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Thoughts on the 2012 Presidential Elect-Chains

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We anarchists don't have a lot of use for elections. We know that the decisions that most affect our lives as workers are made by the employing class and that politicians are just there to give the illusion of representation as they carry out the bosses' class program. Still, elections can tell us something about the terrain upon which we are currently deployed.

The re-election of Barack Obama tells us, for example, that a majority of those voting prefer a government that "provides for the general welfare," as the U.S. Constitution puts it, rather than just the welfare of the rich. That the voters will be sorely disappointed when the lame-duck Obama administration seeks to make a "grand bargain" with Republicans that cuts beloved "entitlements" over the next few years doesn't change the fact that the people voted to defend those programs. The AFL-CIO mobilized its staff and ranks to get out the vote for Obama, even though he did nothing over the past four years to earn labor's support, and they've vowed to bring street heat to prevent the inevitable sell-out. We'll see.

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Americans rejected the notion that Wall Street knows best. Obama's opponent, Mitt Romney, tried to convince voters that his experience at Bain Capital, a private equity firm, would make him capable of jump-starting the ailing American economy. During the election campaign, including the Republican primaries, it was revealed that Bain Capital and Mitt Romney had no record of reviving American industry. Instead Bain Capital was known for leveraged buy-outs of older marginally profitable companies and then loading them with debt from high pay-outs to investors, big pay increases to Bain corporate executives, and borrowed funds. When the leveraged companies were unable to pay these debts created by Bain, the companies were taken into bankruptcy and the assets sold off, leaving the workers unemployed and retirees without their full pensions. Instead of a "job creator," Romney was a "vulture capitalist." Obama did not offer an alternative to vulture capitalism, but was able to raise considerable skepticism about Romney's vision of letting Wall Street guide the economic recovery.

Another lesson from the election is that the days of white supremacy (or at least its cultural manifestation) in the U.S. are numbered – and this is driving the racists to distraction. On Fox Snooze, pundit Bill O'Reilly claimed that Obama won reelection because we are no longer living in a "traditional America" and that the non-traditional Americans just "want stuff," presumably for free (and what's wrong with that, might we ask?). It is well known that by 2050 the pale-faces will be only half the population, the rest will be people of color (or mud people, if you're a tea-bagger). Obama won the votes of over 70% of Latino voters, over 70% of Asians, over 90% of African-Americans, over 60% of youth and over 55% of women – all the constituencies that don't watch Fox Snooze.

The writing is on the wall, and "traditional America" doesn't like what it's telling them. Following the election the racists began venting on Twitter and Facebook; the buffoon Donald Trump called the elections a farce and called for a revolution;

and thousands of people in the states that went for Romney have signed petitions asking for permission to secede from the United States.

Of course, these people are delusional.

We know that Obama is not a socialist, or even a progressive. He's actually a Richard Nixon Republican.

Rich people have done just fine during his administration. Profits are way up. The auto bailout was accompanied by deep concessions granted by the auto workers union (just like in 1979). The Obama education "reform" program sees teachers unions as a road-block to be smashed and the wages of federal workers have been frozen for the past two years. Efforts to stem climate change have given way to "energy independence." Unemployment among Black folk is still double that of Whites and unemployment overall is double-digit; the prison-industrial complex continues to incarcerate over 2,000,000 people, a majority of whom are people of color, and militarism has never been more rampant: the war in Afghanistan is slated to go on for another two years despite the fact that the number of so-called insider attacks on NATO forces is increasing; the drone-assassination program continues to kill suspected "terrorists" and anybody who happens to be in the neighborhood; and the love of all things military is paraded in public at all times. Tune in to any sporting event.

Really, the only thing that Bill O'Reilly and company have to complain about is that the captain of the ship of state does not look like them (oh, and that they might actually be asked to pay a little extra for the privilege of the protection of their state).

We anarcho-syndicalists have a tough row to hoe. With people so invested in protecting the crumbs from the bosses' plate how to convince them that they can provide for the well-being of all by taking control of the means of life? Will the inevitable disappointment in a second Obama term result in greater cynicism among the people or open them up to a radical critique

of the system? Big Labor has promised to keep Obama's feet to the fire. If history is any indicator, what this means is a few demonstrations targeting Republican legislators and further support for Democrats in 2014. Will there be openings for revolutionaries to intervene in these mobilizations to point to a different path? One thing is for certain – there will be more class battles in the near future as the crisis continues and further attempts are made to make the workers pay. An added dimension, the racist right will undoubtedly engage in more violent direct action against people of color and anti-racists will have to actively defend against this unless we want the people to have to depend on the state for protection, thus increasing the state's power.

In any event the re-election of Barack Obama to the presidency is not going to end the “war on terror,” reduce unemployment, secure women's reproductive rights, save Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid, start to address global climate change or do any of the other nice things Obama supporters voted for. Autonomous working class organization and direct action are still the only way to stay the hand of capital and bend the state to the people's will.