

SEP campaigns for November 3 regional conference in New York City

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In New York City, the largest American urban center, the Socialist Equality Party is waging a struggle among workers and young people to expose the misinformation and deception put forward by the Obama and Romney campaigns, and to win support for the Socialist Equality Party presidential campaign of Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer.

SEP campaign teams have worked over the last several weeks to bring delegations of students at Brooklyn College, the Borough of Manhattan Community College, and Columbia to the November 3 conference, Socialism and 2012 Elections. Teams have campaigned among transit, Verizon and Con Ed workers, as well as residents of working class neighborhoods in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

Campaigners have spoken to many New Yorkers about the bipartisan plans for a post-election assault on working class living standards and the preparations for war with Iran. SEP teams have sought to highlight the need for a new leadership in the working class that will prepare a struggle for socialist polices and a workers government.

Social conditions are dire in New York. Official unemployment is around 9 percent, and young people confront a jobless rate nearly double that. Participation in the labor market is at its lowest in decades, as many workers, older and younger, have simply given up looking for full-time employment. Social inequality has soared since the financial collapse of 2008.

The top 20 percent of households by income in Manhattan, according to a recent article in *Crain's New York Business*, had yearly earnings that were 40 times the average of the bottom 20 percent, up from 38 times the previous year. Homelessness in the city reaches a new peak nearly every month.

Over the weekend, an SEP campaign team distributed

hundreds of election leaflets in the Parkchester neighborhood of the Bronx, the second-largest private housing development in the United States, which has an ethnically mixed working class population of 20,000 households. The average annual household income in Parkchester is \$41,000, and the official unemployment rate is above 10 percent. Many workers with whom SEP campaigners spoke observed that the Democratic and Republican candidates had nothing to say about deteriorating social conditions.

Myra, a social service worker for a company that contracts with New York City, said, "There have been budget cuts. A lot of city [homeless] shelters have been closed. The city prefers to have private shelters. This is because we are more efficient in kicking people out, regardless of their situation. If you have a client making the minimum wage of \$7.25, how can they save when having to spend for food, clothes, and other needs? We mandate clients to save and welfare mandates clients to save, but the government cut food stamps. How can they save?"

SEP supporters asked Myra if she thought that the government supported the rich. Myra replied, "It looks that way. It is really about money. Fifteen years ago a social service teacher told me that the middle class would disappear, so it will be the poor and the rich. This is what I am seeing now. I would probably support a socialist candidate. There will be more change."

Lulu Sanders told the campaign, "I am 89 years old, and I have voted since I was 18. I am a life-long Democrat; although I did vote for Eisenhower when he said he would 'Bring the boys home' during the Korean War.

"A lot of people think because Obama is black, they should vote for him because they are black, but I don't see any beneficial change in the situation since Obama

was elected with the promise he was for change we could believe in.

“Most people say Romney will be worse, but I listened to them in the debates, and I didn’t hear much difference. They were both baiting and courting each other, but I didn’t hear any real differences.

“We need jobs. A whole lot of people are out of work, and the people who are working cannot get good jobs. Obama promised college students he wouldn’t allow the interest rates to be raised on their student loans, but they still end up with tens of thousands of dollars of debt and no job to pay off this debt with. I know a friend whose son got degrees in college, but he is working in a grocery store because he can’t find anything else.

“I’m on Medicare. I retired in 1974. Now I’m having trouble getting my prescription drugs. Social Security is asking questions and wants to know what my income is.

“Whether Obama gets re-elected or Romney gets in, both of them will cut Social Security probably. I live off Social Security. Now Social Security wants to know about my income because I get Medicare Part D or Advantage. I have been working all my life since I was 17. Now when I get old they don’t want to give me anything. Food prices are going up. Rent is going up. No one is stopping the landlords from raising our rents. I’ve seen some elderly people living in some pretty bad places. Senior citizens need housing. And now they want to take Medicare away from us?

“A working-class party might be a good idea if it stood against the cuts in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. We can hardly live now.”

Claudio Carvalhaes was visiting from Philadelphia where he teaches theology and philosophy at a university. “There is no real alternative in the election. Both parties are keeping the same economic system. I think Obama has more commitment with the people’s social needs in comparison to Romney, but it is not where nearly what is necessary for what is needed in health care, education, living conditions like housing, and opportunity. The poverty in the US is enormous. In Philadelphia where I live, there are great pockets of poverty.”

The SEP team also spoke to Ruth, 57, a retired school bus driver who previously worked with the mentally challenged. She is currently a housewife. “The

economy is really bad now. I have a grandson who works in Radio Shack, which pays very little. He was going to college, but because of the expense he had to give it up. He really wanted to continue his schooling in order to better himself. I have a nephew and niece who have both been looking for work for over a year. Their father cannot afford to send them to college and they want to go very much. There are no jobs for young people today. They have no future and they have nothing to look forward to.”

When an SEP supporter asked her if these conditions were reflected in anything Obama or Romney had to say, Ruth answered, “Obama does a lot of talking. He repeats the same words all the time, but does nothing for the people. We need something different than the two parties in this country, but the government will not allow it. People are getting more and fed up with these politicians.”

To register for the SEP conference in New York or Michigan, click here



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