

# Green Shoots of Red Electoralism

by Billy Wharton



Hidden beneath the public relations concocted roar and corporate funded thunder of the Obama and Romney campaigns were the little people. This election cycle, more than just a few voters decided to strike out and make a bold statement about what they want for their future. They decided to vote Socialist. A few thousand sought out our Presidential ticket of Stewart Alexander and Alex Mendoza, and many others focused their support on local efforts. This time, doing so wasn't just a way to register a vague protest against the system. It got someone elected.

The current batch of socialist electoral campaigns was built on other recent campaigning that brought a more serious edge to efforts to reach voters. The campaigns of Dan LaBotz for US Senate in Ohio and Brandon Collins for City Council in Charlottesville, Virginia, both garnered significant media attention and had features of full-fledged attempts at running for office. Both candidates effectively used their scarce resources in outreach efforts that included face-to-face campaigning and creative virtual efforts via free platforms such as YouTube. The pair has certainly paved a way for others.

What is most remarkable about the 2012 socialist candidates is the not the overall vote

total, but the sheer number of people willing to present themselves as candidates. In past years, our party has struggled to identify candidates. Being a socialist was a quiet thing – an identity you were proud of but only selectively revealed. A combination of the 2008 economic crisis, the previously mentioned electoral efforts and the political space created by both the radicalism of Occupy Wall Street and the drift of the Democratic Party far to the right have made being a socialist a very public position to promote.

Pat Noble, a member from New Jersey, was the most successful in doing so. Noble gained 1,033 votes and was elected to the Red Bank Regional High School Board of Education. He was joined on the Socialist ticket in the hurricane-ravaged state by Greg Pason, who contested for a seat in the US Senate. With the support of so many voters in the area, Noble will now have to take the next step in Socialist electoralism – moving from running an opposition campaign to creating concrete policies that exhibit socialist values.

This exciting development was paralleled by a plucky Michigan State Board of Education campaign waged by another Socialist, Dwain Reynolds. Reynolds has orchestrated a number of these campaigns in the past. He has created a

dynamic strategy that targets the youth vote and seeks out a coalition with the Green Party. This time, he received an impressive 66,021 votes. His efforts offer lessons about the need to build broader coalitions and tap into rising dissent among young voters.

Such tactical electoral coalitions continue to be a staple of Red Electoralism. In Texas, Angela Sarlay and the national Vice-Presidential candidate Alex Mendoza teamed with the Green Party of Texas to present their campaigns. Doing so allowed the pair to gain ballot access and present “watermelon” politics – green on the outside, red on the inside. This is a critical combination since the Socialist critique of the political economy needs the environmental critique of the Greens and vice-versa.

Sarlay’s campaign is of particular note, since it linked up with another waged by SP-USA member John Strinka in Indiana. Both contested elections as the only candidates running against a far-right Republican candidate. In both cases, the Democrats had totally abandoned local voters. Absent the socialists, the far-right agenda would have gone totally unopposed. Sarlay received 6,739 votes and Strinka 2,862.

There were others. People like Ron Halde- man who ran for State Senate in Indiana and received 750 votes. Troy Thompson who ran to become mayor of Floodwood, Minnesota. Mal Herbert, Jane Newton, Jerry Levy, and Peter Diamondstone in Vermont who ran on the Liberty Union Party line with Herbert picking up an impressive 25,749 votes. John Longhurst in Michigan and Jeff Peres in New York City also ran on the Green Party line as socialists. All told, Socialist Party USA candidates, including our presidential candidate Stewart Alexander, received 123,393 votes.

Local campaigning is no easy gig. Funds are scarce as are, often times, supporters. Candidates can often feel isolated – like a modern-day Don Quixote outgunned and running down capitalist windmills. Yet, it is through stepping back and looking at things through the lens of a national effort that people can see the vitally important impact that can be made through running electoral campaigns as socialists.

Red electoralism provides voters with choices – an essential component of any system that seeks to portray itself as democratic. Deeper than that, socialist candidates offer poor and working-class people a vision of themselves as candidates. We are not professional candidates. We have no handlers, no public relations consultants and no corporate funders who will pull our strings after the election. We offer independent fresh voices for equality for all through our demands of jobs, peace and freedom.

In the coming years, especially as the efforts by the Democrats and Republicans to impose austerity develop, electoral campaigns will offer fertile ground to present a fresh vision of democratic socialism for the 21st century. Independent electoral action can become one of the ways in which poor and working class people fight back and carve out new political possibilities for themselves and their communities.

## Variation on Corinthians 1:13

by J. Richard Marra

You ask me how I’ll vote

(It’s a secret ballot, yet I’ll tell you)

I’ll vote to raise our glasses

Toasting solitary

And drink until we love the blindness.

That we look away from the looking glass darkly

Into a pixel paradise

To dream of dreams dreaming

And let the ice in our cups caress the body plastic

Isolated.

A whimper’s sound and fury

A symbol tinkling through the fog

That shrouds Reason’s prophesy

Beneath a Nation’s dreams

Vandalized.

Abandoned.

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