

WSWS replies to letters on US election crisis

6 January 2001

Below we post a selection of letters on the US election crisis and replies by David North, chairman of the WSWS editorial board.

Dear Mr. North,

I could not agree too strongly with every word of your lecture “The 2000 elections and the new ‘irrepressible conflict’”. I am impressed by the way you manage to explain so many issues—including the background of the Civil War—with such clarity.

I have felt for a long time that the recent year's events (say, from the impeachment on) were no normal political crisis. The election did make me think of Germany of 1933. However, I did console myself with the thought that there was no analogue of the presidential power which assisted Hitler in his “democratic” overthrow of the Weimar constitution.

I now see I was naive. What I did not reckon on was (1) the systematic opposition to voting in the first place by likely Democratic supporters coupled with discriminatory counting mechanisms which were also prejudiced against Democrats (2) the willingness of the Florida legislature—on very dubious if legally possible grounds—to elect Republican electors whatever happens and (3) the willingness of the US Supreme Court, if it happens, to produce an entirely political result, which is in total opposition to the normal trend of the conservative members of the court—a decision which would be the Dred Scott of our time.

May I also share with you a small extract from an article in today's *Guardian*. This is the most liberal of the main English dailies and its general anti-Bush and anti-Republican line can be fully supported. But in a basically sensible article indicating how a Supreme Court decision for Bush would damage the Court, the author, Peter Preston, says:

“I may personally prefer some—not all—of Gore's policies, but the man himself is an uninspiring, wooden hulk. (Edna O'Brien calls him ‘The Wardrobe’.) Bush, by contrast, may be intellectually punier, but he tells good jokes, clearly connects with middle America and has gathered some shrewd operators around him. This is a decent democratic choice, as usual: it is not the edge of some grand canyon.”

One can only despair at such frivolity. Further, even though personalities are not really the issue, I fail to see how anyone in any way progressive cannot find Bush utterly loathsome, if only for his approach to executions.

Kindest regards

PH

11 December 2000

Dear Mr. H:

Thank you for your letter. Perhaps you were naive, but you could not be expected to assume that the ruling elite in the US was prepared to go as far as it finally did in the subversion of basic democratic rights. An election is an objective event, and its outcome may reveal elements of objective reality that were not previously apparent. In this case, the outcome revealed the willingness of broad sections of the American ruling class to break with democracy. There existed within the elite no decisive support for a democratic adjudication of the election crisis. Moreover, the most salient feature of the last two weeks has been the ease with which even those sections of the ruling class that supported Gore (starting with Gore himself) reconciled themselves to the theft of the election and the

prostitution of the entire political system.

Now that this has happened, it is critical to draw the appropriate political lessons. It is not that the forces of democracy have been exhausted—either in the United States or in Europe. But the real base for democracy is to be found not within the precincts of the ruling elite, but within the broad mass of the working people. The defense of democratic rights depends upon the independent political mobilization of the working class. And by independent, we mean the organization of the working class on the basis of its own comprehensive program (political, economic and social) apart from and in opposition to the parties of the ruling class.

That is the task to which the WSWS is committed.

Yours sincerely,

David North

26 December 2000

Congratulations to David North for his excellent and comprehensive analysis of the significance of the election fraud in Florida in his December 11, 2000 article. Your December 10, 2000 editorial was equally outstanding. I have notified various people in San Francisco of your editorial because it so clearly addressed the election fraud issue in Florida, and relates to the election fraud we have experienced here in San Francisco. I agree with David North that the Supreme Court's actions and the entire Florida debacle represent both a watershed in history and significant contradictions in our society. Unlike too many people who are socialists, I do not dismiss election fraud at all. I keep telling everyone that election fraud is fascism and an election fraud team is a strike-breaking team. It has nothing to do with whether we like the candidates on the ballot; the issue of election fraud is an issue of democratic rights, which socialists must always defend. Keep up the good work.

LH

10 December 2000

Dear LH,

Thank you for your letter of support. The election of 2000 has taken us into new political territory. What its outcome has revealed is the collapse of any significant constituency for democratic rights within the ruling elite. But that does not hold true for the broad mass of the working people. Notwithstanding the efforts of the media to project a “business as usual” approach in the aftermath of the election, the events of the last six weeks have left a deep (though still confused) impression on the collective consciousness of the working class. The theft of the election will have, perhaps sooner than many expect, serious political repercussions.

With best regards,

David North

26 December 2000

Dear people:

I have only recently discovered your web site, and I must say I'm happy to find it. As a man born when Herbert Hoover was US president, I have many rather precise memories of American political history during the Roosevelt era forward to the current temporal context. As person who is lettered, I have read more than one book on political philosophy. In fact, I had the pleasure of meeting William Mandel one night when he was guest lecturer for a course I was taking in Marxism-Leninism, which was being

taught by the renowned political scientist and philosopher Louis Wasserman. It was during the experience of taking that course that I became precisely aware of the meaning of Marxism and all that it connotes.

On the subject of the persecution of Abu-Jamal, it seems inconceivable that his advocate would have to experience the trauma inflicted upon him by his tormentors. However, as you correctly point out, it seems that the oligarchy is becoming much more aggressive in this country, and doubtless they will stop at nothing to seize absolute and tyrannical power through the usurpation of the office of the president (and thus the attorney general) and utilizing the police power of the state to achieve any crypto-fascist goal they wish.

It seems to me that the time is at hand to make a concerted effort to meaningfully accelerate the growth of class consciousness among the members of the public who are in a state of psychological readiness to understand its meaning, and a willingness to do whatever they can to prevail in the ongoing class struggle. Once again, it seems that the time is now to press the philosophy of Marxism into the consciousness of the American public. Do you think it's possible?

RP

8 December 2000

Dear RP:

Thank you for your letter. In response to your question: Yes, the time is certainly ripe for the development of Marxian consciousness within the advanced sections of the people. This is possible because it is, in a historical sense, necessary. The publication of the *World Socialist Web Site* will continue to play a powerful role in the struggle to develop this revolutionary consciousness.

Yours fraternally,

David North

26 December 2000

Dear Editor:

As much as I admire the majority of your election coverage, I must take issue with your repetition that there has been only a half-hearted response by Democrats and liberals to the appalling display of egotism and dishonesty by the Republican Party in Florida. Thousands have been demonstrating in the streets; thousands of us have signed petitions, written countless letters to the Republicans, to the media, to elected and appointed officials, and to newspapers—what more is there to do than this? While I admit I have heard of quite a few liberals and Democrats who are less than willing to approach this travesty with courage and perseverance, I feel it is unfair of your writers to consistently refer to the Democratic/Liberal response as if it were nonexistent. Please do not judge all of us by the actions of a complacent segment of the group. To do so is not fair to those of us who are utterly disgusted by the media propaganda and the blatant disregard for democratic rights exhibited in recent weeks. Also, the mass media gleans great pleasure from repeating claims of less-than-adequate Democratic/Liberal response; I hope you are not relying on that same media as a source for your information.

I do want to thank you, though, for your excellent coverage of the election, and I would like to thank writer David Walsh for his December 7 piece on the media; never have I seen anyone put into words so precisely what I think of many of these so-called news anchors. His article was honest, and direct—and very true.

Sincerely,

CS

9 December 2000

Dear CS:

Thank you for your letter. We are entirely prepared to accept that there are many supporters of the Democratic Party, sincere in what they believe

to be liberal principles, who have been outraged by the outcome of Election 2000. However, the role of the Democratic Party must be judged on the basis of its official actions as a political party—not on the basis of the isolated protests of its supporters within different sections of the population. The response of the Democratic Party to the massive conspiracy against democratic rights has been cowardly, duplicitous and unserious. In the final analysis, the Democratic Party, as a political organization of the capitalist class, was neither capable of nor willing to mount a genuine struggle against the machinations of the Republican Party. And how could one expect it to? This is a political party that is rooted—historically, politically, economically and socially—in the interests of corporate America. Its own steady drift to the right over the last quarter-century mirrors the breakdown of the objective basis in the United States for a program of liberal social reform. The defensiveness of the Democratic Party is an expression of its inability to advance any genuine alternative to the Republican Party, which has the political advantage of being unabashed in its defense of capitalism in all its ruthless logic.

In the old days, liberals attempted to fend off the socialist challenge by claiming that it was possible to eliminate poverty and vastly improve the living standards of the broad masses of the working class within the framework of a socially-regulated capitalism. The last 30 years have seen the shipwreck of that perspective. The Great Society proved to be the tragic and bloody last hurrah of American liberalism—an attempt to combine social reform at home with war against the enemies of US imperialism overseas. Its real political legacy has been three decades of political reaction. To be blunt, the Clinton administration, in the basic thrust of its economic and social policy, exemplified the utter political prostration of liberalism. The Clinton administration did not challenge in any significant aspect the socioeconomic agenda of its Republican predecessors. To take just one example, its attitude toward welfare, the *New York Times* writes today: “With strict time limits and vast local discretion to turn the needy away, Mr. Clinton carried his anti-welfare crusade much further than even he had intended. As a result, he leaves far fewer protections for families who, for whatever reason, fail to hold jobs.”

American liberalism no longer exists as an important political tendency. Its old constituencies—within a substantial stratum of the ruling elite and broad sections of the middle class—have all but disappeared. The future of a genuinely progressive movement within the United States is now dependent upon the building of an independent revolutionary socialist movement, based on the working class.

Yours sincerely,

David North

26 December 2000



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