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Obama speech caps two weeks of demagoguery and right-wing policies

By Patrick Martin

9/7/2012

President Barack Obama's speech Thursday night accepting the Democratic Party nomination for reelection brought two weeks of political demagoguery at the Republican and Democratic national conventions to a shameful and repulsive conclusion.

In its banality, hollowness, self-glorification and unadulterated lying, Obama's address was typical of those delivered by the politicians of the two corporate-controlled parties that are vying for power in the 2012 election.

Neither in Tampa nor in Charlotte was there any serious discussion of the actual conditions facing tens of millions of working people four years after the Wall Street collapse triggered the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Still less was any program elaborated by either capitalist party to provide jobs for the unemployed or alleviate the mass suffering created by the crisis of the profit system.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact of the two conventions is that not a single significant political difference was articulated by either party. In a country with more than 300 million people, riven by social and economic polarization, the two officially recognized parties proceed with unanimity on all essential questions.

To call either Tampa or Charlotte a political convention amounts to false advertising. These assemblies decided nothing and discussed nothing. The delegates served not as representatives from states and regions across a vast continent, but as spectators and props in a political infomercial featuring appearances by politicians and celebrities.

As speakers made reference to various social groups they claimed to defend or represent, the television cameras obediently panned to the faces of delegates—black, Hispanic, female, youth, etc.—who supposedly embodied the denoted social layers.

Obama’s speech was a fraudulent exercise in which he postured as a defender of the “middle class,” linked himself to Franklin Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln, and proposed ... precisely nothing.

Like Vice President Joseph Biden and other speakers over the previous three days, Obama made his case for reelection on essentially two grounds: the rescue of General Motors and the killing of Osama bin Laden.

As for the first, the auto bailout was not a favor to auto workers, but rather an assault on their jobs, living standards and working conditions. Wages for new-hires were cut in half, health benefits were slashed for retired workers, plants were closed, and tens of thousands of jobs were eliminated.

When Obama claimed US manufacturing is on the upswing “not because our workers make lower pay” but because they’re more productive, he was telling a brazen lie. The auto bailout set the pace for wage slashing throughout corporate America, and against public employees as well.

As for the invocations of Obama’s success in targeting bin Laden, the use of this state killing as the standard for judging foreign policy only testifies to the debased character of American politics. Obama boasted in his speech that his Republican opponents were “new” to the business of White House-ordered bloodletting, and thus less qualified than himself.

The goal in focusing on the bin Laden killing was not just to celebrate Obama’s prowess in ordering assassinations and drone strikes. It was to further disassociate the Democratic Party from the antiwar sentiments of the vast majority of the American people, who backed the Democrats in 2006 and 2008 in large measure because of disgust with the Bush administration’s criminal conduct in Iraq.

One basic lie underlay the entire course of the Democratic convention: the claim that this party represents and defends the interests of working people. The most dedicated defenders of this lie are the union officials (who comprised a sizeable proportion of the convention delegates) and their apologists in the pseudo-left groups that proclaim Obama the “lesser evil” to the Republican ticket of Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan.

The Democratic Party and the Republican Party represent different wings of the capitalist ruling elite. They compete over who will control positions of power and influence, but are in agreement on the fundamental question of defending the wealth and political monopoly of the financial aristocracy.

While corporations and billionaires dictate policy and make or break candidates through the vast sums they funnel into the coffers of the two parties and their affiliated “super PACs”, the political system becomes more and more removed from the working people, who are permitted to vote November 6 but have zero influence over the decisions made in Washington.