

“Bush’s WMD probe is a fraud,” says SEP presidential candidate

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The following is a statement issued by Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Bill Van Auken in response to President Bush’s announcement Monday that he will appoint an “independent bipartisan commission” to examine supposed US intelligence failures in relation to the US administration’s claims about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The supposedly independent commission that Bush has proposed on “intelligence failures” related to Iraqi weapons of mass destruction is an insult to the intelligence of the American people.

After leading a \$900 million, nine-month search by 1,400 weapons hunters, David Kay acknowledged last week that not a trace of such weapons had been found and that, in his estimation, no such weapons even existed in the run-up to the US invasion of Iraq.

In response, the Bush administration, with the complicity of leading Democrats, proposes to form a hand-picked panel to look into what is being variously described as “lapses” or “overestimations” by US intelligence agencies concerning the alleged Iraqi weapons.

By framing the issue in this way, the administration is dictating the conclusions of the commission before any investigation even begins. There is no reason to believe that the source of the false reports of Iraqi WMD was sloppy intelligence. Rather, the intelligence itself was crafted to fit the specifications of the White House.

This was not a matter of miscalculations or exaggerations by intelligence agents. The administration repeatedly claimed that it had irrefutable evidence that Iraq had several hundred tons of chemical and biological weapons and was on the verge of obtaining nuclear weapons. Top officials insisted that they even knew the precise whereabouts of these weapons. Now, with the first anniversary of the war approaching, they are forced to admit that not a single vial of such material is to be found in all of Iraq.

If no weapons were there, clearly there existed no verified evidence that they were there, something that United Nations inspectors attested to before the war began. The inescapable conclusion is that the government manufactured a pretext for dragging the American people into war. As a result, tens of thousands of Iraqis have been killed. At least 525 US soldiers have lost their lives and thousands more have been wounded.

This would be the starting point for any genuinely independent investigation. The questions before such a panel would include: Who was responsible for lying to the American people and to the world in order to carry out an illegal war? Whose interests—hidden behind the false claims about WMD—were served by this war? How was the administration allowed to get away with it?

The issue is not a failure of intelligence, but rather a colossal

failure of American democracy implicating every section of the political establishment, including the media and the Democratic Party politicians.

The administration and its apologists now put forward the alibi that everyone was fooled by flawed intelligence into believing that the Iraqi weapons existed and posed a clear and present danger. Yet, millions in the US and tens of millions worldwide rejected the government’s lies and marched in the streets to say so.

The Socialist Equality Party refuted the government’s claims well before the war began. Our party explained that the motive for war was not Iraqi WMD, but a longstanding drive by the US corporate elite to lay claim to the world’s second-largest oil reserves and gain strategic advantage over potential rivals by placing US military forces in the center of the Middle East.

The proposed “independent” commission is designed to produce a whitewash. Bush will pick every one of its members from a stable of political hacks and former intelligence officials who can be trusted to deliver the desired conclusions. As insurance against the minimal danger that the commission might produce any findings critical of the administration, it will not deliver its conclusions until well after the November election.

The reality is that no genuinely independent commission could be formed based upon the personnel of the two major parties. Democrats and Republicans alike, none of them pass the smell test. Before Bush’s election, the Clinton administration utilized fraudulent intelligence about Iraqi WMD—and the demand that Baghdad prove a negative, that no such weapons existed—to justify a policy of bombing and starving Iraq into submission.

The Democrats in Congress and all of the party’s leading contenders for the presidential nomination are now going along with the fraud of a commission to investigate “intelligence failures”—and not a calculated conspiracy—because they are compromised and, like Bush, are in need of a whitewash.

A truly independent investigation into how the Bush administration dragged the American people into the war in Iraq will be possible only as the byproduct of a mass independent political movement of working people in opposition to the two parties of big business.

The Socialist Equality Party is participating in the 2004 elections in order to lay the political foundations for the emergence of such a movement. I and my running mate, Jim Lawrence, as well as other candidates of the SEP, will fight tirelessly to expose the hypocrisy and lies of the two establishment parties and the media in relation to the war in Iraq.

We will consistently raise the demands for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US military forces from Iraq, and that those responsible for conspiring to launch a war of aggression—and, as a result, for the immense suffering inflicted upon the Iraqi people and rank-and-file US soldiers alike—be held accountable for war crimes.
