

Bush's State of the Union: Billions for Endless War and Empire

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Bush's State of the Union: Billions for Endless War and Empire- Cuts in Healthcare, Education, and Social Security

George W. Bush's State of the Union Address, masked in talk of "freedom" and "democracy," was an outline of a brutal agenda of endless war, global empire, and the destruction of what remains of basic social services.

The war against working people

Bush said, "First, we must be good stewards of this economy, and renew the great institutions on which millions of our fellow citizens rely." He followed this with his promise to reduce or eliminate "more than 150 government programs."

These cuts are part of the neocon agenda to roll back every gain made by working people in this country. In a period of growing unemployment and rising cost of living, the Bush agenda is to slash spending for education, housing, and healthcare, as it is asking for yet another \$80 billion to finance the war against the people of Iraq.

More than \$150 billion has been spent on the war; meanwhile hospitals are being shut down, schools are overcrowded, jobs are disappearing and state and local budgets are facing enormous deficits. Under the Bush Administration, there is simply no money available to meet human needs.

These cuts come at a time when working people are watching their loved ones die in Iraq in increasing numbers. The more than 1400 soldiers who have died are not the children of Wall Street executives and neocon warmongers; they are the children of the inner cities and poor communities, forced into military service by the poverty draft.

Bush then outlined his plan to privatize the Social Security System, justifying it with the outright fabrication that the system is facing bankruptcy. The truth is that Social Security is not in deficit, not now and not for at least the next forty years. The trust fund will have a surplus next year of \$1.8 trillion. In 2011 when the baby boomer generation will start retiring in large numbers, the surplus will be \$3.2 trillion. These surpluses, plus future payroll-tax revenue, are sufficient to maintain the current level of benefits through 2042, according to the Social Security fund's very conservative actuaries.

The hype about Social Security "going broke" is a myth being created by the Wall Street profiteers behind the Bush Administration who want to destroy the public's confidence in Social Security. This is a sales pitch to convince the public to spend over \$2 trillion to create

a separate system to divert Social Security funds into the stock market—including giving nearly \$1 trillion to the Wall Street firms to manage the new individual accounts. This plan, while benefiting private investment firms, would force cuts in benefits and result in raising the retirement age, both of which Bush admitted were “on the table.” Furthermore, it would place the retirement benefits of millions of people at risk, subject to the fluctuations of a volatile and uncertain stock market.

Increased Repression

Bush said, “We will pass along to our children all the freedoms we enjoy, and chief among them is freedom from fear.” Yet all he is selling is fear and repression.

He promised to fight for a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage—part of a fundamentalist hate campaign to deny basic human rights to members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Transgendered community.

Bush also promised to continue his war against people of color by “taking on gang life,” conservative code words for increased racial profiling and police brutality.

In all of his talk of freedom and democracy, he did not once mention the Patriot Act, which undermines every single right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Nor did he disavow his Administration’s policy of illegal detentions and torture.

Iraq: Permanent Occupation

Bush hailed the phony election in Iraq as a triumph for democracy. To put this election, held under occupation, in perspective, it is helpful to remember another election, also held under occupation, 38 years ago:

On September 4, 1967, the New York Times carried the headline, “U.S. Encouraged by Vietnam Vote: Officials Cite 83% Turnout Despite Vietcong Terror.”

The article said, “United State officials were surprised and heartened today at the size of turnout in South Vietnam’s presidential election...The hope here is that the new government will be able to maneuver with a confidence and legitimacy long lacking in South Vietnamese politics. That hope could have been dashed either by a small turnout, indicating widespread scorn or a lack of interest in constitutional development, or by the Vietcong’s disruption of the balloting.”

At the time the election took place, the U.S. had hundreds of thousands of troops in Vietnam. The U.S. was carpet bombing, dropping napalm, and assassinating activists as part of its infamous Operation Phoenix. Yet it was able to organize a phony election and convince the media to report that the election was a turning point in the effort to legitimize the war.

This attempt to legitimize the war and occupation of Vietnam was an abject failure. The election was followed by the Tet offensive, a massive popular uprising against occupation forces. The war lasted another 7 ½ years, with most of the 50,000 U.S. casualties coming after the election.

Today, the Bush Administration is bringing “democracy” to Iraq with bombs, bullets, depleted uranium weapons, and the torture chambers of Abu Ghraib. More than 100,000

Iraqis have been killed. Fallujah, a historic city, has been destroyed.

This election will only result in greater frustration and anger from the Iraqi people. Whatever the actual size of the turnout was, the overriding expectation of those who voted was that the election would lead to an end to the occupation of their country. When they realize that the Bush has no plans to end the occupation, this frustration will fuel an already widespread resistance.

But Bush said, "We will not set an artificial timetable for leaving Iraq," because the Administration plans are for permanent occupation. The neocon cabal surrounding Bush has long planned a permanent military occupation of the region, to control the supply of oil and to use as a base to launch offensive operations against other nations, like Syria and Iran. The Pentagon is constructing 14 permanent military bases—Bush will not set a timetable because he has no intention of ending the occupation ever. U.S. corporations like Halliburton and Bechtel, which have already made billions in profits, plan to solidify their grip on the Iraqi economy, particularly its vast oil reserves.

Endless War

In addition to the continued occupation of Iraq, Bush listed new targets for U.S. aggression. Using the now-familiar and discredited accusation of possessing weapons of mass destruction, Bush made it clear that the people of Iran, Syria, and North Korea will suffer the same fate as the people of Iraq if he has his way.

He swore that we must "confront regimes that continue to harbor terrorists and pursue weapons of mass murder." This same justification, proven to be an outright lie, was used for the war against Iraq. In Bush language, this means the intent to attack any country, anywhere, if it serves the interests of U.S. corporate Empire.

The U.S. government, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., is "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world." Its death squads are at work in Colombia. The city of Miami is a base for terrorist attacks against the people of Cuba. The U.S. maintains the world's largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction: illegal chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

March 19: Troops Out Now!

Bush concluded his speech with a quote from Franklin Roosevelt: "Each age is a dream that is dying or one that is coming to birth." In reality, the dream of the Bush Administration is a nightmare for working people everywhere—a dream of global empire, permanent war, and the destruction of all social programs.

Those who have other dreams must continue to mobilize to stop the Bush Administration. On the weekend of March 19, the second anniversary of the beginning of Bush's campaign of shock and awe against the people of Iraq, the global antiwar movement will be in the streets to demand an end to the occupation.

The Troops Out Now Coalition, of which the International Action Center is a member, supports the calls for actions throughout the world. In New York City, tens of thousands will march and converge on Central Park, in a massive, united regional demonstration to demand the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all occupation troops from Iraq. The anti-war movement will demand money for jobs, education and healthcare, not for war and occupation. Activists are coming from all over the eastern U.S. to march

against endless war, repression, and corporate greed.

Bush has outlined a plan of attack against working people everywhere-now is the time for us to respond with a renewed level of commitment and unity. We need your help to make March 19 a success.

How you can help:

- 1) Endorse the March 19 Demonstration in Central Park <http://troopsoutnow.org/endorse>
- 2) Organize transportation from your area-contact us at transportation@troopsoutnow.org to post your information on the website.
- 3) Help get the word out-download leaflets from <http://troopsoutnow.org> .

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