

# **Hands off Iraq! Withdraw all US forces from the Middle East now! Build an antiwar movement based on the international working class!**

**Socialist Equality Party**

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*The following statement is being distributed in Washington DC, San Francisco and other cities on October 25 at protests organized against the US war and occupation in Iraq. It has also been posted in PDF format, and we urge our readers and supporters to download and distribute it in their areas.*

As tens of thousands prepare to march October 25 in Washington DC and other cities to demonstrate their opposition to the Bush administration's policies of war and conquest in Iraq, the Socialist Equality Party calls for the building of an international antiwar movement based on the working class.

Six months after Bush declared the end of major combat operations, it is time to draw a balance sheet on the various strategies that have been advanced for the antiwar movement. Those who headed the mass demonstrations in the run-up to the war advocated a strategy of protest and pressure on the institutions, governments and political parties of the ruling class. What have been the results?

The war was launched in defiance of the largest international protest demonstrations in history. These protests clearly expressed the views of the majority of the world's population. But the US government pushed ahead with military action, responding to the only constituency that actively lobbied for war—corporate America, which dominates the two political parties and the media.

This experience demonstrates that the fight against war requires not a strategy based on illusions that the ruling elite can be persuaded to abandon its policies of militarism and war, but rather a political struggle for power against the governments responsible for aggression.

This means opposing not simply Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld & Co., but also the Democratic Party, which shares political responsibility for the war. One year ago the congressional Democratic leadership backed the resolution giving Bush the

authority to wage war. Six months ago they overwhelmingly approved \$79 billion to pay for the conquest of Iraq.

The sponsors of the October 25 march on Washington recently issued an appeal to Congress to reject the Bush administration's proposed \$87 billion appropriation for the continued occupation of Iraq. Within days of this appeal, both houses of Congress approved the request by top-heavy bipartisan majorities: 87-12 in the Senate and 303-125 in the House. The vast majority of Senate Democrats and half of the Democrats in the House of Representatives voted for the bill.

Bush lied in order to conceal the real motives for the war—the conquest of Iraq's oil resources and the seizure of a key strategic position in the Middle East—because the American people would not have supported a war for these objectives. The Democratic politicians share these secret motives. The Democratic Party, no less than the Republicans, is a party of American imperialism that defends the “national interests” of the giant corporations and banks.

Howard Dean, the current front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination, may posture as a diehard opponent of the war, but he supports the US occupation of Iraq, as does General Wesley Clark, who commanded NATO forces in the 1999 bombing blitz of Yugoslavia. These candidates try to have it both ways, claiming the war was unnecessary and illegal, while sanctioning continued US control of the country and its oil wealth.

Democrat Dennis Kucinich adopts a superficially more militant antiwar stance, calling for immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. But in advocating a UN peacekeeping force to replace US troops, Kucinich simply proposes to substitute one form of colonial-style rule for another. It is no more “humanitarian” for Iraqis to be shot down by Turkish or Pakistani troops than by American or

British forces.

The United Nations is not a force for peace. It is an instrument of the imperialist powers. In the period leading up to the war, opposition from France, Germany and Russia blocked a resolution authorizing the US attack on Iraq. These countries were acting to secure their own imperialist interests, which they saw threatened by US domination of the Persian Gulf and its oil resources. Since then, they have adapted themselves to the new US role.

The UN Security Council ratified the US conquest and most recently adopted a resolution giving its seal of approval to the long-term American occupation of Iraq. The UN has thereby countenanced the transformation of Iraq into a virtual colony of the United States.

The Socialist Equality Party rejects the claim that continued US control of Iraq is in the interests of the American people. On the contrary, this colonial occupation leads inevitably to ever greater sacrifices, whose cost, in both blood and money, will be extracted from the working class of the United States. More and more American youth will be killed and maimed while the attacks on workers' social conditions, jobs and living standards are intensified. Bush's \$87 billion is only the down payment.

The more the United States maintains its grip on Iraq, the more the Bush administration will be emboldened to carry out new military adventures. Already the campaign of lies and propaganda against Syria, Iran and North Korea shows the next targets for US aggression. Within the United States, the growth of militarism threatens the democratic rights of the American people, already eroded by the repressive measures enacted in the name of the "war on terror."

There is only one mass social force in the US and around the world whose basic interests are irreconcilably in conflict with those of the capitalist ruling elite and can marshal the power to put an end to imperialist war. That force is the working class.

A serious struggle against war must be based on mobilizing working people in a political movement directed against the Bush administration and the two-party system. It must connect the struggle against war with the struggle against the destruction of jobs, social services, living standards and democratic rights.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers and young people to oppose the US occupation of Iraq and demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all American military forces from the Middle East and Central Asia.

We oppose the substitution of indirect colonialism through the United Nations for direct American rule. All foreign forces must be withdrawn from Iraq and the Iraqi people freed to decide their own fate.

The only international involvement in Iraq should be the

provision of massive economic and technical aid, financed by reparations paid by the United States and Britain, as well as by countries such as France, Germany, Japan and Russia that supported the preceding 12 years of economic blockade that devastated Iraq's economy.

The SEP demands an investigation into the background of the decision to go to war, which should include the criminal indictment and prosecution of those government officials in the United States and Britain who plotted aggressive war against the people of Iraq. On the basis of such an investigation, reparations to Iraq should be combined with compensation to US soldiers and their families for the deaths and injuries caused by the decisions of the Bush administration.

Such an investigation should also include a thorough examination of the September 11 terrorist attacks, including the role played by American foreign policy in the Middle East, the direct involvement of US intelligence agencies in the creation, training and ongoing activities of Al Qaeda, and in the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington themselves.

The lineup of the Democrats behind the US occupation of Iraq demonstrates that the Democratic Party represents no alternative to the Bush administration. American working people are politically disenfranchised, saddled with a two-party system in which both parties are controlled by the corporate elite. The working class must build a new political party of its own, based on a socialist program and steadfastly opposed to American imperialism.

American working people must learn the lessons of history. Our enemy is not the people of Iraq, or of the Muslim world, or of great power rivals like France, Germany, Russia and China. Our enemy is the American corporate elite, the government which they control, and their political servants in both the Democratic and Republican parties. The great strategic task is to build the Socialist Equality Party as the political instrument of the working class.



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