

# The Clinton crisis - the real political issues

The IWB Editorial Board  
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In a bizarre and rapidly unfolding chain of events a sex scandal has mushroomed into a political crisis that threatens to topple the Clinton presidency. It is too early to predict whether Clinton will be forced out of office, nor is this by any means the most important question raised by the scandal. Of far greater significance is the political source of the scandal and what it reveals about the state of bourgeois democracy in the United States.

For working people, the only class-conscious and, indeed, intelligent response to the filth and slime that is pouring out of the media is disgust and suspicion. Behind the lurid facade of a sex scandal, a political struggle is raging between competing factions of corporate power for control over the state, a struggle that has reached a level of ferocity unprecedented in the history of the United States.

With three years to go until the next scheduled presidential election, an attempt is being made by the Independent Counsel, backed by the FBI and a section of the judiciary, to remove Clinton from office. Using procedures normally reserved for dealings with the Mafia, unprecedented measures have been employed - including the wiring of an individual - to obtain potentially damning evidence against Clinton.

Leading organs of big business are exulting in the humiliation and possible collapse of the administration. The Wall Street Journal provided an example of pathological vitriol in an editorial entitled 'The Outrage Arrives.' It gloated: 'The ceiling is suddenly caving in on Mr. Clinton's Presidency...Bill Clinton is about to enter that same land recently visited by Marv Albert and Mike Tyson...'

It is apparent that powerful sections of big business have concluded that they can no longer pursue their interests under the existing president, and they are attempting, through the office of the Independent Counsel and with the assistance of a bribed and

corrupted mass media, to move him out.

It is not here a question of defending Clinton, a capitalist politician and political leader of American imperialism. But it must be stated, the present state of affairs - which has many of the elements of a political coup - exposes the fragile and worm-eaten character of democratic institutions in America.

What is the underlying cause of this political crisis?

The explosive state of relations within ruling class circles is itself an expression of the mounting economic and social dilemmas facing American capitalism, both at home and abroad. The disintegration of the East Asian economies threatens to plunge the entire world into a deflationary slump on a scale unseen since the Depression of the 1930s. Already it has produced turmoil on Wall Street and growing concerns that the bull market may be coming to an end. The collapse of Asian markets is impacting corporate profits, including such blue chip stalwarts as IBM.

The drift and perplexity of the Clinton administration in the face of these events was summed up just a few weeks ago when the president called the breakdown of the East Asian economies a 'glitch.'

Meanwhile regimes long boosted by the US in the region - most notably Suharto in Indonesia - are being undermined by the impact of the economic crisis and the signs of mounting popular unrest.

On a whole series of international fronts, American policy has led to an impasse and the threat of new explosions -- from Iraq to Israel, Bosnia and Haiti. While the administration's opponents lack any coherent policy of their own, many have bitterly attacked the White House for 'caving in' to Saddam Hussein and hesitating to launch new military attacks on the Iraqi people.

At home there are sharp divisions over the thrust of domestic policy. A powerful faction of the ruling class is determined to dismantle all that remains of social

welfare programs and remove any and every restriction on the accumulation of private wealth. Their mouthpieces in the Republican Congress brush aside Clinton's proposals to use the emerging budget surplus for a token expansion of child care and Medicare, and instead demand an end to all taxes on the assets of the rich.

Overall, there is a sense in ruling circles that while Clinton was adequate for the job of escalating the assault on jobs, social program and working class living standards, and could be tolerated as long as the bull market on Wall Street guaranteed ever higher profits, a new, more authoritative and ruthless type of government is required for the next stage of the corporate offensive against labor.

Of course, none of these issues are broached before the public. Instead, the institutions of capitalist rule, of which the corporate-controlled media are among the most essential, seek to stupefy public opinion by bombarding the people with tawdry tales of illicit sex in the White House. The machinations of various factions within the corporate and political elite are hidden behind a blather of so-called news that never rises above the level of soap opera or TV talk show.

A central purpose of this outpouring of media slime is to confuse, disorient and deaden the consciousness of the broad mass of working people. In so far as the crisis gripping the ruling class assumes the form in the thinking of workers of some kind of low-grade morality tale, the masses are reduced to the status of passive spectators, a situation which obviously works in favor of corporate America.

Whatever the immediate outcome - whether Clinton is forced out or, as has happened repeatedly in the past, he hangs onto power by shifting further to the right to accommodate his critics within the ruling class - the result will be an intensified assault on the jobs, living standards and democratic rights of the working class.

The International Workers Bulletin opposes the Clinton Administration on the basis of revolutionary socialist policies, that is, within the political context of building a mass working class movement against the capitalist system as a whole. This opposition has nothing in common with the utterly reactionary maneuvers and gutter tactics of Clinton's right-wing opponents.

Workers should oppose Clinton not because of his

real or alleged sexual peccadilloes, but because of his role, and that of the Democratic Party, as the political representative of American capitalism and its program of austerity, militarism and ever-greater social inequality.

The Clinton crisis underscores the paralyzing effect of the subordination of workers to the Democratic Party. It demonstrates the urgency of the fight of the Socialist Equality Party to develop a powerful mass political movement of the working class.



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