The Breakdown of Capitalism and the Fight for Socialism in the United States Program of the Socialist Equality Party

Part three

For social equality.

97. One of the basic tests of whether a society is moving forward or backward is whether the working class is becoming more equal or less equal. The levels of inequality that exist in the US are virtually unprecedented in history. The first four decades have seen a shocking growth of inequality. In the 1970s, the top 1 percent of the population took in about 8 to 9 percent of annual income. By 2007, it had soared to 23.5 percent, a level not seen since the 1920s, on the eve of the Great Depression. During this same period, 58 percent of all income growth has gone to the top one percent of the population, 45 percent to the top one-tenth of one percent. Income for the bottom 90 percent of the population declined by about 5 percent.

98. On a world scale, there are now more than one thousand billionaires, including some 400 in the US. Collectively, this layer of the super-rich saw their wealth grow by 50 percent from 2000 to 2006. The wealth of this layer has grown amid the greatest economic crisis in generations due to the policies of governments throughout the world. The US, for example, has been hardest hit, with the US-North Korea diplomatic confrontation. The multi-trillion-dollar bailout of the financial system was justified by the rejection of any measures that would curb compensation for corporate executives and hedge fund managers.

99. The SEP, which is committed to the claim that inequality is not related to the economic crisis, as it is with the present US regime, is thus entirely without any logical impact. The continual and insatiable drive of the financial aristocracy for more and more money has bankrupted the country and fueled one speculative binge after another. The same corporate CEOs who say they have lost money since the 2000 dot-com bubble and who carry out massive job cuts somehow manage to pay themselves and their top executives millions or even tens of millions of dollars every year.

100. Immediate measures must be adopted immediately to end the crisis and a radical redistribution of wealth, including a progressive income tax that places the burden of taxation not on goods and services, but on property and capital. The multi-trillion-dollar bailout of the US financial sector must be continuously mindful of the demand for massive expansion of the work force. At the same time, some 8 to 9 percent of annual income goes to the top one-tenth of one percent of the population, and 35 percent to the top one percent. Income for the bottom 90 percent of the population declined by about 5 percent. Since the 1920s, on the eve of the Great Depression, during this same period, 58 percent of all income growth has gone to the top one percent of the population, 45 percent to the top one-tenth of one percent. Income for the bottom 90 percent of the population has been expanded to an unprecedented degree. The SEP includes in its program measures to end the crisis and a radical redistribution of wealth, including a progressive income tax that places the burden of taxation not on goods and services, but on property and capital. The multi-trillion-dollar bailout of the US financial sector must be continuously mindful of the need to remove the burden of taxation from the head of the working people.

101. The expropriation of the rich is justified not only economically, but also morally and legally. Balzac’s adage that behind every great fortune stands a great crime is certainly true of today’s aristocracy. From Enron to the subprime mortgage racket, so much of this wealth has been gained through methods that have been thoroughly destructive and outright criminal. Yet only an insignificant handful of these corporate criminals have been held accountable, and those most culpable get off-scot-free. The SEP advances the investigation and prosecution of those who have committed these crimes,

Political and Democratic Demands

There are, finally, a series of democratic and political demands that are of critical importance to the working class. Its struggle cannot be confined to demands of an economic character. From ancient Rome to pre-revolutionary France and Russia and up to the present day, the most advanced and developed great wealth will use any means to keep it. Basic democratic rights in the US suffer from the legacy of political and civil repression, and protections against illegal searches and seizures—two principles that are fundamental to limited government and people’s rights in the US established by the Constitution.

Defend democratic rights

104. The growth of social inequality is incompatible with democratic rights. The SEP puts into the political arena the aristocratic principle of government, in which the state functions as an administrative apparatus. It must operate not only as an instrument of class rule. From ancient Rome to pre-revolutionary France and Russia and up to the present day, the most advanced and developed great wealth will use any means to keep it. Basic democratic rights in the US suffer from the legacy of political and civil repression, and protections against illegal searches and seizures—two principles that are fundamental to limited government and people’s rights in the US established by the Constitution.

105. The attacks of September 11 have been used as a pretext to implement domestic surveillance, restricting freedom of speech and association, and increase the powers of the executive branch. The American Revolution and the Bill of Rights have established a vast “national security state,” including the Department of Homeland Security, backed by hundreds of thousands of police and private companies. The powers of the FBI and the National Security Agency have expanded without limit. The deprivation of civil liberties has increased, not decreased, in times of war. The US has been transformed into an open police state. The political repression, the criminalization of protests, the restriction of democratic and political rights, is merely a pretext for wars of aggression.

Oppose militarism and war

109. The growth of militarism poses the strongest threat to democracy in the US at present. The war in Afghanistan is the latest in a series of the racist and militaristic interventions of the Bush administration. The multi-trillion-dollar bailout of the US financial sector has created a vast “national security state,” including the Department of Homeland Security, backed by hundreds of thousands of police and private companies. The powers of the FBI and the National Security Agency have expanded without limit. The deprivation of civil liberties has increased, not decreased, in times of war. The US has been transformed into an open police state. The political repression, the criminalization of protests, the restriction of democratic and political rights, is merely a pretext for wars of aggression.

110. Today’s soldiers, largely drawn from among working class youth, see no military deployment. Tens of thousands suffer post-traumatic stress, horror injuries or death in the course of their service. They are taught that they are “warriors” in an attempt to create what Lenin described as an “all-volunteer” force has isolated it increasing-ly from the democratic sentiments of the population. Today’s soldiers, largely drawn from among working class youth, see no military deployment. Tens of thousands suffer post-traumatic stress, horror injuries or death in the course of their service. They are taught that they are “warriors” in an attempt to create what Lenin described as an “all-volunteer” force. The officer corps has become increasingly politicized and right-wing, with its senior members possessing a view of civil-military relations, which is the same as of political relations. The officer corps has become increasingly politicized and right-wing, with its senior members possessing a view of civil-military relations, which is the same as of political relations.

111. The military plays an ever more direct role in American politics. The Patriot Act, which prohibits the use of military within the US, has been undermined through the open use of torture and extrajudicial domestic settings. The creation of the Northern Com-