

**Elections '76**

**Capitalists' Desperate  
Deceit vs.  
Workers' Growing  
Struggle**

**by the  
Revolutionary  
Communist  
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**15¢**



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Chicago, 1976



The usual election year hoopla is in full gear. Politicians stare out at us from a thousand billboards, newspaper ads and TV commercials. Millions of dollars are being spent on a massive media campaign, while the candidates themselves fly from city to city meeting with important businessmen and local big wigs and then come to pump hands in front of the factories we slave in and the supermarkets where we get our pockets picked.

Like so many circus barkers the candidates razzle-dazzle us with tantalizing promises of what's in store just inside their tents. "Step right up! Vote for Jimmy Carter! You'll get Jobs! Peace! Health Care! Tax Reform! Honest Government!" On the other side of the midway Jerry Ford hawks "Fiscal Responsibility! Lower Inflation! National Defense! Prosperity! Honest Government!"

But despite all this election year public relations hype, there is a deep and growing cynicism about the elections and government among the American people. Opinion polls indicate that scarcely half the eligible voters are even likely to vote at all.

Of course there has always been a certain general skepticism about the whole business. It is a common sentiment that the politicians always promise more than they can deliver, that things aren't going to change much for the better no matter who is elected, that big business runs the government while politicians skim the cream off the top and the working man gets the shaft.

But there's a big difference this time around. In the past there was generally some expectation that although there were problems, there would be better times ahead. Working class parents looked to the possibility of their kids getting into college and escaping the drudgery of factory life. In the last couple of decades the civil rights movement offered the hope to Blacks and other oppressed minorities that the burdens of generations of discrimination and denial of democratic rights would be lifted. In pre-Vietnam days, there was even some hope that we might see a generation or two of peace.

Today the mood of the country is very different. People's daily experience is that things are going to hell at a pretty rapid clip. The children of men and women who started their working lives in the depths of the depression of the '30s are themselves walking the streets looking for work and see their children facing the same bleak future. After decades of labor and toil millions of workers confront the certainty that they will



hardly be able to live on what inflation leaves of their retirement checks.

Despite the advances the civil rights movement won, the hopes it generated have run smack into attacks, as the government strives to intensify the oppression of minorities, pit whites against Blacks and keep the working class divided along racial and national lines. With little more than a year gone since the final departure of the U.S. from Vietnam, we have already been threatened with military involvement in Angola and the increased certainty of war with the Soviet Union. Some government officials are talking about "the reality of the *pre-war* period we live in" as hundreds of billions are poured into military buildup. Meanwhile the cities fall apart, the schools deteriorate and medical care and other essential services are cut back.

The situation is not the same as the depression of the '30s, yet despite the ballyhoo made about any of the temporary up-swings, the overall downward spiral of the economy is only emphasized by all the phony rhetoric, election year promises of better times ahead and efforts to restore some faith in the system.

Fewer and fewer working people find it possible to believe that the government and political leaders will bring fundamental improvement in their lives. The stench of lies, deceit and corruption associated with Watergate has been spreading with more recent exposures of bribery, spying, assassination squads, sexual degeneracy and on and on. Then people are told there's no alternatives, and if none of the candidates offers a very bright hope for the future, still, choosing one or the other is the only way of making any progress at all.

Faced with this, people have some very basic and serious questions about what's in store for themselves and their children. They are more convinced than ever that they have no real say in how they are ruled, that money doesn't just talk, it barks the orders.

### *The Real Candidate*

That is why this year, even more than selling a particular candidate, the election-time propaganda is geared up to selling the elections themselves. More than Ford or Carter the real candidate is the so-called free enterprise system itself and the whole electoral process that says that everyone, no matter what class they belong to, has an equal say and an equal stake in how things are run.

All the instruments of election year propaganda have been orchestrated to counter this new level of skepticism and cynicism

about the elections. They play the reassuring theme that the problems are not with the system itself. It is merely a problem of leadership.

Every effort is being made to lure voters into the booths. Big voter registration drives are being sponsored by the AFL-CIO leadership, among others. For the first time since 1960 there are televised debates between the presidential candidates, debates which, as one newspaper put it, "hopefully might stir public interest at a time when participation in the political process is discouragingly low." And even after the debates turned out to be more boring than the automobile commercials on late night movies and the press took to referring to the candidates as "the Sominex twins," TV's Eric Sevareid had to comment "can you imagine what the campaign would have been like without the debates?"

But while the attitude of a lot of people is "who cares," somebody must care enough to bankroll the election buildup and you can bet it is not high school civics teachers or campaign button manufacturers.

The people who are really concerned about the elections are the ones to whom they really make a difference. They are important to the people who really run this country, the same people who run the banks, industry and government, the capitalists who sit at the top of the heap, ruling and raking in the wealth produced by the labor of the working class. To them the elections are very important because they are key to making it seem that this country is really run by the will of the majority and hide the fact that it is really run by them.

"The industrialists, bankers and millionaires might have a lot of *influence*," they concede, "but our political democracy is the great equalizer. Everyone is equal in the voting booth. Your vote counts just as much as David Rockefeller's." And in a way they are right, neither vote counts for anything, because how this country is run is not determined by who is elected.

### *"Will of the People"*

But votes do count for something. They serve to disguise as the "will of the people" policies that amount to constant attacks on the people. It has to be made out to appear that whatever happens, wage freezes, anti-labor legislation, tax hikes, cuts in social services, war preparations or war itself, is done not in the interest of the small minority of powerful capitalists, but by the mandate of the people on election day.

And more than just disguise, these elections, with their promises of new hopes, new "saviors" to take care of things, are a gi-

ant effort to get people to "have faith" and accept attacks without putting up a fight.

Oh, sure there are problems, they admit. They can't deny that real wages for workers are declining or that hundreds of thousands of Black people as well as others are forced to live in wretched slum housing in the cities or that ten million people are unemployed. But the problems are not with the system itself, they say. The problem is merely with the political leadership and the solution lies in electing new politicians to office.

What they don't want people to consider is that they have another political choice before them: to organize their strength as the working class, the great majority, and join with other sections of people to say to hell with your politicians, your wars, your whole damn profit system and organize themselves to fight for their own needs.

Most people would like to believe that the current system could be made to work to the advantage of the great majority of people. But the reality that it does not is becoming harder and harder for the capitalists to cover over, especially as the economic crisis they face drives them to take away more from the working class and step up their competition with each other. But they are trying.

For starters they've come up with a whole series of post-Watergate snow jobs which attempt to turn all the exposures of the last couple years upside down and make them into proof of the basic honesty and health of their political system. The same class of people who Nixon served so faithfully for years now claim credit for driving him out of office. The very fact that many of the crimes of the FBI and CIA have been exposed is held up as proof that they will never again be used to spy on the American people and sabotage their organizations and movements.

Above all the theme this year is that we need a president that we can trust, one who has compassion and concern for the average American and who can rebuild confidence in government and the system as a whole. What they wanted was a new face, someone who might attract some excitement, stir up some hope that maybe, just maybe, things could be changed if he came to office.

#### *Enter Jimmy Carter*

Enter Jimmy Carter. Peanut farmer, scientist, businessman, humble origins, deeply religious. His greatest asset was precisely what was supposed to be his greatest liability, the fact that he was an unknown. Here was someone who could put himself



*All's smiles as Carter meets UAW president Woodcock and Ford Motor Co. chairman Henry Ford II. Carter, "labor's friend," pushes "unity" between workers and those who exploit them.*

forward not as a politician, but as a common man—"just like you and me."

Millions of dollars worth of media publicity advertised that yes, Jimmy Carter was a man the American people could trust. He was a man workers could have confidence in, because he himself knew what it meant to come up the hard way. He knew what it meant to work for a living.

Carter has been promoted as a man of the soil, a good 'ol boy from the deep South who grew up in a segregated society, but rejected racism and segregation and proved himself to be not only an exponent of civil rights, but a fighter for Black people who would take concrete steps to remedy the injustice of racial discrimination.

The romanticization of Jimmy Carter, the effort to turn him into a new popular hero, reached its peak at the Democratic convention. As innumerable speakers portrayed all the outrages of previous administrations, scores of ecstatic supporters testified that Carter was a new type of man. While Walter Cronkite slobbered over Carter's "outspoken mother" and clever daughter, cameras focused on every Black face in the hall and Martin Luther King Sr. proclaimed that Carter had been sent by the Lord. On cue, the television cameras showed the delegates in what amounted to a state of religious ecstasy when Jimmy was nominated.

But far from showing that a poor man, a common man can come from among the people and represent the interests of the



people, the Carter candidacy shows that the capitalists have a vast supply of loyal servants on whom to draw and that enough money can weave together a tissue of lies that can make illusion seem like reality—at least for a while. In fact, the image of Jimmy Carter contrasted with the reality of Jimmy Carter reveals exactly what the capitalists want to accomplish with these elections.

Carter is no man of the soil. He is a small capitalist who has risen higher by pushing others down into the dirt. In fact, although he lives on a farm and his family owns thousands of acres of Georgia farm and woodland, he is not even a farmer. The bulk of his wealth comes from warehousing and shelling other farmers' peanuts and from commodity trading. The Carter family operation is estimated to be worth more than \$5 million and Carter himself is a near millionaire. But his workers are still paid the minimum wage of \$2.30 an hour and in the opinion of his brother Billy Carter, "some are grossly overpaid at that."

The Carter who promises jobs for the millions of unemployed has endorsed a federal program of workfare, a scab plan already exposed in several states, that forces the unemployed to work for cut wages in order to get their benefits. "Why should we pay people \$80 a week for doing nothing when they can be put to work for \$100 a week rebuilding the railroads?" asked Carter at the National Governors' Conference.

The Jimmy Carter who is presented as the friend of Black people, who grew up with and had many Black friends as a boy, ran for Governor of Georgia in 1970 on a program of blatant racism and segregation. A few days before the election he made a big show of visiting one of the private "academies" in Georgia that had been set up in opposition to school integration and proclaimed his commitment to "private education." It was only after he was elected that he began to talk about "equality and justice for all."

The highly publicized proof of Carter's concern for Blacks—the increase in the numbers of Black people in state jobs—actually began not under Carter, but under his predecessor as Governor of Georgia, well-known ax-wielding racist Lester Maddox. This, of course, wasn't because Maddox was a closet liberal, but because both he and Carter were forced by massive struggle to grant concessions, while they worked to turn gains around.

During Carter's administration the city of Atlanta was the scene of massive and brutal police repression, carried out under the direction of the Atlanta police chief, a dog named Inman. Twenty-three people were murdered by the police in Atlanta in an 18 month period. Thousands of Blacks and whites staged

rallies and demonstrations demanding an end to police murder and the immediate removal of Inman. But when a delegation went to Governor Carter to appeal for his intervention to get rid of Inman, his response was that Inman "was working for the best interests of the city" and he described him as merely a "tough and honest cop."

The image of Carter projected by the media is that of the man who emerged from nowhere.

The real story of Jimmy Carter's sudden rise to prominence is quite different. If he was unknown to most American people, he was not unknown to the biggest capitalists in the country. They have been grooming him for his role for several years. "While he was still governor of Georgia," reports one of Carter's semi-official biographers, "he had been spotted by David Rockefeller, president of Chase Manhattan Bank, as a rising figure." As part of his preparations, he was recruited by Rockefeller to represent the southern half of the United States on a Rockefeller-started operation called the Trilateral Commission, an exclusive grouping of leading capitalists, politicians and foreign policy intellectuals from the U.S., Western Europe and Japan.

For over a year Carter was coached at the Brookings Institute in Washington, one of the capitalists' main think-tanks, and the place where, for example, much of the Vietnam War strategy was developed.

But Carter's preparation was not just limited to being surrounded with some of the capitalists' most reliable advisors. In 1974 he was given the job of the chairman of the Democratic Party campaign committee, a job he used to become familiar to politicians and party regulars all over the country, and helped to lay the groundwork for much of his primary campaign.

Even with all this buildup, however, the Carter image wore pretty thin well before election day. He failed so miserably to generate the strong support it was hoped he could that the polls which proclaimed he was a shoo-in when it appeared he could come off as a new "savior of the people" suddenly discovered that his support was "soft" and his campaign in disarray, while Ford, no longer stumbling and tripping, was said to be in hot pursuit.

The polls are designed more to shape public opinion than to reflect it, so it's not surprising that an effort was made to turn around the general lack of interest and enthusiasm for either candidate and attempt to create interest in the campaign by claiming that it was a tight race now, an exciting neck and neck affair.

Ford is even being given more of a buildup, although it was pretty clear from the time that he replaced Nixon that his role

was transitional. He was put in because he was a sort of uncontroversial nonentity, someone whose apparent plainness and honesty would contrast sharply with the rottenness of Nixon. Important sections of the ruling class felt he has done an adequate job for them and represents policies they would like carried out, but he was clearly not the one who could stir up much enthusiasm or give working people a sense that he was someone who stood with and cared about them, who would defend their interests—especially after presiding for a year and a half over constant attacks on them.

But now it is said to be a real contest—and both contestants have “taken off the gloves” and are drawing sharp distinctions between positions that most people can’t distinguish between. But when they pick up mud to sling at each other, they do uncover a little bit of the ugly truth.

Carter says that Ford can’t do anything about unemployment and Ford says that Carter’s proposals will only fuel inflation. Both are right. Like two technicians arguing over how to fix a machine that’s breaking down, their charges and counter charges reveal a lot about what’s wrong. But they can’t agree on how to fix it because it can’t be fixed.

Ford says jobs must come through private industry. Government’s role is to provide the climate to help this along. In other words, what’s good for General Motors is good for the country. When Carter says this will never cure unemployment, especially in today’s crisis, he is right. This “private sector” is in the midst of a real profit crisis—a capital shortage they call it—and far from providing new jobs, they are putting every bit of available capital to work in squeezing more production out of fewer workers. In auto for example production is up again, but 117,000 jobs have been eliminated since 1973.

Every bit of government aid to this “private sector” through tax breaks, etc., will only go to serve this unquenchable thirst for profit and result in more misery, not more jobs, for the workers. This is nothing more than Herbert Hoover’s old “trickle down” theory which came to be despised and hated by millions of workers in the Great Depression.

And what of Carter’s solutions? Ford is right when he says they will only make the problem worse. Carter, too, says he “prefers the private sector,” but government must step in to fill the gaps when people’s needs aren’t met. Carter’s plans for job programs are only tiny drops in the bucket and not a cure to unemployment and, more than that, amount to wage cutting schemes, using unemployment as a weapon to drive down the wages of the entire working class.

Carter’s running mate Walter Mondale recently stated, for ex-

ample, that he wanted to create a job program for youth in cities like New York to do the work of those who had been laid off in the city crisis. So you have heavy layoffs and massive wage cuts for thousands of workers while unemployed youths are sent in to do the work at slave wages.

Ford says Carter’s government spending programs will fuel inflation and points to the skyrocketing budget as a giant problem. And it is a giant problem—one that both Republicans and Democrats have only increased, because it is the necessary and inevitable cost of maintaining their far-flung and declining empire of profit. Neither Ford or Carter can make any substantial dent in this. The only significant budget changes they can come up with are more cuts in the social services provided to the people.

All their great plans amount to more attacks on the people. This is because, despite all their rhetoric, they are not thinking about the people, but can only think about ways to patch up a rotten and decaying system of private profit.

#### *Lesser of Two Evils*

Since it is obvious that a lot of people are not accepting Jimmy Carter or Jerry Ford as their savior, another argument is run out, a more “realistic” view of why we should get behind one of the candidates and vote: “Why not vote for the lesser of two evils, we’ve got to have one of them anyway,” or “Why not Carter, he can’t be worse than Ford.”

Another variation of this is that the Democratic Party is the friend of the working people and the Republican Party is the party of big business. Underlying this is the idea that maybe people can get some concessions from the Democrats that they couldn’t get from the Republicans.

But long and hard experience has shown that concessions are won from the people who rule this country in only one way: through struggle. And often when they seem to be “giving us something” it is nothing more than a veiled attack.

The “two party system” is an important weapon to keep people whipsawing back and forth, undercutting attempts they make to organize their own struggle and fight for their real needs. Particular emphasis, however, is put on building up the Democrats as “the party of the working man.”

The Democratic Party had been around quite a while before it was built up in this way. While they had made efforts since the early part of the century to win the allegiance of the European immigrants crowded into the big cities of the East Coast, the Democrats received little support from organized labor un-



til Franklin Roosevelt's presidency in the '30s and '40s. In fact, Roosevelt himself was actively opposed by significant sections of the working class and their leaders in his 1932 campaign as merely a spokesman for the capitalists. They saw that his programs were attacks on the working class, cloaked in vague anti-business rhetoric and promises to "drive the money changers out of the temple." But after the 1932 elections, Roosevelt and the Democrats took on a new image.

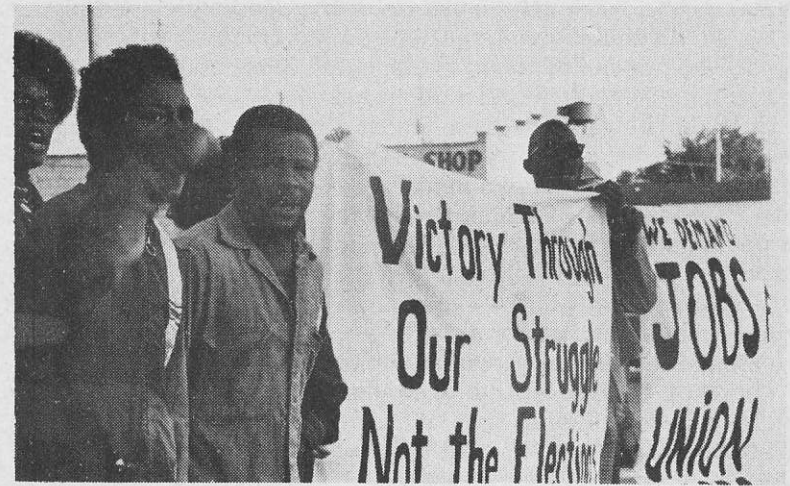
Roosevelt and the New Deal were credited with important victories won in fact by the mass struggle of the working class in the '30s, such as unemployment insurance, social security, and industrial unions. The fact that millions of people organized into unemployed councils, new unions in basic industry and other mass organizations that were in the streets fighting company goon armies and state police supposedly counted for nothing.

With the help of many top union leaders who portrayed him to their membership as some kind of savior, in exchange for high posts in the government and Democratic Party and the prestige of "easy access to the White House," Roosevelt was pictured as the "great man" who whipped the Wall Street Barons into line and built the Democratic Party into a powerful coalition of workers, farmers, professionals and minorities capable of countering the Republicans, pictured as the party of big business.

Similarly Roosevelt and the Democrats were credited with pulling the country out of the depression, putting the country back to work again. But in the first six years of the New Deal, none of his policies dented the depression. They couldn't. Factory gates had closed because the capitalists could no longer suck enough profits from production. They couldn't sell what they had produced because in their drive for ever-greater profit they had driven down the ability of the working class to consume in relation to its tremendous ability to produce, to such an extent that there was no adequate market. And the crisis was worldwide. Every capitalist country was hit by the same kind of devastating depression. The U.S. economy only began to climb out of the depression as war preparations and arms sales to other countries provided the market and stimulus to production the capitalists needed.

From that time on this new image of the Democrats has been put forward for all it was worth.

Today this lovely picture of Roosevelt and the Democrats has grown pretty faded and frayed at the edges, but many people still think the Democrats, no matter how bad, are at least more likely to favor the common people than the Republicans. Jim-



*Allis-Chalmers, Milwaukee. When Carter brought his campaign to this big plant's gates recently, he was met by an angry demonstration of workers with signs saying, "Jobs, Not Hot Air!" and "Victory Through Our Struggle, Not the Elections!"*

my Carter is trying to play on this sentiment by painting himself as the new Roosevelt, a real leader, a friend of labor.

And all the top union leaders, the worthy successors of the traitors who originally painted Roosevelt as a saint, are doing their best to peddle this nonsense.

George Meany says that the most important thing the unemployed can do this year is to vote for the Democrats. Caesar Chavez tells farm workers that the way to force growers to recognize the union and to win contracts is to vote for Jimmy Carter and the Democrats. The heads of the construction unions tell their membership that the way to fight non-union construction and win jobs is to get rid of Ford and put a "friend of labor" in the White House.

### *Real Laws of the System*

But no matter how much politicians wrap themselves in the mantle of previous "successful" presidents, it is not the intentions, good or bad, the programs or policies of this or that candidate that determine how things are going to go.

Remember LBJ vs. Goldwater? Johnson promised no land war in Vietnam, while Goldwater was painted as Dr. Strange-love, ready to bomb Indochina into the stone age. Well, Johnson the Democrat did exactly what Goldwater the Republican had promised to do. It wasn't just because Johnson was a lying

dog—though he was. Any U.S. president would have been forced to try and crush the efforts of the people of Indochina to throw out their foreign masters, and to try and protect the capitalists' raw materials, markets, cheap labor and, in the larger sense, their whole worldwide empire.

In 1972, the voters were told that McGovern was the peace candidate, the only choice for getting out of Vietnam, while Nixon was the well-known hard-liner. But Nixon was forced to withdraw the bulk of U.S. troops within the year, not because he was secretly for peace all along, but because the U.S. was defeated militarily and politically by the Vietnamese and the mass anti-war movement in the U.S.—a movement that was built and gained tremendous power outside the electoral process and threatened tremendous social upheaval.

There are countless other examples of politicians attempting to claim credit for what they were forced to do by the struggle of the people, or to deny that they will let happen what the laws of the system make inevitable.

The whole character of this economic and political system is to push down the working class and the masses of people for the benefit of the few at the top. What happens in this country is determined not by who sits in the White House and Congress, but by the continuing struggle—and the class antagonism—between the small class of people who claim the rights to all that is produced in society, as well as to all the factories, mines and other means of production, and the people, the working class, that produce the great wealth that the owning class calls its own, and in return get scarcely enough to continue to work and raise another generation to slave away in the same way.

If each capitalist is going to survive he has to constantly increase his profits, otherwise he will go out of business or be swallowed up by a larger or more successful competitor. He can only increase those profits by pushing his workers faster, making fewer people do more by speedup and replacing workers with machines. It's not just what he wants to do—it's what he has to do to survive as a capitalist. The same laws continually drive capitalist countries to war with each other—even world war—to protect and expand their investments, and to war with former colonial and underdeveloped countries like Vietnam, who fight to get out from under foreign domination. They drive the working class like slaves and this will be so as long as they are in command. It is only by organizing their own struggle that the working class has beaten back their constant attacks and won a single thing.

The people are given a vote, but for the capitalist class as a whole, whether a particular politician wins or loses the election

is not as important as keeping people ensnared in choosing between the choices they present, and not choosing to build their own battle. Different capitalists or groups of capitalists may prefer—or own a bigger piece of—a given candidate, but each one has been selected and built up on the basis of his ability to serve the interests of their class.

While few capitalists supported George McGovern in 1972, he was very useful in their efforts to channel the mass movement against the war in Vietnam into the electoral process and let it rest there. And in '76 Reagan played a very important role in beating the war drums and telling people that "like it or not" we are faced with the reality of sacrificing to defend the U.S. empire.

That is the way the system operates—and no politician, no matter how "honest," or how handsome, whether Black or white or man or woman, is going to change that. To choose between the lesser of two evils is just a recipe for abandoning our own struggle to fight for what we need and to accept evil. And the way things are going that means worse and worse evil. It is not a choice the working class can afford to accept.

#### *Above Classes?*

No one can represent the antagonistic interests of both the working class and the capitalist class, and when a politician or a political system claims to speak for all the people, and work in the best interests of everyone, rich and poor, boss and worker, slave and slavemaster alike, it is a sure tip-off of a big con game.

The voting booth does not represent the road forward for the working class. The way forward is to battle the capitalists and their attacks at every turn and to reject their traps and phony solutions. This is the road of taking matters into our own hands.

It is not an easy road. But it is the only road that really leads to a brighter future. It means not just rejecting their politicians and fighting them at every turn for what we need now, because in the long run that will leave us on the same treadmill. It means fighting them now and through each battle building the strength and organization that will eventually get rid of them altogether. This is the road of revolutionary struggle against the capitalists and their whole system of class exploitation and sham democracy.

The real political struggle of the election year is not the phony choice they offer of picking between two brands of poison. It is the struggle of the working class, to beat back these attacks and forge their own future.