

Foundation for Proportional Representation-based Socialism

Website: www.PRsocialism.org Forum: tinyurl.com/PRsocialismforum Newsletter 10 (1 May 2011)

Editor's note: As with previous Foundation newsletters, anyone who agrees with (some or most of) the politics in it can download it from the website (www.PRsocialism.org) in Word or PDF format, print it out, photocopy it and distribute it. This would be particularly welcome in the run-up to the 5 May elections and referendum.

Support 30 June general strike call!

Four public sector unions, the UCU, PCS, NUT and ATL, have either balloted for strike action or have decided to ballot, on the issue of attacks by the coalition government on pensions – workers are expected to contribute more, work for longer and receive less when they retire. They plan to coordinate action and strike together on the 30th of June. Other public sector unions should join them, and even the National Association of Head Teachers has voted 99.6% to strike! Ultimately private sector unions need to be involved, and indefinite action will be necessary, but this is a start.

Pensions are an ideal issue to strike against the attacks by the ConDem coalition, also including redundancies and a pay freeze. Let's defeat them on this as a step towards bringing down the government and hopefully leading to a very democratic socialist society, with proportional representation, workers' control of industry and direct democracy (e.g. referenda initiated by the electorate like in Switzerland).

Vote Socialist, Green or Labour on 5 May – and prepare for a Greece-style revolt!



The council elections, and elections to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and Northern Ireland Assembly, on Thursday 5 May, are opportunities for radical socialist or Green parties opposed to cuts to make a breakthrough.

In England, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), bringing together the two largest revolutionary socialist parties (the SWP and Socialist Party) plus others, is standing in about 180 council seats. TUSC is standing in some areas with "Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts" on the ballot paper, and "Socialist Alternative" in others

(the Socialist Party's electoral name that people are used to). TUSC could win some seats, by calling for "needs budgets", without cuts or council tax rises, demanding extra money from central government (like the Militant-led Liverpool Labour council did successfully before ultimately being defeated due to a refusal of other Labour councils to fight). Most Labour councillors will be little difference in practice to Tories or Lib Dems, but a high vote for Labour would help put pressure on the government and give working class people confidence.

TUSC is also standing in Wales. Note that the Welsh nationalists (Plaid Cymru) sometimes describe themselves as a socialist party, and some left-wing people support them on that basis.

In Northern Ireland, the Socialist Party and People Before Profit Alliance are standing. There is a need to counteract the divisive sectarian politics that has divided working class people there on religious grounds for so long.

In Scotland, the left vote is unfortunately split after the former leader of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), Tommy Sheridan, successfully sued the News of the World, setting up the breakaway party Solidarity. The SSP has about 4% support according to opinion polls and stands a chance of winning seats despite Solidarity splitting the vote (it has united with George Galloway of Respect in the Coalition Against Cuts in Glasgow).

Whatever happens in the 5th of May elections, action by workers like the general strikes which convulsed Greece are key. The ConDem coalition's cuts programme will lead to economic stagnation at best. Capitalism leads to crisis, and another banking crisis could be on the cards when governments (that previously bailed out the banks by borrowing money from other banks) go bankrupt (only prevented so far in the Eurozone by bailouts which working class people are expected to pay the bulk of in big austerity drives).

Vote Yes in the Alternative Vote referendum and fight for real proportional representation!

The Foundation for Proportional Representation-based Socialism is in favour of real PR, which Alternative Vote (AV), the only alternative to the existing First Past The Post (FPTP) that we're allowed to choose in the referendum, certainly is not. Under AV, voters mark their ballot papers in order of preference. The lowest placed candidate is eliminated and has his or her votes redistributed according to second preferences. This continues until one candidate gets over 50% of the vote.

There is an undoubted bias towards centre, compromise, candidates under AV. However, voters would not necessarily make the same choices, so the Liberal Democrats need not be the main beneficiaries. Voters would be considerably more likely to vote socialist given that there wouldn't be an incentive for tactical voting – under FPTP, it could be seen as a wasted vote, splitting the left-of-centre vote.

Winning elections is not everything; registering the true level of support for socialism would give a boost to extra-parliamentary activities even when mainstream candidates are elected. However, even in Australia where the Socialist Party (CWI) is very small, they have won council seats under AV.

Some people argue for a No vote to spite Nick Clegg and the Lib Dems. However, David Cameron and the Tories are even bigger enemies and they are strongly opposed to AV, along with the British National Party (left candidates would be able to stand against the BNP without risking splitting the anti-BNP vote) and right-wing Labour politicians like former tough-man home secretary John Reid.

An article in *The Independent* has suggested that Tories are planning emergency legislation in the event that the AV referendum is won with a low turnout. If this happens, the momentum for real proportional representation (the only option capable of winning the support of the overwhelming majority of the population) could prove unstoppable!

No cuts – nationalise banks and use bailout money! Close tax loopholes – force the rich to pay tax!

The scale of the economic crisis in Britain, in which there has been a longer recession than any other Western country despite the massive stimulus package, is so severe due to previous Tory governments decimating manufacturing and industries like coal and steel to try to smash the trade unions, with the economy now relying on services largely based in the City of London. After the run on Northern Rock, that looks foolhardy. There are big opportunities for the left, and the right blaming immigration. We need to put across our ideas skilfully, particularly with respect to where we suggest the money should come from to avoid the cuts planned by the main parties. Whereas most socialists oppose wars, Trident and ID cards, as well as taxing the rich of course, the economic problems are too great for such savings to be sufficient.

Around £1.3 trillion (i.e. £1,300,000,000,000) of our money was spent by the previous Labour government on bailing out the banks. Socialists should argue strongly for nationalising all the banks, but this would cost money the government doesn't have unless we only compensate pension schemes. This would allow whatever's left of the bank bailout money to be used for the benefit of all, avoiding cuts. We should also argue for all banks, whether currently nationalised, part-nationalised or private, to be run democratically from below with most control in the hands of borrowers, savers and workers (plus government representatives). Marxists typically argue for workers' control, but it seems clear that those whose money is at stake should have at least as much control as those who happen to work at a particular bank. If the European Union objects, a socialist government may need to withdraw (unless socialists come to power across Europe at once).

The Tories and Liberal Democrats massively underestimate money lost to the Treasury due to tax avoidance and evasion, which the Tax Justice Network estimates at £95 billion, and the recent budget contained measures to save an estimated figure of just £1 billion! It may be that international agreements are necessary to get the really big sums of money that the rich avoid in this way. It may also be that rich people and corporations relocate to elsewhere in the world to continue avoiding paying a fair share of tax. There are two answers to that – don't let them take their assets with them and encourage revolutions in other countries so they have nowhere to run to!

Join the struggle for Very Democratic Socialism

The Facebook group at [tinyurl.com/VDemSoc](https://www.facebook.com/tinyurl.com/VDemSoc) is intended to discuss and work towards a very democratic form of socialism – in which the government is elected by proportional representation, there is workers' control of industry and there is an element of "direct democracy" (whereby everyone in society can discuss and vote on important issues, perhaps by referenda initiated by a petition signed by some proportion/quantity of the electorate like in Switzerland).

Members of the group are free to make suggestions concerning how such a future society would work, including the form of PR and what to do when the government comes into conflict with workers' committees – called "dual power" by Marxists (we advocate a permanent form of dual power plus direct democracy or "permanent triple power").

Advocating a very democratic form of socialism is important to be popular enough to win majority support (essential for a successful revolution) and to avoid a counter-revolution if the masses regard society as undemocratic afterwards.