

The Plight of Workers and the Unemployed: Obama's Fraudulent "Job Summit"

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If the President had offered us a job summit a year ago, he might have been taken seriously. Now, however, after more than six million jobs have been lost — and with the bottom still falling — Obama's brain storming get-together can only be treated with contempt, if not outrage.

What is needed is immediate action, not idle chatter. We already know what works: federal stimulus money channeled directly towards job creation, a public works campaign to help rebuild the U.S. crumbling infrastructure, full funding for education and social services, and more.

Instead, Obama will invite the corporate elite to the White House to hear their advice on how to create jobs, as they continue slashing them by the thousands. The conservative Washington Post reports:

"President Obama plans to bring together CEOs, small business owners and financial experts to sound out ideas for continuing to expand the economy and create jobs" (November 16, 2009).

Labor leaders have also been invited to the meeting.

Allow us to save the busy President some time — it is obvious what the summit participants will suggest and why. Corporations will propose that taxes remain low for themselves and their very wealthy shareholders, while keeping regulations equally low. Both of these measures would save money for corporations, while encouraging billionaires to play more on the stock market — their solution to creating jobs. Unions, on the other hand, will demand a new and improved stimulus package. This, of course, is the only answer for workers.

The first stimulus bill was an abysmal failure because it was far too small, while much of the money was dedicated to tax breaks. Obama is correct that it saved jobs from being destroyed and that it gave desperate states some financial relief. But the aid was far too small to be truly effective, regardless of Obama's constant boasting about it.

A new stimulus package must be much larger, and wholly dedicated to creating jobs, not merely "saving" them. The current situation in the U.S. is one of complete social failure; there is immense work that needs to be done — in infrastructure especially — while there exists millions of workers available to do the job. But nothing happens. This points to an

obvious failure in the market, and thus demands serious state intervention.

But state intervention cannot be the type that Obama has promoted thus far, especially bank bailouts and corporate-style health care. Instead of aiding the super-wealthy, it should be demanded that Obama drastically switch gears to curing the unemployment pandemic.

Unfortunately, the strong measures needed to address the unemployment issue are unlikely to come from the Obama administration. The president has made clear his desire to focus on the federal deficit; he is under extreme pressure from foreign lenders — Russia, China, etc. — and U.S. bankers to make cuts in the budget, not expand it. And although no one from the U.S. corporate elite complained a bit about Obama's record breaking \$660 billion military budget, they will scream bloody murder if a new stimulus is created to benefit workers.

It is up to us, then, to scream louder. Obama will not create a much-needed stimulus unless he is fearful of the social consequences of doing nothing. If he feels that workers and the unemployed will suffer quietly as jobs continue to disappear, he will continue his "let-them-eat-cake" attitude. If, however, he sees large, angry demonstrations demanding jobs, he will be forced to think again. The time is now. The union movement can pass resolutions as the American Federation of Teachers Local 1021 of Los Angeles did just last week, which calls on the labor movement, as a whole, to organize their membership and working people in general to attend a Solidarity Day III march and rally in Washington, DC in the spring of 2010 to demand living wage jobs for all. If we stay quiet, Obama will implement the corporations' solution to the recession — a jobless recovery with a substantially lower standard of living for everyone but the rich.

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