

Billionaires on Warpath to Pauperize the American Middle Class

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America's well-to-do are waging war on America's "shrinking middle class," Senator Bernie Sanders, the Vermont Independent, says.

"The nation's billionaires are on the war path. They want more, more, more," and "their greed has no end and they are apparently unconcerned for the future of this country if it gets in the way of their accumulation of wealth and power."

Sanders says that, "Right now, the top one percent controls more than 23 percent of all income earned in America," which is more wealth than "the bottom 50 percent" put together. What's more, he notes, "In the last 25 years, we have seen 80 percent of all new income going to the top 1 percent." This comment is supported by data showing that productivity gains created by U.S. workers over the past several decades have not resulted in increased pay for them but have instead gone into profits. Salaries have stagnated.

"All of the progressive legislation that started with FDR is on the chopping block," Sanders declared. "Despite the fact that Social Security today has a \$2.6 trillion dollar surplus, they are targeting Social Security. They are targeting Medicare. In Arizona, people on Medicaid who need transplants are no longer able to get them—(and) that is a real death panel."

The Vermont senator's charges about the Social Security surplus are backed up by the Social Security Administration itself. SSA says from 1937, when the first pay outs were made, through 2009, Social Security spent a total of \$11.3-trillion. In the same period, though, it received \$13.8 trillion.

Over the years, nearly 454 million Social Security cards have been issued and, presumably, as many people have been beneficiaries of the system. And between five and six million new cards are being issued every year. That's a lot of help for a lot of people.

Sanders says that since the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision "what we are beginning to see in elections is unbelievable. Billionaires are going to flood states with all kinds of negative, dishonest ads in an effort to defeat people defending the middle class." He added that the Republicans' "have been pretty honest" about their goal "to bring this country back to where we were in the 1920s."

Not only are the well-to-do out to demolish the progressive legislation enacted as America

struggled out of the Depression of the 1930s but well-to-do individuals and corporations are skirting the tax laws enacted to make them pay their fair share of taxes on their income.

“Right now,” Sanders says, “we are losing about \$100 billion every year because corporate America and the very wealthy are stashing their money in tax havens like the Cayman Islands and Bermuda.” He continued, “In 2009 ExxonMobil made \$19 billion in profits and not only did the company not pay anything in taxes, it got a \$106 million refund from the IRS.”

In an article he wrote for May-June’s *Utne Reader*, Sanders continued, “We should be aware that since 1997, we have almost tripled funding for the military” and if the nation is serious about reducing the deficit, the Pentagon budget is among the “things we need to look at.”

Sanders called for Americans “to put pressure on a handful of Republicans—to tell them, ‘Go into your hearts, talk to your constituents and tell me if it is appropriate to hold hostage the future of this country for an agenda that benefits only the very rich.’”

Sanders concluded that if we don’t act, “if they roll over us now—there is no stopping them. It is time we organize.” Maybe seniors will consider organizing into groups with the word “Voters” and “Defenders” of Social Security in their title. Seniors vote in large numbers and the names of their organizations could send Republicans a message. #

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