

Fight socialism with better ideas, not bigger bullets

by Roger Koopman

At the recent Montana Republican Kickoff, Representative Rodney Garcia dropped a stink bomb in the middle of the gathering by insisting that it is our Constitutional duty to execute the socialists in our midst – or at the very least, lock them up in a dank dungeon somewhere. He sees them as too much of a danger for our free society to deal with if left on the loose. A .45 auto to the back of the head ought to do the trick.

Obviously, there is something very wrong with this picture. We need to ask this pseudo-patriotic politician from Billings if he has looked at our Constitution lately, and if he's been looking through the lens of liberty -- or the telescope of tyranny? For what he's proposing is exactly what socialism is all about.

Sure. It's more than a little disturbing to hear the term "socialism" being cast about on our campuses and across our country as if it was just some gentle and benign theory of government, deserving of a warm embrace. Until recently, socialism was anathema to most Americans, and candidates who suggested their opponents were socialists were roundly criticized for crossing the line of decent debate. Never mind that the core philosophy of the Democratic Party has always been "socialism light" – the welfare state put on wheels to Hell. It was politically impolite to suggest such things. Yet today, many Democrats wear the "democratic socialism" mantle with unapologetic pride.

Rep. Garcia's proclamation that these are "dangerous people" certainly doesn't help us to understand our dilemma. Just the opposite. It's not the people who are dangerous, but the ideas behind the people – ideas that most of its advocates neither understand intellectually nor comprehend historically. Therein lies the problem.

Dictionaries and economic texts define socialism as government control and ownership on the means of production, and the eventual abolition of all private business and private property. It's collectivism, which inevitably leads to totalitarianism -- the total state. State socialism can only be imposed and maintained by a monopoly of force. Ultimately, by the muzzle of a gun. All individualism and individual liberty must be swallowed up by the "benevolent" state. This generally starts by democratic means, thus, the soft-sounding appellation "democratic socialism" to allay our fears. "Heroes" like Hitler were elected. In Germany and elsewhere, democracy was just a temporary means to a dreadful conclusion. Socialism, being an abject failure from the start, must always proceed in this way in order to maintain its total control.

"You are describing communism, not socialism!", the argument goes. No. I am describing socialism. Communism, as a form of government and social order has never existed, and never will. Under Marx's communism, the government eventually fades away, and we all evolve into a state of unity, ecstasy and peace. Won't happen. Can't happen. Every totalitarian state, and the brutal tyranny that accompanied it, represent some form of state socialism. Tell the 200

million murdered victims that it was all meant to be benevolent. Maybe Bernie Sanders can convince them.

Ironically, if Rep. Garcia is serious about shooting the purveyors of socialism, he'll need to begin by shooting himself. It's clear he doesn't understand the fundamental ideas of socialism any better than the next guy. It was Rodney Garcia, in the last session of the legislature, who introduced HB 203, a bill bestowing power on our state government to **purchase, own and operate coal-fired power plants like Colstrip**. The measure even created a new state bureaucracy: the Montana Public Power Commission. You heard that right. No legislator, Democratic or Republican, had come up with a more socialistic idea. (I was the only PSC commissioner among five Republicans who voted to oppose the bill.)

You see, Rodney, socialism is first and foremost an idea – a very bad idea, to which the ghastly groans of human history testify. Freedom is also an idea. You fight bad ideas with superior ideas that have passed the test of time – ideas like private ownership, free markets, individual sovereignty, sanctity of life and the rule of law. And you win not by shooting or jailing the promoters of bad ideas. Those are precisely the tactics of totalitarian socialism. You let them hold forth to their hearts' content, and they will inevitably shoot themselves with the return volley of logic, history, faith and truth.

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