

2010 US elections

The record of the WSWS on Obama

Tom Eley

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The sweeping defeat of the Democratic Party in the 2010 elections was prepared by the policies pursued by the Obama administration. With his party controlling virtually all the levers of state power, President Barack Obama has expanded the war in Afghanistan, deepened the Bush administration's attacks on democratic rights, and overseen the multi-trillion-dollar bailout of Wall Street, while doing nothing to alleviate the worst social crisis since the Great Depression.

Yet only two years ago, Obama's elevation to the presidency was hailed by liberals and ex-radicals as an historic shift in US politics.

"On the morning after a black man won the White House, America's tears of catharsis gave way to unadulterated joy," enthused Frank Rich of the *New York Times* ("It Still Felt Good the Morning After," November 11, 2008)

Kristin Vanden Heuvel of *The Nation*, writing only one day after the election, called the new administration a "Transformational Presidency," "a new era of possibility," and "a remarkable moment in our country's history—a milestone in America's scarred racial landscape."

Alan Maas of the *Socialist Worker*, in an article aptly titled "Great Expectations" (November 19, 2008), was no less enthusiastic. "Obama's election represents a historic change in US politics," he wrote. "The dam on expectations erected through 30 years of conservative dominance has broken."

Many similar panegyrics could be cited.

The *World Socialist Web Site* rejected the attempts to portray Obama as the spearhead of a progressive reform movement. We provided a clear and principled class analysis of his campaign and warned the working class that the Obama administration would continue and deepen the right-wing policies of the Bush administration—a position articulated in scores of news articles and perspective editorials, and in the statements of the Socialist Equality Party.

The following excerpts offer a small sampling of this body of work:

The Pennsylvania primary and the crisis of the Democratic Party

By Barry Grey, April 26, 2008

Foreign policy strategists such as Zbigniew Brzezinski identified [Hillary] Clinton with the decision to support the

disastrous intervention in Iraq. This faction promoted the Obama campaign as a means of carrying out a shift in foreign policy, after eight calamitous years of Bush, to more intelligently and effectively defend US economic and strategic interests around the world. On the basis of the vaguest of abstractions, Obama was presented as the candidate of "change," of a "new politics" that would unite all of the disparate elements of American society and restore the "American dream." His persona—young, a newcomer to national politics, multi-racial—seemed to embody this professed goal.

The making and marketing of Barack Obama: Image and identity in US politics

By David Walsh, August 5, 2008

US presidential hopefuls are selected, vetted, molded in a complex and time-consuming process. The ruling elite faces life-and-death questions and is not about to allow just anyone to take up residence in the White House. He, or she, must be prepared to make the most ruthless decisions. Obama has survived the process to this point largely because powerful forces in the country recognize that the Bush presidency has been a disaster.

Obama outlines policy of endless war

By Bill Van Auken, July 16, 2008

While Obama's "left" apologists will no doubt excuse the blatant militarism and warmongering in the candidate's speech as a mere political device aimed at winning over "centrist" voters, the reality is that the candidate is spelling out what can be expected from an incoming Democratic administration in 2009.

Its policies will be determined not by the hollow campaign rhetoric about "change" that has been Obama's specialty, but rather by the deepening economic and social crisis of American capitalism and the determination of the American ruling elite to continue using military force as a means of offsetting its economic decline.

The New York Times' endorsement of Obama

By Patrick Martin, October 25, 2008

The generally favorable media attitude toward Obama reflects the fact that decisive sections of the American ruling elite have swung behind his candidacy. This is not because they share

popular illusions in Obama, but because they regard these illusions as a valuable political asset in a period of deep crisis for American capitalism. They have come to believe, accepting the candidate's own assurances, that Obama will be a thoroughly reliable and conservative defender of the interests of the financial aristocracy, both at home and abroad.

Obama begins to "lower expectations" for a Democratic White House

By Patrick Martin, November 1, 2008

Tens of millions of people will vote for Obama Tuesday in the hope that the replacement of the Republican administration by a Democratic one will better their conditions of life or bring an end to the war in Iraq. But the result of an Obama victory, as Democratic spokesmen have already begun to make clear, will be to replace one right-wing capitalist government with another.

On the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International

By David North, November 3, 2008

If, as now seems likely, Obama emerges as president-elect, he will assume central responsibility for pursuing the national and international interests of the American ruling class. How long, do you imagine, will he be able to preserve the illusion that the crisis affects all classes of the population in the same way, that the "American people are in this together," that "sacrifices" can and will be "shared," and that the interests of the poor are the same as the interests of the rich? How long will it be before the irrepressible determination of the financial aristocracy to exploit the opportunities created by the crisis for its own maximum enrichment becomes painfully obvious to the masses of workers?

The election of Barack Obama

By the WSWS Editorial Board, November 5, 2008

Whatever satisfaction the Democratic Party draws from its victory is tempered by the realization within President-elect Obama's inner circle, the party leadership and the political establishment that the mass expectations and hopes aroused by the election will not be easily contained. The outcome of the election sets the stage for a new and protracted period of intense class conflict in the United States.

A historical milestone? Reflections on class and race in America

By Barry Grey, November 7, 2008

Now, under conditions of the deepest economic crisis of American and world capitalism since the 1930s, the elevation of race as the defining feature of American society is to be put to the test. Notwithstanding the efforts of the media to frame the election of Obama in racial terms, his victory is, in reality, the product of the initial stirrings of a class movement in opposition to policies of war and social reaction that are bipartisan in character.

One week since the election of Obama

By Barry Grey, November 11, 2008

What drove the election outcome, above all, was the desire of millions of working people and youth, under conditions of a deepening recession and growing social distress, to effect a reversal of economic policies devoted to the enrichment of the financial elite, bring an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a foreign policy based on militarism, and halt the attacks on democratic rights. All of the policies that were repudiated by the electorate are essentially bipartisan in character. But under conditions of a state-enforced monopoly of two corporate-dominated parties, the drive by working people to express their socio-economic interests could only take the form of a victory for the Democrats.

Obama's "seamless transition" to endless war

By Bill Van Auken, November 18, 2008

[T]he change in administrations is seen within the ruling establishment as a means of bringing about changes that will make American militarism more effective while providing, in the person of Obama, a better political cover for the pursuit of American capitalism's worldwide interests.

Obama's "left" cheerleaders and the right-wing transition

By Bill Van Auken, November 22, 2008

What is taking shape is a government that represents continuity with the last eight years far more than change. Its personnel and the policies with which they are identified spell a continuation of wars of aggression abroad and domestic policies that defend the interests of America's financial elite at the expense of the broad mass of working people.

Obama names third Republican to cabinet: A further bow to the right

By Barry Grey, February 4, 2009

The new Democratic president has managed to refurbish the image of the Republican Party following its electoral rout in November, presenting it as a powerful and legitimate force, not the despised bastion of political reaction that was repudiated by the American electorate. Indeed, Obama has given the Republicans virtual veto power over his administration's policies.

Obama's 100 days

By Tom Eley, April 29, 2009

After only 100 days of the new administration, workers and youth are coming face to face with the fact that Obama represents no change from the anti-working class, anti-democratic and militaristic policies of his predecessor. His presidency has already established the impossibility of effecting real change in government policy by means of elections within the framework of the existing two-party system, or through appeals to the Democratic Party.



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