

Obama Congratulates Labour “Friends” at AFL-CIO National Convention

September 15, 2009 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA – In difficult economic times such as the current economic crisis companies aim to sustain their capital with long-term goals to increase profits again and implement strategies for better returns, the workers that enable the production of the surplus value become expendable. The Trade Unions play a key role in the steps forward for companies; they play a key role in capitalism. Millions of workers around the world have lost their means of living or surviving making for a desperate situation. One must wonder how it is possible that so many workers either unemployed or currently barely surviving on meager wages are not desperate enough to rise up and fight back. The quietness of workers in North America in recent years would not occur if not for the hard work of Trade Unions. Currently the unemployment rate in the United States is 9.7% or 14.9 million unemployed Americans. Over the past few years the rates of jobless persons has risen quickly and therefore the government had to act quickly in order to keep order. While the rising unemployment is occurring worldwide, social instability has become a harsh reality for states, good examples being South Africa, Egypt, Iran, and China among many others. Governments are working quickly to extinguish the brewing discontent among the working class. The USA had to implement a strategy to undermine any instability in their population as well. While millions are losing their means to a living, government and business require the support of the unions to put into practice their plans to ‘jumpstart the economy’, that is, create jobs, fund programs and contracts in order to not end up with a dangerous situation, with a population that has nothing to lose. In Barack Obama’s speech at the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations - a federation of 56 national and international labour unions representing 11.5 million members) National Convention he stated:

“That’s why we acted boldly and swiftly to pass an unprecedented economic Recovery Act. It’s a plan that didn’t include any of the usual Washington earmarks or pork-barrel spending.”

Obama indicated that the Recovery Act expands unemployment insurance, provides tax cuts, and creates jobs among others. These reforms were put into place very quickly; all so that the devastation of the recession would not be so weighted upon workers and is cushioned by the reforms of the Obama administration. If not for the assistance of the Trade Unions to apply the reforms and overtly support his government, the reaction of the working class against capital could have been more fervent. While Obama admonished the ‘irresponsibility’ of the bourgeoisie he promoted lifestyle of the “middle class” to the labour delegates at the convention. It is fundamental to insist that within capitalism there are two basic poles; one is capital which owns the means of production and the other, labour which sells its power for wages. Regardless if the working class earns \$70,000 per year in the United States or \$5,000 in other nations, what connects this class is that workers sell their labour powers so that capital extracts profits. Whatever the wages of the workers, they produce the wealth of the owners of capital. Trade Unions are key agents for the state and for capital as they make possible the acceptance by the workers of wage concessions and band-aid reforms. Obama said it exactly when he stated that “...labour is part of the solution.”

Obama is welcoming the Trade Union members as accomplices in his administration. He goes on to explain that his government is working to create jobs, reform the health care system, improve the education system among other changes, or in other words, his variety of capitalism is more friendly to the Trade Unions. The Unions will be welcome at the negotiating tables; the American workers will be encouraged to produce better than foreign workers. American Trade Unions recognize that Free Trade

agreements result in lost jobs, lost members and so welcome any protectionist measures or policies aiming to save local jobs and promote local profiteering over foreign. From this it can be surmised then that Trade Unions divide workers due to capitalist competition and so fighting for jobs basically entails the selling of labour power as cheaply as possible. Instead of being substituted by organizations for struggling against wage-labour the unions control the disputes of workers against capital into a negotiated compromise where a representative of each is satisfied. And during this economic crisis, having a low-paying job is better than no job.

This is especially pertinent when many workers are angry and desperate; their voices can be subdued through offerings of crumbs and it is the Trade Union who can present the offers of bread to the masses and divide the workers and break up a working class movement. The Trade Unions have been exemplary in their ability to suppress the voice of workers, the anti-capitalist tendencies and activities of the rank and file. There is a symbiotic relationship between the union movement and capital; they need each other to control workers and produce wealth. With Trade Unions, the workers submit to capitalism, any anti-capitalist sentiment or activity is smothered, and the wheels of the capitalist machine keep on turning. It is the norm for strikes to end sooner than later at the behest of the Trade Union who negotiate with management. This norm tells exactly why Obama and governments in general ally with Trade Union organizations. They guarantee the maintenance of the production, smother anti-capitalist worker dissent and moreover internally have the trust of workers. In order to fight back without compromise the working class must organize outside the capitalist framework of Trade Unions, put forth anti-capitalist demands with a vision to end the wage-labour foundation of capitalism.

Against Wage-Labour
September 28, 2009
www.againstwage.com
againstwage@gmail.com