

The Harbour League



THE NEW SOCIALISTS

COMMENTARY BY: Mark Hyman

I lived and worked in London in the late 1980s. One evening I attended a dinner party in the weeks leading up to the 1988 presidential election. In attendance were guests from several European nations.

During a conversation I shared my concerns over the outcome of the presidential race. When I finished speaking, an Italian guest leaned in my direction and chided me for my concerns. "You Americans are so silly," he admonished. "You are worried over which capitalist to vote for: the Democrat or the Republican. In Italy we have real choices. Do we vote for the capitalist, the socialist or the communist?"

I wish that Italian guest could have joined me at a recent gathering in which a state legislator lectured me over the state of the economy. The state, she said, should have the right to confiscate the financial assets of individuals and businesses to provide for the betterment of those without. Her husband added, "It is a criminal act to have money and not spend it so that the government can get its share." My, how times have changed.

It has now become fashionable for America's socialists to come out of the closet. Elected officials advocating ideological viewpoints that would have elicited derision and laughter only a few months ago are now emboldened to openly promote socialist policies. They feel safe because America's chief executive has embraced an agenda that is quickly moving America toward socialism in which the goal is to have all power vested in the state and any dissent is quashed.

Exhibit No. 1 is President Barack Obama's claim that "the federal government is the only entity left with the resources to jolt our economy back into life." Rather than provide tax and regulatory relief for businesses that would actually jumpstart the economy, Mr. Obama's \$787.2 billion "stimulus package" is crammed full of wasteful spending measures that hew to a social engineering agenda that includes government central planning at its very core.

The bill has \$575 billion in new spending measures that do not invite businesses to invest, expand or create jobs. Incentives to spur consumer purchasing of big ticket items such as homes and automobiles were drastically scaled back in the final bill passed by Congress. Instead, a dramatic increase in welfare payments was wedged into the legislation.

The rise in welfare payments and the \$400 per person "refund" that will go to the 42 percent of Americans who do not pay any federal taxes make good on Mr. Obama's promise to "spread the wealth."

Mr. Obama easily pushed this deeply partisan legislation through the Democratic Congress even though no government has ever been able to tax the people into prosperity and the world landscape is littered with failed governments that embraced a socialist agenda. Mr. Obama's frequent calls throughout the campaign for "economic justice" surely have Karl Marx smiling in his grave.

Exhibit No. 2 is Mr. Obama's grossly naive call for universal health care. His failed Health and Human Services Secretary nominee, Tom Daschle, promoted a U.K.-style of socialized medicine. I experienced firsthand the U.K.'s National Health Service, an appalling system of rationed health care. Not widely reported is the U.K.'s flourishing trade in private health care outside the NHS that does not require consumers to wait months or years for routine tests and treatments that people in America can receive on a same-day basis.

Mr. Daschle's call for a centralized medical records system controlled by the federal government should have privacy advocates up in arms. However, most disturbing is a provision in the stimulus bill establishing a National Coordinator for Health Information Technology that would, in the words of Mr. Daschle, ensure doctors only prescribe "[medical] treatments [that] are the most clinically valuable and cost effective." Such policies are eerily reminiscent of the political left's eugenics movement promoted by Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger.

Exhibit No. 3 is the Democratic effort to silence critics. Michigan Democratic Sen. Debbie Stabenow, whose husband was an executive with the now-bankrupt Air America liberal talk radio operation, has joined a growing list of Democratic elected

officials who have vowed to disable the few conservative broadcast media outlets by imposing the inappropriately-named "Fairness Doctrine." Sens. Chuck Schumer, Dick Durbin, Tom Harkin and John Kerry have joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and former President Bill Clinton among others in vowing action that would effectively shut down criticism of their brand of government.

Another proposal Mr. Obama is expected to push in the coming weeks is "card check" the elimination of the secret ballot in labor union voting that would allow union thugs to coerce and intimidate workers. One only has to look to the "Winter of Discontent," the era of British Prime Minister Jim Callaghan in the late 1970s, to see how corrupt labor unions sent that country into a massive economic tailspin.

There's a distinct Politburo ring to the Obama administration proposal to move the census from the Commerce Department to the control of White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, perhaps the most partisan politician to work in the White House in a decade, where claims of executive privilege could mask mischief.

Mr. Obama's bona fides of traveling in socialist circles are well-established even though not well-reported by the major news gatekeepers. His membership during the 1990s in the "New Party," an offshoot of the Democratic Socialists of America, his learning at the knee of childhood mentor and lifelong Communist Frank Marshall Davis and his consorting with unrepentant terrorist and socialist William Ayers speak volumes.

Mr. Obama worked for years as a community organizer applying the tactics of dyed-in-the-wool socialist Saul Alinsky and he was a faithful 20-year parishioner of the Rev. Jeremiah "G.. d... America" Wright.

Yet, it is no longer Mr. Obama's history that should worry Americans. Rather, it is the future of America he envisions where equal opportunity and success are to be replaced by the bare minimum and equal outcome.

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