

One week to Election Day in America: The real choice for workers

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As the 2012 presidential election campaign heads toward its conclusion next Tuesday, its right-wing and anti-democratic character becomes ever more clear.

The American population is presented with a “choice” between two multi-millionaires. One, the Republican candidate Mitt Romney, personifies the financial speculators whose criminality and greed triggered the financial crisis that erupted in 2008. The other, President Obama, has devoted his entire administration to protecting and expanding the wealth of the financial elite, destroying the democratic rights of the American people, and escalating military aggression internationally.

The post-election political agenda has already been set, regardless which of the two big business candidates wins. There is bipartisan agreement on policies set by the corporate-financial elite that controls both parties. Those policies can be summed up as (1) new military interventions and wars, (2) further attacks on democratic rights, (3) unprecedented cuts in basic social programs.

Rather than the campaign being used to openly discuss these policies before the American people, it is being staged managed to camouflage and conceal the reactionary agenda that will be implemented once the formality of a vote is out of the way.

Perhaps the most striking demonstration of this conspiracy of silence is the response—or lack of a response—by the media and the political establishment to last week’s *Washington Post* report that the Obama administration is systematizing its assassination program and integrating it into the day-to-day

functioning of the state.

Under the leadership of National Security Advisor John O. Brennan, the White House has created a hit list with the Orwellian designation “disposition matrix” to coordinate between the military and intelligence agencies the carrying out of extrajudicial assassinations. Going even further than the Bush administration, the Obama White House has declared the right of the president to kill anyone, including US citizens, without judicial review.

The *Post* noted: “Targeted killing is now so routine that the Obama administration has spent much of the past year codifying and streamlining the processes that sustain it... transforming ad-hoc elements into a counterterrorism infrastructure capable of sustaining a seemingly permanent war.”

This unconstitutional and illegal assumption of dictatorial power over life and death by the executive branch has been met with near total silence by the major newspapers, including in editorials endorsing Obama’s reelection. Neither the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Boston Globe* or the *Washington Post* itself mentioned the drone assassination program or other attacks on democratic rights in their pro-Obama editorials.

When confronted with questions about the legality its of extrajudicial killings, the administration has responded with language appropriate to mafia dons. Asked about the drone killing of the 16-year-old US citizen Abdulrahman al-Awlaki in Yemen last year, Obama campaign advisor Robert Gibbs said he “should have [had] a far more responsible father,” referring to

Anwar al-Awlaki, likewise a US citizen, who was killed by a US drone strike two weeks before his son.

In the last presidential debate, Romney declared his full support to an expansion of the drone killing program, making it clear that no matter who is elected, extrajudicial state murders will be expanded.

The same methods being used to kill opponents of American imperialism abroad will ultimately be directed against political opponents of the ruling class at home. Drones are already flying surveillance missions over the United States under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security.

The assault on democratic rights is bound up with the expansion of war abroad and the intensification of class war at home. There is no discussion in the election campaign of the advanced state of preparations for war against Iran. Such a war could quickly develop into a regional conflagration enveloping the entire Middle East and sparking a confrontation between the US and Russia and/or China, with incalculable consequences.

Last week, the British *Guardian* newspaper reported that the US has requested permission to use British military bases as staging areas for a war against Iran. Britain has, according to the newspaper, rebuffed the proposal, "citing secret legal advice which states that any pre-emptive strike on Iran could be in breach of international law."

Meanwhile, the US and Israel have been conducting joint military exercises in preparation for a military conflict with Iran. More than 3,500 US personnel have joined 1,000 Israeli troops in what is being called a test of US-Israeli missile defense systems.

Within the United States, the ruling class is preparing a ferocious attack on social programs, including trillions of dollars in cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Such measures are deeply unpopular, but are supported by both Obama and Romney.

In an interview with MSNBC Monday morning, Obama spelled out his priorities after Election Day. "There's no doubt that our first order of business is

going to be to get our deficits and debt under control," he said. "We've already made a trillion dollars worth of cuts. We can do some more cuts. We can look at how we deal with the health care costs in particular under Medicaid and Medicare in a serious way, but we are also going to need some revenue."

Obama's statement came after 80 CEOs of major US companies, including Steve Balmer of Microsoft, Lloyd Blankfein of Goldman Sachs, Jeffrey Immelt of General Electric and Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase, sent a letter to Romney and Obama urging whoever wins the election to proceed to cut social spending and carry out tax "reform," i.e., lower taxes for the rich and raise them for everyone else.

The program of the corporate executives is identical to that proposed by Obama and conforms to the proposals for over \$4 trillion in austerity and tax "reform" advanced by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles commission.

The elections one week from today are a conspiracy against the American people. On all the issues of central concern to the ruling class, the two candidates are united. Whoever is elected, the same basic policy will be pursued.

The real decision in the 2012 election is not which millionaire tool of Wall Street to vote for. The real decision facing workers, youth and students is to take up the challenge of building a political movement of the working class independent of both big business parties to fight for socialism.

The Socialist Equality Party is holding regional conferences in Detroit and New York City to discuss the strategy for this struggle. For more information and to register, visit socialequality.com/conferences.



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