

Letters on WSWs coverage of US elections

28 August 2000

Dear WSWs,

Thank you for your indispensable coverage and analysis of the Democratic Party convention, and—even more so—the class fraction basis of the two major bourgeois political parties (e.g., Barry Grey's “Clinton's speech to the Democratic convention: toasting success on the eve of the deluge”). Your writers consistently provide a much needed antidote to the theoretically naive populist (Nader, etc.) and anarchist (Chomsky, etc.) interpretations of the US political structure so prevalent among the various fractions of the “left.”

From what passes as radical analysis of the US state one would think that corporate soft money donations are the principal means by which the ruling class has a stranglehold on the political system. One would also be misled into believing that US big business is a unified bloc scarce of intra-elite tensions. Weak and uninformed analysis such as this has an organic link with the populism (Nader), proto-fascism (Buchanan), and provocative ultra-leftism (middle-class anarchism) which plague today's reform and “revolutionary” movements, however comprehensible and historically necessary they may be.

Also, virtually alone among the “alternative” perspectives in the public sphere, the WSWs locates the soft spots of the speculative accumulation of the last eight or nine years, and understands that the strategies of mass mobilization must be informed by the undeniable likelihood of a deep recession in the next one or two years. The populists and anarchists simply have no theory of the unpredictable ups and downs of capitalist growth which bolster and erode bourgeois domination of society. The former falsely regard bourgeois domination as a product of their instrumental control of the political system, and the latter falsely regard bourgeois domination as a fortress-like edifice with no cracks in it.

While I may not always agree with the WSWs's vision of what comprises an ideal society latent in the writings

of your commentators, I merely wanted to express my extreme gratitude for the sophisticated reporting on and diagnosis of the US political scene routinely available on your web site.

Sincerely,

JG

17 August 2000

To the editor,

During the hypocrisy of the nomination conventions, I was excited to come across, and would like to share, a striking insight into the American political system by a famous European commentator of 109 years ago. He wrote: “Nowhere do 'politicians' form a more separate, powerful section of the nation than in North America. There, each of the two great parties which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate states, or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party and on its victory are rewarded with positions.

“It is well known that the Americans have been striving for thirty years to shake off this yoke, which has become intolerable, and that in spite of all they can do they continue to sink ever deeper in this swamp of corruption. It is precisely in America that we see best how there takes place this process of the state power making itself independent in relation to society, whose mere instrument it was originally intended to be. Here there exists no dynasty, no nobility, no standing army, beyond the few men keeping watch on the Indians, no bureaucracy with permanent posts or the right to pensions. And nevertheless we find here two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt end—and the nation is powerless against these two great cartels of politicians, who are ostensibly its servants, but in reality exploit and plunder it.”

The author from more than a century ago was Frederick Engels, co-author of the “Communist Manifesto,” writing a preface to the twentieth anniversary edition of Karl Marx's “The Civil War in France: the Paris Commune,” on the rebellion of 1871. Of course, the “two great gangs” referred to are the Democrat and Republican Parties. The quotation holds true for today, too. While the comment on the lack of a standing army and a bureaucracy is now outdated, the vast growth of these agencies of the ruling class have only added to what was, as the author next stated, a “transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society.”

Engels was elaborating on Marx's explanation of the state, whether in the form of an absolute monarchy or a democracy, as constituting an instrument of class rule over the workers, which could no longer be reformed or taken over as it was. The events of the Paris Commune, in which the French workers succeeded for a month in establishing the first workers government, demonstrated the need to replace the capitalist state power with the workers' own organization.

More than a hundred years on, the *World Socialist Web Site* reporting on the election campaign cogently shows the need for the working class to independently bring an end to the plutocracy we live under.

Regards,

HL

12 August 2000



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