

Socialist Equality Party announces presidential campaign

Support White, Niemuth in 2016!

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party
22 April 2016

To take part in the SEP campaign, visit the election web site: sep2016.com.

The Socialist Equality Party has selected Jerry White as its presidential candidate and Niles Niemuth as its vice-presidential candidate in the 2016 elections. White and Niemuth will run on a socialist, anti-war and anti-capitalist program in the interests of the working class in the United States and around the world.

Jerry White, 56, is the US labor editor of the *World Socialist Web Site*. He joined the Workers League, the predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party, in 1979, while working at United Parcel Service and attending the City University of New York. For nearly four decades, as a writer and activist, Jerry has played a major role in the struggles of the working class. He was the SEP's presidential candidate in 2008 and 2012.

Niles Niemuth, 28, was raised in a working-class family in Wisconsin and became a member of the SEP during the 2011 mass protests against budget cuts imposed by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker. Niles joined the staff of the WSWWS after completing his master's degree at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, where he specialized in African-American history. Niemuth has written extensively on US social conditions, working-class struggles and the government's assault on democratic rights.

The 2016 elections are being held under conditions of intensifying international and domestic crisis. The shadow of global military conflict looms over the elections. The vast majority of American workers and youth are experiencing a relentless decline in their standard of living. While the richest one percent controls the economy, most Americans struggle to make ends meet, millions live in outright poverty, and a substantial percentage of children go hungry.

Neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party has anything to offer the great majority of the American people except war, political repression and worsening social conditions. They are the parties of the Wall Street banks, the massive corporations, the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies. Regardless which of these two parties wins the November election, the next government will be the most reactionary, repressive and violent in American history.

The Socialist Equality Party candidates will use the campaign to advance the socialist alternative to capitalism, raise the political consciousness of workers and youth, oppose all forms of national chauvinism, racism and anti-immigrant baiting, fight to unify all workers in the United States, throughout the Americas and internationally, and prepare the working class for the coming struggles.

The election program of the SEP is centered on three essential demands:

1) Oppose US militarism! Stop the drive to World War III!

The SEP campaign is breaking the conspiracy of silence among all the official candidates and the media over the war plans of the United States.

Under the fraudulent cover of the unending "war on terror," now in its fifteenth year, Obama jettisoned his 2008 election promises. He continued and expanded the war policies of the Bush administration to assert the global domination of US imperialism. With the advent of drone warfare, the White House has been transformed into the planning center for bureaucratically routinized murder. Millions of people—in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan—have been killed, injured or turned into refugees in the wars launched by the United States since 2001.

The regional wars are leading to global conflict. American imperialism will not tolerate either military or economic challenges to its dominant international position. Washington's "pivot to Asia" has set into motion a massive military operation aimed at forcing China to accept the global hegemony of the United States. At the same time, the determination of the US to dominate Central Asia has escalated conflict with Russia.

The reckless confrontations provoked by the Pentagon—from the Baltic regions to the South China Sea—threaten to spiral out of control and lead to thermonuclear war. The ongoing preparations for global warfare, which could lead to the deaths of billions of people, are cloaked in lies and secrecy. The SEP campaign will alert workers and youth to the immense dangers they face and build the foundation for a powerful anti-war movement.

2) Put an end to poverty and social inequality!

The SEP fights to abolish a system in which the super-rich exploit the labor of billions of workers around the world. We call for a vast redistribution of wealth to secure basic social rights, including the right to a decent-paying job, quality education, affordable housing, universal health care, a dignified retirement and access to culture.

Eight years after the financial crash of 2008, the disastrous reality of life in America is drastically at odds with official proclamations of "economic recovery." While nominal unemployment has fallen since the depths of the recession, this is largely because millions of Americans have dropped out of the labor force. All the growth in jobs over the past decade has been in the form of contingent, part-time or temporary labor.

Social inequality today is greater than ever before. The top 20 billionaires in the US have as much wealth as the bottom 150 million Americans. The rich not only enjoy untold wealth and privilege, they live longer. The life expectancy gap between the richest and poorest Americans averages almost 15 years for men and 10 years for women.

Young people are burdened by more than \$1 trillion in student loan debt, millions of people are being cut off from food stamps, and millions more are seeing their pensions and health care slashed or eliminated. The government spends trillions on a vast military machine and so-called "homeland security" while it allows the country's public schools and basic infrastructure to collapse. Residents in Flint, Michigan and other cities are supplied drinking water poisoned with lead and other toxic

chemicals.

The proposals from Democratic candidates to raise the federal minimum wage—whether to \$12 an hour as proposed by Hillary Clinton or \$15 as proposed by Bernie Sanders—are not only insincere, they are completely inadequate, leaving workers earning poverty-level wages. The Democrats and their allies in the trade union bureaucracy deliberately cover up the fact that the Obama administration has overseen the greatest transfer of wealth in American history, with 95 percent of all income gains since 2009 going to the top one percent.

The SEP advances a program not for the improvement of capitalism, but for the establishment of socialism. The social rights of the working class cannot be secured without a direct attack on the interests of the capitalist class and the domination of the financial aristocracy over economic life. This means an end to the private ownership of the large corporations, with all those valued above \$10 billion transformed into publicly owned enterprises under the democratic control of the working class. To provide quality jobs to all those who need them, the SEP calls for a multitrillion-dollar public works program to rebuild infrastructure throughout the country.

3) Defend democratic rights! No to government spying and police violence!

Under the framework of the “war on terror,” the most basic democratic rights are being ripped to shreds. Since the revelations of Edward Snowden in 2013 exposed to the world the criminal and unconstitutional activities of the NSA, nothing has been done to rein in the power of the intelligence apparatus. Instead, every terror attack—whether in the United States or abroad—is used as a justification to give more powers to the state.

The Obama administration proclaims the right to carry out drone assassinations, without any judicial process, of people around the world, including US citizens. It helps arm a militarized police force that kills over 1,000 people a year with impunity. Those who expose the crimes of the American ruling class—Snowden, Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange—are thrown in jail or hunted down and forced into exile.

The vast spying apparatus must be dismantled, along with the Pentagon’s Northern Command, which is overseeing the ever more direct use of the military within the borders of the United States. Genuine democracy is incompatible with an economic system in which all decisions are dictated by a ruling class that controls the giant corporations and banks and demands ever more brutal attacks on the rights and interests of the working class.

Break with the two-party system!

The fight for peace, equality and democracy is inseparable from a fight against the capitalist system, which subordinates the global economy to a criminal financial elite. The oligarchs control the political system and both major parties. To defend their rights, workers need their own party.

The 2016 election campaign has exposed the deep crisis of the two-party system in the United States and the terminal state of American democracy.

On the Republican side, the emergence of Donald Trump, a candidate whose persona and appeal are of a distinctly fascistic character, is a serious warning to the working class. Trump’s racist baiting of Muslims and immigrants of Hispanic origin is aimed at dividing workers against each other and creating the conditions for an ever more violent assault on all opposition to the dictates of Wall Street.

Trump’s call to “Make America great again” is a reactionary fantasy. The reality is that American capitalism is in deep crisis, with the ruling class seeking to leverage its military power to offset US capitalism’s long-term economic decline. To this Trump wishes to add the construction of a “great wall”—promoting a virulent form of nationalism that would be the prelude to even more explosive warfare abroad.

Trump’s main opponent, Texas Senator Ted Cruz, is no less reactionary, advancing his own brand of fascistic politics based on Christian fundamentalism. Whoever is nominated, the Republican Party

will run its most reactionary campaign in history.

Trump has been able to exploit social anger and hostility to the political establishment, and channel it in a right-wing direction, due to the character of official “left” politics. The Democratic Party, committed to militarism and austerity, is no less the political instrument of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus than the Republicans.

Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party frontrunner and likely nominee, is the political personification of the status quo. She and her husband, the former president, amassed a fortune by means of political insider dealing and corruption. As first lady, Clinton was part of an administration that carried out far-reaching attacks on the working class; as senator from New York, she supported the war in Iraq and represented the interests of Wall Street; as secretary of state, she organized the intervention in Libya, fomented civil war in Syria and committed countless other crimes.

The widespread popular support for the campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders is largely based on his identification as a “democratic socialist.” His unexpected string of victories in state primaries shows that there is an enormous desire among workers and young people for an alternative to capitalism. The scale of his support has exploded the official narrative of American politics, according to which no one claiming to be “socialist” can get a hearing.

However, Sanders has demonstrated by his long political career that he is neither a socialist nor an opponent of the political establishment. Even when a nominal “independent,” he collaborated with the Democrats and staunchly supported the Obama administration. He defends capitalism and American imperialism, and he promotes economic nationalism, seeking to scapegoat workers in Mexico, China and other countries for the loss of jobs in the US.

Sanders’ central role is to utilize his bogus credentials as a “socialist” to waylay popular hostility among workers and young people to the two-party system and divert it back into the safe channels of the Democratic Party. The experience of the Obama administration, which came to power promising “hope” and “change,” has exposed the role of the Democratic Party as an instrument of the corporate and financial elite. With the assistance of the unions and an array of upper middle-class pseudo-left groups, the Democrats have perfected the practice of combining empty demagoguery and various forms of racial, gender and identity politics with a thoroughly right-wing and pro-war policy.

If Sanders were to run an “independent” campaign—as urged by some of his political backers—this would not change the character of his campaign. His program is based on defense of the capitalist system and opposition to a political movement of the working class.

The same applies to the nominally “independent” campaign of the Green Party. The Green Party is a capitalist party that functions as an external pressure group on the Democrats. When Green parties have participated in governments—most notably in Germany—they have invariably backed the policy of the ruling class, including attacks on workers at home and support for imperialist war abroad.

An internationalist and socialist program for the working class

White and Niemuth will address their campaign to workers all over the world, not just in the United States. What happens in the United States has global implications, and the struggle against the American ruling class can be waged only as an international struggle. The same conditions that exist in the United States are repeated in country after country and have already led to explosive social upheavals, from the revolutionary events in Egypt in 2011, to the mass strikes in China and India, to the protests this spring in France against the state of emergency and reactionary labor laws.

The SEP campaign fights to unite all sections of the working class in a common struggle. Our campaign rejects all forms of nationalism, chauvinism and bigotry, used by the ruling class to divide workers against each other.

In the United States, there are growing signs of radicalization, including

the rebellion of autoworkers last year against the United Auto Workers sellout contracts and the current strike by Verizon workers. American workers are increasingly turning to politics and seeking radical solutions to the conditions they confront. The ruling class, determined to control the world, will find that it does not have control of its own “house.”

The basic aim of the SEP election campaign is to build support for socialist policies—to speak to and educate masses of workers and youth who are looking for a way forward. Many are beginning to ask the question: What is socialism? Our campaign will answer this question, distinguishing genuine socialist politics from its various counterfeits.

We urge you to get involved in the campaign. Now is the time to take up an active fight for socialism! This is not a campaign only about votes. It is about the organization of workers and young people to prepare for the struggles into which they are entering.

There are many ways you can get involved. Sign up for our email newsletter. Join the campaign by building election committees in your area. Organize a meeting in your area. Help get us on the ballot where that is possible. Promote the campaign among your friends and co-workers. Donate to ensure that the SEP can wage the most aggressive campaign possible.

A new way forward must be forged! To all workers fighting to defend their jobs and living conditions, to young people drowning in debt and without a future, to the millions who are sick of endless war, we say: This is your campaign! Get involved today!

To get involved in the campaign, visit sep2016.com today.



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