

# Further correspondence on “‘Socialism 2010’: The politics of the International Socialist Organization”

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Thanks to David Walsh for his fine two part series on the middle class left. While I was not previously aware of the International Socialist Organization and socialistworker.org, I do regularly listen to Amy Goodman’s “Democracy Now”. From that I’m familiar with the supposed need to apply pressure on Barack Obama in order to put him on the progressive track that he presumably desires to be on.

I’m not among those who ever had any illusions about what a Barack Obama presidency might entail. Certainly I knew of the WSW’s evaluation of him, but it certainly didn’t take much to convince me that his vague allusions to change were a charade. For anyone who is thoughtful and knows a little bit of history, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that an individual’s ethnic background or gender in any shape or form guarantees a certain political perspective. How could anyone expect that someone groomed by the Democratic Machine politics of Chicago could be anything other than a careerist?

But what I mostly wanted to comment on is the conception of the middle-class left of applying pressure on an elected representative to make him/ her act in concert with that which was previously promised in words. I am sick to death of “applying pressure”.

The concept of applying pressure of the middle-class left fits in perfectly with David Walsh’s analysis of the middle-class left “helplessly tied to the political apron strings of the ruling elite”. The idea here, I believe, is acceptance of the sham democracy that currently exists in the U.S. where elected representatives are not beholden to their electors. That is, write letters, demonstrate outside their offices, publicize that campaign promises were broken, etc., and you might get thrown a few crumbs. Also to be taken into account

is the fact that it appears that the economic elite of the U.S. economically has very little room for maneuvering.

If an elected representative must be pressured to act contrary to his own intentions, then in what sense does that representative represent those who elected him? Furthermore, if in some way he is forced to act according to the will of his electors and contrary to his own desires, isn’t it likely that at the first opportunity he will seek to undo that which he was forced to do?

The working class does not deserve nor have the time to be asked to apply pressure on any elected representative reneging on the basis on which he was elected. What is needed is a new political system including the genuine possibility of the immediate recall of the working class’s representatives without any ifs, ands, or buts.

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The critique of the ISO and its conferences by David Walsh provide a great understanding of the opportunist organization. The only problem I have with it is the failure to go deeper into the beginnings of this organization, and its theoretical counterpart in Britain, the Socialist Workers Party.

Both groups hold to Tony Cliff’s theory of the former USSR being “state capitalist.” A position the ISO still puts forward in their article, “Where We Stand.”

I know very well that many SEP members have a knowledge of the middle-class tendency of “state capitalism,” but the younger generation for the most part doesn’t. Many don’t know the struggle Trotsky and his followers have waged against it, or how it often translates into capitulation with imperialism (as was the case with Shachtman). With the Soviet Union’s

collapse the younger generation might not raise the questions about what its internal social/economic relations were, and how that affects an international perspective. All this needs to be understood to expose petty-bourgeois tendencies such as “state capitalism,” and to make a Trotskyist analysis of the global situation.

I’m putting a link to a talk on *The Revolution Betrayed* from the WSWS that contains an excellent criticism of Tony Cliff’s theory (and Pabloism).

Best regards,

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