US congressman: “If we don't pass this bill, we’re going to have martial law in the United States”

Tom Eley
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In the wake of Monday's vote in the US House of Representatives rejecting the $700 billion bailout package for the American financial industry, prominent voices in the US and international media have responded by denouncing the lower house of Congress and complaining that the American political system is too susceptible to popular opinion and insufficiently obedient to the will of the corporate and political elite.

The yearning for more authoritarian forms of rule was expressed by, among others, Michael Gerson, the former chief speechwriter for George W. Bush. In a column in the *Washington Post*, he complained, "[I]t is now clear that American political elites have lost the ability to quickly respond to a national challenge by imposing their collective will." The *Times* of London, part of Rupert Murdoch's media empire, was even more blunt, headlining a column, "Congress is the Best Advert for Dictatorship."

Socialist Equality Party (SEP) vice presidential candidate Bill Van Auken authored an article on the *World Socialist Web Site* Wednesday (See "The Wall Street bailout and the threat of dictatorship") explaining the connection between the appearance of such openly anti-democratic polemics in the mainstream media and the bill to bail out Wall Street that is being pushed through Congress.

Van Auken wrote, "The furor over the vote in the House serves as a warning that capitalism in crisis will inevitably move toward new forms of rule capable of defending the economic dictatorship of finance capital by means of an open political dictatorship against the working class."

The next day, the *Los Angeles Times*, in an article on the Senate passage of the bailout measure, noted in passing a statement by Democratic Rep. Brad Sherman from the San Fernando Valley in Southern California which underscores the authoritarian atmosphere surrounding the proceedings in Congress.

Sherman, who voted against the bailout bill on Monday, said, "The one thing that's been proven is the absolute fear-mongering that's being used to drive us is false." He continued, "I've seen members turn to each other and say if we don't pass this bill, we're going to have martial law in the United States."

The *Los Angeles Times* offered no comment on this astounding statement.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has long warned that the growing concentration of wealth and widening social inequality in the US are ultimately incompatible with democratic forms of rule. These deeply anti-democratic tendencies are being accelerated by the eruption of the financial crisis and the response of the American ruling elite and both of its political parties.

As Van Auken wrote:

"The crisis is being utilized to effect an ever more immense concentration of economic power that is incompatible with political democracy. Three banking behemoths--Citigroup, Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase--are gobbling up their failing competitors and now control fully a third of US bank deposits... These intense social antagonisms cannot be contained within America's existing political set-up."

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