

New York Times acknowledges conspiracy of silence over “fiscal cliff”

Andre Damon
19 November 2012

In an article published Thursday, the *New York Times* starts off with an extraordinary admission—that during the elections the Democrats and Republicans colluded to cover-up planned cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and other social programs that they were both planning to make after the elections.

With characteristic cynicism, the *Times* makes this point as a virtual aside within an article providing details on the so-called “fiscal cliff,” the set of scheduled tax hikes and spending cuts being utilized to push through the unpopular cuts.

In the article, “Demystifying the Fiscal Impasse That Is Vexing Washington,” the *Times* asks, rhetorically: “Many Americans must be wondering: What is all this about a ‘fiscal cliff?’ And why did it receive so little attention during the presidential campaign?”

The answer follows: “Well, it’s complicated—the so-called cliff, that is. And most solutions are politically painful. In a rare show of bipartisanship, or mutual protection, both parties ducked the debate until after the election.”

This claim amounts to an admission that both candidates conspired against the American people to prevent any discussion of what Obama has called his “first order of business.” This is because the plans are “politically painful”—i.e., overwhelmingly opposed by the population.

What does this say about American democracy and the political and media establishment of which the *Times* is a part? The elections are supposedly the one time in which the population has the ability to vote on

the future course of government policy. Yet not only do the two parties agree on all essentials, but they deliberately seek to avoid any discussion on their actual plans.

Moreover, it points to the bipartisan drive to give entitlement cuts, long regarded as the “third rail” of American politics, an aura of inevitability.

After asserting that both parties “ducked” the issue of the austerity measures in the election, the article outlines how, in the years before the vote, the Democrats and Republicans set the stage for slashing social spending by constructing the “fiscal cliff.”

“Since Ronald Reagan’s administration, with mixed results, presidents and Congresses have occasionally mandated a self-imposed future crisis to force themselves to agree on unpopular tax and spending actions. In that spirit, the idea behind the August 2011 deal was that Republicans would so greatly fear the military cuts, and Democrats the domestic spending cuts, that they would negotiate a deficit-reduction alternative by the Jan. 1 deadline.”

The article goes on to note, “Such an agreement would set specific targets for new tax revenue and spending cuts to reduce deficits by about \$4 trillion over a decade, giving Congress and the president more time to work out the details. If they failed to do so, presumably other automatic changes might be in store as an enforcement action — setting up yet another looming deadline.”

These statements confirm entirely the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* and Socialist Equality

Party candidates Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer. The WSWS and SEP repeatedly stressed in statements and speeches that the candidates' refusal to discuss the plans to slash trillions of dollars in spending amounted to a "conspiracy of silence."

A resolution first passed at the Socialist Equality Party's election conference in Los Angeles on October 27, characterized the bipartisan plans as follows:

"The plans of the ruling class for after the elections are being concealed from the American people. The next administration, whether led by a Democrat or a Republican, is planning huge cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, food stamps, public education and other social programs."

The accuracy with which the WSWS characterized the post-election plans of the ruling class is yet another demonstration that the political establishment, including the media, has as its aim the suppression of the popular will and the imposition of anti-democratic and socially regressive policies for the enrichment of the wealthy few. All questions of consequence are decided behind the backs of the people, then sold to the population by the media and imposed by the politicians.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact