

Update THE WORKER

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Editorial

The Only Real Alternative

Everyday the crisis of the current political system deepens. More and more people are fed up with the two big parties and the government. The political process is so bankrupt, the only way it can campaign amongst the workers is by trying to bully them into voting for the Obama-Biden ticket as the "lesser-evil."

But the fact is that the majority of people won't vote in the 2008 elections precisely because they are rejecting the old politics of the Republicans and Democrats. They are rejecting the old politics that is incapable of finding solutions to the pressing problems facing our country just as it is incapable of mobilizing and empowering the people to fight for their own interests.

During the elections, governmental leaders, the two big political parties and their candidates, the mass media, the educational institutions, most often present empty platitudes in place of politics. When they do present any politics, what they do is impose a straitjacket on political thought and action, and in fact, try to de-politicize the people.

The terms of the discussion are always pre-set. It is openly or tacitly assumed that the existing economic, political and social relations are the only possible way

in which society can be organized. Thus, for example, the entire discussion about the war in Iraq is reduced to a squabble over the best plan to defeat the Iraqi resistance because the right of U.S. imperialism to impose its political and economic will on Iraq is taken as an immutable law.

Those who reject this old politics, this "politics of the lesser evil," are often attacked as "apathetic" and told that "if you don't register and don't vote, you have no right to complain." But, again, this view is only covering up an essential flaw in the current political process and political system. Of course it is good to vote, if there is anyone to vote for. But un-

der the present system, it is nearly impossible for the people to have any say whatsoever in the selection and nomination of candidates. The two big parties have been granted almost a complete monopoly over selecting candidates. Therefore, on election day, the only "choice" offered the people is between 2 candidates both of whom are hand-picked by big business and advertised by the monopoly-controlled mass media. We must insist that under this system, the people really do not have a vote at all – they are merely being asked to give their

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Growing Unemployment

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment reached a five-year high of 6.1% in August and remained at that rate in September. This amounts to over 9.3 million workers officially counted as unemployed, a number larger than the populations of Chicago, Los Angeles and Houston combined.

While mass layoffs are taking place throughout the economy, they are hitting certain sectors of the workers especially hard. Manufacturing workers lost 51,000 jobs last month and 442,000 over the past 12

months. Construction lost 35,000 jobs in September and retail also experienced heavy losses. Unemployment of black workers has already reached 11.4% and unemployment of Hispanic workers has already reached 7.8%.

Unemployment has steadily increased over the last several months and economists admit that they expect unemployment rates to continue rising.

Particularly severe effects of prolonged unemployment can be

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continued

consent to a government and a political system over which they have no control.

Further, the real content of the politics of the "lesser-evil" is not directed against the "ultra-right" as some political forces contend, but squarely against any independent thought and action on the part of workers and people. Clearly Obama and the Democrats represent the "ultra-right"—the reactionary agenda of war, robbery, racism, and repression—just as much as McCain and the Republicans. Those who campaign amongst the workers for Obama are trying to deceive the people into forgetting the deeds and class character of the Democrats and into giving up their own aspirations and program.

What is the alternative?

The crisis and bankruptcy of the current political system and political process can only be overcome through the independent class politics of the workers. The aim of this politics is for the working class itself to conquer the political power, to

make its agenda and aims the agenda and aims of society as a whole—that is, in order to build a society which abolishes the system of exploitation of human beings, guarantees the economic and other inviolable rights of the people and empowers the people themselves as the decision-makers and leaders of society.

Such a genuine working class politics opens the broadest possible arena for the workers and people to take part in the struggle to change society and advance their own class interests. Genuine working class politics can include workers selecting and running their own candidates for office when this is a useful means of advancing their interests. But independent working class politics does not confine itself to elections, nor does it accept the current electoral system, which is rigged in favor of the 2 big parties of the capitalist class. Genuine working class politics takes up all forms of organization and struggle suitable to advancing the interests of the workers and openly contending with the capitalists over the direction

of society.

Some of the key fronts on which independent working class politics is now developing include: the struggle of the workers to popularize their own program as widely as possible; the struggle of the workers to build up their own independent press as a means to popularize their agenda and equip themselves with consciousness and organization; the work to mobilize the broadest sections of people, through various means, to take up active opposition to the anti-social agenda of monopoly capital.

It is precisely this work of developing the self-conscious, independent political movement of the working class and people which is the decisive political task facing us. It is this point which must be brought to center-stage and fought out during these elections and beyond.

This is the only real alternative.

Unemployment

continued

expected because of the gutting of social programs. Typically, unemployment insurance lasts only 26 weeks, leaving workers without a livelihood at all after that time. Welfare, food stamps and other income-support programs have also been slashed to the bone. In addition, workers who lose their jobs are usually deprived of health insurance,

while most states have cut out Medicaid for the unemployed.

These conditions are entirely unacceptable. These conditions bring out the need for the workers to launch new struggles to protect and extend unemployment insurance and other income-support programs until everyone is guaranteed a job or a livelihood.

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