

STATE OF WHOSE UNION?

SEATTLE, WA--In general, workers are cynical about the American dream Obama was selling in his State of the Union address. Too many are living in a nightmare. But the hard fact is that cynicism will get you only so far. We need an alternative vision that none of the presidential candidates can offer.

Obama told “a story of success that every American can share--the basic American promise that if you worked hard, you could do well enough to raise a family, own a home, send your kids to college and put a little away for retirement.”

“The defining issue of our time is to keep that promise alive,” he said. “We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well while a growing number of Americans can barely get by, or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.”

But it is precisely this set of capitalist rules that makes this promise of more equal distribution of

wealth such a lie.

Have you ever played Monopoly? You divvy up the money equally to begin the game. You buy and sell and always someone gets it all while the rest lose. Those are the rules of capitalism.

That is why Obama’s call for higher taxes on the rich and restoring “middle-class” manufacturing jobs is just putting lipstick on a pig. In fact, the Buffet rule--requiring the rich to pay at least the same percentage in taxes as workers--provides political cover for a system based on driving down the workers’ standard of living.

Obama proposes tax breaks for corporations that open factories in high unemployment areas. Boeing, for one, just made a fortune on those tax breaks. The company opened a new factory in low-wage, non-union South Carolina. In the process, they eliminated thousands of better-paying jobs in Washington State. More manufacturing and more income inequality!

Rather than the illusion of more equal distribution of wealth, we need to eliminate personal wealth. Rather than spending all our energy struggling for non-existent “family wage” jobs, we have to fight to eliminate exploitive jobs, the only kind possible under capitalism. Everyone should work according to their commitment and ability, and get what they need.

Of course, the dog-eat-dog rules of capitalism won’t allow this. That is why Job One is to mobilize the masses for communism.

Marching To The Bosses’ Tune

It’s no accident that Obama couched his fairy tale in nationalist and militarist terms. “When you put on that [US Armed forces] uniform, it doesn’t matter if you’re black or white; Asian, Latino, Native American; conservative, liberal; rich, poor; gay, straight. When you’re in the thick of the fight, you rise or fall as one unit, serving one nation, leaving no one behind.... As long as we are joined in common purpose, ... our future is hopeful and the state of our Union will always be strong.”

Nationalism is the bosses go-to card, especially in these times of crisis. First, it prepares us to march behind US bosses to war. The capitalist economic crisis has shaken U.S. imperialism. Obama’s pitiful attempt to deny the decline of the empire stood out. Never before has a U.S. president been forced to include such a denial in a

State of the Union speech. Obama doth protest too much!

Ultimately, the bosses know their decline can only be reversed by war against their competitors. Although this speech was not an overt war speech, the constant references to challengers China and Iran painted a clear picture. Small wars, regional wars and eventually world war are on the bosses’ agenda.

The Union the bosses want is a union of U.S. workers and U.S. bosses hidden behind the slogan “American jobs for American workers.” Next step: sacrifice your sons and daughters on the altar of U.S. corporate profits.

Second, nationalism reduces the fight against racism, sexism and exploitation to a struggle for an illusory fairer capitalism. This fairy tale of a “fair capitalism” is central to the bosses’ political preparation for war.

But even more importantly, nationalism short-circuits the only way to eliminate racism, sexism and exploitation: communist revolution.

Beyond Cynicism

At a recent ICWP dinner about a dozen workers and students discussed Obama’s speech. The same cynicism that is present in the population as a whole was reflected in the discussion.

But this group went beyond cynicism. The discussion focused on the communist alternative, motivating these comrades and friends to spread the reach of our Party.

They took more *Red Flags* because they had run out of the papers. The young comrades made a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that their friends and classmates and co-workers had about communism. They plan to answer these questions in the pages of *Red Flag*.

They took dozens more of our manifesto *Mobilize the Masses for Communism* to further the struggle with dozens of their friends. We discussed the tens of thousands of these pamphlets we are distributing in the heat of class struggle. This openness to a communist alternative is building, as is the enthusiasm of our comrades and friends to the possibility of building such a movement. Our future--not the future of the bosses’ system--is hopeful if we can expand on developments like these.

