

On the eve of the State of the Union address

# The political issues behind the Clinton scandal begin to emerge

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From the onset of the scandal that has shaken the Clinton administration, The *International Workers Bulletin* has focused its analysis on the intense struggle within the ruling class over the policies of the government that underlie the crisis, rather than the sexual allegations within which this struggle has been packaged for mass consumption.

We have explained that powerful sections of corporate America, reacting to what they consider to be Clinton's temporizing, are seeking to force government policy much more violently to the right. By means of the Independent Counsel and with the aid of the business-controlled media, they have precipitated a political crisis in the run-up to the State of the Union speech with the aim of whipping the president into line, or forcing him from office.

On the eve of the presidential address, a series of articles and commentaries have appeared in the bourgeois press which bear out this analysis, and begin to elaborate the type of policies, domestic and foreign, which these forces are calling for.

The British magazine the *Economist* has provided perhaps the most frank account of the issues underlying the Clinton crisis in an editorial entitled: "Clinton's temptations." As the *Economist* drolly notes, the real concern within corporate circles is not Clinton's predilections for the opposite sex, but what they perceive to be a lingering infatuation with government funded social programs.

"Remember that whatever the truth about his sexual appetites," the *Economist* writes, "when it comes to government, this

president is an amazingly hungry man. For years deficits and Republicans held him back. All of a sudden, he was surrounded by trays of gorgeous pudding. In recent weeks he had tied on the bib, spoon ready poised. He has already proposed, for his next budget, \$22 billion for child care; a 35 percent rise in funding for AIDS treatment; \$5 billion to address global warming; a worker retraining plan, expansion of the Medicare health program, a drive to hire 100,000 new teachers and repair school buildings, and extra money for civil rights enforcement. More cake, Mr. President? Hot fudge with that?

"Many Republicans, watching grimly, thought they were seeing the rebirth of big government.... With luck the new allegations will again help Mr. Clinton to stay virtuous."

The *Economist* points here to a major concern of American big business. Having used the federal budget deficit as the justification for gutting social programs, the emergence of a surplus raises the problem of how to defend an even more aggressive attack on what remains of the welfare state. Under these conditions, Clinton's proposals for even the most timid increases in social spending evoke a furious response within corporate circles.

The *Economist* concludes by countering Clinton's proposals with two of the basic social policy planks of the Republican Congress: an escalation of the assault on the public schools by means of "school choice," and privatization of the Social Security system.

The January 27 Wall Street Journal contains an array of articles and commentaries attacking Clinton's new domestic proposals and denouncing his foreign policy as

one of appeasement. A column by the multimillionaire scion of the magazine fortune, Steve Forbes, calls on the Republican Party to counter Clinton's State of the Union address with a program to effectively dismantle Social Security and Medicare and virtually abolish taxation on the assets of the rich. Among the policies Forbes advances are abolition of the income tax and its replacement by a so-called flat tax, privatization of the Social Security system, an intensified attack on the public school system, harsher restrictions on the right to abortion, a war to topple Saddam Hussein, a massive increase in military spending, and a more ruthless policy of austerity on the part of the International Monetary Fund.

A column by George Melloan, entitled: "A Clinton Resignation Won't Shatter World Order" complains: "The work Mr. Clinton and his wife have in mind consists of spending a projected budget surplus as quickly as possible on projects that will buy votes for the Democratic Party."

Another article, under the headline: "Scandal Undermines Clinton's Agenda, Giving GOP More Say on Host of Issues," is devoted largely to the impact of Clinton's crisis on the tobacco industry. It predicts the tobacco companies will save tens of billions of dollars because the White House will be too weak to impose tougher penalties as part of a national settlement with the industry.

Such items in the capitalist press are the public face of a struggle that is being conducted largely behind the scenes between the Clinton administration and its critics within the ruling class. Whether its outcome is the ouster of Clinton, or yet another lurch of the present administration to the right, the result will be an intensified attack on the social conditions and democratic rights of the working class.



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