

Romney, Obama trade charges of being “out of touch”

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A farcical war of words has erupted in the US elections, with the Republican camp of Mitt Romney and the Democratic Obama camp trading charges of being “out of touch” with the American people.

The controversy began last Friday when Obama, at a press conference on the economy, boasted of “record profits in the corporate sector.” Declaring that the “private sector is doing fine,” he hailed corporate America for “doing a good job creating jobs.”

These remarks came a week after the Labor Department reported a gain of only 69,000 jobs in May, less than half the number needed to keep pace with population growth, along with a rise in the official jobless rate to 8.2 percent. The May report marked the third straight month of plummeting job growth. It shattered the administration’s claims of economic recovery and heralded a further increase in unemployment.

Nevertheless, Obama spoke at his press conference of “a strong, robust recovery.” The cynicism of these words was underscored Monday, when the Federal Reserve reported that the net worth of the median American family fell by 39 percent between 2007 and 2010, wiping out all of the gains since the early 1990s. The report also showed a 7.7 percent decline in earnings over the three years.

Obama let slip his indifference to the suffering of millions of Americans and the real class interests he, his administration and the Democratic Party serve. He is well aware that the record profits of the banks and corporations of which he bragged have been achieved at the direct expense of the jobs, wages and living

conditions of the working class.

The private sector is “doing fine” by hoarding \$2 trillion in cash, refusing to invest it in real production or provide loans to small businesses and consumers. It is exploiting the crisis of its own making to keep unemployment high so as to blackmail workers into accepting poverty wages and speedup.

Obama boasted that US businesses have created 4.3 million new jobs over the past 27 months. He omitted the fact that there are still 4.6 million fewer jobs in the US than in January 2008. He also said nothing of the 500,000-plus workers who have thus far been stripped of extended jobless benefits because of a bipartisan deal he brokered in February to cut the duration of jobless pay.

He proposed no new measures to address the worst jobs crisis since the Great Depression or provide relief for the record numbers of long-term unemployed.

Romney pounced on Obama’s remark about the private sector “doing fine” to denounce him for being “out of touch” with ordinary people. He went on to make clear that his prescription for the crisis is to fire more public employees and remove all remaining restraints on corporate profitmaking.

Denouncing Obama for proposing token funds to cash-strapped state and local governments, he said: “He wants another stimulus. He wants to hire more government workers. He says we need more firemen, more policemen, more teachers.”

Obama adviser David Axelrod on a Sunday interview

program rounded on Romney, saying his call for more public sector layoffs showed that he was the one who was “out of touch.”

On Monday, 2008 Republican presidential candidate John McCain repeated Romney’s charge, telling Fox News, “He [Obama] believes having state, federal and local governments hire more people, that’s the answer... Mitt Romney believes that it’s business that creates jobs.”

This flap only highlights the fact that both candidates, their respective parties and the entire political system are not only “out of touch” with the people, but irreconcilably hostile to their interests. The very fact that Obama could make such “let them eat cake” statements in the midst of the deepest social crisis since the 1930s reflects the reality of a political system separated from the working masses by an unbridgeable chasm and entirely in the service of a financial oligarchy.

Romney, the former private equity CEO who made \$250 million by stripping assets and flipping companies at the expense of the jobs and wages of thousands of workers, had his own indiscretions during the Republican primary campaign. “I like being able to fire the people who provide services to me,” was one. Others included, “I’m not concerned about the very poor,” his casual remark about his wife driving “a couple of Cadillacs,” and his offer during a televised debate to bet a rival \$10,000.

For his part, Obama is a multimillionaire and long-time political asset of Chicago-based corporate moguls such as billionaire Hyatt hotel heiress Penny Pritzker. He was evidently oblivious to the impact his remarks could have on workers and youth struggling to survive in the midst of mass layoffs, wage cutting and austerity.

The fracas highlights the degree to which the official election campaign has excluded any discussion of the desperate conditions facing tens of millions of working people in the US. These issues cannot be discussed by the major parties or the media because the corporate elite they represent has no policies to address them.

The only candidates who articulate and fight for the interests of the working class are the presidential and vice presidential candidates of the Socialist Equality Party—Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer. That is because they are fighting on the basis of a socialist program to break the stranglehold of the financial aristocracy and place the productive forces of society under the democratic control of the working people.

The SEP is intervening in the elections to provide a new political perspective for the working class—a break with the Democrats and the capitalist two-party system and the building of a mass party to establish workers’ power and socialism. All those who see the need for this struggle should actively support the SEP campaign.

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