

Chavez joins campaign rally for legislative elections



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (3rd L) poses with members of the ruling Socialist United Party of Venezuela (PSUV) during a campaign rally in Caracas, capital of Venezuela, Sept. 23, 2010. Venezuela will on Sept. 26 vote to choose 165 deputies to the National Assembly for the new five-year term, to start on Jan. 5, 2011. (Xinhua)

Capitalism

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conflicts exacerbated by the global capitalist crisis must inevitably lead to military tensions between the US and its erstwhile capitalist allies in Europe and Japan. With the major powers now armed with nuclear weapons, a new world war will threaten the future of civilization.

118. The SEP calls for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US, British and other foreign troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Those responsible for planning and waging aggressive war must be held accountable. The vast US military and intelligence apparatus must be dismantled, with the shutting down of the hundreds of US overseas military bases and the disbanding of the standing army. This will free up immense resources to pay reparations to countries ravaged by US militarism, as well as meet critical social needs at home.

119. The only progressive alternative to militarism is socialist internationalism—the struggle to unite the working class internationally in the fight for a socialist future in which the world's resources can be utilized and developed cooperatively to eliminate the scourges of poverty, disease and ignorance and to raise the living standards and cultural level of all mankind.

Defend the rights of immigrant workers

120. The working class as a whole must take up the defense of the rights of immigrant workers against the super-exploitation of the capitalist employers and the repression of the police and immigration authorities.

121. The corporate-controlled politicians and media scapegoat immigrants and whip up racist and chauvinist sentiments. They promote the contemptible lie that this oppressed section of the working class is to blame for rising unemployment, falling wages and attacks on social conditions—the product of the corporate-driven attack on the entire working class. Their aim is to divert rising popular anger and frustration away from the capitalist system and divide and weaken the working class as a whole.

122. Sections of the political establishment are proposing blatantly racist and anti-democratic measures that would facilitate the mass roundup of immigrants. There are also growing calls to modify the 14th Amendment of the Constitution to eliminate the guarantee of citizenship for all those born in the US. The attack on this basic democratic right—established after the Civil War not only to guarantee citizenship for freed slaves, but to guarantee equal protection before the law and due process for all citizens—is a threat to the entire working class.

123. The Obama administration, with the help of its liberal and supposedly “left” supporters, has exploited popular anger over these policies to push for its reactionary measures, under the banner of “comprehensive immigration reform.” Obama is now leading the drive to increase the militarization of the border (including the use of unmanned Predator drones), expand workplace raids, and deport immigrant workers. Stepped-up policing along the border has led to a sharp increase in the number of workers who have died in the desperate attempt to cross into the US in search of employment. Among the proposals advanced by the administration is the introduction of a biometric ID card, a first step toward a national ID card that would facilitate government monitoring of the entire population.

124. The SEP fights for the repeal of all anti-immigrant laws and the disbanding of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the US Border Patrol. It calls for all undocumented workers to be guaranteed full legal rights, including the right to work and the right to travel to their home countries without the threat of being barred from returning and torn from their families. Against the attempt to militarize borders and persecute immigrants, not only in the US but all over the globe, the working class must uphold the principle of open borders—the right of workers to live and work in whatever country they choose with full citizenship rights.

The Political Independence of the Working Class

125. The fight for this program—for the social needs of the

working class, for the defense of democratic rights, for an end to war—raises at every point the necessity for the independent political organization of the working class. It is impossible for the working class to advance its interests within the framework of the Democratic Party and the capitalist two-party system in the US.

126. The experience of the Obama administration has once again demonstrated the right-wing, pro-corporate nature of the Democratic Party. Every aspect of the administration's policy—the expansion of war, the bailout of the banks, the wholesale attack on the working class and the persistent calls for cutting social programs—has been dictated by the corporate and financial elite that controls the political system in the US. To the extent that differences exist between the two parties, they are of a tactical character—over how best to defend profits and prevent the development of an independent opposition in the working class.

127. The fight for the political independence of the working class means a struggle against all those middle-class organizations, including nominally “socialist” groups, which claim that the Democratic Party can be pushed to the left through mass pressure. This position is aimed at preventing the working class from establishing its own independent political party.

128. In fact, the Democratic Party long ago abandoned even a nominal commitment to social reform. The rightward movement of the Democratic Party has been accompanied by attempts on the part of its middle-class supporters to promote all manner of lifestyle issues and identity politics as a means of obscuring the question of class and social equality.

For new organizations of working class struggle

129. The interests of the working class can be secured only through mass struggle. All history demonstrates that nothing is handed down from above. Democratic rights, social reforms, the eight-hour day, the prohibition against child labor—even these gains won under capitalism were the byproduct of revolutionary upheavals.

130. New popular organizations of the working class must be built

in opposition to the existing trade unions. The AFL-CIO and the Change to Win Coalition are not working class organizations, but auxiliary arms of corporate management. They work actively to increase the exploitation of the working class and to isolate and demoralize any opposition from among the workers themselves. They encourage nationalist sentiments, dividing different sections of the working class against each other. Politically, the unions work to channel the working class behind the Democratic Party and thereby subordinate it to the politics of the capitalist class.

131. Over the past four decades there has been a collapse in the number of strikes, the elementary form of class militancy—from 35 million lost man-days due to strikes in 1968, to 16 million in 1972, to less than two million today. This is due not to a decline in social tensions—social inequality has soared during this same period—but to the betrayals of the trade union bureaucracy. At the same time, the wealth of the union bureaucracy has become increasingly disconnected from the conditions of the membership, or even the number of unionized workers. From 2001 to 2008, the membership of the United Auto Workers fell from 701,000 to 431,000—a decline of about 40 percent—but the UAW's billion-dollar assets increased. This was a period that saw repeated concessions contracts imposed on auto workers, reducing wages and benefits and introducing multiple-tier wage systems.

132. To advance its interests, the working class must build genuine mass organizations—rank-and-file workplace, factory and neighborhood democratic action committees—animated by the spirit of revolutionary intransigence and opposition to the two parties of big business. These organizations must begin with the needs of the working class and must be democratically controlled by the working class. They must take ever greater responsibility for unifying the working class—employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled, native-born and immigrant, across different industries and workplaces—and organizing their common struggles against the capitalist class.

For a workers government

133. These independent organizations of workers' power must be instruments for the revolutionary mobilization of the working class to take political power into its own hands, breaking the dictatorship of Wall Street and the corporate elite over political, economic and social life. This can be realized only through the establishment of a workers' government—that is, a government of the working class, by the working class and for the working class, which will implement the socialist policies that are required to meet the needs of working people.

134. Socialism cannot be achieved simply through the election of socialist candidates to the existing state institutions. The state and its institutions are democratic only in the most formal sense. In reality, they are instruments of corporate domination created by capitalism, in which the Democratic and Republican parties, the twin parties of the ruling class, exercise a monopoly.

135. Those who populate Congress, the White House and the

major courts are representatives of one or another corporate interest and the financial aristocracy as a whole. Through various means—including egregious ballot access restrictions, the domineering influence of money in the electoral process, and the corporate control of the media—the ruling class seeks to exclude any genuine expression of the interests of the working class.

136. A workers' state must be based on new forms and structures of participatory democracy—arising in the course of revolutionary mass struggles and representative of the working class majority of the population. This will ensure that such a government is truly popular and democratic, based on bodies elected directly from the factories, offices and other workplaces as well as the working class neighborhoods.

137. The policy of such a government, as it introduces those measures essential for the socialist transformation of economic life, will be to encourage and actively promote a vast expansion of democratic working class participation in, and control over, decision-making processes.

The International Unity of the Working Class

138. The Socialist Equality Party is the only party whose program is based on the common interests of the international working class. It is aimed at forging a united movement of workers of every country.

139. The problems workers confront in the United States are, in essence, the same as those confronting workers in every other part of the world. War, attacks on democratic rights, exploitation, unemployment, poverty and environmental destruction are not merely American problems. They are world problems that require global solutions.

140. Capitalism is a global economic system. Vast transnational corporations scour the world for the cheapest labor and for raw materials, producing for a world market. The same banks and financial markets dictate policy in every country. Because production is global, the problems of mass society can be resolved only on the basis of an international socialist program.

141. The SEP rejects the position that globalization is itself the problem, and that the task is to reestablish a national economic framework and strengthen the nation-state. The immense growth of technology and communications associated with globalization provides the basis for a dramatic improvement in the living standard of every human being. The problem is not globalization as such, but the subordination of the global economy to private profit and the interests of the wealthy.

142. When big business and its political representatives use low wages outside the US to justify the continual assault on wages and benefits in the US, this only underscores the need for American workers to unite politically with workers internationally in a worldwide struggle for socialism against the economic tyranny of the transnational corporations.

143. The SEP rejects all forms of nationalism, ethnic and religious chauvinism, and racism. This includes the deliberate promotion of anti-Arab and anti-Islamic sentiment to justify criminal US-led wars in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Build the Socialist Equality Party! Build the Fourth International!

144. The Socialist Equality Party bases itself on the great traditions of the international socialist move-

ment. Socialism stands for equality, human solidarity and cooperation, the material and spiritual liberation of mankind from oppression and want. The theoretical labors of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels established the historical necessity for socialism and laid the foundations for the creation of the modern revolutionary workers movement. With the 1917 October Revolution, socialism became the program of a mass popular movement that overthrew capitalism and established the first workers state—the Soviet Union. The Russian Revolution was part of a broader international struggle of the working class for social equality. Every major advance of American workers was associated with socialism and spearheaded by socialist-minded militants—from the eight-hour day, to child labor laws, to universal public education, to the formation of mass industrial unions, to the end of Jim Crow segregation in the South.

145. Like many great ideals, socialism has been abused and betrayed. In the Soviet Union, it was betrayed by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy led by Joseph Stalin. Stalinism was not the continuation of the egalitarian and internationalist legacy of the Russian Revolution. It was a conservative, bureaucratic reaction against the revolution, based on the nationalist program of “socialism in a single country.” The Stalinist bureaucracy crushed workers' democracy, imposed dictatorial rule, executed the genuine Marxists and subverted revolutionary struggles of the working class around the world—all in the name of “socialism.” This betrayal of the Russian Revolution and socialism culminated in the direct collaboration of the Kremlin bureaucracy with international imperialism in the breakup of the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism at the beginning of the 1990s.

146. The SEP bases itself on the legacy of the best, most courageous and far-sighted representatives of the working class, who fought for socialism in opposition to bureaucracy. The greatest embodiment of this tradition was Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution. Trotsky led the struggle against the betrayals of Stalinism, dating back to the founding of the Left Opposition in 1923, and laid the basis for the rebirth of the international workers movement through the founding in 1938 of the Fourth International—the World Party of Socialist Revolution. The Fourth International, led by the International Committee, is today the only genuinely revolutionary party of the working class on the planet.

147. America has also produced great fighters for socialism—men and women who battled the labor bureaucrats and devoted their lives to the liberation of the working class. Among them are such figures as Big Bill Haywood, Eugene Debs and James Cannon. American workers must re-appropriate this rich socialist heritage in order to organize the struggle today to transform society in the interests of the people and put an end to poverty, exploitation and oppression in the United States and throughout the world.

148. We call on all those who agree with this program, support the fight for social equality, and oppose war and the assault on democratic rights to join the Socialist Equality Party and take up the fight for socialism **WSWS**