

Sanders Sweeps City Electorate

3/3/83 CYNIC

By Maggie Hayes

"It'll never happen again. He's a one-term mayor."

Joyce Desautels, former Burlington Alderwoman, 1982

"He's not going to get 50 percent of the city, but he's going to get his 40 percent."

UVM political science professor Garrison Nelson as quoted in the *New York Times* on Feb. 28, 1983

Well, what do you know? With a record turn-out of 13,000 voters Tuesday, Burlington voters proved the above opinions wrong. Not only did Bernard Sanders, a self-proclaimed socialist, prove he can be a two-term mayor, but he also drew support from more than half of the city's vote — according to unofficial results, 52.1 percent.

Sanders has a clear mandate in Burlington — it was not an accidental fluke that he captured over 50 percent of the vote this time around.

As the 41-year-old Brooklyn native strode into the tightly packed victory party at Minerva's Restaurant, red-faced,



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Sanders

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wearing sneakers, a shirt, rumpled sweater, and a beaming grin, the 350 Sanders supporters ecstatically yelled his name amidst the peanuts, balloons and din — "Bernie! Bernie! Bernie!"

"I'm very grateful to the people of Burlington," said Sanders. "There is a lot of popular support for what we are trying to do. It has to be recognized that we have a mandate to go forward."

Sanders said that the cause of his victory "is not Bernie's. It's you, and thousands of other people in the city. It's not me."

The tone of the evening was a bit more refined and subdued at Democratic contender Judy Stephany's gathering at Lilly's. Drawing a constant flow of about 50 supporters, the Democratic candidate conceded defeat about 9 p.m.

Former Governor Philip Hoff, a Democrat supporting Stephany, surmised Tuesday night, "I was surprised. It was a real tribute to Sanders. It was no accidental win. It was a real victory. He deserves congratulations. I'm not stunned by the victory, but by the incredible margin."

When Gilson recognized his own defeat, he said Sanders "won fair and square. That's the way the system's supposed to work."

With unofficial results from all six wards by late Tuesday evening, Sanders had garnished 6,942 or 52.1 percent; Stephany trailed with 4,086 or 30.7 percent; and Gilson was left out of the contest with 2,292 or 17.2 percent.

The leftist radical who skimmed by with a mere 10 votes to five-term Democratic Mayor Gordon Paquette in 1981, won every ward except for Ward 4 — Stephany's home ward. She edged Sanders by some 300 votes.

"We knew it was pretty clear that Judy had lost when



Stephany conceding defeat.

Glenn Russell

she was only winning by a three or four percent margin in Ward 4," said the candidate's husband, Bill Stephany, UVM Professor of English.

Sanders also gained a majority in Ward 6, an area well-known as Republican. Many have speculated this win is due to a surge in student voting. Sanders easily gained almost 70 percent in Wards 2 and 3, an area dominated by Democrats. In Ward 1, Sanders received over 55 percent of the vote.

While Sanders coalition candidate and UVM English Professor Huck Gutman of Ward 6 and Amy Demarest of Ward 1 lost their races, Sanders acknowledged their efforts and then joined hands at the Minerva's party with victors Terry Bouricius of Ward 2 and Peter Lackowski of Ward 3, two other members of the Sanders coalition. Even with these two victories, Sanders still faces major opposition from the Board of Aldermen composed of five supporters, five Republicans, and three Democrats.

Although the Sanders organization was confident in the last days of the race, Sanders added, "It was bigger than we expected. And the voter turn-out was stronger than in the past."

When asked if the student vote had an effect on his victory, especially in Ward 6, Sanders said he could not deduce any "concrete" evidence until he saw the vote tally data. "But there has been dedicated support from

the students up on the UVM campus. I'm encouraged to see more activism with the young people in the city."

For the second time, the GOP and Democrats have been stung by Burlington's support for Sanders, his leftist philosophy, and the voters' apparent disillusion with traditional politics. Many have criticized Sanders for his unconventional style and confrontational mannerisms as he fought the Board of Aldermen who blocked proposal after proposal during his first term.

But Sanders has also been praised for his fiscal reforms aided by Treasurer Jonathan Leopold. In regard to Sanders' fiscal "conservatism," William Skelton was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* that Sanders is "Out-Republicaning the Republicans."

However, Democratic leader Brian Brennan remains hopeful. "This may sound strange, but the Democratic party is stronger than four or five weeks ago. In 1981, we experienced a wrenching experience. We knew we couldn't remain fractured. We now have the beginnings of a strong organization."

Whether the Democrats can pull together and re-establish a Burlington mandate in the next mayoral election remains to be seen. However, what is quite lucid is that Burlington has chosen Bernie for at least another two years. Perhaps this time around he'll stick. ●