

Foundation for PR-based Socialism

Website: www.PRsocialism.org Forum: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PRsocialism>

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Workers of the world unite – with the middle class!

May Day is the international workers' day, when there are many events around the world celebrating struggles of the working class. This year, it's the 40th anniversary of working class people challenging for power in France.

The capitalist economy, in Britain and internationally, is in crisis – with the “credit crunch” resulting from sub-prime mortgages sold to people with poor credit records in the USA, escalating levels of government debt and massive increases in food and fuel prices way above official inflation rates. In the so-called third world, food inflation is so high that millions of poor people are literally starving to death once more.

In recent years, parties calling themselves “socialist” have taken power in many countries in Latin America. However, in Britain and other Western countries, prospects for workers taking power seem more remote now than ever before in the history of capitalism! Most left-wing activists, including supposed revolutionaries, concentrate on putting forward reformist demands, such as more money for public services or opposing cuts, at a time when the government is already borrowing about £40 billion a year!

It is important, particularly at a time of economic crisis, for revolutionary socialists to talk about the need for revolution and say how we would organise society better than capitalists do. But what sort of socialist society do we advocate? Marxist parties like the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) stand for a form of socialism sometimes called “the dictatorship of the proletariat” in which only the working class is in control – via hierarchies of committees based on workplaces, with a “workers’ militia” to try to prevent such a society from being overthrown. Hierarchical structures, including those in the SWP itself, make it easy for infiltrators from hostile organisations to reach positions of power and stay there, because it is generally only those on such committees who know who the dodgy people are and what they are up to. Furthermore, in these days of a burgeoning middle class, when there is overwhelming support for some sort of proportional electoral system, such forms of socialism are outdated and stand no chance of receiving popular support.

In contrast, the Foundation for PR-based Socialism stands for a form of socialism based on proportional representation (PR) by single transferable vote (STV). Under STV, voters can specify preferences for different candidates so that votes are transferred to second and later preferences, if the first choice is eliminated or gets more votes than necessary. It is the fairest form of PR because it removes the need for tactical voting and allows voters to choose between candidates of the same party.

What sort of party/network do we need? Join the debate

The Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and Solidarity (which split from the SSP in 2006 in the wake of the Tommy Sheridan defamation trial) have very similar policies, with both uniting revolutionary socialists and reformists around a mainly reformist programme. This strategy was initially successful (winning six Members of the Scottish Parliament in 2003) but arguably would have failed even if there hadn't been a split. Surely it is time for a realignment of the left, with at least one of those parties adopting a different strategy or for a new party to be formed attracting members from both. But what sort of party (or “network” if the term “party” seems off-putting or too hierarchical) can best lead to socialism?

- An openly revolutionary socialist party?
- A revolutionary anti-capitalist party, uniting revolutionary socialists with others opposed to capitalism, like the party being launched by the French LCR? Anarchists could join and ignore its electoral activities if they so wish.
- An ethical capitalist party, which forces rich people and companies to pay their fair share of tax?
- A libertarian party? The UK Libertarian Party, which was formed this year, wants a very free capitalist society under which a voluntary socialist mini-state could be created. It currently has a right-wing programme, on many issues apart from civil liberties and the STV voting system, but if it adopts a position of redistributing wealth at the start of a libertarian society or increasing the minimum wage, both of which Foundation founder Steve Wallis suggested on their forum, their policy of abolishing income tax could be both good and popular.

We may also need to consider setting up some sort of grouping of like-minded people, officially recognised or otherwise, within such a party. Our enemies are organised so we need to be too.

To debate these issues, go to the Glasgow meeting (see the box) or the internet forum (see the top of the newsletter). You can also go to the UK Libertarian Party forum at www.lpuk.org/forum (request access to the main boards – you don't need to join the party).

Meeting

Radical Education Network

Thursday 8 May 2008, 7-9pm

Room N101, St Andrew's Building

Eldon Street, Glasgow