

We Need a Working Class Solution to Working Class Problems!

American workers have had it rough these past few years. Shock after shock has shaken the consciousness of all Americans from top to bottom: the 2000 election fiasco, the collapse of the IT-led boom of the 1990s and the “new economic paradigm”, the September 11 attacks, the war in Afghanistan, the energy crisis in California, the fraud and bankruptcy of Enron, World Com and other massive corporations, the Iraq war and occupation, and on and on. Jobs have been off-shored by the score and millions more have fallen under the poverty line. The gap between rich and poor has widened like never before, the Iraq war is draining much-needed resources from education and health care, and still we work longer than ever while real wages continue to fall and benefits and job security are gutted. The fact is, most of us haven't benefited from the economic “recovery”, and most working people feel as though the economic situation is going badly.

3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2000 - that's 1 in 6 over the last 4 years. There has been no net increase in jobs since the economy technically began its recovery in November 2001. Those jobs that have been created are largely non-union, temporary, and pay an average of 13 percent less than those lost during the recession. Just to keep pace with the growing population, the US economy must create 150,000 positions per month, yet in June of 2004, just 78,000 were created, and in July, a mere 32,000. The polarization of society has continued apace as well. In 1982 the ratio between worker and CEO pay was 1 to 42. Now it stands at an astonishing 1 to 281. Previous economic recoveries provided an average of 61 percent of income growth to workers, 26 percent to corporate profits. This “recovery” has provided just 29 percent to workers, and 46 percent to corporate profits. As Warren Buffett the billionaire recently put it, “if class warfare is being waged in America, my class is clearly winning.” The effects all of this is having on the consciousness of working Americans will be explosive in the coming period. We were promised the “American Dream” - and instead find ourselves homeless, unemployed, and buried in debt, .

This election year it's understandable that millions of Americans want to get rid of Bush and his cronies. He is the personification of the short-sightedness, arrogance and ignorance of the US ruling class. The mood against Bush is a healthy reaction against his right-wing policies of war, privatization, cuts in health care and education, tax cuts for the rich, and the loss of millions of quality jobs. But realistically speaking, what is the alternative? Do the Democrats really represent an option for working people? In a two-party system, the natural reaction is to vote for “the other guy”. Sure, they put on a nicer front and make a lot of speeches about how they want to fight for working people, but what's their real record? It was Clinton who started dismantling the social security safety net,

ramped up military spending, and approved NAFTA, which has been disastrous for workers across North America. He bombed working people in Iraq, Yugoslavia and Sudan, and recently came out in support of Bush's war in Iraq.

John Kerry is no different. He is also for continuing the costly war in Iraq and has no real plan for creating quality jobs to replace the millions that have been lost. Many of the same corporations that fund Bush also donate to Kerry's campaign. If elected, Kerry will be the wealthiest president ever elected in this country. Who is he more likely to listen to if he wins: an under-employed mother of two, or the CEO of a bank that donates tens of thousands of dollars to his campaign? It's common knowledge that in 21st century America it takes lots of money and friends in high places, not ideas to win political office. His talk about universal health care for all sounds good on paper, but how can he possibly take on the powerful insurance and pharmaceutical companies who will fight tooth and nail against it when he has supported them in the past? Let's face it: the Democrats are just as much in the pocket of big business as the Republicans, and will always represent their interests in government. So what's the alternative?

In the world's richest country, access to quality jobs, health care, and education for all is not too much to ask. The wealth to fund all of this and more is there - but it is concentrated in the hands of a tiny group of people who are more interested in mega-profits than in the well being of the rest of us. The fact is, the vast majority of Americans are workers. If we truly are a democratic society in which the majority rules, working people should have the most say as to how things are run and what we do with the wealth produced by our labor. The only solution is a mass political party that can fight in our interests and challenge the power of the corporate duopoly. We can rely only on our class brothers and sisters to fight in our interests. Yes, we need to get rid of Bush and his pals, but we need to replace them with an alternative that can actually address the growing crisis facing working Americans. The time to start building that alternative is now: The bosses have two parties, working people need one of their own. What we need is a mass party of labor based on the unions, armed with a socialist program that can bring about real and lasting change.

Join the Workers International League in fighting for a program that addresses the needs of working people. For more information, please contact us at wil@socialistappeal.org.



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