

## Talking about Socialism, and Electability

by Judy Pasqualge, Rockland, ME

Predictably, the word 'socialism' is being tossed about, with cross-talk often based on differing and unstated definitions - lessening time on issues.

Further, based on negative stereotypes, candidates are being characterized as unelectable, or as not providing all the details on how programs will be 'paid for.'

My view is that the mainstream media angle on electability, while reflective of a broad and legitimate public concern, is really a smokescreen for a disagreement on policy - especially regarding government spending on social services.

Second, while funding budget items is crucial, the focus on policy items not agreed with is another smokescreen - the whole budget needs examination, with a calculation of the consequences, including costs, of inaction.

However, the issue of socialism needs to be addressed. I write of this with some chagrin, as when I was very young in the late 1950s, I formed an image that in socialist countries one doesn't even own his own clothes, as if a massive public laundry passed around (clean) used clothes.

This is part of the demonizing stereotype.

It is easier to first state what socialism is not. It is not what existed in the Soviet Union or exists today in China. Further, by necessity, socialism requires democracy - the institutions for public expression and participation, which do not favor particular classes or groups.

Disputes regarding socialism centered on whether the 'means of production' (tools, machines, factories, land, raw materials, etc.) would be owned by the state. This in no way implied that individuals would not be able to own their own private property (house, car, clothes, etc.).

A concern, especially in less industrialized places, was how best to foster the investment required for it.

It is more useful to speak of the aim of socialism, which can be simplified as: equality over hierarchy, and cooperation over competition. Many people agree with the characterization: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.

Equality does not mean a quick levelling of all to the same level, but is a direction one wants to go. Cooperation does not mean not trying to strive for the best or to maximize effort, but to a determination of value not based solely on the limited standards of asset value or money earned.

Many measures are deemed as socialist because the government takes the lead - often because this is seen as most effective, including regarding cost efficiency. Key are healthcare, public transportation and public education.

Various people, movements and parties have variously described socialism. And this is all to the good, as there is no one template for all countries: the forms must differ depending on history and conditions, and people's choices.

Of course, in the usual discussion of socialism, capitalism is not defined either.

In a capitalist economic system, a private owner uses money to buy a commodity(s), and then after a process of production sells a new product for money (at a greater cost than the inputs - a surplus to him). Further, the actual source of the surplus lies in the labour that produced the product. Daily, a worker produces more product value than he is paid for, the surplus going to the owner. This surplus value can be increased by technological innovations, work speed-up, or a longer work day for the same pay.

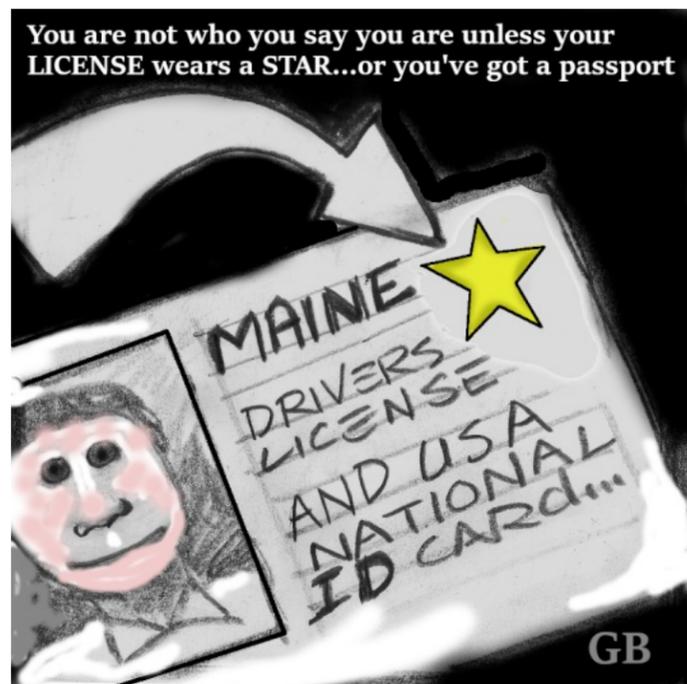
By the mid-20th century capitalism had reached the monopoly stage - monopoly meaning that in a sector, several firms control production such that they can set the price of goods. Baran and Sweezy saw a tendency for the surplus (to the owners of the means of production) to rise. (Monopoly Capital, 1966)

From the 1970s, capitalism entered the stage of financialization: an over accumulation of capital and stagnation in investment. Financial profits increase (of banks, financial institutions, real estate), and are used in speculation; nonfinancial institutions enter the markets, and households are drawn in via credit/debt. (Foster, "The Commitment of an Intellectual," Monthly Review, October 2004)

As an aside, fascism is seen as one of two ways to administer a capitalist system - the other being liberal democracy. Features include a large state hand in running the economy, lack of democratic institutions, and often a cult of the leader and prejudice against a particular group(s). The aim is to control the state, and to repress and discipline the population, with private corporations also providing discipline. (Foster, "Neofascism in the White House, Monthly Review, April 2017)

These days, and globally, many people support a government role in providing social services, and I've yet to meet anyone who would like the government to own all the means of production.

Finally, at this point, it is crucial for Democratic primary voters to decide their critical issues, and choose a candidate based on this. In addition, if healthcare, education, transport - and the earth crisis - are priorities, it would be well to send a message to the DP establishment - in case the July convention winds up in the hands of superdelegates.



## US National Identity card? oh, no...its a "Real ID" driver's license

by Glen Birbeck

For a long time the idea of an ID card requirement for US citizens was toxic. Other countries, none as free as ours, have them, but not here. We do have drivers licenses. Driving is a right, not a privilege, I am told. But driving requires competence and demonstrated skill. These we test and issue a license for.

Without an ID card as such, states and the federal government started asking for driver's licenses as IDs. That process has continued. The Federal government passed a law in 2005 called the "Real ID act" The law was one of the measures in response to the 9/11 commission's report. It is now 15 years since that law's enactment. In less than a year from now, in October 2020, the law will be fully implemented. No US citizen will be allowed to board a commercial airliner without showing a driver's license compliant with "Real ID's" requirements. The only other ID TSA will accept is a valid USA passport.

The apparent difference between a Real ID driver's license and the old license is a star in the upper right corner. I am not known for being politically to the right...but wearing a star, even on an ID card, makes me think of Germany in the mid 30's. Jews were required to wear a star on their lapel. Here NOT having a star will mark you as different. The reason I must accept this is that it is logical. I know the history of this process. I don't like it, but as with the TSA pat down, I can't think of an alternative. Is it a slippery slope to a totalitarian government? Yes, its greased Teflon. Shouldn't surprise us, its the same path. Government as protector or government as overseer. Everyone will get used to this as we do to everything. Then it will be "improved" by deeper digging into each person's potential for illegal acts. You will be safe and have relative freedom as long as the algorithm vets you positive. If one day you're branded as a terrorist you will not be told why.

The states are being coerced into acting as front office for this national ID. The threat of losing federal money is always the cudgel within TSA's velvet glove. They've just about got all the states on board but much needs to be done before October. According to the handout I got at the DMV this week there are four categories needing to be verified. Identity, lawful status in the USA, Social Security Number, and Maine residency. The handout lists the documents needed to nail each of these categories.

Added costs to the states to comply with the law are in the billions of dollars. This might be part of the reason states have been dragging their feet in its nuts and bolts implementation. Maine will start issuing ID cards and "Real ID" compliant driver's licences on July first. The fees charged now reflect this added bureaucratic cost. To get just an ID with the star will cost \$30. To obtain or renew a non commercial license will be \$55 or \$40, those over 65 getting the savings. Commercial licenses will be \$59 or \$48. The price for a duplicate of any of these will be \$30.

If you've been a snow bird, as I have for the last ten years, you're used to flying with a passport. That will still work for flying inside the USA or leaving it. The State department issued passport has always been a pseudo national ID. The US government's assurance to a foreign government that you are bona fide, a citizen of this country with all the rights, etc, etc.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28:**

- Art Reception and Wine Tasting, Good Tern Food Co-op and Café, 750 Main Street in Rockland. 4:30 to 6:00 pm. A reception for their current exhibit of paintings by local artist Monica Gallagher. Deminique Cole, wine and beer buyer for the Good Tern, will present three wines for tasting. The Public is invited.
- Closing Reception for "Joy of Birds" at Gibbs Library, Washington, on Friday, February 28, from 5 to 7 p.m. All are welcome. Patti Forster's bird photographs will be for sale to raise money for the library. They include photos of common species in Maine and a few harder-to-find visitors, like the great gray owl and the glossy ibis.
- Friday Open Mics, in Warren, Saint George River Cafe, 310 Main Street, second and fourth Fridays, at 6:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29:**

- Children's Spanish Story Hour and Sing-Along, open to families with children of all ages, 10 to 11 a.m. at Penobscot Language School, 28 Gay Street, Rockland. Jared McCannell will tell stories and lead children in songs and dances he learned while living and traveling in Spanish-speaking countries. The program is free. For more information, go to penobscot.us or call 594-1084.
- Midcoast Maine Indivisible Rally: "To the Streets, To the Polls," 11 a.m. at Rockland's Chapman Park, corner of Park and Main streets. Organizers invite residents from across the midcoast "to make a political statement: that they see a need for a fundamental political shift in November, and that they will do the work door-to-door and on the streets to make that shift happen." Facebook has details.
- Caucus of Green Independent Party for St. George, 2 p.m. on the lower level of St. George Town Hall.
- Grand Opening of Well and Good Natural Medicine, at 340 Main Street in Rockland, 2 to 5 p.m. Meet the practitioners at the center for natural medicine, acupuncture, fertility education, craniosacral therapy, herbalism, and bodywork. There will be treats, talks and demonstrations all afternoon.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 1:**

- Community Meeting on Regulating Adult-Use Cannabis in Warren, 2 to 4 p.m. at Healing Tree Farms, 72 Atlantic Highway. Presenters will be local caregivers Dan Cellucci and Michelle Bennett. Representative William Pluecker is scheduled to attend. Complimentary food and beverages will be available.
- Sunday Jams in Rockland, Sail, Power, & Steam Museum, 75 Mechanic Street, 1:30 p.m.

**MONDAY, MARCH 2:**

- Free Adult Art Classes at Rockland Public Library, 11 a.m. Catinka Knoth leads the free Monday classes – with a focus on drawing in color – open to all, with materials provided. This week: Mardi Gras.
- "The Memoirist's Dilemma" at Camden Public Library, a free memoir-writing course led by writing coach Lee Heffner on Mondays, March 2 to April 6, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Heffner is the author of "Write to Finish" and a contributor to the anthologies of Best Lit Review and Coastal Art and Words. Limited to eight; call 236-3440 to sign up.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 3:**

- Free Children's Drawing Classes at Rockland Public Library, 4 to 5 p.m. Tuesdays. Catinka Knoth leads the "Let's Draw Together!" series for kids 6-plus (under 11 with an adult – adults are invited to join in). All materials provided. This Tuesday: Mardi Gras.
- "Explaining Yoga and Ways to Incorporate It Into Your Lifestyle," 6 p.m. at Rockland Public Library. Ananda Yoga owners Sheila Caldwell and Amanda Cooney tell what yoga is all about and ways to incorporate it into your lifestyle, both on and off the mat. They also give a brief breakdown of the Eight Limbs of Yoga. This program is free and open to the public and is cosponsored by the library and Destination Wellness Midcoast Maine.
- Tuesday Jams in Thomaston, Federated Church, 8 Hylar Street, at 7 p.m. Folk, country, blues, gospel. FMI: 273-2914.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4:**

- "Soup's On!" in Camden, at First Congregational Church, 55 Elm Street, at noon on Wednesdays to March 25 (except when school is cancelled). The church hall opens for homemade soups (one vegetarian), bread, dessert and tea or coffee. Free; donations accepted. More info: 236-4821.
- Owls Head Garden Club Meeting, Wednesday, March 4, at 11 a.m. at the Owls Head Community Building, 224 Ash Point Drive. Susan Thomas will give an illustrated talk about safaris in Africa. Free and open to the public.

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**THURSDAY, MARCH 5:**

- Reception to Open Peter Yesis Show at Camden Public Library, from 5 to 7 p.m. The Searsport artist's oil paintings in "The Appeal of Soft Realism" will be on display in the Picker Room of the library throughout March. His artwork has been featured in national exhibitions and has received numerous awards. On Thursday, March 26, at 7 p.m., his wife, Kim Yesis, will give a talk in the Picker Room on her book "Side by Side: Tales from Behind the Canvas," written from her vantage point as Peter left a career in engineering to become a fine artist.
- Opportunity to Provide Input on Draft Harbor Management Plan for Rockland, Thursday, March 5, from 6 to 8 p.m. The Ad Hoc Harbor Planning Committee will give an overview of the plan and take public input before making its formal recommendations to the City Council. The plan addresses moorings and channels, waterfront properties, harbor regulation, and public access. A copy of the draft can be found on the RocklandMaine.gov website.
- Thursday Karaoke in Thomaston, Threshers Brewing Company, 1 Starr Street, 7 p.m.
- Thursday Jams in Warren, Saint George River Cafe, 310 Main Street, 6 p.m.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 6:**

- MOFGA Organic Certification Services Taking Applications, through June 30 for the 2020 growing season for organic certification of crops and most livestock products. Find forms and more information at [MOFGAcertification.org](http://MOFGAcertification.org).

**Around Town** is compiled by Chuck Gifford.  
An expanded listing is online at [wrf.org](http://wrf.org)  
Please submit calendar items to [gowrfr@gmail.com](mailto:gowrfr@gmail.com)  
Our thanks to The Free Press for sharing its calendar.

# Dance Partners

by Stephen Carroll

As the 2020 presidential election race marches towards the primary season, a host of Democratic Prom stars jockey for position in a well-choreographed dance number. Progressives, conservatives, billionaires, all looking for the nod from the party bosses.

Will this be the year a conflicted Democratic party returns to its roots as the "peoples" party, or just continues to be the faithful servant of the establishment? A difficult decision for a party who long ago gave its soul to the millionaire class.

In the last three years the Democrats have cozied up again and again to the powerful military-industrial complex, awarding billions to maintain the war effort, authorized far-reaching spy powers on its citizens, approved Trump's border wall, bestowed blessings on Wall Street, protected big banks and helped insurance and pharmaceutical companies maintain the status quo, and fattened their purses. For the poor citizens who elected them, no universal health care, no relief for student debt or for the environment, no living wage.

Two parties looking out for big corporations and their millionaire friends and neither watching out for the working class. Will they allow Bernie to grab the nomination? Unlikely. I'm quite confident there will be a well-rehearsed plan to overthrow him at the convention. The Republicans and Democrats make for good dance partners.

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