

The New York Times and Washington Post endorsements of Obama

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With just over one week before the national election, three leading US newspapers, representing various shades of opinion within the ruling elite, have published editorials endorsing the reelection of Barack Obama: the *Washington Post* did so Friday and the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* published theirs on Sunday.

All three newspapers hailed the killing of Osama bin Laden as the greatest foreign policy success of the Obama administration, demonstrating the debased character of official political discourse in America, where a willingness to commit murder, by death squad or remote-control missile, is deemed an indispensable qualification for the highest political office.

The three newspapers have their differences. The *Tribune* is more conservative on economic questions, declaring itself sympathetic to Romney's demands for even more drastic cuts in federal spending than those proposed by Obama, but critical of the more aggressive foreign policy of the Republicans. The *Post* is somewhat less draconian on economic policy, but critical of Obama's foreign policy as insufficiently militaristic, particularly in relation to Syria and Iran.

The *Times* is enthusiastically pro-Obama on every issue, and its editorial is particularly cynical, demonstrating both in what it says and what it doesn't say the decay of American liberalism. It hails Obama's health care program (aimed at cutting costs for business and government), the auto "rescue" (which slashed wages for new-hires by 50 percent), and the stimulus program (which rejected government-funded jobs for the unemployed). It devotes several paragraphs to Obama's policies on gay rights, but makes no mention of poverty, unemployment, social inequality, domestic spying, Guantanamo, torture, drones or the escalation of the war in Afghanistan.

The *Times* endorsement aptly defines the social interests represented by contemporary Democratic Party liberalism, with its obsessive focus on identity politics, indifference to democratic rights and the social conditions of the vast majority of the population, and unabashed support for American imperialism. It speaks for sections of the financial aristocracy, the military-intelligence apparatus, and privileged and affluent layers of the middle class, including the trade union bureaucracy, that are hostile to the interests of the working class.

The differences among the three leading newspapers only underscore their agreement on the main criterion for choosing the next president: his ability to carry through cuts in domestic social spending that will dwarf anything that has gone before.

The *Post* poses the question as "who is likelier to put the government on a more sound financial footing," concluding, "Obama is committed to the only approach that can succeed: a balance of entitlement reform and revenue increases." The newspaper also notes, as proof of Obama's economic competence, "The rebound of the Dow Jones Industrial Average from 6,626 in March 2009 to above 13,000 today."

The *Tribune* praises Obama for rejecting what it describes as "conventional liberal responses," such as blaming Wall Street for the economic collapse. It poses the same question as the *Post*: "Which of these two candidates, then, is likelier to reach a Go Big debt deal with Congress?" And it reaches the same answer: Obama would be more likely to engineer an agreement that would include "much more ambitious reform of entitlement programs"—in other words, far-reaching cuts in Medicare, Social Security and other basic social programs that the American ruling class is determined to dismantle.

The *Times* reaches the same conclusion: Obama, Romney, can produce a deficit reduction package: “If re-elected, Mr. Obama would be in position to shape the ‘grand bargain’ that could finally combine stimulus like the jobs bill [a token measure consisting mainly of tax cuts for business] with long-term deficit reduction that includes letting the high-end Bush-era tax cuts expire.”

The editorial endorsements of these newspapers are not merely the opinions of the editors. Each of these papers is a major institution of American capitalism, owned by a large corporation and reflecting in its columns the positions of a significant section of the American ruling elite.

These editorials are a message to Obama as much as to the readership. You may well win reelection, they say, but if so, here are your marching orders from the financial aristocracy: you must move quickly and ruthlessly to slash social spending in the United States.

Obama has received the message loud and clear. Speaking to the editorial board of the *Des Moines Register* last week, in an interview that was initially off the record and released to the public only after the editors protested, Obama emphasized his commitment to fiscal austerity and his undivided loyalty to the profit system, citing record corporate profits as proof that his administration was not “bad for business.”

“I’ve already cut a trillion dollars’ worth of spending,” he said. “I’m willing to do more. I’m willing to cut more, and I’m willing to work with Democrats and Republicans when it comes to making some adjustments that bring down the cost of our health care programs, which obviously are the biggest drivers of our deficit.”

He suggested that the upcoming “fiscal cliff,” the triggering January 1 of a series of tax and budget measures, would provide a salutary crisis to help push through significant cuts. It would be “a forcing mechanism,” he said, that meant “we’re going to be in a position where I believe in the first six months we are going to solve that big piece of business.”

He continued that “we can credibly meet the target that the Bowles-Simpson Commission established of \$4 trillion in deficit reduction, and even more in the out-years.” In other words, cuts that Obama initially rejected as unviable during the run-up to an election year would become practical once the election was

safely past and voters had no say in the matter.

He also pledged to lower corporate tax rates and “weed out” regulations on business.

These comments underscore the fraudulent and undemocratic character of the US political system, which is impervious to the interests and concerns of the working class. The 2012 election campaign is a political conspiracy by the Democrats and the Republicans to impose drastic anti-working class policies behind the backs of the American people.

The Obama administration has presided over record long-term unemployment, growing poverty, hunger and homelessness, a social reality to which Obama himself is callously indifferent. Romney cites these conditions only as a verbal slap against the incumbent, while calling for even more sweeping tax cuts for the rich and deeper cuts in social programs.

The only party in the 2012 elections that speaks for and defends the interests of the working class is the Socialist Equality Party. We urge workers and young people to support our candidates, Jerry White for president and Phyllis Scherrer for vice president, and attend the regional conference of the SEP in your area. For more information, visit www.socialequality.com

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