



SOCIALIST ACTIVIST

February 2011 * NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF NEW JERSEY

State of the Union: A Socialist Response

By SPUSA Co-Chair Billy Wharton

Tonight's State of the Union speech revealed just how far out of touch President Barack Obama is from the reality of working people in America. What a distance from the White House to the unemployment line. From the Rose Garden to the food pantry.

Tonight's State of the Union sent the message one final time that the Obama presidency was and is designed to protect the privileges accrued by the richest 5% in society. Obama lived up to the characterization of him as a "hedge-fund Democrat," a politician assigned the task of deflecting the real demands of the American people for a society and economy based on solidarity, peace and justice.

A Call for More Corporate Globalization

The President's focus on "out competing" other countries, such as China and India, is a thinly veiled attempt to appeal to national patriotism made in order to disguise his desire to continue policies of corporate globalization. China and India are not the problem.

The problem is that people in the US are forced to live inside of an economy where the richest 5% of the population control 85% of the wealth. As a result, Obama's claim to be creating a "more competitive America" doesn't mean creating good living wage jobs for working people. Instead, it means continuing the same policies that are tailored to protect the wealth accumulated by the rich.

Democratic socialists have an alternative. Instead of playing to the business community, we need to get serious about creating a comprehensive plan for a full employment economy. This can be done through emergency measures, such as the creation of a National Jobs Program and through more long-term efforts, such as the funding of a democratically operated system of worker owned and managed cooperatives.

A commitment to full employment would put people to work immediately, thereby, relieving the skyrocketing unemployment and underemployment. The Cooperative Program would shift the national economy away from the financial and service sectors and toward manufacturing and production.

This democratically run economy would also provide a challenge to undemocratic capitalist organizations, such as the banks and multinational corporations. Once Americans experience democracy on their workplaces, a democratic socialist system of jobs creation will become a preferred choice for millions.

Americans do not need Bill Clinton "I feel your pain" platitudes. The Obama speech was full of them. We need jobs - good jobs that will allow us to feed our families and live lives free of the uncertainties of crisis economics. If the private sector won't provide this, the public sector must be developed. Think of how much better we would be today if the public money that was poured in the banking system would have gone to create a full employment economy. Democratic socialism offers this alternative.

continued on page 2

Walk and Vigil to Against Torture

Montclair Activists Walk in Protest

On January 21st, a dozen anti-torture activists held a walk and vigil in Montclair to call for the end of torture and the closing of Guantanamo. This was the third year of Montclair actions and marked the 10th anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo as a US torture facility.



The event was organized by members of the Northern NJ Socialist Party, Montclair Quakers and the Montclair Peace Action peace vigil.

Photos can be found on-line at:
njsocialistparty.org/endtorturejan212011.html

Fighting Eminent Domain in Asbury Park

By Patrick Noble

On January 22nd, activists from across the state braved the 21^F weather and congregated in Asbury Park to protest the use of eminent domain in the area. The event was organized by the Reform Party of New Jersey.

The event drew anti-eminent domain activists from both sides of the political spectrum. The Reform Party was represented by Jacob Zychick and Dennis Mikolay, chairman and vice chairman of the state party, respectively. Several members of the Democratic Youth National Organization, a pro-Obama progressive group, were in attendance as well. Dorothy Argiros, a prominent activist that has been a strong voice in the fight against eminent domain in the Monmouth County area, also attended. Lastly, Tea Party activist Lt. Colonel George Gallenthin was in attendance. Mr. Gallenthin personally fought eminent domain in the New Jersey Supreme Court case Gallenthin Realty Development, Inc. v. Borough of Paulsboro in 2007, winning the case in a unanimous decision. Paulsboro wanted to take part of Mr. Gallenthin's property through the use of eminent domain, deeming that it was "in need of redevelopment." Just looking at the broad array of attendees to this event speaks volumes to how universally wrong eminent domain is.

Eminent domain has largely been swept under the carpet by both the state and the media, hence why you don't hear much about it anymore. Going to Asbury Park, it becomes painfully clear that the practice is alive and well. What is happening is that the government is using eminent domain to take property away from private owners, ruling that they are "in need of redevelopment." Many times, this is done after a land owner refuses an offer by a private development company. The land is then seized by the state for a monetary amount that is far below the true value of the property. The private developers are given state money, that is tax payer money, to redevelop the land that has been illegally seized. Visiting Asbury Park, it is 100% clear that no significant redevelopment has taken place on seized properties.

continued on page 2

State of the Union continued...

Obama's Wars

On foreign policy, Obama claimed "that America's moral example must always shine for all who yearn for freedom, justice, and dignity." However, he failed to make any mention in his speech of his continued operation of the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. Guantanamo stands as a gross violation of international human rights. Closing this illegal detention center was a key claim made by candidate Obama during the 2008 election run. Today, even after signing an executive order in January 2009 to close Guantanamo within a year, it remains open and sends the message to the world that America is willing to violate human rights on a global scale.

In addition, not only has Obama continued Bush's wars, he has lately taken to adopting Bush's rhetoric. President Obama stated that, "We have also taken the fight to al Qaeda and their allies abroad." In fact, what the Obama administration has done is re-enforce military occupations while extending the war into Pakistan through the use of drone bombings.

Just two days prior to the State of the Union Speech, the American military unleashed a drone attack in Pakistan that killed more than a dozen people and inspired a 10,000 person anti-drone march in that region. This was one of more than 400 attacks that have produced more than 1,500 casualties since 2008. Many of these people were innocent villagers summarily executed by a machine directed from the center of the empire.

It is time now for Americans themselves to put an end to American militarism. We can do this immediately by building a powerful protest movement to end the wars and occupation in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. And we can do more. We can develop a movement that puts the demand to cut the military budget by 50% at the forefront. To take the money used on war and the military and put it to work to create a better society for all. This is the promise of socialism – a world based on peaceful co-existence in which global solidarity becomes the basis of human relations.

An Austerity President

Near the end of his speech Obama proposed cuts to the Federal budget including pay freezes and cuts to public programs. The President provided qualified support to the Deficit Commission who recommended sharp cuts to the budget "the only way to tackle our deficit is to cut excessive spending wherever we find it - in domestic spending, defense spending, health care spending, and spending through tax breaks and loopholes." He pledged to carry out spending cuts on "...anything we cannot afford."

However, these cuts are exactly the wrong direction for the country to be headed in. Austerity at any level of government should be resisted. Cutting Federal spending will have a spiraling effect on state and local governments who are already engaged in budget cutting. Federal support is the only thing preventing even deeper cuts on the local level. The Federal government should be strengthening these local budgets not forcing more cuts.

And there is one source that can be tapped into to fund not only local budgeting, but the creation of an array of necessary social survival programs. Simply put, the rich must pay. Over the past 30 years, America has experienced a class revolution in which the richest 5% of the country has monopolized an astounding amount of resources.

As socialists, we believe that Federal policy should be moving toward a truly progressive Federal income tax structure that targets the wealth accumulated by the super rich. This would allow the US to create a truly excellent education system – one that is free of charge from pre-K to graduate school. These funds could be used to make a green transition for industry by creating a publicly administered energy policy. And, the deep taxation of the rich could revitalize the country's ailing transportation system by

building a super-fast national train line, by creating a green jobs program for the infrastructure and by aggressively substituting clean energy forms for our current dependence on fossil fuels.

Budget cuts will not get us there. Appeasing the top 5% won't do it. And trying to manage polluting industries through cap and trade will do little to stem the tide of global warming. Only a bold economic plan based on the principles of democratic socialism can create a truly democratic society that puts people back in control of their own lives.

What it Will Take

If Obama's speech does anything, it marks the path that we need to travel as people interested in creating a free and democratic society. We cannot lobby our way to such a society. Voting for the lesser evil won't work. And continuing to get by on less while bankers, corporate executives and other members of the elite enrich themselves is no longer tolerable.

To create a full employment economy, to end the war and shift toward a peace policy and to create a progressive income tax system, we need a democratic revolution. We need people all over this country to awaken from their long political slumber and realize that working people have to power to make history. Our demands for jobs, peace and freedom can begin among small circles of people and grow into a mass movement. We can move from tiny to victorious and now, more than ever, is the time for action.

Eminent domain continued....

If the money has already been passed into private hands, then where are the results? The truth is that, not only is the state allowing for the illegal seizing of land, but the money spent on redevelopment is disappearing into thin air. According to Mr. Gallenthin, the people involved in this corruption travels all the way up the ladder to New Jersey Senate President Steven Sweeney.

We cannot stand by silently as the crime of eminent domain continues unchecked. As politicians and private developers line their pockets with the money produced from stolen properties, we must stand in unified opposition to eminent domain. The people of New Jersey have the right to rent an apartment, own a house, or own land without a lingering fear that the government will take it away on a whim.

The Reform Party of New Jersey is planning to organize another eminent domain event once the weather is warmer. An increased Socialist Party presence at the next event will show our increased solidarity with the victims of this heinous crime. Both as Socialists and as fellow New Jersey residents, we must come out and stand in unified opposition to eminent domain.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 13th: Northern New Jersey Local Meeting-

1:30 pm @ Café Eclectic 444 Bloomfield Ave Montclair, NJ all supporters are welcome- only members can vote.

Info: Call Greg at 201-803-7574 or info@njsocialistparty.org

ANNOUNCEMENT: SPUSA members in the greater Monmouth County area are organizing! If you are in the area drop Pat an e-mail at pnoble428@yahoo.com

SOCIALIST ACTIVIST

PO Box 3056
Memorial Station
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043