



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on June 13, 2012

Barack Obama: Socialist or Fascist?

It bothers me a little when conservatives call Barack Obama a “socialist.” He certainly is an enemy of the free market, and wants politicians and bureaucrats to make the fundamental decisions about the economy. But that does not mean that he wants government ownership of the means of production, which has long been a standard definition of socialism.



What President Obama has been pushing for, and moving toward, is more insidious: government control of the economy, while leaving ownership in private hands. That way, politicians get to call the shots but, when their bright ideas lead to disaster, they can always blame those who own businesses in the private sector.

Politically, it is heads-I-win when things go right, and tails-you-lose when things go wrong. This is far preferable, from Obama’s point of view, since it gives him a variety of scapegoats for all his failed policies, without having to use President Bush as a scapegoat all the time.

Government ownership of the means of production means that politicians also own the consequences of their policies, and have to face responsibility when those consequences are disastrous — something that Barack Obama avoids like the plague.

Thus the Obama administration can arbitrarily force insurance companies to cover the children of their customers until the children are 26 years old. Obviously, this creates favorable publicity for President Obama. But if this and other government edicts cause insurance premiums to rise, then that is something that can be blamed on the “greed” of the insurance companies.

The same principle, or lack of principle, applies to many other privately owned businesses. It is a very successful political ploy that can be adapted to all sorts of situations.

One of the reasons why both pro-Obama and anti-Obama observers may be reluctant to see him as fascist is that both tend to accept the prevailing notion that fascism is on the political right, while it is obvious that Obama is on the political left.

Back in the 1920s, however, when fascism was a new political development, it was widely — and correctly — regarded as being on the political left. Jonah Goldberg’s great book *Liberal Fascism* cites overwhelming evidence of the fascists’ consistent pursuit of the goals of the left, and of the left’s embrace of the fascists as one of their own during the 1920s.

Mussolini, the originator of fascism, was lionized by the left, both in Europe and in America, during the 1920s. Even Hitler, who adopted fascist ideas in the 1920s, was seen by some, including W.E.B. Du Bois, as a man of the left.

It was in the 1930s, when ugly internal and international actions by Hitler and Mussolini repelled the



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world, that the left distanced themselves from fascism and its Nazi offshoot — and verbally transferred these totalitarian dictatorships to the right, saddling their opponents with these pariahs.

What socialism, fascism and other ideologies of the left have in common is an assumption that some very wise people — like themselves — need to take decisions out of the hands of lesser people, like the rest of us, and impose those decisions by government fiat.

The left's vision is not only a vision of the world, but also a vision of themselves, as superior beings pursuing superior ends. In the United States, however, this vision conflicts with a Constitution that begins, "We the People..."

That is why the left has for more than a century been trying to get the Constitution's limitations on government loosened or evaded by judges' new interpretations, based on notions of "a living Constitution" that will take decisions out of the hands of "We the People," and transfer those decisions to our betters.

The self-flattery of the vision of the left also gives its true believers a huge ego stake in that vision, which means that mere facts are unlikely to make them reconsider, regardless of what evidence piles up against the vision of the left, and regardless of its disastrous consequences.

Only our own awareness of the huge stakes involved can save us from the rampaging presumptions of our betters, whether they are called socialists or fascists. So long as we buy their heady rhetoric, we are selling our birthright of freedom.

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