

Two months until the US elections: The political issues facing the working class

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It is now two months until the US presidential elections, but it is not necessary to wait until November 8 to foresee what the American people—and the population of the world—will confront, regardless of who wins. Whether it is Democrat Hillary Clinton or Republican Donald Trump who occupies the White House, the next administration will be one of war, economic austerity and the violent repression of democratic rights.

The two candidates offered by the main capitalist parties, each in their own way, express the deep crisis of American capitalism.

In the “Fortress America” campaign of Trump, a section of the ruling class is seeking to lay the foundation for a fascistic authoritarian movement based on extreme nationalism and militarism. Over the past several days, Trump has called for a massive \$90 billion increase in US military spending. In Wednesday’s “Commander-in-Chief” forum before military veterans, he said that the United States should “take the oil” of the Middle East—an articulation in the candidate’s particularly crude language of the essential motivation for US policy in the region. He has also demanded the resumption of the open use of torture and other criminal policies.

Trump calls for the elimination of all corporate regulations and a reduction in taxes for the rich. This is combined with a demagogic nationalism: vilifying immigrants, demanding the erection of a “great wall” on the US-Mexico border and the creation of what amounts to concentration camps to detain and deport the undocumented.

Trump’s opponent, Clinton, is the consensus candidate of the most powerful sections of the corporate-financial elite and the military-intelligence apparatus. Over the past month, she spent nearly all her time raising money from the ultra-rich who are her real constituency, pulling in \$143 million in August, a record for the campaign so far. She has centered her campaign on winning over prominent Republicans, including war criminals from the Bush administration, and top military generals.

In the aftermath of Wednesday’s forum, Clinton

intensified her denunciations of Trump as a tool of Russian President Vladimir Putin. “What would Ronald Reagan say about a Republican nominee who attacks American generals and heaps praise on Russia’s president?” she asked on Thursday. Trump, she declared, was “unpatriotic,” “scary” and a danger to “national security”—i.e., the geostrategic interests of American imperialism.

Clinton has made anti-Russian sabre-rattling the central theme of her campaign. In an American Legion speech last week, she threatened that cyberattacks and hacking by Russia—charges that are completely unsubstantiated—should be met with a military response. One of her first acts as president, she said, will be to order a Nuclear Posture Review to “make sure America’s arsenal is prepared to meet future threats.”

Despite all the mudslinging, the differences between Clinton and Trump center on how best to advance the national and global interests of the corporate and financial elite that controls the US. The Democratic and Republican candidates differ over means, not goals. Though they denounce each other, they share a common enemy: the American and international working class. Regardless of who wins, the new administration will combine the worst features of both candidates.

In the final analysis, the overriding factor driving the campaigns of Trump and Clinton is the crisis of American and world capitalism, overseen by a parasitic financial-corporate aristocracy dedicated to a policy of war and social counter-revolution.

Here it is worth noting two important anniversaries. This coming Sunday marks 15 years since the attacks of September 11, 2001. These attacks, which have never been subject to a serious independent investigation, were utilized to justify a campaign of war and violence in Central Asia and the Middle East and a vast expansion of police-state powers at home.

Within the framework of the “war on terror,” the American ruling class, under Bush and Obama, escalated a policy of unending war that had begun 10 years earlier with

the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The attempts by the ruling class to reverse the decline of American capitalism through force have failed, however, and the regional wars and proxy conflicts are now developing into a direct clash between the US and its larger rivals, including Russia and China.

This coming Thursday is the eighth anniversary of the collapse of the investment bank Lehman Brothers, a highpoint of the 2008 crash that nearly brought down the entire financial system. Over the past eight years, world central banks, led by the US Federal Reserve, have funnelled trillions of dollars into the markets, inflating new asset bubbles and sending the wealth of the financial aristocracy to new heights. Meanwhile, the world economy stagnates, social inequality is at record highs and there are growing signs of a resurgence of the class struggle internationally.

Masses of working people in the United States and internationally are moving to the left. The millions of people who voted for Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders during the Democratic Party primaries because they thought he was a socialist have not changed their views. Despite the pathetic collapse of his “political revolution” and his support for Clinton, the process of mass political radicalization continues.

The 2016 elections provide an object lesson in the bankruptcy of “lesser-evilism,” the effort to find a solution within the framework of the existing political and economic system.

The basic and pressing task is to prepare for the struggles that will emerge in the aftermath of the elections. The Socialist Equality Party launched the election campaign of Jerry White and Niles Niemuth not to get votes, but to lay the foundations for a mass socialist movement of the working class. The SEP is fighting to politically organize the majority of the population, the bottom 90 percent, who are effectively excluded from political life.

Our campaign advances the following demands:

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

In political solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International, the SEP is fighting to build a mass anti-war movement, based on the international working class. The horrific consequences of the US war drive, which threatens to unleash a third world war waged with nuclear weapons, can only be prevented through the independent intervention of the working class. We insist that there can be no fight for socialism without a struggle against war and there can be no fight against war without a struggle for socialism.

2) Put an end to poverty and inequality!

The same crisis that produces imperialist war also produces the objective basis for socialist revolution, in the

form of growing social opposition and the class struggle. Millions of people in the US, and billions throughout the world, face a future of poverty, unemployment and economic insecurity. To guarantee the basic social rights of the working class—to a decent-paying job, to housing and education, to healthcare and a secure retirement—the wealth of the corporate and financial elite must be expropriated and the giant forces of production placed at the services of social need, not private profit.

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

The crisis of bourgeois democracy is inextricably linked to the policy of endless war and social reaction. In the erection of an apparatus of domestic spying and the development of local police forces throughout the country into instruments of violence and terror, the ruling class is preparing for social unrest. Genuine democracy is not compatible with the continuation of a social system dedicated to the interests of a tiny section of the population and the brutal exploitation of the vast majority.

To achieve these aims, the working class internationally must be politically unified on the basis of a socialist and revolutionary program.

We call on all our readers to take up this fight as your own. The SEP has laid the political framework for an international socialist movement, but you must build it. Support the SEP election campaign and donate to help make it as successful as possible. Make plans to attend an election meeting, which are being held in cities throughout the country.

These meetings will culminate in a special one-day conference in Detroit, Michigan on November 5, to review the experiences of the past year and outline the tasks and agenda for the period to come. You can register today at sep2016.com/conference.

Above all, we call on all of our readers and supporters to make the decision to join the Socialist Equality Party and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality. Not only is a mass socialist movement necessary, the objective foundations for such a movement are far advanced. This potential can only be realized, however, through the decision of workers and young people throughout the world to draw the urgent conclusions of their experiences and build a political leadership.



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