

Obama evades jobs crisis on campaign trail

By Barry Grey
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With the completion of the Democratic and Republican conventions, the presidential campaigns of the two corporate-controlled parties have shifted into high gear, with less than two months remaining before the November 6 vote.

The lying and demagoguery that characterized both assemblies will be intensified. Hundreds of millions more dollars—mainly from corporate backers and wealthy donors—will be expended by the Obama and Romney camps, and American homes will be bombarded by TV ads, to maintain the fiction that the rival candidates embody vastly different policies, while both are driven by the needs of the so-called “middle class.”

Friday’s dismal employment report for August was a reminder that the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression continues unabated four years after the Wall Street crash. Republican candidates Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan predictably seized on the report to highlight the failure of the Obama administration to ameliorate the jobs crisis.

They were reluctant, however, to provide details on their supposed solution, which centers on massive new tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, the removal of virtually all remaining regulations on business, and the gutting of basic entitlement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. Appearing separately on Sunday interview programs, both Romney and Ryan stonewalled when asked to name specific tax loopholes they would end to compensate for the huge loss in government revenues that would result from their proposed tax cuts for the rich.

For his part, President Barack Obama gave short shrift to the Labor Department’s jobs report. Issued only hours after his convention acceptance speech, the news that US payrolls increased by a paltry 96,000 gave the lie to his claims of overseeing an economic recovery and putting the country on the road to

prosperity for ordinary Americans.

Speaking Friday in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Obama sought to sugarcoat the report, declaring, “Today we learned that after losing around 800,000 jobs a month when I took office, businesses added private-sector jobs for the 30th month in a row.”

He then conceded, “We know it’s not good enough. We need to create more jobs faster.”

So much for post-World War II record levels of unemployment, long-term joblessness, home foreclosures and a rising tide of hunger, poverty and social desperation. Obama did not, and could not, propose a single serious measure to create jobs, precisely because his administration is an instrument of the US financial oligarchy. This financial elite has profited handsomely from government-backed wage-cutting, mass layoffs and trillions in taxpayer bailouts.

Pressing his claim to speak for the common man as opposed to the big business Republicans, Obama said in the same speech: “You can’t give up on the idea that your vote makes a difference. Because if you do give up then the lobbyists and the special interests, they’ll fill the void. The folks who are writing the \$10 million checks, the folks running all these super PAC ads.”

Just hours before, his former White House chief of staff and current mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel, had announced that he would leave his post with the Obama reelection campaign to head up the main pro-Obama super PAC. Emanuel will lead the effort to raise \$150 million over the next two months from millionaire and billionaire donors. He will presumably begin this effort in earnest after he is done overseeing his city’s strike-breaking drive against Chicago teachers.

On Saturday, Obama began a two-day bus tour of Florida, where he dropped any mention of the jobs report and focused on his plan to supposedly

“strengthen Medicare for the long term.” Florida, a key battleground state, is the home of millions of retirees.

Obama and the Democrats are seeking to cash in on the Romney-Ryan camp’s proposals to privatize and ultimately dismantle the popular government health care program for seniors, while concealing the devastating implications of the \$716 billion cut in Medicare spending included in Obama’s health care overhaul.

With typical demagoguery, Obama declared Sunday in Melbourne, Florida: “I want you to know, Florida, I will never turn Medicare into a voucher program... No American should have to spend their golden years at the mercy of the insurance companies.”

The Democrats claim that seniors’ benefits will not be affected by the cuts, which will take the form of reductions in the reimbursement rates for hospitals and doctors. This is pure sophistry.

As Obama and company well know, the sharp cuts in government reimbursements will lead medical providers to either refuse to treat Medicare patients or reduce the level of services they provide. This pressure from the government to cut costs at the expense of working people and retirees will be compounded by a panel empowered by the health care law to stop Medicare funding for tests, procedures and drugs the panel deems to be unnecessary.

As for Obama’s supposed opposition to profiteering by the insurance industry, his cost-cutting health care bill was drafted in the closest consultation with industry lobbyists and lawyers. It is anchored on the creation of millions of new purchasers of private policies, providing the insurance giants with a vast new source of profit.

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