

SEP candidate responds on Iraq war stance of California Democrat Adam Schiff

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We are publishing here a letter from the SEP candidate in California's 29th Congressional District, John Burton, to El Vaquero, the school newspaper at Glendale Community College in suburban Los Angeles. The newspaper published the letter on May 26, under the headline "Schiff Opponent Responds to Article."

On May 8, Democratic Congressman Adam Schiff, who represents California's 29th District, spoke at Glendale Community College. Besides Glendale, the district includes the suburban Los Angeles communities of Pasadena, South Pasadena, Altadena, Alhambra, San Gabriel and part of Burbank.

Schiff was one of the first House Democrats to declare his support for the Bush administration's October 2002 request for congressional authorization to use force against Iraq. Supporters of John Burton, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Schiff's seat, attended the meeting and asked questions challenging Schiff's pro-war stance. (See "Democratic congressman backs continuing military occupation of Iraq at California meeting.")

In its subsequent report on Schiff's speech, entitled "Congressman Explains 'Getting Into Politics,'" El Vaquero wrote that "Although the overall tone of the meeting was positive and upbeat, some of the queries fielded by Schiff questioned his accountability in the Iraq War [he voted to authorize the use of force based on the intelligence reports of weapons of mass destruction but has since changed his position]." The article also said, "Schiff is opposed to invading Iran."

Dear Editor:

In your recent article on a May 8 campus appearance, you reported that Democratic Congressman Adam Schiff "voted to authorize the use of force" against Iraq "based on the intelligence reports of weapons of mass destruction," but that he "has since changed his position." You also reported that "Schiff is opposed to

invading Iran." Both statements are inaccurate.

Mr. Schiff has not changed his position on the March 2003 invasion and ensuing US military occupation of Iraq. While, as you say, he now attributes his support of Bush's "preemptive war" to "faulty intelligence," at the same time he refuses to call for the withdrawal of US troops and an end to the occupation. Mr. Schiff's position is the same as that of the conservative Democratic Leadership Council, of which he is a member, that "Democrats must make it clear to the public that we stand for winning in Iraq, not a rush to the exits."

Indeed, during his talk Mr. Schiff did not criticize the Iraq invasion or condemn its instigators for lying to the American people. His only difference with the Bush administration's present Iraq policies is to call for "strategic redeployment" of US troops from urban areas like Baghdad, where they are being killed at the rate of two to three a day, to highly fortified desert military bases, where they can more safely launch deadly strikes against the Iraqi population with aircraft, missiles and high-tech gadgetry.

The DLC's call for "winning in Iraq," like Mr. Schiff's proposal for "strategic redeployment," means continuing the brutal and illegal military occupation of a once sovereign nation, including visiting upon its people more death, torture and suffering for decades to come. "Winning in Iraq" means propping up a succession of pro-US puppet governments, a policy causing increasingly bloody internecine conflicts between rival ethnic and religious factions competing for economic and political power under the framework of the occupation.

In any event, for Mr. Schiff to claim now that he voted for the invasion of Iraq because of "faulty intelligence" is a dishonest evasion. In 2003, thousands of his constituents joined tens of millions of people

around the world in protest, shouting at the tops of their lungs that the Bush administration's claims about Saddam Hussein's supposed weapons of mass destruction were cynical lies intended to stampede the population into an unjust and criminal war. Americans never would have supported the invasion had Mr. Schiff and other US government officials explained its true purpose: to seize control over Iraq's vast oil reserves and to establish strategic positions for the US military in the Middle East to promote the interests of US businesses against those of their European and Asian rivals.

Mr. Schiff's position on Iran is no different. Although he told the GCC audience that he is wary of current Bush administration alarms about Iran's supposed pursuit of nuclear weapons, he did not indicate that he would oppose a military attack. Moreover, Mr. Schiff took a much different position during a 2004 debate on the House floor: "There is no doubt that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, along with the ongoing standoff with North Korea over its nuclear weapons program, constitute the gravest threat to American national security today," Schiff claimed. "How we deal with this threat will shape our global security environment for decades. When coupled with the desire by terrorists to acquire and use these weapons against the US, the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran and North Korea is petrifying."

The majority of voters in the 29th Congressional District reject such crass fear-mongering, just as they oppose the launching of aggressive wars in pursuit of control over natural resources located on the other side of the planet. These voters can find no political voice through politicians of either the Democratic or the Republican Party, however. I am petitioning for ballot status as an independent candidate for the 29th Congressional District in the November 2006 election as part of the national campaign of the Socialist Equality Party precisely to build an alternative to this antiquated and inadequate two-party system.

Very truly yours,
John Burton



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Socialist Equality Party visit: