

Resolutions of the SEP (US) National Congress

On the 2012 Election and the SEP Campaign

31 August 2012

Published here is the second resolution adopted unanimously by the Second National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (US), held July 8-12, 2012. See also: “Socialist Equality Party (US) holds National Congress” and “Resolution 1: Perspectives of the Socialist Equality Party.”

The Socialist Equality Party and its candidates—Jerry White for president and Phyllis Scherrer for vice president—are intervening in the 2012 elections as a means of fighting to build a socialist leadership in the working class, uniting the struggles of workers and youth and politically organizing them to carry out the revolutionary transformation of society.

2. The 2012 elections are held under conditions of the worst economic and social crisis in the United States since the Great Depression. The jobs situation, already disastrous, is getting worse. Tens of millions of people are out of work, have seen their wages slashed, or have been thrown out of their homes. The average duration of unemployment remains near the record highs set after the collapse of 2008. Half the population is categorized as poor or near poor, while 4 million people subsist on less than \$2 a day.

3. The official two-party election contest offers no choice to the working class, as the Democrats and the Republicans are equally committed to the defense of the corporate and financial aristocracy, which is funneling an unprecedented \$3 billion into the two presidential campaigns. The “debate” is between a multimillionaire asset stripper and arch-reactionary (Romney) and Obama, also a multimillionaire, who has in his three-and-a-half years in office proven himself a ruthless representative of the banks. The differences that do exist between the two parties are of a tactical nature. On all issues that concern the basic interests of the corporate and financial elite, they stand united.

4. The experience of the Obama administration has helped expose to millions of people the imperviousness of the political system to the interests of the vast majority of the population. Its record makes clear that the American ruling class has no reform policy. The response of the ruling class to the emergence of social opposition is not reform, but repression.

5. On domestic policy, Obama began his administration by extending and expanding the bailout of the banks, allocating trillions of dollars, while rejecting any government programs to provide jobs for the unemployed. The bailout of the auto industry, based on halving the wages for new-hires and cutting benefits for retired workers, gave the signal for similar attacks by corporations and state and local governments. The administration’s principal

“reform” measure—the health care overhaul—was in fact the opening shot in an ongoing campaign to cut health care costs for corporations and the government. Under Obama’s “recovery,” 93 percent of income gains have gone to the top one percent.

6. On foreign policy, Obama continued the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, expanded drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen and other countries, launched a new war against Libya, and is now stoking up conflicts with Syria and Iran. The logic of this reckless militarism is an open conflict with China or Russia, both nuclear-armed powers, with cataclysmic consequences.

7. From keeping open Guantanamo, to protecting CIA torturers, to prosecuting those who expose US war crimes, like Army Private Bradley Manning, the Obama administration has stepped up the attacks on democratic rights begun under Bush. The White House now asserts the right of the president to order drone-missile assassinations of anyone, anywhere in the world, including US citizens.

8. These attacks are the culmination of a protracted decay of bourgeois democracy in America over many decades. A key turning point was the stolen election of 2000, when the US Supreme Court halted the counting of votes in Florida and installed George W. Bush in the White House. The capitulation of the Democratic Party to this unconstitutional coup demonstrated that there no longer existed any significant support for democratic principles in any section of the US ruling elite. This political shift is itself the expression of more profound social processes: it is impossible to maintain democratic forms of rule in a society where the division of wealth and income is so one-sided and unequal.

9. The past three-and-a-half years have confirmed the SEP’s assessment that Obama’s election did not signal a revival of social reformism, but rather a new stage in the corporate onslaught on the jobs, living standards and social rights of working people. We rejected the claims of those such as the International Socialist Organization, which proclaimed the election of the first African-American president a “transformative event” that would mean a break with “the right-wing agenda that dominated US politics for the last three decades.”

10. In American politics, a critical role is played by a network of organizations of privileged layers of the middle class, trade unions and liberal publications that work to promote the Democratic Party and prevent the immense social tensions building up in American society from finding an independent political expression. These same political forces are once again lining up behind the reelection of Barack Obama and the election of Democrats to the House and

Senate. Whatever their mild and hypocritical criticisms, the pseudo-left cheerleaders of Obama support the Democratic Party not in spite of its right-wing agenda, but because of it. They speak on behalf of a small layer of the privileged upper middle class that is thoroughly hostile to the working class.

11. The SEP rejects with contempt the argument that since only a Democrat or a Republican can win the November 6 election, working people should support the Democrat as the “lesser evil.” This has been the last line of defense for the political domination of big business in America for more than a century. The two-party political monopoly is thoroughly undemocratic and must be swept away.

12. The program of the Socialist Equality Party provides the working class with the only way forward. The SEP fights to connect the struggle of working people for their basic social, economic and political rights to the program of revolutionary socialism. The corporate and financial aristocracy’s death grip on the resources of society is the main obstacle to social progress. The SEP insists that the rights of the working class cannot be secured except through the independent mobilization of the working class in the struggle to take political power, radically redistribute the wealth, establish genuine social equality, and reorganize all economic life under the democratic control of the working class so as to serve social needs, not private profit.

13. The SEP election campaign is based on the principle of internationalism. In a global economy—confronting a corporate ruling elite that exploits workers in every country and seeks to pit workers against each other on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion and nationality—the working class can defend its interests only on the basis of the broadest international unity. American workers are part of the international working class and must conduct their struggles on the basis of an international strategy. Situated in the center of world imperialism, where the ruling class controls the world’s most powerful military machine, American workers have a responsibility to mobilize their class strength against American militarism and its unparalleled record of global aggression.

14. Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer will be running as write-in candidates in most states. The American electoral system is democratic in name only. In reality, the two big business parties exercise a stranglehold over the whole process. Ballot access laws require tens of thousands of signatures in many states just to get a candidate’s name on the ballot. The corporate media works deliberately to prevent any discussion of alternative viewpoints. And the whole process is dominated by unimaginable sums of money. The SEP denounces and seeks to expose the corrupt and anti-democratic character of the existing electoral system. However, the party will seek ballot status in selected states where requirements are less onerous. Where this is not possible, we call on workers and youth throughout the country to write in our candidates’ names as a class-conscious declaration of support for a revolutionary socialist program.

15. In the months since it was launched, the SEP election campaign has won a strong hearing among workers and youth in every section of the country. Important election meetings have been held in the Midwest, Northeast, South and West, as well as in Canada. Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer have campaigned among

workers engaged in bitter struggles against lockouts at Cooper Tire and Caterpillar and against cuts in social programs such as education, health care and public transportation.

16. Everywhere there is an interest in socialism and a strong desire for a political alternative to the parties of big business. The economic crisis is having a profound impact on the consciousness of workers and young people. The American working class is losing all confidence in the capitalist system. The objective development of the crisis and the experiences of the working class create the basis for the emergence of a mass revolutionary movement in the United States, the heart of world capitalism.

17. As the SEP election campaign has shown, the growth of the class struggle and the crisis of capitalism underscore the decisive importance of political leadership and the intervention of the party. Basic theoretical, historical and political issues must be clarified. What is socialism? What was the Soviet Union? How can the working class build a political movement independent of the ruling elite? There is a definite growth of interest in the lessons of the history of the 20th century and the protracted struggle to build a revolutionary movement of the working class, personified in the life and work of Leon Trotsky. The SEP election campaign is necessarily connected to the struggle to clarify the working class on these great historical issues and oppose the efforts of the bourgeois and Stalinist falsifiers.

18. In the four months remaining in the election campaign, the SEP must fight to bring its program to the widest sections of workers and youth. The election campaign will be the focal point of our turn to the working class. This means the widest possible distribution of election material, the use of every opportunity to win an audience for the program and perspective of the SEP, and the holding of meetings of supporters throughout the country. This campaign will prepare both the party and the working class for the struggles that are certain to develop both during and after the 2012 elections.

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