

anarchy, and of wars, declared and undeclared. To avoid future wars, therefore, the capitalist cause must be abolished. Society must be reorganized on socialist lines, replacing private (and state) ownership and competition with social ownership and cooperation. We must make the factories, mills, mines, railroads and all the other means of social production the collective property of society so that

we can produce things to satisfy human needs instead of for the profit of the few. Only then can the competitive, war-breeding struggle for international markets, spheres of influence and sources of raw materials be ended. Only then will the nations of the world have an economic foundation for lasting cooperation, harmony and peace.

“Socialism—genuine socialism—is literally the hope of humanity.”

A Socialist Labor Party Statement—

The Iraq Mess

Don't Blame Bush; Blame Capitalism

If the war on Iraq was not *all* about oil, it definitely was not about weapons of mass destruction. Now, however, American workers are in danger of being misled again by the Bush administration and by its critics on why the United States went to war on Iraq.

Supporters and opponents of the administration alike want workers to believe that somewhere, hidden behind the exchange of charges and countercharges about Iraq, some high-minded objective of U.S. foreign policy has been lost, twisted or betrayed. Nothing could be further from the truth. No high-minded principle or objective was ever involved.

Before the War

In October 2002, President Bush told the nation that Iraq “possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons.” He said it was “seeking nuclear weapons,” and that it had “given shelter and support to terrorism.” In his State of the Union address in January 2003, he said:

“Iraq has 500 tons of chemical weapons, 25,000 liters of anthrax, 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin, 30,000 prohibited bombs and warheads...”

He left no room for doubt about

the accuracy of these figures, and underlings of his administration claimed that the Iraqi regime had proven ties with the al Qaeda terrorist group believed to have conducted the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. “The CIA has collected solid facts about a decade of senior-level contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda,” Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz asserted at one point.

Since the War

Now a different set of facts and assertions come out to undermine the credibility of the Bush administration and to provide ammunition to its opponents, among them a rapidly dwindling field of potential Democratic candidates to replace Bush as chief magistrate of the capitalist government.

A former treasury secretary charged that President Bush made his intentions to invade Iraq known in Cabinet meetings long before the Sept. 11 attacks, and the leader of the Bush administration’s own postwar search for Iraq’s supposed cache of banned weapons publicly stated that the weapons did not exist. Bush himself seemed intent on undermining his own credibility last December in an ABC-TV interview

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with Diane Sawyer, in which the following exchange occurred:

“SAWYER: But stated as hard fact, that there were weapons of mass destruction as opposed to the possibility that he [Saddam Hussein] could move to acquire those weapons still—

“BUSH: So what’s the difference?”

Bush’s appearance on NBC-TV’s “Meet the Press” program in January, in which he had the following exchange with correspondent Tim Russert, was no improvement over his performance in December:

“RUSSERT: The night you took the country to war, March 17th, you said this: ‘Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.’

“BUSH: Right.

“RUSSERT: That apparently is not the case.

“BUSH: Correct.”

One would think that if Bush’s seemingly clumsy attempts to defend the invasion of Iraq went to basic principles his Democratic rivals would be unrelenting in their criticism, but that has not been the case. The presumed front-runner for the Democratic nod, U.S. Sen. John Kerry, has expressed no principled opposition to the war. Not surprisingly, Kerry’s Democratic rivals, most notably Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich, have criticized his stance on the war. On Feb. 8, for example, Kucinich said:

“Sen. Kerry voted for the war. Sen. Kerry supports the occupation. Sen. Kerry supports sending another 40,000 troops to Iraq. I’m wondering if the people of this country are ready to trade a Republican war for a Democratic war, because that’s exactly where we’re headed right now.”

Well, not quite that, Mr. Kucinich, not quite that.

The United States is a capitalist country. It is that regardless of which of the two major capitalist political parties controls the White House or Congress.

Behind the War

Capitalism is a predatory social system. The capitalist class and its political parties couldn’t care less if the government of Iraq (or any other country) is democratic or antidemocratic. Its government will “wheel and deal” with any foreign tyrant if its purposes are served. It had no qualms about supplying Saddam Hussein with weapons when it backed Iraq in its war against Iran in the 1980s. That may seem inconsistent or hypocritical to some, but it was not. Supporting or opposing foreign governments has nothing to do with political principles or ideologies and everything to do with the material and profit interests of America’s capitalist ruling class.

Capitalism needs foreign markets; it needs foreign sources of raw materials for its industries; it needs large supplies of cheap labor; and it needs strategic control over those markets, supplies of cheap labor and sources of raw

materials. Without these things it would choke and collapse. Getting and securing them is the fundamental “principle” at work. How they are gotten and secured is a secondary consideration. Those are questions of strategy and tactics, and it is the development and implementation of that strategy and the tactics needed to carry it out that is the source of the controversy over the Bush administration’s presumed miscues on Iraq and Saddam Hussein’s supposed cache of weapons of mass destruction. The ruling class and the government that serves its interests have no scruples either in pursuing or defending their interests. As Daniel De Leon said:

“The capitalist class will wreck a railroad, scuttle a steamer, or fire a building to achieve its ends. It will shoot down, it will murder and kill to advance the price of its commodities. It will declare war in order to dispose of its goods. Nothing, not even what it now considers the most sacred, is allowed to stand in its way. Whatever menaces it is ruthlessly swept aside. No compunction being shown in the matter of expansion [imperialism], none will be or is shown in the matter of defense. The only thing that threatens capitalist domination is the growth of the Socialist Labor Party throughout the world, and in order to defeat the party, capitalism will resort to any means.”

Beyond the War

The question American workers need to pursue is not if the war on

Iraq was “just” or “unjust.” It is not a question of whether the Bush administration was misled to overestimate the Iraqi “threat,” or even if it knew the truth and simply lied to distract the American working class and to disarm opposition to the war. The danger is that the American working class will be misled again into believing that their interest in peace and prosperity can be served by supporting the Republican Party and the Bush administration’s bid for reelection, or the Democratic Party and its bid to take over the executive branch of the capitalist government.

As the SLP pointed out just before the war began:

“Saddam Hussein and his government may be utterly crushed by another war, but at a horrendous price in human blood and suffering. None of the basic problems that beset the Middle East and its long-suffering peoples will be solved. It will not resolve the contradictions of capitalism or make the world a safer place. For when the war ends, the identical process will start again, leading to new clashes of interest and in time to the next greater and more destructive war.

“Can we do anything about that? The SLP believes we can.

“We believe that the American working class must at last come to recognize that the competitive capitalist system of private ownership of the land and plants of production, means of transportation, mines, etc., is in fact the basic cause of the present state of world