

# **A Socialist Alternative: Dan La Botz, Socialist Party candidate for the U.S. Senate from Ohio**

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**The following essay represents a distillation of my basic stump speech over the past nine months of the campaign. Visit my YouTube page to watch me giving speeches very much like this one around Ohio - or follow my campaign on Facebook.**

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WE IN AMERICAN TODAY face three great crises: the economy, the environment, and the wars abroad—and both the Republicans and Democrats are failing to address those crises. We must not only create jobs for the unemployed, we must create a full-employment economy. We must address the environmental crisis by ending the use of coal and dramatically reducing the use of petroleum. And we must bring all U.S. troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan and stop the bombing of Pakistan.

The Republicans and Democrats cannot address these urgent issues because they represent the very corporations that have caused the crises. How can you address the crises when the banks, insurance companies, manufacturing corporations, service industries and agriculture pay for your campaigns, provide your candidates and staff, and write your legislation? Today, under Republican and Democratic administrations, the banks determine our economic policy, the insurance companies determine our health policy, agriculture and manufacturing corporations determine our trade policies and the oil companies determine our environmental and foreign policies.

## **Bush and Obama: Continuity**

We have seen in the last two years a political continuity between the Bush and Obama administrations. They saved the bankers, but not the homeowners. They saved the auto executives, boards and investors, but not the autoworkers' jobs, wages, benefits and working conditions. They saved the health insurance companies, but failed to give us a single-payer healthcare system.

Similarly with energy. Neither Bush nor Obama would take on the coal or oil companies. Coal

remains on the energy agenda of both, while Obama opened up oil drilling on the Atlantic Coast and in the Gulf just before the BP geyser in the Gulf. The real oil spill was not in the Gulf, it was in the Congress—where oil money has purchased the Senators and Representatives of Republicans and Democrats.

And the wars? Obama has expanded the wars. The U.S. today has an occupying army of 50,000 in Iraq. There are 100,000 troops in Afghanistan carrying out the war there. And Obama has expanded the use of drone missiles to bomb Pakistan, often killing civilians. As a Pakistani-American woman said in Cleveland when I spoke there, “I have to explain to my co-workers and neighbors, ‘Your president is bombing my country.’”

## **Change the National Priorities**

We need to change the priorities of the United States. All of the crises are the result of the corporate domination of our country. Today everything revolves around CEO salaries and bonuses, around corporate profits, and around stockholder dividends. We must the interests of working people, not of the CEOs, at the center of our policies. We might, for example, consider a working woman with a couple of children to support. (I think here of my own mother, a grocery checker who raised two children largely on her own.) What would she need to make her life livable?

She will need a good job at a living wage—with a union to give her a voice in the workplace. She will need good housing with a reasonable mortgage or rent. She will need good public transportation to get her to work quickly and cheaply—and to reduce carbon fuels and the destruction of the environment. She will need free health care for her children, with free hospitalization and pharmacy access. She will need free public education from K through college—because she wants her kids to go far, and so do we.

We take a working woman as the measure of our society, as the measure of a decent society. If you think about it, you can see that if we take care of her, we take care of all of us. For her needs are the common needs of all working people in the country.

## **How do we Pay for It?**

How do we pay for all of this? We end the wars abroad and we close the 1,000 military bases abroad. We raise the taxes on the top bracket of millionaires and billionaires from 36 percent today to the 80 percent they were at in the period from 1945-1965. With the trillions saved by ending the wars and reducing the military budget and taxing the rich, we can begin to put all Americans to work at good jobs with living wages.

The American people step in and take charge of the corporations. We make the government create an enormous stimulus program, twice as big as Obama’s, aimed at creating jobs in all sectors. We force the government to take over the idle and low-capacity production plants and with government financing set them to work, but under the management of workers and communities to produce for a green economy. We demand that the government create a national economic plan and that all Americans have a voice in elaborating that plan.

## **Big Government?**

Some ask, "Won't this just create big government?" The real question, however, is not: "Is the government too big?" The real question is: "Whose government is it?" I am not simply talking about our current corporate, capitalist government simply nationalizing everything. I am not for that. If that happened we would not have socialism or economic democracy, but a state bureaucracy.

I am talking about building a movement among the American people which says that we need to transform our society and end the domination of the corporations and the anarchy of capitalism with its booms and busts. We need to build the consciousness, organization, and self-confidence of the American working people so that they, that is, we can take over these corporations and run them. We need to absorb the corporations into our society, to digest them and transform them by socializing them.

## **How do we Get There**

How do we possibly accomplish such a job, that is, ending corporate domination and transforming American capitalism into a socialist society? First, we have to rebuild the power of labor unions and the social movements. The labor unions need to be transformed from within and from below into a fighting movement prepared to use its power to fight the bosses. We need to strengthen the environmental movement and encourage a resurgence of independent activism.

We need to rebuild the power of the African American, Latino, and women's movements for freedom and self-determination. We can take some inspiration from the LGBT movement as it has fought for marriage rights and to end "don't ask, don't tell." We must revive the slogan "An Injury to One Is an Injury to All," building solidarity among all of the discriminated against and oppressed in our society. Working people have tremendous economic power and organization and should provide leadership to this movement.

The labor movement and social movement alone, however, will not be able to transform American society, no matter how militant they become, if they don't create a working people's party. The labor upsurge of the 1930s and the civil rights movement of the 1950s-60s accomplished much, but ultimately their power was harnessed by the Democratic Party and then turned against them. We must build an independent political movement to the left of the Democratic Party, otherwise we will continue to sow and they will continue to harvest our work.

## **Why Vote for a Third Party**

What is the role of my Socialist Party campaign today? What is its relationship to independent political action more broadly speaking and to that larger task of creating a working people's party? Can a small group of activists creating a third party really make a difference?

I ask you to think back to those small groups of men and women, black and white, who in the 1830s and 1840s met in private homes and school houses, in churches and religious colleges in Ohio and in other states throughout the union. They were radicals who argued that the country could not develop economically, socially, or morally as long as it was blocked by the existence of the plantation and plantation slavery. They argued that the plantation must be abolished. Imagine that, at a time when the plantation was the very center of the American economy, both of "King Cotton" in the South and of the Northern textile industry.

## **From Radical Activism to Political Party**

Those radicals circulated petitions. They marched and demonstrated. They engaged in civil disobedience. They broke the law: freeing slaves from the South and wrestling slaves away from slave hunters and federal marshals in the North. They built the abolitionist movement and then they created abolitionist parties such as the Free Soil Party.

The Free Soil Party played a catalytic role, helping to bring about a realignment of the U.S. political party system—and this led to the Republican Party, which would nominate Abraham Lincoln to the presidency. Lincoln, of course, would prosecute the Civil War and create the Union Army in which abolitionists and the former slaves themselves would end slavery. A small group of far-seeing activists changed the country's history.

## **Independent Political Action Today**

Today, we who vote for the Socialist Party, the Green Party, the Peace and Freedom Party, and for independent progressives to the left of the Democratic Party are, I believe, in an analogous position to those abolitionists of the period from, say, 1830 to 1860. We are working to stake out a humanistic position on the left of the American political spectrum, one that rejects the corporate domination of America.

We are for the abolition of the corporation. We are for the abolition of capitalism. We are for turning the country upside down. What do I mean by that? I mean putting working people, the poor, the discriminated against, the downtrodden at the top of our society and having them and their needs set our course. I mean reorganizing our society around the needs of that working class woman I mentioned earlier.

Vote for me on November 2 because you think that that woman and her kids, that all of those working men and women and their children should have the power to make decisions that will benefit them and all of us. Vote for Dan La Botz. Vote for the Socialist Party. Vote for the socialist alternative.

**Dan La Botz**

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**P.S.**

\* From DanLaBotz.com and Solidarity website:

<http://www.solidarity-us.org/>

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