

Demagogy and duplicity: The Democrats in the 2010 elections

Patrick Martin
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With less than three weeks remaining in the 2010 election campaign, President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party are seeking to stave off a major electoral defeat by making a last-minute, fraudulent appeal to popular hostility towards Wall Street and big business.

In his remarks Sunday to a rally in Philadelphia, largely drawn from the ranks of the trade union bureaucracy, Obama attacked “millionaires and billionaires,” “Wall Street banks,” “corporations”, the “oil industry,” the “insurance industry” and “credit-card companies.”

He charged that “a former lobbyist for AIG and Exxon Mobil” helped draft the “Pledge to America” adopted by the Republican Party. He then declared that “the centerpiece of the pledge is a \$700 billion tax cut that would only go to the top 2 percent, the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans.”

The business-bashing demagogy has been combined in the past week with an ugly dose of American chauvinism, with Obama and congressional Democrats claiming that their opponents are benefiting from money from “foreign-owned corporations,” supposedly funneled through the US Chamber of Commerce, the biggest single fundraiser for the Republican Party.

The charge of foreign money allows the Democrats to wrap themselves in the flag and compete with the Republicans in appeals to nationalism and anti-immigrant prejudice. It has no factual basis. The Republican Party, like the Democratic Party, is an instrument of American banks and corporations that operate all over the world.

Obama and the Democrats combine pseudo-populist rhetoric with right-wing policies that benefit the financial-corporate elite. For the tens of millions of working people facing unemployment and the specter

of homelessness and destitution, they have nothing to offer.

While Obama claims that his administration is “finally holding accountable” the financial interests that caused the greatest economic crash since the Great Depression, the Obama-Bush bailout has put the entire financial resources of the federal government at the disposal of Wall Street.

The administration has rejected any effort to create jobs directly through a major public works program, or any serious measures to alleviate deepening poverty and mass suffering in a crisis which is now completing its third full year, with the average duration of unemployment the highest ever recorded.

This week, even as Obama was mouthing utterly hollow populist-sounding slogans, his spokesmen were taking to the airways to reject calls for a nationwide moratorium on home foreclosures, despite mounting evidence of systematic fraud by banks and mortgage lenders.

The basic outcome of next month’s congressional elections is assured, regardless of whether the November 2 vote puts the Republicans in control of Congress or leaves a reduced Democratic majority in power. The Obama administration will move even further to the right, supposedly in response to public opinion.

The official narrative of the 2010 election campaign, promoted in lock-step by the corporate-controlled media, both openly right-wing and nominally liberal, is that Obama has tilted too far to the left. His supposedly massive federal spending has, according to the media, aroused deep anger in the public at large, reflected in the growth of support for the Tea Party campaigns.

The received wisdom is that the American people, who repudiated Bush and the Republicans just two

years ago, are now, in the midst of a social crisis without precedent in the post-war period, clamoring for more of the very pro-corporate policies—tax cuts for the rich, deregulation, the dismantling of social programs—they voted to end in 2008.

In this conception, American politics is divided along partisan lines between the Republican right and the Democratic “left,” with most of those who are dissatisfied with the existing parties residing somewhere in between these two supposed polar opposites. Summing up the conventional wisdom, Doyle McManus of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote of the elections: “The party that seizes the center will win.”

Besides grotesquely distorting the actual right-wing record of the Obama administration, this portrait of American political life leaves out a decisive fact: the actual sentiments of the working people who constitute the vast majority of the population.

Never in history has a deep-going economic crisis of the capitalist system produced a shift in the masses *in favor of the capitalists*. On the contrary, opinion poll after opinion poll shows growing popular hatred of Wall Street speculators and corporate CEOs, who are—absolutely correctly—held responsible for the destruction of jobs and living standards. The masses in America are moving to the left, not to the right.

Within the peculiar political structure of the United States, limited to two officially recognized parties, both controlled by corporate interests and offering only right-wing policies, this shift in mass sentiment has as yet found no political outlet. But even the opinion polls conducted in the current election campaign, skewed as they are by the assumption that the existing political and social structures are unalterable, rebuts the claim that the enormous and growing dissatisfaction with the Obama administration has produced a surge of support for the policies of the Republican right.

A Zogby International poll of independent voters found that only 13 percent gave a favorable rating to congressional Democrats and only 5 percent to congressional Republicans, staggering figures that give a glimpse of the deep dissatisfaction with both of the major capitalist parties.

A Bloomberg poll conducted October 7-10 found that more than 40 percent of those who had once supported Obama said they were either less supportive or did not support him at all, two years after the 2008 presidential

election. While Obama’s recent populist rhetoric has been attacked by the Republicans and sections of the media as “anti-business,” a majority of those interviewed by Bloomberg rejected this criticism, and more felt that the Obama administration had been too soft on Wall Street than too harsh.

A majority of those polled by Bloomberg rejected cuts in nearly every significant federal program: Social Security, Medicare, roads and public transportation, funding for disease research, education. They flatly opposed either privatizing Social Security or raising the age of eligibility. Most opposed the extension of the Bush tax cuts for the rich.

Millions of working people in the United States are moving into a collision with the policies of the financial aristocracy and both of its parties. The November election will be followed by a turn to austerity policies, including attacks on Social Security, Medicare, public education and access to health care. It will signal an intensification of the war in Afghanistan and a continuation of US military interventions in Iraq and elsewhere. The attacks on democratic rights at home will be stepped up.

The emergence of an independent political movement of the working class is the only way to defend jobs, living standards and democratic rights against this corporate onslaught. The Socialist Equality Party advances a political program for the defense of the social rights of working people on the basis of socialist policies. We call on the readers of the WSWS to consider this program and make the decision to join and build the SEP.

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