

Socialism in America: Far Left Democrats Setting the Policy Agenda

By Deborah Kay Corey

Summary: Socialists push for greater redistribution of wealth, massive government spending, and government ownership of the means of production, and they're having a banner year so far. Now President Obama's appointment of radical environmentalist Carol Browner as his global warming "czar" reminds Americans that actual card-carrying socialists really do work in the federal government. Browner has been a member of the Socialist International. Its U.S. affiliate, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) does not function as a political party and it has a tiny membership. But DSA supports the Congressional Progressive Caucus, whose members control key committees in the U.S. House of Representatives. The mainstream media and Obama supporters snicker at the word "socialist," treating it as an anachronistic epithet hurled by rubes. But it's clear that extreme left-wing ideologues play a major role in shaping U.S. public policy.



President Obama's global warming "czar" addresses her group, the Socialist International, in an undated photograph. The SI deleted Browner's name and biography from its website after the president picked the former EPA administrator to manage his planned environmental policy overhaul.

Socialists everywhere hope that Al Gore's pretended planetary emergency will serve as an agent of change in the United States. The global warming hoax is a convenient political excuse to redistribute American wealth, grow government, and radically alter society. No one who monitors American politics should have been surprised when President Barack Obama named Carol Browner to be his energy "czar" (or more properly, *czarina*). The president has made it clear he intends to aggressively redistribute the nation's wealth because he believes it is the right thing to do. In 2007 National Journal rated Obama as the most liberal, that is, left-wing, member of the U.S. Senate with a voting record to the left of John Kerry, Barbara

Boxer, Hillary Clinton, and self-described socialist Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Obama's background, wrote Ben Wallace-Wells in a 2007 Rolling Stone profile, is "as openly radical a background as any significant American political figure has ever emerged from, as much Malcolm X as Martin Luther King Jr." (For more on President Obama's radical roots, see *Foundation Watch*, June 2008.)

Carol Browner, American Socialist

President Obama telegraphed to the world that he planned to pursue radical environmental policies when he named Browner, an

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ardent supporter of the economy-crippling “cap-and-trade” system of carbon emission controls, to be his global warming czar. Browner, who was administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for eight years during the Clinton administration, now wields immense power over domestic energy policy as assistant to President Obama for energy and climate change. Unlike many political appointees, her post is not subject to Senate confirmation.

One business lobbyist in Florida faulted Browner for her abrasiveness when she served as that state’s environmental regulation secretary from 1991 to 1993. “She kicks the door open, throws in a hand grenade, and then walks in to shoot who’s left. She really doesn’t like to compromise.” (Washington Post, Dec. 12, 1992)

Browner was also legislative director to then-Senator Al Gore. When Clinton selected her in 1992 as EPA chief a Washington Post article gushed she had “the mind and training of an attorney-legislator but the soul of an activist.”

On her last full day at EPA, Browner stood accused by critics of allowing special interests to improperly influence last-minute, or “midnight,” environmental regulations, and she violated a federal judge’s order to

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Frank Llewellyn, national director of the Democratic Socialists of America preserve her agency’s records by having her computer wiped clean. A computer technician testified under oath that she said to him, “I would like my files deleted. I want you to delete my files.” Browner explained that she was simply doing housecleaning on her computer to get rid of her son’s video games and clearing the way for the incoming Bush administration. Other senior EPA officials’ hard drives were cleared and reformatted and backups of emails were erased as well. After a two-year legal fight, a federal judge held EPA in contempt of court.

The sneaky Browner may have wiped her EPA computer clean, but she wasn’t able to delete her affiliation with the Socialist International until after an industrious reporter found it on the organization’s website. Although the listing mysteriously disappeared in January, Browner had been listed as one of 14 leaders of the Socialist International’s Commission for a Sustainable World Society, which takes the environmental left’s hard line on global warming. When the Washington Times confronted the Obama team a week before the president’s inauguration with evidence that Brown was a member of the Socialist International (SI), an Obama aide claimed that Browner had resigned from the group in June 2008.

Browner attended the Socialist International’s XXIII Congress in Athens, Greece last summer. The Congress gathered together 700 delegates from 150 political parties and groups. Her sustainability commission resolved that market solutions alone would not stop climate change and that a draconian crackdown on carbon emissions was needed. The Socialist International declared that it

“has opposed a neo-liberal market ideology and the unilateralist, US-dominated approach in the global economic system.”

Socialist International

The Socialist International (SI) was founded in 1951 and it is largely the creation of the non-Communist Socialist parties of western Europe. SI is headquartered in London, England, the same country that gave sanctuary to Marx in the mid-1800s after he was expelled from several other countries for revolutionary activities. SI members include the Socialist Party in France, the Social Democratic parties in Germany and Sweden, the Labour parties of Great Britain and Norway, the governing Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua, the African National Congress in South Africa, the Puerto Rican Independence Party, and the non-party Democratic Socialists of America in the United States. SI is funded by annual affiliation fees paid by its member political parties and associated organizations.

SI runs two commissions, Browner’s Commission for a Sustainable World Society, which focuses on global environmental issues, and the Commission on Global Financial Issues, created “to address from a social democratic perspective the ongoing global financial crisis.” (Economist Joseph Stiglitz is the most prominent name on the latter commission.)

As a nongovernmental organization (NGO), SI has consultative status with the United Nations. Its decision-making bodies are its Congress, which meets every three or four



American economist Joseph Stiglitz is a member of the Socialist International.

years, and its Council, which meets every six months and includes all member parties and organizations. SI disclosed that its 2008 budget was £1,155,000 (British pounds sterling). The previous year its revenues were £1,094,500 and expenditures were £1,058,000. (At press time, one British pound was equal to about U.S. \$1.60).

As an organization, SI wields little direct influence on American politics, but through its principal affiliate, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), it works with community groups, labor unions and college campus activists. Its youth branch, Young Democratic Socialists (YDS) is made up of students and young professionals. These groups are filled with some of the brightest and most active members of the left in America, and they bring their energies to bear on other political groups like the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Neither the Socialist International nor DSA receive much attention from the mainstream media—and that’s how socialists like it. Writer Barbara Ehrenreich, a DSA member, makes fun of those who suggest that the left is exploiting U.S. economic troubles to push socialist policies:

“Surely you have heard by now of the imminent socialist takeover of America, and if you find the prospect unlikely, ask yourself: How many socialists do you know who lost millions in the recent stock market crashes? Just as I thought—none—and that’s not only because you don’t know any socialists. The truth is that we, the Socialist International Conspiracy, not only saw this coming, we are the ones who made it happen.”

Ehrenreich’s jests are intended to deflect attention from the serious aims of the left. But leftist activists are usually very serious and determined. Author David Freddoso describes the maneuverings of one left-wing candidate in Chicago: “According to New Ground, the newsletter of the Chicago Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Obama appeared at the New Party’s summer 1995 meeting to seek their endorsement in his state Senate race. The New Party, the newsletter states, contained a heavy contingent of DSA members and also members of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and



Socialist true believers in Congress (clockwise from upper left): Charles Rangel (D-New York), Barney Frank (D-Massachusetts), John Conyers (D-Michigan), and Henry Waxman (D-California).

Socialism, a splinter group that broke away from the Communist Party USA after the fall of its financial and ideological patron, the Soviet Union.” The title of Freddoso’s book is *The Case Against Barack Obama*.

Democratic Socialists of America

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is SI’s principal U.S. representative. It was formed in the early 1980s by, among others, Michael Harrington (1928-1989), author of *The Other America*, a study said to have influenced President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty program. In one of those splits peculiar to leftist groups, the Democratic Socialists broke away from the Social Democrats over the Vietnam War. The Social Democrats were the successor political party to Norman Thomas’s Socialist Party. The Social Democrats were led by a former Trotskyite whose anti-Stalinism led

him to support the war!

Interviewed on the Fox network’s “Glenn Beck Program” on Feb. 18, DSA national director Frank Llewellyn had this to say about his group’s beliefs:

“Socialists generally believe that democracy needs to be extended into more spheres of society and especially the economy. And so, you know, we look to build institutions that will do that — co-operative institutions, unions. We look to restructure power relationships so that we don’t have the same mis-managers with the same misplaced priorities, destroying the economy as they’ve recently done.”

Llewellyn disparaged President Obama’s \$787 billion-plus economic stimulus package as “not large enough, in our judgment, to

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have as much of an impact as it should.” It would be better to have “a package of more like \$1 trillion a year.” Llewellyn told Business Week earlier this year that the Obama administration’s Big Government healthcare proposals are too free market-oriented.

A DSA pamphlet further explains:

“In the short term we can’t eliminate private corporations, but we can bring them under greater democratic control. The government could use regulations and tax incentives to encourage companies to act in the public interest and outlaw destructive activities such as exporting jobs to low-wage countries and polluting our environment. Public pressure can also have a critical role to play in the struggle to hold corporations accountable. Most of all, socialists look to unions [to] make private business more accountable.”

DSA is headquartered, interestingly enough, in the heart of capitalism on Maiden Lane in New York City’s financial district. Membership figures are not available, but regular membership dues are \$60 annually and the paid circulation of DSA’s quarterly journal “Democratic Left” is about 5,700. The jour-



Leslie Cagan of United for Peace and Justice



Marxist sociologist Frances Fox Piven is an honorary chairman of the Democratic Socialists of America.

nal features articles by DSA activists and high profile left-leaning academics such as University of Texas economist James Galbraith, son of John Kenneth Galbraith, and Occidental College economist Peter Dreier. Several issues have contained advertisements saluting DSA from such groups as the California Nurses Association and the United Steelworkers. A DSA blog “Talking Union,” links to blogs at the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win labor federations.

DSA operates two separate nonprofit entities out of its New York headquarters. Its 501(c)(4) lobby group, Democratic Socialists of America Inc., disclosed revenues of \$212,136 in 2007, which included \$105,361 in membership dues. Its 501(c)(3) education group, Democratic Socialists of America Fund Inc., had a 2007 budget of \$108,605. In the 2008 election, DSA urged its members to assist Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders by contributing to Progressive Voters of America, a political committee.

DSA’s tiny budget and membership numbers belie its actual influence. Notable DSA members include 79 year-old United Farmworkers firebrand Dolores Huerta, Oakland, California mayor and former congressman Ron Dellums, actor Ed Asner and writers Barbara Ehrenreich and Harold Meyerson.

The group’s honorary chairs are Princeton philosophy professor Cornel West and famed sociologist Frances Fox Piven, author (with the late Richard Cloward) of influential books such as *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (1971) *Poor People’s Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail* (1977).

DSA is a member group of the radical umbrella group United for Peace and Justice, an anti-war coalition headed by longtime Fidel Castro admirer Leslie Cagan which staged some of the massive rallies against the Iraq war. That group has taken in at least \$832,013 in grants from left-wing foundations such as Funding Exchange, HKH Foundation, and Wallace Global Fund, since 2003.

United for Peace and Justice claims more than 1,000 member groups are in its coalition. They are a “Who’s Who” of the American left, including Center for Constitutional Rights, Code Pink, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, National Organization for Women (NOW), Not in Our Name, and Jesse Jackson’s RainbowPUSH Coalition. The environmentalist Rainforest Action Network and the Ruckus Society, notorious for their disruptive tactics in the violent 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, are also members, as is Working Assets, a long-distance telephone



David Ridenour, vice president of the National Center for Public Policy Research

provider that donates a portion of its charges to progressive causes. Working Assets was founded by Michael Kieschnick, a member of the George Soros-led Democracy Alliance, a donors' collaborative. (For more on Democracy Alliance, see *Foundation Watch*, December 2008.)

Congressional Progressive Caucus

Unlike Britain's Labour Party or the Socialist Party of France and other international members of the Socialist International, the DSA chooses not to become a separate political party. DSA rightly notes that "The process and structure of American elections seriously hurts third party efforts." Instead, it works with allies in the feminist, labor and community organizing movements "to strengthen the party's left wing, represented by the Congressional Progressive Caucus."

Members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus control powerful committees in the new Congress. New York's Charles Rangel is chairman of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank is chairman of the Financial Services Committee, and California's Henry Waxman chairs the Energy and Commerce Committee. Michigan Representative John Conyers heads the Judiciary Committee and California's George Miller chairs the re-named Education and Labor Committee, formerly called Education and Workforce when Republicans were in the majority. All are members of CPC.

Other CPC members have plum subcommittee chairmanships: California's Pete Stark, a strong supporter of socialized ("universal") healthcare and in office since 1973, chairs the House Ways and Means subcommittee on health. The famously obstreperous Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas chairs Homeland Security's transportation security and infrastructure protection subcommittee. The notorious Maxine Waters of California chairs the housing panel of the Financial Services Committee. Other well-known members include Ohio's Dennis Kucinich, Massachusetts's Ed Markey, and California's Barbara Lee. There is considerable overlap in the membership rolls of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus. (For more on the Congressional Black Caucus and its foundation see *Organization Trends*, July 2006.)

The Congressional Progressive Caucus currently enrolls about 75 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, one-third of the entire Democratic caucus. It is co-chaired by Reps. Lynn Woolsey (D-California) and Raul Grijalva (D-Arizona). CPC was founded in 1991 by then-Rep. Bernie Sanders, the mayor of Burlington, Vermont who in 1990 was elected to the House of Representatives as an Independent. Sanders is now the only Senate member of CPC. Former CPC mem-

bers Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Tom Udall (D-New Mexico) quit the organization when they were elected to the U.S. Senate. (For more information on the CPC, see *Foundation Watch*, January 2007.)

CPC member Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Illinois) has said, "The American people are not ideological; therefore, the way to go is to attack private power." However, many CPC members don't hide their connection to socialism. "I'm a member of DSA," Rep. Danny Davis (D-Illinois) said in 2000. "There's an active chapter where I live. They're basically no different than a lot of the people I know." New York's Major Owens, now retired from the House, was also a DSA member.

A Socialist Runs U.S. Energy Policy

What can we expect from the Socialist International member Carol Browner? According to Manhattan Institute senior fellow Max Schulz, while at EPA she worked closely with environmentalist groups on a heavy-handed, zero-tolerance-for-pollution regulatory agenda. She was the prime mover behind Uncle Sam's push to compel General Electric to fork over \$490 million to dredge the Hudson River to remove PCBs buried deep beneath the river bed that were no threat to the environment or human health.



Best-selling author and journalist David Freddoso

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At EPA her drive for a severe clean-air standard met bipartisan resistance. For example, Chicago's Democratic Mayor Richard Daley complained that the proposed rules would crush inner-city economies. Many of Browner's initiatives were nixed by legislatures or courts and some of her employees were charged criminally for falsifying data and manipulating studies. (National Review Online, Dec. 11, 2008)

David Ridenour, vice president of the National Center for Public Policy Research, opined in a Washington Times op-ed (March 30) that Browner was "an environmental zealot" who has "so much baggage she could be an airline." Ridenour described a litany of abuses during Browner's tenure at EPA.

Ridenour said during the Clinton years EPA officials relentlessly harassed agency scientists who failed to tow the party line. Officials also "routinely" violated laws against lobbying Congress. He noted that James F. Hinchman, then-U.S. comptroller general of the United States, said EPA officials "distributed EPA fact sheets to various organizations ... directly lobbied the Congress." Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-West Virginia) also accused Browner's EPA of breaking the anti-lobbying law.

After leaving EPA, Browner cashed in on her environmental expertise and became a principal in Albright Group LLC, which she co-founded with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The firm describes itself as providing strategic counsel to clients around the world. She was also a principal with Albright Capital Management LLC,



George Papandreou, current president of the Socialist International, in a 2002 photograph with then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan

an investment advisory firm. Prior to taking her position in the White House she was on the board of directors for several nonprofits group including the National Audubon Society, John Podesta's Center for American Progress, Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection, and the League of Conservation Voters, as well as APX Inc., a for-profit company that describes itself as "the leading infrastructure provider for environmental and energy markets." APX certifies carbon and emissions offset certificates, and would be in a position to make oceans of money if Congress authorizes a major crackdown on greenhouse gas emissions. The company "is well-placed to support carbon-trading markets when they emerge," and has received backing from Goldman Sachs in the form of a \$14 million investment, VentureBeat reported last year.

Browner is married to former Rep. Tom Downey (D-New York), who founded the Downey McGrath Group Inc. in 1993. Downey has lobbied on energy and environmental issues for clients including Exxon Mobil Corp., Chevron Corp. and Keyspan Energy.

Are We All Socialists Now?

When Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-Alabama) recently claimed that 17 members of the U.S. House were socialists he was mocked by writer John Nichols in the far-left Nation magazine. Nichols said Bachus might have misread a figure on the website of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. "CPC

recently listed 71 members on its site – although that number has since risen to 77. Perhaps '71' was transposed as '17.'"

Similarly, Greece's George Papandreou teased that when he previously introduced himself to Americans as president of the Socialist International, the response "tended to be shock and awe." Now that Barack Obama is president, said Papandreou, "this is no longer the case." In February assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) visited Papandreou, who is also leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), a Greek opposition party. Durbin said he was not an official envoy for President Obama, his former Illinois colleague, but noted that his entourage came as "official friends of the president."

Newsweek's cover story last May was entitled "We are all Socialists Now." Not quite. And Barbara Ehrenreich's remark that the Socialist International caused the stock market crash was meant to be a joke. Still, it's getting less and less funny.

Deborah Kay Corey is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C. She also wrote "Al Gore's Carbon Crusade: The Money and Connections Behind It," (Foundation Watch, August 2007) and co-wrote "The Clinton Foundation: Substance or Style?" (Foundation Watch, February 2008).

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Terrence Scanlon
President

BrieflyNoted

The left is worried about effective conservative media coverage of election fraud and financial corruption by the radical community organizing group **ACORN**. Many groups attended a crisis management meeting called by **John Podesta's** left-wing **Center for American Progress Action Fund** to discuss how to foil attacks on ACORN, or as one attendee, the **Alliance for Justice**, phrased it: "Reframing the Attack on Voter Registration." Reporters were barred from the meeting.

In recent weeks, election fraud charges have been laid against ACORN and its senior executives in Nevada, and against ACORN's election canvassers in Pennsylvania. In Ohio, a man whom ACORN registered to vote nine times was indicted by a grand jury for casting a fraudulent ballot. This is significant because ACORN defenders say this never happens. The charges against ACORN were laid in all three states by Democratic officials.

News reports described an angry mob including supporters of ACORN and Citizen Action, who nearly knocked down New York Republican state Senator **James Alesi** and spat at his chief of staff. The protesters were upset that two Democratic senators had decided to caucus with Republicans, a move that, if finalized by the state Senate, could give control of the legislative body to Republicans. A few days later one of the party-switchers went back to the Democrats creating a 31-31 tie and a stalemate in the legislative body.

Left-wing activist groups plan to spend \$82 million on a public relations campaign supporting government-run healthcare. "This will be the crowning achievement of a new era of progressive politics," said Richard Kirsch, campaign director of **Health Care for America Now!** (HCAN). HCAN is an ACORN-led coalition of hundreds of left-wing groups across the country including **SEIU**, **AFL-CIO**, and **MoveOn.org**.

Left-of-center groups say a now-withdrawn Department of Homeland Security report on right-wing extremists has been vindicated by the recent murders of a late-term abortion provider and a security guard at the U.S. Holocaust Museum. **People for the American Way's** Right Wing Watch observes, "it seems as if the report - far from being an offensive attack on Christians and anti-choice activists - was remarkably timely and accurate." The report identified conservatives, libertarians, Second Amendment and right-to-life supporters, and returning veterans as potential terrorists.

The far-left community group **Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America** (NACA) recently squeezed taxpayer dollars out of the state of North Carolina. Like ACORN, NACA uses the Community Reinvestment Act to hound banks into lending money to low-income people with poor credit. But Democratic governor **Bev Perdue** bragged about how a \$1 million grant to NACA from the state's One North Carolina Fund will help it expand operations. **Bruce Marks**, the head of NACA, glibly calls himself an "urban terrorist."

The **Saul Alinsky**-inspired **National Training and Information Center** (NTIC) has agreed to pay \$550,000 to the U.S. government in responses to charges that it misused federal grant money, Crain's reports. NTIC has long been in the forefront of training radical community organizers. The government alleged NTIC used \$207,131 in federal cash to send its employees to training conferences. An Office of Inspector General report found last year that NTIC tried to cover up the fact that the conferences were related to lobbying, not general training, which is against the law. The group was founded by the late **Gale Cincotta**, whom some call the "mother of the Community Reinvestment Act."

For the most part, the media ignored the important Washington, D.C. convention of global warming skeptics' sponsored by the **Heartland Institute**. Heartland's third annual International Conference on Climate Change featured **S. Fred Singer** and **Craig Idso** who discussed their recent report challenging claims that climate change is caused by human activity.