

# WSWS international conference: Resolutions call for political independence of working class, oppose attacks on democratic rights

3 April 2003

*The World Socialist Web Site and Socialist Equality Party held an international conference on March 29-30 in Ann Arbor, Michigan titled “Socialism and the Struggle against Imperialism and War: The Strategy and Program of a New International Working Class Movement”. On April 1 the WSWS published a summary account of the conference [ See “World Socialist Web Site holds international conference on socialism and the struggle against war”] and the opening report by David North, chairman of the WSWS International Editorial Board and national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the US. [ See “Into the maelstrom: the crisis of American imperialism and the war against Iraq”]*

*On April 2 we posted the first two of six resolutions unanimously adopted by the conference delegates [See “WSWS international conference: Resolutions condemn war in Iraq, call for international unity of working class”] and today we are posting the third and fourth resolutions. Tomorrow we will post the final two.*

## **Conference resolution: For the Political Independence of the Working Class**

The struggle against imperialism and war requires the establishment of the political independence of the working class from all of the parties that are tied to big business and base themselves on the defense of the profit system. Imperialist war arises from the insoluble contradictions of capitalism and is waged in the interests of the financial oligarchy. This is why no effective struggle against imperialism and war is possible on the basis of the continued subordination of the working class to the political representatives of the capitalist ruling elite.

This conference condemns the Democratic Party as the accomplice of the Bush administration in the aggression against Iraq. The Democrats in Congress supplied Bush with ample votes last October to pass the resolution authorizing the invasion and occupation of Iraq. None of the party's leading spokesmen has seriously opposed the war, and all of its major contenders for the 2004 presidential nomination fully support it. The Democrats have refused even to insist on a congressional debate on the war and have thereby aided and abetted the conspiracy by which it was planned over the heads of the American people.

The Bush administration could not have undertaken this war without the support of the Democratic Party. Once the war began, the Democrats in both the House and Senate voted overwhelmingly for pro-war resolutions, and their leading congressional spokesmen declared their “full support to our commander in chief.”

It would be politically naïve to think that the installation of Al Gore in the White House, rather than Bush, would have averted war against Iraq. Bush's war-mongering policies are only a more extreme expression of the militarist policies pursued by the Clinton-Gore administration. Clinton presided over the invasion of Somalia, the US military occupation of Haiti, American military intervention in Bosnia, the December 1998 bombing of Iraq, missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan, and the war

against Serbia. He signed the Iraq Liberation Act that made “regime change” in Baghdad the official policy of the United States. Given this record and the subsequent complicity of the Democrats with Bush's war drive, there is no reason to believe that a Gore administration would have pursued a fundamentally different policy in the Persian Gulf.

The Democrats are no less complicit in the Bush administration's anti-working class domestic program. They gave Bush the necessary votes to pass his mammoth tax cut for the rich in the opening weeks of his administration, and since 9/11 have supported the most sweeping attacks on democratic rights and constitutional safeguards in US history. They have colluded with the Republicans to suppress any investigation into the September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, as well as the anthrax attacks that followed, in order to cover up either criminal negligence or outright complicity at the highest levels of the state.

The political collapse of the Democratic Party is the outcome of a protracted process. For decades, support for this party was justified by citing the modest social reforms associated with Roosevelt's New Deal, Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society. These, it was claimed, showed that the capitalist system could ensure far-reaching and permanent improvements in working class living standards and significantly reduce disparities in wealth and income. All such claims have been shattered by the experience of the past 30 years, during which the past gains of the working class have been rolled back and social inequality has reached levels not seen since the 1920s. Over this period the Democrats have lurched ever more to the right, in keeping with the economic requirements and political trajectory of the ruling elite.

The Democrats' refusal to expose the anti-democratic conspiracy that underlay the Republican impeachment drive against Clinton, and their acquiescence in the theft of the 2000 election, demonstrated the party's lack of any commitment to the defense of democratic rights.

This evolution is not an accident. It flows inexorably from the capitalist character of the Democratic Party. Its differences with the Republicans are purely tactical. On all issues that go to the foundations of the financial oligarchy's domination of economic life at home and strategic interests abroad, the two parties stand united.

The political subordination of American labor to the Democratic Party is a central historical problem in the development the working class. It is a problem that cannot be evaded.

Long historical experience testifies to the need for a break with the Democrats. Again and again progressive social movements—from the struggle for industrial unions, to the civil rights movement, to the movement against the Vietnam War—were subordinated to this party of the ruling class and thereby led into a blind alley. The AFL-CIO has played a particularly reactionary role in opposing the development of a mass independent party of the working class. Its alliance with the Democrats ultimately sealed the fate of the unions themselves, turning them into the

bureaucratized vassals of corporate management they are today.

This conference calls on all those opposed to the war in Iraq and the attack on the democratic rights and social conditions of working people to repudiate the Democratic Party. Those who propose the “reform” of this party are practicing charlatanism or self-deception.

What is required, however, is not a new or “third” capitalist party, such as the Greens and other reformist parties. The political independence of the working class can be achieved only through the building of a party that attacks the economic foundations of the capitalist system—private ownership of the means of production and production for profit. It must be a party that opposes the monopolization of society’s wealth by an elite and advances a program for the democratic control of economic life by the working people and the achievement of social equality—that is, a socialist program.

This conference pledges to fight for the political independence of the working class. It calls for a break with the Democrats and all parties that stand with one or both feet in the camp of capitalism. We undertake the task of building the Socialist Equality Party as the mass political party of the working class which, on the basis of an internationalist and socialist program, will fight for power.

#### **Conference resolution: Oppose the attacks on democratic rights!**

The Bush administration has launched the most sustained attack on democratic rights in modern American history. Using the pretext provided by the September 11 terrorist attacks, it has systematically constructed, through the USA Patriot Act, the Homeland Security bill and other reactionary measures, the framework for a police state.

An essential component of the so-called “war on terror” has proven to be a war against the US Constitution. The Bush government, with the complicity of the Democrats in Congress and the support of the American media, has massively increased its powers of domestic spying, search and seizure and arrest and imprisonment without trial.

For millions of immigrants, habeas corpus—the guarantee that no individual can be imprisoned indefinitely without charges—no longer applies. In the wake of September 11, the US government, asserting the right to hold foreign nationals and American citizens incommunicado whom it deems to be threats to national security, rounded up more than one thousand Middle Eastern and Central Asian immigrants without trial on suspicion of terrorism. None has been charged with a terror-related crime and most have been summarily deported.

The launching of hostilities against Iraq was the signal for the FBI to announce plans to interrogate as many as 11,000 Iraqis living in the US. Internment camps for Iraqis or others are not far off.

Two American citizens—Jose Padilla and Yaser Esam Hamdi—are being held indefinitely as “enemy combatants,” and the federal government announced it will fight a judge’s ruling that Padilla be permitted to meet with his lawyers, after 10 months of solitary confinement in a South Carolina Navy brig.

The arrest of Palestinian militant Professor Sami Amin Al-Arian and three others on “terrorist conspiracy charges,” based primarily on the defendants’ political statements, constitutes an attempt to criminalize political opposition to the policies of the US government and its ally, Israel.

Under the Patriot Act, among other sinister provisions, schools are required to turn over school records and libraries the lending records of anyone the FBI claims to be a terrorist suspect. Agents can also demand “business records,” including newspaper subscription lists, bookstore receipts and even journalists’ unpublished notes and photographs.

The Homeland Security bill has created a centralized federal internal security agency, combining 22 federal agencies with 170,000 employees, and given the new body powers that go far beyond amalgamating those separate security agencies into one. Under one provision of the bill, the chillingly named “Total Information Awareness” program, the federal

government will be allowed to track credit card purchases, medical data, travel, magazine subscriptions, library usage and web and email usage.

The US government and military have demonstrated contempt for the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war by illegally holding 660 detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. It has tortured prisoners captured in Afghanistan, resulting in deaths, and turned over others to regimes known for their brutal interrogation methods. By executive order, Bush set up military tribunals to try non-citizens alleged to have ties with terrorism, depriving them of elementary legal protections.

The eruption of protest against the Iraq war will mean a stepping up of repression at home. The hostility of the Nixon White House for the anti-Vietnam War protesters in the late 1960s is notorious. What will be the response of the even more violently reactionary Bush White House? There are no doubt elements in the administration that would prefer to see “their” Kent State massacre sooner rather than later.

The issuing of “terror alerts” by Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge has nothing to do with protecting the American population. Their purpose is to disorient the public and put the media establishment and the Democrats on notice that no opposition to Bush’s policies will be brooked. They also provide a pretext for a crackdown on popular dissent. Already an Oregon Republican state legislator has proposed a measure that would define “violent protesters” as terrorists and subject them to possible life imprisonment.

The only terrorist activity detected in the US since September 11, 2001 has been the anthrax attack on the leadership of the Democratic Party, almost certainly carried out by elements within the American national security apparatus.

The US government has never undertaken a serious investigation into the September 11 attacks. No credible explanation of the tragic event has been offered, including how the perpetrators were able to carry out their crime despite massive US surveillance of Osama bin Laden and his cohorts. The lack of any such accounting reeks of cover-up and conspiracy. It makes a mockery of the government’s claims to be motivated by concerns for the safety and security of the American people.

The new assault on democratic rights, including the relentless pursuit of the death penalty and renewed attacks on abortion rights, has its fundamental source in changes within American society. It is a product, in the final analysis, of the sharp increase in social inequality and the resulting putrefaction of the American political system. The social gulf between the wealthy elite and the broad mass of the population has grown so vast that there is no longer a serious constituency for democratic rights within the political establishment.

The basic rights of the population are viewed by this elite as obstacles to the pursuit of unpopular policies, including war and the destruction of social programs, and to their own unfettered enrichment. The growth of authoritarian tendencies in the ruling circles is a symptom of the failure of American capitalism. This system has no answers to the social problems of its population; it offers only prison, police and war.

The assault on democratic rights following September 11 has been an international phenomenon, demonstrating that global capitalism is incompatible with the elementary rights of the population. The complicity of the Democratic Party in the Bush administration’s attack on basic rights underscores the fact that these rights can be defended only through the independent political mobilization of the working class.

This conference condemns the attacks on immigrants and demands the release of all those interned after September 11. It calls for the dropping of charges against Sami Amin Al-Arian.

This conference further condemns the passage of the Patriot Act and the creation of the Homeland Security Department.

This conference demands that the US respect the Geneva Conventions and grant its prisoners of war all legal rights.

This conference calls for a genuinely independent inquiry into the events

of September 11.

This conference further calls for an international campaign in defense of immigrants and democratic rights.



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**