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The Fabian Society : Masters of Subversion Unmasked

A brief history of the Fabian socialists, their policies, and their elite supporters

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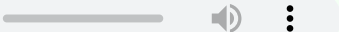
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Social Networks

The main body through which the [Fabian Society](#) operated in the beginning was the Liberal Party, this being the centre-left party at the time. However, the Fabians' involvement with Liberal politics also linked them with liberal capitalist interests, regular contact with whom was nurtured through various Fabian creations such as the [Coefficients Dining Club](#) (Quigley, pp. 137-8; cf. M. Cole, p. 118).

That the Fabians consciously sought the company, collaboration and support of the wealthy and powerful is evident from Fabian writings such as [Beatrice Webb's](#) "Our Partnership", which abound in references to "catching millionaires", "wire-pulling", "moving all the forces we have control over", while at the same time taking care to "appear disinterested" and claiming to be "humble folk whom nobody suspects of power" (Webb, 1948).

In fact, the Webbs were in regular touch with the likes of [Arthur Balfour](#) and [Richard Haldane](#) (a member of the [Fabian Society](#)) who served as contacts between the Fabians and the powerful and wealthy. As their social circle expanded, the Webbs' frequent dinners, informal meetings, and "little parties" enabled them to mingle with leading members of the ruling elite like [Lord Rosebery](#), [Julius Wernher](#) (of the gold and diamond mining company Wernher, Beit & Co.) and [Lord Rothschild](#), and talk them into backing their subversive projects.

It is essential to understand, however, that this was far from being a one-way affair. The leading elements of liberal capitalism -- the big businessmen, industrialists and bankers -- who had amassed great wealth in the wake of the industrial revolution, were no selfless philanthropists. They aimed to strengthen their own position of power and influence by two

means: (1) by monopolising finance, economy and politics; and (2) by controlling the growing urban working class.

The first aim was to be achieved by the centralisation of capital, means of production, etc. The second was to be gained through organising the workers and through promises of a larger share in resources. These aims coincided with those of the Socialist movement of which the Fabians aimed to become the leading element.

As pointed out by [H. G. Wells](#), big business was by no means antipathetic to Communism as "the larger big business grows the more it approximates to Collectivism" (Wells, p. 100). Similarly, Joseph A Schumpeter, who taught [David Rockefeller](#) at Harvard, wrote:

"The true pacemakers of socialism were not the intellectuals or agitators who preached it but the Vanderbilts, Carnegies and Rockefellers" (Schumpeter, p. 134).

Indeed, we find that the core of [Karl Marx](#) and [Friedrich Engels](#)' "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848) consisted of monopolistic capitalist policies like the centralisation of capital and the organisation of workers.

Marx and Engels had begun their career as journalists working for liberal capitalist interests. Marx later worked for the *New York Tribune*, whose owner, [Horace Greeley](#) and editor, [Charles Anderson Dana](#) were close collaborators of [Clinton Roosevelt](#) (Sutton, 1995, p. 45), a radical Democrat member of the well-known Roosevelt clan whose main areas of interest were banking and politics and who were close allies of the Vanderbilts.

The [Fabian Society](#) not only adopted Marx and Engels' policies but was closely connected with the same kind of interests.

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Media Connections

Hubert Bland, a bank-employee-turned-journalist, worked for the London *Sunday Chronicle*, a paper owned by newspaper magnate Edward Hulton, formerly of the Liberal *Manchester Guardian*. Bland was a co-founder of the [Fabian Society](#) in 1884 and became a member of its executive and its long-serving treasurer. He also recruited his friend and fellow journalist [Bernard Shaw](#).

Shaw was working for the London *Pall Mall Gazette*, where leading Liberal [William T. Stead](#) served as editor and [Alfred \(later Lord\) Milner](#) as his assistant. Both Stead and Milner were close to diamond magnate and [Rothschild](#) associate [Cecil Rhodes](#) and were involved in the formation of the influential secret organisation known as the [Milner Group](#). Having been recruited to the [Fabian Society](#) by his friend Bland in 1884, Shaw recruited [Annie Besant](#) and his friends [Sidney Webb](#), [Sydney Olivier](#) and [Graham Wallas](#) in 1885 and 1886.

Tellingly, the Fabians were also adept at securing a higher social and financial position for themselves -- which shows that the "equitable share of natural and acquired advantages" and the "complete substitution of public property for private property" preached in the "Fabian Basis" (1887) and elsewhere were not regarded by Fabians as binding on themselves.

Shaw's friend and fellow [Fabian Society](#) leader [Sidney Webb](#) married Beatrice, daughter of Richard Potter, a wealthy financier with international connections who served as chairman of

the Great Western and Grand Trunk Railways of England and Canada. Beatrice was also a close friend of Rothschild associate and Conservative Prime Minister [Arthur Balfour](#). The Great Western Railways (GWR) supported Webb's fledgling [London School of Economics \(LSE\)](#) by booking courses for members of its staff at the school and Webb also used his wife's other connections to further his Fabian agendas.

[Shaw](#) himself married Charlotte, daughter of Horace Payne-Townshend (a wealthy Stock Exchange investor), who was one of the financial backers of the [Fabian Society](#). Shaw was employed by millionaire [William Waldorf \(later Lord\) Astor](#), owner of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and became a close friend of the latter's son (and Milner Group leader) [Waldorf Astor](#) and his wife Nancy. Interviews with both Shaw and Webb promoting Socialist ideas were published by the *Pall Mall* and *St. James's Gazettes*.

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The Manchester School and the Rothschilds

As Shaw, Webb, Olivier and Wallas became the [Fabian Society](#)'s dominant "Big Four", it becomes clear that the Society originated as a private organisation run by elements in the employ of media outlets representing liberal capitalist interests.

Indeed, the Society's key financial backers included John Passmore Edwards, an associate of textile manufacturer and leader of the Liberal "Manchester School", [Richard Cobden](#) himself. For example, in the 1890s, Passmore Edwards donated £10,000 for a new building for the Fabians' [London School of Economics \(LSE\)](#) (Webb. p. 93).

The Fabians were also linked with the Manchester School through Harold Cox, a member of the [Fabian Society](#) who was a follower of Manchester Liberalism, secretary of the Cobden Club and editor of the influential quarterly *Edinburgh Review*, as well as a collaborator of [Sidney Webb](#) (Webb, p. 502).

It follows that both [Karl Marx](#) and the [Fabian Society](#) were bankrolled by industrial interests with links to the left-wing Manchester School and the media world.

These already powerful interests were allies of the [Rothschild](#) banking family which had close links to the shadowy world of Manchester's left-wing media, industry and finance: the Rothschilds' first port of call in England had been Manchester, where the group's patriarch [Nathan Meyer](#) started his career in the textile trade. They had a long tradition of support for Liberal causes, several leading members of the group having served as Liberal members of parliament.

The [Fabian Society](#) was in close touch with the [Rothschilds](#) both directly and through go-betweens like Lord [Arthur Balfour](#). The Balfours were among the chief representatives of Britain's money power and were involved in the creation of organisations advancing its interests from the Anglo-American League and the [Pilgrims Society](#) to Imperial College and the League of Nations. While his brother Gerald was President of the Board of Trade, Arthur Balfour served as President of the Local Government Board and later as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. While in these posts, he conferred on a regular basis with both Lord [Natty Rothschild](#) and the Fabian leadership and used his position to advance their agendas.

Lord [Rothschild](#) himself was personally involved, with [Sidney Webb](#), in the restructuring of the University of London into which the Fabians' [London School of Economics \(LSE\)](#) was incorporated in 1898. He also provided funds for the LSE and served as its third president, after his relative [Lord Rosebery](#) (Webb, pp. 182, 214).

The LSE continues to maintain close links with Rothschild and allied interests. For example, LSE's [Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment](#) is funded by the Grantham Foundation, whose founder Jeremy Grantham of the investment management firm Grantham, Mayo & Otterloo (GMO) was an economist at Rothschild-controlled [Royal Dutch Shell](#). The Grantham Institute's advisory board includes Sir [Evelyn de Rothschild](#) of EL Rothschild Ltd. and Vikram Singh Mehta of Shell Companies, India. Rothschild, Shell, Barclays, Goldman Sachs, J. P. Morgan and Morgan Stanley are members of the LSE Careers Patron Group. [Peter Sutherland](#), chairman of [Goldman Sachs International](#), is chairman of the LSE, etc.

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Other Financial Connections

The Tata Group

One of the Fabians' links to industrial interests was the Indian textile magnate Jamsetji Tata whom Sidney and Beatrice Webb helped to set up a company town around his newly acquired steel works at Bombay, where the Fabians had set up a local Fabian Society. In 1912, Tata endowments funded the Sir Ratan Tata Department at the LSE, which later became the Department of Social Sciences, whose first lecturer was [Fabian Society](#) member and later New Fabian Research Bureau chairman [Clement Attlee](#) (West, 2012).

The Rowntree Clan

Another Fabian line of connection with industrial interests were the chocolate manufacturers Rowntree's. The company's head Joseph Rowntree, who had founded various charitable trusts in 1904, financed the Fabian Society's Commission for the Prevention of Destitution and from 1915 provided funds for the general work of the Society as well as for its Research Department and special inquiries, including the one that produced "[International Government](#)" (Pugh, p. 129). His son, Seebohm Rowntree, who in addition to being an industrialist was also an avid social reformer, collaborated with [Beatrice Webb](#) on the Royal Commission on the Poor Law 1905-9 (Webb, p. 332), and Rowntree trusts have funded Fabian projects ever since.

The Cassel interests

The [Fabian Society](#) was also connected with the international banker and financier Sir [Ernest Cassel](#), who was an associate of Rothschild, Schiff and Morgan interests. Cassel was persuaded by his friend Lord [Richard Haldane](#), a member of the Fabians' Coefficients dining club and, from 1925, [Fabian Society](#) member, to bequeath large sums to the LSE (Butler, p. 19).

When the [Sir Ernest Cassel Educational Trust](#) was set up in 1919, Haldane, Liberal leader [Herbert Asquith](#) (a friend of Cassel and [Bernard Shaw](#)) and [Lord Balfour](#) (a close friend of Beatrice Webb and Shaw) were appointed trustees. In 1924, the Trust provided substantial grants to the LSE, establishing among others the Sir Ernest Cassel Chair of International Relations, later International Relations Department. (see "[History of the Cassel Trust](#)")

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The Rockefellers, LSE and CFR

The [Fabian Society](#) has been particularly close to the Rockefellers who are covert Fabian Socialists. [David Rockefeller](#) wrote a sympathetic senior thesis on Fabian Socialism at Harvard ("Destitution Through Fabian Eyes", 1936) and studied left-wing economics at the Fabian Society's [London School of Economics](#). Not surprisingly, the Rockefellers have funded countless Fabian projects, including the LSE. Already in the late 1920s and 1930s, the LSE received millions of dollars from the [Rockefeller and Laura Spelman Foundations](#), becoming known as "Rockefellers baby". (see "[A history of philanthropic support at LSE](#)")

The Rockefellers' [Council on Foreign Relations \(CFR\)](#) operating within the U.S. State Department was responsible for designing America's post-war foreign policy. A key element of this policy was the \$13 billion Marshall Aid that funded Europe's Socialist governments, including Britain's own Fabian Socialist Labour government run by Prime Minister [Clement Attlee](#), former chairman of the New Fabian Research Bureau.

[Editor's note: The [CFR](#) still dominates U.S. policy. [David Rockefeller](#) was Chairman from 1970-85, and his son [David Jr.](#) is also a member. The current chairman is [Robert Rubin](#), a former executive at Rockefeller's Citibank who studied at LSE. For background, see "[Final Warning](#)" by David Rivera (1994) and "[The Invisible Government](#)" by Dan Smoot (1962)]

Another Rockefeller outfit bankrolling Fabian projects was the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#), established in 1944 along with the [World Bank](#). Its chief architect was U.S. Under-Secretary of the Treasury [Harry Dexter White](#), a covert Communist, who had close links to the Rockefeller-associated [Institute of Pacific Relations \(IPR\)](#).

The IMF provided several loans to Labour (Fabian) governments:

- \$250 million to the Attlee Government in 1947 (Martin, p. 77)
- \$1 billion to the Wilson Government in 1969 (Martin, p. 109)
- \$4 billion to the second Wilson Government in 1976 (Stone-Lee, 2005)

Another important loan of \$4.34 billion was negotiated in 1946 by Fabian economist [John Maynard Keynes](#) and facilitated by his friend and collaborator [Harry Dexter White](#) who operated within the U.S. Treasury as well as the IMF. All these loans were organised under successive Fabian Chancellors Hugh Dalton, Roy Jenkins and [Denis Healey](#).

The [Fabian Society](#) itself continues to be funded by subversive entities like the European Commission and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), an EU-wide operation co-funded by the European Parliament, which works for a Socialist Europe.

The Society also operates in partnership with global companies like Pearson, a long-time Lazard and Rothschild associate. Pearson has been a major stockholder in the banking group [Lazard](#) from the early 1900s. Lazard was identified by the historian [Carroll Quigley](#) as the principal bank of the Anglo-American Establishment, a left-wing international alliance consisting of the British [Milner Group](#) (revolving around Rothschild interests) and America's Eastern Establishment (revolving around J. P. Morgan and Rockefeller interests).

Like Pearson, Lazard is a left-wing operation with a long history of support for left-wing causes. It has been a supporter of America's Democratic President Barack Obama, and has hired leading Fabian Socialist [Peter Mandelson](#) as senior adviser.

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Fabian Society

The **Fabian Society** is a British socialist organisation whose purpose is to advance the principles of democratic socialism via gradualist and reformist effort in democracies, rather than by revolutionary overthrow.^{[1][2]} Fabian Society was also historically related to radicalism, a left-wing liberal tradition.^{[3][4][5]}

As one of the founding organisations of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, and as an important influence upon the Labour Party which grew from it, the Fabian Society has had a powerful influence on British politics. Other members of the Fabian Society have included political leaders from other countries, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, who adopted Fabian principles as part of their own political ideologies. The Fabian Society founded the London School of Economics in 1895.

Today, the society functions primarily as a think tank and is one of 20 socialist societies affiliated with the Labour Party. Similar societies exist in Australia (the Australian Fabian Society), in Canada (the Douglas–Coldwell Foundation and the now-disbanded League for Social Reconstruction), in Sicily (Sicilian Fabian Society) and in New Zealand (The NZ Fabian Society).^[6]

The Fabian Society



Fabian Society logo

Abbreviation	FS
Formation	4 January 1884
Legal status	Unincorporated membership association
Purpose	"To promote greater equality of power, wealth and opportunity; the value of collective action and public service; an accountable, tolerant and active democracy; citizenship, liberty and human rights; sustainable development; and multilateral international cooperation"
Headquarters	London, England
Location	61 <u>Petty France</u> , <u>London</u> , SW1H 9EU

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Membership	8,000
Official language	English
General Secretary	Andrew Harrop
Chair	Martin Edobor
Vice-Chairs	Wes Streeting, Catriona Munro
Hon. Treasurer	Baron Kennedy of Southwark
Main organ	Executive Committee
Subsidiaries	Young Fabians, Fabian Women's Network, Scottish Fabians, around 60 local Fabian Societies
Affiliations	Labour Party, Foundation for European Progressive Studies
Website	fabians.org.uk (http://fabians.org.uk)

Organisational history

Establishment



Blue plaque at 17 Osnaburgh St, where the Society was founded in 1884

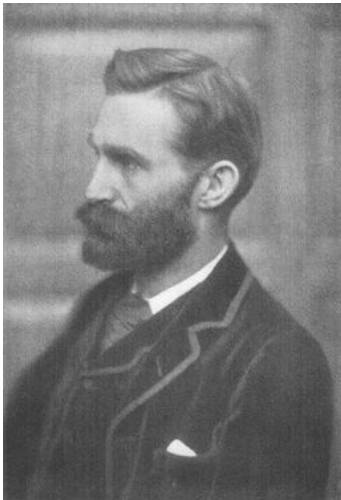
The Fabian Society was founded on 4 January 1884 in London as an offshoot of a society founded a year earlier, called The Fellowship of the New Life, which had been a forebear of the British Ethical and humanist movements.^[7] Early Fellowship members included the visionary Victorian elite, among them poets Edward Carpenter and John Davidson, sexologist

Havelock Ellis, and early socialist Edward R. Pease. They wanted to transform society by setting an example of clean simplified living for others to follow. Some members also wanted to become politically involved to aid society's transformation; they set up a separate society, the Fabian Society. All members were free to attend both societies. The Fabian Society additionally advocated renewal of Western European Renaissance ideas and their promulgation throughout the world.



Wolf in Sheep's Clothing, the original coat of arms

The Fellowship of the New Life was dissolved in 1899,^[8] but the Fabian Society grew to become a leading academic society in the United Kingdom in the Edwardian era. It was typified by the members of its vanguard Coefficients club. Public meetings of the Society were for many years held at Essex Hall, a popular location just off the Strand in central London.^[9]



The Fabian Society was named after "Fabius the Delayer" at the suggestion of Frank Podmore, above

The Fabian Society was named—at the suggestion of Frank Podmore—in honour of the Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus (nicknamed *Cunctator*, meaning the "Delayer").^[10] His Fabian strategy sought gradual victory against the superior Carthaginian army under the renowned general Hannibal

through persistence, harassment, and wearing the enemy down by attrition rather than pitched, climactic battles.

An explanatory note appearing on the title page of the group's first pamphlet declared:

For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain, and fruitless.^[11]

According to author Jon Perdue, "The logo of the Fabian Society, a tortoise, represented the group's predilection for a slow, imperceptible transition to socialism, while its coat of arms, a 'wolf in sheep's clothing', represented its preferred methodology for achieving its goal."^[3] The wolf in sheep's clothing symbolism was later abandoned, due to its obvious negative connotations.

Its nine founding members were Frank Podmore, Edward R. Pease, William Clarke, Hubert Bland,^[12] Percival Chubb, Frederick Keddell,^[13] H. H. Champion,^[14] Edith Nesbit,^[4] and Rosamund Dale Owen.^{[13][12]} Havelock Ellis is sometimes also mentioned as a tenth founding member, though there is some question about this.^[13]

Organisational growth

Immediately upon its inception, the Fabian Society began attracting many prominent contemporary figures drawn to its socialist cause, including George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Annie Besant, Graham Wallas, Charles Marson, Sydney Olivier, Oliver Lodge, Ramsay MacDonald and Emmeline Pankhurst. Even Bertrand Russell briefly became a member, but resigned after he expressed his belief that the Society's principle of entente (in this case, between countries allying themselves against Germany) could lead to war.

At the core of the Fabian Society were Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Together, they wrote numerous studies^[15] of industrial Britain, including alternative co-operative economics that applied to ownership of capital as well as land.

Many Fabians participated in the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 and the group's constitution, written by Sidney Webb, borrowed heavily from the founding documents of the Fabian Society. At the meeting that founded the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, the Fabian Society claimed 861 members and sent one delegate.

The years 1903 to 1908 saw a growth in popular interest in the socialist idea in Great Britain and the Fabian Society grew accordingly, tripling its membership to nearly 2500 by the end of the period, half of whom were located in London.^[16] In 1912, a student section was organised called the University Socialist Federation (USF) and by the outbreak of World War I in 1914 this contingent counted its own membership of more than 500.^[16]

Early Fabian views

The first Fabian Society pamphlets^[17] advocating tenets of social justice coincided with the zeitgeist of Liberal reforms during the early 1900s, including eugenics.^[18] The Fabian proposals however were considerably more progressive than those that were enacted in the Liberal reform legislation. The

Fabians lobbied for the introduction of a minimum wage in 1906, for the creation of a universal health care system in 1911 and for the abolition of hereditary peerages in 1917.^[19] Agnes Harben and Henry Devenish Harben were among Fabians advocating women's emancipation and supporting suffrage movements in Britain, and internationally.^[20]

Fabian socialists were in favour of reforming the foreign policy of the British Empire as a conduit for internationalist reform, and were in favour of a capitalist welfare state modelled on the Bismarckian German model; they criticised Gladstonian liberalism both for its individualism at home and its internationalism abroad. They favoured a national minimum wage in order to stop British industries compensating for their inefficiency by lowering wages instead of investing in capital equipment; slum clearances and a health service in order for "the breeding of even a moderately Imperial race" which would be more productive and better militarily than the "stunted, anaemic, demoralised denizens ... of our great cities"; and a national education system because "it is in the classrooms ... that the future battles of the Empire for commercial prosperity are already being lost".^[21]

In 1900 the Society produced *Fabianism and the Empire*, the first statement of its views on foreign affairs, drafted by Bernard Shaw and incorporating the suggestions of 150 Fabian members. It was directed against the liberal individualism of those such as John Morley and Sir William Harcourt.^[22] It claimed that the classical liberal political economy was outdated and that imperialism was the new stage of the international polity. The question was whether Britain would be the centre of a world empire or whether it would lose its colonies and end up as just two islands in the North Atlantic. It expressed support for Britain in the Boer War because small nations, such as the Boers, were anachronisms in the age of empires.^[22]

In order to hold onto the Empire, the British needed to fully exploit the trade opportunities secured by war; maintain the British armed forces in a high state of readiness to defend the Empire; the creation of a citizen army to replace the professional army; the Factory Acts would be amended to extend to 21 the age for half-time employment, so that the thirty hours gained would be used in "a combination of physical exercises, technical education, education in civil citizenship ... and field training in the use of modern weapons".^[23]

The Fabians also favoured the nationalisation of land rent, believing that rents collected by landowners in respect of their land's value were unearned, an idea which drew heavily from the work of American economist Henry George.

Second generation

In the period between the two World Wars, the "Second Generation" Fabians, including the writers R. H. Tawney, G. D. H. Cole and Harold Laski, continued to be a major influence on socialist thought.

But the general idea is that each man should have power according to his knowledge and capacity. [...] And the keynote is that of my fairy State: From every man according to his capacity; to every man according to his needs. A democratic Socialism, controlled by majority votes, guided by numbers, can never succeed; a truly aristocratic Socialism, controlled by duty, guided by wisdom, is the next step upwards in civilisation.^[24]

— Annie Besant, a Fabian Society member and later president of Indian National Congress

It was at this time that many of the future leaders of the Third World were exposed to Fabian thought, most notably India's Jawaharlal Nehru, who subsequently framed economic policy for India on Fabian socialism lines. After independence from Britain, Nehru's Fabian ideas committed India to an economy in which the state owned, operated and controlled means of production, in particular key heavy industrial sectors such as steel, telecommunications, transportation, electricity generation, mining and real estate development. Private activity, property rights and entrepreneurship were discouraged or regulated through permits, nationalisation of economic activity and high taxes were encouraged, rationing, control of individual choices and Mahalanobis model considered by Nehru as a means to implement the Fabian Society version of socialism.^{[25][26][27]} In addition to Nehru, several pre-independence leaders in colonial India such as Annie Besant—Nehru's mentor and later a president of Indian National Congress – were members of the Fabian Society.^[5]

Obafemi Awolowo, who later became the premier of Nigeria's now-defunct Western Region, was also a Fabian member in the late 1940s. It was the Fabian ideology that Awolowo used to run the Western Region during his premiership with great success, although he was prevented from using it in a similar fashion on the national level in Nigeria. It is less known that the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was an avid member of the Fabian Society in the early 1930s. Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, stated in his memoirs that his initial political philosophy was strongly influenced by the Fabian Society. However, he later altered his views, considering the Fabian ideal of socialism as impractical.^[28] In 1993, Lee said:

They [Fabian Socialists] were going to create a just society for the British workers—the beginning of a welfare state, cheap council housing, free medicine and dental treatment, free spectacles, generous unemployment benefits. Of course, for students from the colonies, like Singapore and Malaya, it was a great attraction as the alternative to communism. We did not see until the 1970s that that was the beginning of big problems contributing to the inevitable decline of the British economy.^[28]

In the Middle East, the theories of Fabian Society intellectual movement of early-20th-century Britain inspired the Ba'athist vision. The Middle East adaptation of Fabian socialism led the state to control big industry, transport, banks, internal and external trade. The state would direct the course of economic development, with the ultimate aim to provide a guaranteed minimum standard of living for all.^[29] Michel Aflaq, widely considered as the founder of the Ba'athist movement, was a Fabian socialist. Aflaq's ideas, with those of Salah al-Din al-Bitar and Zaki al-Arsuzi, came to fruition in the Arab world in the form of dictatorial regimes in Iraq and Syria.^[30] Salāmah Mūsā of Egypt, another prominent champion of Arab Socialism, was a keen adherent of Fabian Society, and a member since 1909.^[31]

In October 1940, the Fabian Society established the Fabian Colonial Bureau to facilitate research and debate British colonial policy.^[32] The Fabian Colonial Bureau strongly influenced the colonial policies of the Attlee government (1945-51).^[33] Rita Hinden founded the colonial bureau and was its secretary.^[33]

Fabian academics of the late 20th-century included the political scientist Sir Bernard Crick, the economists Thomas Balogh and Nicholas Kaldor and the sociologist Peter Townsend.

Contemporary Fabianism

Through the course of the 20th century, the group has always been influential in Labour Party circles, with members including Ramsay MacDonald, Clement Attlee, Anthony Crosland, Roy Jenkins, Hugh Dalton, Richard Crossman, Ian Mikardo, Tony Benn, Harold Wilson and more recently Shirley Williams, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Gordon Marsden and Ed Balls. 229 Society members were elected to Parliament in the 1945 General Election.^[34] Ben Pimlott served as its chairman in the 1990s. (A Pimlott Prize for Political Writing was organised in his memory by the Fabian Society and *The Guardian* in 2005 and continues annually.) The Society is affiliated to the Party as a socialist society. In recent years the Young Fabian group, founded in 1960, has become an important networking and discussion organisation for younger (under 31) Labour Party activists and played a role in the 1994 election of Tony Blair as Labour Leader. Today there is also an active Fabian Women's Network and Scottish and Welsh Fabian groups.

On 21 April 2009 the Society's website stated that it had 6,286 members: "Fabian national membership now stands at a 35 year high: it is over 20% higher than when the Labour Party came to office in May 1997. It is now double what it was when Clement Attlee left office in 1951".

The latest edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (a reference work listing details of famous or significant Britons throughout history) includes 174 Fabians. Four Fabians, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas, and George Bernard Shaw, founded the London School of Economics with the money left to the Fabian Society by Henry Hutchinson. Supposedly the decision was made at a breakfast party on 4 August 1894. The founders are depicted in the Fabian Window^[35] designed by George Bernard Shaw. The window was stolen in 1978 and reappeared at Sotheby's in 2005. It was restored to display in the Shaw Library at the London School of Economics in 2006 at a ceremony over which Tony Blair presided.^[36]

As of 2016, the Fabian Society had about 7,000 members.^[37] In June 2019 it had 7,136 individual members.^[38]

Influence on Labour government

After the election of a Labour Party government in 1997, the Fabian Society was a forum for New Labour ideas and for critical approaches from across the party.^[39] The most significant Fabian contribution to Labour's policy agenda in government was Ed Balls's 1992 discussion paper, advocating Bank of England independence. Balls had been a *Financial Times* journalist when he wrote this Fabian pamphlet, before going to work for Gordon Brown. BBC Business Editor Robert Peston, in his book *Brown's Britain*, calls this an "essential tract" and concludes that Balls "deserves as much credit – probably more – than anyone else for the creation of the modern Bank of England";^[40] William Keegan offered a similar analysis of Balls's Fabian pamphlet in his book on Labour's economic policy,^[41] which traces in detail the path leading up to this dramatic policy change after Labour's first week in office.

The Fabian Society Tax Commission of 2000 was widely credited^[42] with influencing the Labour government's policy and political strategy for its one significant public tax increase: the National Insurance rise to raise £8 billion for National Health Service spending. (The Fabian Commission had in fact called for a directly hypothecated "NHS tax"^[43] to cover the full cost of NHS spending, arguing that linking taxation more directly to spending was essential to make tax rise publicly acceptable. The 2001 National Insurance rise was not formally hypothecated, but the government committed itself to using the additional funds for health spending.) Several other recommendations, including a new top

rate of income tax, were to the left of government policy and not accepted, though this comprehensive review of UK taxation was influential in economic policy and political circles, and a new top rate of income tax of 50% was introduced in 2010.^[44]

In early 2017 Fabian general secretary, Andrew Harrop, produced a report^[45] arguing the only feasible route for Labour to return to government would be to work with the Liberal Democrats and Scottish National Party. The report predicted Labour would win fewer than 150 seats in the 2017 United Kingdom general election, the lowest number since 1935, due to Brexit, lack of support in Scotland, and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's supposed unpopularity, although in reality the party won nearly double the amount of seats predicted by this report.^{[46][47]}

Fabianism outside the United Kingdom

The major influence on the Labour Party and on the English-speaking socialist movement worldwide, has meant that Fabianism became one of the main inspirations of international social democracy. An American Fabian Society was established in Boston in February 1895 by W. D. P. Bliss, a prominent Christian socialist.^[48] The group published a periodical, *The American Fabian*, and issued a small series of pamphlets.^[48] Around the same time a parallel organisation emerged on the Pacific coast, centred in California, under the influence of socialist activist Laurence Gronlund.^[48]

Direct or indirect Fabian influence may also be seen in the liberal socialism of Carlo Rosselli (founder, with his brother Nello, of the anti-fascist group Giustizia e Libertà) and all its derivatives such as the Action Party in Italy.^[49] The Community Movement, created by the socialist entrepreneur Adriano Olivetti, was then the only Italian party which referred explicitly to Fabianism, among his main inspirations along with federalism, social liberalism, fighting partitocracy and social democracy.^[50]

During 2000 the Sicilian Fabian Society was founded in Messina.^[51]

Structure

It is written into the rules of the society that it has no policies. All the publications carry a disclaimer saying that they do not represent the collective views of the society but only the views of the authors. "No resolution of a political character expressing an opinion or calling for action, other than in relation to the running of the Society itself, shall be put forward in the name of the Society."^[52]

Executive committee

The Fabian Society is governed by an elected executive committee. The committee consists of 10 ordinary members elected from a national list, three members nationally elected from a list nominated by local groups, representatives from the Young Fabians, Fabians Women's Network and Scottish and Welsh Fabians. There is also one staff representative and a directly elected honorary treasurer from the membership. Elections are held every other year, with the exception of the Young Fabians and staff representation which are elected annually. The committee meets quarterly and elect a chair and at least one vice-chair annually to conduct its business. The current chair of the Fabian Society is Martin Edobor.^[53]

Secretariat

The Fabian Society have a number of employees based in their headquarters in London. The secretariat is led by a general secretary, who is the organisation's CEO. The staff are arranged into departments including Research, Editorial, Events and Operations.

Young Fabians

Since 1960 members aged under 31 years of age are also members of the Young Fabians. This group has its own elected Chair, executive committee and sub-groups. The Young Fabians are a voluntary organisation that serves as an incubator for member-led activities such as policy and social events, pamphlets and delegations. Within the group are five special interest communities called Networks that are run by voluntary steering groups and elect their own Chair and officers. The current Networks are Economy & Finance, Health, International Affairs, Education, Communications (Industry), Environment, Tech, Devolution & Local Government, Law, and Arts & Culture.^[54] It also publishes the quarterly magazine *Anticipations*.

Fabian Women's Network

All female members of the Fabian Society are also members of the Fabian Women's Network. This group has its own elected Chair and Executive Committee which organises conferences and events and works with the wider political movement to secure increased representation for women in politics and public life. It has a flagship mentoring programme that recruits on an annual basis and its president is Seema Malhotra, a Labour Party and Co-operative MP. The Network also publishes the quarterly magazine, *Fabiana*, runs a range of public speaking events, works closely in partnership with a range of women's campaigning organisations and regularly hosts a fringe at the Labour Party conference.

Local Fabians

There are 45 local Fabian societies across the UK, bringing Fabian debates to communities around the country. Some, such as Bournemouth and Oxford, have long histories, dating from the 1890s,^{[55][56]} though most have waxed and waned over the years. The Fabian local societies were given a major boost in World War Two when re-founded by G.D.H. Cole and Margaret Cole,^[57] who noted renewed interest in socialism and that wartime evacuation created chances for Fabians to strengthen influence outside London.^[58] Many local societies are affiliated to their local constituency Labour party and have their own executive bodies. These local branches are affiliated to the national Fabians and local members have the same voting rights as their national counterparts.

Influence on the political right

When founded in 1884 as a parliamentary organisation, there was no leftist party with which the Fabians could connect. As such, they initially attempted to 'permeate' the Liberal Party (UK), with some success. The foundation of the Labour Party (UK) in 1900 signalled a change in tactics,^[59] though Fabian-Liberal links on specific topics such as welfare reform lasted well into the interwar period.^{[60][61]}

More recent studies have examined their impact on the Conservative Party (UK), such as the foundation of Ashridge College, explicitly designed in the 1930s to create 'Conservative Fabians'.^{[62][63][64]}

Critiques of the Fabians

As one of the world's oldest and most prominent think tanks, the Fabians have sometimes fallen under attack, more often from the left than the right.

Most older critiques focused on the Fabians' political organisation efforts, and claims to have been influential.

Although H. G. Wells was a member of the Fabian Society from 1903 to 1908, he was a critic of its operations, particularly in his 1905 paper "The Faults of the Fabian", in which he claimed the Society was a middle class talking shop.^[65] He later parodied the society in his 1910 novel *The New Machiavelli*.^[66]

During World War One, Vladimir Lenin wrote that the Fabians were 'social-chauvinists', 'undoubtedly the most consummate expression of opportunism and of Liberal-Labour policy'. Drawing from Friedrich Engels, Lenin declared the Fabians were 'a gang of bourgeois rogues who would demoralise the workers, influence them in a counter-revolutionary spirit'.^[67]

In the 1920s, Leon Trotsky critiqued the Fabian Society as provincial, boring and unnecessary, particularly to the working class. He wrote that their published works 'serve merely to explain to the Fabians themselves why Fabianism exists in the world'.^[68]

The postwar Communist Party Historians Group was critical of the Fabians, and indeed the post-war consensus, with its strong social-democratic influence. The marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote his PhD thesis attacking claims from the early Fabians to have been originators of the Labour Party (UK) and the post-war consensus. Instead, he argued, the credit should be given to the more autonomous, working class Independent Labour Party.^{[69][70]}

In more recent years, critiques of the early Fabians have focused on other areas.

In an article published in *The Guardian* on 14 February 2008 (following the apology offered by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the "stolen generations"), Geoffrey Robertson criticised Fabian socialists for providing the intellectual justification for the eugenics policy that led to the stolen generations scandal.^{[71][72]} Similar claims have been repeated in *The Spectator*.^[73]

In 2009, at a speech in the United States the then British MP George Galloway denounced the Fabian Society for its failure to support the uprising of Easter 1916 in Dublin where an Irish Republic had been proclaimed.^[74]

Funding

The Fabian Society has been rated as "broadly transparent" in its funding by Transparify^[75] and has been given an A grade for funding transparency by Who Funds You?^[76]

See also

- Ethical movement
- Keir Hardie
- Labour Research Department
- List of Fabian Tracts to 1915

- [List of think tanks in the United Kingdom](#)
- [New Statesman](#)
- [The New Age](#)

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External links

- Official website (<http://www.fabians.org.uk>)
- Finding Aid for the Fabian Society archives (<http://archives.lse.ac.uk/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=FABIAN%20SOCIETY>), British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics
- Fabian Society and Young Fabian Collection (<http://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/collections/fabiansociety>), British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics
- Annual Reports 1894–1918 (<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/ls?field1=ocr;q1=%22Hubert%20Bland%22;a=srchls;lm=ft>)
- Fabian Tracts 1893–1990 (<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/ls?field1=ocr;q1=Fabian%20tracts;a=srchls;lm=ft;pn=1>)

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Category:Members of the Fabian Society

*The main article for this category is **Fabian Society**.*

Subcategories

This category has the following 4 subcategories, out of 4 total.

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T

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The following 200 pages are in this category, out of approximately 278 total. This list may not reflect recent changes ([learn more](#)).

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Fabianism

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Fabianism

socialist movement

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Fabianism

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Date: c. 1884 - present

Context: [Fabian Society](#)

Key People: [George Bernard Shaw](#) • [Graham Wallas](#) • [Beatrice Webb](#) • [Sidney Webb](#)

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Fabianism, [socialist](#) movement and theory that emerged from the activities of the [Fabian Society](#), which was founded in London in 1884.

Fabianism became prominent in British socialist theory in the 1880s. The name Fabian [derives](#) from [Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus](#), the Roman general famous for his delaying tactics against Hannibal during the [Second Punic War](#). The early Fabians rejected the revolutionary doctrines of [Marxism](#), recommending instead a gradual transition to a socialist society. The most-influential early Fabian theorists included [George Bernard Shaw](#) and [Graham Wallas](#) as well as [Sidney and Beatrice Webb](#), who would remain prominent thinkers in the movement. In the 20th century other prominent Fabian thinkers included the academics [Harold Laski](#) and [G.D.H. Cole](#) (both of whom were sometimes far more radical than mainstream Fabians) as well as [Labour Party](#) politicians and activists such as [R.H.S. Crossman](#), [Roy Jenkins](#), Ian Mikardo, Denis Healey, and Margaret Cole. The Fabian Society survived into the 21st century as a [think tank](#) for moderate British socialists.

When Fabianism emerged in the United Kingdom during the 1880s, [collectivism](#) was widely considered necessary for human flourishing. Although some traditional liberals clung to [laissez-faire](#) politics and economics, theorists of [new liberalism](#), such as [T. H. Green](#) in the 1880s, believed that substantial state intervention would be necessary if ordinary individuals were to prosper. In the early years of the 20th century, the dominant liberal position involved the acceptance and advancement of the extension of



public control in industry. That dominant position also involved [collective](#) responsibility for children's education and nutrition, housing, and employment, along with support for care of the sick and aged. Fabians, who sought to [propagate](#) their ideas by means of what they called "[permeation](#)," targeted collectivist liberal politicians and radical social activists.

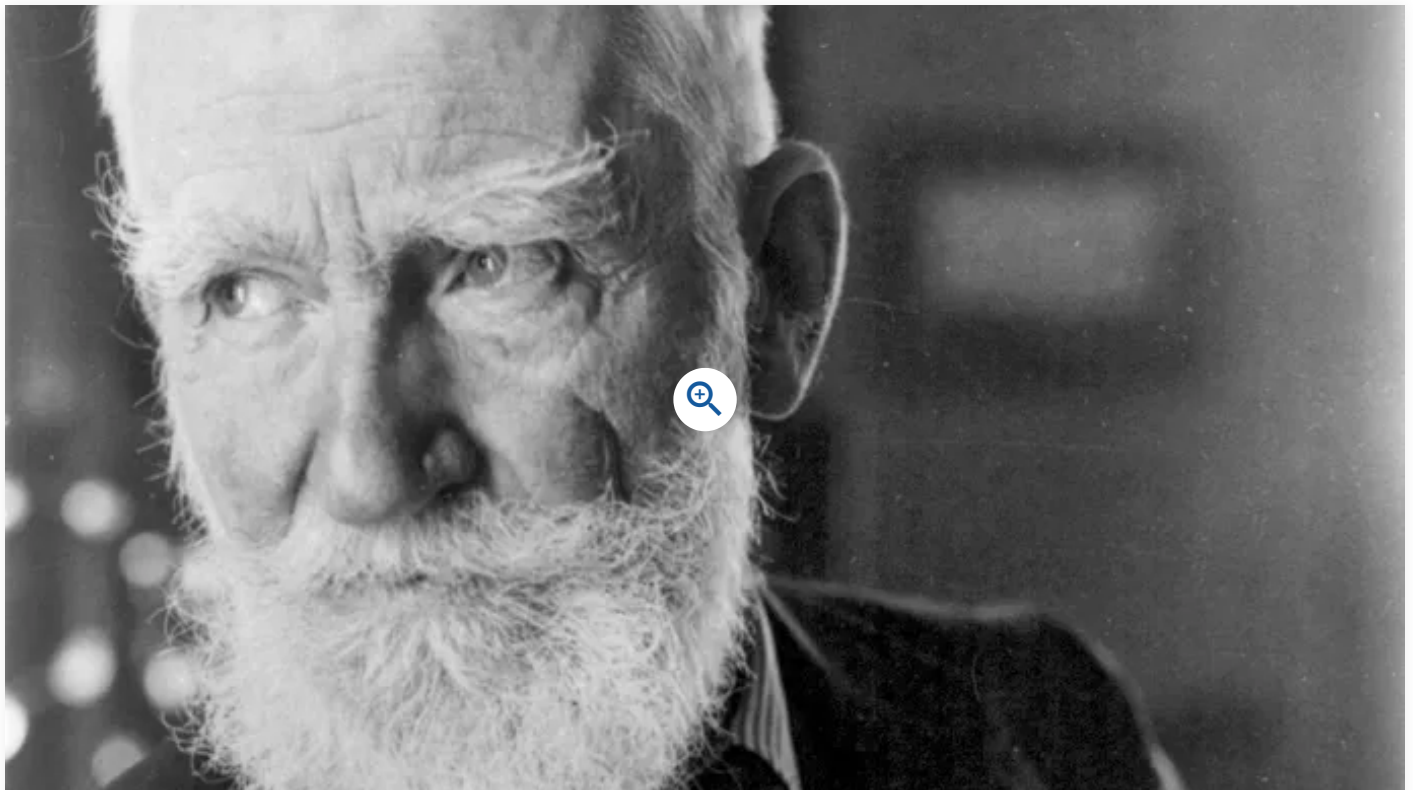
Two pioneers of Fabian theory—[Shaw](#) and [Sidney Webb](#)—were each advocates of the strategy of permeation. Nevertheless, they differed in their views of the most-appropriate target. In his essay "Historic" in *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (1889), Webb insisted that unconscious [socialism](#) had already proceeded through public control of services, largely by the municipalities. He thus believed that the Fabians should strive to influence the mainstream [Liberal Party](#). Although in his preface to the 1919 edition of the *Fabian Essays* Webb said that the Fabians had always intended to create a new party, it was in fact Shaw who pressed for that when Webb saw no need. Shaw hoped to gradually replace rather than merely reform [capitalism](#). He considered that Fabianism would be far more fruitful if it sought to inspire and permeate existing radicals who, he hoped, would eventually merge with socialist activists in Great Britain to found a new party of the left.

Although [permeation](#) remained a key concern among Fabians, some of the other ideas that characterized Fabian socialism in its formative years became less prominent as the 20th century progressed. That was the case regarding their adoption of [David Ricardo](#)'s theory of rent, which Shaw had discussed in his essay "Economic" in the *Fabian Essays*. Sidney Webb's idea that [pragmatism](#) should outweigh firm commitments was also abandoned as Fabians influenced by Shaw pressed for more-coherent socialist or [social-democratic](#) thinking with the aim of influencing public policy.



Shaw had always been more concerned than his fellow Fabians to develop a socialist theory rather than rely on pragmatism. Sidney Webb, nevertheless, came to accept that the failure to sufficiently emphasize equality was a weakness. In his 1919 introduction to the *Fabian Essays*, he conceded that it was Shaw who insisted that equality had to a key and prominent concern. That should involve not just equality before the law, in eligibility for office and in voting power, but also equality of material circumstances.

Notwithstanding that development in Fabian theorizing, the society's publishing activities waned in the late 1920s. Moreover, in the 1930s, the Webbs became supporters of Soviet communism and Shaw momentarily expressed admiration for [Benito Mussolini](#), Italy's fascist dictator.



George Bernard Shaw, c. 1934.

Image: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (digital file no. 3a26142u)

Nevertheless, Fabianism was revived with the New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB), formed by [Cole](#) independently of the society in 1931. The NFRB included a number of social-democratic [intellectuals](#), such as [Leonard Woolf](#), William Robson, Hugh Dalton, and Evan Durbin. [Laski](#) was briefly involved in the early 1930s. The bureau amalgamated with the Fabian Society in 1938.

Laski and Cole had by that time begun to juggle social-democratic and Marxist ideas. Nevertheless, in 1952, in his article “Towards a Philosophy of Socialism” in *New Fabian Essays*, [Crossman](#) disapproved of Laski’s efforts to merge Marxism and Fabianism. The Labour Party needed a sense of direction but not one influenced by Marxism, Crossman wrote, which forced policy into conformity with an imported rigid doctrine. Theory needed to challenge the status quo and expose the inadequacy of tradition as a guide to policy. He singled out Durbin for praise for having realized in the 1930s that this was so. For Crossman, theory was to be based on the principles of the British Labour Party and inspired by the belief that only human will and social [conscience](#) can liberate human beings.

As Bernard Crick’s political theory from the 1960s through the turn of the century illustrated, influencing public policy remained a Fabian priority; thus, permeation continued to be a Fabian activity. Poverty, furthermore, persisted as a major concern, and gradualism remained key to Fabian strategy. Nevertheless, the search for a [coherent](#) socialist theory that Fabians once thought should replace the early pragmatism waned. In the early 21st century, the society declared that it sought to define progressive politics from the left of centre.

Peter Lamb

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica



Nov 3, 2008, 12:32pm EST

Barack Obama, Fabian Socialist

**Jerry Bowyer** Former Contributor ©[Follow](#)

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Barack Obama is a Fabian socialist. I should know; I was raised by one. My Grandfather worked as a union machinist for Ingersoll Rand during the day. In the evenings he tended bar and read books. After his funeral, I went back home and started working my way through his library, starting with T.W. Arnold's *The Folklore of Capitalism*. This was my introduction to the Fabian socialists.

Fabians believed in gradual nationalization of the economy through manipulation of the democratic process. Breaking away from the violent revolutionary socialists of their day, they thought that the only real way to effect "fundamental change" and "social justice" was through a mass movement of the working classes presided over by intellectual and cultural elites. Before TV it was stage plays, written by George Bernard Shaw and thousands of inferior "realist" playwrights dedicated to social change. John Cusack's character in Woody Allen's "Bullets Over Broadway" captures the movement rather well.

Arnold taught me to question everyone--my president, my priest and my parents. Well, almost everyone. I wasn't supposed to question the Fabian intellectuals themselves. That's the Fabian MO, relentless cultural and journalistic attacks on everything that is, and then a hard pitch for the hope of what might be.

That's Obama's world.

He's telling the truth when he says that he doesn't agree with Bill Ayers' violent bombing tactics, but it's a tactical disagreement. Why use dynamite when mass media and community organizing work so much better? Who needs Molotov when you've got Saul Alinski?

So here is the playbook: The left will identify, freeze, personalize and polarize an industry, probably health care. It will attempt to nationalize one-fifth of the U.S. economy through legislative action. They will focus, as Lenin did, on the "commanding heights" of the economy, not the little guy.

As Obama said, "the smallest" businesses will be exempt from fines for not "doing the right thing" in offering employer-based health care coverage. Health will not be nationalized in one fell swoop; they have been studying the failures of Hillary Care. Instead, a parallel system will be created, funded by surcharges on business payroll, which will be superior to many private plans.

The old system will be forced to subsidize the new system and there will be a gradual shift from the former to the latter. The only coercion will be the fines, not the participation. A middle-class entitlement will have been created.

It may not be health care first; it might be energy, though I suspect that energy will be nationalized much more gradually. The offshore drilling ban that was allowed to lapse legislatively will be reinstated through executive means. It may be an executive order, but might just as well be a permit reviewing system that theoretically allows drilling but with endless levels of objection and appeal from anti-growth groups. Wind and solar, on the other hand, will have no permitting problems at all, and a heavy taxpayer subsidy at their backs.

The banking system has already been partially nationalized. Bush and Paulson intend for their share purchases to be only non-voting preferred shares, but the law does not specify that. How hard will it be for Obama, new

holder of \$700 billion in bank equity, to demand "accountability" and a "voice" for the taxpayers?

The capital markets are not freezing up now, mostly because of what has happened, although community organizers' multidecade push for affirmative-action mortgages has done enormous harm to the credit system. Markets are forward looking.

A quick review of the socialist takeovers in Venezuela in 1999, Spain in 2004 and Italy in 2006 show the same pattern--equity markets do most of their plummeting before the Chavez's of the world take power. Investors anticipate the policy shift in advance; that's their job.

It's not just equity markets, though; debt markets do the same thing. Everywhere I turn I hear complaints about bankers "hoarding" capital. "Hoarding" is a word we've heard often from violent socialists like Lenin and Mao. We also hear it from the democratic left as we did during the 1930s in America. The banks, we're told, are greedy and miserly, holding onto capital that should be deployed into the marketplace.

Well, which is it, miserly or greedy? They're not the same thing. Banks make money borrowing low and lending high. In fact, they can borrow very, very low right now, as they could during the Great Depression.

So why don't they lend? Because socialism is a very unkind environment for lenders. Some of the most powerful members of Congress are speaking openly about repudiating mortgage covenants. Local officials have already done so by simply refusing to foreclose on highly delinquent borrowers. Then, there's the oldest form of debt repudiation, inflation. Even if you get your money back, it will not be worth anything. Who would want to lend in an environment like this?

Will Obama's be the strong-man socialism of a Chavez, or the soft socialism that Clement Atlee used to defeat Churchill after WWII? I don't know, but I suspect something kind of in between. Despite right-wing predictions that we

won't see Rush shut down by Fairness Doctrine fascists. We won't see Baptist ministers hauled off in handcuffs for anti-sodomy sermons. It will more likely be a matter of paperwork. Strong worded letters from powerful lawyers in and out of government to program directors and general managers of radio stations. Ominous references to license renewal.

The psychic propaganda assault will be powerful. The cyber-brown-shirts will spew hate, the union guys will flood talk shows with switchboard-collapsing swarms of complaint calls aimed at those hosts who "go beyond the pale" in their criticisms of Obama. In concert with pop culture outlets like *The Daily Show* and *SNL*, Obama will use his podium to humiliate and demonize those of us who don't want to come together and heal the planet.

You've heard of the bully pulpit, right? Well, then get ready, because you're about to see the bully part.

Jerry Bowyer is chief economist of Benchmark Financial Network and a CNBC contributor.



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