

UAW, Jesse Jackson push illusions in Democrats with phony “jobs march”

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28 August 2010

The August 28 “March for Jobs, Justice and Peace” is a fraud perpetrated against the people of Detroit. The aim of the campaign is not to create jobs, but to promote illusions in the Obama administration, which has been chiefly responsible for the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The clearest evidence of the real character of this “jobs march” comes from looking at its principal organizers: the Reverend Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow/Push Coalition; Bob King of the UAW; and the local Democratic Party elite led by Detroit’s multimillionaire mayor, David Bing. Each has played a crucial role in the devastation of Detroit.

The UAW has overseen the loss of 250,000 jobs at the Big Three and the auto parts industry since 2007. Last year Obama’s Auto Task Force shut down dozens of factories, tore up contractually-obligated benefits for auto workers and retirees, and forced new workers to hire on at \$14 an hour, half what they used to be paid. Far from organizing any resistance to these attacks, the UAW worked hand-in-hand with the White House to force the measures on auto workers.

In exchange for its services, the UAW was given major ownership stakes in both Chrysler and General Motors. As a result, Bob King and the bloated executive staff of the UAW have a vested interest in driving down workers’ wages. As King recently told an audience of auto executives and top shareholders, “The 21st-century UAW recognizes that flexibility, innovation, lean manufacturing and continuous cost improvement [i.e., the ever greater exploitation of workers] are paramount in the global marketplace.” (See, “UAW’s Bob King offers up auto workers as fodder for exploitation”)

Even as he stands at the front of a “jobs march,” King is working to force 50 percent pay cuts on workers at a

GM Indianapolis stamping plant to pave the way for its sale to a corporate raider. Workers there chased UAW executives out of the August 15 local union meeting for attempting to push the deal. (See, “Struggle by Indianapolis GM workers raises crucial issues”)

The march organizers look to the auto industry as providing a blueprint for the revival of US manufacturing, what they refer to as “rebuilding America by enacting industrial and trade policies that will create jobs, encourage manufacturing in America and put workers first.” Exports are to be increased by driving down the wages and conditions of US workers to Third World levels. This nationalist program inevitably leads to trade conflict among the major industrial powers and ultimately, as history teaches, war.

The posturing of Mayor David Bing is no less brazen. Since becoming Detroit mayor, Bing has overseen a ruthless campaign of layoffs and pay cuts for city worker. Together with schools administrator Robert Bobb, Bing has pushed through the shutdown of over 100 city schools and carried out a wholesale attack on teachers.

The presence of Jackson is the surest sign that ruling circles are fearful of a social explosion. In the 1980s, Jackson made a career out of soothing the anger of workers, oppressed minorities, small farmers, and others with his catchphrase “keep hope alive.” He was then mothballed in the 1990s when strikes and other forms of social protest virtually vanished. Jackson senses the situation is about to break and is seeking to dust off his established role of diverting working class anger into the Democratic Party.

With political forces like these behind the “jobs march,” ex-radical groupings have been called forth to provide a left coloration. Typical is the Workers World

Party, which absurdly hails the gathering as the “re-emergence of the African-American and labor alliance that proved critical from the 1930s through the 1960s in movements winning significant concessions and social advances for workers’ and civil rights.”

The aim of all those promoting the march is not to defend jobs, but to work as hard as they can to prevent the immense anger and opposition that is building up within the US from finding an independent political expression.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the mobilization of workers throughout Detroit and the US in defense of jobs and living conditions. A serious fight for the right to a job, however, requires:

1. The formation of new organs of working class struggle. This includes building neighborhood, factory and workplace committees, independent of the unions. Organizations such as the UAW are not workers organizations, but arms of corporate management and the state. New organizations will be the basis for uniting the entire working class, across all racial, regional, national and ethnic divisions, on the basis of their common interests.

2. A political break with the Democratic Party. The Obama administration and the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, serve the interests of the corporate elite, which is determined to use high unemployment as an opportunity to increase exploitation and reduce the working class to conditions not seen for generations.

It was Obama who played the critical role in pushing through the Wall Street bailout, first as the Democratic nominee for the presidency in the fall of 2008, and then as president. In Michigan, the Democratic governor, Jennifer Granholm, recently signed into law legislation making unauthorized use of utilities a crime. And in Detroit, it is the local Democratic elite that oversees the eviction of families and the shutoff of utilities.

3. A fight against the capitalist system. The fight for jobs comes into immediate conflict with the profit interests of a tiny layer of the population that controls the banks and major corporations. There can be no solution to the jobs crisis as long as these institutions exercise a dictatorship over the economy.

The alternative to capitalism is socialism: the democratic and rational control of production in the

interests of social need, not private profit. We urge all workers and young people in Detroit and throughout the country to study the program of the Socialist Equality Party, join our party and take up the fight for socialism.



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