

# SEP candidate in California: Extend full rights to all immigrants!

5 April 2006

*The following is a statement issued by John Burton, SEP candidate for Congress, 29th District of California. It is also available as a PDF in English and Spanish to download and distribute.*

During the past week, millions of immigrants, documented and undocumented, have taken to the streets throughout the country to demonstrate their opposition to the punitive and repressive anti-immigrant legislation being debated by the US Congress. Thousands of students, outraged by the injustices being perpetrated against their parents, friends, relatives and neighbors, have walked out of their schools and marched in support of immigrants' democratic rights.

As a socialist candidate for the US House of Representatives, I support the full extension of democratic rights to all immigrants, regardless of how they entered the country.

The protests by young people and adults alike are an integral part of the struggles happening across the globe as workers fight for their rights in country after country, over issues such as immigration, the defense of working conditions by French workers, the preservation of pensions in England, the mobilization of miners against unsafe and unsanitary working conditions in Mexico, and the fight of thousands of workers right here in the United States against deteriorating conditions and living standards.

Republican and Democratic Party politicians in the United States, the political representatives of big business, are using the border issue to attack and undermine the living standards and democratic rights of all workers, native-born as well as immigrant. The class bias in this campaign is open and unapologetic: capital must be free to move across national borders in search of profit, under the North American Free Trade Agreement and similar agreements with other

countries, but workers are to be denied the freedom to work in the country of their choice.

The main focus of the recent immigrants' rights demonstrations is HR 4437, the bill passed by the House that would define undocumented workers as felons and criminalize the actions of schoolteachers, healthcare workers and social workers to assist those in need. But the purpose of all the bills before Congress, including the version backed by the Senate Judiciary Committee and by the Democrats, is to strengthen the repressive powers of the state and ensure that immigrant workers remain a brutally exploited reservoir of cheap labor.

The Socialist Equality Party and I, as its candidate for US Congress for the 29th Congressional District, categorically reject all such proposals. We oppose every law that in any way criminalizes, penalizes or marginalizes immigrants economically or socially. We support and defend the right of immigrant families and individuals, documented or not, to live and work in peace and without fear wherever they please, in whatever country they wish. We also reject any rule or law that denies undocumented immigrants basic educational, health care, and job benefits, including the right to a valid driver's license.

Every year, hundreds of immigrants die while crossing the desert that divides Mexico and the United States. Driven by economic necessity, they are increasingly forced to take the most hazardous routes into the United States because of measures that block their entry, including a metal fence along the California border and an army of federal agents, not to mention armed right-wing vigilantes like the Minutemen. On average, one immigrant dies every day from heat exhaustion, thirst, and freezing weather.

In addition to Mexican and Latin American undocumented workers, the list of so-called illegal

immigrants includes workers from the former Soviet Union, hundreds of whom reside in the 29th Congressional District. Each year, thousands more brave the Pacific Ocean as stowaways from China and Southeast Asia. Criminal gangs often force those that do make it across the border into debt peonage and other forms of slavery.

The responsibility for the human tragedy that takes place at our borders and ports every day, for the virtual enslavement of millions of working class families, belongs to big business and its political representatives, the Republican and Democratic parties, as well as the regimes in Mexico, Central America and other countries that impose horrible social and economic conditions on working people, forcing them to emigrate in search of better lives.

The fight to defend immigrants' rights, jobs, pensions, education, decent health care and our most basic democratic rights is, first and foremost, international. I call on all working people of this country to reject all appeals to chauvinism and anti-immigrant sentiments, to unite in common struggle with your brothers and sisters all over the world, and to break with the Democrats and Republicans, to fight to build our own independent political movement of the working class: the Socialist Equality Party.

We urge all those who support these demands and perspective to join in this fight. Contact the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* to become part of this campaign by participating in the petition drives to place SEP candidates on the ballot and organizing meetings to discuss our party's program.

### **Public Meetings**

#### **Los Angeles**

Wednesday, April 5, 7-9 p.m.

Public Policy Building, Room 1246

UCLA Campus

#### **Pasadena**

Wednesday, April 26. 7 p.m.

Neighborhood Unitarian Church

301 North Orange Grove Avenue.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit: