



San Francisco Tomorrow

Working to Protect the Urban Environment

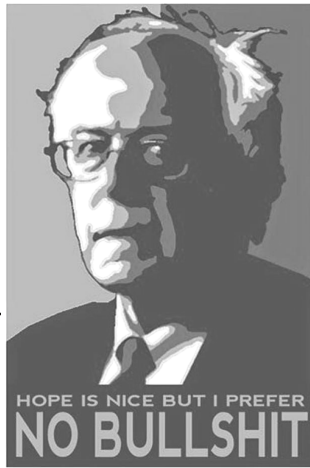
Issue 374

Will you want to live in San Francisco... Tomorrow?

Jan / Feb 2017

The Berniecrats' Agenda

Claire Lau (my wife) had the idea for the San Francisco Berniecrats just after the primary in May of last year. Like so many young Americans, Bernie's run for president was unlike anything we'd experienced in our lifetimes. An American political leader ran on a platform of altruism, virtue, and populism, and changed our concept of what we could demand from our politicians. He didn't just shift the Overton window, he hit it across the park. Claire knew then that Bernie had come to unite and embody a cluster of previously disparate progressive desires. Say the name "Bernie Sanders" and everyone from the gas station attendant to the college professor has an idea of the platform; economic and social equality.



By June 2016, our friends who'd worked so passionately for Bernie were fractured and lacked direction. Over the previous year, we'd been running fundraisers and organizing for Bernie in the Bay Area, and knew there was a community with energy and potential. Claire wanted a way to reunite and refocus us on our common goals, but she sought a vessel that could weather the ups and downs of campaigns and tough elections. We were inspired by groups like the Harvey Milk Democratic Club and San Francisco Tomorrow, which had brought their communities together for decades around the issues that resonated with them, and became major forces in influencing policy. The SF Berniecrats would be the nucleus around which our comrades could gather.

Over a short seven month period, we formed a group, wrote and ratified bylaws, elected an executive board, filed to become a nonprofit, debated and voted on endorsements for the November elections, raised funds, printed and distributed 12,000 voter guides in San Francisco, organized canvassing and phone bank events for

our endorsed candidates, helped to form the Reform Democrats ADEM slate, organized for the ADEM election, and won an unheard-of majority of the seats in both San Francisco districts.

We now have over 100 active members and are setting our ambitions for 2017. Three issues will dominate our actions; infiltrate the California Democratic Party, push statewide medicare for all healthcare, and change the way that housing stock is viewed in the city.

Our recent wins in the January ADEMs are integral to our influence in the state Democratic Party. Over one weekend, former Bernie delegates and Berniecrats won a majority of elected assembly delegate seats in the California Democratic Party. The actual voting power of these seats is not significant; we only amount to one third of all party votes, after appointed seats and the seats of elected officials are factored in, but its the way that we'll use these seats that matters. We are going to radically redefine the role of an assembly delegate.



We're about to begin a statewide experiment in radical democracy. In each assembly district of California, the elected Berniecrat ADEMs are organizing our own town halls. We're inviting the public for an open discussion about what the Democratic party should be. Should we continue to represent the interests of corporations and the 1%, or will we value the needs of the average people? You already know the answer. We're going to film these meetings, broadcast them live over the internet, and document what the people say. We're creating our own media, our own narrative. Then we'll deliver that message to the Democratic Party with an ultimatum: defy the people's will at your own risk.

Medicare-for-all healthcare - a long shot for the entirety of my life, could become a reality in California. The Democrats had blocked the Healthy California bill for years, in an attempt not to undermine the ACA (and certainly at the request of private insurers). Now, the ACA is likely to unravel in short time, with no functional

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Berniecrats (*continued*)

replacement and a dangerous situation for CA lawmakers in which large portions of the state could lose their health coverage. The political winds have shifted, and by mid-February we'll have a bill introduced into the state senate. The SF Berniecrats, our statewide allies, the nurses union, and countless others will be partnering to capitalize on this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Locally, there's no question that housing is the greatest concern. Discussion of the housing crisis has been locked into the same argument between private construction and affordability for too long, but once again the political climate has changed, and we intend to change the topic. What if we said that housing is a right in San Francisco? What if we demanded the public financing of public housing? What if we ran our own ballot initiative to create a fine on vacant buildings and real estate speculation? These are ideas that would garner wide public approval, regardless of their feasibility. What if we took a decidedly socialist turn with the conversation? After all, it's our city.

The SF Berniecrats meet from 6:45-8:30 on the first Wednesday of every month at the Park branch library, and can be reached at sfberniecrats@gmail.com.

...Benjamin Becker

Homeless Perpetual Funding Machine

San Francisco spends \$241 million on homeless services, according to February 5, 2016, Chronicle article. Part of this funding goes to 76 private organizations to deal with the homeless, in effect a job-making vehicle. Or one could characterize it as a bureaucratic nightmare.

This vast amount of money, some \$30,000 each, is spent for an estimated 8,000 homeless souls. Yet, homelessness is getting worse. Then there is the \$20 million of the Police budget that goes to moving homeless people from one area of the city to another. That adds \$2,500 to each homeless person.

A McDonalds fast food worker makes between \$16,000 and \$20,000 a year. If those workers can survive on less, why not just pay each homeless individual \$32,625 and see if that would cure the problem?

...Denise D'Anne

Urban Nuclei and Divide

The 2016 election manifested a reaction to the growth of urban population, economics. culture, values and influence. Economic power is concentrated in the urban nuclei, bound to global markets, supplies and workforces. The geographic split amplifies educational and social divisions as the nuclei expand. The political turbulence is inexorably divisive, exacerbated by parochial institutions and cultural belief systems. Within cities, a micro-battle

wages between lower and higher-income residents---as development/ real estate/ corporate interests grapple over land-use, environmental processes and transportation projects that shape cities and capital distribution.

UNITED NATIONS: "Today, 54 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050. Projections show that urbanization combined with the overall growth of the world's population could add another 2.5 billion people to urban populations by 2050, with close to 90 percent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa, according to a new United Nations report launched today."

TIME: "For now, however, young people prefer cities. According to the Nielsen Company, 62% of millennials prefer to live in mixed-use communities found in urban centers, closer to shops, restaurants, and the office. And as the number of apartment buildings under construction continues to rise, it appears the exodus to the cities won't be slowing anytime soon."

...Howard Wong

NAP EIR Approved

In a victory for conservation, on December 15, 2016, the Planning Commission voted 6-1 to approve the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of the Natural Areas Program (NAP). The intent of this City program is to restore California native plants lost to urbanization. To a large extent, the program will use plants from San Bruno Mountain, as that area contains the last vestiges of a number of species once common in San Francisco, many of which are currently endangered along with the fauna that depend exclusively on them.

There were 74 people who spoke in favor of NAP (including 17 who wanted the Sharp Park Golf Course removed from the EIR), and 42 who opposed the NAP outright. Many people had to wait in the anteroom on the first floor, watching the hearing on closed circuit TV for hours, before finally being able to enter the Planning Commission Chamber to speak.

Sharp Park, located in Pacifica but included in this study, is 120 acres of land bequeathed to the City of San Francisco in 1917 by the widow of George Sharp (Honora). The park consists of a golf course overlaid on a natural area adjacent the ocean. The non-native grass of the golf course requires pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers which are affecting wildlife and tainting nearby water, often causing genetic mutations. Maintaining the Sharp Park Golf Course has been the responsibility of San Francisco's Recreation and Park Department for years. There have been numerous incidents of protected species or gopher control. It is for that reason that the wild lands

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surrounding the golf course have been included in the EIR of the Natural Area Program.

The main concern on Mt. Davidson has been the prevalence of non-native species (eucalyptus, English ivy and Himalayan blackberry), which have driven out native plants. At the hearing, several members of the public portrayed the desire to remove the eucalyptus trees as “xenophobic.” In fact, the biggest problem with eucalyptus is that it releases allelochemicals which inhibit other plants from growing beneath its canopy, creating both plant monoculture and a lack of habitat for fauna (other plants that use allelopathy as a survival strategy include creosote bush, black walnut, and California bay laurel). While crews on Mt. Davidson regularly remove the eucalyptus leaves from the to allow an understory of native species to grow there, allelochemical residue from years past continues to affect the fertility of the soil, and negatively impacts the reintroduction of natives.

Eucalyptus defenders also claimed that to remove these trees would release a tremendous amount of carbon sequestered or stored in the wood and increase global warming. A recent study of these trees found 85% to be in poor health, which is to say that they are likely to die soon anyway, or even go up in a conflagration like the 1991 Oakland fire.

A short list of the organizations supporting the Natural Areas Program in testimony include Nature in the City, Livable City, the California Native Plant Society, and the Sierra Club.

...Glenn Rogers

Where is the Public Housing Model Really Going?

News of Trump’s election, and the appointment of Dr. Ben Carson to run the Housing and Urban Development Department, brought cringes through housing agencies and rights groups in San Francisco. Concerns over what will be cut first, and how to ensure that projects entitled or initiated are moved on quickly to prevent any last minute shut-downs, are the order of the day.

Various facets of the RAD (Rental Assistance Demonstration, a public-private enterprise under HUD) rehabilitation of multiple sites and units, and the transfer to private managing entities, are now in progress. The HOPE SF (a local RAD manifestation) projects at Alice Griffith and Hunter’s View continue at a slow, plodding rate; meanwhile two larger-scale projects, Sunnysdale and Potrero, are about to take off, initiating parcels and projects that will transform a good deal of the city’s remaining public housing space.

One unfortunate aspect of the RAD projects is that they have resulted in attrition of SFHA and other unionized workers, who were previously residents as well as employees. But a bigger issue is where all this privatization is taking us in general. The cost of rentals and market rate units continues to pass all sensibility, at the same time that alarms about “housing bubbles” are being heard. Meanwhile, former ways of providing affordability, such as co-ops and garden rental apartment communities, are going by the boards. Why is the city selling off properties instead of purchasing more land and buildings that can be held in the public trust for the sake of affordability?

In other cities, public housing agencies like the NYCHA are busy expanding publicly-owned developments and acquiring more properties. Yet the SFHA seems to be in a perpetual downward spiral of selling off parcels and managerial functions, reducing staff instead of viewing the job-creative aspect of housing initiation, management, and maintenance as a positive. In whose interest would we be selling off public land sites, like Balboa Reservoir, and Ruth Asawa School of the Arts, when these could be redeveloped by the SFHA into bastions of low-cost housing through collective approaches to financing and philanthropic donations?

There seems to be a disconnect downtown with the reality that land is the key ingredient we are quickly losing control of citywide, as developers and private institutions are savvily snapping up parcels whenever the city or its agencies are willing to sell, with little negotiation in the public’s interest. Potrero and Sunnysdale both passed easily through the Dec 2016 and Jan 2017 Board of Supervisors hearings, with few challenges from opponents. However, concern should be had for the future of affordability when we see our public agencies so willing to sell off public lands quickly and without any iron-clad guarantees of large-scale public housing opportunities. The jobs created during these development build-outs will likely not generate salaries high enough to buy into future housing prices, creating a recipe for more displacement and gentrification.

Driving through the public housing projects in D10, we see remodeled developments that are “shining-stars” of well-designed, clean, and safe housing. But the promises of long-term jobs, and of fulfilling transit and infrastructure needs, are looking sadly under-planned and under-funded, and the promised right-of-return for former tenants may not prove set in stone. Only time will tell if the redevelopments will provide the housing opportunities, public amenities, and infrastructure promised for the future housing needs of a rapidly changing city, and those most needing housing stability.

Missing Links and Politics

Nationally and globally, people have reason for simmering economic-based anger---despite incredible advances in living. Political responses are banal---from lashing out to scapegoating to promises of change. Missing is a response for a new economic paradigm and a vision for a new age of enlightenment.

Merely 120 years ago, people worked hard, had fun, dreamed aspirations---and then died at the early age of 40. Growing population and life expectancy further stress economic trends, Conventional 9-to-5, non-service and living-waged jobs have wilted with the rise of organization, globalization, mechanization, technology, automation, robotics, sustainability and diversification. Inflation-adjusted wages declined. Income-disparity rose exponentially. Jobs will be reinvented and reorganized at a faster pace---from workers, builders, soldiers, tinkers and tailors to architects, technocrats, doctors, lawyers and executive chiefs.

Politicians are reluctant to acknowledge transformations, clinging to traditional solutions to nonconventional economics. From 1750 to 2150, the world's population will have grown from 800 million to 9.7 billion people. From 1841 to 2100, life expectancy will have increased from 42 years to 88 years. If the concept of conventional work remains unchanged, older workers will work longer. Younger workers will find constrained employment and wages---irrespective of education. A new economic paradigm is inescapable.

...Howard Wong



Did you know there are 64 native bee species in the Presidio? Learn all about bees in the park and come to the Presidio Officers' Club on Thursday, March 2 for the lecture, Bee Friendly San Francisco.