Senate on his own.

Sanders connections with the Socialist party connect him in a different way than do what is called by evil voices, the “broken” Washington. What is meant by this can be seen in various parts of American political life, both in blogs, and in newspapers. As being the oldest of the newer senators, he too has voiced his opinion on this issue. But before explaining what he means, it would be suitable to explain further the different stands on this issue.
By saying that Washington is broken, it is both meant that the voting protocols and the actual behaving in the Senate have been scrutinized. Many have come to argue that the filibustering and the voting majority of 60/100 can threaten democracy. The checks-and-balances system makes it almost impossible to create changes, and pass reforms. The progressives have tried hard to pass reforms, but before the Health Care Reform things looked dark for many months when the empty seat of Ted Kennedy went to a Republican. That gave the Republicans filibuster-capable minority, and almost stopped the reform, had it not been for intensive lobbying by the House Leadership among the Blue Dog Democrats, and alterations of the text in the final version of the reform.

This version of the critique comes from the Progressives and the liberals. But there is another side to the critique as well, the older and established one, and this one has roots among the conservatives. It has a clearly populist approach and focuses on the so-called elite in Washington, D.C. This is an old tune, developed in the South after the Civil War, and the argument then was the same as now. It goes like this: The government in Washington, D.C., consists only of the upper class and the aristocrats from the North East. It controls the largest educational centers, and they produce full-time professional politicians. One might ask why this is a typical conservative argument; should not also the working class prosper and come to power? Would it not be of the interest of the railway worker if he could sit in the U.S. Senate and work for the benefits of the little man? Yes, and this is where the populist rhetoric or tool becomes so powerful. Because this argument can evoke feelings among both the rich real estate owner in the Deep South, and the industrial worker out of job in Michigan, Detroit, it is a forceful weapon in the struggle for public opinion.

The concept of “working-class power” has been set forward as a tool to develop a socialistic party viable in the United States. It has been discussed in depth by Seymour Lipset and Marks. The theory evolves around an idea that if the working-class got positions through labor unions, and organized themselves in order to get into office, they could work themselves up in the political system without the necessary training needed today, training only offered at the old and most expensive universities. The road to Washington is for many not covered with gold. To follow the Yellow Brick Road is not an easy task, and to get back home to the old community is not as easy as clicking the heels of some magic red shoes. When the little man arrives in Washington D.C., the wizard talks in riddles, and uses a language that the fellow American has seldom heard spoken. This is the educational gap, created by high fees at the universities, and a lack of support for the student to get loans. The gap is created because of a system that in many ways favors only a few from so-called elite.
By elite it is here meant economic elite. But many argue that by giving the schools seats to the same families they in this way also create a sort of an aristocracy. The positions goes in the family, it is almost as the old system in Europe, where the crown was handed down to the oldest son. This has been for centuries one of the most ancient arguments against the Old Country and the New World. It was the blood heritage one wanted to rid one selves of by coming to the new continent, but then in the end was it so that it was not the rule that one could escape from, but the set of thinking and organizing society? Is the unwritten rule seen in Animal Farm the same? Can mankind rid himself of the idea that some are better shaped to rule others? Are the few good men the only man capable of governing the masses? This paradox is strongly apparent in Washington, D.C.. The conquest of Washington, D.C. made by a member of the socialist party, an independent is a strange and though provoking case of the opposite. Here a man from Brooklyn, with immigrant parents creates an opportunity for himself. He is in many ways the American Dream reincarnated, a sunshine story. But he is also a reminder of the many outside Washington who live unheard, without a voice. Both of these arguments are opportunistic. They are used by the losing part. And who becomes the losing part switches all the time.

According to Richard Hofstadter, rural life has formed American radicalism. Vermont is known for its rural landscape. If one goes to its official website it is clearly agriculture, dairy industry, and its rural characteristics the state builds its reputation on. American economic philosophy, Hofstadter explained, has always been divided in two parts. On one side one finds the thought consisting of an opportunistic belief in hard-money, monopoly and aristocracy- On the other side one finds restoration, a concept coined by Marvin Meyers, explained in Hofstadter’s words as a theme that

[h]arkens back to the simplicity, the civic dedication, the nobility, the limited material aspirations and high moral tone that deemed to be so characteristic of the old republic….And restorationists were deeply concerned that the aggressive materialism of the country, its insatiable quest for opportunities and profits, for offices and emoluments, would lead not only to wealth and luxury but to decadence.

The critique of these two arguments built Jacksonian democracy. The inveterate conspicuousness of the Bank of the United States and promoting a decentralizing of the deposits to the states was a thought inherited by the Populist Party of the nineties. Hofstadter draws a picture of the farmer as an independent, honest, hard-working and good citizen. He was reliable and simple, to use Hofstadters words. This reliable man became an example of small business, and a contrast to big business for the sake of money. During the and after the Civil War the farmer of the South was struck down by short-term credit and
international deflation. The wage-worker was left in despair, claimed the populists. Hofstadter argues that the people were by the populists seen as a victimized people. He or she was controlled by those who did not work for a living. This idea was not very different from the ideas formed by Karl Marx. But, as he goes on, he is only rhetorically resembling to the writings of Marx and Engels because: “the interests exploited the people –not, it is important to say, through the normal mechanism of capitalist production but through their political privileges and through their power control the monetary system.”

The Populists talked about unjust privileges and wanted these equally distributed. They also gave the ruling elite harsh and evil characteristics. The bankers on Wall Street were marked as heartless. But the backlash was just as hard, wrong terms like “primitives, demagogues, anarchists, and socialists,” were used. The Populists wanted to restore the country back to its original prosperity, by reforms. Hofstadter finds the optimism in the rhetoric of the Populists “indigenously American” as he calls it. Like the Populists in 1892 and 1896, Sanders was able to mobilize a great amount of the working-class vote. Hofstadter writes that “in the American party system, third parties have played a significant role in giving neglected interests a voice, in bringing new ideas and issues to attention, and in putting pressure for change upon the major parties.” Then he goes on by adding that because of the struggle for the presidency, “they [were] alert to the appeal of any issue with which a third party movement identify[ed] itself, and thus ready to strike a heavy blow at its chances of making further converts.” This cooptation of the third party can be seen as somewhat deceitful and populist in itself. Bryant was set out as such a prey for the hungry Populists. Hofstadter still believes that one can detect populism in the United States, but no more, as he puts it, like a “part of the stream of American thought,” and it was killed by “the return of general prosperity.” In brief, in Hofstadters view, the movement in the 1890s seems to have been educational. He concludes that the movement:

Aimed, above all, to restore agrarian profits and to scale down agrarian debts by inflation, and it assumed that general prosperity could be restored without a thoroughgoing reconstruction of the economic or constitutional order….They waged a concerted criticism of the vested interests which, despite its tendency to stray into the demonic and the conspiratorial, struck fairly at many targets and anticipated the work of the muckrakers. In its general dedication to the popular interest and to positive government, populism left an important legacy to later reformers, particularly those of the Progressive era and of the New Deal.

Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that Americans “loved change, but they dreaded revolutions.” When searching into the origins of American Populism it is impossible not to look at the term
Americanism, or the American creed. Kazin sees Populism as something he calls a “grand form of rhetorical optimism; once mobilized; there is nothing ordinary Americans cannot accomplish.” An example from today is the music video by Nas, “I Can,” where he speaks directly to the young generations by saying that there is nothing they can not do, only they have to work hard to do it. The song inspired Obama, and Nas preformed Inauguration night. If one alter this lyric it can be seen as a variant of the “Yes We Can” slogan for Barrack Obamas 2008 Campaign. The rapper promoted himself as a voter for Obama in the election of 2008. A lot of rappers from the Hip-Hop scene supported Obama, and made a lot of political rap lyrics. Kazin understands Populism as an impulse, which has been “employed … as a flexible mode of persuasion.” To explain this further, those using populism in this way, all used a certain set of “expressions, tropes, themes, and images to convince large numbers of Americans to join their side or to endorse their views on particular issues.”

In the late 1940s a conservative populism saw the daylight. Then in the 1950s and 1960s the Civil Rights movement, and the New Left took back the rhetorical toolbox. In his introduction Kazin writes the following: “It is only when leftists and liberals themselves talked in populist ways—hopeful, expansive, even romantic—that they were able to lend their politics a majoritarian cast and help markedly to improve the common welfare.”

“A creed is a set of beliefs, principles or opinions that strongly influence the way people live or work.” That is the meaning of the word taken from Collins Cobuild. So, when one is talking about the American creed, then, it is meant how Americans live their life, or would like to live their life. It consists of ideological, unwritten, and normative rules for behavior. It clearly distinguishes between what is looked upon as American and what is un-American. Out of this comes Americanism. Americanism is a civic ideology, and from the early years after the Revolution, Americanism was the same as “understanding and obeying the will of the people.”

How does Americanism differ from socialism? The ideology occurred in a country already being marked by revolution, argues Michael Kazin in his book The Populist Persuasion. The need for a new constitution, or a reform of the policy was seen as unnecessary, and even treasonous. This line of attitude against reforms can be traced all the way up to today. It is un-American to change the system. Progressive movements have been called un-American and un-constitutional again and again, recently by the Tea-Party movement, its name typically taken from the event of December 16 1773 when a group of radicals boarded the ship Dartmouth and threw 342 chests of Darjeeling tea in the Boston
harbor. The event was called the Boston Tea Party and led up to the War of Independence in 1776. In 2006 The Boston Tea Party movement was formed, and they worked hard to “kill” the Health Care Reform. On their official web page they state the following platform: “The Boston Tea Party supports reducing the size, scope and power of government at all levels and on all issues, and opposes increasing the size, scope and power of government at any level, for any purpose.”

The people were to be empowered, wrote Kazin, but then he asks who the people were? For the Founders, it was split, explains Kazin. ‘We’ meant the planters and merchants with “enough independent wealth to govern impartially,” and then he moves on to elaborate on who ‘the people’ were. They were the laborers and citizens not talented not to govern but in need to be governed. Newer meanings of the words have of course arrived. Later explanations of the word consisted of a producer ethic, an idea that he or she who “created wealth in tangible, material ways” was the only one that “trusted to guard the nation’s piety and liberties.” Joe, The Plumber was an excellent exemplar of the people in this context.

The years between the 1790s and the 1860s has been known as the antebellum United States. Among those who made public speech “precise, confident, and authentically idealist,” and as Kazin describes, not yet “cheapened by…the mass reproduction of clichés,” was Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln. Thomas Jefferson was, in our understanding of the term, a libertarian. He promoted an idea of the state as something the common American should distrust. But one must not forget whom he spoke of. It was the anti-republicans, supportive of Great Britain, contrary to the republicans who were the landholders and laborers of America. Andrew Jackson was a warrior compared to Jefferson. It is a common notion today, though, that this age did not belong to the common man, as historians of today conclude. Kazin writes that recent works done on the period of the Common Man, and “Jacksonian democracy” actually developed a large divide between the rulers and the ruled, and that “Jacksonian democracy never existed.” What Jackson promoted was an equal access to property, not an equal right to property and wealth. The socialists in mid-nineteenth-century Europe fought a battle against capitalism, and at the same time trade unionists and laborers fought a war against what they called the rich, proud, and privileged consumers of the young union. In the 1830s Jackson fought a war against the financial elite in the United States, as he campaigned against the Second Bank of the United States. Jackson saw the bank as an evil force, disguised as public, but ruled along private guidelines. As Kazin sums up, the rhetoric used in this battle became common language for different grassroots activists in decades to come.
This was the first concentrated salvo ever fired at financial elite in the United States, and it echoed far beyond its immediate audience. The repetition of terms like “the Monster Bank,” “the money power,” and “financial monopoly” offered the emerging mass public of small entrepreneurs, ambitious shopkeepers, and strapped wage earners a way to blame their misfortunes on a haughty, unelected cabal instead of on the economic system as a whole.  

But had he then forgotten about the “Monstrous system”? Andrew Jackson never came close to taking on that battle. But his legacy was to build into a politician viewed and honored as soldier-like, virile, self-disciplined, honest, patriotic, and straight-talking. Different from this was Abraham Lincoln. With eloquence he stayed true to his roots as a plain man of the people, to lend Emerson’s words. Kazin argues that the bond between the social movements and the governing elites started with Jefferson in the 1790s. “This symbiosis was intrinsic to the political process,” Kazin explained in 1995, and elaborated:

Without strong movements to arouse and mobilize at the grassroots, elite reformers stood naked before their stand-pat adversaries. Yet, without the aid of insiders able to speak to a national constituency and work the levers of government, movements withered away or became impotent, bitter shells. Legitimacy of this sort carries a price, of course. Movements usually have to shear off their radical edges and demonstrate that, if necessary, they can march to the rhetorical beat of an influential set of allies.

The historian Charles Postel wrote in 2007 a book on what he called the Populist revolt. He defined the Populists as farmers, wage-earners, and middle-class activists. Christopher Lasch studied at Columbia University in the 1950s, history was his subject, and he looked up to Richard Hofstadter. Even so, Lasch came to a bit different conclusion concerning populism. As explained by Postel:

The marriage of market and science, in his view, had spawned a consumer society of insecurity and malaise. Modernity had stripped people of control of their work and families. This reality, he believed, put in question the entire Enlightenment project, a project that after three hundred years of promises had decidedly failed to deliver peace, equality, and human solidarity….The Populists (in the nineteenth century) defined the progressive imperatives of modernity, according to Lasch, and pointed to a future that would steer clear of both the market and the welfare state.

Postel is very clear when he says that the term modern is not a value judgment. But like Kazin he describes the Populist movement as an impulse. The Populists used old poets and politicians in their speeches as references to their political philosophy. Some of these were Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln, and they linked reform to progress. Postel sees the Populists as a movement and in the shape of a coalition more than a party. The People’s party came together with alliances both from farmers, labor unions, women’s organizations, and groups for racial equality.

But it was not only the regular groups that supported the Populists, and this creates a more visible path into the future where Senator Sanders created his coalition of supporters in
Vermont. Some of the supporters were, as Postel sums up, “urban radicals, tax and currency reformers, middle-class utopians, spiritual innovators, and miscellaneous iconoclasts.” This group of different people from different backgrounds formed a very strange and unordinary coalition. Just like the one in Vermont, it also spread its wings across different groupings and evoked support from groupings where one would not expect followers. Some in the coalition were nonpartisan and even antiparty. These sentiments meant that they agreed in terms of ideology, but did not believe in the creation of a third party. Therefore they voted along the traditional party lines, according to Postel. Another consequence of these sentiments were that the Farmers’ Alliance as it was to be known, did not have the privilege to work with well-known and trained political campaigners. There was a quite different situation than Congressman Sanders was so fortunate to have, since he was helped in his senatorial campaign in 2006 by Senator Barack Obama. Postal admits in his analysis that it is risky to write about the coherence of Populism, since it spans over this large and diverse group. But he explains:

Our understanding of Populism, however, has also been fragmented by limitations of the analytical approach. Scholars have invested considerable effort in distilling the regional essence of the Populist movement. John Hicks located the center of populism among wheat farmers of the upper Midwest, downplayed the southern movement and its festering racial politics, and reduced the movement in the Far West to the influence of silver mining interest. C., Vann Woodward placed the vortex of Populism in the Cotton Belt, with its southern “rebel yell”. Lawrence Goodwyn argued that authentic Populism rested on the cooperative experience of the western Populism supposedly produced only an insidious “shadow movement” barren of authentic movement culture.

“This geographical analysis,” argues Postel, “breaks down upon closer examination.” Consequently, the fact that the Populist movement was quite strong in a broad geographical area has been missed, Postel points out, and explains the need for his work on the basis of the lack of a thorough examination of the Populism “with a wider, more inclusive lens.” Postel did not focus on particular distinctions within the movement, like race, gender, class, or regional differences in his work. Not because those did not occur, but because, as explained before, it made certain facts slip away, and it undermined the broadness of the coalition.

The same can be said about the analysis of the Progressives of today. Any attempt to analyze small third-party groups in the United States can be pinned down to be seen as special small, and iconoclastic movements or groups of special interests for specific ethnic, or socioeconomic groups.

But when doing a more thorough analysis of them, one detects that they have supporters from a much broader constituency and not merely one small town, or a regional state. In the case of Senator Sanders, Vermont might not be the only place where he has
gathered support. The many analyses of a third-party movement have focused on the existence of the movements and have often called them small groupings from small regions scattered across the large country. But if one reads Postel and Kazin, it looks as if the movements have existed across a large geographical part of the United States, and the problem of the movements lies within the lack of a trained organization, not actually the very existence of a coalition. Senator Sanders has had a position where he has been able to put pressure on the establishments. The Progressives of today think that the problem lies in other areas, for instance, within the undemocratic unions and the need for an organized Progressive movement. There might be political and economic reasons behind the use of these special interests groups. To belong to certain groups can be useful in case of need of economic support.

Some of the main issues that divide the Populists and later on the Progressives from the Republican Party, and to some degree the Democratic Party were, and still are, the degree of expansion and control the government should have over the United States’ economy, and ownership of public facilities, and infrastructure.\textsuperscript{363} The social scientist Elisabeth Sanders noted in 1999 that this interventionist state appeared to stand in a sharp contrast to the forces against bureaucracy in the American society. Postel remarked that this argument rested upon two assumptions:

\begin{quote}
All farmers were by nature, adverse to centralized and remote institutions. In reality, the large-scale business organizations farmers built in the 1880s and 1890s pointed in the parallel direction of centralized and remote government institutions. The second assumption is that social protest movements, again by their inherent nature, were hostile to bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{364}
\end{quote}

The lack of logic and the focus on the inherent nature of the movement simply do not hold as an argument, Postel concludes.
An Ideological Discussion on How Sanders Uses the Term Socialism

I Met a Beaten Broken Man
He Shovels Dirt But Go No Land
And He Held Out His Hand to Me
All God's Children Ain't Free
Johnny Cash

Sanders In Light of Lipset and Marks

One way to categorize the different liberal/political traditions in the US is by splitting them into five different movements or groups: the Socialist Party, the Populists, the Progressives, the Free Speech Movement/Civil Rights Movements, and the Liberal Media. The People’s Party was part of the Populists, The Sanders Coalition in Vermont was part of the Progressives, Freedom Summer, and Tom Hayden and The New Left were part of the Free Speech Movement of the sixties, and the range of blogs, and small TV and radio stations like Blue Grass Radio are part of today’s Progressive movement. These five movements have not been arranged in time, they appeared in different ages, and they consisted of both organized and voluntary workers and supporters. But what they had in common was an ideology that fought for the Common Man, the average Joe. They all used aspects of populism as their tool to express their agenda.

It is useful to start with Thomas Jefferson and the Revolutionary era. This is what Lipset and Marks does in their work on the attempt to import or create a socialistic society in the United States. They gave three men the first roles to play in the tragedy if a tragedy it is. The roles were played by Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln. They all played a part in different eras: Jefferson in the Revolutionary era, Jackson in what they call “the Age of the Common Man,” and Lincoln during the Civil War.\(^{365}\)

Each of these was a reformist coalition that was prepared to operate within one of the major parties, rather than as a separate party, and was consequently rewarded by winning one or more state-level primaries.\(^{366}\)

The reformist coalitions that Lipset and Marks talked about here were the Nonpartisan League, the Farmer Labor League in Oklahoma and End of Poverty in California (EPIC). A typical argument against a third party’s success in American elections has been the two-party system. As has been discussed earlier the two-party system can create an environment where the voter is scared of wasting his or her vote on a candidate that never succeeds in becoming
the winner of the election. This “winner take all” argument has been used by both parties in campaigns where the two larger parties argue that it would be a shame if the vote went to the competitor instead of the “lesser of two evils.” This persuasive strategy gives the voter a feeling that he by voting for the third party candidates actually spoils the election. So, the third-party candidate can have the role as the spoiler, and so can the voter.

But, Lipset and Marks discuss another element in the election process that actually opens up for a third-party candidate, if she or he takes advantages of the same two-party system. Edward Keating from the North Dakota Nonpartisan League said that the primary opened up the opportunity to “renovate one or both of the old parties … by the simple expedient of taking advantage of the primary.” The Nonpartisan League established itself within the Republican Party in North Dakota, but created a platform closely following “the rural-oriented planks of the state Socialist party.” This is an expression taken from Robert H. Bahmer and used again by Lipset and Marks. So actually within the Republican Party from 1916 until the 1930s the North Dakota Socialist party operated within the “enemy lines”, to use the expression by Lipset and Marks. This is what Sanders did as well when he operated within the Progressive Coalition in Congress, and this is also how he could perhaps create the Sanders Administration as Mayor in Burlington.

Soifer argues that Sanders has helped to create a new model for today’s progressives and their way of organizing grass-roots movements. He argues that Sanders has “helped forge a ‘new’ model for today’s progressives and leftist politicians. Fiscally conservative in some respects, Sanders presents an economically liberal (and even radical in some respects) program and a very progressive social agenda.” Soifer states further more that if a viable Socialist Party would exist in the U.S. still, Sanders would have been part of it. Soifer puts him among Hillquit and Berger, and not Eugene Debs, because Sanders believes in elections, in coalitions, in compromises, and in what his critics call “sewer socialism.” But in a radio interview Sanders mentions the educational effect of elections, so he has not fallen too far from the tree of Eugene Debs’ syndicalist/left wing tradition, as Soifers calls the Debs/Hayward tradition.

The NPL tactic spread to Idaho and Minnesota in 1918, then as a new party called the Farmer-Labor party and as Lipset and Marks write, it “elected twenty-four state representatives and eight state senators.” The tactic was simple: They ran in the primary within the Republican party, only to throw away the mask, and run for the General election in their own clothing, namely on the Farmer-Labor ticket. Then, when large enough, they “conquered congress” by running in 1922 as third-party Farmer-Labor candidate. The system of democratic elections opened up for this tactic, so when the Socialist Party by
Eugene Debs in the early 1900s was uninterested in building a radical voice for the people on the local level, this might in Lipset and Marks opinion, have been a step away from creating an opening into the otherwise locked two-party system. As they explain, the Socialist party saw this only as a ladder for individual politicians to get a hold on office seats and thereby abandon the “revolutionary positions of the Socialist party.”

So, in reality the strong hold of the principles and negative stand against bipartisanship within the socialist party actually according to Lipset and Marks observations did lead ultimately to a weakened and isolated movement.

[Morris] Hillquit and other socialists did not understand that the logic of the American Electoral system is fundamentally similar to a two-ballot system. Party factions, which in a two-ballot system would be separate parties, can contest primaries, and then coalesce with other factions in the subsequent general election, or run independently as a third candidates. It is interesting to note in this connection that Friedrich Engels, writing in 1895, identifies the second-ballot system as an advantage for a socialist third party, since voters were not so concerned on the first ballot with the possibility of wasting their vote on a candidate who could not win.

Lipset and Marks elaborate on the issue by adding that “Socialists tended to see politics in terms of absolute right and wrong, and it was difficult for them to envisage a strategy that involved institutionalized coalitions with non-Socialists.”

If one accepts this claim as a waterproof observation, it serves as an illustration of the need for a populist approach in radical politics. It seems as if the more bi-partisan the politician becomes, the stronger he or she supports compromise, the more eligible the politician ends up being. So, is populism and bipartisanship the answer for the radical left in the United States? It is reasonable to assume that this is the case for Senator Sanders and his success in winning the elections. It is hard to disagree with Lipset and Marks when they produce examples of “the sectarian character of the Socialist party.”

What is meant by the sectarian character can be best explained by taking a closer look at the dogmatic regime of the old Socialist Party in the United States. The traditions in Europe are, and have been more open for collaboration and compromises between the ruling classes, the industrial leaders or the upper-class, and the working class and the unionized part of the public. Lipset and Marks make a central point out of this in their book on why socialism failed in the United States. “In the United States, alone among the English-speaking democracies, the major working-class-oriented party operated in isolation from the mainstream of the union movement,” they state. Hence, the organization of a mass party was difficult to achieve, because of the instability and organizational weaknesses of the movement. This indicates a reason for the lack of a strong movement, combined with the other explanations, like 1) the labor force was undermined by other ethnic groupings in the
society like ethnic, racial and religious identity, 2) socialism was seen as something foreign and imported by immigrants, this led to the rejection of socialism among the strong group of potential collaborators, the immigrants. They wanted to become American; and refused to be associated with the un-American socialism. A strong group of the union members were Catholics, and they rejected socialism as well. Thus the regular class line more common in Europe at the time between white collar workers and blue collar workers did not exist as clearly in the United States, according to parts of research in the field of political history in the United States.384

What might be different today is the educational division, between the relatively new groups of so called working poor in the United States, the pink-collar group. They often work several part-time jobs, and they live in mobile homes or trailer parks. They have lacked health insurance, and they have no hope of sending their children to the universities to provide for a good education. A large number of these workers are immigrants as well, some of them illegal. The question would then be, could these workers again rise and together with the unions form a new Progressive, social-democratic movement? Or would it again be impossible because of their need to integrate into the American Creed, the essence of what it means to become American? The broadest reaching nation-building tool might be ideology and as long as socialism is seen as something foreign in the United States, it might be difficult to organize these groups. This might be one of the answers to why few speak up against poverty in the United States. It may be somewhat daring to suggest an easy explanation like this, the picture is complex, and there are several unknown variables, but part of one explanation might lay here.

Again Sanders, as a Senator, as a Congressman, and as a mayor, was protected by these variables. How was that? He was the son of immigrants, and a Jew but still he was bold enough to call himself a socialist. Was it the era? The sixties were open to radical movements and ideas. This probably had an effect on some people. Regarding the situation before World War I Lipset and Marks comments: “The strength or weakness of party organization mattered more in the pre-World War I period than it does in the contemporary era of mass media and direct advertising.” For the American Socialist party to encroach, it needed to cooperate with the labor unions.385 The labor unions were relatively important community builders in this era, they consisted of close-knit groupings, and they shared norms and formed small occupational communities, in addition to the strong financial organization, with their membership dues, that ensured their members economically.386 They developed solidarity. As the historian David Brody writes in *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle*:
“The union influence did not end at the gates…. Turn-of-the-century union journals are filled with local accounts of baseball leagues, picnics, balls, lectures, and funerals.” David Brody writes that unions were the “major force” in some towns in this period. His summary of the period before April 1917 is as follows:

So, the nation edged closer to war, this was the sum of labor’s collective development. The trade-union movement was strongly rooted, but narrowly confined, in principle encompassing the entire labor force, in fact incapable of reaching the mass of industrial workers. The Socialists had consolidated their political position (notwithstanding a poor showing at the 1916 elections) and retained their hold on a large part of the labor movement, but without substantially affecting its trade-union orientation. The IWW, a bitter and unyielding enemy of the AFL, was building its native-rooted syndicalism into what may best be described as the trade unionism of the dispossessed. No one can know the future these labor developments might have found in the normal course of events. For war arrived in April 1917 and decided labor’s future.

Lipset and Marks comment on the function of political parties, and they mention three functions: first the party operates as a “means of information about the issues of the day,” second “their meetings and newspapers connect supporters and potential supporters to the polity,” and third it has an instrumental role “in getting their supporters to the polls.” The role of the party was not all about the political issues of the day then. It had a socializing role as well and an educational role. Lipset and Marks explain it like this: “Socialist parties … were part of a working-class community, based in pubs, libraries, political meetings, and social organizations of almost every kind.” What did this have to say for the strength of the Socialist party in the United States? When the labor unions took over the social part of the role that the Socialist party could have played in the U.S., something else may have weakened as well, namely class consciousness, argue Lipset and Marks.

The absence of strong union-party links in the United States not only hurt the American Socialist party directly, it also arguably weakened class consciousness … class unions … adjusted their organizations to the particularities of labor markets and preexisting cultural loyalties and pre-justices, including above all the divide between native and immigrant workers.

In Milwaukee, Victor Berger was a prominent figure in the Milwaukee socialist movement. Jews from Eastern Europe became important in this movement. This way of implementing socialism was being critized by the more dogmatic socialists, as Lipset and Marks clarify: “Socialist practice in Milwaukee, denigrated by left-wing intellectuals as municipal socialism, or ‘sewer socialism,’ was concerned above all with showing that socialists could run as efficient and honest city government while aiding unions and the underprivileged.” An interesting example of this was the free medical care they organized, and their fight against reckless banks and big corporations stands as a reminder of the work Sanders has done in Burlington, Congress, and the Senate.
One of the questions raised by Lipset and Marks is the following: “Could the Socialists have helped to create a more encompassing union movement based on industrial unions if they had been more tolerant of the revolutionary faction?” Lipset and Marks group the American Socialist party behind three important figures, Eugene Debs, Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger. Within the Socialist party these three represented three factions, the leftist’s section by Debs, the centrist syndicate by Hillquit, and the rightist bloc by Berger. These factions were a result of what Lipset and Marks see as the party’s propensity to sectarianism.

In one corner of the house they had inherited from the Populists, the anarcho-syndicalists and Marxists made their bed, and in the other part of the house the reform-friendly rightist bloc made theirs. The important distinction here is how the Socialist party existed in America, how it was “view[ed] as in, but not of, America,” as Lipset and Marks put it. The un-patriotic flavor to the party made it disliked and distrusted. According to Lipset and Marks, it is undoubtedly true that “the pre-World War I Socialist party compromised with the racist and nativist sentiments prevalent among American workers.” Eugene Debs disagreed with this line and was a proponent for a different strategy, a more egalitarian society both racially and ethnically. So what you can find in the U.S. in the beginning of the nineteenth century is a hierarchically built society where for the American Socialists class struggle was the main goal and superior to the religious and racial equality struggles.

A question not asked so often is why should there be a socialistic party in the United States? Why is it needed? Lipset and Marks focus on this, and use the works of David R. Cameron, Geoffrey Garrett, and others when they state that “societies in which social democratic parties have consistently played a role in national government and in which unions are strongly organized tend to have extensive welfare systems and greater economic equality.” Repression has been more intense in times of war,” writes Lipset and Marks. Since, even if social radicalism was seen as extremist, undemocratic, and even un-American, the politics in the united States in the 1930s “led to a kind of Europeanization” of the political sphere. Is this happening again today? Is the Progressive movement and Bernard Sanders the evidence of this?

The political landscape that surrounded Sanders was softer in its edges than the harder, rougher environment of the “Freedom Summer”. The latter was more radical. Still Sanders had first-hand experience of inequality and poverty and had clearly developed class-consciousness early in his life. The enemy was “the redneck farmer, Southern sheriff, and Dixicrat politician.” The corruption that was discovered by the volunteers in 1964 lowered
their confidence in nearly all “branches and agencies of government.” A large number of the participants of “Freedom Summer” reported that their opinion of federal officers had been lowered because of experience. The paradox that this could enlighten, is a paradox well known to the analysts of political power, or writers of history. The first one of these branches is where the citizen is free of poverty and society has a strong and developed social security system, so that a single citizen should be released from any fear of losing his or her welfare system. These ideas provide some of the foundations from which the concept of social-democratic welfare is developed. The other branch is grown out of distrust in government, and a fear of a strong, centralized federal government that controls the citizen and uses every opportunity to take away his or her freedom.

The radical left side in politics often strongly opposes a strong government. It can be analyzed as in a way an anti-strong state stand. The idea of liberty, one might say, is closely connected with a freedom stand, where the citizen is liberated of the chains of the state and freedom is discovered. On the far left side of politics this is a popular stand. It is connected to the idea of anarchism. They hold the opinion that a society is not dependent on a strong welfare system governed by a strong federal state. Neither are they dependent on a strong party structure that controls and upholds society based on ideology. They are in-dependent.

One might say that this paradox can be personified in Senator Bernard Sanders’ politics. He is an independent politician, on the left side of politics, not affiliated with any party, and still he has taken a strong position in U.S. political federal government structure. This leaves Sanders in the moderate stand.

As a senator in U.S. politics, he represents not a third-party, but one might argue that he represents a third way. As the old system of senators in Ancient Rome he represents a group of citizens not connected with any party (in this regard neither Democrats nor Republicans), and can be said to represent the People in a purer meaning of the word democratic. This pure democracy, or direct democracy, is at least what his supporters are giving him credit for. To try to explain this, one could imagine a garden where two different plants grow. One plant has the ability to grow all on its own; the other one is in need of external care and nourishment. There is a gardener in the house, and he gardens them both, also the one not in need of this. Imagine that the gardener is the federal state. The plant capable of looking after its own being miss-develop because of maltreatment. The other plant grows more than normal. But both plants survive but not in the best way. Should the plants be treated differently in regard of their different attributes or should they be treated equally for the sake of the garden as a whole? This question is a basic question for a politician in his
everyday work. Senator Sanders has existed as an anomaly as he has lingered between independence from strong state control, but still within the federal government.

The way from extreme right-wing libertarianism and extreme left-wing anarchism is divided only by a little pond, easily crossed by a tiny wooden boat. If one bends the line between left and right, the extremists will meet on the back and they resemble each other. The connection from this picture to Sanders is the following: Because he has gained support from a great and broad spectrum of citizens in the state of Vermont, one might argue that a way of achieving this has been not only because of this iconic character of his, but because he has made an impact on the need that perhaps every human being feels now and, then, the need to be free. Sanders is not a typical socialist in the European sense of the word. He is an American socialist. He can be interpreted as the free and independent cowboy discovering the corrupt sheriff in town. Just like the hyphenated American is firstly American then Italian, Senator Sanders is an independent senator before he is a social-democratic senator. This might have given him just the advantage he needed to be elected Senator. So Sanders has been swimming in this little pond back and forward to compromise with politicians at the Board of Aldermen in Vermont, and now in the Senate. His critics have been putting a label on this, he has been labelled a sell-out. He has been criticized for selling Vermont “by the pound”, and in that regard not being a true leftist in politics.405

It has never been a good trait to be able to change your cape to the wind, or being caught in bed with the wrong people. These traitor traits have been looked upon as the most scandalous behaviour in politics. Sanders has been charged with these “felonies,” every single one of them. Right or wrong, his pragmatism stands strong as he has always been a strong believer in the idea that what is good for the larger part of the society is good for the nation as a whole.

A large part of the class-struggle circles around the term materialism. To climb the social ladder was done by elevating one’s standard of living. The class journey was strongly connected to capital and better ways of living. The strong paradox then comes with these facts. To be a struggling socialist wanting a better future for the poor, the elderly, and the working-class could be seen as a totally legitimate struggle to uphold the capitalistic system. So is Sanders a typical American capitalist? In a biographical work it is not useful to answer it, but it leads to a larger question that might be discussed, and that question is, are socialism and capitalism two variants of the same plant, and is it about time to plant a new one in the Green Mountain State?
Summary

In 1969 Christopher Lash wrote about the collapse of the American Left. A question to be raised is whether the movements of the sixties collapsed or really just became co-opted in the mainstream culture in America. Tom Hayden argues that these idealistic movements exist continuously in society, either as a social movement underground or as a co-opted movement used by Machiavellians.

According to McClasky and Zaller and their analysis from 1984 Sanders is a liberal because he wants reform and does not defend the status quo. The liberals in the United States are represented by the Democratic Party. Sanders wants to form an alternative to the Democratic Party. It is not satisfying to call him liberal, nor would Sanders call himself this, according to Fiermonte.

He is not a liberal. Sanders would say that liberals are from wealthy families. Liberals forget the class issue. The class issue is the fundamental issue for Sanders. So he sees himself as a social-democrat and a socialist, not a liberal.

The strong allegiance to the class-concept, and his views on the liberals as part of an economic elite places him rather easy within the socialist term. But things are not that easy. He is not quite the typical socialist either. He has knitted close connections to the farmers of Vermont, and also with wealthy citizens. How does this combine with his view on a wealthy liberal upper-class?

Is he a lonely Senator then? Or is he a mark of a shift to the left in U.S. politics? In 2008 Peter Freyne wrote the following: “I think we may be at a point, what is called a transformational point, in American history where the people of this country in large numbers really, really, really want to move America in a very different direction. This may be the moment.”

This comment divides itself from the notion that a radical culture in America only evolves among the young and then is eaten up, and dies out as the youth grow into adults. According to Sanders’s longtime campaign manager as well, this is true. “The folks that voted on Sanders,” he said in an interview, “were not only young people who had recently moved to Burlington, they were elderly and mainly working people." This might show that underlying the surface of the American history, and under the retelling of the history of radicalism in the U.S. there dwells another story, a story that has links to the phenomena of American Exceptionalism. Godfrey Hodgson points out one period in
American history as a period rightly called exceptional, the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War. He extracts specifically four tendencies as particularly extraordinary with the American society at this time: “voting, the ownership of land, and educational and economic opportunity were far more widely available than in even the most successful European societies.”

About the events in 1989 Hodgson writes the following:

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union constituted not just a culminating political and ideological victory. It felt too many Americans like final confirmations of American Exceptionalism. Now the United States was ‘the lone superpower’.

Bernard Sanders has used these opportunities to his advantage, and involved the local community in politics. He belongs to the World War II Generation. He belongs to the group of radicals along with Michael Harrington, and Barbara Ehrenreich, but his approach is modern. He makes use of today’s digital media, and connects with the younger voters by the social medias like Facebook, and the Internet, and documentaries. Sanders plays all four roles of an third-party candidate, and he uses bi-partisan methods. His communication tool is populism, a concept according to Lipset incorporated into the American Creed.

Bernard Sanders is perhaps what you could call the All-American man; still he is an anomaly, an iconoclast in American politics. He speaks in a language everyone can understand, and he speaks quickly, and sharply. This way of representing himself as the guy in the street has been of help for him throughout his career as a politician. Sanders story may be called a story of the American Dream. The individualistic idea has been combined with a social-democratic feeling of sharing the burden with your fellow American. By combining the Lone- Ranger Cowboy myth with the local socialistic politician icon, he has created in many ways a new kind of politician. By representing Vermonters as independent Sanders pulled the political centre in U.S. politics to the left. Has Sanders won the seat by his great charisma, or by being a socialist? He did connect to a working-class in the United States, and he used the ability to establish a large grass-root movement. He uses the communicative tool of populism both in his speeches, and by his methods to evoke (or provoke) feelings among his voters. Sanders walks in Michael Harrington’s footsteps, he walks in the footsteps of the Populists as well. Soifer concluded his analysis by saying that:

If there were still a viable Socialist Party today, Bernard Sanders probably would belong to it. Given how strongly Sanders identify with Debs, it is ironic that he falls within the moderate/ right-wing tendency (that is the Hillquit/Berger tradition) of the Old Socialist Party rather than the syndicalist/ left-wing tendency (that is, the Debs-Hayward tradition).

If Fiermonte is right Sanders has built a strong coalition in Vermont not only consisting of young voters but of a working-class as well likewise to what he did in 1981, and
1983 according to Rice. Sanders uses a tool of communication accepted by the American people, namely populism. This enables him to brand his “Sanders Socialism,” according to Jupskås typology this can be seen as one of Populism’s many faces, “socialist populism.” He has created a new memory of the old legacy, and instead of becoming the rich, proud and privileged Socialist Senator it may seem as if he is battling to become a lower-class warrior of the Common Man. Sanders has combined socialism, populism and individualism and created “Sanders Socialism,” without confronting the American nation-building project. Instead he has branded “Individualist-Socialism” a new and strange bird in the corridors of the Capitol. Someone may have started walking to a different heartbeat and Harrington may have found his Dickens.

Appendix

**Interview with Phil Fiermonte, Outreach Director for Senator Bernard Sanders 15.10.09**

Phillip Fiermonte is Outreach Director in the Office of U.S. Senator Bernard Sanders. Fiermonte started as a voluntary community organizer in the 1981 election. In that election Sanders won a 10% victory. This is when the relationship between Mr. Fiermonte and Sanders started, and after that they worked together on the election campaign in 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2006.

Mr. Fiermonte worked on the pay roll for Sanders from 1993, and in 2006 he was the political director of his senatorial campaign. In 2006 Sanders ran against a very wealthy opponent. Mr. Tarrant. Tarrant was a millionaire. On the phone with him on October 15 2009, starting at 10:30 AM he was asked about Sanders and the Senate election in 2006. This is an edited transcript of the conversation:
2 How was the campaign organized?
Sanders ran against the wealthiest opponent in 2006. The opponent was Republican Richard Tarrant. The election campaign started two years in advance. Mr. Tarrant was one of the wealthiest. He used millions of dollars on the campaign which started two years in advance. Sanders has always understood grass-roots organization, and they have worked as a team. In the campaign we knocked on 76, nearly 85 doors. We had help from many young people, who canvassed in neighborhoods. They made up a group of 15-20 young people. The issues we talked about in the field were taken from polls. We used instant polls each day to find out what interested the citizens. This election was different because we had for the first time coordinated the campaign with the Democratic Party. He was nominated as a Democrat, but refused to run for them. Instead, he decided to run as an independent. The interesting thing then happened in 2006. The Democrats became the Third Party, and the spoiler. Sanders ran for office in the Congress in 1988. He then ran in a three-way race. This year became a turning point for him because after this election he was not a spoiler any longer.
3 Were there special groups that you wanted to reach? (Answered in question 13)
4 Did you have any slogan, like: “Yes, We Can”? 
The slogan for the campaign was “Bernie for Senate, experience that money just can’t buy!”
The thought behind this slogan was simple. We wanted to say that Sanders was not a sell-out. Tarrant did not have his resident status in Vermont; it was New Jersey.
5 What role did the Democratic Party play in his campaign? I have seen that Obama worked for him in 2006? Obama agreed to campaign for Sanders. This was a weekday. We had rented the Ira Allen Chapel. Ira Allen was a revolutionary and one of the Green Mountain Boys in the Revolution in 1790’s. The chapel has 900 seats. 3000 people came. We had to arrange it with a megaphone at a rally outside because of the crowd. This was the first time the magnitude of the popularity around Obama showed for many of us. Yes, I think that it is fruitful to speak of the effect that Sanders has had on Obama. Vermont has for a long time now been fundamentally different, more progressive. And in the country as a whole the ground has moved to the left. You must remember that Vermont is not a very progressive state, earlier it was a very Republican state; it was the only state who voted against Roosevelt. It consisted then of a group of native Vermonters.
6 Why did he run as an Independent?
Sanders ran as an independent because he did not want to be a part of the Democratic Party. He stated up as part of the Liberty Union, but decided to run for an Independent candidature.
Sanders felt that the Democratic Party was run by, to a far extent, mainly by Big Money interests.

7 How did he do it?
That is an amazing story! It is a combination of persistence and determination. He ran as candidate in 1972 for the Liberty Union. He got 2% of the votes. But he did not give in. He continued the grassroots meetings. 6-700 people came. He had a unilateral focus as well. Sen. Sanders is a good orator and a great communicator as well. He has a strong belief that the system should do better. The poverty in America is overwhelming, and the senator wants a real change for the working people. In 1981 he got 10% of the votes, so he focused on his work, because he had a strong belief in the people. He thinks that one should keep taxes down for working people. So after 8 years, there was a revolution in Vermont. As a mayor in Burlington he wanted to show that government can be positive factor in a society. This was a period when United States was governed by Ronald Reagan. The undercurrent of his politics was that government represented something bad. Senator Sanders wants to reach out to the youth of America. Indeed, the rest of the country might have a good deal of lessons learned by Sanders. His views on corporate founding and free trade have slowly been co-opted society as a whole. Sanders is no sell-out. His view today is the same as 30 years ago. Media is controlled by Fox News and Rush Limbaugh. You can speak of corporate media. There is a need for progressive media in the States. Vermont is a white state, and it is quite homogeneous by nature. This has made it easy for Sanders to win his voters. But Sanders has by no means become a sell-out, he might have mellowed but he works on the same themes as he did in 1981. Another reason for his success might have been that he is fighting for working people. Senator Sanders is no fake, no bullshit. He is not like John Edwards who admitted a sexual affair with a campaign employee.

8 When Sanders define himself as being a social democrat what does he mean by that?
He is not a liberal. Sanders would say that liberals are from wealthy families. Liberals forget the class issue. The class issue is the fundamental issue for Sanders. So he sees himself as a social-democrat and a socialist, not a liberal.

9 How was the campaign founded?
There is a rule in the United States. that there is a limit at $10,000 that self founders can give. Individuals can give this amount, then political action groups can give $48,000, and other contributors’ can give $24,000. But there are always loopholes in this system, and the millionaire got $5 million dollars from friends. Sanders was founded by Labor Unions and Human Rights organizations. So instead of getting a lot of money from a small group of
people, Sanders got a lot of people to give small amounts of money. The working-class people managed to collect $75 each but total in was a whole lot more. Obama used a similar concept in his campaign, yes.

10 **How many worked for his campaign?**

Around a number of 30 people worked for Senator Sanders.

11 **Did any celebrities, musicians, writers or documentary film makers help him in any way?**

The filmmaker Michael Moore has helped Sanders in his campaigning. Sanders has appeared in many of his movies. Latest he was interviewed in the newest move by Moore, “Capitalism: A love story.” Sanders explained to Moore that the more he used the word a socialist about himself the better he did. According to the poll made by the Rasmussen group one of five Americans finds socialism superior to capitalism. Another well-known person in American media is Ted from Ted/Divine. He made TV-ads for Sanders. Ted is a democratic media guy.

12 **What was Sanders stand on small government and regulations coming from Washington contrary to local government in Burlington?**

Sanders has his home in Burlington. He works in Washington, he does not live there. He is very engaged in State government in the States. But he has strong views concerning Federal government as well, like environmental protection. His view is that Washington should not dictate the states. In the current debate over health care he is totally committed to the state of Vermont. He supports a single-payer option.

13 **Can you describe the typical Sanders voter according to the variables: age, gender, religious stand, social class, income, education?**

The Sanders coalition consisted of Senior citizens, progressives, Worker Unions, and Veterans. The Veterans made up a strong and large constituency, by arranging the night for Veterans. The Firefighters was another group, Sportsmen like hunters and fishers. Sanders took up a lot of wildlife issues in his campaign so they supported him. The NRA spoke of taking the guns away from hunters. Sanders stood on the hunters’ side in this issue. Another group supporting Sanders was the young people. There are a lot of High Schools in Vermont, and we have a university as well. The political illiteracy is low in Vermont. Sanders has always seen it as important to engage the young people in dialogue. He has done this on college campus and one important issue has been on health care. Many of our volunteer workers for the campaign were just graduated out of College.

But there is a myth about the Sanders coalition, and that is that it consisted mainly of young people. This is not entirely correct. Out of six wards ward 2 and 3 consist of poor people. Here Sanders got 70-75% of the votes. So, the typical Sanders voter is from the
working class, or he or she is among intellectual progressives. Another type of Sanders voter is a farmer in the large dairy industry of Vermont. He or she is maybe an environmentalist or among the senior citizens, but she or he is not found only among young people.

**Interview with Bernard Sanders by Irwin Mole in 1990:**
Second opinion The progressive 1990 Irwin Mole, Editor Monthly magazine.
Irwin Mole: Todays guest: Bernie Sanders, former year independent socialist candidate.
Bernhard Sanders, welcome to Second opinion!

B. Sanders: Well, it’s a pleasure to be here.

IM Why are you ready for Congress?

BS Well as you mentioned, I was mayor of the City of Burlington for eight years. We won four terms there, and in fact in Burlington today, we have the only three-party system of any municipality in the United States of America. It’s very clear to me that the Democratic and Republican parties are incapable of representing the working people, the poor people or the elderly people. That the crisis of our time is that there is no real alternative movement in this country that impacts every aspects of our life. In Vermont we are probably leading the rest of the country in developing an alternative movement outside the democratic and republican party. I ran against congressman Peter Smith two years ago, he beat me with 3.5 % points, I got twice as many votes as the democrat did. This time with the polls show it’s a dead heat. It’s a very close election. Ah… we think we have a good chance to win and become the first independent progressive in the United States Congress, and begin to raise issues that the Democrats and the republicans don’t have the guts to go near with a ten foot pole so it’s an important election not only for Vermont but I think for the nation.

IM I want to ask you of course to go into these issues but…but…but let me ask you this first a ah if everything you say is true one still has to wonder what difference it will make in Congress to have one person there. There are 345 members of the House of Representatives…
BS Well, there are actually 435 ....(interrupting)

IM... 400...400

BS Well. It doesn’t make much difference.

IM here are 435 members So what difference will it make to have you there anyhow to have you there if you’re elected?

BS I think you know clearly one person doesn’t change the world, doesn’t change the entire United States congress. My election is not going to radically change Americans priorities over night. I think this is what it does then. I think doing this in Vermont in fact to some degree. The basic criticism that I have of the system is not that they are not solving the enormous problems facing this country but that is difficult problems and you can’t criticize these people for not solving them over night. The most serious problem is they don’t even have the guts to talk about the issues. So you look at the mass media, you look at television you look at radio you look at newspapers the reality is of American life, the pain of what is going on in this country, the insanity of what is going on in this country is not seriously debated. Then, you and I may have difference of opinion but if we bring forth our opinion we deal with the realities of American life at least the people out there listening and say Yes, well I agree with this guy, I don’t but the reason the people in this country no longer vote by the tens of millions is they listen to what goes on in congress and say Hey, these guys are not dealing with the reality of my life so what I can at least do is going down there and start raising the issues with as loud a voice as I possibly can. The issues that the Congress chooses not to deal with. And say hey! You know, you have to start talking about these issues, now, how much success we have had, I don’t know. But clearly to my mind, what has got to happened in this country and we are doing it in Vermont, but it has to happen in the other 49 states, we need an independent political movement outside the democratic and republican parties prepared to deal with the real issues that those parties don’t deal with.

IM There are many people who are saying in this election year that there is massive dissatisfaction by the public from the political system from the combats from the major political parties and do you feel that you are riding the crest of that kind of a protest?
BS Well first of all, I think what you said is correct. I think that fact is what the political scientist estimate is that 2/3 of the American people are not going to be voting in November 1990. As you know The United States has far and away the lowest voter turnout of any industrialized nation in the country…in the world. And that means, the manifestation of that is the poor people in this country no longer vote. You know that I mean everyone talks about black people in South Africa can’t vote but they don’t talk about is that in the United States of America, I would say that 95% of the poor people do not vote, a majority of working people do not vote. Ah.. so what we are talking about is a situation. You know it’s a funny kind of thing as you know Irwin, there are countries in the world where people use the political boycott as a tool to say Hey don’t give legitimacy to this election, we could not organize a boycott in this country right now because that boycott are already exist.

IM And has for some time…

BS And…and. increasingly exist and in a year, fewer and fewer people vote. Ah.. so to me what you are seeing and have already seen is a tremendous disgust and frustration with the political system and an understanding that the United States Congress does not represent working people, elderly people and poor people. They have already given up on the political system. Now, in Vermont for many years, we have been doing third party politics and as I mentioned in Burlington now we have a progressive city government. So I don’t think we are capitalizing on that right as much as others around this country because we have been there raising these issues. Yeah but to some degree I would say the disgust is higher that it has ever been, the tax breaks for the rich and rising tax for the middle class and the poor. The fiasco of the crooks and swindles destroying the savings and loan industry, ah.. and the fact that both political parties bear direct responsibility for that, the huge overspending in the military situation, the military budget. The collapse of the health care system, all of these things, all completely reinforces the message that many of us have been making in Vermont for many years. And that is that you have a handful of very wealthy people powerful economic forces in this country that control both the economic and political life in this nation both parties are tied to those corporations and that the rich are getting richer (comma) the poor are getting poorer because working people have literally no representation in congress. So the answer to your question, in general yes we are capitalizing on that.
IM Now the question occurs to me though that if you do succeed that if your elected isn’t the upshot of that going to be two years from now perhaps more alienation and disaffection as people realize that ok we got this guy into congress but nothing has changed!

BS But here is the point. You see we had that problem when I was mayor of Burlington now there are some people that are political naive who might think, Oh God, all we have to do is to let one person into the United States Congress…

IM Hi-hi

BS We let the homeless into decent housing, solve the health care crisis, obviously that is an naïve point of view, and in Vermont we make it very clear to the people of our own state that hey. My election is not going to radically change the world. What has to happened is that all over this country, in the Midwest, in the West, we have to sacrifice throwing out the members of congress that no longer represent ordinary people, by the dozens. Alright, most of the members of the United States Congress do not represent ordinary people but they represent big money interest. But with my election sure doesn’t change the world, but it might send a good message all over the rest of the country not to be so pessimistic. Not to believe that you can not take on the system that we are having one of the things that I am in a sense excited about is that we have forced the president of the United States to come to Vermont to campaign for my opponent. The republican national committee is releasing significant sums of money because my opponents are in trouble. They are getting very, very nervous, and if we can win this election it can be a signal to people all over this country that you don’t have to keep functioning within the two-party system. You don’t have to keep voting for the lesser of two evils. You can stand up and articulate the issues as you see them and say to people Hey, stop the crap lets talk about the real issues. Let’s develop an independent progressive movement in this country.

IM How…how realistic is it to expect that to happen. After all in Vermont you have been working at this for twenty years haven’t you?

BS Yes I have.

IM So…so, your campaign this year is a combination of two decades of political work.
BS That is correct.

IM Are you prepared to say to the people listening to us right now, I’ll start working right now so that in twenty years maybe you have a shot and a payoff?

BS Well, yes I am, but I, you know, I think the world is changing and I think it need not take twenty years in other states in other communities. What I am saying is that twenty years is better than nothing. What I am saying is that if we keep compromising our philosophical point of view. If we keep selling out our souls it never happens and by the way, change does not always mean getting elected. If you had a candidate running for governor or senator from Wisconsin or Illinois or Indiana or whatever state who stood up and articulated the right issues and was able to make the case for hundreds and thousands and millions of people and let’s say that candidate got 5% of the vote, that is not necessarily a losing effort. That means you are educating people and next year that person gets 20% or maybe he or she will not get that but educating people at a time when the media as you know limits serious political debate. Getting on the television, getting on the radio, and talking about real issues you don’t know. You never know what the impact of that discourse and effort is about. You know, I won four elections as mayor of Burlington I got a lot of national attention etc but people do not know, is that ten years before that I ran for the United States senate from the State of Vermont, and do you know what I got, I got 2% of the vote.

IM Mmmmm

BS You know I was a laughing stock. 2% ho-ho-ho. But I did not know that it was an effort in vain. We had a great impact in our state. SO what I am suggesting is that most important is that people who hold strong views, who understand that the basic priorities, the basic values system of this country is absolutely backwards, they've got to get up and they've got to articulate that view and talk to their brothers and their sisters. Ah. And whatever effort you make is a positive effort.

IM DO you think that effort must of necessity be mounted outside the major party framework?
BS We work in Vermont, one of the positive things we have done is unlike many other areas of the country where the left gets together is we have respected each others point of view. Now I have. My strong belief is that we have to build a third party in this country a progressive party. No, right now I am very proud that in Vermont many of the best Democrats in the state are supporting my candidacy, over their own candidate, I should point out. And we will work well with progressive Democrats. But the problem is, and I know the late Michael Harrington, the democratic socialist of America believes that the goal is to take over the Democratic Party. I don’t for this reason. To me ah, deep down in its deepest sense the Democratic Party of today is not a hell of a lot different ideologically than the Republican Party. And when you step foot in that party, what you are telling the people outside is, well, you know I am working with the Michael Dukasises, or the Loyd Bentsons or the other reactionaries in Congress, and these people say, why do I want to join that party. And second of all it rarely happens whatever you are doing to try to prevent it you become walking servant in the process. You’re in bed with some people who are not the nicest people in the world. And you become walking servant. And I think that what has got to happen is that to a stronger degree as possible we have got to articulate the ideas, what is really going on the best we can. And I think it is odd to do that within the Democratic Party so I prefer to be really honest with the people. This is where I stand, we are outside of the two party system if what we are saying makes sense to you, join us.

IM Aside from your congressional campaign and your continuing effort in Vermont are you involved in any way in any attempt to build a national third party movement or to build local third party movements outside your state?

BS No, I mean basically our energy and the reason why we have been successful is precisely because we have spent 99.9% of our time in our city and in our state. I think that what very often happens if you have some familiarity with how the progressive movement in this country works or left moves, 8 people will come together and they will form a political party or a new movement and that’s no fun and it goes no place. My strengths, I don’t believe in it, ok, what we have done is that we have concentrated in our own state in our own city raising the issues of relevance to our own people, and in my view to the way a national third party movement will develop is when the people in Indiana, the people in Illinois, the people in Wisconsin, the people of California do the same, talk sense to your own people. Talk about your own local issues, your own statewide issues, and when you have a movement of any
substance, let’s get the states together, but I think it’s jumping the gun to be talking about a national organization, when we almost have no local organizations at all around the country.

IM For those of you who cued in late I am Irwin Mole and the program is second opinion and my guest is Bernie Sanders, the independent socialist candidate for Vermont’s one and only seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Alright we have made several references earlier in the program to issues, but we haven’t really spelled them out. Why don’t you briefly outline what you think are the essential goals for your program for the United States?

BS I am delighted to do that Irwin. I think the first point I have already touched on what is must be understood is that we are losing the structure of Democracy in this country; witch is ultimately the most important issue facing the country. November 1990 2/3 of the American people do not participate in the political process; they have discussed it they have given up. 1988: 99% of incoming Congress members won re-election. What you are talking then about are a government which is self-perpetuating, can do anything it wants, and basically can't be thrown out of office and most people refuse to participate in the process. That in fact is the most important issue. How do you revitalize democracy? How do you bring working people and poor people back into the process? That is the first and most important thing that has to be done. Second of all very important issue to the people back in Vermont I think nationally is the crisis in health care. As you know the United States is one of two industrialized nations in the entire world that does not have in one form or another a national health care system which guarantee health care to all people. In my state around the country the cost of healthcare escalates rapidly, elderly have to pauperize themselves before they can get in to a nursing home, elderly people, all people can not afford prescription drugs. We need a national health care system guarantee to all people. Thirdly in terms of the economical situation in this country it’s not talked about too often in Congress but I am sure you are and your listeners are familiar with, the gap between the rich and the poor in this country is growing significantly wider. You have a situation where within the last decade the richest 1% of our population has seen a doubling in their real - inflation is counted for - income. Rich people have become twice as rich, middle class and the poor are getting poorer. What we are seeing is not only the clan and the middle class in general but for working people in general, but because of the industrialization of this nation what you are seeing is where 30 years ago, workers had decent jobs in manufacturing plants, they were not getting rich but they earned an income, they had benefits. What we are seeing now is that their kids are working in the MacDonald’s, or the
Burger Kings in the service industry jobs for five or six bucks an hour rather than for 15 bucks an hour.

IM What would you do about that?

BS Well, that an complicated answer, no simple answer, but I think clearly what we need is an new industrial policy in this country, in which the government says that the General Electrics, the General Motors, the other multi-national corporations a couple of things. Number one the days that have given you huge tax breaks, and then you pick up and leave this country and go to the third world where you employ slave labor is over, you have to stay in this country, retool on an environmentally sound way with the goal of producing products that are needed and you are paying workers a decent wage. There is an enormous amount of work to be done. You know we need to rebuild completely from bottom on and up mass transportation system, new energy system, the break of dependency on fossil fuel, rebuild our cities, we need millions of units of decent housing, we can do that in this in this nation, but the government can not sit back and let corporations simply cannibalize themselves, move to the third world, invest in in junk-bonds, we need to rebuild American industry, we need to raise the minimum wage substantially, we need a new tax-payer policy in this country. As you know right now, the republicans and the Democrats to some degree continue, despite the three million dollar debt, the millions and trillions of dollars in tax breaks given to the richest peoples corporations these people are still talking about a reduction in the capital gains tax for the rich, they are talking about raising the gas tax for the middle class, cutting in Medicare, parking social security for the poor, Totally insane! So I think those areas are of concern for the people of Vermont, and to the people of this nation. Last point, briefly, well there is no last point, there is several more points I want to touch on, one point has to do with basic national priority areas thank God, well I meant the good news of the last couple of years is that the Cold War is over, and that is an extraordinary development. What that means is that we can cut military spending by 50% within the next five years. You don’t need Star Wars, you don’t need soft bombers, you don’t need Midget man submarines. You don’t need these weapon systems. We can free up tens of tens of millions and billions of dollars and deal with the deficit and start reinvesting in education so that 25% of our kids will not drop-out in High school, so that the kids can afford to go to college, you can invest in environmental protection systems so we can clean up the toxic waste dams., etc, etc,. Lastly, you know in terms of foreign policy I think there is going to be a radical change. We can not continue to support the
death squad governments of El Salvador, of Guatemala. We can not continue to feel that we can invade every country in Latin America and Central America that we want when we want it. So basically I think we need an entirely new agenda involving the working people, involving the poor people, women, environmentalists, and to some degree that is what we are doing in Vermont. What excites me is, I don’t want to overdo it, very much about this campaign is that we now have won the endorsement of every union in the state of Vermont, the AFL/CIO, the Teamsters, the United Electrical Workers, and the Teachers Union. We have won the support of Environmentalists, leading peace activists, leading feminists, the family farmers, we are bringing together creating what Jesse Jackson calls the Rainbow Coalition except we are doing it in a way better way than the way that Jesse talks about, because we are doing it outside of the Democratic Party. And I think that if we are successful in Vermont it could become a real prototype and a model for the states around the country.

IM I did not hear you say either in your summary right now or for that matter in the couple of dozen pages of position papers that your campaign staff sent be anything about the current U.S. military intervention in the Persian Gulf?

BS Actually we have sent out two or three documents about that…

IM It was not sent to me.. ehehe..!

IM Well, where do you stand on that?

BS I am happy to tell you where I stand. Number one, in terms of the current crisis let me touch on three or four points. First of all, it goes without saying that just as happened in 1973, the oil companies are taking advantage of the crisis of the confusion. Of course they were raising oil prices very, very high. Ah, clearly the federal government has got to step in and tell them that they can’t do that. Number two as you recall in the early nineteen-seventies at that time there was a blow up in the middle east, ah the politicians jumped up and down and they said we have got to break our dependency on middle east oil, you recall that. And of course seventeen years have come and gone and we are more dependent on middle east oil because we have not developed any serious conservation efforts in this country and we have not developed new forms of energy such as solar-energy to break our dependency, not only if for political reasons but to break our dependency for environmental reasons. If there are energy
systems out there waiting to develop we have not done it. Third and important point to be made in regard of Saddam Hussein and the Middle East in general, the tragedy of our time you know and when you are in politics and you deal with the environment, you deal with poverty you never know which particular tragedy is worse than the other tragedy, but certainly one of the major tragedies of our time is right now forty thousand children a day is starving to death in the third world. And one of the reasons that Asia, and Africa, and Latin-America are currently undergoing the worst economic conditions they have ever undergone is that countries like the United States, and the Soviet Union, China, France, England are pouring billions and billions of dollar of weaponry and armaments into the third world dictatorships, like those of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, so here you have a situation where a guy, a rather vicious despot has a million man army, sophisticated weaponry given them by every country in the world including the United States of America, at the same time as the children starve to death. Clearly, in my view, what the United States has got to do, Bush won’t, but we should is call together the United Nations to say stop the armaments of the third world, use that money for economic development to stop the starvation. Fourth point: What do you do when you have a situation when you have a very vicious man a dangerous man in Saddam Hussein, that is what my opinion is who unilaterally, on his own invades another independent country such as Kuwait. Now in Vermont, my voice has been as loud as any voice in the States and I have been poring and fighting as loud as I could against the United States war against the people in Nicaragua, which an illegal and an immoral war. I opposed the United States invasion of Panama, I opposed the United States invasion of Granada, I opposed very strongly the whole United States attitude to the third world in which it says Hey we don’t like the government at all, or Ronald Reagan or Bush doesn’t like the government, we can overthrow these people. Obviously that is illegal and immoral, can not be allowed to happen. I opposed the Soviet Union and its invasion in Afghanistan. I very strongly oppose the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Now what do you do? I think what you do is clearly it cannot be the burden of the United States or the sole responsibility of the United States of America to play policeman in the world, especially with our record of invasions of other nations. I think that Saddam is a dangerous guy and I think that if he is allowed to invade Kuwait, I think you are going to make and retain that country under his control. I think you are going to have an even more unstable and volatile Middle East situation than you have now, and God knows it is unstable right now. My position is to stand under the United Nations a multinational force for defensive purposes to support a very, very strong economic embargo to stop his ability to sell his oil, basically to bring this guy to his knee, to free hostages. No country has the right to
seize innocent people and hold them as hostages to get them out of Kuwait and use the military presence there, the multinational presence there under the United Nations in an defensive mode. I am deeply concerned about the tremendous buildup that has taken place in the last month I am deeply concerned that there are some people that are some people in this country: senator McNamarra, Kissinger from New York, and others who are talking about now being the time to invade Iraq. DeBrian who is saying out strongly disagree with that, but I think a military presence under the United Nations is an effective deterrent and I think in the long run it creates a more peaceful situation.

IM Are you prepared to say that the United States it should never as it did in the Persian Gulf send its troops abroad without prior not subsequent not on a rubber stand, not having a ticket run, but having a prior action by the international community to take such a step?

BS I don’t have a great deal of faith and confidence in the president of the United States, I mean that goes without saying, I mean you know in Vermont, people say that, gee Bernie how can you agree with Bush initial sending troops over there. What you can’t say under a military situation, I mean you really can not say so I fancy your question though I can’t say that, because you, sometimes it is necessary to act quickly. Sometimes it is necessary to act quickly.

IM Is this one of these times?

BS I think initially when you have an invasion that is taking place of a country and if you are not there quickly to stop the possibility of a continuing aggression throughout the Middle East it may well have been the time. I think clearly right now there is no excuse for the United States to be acting unilaterally I want it to be done under the United Nations but what I can not tell you is every single time and every opportunity that it might not be necessary to act in a defensive mode.

IM Ok, I find that that answer falls somewhat short of the, of the earlier comments you made in which you attempted to distinguish yourself decisively from the bi-partisan consensus and the government of the United States.

BS Well, sorry you feel that way, it’s your opinion and you are entitled to that.
IM Ok, I , I, I am also wondering how you square your strong comments on reducing military spending with this feeling you apparently have that the United States doesn’t need be the world policemen.

BS That is exactly what I do not believe, I do not believe that the United States needs to be a world policemen. I think that people who know a lot more about the military than I do will tell you that the basic issue in terms of military spending, and the three million dollar budget roll right now is that the entire military presence of the United States and structures of our military is geared toward fighting a global war against the Soviet Union and almost every sane human being understands that is over with.

IM Yes but there are elaborate plans in the Pentagon and in the Congress for that matter to switch over to regional conflict.

BS Yes I understand that, and I obviously do not support that. All I have said is that I believe that we can cut military spending in five years by 50% , if you can do it more or less I don’t know, but I think that is a reasonable estimate in terms of the United States being the policeman of the world that is precisely what I am not saying. What I am saying , and if there is a silver lining and if there is a positive aspect of this whole crisis in the Persian Gulf perhaps the revitalization of the United Nations to act in a collective manner. It is the Soviet Union and the United States working together, and I think one of the aspects of that may in fact end up not making the president of the United States very happy is that perhaps just perhaps, the next time the United States thinks or the president thinks it is time to invade another small country for what ever particular reasons they may have to start reading some of the rhetoric that the president has been giving right now about the illegality of and the immorality of a large nation invading a small nation and the necessity of the United Nations to deal with international conflicts rather that unilateral aggression on part of a superpower.

IM I am afraid that has to be the last word for today. I am Irwin Mole and my guest has been Bernie Sanders. Thank you, Sanders.

BS Irwin, thank you very much.

C60 Low Noise Professional Quality 60 min. Cassette tape New national, Ferro extra I 60 BASF
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