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The Economy for Whom?

Behind each and every one of the lying slogans of the two parties lurks the voracious appetite of the big capitalists.

Slogans are issued endlessly against "big government" by the very same politicians who are demanding to be the arbiters of the very life and limb of the workers. The politicians who are demanding that the workers "sacrifice" and "cut and slim" are the ones continually taking huge sums out of the public treasury in order to fatten the profits of the capitalist moneybags and putting all of the special interests of big business ahead of the interests of society as a whole.

For their part, the social-democratic and revisionist slogans of "empowerment" call for ameliorating the crisis of capitalism not by joining in existing struggles to protect barriers restricting the degree of exploitation of the workers, but instead by demanding increased intervention by the state. In the first place, this is a means for using "socialist" phraseology to apply a mask over bourgeois democracy in order to hide the fact that the existing state is nothing but an instrument for suppressing the workers and for brutal economic domination of the peoples by state monopoly capitalism. Secondly, the social-democrats and revisionists are using these slogans to advocate "trickle-down economics for the people." Instead of guaranteeing that public education, retirement benefits and vital social services are produced on the basis of the needs of the people as rights and entitlements, "trickle down economics for the people" involves taking billions of dollars accumulated by the government through taxes and redistributing this monetary wealth of the country in favor of the monopoly capitalist class. Once this part of the social fund has been converted into increased capitals for the bourgeoisie from year to year, they are free to take this freshly acquired plunder

out of the economy, to disinvest and drain our country of vital economic resources.

In their administrative and political activity the parties of the capitalist class pretend to battle with one another and to carry out an allegedly ferocious partisan struggle. But the bourgeois congress is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the "voting cattle." And several hundred years after the first capitalist revolutions which enshrined on their banners such things as freedom of conscience and freedom of association, these elementary rights are routinely violated by the capitalist state in the U.S. No matter how they try to pass American government off as accountable to the people, it is ruled by the political parties of the bourgeoisie and reflects, in fact, not even a shred of true democracy or freedom, whether individual or social, in its activity.

At this time when U.S. imperialism is desperately trying to create a chauvinist hysteria in order to get the workers to sacrifice more than ever at the altar of the "national interests" of the bourgeoisie, the talk in the capitalist media is, above all else, about making justifications as to why the working people are made to bear the burden of the economic crisis.

The most favored excuse of the day is COVID-19. Not only the county, municipal, and state budget deficits, but even the federal deficit and the national debt are being blamed on a single issue. As workers all over the country are pointing out, no amount of hyperbole and repetition of this Big Lie can change the facts. The government deficits are a result of the fact that for years and decades the government has forked billions of dollars over to the monopoly corporations while it is the working people who foot the bill.

Long before the latest fashionable single issue emerged the capitalists began waging a generalized offensive directed against the entire working class. This offensive takes a multitude of forms, including generalized, class-

wide cuts in wages. It includes contracting out, outsourcing and de-unionization. It includes the widespread use of contingent workers (part-time and/or temporary). It includes attacks on labor laws that recognize certain minimum standards and protections for the workers, such as health and safety laws, laws guaranteeing the right to unionize, laws limiting overtime, etc. It includes stripping away the social safety net, such as unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, welfare, Medicaid and so forth, which helps provide a minimum standard of subsistence.

As part of this anti-social offensive against the standards and economic gains attained by the workers over decades many companies have eliminated guaranteed pension benefits and shifted a heavier burden of health insurance co-premiums, deductibles and co-payments onto the workers. Many companies have lowered occupational safety standards and created new work rules which increase overwork and injury risk. Two-tier and three-tier wage systems have been imposed not only to immediately slash the wages of younger workers but to undermine the standard of wages and benefits achieved by the older generation of workers.

The on-going offensive aims not only at the elimination of any and

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all barriers to capitalist exploitation but also at undermining the collective strength of the workers. By eliminating social protections and destroying unions the capitalists want to reduce each worker to an individual wage-slave, a wage-slave with no rights that society is bound to recognize, an individual with nothing but his/her labor-power to sell, an individual who can only secure a livelihood at the whim of the capitalist owners. The capitalists want not only to return to the days of the 19th century in which the rise of monopoly capital was accompanied by a vast increase in the scope of power wielded by the state, but also to develop new forms of exploitation in line with contemporary production methods, to extract a full day's work from part-time workers, to force the majority of families to send out two or more wage-earners, to impose the most intense speed-up and overwork.

The working class and broad masses of American people must lay the blame squarely on the shoulders of the capitalist politicians for the consequences the two parties are visiting upon the country. The basis of the program of both parties is to put an ever-increasing portion of the social capital of the whole country at the disposal of big business. This could never be anything but a recipe for disaster.

Anyone who stops to think for even a second can readily recognize that every year American workers produce an abundance and ever-increasing stock of material blessings. However capitalism always tries to absorb as profit as much of the labor of the workers as possible and to intensify that labor to the maximum in order to grab even more profit. In consequence, the workers have no say-so and millions of workers — whose labor has created untold riches for the capitalists — are not even paid enough to keep themselves and their families alive.

In spite of all this the Democrats have again taken to "warning" the people of the need to raid the public coffers as part of a "fight against the deficit". And the Republicans bluntly declare that the people will simply

have to sacrifice for now while awaiting a promised "prosperity" of tomorrow. On the other hand, the bipartisan fiscal policy of the Republicans and Democrats always manages to have plenty of money to fork over to the finance capitalists for constantly rising interest payments, for insuring the profits and freeing up the capital of big business after it makes bad investments so it can seek out more lucrative deals, for underwriting super-profits for the military arms contractors, for handing out billions in technology and other private grants to aid a handful of financial groups, for guaranteeing the natural resource extraction projects of U.S. monopolies operating in foreign lands, etc., etc., etc.

The vast expenditures on military weapons and war wastes and destroys the productive capacities of society while the ever-growing budget deficits result in inflation, the falling value of the dollar, and a host of new crises and contradictions. Again the burden falls on the working masses who find the wealth in the public treasury redistributed in favor of the capitalist class and their real wages reduced.

It is easy to see why, from the very emergence of capitalism, workers have recognized that they have no way forward except by coming out together and asserting their collective rights and interests. Early on the workers discovered that they have the common interests to organize themselves in unions and to come out together in the immediate struggle for higher wages and better working conditions. So too, such historic working class victories as the 8-hour day and trade union rights, social security, unemployment compensation, Medicare and Medicaid, public housing, heating assistance for the poor, food stamps, etc., all made important inroads against the power of private property in the means of production and declared that the workers were more than just meat in the market, more than animals to be governed and exploited.

The workers are the laboring class who through their cooperative efforts produce all the material bless-

ings. The collective interests and rights of the workers arise as an objective fact of modern society. The aspiration for change arises from objective necessity, from the objective contradictions of our society, and is, in fact, the most fundamental and constant thing produced amongst the workers by the capitalist system. Nothing has happened, nor can anything happen, which will eliminate the working class as the motive force of progress and human history. That is why the working people are demanding a solution to the problems of wage cuts and unemployment. That is why the workers are demanding decent jobs at living wages. That is why the people are demanding an end to homelessness and hunger. That is why the people are demanding education and a future for the children and youth, as well as medical care and a secure pension for retired workers, etc.

But under the two party system the workers are political nobodies whose only role is to be exploited by the capitalist monopolies. Under the present political system the two big parties (both of which are financed and organized by big business) insure that the government is accountable only to the monopoly capitalist class. The people are left out of the equation altogether. We must emancipate ourselves. We have to come out together and develop our own independent political movement which brings the agenda of the people to center-stage. The workers constitute the majority of society and we must have the decisive say in determining our own social environment.

The problem is not a lack of resources or wealth in our country (there is far more than enough to provide for all the basic needs of the masses) but that under the capitalist system, the very wealth produced by the working class itself goes first, last and always to enrich the capitalists. The immediate political question that confronts us is: the economy for whom? for the capitalists or the workers? To whom must the wealth produced by the whole society go — to the capitalists in the form of higher and higher profits or to the workers?