

Republican candidate advances fascistic agenda

Buchanan announces presidential campaign for 2000

Jerry White
6 March 1999

Patrick Buchanan, the right-wing media commentator and long-time Republican Party political operative, announced March 2 that he will be a contender for the Republican presidential nomination in the year 2000. Speaking in Manchester, New Hampshire, the former aide in the Nixon, Ford and Reagan administrations called for a "new patriotism in America" to clean up the country's "polluted and poisoned culture" and "heal the soul of America."

Buchanan attempts to present himself as a spokesman for working and middle class people, while advocating a reactionary platform of economic nationalism, anti-immigrant chauvinism, militarism and religious and racial bigotry. The day before he formally announced his candidacy, Buchanan spoke before steelworkers in Weirton, West Virginia, where he sought to channel growing anger over layoffs along chauvinist channels, calling for across-the-board quotas on steel imports.

Buchanan has always placed animus towards immigrants at the center of his politics. He has spoken openly of the necessity to maintain America as a "Christian, European nation." In his announcement speech he called for a halt to all immigration to the United States, declaring that America is not "some polyglot boarding house for the world."

Like many on the right, Buchanan seeks to exploit the controversy over affirmative action programs to encourage bigotry against blacks and other minorities. This is nothing new for Buchanan, who won the majority in the Louisiana Caucus in his 1992 bid for the Republican nomination by obtaining the support of former KKK leader David Duke.

In announcing his campaign Buchanan hit on other issues--opposition to abortion, religious virtue, a billion-

dollar tax cut, smaller government, etc.--that are dear to the extreme right in the Republican Party.

Of particular significance was Buchanan's pledge to "reshape" the Republican Party so as to make it "the natural home of working men and women, and the middle class." Buchanan is quite consciously seeking to transform the Republican Party into an instrument for the development of a mass fascist movement in America.

He seeks to tap into the legitimate anger and frustration of broad layers of the population, both middle class people and workers, and divert their social discontent in a reactionary direction. Appealing to everything that is backward in America, Buchanan aims to exploit the political confusion and disorientation engendered by a political system monopolized by two big business parties which are indifferent to the problems confronting working people.

In his Weirton speech, Buchanan made a thinly veiled appeal to anti-Semitism, singling out Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin for attack. Buchanan said Rubin and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had sold out American sovereignty by encouraging Russia, Brazil, Japan and other countries to export low-cost steel to the US, in order to repay international loans to Western bankers. Supporters in the audience carried signs stating "Rubin and Judas--Two of a Kind."

Such an appeal is nothing new for Buchanan. During his days in the Reagan administration he defended Reagan's visit to an SS cemetery in Bitburg, Germany, denouncing "Jewish pressure" to call it off.

Buchanan chose to speak in Weirton, an economically depressed steel town 35 miles south of Pittsburgh, to establish his credentials as a supposed

partisan of hard-pressed working people. Addressing himself to those who have been "left behind" by the current economic boom, he said the recent spate of layoffs was the result of the Clinton administration's "globalist free-trade policies" that are "killing our industries." Standing alongside supporters carrying signs reading, "Free Traders are Traitors," Buchanan proclaimed that he was a protectionist, claiming this meant protecting the American worker.

In presenting himself as a champion of working people, Buchanan counts on the political naivete and uninformed state of his audiences. He also counts on the complicity of the press. His fascistic politics are well known within media circles, but he is nevertheless presented as a legitimate politician and his campaigns are given enormous publicity.

The notion that this lifelong defender of big business is a friend of the working class is absurd. Buchanan was born into a family, headed by a well-to-do Washington accountant, that revered Francisco Franco, the fascist general who butchered tens of thousands of Spanish workers in the 1936-39 civil war and set up a police state that ruled for more than 35 years. Among Buchanan's earliest heroes was Joseph McCarthy, the Republican Senator who led the anticommunist witch-hunt after the Second World War that purged socialist and radical workers from the unions and trampled on civil liberties and constitutional rights.

Buchanan boasts that he has served "two of the most important presidents" in US history: Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. For eight years he served as Nixon's key aide and speech writer, assisting in the Watergate cover-up of Nixon's illegal actions and unconstitutional persecution of anti-Vietnam War protesters and other political opponents. He supported the attacks on workers' living standards, such as Nixon's wage controls of the early 1970s. Buchanan then served as a speechwriter and communications director under the union-busting Reagan administration.

Far from being a "man of the people," Buchanan has amassed a multi-million-dollar personal fortune as a political insider, syndicated columnist and co-host of various television shows, including CNN's "Crossfire" program.

During his bid for the Republican nomination in 1992 and again in 1996, Buchanan was backed by staunchly antiunion corporations, particularly those whose profits

were most threatened by global competition. Among his biggest financial backers is Roger Milliken, the head of Milliken & Co., a South Carolina-based textile company with a history of shutting down mills where workers vote to unionize. Another of his backers is W. Grover Coors, a trustee of the right-wing Heritage Foundation think tank and a member of the notoriously anti-union Coors brewing family.

In his speeches and columns Buchanan regularly denounces the "global economy" and "the financiers of the New World Order," while carefully avoiding any attack on capitalism. He seeks to line up American workers in what he calls a "Darwinian war" against the rivals of US multinational corporations on the world market.

The logic of Buchanan's program of economic nationalism is military confrontation with corporate America's competitors for markets, resources and profits. Buchanan insists that the US armed forces be unleashed to carry out unilateral military action without being constrained by the United Nations or NATO. "When US vital interests are threatened ... we ask no nation's permission to respond," he declared in his New Hampshire speech.

Notwithstanding his supposed concerns for the jobs and conditions of American workers, Buchanan is a defender of the profit system who demands that workers accept the dictates of the capitalist market. In a recent column in the *New York Post* he wrote: "In a national economy, when there is a problem of overproduction, the market solves it. Weak companies go under, and stronger companies downsize or merge to cut excess capacity, until demand catches up."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact