

Foundation for PR-based Socialism

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

Website: www.PRsocialism.org Newsletter 4 (15/9/08)

Struggle for real democracy and socialism – inside and outside the Labour Party

Labour is in crisis, with Gordon Brown and the entire New Labour project deeply unpopular and many demanding a change of leadership and/or policies.

Brown claimed to have ended the cycle of boom and bust – impossible under capitalism. He borrowed heavily to prolong the boom and we are now entering a severe recession. Big business and its New Labour allies are trying to make working class people pay for their crisis – escalating food and fuel prices and a housing slump, with big cuts in living standards unless we go on strike.

The credit crunch is mainly blamed on “subprime” mortgages in the USA, sold to people with a poor credit history and with high interest rates starting low. This caught many out, since **most US mortgages are at a fixed rate for the entire term, which (due to high inflation) could lead to many banks around the world that have lent the money for such “prime conforming” mortgages facing bankruptcy**. New Labour would probably bail other banks out like when it nationalised Northern Rock (and like the US government recently did with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) or lent £50 billion without revealing to whom, but other governments may adopt a different approach.

The problems of capitalism are so severe that mere reforms (entailing greater government borrowing) are insufficient; we should point out that a complete change of society is needed. We should also fight for real democracy – proportional representation, under capitalism or socialism (see overleaf).

The Labour Party conference takes place this month in Manchester. Meanwhile, the Convention of the Left will bring together activists from a wide range of organisations inside and outside the Labour Party simultaneously in the same city. It would be premature for socialists to leave Labour now, with struggles for the direction of the party just beginning, but the Convention could play a big role in the creation of a new socialist party capable of challenging for power at the next general election. If we fail, the Tories will almost certainly win it (perhaps leading to an independent Scotland, the SNP splitting and socialism could start in Scotland). Come along to debate the way forward.

Convention of the Left

Saturday 20 – Wednesday 24 September, Manchester

For details, visit www.conventionoftheleft.org

Campaign for renewable sources of energy – and point out the need for socialism

In these difficult economic times, it is unsurprising that many ordinary people give higher priority to maintaining their living standards than saving the planet. Since thousands are likely to freeze to death this winter due to not being able to afford to heat their homes, it would be inhuman to ignore their plight. We are rightly cynical about politicians who sometimes talk green but help polluting companies or use “climate change” as an excuse for building more nuclear power stations – with by-products needed for nuclear weapons, and those politicians supposedly worried about terrorism. [Would they allow a terrorist attack on a nuclear power station, to excuse such a severe clampdown on civil liberties that a socialist revolution would become impossible?]

Capitalist politicians use talk of climate change as an excuse for divide-and-rule, with some ordinary people more concerned about the problem than others. Some fly across Britain while others use trains or coaches; politicians serious about climate change would tax flights to subsidise public transport.

With Scotland having just had the coldest Easter for 46 years (and China the coldest winter for 50), cynicism about global warming is understandable. Even if it isn't mainly caused by mankind, investment in renewable sources of energy would still be preferable – due to the pollution of carbon fuels (highlighted by the smog in Beijing before the Olympics) and the fact that such resources are running out (shortage of supplies have caused recent price hikes). Also, it's better to be on the safe side than risk disastrous global warming.

Tidal and wind power are probably most suitable for the British climate, but solar power is ideal in African deserts. An EU committee recommended concentrating solar power (CSP) plants in Africa, that focus sunlight onto a tower to drive a turbine, to provide Europe's power. The dangers of unstable African regimes or terrorist attacks on power lines may make it unfeasible in the current unethical capitalist world – but we should use that as a reason for socialist revolution, rather than merely suggesting minor reforms that do little to solve the world's energy problems or help the struggle for a better world.

For the single transferable vote (STV) form of PR

Marxists argue for hierarchies of committees based on workplaces (that were called “soviets” in the USSR) backed up by a “workers' militia” to enforce the rule of just the working class – “the dictatorship of the proletariat”.

Hierarchies enable those with bad intentions (including infiltrators from the secret services) to reach and stay in positions of power, because only those on the same committees know who such people are and what they are up to.

STV, where voters specify preferences for different candidates, is the fairest form of PR, since it eliminates the need for tactical voting.