

The Fight for Socialism Today: Conference resolutions

The attack on the working class and the fight for socialism

5 May 2011

The Socialist Equality Party, World Socialist Web Site, and International Students for Social Equality last month held three regional conferences on "The Fight for Socialism Today". The conferences were held in Ann Arbor, Michigan on April 9-10; in Los Angeles, California on April 16, and in New York City on April 30.

Each of these conferences discussed and adopted a series of resolutions on the basic political questions facing the working class in the US and internationally. In total, about 300 people participated in the conferences, representing 24 states in the US, along with delegations from Canada, Germany, Britain, Australia and South Africa.

Today we begin publishing the resolutions of the conferences, starting with the main resolution, "The attack on the working class and the fight for socialism". We encourage all those who agree with these resolutions to make the decision to join the SEP and take up the fight for socialism.

Resolution 1: The attack on the working class and the fight for socialism

Two-and-a half years after the Wall Street crash and the government's multi-trillion-dollar bailout of the banks and the corporate-financial elite, the attack on the living standards, social conditions and democratic rights of the working class is intensifying.

Not since the Great Depression of the 1930s has the working class confronted such a dire situation. More than 25 million workers lack a full-time job and long-term unemployment is at record levels. The housing crisis continues with no end in sight. There were nearly 4 million foreclosures in 2010, and this number is expected to increase by 20 percent this year. A record 44.2 million people rely on food stamps to get by, and one in four US children lives in poverty.

Far from offering measures to address this crisis, the ruling

class and its political representatives are using the economic disaster they created as an opportunity to escalate the attack on the working class. After a phony war of words, the Obama administration and congressional Democrats and Republicans have reached an agreement to cut tens of billions from federal spending this year.

The Republican Party has proposed a 2012 budget that includes the dismantling of Medicare and Medicaid combined with drastic cuts in all social programs that benefit the poor. The Obama administration is preparing its own brutal austerity measures, including \$4 trillion in cuts over 12 years, which it will attempt to package as a "reasonable compromise."

Nearly every state and local government is implementing deep cuts in public education, health care and other vital services. The already inadequate federal assistance to the states is drying up this year. Public employees, who have suffered more than 400,000 job losses since 2008, are facing cuts in wages and benefits and the destruction of the basic democratic right to resist the demands of the employers.

The impoverishment of the working class is closely tied to a surge in corporate profits, which reached a record high of \$1.68 trillion last year. The US stock market is soaring and CEO pay is back to the levels that prevailed prior to the crash. None of the corporate criminals responsible for the economic crisis have been held accountable.

These conditions are an unanswerable indictment of capitalism and the two-party system. The experiences of the past two-and-a-half years demonstrate that the entire political system is under the control of a financial aristocracy which is determined to defend its wealth at the expense of the vast majority of people.

After coming to power as the candidate of "change," Obama has continued and deepened the right-wing policies of Bush on every front: the bailout of the banks, the assault on jobs and wages, the destruction of social programs, the attack on democratic rights, militarism and war.

The American working class is beginning to fight back. In

February and March, hundreds of thousands of workers in Wisconsin participated in mass demonstrations against budget cuts and the attack on the democratic rights of workers, and tens of thousands have demonstrated in other states throughout the country.

These struggles, however, have immediately exposed the problem of political program and leadership. They have been blocked and diffused by the trade unions, whose sole aim was to defend the narrow interests of the union apparatus, including the dues check-off system, while channeling opposition behind the Democratic Party. For its part, the Democratic Party fully supported the attack on public workers and social programs in Wisconsin and is carrying out similar measures in states across the country where it holds power.

The working class requires a new perspective. This conference:

1. Rejects demands, accepted by all factions of the political establishment and promoted by the mass media, that the working class pay for the economic crisis. Trillions are handed to the banks and billions can be found overnight to pay for new military adventures, yet the universal claim is that “there is no money” for education, health care or decent wages. This in a country where the combined budget deficit of all 50 states amounts to less than one-tenth of the wealth of the 400 richest individuals.

2. Calls on workers to assert that there exist certain basic, non-negotiable social rights that must be guaranteed to all, including: the right to a job, the right to a livable income, the right to education, the right to decent and affordable housing, the right to utilities and transportation, the right to high-quality health care, the right to culture, the right to a secure retirement, the right to leisure, and the right to a healthful and safe environment.

3. Declares that to fight for these rights, the working class must break free of the pro-business trade unions, including the AFL-CIO, the UAW, the NEA and the Change to Win Coalition. The unions have for decades presided over and participated in the destruction in the living conditions of the working class, overseeing the lowering of wages and the elimination of hundreds of thousands of jobs. We call for the formation of new organizations of working class struggle, including rank-and-file committees in the workplaces and neighborhood and action committees to organize all sections of workers and youth.

4. Calls on workers to break with the Democratic and Republican parties, both of which represent the interests of the corporate elite and defend the capitalist system. The experience of the Obama administration has once again exposed all those who claim that the Democrats can be

pressured to carry out policies in the interests of the working class.

5. Insists that the rights of the working class are incompatible with the capitalist system, which is based on the exploitation of the vast majority to guarantee the wealth of a small minority. All the basic needs of the working class come into immediate and direct conflict with the dictatorship of the giant banks and major corporations over every aspect of political and economic life.

To address the social crisis facing the population, this conference calls for an emergency jobs program to provide work for everyone. The resources to pay for such a program must be obtained through a sharp increase in taxes on corporate profits and the income and assets of the wealthy. The major banks and corporations must be taken out of the hands of billionaire investors and placed under the democratic control of society as a whole.

Democratic control over the economy will provide the basis for the establishment of genuine equality and a vast expansion of the productive forces and living standards of the working class. This program, which expresses the basic interests of the working class, the vast majority of the population, constitutes the fight for socialism.

The realization of this program requires the building of a new revolutionary leadership. This conference calls on all workers throughout the country to join and help build the Socialist Equality Party to spearhead the fight for socialism.



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