

California recall election

John Christopher Burton, socialist gubernatorial candidate, discusses California crisis

Andrea Cappannari
2 September 2003

In the opening phase of his campaign for governor in the California recall election, John Christopher Burton, the socialist candidate supported by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), was able to discuss his policies in a series of interviews to be aired on cable television stations throughout the state over the next several weeks.

Burton was invited by several cable TV outlets to discuss his campaign following brief appearances on the ABC and FOX network news affiliates broadcasting in the Los Angeles area. These appearances reflect growing interest among California voters in the socialist alternative to the Democrats and Republicans represented by Burton's candidacy.

Burton and the SEP are calling for a "no" vote on the recall of Gray Davis, the Democratic governor who was reelected last November. As explained in the election statement issued by the SEP on August 30 (See: "Vote 'no' on the California recall. Vote John Christopher Burton for governor, for a socialist solution to the crisis"), the recall drive is the latest effort by the Republican Party, acting in behalf of corporate interests, to subvert democratic processes. At the same time, Burton and the SEP are giving no political support to Davis, Lt. Governor Bustamante or any other representatives of the Democratic Party.

On August 22, Jim Goyjer of Snapshots Productions, a non-profit company dedicated to securing television airtime for other non-profit organizations, interviewed Burton. In the 12-minute session, which can be accessed [on-line](http://www.snapshots.com/candidatesforgovernor.htm) at <http://www.snapshots.com/candidatesforgovernor.htm>,

Burton spoke of the political character of the recall and outlined the socialist program that he is advancing to resolve California's economic crisis.

Burton began his remarks by stating his opposition to the recall and discussing its political origins.

"The motive behind the recall is not a challenge to Davis' mismanagement of the state," he said. "Rather, [it is] an attempt by right-wing Republicans, [who] financed the signature gathering, to undo the results of the last election and to put in an administration that will remove even more quickly all fetters to the private accumulation of wealth."

The political events unfolding in California, Burton said, were symptomatic of wider phenomena. "This is an international situation and a national crisis that is really caused by the breakdown of market economics. I think the period we are in now is very similar to the period that the country and the world found itself in [during] the 1930s, [when] the major organs of capitalism could no longer meet human needs."

What is needed, Burton maintained, is a "radical reorganization of society." If he were governor, he said, he would "completely revamp the tax structure of the state of California." He continued: "I would drastically increase taxes on large businesses and the wealthy and I would lower taxes for the masses of working people."

Expanding on his socialist program, Burton told Goyjer: "My platform calls for transforming the major corporations and banks into public utilities, to obtain the resources necessary, not only for education and health, [but also for] real programs for the growing number of unemployed, to eradicate poverty and

homelessness, to expand recreational opportunities for youth and for families and to develop culture and the arts—all of which are necessary to live a full and satisfying life.”

In discussing the social decline that has plagued California for several decades, Burton, a civil rights lawyer in the Los Angeles area, drew a comparison between the state of the education system today and that of the 1970s. “When I went to law school 25 years ago at Hastings College of the Law,” he said, “virtually my entire tuition was paid by the state. Now, students are having to pay upwards of \$14,000 to \$15,000 a year, which excludes a large percentage of people from becoming lawyers.

“The entire educational system needs to be revamped, from kindergarten up, with massive infusions of money, so that people—no matter where they grow up, where they are born, whether they are immigrants or the children of...single mothers or [immigrant] parents, or have grown up in poverty—have excellent educational opportunities right through professional school.”

Burton spoke about the political processes unleashed by the recall election, saying, “Even though I am opposed to the recall, I think it has, probably to the chagrin of the people who originally supported it, opened up the field so that people like myself and the 134 other candidates can obtain ballot status and thereby present the voters with options that they’ve never seen before.

“[The media] present to the public a very narrow debate, where progressive ideas, much less socialist ideas like my own, are censored. This race has given an opportunity for these views to get out.”

The Snapshots interview with Burton will air as part of a 30-minute program featuring lesser-known candidates in the recall election. Los Angeles-area viewers can watch the segment on Time Warner Communications Channel 34 at 10:30 a.m. every Saturday from August 30 to September 20. Additionally, the interview will air on Adelphia Channel 25 in the LA area at 10:30 a.m. every Saturday, beginning on September 13 and ending on October 4.

The California Channel, a statewide cable TV network that broadcasts interviews and unedited footage of political events, conducted a 30-minute

interview with Burton on August 25. Burton’s conversation with John Hancock, president of the channel, will air during the week of September 22. The exact date and time have not been set.

To find out which station carries The California Channel in your local area, check the listings at <http://www.calchannel.com/carriage.htm>. In addition, the interview will be available for viewing as of September 22 on the California Secretary of State’s web site at <http://www.ss.ca.gov/>.

A 60-second radio statement by Burton will be aired throughout California on 36 Infinity Broadcasting stations and is available on the WSWS. In his remarks, Burton responds to the question, “As governor, what would you do to improve the state of California?”

Full coverage of Burton’s campaign and details of upcoming events can be accessed on-line at his web page: <http://www.socialequality.com/>.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact