

# *Foundation for Proportional Representation-based Socialism*

Website: [www.PRsocialism.org](http://www.PRsocialism.org) Forum: [tinyurl.com/prsocialismforum](http://tinyurl.com/prsocialismforum) Newsletter 5 (31 October 2008)

**Editor's note:** I, Steve Wallis, have written all the articles in this newsletter. I would welcome replies to points made in this newsletter and articles/letters for future newsletters, posted to the forum (with the web address above) or emailed to me personally at [revolutionarysocialiststeve@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:revolutionarysocialiststeve@yahoo.co.uk). I have recently changed my strategy for achieving a democratic socialist society from opposing and sabotaging Marxism to uniting with Marxists, as outlined in this newsletter. This will hopefully encourage other revolutionary socialists to get involved.

As with previous Foundation newsletters, anyone who agrees with the politics in it can download it from the website (with the web address above) in Word or PDF format, print it out and distribute it anywhere in the world.

## **Support Barack Obama as a step towards achieving socialism!**



**JOIN US**  
HELP ELECT BARACK OBAMA

The date of the US presidential election (the 4th of November) is looming. The far left (revolutionary socialists, particularly Marxists) have traditionally opposed both the Democrats and Republicans as parties of big business. Sometimes they have supported alternative candidates, particularly Ralph Nader, who stood as a Green Party candidate in 1996 and 2000, receiving 2,883,105 votes (2.74%) in the latter year.

Nader was widely blamed for George W Bush beating Al Gore in 2000, because Nader's votes in New Hampshire and Florida vastly exceeded the difference in their votes, but so did the votes of the other six third-party candidates. Gore actually got more votes than Bush in Florida but was defrauded by a Supreme Court ruling halting a manual recount – there were many more “hanging chads” (from ballot papers that hadn't been properly punched by machines) on papers of those voting for Gore

than Bush, because instructions on how to vote were very complicated and Bush supporters tended to be better educated, and exit polls showed Gore way ahead of Bush (far more than the difference in their recorded votes). The argument that there was not time to count the votes ahead of a court deadline was ridiculous, considering that manual counts take place in a few hours in the UK, but it suited Bush's allies in the courts to defraud Gore.

Nevertheless, Nader received a mere 463,653 votes (0.38%) when he stood again, independently this time, in 2004. Clearly most of Gore's supporters had switched to the Democrats and perhaps even campaigned for its candidate John Kerry that year. They correctly drew the conclusion that, under the extremely undemocratic US electoral system, change could only realistically come via the Democrats. Some got involved in left-wing organisations operating within the Democratic Party including the Progressive Democrats of America. Right-wingers are organised so left-wingers need to be too, as the Militant Tendency argued when it was a faction of the British Labour Party (until it left in the early 1990s).

In the second live TV debate with Bush in 2004, Kerry pledged to tax the rich (reverse tax cuts of 85 or 90 billion dollars for those earning over \$200,000 a year) and close all tax loopholes. This was the primary reason why Kerry was also defrauded, in an election where votes were conducted using computers with no paper trail preventing manual recounts, and with the three companies providing most of the computers linked to the Republicans and refusing requests for impartial observers to examine the software! Some voters pressed “Back” on the computers and found that their vote was being registered with Bush when they had voted for someone else (actually a sign that some of the programmers wanted the fraud to be discovered!) Other dubious tactics included having more voting machines per person in white areas than black ones in that highly segregated country, with some queuing for several hours to vote and others giving up.

Like New Labour in Britain, which is introducing ID cards linked to a central database and collecting other information about us including car registration numbers gleaned from speed cameras (even those not speeding), the Republicans have tried to ensure that capitalism continues forever using measures like the Patriot Act. This alone would be a reason to vote for Obama, in addition to increasing the likelihood of a swift end to the war in Iraq and the Democrats carrying out the large number of reforms in the interest of working and middle class people that Obama is promising. Don't just take my word for him having a left-wing programme – watch the 30-minute ad shown on TV (search YouTube for “Obama infomercial”) and/or visit [www.BarackObama.com](http://www.BarackObama.com). Obama is not a revolutionary socialist, but nor was Fidel Castro before the Cuban revolution – and a victory for him will greatly increase the chances of a socialist transformation of society as well as a fair electoral system, in the USA and with a knock-on effect around the world!

Will Obama be defrauded like Gore and Kerry? Obama's defeat would be blamed on racism; he'll have 5000 volunteer lawyers in Florida but will that prevent it? Visit [www.nomorestolenelections.org](http://www.nomorestolenelections.org). Or will he be assassinated, as planned by two neo-Nazis? [They were described as “skinheads” in many news reports. Great! Those who look like fascists either are ones, are pretending to be ones, or are unaware of the impression such a hairstyle gives.]

# Democratise the banks and end repossessions

Stock markets around the world have recently come close to complete financial meltdown. Governments and central banks around the world have had to resort to huge subsidies and nationalisations to prevent this from happening. Even the \$700 billion in the USA and £500 billion in the UK may not be enough! Gordon Brown is being hailed as the saviour of capitalism and the British bailout is being copied overseas, but in some countries, capitalists are having problems borrowing the money they need to preserve their system and severe conditions that attack the living standards of working and middle class people may be imposed in order to get emergency funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Socialists should demand and indeed are demanding that money is also used to help ordinary people in this recession, including an end to repossessions (perhaps by the banks owning the properties and renting them back to the previous owners). However, with many banks around the world being nationalised, and the possibility that only nationalisation of all the banks will lead to them lending to each other again, we should insist that they are run democratically, with most control in the hands of borrowers and savers (also with representatives on the boards of the government and trade unions).

Left-wing activists should debate precisely what demands to put forward, and there will be an opportunity for activists in the Manchester area (in England) to do so at the next Convention of the Left meeting (7pm, Monday 17 November, Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, behind Manchester Central Library). Should the whole board be elected annually, rather than just a third as with building societies like the Nationwide, limiting change? Should there be referenda of members if there is a minority opinion on the board such as over whether to increase or decrease interest rates? Should there be local meetings of borrowers, savers and workers to determine the banks' policies?

## 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 had the coldest Easter for 46 years (and China the coldest winter for 50), and Britain having had snow in October for the first time since 1934, 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 caused oil 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.

## Turn the Convention of the Left into an anti-capitalist network

There have been many different attempts to unite left-wing activists, in Britain and elsewhere in the world, in recent years. Most of these have involved revolutionary socialists uniting with reformists, with parties generally putting forward lowest common denominator politics such as reformist demands. The economic crisis is so great that gradual reforms are insufficient to deal with it effectively, and New Labour is already borrowing many billions of pounds that it cannot afford, funded by borrowing (£37.6 billion in six months) with the Tories and Lib Dems making similar promises. If activists don't talk about the need to replace the capitalist economic system with socialism, it will never happen!

The Convention of the Left, which met during Labour's conference in September, brought together activists with a wide range of political views inside and outside that party. The time is not ripe to launch a new party that stands candidates in elections – there is still a struggle taking place within the Labour Party with the prospect of a sizeable split-off linking up with socialists outside the party. Whereas I would be in favour of a democratic revolutionary socialist party, calling for hierarchies of committees based on workplaces and local communities (as advocated by Marxists) but also with a government elected by proportional representation (preferably with single transferable vote to end tactical voting), a broader organisation, perhaps called the Anti-Capitalist Network, would be more viable and inclusive now.

### Convention of the Left recall conference

Saturday 29 November, Manchester

For details, visit [www.conventionoftheleft.org](http://www.conventionoftheleft.org)

I'd urge all socialists in Britain to come to the Convention's recall conference (see the box) and discuss the way forward. It is the most promising attempt at left unity so far, largely because it was a rank-and-file initiative by activists in Manchester.