

# For a socialist alternative in the 2006 US elections

**Statement of the Socialist Equality Party  
28 September 2006**

The Socialist Equality Party calls on working people and youth throughout the country to support our candidates in the 2006 US elections.

Every vote cast for the SEP strengthens the fight to build a socialist political movement in opposition to the two parties of the financial-corporate ruling elite—the Democrats and Republicans. Our aim is to unite the American and international working class on the basis of their common class interests to put an end to a social and political system responsible for war, repression, poverty and ecological catastrophe.

The SEP is the only party that fights for a program that advances the interests of the working class. We are fighting to create a society in which the needs of humanity prevail over the corporate drive for profit and the accumulation of obscene levels of personal wealth. A vote for the SEP is a vote against militarism and war. It is a vote against the assault on democratic rights and the attacks on jobs and living standards. It is a vote against the immense concentration of wealth in the United States and the growth of social inequality.

The United States is in the throes of a profound political, economic, social and moral crisis. It is a nation whose global imperial aims have become odious to millions of its own citizens.

During the five years that have passed since the Bush administration unleashed its so-called “war on terror,” the policies of the United States have assumed an unconstitutional, illegal and even criminal character. The events of 9/11 have been employed as a pretext for unbridled militarism and a brazen contempt for human life and dignity.

A nation whose revolutionary founders proclaimed the “inalienable rights” of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” is now led by a cabal of political gangsters who are attempting to abolish “the great writ” of habeas corpus and are conducting massive and illegal spying operations against American citizens. The leaders of the American Revolution proclaimed their “decent respect for the opinions of mankind.” The present occupant of the White House and his henchmen unashamedly flaunt their contempt for international law and defend the use of torture. Whereas Lincoln appealed as president to the “better angels of our nature,” the Bush administration appeals to the basest instincts of the most reactionary sections of the population.

This appeal to reaction includes a relentless assault on the secularist, Enlightenment foundations of the American republic and the cultivation of religious bigotry and intolerance. The Bush administration has unleashed a systematic attack on the past achievements of culture and thought, including science itself, opposing stem-cell research, rejecting the findings of environmental studies, and encouraging religious fundamentalist attacks on the theory of evolution.

There exists within the United States a broad and deep-rooted opposition to the Iraq war and the right-wing domestic policies of the Bush administration. Yet there is no means within the corporate-controlled two-party system for this opposition to find independent political expression.

Far from opposing the ultra-right Republican administration, the Democratic Party functions as its accomplice. The differences the Democrats have with the Republicans are insignificant when compared to what the two parties agree on—that is, their shared determination to uphold the domestic and global interests of the American corporate and financial ruling elite.

The struggle against war and imperialist militarism, the defense of democratic rights and the eradication of poverty require the building of a new mass political movement, based on a socialist program and perspective.

## **The need for an international program**

The SEP is the only party whose program expresses the common interests of working people all over the world and opposes every form of nationalism, ethnic and religious chauvinism, and racism.

The problems that confront workers in the United States are, in essence, the same as those confronting workers in every other part of the world. War, the attack on democratic rights, exploitation, unemployment, poverty and the destruction of the natural environment are not simply American problems. They are world problems and require global solutions.

The working class is an international class, not only in a theoretical sense, but also increasingly in practice, with the growth of mass movements that cross international borders and unite working people of many different countries. The mass demonstrations in February 2003 against the impending US aggression in Iraq were the largest international protests in history, involving more than 20 million people. This past spring, demonstrations of millions broke out in the same month in France and in the United States, in the first instance against attempts by the Chirac government to worsen job conditions for youth, in the second, against attempts by the Republican-controlled Congress to criminalize undocumented immigrants.

The overriding economic and social fact of our time is the failure of the international capitalist system. On a planet inhabited by more than 6 billion people, all aspects of economic and social decision-making are subordinated to considerations of corporate profit and the irrational accumulation of ever-greater personal wealth by a small ruling elite.

The spectacular advances in science, technology and the productivity of labor should have made possible a dramatic improvement in the living standards of every human being. Instead, conditions of life are deteriorating for the vast majority of working people all over the world.

In the United States and internationally the ruling elites show contempt for the broad masses of the population. The devastation

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wrought by the Asian tsunami nearly two years ago demonstrated how needlessly vulnerable millions of people are to unexpected events such as a natural catastrophe. Hurricane Katrina revealed to the world that these conditions exist in what is supposedly the richest country on the planet. An entire city was destroyed because the American ruling elite has allowed the most basic social infrastructure to decay, in favor of the ever greater accumulation of personal wealth. More than one year after the death and destruction caused by Katrina, virtually nothing has been done to rebuild the working class districts of New Orleans. This stands as an indictment of the American social and political order.

In the epoch of world economy, the problems of mass society can be resolved only on the basis of an international socialist program. The rational, planned and humane mobilization of the world's resources conflicts at every point with the interests of national ruling elites whose wealth and power are based on the existing capitalist system.

Big business justifies its assault on the working class in the name of global competitiveness. But the global integration of all aspects of economic life is not, in itself, the real cause of deepening social distress. The global expansion and unification of the productive forces have the potential to vastly improve living standards. However, social progress is blocked by the subordination of these powerful economic processes to the private profit interests of the ruling elites in competing national states.

When employers in the US tell workers that they must accept massive wage cuts or lose their jobs to low-wage regions, this only underscores the need for American workers to unite politically with workers internationally in a worldwide struggle for socialism against the economic tyranny of the transnational corporations.

Socialism means the reorganization of economic life on the basis of social need and the common good. Its goal is the elimination of poverty and oppression and the elevation of the living standards of the world's people on the basis of social equality. It means the fullest extension of democratic control over the policies and priorities of society and the processes by which wealth is produced and distributed.

### **The critical issues in 2006**

The 2006 elections are dominated by three critical and inter-related issues: (1) the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the advanced preparations of the Bush administration for new and even more bloody military actions; (2) the assault on the democratic rights of the American people; and (3) the government-backed assault on working class living standards and the massive growth of social inequality.

The stance of the SEP on these critical issues is unequivocally and diametrically opposed to that of the two parties of the corporate elite.

**\* The SEP demands the immediate withdrawal of all American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and an end to war threats against Iran!**

It is an indisputable fact that the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was launched on the basis of out-and-out lies. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and the regime of Saddam Hussein was not collaborating with Al Qaeda in the preparation of attacks on the United States.

The war was launched not to fight terrorism, but to secure US domination of the crucial oil resources of Iraq and project American power throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. Now the

American ruling elite is threatening military action against Iran—another unprovoked act of aggression that could lead to a confrontation with China, Russia or another power. American imperialism is bringing the world's population once again to the brink of an international conflagration.

The official debate on American military policy within the political establishment is conducted entirely within the framework of the so-called "war on terror." The SEP completely rejects this exercise in political deceit, contrived by the Bush administration to justify the strivings of the American ruling elite for world domination. To the extent that there is a terrorist threat, it is the result of US imperialist policies that have produced poverty and oppression around the world and generated immense anger and hatred.

Five years after September 11, 2001, there are more questions than there are answers about the events of that fateful day. No credible investigation has been conducted into the most devastating terrorist attack in US history—an event that has been used as a pretext to implement foreign and domestic policies long sought by the most predatory sections of the American ruling elite.

Nor has there been any explanation of the astounding intelligence and security "failures" that allowed a group of known Al Qaeda operatives to commandeer commercial aircraft and fly them into the World Trade Center and Pentagon. There is, however, a mass of evidence that the hijackers were being monitored by American intelligence, leading to the conclusion that a decision was made within the upper echelons of the government to allow them to proceed with their plot.

The SEP candidates call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Our campaign demands that all those responsible for the illegal and unprovoked invasion of Iraq be compelled to face trial before a war crimes tribunal, and that the US government compensate the Iraqi people for the destruction and suffering it has caused, as well as the families of American soldiers killed in the war and the men and women who have been wounded, both mentally and physically.

The SEP opposes all attempts to revive the draft—a proposal that is increasingly being raised by representatives of both big business parties.

The SEP fights for a socialist foreign policy, based on international working class solidarity. This includes the immediate closure of military bases all over the world; the abolition of the CIA and other organizations that have sponsored coups and meddle in the affairs of other countries; and the massive expansion of aid to countries that have been devastated by American military intervention and corporate exploitation. The aim is to create conditions of genuine worldwide social equality. The SEP calls for the abolition of the so-called "Department of Defense," and with it the standing army, which poses a constant threat to democratic rights. In its place, we advocate the formation of popular militias, organized under the democratic control of the working class.

**\* The SEP calls for the defense and expansion of democratic rights!**

Democracy is ultimately incompatible with the levels of wealth concentration and social inequality that exist in the US.

The greatest refutation of Bush's claim that the war in Iraq is a war to spread democracy is the fact that it has been accompanied by an accelerating attack on democratic rights within the United States itself. In the name of defending "freedom" against "terrorism," the Bush administration has erected the institutional and legal framework

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for a police state in America, assuming military and police powers that no previous US government has claimed, not even during World War I or World War II.

The Bush administration has repudiated international law, the Geneva Conventions and all legal restraints on executive power. Under Bush, the United States has asserted the right to attack and occupy any country it chooses; to establish a worldwide network of prisons where those targeted by Washington can be kidnapped, tortured and even murdered with impunity; and to erect a vast apparatus of domestic spying, surveillance and provocation.

The Socialist Equality Party demands the revocation of the Patriot Act, the dismantling of the Department of Homeland Security, the abolition of the Pentagon's Northern Command (the military command center set up in 2002 to oversee the United States), the closure of the Guantánamo concentration camp and all similar facilities, and an end to torture, renditions and similar atrocities committed in the name of the American people.

The defense of democratic rights requires a counteroffensive against the attempts by the Bush administration to whip up the most reactionary political and social forces and roll back progressive reforms won in the past. The Socialist Equality Party is indefatigable in its defense of past democratic and social gains—civil and voting rights, universal public education, healthcare and old age benefits for seniors, etc.—as well as constitutional guarantees of civil liberties.

The SEP demands equal rights for all and opposes all discrimination in employment, housing, education or any other field based upon race, national origin, religion, sex or sexual preference. We defend the unrestricted right of women to abortion on demand and uphold the right of gay people to marry and receive the same medical, legal and employment benefits as heterosexual couples. We oppose the death penalty as a barbaric measure which sanctions the taking of human life by the state—a penalty that is imposed almost entirely on the poor and disproportionately on racial minorities.

**\* The SEP demands an end to the two-party corporate monopoly!**

The defense of democratic rights cannot be limited to the purely negative task of beating back attacks on civil liberties and constitutional norms. The working class needs a great expansion of democratic rights, beginning with a radical restructuring of the US political system itself, one of the most restrictive and undemocratic among the advanced industrialized countries.

This should include abolishing such archaic institutions as the Electoral College, ending the numerous restrictions on the right of all citizens to vote, and eliminating the myriad obstacles to third parties and independent candidates who wish to challenge the Democrats and Republicans. These barriers range from restrictive and arbitrary ballot access laws that impose prohibitive signature requirements, to deadlines for filing nominating petitions that are designed to block rather than facilitate ballot access, to federal subsidies for Democratic and Republican campaigns, to a corporate-controlled media that systematically excludes critical viewpoints—especially those of socialists.

It is through such mechanisms that the political monopoly of the two-party system is maintained, not through any satisfaction on the part of the population with the existing political alternatives. The United States government routinely denounces elections in other countries for violating democratic standards, but in most cases the elections there are more democratic than what occurs in the US.

The SEP has experienced firsthand these antidemocratic restrictions. In order to place our candidates on the ballot, we have

had to collect tens of thousands of signatures in different parts of the county. Our petition campaigns won broad support and gave expression to the popular demand for a genuinely democratic and progressive alternative to the Democrats and Republicans.

In New York, Bill Van Auken, the SEP candidate for US Senate, collected nearly 25,000 signatures to obtain ballot status and will appear as the candidate of the SEP on the November ballot. In Michigan, Jerome White submitted more than 5,000 signatures and will be on the ballot as an independent candidate for the US House of Representatives from the 12th Congressional District. In Maine, the SEP campaign gathered 284 signatures to place Eric Des Marais on the ballot as an independent candidate for state Senate from the 32nd District.

In Illinois, the SEP campaign collected close to 5,000 signatures, far more than the number required, but the Democratic Party conducted a weeks-long campaign to block the certification of Joe Parnarauskis, the SEP's candidate for state Senate from the 52nd Legislative District, flouting state election laws in their efforts to keep him off the ballot. On September 21, the Illinois State Board of Elections finally voted to certify Parnarauskis, who will be listed as the SEP's candidate on the November ballot. This victory, which was nothing more than the assertion of the democratic and legal rights of Parnarauskis and the population of the district, required the expenditure of thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of labor.

In California, the restrictions were so severe that even the collection of nearly 12,000 signatures did not suffice to place the SEP's congressional candidate on the ballot in Pasadena. John Burton, the party's candidate for US Congress in the 29th Congressional District, will be conducting an aggressive write-in campaign.

In Oregon, where new restrictive requirements blocked the efforts of SEP candidate Christie Schaefer to obtain ballot status, Schaefer, who is running for state Senate in the 19th District, will also conduct a write-in campaign.

The ballot access restrictions and other barriers thrown up by the Democrats and Republicans amount to a state sponsorship of a two-party monopoly that is increasingly discredited—and narrow to the point of irrationality, given the vast diversity of a country of nearly 300 million people.

In addition to these laws, candidates for statewide or national office require millions of dollars to gain access to the corporate-controlled media, which writes off as unviable any candidate who does not have support from sections of the ruling elite.

With only two parties of big business to choose from, the right to vote means very little. Increasingly, however, even this right has come under attack. In 2000, the presidency was handed to George Bush by a 5-4 decision in the Supreme Court. That decision halted the recount of ballots in Florida and gave the elections to an individual who lost the popular vote. There are as well many questions that remain unanswered about the 2004 elections, with indications of widespread fraud. The increasing use of electronic voting machines without a paper trail casts doubt on the results of many elections in the United States.

In place of the winner-takes-all system, the SEP advocates a system of proportional representation in which all parties that receive a significant share of the vote are represented in legislative bodies. All candidates should have equal airtime and media access, as well as access to public debates. Corporate funding of campaigns must be completely eliminated so that all candidates have an equal opportunity to present their views to the public.

**\* The SEP calls for economic democracy!**

The very concept of democratic rights must be expanded beyond the narrow framework of equality before the law and due process. It must encompass the social realities of life for the broad mass of working people. It is therefore inseparable from a struggle against the concentration of private wealth.

There is a fundamental hypocrisy in the conception of equal rights before the law in a society permeated with economic and social inequality. The right to vote every two or four years means little when a financial oligarchy dictates the most important issues of daily life: whether people will have a job, how much they will be paid, under what conditions they will work.

Democracy must be infused with a profound social content, beginning with the democratization of the workplace, where most people spend the bulk of their time and effort. Industrial democracy means real control by working people over their working lives. Decisions affecting conditions of work, safety, salaries, hiring and hours must be subject to the democratic voice of the workforce. This presupposes the opening of the books of all corporations for inspection by the workers, and the ratification of corporate leadership by a democratic vote of all employees.

**\* The SEP fights for the defense of jobs, the expansion of social benefits, and the elevation of living standards of working people and youth!**

The US ruling elite claims that decent-paying jobs, pensions, health benefits and social services such as public education have become unaffordable. They are being sacrificed to provide ever more obscene levels of personal wealth for the top 1 percent in American society.

The SEP maintains that working people bear no responsibility for the corporate bankruptcies that devastate working class communities, while executives walk away from the disasters they have created with additional millions in their bank accounts. The dramatic failure of such icons of American business as General Motors, Ford and United Airlines, to mention only a few of the best known companies, is overwhelming proof of the crisis and decay of American capitalism.

For decades, the apologists for big business claimed that the American system of “free enterprise” could guarantee workers high wages, generous social benefits and a secure and comfortable retirement. There was no need for socialism, proclaimed these corporate shills, when capitalism could provide workers with a high standard of living.

These fatuous claims have been refuted by the economic facts of American life.

The Gross Domestic Product of the US has grown by 50 percent since 1972, in real terms. Per capita GDP has likewise risen substantially. This means that, as a society, it should be easier, not harder, to meet the basic needs of working people—good-paying jobs, health benefits, secure pensions, decent public services. Yet the real hourly wages of American workers have declined, family income has stagnated, pensions have been gutted, and vital social services such as healthcare and education have been starved of funds.

Economic output has grown enormously over the past 30 years, but those who do the work have gained little or nothing from it. Instead, the increased wealth has been monopolized by a small fraction at the top of American society. Since 1979, the wealthiest 1 percent of the American population has more than doubled its share of the national wealth, from 19 percent to over 40 percent.

Corporate CEOs now make 431 times the wage of an average worker. Last year the salaries of top executives rose by 91 percent, compared to 4 percent for workers.

A study by the Internal Revenue Service, reported in the *New York Times* in October of 2005, documents the staggering level of income inequality in the United States. In 2003, the latest year for which comprehensive figures are available, the top 1 percent swallowed up all of the increase in real income for the whole of the United States. According to government figures, wages as a share of national income are at their lowest level since 1947, while profits are at their highest since the 1960s.

A far-reaching redistribution of the wealth from the super-rich to the broad mass of working people, and the utilization of these resources for the good of all, has become an urgent social necessity. We demand the reorganization of economic life on rational and humane—that is, socialist—foundations. The wealth produced by the working class must be used to meet the needs of the people, rather than the profit interests of giant corporations and the enlargement of the bank accounts of a privileged elite.

Economic security is a basic human right, not a privilege to be enjoyed by the few who are rich. The SEP demands the reorganization of economic life to guarantee all working people a comfortable standard of living.

**\* The SEP fights for the socialist reorganization of the economy!**

The Socialist Equality Party advances a program whose aim is the reorganization of the US and world economy in the interests of the working class. The present capitalist setup, in which all of the forces of industry and finance are privately owned and controlled, must be replaced by a socialist system of public ownership and democratic control of the economy. We advocate the creation of an economic system whose organizing principle is the satisfaction of human needs, not the creation of profit and the accumulation of vast personal wealth.

For all the ballyhoo about the American economy being the greatest in the world, the real state of corporations in the US is one of extreme mismanagement and disorganization. The essential purpose of these companies is to funnel vast sums into the pockets of executives and big shareholders, while everything else is ignored. In the process, the long-term health of the companies themselves is sacrificed. Nowhere is this phenomenon more clearly expressed than in the decay of American manufacturing. The consequences for the American working class have been devastating, including the destruction of millions of jobs and the collapse of wages and working conditions.

To establish the economic foundation for the reorganization of economic life in the interests of the working people, we advocate the transformation of all privately owned industrial, manufacturing and information technology corporations valued at \$10 billion or more—companies that, taken together, control the decisive share of the US economy—into publicly owned enterprises, with full compensation for small shareholders and the terms of compensation for large shareholders to be publicly negotiated. The SEP also proposes the nationalization of the healthcare and pharmaceutical giants, as well as all large banking and insurance institutions. In addition, the SEP advocates the nationalization of the railroads, airlines, telecommunications and power utilities, and the placement of all critical natural resources under public ownership and control.

The reorganization of the American economy along these lines would make available immense resources to implement programs that would significantly improve the living conditions of the working class.

We call for an extensive program of public works to guarantee

employment for all those who are presently unemployed and able to work. The urgent need to raise the income level of millions of working Americans must be tackled by establishing a guaranteed federally funded annual income, indexed to inflation. To create jobs and make possible the increased participation of workers in political and cultural life, the work week should be reduced to 30 hours, at 40 hours' pay. Full-time workers should receive at least five weeks annual vacation.

We call as well for a massive investment to ensure high-quality public education and access to free higher education for all; universal, comprehensive medical coverage; state-subsidized housing construction to build comfortable and affordable homes; a guaranteed right of workers to join a union and control the union democratically; the outlawing of union-busting tactics and wage-cutting; retirement security at a decent income for all working people; and government support for small and medium-sized businesses.

**\* The SEP calls for a democratic redistribution of wealth!**

The social rights outlined here can be realized only on the basis of concrete measures to promote social equality. Tax policy must be stood on its head: from a means of plundering the people to enrich the millionaires and big business, it must become the instrument for a radical redistribution of wealth. This means repealing the tax cuts for the rich enacted under Ronald Reagan, the elder George Bush and George W. Bush, maintaining and raising direct taxes on wealth, such as the estate tax, and abolishing the loopholes and accounting gimmicks that allow most large corporations to pay only a tiny fraction of tax on their profits. Taxes should be reduced for the vast majority of the population and sharply increased for those with the highest incomes and levels of accumulated wealth.

Particular attention must be paid to investigating the speculative activities of the past 25 years and the criminal misappropriation of corporate resources by CEOs at the expense of the workers and small shareholders. This stolen wealth must be returned and used to improve social services and working class living standards.

Property rights must be subordinated to social rights. This does not mean the nationalization of everything, or the abolition of small or medium-sized businesses, which are themselves victimized by giant corporations and banks. Establishing a planned economy will give such businesses ready access to credit and more stable market conditions, so long as they provide decent wages and working conditions.

**\* The SEP fights for the unity of the international working class!**

While fighting all forms of discrimination and all attacks on democratic rights, the Socialist Equality Party opposes the various strains of identity politics, including cultural nationalism and feminism, whose essential role is to obscure the most fundamental division in capitalist society, that between the social classes. We stand firmly in support of integration and the unity of all working people. We oppose racial politics, which are fundamentally inimical to the interests of working people and the need to build a mass international movement against capitalism. Those who claim to politically represent racial constituencies invariably do so in the interests of narrow and privileged social layers, whether among blacks, Latinos, or other ethnic groups, which seek positions and perks within the framework of the capitalist system.

In that context, we oppose affirmative action policies, which pit white and minority workers and students against one another in a divisive struggle for jobs and college admission. Such programs

benefit only a privileged few, not the masses of minority people. We insist on full and genuine equality of opportunity, within the framework of a massive social investment to guarantee good-paying jobs, quality K-12 and college education, affordable housing and all other social needs. Only such a policy, based on the unity in struggle of all sections of working people, can create the conditions for a society in which all people can enjoy economic security and realize their full potential, not one where limited opportunities are rationed out on the basis of race or gender.

We support full democratic rights and citizenship for all immigrants, including the estimated 12 million undocumented workers who are branded "illegal aliens." We demand an end to the anti-immigrant attacks—dragnet-style sweeps, detentions and deportations—that the government has mounted as part of its "war on terror."

The attack on immigrants is one manifestation of the reactionary and antidemocratic character of the entire nation-state system. Corporations exploit workers throughout the world, while using the national restraints placed on working people to facilitate this exploitation. In opposition to the whipping up of national chauvinism by the ruling elite, we fight for the building of a unified movement of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program.

**\* The SEP calls for an expansion of spending on arts and environmental protection!**

The Socialist Equality Party calls as well for measures to enable working people to have full access to art and culture. American popular culture was once one of the wonders of the world, a pole of attraction because of its innovation and powerful democratic and humanistic spirit. As in other spheres, the subordination of culture to the profit motive has led to an immense degeneration.

Popular culture has suffered under the impact of funding cuts for the arts and a right-wing ideological assault on artistic expression. Government subsidies to museums, orchestras, theaters and public television and radio have been gutted. Art and music education has been drastically curtailed or eliminated outright from most public schools. Library hours and services have been scaled back. The damage to the intellectual and moral fabric of society resulting from such a mercenary and philistine approach is impossible to quantify. There is, however, an indisputable link between the glorification of militarism, brutality and egotism and hostility to the artistic and cultural heritage of previous generations.

The Socialist Equality Party demands massive funding for the arts and the creation of new schools and centers to ensure that every section of the population has access to music, dance, drama and art, either at a nominal fee or for free. Decisions on subsidies and grants for the arts must be taken out of the hands of the politicians and bureaucrats and placed under the control of committees of artists, musicians and other cultural workers.

Only a socialist economic program can assure the rational development of the earth's finite resources. The subordination of all human activity to the drive for profit and the accumulation of personal wealth threatens to unleash an ecological disaster. The inability of the profit system to confront this or any of the other problems posed by the increasingly complex needs of mass society poses a mortal threat to mankind's survival. Socialist economic planning will create conditions for genuine global collaboration in the protection of the earth's environment.

**For the political independence of the working class**

The precondition for conducting a struggle within the US and

internationally against war, repression and the attacks on living standards and democratic rights is the establishment of the political independence of the working class. The Socialist Equality Party campaign is centrally aimed at achieving this essential task by laying the political basis for the development of the SEP as the independent mass party of the American working class.

The SEP insists that the most pressing political task facing the working class is a complete break with the Democratic Party and the entire framework of the “two-party system.” To the extent that differences exist between the Democratic and Republican parties, they are merely of a tactical character—over how best to secure the interests of the capitalist elite within the United States and globally.

The Democratic Party supported the invasion of Iraq and continues to support the US occupation of the country. The Democrats merely call for a “redeployment” of American troops to bases and ships in the region, with the option of returning them to Iraq.

The Democrats criticize the Bush administration for its incompetent management of the war, not for waging an imperialist war to plunder the oil resources of Iraq and establish US domination of the Middle East. They seek to outflank the Bush administration from the right, charging that Bush’s disastrous handling of the war in Iraq has detracted from the prosecution of the “war on terror” and diverted the US from the need to “finish the job” in Afghanistan and confront other countries, such as Iran, Syria and North Korea. John Kerry, the Democratic presidential candidate in 2004, has called for sending more US troops to Afghanistan. Prominent Democrats have broached a revival of the draft.

The Democratic Party offers no serious opposition to Bush’s flouting of Congress, the law and the Constitution and the establishment of the framework for a presidential dictatorship. It continues to support the Patriot Act and the Homeland Security Department, and voted overwhelmingly to install the author of the illegal National Security Agency domestic wiretapping and data mining programs, Michael Hayden, as director of the CIA.

The Democrats long ago repudiated any policy of social reform and adopted policies designed to further enrich the wealthiest social layers at the expense of the working population. In its domestic agenda, the Democratic Party lays the greatest emphasis on fiscal austerity and balancing the federal budget, while offering nothing to the vast majority of working people whose jobs and living standards are under relentless attack from corporate America.

The fundamental reason for the Democratic Party’s complicity with Bush and the Republicans is the fact that it defends the basic interests of the capitalist ruling elite. Its specific function within the framework of the two-party system is to pose as a party “of the people” in order to smother and neutralize any movement of social opposition from below.

There are various third parties claiming to present an alternative in these elections, most prominently the Greens. While the SEP defends the democratic right of Green Party candidates to appear on the ballot, our program is based on a fundamentally opposed perspective. The program of the Green Party is one of minor reforms and small palliatives for a social and political system that is utterly rotten. It opposes socialism, accepts that “corporations have become the dominant economic institution of the planet,” and urges merely that they become more socially and environmentally responsible.

However, even the bread-and-butter issue of the Green Party—environmental protection—cannot be seriously addressed outside of the struggle for a different principle of social organization, according to which economic decisions are made on the basis of social need rather than private profit.

Ultimately, the perspective of the Green Party is to pressure the powers that be—and their political representatives in the Democratic

and Republican parties—rather than fight for a genuinely independent alternative. The program of the Greens is best illustrated by what they have done in countries where they have achieved political power. In Germany, the Greens joined a coalition government with the Social Democrats in 1999 after running on the basis of social justice and pacifism. They ended up supporting right-wing economic policies, and Germany’s Green Party foreign minister backed the deployment of German troops to fight in Afghanistan—Germany’s first foreign military intervention since the Second World War.

### **Support the SEP campaign! Vote for the SEP candidates!**

The Socialist Equality Party appeals to the many thousands of readers of the *World Socialist Web Site*, to supporters of the SEP, and to all those who oppose war, repression and the assault on working class living standards to actively support our election campaign. Help bring our program to the widest possible audience. Vote for our candidates on November 7.

The SEP campaign does not have and does not want access to the billions in contributions from corporate America and the super-rich which finance the Democratic and Republican parties and their campaigns of mutual mudslinging and lies. What we seek to achieve—raising the political consciousness of the working class—can be accomplished only by developing a grassroots political movement that will broadly mobilize workers, professionals, young people and students and extend beyond the election itself, laying the foundations for the building of a mass socialist party of the working class.

We place this challenge before our supporters: Join us in the effort to publicize the SEP campaign, win support for its candidates, organize political discussion of our program among working people and youth. Set up meetings in your neighborhoods, at your workplaces and schools to hear from the SEP campaign. Distribute this campaign platform as broadly as possible. Help build the SEP as the new political party of the working people.

We recognize that we face enormous obstacles in mounting this campaign. The American political system is profoundly undemocratic. The two-party system perpetuates itself by seeking to exclude from the ballot all independent alternatives, especially those on the left.

We are nevertheless waging an aggressive and ambitious campaign. We do so on the basis of a principled socialist and internationalist program and confidence that this program will find a growing base of support among working people. Our ability to reach the broadest possible audience depends on the active support and participation of workers, students and youth.

### **Join the fight for socialism!**

The Socialist Equality Party bases itself on the great traditions of the international socialist movement. Socialism stands for equality, human solidarity and cooperation, the material and spiritual liberation of mankind from oppression and want. The first task of socialism is the elimination of poverty—a goal that is eminently realizable, given the enormous development of man’s productive forces and the tremendous advances in science and technology. Socialism will proceed to raise the living standards of the broad mass of humanity and create the conditions for full equality.

But man does not live by bread alone, and the perspective of socialism does not stop at the fulfillment—as crucial as it is—of immediate material needs. That achievement lays the foundations for an enormous flowering of culture, science and the intellectual and moral stature of individual men and women. Socialism envisions the fullest possible development of people’s talents, interests and potentialities, in a world where social ownership of the means of

production, international planning and cooperation, and a vast extension of popular participation and democratic control will enable man to overcome the demoralizing grind of economic insecurity and the dehumanizing effect of dog-eat-dog competition.

With the advent of Karl Marx, socialism became a science. With the 1917 October Revolution, it became the program of a mass popular movement that overthrew capitalism and established the first workers state—the Soviet Union.

The Russian Revolution was part of a broader international struggle of the working class for social equality. Every major advance of American workers was associated with socialism and spearheaded by socialist-minded militants—from the eight-hour day, to child labor laws, to universal public education, to the formation of mass industrial unions, to the end of Jim Crow racial segregation in the South.

Like many great ideals, socialism has been abused and betrayed. In the Soviet Union, it was betrayed by the bureaucracy that arose under Joseph Stalin. Stalinism was not the continuation of the egalitarian and internationalist legacy of the Russian Revolution. It was a conservative, bureaucratic reaction against the revolution, based on the nationalist program of “socialism in a single country.”

The Stalinist bureaucracy crushed workers’ democracy, imposed dictatorial rule, executed the genuine Marxists and subverted revolutionary struggles of the working class around the world—all while claiming to act in the name of “socialism.” This betrayal of the Russian Revolution and socialism culminated in the direct collaboration of the Kremlin bureaucracy with international imperialism in the breakup of the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism at the beginning of the 1990s.

For more than 50 years, the American ruling elite has waged an unending propaganda campaign aimed at discrediting socialism in the eyes of American workers. Beginning with the McCarthyite witch-hunt of the 1950s, the political establishment sought to remove all traces of left-wing and socialist influence from the American labor

movement. This has had catastrophic results for the working class.

In the US, the struggles of the working class were betrayed by a labor bureaucracy that defended the capitalist system and politically subordinated the workers to American big business and the Democratic Party. Under conditions of globalized production, in which capital can scour the globe in search of cheaper sources of labor, the union bureaucracy, wedded to a nationalist perspective, has proven unable and unwilling to defend the gains made by workers in previous periods. The betrayal of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy has led to the identification of the unions with corporate management and their transformation into instruments to suppress the working class, isolate strikes and enforce concessions.

Our movement bases itself on the legacy of the best, most courageous and far-sighted representatives of the working class, who fought for socialism in opposition to bureaucracy. The greatest embodiment of this tradition was Leon Trotsky, a leader of the Russian Revolution who led the struggle against the betrayals of Stalinism and laid the basis for the rebirth of the international workers movement through the founding in 1938 of the Fourth International—the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

America has also produced great fighters for socialism—men and women who battled the labor bureaucrats and devoted their lives to the liberation of the working class. Among them are such figures as Big Bill Haywood, Eugene Debs and James Cannon. American workers must re-appropriate this rich socialist heritage in order to organize the struggle today to transform society in the interests of the people and put an end to poverty, exploitation and oppression in the United States and throughout the world.

We call on all those who oppose war and militarism and the assault on democratic rights, and who support the fight for social equality, to contact the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* and volunteer to participate in the SEP campaigns. Join the SEP and help fight for a socialist alternative!

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To contact the WSWP and the Socialist Equality Party visit: <http://www.wswp.org>