

Congressional Black Caucus sponsors fraudulent jobs fair in Detroit

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On August 16, more than 5,000 people, many considered long-term unemployed and out of work for more than a year, waited in long lines for hours in the hot sun to attend a jobs fair in Detroit sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), a section of the Democratic Party. The jobs fair and town hall that followed were part of a “For the People Job Initiatives” sponsored by the CBC, which will include future stops in Atlanta, Miami and Los Angeles.

The campaign by the CBC is a recognition of the immense social tensions that are building up in the United States as a consequence of mass unemployment, poverty, and an unrelenting attack on social programs that benefit the working class. Their aim is to channel growing opposition to the Obama administration, particularly among black workers and youth, back into the Democratic Party.

The cynical charade of the CBC's campaign was revealed in Tuesday's event. The jobs crisis in the Detroit area is at Great Depression levels. The official unemployment rate in the city is close to 30 percent, while the actual rate, including those who are underemployed or have given up searching for work, is close to 50 percent. A headline in the *Detroit News* the day after the jobs fair noted that 36 percent of children throughout the state of Michigan live in jobless households.

Nationally, long term unemployment is at levels not seen since the Great Depression. The official unemployment rate is 9.1 percent, with 25 million people out of work. Among black workers, the unemployment rate is 16.2 percent, with the same

figure for teenagers of all races. For black youth, it stands at a shocking 40.7 percent.

According to the CBC itself, the “people job initiative” aims to hire 1,000 workers in Detroit and 10,000 nationwide. This does not even rise to a pittance, and most of these are jobs that would likely have been filled anyway. Thousands of people lined up for hours in the heat on Tuesday only to find that at the other end were a few company representatives taking resumes. There were not even any interviews conducted. (See, “Detroit workers speak on jobs crisis”)

The CBC is also touting a series of bills presented before Congress, none of which would do anything to seriously address the unemployment crisis even if they were passed. They include proposals to provide job assistance training to military personnel, award grants to universities for cyber security progress, develop programs to minimize gender bias in science education, and the like.

Like the Obama administration, the proposals of the CBC are tailored to the “private sector.” A resolution proposed by Michigan Representatives John Conyers and Hansen Clarke urges Congress to “call upon the private and public sectors to immediately remedy the crisis...with immediate employment opportunities for the underserved.”

In reality, the CBC campaign is a fraud, using thousands of people desperately looking for jobs as a backdrop for an effort to inflate popular illusions in the Obama administration and the Democratic Party. This comes as the administration is planning a “jobs” speech in early September that will consist mainly of proposals to cut trillions of dollars in federal spending, only compounding the unemployment crisis.

The CBC would prefer that Obama present a more

“left” face, in an effort to avoid the type of social explosions that have rocked Britain. The paucity of their proposals, however, reflects the fact that there is no constituency in the Democratic Party or the political establishment as a whole for a serious jobs program.

While acknowledging that “our people are hurting,” CBC member and California Representative Maxine Waters said at a Town Hall meeting after the job fair that the aim was not to “put pressure on the president.” This would be harmful, she said, because everyone loves Obama, the first black president.

Because Obama is African American, Waters said, to oppose him would mean to oppose all African Americans. This of a president who has presided over the bail out of the banks; the devastation of the social conditions of the vast majority of the population of all races, including an immense growth in poverty and unemployment among African Americans; and now plans for trillions of dollars in cuts to social programs.

Waters' promotion of racial politics is aimed at keeping workers tied to the Democratic Party, while forestalling a unified movement of all workers against the dictates of the banks and giant corporations.

“We’re supportive of the president,” stated Waters, “but we’re getting tired, y’all... We want to give the president every opportunity, but our people are hurting.”

Even in the largely sympathetic audience, Waters' promotion of Obama evoked opposition. When Waters said, “When you let us know it is time to let go [of Obama], we’ll let go,” several people in the audience yelled, “Let go!”

On Tuesday, Emanuel Cleaver, CBC president and representative from Missouri, said he was supporting the jobs plan Obama planned to submit after Labor Day. “I’m glad the president is going to present his jobs plan,” Cleaver said in an interview on MSNBC. “The reality is that based on past history, we can’t assume that Congress is going to do anything with it. Members of the CBC have introduced more than 40 bills related to job creation and not one has even been called for a hearing.”

The aim of this layer of the Democratic Party, together with the pseudo-left milieu that orbits around it, is to head off an independent political movement of

the working class based on a socialist program. Such a movement is in fact the only basis for resolving the immense social crisis confronting the working class of all races, in the United States and internationally.



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