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Comrade Obama?

by Patrick J. Buchanan ([more by this author](#))

Posted 10/31/2008 ET

If Barack Obama is not a socialist, he does the best imitation of one I've ever seen.

Under his tax plan, the top 5 percent of wage-earners have their income tax rates raised from 35 percent to 40 percent, while the bottom 40 percent of all wage-earners, who pay no income tax, are sent federal checks.

If this is not the socialist redistribution of wealth, what is it?

A steeply graduated income tax has always been the preferred weapon of the left for bringing about socialist equality. Indeed, in the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848, Karl Marx was himself among the first to call for "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax."

The Obama tax plan is pure Robin Hood class warfare: Use the tax power of the state to rob the successful and reward the faithful. Only in Sherwood Forest it was assumed the Sheriff of Nottingham and his crowd had garnered their wealth by other than honest labor.

"Spread the wealth," Barack admonished Joe the Plumber.

"From each according to his ability, to each according to his need," said old Karl in 1875. When Barbara West of WFTV in Orlando, Fla., put the Marx quote to Biden, however, Joe recoiled in spluttering disbelief.

West: "You may recognize this famous quote: 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.' That's from Karl Marx. How is Sen. Obama not being a Marxist if he intends to spread the wealth around?"

Biden: "Are you joking? Is this a joke?"

Biden's better defense, however, might have been the "Tu quoque!" retort: "You, too!" --

the time-honored counter-charge of hypocrisy.

Indeed, how do Republicans who call Obama a socialist explain their support for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, welfare and the Earned Income Tax Credit? What are these if not government-mandated transfers of wealth to the middle and working class, and the indigent and working poor?

Since August, the Bush-Paulson team has seized our biggest S&L, Washington Mutual, and largest insurance company, AIG. It has nationalized Fannie and Freddie, pumped scores of billions into our banks, bailed out GM, Ford and Chrysler, and paid the \$29 billion dowry for Bear Stearns to enter its shotgun marriage with JPMorgan Chase.

And with federal, state and local taxes taking a third of gross domestic product, and government regulating businesses with wage-and-hour laws, civil rights laws, environmental laws, and occupational health and safety laws, what are we living under, if not a mixed socialist-capitalist system?

Norman Thomas is said to have quit running for president on the Socialist ticket after six campaigns because the Democratic Party had stolen all his ideas and written them into its platforms.

Did Ike repeal the New Deal? Did Richard Nixon roll back the Great Society? Nope. He funded the Great Society. Did Ronald Reagan cut federal spending? Nope, defense spending soared. Bill Clinton slashed defense, but George Bush II set social spending records with No Child Left Behind and prescription drug benefits for the elderly under Medicare. Surpluses vanished, deficits returned, the national debt almost doubled.

Is the old republic then dead and gone, in the irretrievable past? Are we engaged in an argument settled before we were born?

In his 1938 essay "The Revolution Was," Garet Garrett wrote:

"There are those who think they are holding the pass against a revolution that may be coming up the road. But they are gazing in the wrong direction. The revolution is behind them. It went by in the Night of the Depression, singing songs to freedom."

Nevertheless, there is a difference not just of degree but of kind between unemployment compensation for jobless workers, welfare for destitute families, and confiscating the income of taxpayers who earned it -- to hand out to chronic tax consumers who did not.

This last is the socialism Winston Churchill called "the philosophy of envy and gospel of

greed." And it is this suggestion of socialist ideology in Obama's words that has produced the belated pause by a nation that seemed to be moving into his camp. What did Barack say in 2001?

He spoke of the inadequacy of the courts as institutions to bring about "redistributive change" in society, of the "tragedy" of the civil rights movement in losing sight of the "political and organizing activities on the ground that are able to bring about the coalitions of power through which you bring about redistributive change."

Normal people don't talk like that. Socialists do.

This is ideology speaking. This is the redistributionist drivel one hears from cosseted college radicals and the "Marxist professors" Obama says in his memoir he sought out at the university. It is the language of social parasites like William Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn and Father Pfleger.

Enforced egalitarianism entails the death of excellence. For it seizes the rewards that excellence earns and turns them over to politicians and bureaucrats for distribution to the mediocrities upon whose votes they depend. One need not be Ayn Rand to see that Barack has picked up from past associates utopian notions that have ever produced nightmare states.

Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of [Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World](#), ["The Death of the West,"](#) ["The Great Betrayal,"](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)

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