

Vermont Socialist Plans Mayoralty With a Bias Toward the Poor

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BURLINGTON, Vt., March 6 — Olive branches and soothing balm seemed in order, and so Bernie Sanders, a 39-year-old, self-styled Socialist from Flatbush who surprised Vermont on Tuesday by narrowly being elected Mayor of its largest city, was being careful to sound conciliatory.

"I'm not going to war with the city's financial and business community and I know that there is little I can do from City Hall to accomplish my dreams for society," said Mr. Sanders, whose election runs counter to both this state's native conservatism and the nation's trend toward the political right.

Nonetheless, he plans to run the city with the aid of a steering committee of poor people, labor unions and other representatives of what he calls the "disenfranchised"; to push for enactment of some form of tenants' rights or rent control measure; to tax or otherwise receive city revenues from the numerous tax-exempt educational and medical institutions here, and to investigate the morale problems of the city's Police Department.

And he said that he intended to run a city government marked by a distinct bias toward the poor. "We're coming in with a definite class analysis and a belief that the trickle-down theory of economic growth, the 'what's good for General Motors is good for America' theory, doesn't work," he said today.

Unless a recount demanded by his opponent overturns his 22-vote lead, Mr. Sanders will take office in April in this prosperous city of 38,000 people, set dramatically on a hillside with Lake Champlain and a picture-book view of New York's Adirondack Mountains on one side and the rolling hills of Vermont's intense rural poverty on the other.

In four unsuccessful races for Governor and United States Senator since 1970, Mr. Sanders had ruffled some feathers by attacking the political, financial, business and educational leaders of the state for directing their attention to growth and development rather than the plight of the state's poor, politically disenfranchised and elderly residents.

But his victory was met with restraint by some of those leaders. "I wish Bernie Sanders luck and success," said Gov. Richard A. Snelling, a Republican whom

Mr. Sanders has accused of being in thrall to business interests. And Hilton Wick, president of the city's largest commercial bank, remarked in steely tones that it was unlikely the new Mayor would have any "significant, rapid effect" on life here.

Gordon Paquette, the city's five-term Democratic Mayor, declined to talk about the election until after a recount is held next week. In five previous races the former bakery delivery man had never lost an election, never lost a single city ward. He had run unopposed, and thus with tacit Republican support, three times and rarely garnered less than 75 percent of the vote.

Mr. Sanders, who ran as an independent, is a former freelance writer, carpen-

ter, film producer and political activist who came to Vermont in the late 1960's like thousands of other young people upset over the Vietnam War and the plight of the nation's cities. This time he beat Mayor Paquette by 43.2 percent of the 9,000 votes cast to 43.1 percent.

Mr. Sanders put together an unlikely coalition that included poor people's and tenants' rights organizations, students and faculty members at the University of Vermont here and members of the Burlington Patrolmen's Association and other city workers groups upset over pay and working conditions.

"We have a city that is trying to help a developer build \$200,000 luxury waterfront condominiums with pools and

health clubs and boutiques and all sorts of upper-middle-class junk five blocks from an area where people are literally not eating in order to pay their rent and fuel bills," he said. "Building luxury condominiums will not be the priority of this administration."

Mr. Sanders did not campaign as a Socialist and Mr. Paquette did not make an issue of it.

Nonetheless, Mr. Sanders' political beliefs are widely known, and he said of his victory: "Burlington will be on center stage because the country has gone in one direction and we have gone in the other. People will be paying \$10 a head to see the freak Mayor of Burlington and what we do can have an affect."



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Bernie Sanders, the newly elected Mayor of Burlington, Vt.