

Romney's words

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The video of a Mitt Romney campaign fundraiser posted Monday on the *Mother Jones* web site has provided a revealing glimpse of what the financial magnates think and what they say to one another in the privacy of their board rooms and mansions.

Romney's words, secretly filmed and leaked to the liberal magazine, were addressed to attendees at a \$50,000-a-plate dinner held last May at the Boca Raton, Florida home of a fellow private equity multi-millionaire, Marc Leder. They express the arrogant and misanthropic outlook of the financial parasites who dominate economic life and control both big business parties.

They reflect as well the contempt and hatred of these social layers for the working class and their determination to destroy what remains of social programs upon which tens of millions of people depend.

Speaking of his chances in the November election, the Republican presidential candidate said: "All right, there are 47 percent who are with him [Obama], who are dependent upon government, who believe they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it. That that's an entitlement. And the government should give it to them. And they will vote for this president no matter what... These are people who pay no income tax."

Romney went on to say that his "job is not to worry about these people. I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives."

The video shows Romney raising his voice and accenting the word "entitled" to emphasize the absurdity of people believing they have a right to health care, food and a roof over their heads.

In the upside-down world of Romney and his like, it

is working people—those who actually produce all of the wealth—who are leeches, looking for a free ride at his expense. This is from a man who accumulated a fortune of \$250 million heading Bain Capital, a private equity firm that bought up companies, loaded them with debt, charged them exorbitant fees, stripped their assets, and either closed them down or resold them, at the cost of thousands of workers' jobs and living standards.

He is the beneficiary of government subsidies, a tax code grotesquely skewed in his favor, and the protection of politicians and regulators who give Wall Street swindlers a free pass—not to mention the multi-trillion-dollar taxpayer bailout of the financial system. He refuses to make public his own tax returns beyond the past two years, defying past practice for presidential candidates.

His 2011 tax return listed his income for the year at \$20.9 million, about 770 times the median annual wage of US workers. His effective tax rate for the year was about 14 percent, less than the tax rate paid by millions of working people.

Another part of the video shows Romney recounting his visit to a Chinese electronics plant while he was head of Bain. He speaks admiringly of the sweatshop conditions he saw, with young women working long hours for a pittance and living in barracks-like dormitories. The essence of his anecdote is that American workers should be thankful for what they've got.

None of this is entirely new for Romney. During the Republican primary campaign he remarked that he was not concerned with the poor and boasted that he liked firing people. His remarks at the fundraiser put in blunt terms his perspective and that of his party for a return to the conditions of working class exploitation that existed a hundred years ago.

The response of the Obama campaign and the Democrats shows that they basically share the same

perspective. While seeking to take advantage of Romney's vicious remarks for electoral purposes, they have studiously evaded the basic question they pose: Are Americans entitled to health care, housing, food and education?

Obama's campaign manager, Jim Messina, called it "shocking" that a presidential candidate would declare that "half the American people view themselves as 'victims,' entitled to handouts, and are unwilling to take 'personal responsibility' for their lives." He went on to charge Romney with writing off "half the nation."

White House Press Secretary Jay Carney merely told reporters that Obama "does not think men and women on social security are irresponsible or victims, that students aren't responsible or victims."

The implication of these statements is that to say Americans believe they are entitled to the basic elements of a civilized life is to slander them. In other words, they are not so entitled.

The Democrats' duplicitous response to Romney's remarks underscores not only their repudiation of any reform program, but their determination to shred the basic social programs that still survive from the reforms of the 1930s and 1960s—Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. In this connection, it is worthwhile recalling the response to mass unemployment and poverty of the last Democratic president to preside during a global capitalist crisis.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his State of the Union Address of January 1944, called for a "Second Bill of Rights" to guarantee Americans economic security. He listed as rights to be guaranteed by the government the right to a job, the right to a decent income, the right to decent housing, the right to health care, the right to a secure retirement, and the right to a good education.

How serious Roosevelt himself was about implementing such a program is a matter of historical debate. His entire New Deal was motivated by his determination to save the capitalist system from the threat of social revolution. In any event, American capitalism even at the height of its power, during the post-World War II boom, proved utterly incapable of implementing these modest social goals.

Today, after decades of decline—marked precisely by the ascendancy of the most parasitic sections of capital, represented by the likes of Romney as well as Obama's closest economic advisers—American capitalism can

save itself only by destroying all of the past social gains of the working class.

That, however, is not so easily accomplished. The incendiary statements of asset strippers like Romney will not go unnoticed by workers and youth, who are well aware they are being made to pay for the money-mad profiteering of financial parasites. There will be colossal class struggles in the United States, as around the world.

The critical task is preparing the revolutionary leadership required to impart to these struggles a socialist strategy and program.



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