

## Politics

October 2015

Copyright © 2016 Robert Alan Paul, All rights reserved

I am thoroughly opposed to promoting a particular political party or agenda and associating it with being a Buddhist in our Sangha, as if a good Shambhalian must agree with such things. In Canada that means a good Shambhalian must be aligned with the NDP or Green party. We must be extremely liberal, socialist or libertarian because Conservatives are evil and hate people, while we (and the NDP, etc.) love them. It extends to the sustainability movement and global climate change. These things, some people seem to think, aren't even political, but are merely the sane Shambhalian thing to do.

Of course, if you look behind the veil we can see that they are quite political. Politics is the art of balancing the needs of all stakeholders in figuring out how to plan and act. In discussions of sustainability and climate change issues it is frequently ignored how some groups of people will suffer if the 'only sane' directions are chosen. For instance, the rich countries who became rich with abundant and cheap oil are now telling the developing countries that they must tighten their belts. Thus, trying to avoid increased greenhouse warming by not using abundant cheap energy sources comes down to the rich telling the poor that they must remain poor. This is, of course, an oversimplification. These are just not simple, cut-and-dry, clear decisions that any sane citizen of any country must recognize as being the way to go.

In Canada we are in the midst of an election campaign. Many Shambhalians think there are the bad conservatives and the other good people, and the choice is clear. I see twiddle dee and twiddle dum dum. Most of the system will continue as it has in the past, since there are no good proposals to significantly change things that have any chance of being instituted. While I have been out of country for two weeks, hence may have missed some things, I have not heard proposals to have a really long election campaign so all the issues can be discussed fully— Canadians get tired of discussing such boring things as how our lives are controlled by government. I have not heard proposals for open primaries so that all citizens can directly choose their party candidates—Canadians like old white men to choose such things in the back room. I have not heard proposals to allow our MPs to vote as they wish, on their conscience or on the wishes of the constituencies that elected them, without getting kicked out of the party.

The latter is called Leninist party politics, by the way. I have not heard proposals to bring the tax rates back to those of the preReagan era or earlier when those with significantly higher incomes actually were in significantly higher incremental tax brackets.

In the US we are in the early stages of a very long election campaign. There is, however, a significant choice between twiddle dee-dum and a semblance of sanity. I think Bernie Sanders is worth looking at and listening to. He is actually telling the difficult truth that is resonating with what we already know. He is mobilizing large numbers with small contributions, rather than its reverse. I personally think he is the Franklin Roosevelt of our time and the only chance the USA has of avoiding violent revolt of the increasingly oppressed and growing population of poor and working poor who live without hope.

Does he promote the basic goodness of all people? Not really, since I think he would exclude billionaires from his Christmas list. Yet, he comes closer than anyone I have seen in a very long time, if ever. He also has experience, chutzpa and charisma, hence has a chance of success. I started this article by generally rejecting the idea that we should ally ourselves with any particular political party or agenda. I think Bernie's potential is worth taking a second look.