Discussion Document for the National Committee

Update on the US Political Situation and Our Tasks

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This document was distributed as a discussion document for the National Committee in Minneapolis on July 8-10, 2017 as a contribution on some of the key political developments in the US and the central organizational challenges facing Socialist Alternative at this time.

The document was not intended to be a rounded out perspectives document that covers all aspects of the situation in the US, but instead focused on elements of the political issues that represented the biggest challenges to our organization at that time: The character of the Trump administration and state of the resistance against it, how we engage in the anti-Trump resistance, how we relate to the Berniecrats, developments with DSA, and our approach to the struggle around healthcare. The document also aimed to stimulate a discussion on the new tasks facing Socialist Alternative in this radically new political situation, our growth to over 1,000 members, a shift in focus towards cadre building and internal political development, and how this fits into our medium term targets.

We have updated the document to incorporate points from the valuable discussion at the NC meeting. In light of the political debate at the NC meeting regarding aspects of the document we have worked to make some of our formulations more precise and elaborated on some points, as is necessary in any living discussion. The document has also been proofread.

In the little over a month since the NC meet in Minneapolis we have seen an intensification of the turmoil and crisis in US politics. Events have continued to move at a rapid pace. These include the far-right rally and terrorist murder in Charlottesville which has unleashed a powerful wave of outrage against racism and Trump; massive outcry and uproar against Trump's hesitant response and defense of the far-right which has resulted in a growing isolation of Trump from sections of the Republican Party and big business; the defeat of Trumpcare in the Senate; the ban on transgender people in the military; and the various shakeups and upheavals within the Trump administration. We have not updated the document to take into account these or other developments since the NC as it would have required substantial additions.

The Character of the Trump Regime

1. The character of the Trump administration is in flux, reflecting the intense pressure of contradictory forces. At this point the predominant tendency remains right-wing populism and nationalism, along with a radical agenda of deregulation and tax cuts for the rich and big business. Trump also continues to act in a highly erratic, unbalanced, and bizarre fashion. While this is an expression of his own peculiar psychology it is also fundamentally rooted in his populist "anti-establishment" political approach and is a reflection of his authoritarian and bonapartist inclinations.

2. This is part of an international development: The traditional parties through which the capitalists used to rule are in crisis. Populist forces to the right and new formations on the left are developing. The search for a fundamentally different left alternative was highlighted with Jeremy Corbyn's appeal, especially to young people, which spread the message internationally that we can change the balance of forces if we dare to take a clear anti-corporate and left stand. On the other side, the dangers of the right are also growing as the results for Marine Le Pen in France have shown. But even there, we saw the potential for a new left force around Melenchon and the huge working class mobilizations one year ago.

3. The lack of a credible political path forward under capitalism, the anger and disgust at establishment institutions, compels the ruling class to improvise with populist forces and rely on more authoritarian methods.

4. Ten years after the Great Recession capitalism as a world system and its ideological legitimacy have not

recovered. On the contrary, the historic and growing chasm between rich and poor is further undermining the credibility of the system. Inter-imperialist tensions are rising.

5. While Trump is an expression of the relative decline of US imperialism on a world scale, he is also acting as a catalyst which is accelerating this decline. This was graphically displayed with the stunning US isolation at the recent G20 - some called it the "G19" - summit in Hamburg, Germany.

6. In the US, there is a deep and sharp split within the ruling class over Trump. The most rapacious, arrogant, and short-sighted sections have so far supported him. At this stage, the majority of Corporate America has supported or tolerated Trump on the basis of a very narrow-minded enthusiasm for his agenda of tax cuts and deregulation, although doubts are rising about his ability to deliver given a certain governmental paralysis.

7. Trump is relatively independent from broader sections of the ruling class to an unusual degree. The strategists of capitalism have only partially succeeded in bringing Trump to heel through the normal checks and balances of bourgeois politics, the legal system, the capitalist media, scandals and investigations, and stirring up of public opinion against him.

8. This battle over Trump's tendency to assert his own independence from the broader ruling class to pursue his own narrow interests came to a head most clearly with his firing of FBI Director James Comey. This was met with opposition by the majority of the ruling class, the political establishment of the Democratic and Republican parties, the leading strata of the US state machine, and the capitalist media. The result has been an uneasy standoff, with the ruling class firing warning shots but not being prepared to take decisive action to push Trump back. While Trump's position was weakened by this affair, he continues to feel out the limits of how far he can go.

9. The section of the ruling class represented by the Democratic Party is fiercely opposed to Trump for their own political, strategic, and economic reasons. But there have also been important efforts by the Republican establishment to limit the influence of right-wing nationalist/populist figures like Steve Bannon and surround Trump with more reliable advisers for the ruling class like the National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster. McMaster was brought in after the firing of the previous National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, who was strongly opposed by the foreign policy and intelligence establishment for his unbalanced right-wing ideological approach.

10. We have seen the results of this "moderating" influence in Trump's failure to act on his pledge to withdraw from NAFTA. This pressure – along with mass protests from below – has also contributed to ~~is also seen in~~ the defeats and delays in Trump's Muslim Ban (despite the recent, huge concession made by the Supreme Court) and in various obstructions to Trump's promise to build "the wall" on the Mexican border. On immigration, Trump has carried out a more vicious and brutal deportation policy, but has not yet unleashed an all out campaign of mass deportation of millions as he promised.

11. On the other side, Trump's more radical right-wing populist agenda have also found expression on a number of policy fronts. It is seen in his attempts at the Muslim Ban, his blatant pandering to the Religious Right, tearing up the Trans Pacific Partnership, withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, and his flouting of the norms of bourgeois democracy.

No Trump Boom

12. Wall Street's spasm of euphoria following Trump's election appears to be over, increasingly replaced by skepticism over what this administration will actually be able to deliver. Further, the capitalist cycle that started after the Great Recession shows some indications that it is reaching its limits. The depth of the crisis 2007-08 along with the growth of China allowed this cycle to be longer than normal. However, China's slowing growth rate along with mounting debt and unsustainable bubbles point to deep contradictions in the Chinese economy. The low level of interest rates internationally, while partially succeeding in preventing a financial meltdown, has not been able to stimulate significant growth and now limits the ability of the capitalist states to respond to future problems.

13. In the US, the official unemployment rate is very low, but the workforce participation rate has still not reached pre-crisis levels. The accumulation of debt around student loans and credit cards still hangs over the US economy. CEOs indicate a high level of economic confidence, yet corporate investment still remains relatively low.

14. New additional "[k]nee-jerk deregulation [through the Trump administration] is not the only threat to financial stability. It's entirely possible that the system is more fragile than the Fed's stress tests [of banks]

indicate," warns the editorial board of the *New York Times* (July 3, 2017).

15. New trade tariffs will not help the US economy, but will instead increase the battles between capitalist classes internationally. The outcry by sections of US industry that consume steel against Trump's populist-nationalist attempts to "defend" American steel production demonstrates how intertwined international production is today. A reactionary nationalist agenda of protectionism will not lead to more wealth, but will undermine in the medium term the economic strength of corporate America as well as negatively impacting working people. At the same time, the consequences of neo-liberal free trade and globalization have led to huge inequality and social tensions which are fueling a rise in protectionist and nationalist sentiments. Marxists need to explain that neither capitalist free trade nor protectionism will benefit the working class, but instead international socialist planning is needed.

16. We cannot predict the exact timing of the next recession. But it is likely that Trump will be confronted with an economic slowdown during his term. At the very least there is no sign that he will fulfill his ambitious pledges for high growth rates and a return of good paying industrial jobs. This will have a further destabilizing effect on Trump's administration and will be decisive in undermining his popular base.

17. The whole character of the recovery after the Great Recession underlines the rotten character of capitalism today. A tiny elite is getting richer while workers and the poor pay for it. The inability of capitalism to develop the productive forces expresses itself in the remarkable reversal of globalization that has begun to develop as well as sharper tensions between the imperialist powers expressed in proxy wars and deeply unstable international relations. Putting Trump in charge of US imperialism in such a situation is enormously accelerating this emerging disorder.

The State of the Movement against Trump

18. We saw an enormous wave of protest and a growth of organized left and progressive forces in the period from Election Day through the middle of March. The high point of protest so far was the January 21 women's marches. The mood for bold, fighting tactics, like mass direct action, hit its peak at the end of January and in February with the Airport occupations and the widespread discussion of strike actions.

19. The resistance of millions taking the streets had a significant impact. First and foremost it succeeded in making visible the massive scale of opposition to Trump and gave confidence to people to fight back. Together with the deep divisions in the capitalist class, this resistance was a decisive factor in limiting the billionaire president's ability to impose his Muslim ban. Mass public opposition and outrage have created huge obstacles for Trump to push through his brutal repeal of Obamacare.

20. The initial wave of struggle succeeded in helping hundreds of thousands of new people get activated and to some extent organized. Maybe the largest organizational expression of this has been in the explosive growth of the liberal "Indivisible" movement. By the beginning of February, less than two months after their start with the publication of the *Indivisible Guide*, more than 3,800 local groups had been formed which were affiliated in some way to the movement. They now claim over 5,800 local groups (with at least 2 in every congressional district).

21. We have also seen a very significant growth of the socialist left, albeit on a much smaller scale. The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has grown from around 8,500 on Election Day to over 21,000 as of early May with over 120 local chapters across the country. This represents the largest socialist formation in the U.S. since the 1960s, and it is well positioned to grow further. During this time the number of paid subscribers to the socialist journal *Jacobin* nearly doubled to over 30,000.

22. This explosive growth in organized forces appears to have plateaued around the middle of March, reflecting a certain change in the mood. However, this new layer has learned important lessons from their initial experience and is now better prepared for the coming battles.

23. Following the Women's March the movement stepped up. The Muslim ban was met with airport actions. A discussion developed around strike action on the days without immigrants in February, International Women's Day and for May Day. This pointed in the right direction: Using peaceful mass civil disobedience and the collective power of workers as more powerful tools to hit the profits of Trump's billionaire backers. In April the Tax Day protests, science marches, and the people's climate march showed again the potential for resistance. The May 1st protests and strikes, while not a breakthrough for the movement, were the largest since 2006.

24. But overall, despite historic protests and growing anger which succeeded in delaying or blocking a number of aspects of Trump's agenda, it remains the case that Trump has not been decisively defeated and is instead still pushing ahead with his reactionary policies. While Trump has failed to implement much of his agenda so far due to the mass resistance and ruling class opposition, he remains a deeply menacing figure who is perceived to be a dramatic threat to wide sections of society. Trump has been able to install Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court and to use his executive powers to carry out a number of attacks: a ramping up of repression and deportation of immigrants, a reversal of the limited oversight of police departments under the Obama administration with encouragement of racist and violent policing, a return to more aggressive "war on drugs" and "war on crime" policies, systematic deregulation, significant undermining of the EPA, and withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord. And Trump and the Republican controlled Congress still threaten to attack healthcare and Planned Parenthood, give tax cuts to the rich, etc.

25. This experience has led to a certain understanding in the movement that just protesting is not enough. But the attempts to move towards a higher level of struggle through mass direct action reached their limits for the time being.

26. Instead the dominant tendency, under the influence of the Democratic Party establishment, has been to increasingly look to fight Trump through investigations into various scandals, impeachment, and, most of all, the upcoming 2018 elections. At this point, this represents the "path of least resistance" for the masses to test out.

27. The upcoming 2018 elections will increasingly become the dominant focus of the majority of those looking to fight Trump. This is being seized on by the Democratic Party to divert energy away from building mass struggle.

28. Alongside this have been other changes in the mood of different layers. The feeling of urgency which took hold of wide sections immediately after Trump was elected and inaugurated has cooled down some. This is part of a wider process of people becoming somewhat used to Trump's outrageous actions and policies. We have also seen a weakening of the feeling among a minority of the movement which had exaggerated fears of Trump, calling him a "fascist" and painting the picture of an imminent dictatorship. However, the dominant sentiment among progressive workers and youth is still a massive anger, fear and disgust at Trump, which is further reinforced by the falling support for Trump overall in society.

29. All of this has resulted, for the moment, in a certain lull in struggle. This is part of the inevitable ebb and flow of any mass movement, which needs at certain conjunctures to pause to catch its breath, digest its experiences, and draw lessons. If the Republicans are able to push through Trumpcare, this would represent a major defeat and could lead to a certain demoralization for a time, further prolonging this lull in struggle.

30. However, this lull is temporary. We do not know exactly when, but there is little doubt that at a certain point we will see new explosions of mass struggle taking various forms.

31. It would be a major mistake to confuse the slowing down of protest with a decline in mass opposition to Trump. In fact, support for Trump continues to fall, though only slowly so far among Republican voters (though opinion polls show a shift from "strong support" to "weak support" for Trump). The degree of public opposition to Trump is unprecedented for any president this early in their term.

32. New twists and turns in the situation are inevitable. The whip of Trump's counter-revolution will provoke new and higher levels of protest, which will hit new limits and be followed by new phases when activists search for a way forward. Inherent in the situation is the danger of the movement reaching a certain impasse, particularly given the inadequacy of its leadership and the low level of organization. This can be triggered by, or allow for, Trump defeating the resistance of certain communities, which can lead to a mood of demoralization for a time.

33. New events, such as terrorist attacks, outbursts of anger in riots, or foreign conflicts, can also undermine the movement and strengthen Trump temporarily. In a situation of political crisis at home it is possible that Trump will look to save himself by starting a war or seizing on a foreign conflict to rally the country around the flag. While this can have a certain impact, it would lay the basis for an even deeper crisis and recoil against Trump sooner rather than later.

34. The movement is faced with overcoming its limitations in the form of its leadership, program, and low level of organization. The struggle of activists with these questions represents a key opening for us. Despite all the obstacles and setbacks, these challenges are

propelling the most advanced activists forward in a molecular process of searching for the necessary ideas and tools to effectively resist.

35. We need to make sure Socialist Alternative is at the center of these debates in a politically cohesive way, with a bold approach to educate our members to intervene in a principled fashion in these openings, bringing Marxism to a new generation while systematically strengthening our organization.

Upheaval in the Political System

36. The main perspective is one of an on-going crisis and deep polarization of US society. This will unleash new waves of politicization, struggle, and even elements of rebellion along with the growth of outright reactionary forces.

37. The opposition to Trump amongst the capitalist class is a key politicizing factor that inflames protest. His disregard for elementary principles of bourgeois democracy, which the capitalists rely on to keep any administration under their control and serving their overall interests rather than the narrow needs of the president and their clique, fuels increased debate in the media.

38. The rift between Trump and the intelligence agencies and the deep state is very significant. Condensed in the Comey affair, we can see how the bureaucracy of the capitalist state represents conflicting but broader interests of the ruling class as a whole. The attempts by Trump to free himself from some of the checks and balances within the bourgeois state are being met with fierce resistance.

39. While the more farsighted sections of the ruling class were unable to avoid a Trump presidency, they are now working overtime to at least rein him in and surround him with an apparatus that keeps him in check.

40. While there is a growing discussion of impeachment, it is unlikely to happen in the short term. There needs to be more disillusionment amongst Trump's base before the GOP in Congress could move in that direction, and/or a far greater political rebellion within the US to force the hand of the ruling class. However, the representatives of the bourgeois are clearly dangling a sword over Trump's head in the form of Russia, obstruction of justice, or potentially other scandals, to have at their disposal if they decide to remove Trump to protect the interests of their system.

41. For working people these battles within the ruling elite make the dishonest methods of capitalist rule, the cronyism, corruption, backstabbing, and house of cards methods even more visible. Whenever Trump leaves the White House he will leave more anger and disgust at the whole system behind in the minds of workers and young people. The splits at the top of society undermine the legitimacy of the ruling class as a whole, which encourages the middle class and working class to question Trump and the system as well.

42. While we recognize that impeachment is not immediately posed, the issue is worth examining for a number of reasons. It is very likely the issue will arise again at a number of points, and we need our forces to be politically prepared with how we should respond especially given the confusion and ultra-left attitudes towards it among some on the far left. Further, from the point of view of method, the issue is useful to explore in clarifying our overall approach towards the anti-Trump movement and the Democrats within it.

43. While the Democratic Party leadership wants to use the question of impeachment as a tool to divert energy away from building a mass movement, Marxists can and should seize on these developments to drive a wedge between left-wing workers and their Democratic Party (mis)leaders, while utilizing the mood for impeachment to agitate for mass protests and organizing from below to drive out Trump.

44. We want to see Trump driven from office. This can take various forms. From a socialist standpoint, the ideal way would be through a mass revolt that forces Trump to resign. But in most people's minds, impeachment is the most common symbol associated with ~~of~~ bringing down Trump. As we have said repeatedly in our material and discussions, we demand the Democrats in Congress do everything in their power to fight Trump. Impeachment is one of the more powerful tools at their disposal.

45. There is a strong mood to see Trump brought down, and the vast majority of progressives want the Democrats in Congress to move to impeach Trump. We should seize on this to highlight the chasm between their desires and the timidity of the Democrats and the establishment who are hesitant to wage an all-out war against Trump, including dragging their feet on beginning a serious campaign to remove Trump through impeachment.

46. As Philip and Tom wrote in their contribution to the February NC (published in Members Bulletin #86) in

the section *Demanding the Democrats Fight Trump*: "We should participate in such efforts [of the base of the Democrats demanding determined efforts against Trump] and support demands for the Democrats to delay, obstruct, and block Trump's right-wing agenda. Given the conservative, cowardly, compromising outlook which dominates the psychology and ideology of the Democratic establishment, such an approach will not come naturally to them. Instead they will need to be pushed into taking such a confrontational stance by the pressure of a powerful left-wing movement from below (though ruling-class opposition to Trump can also push the Democrats into adopting a firmer oppositional stance). Throughout this we will need to continually but patiently help the best workers and youth draw the conclusion that there can be no trust in the Democratic Party and a new party is needed, one that is 100% part of the resistance to Trump and the Billionaire Class."

47. Our position is: there should be no trust or reliance in the establishment, including the Democratic Party establishment, to fight Trump but instead we must build our own independent strength in struggle. Flowing from this, we argue for building a massive movement from below to drive Trump from office, which is the best way to compel the Democrats, and later even a section of Republicans, to begin serious efforts to impeach Trump.

48. To the extent the Democrats move to begin a serious fight to impeach Trump, we will welcome it, while explaining this reflects the pressure from below and that rather than trusting the Democratic politicians, we must redouble that pressure from below by stepping up and strengthening our movements.

49. Again as Philip and Tom wrote in February "To the degree the Democrats put up resistance to Trump, we will welcome it, while explaining that this is contrary to their political orientation but was the result of the pressure of the movement from below, which demonstrates the need to not rely on them but instead build up the independent power of working people. Furthermore, we will explain that it is not enough for left Democrats to vote the correct way, but that they should use their position to actively help publicize and organize for mass protests and actions that will build the movement against Trump. Throughout this process we can explain we need an opposition party that is actively part of leading the struggle against Trump and the billionaires, not one that is compromised and needs to be dragged into struggle."

Divisions in the Democratic Party

50. Both parties are in serious turmoil. The two party system is steadily being undermined and could see serious challenges in the coming period from the left and the right.

51. However, the political search for a left alternative to the right-wing Republicans and the Wall Street Democrats is more complicated in the age of Trump than it was when the Democrats controlled the White House. Nevertheless, it still is an important tendency which continues to plow ahead, though at this stage in a more subterranean, disguised fashion. Only 38% of people think that Trump is "in touch with the concerns of most people." But in a striking display of the overall crisis of legitimacy of establishment politics, the GOP with 32% and the Democrats with 28%, have even lower numbers than Trump (*Washington Post*, April 23, 2017).

52. In the movements the consciousness of the majority is towards trying to reform the Democratic Party, but among many it is without much enthusiasm. As we have explained in previous material, there is a deep anger, even hatred, for the pro-corporate leaders of the Democratic Party among this layer.

53. Nevertheless, the dominant tendency at this stage is for this mood to be channeled not in the direction of beginning to build a new political party, but instead towards fighting the corporate leaders of the Democratic Party by working to take over the Party along the lines of Bernie Sanders strategy, a "tea party of the left." It will take further events for these illusions to be shattered and the necessary steps taken to build a powerful mass left populist or working class political alternative to the Democrats. But the deep skepticism that already underlies the sentiment towards reforming the Democrats is a powerful indication to the future storms being prepared.

54. With each of the four major special Congressional elections this year being lost by the Democrats (while not in friendly territory for them), the deep divisions within the Democratic Party broke out into the open. This is part of a furious debate over how to win the coming midterm elections. Berniecrats are pushing for a shift to the left, while the leadership of the Party is trying to hold them back. The corporate leadership is standing firm and has kept Nancy Pelosi (so far) in place. But in their struggle against the Sanders wing the establishment has been forced to use their left face, like former labor secretary Tom Perez, who narrowly won the DNC chair against Keith Ellison.

55. The perspective put forward in Philip and Tom's contribution to the February NC is being confirmed by events. They wrote "So far, mainstream Democrats have avoided a split by bending somewhat to the pressure from their base and Sanders, while maintaining control of the party's main levers of power. [It is] highly unlikely that the left will succeed in seriously changing the underlying character of the Democratic Party or in rallying substantial forces for an organized left-wing split in the short term. Far more likely is that there will be a lot of new energy in and around the Democrats that will push it to adopt a stronger oppositional stance towards Trump, and in a more left-wing direction in general, but will not succeed in fundamentally dislodging the pro-corporate leadership of the party."

56. Events have also confirmed our diagnosis from the February NC that on the basis of the experience of the post-2011 struggles and the Sanders campaign, combined with the radicalization taking place in the struggle against Trump, there is an important minority that could be won now to joining a new, radical left-wing or socialist party. The pressure in this direction was indicated by RoseAnn DeMoro, Executive Director of National Nurses United, in her support at the People's Summit for Sanders to launch a new People's Party. Unfortunately, it appears DeMoro's support remains rhetorical at this stage. Nevertheless, it is a pointer to the coming upheavals that will result in steps towards building a new left party.

57. We have argued that the scope for such a development would depend on the authority of the leading elements who establish it. If Sanders were prepared to launch a "People's Party" - which he is not currently - hundreds of thousands of members could be signed up. But even under this most favorable scenario, such a "People's Party" would still likely be in the minority and would need to orient towards and maintain a dialogue with the genuine workers and youth who would still need to go through further experiences to draw the conclusion that a break from the Democrats is needed rather than supporting left Democrats.

58. More concretely given Sanders' political attachment to reforming the Democrats, the space currently exists for a broad Socialist Party of 50,000 to 100,000 members if DSA were prepared to boldly take the lead, along with us and ~~working with~~ other forces. While this would not be a mass workers party, it would represent an important step forward by bringing together an important section of the most left-wing workers and youth into a common radical left party. Indications of this potential is shown in the growth of DSA from 8,500 to 21,000 members since Trump's election, the 42,000 who have signed the petition demanding Sanders launch a "People's Party," and the support that DSA, SA, and independent left candidates have received in local elections this year.

59. We have also seen some significant, though limited, successes of left wing candidates within the Democrats.[1]

Democratic Socialists of America

60. Particularly noteworthy for us is the success of some DSA members running for local office. More than a dozen DSA members now serve in local posts across the country (John Nichols, *The Nation*, 4/20/2017). As far as we can tell, none of these have been elected as independent candidates, either running as Democrats or not explicitly addressing the issue when standing in "nonpartisan" races.

1 John Nichols summarized these developments in a recent article in *The Nation* ("A Progressive Electoral Wave Is Sweeping the Country," 6/15/2017):

- **a.** Chokwe Lumumba was elected Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi's largest city, with 93% of the vote in a general election that drew one of the highest turnouts the city has seen in years. Lumumba won 55% of the vote in a Democratic primary that saw him oust the centrist incumbent mayor.
- **b.** On May 16 the veteran civil-rights lawyer Lawrence Krasner won the Democratic primary for Philadelphia district attorney. Krasner, who had defended Occupy Philadelphia and Black Lives Matter protesters, beat a crowded field of contenders with a campaign that promised progressive criminal-justice reform.
- **c.** In St. Louis on April 4 Natalie Vowell won a citywide school-board seat with "an intersectional campaign that focused not just on education policy but addressed the housing, employment, and criminal-justice issues that often determine whether students succeed. A Sanders delegate to the 2016 Democratic National Convention, Vowell promised to 'empower parents across the economic spectrum and stop equating poverty with apathy.'"
- **d.** "In Scott Walker's Wisconsin, April voting saw Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers win a statewide nonpartisan race after being targeted by conservative backers of the 'school choice' schemes … Evers won 70 percent of the vote in a state that narrowly backed Trump last fall."
- **e.** In New York another 2016 Sanders delegate, Christine Pellegrino, was elected with 58% of the vote in a district that gave Trump a 23-point edge last November. Pellegrino, an elementary-school teacher and union activist, "ran an edgy anti corruption campaign that recognized the mood among voters frustrated with both major parties."

61. The most prominent of these has been khalid kamau who was elected on April 18 with 67% of the vote to the City Council of South Fulton, Georgia. khalid highlighted his experience as a BLM and Fight for 15 organizer and was also a Sanders delegate at last year's Democratic National Convention.

62. Another victory for DSA was the election of Dylan Parker, a 28-year-old diesel mechanic, to the City Council of Rock Island, Illinois, a city of 39,000 people. His campaign called for universal high-speed Internet access and expanding Rock Island's publicly owned hydroelectric power plant. Parker won 68% of the vote on April 4. (John Nichols, *The Nation*, 4/20/2017)

63. Unfortunately, it appears that neither kamu nor Parker's campaigns had a very visible socialist profile. Further, their programs were relatively limited.[2]

64. But the key question now for DSA and their representatives will be: how will they use these elected positions? Will they boldly use them as platforms to build movements and lead struggles? Fight for bold, left-wing policies? Help spread and build a left-wing insurgency against corporate Democrats which builds towards a new party of working people? Use their position to popularize socialism? Such an approach will require standing against the ferocious opportunist and careerist pressures of capitalist society, the leaders of the labor and progressive movements, and the low level of mass consciousness of their own voters.

65. As far as we can see, unfortunately, this has not been the spirit employed by these campaigns so far and is not the instinct of the DSA leaders. However, these individuals will be tested and pushed in all kinds of directions under different pressures from above and from below. Our example of how to use a council position can play, and is playing, a certain role in helping people to see what is possible.

66. Nina Turner taking over the presidency of Sanders' Our Revolution could point to an important shift in Our Revolution. However, it is significant that DSA and not Our Revolution developed into the main force to express the aspirations of the Sandernistas as a broad organization with democratic rights of members and a socialist profile.

67. DSA is the most visible expression at this time of the search for a radical alternative and for a socialist force. While still a small organization in a country of 325 million people, it represents an important early indication of new formations developing. Its growth is particularly notable as it expresses the growth in workers and youth joining the socialist movement. While far from a mass force, DSA's growth is significant given the vacuum on the left of organized membership organizations and relative to the tiny size of forces in the US who identify as socialist over the past period and historically.

68. DSA is now the biggest organization calling itself socialist since the 1960s, and the third largest in US history. However, it is far weaker than the pre-WWI Socialist Party or the Communist Party in the 1930s and 40s not just in membership size, but also in its much weaker political program, and dramatically less social weight and roots in the working class. While an important layer of union activists and workers have joined DSA, it is so far dominated by white collar workers, college educated youth, and more middle class elements. Its members are largely new to activism and are not deeply rooted in the working class or in various social movements, as big sections of the early SP and CP were. Given the very new political character of the forces joining DSA, and its lack of a mass base, its perspectives at this stage for the medium term are very open as it could evolve in all sorts of different directions in response to big events.

69. As outlined in our materials, we welcome a new generation searching for socialist ideas getting organized in a broader organization like DSA. What does this mean? We welcome the tens of thousands of young people and workers who have decided they are socialists and want to get active in a socialist organization. This is an important step forward and represents a progressive development. At the same time we believe that the politics of the DSA leaders are not adequate for the task of rebuilding a politically principled socialist movement. These political limitations, including the limitations of DSA's left leaders, are already a relative obstacle to DSA seizing the full potential to build the socialist movement and wider workers struggles today, and if not overcome DSA's reformist politics will at a certain stage emerge as

2 It is interesting to note after being elected Parker announced he would donate all $6,000 of his salary as an Alderman to "non-profits and organizations benefiting Rock Island. While his contribution will be a negligible amount with respect to the funding necessary to provide the services and desires of the citizens of Rock Island, Alderman Parker recognizes the need for citizens to step forward, participate in the public arena and commit some personal dedication to building a stronger, healthier and livable community." While an excellent step, Parker poses this more in a liberal fashion than the class struggle, socialist way we raise the question of a worker's wage and donating the surplus towards building movements.

a decisive obstacle for these newly developing socialists to move forward. But at this stage, it is correct to emphasize the progressive features in this phenomenon, while maintaining an independent Marxist position and warning, in a friendly and patient manner, of the political limitations of DSA. We want to work with DSA, and Our Revolution where it has an active life, to help these new forces draw the necessary political conclusions from the fight backs against Trump and the billionaire class.~~We want to work with them and their organizations, DSA and others like Our Revolution where it has an active life, to help them and the movements to draw political conclusions from joint fightbacks against Trump and the billionaire class.~~

70. While DSA is a broad organization in flux and with a wide variety of political outlooks within it, the dominant approach is towards a left-wing, social democratic (in the sense of social democracy in the post-war period before the collapse of Stalinism), reformist policy. However, this political approach is fundamentally insufficient to achieve the far reaching change in society many of those newly joining the socialist movement want. In contrast, t~~T~~o build the socialist movement on principled foundations, to avoid the mistakes that have dominated the previous mass left formations, a consistent Marxist, revolutionary theory, program, and methods will be needed. We wish to work with the new forces organizing around DSA to win a section of them to Marxist politics ~~to build such a force~~ while collaborating ~~with others~~ to build broader fighting formations of workers and youth ~~that include other non-revolutionary tendencies~~.

71. While the leading layer of DSA has a left-wing, social democratic, reformist approach, the character of the new forces joining DSA is quite mixed and not yet fully settled. The dominant character at this point is their low political level, their lack of experience, and confusion on various issues. This is not an attack on the new people joining DSA, but is a reflection of the low starting point of almost all workers and youth who are being politicized in this period. Any left force that would grow explosively at this point in time, including ourselves, would have to deal with the same dynamic. What is most important at this stage is that this layer has taken a big step forward, identifying as socialist, drawing the conclusion that they need to active and organized, that many of them have committed themselves to building a socialist movement. At the same time, this new socialist layer is quite political undeveloped, which we need to be alive to and work to educate in Marxism in a patient and non-sectarian manner.

72. There is a wide range of evolving political outlooks, some contradictory with each other, within this layer joining DSA. This ranges from left-liberalism, reformism, anarchism, utopian socialism, left-wing identity politics, as well as those who describe themselves as Maoists, Marxist-Leninists, Marxists and Trotskyists. In this environment of widespread confusion and a low level of political understanding, ultra-left moods and views can gain widespread support at the same time opportunist and reformist positions are also adopted. It will take time, experience, political debate, and the conscious intervention of Marxists, for these new forces to learn further lessons and politically develop a deeper understanding of capitalism, class struggle, socialist politics, and Marxist theory. Of course, big sections of these new forces can be miseducated by the various leading political trends in DSA and on the broader left. That is why it is incumbent on us to search for every possible opportunity to work together with the new layers joining DSA and engage in a comradely political discussion and debate with the aim of spreading Marxist politics and combating the false political approach of various dominant trends on the left.

73. The potential exists for DSA to grow towards 30,000 or even 50,000 members in the next period. To fully seize on this DSA needs to overcome a certain lack of ambition within their leadership, which flows from their politics: their lack of systematically and consciously developing perspectives to identify the opportunities and understand the processes at work. In addition, DSA's development is also limited by the anxious approach of some of its leaders who fear that by taking bold initiatives they will "lose control."

74. At DSA's upcoming August convention their left wing, much of which considers itself to be Marxist and who has all the momentum on its side, will have a big opportunity to help shape the direction of DSA. A consistently Marxist tendency in DSA should be fighting for the leadership of DSA on the basis of movement building and a class struggle approach, socialist policies, a systematic approach to educating their new members in the ideas and methods of Marxism, and adopting an internationalist working class policy which would include leaving the pro-capitalist Second International. Unfortunately, the leaders of the left wing of DSA do not appear, from what we can see from outside of DSA, to share this approach and are not fully grasping these opportunities. While generally supporting the left-wing

of DSA when they fight against the right-wing of DSA, we recognize that the left-wing leaders, even those claiming to be Marxists, also tend to act in a reformist fashion, though with a more radical approach than the right-wing. But it is also clear that the dynamic of the new forces entering DSA, and big events, could push them much further ~~down this road~~to the left at a certain stage.

75. However, being pushed to the left in response to big events would likely mean responding in an empirical and pragmatic fashion (though it is possible for left leaders to develop as conscious Marxists in response to events if they can make a qualitative programmatic and theoretical breakthrough in their politics). History and experience have shown ~~it~~such a pragmatic approach, even if well meaning, is a serious political liability for left leaders~~to respond empirically and pragmatically to developments~~. Instead, the central lesson of Lenin and Trotsky is that conscious Marxist policies and strategies are needed which are systematically campaigned for in preparation for great events. Given the pressure of capitalist ideologies, particularly various reformist and left outlooks, this is best arrived at through a collective exchange of experience and democratic debate among conscious revolutionaries. This poses the need for revolutionaries to come together in an organized way, i.e. a revolutionary tendency, organization, or party depending on its stage of development. Unfortunately, this is not the approach of the leaders of the left in DSA.

76. The newly developing political discussions and debate among a broader left milieu is extremely welcome. Thousands are now following debates on the left - and we are more than confident that our ideas can find a big echo within them.

77. The recent *New York Times* op-ed on the legacy of the Russian Revolution by Bhaskar Sunkara, the editor of *Jacobin* and a leading figure on the left of DSA, is an example of the growing audience and discussion about socialist politics. While his article helps to popularize left politics and legitimize a discussion on socialism, he takes a very unclear position on the Russian Revolution by leaving the door wide open to the idea that it led to Stalinism. His article also puts forward a limited, reformist vision of socialism as a form of radical democracy rather than a fundamental transformation of society which includes bringing the commanding heights of the economy into public ownership and new, mass, democratic institutions which would allow workers and the oppressed to decisively end the rule of the capitalists and instead run society on their own.

78. There is a potential for a new, broad, democratic Socialist Party which is currently most clearly expressed in the growth of DSA. How far this development will go within the DSA remains to be seen. Our political differences with DSA include their hesitancy to break with the Democrats but goes much beyond that. We seek to have an open discussion with DSA and especially the left of the DSA about the need for working towards a broad, membership-based, left-wing party as an alternative to the Democrats, but also about what socialism actually means, how to break the power of corporate America, the need to take the top 500 companies under democratic public ownership, building a socialist movement based on movements of the working class rather than an electoralist outlook, international and historical questions, the need for a revolutionary party, and more.

BLM and Labor

79. The Black Lives Matter movement, which was the most dynamic struggle taking place in the US since its emergence in the summer of 2014, has been thrown back by Trump's victory in November. But already before Trump was elected the BLM movement was struggling. As we outlined in other material, this reflected its weaknesses in terms of a lack of political clarity, organization and clear proposals for next steps to advance the struggle. BLM also was not able to successfully mobilize large sections of the black working class. These elements of crisis in BLM pushed some forward to give better answers. We welcomed the discussions around the program of the Movement for Black Lives in 2016, despite its political weaknesses, while also highlighting the need for coordinated action and organization.

80. However, with the election of Trump, the Black Lives Matter movement lost ~~some~~ more of its dynamism. The strategy to put pressure on elected officials always had serious limitations. But this strategy appeared more promising under Obama than under the new Trump regime, with the racist Jeff Sessions in charge of the Department of Justice. Within BLM there is ~~This reflects~~ a certain political demoralization regarding Trump's election and a lack of clarity on how to move forward under these new conditions. It also expresses a feeling that continuing to protest is not enough and new ways of fighting are needed, a mood that was growing within BLM before the election of Trump. This has resulted in a limited development towards BLM activists running for political office, mainly under the banner of the

Democratic Party, but with some notable exceptions especially Nikkita Oliver's People's Party campaign for Mayor in Seattle.

81. The new campaign being led by Reverend Barber is important to follow and could open up important new vistas. Developments in the south could spark new impulses for the movement to reignite.

82. Labor's decline continues, with passivity and even collaboration with Trump. The "Friedrichs case," the threat of "right to work for less" for public sector workers through the Supreme Court is coming back, just under new names (Yohn v. California Teachers Association and Janus v. AFSCME). This Supreme Court Case could deal a major blow to the public sector unions, one of labor's last strongholds.

83. However, important spots of resistance do exist. The most dynamic forces are firstly the NNU and to a lesser extent CWA. There are also signs of life in some teacher's locals and a more fighting leadership in ATU. Most important is the search for working class methods of struggle with strikes and job actions with the discussion about anti-Trump strikes on March 8 and May 1. This points towards the potential for rebuilding a broad workers movement in an explosive fashion in the coming period, though quite possibly in new forms that will not simply be contained within the narrow confines of the existing union structures.

84. This document is not able to fully deal with the developments in BLM, labor and other social movements (such as the fight against sexism, the LGBT movement, and the environmental movement). We have tried to briefly highlight here the most important trends in BLM and labor that relates to and will impact other battles that we touch on in more depth throughout this document. Other material will be needed to analyze these movements in more depth.

The Struggle against Trumpcare, the Fight for Medicare for All, and Our Approach

85. Millions are terrified about the plans that Trump and the GOP are putting forward to replace Obamacare. With the failure, so far, of the Senate to pass Trumpcare, Trump even raised the idea of repealing before replacing. That would trigger an even bigger outcry. Regardless, the issue of healthcare has a huge potential to undermine Trump's support among his base.

86. Trumpcare represents the most reactionary attack on working people in the US in decades. It would carry out an enormous transfer of wealth away from poor and working people to the super-rich, while barbarically throwing tens of millions off of healthcare.

87. This is a reminder of how incorrect much of the far left was in 2016 in insisting that there was no difference between Trump and Clinton or the Republicans and Democrats. The issue of healthcare sharply illustrates the reality that the Democratic policy of Obamacare is a "lesser evil" compared to Trumpcare. Recognizing this did not prevent us in any way from arguing against the dead-end of supporting the Democratic Party and instead for a vote for Jill Stein; in fact, it allowed us to win more support for this position.

88. We explained that the severe limitations of the market-based Obamacare policy (echoing RomneyCare in Massachusetts) opened the door to the Republicans to gain a popular echo with their attacks, as millions faced rising healthcare costs and an undermining of high-quality union healthcare plans, with a policy that still failed to achieve universal coverage and maintains the enormously wasteful and expensive for-profit healthcare system. That is why the best way to answer the Republican attacks is a Medicare for All socialized healthcare system that would provide universal and better healthcare at a reduced cost. And even more, it is actually a more politically popular position than Obamacare!

89. Following the Republican victories in the 2016 election, the repeal of Obamacare and replacing it with Trumpcare was the number one item on their political agenda. Despite controlling the White House, Congress and the Senate, this has been met with huge obstacles. So far it was more the mood of widespread public opposition than an organized movement that stopped the Republicans from moving forward, although the continual protests at town hall meetings and occupations of Congressional offices did have an important impact.

90. The Democrats are strongly opposed to Trumpcare and are using the mass media and other avenues to raise public awareness against it. Progressive groups tied to the Democratic Party have successfully mobilized for angry town halls and have flooded Republican Congress members with an avalanche of phone calls and letters. But with a few exceptions, there was no lead given to mobilize this anger into a mass struggle from below.

91. In this situation, our material and interventions need to start with opposing the Republican attack on healthcare. We want to defeat Trumpcare and we have

the best ideas for how to build a movement that can stop it. ~~That~~ Aiming our fire first and foremost at Trump and the Republicans is sometimes counterintuitive, given ~~to~~ the anger amongst our members towards the Democratic Party. But this is an important tactic, given that most progressive workers and youth are angry primarily at Trump, and they are less angry at the Democratic Party. This approach will best allow us to reach workers and youth with our politics, including the vital need for working people to organize independently of big business in their own movements and with their own political party.

92. Most people and even activists do not have a clear consciousness of what a serious, working class opposition to Trump in Congress and on the streets could do. There is a limited understanding of the potential to get organized and build a lasting movement. Confronted with the attacks by Trump, even Chuck Schumer manages to sound like a strong opponent of Trump to the untrained ears of some people who fear losing their healthcare.

93. We should explain a fighting strategy would be to organize national days of action which build towards a million person march on Washington DC, mass occupations of Republicans' offices and even a mass occupation of Congress itself, as well as strike action starting with unionized health care workers. In this context we should criticize the Democrats' refusal to take such steps and the hostility of the Democratic establishment towards Medicare for All. When they are in charge, like in New York or California, their machine kills the best defense we have against Trump: Mobilizing people to stop the attacks and to win single-payer in their states.

94. But we should also - in solidarity and very friendly in tone, but clear in content - criticize the failure of the labor and progressive organizations like Planned Parenthood, along with Sanders and Our Revolution, to organize an all-out campaign of mass struggle (though of all these groups, Sanders has done the most with his constant media appearances which include advocating for Medicare for All, his tour of a number of "red" states, and organizing protests in January and February).

95. On the other side, there is a huge opening to demand what is needed. As the *Washington Post* said "the biggest winner in the current health-care debate: Single-payer" (July 1, 2017). "Polling has shown government-provided healthcare to be a very popular notion among Americans. Depending on whether it's described as a public option, Medicare for all, or federally funded universal health care, proposals are supported by 57 to 61 percent of Americans, compared with only 19 to 24 percent opposed." (*Seattle Times*, June 27, 2017)

96. While having been an annual ritual for left Democrats to move Single Payer forward at the state level or in the Congress without much of a fight, this year real momentum developed. The DSA door-knocked in California together with an enthusiastic campaign by the NNU. NY saw a real debate and anger when conservative Democrats blocked it.

97. Reflecting this pressure, Democratic Senators Elizabeth Warren and Kirsten Gillibrand have publicly come out in favor of Medicare for All and added to the momentum. "In the House, 112 of the 193 Democrats have cosponsored a singlepayer bill proposed by Representative John Conyers Jr. of Michigan and called the 'Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act.' Until recently, the bill had attracted a fraction of that support." (*New York Times*, 6/3/2017)

98. While left Democrats are seen as promoting and even campaigning for Medicare for All, corporate Democrats are seen as killing the bills where they are needed to shield the insurance and pharmaceutical companies.

99. We absolutely should expose the role of the Democratic Party and there are important opportunities to argue for independent candidates, independent of corporate cash and independent of the corporate Democratic Party, and for a new party to replace those in power who get in the way of Medicare for All.

100. However, we need to be careful to not come across like we are saying the struggle against Trumpcare or for Medicare for All needs to wait until we have a new party. We can and should offer ideas for how to build a real grassroots movement now, when the question of the development of a mass political alternative is not yet seen in the movement as an issue that will be solved very soon.

101. We support mobilizing people to call their representatives in Congress, but we do not agree with limiting the struggle to this. Instead, we use it as a step towards getting people actively engaged in community action groups, in unions taking a bold stand, and in an organized movement.

102. We want to call out the rotten capitalist system, where healthcare is organized for profit and argue to take

the insurance, pharmaceutical, and medical device companies and hospitals under democratic, public ownership as a step toward a socialist society. At this point in the movement we can open a dialogue with a wide section of activists on these far reaching proposals. We are used to thinking it is easier to win workers to the idea of a new party than to the idea of fighting for socialism. But in this situation we can actually win a wider layer of workers to a socialist vision of socialized healthcare on the basis of bold anti-capitalist agitation than if we started with the question of breaking from the Democrats. But we don't stop with socialized medicine. We should pose the question what kind of party is needed to win it? The Democratic Party is the second most pro-capitalist party in the world. To abolish the private, for-profit insurance and healthcare companies will require building our own mass political party which fights the big healthcare companies and their system of capitalism, a party which is democratically run by its members, and bases itself on determined social struggle. On this basis, a critique of the Democrats from us will be sharper, because it will be better understood than if we appear to lecture the movement from outside about a general truth of Marxism, that the Democratic Party is a capitalist party and working people need our own party.

103. Naomi Klein's new book, *No is Not Enough*, speaks to a broader sentiment. Klein identifies a radical truth, that more and more people in practice acknowledge, that even if we block Trump on each and every occasion, "the political conditions that produced [Trump's victory] and which are producing replicas around the world, will remain to be confronted." The new momentum behind the demand for Medicare for All is only one indicator of this. We need to re-think our demands, engage in a understanding way with the movements and help them use the strength of radical demands to overcome their weaknesses which lie in the lack of clarity about working class mobilization, independent organization, a break from the Democratic Party, and the need for a rounded out socialist program.

104. The struggle for healthcare will remain, with some ups and downs, a huge feature in US politics over the next year and beyond. The lessons for our approach that we can draw out today will also help us in many other fields of struggle.

Addressing Left Efforts to Reform the Democratic Party

105. The battle to defeat the Republicans' barbaric assault on healthcare poses very sharply the question of how we address the issue of the Democratic Party in the new political situation with Donald Trump as President and the growth of left-wing efforts to transform the Democratic Party under the leadership of Bernie Sanders.

106. Our National Committee in February had an important discussion on this that made a number of significant points. We think it's useful to quote some of the key passages from Philip and Tom's contribution to that discussion that summarizes a number of the central points.

107. "We do not place our opposition to the Democratic Party against the needs of the movement. Instead, basing ourselves on the experience and tasks of the movement, we draw out the necessary lessons about the pro-capitalist, anti-worker character of the Democratic Party and the need for a new political force that is 100% against Trump and the billionaire class. To the extent that the Democrats fail to take the necessary measures to fight Trump in Congress, we will criticize them for it, pointing out that this flows from their conservative outlook and ties to big business and that we need to rely instead on building a massive movement from below and a new party which is consistently against Trump and can help lead the struggle."

108. And further: "In this new situation, it will not be adequate for us to simply rely on repeating our position that the Democratic Party is a big business party, the left should break from it and begin building a new party. This is still our view, but how do we pose things in these new circumstances? We should explain that in our view, the strategic task facing working people on the political plane is to build their own independent power by forming a broad, membership-based, left-wing party with a clear anti-corporate program that helps to unite and lead struggles and runs in elections."

109. We went on to explain that we should engage with genuine elements fighting to transform the Democratic Party into a "people's party" by putting forward that we think to achieve this would require an all out struggle to a) cut off all donations from corporations and the super-rich to the Democratic Party and its candidates; b) adopt a thoroughly anti-corporate left platform that elected officials must vote in accordance with or else lose the party's support and endorsement; and c) that the party is opened up for mass membership involvement and democratic control. We go on to explain that such a struggle would be met by an all-out resistance by the pro-corporate Democrats, inevitably leading to a

split and the emergence of a new party if the left stuck to its position.

110. We also summed up the underlying method we should use in this new situation: "*Our approach should be to 'march separately' – to put forward our own independent socialist policies and under our own independent Socialist Alternative banner – while 'striking together' against Trump; and within that, striking together with left Democrats like Sanders against the corporate Democrats. At each stage we will point out the political inadequacy of the corporate Democrats as well as the left Democrats and other left forces, drawing out the need for clear socialist policies.*"

111. "In this sense, our previous terminology of 'building a movement independent of the Democratic Party' is somewhat outdated in the current situation. We will need to find new ways to express the same idea but in way that reflects the current conditions. We can explain that the movement against Trump should not restrict itself to the limits of what the corporate Democrats are willing to accept but instead will be able to mobilize much greater support by putting forward bold demands like Medicare for All, etc."

Historic Opportunity to Build SA Requires a Focus on Cadre Building

112. At present we see the biggest opportunities in the US since the 1970s to build the socialist movement and a distinct Marxist force. Socialist Alternative must do everything possible, and more, to seize this opening!

113. Trotskyists in the US can for the first time in a long period overcome some of our relative isolation. We can move over the next few years to 2,000 or even 5,000 members while developing serious roots in certain cities, among strategic sections of the working class, and within some unions. With the current battles and movements, there is a special opening to win more women and people of color.

114. While this is objectively possible, subjectively the immediate tasks facing Socialist Alternative are different. Our main task at this point of time is not recruitment. To be able to grow to 2,000 and then 3,000 members it is first necessary to make a qualitative breakthrough in the political development of the organization and the crystallization of a new layer of cadre.

115. This is not a formula for all times and places, but reflects the concrete stage of development of our organization at this particular conjuncture. In the past we needed to continually argue against a tendency towards a conservative approach to recruitment and party building and in favor of a relatively ~~in the hesitation of some in our ranks towards an~~ "open door" policy towards recruitment. This was absolutely needed at that time. However, over the past 3.5 years our organization has grown from 250 to over 1,000 members and spread to many new parts of the country. Following Trump's election we grew rapidly from around 850 members to almost 1,100.

116. The objective space to grow still exists. What has changed is that in a politically new and challenging situation, which our organization is struggling to adjust to, the internal balance between our cadre and newer members has now been stretched to the maximum. To go forward, we will need some time to politically educate the new forces which have joined and develop a wider layer of cadre. While reading books and discussions are necessary for political education, they are not sufficient. Most of all, it requires gaining experience dealing with the real challenges building movements and a Marxist approach of how to engage with working people searching for a way forward.

Re-evaluation of our Re-launch & A More Selective Approach to Recruitment

117. With Trump's election a number of our plans as outlined in our May 2016 National Convention needed to be reviewed.

118. We were very well positioned among Bernie Sanders supporters and aimed to tap into the space for a "New Socialist Party" with our planned re-launch. We were moving forward with a bold approach to present our organization to a new layer of Sandernistas, which was linked to ambitious targets for recruitment. That was the correct approach under those circumstances.

119. However, the objective situation changed sharply in November. Our re-launch would have been a distraction from the urgent need to re-orient the organization towards the resistance against Trump and taking the time to have internal discussions to be able to come to terms with a radically altered political terrain.

120. Further, DSA emerged as a significant force with the potential to absorb a broader layer that we could not just include in our organization without losing our character as a distinct Marxist force. In this new situation we now use the slogan of a "New Socialist Party" to call for DSA to launch a broad, multi-tendency Socialist Party that can grow to 50,000 to 100,000

members rapidly. Such a new Socialist Party would not be a mass workers party, nor would it be a revolutionary party. But it would represent an important step forward by bringing together a significant section of the most left-wing workers and youth into a common party. Such a radical left party could play - with the correct policies, tactics, and leadership - an important role in spreading anti-capitalist and socialist ideas, strengthening the left-wing of the anti-Trump movement, and help a wider layer of progressive workers to more quickly draw the conclusion that a political alternative to the Democratic Party is needed. It would also represent an arena for the members of this party to learn through experience and for debate between the various political trends within it, which would provide important opportunities for us to spread our ideas.

121. The development of this slogan for a "New Socialist Party" is an important ~~That is a significant~~ addition to our call for "a new party to fight the right" that in ~~many~~ some occasions replaced our call for a "new party for the 99%." It provides us with a more definite slogan to use when speaking to the radicalizing layers of the anti-Trump movement which makes more concrete the immediate steps that could be taken by DSA, and other left forces, towards building a stronger, more organized left and begin to build a political challenge to the Democratic Party. This call also corresponds with the objective process that is taking place towards the crystallization of a new socialist consciousness, especially among a section of youth, and the emergence of a new party. But it is not our only slogan, and is not the slogan we should use when addressing a broader audience.

122. We also need to change our approach to recruitment at this point of time. The resistance against Trump leads to a feeling of a need for broader unity that we have to skillfully withstand. Even some of our members were initially taken aback by Trump's victory and drew the conclusion that building a broader, united resistance should be our main focus now. The development of the DSA highlights a broader discussion about socialism where we need to develop a much clearer understanding within our ranks about the distinct Marxist contribution we want to bring to broader formations and the revolutionary character of our organization in contrast to broader formations.

123. The current imbalance between newer members and cadre within the organization is a challenge to fulfilling these tasks. Our leading members have to focus on developing more comrades in and through engaging in these battles.

124. Flowing from this, recruitment is a lower priority for the organization at this time. We should adopt a more selective approach to recruitment, looking to recruit on a higher political level. Generally, contacts should not be accepted into membership without having first discussed with us "part one" of the new version of the New Member Reading Packet and committing to read and discuss "part two." Contacts who are not in agreement or open to learning our politics or methods should not be recruited, but instead asked to get a subscription to the paper and to become a sustainer.

Addressing Broader Audiences & Leading Mass Work on a Principled Marxist Basis

125. The Trump era will include a number of complications, setbacks, and lulls in the movement. Out of setbacks, higher and more developed attempts to fight back will arise. It would be naive to expect the broader movement or our organization to simply develop on a linear path of steady growth.

126. Reflecting the decades long struggle to defend revolutionary principles but unfortunately in isolation from the mass of the working class, the biggest challenge for small Marxist forces today is the tendency towards a sectarian approach and to dogmatically cling to old formulas rather than engage with the new openings. Paradoxically, the essence of this outlook is a fear of being unable to speak to broader forces on a principled Marxist basis. Put another way, once most of the socialist left is thrust out of their isolation ~~narrow sectarian existence~~ and into leadership of a broader struggle they tend to adopt an opportunist approach.

127. In contrast, we must politically educate and develop our organization to be able to offer revolutionary socialist ideas while finding the necessary tactics and language to engage with the emerging radicalization taking place, despite it starting from a low level of consciousness. Our political capacity to do this has been the principal strength which has allowed Socialist Alternative to stand out and become a point of attraction on the left over the past few years.

128. This did not happen accidentally. It is the product of a conscious, rigorous, unsparing approach towards political clarity in our analysis, program, demands, strategy, tactics, slogans, terminology, and organizational methods. This requires an ongoing, determined struggle against the dominant anti-political, anti-theoretical, and pragmatic attitude which dominates

the US left and working class and inevitably finds expression within our ranks.

129. This dominant approach on the left, which deceptively appears as a shortcut but only lays the basis for political blunders and setbacks, argues we are being "sectarian" and "splitting hairs" by demanding political precision and accuracy, i.e. it seeks to prettify political and organizational sloppiness which the majority of the left elevates into a virtue. In contrast, standing in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and the CWI we fight to maintain the sharpest possible political and organizational edge by taking a meticulous approach ~~towards even secondary issues~~.

130. This exacting, scientific attitude paid huge dividends when our carefully worked out analysis of the political situation allowed us, uniquely on the left, to identify the opening to the left of the Democratic Party in the immediate aftermath of Occupy. Further, we had the advantage of having an organization that operated as a democratic collective and was thus able to draw out the organizational conclusion of testing this hypothesis by asking Kshama Sawant to run for office in 2012. This allowed us to not just have a purely speculative analysis, but an instrument to measure and make visible this opening.

131. The strength of our principled, but tactically flexible approach was on full display in our leading role in the struggle for $15 in Minneapolis and in Seattle, against the resistance of the labor leaders (and ultra-left groups). This was further complicated by the still existing proxy consciousness among the majority of workers. Without prettifying things, soberly facing up to all the limitations in mass consciousness, we were able to find ways to engage and activate new workers while working with and challenging the labor leaders.

132. Despite initial hesitation in our ranks, we were able to come to the correct decision that we would need to make concessions to the confused consciousness that existed in the majority of workers towards small business with a longer phase-in for small businesses, while explaining this concession openly in a principled manner and not pretending that it was something else. We also faced debate within SA and among the supporters of 15 Now in developing our tactic of including a "Collective Bargaining Opt Out" for hotel workers as a tool to win over Unite Here in the struggle in Seattle.

133. Critical to the election of Kshama Sawant in 2013 and her re-election in 2015 was our ability - unique on the left - to engage in a friendly dialogue with genuine left-wing Democratic voters with the aim (and result) of actively winning many of them away from the Democratic Party. This was most visible in our bold initiative of launching "Democrats for Sawant" in 2013, which along with the launch of "Small Business for Sawant" was openly mocked at the time by sectarian elements. We made even more aggressive efforts in 2015 to help left-wing Democrats organize within their local Party structures to partially block the endorsement of the Democratic challenger to Sawant, acting to support the Socialist candidate who was systematically undermining the Democratic Party.

134. This principled but engaging approach, even on very hostile territory, was also critical to our successful work in the Seattle City Council. We have had to continually fight to drag various left-wing, and not so left-wing, Democratic politicians into collaborating with us on specific issues and struggles. It was also key to our intervention in the 2015 Seattle City Council elections, where we succeeded in sharpening the contradictions between the anti-corporate Democrats running against establishment Democrats by vigorously working in solidarity with the left Democrats in their conflicts against establishment Democrats, while continually working to educate their supporters (as well as many of our own supporters) on the capitalist character of the Democratic Party and the need for an independent political force for the left.

135. The experience of our intervention in the huge upheaval around the Bernie Sanders campaign was among the biggest contribution to our cadre development in the recent period. Intervening with a firm principled approach of breaking people away from the Democrats while getting involved in the radicalization and first steps of a new generation searching for socialist ideas - that combination was decisive to educate a new generation in our ranks and increase the cohesion of the organization. Our internal debates were crucial to making all comrades aware of the dangers of passive sectarianism as well as the threats of opportunism that such a tactic also includes.

136. The Sanders campaign underlined our political strength, demanding an ability to size up a situation concretely. Almost all of the rest of the other socialist groups were unable to do so, remaining trapped in a dogmatic and sectarian approach. On the other hand, DSA with its impressionistic and empirical approach was able to recognize the radicalization that was taking place. Unfortunately, they did so on an opportunistic basis,

tending not to fight against the weaknesses of Sanders from an independent socialist standpoint.

137. In this new period it is also important to have an open, self-confident approach towards debates on the left especially given the strong feeling among progressives that the left is too divided and sectarian. We were able to take steps in this direction with the opening up of our paper for a comradely exchange and debate with the ISO and organizing Socialism Conferences with the DSA and others.

138. The question can be posed: why is it so important for us, a relatively small organization predominantly engaged in propaganda work, to be able to speak to broader audiences and lead mass work in a principled Marxist fashion?

139. First, we are speaking to a mass audience regularly through Kshama's work as a high-profile political leader in Seattle. This is the highest profile, most impactful work being done by the organization currently. Nor would we have been able to win this position, despite being a very small organization before Kshama was elected, if we had not been politically equipped with the necessary methodological approach towards mass work. (Kshama was elected in 2013 with almost 95,000 votes, certainly a mass audience, even though we only had 50-70 members at the time in Seattle!) We then needed to address an even larger mass audience when we led the fight for $15 in Seattle in 2014. The tremendous example we set in Seattle was the turning point in allowing our organization to make a breakthrough nationally, establishing SA as a point of attraction for thousands and allowing us to grow by leaps and bounds in all areas of the country.

140. We have been able to build on this example in Minneapolis, with our mass campaigning for $15 and with the Ginger Jentzen campaign for City Council. Given the relative vacuum on the left and the explosive developments that are impending, *similar opportunities will open up for SA in other cities across the country, even where we are relatively small, if we have local leaderships that are vigorously fighting to find these opportunities, and are politically equipped to carry out this work.*

141. We have also initiated or played leading roles in many other lively campaigns and struggles in numerous other parts of the country where comrades have done fantastic work. As we explained above, our intervention in the Sanders campaign was rooted in the same political approach of being able to break out of the trap of a narrow sectarian outlook, while developing concrete demands and tactics to arm our comrades to do battle with the reformist, electoralist ideas that dominated the Sanders movement. Further, to successfully develop union work, our comrades must be politically equipped to speak to a broad consciousness while having the political firmness to argue for socialist ideas.

142. When we intervene in broader movements, we want to win the best elements to join SA. But on what basis? We want to win the most politically advanced elements to a program and strategy that will allow them to successfully lead these broader movements. This approach has long been the hallmark of the CWI. This requires that we, even where we are a small propaganda group, have the political understanding and tactical ability to assist the leadership of broader movements if they are won to our position to be able to lead a mass struggle on a principled, socialist basis.

143. Finally, to properly educate our members and train a healthy cadre we must politically inoculate them against ~~the diseases of~~ sectarianism, which plagues the socialist left, and its twin evil opportunism, which permeates all left forces which begin to have any broader impact on society.

144. Again, to rise to this challenge is a political task which requires a conscious effort and leadership. This will not happen without vigorous discussion and debate. The transformation of our organization over the past 4 years has required an on-going political effort to overcome the legacy of a small circle mentality and a propagandistic approach which naturally develops when an organization remains small and relatively isolated for a prolonged time.

145. In the new situation we have entered, with an organization of over 1,000 members and an explosive but complicated political situation where we can make new leaps forward but will also face unprecedented challenges, we will no doubt face new discussions and debates around shaking off old routines and outdated formulas to be able to measure up to the requirements of building a substantial revolutionary party of 2,000 to 5,000 members in the coming battles.

The Challenges Ahead

146. To generalize the political challenge outlined above: We need to be sharp and clear in defending Marxist ideas, but engage with a new layer of people that are starting with a very low level of political experience. It is unclear to most people what socialist ideas are.

There is a huge pragmatism about how to engage with the Democratic Party. There is not even much of an understanding of what it means to mobilize, organize, or build a movement. We can offer a lot of answers and need to combine the skills of the united front and the transitional method in a new period of mass anger, movements, and confusion.

147. Socialist Alternative has made tremendous steps forward. Just in the very recent period we have grown beyond 1,000 members, had the huge success of winning $15 in Minneapolis, seen the launch of Ginger's dynamic campaign, and Kshama continues to have a high profile on the US left. We also started initiatives to work with the DSA. Our very successful summer school showed there is a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to building SA and a layer in the organization that is politically developing.

148. However, there is still a lot to do: On the one hand, the growth of DSA requires a deeper political understanding within the organization on the revolutionary character of Socialist Alternative and the vital importance of building a revolutionary party as opposed to just building broad formations. On the other hand, we need to further develop the skills to embrace the new layer of activists and politicized people, such as DSA members, in campaigning work and cooperation to develop the politics necessary to fight capitalism. This requires developing the political ability to work in a principled, yet non-sectarian and collaborative fashion, with other trends. This is a real and on-going challenge for all of us~~many of our members~~.

149. We have sharpened the theoretical understanding in the organization around the fight for black liberation. We need to deepen this while working to build amongst people of color in a challenging environment of Identity Politics in movements such as BLM.

150. Individual members are doing valuable work within their unions, like in MNA, Philadelphia and Boston nurses, ATU in Minnesota, the building trades and teachers in Seattle~~SEA~~, where the vacuum of leadership opens up opportunities for us. This work requires great sensitivity and political strength as part of long term strategy to build broader influence and recruit a core to SA.

151. At the same time, these successes pose new challenges, politically and organizationally. We can easily recruit people, but as outlined above we have reached a point where numerical growth will only be sustainable if we develop the cadre to keep, organize, and educate new members. This task of cadre development, of political and organizational cohesion, starts at the top of the organization.

152. In this new situation the tasks of engaging with a new layer of radicalizing people, bringing together and distilling the collective experience of a much larger organization, strengthening the political understanding and cohesion within our ranks in a dynamic way, requires that we make some adjustments in the work of the EC and NC. Methods which were adequate in an earlier stage of development are no longer sufficient in these new circumstances.

153. We need the EC to more proactively and systematically organize an on-going discussion with the NC and the leadership in the different areas on political developments, identifying opportunities, getting input on the challenges and difficulties the branches are facing, where our members' consciousness is actually at, "warts and all," and give a politicized lead to organizational challenges. This requires the EC to have a finger on the pulse, a tight grip and understanding, of the actual state of the branches and membership.

154. This is linked to developing a more conscious approach of drawing out the political and organizational conclusions, and fighting to win clarity within the organization around them. For example, on the issue of the healthcare debate, we need to establish a common, cohesive understanding throughout our membership that a) Our starting point must be to fight to defeat Trumpcare, b) Our proposals for a fighting strategy to defeat it (i.e. protests, sit-ins, a million person march on Washington, and strikes of unionized healthcare workers), c) The debates and divisions within the Democrats over Medicare for All, d) How we need a more nuanced approach towards the Democrats in the context of this struggle, and e) The scope for bold anti-capitalist and socialist agitation.

155. The NC also needs to develop to play a more ~~active~~ political role. The NC members need to be at the forefront of developing new local leaders and cadre. But the NC also needs to help politically lead the national organization by taking on responsibilities for writing material and political tasks, leading interventions, making visits, etc. ~~For~~ Freeing NC members ~~be freed~~ up for this work will require successfully developing a wider layer of leaders in the branches, but also being willing to allow this newer layer to take on more responsibilities in

the branches and make some mistakes, which they will learn from. But most of all, the political role of the NC is first and foremost taking seriously and engaging in political discussions and debates. This does not mean NC members, who already sacrifice tremendously for the organization, should simply "do more" but rather that the organization as a whole needs to more consciously make hard choices and develop the conditions that free NC comrades up to play more of a political role.

156. For the EC to be successful and the sharpest possible tool requires that we have a lively, independent thinking, critically minded, self-confident, politically educated and informed NC which challenges the EC and holds it to account. In turn, the NC will only be able to fully play this role if it rests on a vibrant democratic culture within the ranks of the organization of politically educated Marxists rooted in living struggles of workers and youth - something we are far from. But we must begin to move towards this, starting with strengthening the role of the NC.

157. To develop cadre, we need more high quality, lively material which can tackle the key discussions and debates taking place on the left. The question of how we do this and develop our publications will be discussed at upcoming national meetings.

158. If we build and develop cadre through an understanding of -- and an active engagement in -- the battles against Trump and the billionaire class, we can lay the basis for a powerful Marxist force in the major imperialist power as part of a principled international socialist force which can give the best possible leadership to the working masses and oppressed struggling for change.

EC Majority Reply to Document from SK and PL

Submitted by KB, TC, AJ, BK, CP, KS

1. The election of Trump, the protests that have developed against him, the divisions in the two major parties and the growth of the left in the US pose new questions for our leadership and our organization as a whole. Big events like this often provoke debates in our party; we welcome a comradely discussion on these issues being aired fully in the NC and beyond.

2. At very short notice to both the EC and NC, SK and PL produced a long document for discussion at the July NC. The majority of EC members disagree with many important political and organizational assertions in this material. A number of these points came out at the NC and the CWI School in Barcelona, but we feel the need to reply at length here in order to clarify the political differences that need to be discussed further in the organization.

3. This isn't intended as a perspectives and tasks document, and it should be noted that the NC unanimously passed a building resolution that contains an important political introduction. We feel that the building resolution from the NC stands in contrast to the characterization of the organization and its tasks put forward in SK and PL's document; we detail some of these points below. The scope of this EC majority reply is to clarify issues for the debate that should continue in the organization rather than to give overall perspectives. The NC will need a full perspectives update at our next face-to-face meeting.

4. Since the NC, SK and PL's document has been amended even though it was only intended to be a discussion document. We welcome if the comrades are rethinking their approach based on the discussion and criticisms at the EC, NC and CWI School. However, this has not been politically explained to us, and we feel that replying to the original document that was presented to the July NC as well as the August version will help clarify the points of contention in the debate.

5. In general, we feel that SK and PL's document is focused on a balance sheet of the first half of 2017, but does not provide perspectives for the situation going forward and goes on at length about the approach we "should" take in various circumstances that has already been developed in a much more concrete way in our newspaper and on our website.

6. We also have political differences, outlined below, on our approach to the corporate Democrats, our analysis of Black Lives Matter and the need to develop a more in-depth analysis of the situation in DSA. We feel that these differences reflect ongoing debates on the EC in relation to Trump's election and the struggles against him that need to brought into the National Committee in an organized way. For the debate to be fully aired, it is necessary for us to bring in points from our EC discussions that led up to the July NC and happened at EC meetings after the NC.

Democrats and Berniecrats

7. Two-thirds of Americans think that the Democratic Party is out of touch, a higher figure than feel the same way about Trump. In this context, attempts of the Democratic Party leadership to appear "left" or "radical" often fall flat with the Berniecrat activists and the wider population. The "unity" tour is one key example, and Schumer and Pelosi's "better deal" was received without enthusiasm from the Democratic Party base and with heavy criticism from the Berniecrats, particularly for the lack of a demand for "Medicare for All." Of course the fact that 17

Senators signed onto Sanders' Medicare for All bill, reflecting massive pressure from the base, can increase illusions in the idea that the Democratic Party can be pushed to the left but it will also increase people's confidence in fighting for more. In no way will it change the fundamental dynamic of simmering civil war inside the Democrats (see the storm created by Hillary's new book and the reaction to the possibility or a rotten deal with Trump on DACA) or raise confidence in the corporate leadership whose key figures have demonstratively not signed on.

8. Our material should -- as it has -- take into account that millions of people, often the most combative and advanced sections of workers, are fed up with the Democratic Party establishment. While we should be willing to put demands to the Democratic Party leaders, we should also realize that an honest explanation that directly exposes the corporate Democrats can be met with an enthusiastic response with the best people, some of whom may still vote Democrat as a "lesser evil." SK and PL's overall approach to debates within the organization de-emphasizes the openness to straightforward criticisms of the Democratic Party leadership. We feel that this is an ongoing trend from the comrades related to an over-estimation of the impact that the establishment can have on consciousness, particularly among the advanced layer; we outline other examples of this below.

9. SK and PL's document's sections on the Democrats and Berniecrats are largely repetitions of material drafted mainly by Tom in February. However, we are faced by new questions and need to clarify our approach and prepare for coming events.

10. We should put forward sharp criticisms of the leadership of the Democratic Party leadership, while continuing to direct our main fire at Trump and the Republicans. This is in no way contradictory to a friendly, engaged approach to the Berniecrat base because that's how they see things. We should remember that the lessons of the 2016 election and Clinton's failure are fresh in the mind of Berniecrats, and there is widespread feeling that "Bernie would have won."

10. The Berniecrat layer is much wider and deeper than DSA's membership or the people around them. We will need much more in-depth material on the Berniecrat candidates, their activist base and the debates taking place around their campaigns. The tactic we took towards the Sanders campaign itself in 2016 will be instructive for our intervention -- although a number of conditions will be different -- particularly in campaigns which gain active support of union activists and young people. We will need to actively engage with these campaigns while politicizing issues, pointing towards the power of social movements and the working class and advocating the need for independent political action.

11. The situation will also be different in each race, and we cannot simply rely on repetition given the various concrete situations we will face. Our tactics will vary based on the level of support of a given candidate, their activist base, their program, the strength of our organization in a given area, and the level of organized struggle they are carrying out against the Democratic Party leadership. We will also likely be involved in campaigns against anti-worker Democratic Party policies where they lead governments at the state and local level.

12. The struggle within and around the Democratic Party will come in two phases with uneven geographical features. In many areas, Berniecrats of various stripes will challenge the Democratic Party establishment in primaries in 2018. We should have a friendly approach towards this phenomenon, seek to engage with it, and approach our tactics on a "case by case" basis. Many of these primaries will be extremely polarized, and Berniecrat activists will draw

various conclusions from it, ranging from #DemExit to excitement about continuing to try to change the Democrats to outright demoralization.

13. Most Berniecrats, no matter how much they continue to hate the Democratic Party leadership, will "hold their noses" and vote for mainstream Democrats in the 2018 general mid-term election. However, many of these same Berniecrat activists will still be extremely critical of the Democratic leadership in this context. The tone, formulations and emphasis of our material will need to change to address these two phases of the upcoming 2018 election. There is also the possibility of some Berniecrats being elected to Congress and it is even conceivable that if the Democrats win a small majority in the House that the Berniecrats could effectively hold the balance of power for key votes. This would mirror to a degree the role of the Tea Party and Freedom Caucus in the Republican dominated Congress in the last period and would sharpen the tensions inside the Democrats to boiling point. At this stage this is more in the realm of conjecture but such developments cannot be excluded in the enormously polarized political situation.

14. In the coming years, there will also be left Democrats that disappoint tremendously. This is part of an international phenomenon of the failures of left populism and reformism when put to the test. Already, we've seen Betsy Hodges in Minneapolis and Bill DeBlasio in New York--who were lumped in with Kshama in the mainstream press in 2013--rapidly lose much of not only the excitement around them, but also their base. But the Hodges/DeBlasio type "left" which is still organically tied to corporate interests may be more definitely superseded by a Berniecrat left which could also sell out but at a later stage and for a different price. We should prepare the organization for developments like this, and offer clear warnings in our material even while taking a friendly tone to many Berniecrats and their efforts to "take back" the party.

15. The 2018 elections will likely cut across the anti-Trump struggles in the streets, but the situation is still explosive and Trump and the Republicans could over-reach, even in an election year, to provoke big protests. The organization will need a more in-depth document on overall perspectives and the Berniecrat phenomenon for the face-to-face NC meeting in December.

Our call for a new party

16. We agree with SK and PL's document that big steps towards a new party are extremely unlikely before the 2018 elections. However, we still need to be at the forefront of the call for working-class political independence and find ways to articulate this that correspond to the rapidly-changing situation. We also need a sense of proportion about the development of independent politics as well. With a low starting point, independent candidates are actually on the increase in 2017, but the main effort of healthy forces turning towards electoral action is to use Democratic Party ballot lines for left campaigns and/or try to reform the Democratic Party.

17. Our call for independent working-class candidates and a new party can take on different forms in different contexts, but it should also be a process that we are very clearly at the forefront of.

18. "Draft Bernie for a People's Party" (DB) is the most significant move towards independent politics, and the Green Party is largely discredited among new activists. DB has the support of Cornel West and made an impact at the People's Summit with NNU leader Rosanne DeMoro offering at least implicit support. DB is too oriented towards the tops of the Sanders campaign

and not focused enough on building from below or engaging with the anti-Trump movement. However, they have a healthy patient approach to Bernie activists not ready to build a new party, and they are willing to work closely with us.

19. Although modest in size, DB has developed significant fundraising potential. We collaborated with them on a high-profile event in September and in presenting petitions to Bernie to launch a new party. Sanders himself has more authority to develop a new significant political initiative than the labor leaders, the DSA or community organizations. Unfortunately, he is unwilling to take up this responsibility, but DB is correct to call on him to develop a new party. In 2018 though, DB's approach of organizing solely around electoral campaigns and the call for a new party will leave it isolated and possibly discredited or even disbanded. We should continue to urge them as we did at the September event to focus on a few well prepared races with strong candidates in 2018 rather than running "People's Party" candidates across the country. We should also continue to urge that they orient toward social movements and struggles against Trump.

19. Our work around the Ginger Jentzen campaign is an opportunity to put us at the forefront of popularizing a new party, and we should connect this to the need to build effective movements and fight for the socialist transformation of society.

20. While our largest audience will be among Berniecrats in the immediate sense, we can't lose sight of the overall perspective of the crisis of capitalism and the eventual explosive opening for independent politics. We can't lose opportunities to put ourselves at the center of developments in the direction of the formation of a new mass left party.

21. We also should recognize that those taking up the "inside / outside" strategy are largely doing it in a much more genuine way than in the past. Our Revolution has been genuinely open to endorsing independent left candidates. We should continue--as our material already has--to give these people tools to carry out their fight against the DP leadership while also pointing positively towards the need for a new political entity to fight against Trump and the billionaire class.

22. DSA is not the entirety of the Berniecrat layer, and while we need a particular orientation towards DSA, we also need to articulate our call for a new party in way that pulls others into the discussion. Based on discussion at the NC, we now feel that the call in PL's article for DSA to launch a new socialist party is too narrow of an approach and doesn't engage in the real debates taking place either within DSA or with the much wider Berniecrat layer. Our main call for a new political formation needs to continue to be for a new mass "people's party".

Democratic Socialists of America

23. The EC was correct to raise the importance of DSA's growth at the February NC, and our perspectives have been borne out as they have continued (albeit slowed) their growth and profile since then. The new recruits are asserting themselves as was seen at the DSA convention, pushing DSA in a more active and left direction. They have even adopted some ultraleft positions (on policing, prisons and BDS) while maintaining the overall reformist orientation, including pushing the Democratic Party to the left.

24. Our big branches have engaged with DSA in a collaborative and successful way, particularly in Boston, New York and the Bay Area, but also all over the country. We feel that SK

and PL's tone in their document about a "sectarian danger" in our organization is overstated in relation to DSA and the Democratic Party.

25. An opportunist danger exists as well, as evidenced most clearly by our group in Tennessee leaving us for the DSA. We also feel that the majority of our members are not clear enough on the differences between us and DSA, and particularly with the left of the DSA, and we need to actively rectify this. There is a tendency among our members to just engage DSA in debates about the Democrats and not enough of a discussion about reform vs. revolution and the international and historical issues that contribute to our Marxist program. The "Finland Station" article can help with this, but we should also be more consciously using the material of the CWI, particularly in relation to Corbyn, Greece and Venezuela which are issues discussed by the more thinking elements in DSA. We will also need more material, for example to respond to other recent pieces by Bhaskar and Joseph Schwartz on the strategy for building the socialist movement.

26. PL's panel discussion at the "Socialism" event in Seattle alongside Bhaskar unfortunately did not help us in clarifying differences in a comradely way. PL didn't give enough of a contrast with DSA's politics, and many of our new members left the event confused about the differences between Marxism and the DSA's approach. We feel that the event with Kshama speaking in New York was a better example of how to deal with debates with the left of DSA.

27. The left of DSA is in a rapid process of change, and there has been debate among EC members about this for months. Earlier this year, EC members argued to PL that Bhaskar and the "Left Caucus" he led were not prepared to lead the fight against the DSA right wing. This was dismissed by PL even after the left caucus dissolved itself which we were told was a "rumor" despite clear evidence. The left in DSA is not static and will not necessarily always be formed around Bhaskar and his grouping. The prominence of "DSA Momentum" and the "Spring Platform" showed this at their Convention.

28. International developments can give us insight into the trajectory of DSA's left leaders. Left formations tested by events--from the PRC in Italy to SSP in Scotland to the NPA in France and most disappointingly SYRIZA in Greece--have largely failed the examination. DSA has time before this happens because they will largely go untested. While we see some left leaders impacted by a mood from below--Iglesias, Corbyn, Melenchon--none of these figures developed into rounded-out Marxists. In July, the comrades stated: "At DSA's upcoming August convention, their left wing - who has all the momentum on their side - could boldly take over and lead DSA toward movement building, socialist policies, a systematic approach to educating their new forces in the ideas and methods of Marxism, and adopting an internationalist working class policy which would include leaving the pro-capitalist Second International". We completely reject that the existing left is capable of educating the DSA in Marxism and genuine internationalism.
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29. We are glad the comrades seem to have partially shifted their position on this but SK and PL's document continues to focus on the possibility of DSA's left developing into Marxists. There is also an insufficient recognition of the strength of the right wing and the general political formlessness and confusion of large sections of the DSA membership.

30. We do not of course exclude that individuals and groupings in DSA could go much further on the road to genuine Marxism especially in the context of major political developments and developments in the class struggle and sharpening political divisions within DSA itself. But

in our opinion, this will also require the ideas of the CWI gaining an echo, and of course it is also entirely possible that many left leaders in DSA will shift to the right under pressure from events.

31. Without explanation of a changed position, paragraph 65 has changed again both before and after the NC with a wholesale update of the DSA section that balances their contribution more. We should make proposals to DSA branches and DSA as a whole, but putting an emphasis on “demands” or public advice to the narrow “left caucus” (as various versions of paragraph 65 does) overstates their importance, doesn’t deal with a fast-moving situation in DSA, and can disorient our membership. We feel that this indicates a political disagreement in our leadership that should be debated thoroughly.

32. Our relations with left figures in DSA can be important for us, but only insofar as they give us access to DSA’s fresher layers who are moving into struggle. The key relationships with DSA members will be built through local collaboration on issues in which we can set the political tone of the actions, meetings or campaigns taking place.

33. Surface and impressionistic analysis of DSA will not be adequate for giving our members the capacity to intervene in their debates. We do not want to be seen as simply the “advisors” to the group around Jacobin, and we think all versions of SK and PL’s paragraph 65 point too much in this direction. Instead, we need to train our members to use united front methods of work and put forward the CWI’s politics in the process of collaboration with DSA in anti-Trump struggles and beyond.

34. Our own work is a point of reference for left-wing DSA members around the country, and we feel that there can be a tendency to be too modest about this when engaging with DSA. Their discussions around what type of candidates to run, how to use elected office and political program are perfect for us to intervene boldly talking about our own experiences, and we should do this more often and more audaciously with public material. This can help train our members in the transitional method and a Marxist approach to clarifying ideas.

35. We need a sense of proportion about DSA. They are 30 times our size, but they are not the outline of a mass party, and they have no meaningful way to hold their leading figures accountable. They are not headed to crisis any time soon, we shouldn’t isolate ourselves from those trying to transform it, and we do want to bring them closer through collaboration and get them to engage with our ideas. However, another side of the sense of proportion needed is to acknowledge that the anti-Trump struggles and the Berniecrat layer are much broader than DSA.

36. We also should look honestly at DSA’s class composition which PL and SK’s new August draft started to do after EC discussions. One comrade at a big DSA event said that “finding a working-class person here is like playing Where’s Waldo.” Their lack of people of color is also extremely stark, including in relation to our organization. We need to consciously improve the class and racial composition of SA, and we should see a balanced orientation to DSA in this context. We should also realize that DSA’s composition is a recipe for debates to arise in their ranks about black liberation, immigrant rights, women’s struggles and all forms of special oppression. We should be prepared to intervene on these issues with a Marxist program. Other complicated issues will come up in DSA as well in advance of them being fully tested. This is shown already around the election of Danny Fetonte to their leadership and subsequent turmoil. This episode illustrates that we will not necessarily want to focus on all of the debates being

aired in DSA on side issues. Instead, we will point towards the types of collaboration that can strengthen the workers' movement and the building and consolidation of our organization.

37. While there is agreement in the leadership about the need to orient towards developments in DSA, we also need to debate how that should be done and be prepared to react to the coming key political discussions in their ranks.

Trump's agenda, the protests and the lull

38. SK and PL's original July document said in paragraph 22 that "Trump is largely going ahead with his plans." It is a positive step that this is being taken out of the document, but we think that even before the defeat of Trumpcare later in July this was very clearly untrue. However, the correction of a misjudgment is not just a matter of "editing"; this needs to be presented to the NC with a full explanation.

39. We feel that this mistaken sentence is related to ongoing political disagreements that started on election night when Clinton was defeated, and is related to an overstatement of "demoralization" as a factor in consciousness. There was a lull in protests in late Spring and early Summer, and demoralization is a factor in this, but also complacency and confusion is a big part of the situation as well. Key aspects of Trump's agenda have been pushed back either by movements, popular opinion or a section of the ruling class. Many people see Trump's administration as a failing circus, and therefore don't feel as compelled to get active. This, along with the lack of leadership, organization and direction in the anti-Trump struggles are likely bigger factors in the lull than the elements of demoralization in consciousness.

40. Trump's biggest campaign promises were on immigration, healthcare and jobs. No wall is being built, and millions have not been deported. Even though aspects of the travel ban were implemented, this only came after determined struggle that stopped this agenda when it was initially ordered. In preparation for the possibility of mass deportations, many communities in heavily-immigrant cities like New York began to get organized to resist raids and neighborhood sweeps. It appears as if the Trump administration will now again turn its attention towards immigration, and we need to understand the political terrain on this issue far beyond the few sentences provided by SK and PL. As the EC has said, we expect immigration issues to become a crucial struggle. While there is fear and demoralization in immigrant communities, there is also the potential for explosive action.

41. Arguably the most serious aspect of resistance to Trump this past Spring was around the threat of mass deportations, and this is strangely not mentioned in SK and PL's document despite it being more of a "balance sheet" analysis than an outline of perspectives. Tens of thousands around the country were meeting regularly, engaging in all sorts of trainings, and preparing for civil disobedience. The fact that this did not lead to a full scale confrontation with the state is not because of mass demoralization but mainly because Trump backed away from his threat. Trump was likely presented with assessment from the security state about what was likely to happen if he went down this path. This organizing was on a wider scale than the preparations for strike action that SK and PL over-emphasize in their document.

42. Our organization will need to prepare for coming immigration battles by reading the CWI material on this issue and our material from the 2006 struggles, which we intervened in quite well, especially in Boston. We need to get beyond purely moralistic slogans about immigration and avoid out-of-touch calls by the far left for "open borders." We need to articulate

a program for immigration that is in the interests of all workers and make an appeal to native-born workers and youth to support immigrant rights in the context of building a strong movement against Trump and the overall class struggle.

43. While the Republicans are still trying to repeal ACA, Trumpcare has been pushed back three times now, mainly by popular opinion and divisions in the Republicans rather than an organized mass movement. The lack of a movement on this issue is what made the votes close in July and opened the door for the Republicans to come back with new attempts to repeal. A key turning point in this struggle came after the NC, but we feel the difficulties faced by Republicans on healthcare indicated that Trump's agenda was very, very clearly not "largely going ahead."

44. While elements of both complacency and demoralization contribute to the lull in movements, the biggest factor is the lack of leadership and organization. None of the big demonstrations have called for a clear next step. There is no anti-Trump coalition building an ongoing mass movement that could play the role of United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) in 2003 and 2004. Although UFPJ was tied to the Democratic Party, it provided organizing meetings, educational events, structures to join and most importantly, plans for mass actions. If a mass organization or prominent individual like Sanders had initiated something like this, there would have been the basis for continued mass anti-Trump demonstrations throughout the Spring and likely into the Summer.

45. The protests after Charlottesville and the attack on DACA show that even without a clear lead given by larger forces, it is possible for whips of counter-revolution to provoke spontaneous if temporary struggles. In building a movement against the right, general "anti-Trump" propaganda will not be enough to spur people into action. We will need to be putting forward specific demands, strategy and tactics to beat back attacks and mobilize people into action, connecting this not only with a generalized struggle against Trump but also articulating a socialist program.

Trump's election and underlying issues

"A political party's attitude towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest ways of judging how earnest the party is and how it fulfills in practice its obligations towards its class and the working people. Frankly acknowledging a mistake, ascertaining the reasons for it, analysing the conditions that have led up to it, and thrashing out the means of its rectification—that is the hallmark of a serious party; that is how it should perform its duties, and how it should educate and train its class, and then the masses."
—Lenin, "*Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder* (1920)

46. Trump's election was a huge turn in the situation that would test any leadership. It is inevitable that debates and divisions would arise from this situation. It is no crime to make political mistakes, but they should be acknowledged in order to learn correct lessons and adjust perspectives. We feel that the current debate about anti-Trump struggles is rooted in previous debates on the EC about this situation.

47. Days before the election, BK put "What if Trump Wins?" on the agenda for the EC meeting. We should be fully honest here that not one EC member predicted Trump's victory, but we feel that this discussion and--more importantly--the debates on the EC immediately after Trump was elected underline the current debates. At this EC meeting, BK proposed putting out a message to the sa-bc list outlining the possibility of a Trump victory, feeling that the organization was unprepared for this. SK argued against sending this email to the sa-bc list

saying that we instead needed an email about “what happens when Clinton wins” and didn’t engage with the discussion on what would happen if Trump won. Unfortunately, neither BK nor other EC members pressed the point of an email to the sa-bc list about the possibility of a Trump victory. We share this because it foreshadowed events that were to come in the following days.

48. On election night, our comrades and much of the left in general were experiencing partial shock. It had been worked out ahead of time that due to time zone differences, Seattle comrades on the EC would be issuing SA’s initial election statement to respond to the results. When it became clear that Trump had won, the Oakland comrades took the excellent initiative of putting out a call to action for protest. BK sent a message to the EC list urging that a national call from SA as well as the initial statement should be the task of the Seattle EC members that night.

49. When this was discussed in Seattle, SK was against a call to action. He argued that a period of demoralization was going to set in, and that we wouldn’t be able to grow in this context and would need to aim to hold onto our members. Calvin and Kshama argued against this, but in the end, no statement or call to action was put out in the name of the national organization. This is unfortunate, but luckily our branch leaderships around the country did not see things the same way as SK. This episode shows the need to develop cadre who can act independently and play a role in the internal life of a revolutionary organization. Our successful actions the day after Trump was elected helped to electrify the organization after the initial shock. These demonstrations, as well as our clear perspectives and the material we produced, were central to the most rapid months of growth our organization has ever experienced, and it got us more national media attention than ever before. It was correct to call these protests, and they played a big role in re-orienting the organization immediately after Trump’s election.

50. After these demonstrations, SK continued at the Seattle City Committee in December to argue for his one-sided “demoralization” perspective, this time predicting small demonstrations in January. Many leading comrades argued against this. We illustrate these discussions not just to “score points” but to show that the current discussions in the leadership have common themes running through them. There is an ongoing trend of trying to narrow down complex situations in consciousness and also to overestimate the impact that the Democratic Party establishment can have on consciousness.

51. In the aftermath of the election, there was a debate on the EC about our analysis and written material. Some EC members wanted us to make the popular point that “Bernie would have won” against Trump if he were the Democratic nominee. PL argued against this very forcefully. This debate came up again at the IEC meeting a few weeks later with Peter Taaffe arguing the point that “Bernie would have won” and PL arguing against. It was a mistake by the EC that we did not push harder against Philip’s arguments to get this important point into the material. We feel that PL’s arguments on this issue over-estimated the impact that the ruling class could have on consciousness in attacking Bernie. PL now doesn’t argue against EC members who acknowledge this mistake. However, PL has not explained the evolution of his views on this issue.

52. After shelving the one-sided “demoralization” analysis without explanation, SK put forward that a “general strike was inherent in the situation” in the US. The EC rejected this but the entire EC still went too far in pushing the call for a “nation wide strike” for May Day. Many features led to this mistake, including our misreading of the situation in immigrant communities due to our

lack of roots. We have openly acknowledged this, but SK and PL's document, in its section on labor, still overstates the importance of discussions around political strike action. In the August version of SK and PL's document, they say that "most important is the search for working class methods of struggle with strikes and job actions with the discussion about anti-Trump strikes on March 8 and May 1." One feature of this assessment is a failure to understand the situation in the broader working class, especially outside the big coastal cities which was also a part of the collective failure to fully understand Trump' momentum going into November.

Labor and Black Lives Matter

53. The brief two paragraphs in SK and PL's July document on labor and BLM are cursory and could give the organization an unbalanced and incorrect view if taken as our main condensed points on these issues.

54. The approach of the union bureaucracy, even in left unions, has been completely inadequate in dealing with the threat of anti-union laws. The ATU, "left" locals of HERE, and even *Labor Notes* are preparing for union organizing *after* right-to-work rather than getting ready to resist the laws with mass demonstrations and the viable threat of strike action. This comes from the routines of decades of defeat but also from the social outlook of the top union leaders.

55. Many union leaders are as afraid of mobilizing their own members as they are of the destruction of the labor movement. They haven't had real jobs in decades and are prepared to be the "last ones to turn out the lights" at union halls and move into jobs in politics and the private sector where they can reap the rewards from selling out the working class. The majority of labor leaders (those outside of left unions) are not just a "political tendency;" they represent a privileged section of the workers movement whose comfortable lifestyles and existences are based on class collaboration and concessions.

56. But the problem is also, as we've pointed out before, the lack of activists in most unions with real experience of class struggle who could point the way forward and rebuild a fighting activist layer.

57. The outlines of a fighting section of the labor movement around NNU, some teachers locals, CWA and ATU has been previously outlined in our perspectives documents. One new development on this front is Rosanne DeMoro's statements against the corporate Democrats; this shows the opening for a frontal attack on their big business agenda. We should also add that millenials, even those identifying as Republicans, view unions favorably. The Verizon Wireless strike showed the potential for young workers to take action when a lead is given.

58. In their one paragraph on labor, SK and PL say that the discussions around strike action (presumably around March 8 and May 1st) were the most important developments in the labor movement over the past period. That is an over-statement of the discussion around strike action, and we feel could give the impression that we have a surface understanding of the issues at stake in the unions currently. Again, we will need more material on labor going forward.

59. At the July NC and at the CWI school in Barcelona, we outlined our disagreements with SK and PL's paragraph on BLM in their July document, and the comrades have changed

their document to reflect some of our points. However, this was done after the comrades argued against our points at the EC and the NC meeting, and we would like clarification on this shift.

60. The lack of big BLM protests predates Trump's election, showing that demoralization around Trump's election wasn't the key turning point for BLM's current phase of development. However, the process was compounded by Trump's election which upended BLM's expectation of extracting concessions from the liberal establishment. Protests were small throughout the country the week that Alton Sterling and Philando Castille were killed in 2016 before Trump was elected.There are many reasons for the decline in BLM protests, and Trump's election isn't the main one.

61. Many people who protested around the murders of Mike Brown and Eric Garner feel that protesting hasn't delivered, and there is some truth in this. While there are now indictments of killer cops which didn't happen until the BLM movement, the police are almost always acquitted. People feel that the protests are not achieving justice on this central issue. In this context, a section of BLM activists are turning towards electoral politics which is a classic example of struggle being blocked in one avenue and moving towards another.

62. Also, the inexperienced new leadership of BLM hasn't been up to the task of building roots in the black working class. In between protests around police killings, the young activists at the forefront of these protests often turn inward rather than building ongoing campaigns to improve living conditions in black neighborhoods and taking up clear demands. They are informed by the defeats of the last few decades which were felt most heavily in the black community. While they gained confidence growing up under the first black President, their expectations were not met, and they moved to the arena of struggle. However, they were either abandoned by the civil rights establishment or outright rejected them, and the thread of history of black struggle was largely broken, leaving these activists dependent on the wrong ideas of academic middle-class identity politics. As with the anti-Trump struggles, the weakness of leadership plays a huge role in BLM's decline.

63. We need a balance here about this overall process. We shouldn't mistake a short-term perspective for a general analysis. A whole generation of black youth have moved into struggle, and that is not going away. This will erupt in one way or another in coming years. Our organization needs more than just a surface analysis of this movement in order to make an impact for Marxist ideas. It has been correct that we've taken up the debate in the organization on identity politics. However, we should not train our comrades to see our contribution in an abstract way. Comrades need to be familiar with the complex reasons for BLM's relative decline and how we put forward our program throughout these struggles to be confident intervening. This is especially true for areas where we have a lack of black cadre like in Seattle where we haven't yet been able to build upon Kshama's popularity in the black community.

64. SK and PL's document simplifies our difficulties building in the black community to "identity politics," and this is indeed a big feature, but it is only part of the equation. The key barrier for us is that the current upsurge comes after decades of intense defeat in the black community. The more militant of the Black Power and civil rights leaders were either co-opted or killed; this, along with the intense oppression and defeats of the following decades, leaves a new generation of those moving into struggle without the traditions of mass action or a united fight for clear demands. This left an opening for the ideas of identity politics, but the effects of this process are also more complex than just that.

65. We should note that organizations who adopt identity politics are also having a hard time consistently activating large sections of those same youth who came around BLM, and that the DSA has been unable to draw in black activists. The barrier there is not just identity politics, but an ongoing process of defeats, inexperience and mistrust of organization as well. We should also acknowledge that we need to overcome subjective problems in our organization to improve our composition. Our members are not just affected by identity politics; they are unclear on how to put forward a Marxist program for black liberation and need experience in both study of this crucial topic and in engaging in the movements connected to this fight as well.

66. Our analysis and approach to BLM has been an ongoing discussion and debate on the EC over the past three years, and some disagreements have been constant in that process. We think that the weakness of SK and PL's document on this issue and our response can help to raise the political understanding in the organization around this struggle in order to better intervene in the black community and develop black cadre.

Opportunism, sectarianism and "stepping up"

67. The last few pages of SK and PL's document deals with organizational issues. There is some good material in this section on cadre development and other issues, but many of these points are already made in a more concrete way in the building resolution that was passed unanimously by the NC. We feel that overall SK and PL's material on organization runs the danger of mischaracterizing the organization and its leadership as "sectarian" without fully realizing the inherent opportunist dangers in the situation. The question of resources is avoided in their document, while the building resolution from the NC puts forward our tasks in relation to the real resource strains on the organization. This section of our reply is not intended to go over every challenge the organization faces or a balance sheet; instead in our limited space here, we want to register disagreements with SK and PL's approach.

68. Not including the council office, we have 11 full-timers based in Seattle (6 national and 5 local) with around 200 members and then 8 full-timers (5 national and 3 local) based in the rest of the country and more than 800 members outside of Seattle. We have no full-timers based in Chicago, the Bay Area or Philly. Due to the importance of the mass work and profile in Seattle, the EC has defended this imbalance. Before another re-election campaign in Seattle in 2019, we have the opportunity to rebalance our resources, and the EC majority feels that our priority should be national centralization of the work. The resources required for this are outlined partially in the building resolution from the NC.

69. This approach is in contrast to SK and PL's calls for the NC comrades to "step up" and take on more national work. We are concerned that this is part of a staff-focused perspective that doesn't take into account the pressures on leading comrades who aren't full-timers. Their initial proposal around drastically increased national meetings for instance would effectively exclude many working comrades from meaningful participation in the leadership. This was concretely shown by the low attendance from non-full-timers at the July NC meeting. We want to maximize working comrades meaningful participation in the leadership of the organization.

70. With little resources for national coordination or to develop national teams that are able to work face-to-face, the national party-building team has stepped in and organized many of our most successful national initiatives, including the recent national Summer School. To build upon this success, we need an infusion of resources to achieve the political cohesion and

centralization necessary to consolidate the organization. This important task isn't just a question of the NC and EC "taking on more responsibility"; it is a question of a conscious drive to orient more resources toward our publications, national party-building, political education and national events.

71. While SK and PL point out many things that should be improved in the organization, in our opinion this comes across in an overly-negative way and doesn't deal with a key issue. We need to consciously improve the class composition of the organization and develop more black cadre and people of color in general.

72. SK and PL often assert the need for a "Seattle model" for the national organization and the international. Our successes in Seattle are incredibly important for the whole of the CWI and are the product of the work of the entire organization. It is an example which has inspired and raised the sights of comrades throughout the international, and discussing the lessons of our victories there has been very beneficial. At the same time, we should more openly discuss the inevitable challenges and pressures we have faced in the Seattle work over the last period, and how we have faced up to them in order to strengthen our work. We feel that this hasn't happened enough for instance in drawing up a balance sheet of the Jess Spear campaign or the Seattle intervention in BLM. There is no shame in making mistakes, but we should openly acknowledge them and learn from them. We don't want to deepen a feeling in the organization that the Seattle work is "autonomous" or "beyond criticism." This is particularly the case with Seattle being put forward as a "model." There are valuable lessons in this discussion for the whole organization.

73. For example, with so many staff concentrated in Seattle, it is a struggle to get other comrades and branches in Seattle to take ownership over the work and be politically engaged in our key decisions. There is a discussion in the Seattle organization right now about how to improve this situation. On the other hand, our experience in Seattle shows the the difficulties of driving forward with the political development of the membership amid constant pressures of mass work and campaigning. Fighting for the correct balance requires constantly critically reviewing our work, methods and priorities. .

74. The EC and NC face many challenges in order to prepare ourselves to make another breakthrough to go to 2-3,000 members. The key challenge will be political through reacting to events, developing perspectives and identifying opportunities to use the best Marxist slogans, strategies and tactics. Cadre development will be key to this process along with a national centralization of publications, political education and party-building and the conscious deployment of resources to achieve these tasks.

Process around July NC discussions

75. It is necessary for us to explain the process that led to the "discussion document" put forward by SK and PL. Two weeks before the July NC, PL told us that he was working on a document on "medium-term tasks for the organization" that would be "no more than 5 pages." This was in the context of agreement on the EC that we were not going to produce longer documents for the July NC.

76. Then, less than a week before the NC, we were presented with a 20 page document from SK and PL that continued to change and lengthen as we got closer to the NC meeting. As is outlined above, the EC majority had clear disagreements with this document. We outlined

many of these--but not all--at the NC and the CWI school in Barcelona. Most of our political points have not been responded to verbally in debates, yet SK and PL changed their discussion document numerous times in a way that reflects our criticisms without explanation.

77. In informal conversation, we have heard assertions that SK and PL producing this document for the July NC "shows who is the real political leadership of the EC." Given both the weaknesses and process that led to this document, we feel this isn't an open approach to political discussion.

78. Given the political and organizational differences that have opened up in the leadership, it is necessary to politicize the debate. EC comrades who significantly change their views should explain this fully and openly rather than change their document before and after the NC without explanation or try to pose as "the real leadership" through producing a document that was not commissioned by the EC and came as a complete surprise.

79. We also feel that the approach taken to the proposal to vote on a new EC reflected a bad method in these debates. Andy and Pat made a genuine proposal to try to find a way out of the divisions and to bring the current EC into more regular communication with a section of NC members. While the EC majority disagreed with this proposal, its starting point was healthy. However, the way it was seized upon, particularly by PL, in a demagogic and unhealthy way by constructing straw men like "nobody has a hereditary right to be on the EC" or loaded attacks like "turnover is needed to get rid of rot." PL said that he would have replaced the EC if the discussion indicated that NC comrades wanted to.

80. In periods of heightened debate within a revolutionary party, leadership changes should come after key discussions and divisions have been clearly aired in the organization, reflecting the balance of opinion in the party. Instead, PL and SK tried to replace the leadership when the discussion was just getting underway and before political issues were clarified.

Importance of the CWI

81. In dealing with a rapidly-changing situation, analyzing complex developments and developing our strategy and tactics, the political perspectives, program and experience of the CWI is absolutely crucial for training a new layer of cadre. We feel that in the many pages written by PL and SK on how to develop the organization, this crucial point is lacking.

82. We will be unable to develop more leaders in the organization unless comrades engage in a meaningful way with international events and the work of the CWI. We need to increase the profile of the international in the US section. In an immediate sense, all branches should discuss the unification with Izquierda Revolucionaria, the document explaining that process and the political issues involved.

83. We should continue to develop cadre and raise the understanding of the importance of the CWI's politics with a concerted campaign after Ginger's election to get more branches to take out subscriptions to *Socialism Today.* The pamphlet from the Greek section on SYRIZA that was sold at the CWI school in Barcelona is essential reading for BC members throughout the country.

84. Engagement with US perspectives, our slogans, tactics, strategy and mass work are crucial for developing cadre. However, we feel that SK and PL's document understates the

importance of reading and discussion, particularly around international events and the work of the CWI.

85. The work of our section in England and Wales is something that all members should be following in detail. The Corbyn phenomenon and the flexibility and sharpness of the approach of the CWI's biggest and most experienced section will be important for cadre development.

86. The political direction and practical help from the International Secretariat and International Executive Committee members has been instrumental in the rapid development of the US section over the past few years. The intervention of the CWI's leadership in the current and future political debates of the US section will be a central contribution to the discussion going forward as well.

Response to the *EC Majority Reply*

By EC members Philip L. and Stephan K. and NC members Ramy K. and Sarah W.K.
February 5, 2018

1. Opportunities to build the socialist movement are growing in the U.S. SA has made great strides forward and is well positioned to take advantage of these openings. However, this is now greatly complicated by the bitter divisions in our national leadership that broke out in April 2017.
2. Given the opportunities in front of us and the decades of heroic work building SA, it would be tragic if all sides of this debate did not bend over backwards to resolve this dispute on a principled basis. The authors of this document are committed to doing everything possible to rebuild trust and find a path forward to joint work, even if differences remain.
3. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of confusion and frustration about what this debate is even about. And yet, how this debate is resolved will have a significant impact on SA's work. It's therefore necessary, and very worthwhile, to take the time to deal with the issues in depth and clarify the issues.
4. We recognize that this document is quite long. There are several important issues that have arisen that need to be addressed. We also think there have been a large number of inaccurate claims made about the positions of Philip and Stephan. Responding to these inaccurate claims to correct the record requires more space than making the claims. Nonetheless, we feel this is necessary in order to resolve issues which are obscuring the debate rather than illuminating it.

Part I: What is this Debate About?

5. Over 2016 and 2017 U.S. society was deeply shaken by truly historic events - the Sanders campaign, Trump's election, and the crisis-ridden Trump presidency. Sanders' campaign was a new phenomenon that required new tactics which our organization successfully developed, though not without intense discussion, debate and some disagreements among the CWI International Secretariat (I.S.), Executive Committee (EC), National Committee (NC), and throughout the organization. These debates played a very positive role in clarifying issues and raising the political level of the organization.
6. Trump's election victory has resulted in extremely rapid and sharp changes in the objective situation which have posed new questions. These big objective events have resulted, at least for the time being, in two main viewpoints on the EC about how to relate to these developments.
7. These political debates are also related to ongoing tensions over the past few years on the EC that are, paradoxically, a result of the breakthroughs SA has had. The organization has grown rapidly since 2012 and has the potential to develop substantially further. But this poses the unavoidable challenge of breaking out of the limitations of an early phase of our organization's development.
8. The tendency towards an abstract, propagandistic approach inevitably develops when a small Marxist group is restricted mainly to propaganda work for decades. After years of being a small, isolated organization largely (though not entirely) limited to propaganda work, SA has undergone significant changes since 2012. We have grown from 250 to 1,000 members, won a city council seat with a high profile on the left nationally, and established a significant citywide Seattle organization that is a factor in events. In certain instances, we've been able to engage in mass work with wide layers of the working class (e.g., Ginger's campaign, the $15 campaigns we won in Seattle and Minneapolis, and the leading positions we've won in some unions). At the same time SA is still a relatively small force struggling to develop an initial cadre. This situation has put huge political and organizational tasks on the shoulders of our small number of cadre.
9. The dramatic changes in the objective situation and our rapid growth have resulted in disagreements developing around **three main issues**:

(1) Moving Beyond a Propagandistic Approach:
All EC members agree that SA needs to do propaganda work (propagate Marxist ideas to a few people). However, disagreements have developed about how to engage in principled mass work, i.e. flexible, yet principled, tactics for leading or intervening in struggles that involve broader layers. We face complex challenges in advancing a principled Marxist position while addressing a broad audience, given the historically low level of consciousness and organization of the working class. Major developments and our changed role has led to

disagreements on the EC about new tactics which require going beyond repeating formulas that reflect a more propagandistic approach.

This has included debates around our program and tactics for the 2013 Sawant campaign, the fight for $15, our approach towards left Democrats in the 2015 re-election campaign, and tactics on the Seattle City Council. In 2015 and 2016, debates developed on the EC in working out our Sanders tactics. (Do we campaign for Sanders, a Democrat? Should we encourage supporters – but not members – to vote for Sanders in the Democratic primaries? How can we use the "safe states" tactic in a principled way?) In 2017, differences developed about our approach to the Trump resistance, impeachment, the battle against Trumpcare and for single-payer, the "Berniecrat" wing of the Democrats, and our approach toward the rapidly growing DSA.

(2) The Relationship Between a Public Representative and a Marxist Party:
Our biggest area of mass work, where we sometimes reach tens of thousands of people, is our city council position in Seattle. While everyone agreed in general that branch and council work must be interwoven, as tensions developed around this high pressure work, a conflict developed fundamentally about whether our party should direct our council office or, in contrast, whether our council work should be allowed to act independently and given its weight, in effect, direct our party.

(3) Internal Democracy:
The EC Majority argues instead that the conflicts in the SA leadership are the result of Stephan and Philip's bullying methods and their working outside the structures to achieve their positions when they are in a minority on the EC or SEC. We do not agree that Stephan and Philip have worked outside the structures of the organization. We believe that each allegation of inappropriate conduct needs to be looked into thoroughly and dealt with in a serious, responsible way. As such, Philip requested an investigation into the most serious allegation about him. Stephan and Philip will cooperate fully with any investigation into the claims made against them. Unfortunately, we think the EC Majority has not attempted to objectively examine the various claims, hear all sides, and on that basis draw all necessary conclusions. Instead, one accusation after another has been piled on without serious evaluation. This has had the effect of pushing aside the important political questions we've been trying to raise.

Through this process, disagreements have arisen over how to have a democratic debate where both sides' political views are discussed in a way that clarifies issues. We believe that our viewpoint is increasingly being locked out through administrative measures rather than an open democratic political debate. This is an extremely damaging precedent for our organization's internal democracy.

10. We must have a sense of proportion and recognize that both sides have overwhelming agreement on program, perspectives, and strategies. But that does not mean the current debate – about tactics, the relationship between a public representative and a Marxist party, and internal democracy – are unimportant. The hallmark of Marxism, the CWI, and SA has been its tireless determination to achieve political clarity. It's essential we resist the siren call of a "pragmatic" approach – one that downplays the importance of debates that will impact the direction of our organization so we can get on with immediate "practical" work.

The Debate So Far

11. Instead of a debate around the political issues, the EC Majority has presented this debate in largely personal and organizational terms. The comrades who proposed or agreed that Philip should become SA's National Secretary in 2016, SA's National Spokesperson in 2014 and 2015, and the Political Director of the 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 Seattle election campaigns, now claim that the current dispute is related to Philip's troubling history of bullying, and a factional approach dating back nearly 20 years where he has had difficulty working with comrades.
12. At the December NC meeting a serious new allegation was raised about Philip. In his sum-up at the NC, Philip requested a full investigation to clarify the facts of the matter and draw all the necessary conclusions for himself and the organization. Philip followed up with the national Grievance Officers, and they are now carrying out an investigation.
13. The CWI I.S. agreed at the end of 2013 that Stephan, as an I.S. member, would be based in the U.S. for all of 2014. Later in 2014 they did not want Stephan to come off of the I.S. However, now they claim that Stephan created one mess after another in different countries both as an I.S. member and before he was a member of the I.S.
14. One allegation after another has been made along these lines. A serious discussion which considers one issue at a time needs time. Yet whenever one allegation is seriously answered by carefully clarifying what actually took place, often another

allegation regarding a different incident is raised. There seems to be no interest in clarifying and responding to points; rather, there is a tendency to rely on giving the general impression that, given the quantity of the allegations, if, at least some of them are probably true, then things must be bad enough. This is a damaging method which does not illuminate issues; it obscures them. All SA members should insist on maintaining democratic norms for debate. Serious allegations must be substantiated, and time must be allowed for detailed responses before any judgment is made.

15. Regarding the criticisms of Stephan raised by the I.S., we believe, of course, that the I.S. has the right to raise their criticisms. However, we don't think it was helpful for the I.S. to raise criticisms of Stephan's work in Greece in 2012 and Germany in 2009 with a select group of EC members without informing Stephan that these complaints were being made about him. Some EC members then told other non-EC members about these criticisms without ever talking with Stephan to hear his view on the issue, much less let him know they were going to spread these allegations beyond the EC.
16. Such an approach does not allow for comrades to make an informed judgement on these criticisms, and can fuel suspicions which undermines the functioning of a collective leadership. If the I.S. believes that the discussions in Greece in 2012 and Germany in 2009 are important for the U.S. today, they are completely welcome to raise their view. But they should have brought it forward openly, letting everybody involved know and have the right to explain their view. Unfortunately, this is not how the I.S. chose to raise their criticisms.
17. The documents that the I.S. circulated for the discussion about the SA internal debate at the last International Executive Committee meeting (IEC), as well as the *EC Majority Reply*, highlight ongoing political tensions over the last period. The I.S. letters, and Philip and Stephan's replies, describe several political discussions and disagreements between the I.S. and mostly Philip and Stephan about how to approach the Sanders campaign, the "safe states" argument, and the ISO. However, at the recent IEC and NC meetings, these political debates were hardly discussed. Attempts to raise political points on the Trump resistance, Sanders supporters, and DSA were criticized as supposedly evading the fundamental issue of Stephan and Philip's bullying and bad organizational methods.
18. This does not mean we believe it's acceptable to downplay personal misconduct by pointing to comrades' political contributions. All allegations of bullying or other inappropriate conduct by leading members should be taken very seriously, looked into thoroughly, and dealt with accordingly. Standards for conduct must be applied universally, regardless of comrades' sympathies with regard to internal debates. Regrettably, in our view this is not how these issues are being handled.
19. Stephan and Philip take criticisms of their conduct very seriously and will continue to look into each occasion where they might have made mistakes or engaged in unhelpful behavior and what they can learn from it. They have been open to hearing the criticisms of their conduct and offered their reflections. Philip and Stephan have apologized for mistakes they believe they made that contributed to the breakdown in working relations in the leadership. They have acknowledged that at times they acted out of frustration, hurt, or impatience and spoke in a overly sharp or provocative way at some meetings.
20. Unfortunately this was not taken up as a chance to rebuild trust by an honest evaluation of mistakes on all sides, but to further what appears to be a campaign of "character assassination" (as Ty is quoted as saying in the May 22, 2017 letter from the I.S.)
21. SA experienced its most rapid growth from 2011 to 2017, when the two trends on the EC succeeded in developing a collaborative leadership. During that period, a fruitful tension of political differences within the EC produced a highly successful collective leadership. However, working relations among the Seattle leadership broke down in the spring of 2017. Instead of helping the Seattle comrades overcome these difficulties, in our view the national EC Majority and the I.S. intervened in a way that escalated the conflict.
22. Now the hard won collective leadership on the national EC and in Seattle has been dismantled. The EC Majority undemocratically (without a vote of the NC, which elects the EC) "locked out" three elected members of the EC (Ty, Philip, and Stephan) from meaningful input in EC discussions and decisions. (Bryan K described this as a "lock out" of these comrades in his sum-up at the December 2017 IEC meeting.) As part of this, the EC Majority changed the composition of the EC Conveners, and the City Council Strategy Team in April/May 2017. (The EC never reported these changes to the NC, but they are detailed in Ramy's document.)
23. The national EC also carried out a change in the composition of the Seattle Executive Committee (SEC) by removing Stephan from it. They asked the Seattle City Committee to elect a new SEC but provided false reasons for their proposal. At that

time, the EC Majority insisted that Philip, Ty, and Stephan not raise any disagreement or alternative proposal with the City Committee or else the EC would place the Seattle organization under trusteeship.

24. In our view, these changes in personnel on leadership bodies had a clear impact in altering the political balance of these bodies. This has begun to lead to a changed political approach.
25. A majority has the right to democratically elect executive bodies, and to organize teams which work under the direction of the elected leadership, as they see fit. However, they should propose changes to the body that elects the leadership and obtain the body's conscious agreement. Instead, these organizational and political changes were carried out undemocratically. The NC was not informed or consulted on the changes in the national bodies, and the agreement of the Seattle City Committee was obtained under false pretenses.
26. We will work under the discipline of a majority to build SA and will continue to go out of our way to ensure that majority decisions are implemented. It's important that in the course of these debates we do not lose focus of the huge opportunities ahead of the organization. When we feel it will help SA's work, we will raise our views, and we expect the majority to allow minority viewpoints to be aired. Issues should be discussed in a constructive way, and if they are, it will politically strengthen SA.
27. Most recently, (James) Whitney K., a comrade working in the council office, alleged that he was fired "because of [his] perceived political leanings towards what has come to be called the EC minority … This is a dangerous precedent which can have a chilling effect on our internal democracy, especially on other full-timers who might fear if they raise questions or criticisms they will also be fired. Given the amount of full-timers who are part of our national committee and [Seattle] city committee, I feel this would have important consequences to building a healthy revolutionary party. This chilling effect can be damaging even if there is merely the perception that full-timers are fired for having political disagreements." We think Whitney is correct to highlight this serious threat to SA's internal democracy.
28. How our organization learns to deal with political differences will have a huge impact on our future. Comrades tolerating the silencing of a minority viewpoint through the undemocratic removal of comrades from leadership positions creates a dangerous precedent that will make it more difficult the next time comrades need to raise disagreements. When new shifts in the political situation inevitably take place, SA will find it increasingly difficult to discuss how to adjust.
29. Trotsky wrote in a much more heated discussion: "In any factional struggle personal conflicts and mutual accusations occur: that is inevitable. However, a revolutionary who determines his political position on the basis of purely personal episodes, accusations, sympathies, and antipathies is no good at all. Such a method is typical of petty bourgeois radicals, incapable of rising to the level of Marxist principles. Petty bourgeois squabbles have to date poisoned the leadership of the Spanish Opposition, preventing it from orienting itself correctly and paralyzing the development of the entire organization, despite the exceptionally favorable objective conditions. If rank-and-file members of the Spanish Opposition, real Bolshevik-Leninists, want to break out of this impasse, they will have to brush aside the debris of personal squabbles and examine political differences on the basis of their merit. It is necessary to study the entire history of these differences." (*The Spanish Revolution*, 1931-39, p. 225)

The Relationship Between a Public Representative and a Marxist Party

30. We agree with the assessment in the letter to the IEC from Ty, Kailyn, and Patrick that this "crisis is a result of the huge political pressures and stresses on the leadership and the challenges of transitioning into mass work over the past period, alongside the challenge of building a cohesive revolutionary organization across an entire continent. These pressures have especially born down on the Seattle leadership since 2012, which is also where the internal crisis and the breakdown in relations is most acute. It's inevitable that debates and differences would emerge as the organization grows in size and influence, and as we grapple with new experiences brought on by both our successes and the rapidly changing objective situation." (Ty and Kailyn later withdrew their support for this letter.)
31. Our victory in winning a city council seat in Seattle was a historic achievement for SA and the CWI. The entire organization is deeply committed to defending this conquest and waging a fierce struggle to re-elect our public representative in 2019. KS and our council comrades are doing fantastic work in the face of relentless political attacks from the establishment. They also must address the day-to-day needs of Seattleites asking for help, as well as participate in many coalitions and campaigns.
32. While this position provides an extremely valuable platform, it also brings powerful pressures to bear on

SA. Inevitably, our public representative and our council comrades feel these pressures most intensely. That is why it's important that the organization as a whole maintain a wider overview. We should not allow the priorities of SA Seattle to become subsumed by the immediate pressures to defend the council position, losing the necessary focus on building SA, developing dynamic branches and a wider cadre.

33. A decisive question for a political organization is how to decide what to prioritize. We need to balance, on the one hand, the need for our elected official to develop relationships and alliances with social justice organizations, and on the other hand, the need to find creative ways to use our public position (including these important alliances) to popularize socialist ideas, strengthen our party's authority, and build SA.
34. For example, in the wake of the Alton Sterling and Philando Castile murders, the new wave of BLM protests that these killings sparked nationally in 2016, and the victory of the Block the Bunker movement in Seattle, the SEC had discussions about how to connect that year's city budget fight to this re-emerging mood to challenge police brutality and racism. Stephan and Jess argued that we should prioritize the question of racial justice in how we framed our People's Budget. This was in part reflected in KS's speech responding to the mayor's budget proposal, in which she highlighted racial inequality. However, shortly after, the Build 1,000 Homes campaign became the main focus of the 2016 People's Budget. The council office felt they had to emphasize the homelessness crisis to build the biggest possible coalition for this demand. This is understandable and legitimate. However, in the end, SA should ultimately make these decisions democratically, through its elected bodies, and after discussion; these decisions should not be made by our council office alone. Unfortunately, this debate was not welcomed by our council office. We ended up with an SA leaflet that emphasized racial justice, while the council material and subsequent speeches – one announcing the victory of $29 million for housing and the other explaining our vote against the budget – focused on homelessness and inequality, with only a very limited emphasis on racism.
35. KS's letter that was circulated to the IEC argues there is "a longstanding practice by the Party-Building Team … to oppose broader branch involvement in the council work." However, we believe that this tension reflected the sometimes-divergent priorities of building a Marxist party and responding to the pressures on our council office.
36. Stephan was assigned by the SEC to lead the Party-Building Team. He was in close communication with the branches, and, together with Patrick, Jess, and Kailyn, he often brought the input and priorities of the branches into the SEC meetings. After years of intense mass campaigning with the majority of the work organized centrally, our branches needed time to learn to organize lead-offs, recruitment, study groups, and paper sales; to learn to use targets, etc. The Party-Building Team regularly mobilized the branches to participate in as many events as possible that the council comrades requested. However, on occasion, Stephan would raise on the SEC that he disagreed with a particular request to mobilize because he believed it would harm the balance that our branches need between outward campaigns and internal development.
37. Stephan and Jess openly argued on the SEC that the SEC should more regularly discuss the development of the branches; that the SEC needed to be more aware of the needs of cadre development; and that the organization needed to set a reasonable pace of work to allow time for branch and cadre development. They tried to bring the needs of the party-building aspect of our work into the SEC discussions. This is reflected in the SEC minutes which show Party-Building Team proposals regularly brought forward about branch and BC composition, day schools, targets, citywide interventions, etc., prepared by Stephan and Jess, and later Kailyn.
38. We agree with what Patrick wrote in his resolution to the December NC (which he later withdrew) that the tensions in the SEC arose from "the huge, often competing pressures that arise from trying to balance our council work, mass campaign work, and the rapid development of our membership and branches." These structural tensions are downplayed by the EC Majority, who, starting in April 2017, argued instead that the tensions in the SEC were brought to the point of crisis by Stephan's bullying approach. After Philip raised criticisms of how the majority of the EC and I.S. were handling this dispute, the same allegations were suddenly made against Philip (yet only days before I.S. and EC Majority comrades pointed to Philip's close collaboration with KS as evidence that Stephan's bad approach was the source of the conflict between Stephan and KS).
39. In our view, these structural tensions lay behind the personal conflicts that our elected official had not only with Stephan and Philip but also previously with Patrick (Seattle City Organizer in 2014 and 2015; SEC member from 2013 to 2015) and Jess (SEC member from 2014 to 2016; Seattle City Organizer in 2016). These tensions were most

sharply expressed when KS refused to participate on the SEC several times between 2014 and 2016 due to tensions with Jess; and again in 2016 and 2017 when KS said she would not participate on the SEC if Stephan attended the meetings.

40. All of our leadership bodies are subject to recall at any time. All members, including KS, can propose to the Seattle City Committee to change the composition of the SEC. If an SEC comrade makes mistakes, it should be addressed in a friendly but open way so that everybody can learn from it. Unfortunately, this was not how this was dealt with. Instead, an elected public official repeatedly said behind the scenes that she would not participate on the leadership body she was elected onto unless another elected member of that body stopped attending the meetings.
41. When Ty, Philip, and Stephan proposed this be democratically discussed by the City Committee, the EC Majority, in an unprecedented move, insisted that Philip, Stephan, and Ty not raise disagreements or propose an alternative SEC slate to the City Committee – otherwise the EC would not allow the City Committee to meet and would put the Seattle organization under trusteeship, at least until the next NC meeting. At its June 2017 meeting, the City Committee elected a new SEC based on the false reasons provided by the EC Majority. Rather than explaining that disagreements had developed, they said that Stephan needed to turn his focus to national work and could no longer serve on the local leadership bodies.
42. Since then, KS and Calvin have been unwilling to genuinely collaborate with other elected SEC members, namely Philip and, at first, also Ty. From April to November of 2017, the period when Ty was raising strong criticisms of the EC Majority, he was locked out of meaningful participation in the national EC, and KS and Calvin only cooperated with Ty on the Seattle EC in a limited way. For example, see this letter from KS and Ty's response. (Both letters were circulated to the IEC. Philip and Stephan agree with Ty's response that the allegations KS's letter raises are inaccurate.)
43. We do not think these things happened due to bad intentions. Nonetheless, they need to be carefully addressed and taken up.
44. In a revolutionary Marxist organization, an essential political basis for electing members to public positions (political, trade union, etc.) is a clear understanding of the huge special pressures such positions bring. These pressures do not just apply to reformist parties. Lenin and Trotsky drew quite clear conclusions that even genuinely communist public figures face the same pressures. This is not due to personal weaknesses but rather objective forces. The history of the socialist movement illustrates that standing against these pressures requires a strong political understanding of these challenges throughout the ranks of the party, and that the work of public figures needs to be led by a collective leadership.
45. As Ramy wrote in his document about the SEC election, "We need a Seattle EC that has decision-making power over all areas of work: council work, branch work, union work, etc. Each team in our party must work under the direction of our party's democratically elected leadership, not the other way around. This important democratic tradition is reflected in the resolutions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International, which the CWI bases itself on. One key resolution was the *Theses on the Communist Parties and Parliamentarism*, which explains, 'Communist members of parliament must subordinate all parliamentary action to the activity of their Party outside parliament… The organization of the parliamentary faction must be completely in the hands of the Central Committee of the Communist Parties.'"
46. We have huge respect for the sacrifices KS makes, her political strength and willingness to stand up to the capitalists and the establishment and boldly argue for socialist ideas despite constant pressures. The council position is a tremendous asset for the whole organization in the U.S. and internationally.
47. While we have no doubt about her and Calvin's personal integrity or intentions, on multiple occasions we have seen both comrades be unwilling to work with elected members of the Seattle leadership. If a breakdown of relations developed once or twice, that would be understandable. However, the list of comrades with whom they developed an an uncooperative attitude, or broke off working relations with, is long enough to suggest a pattern: it includes Patrick, Jess, Stephan, Philip, Ty (for a time), and now Whitney. Given KS's elected position and the pressures it entails, this pattern poses dangers to our work if not dealt with properly, regardless of anyone's intentions. We believe it would be a disservice to KS and all of our comrades' collective work to loosen the framework of political discussions and – where needed – democratic checks on this critical work on the City Council.
48. The national EC has always had the right to direct, and override the decisions of the SEC and the work of our public representative (just as the NC or National Convention in turn have the right to direct and override the EC). However, the practical reality

acknowledged by the EC ever since KS was elected was that the EC as a body was not able to follow developments in Seattle politics closely enough to confidently make the final decision on many issues. The EC was consulted on the key decisions, and always had the right to weigh in on other issues. But it was agreed that the week-to-week overview of the council work had to be more closely discussed by the Seattle EC, and on a day-to-day level by a Council Strategy Team (a subcommittee of the EC and SEC that drafted speeches and public statements and which brought forward key issues to the SEC and national EC in a more prepared fashion).

49. Since April 2017, the SEC's oversight of the council work has been substantially reduced. The Council Strategy Team met once in May and once in June of 2017, and not at all for the second half of the year. If the EC is truly going to be responsible for the council work, it needs to really engage on the issues every week. So far this has not been the case, in effect, leaving decisions to the elected representative.
50. Further, if the national EC is going to replace the oversight of the SEC, it would be critical that the EC worked closely with the Seattle organization to carefully integrate the work of the Seattle organization with the council work, and taking Seattle comrades' views and priorities into account. So far this has not been the case.
51. While the December IEC/NC resolution can give the impression of increased oversight of the Council Office by the national EC, in practice it means a significant decrease in discussion and a bigger gap opening up between our elected official and the rest of the party. This is because the resolution has meant removing oversight of the council work from the Seattle organization – that is, from the SEC, the City Committee, and the wider membership – thereby weakening its ability to review and give meaningful democratic input into the political positions, demands, and tactics of our public representative. In practice, the EC has not been able to fulfill this role in an meaningfully informed and engaged way. These political challenges will lead to increased tensions and problems, if this tendency is not reversed.
52. For this reason, we think it's positive that the SEC is re-establishing the Council Strategy Team. However, its composition has been changed again, this time removing Philip. The City Committee was only made aware of Philip's removal by Ramy, not by the SEC. In addition, further changes have been made to the composition of the SEC.
53. This new SEC proposed in its January 2018 *Response on the Seattle Structures Debate*:

    Unfortunately, over the whole past period, the SEC feels there has been an exaggerated separation between our work in the Council Office and the rest of the organization. We urgently need to overcome this politically, and we feel a part of this should be through a shift in our structures … We also want to encourage greater participation and responsibility for branches in the campaigns and coalitions currently centered around our Council Office. Part of this will include, in coordination with the SEC, more direct lines of communication between the Council Office and the branches where needed.
54. We want the organization to take more ownership of the council work. In our view, that goes beyond mobilizing members to council events or coalition meetings; it starts with politics and the ability of the organization and its elected leadership to have democratic input into the council work. We need a fully empowered City Committee and SEC that seriously discuss the political direction of the council work, and that have the power to carry out their decisions.
55. Requests from our council office to mobilize Seattle branches behind a campaign are very welcome, but those requests should first be run through our democratically elected leadership bodies before deciding whether and how to agree to the request. It's crucial that our democratically elected leadership bodies maintain the overview and set the priorities of all areas of our work – the branches, council work, labor work, student work, etc. Seattle comrades will remember the challenges in late October 2017 when we were all phone-banking for the Ginger campaign and at the same time mobilizing for the camp-out in City Hall on November 1st. Ordering competing priorities like this on a branch-by-branch basis with different comrades pushing in different directions would become confusing and demoralizing; it's essential, therefore, that the city-wide bodies be empowered to take the lead in presenting the branches with an organized plan of action.
56. While the new SEC proposal includes a proviso stating that branch mobilizations for campaigns and coalition meetings that emerge from the council work will be done "in coordination with the SEC," we think the direction remains clear. The Seattle organization is being increasingly led by the council office, which will take decisions and then mobilize the branches "in coordination with the SEC" to campaign in support of its initiatives. Changes in the composition of the SEC and the Council Strategy Team have been carried out undemocratically, leading to a situation where our public

representative, with the support of the EC Majority, has removed those who raised disagreements.

57. Behind these practical questions is a much more important political one: Who decides the priorities of a Marxist organization? In short, our party needs to direct our council work; our council office should not be allowed to act independently and given its weight, in effect, direct our party.

Part II: Our Tactics in the Trump Era

58. The remainder of this document deals with responding to points that have come up in the written exchange so far. Philip and Stephan sent to the NC on July 5, 2017 a discussion document *Update on the Political Situation*, hereafter referred to as the ***Update***. On the basis of the discussion and debate about it on the EC and NC, Philip and Stephan made some revisions to the document to clarify issues and remove some misunderstandings. This revised version, with all substantial deletions and additions shown, was sent to the EC on August 16. This is the version we quote in this document, unless otherwise noted.

59. The revised *Update* was sent to the NC on October 9th, along with the *EC Majority Reply to Document from SK and PL*, hereafter referred to as ***EC Majority Reply***. When we write, for example, "*EC Majority Reply* 10," we mean the 10th paragraph in their document.

60. The EC Majority objects repeatedly that the revisions Philip and Stephan made to their *Update* changed their positions without political explanation. However, the revisions made on August 16th did not contradict the positions in the July 5th *Update*. They were elaborations and clarifications to help more clearly explain their position. This was based on listening carefully to the comrades' comments at the EC and NC. Given that the goal of debate in a Marxist organization is to clarify issues, Philip and Stephan saw no benefit in debating issues where there was no actual disagreement in substance but rather a misunderstanding or confusion created by a loose formulation. We encourage all comrades to independently make up their own minds about the character of the changes made on August 16th by reading the *Update*, particularly the highlighted changes.

61. Unfortunately some of the main issues Philip and Stephan raised in the *Update* were not answered in the *EC Majority Reply*. On other issues there are misleading quotations, and positions are attributed to Philip and Stephan on the basis of assertions and hearsay rather than quoting what they actually wrote. Attempting to correct the large number of what we consider to be inaccurate assertions requires a longer response. We often have to provide full quotes in their context. This is unfortunately necessary in order to resolve issues which are obscuring the debate rather than illuminating it.

Tactics Towards Democrats

62. We agree with the *EC Majority Reply* that alongside the "season of war" in the Republican Party, there is a "dynamic of simmering civil war inside the Democrats." We also agree that the attempts by the Democratic Party establishment leadership to appear "left" were "received without enthusiasm from the Democratic Party base and with heavy criticism from the Berniecrats" (*7*). And we also agree that "[w]hile we should be willing to put demands to the Democratic Party leaders, we should also realize that an honest explanation that directly exposes the corporate Democrats can be met with an enthusiastic response with the best people, some of whom may still vote Democrat as a 'lesser evil'" (8).

63. We do not agree that "SK and PL's overall approach to debates within the organization de-emphasizes the openness to straightforward criticisms of the Democratic Party leadership" (*EC Majority Reply 8*). The question under debate is how to most effectively wage a political struggle against the influence of the Democratic Party over workers and youth. The debate is also about how to educate the most advanced layers on the need to break wider layers from the Democratic Party rather than being satisfied with only themselves breaking from the Democratic Party.

64. For example, in Ginger's marvelous election campaign we were able to win greater support for a socialist alternative to the Democratic candidates by fighting to be part of the left insurgent mood that was being expressed by various "left" Democratic candidates for Minneapolis City Council. We fought to do joint events with the main left Democratic mayoral and city council candidates on issues where we had immediate agreement. This gave us a bigger audience to raise our own program and strategy (in contrast to the left Democrats) to fight corporate power and the establishment Democrats. This may have appeared as less "straightforward" than having nothing to do with any Democratic candidate, but it was far more effective in strengthening independent left politics.

65. The Sanders campaign is another example. It appeared to be a more "straightforward" criticism of

the Democratic Party to oppose all the Democratic presidential candidates, including Sanders. However, in practice this meant isolating the radical left from a radicalizing movement where there were huge opportunities to educate people about the pro-capitalist, undemocratic character of the Democratic Party. Our tactic of getting involved in the Sanders campaign (on an independent socialist basis) allowed us to reach a far bigger audience with bold and straightforward criticisms of the Democratic Party, and Sanders himself.

66. KS's election and re-election were the most impactful and "straightforward criticisms" of the Democratic Party that SA has ever delivered. Landing these blows required us adopting audacious tactics to engage with left-wing workers who mistakenly identify as "Democrats" and regularly vote for Democratic candidates. There is no doubt that this ran the risk of opportunistically bending to their prejudices and political illusions. This is the real test of the firmness of a revolutionary organization – when it has the opportunity to address a mass audience and is under pressure to make unprincipled concessions (or satisfy itself with making extra-revolutionary proclamations at a safe distance with no real influence). We believe that on the whole, despite some mistakes, SA succeeded in withstanding these pressures in our election campaigns and demonstrated a real militancy in arguing our politics straightforwardly.
67. The *Update* argued that among those supporting Sanders' strategy of reforming the Democratic Party, there is a deep skepticism and even outright hatred of the party leadership. We have stressed that the Berniecrat phenomenon is in no way a deep rooted, stable process like the relatively stable social-democratic illusions of the post-war period in Europe. This is a much more volatile process. But "nevertheless, the dominant tendency **at this stage** is for this mood [of anger at the pro-corporate leaders of the Democrats] to be channeled not in the direction of beginning to build a new political party, but instead towards fighting the corporate leaders of the Democratic Party by working to take over the Party along the lines of Bernie Sanders' strategy." (*Update 52*, emphasis added)
68. We have explained that this fundamentally represents an overture, an opening act, in the impending drama that will see big opportunities for the creation of a new mass party to the left of the Democratic Party. This is our perspective and strategic orientation. But to build our organization, we cannot leave matters there, simply waiting for the future formation of a workers' party. While keeping this perspective in mind, we must have a concrete estimation of the current juncture and find the most effective tactics under the prevailing conditions to build our forces now.
69. We fully agree that in the current environment we can sharply attack the Democratic leadership and get a big echo – provided we recognize where genuine left-wing Sandernistas are coming from and adopt an approach that allows them to understand what we are saying.
70. The U.S. Perspectives document drafted by Bryan K., adopted by our 2014 National Convention, makes several relevant points along these lines:

    > *The divisions within the Democrats are having an impact on the consciousness of the audience we mainly address: union members, people of color and youth. We should not have a dismissive approach to the development of left populism that reflects the simmering anger against the injustices of capitalism. We seek to engage with those sections of society who are just now beginning their search for an alternative. (70)*
    >
    > *A growing layer of those still attached to the Democrats can be won to independent working-class politics when given a viable option. We saw this in Seattle and Minneapolis with organizations and individuals usually tied to the Democrats actively campaigning for socialists... **We are in a better position to break people from campaigning for Democrats when we have a positive alternative to assert.** (71 emphasis added)*
    >
    > ***We saw on the ground that 'Break from the Democrats' gained far less of an echo than slogans about building an alternative to the Democrats' corporate policies**. (85 emphasis added)*

71. A wider layer can be won to supporting a left alternative to the Democrats when they are presented with a viable alternative, but the opposite is also true. Without a viable alternative to the Democrats, it's much harder to convince broader layers to not vote Democratic. Since 2014, we have seen – despite huge skepticism and hostility to the Democratic Party – the majority of the new left energy in electoral politics being directed towards left Democrats. Doesn't this situation underline the case for more nuanced tactics? Where there are credible independent alternatives on the ballot we can mobilize large elements of this hostility towards the Democratic Party into a vote for an independent alternative, as KS's and Ginger's campaigns showed. Unfortunately, given the very weak forces of independent left politics at this time, credible independent candidates are the exception, not the rule.

72. Does the EC Majority think the points made in the 2014 U.S. Perspectives document are "de-emphasiz[ing] the openness to straightforward criticisms of the Democratic Party leadership"? In our view the experiences of the Sawant 2015, Sanders 2015-2016, and Jentzen 2017 campaigns have only confirmed the approach agreed at our 2014 Convention.

73. Trump's election makes this approach even more important. The document by Tom and Philip for the February 2017 NC, published in our *New Member Reading Packet*, explains that Trump's election

> *has altered somewhat how the Democratic Party is seen by key sections that are moving into struggle. The Democrats can now more easily appear as a lesser evil in contrast to the viciously right-wing policies of Trump and the Republicans… Further, given the deep anger and desire for bold action against Trump from the base of the Democratic Party, the majority of Democratic politicians have been forced to adopt a more combative approach towards Trump, shallow and cynical as it may be. For example, mainstream Democratic politicians spoke at the airport protests against the Muslim ban and at other anti-Trump rallies… This all points to the highly likely perspective that we will see increased moves by activists in the direction of a 'Tea Party of the left.'*

74. Tom and Philip's document goes on at length emphasizing how a skillful, patient approach is needed even more in the Trump era. They wrote:

> *[SA] has long argued that the Democratic Party is dominated by big-business, pro-capitalist interests and that we instead need to build a political alternative in the form of a mass workers' party with a socialist program. However,* ***such an understanding does not exhaust the question of how to argue for it most effectively to win over wider layers of workers and youth who have not yet drawn that conclusion. To do so we will need to patiently explain our position based on the needs of the movement and help the best workers and youth generalize from their concrete experience from the actual living struggle itself****.*
>
> *There is no doubt that the anti-Trump movement will try to push the Democrats to block Trump's right-wing agenda…* ***We will need a patient approach as the movement will require some time and experience for a significant section of the activists to fully come to grips with the reality of the Democratic Party*** *…*
>
> *Basing ourselves on the experience and tasks of the movement, socialists should draw out the necessary lessons about the pro-capitalist, anti-worker character of the Democratic Party and the need for a new political force that is 100% against Trump and the billionaire class. To the extent that the Democrats fail to take the necessary measures to fight Trump, we will criticize them for it, pointing out that this flows from their conservative outlook and ties to big business and that we need to instead rely on building a movement from below and that we need to build a new party.*
>
> ***To the degree the Democrats put up resistance to Trump, we will welcome it, while explaining that this is contrary to their political orientation but was the result of the pressure of the movement from below, which demonstrates the need to not rely on them but instead build up the independent power of working people.*** *(emphasis added)*

75. On an abstract level, we could debate forever the correct balance between:
    a. Explaining the pro-corporate nature of the Democratic Party, and
    b. Putting forward demands on the Democrats, forcing them to decide between (1) failing to take them up, thereby exposing themselves to their left base, or (2) adopting our demands, thereby advancing the struggles of different movements.

76. The truth is concrete. Stephan and Philip brought up in their *Update* two very concrete issues where this question is posed: the battle around healthcare and the demand to impeach Trump. Unfortunately, there is no reply in the *EC Majority Reply* regarding either of these two issues.

Impeachment

77. The *Update* circulated for the July 2017 NC meeting argued "while the Democratic Party leadership wants to use the question of impeachment as a tool to divert energy away from building a mass movement, Marxists can and should seize on these developments to drive a wedge between left-wing workers and their Democratic Party (mis)leaders, while utilizing the mood for impeachment to agitate for mass protests and organizing from below to drive out Trump." (43)

78. At the July NC meeting it appeared to us that some of the EC Majority comrades argued against SA demanding Trump be impeached. Since then, the EC Majority has gradually begun to embrace the call for impeachment, but without explaining why they changed their position. This limits the ability of the organization to more consciously understand the approach we are taking.

79. On the EC and NC and in the *Update*, we raised that there needed to be a fuller discussion on the issue, and written material needed to be produced. Discussion grew in the organization, including at the

August and September NC phone conferences, about SA adding the impeachment demand to our material. Bryan K then wrote the article *How to Drive Out Trump*, published online October 1st.

80. We agree with much of this article. It correctly points out that "the pro-corporate Democratic leaders are not calling for impeachment," and it put forward a stronger call for impeachment than previous material in our paper/website. However we think this article reflected a lack of clarity in some aspects of how SA should argue the case for impeachment from a socialist standpoint.
81. The article says "currently, the motivation for protests isn't a general call for impeachment. Instead, people are organizing against the attacks on immigrants, against the 'alt-right' and on a host of other issues. The starting point of socialists isn't just to enter into these movements and push them towards impeachment demands." This approach undermines utilizing the impeachment tactic by pointing away from it. Instead we should positively explain why and how socialists argue for impeachment, and also critique the liberal strategy towards impeachment.
82. If we were the only ones bringing up impeachment, then our tactics would have to be different. However, there is already a significant debate taking place among capitalist commentators and also protesters about this question. Support for impeachment has been rising rapidly.
83. In the EC discussion about Bryan's article, Stephan proposed rough amendments, including deleting the quote above pointing away from impeachment and replacing it with a positive formulation: "Currently, the motivation for protests is more and more a generalized opposition to Trump. People are organizing against the attacks on immigrants, against the 'alt-right' and a host of other issues. But these movements are correctly seen as different sides of the same thing. The starting point of socialists is to help this generalization, to bring movements together."
84. Stephan's amendments also included: more directly highlighting impeachment; arguing for building mass struggles against each of Trump's attacks and linking them to the need to bring the movements together to drive out Trump; challenging the dominant strategy of focusing on the 2018 elections, and adding demands such as defending immigrants, Medicare for All, taking concrete steps to build a mass movement, and that Congress impeaches Trump. Unfortunately the EC did not include these amendments.
85. We agree with Bryan that "currently, the motivation for protests isn't a general call for impeachment." There is a growing desire to use the 2018 elections to throw out the Republicans. Given this terrain, one of the stronger weapons to undermine illusions in the Democrats is to attack the vast majority of Democrats, including many left Democrats, for refusing to campaign for impeachment throughout this 2018 election season.
86. We agree that where protests have broken out, it has generally been on specific issues in response to various attacks from Trump. However, the mood is more complicated than that. For example, when Trump's education secretary Betsy DeVos came to a Seattle suburb in October, the anger among the crowd of 1,000 largely union members about her attacks on education was palpable. But the bigger question in protesters' minds was how to get rid of Trump. When the last speaker ended with the demand to impeach, huge applause erupted. Later on, when a section of the protest tried to block the entrance of the hotel where DeVos was speaking, demonstrators started chanting "Impeach Trump!" Likewise, during this year's Women's March in Seattle, picket signs and chants about impeachment were very popular.
87. These anecdotes highlight in our view a general mood that exists in the different struggles that break out against Trump – regarding education, Dreamers, women, etc. – there's an anger around the immediate issues but a strong recognition that to deal with any of these issues Trump has to be defeated. Our role is to intervene on the specific issues that come up while helping to generalize towards uniting these different fights as much as possible into an almighty struggle to drive Trump out.
88. Socialists understand that a mass movement could force Trump to resign. It could also force his cabinet to remove him through "Article 25" (though this would still require a two-thirds vote in the House and Senate if Trump appeals). However, impeachment is the tool that most ordinary people in the U.S. look to when they want to kick out a president. We can take this up and explain that impeachment will require a mass struggle to force the Democrats and Republicans to do it.
89. The impeachment slogan has, like many demands, significant limitations which need to be addressed in our material, but the dominant feature at this point in time is a progressive desire to get rid of Trump. We should not avoid this question, but rather help our comrades take it up in a principled, socialist fashion. The dominant liberal way impeachment is posed is to point away from movement-building and

funneling energy into electing Democrats.

90. In contrast, socialists should utilize the sentiment for impeachment to continually hammer home the need to build a mass movement to drive out Trump and force Congress to impeach him. We should use every opportunity to point out the hesitation and opposition to impeachment from the majority of Democrats (at this stage) and Republicans. Their resistance shows that we cannot trust the establishment; instead we must rely on the strength of ordinary people organizing a movement from below to force the politicians' hands.
91. As we've done, we need to answer the concerns about a Pence presidency. But we also need to warn explicitly that the Democrats and the wider ruling class can at a certain point turn to impeachment to stabilize their system and steer politics back to "normal." This tension is not unique to impeachment. As we know, there is nothing inherently revolutionary in demanding any reform like $15. Reforms can be taken up in a revolutionary, reformist, or even an openly pro-capitalist fashion (as Nick Hanauer does). As Marxists, we must link the fight to drive out Trump with the need for fundamental social change and the need to build a new party that really fights for working people.
92. We hoped the October 9th *EC Majority Reply* would have explained more the comrades' thinking and why they did not agree with Stephan's amendments to the October 1st article given that it flowed from points first raised in the *Update*. Unfortunately, the *EC Majority Reply* says nothing on this.
93. Tom's article, *The Challenge Facing the Left: Building A Real Mass Movement* for the October paper went even further than Bryan's article in keeping the impeachment demand at a distance. Tom refers to the decision of President Lyndon B. Johnson not to seek a second term and the resignation of Nixon as examples that "show that impeachment is not the only way to bring down a president and that what is key is a mass movement."
94. We agree the key is a mass movement. We can state this in a general abstract fashion in almost any situation. But how do we concretize it in these specific conditions? The impeachment demand, taken up in a socialist fashion, can be used both as a lever to build a movement and added to the demands of various anti-Trump movements to strengthen and unite them together. Given that impeachment is widely perceived as the most credible way to force a president out, and given the opposition in Congress to taking this step, the need to struggle to achieve what ordinary people are hoping for is posed. Further, since the Democrats are highly unlikely to win the necessary two thirds in the Senate in 2018 to convict Trump on their own, a movement would need to be strong enough to scare even Senate Republicans into voting to remove Trump to avoid even more damage to their system.
95. This is, in fact, what happened to Nixon. Tom's article fails to mention that the House Judiciary Committee passed three articles of impeachment against Nixon, with a significant section of Republicans voting with the Democrats. Of course Marxists explain that it was the huge social revolt throughout U.S. society which drove this process forward. Nevertheless, the political-legal mechanism that pushed Nixon out was his impending impeachment, and that is what is recorded in popular consciousness. The example of LBJ not running for a second term is an even weaker argument as it implies waiting until Trump finishes out his first term in 2020, which is unacceptable in the eyes of radicalizing youth and workers.
96. In the November issue of our paper a revised version of Bryan's October 1st article was printed. We believe this version marked a further improvement, bringing it closer to the approach Stephan originally argued for in his amendments to the first version. The new version correctly added demands, including "Congress should take immediate action to remove Trump from office, whether through impeachment or resignation." Despite its improvements the article still reflects some hesitancy to fully embrace the demand of impeachment.
97. While we believe it's to our advantage to take on the demand of impeachment to develop the idea of a generalized struggle to oust Trump, we also need to educate our members and the left that the way we frame our demand for impeachment is fundamentally different than the games some Democrats are playing by filing articles of impeachment without following up with a serious campaign.
98. Critiquing the Democrats' limited approach on the concrete issue of impeachment is, in fact, a harder hitting attack on the Democrats than general, abstract criticisms. Criticizing "left" Democrats who (so far) have failed to advocate impeachment, or have not seriously campaigned for it, will be especially damaging, given the higher expectations that their left-wing base has of them.
99. This shows, in our view, how Marxists should not avoid taking up demands presented by the needs of fighting Trump, and instead we need to arm the left to prevent those demands from being limited by the framework the Democrats prefer. To keep an artificial distance does not prepare our ranks for a

bold engagement when the issue of impeachment periodically bursts onto the agenda or if a more determined mood, or movement, for impeachment develops.

100. Recently the impeachment demand has been highlighted on SA picket signs and the SA national petition for the women's marches in 2018, which we welcome. However, we believe the EC Majority's tendency to approach this question in an abstract propagandistic fashion rather than engaging concretely resulted in the organization missing opportunities to take up the impeachment demand earlier. Under the pressure of events and the debate inside the organization, the EC Majority changed its position. But they changed it in an empirical, pragmatic fashion (meaning being driven by events and impressions rather than by a conscious theoretical understanding). This has not sufficiently clarified for our members how to use the impeachment demand in a socialist way in contrast with how the Democrats use it.

Healthcare

101. To avoid an abstract discussion about whether to put demands on Democrats "or" to criticize them, the *Update* dealt with our approach toward the living, concrete struggles developing against Trumpcare and for Medicare for All, including at the state level in New York and California.

102. We have always needed to call out the Democrats whenever they have blocked the movement toward socialized medicine. We have always needed to find ways to argue for a mass party of the working class. However, we think it was clear that last spring and summer, important sections of the radical left, including many of our members, struggled when they were confronted with the wave of popular anger at Trumpcare and the campaigns that developed to establish a single-payer healthcare system on the state level. This was a complicated challenge for three reasons:
(a) there was a clear difference between the positions of the Republicans and the Democrats (who were prominently opposing Trumpcare and all voted against it);
(b) the struggle nationally was concretely to defend Obamacare, a policy the radical left (correctly) had been highly critical of; and
(c) left Democrats were sponsoring single-payer legislation nationally and on the state level in California and NY.

103. NC member and NY City Organizer Patrick sent a letter to the national EC on June 26 that raised these points and proposed that SA call a national day of action on healthcare. (This was agreed by the EC and resulted in the very successful actions in July.) Patrick wrote:

> *I think there is a lot of confusion in the organization on our tactics toward the processes in the Democratic Party right now… I wanted to report from NYC Pride… our main political edge was healthcare… We got a huge echo … The chants that got the loudest echo were: 'What do we want? Healthcare. When do we want it? Now!' And: 'Hey hey, ho ho, Trumpcare has got to go!'… We tested out chants for single payer & Medicare for All – and most of our comrades wanted to chant more 'radical' slogans. But they did not get anything close to the echo that the first two chants, mentioned above, got.*

104. Given this challenge, the *Update* attempted to help clarify this:

> *Our material and interventions need to start with opposing the Republican attack on healthcare. We want to defeat Trumpcare and we have the best ideas for how to build a movement that can stop it. Aiming our fire first and foremost at Trump and the Republicans is sometimes counterintuitive, given the anger amongst our members towards the Democratic Party. But this is an important tactic, given that most progressive workers and youth are angry primarily at Trump, and they are less angry at the Democratic Party. This approach will best allow us to reach workers and youth with our politics, including the vital need for working people to organize independently of big business in their own movements and with their own political party.* (91)

105. Patrick also raised:

> *It seems comrades are struggling for how to respond to recent events around issues related to shortcomings of the Democrats and Bernie Sanders. There seems to be a strong tendency in the organization to respond to recent developments with comrades quickly resorting to 'this shows we need a new party'…*
>
> *There was a different emphasis in the NYC organization's statement on the failure of Medicare For All legislation here than the Bay Area's recent Facebook post on June 25… The Bay Area statement criticizes the Democratic Party leadership for failing to pass Medicare for All legislation and then essentially concluded that we need a new party. The NYC statement on the NY Health Act also criticizes the Democratic Party leadership for failing to pass the legislation and concluded with a call for building a mass struggle in support of the NY Health Act.*
>
> *To make our point sharp, we put forward a demand for a mass demo on the opening of the next legislative session. We also included demands at the end that talk about the need for a systematic mass mobilization, along with demands for a new party and socialism.*

The Democratic Party is full of growing contradictions right now. It was members of the Democratic Party who killed Medicare for All in California (and didn't do enough to support it in NY) – but also it was members of the party, and the left wing insurgency around Sanders in particular, who helped it get as far as possible and mobilized the most support for it…

We should definitely be looking for opportunities to open up a discussion about launching a new party. But, I think we are limited to just that – a discussion. The debate right now amongst millions of people is not so much 'do we need a new party?' … the larger issue is: how can we stop Trumpcare? And for Bernie Sanders supporters and left-wingers it's 'how can we pass Medicare for All.' A new party is not where this layer is looking to at the moment.

106. We largely agree with Patrick's points. We think they showed that the EC needed to more consciously explain these issues throughout the organization, which Philip and Stephan raised on the EC, at the July NC, and in their *Update*.

107. In California and NY comrades found ways to engage in this real struggle and played an excellent role. However, this required helping comrades develop tactics to connect with activists when right-wing Democrats killed the bills. The NY organization put out a statement with good propaganda, explaining the character of the Democratic Party, arguing for a new party, and for socialism. To make this sharper, they stressed the need for stepping up the struggle to overcome the blockade of the pro-corporate Democrats, calling for a mass demo on the opening of the next legislative session. They did not limit themselves to only raising propaganda, but also advanced a tactic of organizing a sit-in at the office of a conservative NY representative who was blocking the single-payer bill. This was successful in drawing in DSA members and activists, bringing them into collision with the Democratic Party, and provided a larger audience for our propaganda than if we had only denounced the Democratic Party.

108. The Bay Area comrades took the excellent initiative to quickly write a good article for our website when the Democratic leadership blocked a similar single-payer bill in California. While it was absolutely correct for our article to expose the Democratic Party and call for a new party, more was needed because activists were still engaged at the time in fighting to win single-payer. Even after the bill was derailed by the State Assembly Speaker, activists continued to demand that he reverse his decision. Instead of presenting ourselves as fighting together with this ongoing movement to achieve its immediate demand, our article focused on calling for a new party. While the idea of a new party would be well received by some activists, it would be understood by many of them as a longer-term project. Stephan raised with the Bay Area comrades, and at the July NC meeting, that in addition to calling for a new party, we should have also called for mass protests and occupations of the offices of the Democrats who killed the bill as well as running independent candidates to kick out the Democrats who betrayed the movement. Comrades in the Bay Area agreed and adjusted to the situation on the ground.

109. However, at the July NC meeting it appeared to us that some EC Majority comrades argued against the thrust of these points and defended the article on California that the Editorial Board had edited and published - despite knowing much more about the ongoing movement than the Bay Area comrades knew when they first drafted it. Unfortunately, the *EC Majority Reply* does not reply to these points on our tactics in NY or California, nor the more general points on healthcare in the *Update*.

110. The concrete experiences of the fight against Trumpcare and the fight for single-payer in NY and California are examples of how we need to combine the tasks of calling out the Democrats with sometimes putting demands on the Democrats, as well as finding opportunities to bring radicalizing workers into conflict with the Democratic Party. We find ourselves in a situation where workers need time to experience for themselves the futility of reforming the Democratic Party. We need to participate in the struggles of workers and help them draw the conclusion from their own experiences that the Democratic Party is a dead end. Wherever possible, we should try to find concrete, rather than abstract, ways to clarify this to a wider audience and speed up this process. We are not saying we should not raise the need for a new party; on the contrary, we are saying we need to find ways to make this point more effectively.

DSA and a New Socialist Party

111. DSA has grown rapidly to become the largest self-described socialist formation in the U.S. since the 1940s. Earlier in 2017 the EC agreed to add the demand for a new socialist party, particularly when talking with DSA members. The Editorial Board asked Philip to write an article for the July/August 2017 issue of our paper which highlighted this. The article was edited by Tom. Comrades can change their views, and we are open to revising our position as well. However, we disagree with the new position

raised in the October 9th *EC Majority Reply* against calling for a new socialist party.

112. In Tom's draft of the December U.S. Perspectives document, he wrote the call for:

> *DSA to launch a 'new socialist party'... should be dropped. For one thing it does not make sense to new DSAers who believe they have actually joined the 'new socialist party'. Also it overemphasizes the importance of the DSA phenomenon when we need to point to the potential for a broader new left party which would have a far more substantial base of social support. Explaining the necessity for a mass workers party with a federal structure to young people in the DSA is more important than talking about 'what kind' of broad socialist group we need... A new working-class party to fight the right is a more ambitious call, reflecting what is actually needed, then just regroupment of the socialist left. In this context, a call for a 'new socialist party' is too narrow for the tasks faced today in the face of the right-wing onslaught.*

113. Our call on DSA to launch - together with SA and others - a broader socialist party is one way to concretely engage with the radical minority which is currently open to building an alternative to the Democrats. However, it's not a slogan that fits all audiences. In general we should still emphasize slogans for a broader mass "party for the 99%" or "a party to fight the right." The demand for a new socialist party is for a more focused audience of DSA and the newly emerging socialist elements.

114. In no way does the demand for a new socialist party point away from arguing for a mass workers party. A smaller socialist party of 50,000 to 100,000 members would be one important step toward the future formation of a workers party. Our call for a new socialist party should stress that it is an immediate step to bring together a radical minority who could, in turn, fight more effectively together to break broader layers of Sandernistas from the Democratic Party.

115. We agree that "our call for independent working-class candidates and a new party can take on different forms in different contexts, but it should also be a process that we are very clearly at the forefront of" (*EC Majority Reply 17*). In speaking to a more radical minority we can call on DSA to join with us, Movement for a People's Party (formerly Draft Bernie), and others, to vigorously run independent socialist candidates in maybe 10 or more well targeted 2018 races. This would sharpen the debate on the left about breaking from the Democrats. If 10+ independent socialist candidates ran, built movements, and coordinated efforts, it would point towards the formation of a new Socialist Party.

116. The objective space exists for dozens of independent socialists to be elected, mainly to local office (though this potential isn't being fully realized given the weakness of the subjective factor). Those most open to socialism are also most prepared to support an alternative to the Democrats. With the radicalization of a minority in the anti-Trump movement and the growing appeal of socialism, the space exists for a broad socialist party of 50,000 to 100,000 members. Such a party would be a relatively small formation without a mass base in labor. It would be a crisis-ridden formation.

117. Nevertheless, it would represent an important step forward. A new socialist party would provide a forum for a new layer to get organized, test ideas, and begin to educate themselves. This would allow us to work alongside this new layer in an on-going fashion. It's an offer for united front type work with DSA and other newly emerging socialists – let's unite to build a broader socialist party, while we each maintain full freedom to argue for our separate politics and criticize each other's views. We are completely confident that SA's ideas would gain wide support in such a scenario.

118. Unfortunately it's unlikely in the short term that DSA will launch a broader socialist party given the opposition of DSA's leadership, including its left leaders. But new events can make this need felt more sharply. The opposition of the DSA leadership to taking this step reflects their political weaknesses, not ours. Many fear the impetus it would give to challenging Sanders' strategy of reforming the Democrats and the impact SA would have in such a formation.

119. Contrary to the EC Majority's claim that it "does not make sense to new DSAers who believe they have actually joined the 'new socialist party,'" DSA's Refoundation Caucus recently published a proposal for DSA to move toward independent socialist candidates and a mass socialist party! The document refers extremely positively to SA's successes running candidates and says "it should also be noted that, seeing the growth in DSA over the past year, Socialist Alternative recently published an article calling on DSA to form a new, mass socialist political party," linking to our July article calling on DSA to launch a new socialist party.

120. The Refoundation Caucus claims to have "200 members in 30 states and districts" and a member on DSA's National Political Committee. Their proposal for DSA to run independent socialists and move toward a mass socialist party was scheduled to be discussed at the National Political Committee's January meeting.

121. Furthermore, the Movement for a People's Party

(formerly Draft Bernie) sent out an email blast promoting "the DSA Refoundation Caucus's exciting proposal." They also asked SA to send a letter to the DSA leadership endorsing Refoundation's proposal. Unfortunately, this great opportunity to engage in a real discussion by sending an open letter to the DSA leadership was not taken up by the EC.

122. But do we overemphasize DSA? DSA does not play the same role in every city, but a significant section of the best left-wing Sandernistas are rallying behind DSA because they are looking for a socialist organization, a membership organization (that appears more democratic than the NGO-style, top-down options of Our Revolution and others), and an activist organization involved in campaigns like Medicare for All, electoral campaigns, the fight against racism, etc. DSA has a disproportionate middle-class and white-collar composition, but an important section of their new members are union activists and young workers.

123. It's quite possible that the DSA leadership will wreck this opportunity to keep a radicalizing layer of activists together. However, given the dynamic that exists for a broad socialist formation and the space for DSA's politics while Trump is President, we think it's most likely they will continue to be an important factor on the left for the next period.

124. But the *EC Majority Reply* argues "the Berniecrat layer is much wider and deeper than DSA's membership or the people around them" (10) and "we need a sense of proportion about DSA … the anti-Trump struggles and the Berniecrat layer are much broader than DSA" (35).

125. We fully agree. However, we still agree with the position the EC argued for at our February and July 2017 NC meetings that DSA should be a priority for SA for a few reasons. First, DSA, at this juncture, is at the core of the more advanced, freshly radicalizing layer. DSA's strengths (the search for activism, socialist ideas, and a membership organization) and weaknesses (politically unclear about those socialist ideas, program, the need to build a new party, etc.) are representative of a much wider layer.

126. Second, the NC agreed that SA needs to focus at this point on developing a wider layer of cadre to lay the basis for further sustainable growth. A critical part of this is establishing a deeper understanding about Marxist politics and building a revolutionary organization. Relating to DSA helps to distinguish for our members the precise character of our revolutionary socialist politics in contrast to the vaguer ideas of DSA. It compels our members to argue our politics on a higher level in a more conscious fashion.

127. Third, the EC agreed that one credible scenario for future developments would be a section of the forces currently organized in DSA fusing together with us to build a revolutionary party. This could be a layer of hundreds or possibly thousands. The EC argued at the February NC that this was a medium-term prospect, not a short-term one, which depends on events and the quality of our intervention. While perspectives for DSA are very open, the EC argued that this was one possible perspective, and given the qualitative breakthrough it would represent, one that we should work towards while keeping our main orientation toward anti-Trump struggles.

128. We believe these points are still correct.

129. Who concretely are the other people in the "Berniecrat layer" that the *EC Majority Reply* suggests prioritizing orienting to? The comrades seem to overemphasize the "Draft Bernie" activists when they write "'Draft Bernie for a People's Party' (DB) is the most significant move towards independent politics" (*EC Majority Reply 18*). We agree DB is significant and we should engage with it. However, its organized presence is very limited relative to DSA at this stage. Further, they have responded enthusiastically to our proposal for DSA to launch a new socialist party. Despite the EC Majority's emphasis on DB, they didn't respond to the request from DB to send DSA a statement supporting the proposals of DSA's Refoundation caucus for independent socialist candidates and a broader Socialist Party.

130. A big strength of DSA compared to other Berniecrats is that it's a membership-based organization with lively structures. Despite big regional differences, this creates the possibility for us to propose joint actions and also the space for their members to draw conclusions out of their campaigns. Where they now have elected officials, they are not in a position to hold them truly accountable. However, they will monitor what "their" representatives do. This can lead to an active process which their members can learn from. Further, half of the candidates DSA supported in 2017 ran as either independent or on a Green Party ticket, while the other half ran as Democrats.

131. Our Revolution (OR) unfortunately has been much less willing than DSA to support independent left candidates. OR made a dual-endorsement of both Ginger and Steve in the Minneapolis race last year, whereas DSA ranked Ginger's campaign among their top 5 priority races nationally. However, OR's successes in the 2017 election gives an indication of the bigger role OR could play in 2018, especially with their association to Sanders. But their top-down approach and lack of activism limits their ability to

engage the new generation moving into action. While OR formally now is a membership organization, in no way do they have functioning structures that could come into conflict with their elected representatives in contrast with DSA. This may change at a certain point, but so far there are no real signs of this.

132. Obviously, there are local exceptions. We have to deal with OR locally on a case-by-case basis. In our general material we should continue calling on Sanders and OR to refuse to endorse any candidate who takes corporate money, develop real membership structures, throw their weight fully into building movements, and to argue for a political revolution against the billionaire class in the true, socialist meaning.

Illusions in the DSA Leadership?

133. What about the hopes that Philip and Stephan allegedly have in the leadership of DSA? Are they too soft on DSA?

134. The *EC Majority Reply* says: "In July, [Philip and Stephan] stated: 'At DSA's upcoming August convention, their left wing - who has all the momentum on their side - could boldly take over and lead DSA toward movement building, socialist policies, a systematic approach to educating their new forces in the ideas and methods of Marxism, and adopting an internationalist working-class policy which would include leaving the pro-capitalist Second International.' We completely reject that the existing left is capable of educating the DSA in Marxism and genuine internationalism." (28)

135. However, Philip and Stephan were not arguing that the existing left of DSA is educating DSA in Marxism and genuine internationalism. The point they were trying to make was, in fact, a political critique of the left of DSA for not measuring up to the necessary political tasks.

136. The quote the EC Majority gives is quite selective. Immediately following what they quote the *Update* goes on to say:

> *The leaders of the left wing of DSA do not appear, from what we can see from outside of DSA, to be fully grasping these opportunities. But it is also clear that the dynamic of the new forces entering DSA, and big events, could push them much further down this road at a certain stage. (65, July 5 Update)*
>
> *However, history and experience has shown it is a serious political liability to respond empirically and pragmatically to developments. Instead, conscious policies and strategies are needed which are systematically campaigned for. Given the pressure of capitalist ideologies, particularly various reformist and left outlooks, this is best arrived at through a democratic, collective exchange of experience and debate among revolutionaries. This poses the need for revolutionaries to come together in an organized way, i.e. a revolutionary tendency, organization, or party depending on its stage of development. (66, July 5 Update)*

137. The *EC Majority Reply* also ignores the numerous other places in the original July 5th *Update* which spelled out clear criticisms of DSA leaders and argues against the political approach of DSA. Comrades can review paragraphs 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 68 and 69 in the original July 5th *Update*.

138. The quotes above were in the July 5th *Update* first sent to the NC. Based on discussion at a EC meeting after this, Philip and Stephan accepted that their original formulation in paragraph 65 was not clear enough. Their original formulation was not intended to paint the left leaders of DSA as sharing our politics. However they agreed that it was not clear enough and made amendments to clarify what they were trying to express. On July 7th, before the NC meeting, they sent the NC a clarifying amendment:

> *At DSA's upcoming August convention their left wing, **much of which considers itself to be Marxist - and** who has all the momentum on its side, **will have a big opportunity to help shape the direction of DSA. A Marxist tendency in DSA should be fighting for the leadership of DSA on the basis of ~~- could boldly take over and lead DSA toward~~** movement building, socialist policies, a systematic approach to educating their new members in the ideas and methods of Marxism, and adopting an internationalist working class policy which would include leaving the pro-capitalist Second International. **Unfortunately, ~~T~~**the leaders of the left wing of DSA do not appear, from what we can see from outside of DSA, **do not share this approach and are not ~~to be~~** fully grasping these opportunities. But it is also clear that the dynamic of the new forces entering DSA, and big events, could push them much further down this road at a certain stage. (65, July 7 Update)*

139. And after reviewing the *Update* in light of the NC discussion Philip and Stephan further clarified and spelled out their view with the August 16th revisions:

> *We welcome the tens of thousands of young people and workers who have decided they are socialists and want to get active in a socialist organization. This is an important step forward and represents a progressive development. At the same time **we believe that the politics of the DSA leaders are not adequate for the task of rebuilding a politically principled socialist movement. These political limitations, including the limitations of DSA's left leaders, are already a relative obstacle to DSA seizing the full potential to build the socialist movement and***

> ***wider workers struggles today, and if not overcome DSA's reformist politics will at a certain stage emerge as a decisive obstacle for these newly developing socialists to move forward****. But at this stage, it is correct to emphasize the progressive features in this phenomenon, while maintaining an independent Marxist position and warning, in a friendly and patient manner, of the political limitations of DSA. (69 emphasis added)*
>
> *While generally supporting the left wing of DSA when they fight against the right wing of DSA, we recognize that* ***the left-wing leaders, even those claiming to be Marxists, also tend to act in a reformist fashion****, though with a more radical approach than the right wing. But it is also clear that the dynamic of the new forces entering DSA, and big events, could push them much further to the left at a certain stage. (74 emphasis added)*

140. This is criticized by the *EC Majority Reply* "Without explanation of a changed position, paragraph 65 has changed again both before and after the NC with a wholesale update of the DSA section that balances their contribution more" (31). We think it's in the interest of the organization to avoid misunderstandings and clarifications should be welcomed. This was the character of the changes Stephan and Philip made to paragraph 65.

141. The *EC Majority Reply* argues that despite these revisions there remains political disagreements (see paragraphs 29, 31, 33).

142. We agree that the leaders of the DSA left are not currently acting as Marxists. But is it possible that their politics develop and a section of them adopt a revolutionary Marxist position? The *EC Majority Reply* indicates yes! They write "we do not of course exclude that individuals and groupings in DSA could go much further on the road to genuine Marxism especially in the context of major political developments and developments in the class struggle and sharpening political divisions within DSA itself. But in our opinion, this will also require the ideas of the CWI gaining an echo, and of course it is also entirely possible that many left leaders in DSA will shift to the right under pressure from events." (30)

143. This echoes what was said in the August 16th *Update* quoted above as well as the following passage:

> *However,* ***being pushed to the left in response to big events would likely mean responding in an empirical and pragmatic fashion (though it is possible for left leaders to develop as conscious Marxists in response to events if they can make a qualitative programmatic and theoretical breakthrough in their politics). History and experience have shown such a pragmatic approach, even if well meaning, is a serious political liability for left leaders. Instead, the central lesson of Lenin and Trotsky is that conscious Marxist policies and strategies are needed*** *which are systematically campaigned for in preparation for great events… This poses the need for revolutionaries to come together in an organized way, i.e. a revolutionary tendency, organization, or party depending on its stage of development.* ***Unfortunately, this is not the approach of the leaders of the left in DSA.*** *(75, emphasis added)*

144. The stress here was that the dynamic of new forces entering DSA and further big events could push left leaders of DSA further to the left at a certain stage. It's far from saying they could develop into Marxists.

145. It goes on to point out, in a condensed fashion, that such a move to the left in response to big events would mean responding in an empirical and pragmatic fashion, which is not adequate and not at all the same as consciously adopting the program of revolutionary Marxism. It argues that it's possible for left leaders to become Marxists, but this would require "a qualitative programmatic and theoretical breakthrough in their politics."

146. Historical experience shows in the vast majority of cases left leaders do not develop into genuine revolutionaries. Instead, they can move to the left due to pressure from below or from big events, but do not draw all the necessary conclusions. But there are examples of left figures who started from a reformist or confused position that were able to make a qualitative breakthrough in their politics and embrace a revolutionary outlook. Eugene Debs is one example.

147. The role of the subjective factor, a conscious Marxist intervention, is decisive. Philip and Stephan wrote:

> *It will take time, experience, political debate, and the conscious intervention of Marxists, for these new forces to learn further lessons and politically develop a deeper understanding of capitalism, class struggle, socialist politics, and Marxist theory. Of course,* ***big sections of these new forces can be miseducated by the various leading political trends in DSA and on the broader left. That is why it is incumbent on us*** *to search for every possible opportunity to work together with the new layers joining DSA and engage in a comradely political discussion and debate with the aim of* ***spreading Marxist politics and combating the false political approach of various dominant trends on the left****. (72, emphasis added)*

148. The *EC Majority Reply* states: "We should make proposals to DSA branches and DSA as a whole, but putting an emphasis on 'demands' or public advice to the narrow 'left caucus' (as various versions of paragraph 65 does) overstates their importance, doesn't deal with a fast-moving situation in DSA, and

can disorient our membership. We feel that this indicates a political disagreement in our leadership that should be debated thoroughly." (31)

149. We welcome "a thorough debate" on this question. Unfortunately very little of actual substance on this has been forthcoming from the EC Majority. Instead they have issued an avalanche of personal and organizational accusations.

150. We think SA should argue for DSA, and the left wing of it, to take steps such as:
(a) A national Medicare for All campaign – With the right timing, this could have a big impact and should be linked to popularizing the idea of taking the healthcare companies into democratic public ownership.
(b) Demanding Trump's impeachment should be taken up by DSA in a bold way that undermines the Democrats and builds a movement to drive out Trump.
(c) Vigorously run independent candidates in 2018 in 10+ targeted races where they can make an impact.
(d) Launch - with SA and other forces - a new, broad socialist party with the aim of growing to 100,000 members.
Of course, we are open to other ideas.

151. We are happy to offer DSA, and its left wing, this kind of advice. In outlining these proposals we accomplish two things: On one side, we offer a way forward to the new layer who's starting to get organized (testing out DSA from the inside or observing them from the outside); we offer our ideas as an alternative to the DSA left leaders. On the other side, it's a means to attract the ones and twos, and in the future even more people on the socialist left, to consider joining SA.

152. The *EC Majority Reply* argues we need to clarify differences between the politics of SA and DSA, particularly the left of DSA. We agree. We are offering concrete ways of doing exactly that.

153. The *EC Majority Reply* argues: "we do not want to be seen as simply the 'advisors' to the group around Jacobin, and we think all versions of SK and PL's paragraph 65 point too much in this direction. Instead, we need to train our members to use united front methods of work and put forward the CWI's politics in the process of collaboration with DSA in anti-Trump struggles and beyond." (33)

154. However, SA will end up exactly as "advisers" if we don't concretely engage. The flip-side of the ISO's abstention from the Sanders campaign (despite their arguments about how they would collaborate in a united front way with Sanders supporters in building movements for $15, Medicare for All, etc.) was their very friendly meetings with DSA who were opportunist towards Sanders running as a Democrat. In their joint events they gave each other "friendly advice." Our Sanders tactic put us in the middle of the battle, in conflict with Sanders and the opportunist approach of DSA. And that is where we should strive to be, in the tradition of the CWI, in the middle of the battles where a new generation of fighters is trying to overcome exploitation and oppression.

"Sectarian Danger" and Opportunism

155. The *EC Majority Reply* says: "We feel that SK and PL's tone in their document about a 'sectarian danger' in our organization is overstated in relation to DSA and the Democratic Party. An opportunist danger exists as well, as evidenced most clearly by our group in Tennessee leaving us for the DSA. We also feel that the majority of our members are not clear enough on the differences between us and DSA, and particularly with the left of the DSA, and we need to actively rectify this. There is a tendency among our members to just engage DSA in debates about the Democrats and not enough of a discussion about reform vs. revolution and the international and historical issues that contribute to our Marxist program." (24-25)

156. We can discuss forever in abstract whether opportunism or sectarianism is the bigger danger. In reality, the dangers of opportunism and sectarianism are interrelated. It's absolutely true that there is an opportunist danger, especially among our newer members. We would also highlight this is the main pressure our public representatives face, and that we generally face when carrying out mass work. That is why we opposed measures by the EC Majority to reduce the organization's oversight of the work of our public representative.

157. We agree the "majority of our members are not clear enough on the differences between us and DSA, and particularly with the left of the DSA." The *Update* says "the growth of DSA requires a deeper political understanding within the organization on the revolutionary character of Socialist Alternative and the vital importance of building a revolutionary party as opposed to just building broad formations" (148). We need to educate our members on the political weaknesses of DSA, particularly its left wing. At this stage that requires explaining what we think the left of DSA should do and taking up where they fail to adopt a Marxist policy, and engaging in debates against their politics.

158. However, the bigger challenge for the SA

leadership and more experienced comrades is to overcome our instinct to repeat propagandistic formulas. The SA leadership made this point in its report to the IEC after KS's election in 2013: "The organization will need to shake off the years of isolation and come to grips with the realities of mass work, its tactical demands, and politically learn how to present our ideas in a transitional fashion to a mass audience."

159. This point was again made during the debate within SA on our Sanders tactic. The EC argued that among our newer members the bigger danger was carrying out the Sanders intervention in an opportunist way. But the EC also argued that the larger challenge for our experienced members was to not repeat old formulas that served to keep us isolated from the Sandernistas. The tendency to stick to a more passive, propagandistic approach - which our cadre were more accustomed to than the radically new Sanders tactic - was often driven by a fear of the opportunist tendency among new members to bend to the consciousness of the Sandernistas. This was an illustration of Lenin's point that sectarianism feeds off of opportunism. The challenge for revolutionaries is to overcome this false choice by finding tactics to connect to the real movement while firmly fighting for socialist principles within the movement. SA can be proud that, on the whole, we were able to work out such an approach in the new situation that Sanders' campaign represented.

160. It appears to us that the EC Majority believes that Stephan and Philip are leaning in an opportunist direction, though they did not say so explicitly in their document. It would be beneficial to the organization if the EC Majority could clarify this. We would welcome a frank debate about such concerns. Revolutionaries have no need for equivocation or false diplomacy.

161. The *Update* argues that SA's political capacity to carry out principled mass work has been unique on the U.S. left and was the decisive reason for the breakthrough SA achieved in numbers and influence in recent years. Contrary to an opportunist approach, the *Update* argues for:

> *a conscious, rigorous, unsparing approach towards political clarity in our analysis, program, demands, strategy, tactics, slogans, terminology, and organizational methods. This requires an ongoing, determined struggle against the dominant anti-political, anti-theoretical, and pragmatic attitude which dominates the US left and working class and inevitably finds expression within our ranks. (128)*
>
> *To properly educate our members and train a healthy cadre we must politically inoculate them against the diseases of sectarianism, which plagues the socialist left, and its twin evil opportunism, which permeates all left forces which begin to have any broader impact on society. (143)*

162. The *EC Majority Reply* also raises: "PL's panel discussion at the 'Socialism' event in Seattle alongside Bhaskar unfortunately did not help us in clarifying differences in a comradely way" (26). Philip says none of the EC Majority members ever raised this criticism with him directly. Philip says the only feedback he received from any EC Majority comrades was from Calvin, who messaged Philip afterwards "Great job, BTW."

163. We think Philip's approach was in line with what was agreed in the July 2017 NC building resolution, which was amended by Patrick to say: "We will need patience when discussing with the layer around DSA… The key at this stage is to propose collaboration, to raise our profile, get a better understanding of the consciousness, and engage in the discussions they are having. We do not need to artificially force debates. It is inevitable that further debates will come. At the same time, we should not shy away from discussing the differences between Marxism and the politics of the DSA leadership… It will be critical that while taking an approach of positive engagement, that we clarify again and and again with in our own ranks the differences between DSA (and other groups) and Socialist Alternative."

Part III: Correcting the Record

Trump and the State of the Resistance

164. One of the more bizarre and inaccurate parts of the *EC Majority Reply* is the section "Trump's election and underlying issues" (46-52). We were truly taken aback by the lack of a conscientious attitude by the EC Majority in accurately portraying Stephan and Philip's positions. Any serious Marxist approach to debate should have a meticulous attitude to accuracy and providing evidence for claims. Numerous "quotes" and assertions are made that lack context and are from discussions that members who are not on the EC have no way of independently verifying. The evidence rests purely on the authority of the authors of the *EC Majority Reply*.

165. A number of the claims about supposed disagreements regarding Trump's victory were never raised on the EC, or with Stephan or Philip, before the comrades sent out the *EC Majority Reply*. If comrades considered these disagreements important, why were most of them never raised at

the time? Why was there no effort to confirm or clarify with Stephan and Philip if the positions attributed to them were accurate? This is a regrettable method.

166. We will review *the objective, verifiable record* to clarify the facts as far as possible, and we will also relate Philip and Stephan's *memories* of these incidents.

167. In the *EC Majority Reply* we find various assertions and stories which supposedly demonstrate Stephan's mistakes in responding to Trump's victory and his "one-sided 'demoralization' perspective" (50). The comrades attempt to connect this with their criticism of the sentence in the July 5th *Update* which said "Trump is largely going ahead with his plans." The *EC Majority Reply* says "We feel that this mistaken sentence is related to ongoing political disagreements that started on election night when Clinton was defeated, and is related to an overstatement of 'demoralization' as a factor in consciousness" (39). This is also linked to disagreements about the cause of the lull in anti-Trump struggles starting in May 2017.

168. Where do Philip and Stephan write in any of the versions of their *Update* about "demoralization" being "a factor in consciousness"? Or that it led to the lull in the resistance? The comrades utterly fail to provide any quote from the *Update* or other writings by Philip or Stephan to substantiate this (despite frequently putting "demoralization" in quotation marks as if Philip and Stephan are being quoted).

169. The word "demoralization" is used only 3 times in the *Update* (paragraphs 29, 32 and 80). In paragraphs 29 and 32, the word "demoralization" is describing *potential* scenarios *if* Trump were to succeed in inflicting a major defeat on sections of the movement. However, the *Update* makes clear that such a scenario has not happened so far. The final reference in paragraph 80 says that "**within BLM** there is **a certain** political demoralization regarding Trump's election" (emphasis added). "A certain political demoralization" here is referring specifically to BLM and was in no way a statement about the Trump resistance as a whole.

170. The *EC Majority Reply* says:

> *Days before the election, BK put 'What if Trump Wins?' on the agenda for the EC meeting. We should be fully honest here that not one EC member predicted Trump's victory, but we feel that this discussion and--more importantly--the debates on the EC immediately after Trump was elected underline the current debates. At this EC meeting, BK proposed putting out a message to the sa-bc list outlining the possibility of a Trump victory, feeling that the organization was unprepared for this. SK argued against sending this email to the sa-bc list saying that we instead needed an email about 'what happens when Clinton wins' and didn't engage with the discussion on what would happen if Trump won. Unfortunately, neither BK nor other EC members pressed the point of an email to the sa-bc list about the possibility of a Trump victory. (47)*

171. Stephan, an EC member present at this meeting, believes this is not accurate. (Philip did not attend that EC meeting). Stephan and Philip's memory is that in the final week or so of the 2016 election the two of them discussed that it appeared increasingly possible that Trump would win (though they both thought a Clinton victory was more likely). They remember discussing that the EC should raise in the organization the possibility of Trump winning and propose that branches be ready to immediately call protests. Philip remembers raising these points with Bryan as part of preparing the EC meeting. (As the EC Conveners, Philip and Bryan met weekly to prepare EC meetings).

172. Memories are often incorrect, however. Fortunately, there are some verifiable records that can shed some light on this. The last EC meeting before the election was on November 3, 2016. The relevant parts of the minutes (recorded by Calvin, now part of the EC Majority) read:

> *Attending: CP, KB, TC, TM, KS, BK, AJ, SK?*
> *Apologies: PL*
> *1. What if Trump Wins? / BK*
> *a. New material coming out on election: how is election so close? Defending Stein vote and our approach.*
> *b. Communicate to organization basic points about responding to Trump victory*
> *[…]*
> *3. Reports and Proposals*
> *a. Message will be sent out that meetings should be organized after the NC in branches to discuss post-election perspectives*

173. The minutes say it was agreed to "Communicate to organization basic points about responding to Trump victory." This contradicts the assertion in the *EC Majority Reply* that Stephan convinced the EC to not send out an email to prepare the organization for how to respond if Trump won.

174. Philip and Bryan had an EC Conveners meeting on November 2nd and agreed on an agenda to propose for the November 3rd EC meeting. The records of the EC Conveners meetings were kept in a document shared by Philip and Bryan; they show Philip proposed and Bryan agreed that the EC discuss "what if Trump wins." This is consistent with Philip's memory. Following the EC Conveners meeting, Bryan sent the EC the proposed agenda that Philip

and Bryan had agreed on. However, the fact that it was a joint proposal from both EC Conveners is left out of the *EC Majority Reply* which says that only "BK put 'What if Trump Wins?' on the agenda for the EC meeting."

175. Furthermore, the weekly Seattle SA full-timers meeting (which Stephan was politically responsible for organizing) had as its main discussion on the morning of Election Day (11/8/16) "Preparing for Election Results," which dealt with both possible scenarios: What if Trump wins, or what if Clinton wins?

176. The *EC Majority Reply* states:

> *When it became clear that Trump had won, the Oakland comrades took the excellent initiative of putting out a call to action for protest. BK sent a message to the EC list urging that a national call from SA as well as the initial statement should be the task of the Seattle EC members that night. (48) When this was discussed in Seattle, SK was against a call to action. He argued that a period of demoralization was going to set in, and that we wouldn't be able to grow in this context and would need to aim to hold onto our members. Calvin and KS argued against this, but in the end, no statement or call to action was put out in the name of the national organization. (49)*

177. Philip and Stephan, who participated in the national EC and Seattle EC discussions on Election Night, do not agree with this account. To blame Stephan for the lack of a national call for Trump protests is absurd. We think all comrades involved in Seattle did the best they could together. Stephan and Philip don't recall a veto from anyone.

178. Their memory is that after it became pretty clear Trump was winning, the national EC had a discussion where there was agreement on the key points to make in the statement that Tom and Philip would put out the next day. They do not remember a debate among national EC members that night about putting out a national call. On Election Night a message from Ramy was in fact released to the national BC email list urging all branches to call protests in their local areas and use the Oakland protest Facebook page as a working model. Many SA branches did exactly that, and SA organized protests across the country on November 9 and the days after.

179. Stephan and Philip do remember that the Seattle EC members had a quick discussion on election night on whether to call a protest in Seattle the next day. The Oakland comrades and Ramy had taken the excellent initiative to quickly put up a Facebook event for a protest that branches across the country were copying. There was a strong mood from younger Seattle comrades to do this. In that brief SEC meeting Stephan argued that, given the shock of Trump's surprise victory, it was more important to have all Seattle members meet November 9th for a citywide meeting to discuss what happened. There was a genuine back and forth about this, with some comrades arguing we should go ahead and call a protest. There were no hardened positions or contentious arguments. At the end of the meeting, it was generally agreed to mobilize members to a citywide SA meeting rather than a protest.

180. However at 12:41 a.m. Stephan messaged the SEC:

> ***Stephan Kimmerle***
>
> *Maybe I was too cautious with the protest and we should call one tomorrow, 4pm West lake.*
>
> ***Calvin Priest***
>
> *I agree*
>
> ***Stephan Kimmerle***
>
> *The ones in Oakland and Boston get a huge echo*
>
> ***Calvin Priest***
>
> *Let's do it*
>
> ***Kailyn Nicholson***
>
> *Haha the tables have turned! If we call it before the citywide and it gets huge, it might be difficult to get comrades to the meeting. Are we OK with that?*
>
> *I could put an event up now with just a title, time and location and we could fill in the content more tomorrow morning*
>
> ...
>
> ***Stephan Kimmerle***
>
> *Yes please*
>
> *Philip also agrees*
>
> ***Calvin Priest***
>
> *I think we should go ahead*

181. While the *EC Majority Reply* is correct that Stephan and Philip didn't immediately get this fully right, within a few hours the SEC unanimously agreed to call a protest. They put out a call that night, and an estimated 6,000 people came out in protest the next day in Seattle (November 9).

182. EC members also carried out the following tasks on November 9: that morning Bryan got a short statement on Trump's victory immediately posted on the SA and CWI websites. At 2:40 pm Ty sent out a leaflet to use at protests and as well as posters. And at 8:02 pm Tom sent out the statement he and Philip wrote on Trump's victory.

183. The story is further told that Stephan continued to argue in December 2016 "for his one-sided 'demoralization' perspective, this time predicting small demonstrations in January" (*EC Majority Reply 50*). There is no quote given from any publication; again this is just claimed.

184. But the facts tell a different story. EC Majority comrades Tom and Calvin sent the EC on January 14, 2017 a draft leaflet to use at Trump inauguration protests. Their draft started with: "Donald Trump is now Predator in Chief and head of what will be one of the most reactionary and dangerous administrations in US history, the logical culmination of a predatory and decaying capitalism." Stephan proposed on January 15th the following amendments (additions and changes are in **bold**):

> ***Millions are on the streets this weekend. Students on walkouts, women on the march, immigrants rising. Working class people and youth can see their power. The power we will urgently need in the coming weeks and months. This can be the starting point of a radical, peaceful mass movement against Trump, his billionaire cabinet and the huge economic, racial and gender injustices dominating US society.***
>
> *Donald Trump is now Predator in Chief and head of what* ***~~will~~ aims to*** *be one of the most reactionary and dangerous administrations in US history, the logical culmination of a predatory and decaying capitalism.*
>
> ***But we can beat him. This will not be a short battle and there will be setbacks. But millions were inspired last year by Bernie Sanders' call for a "political revolution against the billionaire class". The increased interest in socialist ideas reflects the search for an alternative to crisis ridden capitalism. Working people are stronger than the top 1%.***

185. Does this prove that Stephan was more in touch with the huge scale of protests that were erupting than others? And that Tom and Calvin had a incorrect and demoralized perspective? Should we base our judgement of the comrades on their drafts? We don't think so. It just demonstrates how it is incorrect to use anecdotal evidence to discredit someone. It's in the interest of our entire organization that we present the positions of comrades as accurately as possible. Distorted claims based on this or that quote, torn out of context, do not help raise the level of members' understanding.

186. *What Stephan actually argued* after the election was the following: We all agree that there will be a powerful movement against Trump. But if Trump succeeds in forcing through major attacks in the future, in spite of powerful struggles from below, then the movements could be demoralized for a temporary period. Conditions for our organization could become more complicated temporarily than what a majority of our membership (having recently grown to 1,000 members) had experienced so far. Stephan argued this point to prepare the organization for this possible scenario. If Trump had forced through Trumpcare (and it was close!) this could have had a temporary demoralizing impact on key sections of progressive workers. This scenario has not materialized so far, but it's not ruled out in the future. In our view, it is a legitimate point to raise.

187. The EC and NC themselves made points along these lines on several occasions. The U.S. Perspectives Update drafted by Tom and Philip and unanimously adopted by the February 2017 NC argued, "without a bold program that mobilizes the broadest forces against Trump, and unless that movement is centered on the social power of working people, there remains a real danger of this regime inflicting serious defeats that temporarily demoralize the movement."

188. The EC took a number of concrete decisions articulating its political response to Trump's victory that members can review. These included:
(a) The November 9th SA statement by Tom and Philip
(b) The extensive lead-off "Election Analysis and Post-Election Perspectives" that the EC asked Philip to give at a November 11th EC meeting, and again at the November 12th NC meeting with Bryan K summing up
(c) The student walk-outs the day of Trump's inauguration that the EC proposed to the NC to organize, which the NC agreed to
(d) A second, more substantial article on Trump's victory by Tom and Philip (November 26)
(e) The U.S. Perspectives *Update* as well as Our Strategy and Tactics in the Anti-Trump Resistance that Tom and Philip drafted together for the February 2017 NC meeting (both in Member's Bulletin #86).

189. The position that the *EC Majority Reply* claims that Stephan held runs counter to all these decisions, articles, and documents that the EC or NC agreed upon. However, there is no record of Stephan voting against or disagreeing with any of these decisions, articles, or documents. We believe this is because Stephan, in fact, agreed with the EC and NC decisions, articles, and documents, contrary to the EC Majority's claims.

190. The *EC Majority Reply* also raises:

> *SK and PL's original July document said in paragraph 22 that 'Trump is largely going ahead with his plans.' It is a positive step that this is being taken out of the document, but we think that even before the defeat of Trumpcare later in July this was very clearly untrue. However, the correction of a misjudgment is not just a matter of 'editing'; this needs to be presented to the NC with a full explanation.*

We feel that this mistaken sentence is related to ongoing political disagreements that started on election night when Clinton was defeated, and is related to an overstatement of 'demoralization' as a factor in consciousness. (38-39)

191. Once again the comrades gives a one-sided, partial picture of what Philip and Stephan argued. In Philip and Stephan's original July 5th *Update*, paragraphs 16-20 describe the "enormous wave of protest and a growth of organized left and progressive forces" and how "the resistance of millions taking the streets had a significant impact." It then says:

> *Following the Women's March the movement stepped up. The Muslim ban was met with airport occupations. A discussion developed around strike action on the days without immigrants in February, for women's day and for May Day. This pointed in the right direction: Using peaceful mass civil disobedience and the collective power of workers as more powerful tools to hit Trump's billionaire backers profits. In April the Tax Day protests, science marches, and the people's climate march showed again the potential for resistance. The May 1st protests and strikes, while not a breakthrough for the movement, were the largest since 2006.*
>
> *But overall, despite historic protests and growing anger, Trump is largely going ahead with his plans. This experience has led to a certain understanding in the movement that just protesting is not enough. But the attempts to move towards a higher level of struggle through mass direct action reached their limits for the time being.*
>
> *Instead the dominant tendency, under the influence of the Democratic Party establishment, has been to increasingly look to fight Trump through investigations into various scandals, impeachment, and, most of all, the upcoming 2018 elections. At this point, this represents the 'path of least resistance' for the masses to test out. (21-23 July 5 Update)*

192. Comrades can see that there is nothing in these quotes about "demoralization." But after discussion on the EC, Philip and Stephan agreed that paragraph 22 could be formulated better. On July 7th they sent out the following amendment to paragraph 22:

> *But overall, despite historic protests and growing anger* ***which have succeeded so far in delaying or blocking a number of aspects of Trump's agenda, it remains the case that Trump has not been decisively defeated and is instead still pushing ahead with his reactionary policies*** ~~***Trump is largely going ahead with his plans***~~*. This experience has led to a certain understanding in the movement that just protesting is not enough. But the attempts to move towards a higher level of struggle through mass direct action reached their limits for the time being. (22 July 7 Update)*

193. We think the point Philip and Stephan were trying express here was correct. While the huge wave of protests succeeded in blocking Trump on a number of fronts, Trump was not decisively defeated and continued to push ahead with his right-wing agenda.

194. Following the discussion at the July 2017 NC, Philip and Stephan further clarified and spelled out their position in the August 16th revisions:

> *But overall, despite historic protests and growing anger which succeeded in delaying or blocking a number of aspects of Trump's agenda, it remains the case that Trump has not been decisively defeated and is instead still pushing ahead with his reactionary policies. While Trump has failed to implement much of his agenda so far due to the mass resistance and ruling class opposition, he remains a deeply menacing figure who is perceived to be a dramatic threat to wide sections of society. Trump has been able to install Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court and to use his executive powers to carry out a number of attacks: a ramping up of repression and deportation of immigrants, a reversal of the limited oversight of police departments under the Obama administration with encouragement of racist and violent policing, a return to more aggressive 'war on drugs' and 'war on crime' policies, systematic deregulation, significant undermining of the EPA, and withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord. And Trump and the Republican controlled Congress still threaten to attack healthcare and Planned Parenthood, give tax cuts to the rich, etc. (24)*

195. Since then Trump succeeded in passing a deeply regressive tax cut for the rich and packed lower courts with ultra-conservative judges. Acknowledging this does not contradict that the scale of popular and ruling-class opposition has checked Trump on a number of fronts, most clearly with Trumpcare. Nor does it contradict points also made in the *Update* about the scale of resistance, Trump's record low approval ratings, and how weak and crisis-ridden his administration is.

196. We don't agree that this is "an overstatement of 'demoralization' as a factor in consciousness," as the comrades write. They argue: "There was a lull in protests in late Spring and early Summer, and demoralization is a factor in this, but also complacency and confusion is a big part of the situation as well" (*EC Majority Reply 39*). We would not emphasize the complacency factor as much as the EC Majority, but we think that this is a minor question.

Strikes Against Trump

197. The *EC Majority Reply* claims:

After shelving the one-sided 'demoralization' analysis without explanation, SK put forward that a 'general strike was inherent in the situation' in the U.S. The EC rejected this but the entire EC still went too far in pushing the call for a 'nationwide strike' for May Day. Many features led to this mistake, including our misreading of the situation in immigrant communities due to our lack of roots. We have openly acknowledged this, but SK and PL's document, in its section on labor, still overstates the importance of discussions around political strike action. In the August version of SK and PL's document, they say that 'most important is the search for working-class methods of struggle with strikes and job actions with the discussion about anti-Trump strikes on March 8 and May 1.' (52)

198. Again we are presented with a "quote" from Stephan – a "general strike was inherent in the situation" – without a source or context. Let's look into that context. We urge comrades to look at what Stephan actually wrote, and what other comrades published without Stephan's input.

199. Stephan's article deals with the situation after the historic women's marches in January 2017, when Trump refused to back down and issued executive orders to proceed ahead with his plans, and a debate opened up about the way forward. Our comrade in the Minnesota Nurses Association passed a motion to open a discussion within "the NNU, the AFL-CIO and the wider labor movement to start an intense discussion about workplace education and information meetings and protest action on May Day, May 1st 2017, including a discussion within the AFL-CIO about a call for a nationwide strike that day."

200. In the Seattle educators union (SEA), more than 90% of the Representatives' Assembly voted that "SEA will propose in writing to the WEA and the NEA, that they call upon their affiliates to go on a one-day strike in order to strengthen our ability to take a stand for both worker rights and the paramount needs of our students on May Day."

201. We think that these efforts were very positive and were correct to argue for at that time to point a way forward. Why did this discussion happen? In our view, significant parts of the movement, including sections of the labor movement, experienced their power at the women's marches; they saw the huge numbers of people in the streets against Trump, but they also sensed the need for stronger measures to be able to actually defeat Trump. Objectively, this pointed to the need for generalized mass struggle of the working class using one of its strongest weapons, strike action.

202. This need found expression in the airport occupations, the Day Without Immigrants on February 16th, and the widespread public discussion about taking strike action on March 8th and May 1st. Unfortunately, this sentiment from below was not matched by any determined lead and systematic organizing from authoritative national organizations or leaders. Nor was the level of organization of activists from below strong enough to overcome this barrier.

203. This reflects that the U.S. working class is coming out of a period of a declining labor movement and a throwing back in consciousness. The level of consciousness, organization, and leadership in the working class and anti-Trump movement was not strong enough at that time to meet the objective need. This contradiction is preparing the way for explosive developments, when at a certain point consciousness and organization will leap forward to catch up with the objective tasks.

204. Marxists seek to identify both the objective needs *and* the state of consciousness and organization of our class. To develop perspectives, both parts are needed, both objective and subjective. In this sense, in the context of the massive protests against Trump and his insistence on attempting to implement his agenda, the objective situation visibly pointed to the need for a one-day strike across the country. Was it likely that a general strike would happen on May 1? Absolutely not. No one on the EC, including Stephan, argued that. It was absolutely clear that it would take more time and more sustained struggles to develop the consciousness and leadership for that to happen.

205. The task of Marxists is to highlight the contradictions between the objective needs and the subjective understanding of our class - not to minimize them. Our job is to point a way forward for the movement, even if it does not materialize. Of course, we must be clear about the difference between what we are calling for the movement to do and what we think is likely to materialize in reality.

206. The *EC Majority Reply* says: "In their one paragraph on labor, SK and PL say that the discussions around strike action (presumably around March 8 and May 1st) were the most important developments in the labor movement over the past period. That is an over-statement of the discussion around strike action, and we feel could give the impression that we have a surface understanding of the issues at stake in the unions currently." (58)

207. Given the weakness of organized labor, we maintain that the discussion around mass strikes was very significant. It points "towards the potential for rebuilding a broad workers movement in an

explosive fashion in the coming period, though quite possibly in new forms that will not simply be contained within the narrow confines of the existing union structures" (*Update* 83).

208. Or as Philip put it in *Building the Resistance to Trump* in the *New Member Reading Packet*, "While the scale of the strike action so far has been relatively small, the very fact that this discussion has broken out is significant, given the weak tradition of political strikes in the U.S. and the historically low level of strikes over the past 25 years. It would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of these developments or downplay the potential for much larger strike actions against Trump to develop. While there will be ebbs and flows in this process, the overall trend points in the direction of working-class methods beginning to develop within the anti-Trump resistance as part of the new spirit of rebellion especially among younger workers."

Black Lives Matter

209. The *EC Majority Reply* says: "The brief two paragraphs in SK and PL's July document on labor and BLM are cursory and could give the organization an unbalanced and incorrect view if taken as our main condensed points on these issues" (53).

210. Philip and Stephan didn't claim to have written a full perspectives document. As they wrote in the introduction to their *Update*, "The document was not intended to be a rounded out perspectives document that covers all aspects of the situation in the U.S., but instead focused on elements of the political issues that represented the biggest challenges to our organization at that time." They did not claim the very limited points in the *Update* on BLM and labor should be "taken as our main condensed points on these issues."

211. Regarding BLM, the *Update* attempted to address in a very limited fashion how Trump's election had impacted it. With Trump coming to power, the BLM movement lost further momentum even though BLM protests should still be expected to flare up again and again. Comrades at the EC and NC took this up and presented this as evidence for disagreement. To remove misunderstandings, Philip and Stephan added short paragraphs that acknowledged what they never disputed: The BLM movement was already facing a crisis of program, leadership and strategy before Trump's election. However, we are still convinced that Trump's election marked a shift in the situation, with his open support for racism and the appointment of Jeff Sessions who, for example, is reducing federal oversight of local police departments. The previous strategy of many BLM activists of attempting to pressure the government is now seen as less viable, whereas more illusions existed under Obama's Justice Department.

212. We don't believe that there are deeper disagreements about BLM nor our approach to the vital task of building SA in the black community. This disagreement appears to have been significantly exaggerated.

Undemocratic Changes

213. The *EC Majority Reply* says: "In periods of heightened debate within a revolutionary party, leadership changes should come after key discussions and divisions have been clearly aired in the organization, reflecting the balance of opinion in the party. Instead, PL and SK tried to replace the leadership when the discussion was just getting underway and before political issues were clarified." (80)

214. The EC Majority objects that Philip and Stephan openly told the EC and NC they supported the proposal from two NC members, Andy and Patrick, to expand the national EC. However, the EC Majority defends how they changed the composition of the Seattle EC by removing Stephan. The EC Majority went as far as insisting that Philip, Stephan, and Ty could not raise disagreements about this or propose an alternative SEC slate to the City Committee, or else they would not allow the City Committee to meet and would put the Seattle organization under trusteeship, until at least the NC meeting.

215. Nor was this a one-off measure. Since the disagreement about the SEC election, they "locked out" Ty, Stephan and Philip from meaningful participation on the EC without the agreement of the NC. They also changed the composition of the EC Conveners and Council Strategy Team, but denied that these steps represented any political shift, and rejected proposals to report these changes to the NC.

216. Somehow, the EC Majority does not consider these changes in leadership bodies, which were done without open political discussion, as contradicting their stated position that "in periods of heightened debate within a revolutionary party, leadership changes should come after key discussions and divisions have been clearly aired in the organization, reflecting the balance of opinion in the party."

217. The *EC Majority Reply* account of the discussion at the July NC about adding comrades to the EC omits several facts, giving a distorted impression that "PL and SK tried to replace the leadership." In fact, two NC members, Andy and Patrick, proposed to the NC to expand the EC. NC members have every right to propose changes to the EC. The *EC Majority Reply*

also gives the impression that this proposal would have *removed* comrades from the EC, but it wouldn't have. It was a proposal to *add* comrades to the EC.

218. At the July NC meeting, the EC Majority and the I.S. argued the proposal was brought forward too late to take a decision. However, Andy and Pat had initially sent their proposal to the EC several weeks before the NC meeting on June 14, 2017. Over the next few weeks, EC Majority comrades attempted (unsuccessfully) to convince Andy and Pat to drop the proposal. This is perfectly legitimate, but the EC should have acknowledged to the NC that the reason Andy and Pat's proposal came to the NC so late was due to the EC itself.

219. Once Andy and Pat's proposal was sent to the NC, the EC Majority demanded that Philip, Stephan and Ty promise that there would be no vote on it at the July NC. Philip, Stephan and Ty argued that it was very likely that the NC would decide it wanted more discussion and table the issue, but that it was wrong of the EC to pre-empt the discussion on the NC. On the basis of the discussion, Andy, Pat and the NC should decide if it wanted to vote on it. Philip, Stephan and Ty urged the EC Majority to debate the proposal on its merits, rather than focusing on procedural questions.

220. We are stunned by the hypocrisy of the EC Majority on this issue. They criticize Philip and Stephan for openly supporting a proposal from NC members to expand the EC through a democratic vote, while the EC Majority used organizational measures without a democratic vote to remove comrades and change the composition of the EC, SEC, and EC/SEC sub-committees. The EC Majority denied the Seattle City Committee the right to an informed election of the SEC. Instead the EC Majority changed the SEC in an administrative, undemocratic fashion. The EC Majority also removed three comrades from meaningful participation on the EC by locking out Ty, Philip and Stephan without informing the NC for 7 months. They have also now removed a full-timer, it appears, in response to that comrade's political opinions on internal discussions. Such measures are unprecedented in SA's entire history.

Staff-Driven?

221. The *EC Majority Reply* says:

> *SK and PL's [call] for the NC comrades to 'step up' and take on more national work. We are concerned that this is part of a staff-focused perspective that doesn't take into account the pressures on leading comrades who aren't full-timers. Their initial proposal around drastically increased national meetings for instance would effectively exclude many working comrades from meaningful participation in the leadership. This was concretely shown by the low attendance from non-full-timers at the July NC meeting*. (69)

222. Once again the comrades are not accurately quoting the *Update*, which does not use the words "step up." We agree that a lot of leading comrades cannot be asked to just "step up" the time they give SA by making super-human sacrifices. That is not what the *Update* called for. It presented a political challenge, not an organizational request for more time. We think leading comrades nationally – full-timers and also non-full timers – need to be freed up from local work to be able to play a bigger political role nationally.

223. This will not happen overnight. But we need to set our sights on this goal. This starts with the EC. The EC needs to organize more national discussions and include more NC comrades in the process of developing our positions and actions. And we need a plan to allow our organization to develop a broader and politically stronger leadership.

224. Rather than "a staff-focused perspective," the *Update* actually said:

> *The NC also needs to develop to play a more political role. The NC members need to be at the forefront of developing new local leaders and cadre. But the NC also needs to help politically lead the national organization by taking on responsibilities for writing material and political tasks, leading interventions, making visits, etc. Freeing NC members up for this work will require successfully developing a wider layer of leaders in the branches, but also being willing to allow this newer layer to take on more responsibilities in the branches and make some mistakes, which they will learn from. But most of all, the political role of the NC is first and foremost taking seriously and engaging in political discussions and debates. This does not mean NC members, who already sacrifice tremendously for the organization, should simply "do more" but rather that the organization as a whole needs to more consciously make hard choices and develop the conditions that free NC comrades up to play more of a political role. (155)*
>
> *… [we need] a lively, independent thinking, critically minded, self-confident, politically educated and informed NC which challenges the EC and holds it to account. In turn, the NC will only be able to fully play this role if it rests on a vibrant democratic culture within the ranks of the organization of politically educated Marxists rooted in living struggles of workers and youth. (156)*

225. This is a political argument for developing the NC (which includes over 20 members who are not full-timers) as a more political body which plays a

larger role in leading the organization. The less this is done, the more the organization will end up being led by the EC (which is almost completely full-time) and other full-timers working under the direction of the EC. The clear emphasis in the *Update* is the central importance of developing a wider cadre, not more full timers.

226. The *EC Majority Reply* also raises "their [PL & SK's] initial proposal around drastically increased national meetings for instance would effectively exclude many working comrades from meaningful participation in the leadership" (69). Again, this is simply not accurate. The building proposal to the July NC was proposed by the *entire EC, not just Philip and Stephan*. The EC proposal said,"we should move towards increasing the frequency of our National Conventions and Summer Schools as well as looking at the possibility of national and/or regional cadre schools for leading comrades only." On the basis of concerns raised in the discussion at the July NC, the *entire EC* agreed to remove this.

227. The *EC Majority Reply* also raises various criticisms of the Seattle organization. We find the timing of their criticisms strange. Why are these points only being raised now? Is there a need to discredit the work Philip and Stephan were ever involved in? While the EC Majority criticizes Philip and Stephan for allegedly not raising things through the structures of the organization, the EC Majority did not raise their criticisms of the Seattle work on either the EC or SEC before they sent out the *EC Majority Reply*. This is especially strange given that two members of the EC Majority, KS and Calvin, have been on the SEC since 2013 and played a central leadership role in the Seattle organization.

228. Nevertheless, we are happy to have a discussion on the strengths, weaknesses, and overall lessons from the experience building SA in Seattle. There is no doubt the SEC faced challenges and made mistakes. However, on balance, we believe we made tremendous progress growing from 50 members in two branches in 2013 to 200 members in ten branches in 2017. While there is room for improvement, the development of a new layer of cadre and independent branch leaders who are not full-timers has been impressive in comparison to other parts of the country and the CWI internationally.

For a Political, Clarifying Debate

229. We were taken aback by the divisive tone of the *EC Majority Reply*, its personalized attacks, and the numerous misstatements. We're concerned the tone and method used in the *EC Majority Reply* creates an intimidating atmosphere that can discourage members from raising criticisms of the EC.

230. In this document we attempted to characterize comrades' positions as accurately as possible. We erred on the side of giving longer quotes or more information so comrades can review issues for themselves. We provided quotes from written, verifiable sources as much as possible. Where we needed to refer to verbal discussions, we attempted to provide context and state who we were quoting rather than anonymous quotes or rumors. We believe it's in the interest of the entire organization that all sides strive to conduct debates in this way to avoid misunderstandings that sometimes develop out of suspicion or rumors and to encourage members to draw their own independent conclusions.

231. Unfortunately, we believe the *EC Majority Reply* does not adhere to such an approach. At several points it criticizes the *Update* based on selective quotations or none at all. It contains numerous inaccuracies, as well as anecdotes and snippets of quotes taken out of context from meetings (see paragraphs 27, 47, 49, 50, 52). Quotes are given from anonymous, unverifiable, or informal conversations.

232. At one point the *EC Majority Reply* even criticizes Philip and Stephan based on "informal conversation" that comrades "have heard": "In informal conversation, we have heard assertions that SK and PL producing this document for the July NC 'shows who is the real political leadership of the EC'" (77). Where and when did Philip or Stephan ever say anything like that? It's damaging to not only the accused comrades but to the whole organization if we start to write documents based on hearsay.

233. Based on this hearsay, the EC Majority repeats again that Philip and Stephan wrote the *Update* to "try to pose as 'the real leadership'" (*EC Majority Reply 78*). There are quotation marks in the *EC Majority Reply* around "real leadership." Is this a quote from Philip or Stephan? If so, from when and where?

234. *The EC Majority Reply* objects to Philip and Stephan "producing a document that was not commissioned by the EC and came as a complete surprise" (78). It's perfectly legitimate in a Marxist organization to produce a political document for discussion. A majority in a democratic centralist organization must respect the right of a minority to air its views. Disagreements and debates are inevitable in a political organization.

235. Nor did Philip and Stephan "completely surprise" the EC with the *Update*. They informed the EC in advance that they were drafting it and sent the

EC a draft for discussion. In that discussion the EC Majority asked them to take out some parts of the document. Philip and Stephan accepted several of those requests before they sent the NC the *Update*.

236. The *EC Majority Reply* says "SK and PL's document understates the importance of reading and discussion, particularly around international events and the work of the CWI" (84). Yet incredibly Philip and Stephan report that some of the material that they removed from the *Update* at the request of the EC Majority dealt precisely with the importance of reading and discussions for political education. Stephan and Philip's initial draft sent to the EC said:

> *To develop cadre, we need more high quality, lively material which can tackle the key discussions and debates taking place on the left. As we have agreed, we need a serious effort to produce more pamphlets. Alongside this, we should look to develop a political journal with 2 or 3 issues in 2018 to provide a concrete spur towards producing more in-depth material that will help to educate our members and have an impact on a more politicized left milieu that is developing. In the pre-Convention discussions and at the National Convention itself we should have a full discussion about the role of the paper, how to use it, increasing our sales, and when to go to a bi-weekly paper.*
>
> *We want to fully use the New Members' Reading Packet. All branches should discuss the chapters over the summer to make sure that new and older comrades are educated in how to use it and to engage in the start of an educational process with ideally each and every new member. Members who have already read and discussed the New Members' Reading Packet should join study groups on the Intermediate Reading Program we have developed.*

237. Clearly Philip and Stephan do not "understate the importance of reading and discussion" for political education and cadre building. We agree with their proposal that SA should develop a political journal given the current priority on political education and cadre development. This would be a key tool to help the organization concentrate on producing more in-depth, educational articles on historical, international, theoretical issues and current debates on the left. Such a journal would help focus members' attention on reading, writing about, and discussing these issues. Philip and Stephan also proposed all branches discuss the new version of the *New Member Reading Packet*. This new version, which Philip was the main EC member responsible for drafting, has 10 CWI readings, including one about how the CWI drove Thatcher out of office.

238. The implication that Philip and Stephan understate studying international developments and the work of the CWI is a red herring.

Moving Forward to Build SA

239. While objectively there is a very favorable situation for building the socialist movement in the U.S. currently, the divisions in the SA leadership have created a challenging situation for our organization. However, with a calm, political, democratic approach towards this debate, the whole organization can be politically strengthened by it. In such an atmosphere all of us could learn and move forward together. We strongly believe that all comrades involved in this debate are needed to build this organization. In the heat of these debates it's extraordinarily important to keep in mind that we need each other for SA to succeed.

240. All comrades, including ourselves, must have the courage and determination to put the needs of the Marxist movement first. We all should work to re-establish healthy working relations that will be most conducive to building SA. Let's use this debate to sharpen the political understanding of the organization so that it's better able to build the forces of Trotskyism in the U.S. and internationally. We look forward to working together with all comrades to build SA and the CWI. Onward in solidarity.

This Conflict is About Methods of Leadership

Forty-nine National Committee and Seattle City Committee members and invited observers are signed onto this majority statement. This includes 31 National Committee members and elected alternates, alongside 25 Seattle City Committee members and invited observers. Given the very tight timeframe we had to draft, edit, and ask for signatories, there are several other NC and CC members and observers who have also taken a stand against the methods of the minority group and who we anticipate will add their names to this statement. This is a slightly updated draft from the one initially circulated to the Seattle Convention on May 6th, with additional signatories added, several small corrections, improving language open to misinterpretation, alongside copy edits. ***- May 9, 2018***

Signatories in alphabetical order by last name: ***Patrick A*** *(NC member),* ***Elan A*** *(NC alternate),* ***Ellen A*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Tom B*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Justin B*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Kelly B*** *(EC member),* ***Erin B*** *(NC member),* ***Misty B*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Sarah C*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Toya C*** *(NC member),* ***Tom C*** *(EC member),* ***Steve E*** *(NC member),* ***Chris G*** *(NC member),* ***Marty H*** *(NC member),* ***Justin H*** *(NC member),* ***Eljeer H*** *(NC member),* ***Ginger J*** *(NC member),* ***Alan J*** *(EC member),* ***Emerson J*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Nick J*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Dan Ka*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Josh K*** *(NC member, Seattle CC),* ***Bryan K*** *(EC member, IEC member),* ***George MFB*** *(NC member),* ***Matt M*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Emily M*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Tiffani M*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Ty M*** *(EC member, Seattle CC),* ***Genevieve M*** *(NC member),* ***Andy M*** *(NC member),* ***Keely M*** *(NC alternate),* ***Colin M*** *(Seattle CC observer),* ***Kailyn N*** *(NC alternate, Seattle CC),* ***Leon P*** *(NC member),* ***Sonja P*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Jeremy P*** *(NC alternate, Seattle CC),* ***Calvin P*** *(EC member, Seattle CC),* ***Jordan Q*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Rob R*** *(NC Member),* ***Freeman R*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Kshama S*** *(EC member, Seattle CC),* ***Teddy S*** *(NC member),* ***Sasha S*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Logan S*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Ryan T*** *(NC alternate),* ***Ryan W*** *(NC alternate),* ***Tony W*** *(Seattle CC),* ***Nick W*** *(NC alternate),* ***Adam Z*** *(NC member, Seattle CC)*

1. Marxists have on many occasions pointed out that, as a general rule of history, sharp changes in the objective situation inevitably lead to tensions and often crises within every political tendency and institution in capitalist society. History has not spared the socialist movement and revolutionary parties from this fate. As comrades on all sides of the present conflict have pointed out, the huge opportunities that have opened up to build Socialist Alternative within the fast-deepening crisis of global capitalism, combined with our rapid growth in size and influence since 2013, have placed tremendous pressures on our organization, and on our elected leadership bodies in particular.

2. While there is general agreement on the conditions which underlie the

present internal tensions, there are very different explanations over the character of the conflict. In the opening section of the document “Response to the EC Majority Reply,” authored by five comrades who initiated the minority group on the National Committee, they outline the three issues around which the comrades believe the conflict has hinged: “(1) Moving Beyond a Propagandistic Approach… (2) The Relationship Between a Public Representative and a Marxist Party… (3) Internal Democracy.”

3. Developing these themes, the minority statement attempts to paint a picture of fundamental shifts in the political direction of Socialist Alternative, especially in Seattle, following a breakdown in working relations between Philip and Stephan, on the one hand, and the rest of the national Executive Committee (EC) and Seattle Executive Committee (SEC). Taking this case further, in his sum-up at the April 22 Seattle City Committee (CC) meeting, Philip memorably took up the comparison another comrade had made of the present conflict to the 1903 split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, emphasizing that what appear to be small differences today will later develop into fundamental political differences. It seems clear that this perspective is the political basis on which the five minority comrades on the NC have attempted to justify building an organized faction within Socialist Alternative.

4. We urge all comrades to look beneath the headlines of this debate, to carefully examine all the political issues highlighted by all sides, and to ask themselves: Has there been a convincing case presented that big enough differences exist to justify comparing this conflict to the 1903 split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks? Are the differences large enough to justify the factional campaign the minority have waged within Socialist Alternative? Or should the political differences raised by the comrades be resolvable through healthy, comradely debate, within the framework of building a collective leadership?

5. The conclusion of the signers of this statement, and the conclusion of a big majority of all the elected leadership bodies in Socialist Alternative and the CWI, is that the intensity and scale of this conflict is not justified by any of the political disagreements the minority comrades have raised.

6. If you agree, then we urge you to ask another question: If the political issues raised by the minority don’t justify factional divisions, then what is actually at the heart of this conflict? In our view, the minority have systematically exaggerated differences and over-polarized the organization around secondary issues in order to distract from the real issues underlying this conflict. In reality, we believe the central question around which sharp divisions opened up in the leadership have been destructive methods of debate and destructive methods of building a collective leadership. This conflict began with comrades standing up to bullying behavior and a rejection of the accusations against Kshama’s accountability.

7. We also cannot agree with their allegation that comrades’ democratic rights

to raise political differences have been suppressed. Despite the paralyzing character of this debate and the effect it has had on the practical work of Socialist Alternative in Seattle and nationally, extensive debates have been organized, from a full day at CWI's International Executive Committee (IEC) meeting in December, three full days at the National Committee (NC) meetings in December and March, and over four full days at the Seattle City Committee (CC), and now in the wider Seattle membership. Plans exist to bring the discussion to the national membership in the pre-Convention discussions. In the meantime, a host of other other burning discussions and areas work have been set aside to make space for this debate.

8. Through this consuming process, support and sympathy for the arguments of the minority comrades has steadily eroded at every level, to the point where among the 42 National Committee members and elected alternates only five support the minority group with 33 identifying with the majority. Following months of debate on the Seattle City Committee, those five NC comrades have only won the consistent support of four others among the 38 CC members and regularly invited observers, while 27 have come to identify with the majority opposition to their methods.

9. Despite their failure to convince any of the elected bodies of their views, and resolutions at all levels urging the comrades to wrap up their factional campaign, the issues clearly remain unresolved in the eyes of the small minority group. Rather than wrapping up their factional organizing and attempting to rebuild trust and collaborative relations, the minority keeps escalating their efforts. Rather than raising differences in a spirit of solidarity, to use debate to strengthen the organization, they have used every opportunity to sow divisions and to try and expose and undermine the elected leadership bodies. The comrades have a right to raise criticisms, and to propose changes to the leadership bodies, but as we will demonstrate, throughout much of the last year, they organized their faction in secret and did not openly put forward their full conclusions and aims.

10. In light of this situation, the EC has proposed a structured debate on these questions throughout the entire national membership in the run-up to the October National Convention. Similarly, in Seattle, where a number of Branch Committee members not aligned with either side urged the debate be brought even sooner than this into the local membership, the Seattle CC organized a full day-long report to all Seattle BC members on the conflict in April, and the debate is now being brought into the Seattle City Convention on May 6.

11. Throughout this process, we will continue to call on the comrades to step back from their unfounded attacks on Kshama and the elected leadership bodies of Socialist Alternative, to wrap up their factional campaign, and to engage in a serious discussion around steps to rebuild trust and a collective leadership. Within this process, the organization remains fully committed to defending the vital democratic space to discuss out all differences over our

analysis, program, strategy, and tactics. In our view, a vital foundation for a meaningful and healthy debate to take place is an ending of the method of over-polarization and the factional organizing which have characterized the discussions so far.

12. *This statement will begin by outlining what, in our view, are the roots of the divisions and the destructive methods of the minority, and what has led us to our conclusions about the character of the conflict. Given the need to produce this document in a more rushed timescale than originally planned (the reasons for which are explained in the final section of this statement), our intention is to produce an addendum in the next couple weeks which will take up further several of the specific issues of analysis, program, and tactics around which the minority have attempted to falsely polarize this conflict. We aim to demonstrate in more detail the lack of evidence for the minority's case.*

Methods are political

13. In their document "Response to the EC Majority Reply," the minority grouping attempts to simplify the tensions into a familiar trope for socialists: as a clash between "two main viewpoints" (par. 6) in the leadership over how to respond to the huge events unfolding in US society. When comrades have stood up against the destructive and maneuvering methods of debate adopted by Philip and Stephan in particular, they have attempted to write off these criticisms as secondary, saying: "Instead of a debate around the political issues, the EC Majority has presented this debate largely in personal and organizational terms" (para. 11).

14. We do not agree that the question of methods for building a collective leadership in a revolutionary party are not themselves deeply political questions. The task of constructing a revolutionary leadership, of building strong political teams that bring together the collective experience of our active membership, and of generalizing the political lessons from this experience, are all profoundly political problems.

15. In fact, there is a long history of discussion, debate, and commentary in the Marxist movement over precisely the question of how an authoritative leadership of a revolutionary party is forged. This is first and foremost achieved through developing correct perspectives, program, and strategy to intervene in the class struggle - but the very ability of a revolutionary party to develop political clarity is intimately bound up with correct methods of leadership. All comrades who have studied the early history of the Russian Marxist movement will remember Lenin's critique of Plekhanov's sometimes abusive and informal methods of leadership which, while a relative problem from the beginning, became an absolute fetter on the development of the organization when the objective situation opened up the potential for the dramatic growth of Marxism in Russia. Trotsky wrote on many occasions to challenge and correct destructive methods of debate within the fledgling

sections of the 4th International.

16. Within the history of the CWI itself, questions of methods of debate and of how to build a collective leadership have arisen many times, most famously as a feature of the factional conflict with Ted Grant and Alan Woods that contributed to the split in 1991. A full quarter century later, the false methods of leadership of the IMT (the international set up by Grant and Woods after they split from the CWI) were again a feature of the discussions leading up to the CWI's merger with *Izquierda Revolucionaria* (IR) in the Spanish State last year, who had left the IMT several years before. The IR comrades described how the inability of the IMT to achieve clarity on perspectives, program, and strategy was linked to the top-down and maneuvering methods introduced into the IMT leadership by Woods. In particular, they referenced his intolerance of anyone who challenged his authority, and the stunting political impact this had on the leadership bodies.

17. While we are not attempting to draw any direct analogies between these past examples and the present debate over methods in SA, we believe this history demonstrates the profoundly political character of leadership methods and holds important lessons for the present conflict within Socialist Alternative. As the discussion has unfolded over the course of the past year, a large majority on all the bodies where it was discussed have come to the conclusion that what is at stake in this debate is a fundamental issue: the methodology for organizing democratic debate in a revolutionary party and constructing its leadership. Political differences over our current perspectives and tactics deserve a full debate, but the deeper issues being expressed in the present internal divisions are the methods of building a collective leadership on a democratic centralist basis.

What is "the majority"?

18. With the debate now moving into the wider membership, it has unfortunately become necessary to put down in writing this initial statement of the majority of National Committee (NC) members and invited observers. Up until now, the central arguments which have unified a large majority of the elected leadership bodies of Socialist Alternative against the methods of the minority group have been developed in the verbal discussions, especially at the December International Executive Committee (IEC) and National Committee meetings, but not yet in written form.

19. For a long time, there was hesitancy on the part of many of the signers of this document write up our sharp criticisms of the Philip and Stephan's methods and behavior in order to avoid more fully entrenching the divisions. Many of us initially hoped that that they would - as they have at times in the past - accept responsibility for their actions and agree to steps to rebuild trust and a collective leadership where their talents could continue to be used for the benefit of the movement.

20. While a number of important political questions have come up as part of this debate, the signers of this statement do not believe that the sharp divisions in our leadership hinge around vital questions of political perspectives, program, or strategy. In our view, from the outset of this conflict, Philip and Stephan have continuously exaggerated differences, seized on small mistakes or imbalances, and exploited the very real problems we face - largely resulting from the conflict itself - in order to obscure calls to take responsibility for their destructive approach and build support for their faction. Ironically, while they claim to be struggling for political clarity, among the biggest casualties of this conflict is a dramatic undermining of healthy spaces for democratic debate. Open discussion is destroyed when comrades fear that every mistake, every disagreement, will be weaponized to whip up further divisions and disorganization.

21. In reality, on the very political issues around which the minority has attempted to artificially polarize the organization, a healthy debate and spectrum of opinion exists among the the comrades who constitute the majority. While we reject attempts to exaggerate and draw bright lines of division on issues like our approach to DSA, how we intervene in the impeachment debate, or the disagreements over Seattle SA's structures, some of us in the majority have raised very similar arguments as minority comrades or agreed with their points. All the wider political issues raised by minority comrades are completely legitimate questions to discuss, debate, and try to reach clarity around, *but they are not the issues around which the majority and minority can consistently distinguish themselves from one another.*

22. Instead, what unifies the majority is: a) an objection to continuous over-polarization around secondary disagreements, b) an intolerance for bullying patterns of behavior, c) an appeal to end the unfounded attacks on Kshama's character, and d) opposition to Philip and Stephan's decision, after failing to win a majority for their views on any body where the debate has been aired, to wage an initially secret factional war within Socialist Alternative around various secondary political and organization issues. These are unhealthy methods of debate which have done more to politically confuse than clarify issues, disorganized our work, shattered the hard-won collective leadership we'd built in the previous period, and are now threatening to plunge our organization further into crisis.

23. Therefore, while the minority group has framed their central written contribution to this debate as a response to the October "EC Majority Reply" we want to be clear that the current NC and CC majority do not base our case on that document. Already, at the NC meeting in December (i.e. before the minority submitted their "Response" in February), the six authors of the "EC Majority Reply" made clear that they accept important mistakes were made in their document. Others in the current majority also accept they made important mistakes in an earlier period of the the conflict by echoing mistaken arguments and supporting problematic aspects of the minority's

approach.

24. Mistakes are inevitable in revolutionary politics. We recognize that mistakes have been made on all sides in this extremely difficult, often confusing, and deeply polarizing debate. We believe that building a politically strong, responsive, and democratic collective leadership requires a preparedness to openly acknowledge and learn from mistakes. Pretenses to infallibility within the socialist movement should be viewed with suspicion and have on too many occasions introduced a corrosive, top-down atmosphere into organizations. In our view, a central problem with the approach of the minority has been their refusal, at each stage of the discussion, to acknowledge their mistakes in a meaningful way or to change their approach.

How did we get here?

25. Writing up this account of the breakdown in relations in the leadership of Socialist Alternative is inevitably distasteful but has at this stage become necessary. Understandably most comrades will have a healthy distaste for anything that smacks of personal attacks or an unnecessary airing of dirty laundry. It is far simpler and clearer when conflicts can be neatly explained around easily distinguishable political differences, disconnected from the individuals or groups who advocate them. Of course, such a clean separation is never really possible and the task of all comrades in this debate is, unfortunately, to soberly look at and then judge the differing explanations of how this conflict originated, how it evolved, and what lessons to draw out of the experience.

26. This conflict began as a revolt against the methods of leadership of Philip and Stephan. Elected by the EC to be National Secretary (our highest elected position) in 2016, Philip also played a central role in the leadership of Seattle Socialist Alternative. Stephan was formerly a member of the International Secretariat (the day-to-day elected leadership of the CWI based on London), but after moving to Seattle in 2014 came to play the central role in the local organization, coordinating the SEC and leading five full-timers on the Seattle Party Building Team. While the tremendous pressures of the work over the past period created a number of tensions between comrades, they especially tested the approach to leadership of these two comrades who were, until last summer, playing the dominant roles.

27. The current conflict initially broke out on the national EC in early April 2017, not over any wider political disagreements as the minority alleges, but rather over the role of one individual in the Seattle leadership. In fact it was Philip who initially proposed that the EC agree to change Stephan’s role to focus on national work as a way to resolve the breakdown in relations that had developed on the Seattle EC between Stephan, on the one hand, and Kshama and Calvin on the other. By April 2017, the escalating tensions in the Seattle leadership had been discussed by national EC members for nearly a year, and the Seattle EC had become less and less functional largely due to what Philip himself acknowledged was Stephan’s increasingly “belligerent” approach to Kshama and Calvin.

28. Initially there was consensus on the proposal to change Stephan’s role, and

no one motivated this proposal on the basis of political disagreements with Stephan. While comrades on the EC and SEC had differing views on the character of the breakdown in relations, the aim was to achieve an agreeable re-organization of roles. So, despite the serious concerns some EC comrades had over Stephan's belligerence, there was no call from anyone to formally assign blame to Stephan for the breakdown in relations.

29. Disagreements only arose when Philip and Stephan wanted to, in effect, formally assign blame to Kshama. They raised that Kshama had a pattern of refusing to work with people, that she wanted to pick and choose who was on the elected leadership bodies, and that this amounted to a dangerous lack of accountability. Flowing from this narrative, they proposed that EC and the International Secretariat (the IS is the elected leadership of the CWI) should formally register its agreement with these views by saying to Kshama that "this can't happen again."

30. The majority of the EC and the IS didn't agree to placing the blame on Kshama or censuring her as a condition to gain agreement on changing Stephan's role. The majority urged the minority comrades, having clearly registered their views and offered their warnings, to move forward together with the decision to change Stephan's role.

31. Instead, EC comrades report that Philip dramatically deepened the dispute at an EC meeting on April 7, 2017, working himself into an extended angry tirade, yelling and interrupting comrades, and accusing the majority of EC members and the IS of "covering up" for Kshama's lack of accountability. He accused comrades of trying to marginalize Stephan because of past political disagreements with him on the EC. Philip also opened an increasingly vicious set of attacks on Kshama, relating compromising quotes he alleged other EC and IS comrades said about Kshama in private conversations with him, and levelled a series of insults and barbed comments against others.

32. This was not the first time it was necessary for other leading comrades to call out Philip for behaving in a bullying and unbalanced way, but on previous occasions he would acknowledge his mistake and work to repair relations. Given his real political talents and the central role he played in many of the successes in Seattle, there had been serious attempts by all comrades to build a wider leadership team that made it possible for Philip to play a central political role on the EC and SEC. While Philip offered a semi-apology for aspects of his behavior, EC and NC comrades report that the episode on April 7, 2017, opened a whole period of similar and even more outrageous and bullying behavior by Philip toward those who challenged him, shattering working relations on the EC, SEC, and eventually with a number of NC and Seattle CC members.

33. In the aftermath of Philip's behavior and accusations at the April 7 EC meeting, a majority of EC members agreed to temporarily elect Tom to join Bryan and Philip as "EC Convenors," given the breakdown in relations and lack of trust a majority now felt toward Philip. While the Convenors have no formal decision making power - they meet each week to prepare agendas and proposals for the EC to review - Philip and Stephan made a major issue of this change, alleging that it reflected an attempt to marginalize Philip alongside Stephan because of past political disagreements. Given how this narrative has become a central issue for the minority comrades, while debates were a regular feature on EC meetings, it is important to note that there were no

significant political divisions causing tensions on the EC in the months leading up to April 2017. The February 2017 National Committee featured a unanimous vote on the US Perspectives and Building Priorities documents, and there was agreement that the substantial draft document by Philip and Tom C on our tactics in the Trump era should be completed and circulated to the membership (it was subsequently published in the New Member Education Program).

34. In their “Response,” the minority objects to calling out Philip’s behavior, labelling it hearsay and demanding that comrades ask for investigations into specific incidents before introducing Philip’s bullying behavior into the debate. However, until his resignation in December, Philip was serving as National Secretary, the most influential elected position in our organization. With numerous comrades on the EC, the NC, and beyond reporting similar experiences and, in the context of Philip accusing EC and NC comrades of an undemocratic “lock-out” because he was raising political disagreement, the need to raise objections to Philip’s pattern of behavior became a decidedly political question.

35. Similarly, when Philip initially proposed changing Stephan’s role on the EC, no one suggested opening a discussion on Stephan’s own significant history of broken relations. However, as Philip and Stephan doubled down on their accusations against Kshama, this opened up a discussion on Stephan’s own methods of leadership and debate. As the discussion unfolded it became clear that the experiences with Stephan described by Kshama and Calvin corresponded with the experiences of other comrades on the EC and the International. Their descriptions of Stephan’s bullying and belittling approach toward them when disagreements arose, of maneuvering to build a block among other SEC members against them without openly raising his full disagreements on the SEC, all found parallels in the experiences of other comrades.

36. Most EC members had experienced a similar conflicts with Stephan and had strained working relations. Similarly the comrades on the International Secretariat, a body that Stephan had served on until moving the Seattle in 2014, described previous episodes of breakdowns in relations between Stephan and other leading comrades, including a complete breakdown in relations with the leadership of our German EC on which Stephan had long served, leading up to his moving out of Germany to the International Center. At the day-long discussion on this conflict at the IEC last December, the leading comrades of the German section described their conclusions that, over a whole period, Stephan had a pattern of elevating secondary disagreements to such level as to lead to a breakdown in relations. Subsequently, when he was a member of the IS, one of Stephan’s responsibility was to work with our Greek organization. However, reporting similar objections around methods of debate, the entire Greek leadership signed a letter asking the IS to re-assign Stephan.

37. We do not agree with the very serious accusations against Kshama and we believe the proposal to censure her for the breakdown in relations was wrong. We also do not accept the allegation that Kshama has a pattern of refusing to work with people or that she has acted in an unaccountable manner. Under the intense pressures which have faced the Seattle and national leadership in recent years, virtually all leading comrades have had their share of conflicts

and tensions with others. While it has been possible for others to shift their roles and responsibilities as needed to manage these tensions, given Kshama's elected position she has faced the most intense pressures while, at the same time, she has not had the option of simply shifting her role or taking extensive time off from work.

38. The minority has produced various lists of individuals who they claim Kshama has refused to work with. A number of these individuals dispute their narrative and have objected to being on this list. In Philip and Stephan's case, we believe they were primarily responsible for creating an intolerable environment on the SEC that inhibited the ability of it to function. The decision to change their roles was collective, not simply based on Kshama's preferences. In reality, the allegations about Kshama's alleged lack of accountability have amounted to an irresponsible campaign of maligning another comrade. In a Marxist organization it is a truism to say that all members have a democratic right and responsibility to raise disagreements and criticisms of our leading representatives. However, aside from the question of individual roles (which have been answered), the minority has completely failed to demonstrate where, politically, Kshama has been unaccountable to the organization and our program.

39. There are also allegations relating to staffing decisions in the council office which, after full discussions on NC and City Committee, we do not at all agree with. However, rather than answering those accusations here, we are appealing to all comrades to keep these issues to a verbal debate rather than online or in print, given how previously our internal documents have been leaked and published online. These accusations could be used by the establishment and corporate media to undermine our hard won position in Seattle.

"Administrative measures?"

40. After fully hearing out the minority comrades over the course of this debate, we completely reject the ongoing false narrative that Stephan's role was changed from Seattle to national work simply because Kshama demanded it. The decision was made by the EC as a whole because the SEC had become dysfunctional. We also disagree that this was done in an administrative, undemocratic fashion. It is the task of the nationally elected leadership bodies to work out the roles and responsibilities of all national full-timers, and especially EC members. In addition to a lengthy effort to resolve tensions, EC comrades discussed multiple proposals for a mutually agreeable way forward before the decision was finally taken in April of 2017. Ultimately the change in roles was made by a democratic vote with a clear majority on the national EC.

41. Disagreements have also been raised about the EC's opposition to bringing the full debate, even before the real issues were clarified for most EC comrades, into the Seattle City Committee last June, where a new SEC was proposed and elected without Stephan. The EC's initial aim was to make every effort toward repairing relations before widening the conflict and further entrenching the divisions. However, given how the conflict has unfolded, in retrospect there is general agreement that it would have been better to have organized an emergency debate at the National Committee beforehand and from there brought the disagreement fully into the City

Committee before holding a vote for the SEC.

42. While acknowledging this mistake, we don't agree with the characterization that the EC's approach amounted to "administrative measures," or taking the Seattle organization into "trusteeship," or that it is "unprecedented." It is not at all unprecedented for elected leadership bodies to make every attempt to resolve interpersonal disputes, breakdowns in relations, or even political disputes over secondary questions without always airing the full conflict before the wider membership. Many Branch Committee members will have experienced disagreements and arguments on their BC's that were discussed out, sometimes over the course of several meetings, in an attempt to resolve them before bringing the debate fully into the branch. There are many examples in the history of our organization, from the Branch Committee level up to the EC, where breakdowns in working relations led to changes in comrades' roles, but where the full messy background was not reported to the wider bodies or membership. This in no way means any political disagreements connected to such disputes should be hidden from the wider organization, but we have insisted on a structured democratic debate.

43. For that reason, we also don't agree that this debate should have been aired on the Seattle CC before the National Committee, given that the dispute was centered among EC members and the central objections raised were to the refusal of EC to censure Kshama and the allegation that Stephan's role was being changed because of political differences. Philip and Stephan have the right to air their views, and they have done so at many levels of the organization, now including the Seattle Convention. The National Committee also has rights, and given that Philip and Stephan were elected by the National Committee to their roles on the EC, the NC had the right and obligation to organize a full debate and to then make it's views known to the Seattle City Committee and wider membership when the discussion is brought there.

44. Given the central importance of our city council position to our whole national organization, and the role of the whole organization in winning and defending the seat, the question of who is the day-to-day leadership team coordinating the council work is not primarily a decision of the Seattle City Committee. In practice, since Kshama's election in 2013, the council work has been overseen by members of the EC in Seattle, who worked under the EC's general direction, and who were also elected to the SEC. Previously both Philip and Stephan vigorously defended the need for the council work to be under general direction of the national EC, with local EC members delegated to be the day-to-day leadership team. When important debates on the SEC developed under Philip and Stephan's leadership these were typically brought to the EC and resolved there if possible before being brought into the Seattle City Committee. Especially for the EC members serving on the SEC, they are first and foremost accountable to the EC and the National Committee who elected them.

45. The last year has demonstrated that a lot of time and extensive discussions were needed for the issues to be clarified even to most EC members, NC members, and City Committee members. From very early in the conflict, the debate assumed a larger character than the narrow question of the composition of the SEC or Stephan's role. It was necessary to both take decisions that allowed the SEC to function while at the same time opening a

process of structured debate on the wider issues posed, starting in the national and international elected leadership bodies.

46. The accusation by Philip and Stephan that they have been “locked out” of the EC simply because they held differing views also flips things upside down. What is the substance of this accusation? The comrades are able to register their votes on all questions, put forward proposals, and, where they don’t get agreement, they can and at times have brought their disagreements and proposals into the National Committee (which the EC is accountable to). What is true is that the the previous collaborative atmosphere on the EC has been shattered. In the context of Philip and Stephan adopting an openly hostile attitude toward the rest of the leadership, where EC members felt their every statement was scrutinized and often distorted, the EC meetings quickly became a sterile environment for political discussion.

47. Previously EC meetings were characterized by healthy back-and-forth discussions, where comrades could test ideas out without feeling they would be pinned to the wall with every mistake. Comrades generally could trust that sensitive discussions would not be reported outside of EC meetings without common agreement. However, this was clearly happening with NC members in the minority group and beyond. While informal discussion outside EC meetings was always a feature of how proposals came together, this has undoubtedly increased among majority EC members in the present atmosphere. What the comrades characterize as a “lock-out” amounts to little more than these kinds of adaptations to a breakdown in trust and a shattering of the hard-won collective leadership on the EC.

Accountability

48. Alongside the accusation that Kshama wants to pick and choose who is on the Seattle leadership bodies, is the linked idea that this debate is rooted in fundamentally different conceptions of the relationship between elected officials and the revolutionary party. In the minority “Response,” (para. 9) they say that “a conflict developed fundamentally about whether our party should direct our council office or, in contrast, whether our council work should be allowed to act independently and given its weight, in effect, direct our party.” While there is room for debate over what our campaigning focus in Seattle should be, or what the pace and balance of our work should be at any given period, we consider it a gross exaggeration to suggest the Seattle leadership are abandoning the basic ideas of Marxism regarding the role of elections and elected officials for a revolutionary party.

49. Undoubtedly, as the “Response” points out, huge pressures exist on our organization due to the powerful platform and influence we have won through our council position and the growth of our party in Seattle. Our relatively small number of Marxist cadre bear a heavy burden of trying offer leadership on the myriad day to day challenges, trying to maintain a principled approach to complicated tactical questions. The pace of work and demands facing the council office and the pressures facing the branches can be different and has at times been the source of tensions and debates. Under these conditions, mistakes have been made and will continue to be made. The question is

whether we can collectively learn from those mistakes, make corrections, and use the debates around these experiences to build a stronger collective leadership and cadre base for Socialist Alternative in Seattle and nationally.

50. What stands out, however, in the minority “Response” as well as the discussions on this issue in the run-up to the Seattle Convention, is how minor the actual examples the bring up to demonstrate the alleged fundamental difference. The “Response” (para. 34) points to our hugely successful 2017 city budget fight in Seattle, where our call for the city to build 1,000 homes instead of the police precinct not only helped “Block the Bunker” but also won $29 million for affordable housing. Amid growing tensions in the Seattle leadership at the time, the comrades point to a slight difference in emphasis between an SA leaflet and a council produced leaflet on the issue as their evidence of two fundamentally different ideas?

51. As their next piece of evidence, the “Response” makes the case that various specific disagreements over the balance of party work in the past - how much were branches oriented to various struggles around the council office - is evidence of fundamental differences in approach. While there is room for debate over the right balance on any given campaign - and there have been healthy debates on these questions among majority comrades in Seattle - we don’t agree that any of the past differences constitute a proposal for the council office to “act independently and given its weight, in effect, direct our party.” All key decisions over our core prioritizes continue to be discussed and agreed by the elected leadership bodies. If anything, over the past year the role of the City Committee in discussing and debating priorities has been heightened, with far more frequent meetings and engaged discussions and debates.

52. In the City Committee debates on this issue in February and March 2018, Ramy and other minority comrades repeatedly linked their criticism of Kshama to the specter of the historic betrayal of the Social Democratic Party bending to the opportunist pressures and sending millions of workers to their slaughter in WW1. Numerous other examples of historic betrayals by socialist leaders were also raised to create an aura of suspicion and doubt around Kshama. Similarly exaggerated points, including repeated assertions by Philip in particular about the “tunnel vision” of council comrades, have been a feature in branch discussions around Seattle Perspectives and Priorities.

53. But Seattle comrades report that what is again striking is how minimal and insignificant the concrete differences to our approach and priorities have been. Despite numerous amendments being written up, on balance they add up to relatively small differences in emphasis. Ridiculous claims of Kshama bending to opportunist pressures have been made in relation to a recent housing town hall we organized where our speakers did not put enough emphasis on our wider socialist program. While all comrades agreed afterwards that this was an imbalance, while the SEC explained it reflected a rushed preparation of the program, a number of minority comrades raised

that this represented a seeping abandonment of the transitional approach!

54. A lengthy amendment was then drafted for the Seattle Perspectives document outlining general truisms about the transitional method, and how we apply that to the housing fight. The SEC was in broad agreement with this amendment and, with the exception of a couple barbed lines, accepted is as friendly. However the whole episode is just one example of the destructive and exaggerated method of debate, where every mistake is seized upon and every political debate weaponized to try to paint a picture of a politically rudderless Seattle leadership now that Philip and Stephan have been "undemocratically" taken out of the local leadership.

55. From early on in the debate, part of the accusation from Philip and Stephan was that the International Secretariat, alongside the EC, was "covering up" for Kshama's lack of accountability. In numerous conversations with IS and EC members, Philip in particular characterized the IS as having a "rotten" approach, and at the IEC meeting in December he said the IS used "maneuvering" and Zinoviest methods - understood in our tradition to mean a dishonest or bureaucratic intervention of the international leadership. Comrades in the minority have accused members of the IS, IEC, and EC of siding against them out of a desire to avoid clashing with Kshama as she veers in an opportunist direction. But the whole history of our international contradicts this.

56. To just take the most important modern example, in the late '90s we had six Members of Parliament in Scotland, in many respects the the strongest position of any section of the CWI during a difficult period for the international and the workers' movement. Facing the huge pressures of a period of reaction, the majority of the Scottish section, including all our Members of Parliament, began moving in an opportunist direction and downplaying the need to build a revolutionary party. The International Secretariat did not hesitate to carry out a full debate in all sections of the CWI around this question.

57. The material from both sides of this debate is extremely educational and can be read on marxist.net. The IS supported a small group in Scotland against the majority who led hundreds of members and 6 Members of Parliament in order to defend Marxist ideas. The subsequent political degeneration of the former CWI members in Scotland and the modest, but important, development of Socialist Party Scotland demonstrate how the IS and IEC were correct. It also shows how, even in the face of much bigger losses than the minority alleges they fear in Seattle, the IS and IEC have no record of shying away from defending Marxist ideas and organization against the opportunist pressures when they threaten to derail the work of building the revolutionary party.

Is a faction justified?

58. For many Seattle CC members, the "expanded" City Committee meeting on April 22 ("expanded" to include all Seattle BC members to hear both sides of the debate), clarified the political trajectory of the minority group. In his contribution to expanded CC meeting, Ted (who was recruited by Philip and

has worked closely with him for 18 years) elaborated his impression from conversations with Philip in the early days of the conflict last spring and summer. Ted explained the minority saw this as “a 1903 moment,” referring to the initial split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at the 1903 Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. After fully exploring the political issues over many months, Ted went on to say, he didn’t agree with that characterization or that the differences justified organizing a faction.

59. Responding to Ted in his sum-up for the minority group, Philip took up and developed the comparison to 1903 made by Ted. Memorably using the metaphor of the present “acorn” of small differences that could soon become a full-grown “tree” of fundamental political divisions, Philip explained that just like the divisions between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1903, if comrades feel today’s disagreements in SA don’t yet appear significant enough to justify the approach of his minority grouping, that was only because they haven’t yet matured.

60. This was the clearest expression yet, in a formal setting outside of EC meetings and private conversations, of the leading minority comrades’ perspective that this conflict is heading toward an eventual split. While this interpretation is firmly denied by the comrades, it is difficult to explain their approach to the conflict in any other way. Unfortunately, what has already became clear to most of the signers of this document is that Philip and Stephan had been building a secret faction for much of the last year, based on a deep hostility to the US and International leadership and exaggerated claims of political differences. The whole logic of their approach has led them to wage a campaign of proxy debates designed to to expose and undermine the national and Seattle ECs, Kshama, and the Council Office. Rather than raising disagreements with the aim of politically developing and strengthening the organization, the leading minority comrades have carried out a factional guerrilla campaign.

61. We do not throw the word “faction” into this discussion as a slur, but rather to try and clearly describe the politics and methods of the minority group. In the Marxist tradition, a faction is organized when a group within the revolutionary party decides that fundamental issues of political principle are at stake and that the task of building a viable revolutionary party requires a fundamental change in direction including a serious change in the leadership bodies.

62. However, alongside the right to organize a faction in a revolutionary party comes the obligation of a faction to openly and honestly declare its politics and its aims. After a year the comrades have yet to produce a clear statement fully elaborating their full political conclusions and aims. Even the 29 page “Response to the EC Majority Reply,” which the comrades subsequently called the declaration of their grouping, does not spell out their full political conclusions or aims, and does not make the case for building their faction.

63. NC and CC members heard reports from Ty, who initially worked closely with Philip and Stephan on the EC and who attended faction meetings with the five authors of the “Response” in September and October. Ty’s reports filled out an already clear picture that the comrades had abandoned the perspective of winning over a majority of Socialist Alternative and the CWI, but, rather than working collaboratively as a loyal minority, were instead waging a factional war in order to leave Socialist Alternative with the largest possible numbers. Specifically, when discussing with Philip and Stephan what life outside the CWI would look like, Ty reports the comrades explained their idea of forming a Marxist faction within DSA. This idea has now emerged as a prominent proposal from Philip and others within the pre-Convention debate in Seattle, though of course not explicitly explained as part of a perspective for a split.

64. None of this has been openly spelled out on the NC or in the Seattle City Committee, but Philip’s use of the comparison to 1903 at the April 22 expanded CC meeting, alongside their overall tactics in the lead-up to the Seattle Convention, are consistent with what the comrades have said more frankly in private discussions. This has been a dishonest and poisonous method of debate, forcing the National Committee and Seattle City Committee into endless proxy battles. We believe this approach is deeply out of step with healthy traditions of open debate within the Marxist movement and the CWI.

65. Normally, political disagreements and criticisms should be raised in a spirit of solidarity, with debate organized to politically strengthen the organization and to sharpen the politics of the cadre and elected leadership bodies. If conducted in a proportional and open manner, debates can educate the wider organization, correct mistakes, and develop the political cohesion and confidence in the revolutionary party. Even when much bigger tactical disagreements have emerged in the organization, with much bigger issues are at stake, comrades have not resorted to organizing a secret faction. This was demonstrated in Socialist Alternative in 2015 and 2016 in the debate around our Bernie Sanders tactics, when initially a significant section of the membership was very unsure about the approach and a minority were strongly opposed.

66. From the outset, the group opposed to our tactics toward the Sanders campaign openly explained their full disagreements, first before the National Committee, and then within a structured debate among the wider membership. While the disagreements were quite sharp, they conducted themselves in an open and responsible manner that made it possible to work out an agreed framework for a clear debate. But we must underline that there is a profound difference between this approach and the approach of the minority today, which while unable to point to equally significant differences in analysis, program, or tactics, has taken a far more hostile view to the elected leadership and conducted itself in a far more combative and disruptive fashion.

67. After nearly a year of debate and six months of actively building their group, even their February “Response” failed to fully spell out their full political conclusions, or openly explain the aims and character of their group. Rather than taking a proportional approach to the political differences, and being prepared to work over a longer period of time in a collaborative way to allow developments to either confirm or negate their criticisms, the combative and destructive quality of their campaign appears to flow from an approach of trying to find adherents before a split occurs.

68. While we don’t accept that the political questions spelled out in the minority “Response” justify the organization of a faction, we are concerned about the political logic of the minority group. By resorting to exaggerations and mischaracterizations of other comrades views to justify building a minority faction, the comrades risk losing their own political rudder. The history of the left is unfortunately thick with internal divisions creating a political logic driven more by organizational considerations, by a need to differentiate themselves.

69. In the pre-Convention debate in Seattle, comrades report that the growing emphasis by the minority group on democratic issues which appear geared toward mobilizing behind them comrades who, from a different political starting place, also have raised democratic concerns. To take one small example, whereas leading comrades in the minority have previously argued against requiring the City Committee or National Committee to produce written rather than oral reports to branches, now this proposal appears to be encouraged by the comrades.

70. The same general danger exists for all sides in a conflict of this character, of saying “black” when the other side says “white.” A central task of the comrades who consider themselves in the majority, therefore, must be to bring together comrades who have political agreement with points raised by the minority, alongside comrades who disagree on these same points, into a common block against the campaign of false polarization to justify the organization aims of the faction. Only on this basis will we be able to defend the democratic space to have a genuine and healthy debate around these very political questions, to learn from one-another, and to politically strengthen our elected leadership bodies.

71. While there are many examples in the history of the Marxist movement where much bigger programmatic and tactical differences were resolved within the framework of a common organization and collective leadership, there are also many examples where petty organizational schisms contributed to groups evolving away from Marxist ideas. There are also examples, like the IR in Spain today, or Trotsky before 1917, of groups and individuals who broke with the revolutionary party at one stage but found there way back at another. The factional logic of this conflict could indeed produce more serious political differences down the road, though we do not believe that is at all inevitable.

72. On many occasions Trotsky explained that at the root of major factional debates one can usually find underlying class issues and urged Marxists to seek to uncover these class issues. When this debate first broke out, while pointing to the core issue of the incorrect methods of Philip and Stephan, all comrades strove to uncover any possible deeper political issues. Except for some minor differences on perspectives for DSA, or tactical slogans like calling for DSA to launch a new socialist party (which a number of the signers of this statement also agree with), no major differences were found. Indeed, the US perspectives document was passed unanimously by the full NC in December. While does not mean the methodological issues won't become a precursor of deeper political differences, at this stage the only differences that have emerged have been minor - issues of emphasis, orientation, and tactics. Certainly, none of the specific political issues brought up by the minority justify the damaging methods of work that led to the breakdown in the leadership in April 2017 or the level of factional division up until the present moment.

Expanding the debate

73. At the March National Committee, where this debate was continued, it was agreed by a vote of 21 to 2 to put a temporary "pause" on this paralyzing internal conflict to allow the organization to again turn outward for a period. This was no "gag order," as some in the Seattle minority have dubbed it. A core component of democratic centralism is the idea that, to avoid devolving into an endless debating society, the organization as a whole has the right to decide how to structure debate. Just as a branch must frequently balance the democratic right of each member to raise things for discussion against the branch's collective right to democratically decide what to prioritize in a given meeting (i.e. what to put on the agenda and what not to), the whole organization, through its elected bodies, has the right to collectively open periods of discussion but also, once a given phase of debate is completed and decisions are reached, to collectively decide to focus outward again.

74. In Seattle, the "pause" was the basis on which we were able to build the "Tax Amazon" struggle, which has emerged as a ferocious battle with big business and the political establishment in Seattle and is gaining significant national media coverage. Comrades can agree or disagree whether this was correct, but it's not a serious approach to pretend we could have it both ways - to have continued a consuming debates around the internal crisis while also waging a serious battle for the Amazon Tax while maintaining the basic functioning of our structures, our finances, and other key interventions. The plan had been to end the "pause" in the month leading up to the June 23-25 National Committee meeting, and from there to open the national pre-Convention discussion where, if comrades chose, a structured debate on these issues could be brought into the wider membership in the run-up to the October National Convention.

75. In this overall national context, our hope was that the “pause” would also allow the Seattle organization to have a full, healthy discussion and debate around Seattle perspectives and priorities leading up the Seattle Convention. However, a number of Branch Committee comrades increasingly demanded that the full debate be brought sooner before the Seattle membership. This demand was especially understandable given how the pre-Convention discussion in Seattle increasingly became a proxy debate, with a highly polarized atmosphere and an unprecedented volume of amendments coming from comrades around the minority faction. We do not agree that the political content of the amendments justify the organization of a faction, but it became clear that the minority group was using the Convention debate as a proxy to build support for their wider criticisms.

76. Under these circumstances, the Seattle Executive Committee, with the agreement of the national EC, proposed bringing the full debate into the May 6 Seattle Convention. This initial statement was therefore rushed out in order to provide, in outline, our views on the key issues underlying this dispute.

77. We urge comrades to carefully listen to all sides, take a patient approach to the discussion, and draw their own conclusions. We in the majority are in no way expecting comrades to simply defer to the authority of the elected leadership bodies. At the same time, given the character of the issues under dispute, especially the allegations raised against Kshama by the minority and the disputed methods used by Philip and Stephan, we urge the comrades to ask themselves why - at every level of the organization where this debate has been had out - the comrades in the minority have seen support and sympathy for their position further erode away over the course of the discussion.

78. The International Executive Committee is the elected leadership of the CWI which meets for a week each year. It brings together comrades with decades of experience working alongside Philip and Stephan. The IEC met in December and spent over 11 hours debating the conflict in the US. At the end, 69 elected IEC members, alternative, and invited observers voted to reject the arguments put forward by Philip and Stephan, with only the two of them abstaining on the resolution. On the National Committee, out of the 42 elected members and alternates, only five (all from Seattle) have joined the minority, while 33 generally identify with the majority. On the Seattle City Committee, out of the 38 CC members and regularly invited observers, 28 have come to identify with the majority opposition to their methods, while only four others have come to consistently vote with five NC members and alternates who signed onto the minority groups’ February “Response.”

79. While taking the time to judge all the questions for yourselves, we urge comrades to consider why it is that virtually all of Philip and Stephan’s longest-standing and closest collaborators have completely lost confidence and trust in them. Is it because, as the minority alleges, we have suddenly become intolerant of disagreements being raised in the organization, or that

we want to squash any criticism of Kshama and the work of our Council Office? Over the course of this debate, we are confident a big majority comrades will recognize the ludicrous character of these accusations and join together with us in defending the organization from the destructive methods and factional campaign waged by the minority group.

80. The crisis of capitalism is preparing the ground for big events and a reawakening of the US working class. The wave of teachers strikes across parts of the US, the revolt of young people against the NRA, and the #MeToo movement are just the beginnings of the historic struggles that will develop in the years ahead. The “Tax Amazon” struggle shows our Seattle organization is positioned to make a great impact in this process. At the same time, we are under attack from the ruling class, the political establishment, and sections of the union bureaucracy. This highlights the immensity of our task and the need to build our organization in the best traditions of the Marxist movement, including the best methods of building collective leadership.

81. This debate will go wider into the organization, and it’s an important opportunity to develop leaders in our movement. Through studying the history of debate in the Marxist movement, engaging with the current dispute and intervention in the class struggle, we can strengthen the forces of the CWI in the US.

Some Points on the Discussion in the US Leadership on the Sanders Tactic

By Philip and Stephan, November 20, 2017

The IS is circulating to the IEC their "Contribution to the Sanders Debate in the US" from March 2, 2016. This is an excellent statement which we are in strong political agreement with. It is an important part of the record of the political discussions which took place within the US leadership and with the IS about our Sanders tactic.

Unfortunately, given the one sided picture we perceive the IS and EC Majority is painting about our role, we think it is necessary to register here some additional points.

This is not intended to diminish other comrades' roles. We have no doubt that the IS played a valuable political role overall in helping the US EC to develop our analysis and tactics on Sanders and other issues. We also fully recognize the critical role that all the other US EC members played in the collective discussions and debates on Sanders and in the tremendous work of SA over the past period.

"Independent Friends of Bernie"?

On April 24, 2015 Stephan circulated a rough draft of a statement for discussion with the EC Coordinators (Philip, Stephan, Bryan & Alan) and with Peter and Bob of the IS. This rough draft was circulated to be a concrete basis for a political discussion of what Kshama and SA would say when Sanders made his impending announcement of his campaign for president within the Democratic primaries (which was actually launched on April 30). It was not at all ready for publication (due to its "Germanish" and rough formulations).

Stephan's draft said SA would campaign in support for Bernie Sanders by arguing for (and possibly initiating) a "Independent Friends of Bernie." A "Independent Friends of Bernie" campaign (or called by a better name, as we eventually arrived at) would be independent of the official Sanders campaign structures and would argue for Sanders to run all the way through the November 2016 general election as part of building a new party independent of the Democratic Party. The conclusion of Stephan's draft stated:

> *Sanders running independent could open the floodgates. Maybe not to win in 2016. But, more importantly, it could change US politics forever, laying the basis for a new "third party" that could give millions of ordinary people and their families a powerful tool in our struggle against Wall Street and the 1%.*
> *If you want to be part of such a Bernie campaign, if you share our view, get in contact with Kshama and Socialist Alternative. Help us build for Bernie's proposals of $15/hour minimum wage, single-payer health care, to close the gender pay gap, to break the dominance of Wall Street and create good paying jobs by tackling climate change.* ***Help us build a campaign to support Bernie and urge him to go the whole way to November 2016 – and beyond!***
> *We don't want to end with a defeat in the Democratic Party primaries – and that's it. We can build an alternative, uncompromising for working people's interests, without corporate cash, corporate control and corporate politicians.*
>
> *Contact: IndependentFriendsOfBernie@SocialistAlternative.org*
>
> *[emphasis added]*

Comrades can read the full rough draft that was discussed here:
https://web.tresorit.com/l#9JCSDfjw12Bu14Clg_-l7w

The draft was discussed by the EC Coordinators (Philip, Stephan, Alan and Bryan) and Peter and Bob from the IS in a phone call on Saturday, April 25, 2015.

Flowing from the arguments made at this meeting the IS comrades (Peter and Bob) and EC comrades involved agreed to a compromise formulation, that

was later also discussed by the EC. This was summarized in an article by Philip that was published on May 9, 2015 after a draft was circulated and discussed at a NC phone conference on May 6. Reflecting this agreement, the article was careful to adopt a friendly, but still somewhat distant and explanatory posture, rather than explicitly saying we were supporting Sanders, were campaigning for Sanders, or proposing an independent initiative for Sanders linked to campaigning for a new party. For example, the end of the article reads:

> *If you agree, join Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative to make sure this historic opportunity is not squandered. We will be campaigning with Sanders supporters against the corporate politicians while politically arguing for Sanders to run all-out through the November 2016 election, as a step toward building an independent political alternative for working people. [See full article here: https://www.socialistalternative.org/2015/05/09/bernie-sanders-independent-campaign/]*

This was a strong position for us to take at the very early stages of the campaign and left the door open to develop a much bolder Sanders tactic. The campaign was still new and it remained to be seen how far it would develop (though all indications from the very beginning pointed to it gaining a major momentum). Furthermore, we had to fight to educate the membership and bring them along as there was a strong suspicion and hostility towards engaging, supporting, and much less campaigning for Sanders given he was running as a Democrat.

However, on the basis of further discussion, debate, and experience, the US organization eventually fundamentally arrived at the tactic that Stephan had originally proposed in broad outlines.

Millions got excited about Sanders' call for a "political revolution" and wanted him to win the Democratic primaries. But what about us? Was it possible for Marxists to want him to win - within this imperialist party? Could we pro-actively mobilize the radicalizing workers and youth who supported Sanders in campaigning activity geared to help Sanders win, but on an independent basis? SA struggled with these questions, of how to positively relate to the progressive sentiment of workers wanting to see a radical anti-corporate candidate, Sanders, win the battle he was engaged in (the Democratic Party primaries) while maintaining our independent political program and demands (the capitalist character of the Democratic party and the need for independent working class political action).

The most developed explanation of our decision to launch #Movement4Bernie, explicitly campaign (critically) in support for Sanders, to say we wanted Sanders to win the Democratic primaries, explaining that our members should not register as Democrats but urging those people who (mistakenly) were registered as Democrats to vote for Sanders in the Democratic primaries, and arguing that our comrades and independents should vote in "open" Democratic primaries where they would not need to register as Democrats was the resolution originally written by Philip and adopted by the NC on November 21, 2015 (see Member's Bulletin 68, https://web.tresorit.com/l#gt8Xearg7jPf_O7_RWGP6A).

We do not think the US organization would have been ready to adopt this position (the "Movement for Bernie" tactic) at the very beginning of the campaign. But we do think we would have been able to arrive at it faster if the EC and IS has been more politically clear from the beginning of the possibility, and indeed likelihood, that we would end up with such a tactic if the Sanders campaign continued to develop as it appeared it would.

We fully recognize this was a new situation and that it was no disaster that it took time for the EC, IS and the US organization to find the best way forward. This was a collective process where all the comrades contributed, and all the comrades made mistakes including ourselves (for example when we argued prematurely in March 2016 that Sanders campaign had hit its peak, when in fact that happened in May). However, a balance sheet of these discussions needs to take into account how we collectively prepared the organization to fully embrace and develop the Sanders tactic to its conclusion.

We welcome a review of the discussions that took place around this complicated issue. In the end, our successes were based on a very valuable and fruitful back and forth debate, based on accumulating living experience from our dynamic intervention in the struggle.

IS CONTRIBUTION TO THE SANDERS DEBATE IN THE US

1. The International Secretariat thinks that the approach of the US EC/NC to actively intervene in the Bernie Sanders campaign and launch the "Movement for Bernie" and support "Labor for Bernie" is generally correct. The initiative taken by the EC and NC has shown commendable flare and initiative in our approach to the mass movement which has developed around the Sanders campaign. This movement is historic for the US and potentially represents a point of departure for the US working class which is full of opportunities for our organisation if we seize the initiative as the US leadership has proposed.
2. Naturally even the IS initially had some questions about launching the "Movement for Bernie" and examined if it raised the danger of blurring the lines between our programme and the aim of building our own organisation and a new independent workers' party. Drawing on our experience and the best traditions of Trotskyism combined with discussion with the US EC we were convinced this was not the case. We are convinced it is correct to actively intervene in this process. Our approach is to support Sanders and at the same time to explain the differences we have with him. We believe that the comrades have done this. The assertion by the opposition in our ranks that the lines have been blurred does not hold water if we look at the leaflets and material produced by the comrades. While this or that phrase may have been expressed clumsily the strategical and tactical approach of the comrades has been generally correct.
3. We believe that the comrades who support the opposition are mistaken in their approach and tend towards a static conservative approach, to effectively stand outside this important movement. The proposal to have stalls and intervene in rallies while correct is inadequate to effectively intervene in this movement. The decision to take a political and organisational initiative to try and draw a layer of those mobilised behind Sanders is also being taken to try and give an organised form to this layer who are in the main not organised.
4. The debate, in the section and at the world congress, has involved valued and long-standing comrades and in the main been conducted in a comradely and fraternal manner, which we hope and urge will continue. There should be no hint of recrimination or sanctions against comrades. We recognise that a new tactic will provoke controversy and some suspicion that we are moving away from supporting a principled approach. This is not the case. Such suspicions have developed when many of the tactical turns proposed in the history of the Trotskyist movement have been discussed – for example in Spain in the 1930s.
5. Comrades from the opposition may object that those events involved forces from a Socialist party unlike the capitalist Democratic Party. However, it should be remembered that did not prevent Largo Caballero from initially participating in the right-wing dictatorial regime of Primo De Rivera. He justified this on the grounds that it prevented the UGT trade union from being declared illegal. Later this same Largo Caballero moved sharply to the left and was known as the "Lenin of the Spanish revolution". Unfortunately, the sectarian Trotskyist forces at the time refused Trotsky's advice to intervene in the young socialists when invited to do so. As a result an historic opportunity

was lost allowing the Stalinists to gain a base and ship- wreck the Spanish revolution.

6. The discussion in the US is whether or not it has been correct to adopt a bold tactical turn to intervene in a dynamic new situation. It is not about us revising our class analysis of the Democratic Party as a capitalist party. It is not about us revising our aim of fighting to build an independent workers' party in the US or the need to build a revolutionary party. It is a tactical discussion which includes the issue of how a new workers' party can develop in the next period. We understand the hostility that exists amongst a layer towards the Democratic Party because of its role and history.
7. Yet we should remember the united front tactic proposed by Trotsky. This concerned approaching the Social Democrats – SPD – the party that in the civil war in the Ruhr in 1920 was responsible for the slaughter of thousands of workers. It was the same party that had voted for war credits in 1914 and whose leaders were responsible for the execution of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Still, despite the role of the SPD, the tactic of the united front was proposed in the 1920/ period not as a tactic to prop up the SPD but precisely as a means of breaking SPD workers away from it. The hatred of the CP members towards the SPD meant that this proposal was greeted with outrage by a layer but it was still a correct tactic. The initiative the comrades have taken is not done to prop up the Democratic Party but precisely to help workers and youth break from it and draw the conclusion of the need to build a new party that defends their interests.
8. In Britain in the past we worked within the Labour Party – a bourgeois workers' party. We clearly fought for our own independent programme and ideas. However, this same party in the 1960s attempted to introduce vicious anti-trade union legislation. We were compelled to give it electoral support as part of this tactic, even to some on the right of this party like Denis Healey and others who had links with the bourgeois Bilderberg group and even the CIA. Something we denounced in a public pamphlet and other material on at the time of the witch-hunt against us. This tactic was a necessary overhead for our work which was very successful and eventually allowed us to lead the Liverpool council struggle in the 1980s.
9. The opposition in the US section has a schematic approach which envisages a new workers' party emerging in an almost virgin form - from the working class and the workers' movement and which in reality excludes splits and/or ruptures around the capitalist Democratic Party forming a part of this process. Engels warned in the 19th century against a dogmatic approach in relation to the US. Marx and Engels argued that one concrete step forward by the masses was worth more than a dozen programmes. Where splits to the left from capitalist parties are possible the task of Marxists is to work in such a way as to try and assist them and steer them in the right direction towards forming a new independent party of the working class. The success of such a development is not pre-ordained or inevitable.
10. The emergence of new workers' parties can take different routes. The same process will not be repeated in all countries. However, the recent mass movement of fresh forces, largely from outside the Democratic Party, behind Sanders represents a possible step in this direction. Marxists have a responsibility to boldly intervene to try and assist this process and help the most advanced layers draw the right conclusions of the need for an

independent party. This is what the launch of “Movement for Bernie” is aiming to do. The EC/NC statements have been balanced – supporting Bernie and at the same time explaining our differences.

11. Our tremendous victory in Seattle represented a great step forward. Kshama’s victory was a factor in pushing Sanders to stand, just as our struggle for a new workers’ party in England and Wales was a factor which resulted in some unions, such as UNITE, endorsing Corbyn in the recent Labour leadership election. We have had a very significant impact in Seattle and through it we have partly affected how the situation nationally has developed. We need to build on this. However, it does not mean that this will be repeated in the same way in each city or state or at national level. Nor will it been repeated in the same way in every country. The opposition argue that stalls and distributing material is what is necessary to intervene in this movement. However, as we have explained in our opinion this is inadequate.

12. The same argumentation was used against the French turn advocated by Trotsky. It was also repeated by supporters of Ted Grant when the proposal was made for, initially, a temporary open turn in Scotland and the launching of Scottish Militant Labour. Later, in the light of experience and events, this temporary turn, was developed on an all British basis and linked with a re-appraisal of the class character of the Labour Party. The opposition in the US seem to be looking for a pure crystallisation in the formation of a new workers’ party. Yet other developments coming from around the Democratic Party are also a part of the possible perspectives for the emergence of a new independent workers’ party in the US.

13. There are many historical examples illustrating how splits from some bourgeois parties developed towards the formation of new parties – some of them workers’ parties. In Chile splits from the bourgeois Christian Democracy led to the formation of the Christian Left and MAPU – part of the latter which ended up on the left of Allende’s Popular Unity alliance.

14. In Greece, the former mass workers’ party – PASOK – partly found its origins in the old liberal capitalist Centre Union. PASOK, founded in 1974, rapidly developed a mass base and a radical left reformist or centrist position during its most left combative phase, attracting the support of millions which the KKE with its rigid Stalinist approach could not attract. This was a development anticipated by us at the time.

15. Its leader Andreas Papandreau was himself radicalised by his own experience and events. Fleeing from the military junta, armed with a pistol and his experiences of the struggle against the military junta including the brutal repression against the polytechnic students by the military in 1973, all served to radicalise this figure and drive him to the left.

16. There are many other examples which illustrate this process. Even in Britain, where we have historically pointed to the formation of the Labour Party being based on the trade unions, the process was not of a “pure” workers party being established. The pioneers for the formation of an independent party of the trade unions battled for two decades for the realisation of this goal. The struggle did not proceed in a straight line but was full of zigzags, steps forward and sometimes steps backwards.

17. Kier Hardie, the miners’ leader from Scotland and regarded as the ‘father of the Labour Party’, was originally a Liberal who tried to reform the party but concluded that this was impossible. Firstly he established the

Scottish Labour Party and then, in 1893 he founded, with others, the Independent Labour Party, which included Marxists from the social Democratic Federation and a handful of trade unionists.

18. Hardie and the ILP conducted a protracted battle to break the trade unions from the Liberal Party's coat-tails. He was elected as MP by the south Wales miners in 1900. However, the South Wales miners as a whole were not free at this stage from illusions in the Liberal Party – even when they established their own political fund in 1899. In the 1890s Hardie battled at each Trades Union Congress each year for 'independent Labour Representation'. The Labour Representation Committee was formed in 1900, attended by trade union delegates and the co-operative movement and various socialist groups. The miners' union, however, abstained due to their connections with local Liberal associations. This situation lasted for almost a decade.

19. In fact the LRC initially secured the affiliation of 353,000 trade unionists out of a total of 2,000,000. The 'new unions' joined but the older, skilled workers' unions remained aloof for a period. The turning point was the 1901 Taff Vale judgement which awarded heavy financial damages against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants for alleged damage done to the Taff Vale railway company during a strike.

20. By 1903, the affiliated membership of the LRC had risen to 873,000. Yet the LRC, despite being known as the "Labour Party", was still a long way from constituting a party. It didn't even have a programme and only affirmed a willingness to "cooperate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interests of labour". Local parties despite existing in some areas, were not affiliated to the national party, because the trade union leaders feared they could pass to socialist control. There was no individual membership until 1918. This was only changed during the first world war when Arthur Henderson, originally a Liberal Party agent, as treasurer, re-organised the party.

21. During this period before the Labour Party became fully independent and an established force, a relatively lengthy period of "Lib-Labery" existed. While this will not be repeated in exactly the same way today there are many lessons for how a new workers' party may eventually emerge in the US and the possible role of left Democrats in crossing over to participate in its formation.

22. The development around Sanders is one step along this path. How far this develops remains to be seen and is unclear. Yet our task as Marxists is to try and take it as far as we can and intervene to assist the best layers draw the most advanced conclusions possible.

23. History knows all kinds of changes – many of the most unlikely character. Often developments of a mass character unfold not conforming to how we would prefer them to be, but they are expressed in the only channel open to the masses at that time. Marxists therefore need to be extremely flexible in tactics in order intervene in events and especially mass movements where they are actually taking place and not where we would prefer them to be. If not, we will simply remain on the side- lines observing the mass movement pass us by.

24. This has been the experience of the section in England and Wales in relation to the Corbyn phenomenon. This helped shed some light on how to

approach the Sanders movement. We did not fully anticipate the Corbyn developments in advance. When he stood and began to attract wider support we wished him well but did not initially think it likely he would win. Given the bourgeois character of New Labour we as a party did not join or advocate a vote for him, but in reality we supported the idea of his victory because of the consequences it would have in the party and outside it.

25. However, many of our supporters and even some members registered and voted for Corbyn for the best of reasons. Following his victory the Socialist Party in England and Wales has had to orientate towards this development and intervene in it. This is despite the enormous weakness and inadequacy of the Corbyn and Momentum leadership.

26. Although we did not initially anticipate these developments we were always open to them and recognised that such a turn would require us to change or modify our tactics. Since the 1990s we have called for the creation of a new workers' party. We have argued that changing the Labour Party or New Labour was not possible following the Blairite counter- revolution. However, we were open to a possible change. In Socialism Today in 2002 Peter Taaffe wrote: "If, however, despite our arguments, it does appear that there is possibility of success, that Labour begins to change in a socialist direction, it would be false and dogmatic for any genuine socialist or Marxist to stand apart from the process. If there is a serious shift to the left in the Labour Party we would participate in it" (Socialism Today September 2002 issue 68).

27. These developments have resulted in a change in the Labour Party. Its class character is unsettled or unresolved at this stage. In reality it is at least two parties in one with the apparatus, officialdom, parliamentary party and the overwhelming majority of councillors in the pro-capitalist Blairista camp. The struggle between these two forces has yet to be played out although the Corbynista forces are capitulating and abdicating from conducting a struggle. This rapid turn in events has required our English and Welsh section to adopt adroit tactics and argumentation at each stage.

28. In the debate in the US supporters of the opposition have argued that Corbyn is a different phenomenon because, unlike Sanders, he is from a long left socialist tradition. This, and Sanders' own history, are interesting and significant yet they do not determine our approach. As already mentioned, individuals like Andreas Papandreou evolved and changed reflecting their own experience and the pressure of the mass movement. Figures like Tony Benn in Britain or Bertinotti in Italy did not begin on the left. They evolved in that direction reflecting the objective and social situation they were operating in. It appears that at this stage Sanders is much further to the left and more combative than Corbyn. This was not determined by the history of either of them nor their personality, but objective and subjective factors.

29. Does this mean we revise our analysis of the Democratic Party or that we argue that the movement should struggle to change the Democratic Party? Does this mean we stop calling for a new independent party to defend the working class? No it does not. We need to assist those aroused to action and political activity around Sanders to draw the right conclusions on these questions.

30. Is there the danger that we dilute our programme, our support for a new independent party or fail to take up Sanders' political weaknesses? Yes

this danger does exist and we need to guard against it and correct any deficiencies in our material and argumentation.

31. However, the opposition has not provided any evidence to show that we have not raised our criticism of Sanders' programme. We said it was wrong to run for the Democratic nomination and reiterated support for a new independent party of the working class. We have warned against and opposed his endorsing of Clinton if, as is most likely, he loses the nomination or is blocked by the Democratic machine and we have called for him to run as an independent in such a situation. If we defend our programme and ideas and maintain our criticism of the Democrats and Sanders what do we have to lose by making this turn? The real question is what opportunities will be lost if we fail to make this tactical turn.

32. The conservatism expressed by the arguments of the opposition reflect a fear of being tainted by the mass movement and a desire to maintain our revolutionary purity. We need to defend our principled programme and ideas but not by being afraid to dirty our hands making tactical turns to intervene in a mass movement. This is a recipe for inaction and merely observing from the side lines. The sweep and scale of this movement compel us to actively intervene and participate in it. The only proposals from the opposition for any intervention are to attend the Sanders rallies and set up a stall to sell our material. This activity is necessary but is not sufficient if we are to actively engage in the movement.

33. The ISO have accused us of echoing the position of the DSA (Democratic Socialists of America). But they are left marginalised, commentating on Bernie, supporting Jill Stein and the Greens when the real struggle of the masses is taking place at this stage in the mass rallies of Sanders like the 27,000 rally in California. Rarely in US political history have such events taken place. It is a totally sectarian approach and method. At the same time if we are not there it leaves the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which has grown quite significantly, free rein to reach the far larger forces drawn behind Sanders to divert them into the Democrats. The initiative taken by the EC to launch the "Movement for Bernie" gives us an alternative to offer to those we can reach an alternative and perspective of how to conduct a struggle to build a new party.

34. It is true that a layer in the US on the left are totally opposed to the Democratic Party – as indeed we are. However, even for this layer, it is important that we try to educate them in the need to engage with the millions drawn around the Sanders campaign precisely with the aim of breaking them away from the Democratic Party and the idea that it is possible to transform it. This can be a bitter pill to swallow for a layer due to the role of the Democrats. We need to address this layer.

35. This tactical turn is not without some precedent in the US. In 1988 a debate emerged in the US section and the CWI on the Jesse Jackson campaign to win the Democratic Party presidential nomination. Some of the comrades at the time, notably John Throne, went so far as to call for a vote for Jackson. A majority of the comrades and the IS at the time opposed this but argued an extremely sympathetic approach should be taken towards those attracted to his campaign. We argued that we understood those supporting Jackson but then explained his limitations and the need to break from the Democratic Party.

36. The Sanders campaign has assumed a much more radical character – placing the question of socialism as an idea on the table for discussion. This means his campaign is on a higher level than the Jackson campaign. This represents a massive step forward for the US. The fact that “socialism” was the most searched word on the internet in the US in the past year illustrates this development. We are still not calling upon people to register as Democrats to vote for Sanders as this would represent a step too far. But we are correctly saying we want him to win – in the same way as we wanted Corbyn to win. We therefore also needed to take a step further than we were able to do with the Jackson campaign by launching and intervening with the “Movement for Bernie” campaign.

37. How this campaign will develop will be seen in the next period. However, the IS thinks it offers us great opportunities to seize hold of the possibilities which exist today. Failure to do so would be a big mistake. When opportunities present themselves we need to take bold initiatives and to grasp them with both hands.

38. The debate is extremely beneficial to clarify our approach to this issue both in the US and throughout the CWI. From it important lessons can be learnt for all sections and comrades if it is conducted in a comradely, fraternal and loyal manner. It is in that spirit that the IS is submitting this contribution to the discussion.

International Secretariat 02/03/16

The 2016 Debate in the US Organization on "Safe States"

by Philip and Stephan
November 20, 2017

As Tony Saunois wrote in his article on Sanders on April 1, 2016, we needed to deal with real fears of a significant layer:

> *The real fear of a big layer that standing independently could 'split the anti-Trump vote' could be answered, if there was a real threat of the racist Trump winning by Bernie standing in most states, but not in the tightly fought swing states. This would allow him to fight in the large majority of other states and forge together the forces for a new party.*
>
> *Standing as an independent and using this campaign to lay the basis for building a new party would ensure that a weapon is forged for the US working people to use in the struggles that will erupt under either a Clinton or Republican administration and future elections to the House of Representatives and Senate two years later.* [*http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7527*](http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7527)

Along these lines SA and #Movement4Bernie launched a petition in April 2016 calling on Sanders to "Run Through November as an Independent - Organize a New Party for the 99%." (see full text https://web.archive.org/web/20160414114818/http://www.movement4bernie.org/run-all-the-way). This petition went on to gain 125,000 signatures. Accompanying the petition text was a prominent statement from Kshama which politically argued for why people should sign. The article had a section titled "Splitting the Vote?" which said:

> *Unfortunately, alongside Clinton's supporters, Sanders himself has argued that an independent runs risks splitting the progressive vote and allowing a Republican victory. Especially with Trump as the GOP frontrunner, this fear is understandable (though given the mass hatred of The Donald it's far from clear he could win a three-way race with Clinton and Sanders).*
>
> *If electing a Republican is really Bernie's main concern, there is no reason he could not at least run in the 40+ states where it's absolutely clear the Democratic or Republican candidate will win, while not putting his name on the 5-10 closely contested "swing states." This could still allow for a historic campaign* ***if linked to building a new party for the 99% and laying the foundation for an ongoing mass political movement to run hundreds of left candidates for all levels of government, independent of corporate cash****. (emphasis in the original)*
> *https://www.socialistalternative.org/2016/04/17/kshama-sawant-petitioning-bernie-run-independent/*

This position was again highlighted in an important speech by Kshama to a rally of several thousand left-wing Sanders supporters in New York City on April 16, 2016 shortly before the New York State Democratic Primary, which was a critical battle in the primary campaign. Towards the end of her speech Kshama said:

> *I want to be able to vote for Bernie Sanders in the general election, when it really counts. When tens of millions of people are paying attention.*
>
> *And if he's blocked by the Democratic Establishment, he should run all the way as an Independent or Green. Let's be clear - this undemocratic primary and this undemocratic party is a prison for the 99%.*
>
> *Let's break out of this prison!!*
>
> *I launched a petition this week calling on Bernie to do just that. You can sign it at movement4bernie.org.*
>
> *I agree we need to stop the right-wing - Donald Trump or Ted Cruz, or whichever right-wing Republican ends up on the ballot. But we will never stop them with corporate politics.*
>
> *We can't stop them by silencing our movement, holding our noses, and voting for Clinton - a candidate of Wall Street, Walmart, and warmongering.*
>
> *If we do not have our candidate running through November then Trump and the Republicans will have a monopoly over the anti-establishment vote - why should we allow them!*
>
> *I understand some would argue that if Bernie ran as an independent in the general election it runs the risk of tipping the election to the the Republicans. But there is absolutely no reason*

that Bernie cannot run on the ballot in the 40 or more states that are not so-called "swing states."

Trump will not be winning my state of Washington - I can promise you that. Nor will he win here in New York. There is no reason Bernie cannot run all the way. This could be a historic campaign to lay the foundation for a new party and ongoing mass political movement.

Let us together build a revolution that can really take our country out of the hands of billionaires and into the hands of working people. https://web.tresorit.com/l#oM3bgDpiRuAk83zDyNWLqg

You can also watch Kshama's speech to get a feel for the reaction of the crowd and the impact our various arguements made here: https://www.facebook.com/SocialistNYC/videos/vb.151332011571244/984209901616780/?type=2&theater

To get a sense of the consciousness and concerns of left-wing Sanders supporters at this time, and the impact our line of argument had on a significant minority of Sanders supporters comrades should also watch the episode of "Redacted Tonight," a left-wing political show, that featured Kshama and our petition calling on Sanders to run in the general election. It was viewed 53,000 times on YouTube and was the biggest single factor in spreading our petition: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UR3xEsIx2k

In April some NC members raised criticisms about this line of argument around "safe states." George MFB, a NC member, submitted a document outlining his objections.

The EC agreed that Philip and Stephan would draft a response to George's document to prepare for a political discussion on the NC. On April 21, 2016 Philip and Stephan circulated to the EC an initial draft (see below) for political discussion and further amendments from EC comrades.

The IS letter from April 22, 2016, which is now being circulated to the IEC, was responding to Philip and Stephan's April 21 draft "Why We Urge Bernie Sanders to Run at Least in the 40+ 'Safe States'", re-printed below. After more discussion the EC published a statement in Members Bulletin 77 on May 23, 2016. MB 77 also includes the criticisms from George. You can find MB 77 here: https://web.tresorit.com/l#KuaRKXdDApddnwsRiLrS5Q

The IS letter on April 22, 2016 responds to this initial draft, circulated on April 21, 2016, by Philip and Stephan for political discussion and further amendments from EC comrades.

Why We Urge Bernie Sanders to Run at Least in the 40+ "Safe States"

Bernie Sanders campaign is facing serious obstacles in the Democratic primaries. What we argued from the beginning is becoming more and more visible: the contradiction between Sanders program of significant improvements for the working class and his decision to run within the Wall Street owned Democratic Party is unbridgeable.

Sooner than later, likely with more of a painful awakening than a smooth transition, this contradiction has to be resolved: either Sanders accepts his defeat and asks his supporters to reduce their aspiration from a rebellion against corporate politics to a temporary shift of Clinton's rhetoric to the left, or this emerging movement for a "political revolution against the billionaire class" frees itself from the constraints of a billionaires party.

We recently launched a petition to urge Sanders to run all the way through November as an independent and to organize a new party of the 99% (see http://movement4bernie.org/run-all-the-way). This has gotten an excellent response, with over 9,000 people signing within days!

We would prefer if the consciousness of the working class and the balance of power between the classes would allow us to urge Sanders to run as an independent nationwide in all 50 states as part of building a new mass working class political party. However, the question facing us is

how under the prevailing conditions and consciousness can we gain the maximum support for steps in this direction? How can we push Sanders to step outside the prison of the Democratic Party and run independently, or free his supporters from his restrictions? It is much easier for Sanders supporters to listen to our advise if we take their concerns into account.

The argument made by Sanders against running independent of the Democrats in the general election is that this would weaken Clinton's vote and hand over the presidency to Donald Trump. Sanders gets a big echo for this position, even with many left-wing people who oppose Clinton. There is a strong fear among the vast majority of left-wing workers and youth of a Trump (or Cruz) presidency.

We should have no hesitation acknowledging this a legitimate fear. We recognize that on many important issues - such as abortion, immigration, LGBTQ rights, the environment, union rights, etc - there are real differences between Trump or Cruz and Hillary Clinton, with the right-wing Republicans adopting a more reactionary position. For socialists, however, this is secondary to the much more important task of developing an independent party of the working class, or at least steps in that direction. While we want to see the most right-wing parties checked, the decisive task is to raise the level of organization and consciousness of workers and the oppressed which a broad left party would develop significantly.

Therefore we propose to Sanders - and more importantly to his supporters to open up a debate - that he should run independently in November independent of the Democrats, for example together with Jill Stein on the Green Party ticket, at least in the 40+ states where the Democrats are most vulnerable, where they can not hide behind the lesser evil argument. These are the “safe states” that will be won by clear margins either for the Democrats or the Republicans.

This would be a campaign to build a new party for working people and fights for the best possible vote in November to register support for such a project. This is not a proposal for a Sanders campaign to win the presidency in 2016. Unfortunately, that is not in the cards and thinking workers and activists understand after the experience within the primaries, the establishment media, and the super PACs, that an independent Sanders run would not be able to win the election but would be a campaign to build a new party.

A significant vote for Sanders - which we believe could possibly register up to 10% of the vote - would be a tremendous encouragement to run candidates all over the country, independent of corporate cash and independent of the Democratic Party. Given the current consciousness and the balance of forces, from the standpoint of Marxist realism, this is what is objectively possible and not much more. And let us be clear, such a development would be an absolute earthquake completely shaking up politics as usual in the world’s dominant imperialist power.

This proposal to Sanders and his supporters does not mean that we think Sanders should advocate for a vote for Hillary Clinton in the swing states. We will acknowledge with sympathy that the biggest part of the more conscious layers of our class will vote for Clinton out of fear of the right wing. We will still patiently explain the decisive need to build a new party of, for and by the 99% in all 50 states. Our members should either write in Sanders or vote for the most significant left candidate on the ballot in their states, including in “swing states.”

We will obviously still argue for our full program. We will patiently argue what a difference it will make, even if Trump would win the presidency (which is highly unlikely), to have a mass party of working people to fight back against attacks from both right-wing Republicans and Wall Street owned Democrats. However, our chance that people will listen to these arguments is much higher if we take their concerns about Trump seriously from the start. Our key task is to win a new layer moving into political action around Sanders to leave the framework of the Democrats, despite Sanders arguments, with concrete proposals that correspond to the current situation and tasks given the actual state of the Sanders movement.

Debates on the Left about a “Safe States Strategy” and Lesser Evilism

The US left unfortunately has a very rigid, inflexible approach to the tactic of a “safe state strategy” and other tactical questions regarding how to address the mood towards lesser evilism while working to break people away from the Democratic Party.

This rigid approach arises for good reasons and from the best of intentions of not wanting to make any concession to the hated Democratic Party. Given the relative weakness of the US left and the terrible role of the Democratic Party, for small radical groups it has been essential to start with taking a firm stand against the Democratic Party and for the political independence of the working class. Drawing a clear line for independent class-based politics is an fundamental starting point for socialists. Without such a understanding there is no compass, no strategic framework within which to work out the best tactics. This leads to approaching each

question in an pragmatic and empirical fashion, as has been the bane of the US left and workers movement.

However, once we have established a clear strategic line the second task is to move the mass of the working class over this line. This requires an active intervention, reaching out and getting involved in actual developments and debates which hold potential for winning new forces to independent politics, regardless of their limitations or confused starting point. The Marxist method is not to declare our conclusions and wait until the working class comes to us. Instead, the method of Marxism has always been to help our class to understand and to act to change the world based on the living experience and needs of the actual class struggle.

Socialist Alternative's position is absolutely clear: again and again movements have been co-opted and destroyed by the Democratic Party. Furthermore, the argument for a "safe state strategy" was used by the Green Party leadership in 2004 as part of their effort to avoid supporting Ralph Nader and running the strongest possible left challenge to the Democrats.

When Ralph Nader ran in 2000 to offer a left challenge to the two party system, Socialist Alternative was very quick to recognize its potential and was the first socialist organization in the US to support Nader. This required discussion and debate within Socialist Alternative. But we came to the conclusion that by boldly supporting Nader's campaign we could explain to a broader layer of radicalizing workers and youth attracted to Nader the need for a new left party of, by and for working people. Unlike others on the left who supported Nader uncritically, we adopted a critical approach, arguing for a vote for Nader from an independent socialist standpoint, linking support for Nader to our wider program, and working to recruit people to Socialist Alternative.

The vast majority of the revolutionary left in the US was incapable of coming to terms with how to deal with Nader's middle class left-populist campaign, and therefore opposed Nader with abstract denunciations and calls for independent socialist or working class politics. The ISO initially attacked Nader's candidacy as "the lesser of three evils" along the lines that elections can not change society, Nader was not a socialist, and attacking various programmatic weaknesses of Nader. Only mid-way through the campaign did the ISO reverse its position and support Nader, but this time largely in an uncritical, opportunist fashion.

In 2004 the lesser evil mood was much stronger than the 2000 election which came against the background of eight years of Bill Clinton's neo-liberal policies and the eruption of the radical anti-globalization movement. After four years of George W. Bush there was a massive pressure to support the Democratic candidate, John Kerry, in order to defeat Bush. This was particularly intense given years of liberal and left-wing attacks on Nader and the Greens for allowing Bush to win in 2000 (never mind that Gore actually won the popular vote, the Supreme Court stole the election in Florida, and that the big business policies of Clinton and the Democrats opened the door to support for Bush as well as Nader).

In 2004 Socialist Alternative was again the first socialist organization to support Nader. We boldly campaigned for a Nader vote, challenging the rotten approach of the vast majority of the left (including many who had supported Nader in 2000) which had succumbed to the Democrats. However, we very consciously adopted a sympathetic approach of stressing our solidarity with all those who wanted to kick out the Republicans, and recognized that there were many issues where Bush was more right-wing than Kerry. However we argued what was key was to build mass movements to fight Bush and that supporting Kerry would decisively undermine the anti-war movement. We also argued that the Democrats were not an effective way to fight Bush given their record of voting for many of Bush's policies.

Again the vast majority of the far left was politically lost. Some revolutionary organizations like Freedom Road Socialist Organization went so far as to call for a vote for John Kerry. The ISO prevaricated, initially holding off on supporting Nader, but eventually supporting Nader. Others maintained their abstract position from 2000 of denouncing Nader.

Far more important was the approach of the Green Party, which was the key electoral force on the left to mount a presidential campaign in 2004. The Greens leadership were absolutely against running Nader as the strongest possible left challenge to the Democrats and Republicans. This was in reaction to the intense attacks they had suffered in 2000 and in its aftermath, and a bending to the huge pressure to support John Kerry. They worked to take the Green Party out of the equation by formally running a very low profile Green, David Cobb, under the cover that Cobb would use the campaign to build the Green Party as opposed to Nader who was not a member of the Greens. They also argued strongly for a "safe state strategy," in contrast with Nader, who insisted he wanted to run across the country.

However, does this mean that the "safe state strategy" is wrong on principle in all circumstances? If Nader had said "I understand the huge desire to get rid of George W. Bush. For me the most important thing is begin building a political alternative to the Republicans and the Wall Street Democrats who have enabled Bush. However, I will

not run in the small number of highly contested states, but will instead focus on getting as many votes as possible in the more than 40 states where the Democrats can not hide behind the lesser evil argument" would Nader have gotten more or less votes, more or less weight in debates within labor and the broader left?

These are hypothetical questions, and we can debate the answer. However, it is a discussion about the smartest tactic, not about principles. The fact that the Green Party leaders in 2004 abused the tool of a "safe state strategy" does not force us to take it out of our toolbox for future battles for left politics.

While it was not widely discussed in the organization at the time, the CWI IS raised with the US EC that they did not think we should oppose Nader utilizing a "safe states strategy" on principle and that such a tactic may be necessary at times. We did not end up discussing the safe state issue much in the organization in 2004 because it was secondary to the far larger issue of siding with Nader and the left-wing of the Green Party against the back sliding of the Green Party leadership.

Propaganda against Lesser Evilism and Breaking the Masses from the Democrats

A small socialist organization largely limited to propaganda (explaining our program to a limited number of people) needs to emphasize within its ranks and to its small periphery the fundamental position that the working class needs its own political party and we will not support the Democrats or Republicans. However, when this question begins to be discussed beyond the narrow confines of propaganda, when we are engaged in a serious dialogue with activists working within broader masses, in unions or within the Sanders camp, the question is posed differently. It is clear that the starting point for many of the best people supporting Sanders is: "I agree with you, I hate Hillary Clinton, but we have to stop Trump. That's more important than other things."

How can we move from this first concern of the broader layer of people around us towards the strategic goal of taking steps in the direction of a workers' party? The task is not to deny lesser evilism, but to find the concrete slogans and tactics that can assist leftward moving elements to find a path out of the trap of supporting the Democratic Party and towards independent working class politics.

Sanders has said he will not run as an independent because he does not want to be a "spoiler," i.e. help tip the election towards the Republicans. We do not agree with Sanders on this. But why not call on Sanders: if your concern is not helping the Republicans, why not at least run in the general election independent of the Democratic Party in the 40 or more states where either the Republicans or Democrats will clearly win by large margins? This removes the concern that a Sanders campaign would help elect a Republican and puts Sanders on the spot, showing there is an alternative to Sanders claim that he has no choice but to endorse Clinton to stop the Republicans.

Put differently, it is demand on Sanders to take action in the interests of the working class in the 40+ safe states where his concern of not helping the Republicans absolutely does not apply. This is a united front offer which if Sanders accepted would represent a major step forward. If Sanders refuses this offer, it will help his best supporters to see that Sanders does not need to support Clinton and that they should join with us in fighting to build a political alternative to the Democratic Party.

It is clear that Sanders does not intend to take any such step. Our focus is on winning the best Sanders supporters to our position. This is a sizable audience, with various polls showing between 20 and 35% of Sanders voters say they will not support Clinton in the general election.

To effectively reach this audience, to give them political confidence to actually follow through on this and not just leave it as a temporary opinion poll, and to arm them with arguments to take up with those around them, we need to take into account their consciousness and the mood of the majority of Sanders voters who are planning on backing Clinton in the general election.

And here we also need to recognize that the fear of Trump is not just Sanders, but is strong among the vast majority of Sanders voters. Even many of the minority that says they will not vote for Clinton shares this fear and will likely end up falling back in line with Clinton if the race is tight and there is not a strong left campaign to help them overcome the pressure to support Clinton.

For us to effectively put demand Sanders run independently it is therefore necessary here and now to take into account the strong desire to stop the threat of Trump and the right. That's why we recognize their concerns by accepting Sanders would not run in the minority of battleground states while demanding Sanders run independently in at least the 40 or more "safe states," but.

Whether Sanders plans to do this or not is not the point. It offers a clear path for left-wing Sanders supporters to see an alternative to the claim that they must rally behind Clinton to stop Trump. The easier it is for them to follow our advise, the harder it is for the Democrats to pressure them into backing Clinton.

Obviously, we will also continue to stress the importance of organizing protests against Trump and building mass movements.We will continue to make larger points about not allowing Trump to be the anti-establishment candidate in November, the need to break out of the two party system, and the general need to build an independent party of the working class.

However, these arguments will get more attention if we can start with a simple tool to get the ears of Bernie's left-wing supporters. Turning the "spoiler" question around by asking why shouldn't Sanders run at least in the 40+ "safe states," helps us to develop all these arguments with Sanders' supporters.

Further, this demand puts the maximum pressure on Sanders to take a step towards building a political alternative to the Democratic Party. If Sanders did run as an independent candidate only in the 40+ safe states it would represent a massive step forward and break in the situation. Under the current conditions it would be concretely a far stronger position that Sanders not running independently in any states, which is concrete alternative. If Sanders does not stand it will leave Jill Stein of the Greens as the strongest left candidate, resulting in the left having a qualitative weaker impact in the general election (though she could still receive a much better result than the last time).

An independent Sanders run, even if only in 40 states, would be a truly enormous development which would be widely discussed and debated throughout US society. Sanders would have a chance of winning 5 to 10 million votes, surpassing Nader's 3 million votes in 2000. This would provide a powerful basis to bring together a new political party of the left in all 50 states of the country. It would also give a huge stimulus to more candidates to run independent of the Democrats in local, state and federal elections.

A Question of Tactics Not Principles

When Kshama Sawant ran in 2013 we picked the easiest target: Richard Conlin, a long-standing establishment Democrat who was politically vulnerable for a number of reasons, especially that he was the only Seattle councilmember to vote against a popular paid sick leave ordinance. We were able to show the strength for independent politics with the highest possible vote by picking our fight, and we picked it well.

Many of the other Democratic incumbents on the Seattle City Council were politically just as bad as Conlin and also deserved to be challenged. But the fact remains that Kshama would have received a lower vote running against them and would not have been elected. There can be no doubt that by tactically choosing our battle by targeting the weakest Democrat to run against, and not the strongest, independent politics and the socialist movement made a huge breakthrough by electing the first socialist to the Seattle City Council in 100 years.

If we had not had the tactical audacity and flexibility to launch "Democrats for Sawant" in 2013 it is safe to say Kshama would not have been elected and the forces of independent left politics would have failed to make a breakthrough.

Further, once on the City Council Kshama had to adopt a skilful approach of seeking collaboration and joint initiatives with left Democrats in Seattle, without hiding our political differences and working under our own independent banner. If Kshama had not done so, it would have played into the hands of the Democratic Party who wanted to isolate us from the majority of left-wing workers who still have not decisively broken from the Democrats. If we had adopted a rigid approach Kshama would have not been re-elected in 2015, which was a another key victory for independent politics.

In the case of the 2016 presidential election, it is also a tactical question for Sanders to pick which battles to focus on. The 40+ "safe states" are the states where Sanders would get the strongest vote and the Democrats are more vulnerable to a left challenge, and it would signal that he is not ignorant of progressives fears about a Trump presidency.

Is there a realistic possibility that Sanders will do that? It's highly unlikely. Is there a realistic possibility that we can help to move thousands of Sandernistas beyond Sanders limitations, for example those who signed our petition? Absolutely.

But we will need to arm this layers with a clear message to stand against the likely tidal wave of lesser evilism around them. And the crux of the lesser evilism is that it is not just made up, but it has a powerful impact. In discussions with the ones and twos, we can explain lesser evilism. In mass work our task goes beyond explanations, but has to include providing an active leadership by involving broader layers in concrete steps which break lesser evilism in practice by building an alternative.

Our "safe states" proposal can give those activists a tool to defend and spread their position against a torrent of media frenzy about "uniting" against Trump - that means providing real leadership in helping to free them from the political domination of the Democrats and building towards a real force of working people.

To succeed in building a mass political alternative to the Democrats, the left will need to combine firm principles with flexible tactics to overcome lesser evilism. A rigid, inflexible position towards lesser evil moods among workers will only lead to unnecessary delays and setbacks in building a mass alternative.

For example, while Nader in 2000 received the highest vote of any independent left presidential candidate since the 1920s, he made tactical mistakes which created some unnecessary difficulties in building further support for independence from the Democrats. In 2000 Nader adopted an overly rigid position on the Democrats by failing to take into account the lesser evil mood against Bush and the Republicans. Nader incorrectly argued there was no difference between Bush and Gore. This was ruthlessly exploited by the liberal left to attack Nader after Bush took office and carried out an aggressive right-wing agenda.

Nader also made a serious mistake in not intervening in Florida to help organize mass protests against Bush's theft of the election, which he partly justified on the basis it would make no difference whether Bush or Gore won. This underlines the importance of any future left force having the tactical adroitness to navigate the inevitable challenges presented by lesser evil moods among sections of workers and oppressed groups while remaining politically firm on the need to build independently of the Democratic party.

In practice, those left groups like the ISO who have not engaged in the Sanders' campaign because they oppose the Democratic Party have assisted those forces who support reforming the Democratic Party to more easily lead the fresh layers drawn into Sanders campaign. This is basically a sectarian approach, cutting the advanced layers off from intervening in real struggles of the broader masses.

The same relationship applies to the issue of lesser evilism and the "safe states" tactic. If we deny the real lesser evil mood that exists in our class and refuse to take into account the strong fear of a Trump presidency, as unfortunately most of the far left does, what is the concrete result? A weaker independent left challenge and a strengthening of lesser evilism! A effective tactic that takes into account this mood will mobilize larger numbers behind the call for a left alternative to the Democrats and make it harder for the Democratic Party to stampede Sanders voters into supporting Clinton on a lesser evil basis.

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An alternative to the NC voting on the entire document above is just voting on a short resolution drafted below (but the longer document would be circulated as a discussion document from Philip and Stephan for comrades to consider):

The National Committee agrees with the Executive Committee's position of calling on Bernie Sanders to run as an independent at least in the 40 or more "safe states" where either the Republicans or Democrats will clearly win by large margins. We should use this proposal boldly for example in future petitions and leaflets. This demand puts the maximum pressure on Sanders to take a step towards building a political alternative to the Democratic Party and helps to show Sanders' supporters that we take their fears about Donald Trump and the right wing seriously. It helps us to reduce the obstacle of lesser evilism and instead focus the debate on how to begin building a new political party for working people, rather than being trapped inside the Democratic Party and supporting Hillary Clinton as necessary to defeat the Republicans.

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To the US EC
22/4/16

Dear Comrades,

As comrades may be aware the IS has had some discussion with Philip and Bryan on the question of the "safe state strategy" and the document drafted by Stephan and Philip. This IS has had discussions on this question and would like to raise the following issues for the discussion with the US EC. We think it is a mistake for the comrades to bring this forward this proposal as a major part of our propaganda at this stage. We should also not link it so prominently to the question of us demanding that Sanders runs independently as is done in the draft resolution by Stephan and Philip to go the NC.

We are sending this letter to urge the comrades to reconsider how they are approaching this issue. If the EC endorses this position we ask that this letter be circulated to the NC members for the discussion and request that the IS participate in the telephone meeting this Sunday for the session discussing this question. In that case we request that this discussion is taken first as we would not be able to participate for the entire meeting.

There is an extremely volatile situation in the US at this stage and there are many variants of possible perspectives both for Sanders, the Democrats and the Republicans. These we need to consider when discussing what are the main points we emphasise in our propaganda.

It is important for us to be clear that we are in favour of a new party, or Sanders running independently, standing in each state. We support the idea of any new workers party standing in opposition to all capitalist parties. This does not mean we exclude, under certain specific conditions, that a tactical retreat at a certain stage may be necessary meaning that this does not happen.

However, we think it is a mistake for us to be giving this any emphasis now and it should not be included on the petition calling on Sanders to run independently. We should be concentrating on the issue of Sanders running independently and appealing to the most advanced layers attracted to the Sanders campaign. Especially the 30% who have indicated they would not be prepared to back Clinton.

This of course may change if the threat of a Trump/Cruz victory in November seems as very real threat. However, this is not the case at this stage.

This does not preclude us accepting that a tactical retreat may be posed and not running in each state where the issue comes up in meetings or discussions.

The comrades argue that we need to do it to answer Sanders argument that he is not prepared to run as a “spoiler” and also the pressures of “lesser evilism”. We clearly need to answer Sanders and also be sensitive to the “lesser evilism” sentiment. However, to do this it is not necessary for us to give emphasis to Sanders not running in the “swing” states.

This after all is one possible tactical issue that may be posed later. In the document by Stephan and Philip the comrades go further than this and say; “…we recognise their concerns by accepting Sanders would not run in the minority battleground states while demanding Sanders run independently …”. In other words rather than raise it as a possible tactical retreat that may be necessary the comrades are advocating it now. We think this is a mistake.

The main issue for us at this stage is critically supporting Sanders right up to the Democratic Convention and possibly after if there big disputes. Then if he is blocked urging him and his supporters to run independently or on the Green ticket raising the idea of a new party. We also need to link this to the fact that Sanders is best placed to defeat Trump and the other Republican candidates in all of the recent polls.

This is also linked to the question of perspectives for the campaign in the next weeks and months. The volatility and explosive situation which exists raises all sorts of possible senarios. The “lesser evilism” can be less pronounced in the event of two candidates standing from the Republicans in one form or another. This could enormously increase the pressure on Sanders to also run independently.

In the last few days Trump has also made a turn to a more populist approach. He has raised the issue of taxing the rich and may go even further and try to steal some of Sanders clothes and attack Clinton with the objective of even winning some of Sanders supporters.

A populist lurch to the “left” by Trump, even taking some of Sanders ideas and slogans, aimed at winning democratic voters can also get some traction. This may even put into question what a “safe state” actually is.

There is also the question of what comrades in “swing states” should argue for. In the discussion Philip argued that in these states we would urge comrades and our supporters to either vote for the most left party – like the Greens or support a write in for Sanders. Surely this is inconsistent with advocating Sanders does not stand in these states.

If we argue for this position what are we going to say in relation to the Greens standing in all states – would we criticise them for this? We think this would be a mistake.

While we need to be sensitive to the fears of a Trump victory and the pressures therefore for “lesser evilism” we also need to recognise that these pressures will always be present where there is no proportional election system. Any new workers party in the US, Britain and other countries will need to face this issue and on occasions be unpopular amongst a layer for resisting such pressures in favour of building support for a new party. On a smaller scale, we face this in Britain, where TUSC, is standing against right-wing Labour councillors in the forthcoming elections.

We do not think it is necessary for us to get locked into advocating an electoral tactical retreat at this stage when the main task is to win support for the idea of running independently and building a new party. This needs to be the central thrust our propaganda at this stage to try and assist the outline of a new party which exists in the 30% of Sanders supporters who say they will not vote for Clinton.

We therefore urge the comrades not to give emphasis to the “safe states” strategy at this stage.

We would also like to comment further on the statement the comrades have drafted for the debate with the ISO. Following discussion with the comrades we recognise some important changes have been made. However, we still feel that the comrades are being too friendly in their approach to them. We cannot understand why the comrades are opposed to including in it the ISO’s past position of not endorsing Kshama and the political summersaults they did during the previous Nader campaigns.

In Britain we are in a front with the SWP in TUSC. However, this does not prevent us from raising our past differences with them to illustrate the differences in method. For example in the recent review of Michael Crick’s book on Militant Peter Taaffe takes up the wrong position adopted by the SWP during the Poll Tax and Liverpool struggles.

We urge the comrades to reconsider these questions and let us know the conclusions you reach so that if necessary we can participate in the NC discussion this weekend.

Comradely,

Tony Saunois for the International Secretariat.

Debate with ISO for SA and ISO Publications

Note from Philip and Stephan, November 20, 2017:
The letter from the IS from April 28, 2016 now being circulated to the IEC responds to the draft below of an article debating with the ISO on how socialists should approach the Sanders campaign. The US EC agreed with the ISO to have a debate be published in our publications and in theirs as we had previously done in May 2015. We believed that by boldly and self-confidently presenting the contrast of ideas in a friendly but clear way we would have everything to gain. The final version of the debate with the ISO can be found here:
https://www.socialistalternative.org/2016/05/25/socialists-bernie-sanders-campaign-fighting-independent-working-class-politics/

From: Philip
To: Tony Saunois; Bob Labi; Peter Taaffe (Home)
Cc: Bryan Koulouris
Sent: Wednesday, April 27, 2016 6:42 PM
Subject: Proposal for ISO article

Hi Comrades,

Bryan and I have discussed the ISO article further and worked on a new, longer, draft that develops some of the points more fully and points towards some of the larger issues with the ISO's method (see below for new draft).

We think that given our prior agreement with the ISO, there is a risk they will go ahead and publish their article and say we pulled out, so it is best if we can proceed with running the debate on the SA and ISO websites, if we can reach sufficient agreement on the article ourselves.

Given the broad audience (beyond the members of SA and ISO) of new Sanders activists and socialists that we think this debate will reach, we think we need to be careful to pose things in a way that comes across in a comradely way and registers disagreements in a way that is relevant to the immediate debate on how socialists should relate to the Sanders campaign while still bringing out elements of the ISO's methods in contrast to ours.

We have included 1 paragraph on the ISO's previous positions on the Swant campaigns. The paragraph says "While they have kind words for Kshama now and endorsed Kshama's 2015 re-election campaign, the ISO didn't endorse her first campaign and didn't build her victorious 2013 campaign. We feel that this narrow approach is also reflected--in a different way--in their intervention with Sanders supporters."

However, we both believe on balance it would be best to delete this paragraph as it seems out of place in the current draft and because we've included several new paragraphs critical of the ISO's overall method. Given the nature of the discussion we had on this issue, we both think it would help send a good signal if we could agree to disagree and take this paragraph out. However, we also both agree that we can live with including the paragraph if you would object to us publishing the article without it. If you feel strongly we should include it, then we can and still publish the article.

Please let us know what you think. Comradely,

Philip and Bryan

Debate with ISO for SA+ISO websites

1506 words (We tell the ISO it needs to be longer than the 1000 words origibally agreed, and that it can be as a online publication)

"We need a new party of the 99% and we need candidates everywhere fighting for what Bernie calls for: $15/hour, Medicare for all, and free education," stated Kshama Sawant, Seattle's Socialist Alternative city councilmember, to the applause of the huge crowd at the Bernie Sanders rally at Safeco field on March 25th.

Making the biggest possible impact amongst Sanders supporters for fundamental socialist change and to break free from the Democratic Party - that has been the goal of SA throughout the Sanders

campaign. And we have received a big echo for these ideas among the people fighting for Bernie's political revolution, at rallies, debates and within labor.

Millions are rebelling against the political establishment, inspired by Bernie's bold pro-worker demands. Over two million people donated, breaking all previous records. Hundreds of thousands have attended rallies and volunteered for the campaign of a self-described socialist.

This represents an earthquake in US politics. In such a situation, socialists have a responsibility to engage with and be part of this movement. To stand aside from a historic mobilization of this scale - as unfortunately most of the far left including the ISO has done - is a serious mistake.

That does not in any way mean we should ignore the political weaknesses of Sanders campaign. While Sanders is running on a broadly left-wing basis, there are important deficiencies in his program, especially on foreign policy. But most important is Sanders mistaken decision to run within the Democratic Party, a party controlled by the same billionaire class Sanders wants to carry out a revolution against.

Despite huge support, it is increasingly clear that Sanders will not be able to win the Democratic nomination. This underlines that the Democratic Party is a key political pillar of US capitalism. Sanders has said he will respect the outcome of the Democratic primaries and support Clinton if she is the nominee. This would transform the dominant character of his campaign from a rebellion against corporate America into a left-wing prop for an establishment candidate.

Yet a significant section of Sanders supporters - 20 to 35% in polls - say they will refuse to support Clinton in the general election. This represents the biggest opportunity for socialists in decades to build support for independent politics and a new socialist movement, but only if we have the tactical flexibility to connect with them.

New workers parties will not develop in a clean or linear fashion, and we have to be prepared for all sorts of half steps as part of a developing process. The formation of new workers parties' rarely takes place in a pure form. Often elements from capitalist parties can be affected by the class struggle and play a contradictory role. In Greece the former workers' party, PASOK, found a part of its origins in the liberal capitalist Center Union. In Britain some elements from the Liberal Party were involved in the eventual formation of the Labour Party at the start of the 20th century.

Fighting for Leadership

Todd Chretien writes for the ISO that the Democratic Party can not be reformed into a tool for working people. We agree. Therefore Todd proposes not to join Sanders' campaign but "to work in unity with Sanders supporters around initiatives and actions outside the electoral arena" in movements.

SA has been involved in a whole range of movements over the past period. However, in all these movements the issue of how to relate to the presidential election has been a central question. Further, given the scale of the Sanders revolt, the ISO's approach is seriously insufficient. The reality is that the Sanders campaign, at this stage, has been by far the largest expression of the growing rebellion of working people and youth.

But leading elements in the Sanders campaign want to win this fresh audience to their political strategy of reforming the Democrats Party and a "socialism" which limits itself to reforming capitalism. In contrast, SA entered this battlefield to win support for building an alternative to the Democrats and for fundamental socialist change.

Unfortunately, the majority of the radical left has not been able to help the radicalizing Sandernistas resolve the contradictions of the Sanders campaign in favor of independent politics and genuine socialism. Out of fear of coming too close to the Democratic Party, they have had a negligible presence at Sanders events. In practice this has been to the benefit of the pro-Democratic Party leaders in the Sanders campaign, making it easier for them to corral newly politicized layers behind their strategy.

For example, at the recent 40,000 person Bernie Sanders rally in Manhattan, Socialist Alternative collected hundreds of signatures for Sanders to run as an independent, sold hundreds of copies of our newspaper which explained genuine socialism, and built for public meetings entitled "How Can We

Continue the Political Revolution?" In contrast, all that we saw of the ISO was a table with the slogan "Join the Socialists!" Besides appealing for people to join the ISO, there was no offer to the thousands of radicalizing Sanders supporters for how to take their struggle forward. Nor was this isolated to the NYC rally.

This is emblematic, in our view, of an important difference in method between SA and the ISO. While openly fighting for our politics and seeking to build our distinct organization, we also think socialists must fight for proposals and demands that can help a broader movement advance beyond simply saying they need to join our socialist organization or only uncritically promoting the existing movement.

This relates to a strategic question for US socialists: do we advocate for the idea of working people forming their own mass party, even if in the first instance it does not adopt a socialist program? SA believes such a step would be a historic advance for the US working class and would provide an arena for socialists to demonstrate concretely the need for a socialist program to a mass audience. In our experience this has not been the approach of the ISO.

Bernie Should Run as an Independent in November

Confronted with a defeat in this rigged primary the struggle to liberate this movement from the Democrats becomes more and more urgent for Sanders supporters. That's why the socialist left should build momentum behind Kshama Sawant's call for Sanders to run outside the Democratic Party - in the general election, for example on the Green ticket with Jill Stein, and lay the basis for a new party of the 99%. Over 17,000 people have so far signed this petition! What is the ISO's position on this petition? Is the ISO prepared to take up and fight for this demand among Sanders supporters?

[While they have kind words for Kshama now and endorsed Kshama's 2015 re-election campaign, the ISO didn't endorse her first campaign and didn't build her victorious 2013 campaign. We feel that this narrow approach is also reflected--in a different way--in their intervention with Sanders supporters.]

The ISO focuses on debating the "safe state" issue that SA members raised as a potential option to cut across the fear of Trump and against Sanders's own declaration that he would refuse to be a "spoiler." While this isn't a central issue, we think it is useful to arm Sanders supporters who are gravitating towards independent left politics to cut across the coming "lesser evil" tidal wave.

Todd wrote that SA "has made a tactical decision to follow Sanders into the [Democratic] party." This is not true. We argued for Sanders to run as an independent, criticized him for choosing to run in the Democratic primaries, and have urged Sanders to run as an independent in the general election. SA members have not joined the Democrats or registered as Democrats, and we have made clear to activists in the Sanders campaign that we wouldn't sign people up to register as Democrats.

Todd writes: "The problem with the SA approach is that when you tell people to vote for Sanders and organize a 'movement' in support of him, almost everyone you reach will naturally conclude that you're doing so because you support Sanders' stated strategy of reforming the Democratic Party." When people heard us speak or read our material this was not their "natural conclusion," as we explicitly argued that we need to build a new party as an alternative to the Democratic Party. Furthermore, is this not a danger socialists face in many struggles? Is there a danger that the Fight for 15 promotes illusions that we can make capitalism "fair?" Or that people would "naturally conclude" that if socialists supported Occupy they were supporting the semi-anarchist and populist ideas that predominated in that movement?

Finding our way towards a new radicalizing generation supporting Sanders while putting forward a principled position is critical to rebuilding a socialist left. Future developments will often be similarly "impure" like the Sanders campaign. Socialists will need to be actively involved in the movements of working people - even if these movements or its leaders have serious limitations - while fighting for an independent socialist position.

Committee for a Workers' International

www.socialistworld.net

To Philip, Bryan (US EC)
28/4/16

Dear Comrades,

We are writing in response to the latest draft of our response to the ISO drafted by Philip and Bryan. These are comments as you both requested. In view of the problem of time could you either contact us before the EC meeting if you don't agree with these points and/or circulate this letter to the EC members with your draft if it is going to be discussed by the EC at its' next meeting. There have been a number of fruitful exchanges and discussions between IS comrades and Philip and other comrades.

However, having read the latest draft we still have a number of misgivings regarding the approach of the comrades in this draft. As Peter, Bob and Tony have explained to the comrades we think it was a mistake of the comrades to agree to a formal arrangement with the ISO to carry articles commentating on each -others position on important issues as they arise. We are opposed to a discussion of this character being conducted as a "joint enterprise". This is for political reasons. We should be conscious they are entering into this process with a view to influencing and winning a layer of our members from us having viewed our successes in the recent period.

We should also be conscious the ISO have carried criticism and attacked our position. For example at the beginning of April they carried an article "Inside out or inside in?" with no reference to us and just went ahead and published this attack.

We are not opposed to carrying a response to them answering their attacks on us. Yet we should not be concerned if they accuse us of pulling out of the agreed process. We think the comrades are still to "comradely" in the proposed response to the ISO. This after all is not a "comradely discussion" between two groups coming together. They are a sectarian opponent of ours which seeks to undermine and damage our organisation which is now a strong threat to them. It is not a question of adopting a "comradely approach" but of stating what is. Lenin and Trotsky were frequently denounced as being too sharp, un-comradely or sectarian in their polemics against opponents. This does not mean we should adopt a denunciatory tone but we should not shy away from clearly stating our differences and exposing their wrong methods.

Concretely we therefore would like to suggest the following specific changes and additions to the draft by the comrades:

i) We think that the issue of Kshama's election and the position of the ISO should be included. May be it would be better to include it following the

paragraph beging “This is emblematic, in our view, of important differences….”

ii) Where the comrades raise differences between us and Sanders on foreign policy we should include domestic policy as well or just say policy.

iii) In the section headed “fighting for leadership” we should not say “Todd Chretien”- it is too friendly - just say the ISO. This point also applies to other references in the article. In the same section where we say the “ISO’s approach is seriously insufficient” we should change this to either “sectarian” or “wrong”.

iv) Where the comrades say the “radical left” we should add “including the ISO”.

v) In the next section where the comrades deal with the “safe states” question we would prefer the comrades not to deal with this issue in this document. However, if the comrades think we must then this part should be amended to read “we think it may be useful to raise this as a possible tactic to consider to help those Sanders supporters who are gravitating towards independent left politics to cut across the coming “lesser evil” tidal wave.

We would also like to raise a point for consideration for the perspectives of the Sander movement. In the document we say “Confronted with a defeat…” in relation to the Demo0cratic nomination. It would in our opinion be better to quality this to say something like, ”Confronted with the very likely defeat ….”

The mass movement may yet include some surprises despite the recent defeat in the primaries. Even “super delegates” can be affected by the mass pressure which exists. This is a living dynamic process unfolding. We need to be open to all possible variants. Including the possibility of Sanders, being compelled to stand independently. This is not the most likely outcome. We recognise that he is standing down his full timers. He seems intent on running to the convention with the aim of demanding radical programmatic concession from the Democrats and Clinton. What if these are largely rejected what then for the campaign/ In this situation it could not be excluded that the pressure is so great that it would compel him to stand. Especially if the Republicans are split and there are two candidates from the right. We are not proposing this be included in the statement but is a point to consider in us being prepared for further possible political upheavals. We are not dealing with a fixed situation but one with it’s own dynamic and twists and turns.

We urge comrades to consider these points which are raised as a comradely contribution to the discussion.

Comradely,

Tony Saunois, Peter Taaffe, Bob Labi.

Committee for a Workers' International

To the US EC
22/5/17

Dear Comrades,

Following a report of the US EC meeting on May 12 2017 which comrade Bob La attended on behalf of the IS we feel compelled to comment on some of the reported issues raised by Phillip L and Ty M in the discussion. There are many issues raised by the comrades which we do not agree but there are three issues in particular which we do not agree with.

Firstly, the argument put forward by Phillip that the IS has adopted a "line of least resistance to Kshama" in order "to protect a position" we think is false and scandalous. To even raise the issues in this manner illustrates a wrong method and attitude. This has never been the approach of IS. We have intervened in this crisis in an even handed and fair manner and do not accept that the "centre of the crisis is the IS's behaviour" as Phillip has argued. Where we have disagreements with any comrade we have raised them openly and honestly.

This has been the approach the IS has adopted towards comrade Kshama and all other comrades. Kshama, in our experience, has always been open to discuss any issues that have arisen for discussion. As with all our public representatives, she is under tremendous pressure. Issues of formulation and how to approach specific tactical issues are inevitable and need to be discussed. Like all of our public representatives she is subjected to intense scrutiny and pressure from our political opponents. The leadership of our organisation has a responsibility to discuss with comrades in such a situation in a comradely and sensitive manner. Unfortunately this has not always been the approach the comrades have adopted, particularly Stephan and Phillip.

Phillip uses the issue of the Seattle police challenging ICE as an alleged example of the IS preventing issues being raised. The account of this discussion given by Phillip is not at all accurate in the view of Tony S. This issue arose at the February 2017 NC attended by Tony S. The issue was raised by a comrade in the meeting. Tony S was

unaware of the issues and what the differences were on this question. Phillip asked Tony S outside of the meeting if he grasped the issues and then explained them. He also asked Tony S to discuss the issues with Kshama with other comrades such as Ty present. This was done and agreement was reached including on how to deal with the question then. Tony S did not “stop” Phillip from raising the issue. This gives the impression of a bureaucratic approach. It was agreed that it would be better to discuss it with Kshama in private who was subsequently extremely open and keen to discuss the issue as she has been on other political issues the IS has raised with her. Phillip agreed with this at the time.

Ty accuses the IS of “character assassination” in relation to comrade Stephan K. This is a scandalous allegation made without any foundation. We entirely reject it. We have raised differences with comrade Stephan K in relation to his methods and approach to the work. These points have been raised openly with him and the EC members in the US. We do not accept that raising differences in relation to method and work is the same as “character assassination” which the IS has never engaged in. Phillip at the EC on 29/30 April argued that “Stephan, since last summer, had played an increasingly belligerent role”. Does this also constitute “character assassination”?

There are other important issues raised by the comrades in the EC discussion which we will if necessary comment on in future discussions. However, the IS wishes to make clear it’s opinion on these three important issues at this stage.

Comradely,

Tony Saunois for the International Secretariat.

Concerns Regarding Worsening Situation in the Seattle Leadership

Hi EC,

For the last months, Calvin, Adam, and I have made a sincere effort to try to move towards a healthy collective leadership in the Seattle Executive Committee (SEC) and in Seattle generally, and to try to rebuild from the polarizing effects of the conflicts earlier this year. While we did not expect an easy path, we had hoped that all SEC comrades would approach this with the seriousness and urgency that it deserves.

I am writing this letter to register that in my view the situation is getting worse, rather than better, due to highly irresponsible behavior by SEC comrades. There have been several recent events which I will report, which unfortunately appear to speak to ongoing problematic methods that need to be addressed.

New Rumors about a Lack of Accountability by the Council Office

It has come to my attention, reported to me by several different Seattle branch members in recent weeks, that new rumors are being spread maligning the Council Office and questioning its accountability to the democratic structures of the organization. It is clear from the details of the rumors that the ultimate source would have to be SEC members. Since that time, there has been confirmation of some of the sources, as I will explain below.

There are multiple specific rumors. I have now heard from a number of Branch Committee (BC) members that there is an insinuation that the Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA) coalition, and its inaugural meeting, were undemocratically created by the Council Office without oversight of the SEC. A second accusation is that our recent vote on the appointment to the vacant City Council position was done undemocratically without oversight of the structures of the organization. A third is that decisions around this year's People's Budget have also been made unaccountably by the Council Office without SEC oversight.

Philip has admitted in the SEC that he registered concerns about our AHA coalition to non-SEC comrades, though he did not explain to whom. After we heard through other members, Ty admitted to us that he raised his concern to a branch organizer, Colin, about our vote on the appointment to the vacant City Council position, which then rapidly spread to the rest of Colin's BC and beyond. The source of the People's Budget rumor is unclear, but it's hard to imagine the details reported could come from a non-SEC member.

All of this represents a highly irresponsible doubling down on the earlier accusations, from this Spring, against the Council Office and me of a lack of accountability, only now no longer restricted to NC members, but being raised with a wide layer of BC members and fulltimers in the Seattle organization. James and Rebekah, who work parttime and fulltime, respectively, in the Council Office have both reported these rumors. There is a real danger of these irresponsible actions seriously damaging morale or even creating a factionalized situation in our City Council office.

Rebekah informed Adam recently that these rumors are quickly becoming widespread among branch members.

I will further explain the rumors and facts of the situation below.

Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA) and People's Budget
The most common example being cited in the new rumors is the recently launched 2017 People's Budget. Seattle members have been told that the Council Office did not have proper discussions within the SEC about whether the branches should orient towards the People's Budget, and that the Council Office essentially steamrolled its way on this issue, and did not give branches the opportunity to participate in the decisions.

In reality, the reason there was a delay in going to the City Committee and the branches with the People's Budget ideas was that Philip and Ty on the SEC pushed back hard against the idea of doing a People's Budget this year (we have held one every year since winning the City Council seat), or if we did do it, to do it in a small way with the Council Office and without involving the branches.

The perspectives put forward were that there wasn't much room for SA to play a leadership role during this year's budget season, that we were crowded out by the Katie Wilson-dominated liberal activist layer. Philip even suggested that we should dissolve our AHA coalition and effectively leave the current organizing around housing and homelessness issues in the hands of Katie Wilson and other Housing for All Coalition leaders (the liberal reformist activist layer). It was only because of Calvin, Adam, and my insistence that the People's Budget went ahead.

These are tactical questions and of course need to be debated, and in general, we should not engage in internal point-scoring. But what stands out to me is that branch members are being told (likely by Philip and/or Ty) that the Council Office is not communicating and didn't involve the larger membership on AHA and the People's Budget, even though SEC decisions were in fact stalled by Philip and Ty, as part of their larger pattern of resistance to proposals made by the Council Office. For what it's worth, the Council Office's proposals to prominently fight for the People's Budget, and lead the way on 'Stop the Sweeps' of homeless people and 'Progressive Business Tax' to fund housing and services have been proven completely correct so far. Council comrades skillfully pushed back against the liberal activist leaders by winning over rank-and-file activists, forcing two Councilmembers (Mike O'Brien and the new appointee we voted for, Kirsten Harris-Talley) to support the demands. We are clearly succeeding in using our People's Budget and Stop the Sweeps proposal to energize and mobilize, and are getting a huge echo as well as media coverage. Whether we can win the demands outright will depend on the strength of the campaign in the next few weeks, but the main goal is clearly already confirmed as a decisive success.

This recent attempt to oppose broader branch involvement in the Council Office work is only the latest in a series. There has unfortunately been a longstanding practice by the Party-Building Team (PBT) (before Ty arrived) of pushing back against branch involvement. SEC members on the PBT have asserted that branches are not excited about the Council work, have other more politically important things to do, that engaging in opportunities opened up by our Council position is not politically educational enough, and that it's hard to motivate members to take an interest in the Council work.

The reality is quite the opposite, and we have heard from many BC members in this regard, who have wondered why branches are not asked to be more involved. Interestingly, one of the reasons cited at a recent SEC meeting unwittingly by Ty, as to why City Committee (CC) members should not see a document listing possible roles for branches in the People's Budget movement, was that he worried "they will be excited" about the People's Budget, and presumably it would be hard to hold them back.

Vote on Appointment to Vacant Council Position

Another new example of accusations against the Council Office is something that Ty himself has admitted: he recently talked to Colin, a very new branch organizer and unconsolidated member, and complained that he (Ty) found out about the Kirsten Harris-Talley vote in the media, and that he (Ty) was frustrated that the Council Office has had a record of not communicating properly, and that that has been a problem for the SEC on an ongoing basis. Colin later raised this with his fellow-BC members, and since my last conversation with Ty, I have heard the same rumor being repeated by several CC members and CC invitees.

I had in fact requested at the two SEC meetings prior to the vote that the topic be included in the SEC agenda. Unfortunately, those two meetings were each five and six hours long (!), and the topic was never addressed. Further, as was reported to SEC comrades, the vote on the appointment to the vacant City Council position was a politically very tricky, fast-changing issue with consequences if we made the wrong decision. It required us to be agile, and did not offer us any avenue for live consultation with the SEC - we had to make a final decision in the space of the last half hour right before the vote. Events since then have fully vindicated the decision. Not only was the vote proven correct in retrospect, our Council Office worked extremely well throughout the appointment process, building links with the best activists of the People's Party, totally upending backroom plans to appoint establishment candidate John Okamoto, and on top of that requiring all candidates to answer to a public community forum (for the first time in Seattle City Council history of temporary appointments), because of a resolution we forced the Council to pass.

After I found out about the rumors, I asked Ty, do you have disagreements with the decision to vote for Harris-Talley's appointment, or with how we politically presented our vote? Ty said he had no disagreements. Danny B. informed me that when Philip complained to him about the same thing, Danny asked Philip if he had any disagreements with the decision to vote for Harris-Talley. Philip also said he didn't have disagreements.

My question is, if SEC comrades do not have any political disagreements, why are they making such accusations about the Council Office? None of these specific concerns were in fact registered with me, or even questions asked about the process, before the rumors began to spread. Lastly, even if the comrades did have disagreements, it would still be extremely concerning to go immediately to the broader membership with such loaded accusations without fully airing them first on the SEC.

Consequences of Accusations about the Council Office

It is all the more astounding that these accusations are happening at the same time we are tasked with trying to repair the broken Seattle leadership, in the heat of the number one national priority of the Minneapolis election campaign, and with two lawsuits hanging over us.

When I confronted Ty recently about this in a meeting between Calvin, Ty, and myself on Oct 17, he expressed regret about his individual comments to Colin, but he also tried to portray it as

somehow not a big deal. Worse, he continued with his (ongoing) accusation that the Council Office is systematically lax in communicating to the SEC, and that it does not consistently incorporate the SEC in important decisions, in spite of a mountain of evidence to the contrary.

This is a real problem, as I have quite clearly explained to Ty and Philip multiple times. I completely reject the idea that the Council Office is failing - in any way - to communicate to the SEC, or to be accountable to the SEC and the organization. As SEC comrades should be able to admit, Council comrades take great pains to include and consult the full SEC. We err on the side of taking political questions to the SEC. There have been many instances when I have personally insisted that Council comrades send advance notice to the SEC to make all leading members aware of a given political situation. But realistically, we cannot always inform the SEC of every detail or involve comrades on every question.

The comrades' idea of "accountability" for the Council Office appears to be only explainable as an idea of micromanaging rooted in distrust, particularly striking given the exceptionally high degree of ongoing communication and oversight, given that I am an elected member of the national EC tasked with leading the Council work, and not least given the success and political consistency of that work since we were elected. If there are political disagreements, then no doubt these should be discussed. But for over two years now, I have been at a loss to explain why there has been this continual attack on the Council Office.

As I have said to the EC before, if a CWI elected representative was in fact unaccountable, that would be an extremely serious matter, and would need to be dealt with through our elected structures. Do the comrades realize how damaging their actions can be to our organization as a whole? And how do they hope to consolidate members into SA while at the same time sowing doubts in their minds about the accountability of currently the most prominent public position of SA?

Needless to say, this risks a potentially quite difficult Council Office atmosphere on top of the huge pressures our office already faces. If this situation is not corrected, it will create worse problems for the Council Office work. Failure to correct this would indicate an inability to put the interests of our organization above the comrades' factional interests.

When Calvin and I recently met with Ty, he said that he agreed the political differences in our organization do not justify the damage to our organization posed by an ongoing faction in the US section. Yet, that is precisely what the comrades appear to be developing.

To take another recent example, SEC members who are not on the PBT were not made aware of a fulltimer study group, and only select non-PBT fulltimers (like Rebekah) were invited. Calvin, Adam, and I were completely unaware of this study group, and know about it only because of social media posts by comrades. To my knowledge, there have been no SEC discussions about fulltimer study groups, what should be discussed, and who should attend them.

When Danny B was just in Seattle, Stephan told Kailyn that she shouldn't trust the IS's motives in their discussions with her. The question here is what do the comrades think they are doing when they convey the impression that the IS, the majority of the EC, and the Council Office are not to be trusted? That even a discussion with an IS member is somehow suspect?

Conclusion

Aside from everything else, my most urgent appeal to the comrades is that they refrain from bringing their factionalizing further in Minneapolis during the last days of the Ginger campaign. Already, it has been reported to me that criticisms of the election campaign similar to the ones the comrades have made in the EC phone meetings are being raised by other Seattle fulltimers who are currently in Minneapolis. We need all hands on deck right now and we need to maintain a high morale. I hope that can be respected for the remainder of the Ginger campaign.

Kshama

Sent October 28, 2017

Response to “Worsening Situation in Seattle” Letter to IEC

Submitted by Ty Moore *on 11/25/17 to the IS with a request that it be distributed via email to IEC and any other comrades who received the original letter.*

It was with disappointment when I saw Kshama’s letter on the “Worsening Situation in Seattle” was circulated to the International Executive Committee (labelled “US Doc 4”). I had initially been hopeful that, rather than producing a written reply which risked escalating tensions further, that an agreed process of verbal discussions would be best to resolve things.

The initial draft of this “Worsening Situation” letter was sent to the EC less than two weeks after Kshama, Calvin and I had sat down together, for the first time since the crisis began last spring, to begin a pro-active process to rebuild relations and re-establish a collective leadership in Seattle. Our meeting on October 17th came together following discussions with Danny B from the IS, and while it was only a tentative start, it seemed everyone was committed to a serious and good-faith effort to a process of dialogue aimed at rebuilding trust and overcoming the leadership crisis.

This work is absolutely vital, in my view, especially since the challenge of re-building a strong, collective political leadership in the Seattle organization is at the heart of the wider internal crisis facing Socialist Alternative. Unfortunately, the extremely serious but unfounded accusations in this letter -- coming against the background of rejection of my previous attempts to open a process of de-escalating tensions on the EC -- raises fresh questions about what will be needed to succeed.

It is of course welcome and needed for comrades to put any concerns of this nature clearly on the table for discussion. There are ongoing and very real questions over how to overcome the breakdown in the elected leadership structures, and their lack of sufficient oversight over all aspects of the Seattle work. However, I completely reject the accusations raised in the letter that any of this constitutes “new rumors... maligning the Council Office and questioning its accountability to the democratic structures of the organization,” or that comrades were engaged in “a highly irresponsible doubling down on the earlier accusations, from this Spring, against the Council Office and me of a lack of accountability, only now no longer restricted to NC members, but being raised with a wide layer of BC members.”

Accusing comrades of an effort to malign and spread rumors about the council office is a very serious accusation and, if true, would justify disciplinary action and removing me from my current position as Seattle Organizer (responsible for coordinating the Seattle Executive Committee (SEC), the City Committee (CC), and bringing together the work of the council office and wider party organization). If the comrades are serious about pursuing the accusations then a real investigation should be organized to get to the bottom of it. What is completely unacceptable is to continue raising such accusation with a widening number of comrades while not agreeing to either a serious process of dialogue to resolve things or a real investigation. Otherwise the comrades should clearly retract the accusations. This is just one of a number of examples that, in my view, makes clear the need for the IEC to send a commission to the US, as proposed in the letter to the IEC by NC members Patrick, Kailyn, and myself, which was already circulated (see “US Doc 14”).

I completely reject that I am involved in or aware of an effort to maliciously spread rumors about Kshama or the council office. After checking with comrades, I am confident none of the EC or NC comrades accused of spreading rumors (this accusation has now gone beyond Philip and myself) have raised with CC members the more controversial points that the EC has agreed should be limited to the NC members and observers.

The only concrete evidence cited to justify the accusations was a single conversation with Colin, my Branch Organizer, which he initiated with me after reading a document from Jeremy and Tony (sent to the IEC as "US Doc 5"). In my view, this is hardly enough evidence to to base such serious allegations around.

Jeremy and Tony's document further developed a widespread discussion taking place on Seattle's structures, including the challenge of integrating our city council work with the branches and party structures. In answering Colin's questions on that topic, I did make a mistake by raising with Colin - before raising with the SEC - the lack of SEC discussion before Kshama's vote a couple days earlier for a replacement city council position, which I learned about first in the media. As Kshama explains in her letter,I later found out how hastily that important decision needed to be made and given that there was no disagreement on the substance I felt it was best to drop the issue.

However, I did not raise this concern with Colin in a manner that maligned Kshama or implied any attempt by the council office to evade accountability to democratic structures. Rather I raised it as an example of how the rapid pace and huge pressures of the Seattle work creates enormous challenges for the SEC to have meaningful input and oversight over many decisions. I raised with Colin how the SEC and CC, in my view, has not been capable of adequately staying on top of the the party building work or the council work in the recent period.

I communicated all this to Danny, Calvin, and Kshama immediately after finding out it was a concern, which was less than a week after my discussion with Colin. I clearly communicated my mistake to Colin and have not raised this issue subsequently, and I don't have see any evidence that anyone else continues to raise the issue. When I discussed with Colin to register my mistake he confirmed that he in no way heard my comments as maligning the council office or trying to spread rumors.

Structures debate

This false characterization of my discussion with Colin in the letter is, unfortunately, just the most prominent example of how the letter paints a generally one-sided picture by omitting the central context for all three of the alleged rumors: the widespread discussion taking place in Seattle on our internal structures. There are many self-evident examples active comrades have raised about the challenge of ensuring our ten branches and City Committee have meaningful democratic involvement over our priorities, orientation, and key political decisions, given the fast pace of events and rapid shifts required. With most of our campaigning activity currently centered around our council office work, it is to be expected that questions about how council decisions are made are being raised. As I explain further below, this is also the source of discussion around the other two so-called rumors concerning the Peoples Budget and Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA).

To allow for a genuine and democratic discussion to take place, it is vital all comrades deal with such questions in a responsible manner, especially where there are disagreements within the leadership. This

is especially true given the extreme suspicions and tensions in the leadership. This means avoiding any personalized criticism of other comrades, or anything that comes across as maligning comrades or questioning their loyalty to the organization and its democratic structures. At the same time, it is also irresponsible to respond to comrades who raise concerns about the very real weaknesses of our leadership bodies in Seattle by questioning comrades motivations or accusing comrades of spreading malicious rumors. This practice is already having a serious chilling effect on the discussion.

Comrades from all sides of the debate will acknowledge that there have been serious challenges with integrating the council and party work, especially recently. The Seattle Executive Committee (SEC) is the main body tasked with bringing together the work of the ten branches, the work of the 4.5 Seattle FTers, and the work of the council office FTers (3 FTers plus 2 half-timers), as well as City Committee (a body of 27 members and 11 regular observers which normally meets monthly). Even before the outbreak of the present internal crisis, the SEC faced serious challenges keeping on top of the pace of work and huge pressures on the Seattle organization. But since the crisis broke out in April, the SEC has met very irregularly, suffered under broken lines of communication, and has not been capable of keeping on top of many areas of work in a meaningful way, whether that be mobilizations to city hall, shifting roles on the branch committees, or key tactical decisions in our coalition work.

The present discussion was initially brought verbally into the Seattle City Committee by Jeremy, Tony, and others in August. This was done in the context of sharp criticisms of Stephan, Philip, and Seattle party-building work being introduced to Seattle NC members/observers by EC Majority comrades in the aftermath of the July NC, as well as sharp criticism of Kshama and the EC majority for the way in which Stephan was removed from Seattle work. In my view, both sides made mistakes contributing to an unhealthy escalation of tensions, making genuine democratic debate over the problems more difficult.

The document from Tony and Jeremy circulated to the City Committee on October 5th argues that the current structures “seriously weaken the important connection between the Council Office and branches,” and points along these lines have been firmly raised at City Committee meetings and more widely in informal discussions with CC and BC members. Other criticisms were also raised, including concern about an overly top-down approach to party building, disagreement over the role of the FTers, and lack of meaningful democratic control by the City Committee.

Any path toward a overcoming the tensions Seattle must include a sober assessment of the SEC and City Committee’s current inability to exercise adequate democratic oversight over all aspects of our work, and to map out concrete steps to overcome that. For example, all SEC comrades recognize the need to re-establish Council Strategy Team meetings (an SEC sub-committee that fell apart amid the tensions) for this exact reason. Flowing from this point, to overcome tensions all comrades will need to agree that discussion on the City Committee about the weakening of Seattle’s leadership structures and linked problem of coordination -- if raised responsibly in a way that avoids personalization or one-sided blame -- *has absolutely nothing in common* with the repeated accusations in the letter about spreading rumors or maligning the council office.

At the same time, given the tensions it is very damaging to use loaded language about “lack of accountability” as some comrades have in relation to the council office, or to make overly personalized suggestions that any comrades are attempting to act independently our elected structures. This applies equally to the work of myself and the party building team, which have been repeatedly accused of

intentionally evading democratic oversight by the SEC. At EC and SEC meetings, comrades on all sides of this debate have repeatedly engaged in exaggerated or outright false accusations of one another, as well as overly barbed and personalized comments. This approach cannot continue.

Danger of escalating tensions

With a serious and determined attitude toward building a collective leadership, I have no doubt that a calm set of discussions could, even now, allow us to work out a resolution. And I was hopeful this would be the comrades approach when a couple of the specific issues raised in Kshama's letter (though by no means all of them) were first flagged for me in a meeting with Danny B, and then a few days later at the October 17th discussion with Kshama and Calvin (though only briefly, at the end of our discussion). But at that meeting, designed to open a process of renewed collaboration, Kshama already made clear her intention to send this letter.

I appealed to the comrades to first engage in a process of discussion to see if there were misunderstandings that could be cleared up and if there were steps that could be agreed to address the concerns in a mutually agreeable way. I urged the comrades to consider how sending a formal complaint to the EC, based on accusations of malicious intent - before even attempting a meaningful discussion to check if what they had heard second hand was in fact accurate - would sharpen tensions at exactly a moment we have a chance to de-escalate.

That invitation was not taken up. And the impact of accusing myself and others of malicious intent and dishonesty when disagreements come up or mistakes are made is to create serious barriers to even properly discuss out the issues, much less resolve them. I have repeatedly emphasized with all EC and NC comrades, especially since the July NC, that I do not think it is politically justified or responsible for the EC to continue operating as two intransigent blocks.

Up until Kshama's letter was sent to the IEC, I was still hopeful that a serious mutual attempt at a verbal dialogue would be a better method resolve things than producing this written reply. But clearly one purpose of the letter is to add to the formal record of escalating accusations in the run-up to the IEC and NC meetings. This approach lends itself to doubling down on exaggerated suspicions and points away from the potential to rebuild a collective leadership in Seattle. I am concerned that this letter is part of a more generalized escalation on the part of the EC majority, as raised in the letter I wrote the IEC with Patrick and Kailyn (see "US Doc 14" circulated to IEC members). This threatens to deepen the factionalized atmosphere in Seattle and nationally around mainly organizational questions, without any principled political differences justifying the polarization. This again points to the need for the IEC to intervene with a commission to help chart a different way forward.

Answering the specific allegations

Affordable Housing Alliance

The other two allegations raised in the letter should be seen in this context, and again the issue appears to be mainly a tendency to conflate malicious rumors with necessary democratic discussion over the challenges we face emerging organically from comrades experience.

To take the first example, it is an exaggeration to say myself or others have said that "the Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA) coalition, and its inaugural meeting, were undemocratically created by the Council Office without oversight of the SEC." What I have raised, first of all with EC comrades, is frustration that the inaugural public meeting of AHA was planned for just two days before our Affordable Seattle launch meeting on July 29th. Affordable Seattle was the banner we used for a six-week mass door-knocking campaign linked to our electoral support for Jon Grant and Nikkita Oliver in the August 1st Seattle primary. Seattle comrades carried out nearly 600 door-knocking shifts leafleting for, among other things, our public Affordable Seattle launch event on July 29th.

This plan had been agreed by the City Committee in early June to be the central focus of branch activity. The SEC had also agreed, in a meeting later in June, that the council office (which was legally barred from involvement in electoral work) would launch the Affordable Housing Alliance as a complementary effort, bringing together a wider coalition organizations focussed on the fight for an Economic Eviction Assistance ordinance. However, no launch date was set and some secondary disagreements over the character of AHA were not resolved because the SEC was not able to meet in July (or August) due to schedule conflicts as well as rising tensions around the July NC.

This explains the confusion and frustration felt by myself and many comrades when, without prior notice or discussion, we saw a public email and social media announcements for the big launch of AHA just two days before the big public launch of Affordable Seattle. That frustration was added to when I later learned that subsequent AHA coalition meetings in early August had already discussed draft legislation for the Economic Eviction Assistance - which was to be the central campaign of the branches into the fall - without that having been circulated to the SEC, City Committee, or brought into the branches for discussion.

I attempted to set up discussions with Calvin and Kshama in early August to discuss this (and the tensions in general), but they were not able to, though I did discuss it with other EC members. Philip later raised the issue at an SEC meeting in September when we begin regularly meeting again.

In an early August discussion with Adam, who was leading up the AHA work, he fully agreed to a process of bringing the discussion into the branches, even if belatedly. At that stage, my over-riding concern was attempting to rebuild a functioning Seattle leadership so, having worked out a process to go forward with Adam I felt it was best to put the issue to rest and that is what happened. However, since the clear lack of coordination was an experience a whole layer of active comrades went through, it has continued to be a point of reference in discussion about the challenges we face. I do not raise this as an example of lack of accountability but rather as an example of the challenges that must be overcome by the Seattle leadership as a whole.

Peoples' Budget Discussion

The letter asserts that "Seattle members have been told that the Council Office did not have proper discussions within the SEC about whether the branches should orient towards the People's Budget, and that the Council Office essentially steamrolled its way on this issue, and did not give branches the opportunity to participate in the decisions." No specific source or evidence is provided for this accusation, and I believe it is baseless. What is very real, and I suspect is the basis of this accusation, is that the rapidness of the tactical shift toward the People's Budget struggle - which was proposed by the

whole SEC and passed unanimously by the City Committee - produced some initial frustrations that needed to be discussed out.

It came against the background of a lengthy process of discussion, initiated in mid-August and discussed out over the course of two City Committee meetings. The fall plans and priorities resolution proposed by the SEC and City Committee to the Sept 9th Citywide Membership meeting which, after discussion, did not include the Peoples Budget among the fall priorities. This resolution was then brought into the branches and active plans and targets were prepared for the agreed priorities (Minneapolis campaign work alongside energetic tabling around "Stop the Sweeps" and related housing slogans, and the Jon Grant election). Then in the run-up to the September 28th City Committee, the idea of using the Peoples Budget to rally the wider Housing for All coalition behind a budget proviso to Stop the Sweeps was raised, debated, and unanimously proposed by the SEC to the Sept. 28th City Committee.

This was a completely correct tactic, and after the case was made to comrades a whole layer of active members threw themselves into the fight. However, the rapid shift in orientation coming after a lengthy process of discussion sparked discussion among some comrades about how the opportunities opened by our council position frequently compel us to rapidly shift focus. In this process, some minor frustrations flowing from communication mistakes came up, but I did not hear any comrades raise concerns about "steamrolling" by the council office or SEC.

While there were important tactical debates, which the wider tensions and suspicions made more difficult to navigate, it is not true that Philip or I opposed the tactic, as evidenced by the unanimous votes in favor of it. The discussion also brought out differences over how to integrate branches into council centered initiatives in a way that didn't bypass existing lines of communication, but this was never a question of an "attempt to oppose broader branch involvement in the Council Office work." These debates are reflected in the documents from Tony, Jeremy, Sarah and Ramy that IEC members had circulated to them.

Staff Study Group

The letter also raises that "SEC members who are not on the PBT were not made aware of a fulltimer study group." At an early September SEC meeting it was verbally reported that, with most party building FTers in Minneapolis for long periods, we planned to fill out the long established Friday morning PBT study groups with a study group open to all SA FTers (i.e. SA national FTers and two temporary campaign FTers) on "Lessons of October." This was also discussed at our weekly SA staff meetings, announced over our SA staff list on September 17th, and referenced in a proposal sent to SEC on Oct. 3rd on our overall fall political education plans. When Danny from the IS was in town he participated in the study group. It is unfortunate that, having possibly missed these communications, instead of simply approaching me or other PBT comrades for discussion, the issue is now raised as a formal complaint.

I understand Stephan will be sending a short note regarding the accusations of his conversation with Kailyn so I won't deal with that here.

Appeal to the IEC to Intervene in the US Leadership Crisis

Submitted to the CWI International Executive Committee on 11/20/17 by:
Patrick Ayers *(NC member, current NYC Organizer, Seattle Executive 2012 - Dec 2015, and Seattle Organizer Spring 2014 - Dec 2015)*
Kailyn Nicholson *(NC elected observer, Seattle Executive, Seattle Party Building Team leader)*
Ty Moore *(EC member, Seattle Executive, Seattle Organizer since Jan 2017)*

Socialist Alternative has made tremendous strides forward in the last several years. The Minneapolis election campaign was a fantastic experience for the whole organization. Members are excited to turn outward, build, and deepen their understanding of Marxist ideas. However, since April there has been a growing breakdown of relations on the EC with accusations of bad methods, malicious intentions and wrongdoings going back and forth. This breakdown in relations has brought to the surface a number of important political disagreements as well, but not over issues of political principle. In our view, the actual state of political opinions and differences do not fully explain or justify the extreme factional environment.

Making the situation worse, the bitter atmosphere has undermined the ability to organize a genuine, constructive, living political discussion and debate, which is vital in order to resolve the tensions on a healthy basis and politically strengthen the organization. With no fundamental issues of political principle posed at this stage, the the deepening divisions and distrust are beginning to spread into the NC and pose the potential of a deeper crisis that could seriously demoralize our ranks and undermine the work of building a powerful Marxist trend in US.

Fundamentally, the crisis is a result of the huge political pressures and stresses on the leadership and the challenges of transitioning into mass work over the past period, alongside the challenge of building a cohesive revolutionary organization across an entire continent. These pressures have especially born down on the Seattle leadership since 2012, which is also where the internal crisis and the breakdown in relations is most acute. It's inevitable that debates and differences would emerge as the organization grows in size and influence, and as we grapple with new experiences brought on by both our successes and the rapidly changing objective situation.

The intention of this letter is to fight for a de-escalation of the immediate crisis in order to limit the potential damage to Socialist Alternative, and re-open the space for a genuine, open political debate to take place.

There are important political questions under debate including how we relate to new left trends emerging like DSA and the “Berniecrat” activists struggling to transform the Democratic Party, and how we can best organize our party and develop a widening layer of cadre. Important questions of method are also being raised, and should be discussed and debated openly within the party.

Different political tendencies may be emerging in these discussions, but we are concerned that the factional dynamic and intense personal suspicions, more than the actual political differences, are key driving factors behind the formation of factional blocks in the US leadership. This risk is shown in the highly personalized manner in which some of the political differences are being raised and the fact that the most bitter and intense conflicts have emerged over organizational questions. We do not believe there are yet any clear principled differences that would justify a factional division in our ranks or the damage these divisions threaten to do.

Undoubtedly, the extreme pressures of our work in recent years, especially in Seattle, have brought to the surface comrades’ strengths and weaknesses, and worn down comrades’ patience. The levels of distrust and personal suspicion has grown over the past period. Most comrades on the Seattle Executive Committee and the national EC have now divided into two intransigent camps and are drawing in wider layers of leading members around them. Rumors, suspicions, blame, and false characterizations are spreading. In Seattle especially, the breakdown has led to a growing discussion, questioning, and frustration among members about the source of recent dysfunction in the leadership. The lack of any open discussion on the Seattle City Committee over the wider issues has resulted in conversations happening in informal spaces, while suspicions, hostility, and distrust have broken out in confusing ways at City Committee meetings.

Unfortunately, the space for either side to acknowledge mistakes -- an important step to improving relations -- has been limited by an atmosphere where any acknowledgment of mistakes has been used as a weapon by the other side. Under these conditions, the tendency has been to fall back on explanations that lay all the blame on the other side and deepen the personalized polarization.

The whole logic of the situation points toward an explosive NC in December and, worse still, a score-settling convention in 2018. This crisis is unlikely to develop in a long drawn-out way like the 2000-2010 factional crisis. That was a different period and there is more at stake now. We have 1,000 members who are overwhelmingly new and young, and a very narrow layer of cadres to both hold the national leadership in check and provide leadership to rapidly growing and energized branches. All together, the organization is unstable. In this situation, an intensely personalized and intransigent faction fight without a clear political basis poses the possibility of damaging the organization. An unprincipled split cannot be ruled out,

which as Trotsky warned is “the most dangerous kind of miscarriage, one which can kill both mother and child.” (Quoted from *Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party,* Chapter 5 “Crisis of the American section,” 1982)

The three of us, in different ways, have attempted to fight back against this dynamic and we believe mistakes have been made by both the factional blocks on the EC that have contributed to the damaging escalation of tensions. We recognize that the three of us have also made mistakes. However, at this moment it seems the EC majority, the stronger side in this escalating crisis, appears prepared to force through a resolution on its own terms, driving minority comrades out of leadership, out of full-time positions, and other measures to marginalise their influence. Majority comrades have said that they believe things are heading toward a split and this seems to be informing their uncompromising approach. Unilaterally imposing a resolution will almost certainly result in a deepening of the factional tensions and, if carried out in an overly bureaucratic manner, does risk provoking the kind of damaging and unprincipled split Trotsky warns against, or creating a deeply entrenched faction fight that would effectively do just as much damage.

We do not think this is the only or best resolution. To see if another way forward is possible, we would need to avoid a further polarization within the US leadership and make a serious attempt to find a principled and mutually agreed organizational compromises, linked to organizing an open and comradely political discussion on the various issues under debate. However, without the intervention of the IEC working alongside a layer of NC comrades prepared to take an independent position, this second path is likely impossible.

Proposal to the IEC

The IEC meeting will be decisive for how this crisis is resolved. We encourage the IEC to intervene, strongly, on the side of de-escalating the tensions as a necessary step for clarifying issues. We would like to propose the IEC send a team of IEC members to the U.S. to talk to all comrades involved and to work out proposals for a way forward that could be presented to the US National Committee and the IEC. An important aspect of our proposal is that the composition of this team should be agreed by both the EC majority and the EC minority to give it maximum authority to develop proposals for a way forward.

We would further propose that one aim for a de-escalation process should be the drafting of single unified perspectives and tasks document for the NC or National Convention in 2018 where any differences can be discussed and debated on the basis of amendments.

Lessons from Trotsky

We have drawn advice from Trotsky's intervention in the faction fight in the US section in 1932-33. In that crisis, there were no issues of fundamental political principle involved. He identified the immaturity of the organization to be one of the chief causes of the extreme factionalism and the possibility of an unprincipled split. (Quoted from *Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party,* Chapter 5 “Crisis of the American section”, 1982):

> When an organization is politically mature and its members have experience in factional struggle, the frictions can be held in check until the major political differences are evident. However, the debates often appear to be purely personal and organizational. The special nature of the situation consists in the fact that the intensity of the struggle does not correspond to the stage of developments in the formation of factions. Both factions find themselves, so to speak, in a state of infancy, they have no clearly developed form. On the other hand, they are already organized as factions and confront the League more or less with a split. And that can destroy it. When a split takes place after intense political struggles, it can be understandable and natural. But the way things stand in the League, I believe there is also an element of personal fault involved. (*Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement, 1929-33,* pp. 200-201)

Trotsky warned an unprincipled split would not be understood by members and supporters, and strenuously opposed any action by the majority or minority that could be based on such a perspective. Instead, he argued for restraint on both sides. He warned the minority not to be “impatient,” and stressed to the leaders of the majority that they had a greater responsibility:

> After having a series of discussions with you and becoming acquainted with the [Communist League of America] documents, I think--entirely apart from any assessment of the minority’s attitude--that in the organizational policy of the majority of the central committee there are elements of formal intransigence which may appear as bureaucratism and which in any case will injure rather than enhance the authority of the central committee and its influence… The Oppositional minority has a certain right to manifest impatience but the majority leadership has no such right. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* pp. 212-13)

Trotsky proposed that the US organization should focus on turning outward and asked for the determined intervention of the international to broker a truce and organizational compromises. A crisis was averted in 1933 and, while there were still many debates over the next period, the US Trotskyists were able to achieve tremendous successes and the membership grew to 2,000 by 1938. While a split became unavoidable eventually, this was on the basis of clear and principled political differences over programmatic and theoretical issues related to the defense

of the Soviet Union which was widely understood as politically justified among members and supporters.

We encourage comrades to read the full selection “Averting an Unprincipled Split” from the chapter, “Crisis in the American Section,” where these quotes from Trotsky were taken. It’s available here: **https://tinyurl.com/ycp2s8ws**

My Concerns about the Election of the Seattle Executive Committee and My View of the Internal Debates

Letter from Ramy Khalil to the National Committee
December 5, 2017

Opportunities to build the Marxist movement are growing in the U.S. We've made great strides, particularly in Seattle and more recently in Minneapolis, and we are in a position to make further gains.

Unfortunately our national leadership has recently become bitterly divided. It is incumbent on all of us, myself included, to take these issues seriously and find a principled resolution. We must work to bridge the divide, avoid misunderstandings, rebuild trust, and find a path forward to joint work, even if we don't agree on everything.

The political disagreements in the national leadership came to a head around the breakdown in relations on the Seattle Executive Committee (SEC). What led to this?

I would have preferred not to write this letter. But given the intensity of the divisions and the lack of clarity of the causes of the conflict, I think it will help the NC to explain my views about the origins of the conflict and how I believe we can begin to overcome it.

June Election of the Seattle EC

The City Committee is a leadership body (currently 27 members) elected annually (or as needed) by the Seattle SA convention. The City Committee meets monthly to guide the overall direction of our work. The City Committee elects the Seattle EC to serve as the day-to-day leadership with an overview and decision-making power over all areas of our work: City Council work, the Seattle Party-Building Team, branch work, union work, etc. The Seattle EC is accountable to the City Committee and, in turn, the City Committee is accountable to the City Convention.

In June, the National Executive Committee did something unprecedented in my 21 years in SA. The National EC arranged for Bryan K to attend the Seattle City Committee and propose that the City Committee elect a new Seattle EC. The national EC told the Seattle City Committee that Stephan was needed for national work and therefore should no longer serve on the Seattle EC. The real reason for this new slate, however, was not explained transparently to the City Committee. The real reason was that a breakdown of relations had developed on the Seattle EC between Kshama and Stephan. This conflict was never explained to the majority of the City Committee members; only the Seattle NC members were informed through one-on-one discussions.

Disagreements about Mass Work

Both sides agree there were a lot of minor political and organizational disagreements that arose over the previous two years that contributed to growing tensions. Both sides point to disagreements around tactical questions of the mass work we are engaged in in Seattle: a Wells Fargo protest ad in *The Stranger*, coordination between our 10 branches and our council office, the May Day strikes, how to engage Sandernistas and DSA members, the safe states argument in our Bernie tactic, etc.

These tensions inevitably arise as we are a small organization which recently elected a councilmember, quadrupled in size, and are now required to sometimes speak to tens of thousands of people. All comrades on the Seattle EC, especially Kshama, have great responsibilities and stresses weighing on them every day. My understanding is that everywhere the CWI has elected comrades to major public office, tensions very often arise between our public representatives (or union representatives) and the wider needs of our party. As Sarah White and I wrote in our document, "Successes and Challenges in Building Seattle SA":

> One challenge we should keep in mind is that our council office is regularly compelled to carry out initiatives that are completely correct and necessary, but they are often not high priorities for the branches to take up. In order to recruit to a revolutionary organization, our branches often have to orient to a politicized minority, whereas our council office often has to address the immediate needs of specific constituents and a broad electorate who are not always as radicalized or engaged in mass struggles. This is not always the case but sometimes, for example, our council office has to orient toward faith-based groups or non-profits, whereas SA branches are often engaged with activist groups like [Nikkita Oliver's] People's Party and DSA. Sometimes this means that our council office and our branches have to put forward slightly different slogans and demands, even when we are intervening on the same exact issue. There are no easy or universal solutions to these built-in tensions, but they require conscious political discussion and democratic decisions by the elected leadership bodies of the organization.

For those who are newer to the NC, I should make clear I know all of the comrades involved in this dispute extremely well. I think it's fair to say I have worked longer in very close collaboration with Philip, Kshama, and Calvin than probably anyone else. I have been a National Committee member for almost 20 years, I was a National EC member for 14 years, and a Seattle EC member for a time along with Kshama, Calvin, Philip, and Patrick. I was a campaign leader of Kshama's first election campaign in 2012, the Campaign Manager of Kshama's successful 2013 election, and I was the Volunteer Director of Kshama's re-election campaign in 2015. I have worked with Stephan since 2011, especially after he moved to Seattle in 2014. I have supported Philip's work when I felt it benefited the organization and also called Philip out when I felt it was necessary.

When this conflict was first brought to my attention by the EC majority, I was sympathetic to the concerns that Calvin and Bryan K. raised. But after listening to both sides, I was unsure. So I went back and asked to meet with every single EC member on both sides again (except Kshama who I feared was too busy and appeared well represented by the 4 other EC majority members I spoke with). I took notes and systematically asked both sides to address each others' claims and counter-claims. I also had in-depth discussions with a member of the International Secretariat, the one other SEC member, Kailyn, as well as SEC observers Ted and Adam.

I saw from my own experiences in Seattle that Stephan was the Seattle EC member charged with politically leading up the Seattle Party Building Team, and he was helping organize City Committee meetings and weekly Branch Organizers meetings. I understand he attempted to bring the input and demands of the branches into the discussions of the Seattle EC. This contributed to Stephan raising disagreements at times with city council comrades.

My impression is that Kshama found the disagreements with Stephan increasingly frustrating, eventually unbearable, and ultimately refused to work with him. In response, Stephan felt sidelined and excluded from discussions, and tried to push to overcome this situation, but he did so in a frustrated, impatient way.

Alongside the tensions in the *Seattle* EC, political tensions had also developed on the *National* EC over a longer period. After discussing thoroughly with EC members from both sides, after listening to the political debates at the July NC meeting, and after reading the recent exchange of documents, I believe that these tensions stem from the growing pains of transitioning to mass work.

We are in the process of figuring out how to make the transition from advocating basic socialist ideas to seizing the growing opportunities to address a larger audience and, in some cases, develop mass work on a principled revolutionary basis. With the rise of Sanders and Trump, tactical disagreements developed about how to approach the Bernie campaign, the safe states argument, the Trump administration, Sandernistas, DSA, Impeachment, etc. These tensions are perfectly normal. Comrades on both sides say they were able to resolve their different inclinations in a productive, united fashion — until the spring of this year.

The evidence indicates to me that Philip and Stephan were at the forefront of one wing of the EC pushing for a more flexible, tactful approach of united front methods and mass work, which some comrades saw as potentially running the risk of opportunism. The evidence also indicates that another wing of the EC has been more cautious, which other comrades saw as potentially running the risk of conservatism.

These political debates are becoming clearer in the exchange of documents, but they need to be clarified further over the coming period. The NC has a responsibility to clarify and fully grasp these issues which are important.

Approaching Debates Politically, not Personally

Against this background, EC majority comrades developed a viewpoint, with encouragement from the CWI International Secretariat, that Stephan is arrogant and condescending, too adamant in arguing his views, and that he used the Seattle Party-Building Team to maneuver around the council office's priorities.

Do Stephan and Philip argue forcefully for their views? Yes. Is that a crime? No. I have also seen other EC members and International Secretariat members argue forcefully. The CWI points out that Lenin was also regularly criticized for arguing forcefully for his views, even when he was in the minority within the Bolshevik Party.

All comrades acknowledge that Philip and Stephan have talents and political strengths which have contributed to our successes. At the same time, it is clear Philip and Stephan acted too harshly in a few of these debates and were not patient or comradely enough at times.

Both sides report that Philip and Stephan have acknowledged and apologized for these mistakes. It is very unfortunate, in my opinion, that these apologies, which appear to have been genuine attempts to help rebuild relations, have been used by the EC majority as admissions of guilt and opportunities to step up criticisms of Stephan and marginalize him.

I know of one member of the EC majority who has engaged in angry outbursts, yelling and cussing at other Seattle EC members and storming out of meetings numerous times over several years. Twice now this behavior has also been directed at me by this EC majority comrade, unprovoked by me. (I raised this with him, and he apologized.) So there have been "no angels" on either side of this conflict. So it seems imbalanced that the EC majority is focused on only criticizing Philip and Stephan's role in the breakdown of relations.

Disagreements and debates are inevitable as political situations constantly change, which require us to regularly adjust our analyses and tactics. When disagreements inevitably develop, it is important we strive not to take them personally. This can be difficult, but we must demand this especially from National EC members. That's why I don't think it was appropriate that our elected public representative and the EC majority allowed Kshama to refuse to participate in the elected leadership body unless the composition of the body was changed. Our elected officials, no matter who they are, need to work on the leadership bodies we democratically elect them onto.

Unfortunately, it is clear to me that a number of EC majority comrades have reacted very personally to this dispute. I have argued to EC comrades that taking issues personally can cloud their judgement, which is irresponsible and damaging. Nonetheless, Calvin has maintained so far that the criticism of Kshama's refusal to work on the body she was elected onto and demanding that another member is removed as a "very personal issue." But I maintain that comrades need the freedom to be able to raise disagreements within our organization in order to hash out the best decisions together.

If Kshama and the EC majority wanted to change the composition of the Seattle EC, they have the right to advocate for that. But they should have advocated for that openly and transparently. In the EC Majority Reply, the comrades write "In periods of heightened debate within a revolutionary party, leadership changes should come after key discussions and divisions have been clearly aired in the organization, reflecting the balance of opinion in the party." I agree with this. However, the EC asked

the City Committee to elect a new Seattle EC that excluded Stephan, without providing the City Committee the information they needed to make an informed, conscious decision.

We need to be very supportive of Kshama, whose performance is very impressive, despite the extremely difficult nature of the work. So I could accept it if relations between two comrades broke down once or twice to the point where they needed to be separated into different fields of work. But my concern is that there has been a pattern of Kshama and Calvin refusing to work with people they have disagreements with. For example, Kshama refused to participate in the Seattle EC a number of times due to tensions with Jess. Kshama and Calvin also adopted, in my view, an uncollaborative approach towards Patrick who was also a Seattle EC member and later the Seattle City Organizer.

Over the years, I have urged Kshama and Calvin to work together with others when disagreements develop. Now this pattern appears to be continuing. I believe this pattern sheds an important light on the current dispute in which Kshama refused to attend SEC meetings with Stephan.

This is not to minimize Calvin and Kshama's tremendous strengths, which have contributed enormously to our successes. I have tremendous respect and admiration for Kshama and Calvin, which outweigh my criticisms by far. I also recognize the enormous responsibilities and political challenges Kshama faces. But it is precisely because Kshama is under so much pressure that I believe we need to give her the best possible support, assistance, suggestions, and sometimes feedback. We do not want our elected officials or the EC to be surrounded by people who only agree with them, who are not comfortable raising disagreements or giving feedback when necessary.

A Political Shift

Starting this Spring when this conflict erupted, leadership changes were made not only to the Seattle EC, but to two additional leadership bodies:

(1) Our council strategy team (a sub-committee of the Seattle EC) used to be made up of Kshama, Philip, and Stephan — and later on Kshama, Philip and Ty. In April it was changed by the National EC to Kshama, Philip, Ty, Bryan K., and Calvin — giving the national EC majority control over the body. (However, since May it has not held a meeting.)

(2) The EC Conveners (an EC sub-committee that convenes EC meetings) used to be made up of Bryan K. and Philip. In July, it was changed to Bryan, Philip and Tom — giving the national EC majority control over the body.

These changes, formally speaking, were relatively minor. But in my opinion they were indicative of a more significant change in the political balance of the EC — a certain shift away from united front methods and principled mass work and back toward a more propagandistic approach.

The EC has the democratic right to organize teams of comrades however they think would be best. But there must be collective discussions of the entire EC followed by majority votes, and changes of leadership teams must be reported to the bodies that elected them. Again, as the EC Majority Reply says "In periods of heightened debate within a revolutionary party, leadership changes should come after key discussions and divisions have been clearly aired in the organization, reflecting the balance of opinion in the party." Shifting the political balance on the National EC could be carried out democratically - as long as it is openly reported to the National Committee and the NC agrees to the shift.

Pressures on Public Representatives

Is Kshama unaccountable and making big mistakes that need to be corrected? Absolutely not.

Has she done an outstanding job? Absolutely.

But are there dangers from the huge pressures in city council work? Absolutely.

It is extremely challenging for a revolutionary socialist to act in a principled but skilful way given the power of the mass media, the political establishment, the liberal labor leaders, and the low level of consciousness of workers at this stage. The history of the workers' movement is full of

examples of socialists bending to the power of not just big business but especially other trends in the movement, the liberal left, the labor leaders, identity politics, etc.

Here is one example of the organizational tensions that exist between the priorities of our council work and the priorities of SA which require the Seattle EC to oversee and coordinate all our work, including our council work. The City Committee and our 10 branches discussed and agreed to launch a new campaign "Affordable Seattle" in July. After a few months of door-knocking building up to our big public kick-off, our council office sent out a public email and social media announcement inviting people to another kick-off event that same week for a coalition led by our council office with a very similar name, "Affordable Housing Alliance." The breakdown in relations and communication on the Seattle EC resulted in our council office mobilizing people to a competing kick-off event for one coalition with an almost identical name as the kick-off event that our branches were launching only two days apart.

Mistakes are understandable and inevitable. But this example illustrates why we need a Seattle EC that has decision-making power over all areas of work: council work, branch work, union work, etc. Each team in our party must work under the direction of our party's democratically elected leadership, not the other way around.

This important democratic tradition is reflected in the resolutions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International, which the CWI bases itself on. One key resolution was the "Theses on the Communist Parties and Parliamentarism," which explains, "Communist members of parliament must subordinate all parliamentary action to the activity of their Party outside parliament… The organization of the parliamentary faction must be completely in the hands of the Central Committee of the Communist Parties."

In the future, we should insist that leading members, particularly those elected to public office, not be allowed to refuse to work on the leadership bodies we elect them onto without openly convincing a majority of members who elect them why a change is needed.

Comrades argue that less experienced City Committee members would have been demoralized if the EC informed the City Committee about the conflict. But if the issues would have been presented politically all along rather than personally, even less experienced members would not be turned off and demoralized. It would have required the City Committee members to engage with the difficult challenges of balancing council work with branch work and they would begin to learn how to deal with disagreements that inevitably develop.

Moving Forward Together

We could move forward more easily and calmly if concerns like the ones I have raised in this document are addressed politically, without resorting to moral outrage or accusations of malicious or divisive motives. My loyalty to the CWI and SA remains steadfast — as it has for 21 years. I raise these concerns to help all of us clarify what I see as the key sources of the conflict and my views about how we can move forward together, even if we don't agree on everything.

I will continue to do everything I can to unite the organization and work hard to build SA. At the same time, I have an obligation as a National Committee member to raise concerns when necessary.

I look forward to putting these issues behind us and working with all comrades to build SA together — under the direction of the elected leadership. We need all comrades to come together, on the basis of open, democratic debate over differences, while working in a united fashion to seize the growing opportunities to build SA.

Comradely,
Ramy Khalil, National Committee member and Seattle City Committee member

Minority Record of Resolutions and Votes at the International Executive Committee, National Committee and Seattle City Committee
May 28, 2018

The EC's introduction to the resolutions and votes that took place at the IEC, NC and Seattle City Committee meetings that discussed the internal crisis in SA (in Part Two of the packets emailed out on May 11, 2018) contains omissions and a one-sided presentation of some of the votes. When relating the minutes, votes, and/or decisions that various bodies took, it should be done in a strictly factual manner that is agreed by both the Majority and Minority. Unfortunately this was not done by the EC. To correct this, the Minority felt compelled to produce this alternative record.

December 2017 International Executive Committee (IEC)
The I.S. put forward a Resolution on the US for a vote:
Full IEC Members: 41 voted in favor of the resolution; 0 voted against; 1 abstained.
Consultative IEC Members: 12 voted in favor of the resolution; 0 voted against; 0 abstained.
Observers: 16 voted in favor of the resolution; 0 voted against; 1 observer abstained.

December 2017 National Committee (NC)
The resolution *Proposal for De-escalation of the Factional Divisions* was withdrawn by its mover, Patrick A, in the last part of the discussion.

The EC Majority proposed a vote to endorse the December 2017 IEC Resolution on the US:
Full NC Members: 23 in favor; 0 against; 2 abstentions.
Candidate NC Members: 7 in favor; 0 against; 0 abstentions.

Note from the Minority: The voting took place after Stephan K left the meeting due to childcare responsibilities that he had previously informed the EC of. Another two comrades who now support the Minority were also not present for the December NC meeting (NC member Sarah WK, and Candidate NC member Bryan W). Other NC members who the NC Minutes listed as giving apologies for missing the meeting were Jeff B, Jesse L, and Kade Q.

February 17th, 2018 Seattle City Committee
The SEC proposed that the City Committee vote to support the December 2017 IEC Resolution on the US.

Seattle City Committee members Philip, Ramy, Rebekah, Sarah WK, Stephan, and Whitney moved an alternative resolution (called "Resolution 1") that said "The City Committee endorses all the points of the IEC resolution except point 5."

Point 5 in the IEC resolution said "We do not accept that the IS or majority of the EC has acted in a manner to be responsible for the divisions which have opened up within the leading bodies of the US organisation. The IEC is concerned about PL and SK's approach to the break-down of

relations in the Seattle and national leadership, and hopes they will be open to a reviewing of roles to find a healthy way forward in the organisation."

The vote on these two different motions was as follows:
City Committee Members: Endorse IEC Resolution - 16 / Resolution 1 - 7 / Abstain - 1

City Committee Observers: Endorse IEC Resolution - 5 / Resolution 1 - 1 / Abstain - 4

National Visitors (Bryan K and Kelly B from the EC, and NC member Brandon M): Endorse IEC Resolution - 2 / Resolution 1 - 0 / Abstain - 1

Seattle City Committee members Philip, Ramy, Rebekah, Sarah C, Sarah WK, Stephan, and Whitney put forward a second resolution for a vote:

> 2) In addition, the City Committee believes the following resolutions will help us move forward together out of the current crisis and build a stronger organization to meet the challenges ahead, including re-electing KS in 2019:
>
> A. We appeal to both the EC majority and minority to do everything possible to overcome the unfortunate divisions in our leadership through political clarification, democratic discussions where all sides are aired within the relevant bodies, and collaboration to build SA and the CWI. We reaffirm that all aspects of our work -- branch work, student work, labor work, council work, etc. -- are overseen by our party and its democratically elected leadership structures (the SEC overseen by the City Committee and citywide membership meetings, and on a higher level, the EC overseen by the NC and National Convention).
>
> B. All allegations of personal misconduct should be looked into in a calm, thorough way after hearing all sides. Standards for conduct apply to all comrades regardless of their sympathy with the majority or minority.
>
> C. Decisions to change elected bodies or full-timers' roles or positions should be made after thorough political discussion and an open and informed vote of the responsible bodies.
>
> D. Any hint of full-timers being removed for holding minority views (within the general parameters of SA's politics) has to be avoided in order to preserve our internal democracy.
>
> E. We reaffirm the right to bring up legitimate questions about the relationship between our public representative and the elected leadership as well as the Party-Building Team and the elected leadership. We reaffirm our political confidence in KS and the Council Office and at the same time demand the right to be able to raise questions and concerns in a structured, democratic way. We reject generalized statements that KS is unaccountable.

This resolution was voted on in 5 parts:

Resolution 2A

City Committee Members: For - 9 / Against - 12 / Abstain - 3

City Committee Observers: For - 1 / Against - 2 / Abstain - 7

Resolution 2B
City Committee Members: For - 9 / Against - 11 / Abstain - 4
City Committee Observers: For - 1 / Against - 3 / Abstain - 6

Resolution 2C
City Committee Members: For - 8 / Against - 13 / Abstain - 3
City Committee Observers: For - 1 / Against - 5 / Abstain - 4

Resolution 2D
City Committee Members: For - 8 / Against - 13 / Abstain - 3
City Committee Observers: For - 1 / Against - 3 / Abstain - 6

Resolution 2E
City Committee Members: For - 9 / Against - 13 / Abstain - 2
City Committee Observers: For - 1 / Against - 4 / Abstain - 5

March 2018 National Committee
The EC Majority put forward a resolution for the NC to vote on.

Philip L, Ramy K, Sarah WK, Stephan K, Whitney JK, and Bryan W put forward two resolutions on *Moving Forward* and on *Democratic Norms*.

Vote on EC Majority Resolution:
Full NC Members: 21 in favor; 2 against; 2 abstentions
Candidate NC Members: 6 in favor; 1 against; 0 abstentions
Invited Observers: 4 in favor; 2 against; 0 abstentions

Vote on *Moving Forward* Resolution from PL, SK, RK, SWK, WK & BW:
Full NC Members: 2 in favor; 23 against; 0 abstentions
Candidate NC Members: 1 in favor; 6 against; 0 abstentions
Invited Observers: 2 in favor; 4 against; 0 abstentions

Vote on *Democratic Norms* Resolutions from PL, SK, RK, SWK, WK & BW:
Full NC members: 2 in favor; 23 against; 0 abstentions
Candidate NC Members: 1 in favor; 6 against; 0 abstentions
Invited Observers: 2 in favor; 4 against; 0 abstentions

The NC Minutes noted: “Stephan K and Toya C heard the discussion but were unable to attend

the vote. Stephan K's sentiment was for the minority resolutions, and Toya C's sentiment was for the majority resolution."

Note from the Minority: Sarah WK, a NC member who was one of the authors of the Minority resolutions on *Moving Forward* and *Democratic Norms*, was unable to attend the NC and was not able to vote on the resolutions. Other NC members who did not attend the March NC meeting was Brandon M, Genevieve M, Leon P, and Adam Z. Other candidate NC members who also did not attend were Cora B and Ryan T.

IEC **RESOLUTION - Also adopted by the National Committee**

Vote by the CWI's International Executive Committee, Dec 2017
Full IEC Members: 41 in favor / 0 against / 1 abstention
Consultative IEC Members: 12 in favor / 0 against / 0 abstentions
Visitors: 16 in favor / 0 against / 1 abstention

Vote by the US National Committee, Dec 2017
Full NC Members: 23 in favor, 0 against, 2 abstentions.
Candidate NC Members: 7 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions

RESOLUTION Adopted by the CWI's International Executive Committee on the US

This meeting of the IEC recognises the tremendous steps forward taken by the US organisation. This is reflected in the outstanding victories we have conquered in Seattle and more recently the marvellous election campaign in Minneapolis. We also recognise the rapid growth of the organisation which brings with it new challenges to consolidate the new members on a solidly Marxist basis.

The opportunities which exist in the US to build a strong Marxist party are of international importance for the CWI and the working class.

The organisation in the US now has the opportunity to make even further advances and steps forward in the coming period. The development of the US organisation is crucial for the whole International. We appeal to all comrades in the organisation not to conduct themselves in any way that will damage our work or weaken our ability to build the section.

The IEC has had a full day's discussion on the situation which has arisen in the organisation and the differences which exist. We do not think a delegation from the IEC is necessary. The IS will be fully involved in the discussions in the US organisation and will fully report to the IEC on the situation. Having considered all of the issues raised by all comrades the IEC concludes that:

1. **1.** The discussion on differences on political, organisational and methods of party building must be conducted in a structured manner through the established structures of the organisation. It is the IEC's view that current political differences in the organisation don't justify the present factional divisions.

2. **2.** The production of documents as part of this discussion should only be done in the framework of a strictly agreed procedure with a word limit established for each document.

3. **3.** We reject the allegation that comrade KS is in anyway unaccountable or has conducted her work in an unaccountable manner.

4. **4.** The IEC agrees that the running and staffing of

KS's office in Seattle be agreed by the national EC of the organisation in consultation with KS.

5. **5.** We do not accept that the IS or majority of the EC has acted in a manner to be responsible for the divisions which have opened up within the leading bodies of the US organisation. The IEC is concerned about PL and SK's approach to the break- down of relations in the Seattle and national leadership, and hopes they will be open to a reviewing of roles to find a healthy way forward in the organisation.

6. **6.** The IEC urges all comrades to conduct discussions and debates over any differences which exist in a comradely and responsible manner taking into account the need to defend the interests of the US organisation and strengthen it and not to do anything that will damage it.

The IEC is confident that the EC, NC and membership of the organisation will over-come the problems which have arisen and will take the necessary steps to seize hold of the opportunities which exist to build a stronger organisation.

Subject: [SA-NC] Proposal for De-Escalation of Factional Crisis
Date: Thu, 7 Dec 2017 13:37:46 -0500
From: Patrick Ayers <patrick.ayers@gmail.com>
Reply-To: sa-nationalcommittee@googlegroups.com
To: sa-nationalcommittee@googlegroups.com

Hey all,

Attached is a draft resolution I would like discussed during the EC report this Sunday.

My hope and request is that comrades from both the minority and majority will consider these concrete steps toward de-escalating the internal crisis, and I would welcome if comrades have additional concrete proposals on how overcome the tensions and bring the discussion forward in the healthiest possible way.

What I fear won't work is if, following a full debate Sunday, there is no concrete process outlined committing the EC to make a serious attempt to reach an agreed framework to de-escalate the crisis. It seems clear that, up until now, the EC's failure to organize any serious effort in this direction has resulted in a continued escalation of the crisis. I hope the NC can help cut across this dynamic and push forward a serious attempt to achieve an agreed framework to move the discussion forward along healthier, less polarizing lines.

Finally, I would strongly encourage comrades to read and draw lessons from the material discussing Trotsky's approach to the 1932 crisis in the US section of the Left Opposition. Facing a deeply entrenched factional situation, though without clear principled political differences, Trotsky argued for a process of conciliation and organizational compromise.

The Trotsky selection, as well as my draft resolution, are both attached.

Solidarity,
Patrick
--

Proposal for De-Escalation of the Factional Divisions

Submitted by Patrick Ayers

Socialist Alternative has made huge strides forward in the last year, but the factional crisis in the leadership threatens to undermine these gains. The political, methodological, and organizational questions under dispute, while important, are not significant enough to justify the current scale of factional tensions. While discussing out all the issues involved, this NC needs to initiate a process of de-escalation. In that spirit, we urge the NC to consider the following proposals to move the organization in a healthier direction. We hope these points,

following discussion and potential amendments, can help form the basis of a mutually agreed framework for de-escalating the internal crisis.

1. The NC calls on the Executive Committee to open a process of dialogue aimed at reaching an agreed framework to wrap up the factional organizing now taking place on both sides. A key goal should be to reach mutually acceptable agreement on the immediate organizational issues posed, including at least: (a) roles and functioning of the EC; (b) hiring, firing, and roles of full-timers; (c) which aspects of the present disputes should be brought to the wider membership; and (d) how to structure the political debates on these issues.
2. The NC asks the EC to bring clear reports on the results of this process to the next NC phone meeting, outlining what was agreed and what could not be agreed. Further, the EC should re-establish monthly NC phone meetings to discuss our perspectives, tasks and, where necessary, the issues under debate.
3. To make any agreement work, the comrades in the minority must be prepared to accept the right of the majority to lead and accept roles that reflect the balance of opinion in the leadership. Comrades in the minority must take a responsible and respectful approach to discussions, and raise disagreements in a proportional manner that does not disrupt the ability of the majority to carry out decisions.
4. On this basis, the majority must be prepared to genuinely involve the minority in running the organization and to reach principled compromises to allow for the re-establishment of a collective leadership. The majority will need to allow for a full and open debate over important areas of political disagreement, and create an environment where all comrades feel welcome to raise their views through the appropriate structures.
5. Establishing a healthy environment for debate that elevates comrades' political understanding will require all comrades to refrain from exaggerations and to carefully avoid mischaracterizing one another's views. A conscientious approach toward double-checking to fully understand comrades actual views before repeating them or drafting counter-arguments is always best, but it is essential if we hope to overcome the atmosphere tension, suspicion, and mistrust.
6. The NC recognizes that there are substantial challenges to re-building a collective leadership team in Seattle, given not only the existing tensions but also the huge, often competing pressures that arise from trying to balance our council work, mass campaign work, and the rapid development of our membership and branches. We urge comrades to avoid a provocative approach to one another and to enter into a genuine dialogue to rebuild working relations.
7. This NC affirms its confidence in the accountability of KS and the council office. Moving past this discussion will be a crucial step toward of rebuilding a collective leadership in Seattle. While all comrades have the right to clearly register their views on the origins of this crisis at this NC, going forward this NC urges all comrades to put those questions to rest to allow the organization to move forward.

“Averting an unprincipled split”

From ***Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party,*** Chapter 5 “Crisis of the American section” by Dianne Feeley, Paul Le Blanc and Thomas Twiss. Originally published in 1982.

In the early 1930s a faction fight divided the young Communist League of America with a majority led by James P. Cannon and Arne Swabeck and a minority led by Max Schachtman, Martin Abern, and Albert Glotzer. By 1932-33 the fight had brought the CLA to the verge of a split. Arne Swabeck visited Trotsky in Turkey in early 1933 in an attempt to win Trotsky’s support to the majority faction. As Swabeck described the situation there were no questions of principle on which the two factions disagreed. Rather, the political questions in dispute were “of what conception one has of a communist organization. What methods should be employed?” (*Supplement, 1929-1922*, p. 195) He depicted the minority as advocating methods that would continue to restrict the CLA’s activities to literary ones, while the majority wanted more participation in the class struggle. Also, the minority had opposed sending Swabeck as the CLA’s official representative to the preconference of the International Left Opposition, which was held in France in February 1933.

When the majority had asked if the minority wanted its own representative at the preconference, the minority demanded that a national conference be convened immediately. Swabeck explained to Trotsky that the majority was not against a conference, but wanted ample time to discuss national and international questions in depth. The two factions also had disagreed over whether or not Max Eastman should be allowed to participate in a public meeting to answer Stalinist slanders. And, finally, Swabeck complained that Schachtman “viewed everything as a personal questions” and that in editing *The Militant* he “keeps the comrades waiting, and edits the paper in a far too individualistic fashion.: (*Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement I,* 1929-33, p. 199)

Differences had also arisen over internal organizational questions. At the June 1932 plenum of the National Committee, the majority proposed that three additional majority supporters be co-opted onto the National Committee in New York. Initially, the minority agreed, but later reversed its position and the co-optation was rejected in a national referendum vote. The majority contended that the New York branch, which supported the NC minority, was not proletarian enough. To correct this, the majority proposed that only workers be accepted as new members for a six-month period and that all members be obliged to actively participate and report on their activities in a mass organization. The minority, in combination with another grouping, opposed the resolution and it was defeated.

On Swabeck’s departure for Europe to participate in the preconference, he had suggested that Cannon be assigned to take his place as national secretary. The minority rejected this and argued instead for a secretariat of two comrades, Cannon and Abern. Swabeck further charged that the minority had joined in unprincipled blocs with other CLA groupings in order to oppose criticism of members for direct violations of discipline. And in April/May 1932 the minority had begun to work as an organized faction with its own center, finances, etc. But since there were no major political differences and the minority had not put out its own platform, Swabeck argued that the minority faction had no principled basis.

Trotsky gave his evaluation of the situation in the conversation with Swabeck and later in a series of letters to Swabeck, Schachtman, and Glotzer. Trotsky basically accepted Swabeck’s assessment that the fundamental source of the problem in the CLA was in the different traditions of the two main factions and in the heterogeneity of the League’s social composition, coupled with the new organizational tasks of the league:

> I have only been able to determine that the majority of the central committee consists of comrades who are, so to speak, more American, who were involved in revolutionary organizations even before the advent of the Communist Party, in the IWW, while the leaders of the minority are younger comrades who haven't worked in the unions and the revolutionary organizations. The other point is that according to Comrade Swabeck's reports the workers in the local organizations, especially those with trade union experience, tend to go with the majority, while the intellectuals, etc., who have come to the organization more or less on an ideological basis, go with the minority. This division is not absolutely accurate, but is more or less correct. It is important insofar as it corresponds to the facts for there are certain socially based points of support. Since the organization was oriented more toward propaganda work, this can account for the fact that these differences or divergences, which are based in the social composition of the organization, have not yet broken through to the surface. Up till now, for both groups, it has been a question of finding the correct propaganda formulations, and since the different compositions of the two groups and the different traditions (or in the one case--absence of traditions) have not yet found political expression, they are channeled, so to speak, into side roads--into organizational and personal questions, etc. That is what is most dangerous. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 199)

Yet these factors in themselves did not necessitate a split--particularly if the League successfully managed to direct its efforts outward. Trotsky noted:

> The very fact that the two factions have different social compositions and different traditions is not sufficient to make a split necessary, for every party is formed from different groups, elements, etc., and is not socially homogenous. And every party is a melting pot, but there has to be activity. The present situation in the League will become a melting pot. To a certain extent this is dependent on the opportunities and successes. If you score successes, this will weld together the best elements. In case of failures and inch-by-inch developments, the discontent can find its expression in a split. (*Supplement,* 1929-33 pp. 199-200)

Trotsky emphasized the importance of the party's turning outward, and its interrelationship with the party's internal life:

> Not convincing, it seems to me, is the allegation that in spite of the hopes of any 'optimists' the situation became even more acute after the League began to pass from the propaganda to the agitation stage. It is by passing from one stage into another that the malady usually comes to the surface. But serious successes in the field of mass work will inevitably produce a favorable influence upon the internal relations and in every case provoke a radical regroupment by gradual isolation of the demoralized elements. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 213)

In such circumstances with political ideals so ill-defined, Trotsky strongly opposed the perspective of a split. As Trotsky explained to Swabeck: "A split would destroy the League and compromise the movement seriously. One cannot explain a split to the workers by unclear social stratifications on the one hand and the expression that these find in organizational and political forms on the other." (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 200*)*

And he insisted on the same point to the minority leaders, writing to Glotzer: "...a split without a clear political character is the most dangerous kind of miscarriage, one which can kill both the mother and the child." (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 217)

In light of the disastrous consequences of such a split, Trotsky turned his attention to the subjective sources of the intensity of the differences within the CLA. As Trotsky characterized the solution to the situation, the political immaturity of the organization was responsible:

> When an organization is politically mature and its members have experience in factional struggle, the frictions can be held in check until the major political differences are evident. However, the debates often appear to be purely personal and organizational. The special nature of the situation consists in the fact that the intensity of the struggle does not correspond to the stage of developments in the formation of factions. Both factions find themselves, so to speak, in a state of infancy, they have no clearly developed form. On the other hand, they are already organized as

> factions and confront the League more or less with a split. And that can destroy it. When a split takes place after intense political struggles, it can be understandable and natural. But the way things stand in the League, I believe there is also an element of personal fault involved. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* pp. 200-201)

In an effort to forestall a split Trotsky cautioned restraint on both sides. To Swabeck, representing the majority, Trotsky emphasized the responsibility of the majority for the intensity of the factional struggle: "The fact that the conflict has flared up so prematurely and with such intensity, and that no one knows hot to cool it down--that means to me to be a negative symptom for the leadership." (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 201)

He further remarked:

> After having a series of discussions with you and becoming acquainted with the [CLA] documents, I think--entirely apart from any assessment of the minority's attitude--that in the organizational policy of the majority of the central committee there are elements of formal intransigence which may appear as bureaucratism and which in any case will injure rather than enhance the authority of the central committee and its influence… The Oppositional minority has a certain right to manifest impatience but the majority leadership has no such right. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* pp. 212-13)

On the other hand, in letters to the minority, Trotsky emphasized the minority's responsibility. To Schachtman he wrote: "I would really like to implore you, as well as your friends, not to be so nervous, so impatient, to adopt a longer-range perspective and not for a moment to forget that we have an international organization that is not at all inclined to adopt a one-sided view and in whose eyes the 'aggressor,' the instigator, has much more to lose than to win." (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 214)

Similarly, he advised Glotzer: "Do not in any case or under any circumstances exacerbate the situation in the League… Any impatience on the part of your group would make a split very likely… Patience, dear Glotzer, you must prepare yourself for a long-term work." (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 217)

With regard to specific differences, Trotsky focused on the errors of the majority while addressing Swabeck, and the errors of the minority in his correspondence with Schachtman and Glotzer. To Swabeck, Trotsky condemned the majority's position on a whole series of questions. First, regarding the question of the co-optation of the National Committee, Trotsky doubted this necessity. (*Cooptation* means the leadership appointing an additional person or additional people to a leadership body rather than making such an addition through elections within the organization as a whole.) Trotsky thought such an action by the majority would appear to members as undemocratic and factionally motivated, and characterized this move as evidence of "organizational intolerance." He reviewed:

> Let's take the question of cooptation, for instance: Comrade Swabeck himself recognizes that this measure did not benefit the popularity of the leadership. I wonder if the results really justify this measure. The figures are very interesting: the members of the local organization see that all resolutions have been adopted unanimously and a proposal is made for cooptations in order to reinforce the 'majority.' The members ask themselves : 'What majority? You have been able to clarify your standpoint so that the minority has been forced to follow suit.' The coopation proposal has caused dissatisfaction among the membership. On the one hand, they see it as undemocratic, on the other, as factional, as dangerous for the unity of the organization. So there were very good reasons motivating the no vote. The membership does not want a leadership artificially imposed upon it and, secondly, it has good enough reasons to be concerned about the organization. The result was the vote against the majority and the shaking of the majority's position despite the fact that it wished to strengthen its position. It was an inappropriate measure and revealed perhaps too much organizational intolerance. Given the present situation, it would perhaps be better in the long run not to carry out cooptations. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p 201)

Trotsky further remarked: "In order to justify the cooptation you would have had to propose a resolution that forced the minority to vote against it. That would have made the emergency measure

clear to the organization. But perhaps such a course of action was impossible since there were no such deepgoing differences of opinion, and that very fact made the cooptation an arbitrary measure." (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 203*)*

On the question of national secretary, the question of the central leadership position in the organization, Trotsky argued that the majority position exacerbated differences, and he proposed a compromise:

> Of course it was quite natural to propose Cannon as secretary, but perhaps in Cannon's position I would say: "I would like a representative of the minority to work with me as assistant secretary." That would be an attempt to cooperatively regulate the disputed questions and perhaps the frictions would indeed be lessened in the course of day-to-day collaboration. The personal-organizational disputes are out of proportion to the stage of maturation of the principled differences. It seems to me that in fact an element of organizational "ultimatism" on the part of the majority played a role. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* pp. 201.02)

In his letter to Swabeck, Trotsky also opposed the factionally-motivate proposals by the majority to deprive Abern of his vote on the resident committee of the National Committee while Swabeck was in Europe, the drafting and circulating to foreign comrades of theses on American imperialism behind the backs of the majority, and the majority proposal to transfer the national headquarters to Chicago.

At the same time, writing to Schachtman and Glotzer, Trotsky criticized the protests of the minority against sending Swabeck to Europe for the preconference and to visit Trotsky.

Finally, Trotsky explained to both groups that neither side could gain substantially from a victory at the national conference of the CLA scheduled for June-July 1933. And if the faction with a small majority at the conference attempted to use their victory to change everything in the party, a split would ensue and members would be lost. He explained to Swabeck:

> The third conference in June-July: In the present situation what can it accomplish? Perhaps it can adopt good resolutions, but as far as the disputes between the different groupings are concerned we can say: 110 here and 100 there or the other way around. Everything will be as before. The majority stands only to lose, since it cannot hope to win eight seats as against one for the minority. In such a situation personal relations play a very great role. Naturally, if one says the split is unavoidable, I have my 51 percent, I am going to set a course for throwing the others out--this can be carried through to the end. But there must be *political reasons* for it... We must express this perspective very clearly: what do the comrades hope to gain from a new conference and what can they hope to gain--110 to 100? If you chart a course toward establishing a majority of a few percent on one side and then changing everything, then you will just lose members, because immediately an element will appear which heads for the sidelines. (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 202)

In the same vein, Trotsky wrote to Schachtman: "In one of your letters you gave expression to the hope that the next conference will settle the disputes. That is not my opinion at all. If your group gets 51 percent that would not change anything at all." (*Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 214)

And to Glotzer he wrote:

> It also seems to me that it is wrong to hope for a national convention that will 'put everything right.' Under present circumstances the convention could only bring about an unimportant shift in the relationship of forces. Whether your group has five and the other group four on the central committee, or the other way around, is rather unimportant since each group is dependent on the other if things are not to be driven to a split, i.e., a catastrophe. *(Supplement, 1929-33,* p. 217*)*

Besides appealing to both sides for restraint, Trotsky requested the "determined intervention" of the International Secretariat of the ILO in order to prevent a split. With the aid of Trotsky and the International Secretariat, a truce was accepted by both sides in the spring of 1933 and a split was

averted under the joint leadership of cannon and Shachtman, the American section thrived and became a significant revolutionary force during the next six years.

Overcoming past differences in 1938

...Trotsky was also concerned that steps be taken to overcome past differences. In this regard, he advised a conciliatory approach by the leaders of the former majority in dealing with the former minority:

> Don't you believe that some concrete and sincere steps could be made by the leaders of the former majority in order to eliminate the psychological remnants of the old struggle? What could this step be? In the first place, an open discussion in the committee with the most representative comrades of the former minority: Have we any principled differences with you? What are your organizational, or practical, or personal objections? Now, at the beginning of a great new chapter in the life of the party, we on our own part are absolutely ready to eliminate all the hindrances to close and harmonious cooperation. We are ready, for example, to eliminate anything resembling a factional caucus in the central committee. You find that the party regime is not sufficiently democratic? We are absolutely ready to accept every practical suggestion in order to eliminate any bureaucratic tendency and amplify the general party democracy, and so on. Such a discussion should be conducted without official procedure; that is, without concern for formulation in the minutes, etc. If the first discussion of such kind reveals itself more or less promising, it could be repeated during the convention, especially with the consent of the members of the new National Committee.
>
> The initiative should issue from the "majority," which only by general goodwill can disarm the minority. Let us imagine that some of the minority representatives, in spite of the best will on your part, continue their factional position. But the question is: Who will win by such a march of events? Not the factionalists surely. They will isolate themselves from their own closest friends. For the inner education and cohesion of the central committee, such a sincere attempt to reestablish the dull mutual confidence could have only the best influence. (*Writings, 1936-37,* pp. 477-78)

Although his major emphasis in this period was on democracy, Trotsky simultaneously advised the former minority leader Glotzer that this must be tempered with a sense of responsibility. When Glotzer objected to the party regime, Trotsky advised him to be patient:

> But there are methods of fighting for party democracy which are very dangerous to this aim. The present leadership--I mean *all* its members--is not an accidental one: it is a result of a selection, of a long period of struggle. In three to five years, new experiences can induce important changes in the composition and in the mentality of the leadership. But trying to change the leadership by some too-impatient, too-sharp measures can be fatal, and I can't conceal my impression that there are some disquieting symptoms in your letter. (*Writings, 1936-37,* p. 441)

It was particularly important in the upcoming convention to keep in mind that the majority of the membership had an entirely different organizational education than that of the Trotskyists [the majority of the membership had been recruited out of the Trotskyists' previous entrist tactic in the Socialist Party]:

> You will have, I assume, the greater half of the party composed of new elements. They agree with you on the principles but lack concrete experience in applying the principles. Their organizational education is totally different from yours. That is why your objections and arguments can assume in their heads a totally different meaning. Let us take, for example, the question whether it was or was not reasonable to enter the Socialist Party. For the "natives" the question does not exist at all. Your entry into the SP helped them to find the genuine, revolutionary road, and they will be at a loss even to understand the clash of opinions among their new leaders on this question. I will not say that therefore the question cannot be posed in the discussion but it absolutely necessary to consider the

> new milieu and to observe the necessary proportions. (*Writings, 1936-37*, p. 443)

For this reason, Trotsky urged the "old guard" to:

> ...make every effort---naturally, not at the expense of principles--to present the party unanimous drafts, or at least reduce the differences to concrete amendments to the common texts and not to present opposing drafts and force the party to choose between them. These suggestions presume, naturally, insofar as I can judge, that irreconcilable differences do not exist now in the party, and even less in the leadership… Democracy doesn't signify nonchalance and carelessness. And every outbreak of a sharp clash in the 'old guard' at this period would become inevitably prejudicial to party democracy and to the party as such. It is, naturally, not a question of forbidding the discussion, or a "gag law" in our own party. It is only a reminder that the character of the discussion must be controlled by a sense of responsibility. (*Writings, 1936-37*, p. 445)

Resolution for the US National Committee March 3-5

The December 2017 meeting of the NC voted overwhelmingly (with only 2 abstentions) to endorse the resolution adopted at the 2017 IEC meeting. This resolution appealed to all comrades to conduct the internal debate through the democratic structures of the organization. The IEC and NC were of the view that the political differences which have developed did not justify the current degree of factional division. All comrades were urged to conduct the discussion on any differences in a comradely, responsible manner taking into account the need to defend the interests of Socialist Alternative.

The IEC and NC also overwhelmingly rejected the allegations made by PL/SK that comrade KS is unaccountable or has conducted her work in an unaccountable manner or that the IS or EC majority has been primarily responsible for the divisions which have opened up between PL, SK and the majority of the EC and NC.

At the December 2017 NC there was strong criticism of the conduct and approach of PL and SK following which both comrades stated they would re-evaluate their approach and attitude. In his reply to that meeting's discussion PL also offered his resignation as National Secretary of the organization which has subsequently been accepted.

Despite the fact that the allegation that KS has been and is unaccountable was overwhelmingly rejected by both the IEC and the NC, unfortunately PL and SK have persisted in insinuating this allegation.

Of course comrades are entitled to maintain their view on this and other issues, but it is not acceptable for comrades to persistently repeat allegations which have been overwhelmingly rejected in what is, effectively, an attempt to undermine KS's work. The NC therefore, again, calls on the comrades to desist in such a negative and damaging approach.

The IEC and NC also agreed that the running and staffing of KS's office in Seattle be worked out by the national EC in consultation with KS. By a clear majority it was agreed by the EC and in discussion with comrades in Seattle that comrade W should not continue to be employed as a full-timer. Neither PL nor SK participated in the EC meeting which made this decision and made no counter proposal. They then participated in a campaign without giving any notification of their intentions to the EC alleging that W was removed because of his political differences with the leadership and now claim it is "chilling" warning to the organization. This NC totally rejects this allegation which, if it continues to be raised more widely, will be very damaging and undermine the organization and its leading bodies.

This NC reaffirms the right and responsibility of the EC to discuss, plan and organize the work of the party and allocate its resources, including full-timers, in discussion with the relevant party structures. This includes making decisions on the allocation of full-time resources.

The NC reiterates the rights of all comrades to raise and discuss differences of a political and organizational character. As the last meetings of the IEC and NC it was also agreed that the political differences which have been raised so far do not justify the degree of factional approach adopted by PL and SK. However, the political points should and need to be discussed openly and democratically. The discussion needs to be conducted through an agreed procedure. The NC agrees that the EC establish a word length for the production of documents and a limit on the number of document for a discussion on such differences.

Coming out of this NC, there should be a “pause” placed on the internal debate until mid-May so that we can focus outward on our work. In Seattle, where a City Convention is planned for April, the NC agrees a discussion should be organized over perspectives and priorities where all comrades will have the right to present their views. Disagreements should be raised in a loyal fashion, with the aim of finding agreement within the leadership bodies wherever possible, and in a proportional and balanced way that does not disrupt the vital work of building the organization. The NC strongly discourages comrades from using the discussion on Seattle perspectives and priorities to continue artificially polarizing the discussion or to conduct a proxy debate.

Given the serious tensions in the Seattle organization, the complete breakdown of relations with PL, and the need to rebuild a functioning collective leadership, the EC Convenors have for several months discussed with PL about a path toward finding another positive role for him to play in the national organization. A further factor is that since April 2017, PL has seemingly been acting as a full-time factional organizer. Given his increasingly factional priorities, it has been difficult to give him any other work. It is untenable to continue this situation. The EC Convenors urged PL to no longer be involved in the day to day work of the Seattle organization and to engage in a good-faith effort to find another role within which he could begin to rebuild working relations and trust within the organization. We have urged in this context that, following this NC meeting, PL should take a full leave from political work and to move to another city, possibly back to NYC where has said he would like to move for several years, to play a national role. PL has not engaged in this process or the discussions surrounding how to rebuild a collective national leadership in a serious way. The NC supports the approach of the EC majority and strongly urges PL to reconsider and to begin engaging seriously in a discussion about his future role.

In mid-May, we should reopen the discussion for a month to prepare for an expanded NC meeting in June. This meeting should incorporate a layer of leading comrades across the country and set a framework for how to organize a democratic discussion leading up the National Convention in a way that minimizes the damage which the present discussion could have on the organization. .

The organization’s National Convention should take place in September or October, and the pre-Convention discussion should open in July.

Moving Forward

Resolutions for the March 2018 National Committee

From Philip L, Ramy K, Sarah WK, Stephan K, and Whitney JK

A) Resolution on Moving Forward

1. The NC has now had two meetings which discussed the current disagreements on the EC and NC. To help overcome this conflict we urge all comrades to now focus on a forward-looking discussion on U.S. Perspectives and building SA in the run-up to the next NC meeting in June. The NC asks the EC to draft a Perspectives document and a Building document in a inclusive fashion. The EC will circulate the draft documents well in advance of the June NC for discussion, amendment, and then a vote at the NC.
2. The NC should strive to reach the maximum agreement and clarify any important concrete disagreements. If concrete disagreements arise, we urge all comrades to narrow them down to the most important ones and present them as amendments to the perspectives and building documents. We appeal to all comrades to approach discussions on these differences in a responsible manner which deals with the substance of the actual issues, and not as a proxy for previous debates.
3. A key element in moving forward is the EC and NC agreeing on our building priorities and implementing them together. Turning outward to implement our agreed priorities will help to create the healthiest possible atmosphere in the organization, help to re-establish comradely working relations, and provide a positive framework for political discussion and for any disagreements to be tested in practice.
4. Between now and the next NC meeting in June, the present debate regarding the previous changes to the Seattle and national ECs, the removal of Whitney and Freeman as full-timers, and the accusations about comrades' past conduct and organizational methods should be put on hold by all sides of this dispute.
5. Comrades are free to raise their political and organizational views on new issues as they arise and are asked to focus them on the discussions around the production of the perspectives and building documents.
6. If members not on the NC or Seattle City Committee request reports about the previous debates, it is the task of the NC as SA's leadership to politically convince comrades, in a democratic manner, that it's in the best interest of SA to limit the earlier discussions regarding the previous changes to the Seattle and national ECs, the removal of Whitney and Freeman as full-timers, and the accusations about comrades' past conduct and organizational methods. Attempts to artificially impose a ban on discussing past debates on the membership will not be viable and will create further complications. The NC will work to politically convince comrades to voluntarily agree that these issues should not be debated beyond the NC and Seattle City Committee.
7. The existing groups on the EC and NC are both asked to contribute to this process of working to overcome the current divisions. The NC appeals to both groupings to work toward establishing the political and organizational basis for both groupings to be dissolved in the run-up to, or immediately after, the National Convention.

B) Resolutions on Democratic Norms

The EC Majority resolution comments on some issues previously debated. We are putting forward the following resolutions as statements which clarify SA's democratic standards as we go forward.

1. In order to maintain our internal democracy, the EC has a responsibility to avoid taking actions that could be reasonably perceived as removing full-timers for holding minority views (within the general parameters of SA's politics).

2. All allegations of personal misconduct should be looked into in a calm, thorough way. Judgments should not be made until after hearing all sides. Standards for conduct apply to all comrades regardless of their views on internal debates.

3. All aspects of our work -- branch work, student work, labor work, city council work, etc. -- are overseen by our party and its democratically elected leadership structures (nationally the EC overseen by the NC and National Convention, and locally by the citywide membership meetings and democratically elected city leadership bodies).

4. We reaffirm our political confidence in KS and the Council Office. We do not agree with generalized statements that KS is unaccountable. We also reaffirm the right of members to bring up legitimate questions and criticisms about the relationship between our public representatives and the organization. Such issues should be raised through the democratic structures of the organization in a responsible manner.

Statement on the Internal Situation (not for a vote)

1. SA faces a situation where the EC and NC have become divided with two groups engaged in a sharp debate. Both groups have written documents, had discussions among themselves, and have raised their views with other NC members, NC observers, and Seattle City Committee members and observers as part of a process agreed by the EC.
2. In the interest of using the huge opportunities in front of the CWI in the U.S., all comrades should work to overcome these divisions, or at least narrow the debate to important issues of disagreement.
3. We believe there are three main underlying issues in this debate:

   (1) Overcoming the limitations of an abstract, propagandistic approach by developing effective tactics, on a principled Marxist basis, to fight for influence and/or leadership among broader layers and in movements.

   (2) Defending the democratic centralist understanding that a revolutionary organization oversees the work of its public representatives, rather than allowing public representatives to act independently and, given their weight, to direct important aspects of our party's work.

   (3) Defending SA's internal democracy. We believe the EC Majority group is increasingly locking out our views from internal discussion through administrative measures rather than an open democratic political debate on the relevant bodies. The termination of Whitney was also done in a way that suggests he was removed due to his perceived criticisms of aspects of the city council work and sympathies with a minority viewpoint on the EC. These are extremely damaging precedents for our organization's internal democracy.

4. We believe that these are important political issues which are necessary and valuable to debate. If discussed in a patient and democratic manner, it would allow the entire organization to learn and move forward together. We believe the sharp divisions in the SA leadership have developed further than what the current political differences justify, and are the result of the mistaken way these differences have been handled.
5. While we acknowledge that comrades in the minority have at times acted in an impatient or frustrated way that exacerbated tensions, in our view the EC Majority has acted in an undemocratic fashion on a number of occasions as this dispute unfolded.
6. In our view there were serious shortcomings to the debate at the December 2017 NC meeting. The NC received many documents only days before the meeting. The discussion was not organized to give extra time for minority views and for comrades to come back into the discussion to respond to allegations against them. Numerous allegations were made, we believe, without substantiation and in an exaggerated way, and without comrades hearing any reply. Stephan had to leave early (given childcare responsibilities previously communicated to the EC) and was unable to respond to many points. As Philip indicated in his very brief sum-up, he believed that, given the atmosphere that existed, it would have been counterproductive for him to respond at that time to the many allegations and arguments made.
7. We understand that the EC Majority does not agree with our claims about a number of undemocratic actions. However, we remain deeply concerned about what we perceive as unprecedented violations of SA's internal democracy. Given this, we believe it is necessary for us to be organized to defend not only our own democratic rights, but the democracy of SA as a whole.
8. EC minority comrades have made mistakes that contributed to the breakdown in working relations in the leadership. At times they acted out of frustration, hurt, or impatience and spoke in an overly sharp or provocative way at some meetings. We recognize that the minority on the EC has lost the confidence of the comrades of the EC Majority. It is the task of the minority of the EC to work over time to regain that confidence.
9. Given the level of agreement all sides have on the key issues of perspectives, program, and strategy, any talk about this debate leading "toward a split" (as happened at the February 17/18 Seattle City Committee) should be opposed by all NC members. Any comparison to expulsions (as also happened at the same City Committee meeting) is also inappropriate. Such language serves to unnecessarily deepen mistrust in the organization and makes it harder to have a clarifying debate.
10. Another issue raised at the February 17/18 Seattle City Committee was that our group was an "undeclared faction." In our view the same could be said about the group around the EC Majority. We do not think such an approach is helpful. When important differences have arisen in the CWI and SA traditionally, we have allowed full democratic rights for minorities with the aim of avoiding a minority formalizing their differences by declaring a faction. Declaring a faction can harden divisions and make it harder to overcome. The leadership of the organization should try not to push comrades into forming a faction, but should instead work to remove any

democratic concerns and patiently discuss and debate out political and organizational issues.

11. We are deeply committed to building SA and the CWI. We are also duty bound to raise our views and criticisms regarding important issues when we believe it will assist the organization. We will raise our views in a constructive fashion. When we are in a minority, we will be a loyal minority which will not obstruct the decisions of a majority (while reserving the right to criticize those decisions within the appropriate bodies of the organization). We are committed to overcoming the breakdown in personal relations.

12. We are prepared to dissolve our group once we are confident that the full democratic rights of minorities are fully respected within SA. We appeal to the EC Majority group, who has the responsibility as a majority who is leading the organization, to work to re-establish the trust of all SA members in our internal democracy. This is key to be able to reduce the unfortunate divisions within the organization. We are committed to working with the EC Majority group to assist in this task.

For City Committee Discussion: Some Issues Related to the Seattle Organization
by Tony Wilsdon and Jeremy Prickett

We have been bringing up concerns about the recent campaign proposals through the structures of the Seattle organization over the last few weeks. In this letter we want to open a discussion about some of the challenges which have faced us over the last period and how we think we could better respond to them.

These challenges - difficulty in politically consolidating our rapid growth, flowing from this the equally rapid growth of a fulltime apparatus, and the difficulty of devoting sufficient time, energy, and resources to the political development needs of the organization in the midst of mass campaigning work - are inevitable for an organization which has passed through the successful work which Seattle SA has in the last few years.

Discussing these challenges and how to better respond to them is a normal and essential part of our understanding of democratic centralism and, if conducted in the correct manner, can greatly strengthen our organization.

We feel we need to take a look at our structures and approaches to party building and discuss how they have shaped up to the tasks. In a revolutionary party, some periods of activity - such as electoral or other important mass campaigns - require a very streamlined form of organization in order to maximize their effectiveness. We feel that in Seattle elements of this streamlined system seem to be left over from the electoral campaigns of a few years ago. We believe this has had a detrimental impact on the development of cadre at the City Committee (CC), Branch Committee (BC), and branch levels.

Too often, already fully-developed campaign proposals and initiatives have arrived at the branches via the Party Building Team (PBT), staff meetings, full-timers, and the Branch Organizer meetings. This has resulted in creating the sensation of a “conveyor belt” process as the discussion at recent City Committees has shown.

We should make a special effort to present proposals in a way where comrades learn to grapple with the politics and decision-making, and thus develop their own Marxist skills with the space to take ownership, build the organization, intervene in movements, and argue Marxist tactics in the workplace. We need to build Marxist cadres who can work as part of a genuine collective leadership and who are also able to independently intervene in the class struggle.

Full-timers

Another issue linked to this is the role of full-timers. We have developed a substantial full-time team in a short period of time and these comrades play a very important role. However, a large fulltime apparatus always creates a danger of "substitutionalism" - the substituting of the efforts of full-timers for those of an active and engaged membership - which we have to discuss how to avoid. In our opinion the Seattle organization has been run too much through the efforts of full-timers rather than through the branches. In some ways this has become a substitute for the city committee, branches and branch committees to play a leadership role in coming to and implementing decisions.

Socialist Alternative hires comrades to work full time first on a political basis, and this starts with a national and international perspective. While we ask Seattle full-timers to have the starting point of national and citywide priorities and sometimes to take up specific citywide responsibilities, e.g. treasurer, for specific campaigns and to support the council work, their job is not to run the branches.

However, a key role should be to provide political support to the branches. Full-timers should be assigned to work with specific branches, and have regular one-on-one discussions with branch organizers, and a genuine back and forth with BCs, assisting them in taking leadership and ownership of their work. This would include helping the branch committees with decisions and with political development. They should also be providing extra resources to support branch decisions, discussions with members, campaigns, tabling etc. We think we can learn from how CWI branches in large cities internationally function in this regard.

Campaign work

Our campaign work has been sometimes unbalanced in terms of too great an emphasis on implementing centralized campaigns as compared to not enough emphasis on fully-rounded development of cadre development through that work. The organization has too often moved from one period of intense campaign activity to another, with too much emphasis on centrally driven campaigns without space for branches to lead and develop their own initiatives in those areas of work.

While centralized campaign work is essential for the most effective citywide and national organization, within it we should consciously be emphasizing all related opportunities for political development. This means campaign work should not be overly centralized, and not seen as an end in itself. For example, coalition work within campaigning is an important skill for working within the working class that we need all CC and BC members to get some experience in. For BCs, this means having an active lookout for what local coalitions or campaigns they can

be active in. This can lead to a healthy, and politically consolidating, debate about how to balance national, citywide, and branch priorities.

Campaigning has sometimes meant BC members having had to give up important branch development work in order to meet targets. While targets are an important part of mobilizing comrades for political work, they also need to be presented in a way that does not distort the political work, and where branches grapple with those targets and don't take them as inflexible goals. Targets have often been attached to campaigning work, without corresponding targets for the other important branch-building and cadre development work. This has resulted in active and leading comrades feeling they need to put aside other essential work in order to reach the much publicized campaign targets.

Cadre development

The key priority adopted by our national organization, after the Ginger campaign, is cadre development. We need to have a great deal more focus on this in Seattle where we exploded to 200 members and 10 branches. We must develop plans to strengthen this work. This includes the newly revived labor caucus with a focus on political development, other caucuses, branch study groups, and to empower the BC members to put a focus on using branch meeting discussions to help develop branch members. This should also mean comrades putting time aside for reading Marxist works as part of their own political development.

Our overall goal is build a base for Marxism in the working class. This is done in no small part at a branch level. Through discussions at the last two CCs we have correctly begun to redirect the emphasis to leave more space for branch initiatives. Digging roots into the workplace and community should be key task for our branches

Another feature of our recent work has been all too often to bypass the City Committee which is the elected leadership of the Seattle organization. By the time decisions come to the City Committee they have been discussed and streamlined through discussions by the PBT, SA staff meeting, and the Branch Organizer meeting. This minimizes the role of the comrades who are elected to the CC. We need to raise the authority and role of the CC and its members in our organization, and in the working class as a whole. Our goal is to have a CC that plays a central role in leading the Seattle organization and that has a living connection to the working class throughout the city and has many members who are recognized as leaders in different communities, campaigns, and workplaces.

Council Work

Another consequence has been to seriously weaken the important connection between the Council Office and branches. The council office is a critical political asset and organizing tool that belongs to the Seattle branches, and to the national organization. The work we have done through our council position (such as $15/hour, the Stepping Forward victory, Carl Haglund law, winning $29M for affordable housing in Build 1,000 Homes) have been key in raising SA's profile, and helped us begin to sink roots, among working class communities, particularly those most active in movements. The link between the council work and Seattle SA branches, through the City Committee, should be greatly strengthened, so that branches can use the council work to further sink serious roots in local working class communities.

Likewise, branches could be a very valuable resource to directly strengthen the council work, and should have a sense of ownership and investment with that work. Branch work would include but not be limited to: mobilization and speaking at key events, working with activists in campaigns around specific demands, and taking the lead in organizing political interventions, like the upcoming People's Budget which can allow the membership closer contact with the work of the council. All of which branches can further use for political development, to develop connections with key allies in their areas, and to use the council seat to win more victories for the working class. The Seattle organization should consider developing a "council coordinator" role, so that each BC/branch identifies a person in their branch to connect with the City Council office, to facilitate a two-way line of communication, and for the purpose of political development, sharing Council-office initiated political proposals with branches, helping mobilize branches to council office-initiated political actions among working-class communities, and instilling a sense of ownership of the council work within the branches.

Importance of branches

In the CWI, the branch is the basic building block of party democracy and party building. Branches should be decisive in how we conduct our work. The branch committee enables the branch to be focused, brings proposals for discussion, follows up on branch decisions and develops new emerging leaders in whatever work they are involved in. This of course must be done in the context of overall national and citywide priorities.

The citywide structures are there to provide leadership and support for this effort. The CC is elected by our annual conference, and should be the decisive decision-making body on key political priorities and proposals. It should meet more consistently on a monthly basis, or more often as needed.

The SEC is elected by the CC to help politically lead the work and to take necessary timely day-to-day decisions, to develop new proposals, to support the work of the branches, to bring a city-wide view to our work and help prioritize our work based on decisions taken by the CC. It is also responsible for convening CC meetings, help prepare the agenda and present clear proposals for discussion, debate and decision by the CC. It also should present for discussion other proposals sent by CC members, branches and BCs for discussion at the CC.

Looking Forward

Clearly, during elections we needed a streamlined organization that can organize a disciplined campaign. We will need to reemphasize central structures in 2019 to re-elect Kshama. But even then, we must balance the role of the branches. It should be clarified that the organizing is bending the stick towards more centralized structure on a temporary basis, and only as needed.

An essential process has to be a sharper focus on political development. This primarily occurs at the branch and BC level. This needs to be through one-on-one discussions and study groups based on branches or sometimes a couple of nearby branches. BC members can gain excellent experience by leading study groups. Also, as at present, emerging leaders should be invited to attend and participate in CC meetings to further enable their development.

Because we have grown so fast in Seattle, and just moved to 10 branches, there is special need to politically develop Branch Organizers, many of whom are very new members. The Branch Organizer meeting should be restructured to primarily focus on political development. A smaller part of the meetings should provide space for an interactive process on branch building, strategies, etc. Lastly, weekly Branch Organizer meetings are both time-consuming and by meeting every week do not allow enough space for comrades to develop. We should consider holding them no more than every other week, allowing time instead for one-on-one discussions between branch organizers and branch-assigned full-timers, and shifting emphasis toward BCs and branches taking more ownership of campaign work and political development in the Seattle organization.

Successes and Challenges in Building Seattle SA

A Contribution to the Discussion Initiated by Tony and Jeremy's Document about Organizational Structures

By Ramy Khalil and Sarah White
November 8, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Seattle Socialist Alternative has grown rapidly from 50 members to over 200 members in only 4 years, while leading mass campaigns that have had a significant impact among Seattle workers and the U.S. left. In this same period, we successfully made the transition from 2 to 10 branches (although we temporarily merged 2 of the 10 branches because of summer vacations and so many Seattle branch leaders being in Minneapolis). It has been a real challenge to grow so fast starting with only a small layer of cadre.

This year in particular, we have experienced difficulties and challenges in Seattle, particularly over the summer and fall. In our view this is mainly a result of a number of disruptions facing our leadership team and a certain weakening of the Seattle Executive Committee and of the Party-Building Team.

This year we lost Jess when she moved to Ireland for personal reasons after serving on the Seattle Executive Committee and as the City Organizer. This required transitioning Ty into the City Organizer position and onto the SEC. The Party-Building Team was also weakened when we arranged for Freeman to work in the Bay Area most of this year and for Sasha to work in Minneapolis for half of this year. (Even though they were replaced by excellent comrades the turnover was still disruptive). As Bryan K. outlined at our City Committee in June, the national Executive Committee also proposed moving Stephan to national work and off the Seattle Executive Committee and the Party-Building Team. Over-all the PBT went from five to four full-timers (plus Whitney part-time), and the lack of an office, alongside comrades being out of town for long periods, added further challenges.

To put this discussion in its proper context, we believe it helps to start with a balance sheet of our work in Seattle in recent years and the organizational structures we developed to meet the challenges we faced.

1. TREMENDOUS PROGRESS

We are very proud of the tremendous successes and achievements of the Seattle organization. These have come through our hard work, imagination and political seriousness, with tremendous assistance from comrades nationally and internationally. We have scored historic victories for the socialist movement and the CWI with the election of the first independent socialist in a major U.S. city in decades and leading the struggle to pass $15 in the first major U.S. city. We also led a historic campaign to re-elect Kshama as well as other major socialist electoral challenges (Sawant in 2012 and Spear in 2014). We also stopped rent hikes for 7,000 SHA residents, passed the Carl Haglund law, helped block the police bunker, won $29 million for affordable housing, taxed the rich, won rights for renters, passed Indigenous People's Day, and more.

We have played a key role in quadrupling SA's membership nationally and helping comrades learn how to lead mass work and develop a dialogue among broader layers of working people. We have set a pioneering model for the U.S. left for how to use an elected position, helping the socialist movement develop bold new tactics.

In the labor movement we have established ourselves as a known force and developed valuable relationships with a wide layer of leading left union activists. For the first time, we had an SA member on the MLK Central Labor Council starting in 2014 and 2015 (Kshama), and again in 2017 (Justin V). We have made modest but important steps toward building SA in an organized way within key unions, most recently highlighted by two members being elected onto the SEA E-Board, another comrade being elected onto a local WFSE E-Board, and the presence we are developing in the building trades.

Throughout this time we have seen a qualitative political growth of many members and an important layer of developing cadre. We have developed a number of new working-class women leaders at all levels of the organization. We have grown from 2 to 10 branches in 4 years - possibly the fastest growth of members and branches throughout the CWI over this period. This would not have been possible without a significant development of a wider layer of consolidated members, cadre, and a broader leadership layer developing in the branches and citywide. The City Committee assisted this by developing more branches and keeping the size of each branch smaller to open the space for a greater number of members to participate in each branch and take on positions of leadership and responsibility.

We have developed our annual democratic City Conventions (with over 100 members attending the 2016 City Convention and 150 in 2017, including visitors from other branches). We have also established: a 27-member City Committee which meets almost every month (with additional invitations), a well-organized Party Building Team and council office team that have helped to develop a new layer of comrades stepping up as full-timers, weekly meetings of the Branch Organizers, and bi-monthly meetings of the Paper, Recruitment, and Finance organizers.

We did this while freeing up full-timers to dedicate resources to the national organization or leave Seattle to make extended visits to assist other areas or relocate for political or personal reasons (Patrick to New York and Jess to Ireland — each of whom served as the main City Organizer — as well as Sasha to Minneapolis this year and Freeman to the Bay Area this year).

We fully agree with Tony and Jeremy that it is useful to review our structures to ensure they measure up to our current needs and to ensure we're seizing the most important opportunities around us. We always need to be flexible about our organizational structures so that they suit our political goals and the current conditions. Where we can identify ways that we can make changes that would be more effective, we absolutely should. At the same time, we should be clear about the major gains and achievements we have made and the effectiveness of the structures we have developed over the past few years. In our opinion these structures have been vital to developing our work and helping speed up the political development of comrades.

While Jeremy and Tony point to a number of real challenges we face, we believe their document left out the main causes of the challenges that our work has faced in Seattle this year: turnover, disruptions, and weakening of the SEC and Party Building Team.

2. BALANCING DIFFERENT FORMS OF EDUCATION

We agree with the emphasis in Tony and Jeremy's document on studying Marxist literature and politically developing comrades through BC, branch, and small group discussions. But we feel the document downplays the value of other aspects of cadre development. Experience in the class struggle has been just as valuable.

Participating in recent mass struggles have been crucial for developing cadre. These include: our election campaigns, *15 Now*, BLM, Bernie's campaign (especially the internal debate about our Bernie tactic), leading or participating in Trump protests, the work of our council office, housing justice campaigns, and labor struggles like the 2015 teachers strike, the teachers May Day 2017 strike vote, and the cement workers' strike.

When comrades experience first-hand the attacks from the corporate Democrats in City Hall or the betrayals of the Democratic Party Super-Delegates, the labor leaders, or Bernie Sanders himself, it really clarifies who is on which side of the barricades in the class struggle. When comrades participate in these mass campaigns where we have to engage broad layers of ordinary working people, comrades become personally invested in and connected to the struggles of the working class and the oppressed. Comrades also learn how to *apply* what they've learned from studying Marxist writings to living, breathing struggles of the working class. We learn immensely from engaging with the challenges and complications of connecting with different people's consciousness and working to raise their consciousness — in an effective yet principled way. This is where the rubber meets the road.

We are very fortunate that there has been a rising tide of radicalization and movements since 2011 where we have gained experience and, in some cases, led struggles. This window will not always be open. We will not always have the fortune of having a city councilmember or the opportunity to participate in social movements, with all their twists and turns, in which our members can learn to interact with other political trends and argue for our ideas.

The whole Seattle organization (and national and international organizations) politically developed out of the experiences of discussing and debating our demands, strategy and tactics throughout the Fight for $15 in 2014 when we had to make a number of rapid tactical turns and compromises to mass consciousness and the union leadership. Out of these experiences, a whole layer of members learned how to apply Marxist theory, strategy, and tactics to a living struggle, enabling us to forge a new layer of emerging cadre.

Nor have mass campaigns stopped us from studying Marxist writings. Most branches and BCs continue discussing SA/CWI and Marxist readings at their weekly meetings during many of our mass campaigns.

Even at the height of our re-election battle in 2015, there were regular monthly meetings of the City Committee and weekly Branch Organizer meetings in order to combat the pressure towards a top-down approach that is inherent in such an intense election campaign. These meetings played a critical role by including the branch leaders in discussing the twists and turns of the campaign, getting their feedback, giving them more ownership of the campaign, and finding ways to include the members in the campaign. Through the branch organizer meetings, we made major efforts to involve the branches in the work of the re-election campaign and had real success in actively

involving the members. The SEC also made sure to have weekly meetings of our especially enlarged staff in 2015 that discussed international and historical questions which ensured we were politicizing our work.

3. EDUCATIONAL FORMATS

One-on-one discussions around readings is a critical part of our methods for developing cadre. But with our recent rapid growth, we have had to take new initiatives to bridge the gap between our large number of new members and our small number of cadre (who are often occupied leading council work, party-building, and campaigns). In addition to one-on-one discussions, we have regularly organized day schools and study groups when possible, and mobilized members to the national summer camps, CWI Schools, regional summer camps, and national conventions.

Specifically, over 50 Seattle comrades participated in the 2016 National Convention, 47 Seattle comrades participated in the 2016 Pacific Region Summer Camp, 55 Seattle comrades participated in the 2017 National Summer School, and 52 Seattle comrades participated in the 2017 Pacific Region Summer Camp. We have also encouraged use of the new edition of our New Member Reading Packet and the very important SA Intermediate Recommended Readings.

We have also worked to use the political discussions and debates within SA for the maximum educational effect. In 2016 the SEC and City Committee organized a special citywide membership meeting to openly debate our tactics towards the Bernie Sanders campaign. Along with discussions in the City Committee and branches, these debates helped many comrades deepen their political understanding.

In April and May of this year we organized 5 special day schools for members to engage in the debate in SA on Identity Politics and Member's Bulletin #87. These schools discussed specific readings on BLM, the Marxist approach towards fighting oppression, and the philosophy of post-modernism which underlies Identity Politics. These readings and debates raised the political understanding of the Seattle organization and increased the confidence of members to boldly argue a Marxist case for fighting oppression.

We believe the SEC and City Committee have overall struck a good balance between outward action campaigns and internal ideological education. At times, we have argued against a campaigning focus to make space for cadre development through readings and internal discussion. For example, at the 2016 City Convention, when some comrades moved a proposal to launch a housing campaign, the Seattle Executive Committee argued against it to ensure there was time for reading, discussion, and strengthening the BCs.

4. THE ROLE OF SA FULL-TIMERS

Tony and Jeremy's document makes good points about the dangers of becoming over-reliant on full-timers. We agree that full-timers should not substitute themselves for the membership. Full-timers should work to maximize the active participation, engagement, and decision-making of the wider membership.

Across the country, we have encountered fresh layers of people moving toward socialist politics, but starting from a very basic level of political understanding. Everywhere we've grown this has presented special challenges, but especially here in Seattle given the scale of our growth. This challenge was further compounded from 2013 onwards as most of Seattle's more experienced

cadre were forced to put their attention toward the pressing challenges of the council office and our mass campaign work, leaving less time for party-building tasks. Visits from leading comrades from other countries helped, and we took on a number of promising newer members as full-timers, asking them to take on challenges before they were fully prepared in many cases.

Under these circumstances, we think the full-timers have done a great job of striving to educate and maximize members' participation and involvement. Tony and Jeremy's document argues that the full-timers' "job is not to run the branches." But it is important to recognize that 7 out of 10 Seattle Branch Organizers are not full-timers. It is often useful to learn and compare our work with other CWI sections, and our understanding is that this is a good ratio of branch leaders to full-timers compared with other cities where the CWI has multiple branches in one city.

The full-timers assisted our growth to 10 branches — not by substituting themselves for others — but by helping newer members for a temporary period, with the goal of the full-timers making themselves replaceable as soon as possible. Josh, for example, plays a decisive role in his branch, but helped Justin grow into becoming a Branch Organizer. Freeman was also a Branch Organizer and he worked to develop other BC members able to take over running the branch (first Tiffani, now Colin). Rebekah plays a very valuable role as a full-timer, not by substituting herself for other BC members, but as part of a team. The SEC asked other full-timers to play similar roles as we transitioned to 10 branches. We have taken many steps forward and some steps back, but overall we believe these methods have succeeded in developing a whole new layer of comrades, who are in reality running the daily activities of the branches, not the full-timers.

Tony and Jeremy's document argues that our full-timers have "become a substitute for the city committee, branches and branch committees." However, we should remember that the City Committee has been able to assert itself when it felt it necessary to disagree with proposals presented by SEC full-timers. This happened not only recently with the resolution about our work in the fall but also the proposal in early 2017 to launch a housing ballot initiative.

But one thing we do think would help the City Committee have more influence over our work is to ensure that the SEC convenes the City Committee meetings on a consistent monthly schedule. We urge the SEC to pick a consistent day of the month, such as the last Saturday of each month, to ensure that the City Committee meets monthly consistently.

We also urge the SEC to prepare the meetings in advance more so that the City Committee receives information and proposals at least a few days before the meeting rather than last minute at the meeting itself. Such a short amount of time often does not allow the City Committee to seriously consider proposals or, when necessary, present thoughtful amendments or alternatives.

5. BRANCH ORGANIZERS MEETINGS

We have real concerns about Tony and Jeremy's suggestion that Branch Organizers meet every two weeks instead of weekly, and to reduce the role of the meetings as a space for discussion and debate about our priorities and work. The weekly meetings of BOs have been absolutely vital for politically developing the BOs and providing a forum for branches to make demands and give input on the direction of our work in a timely fashion. Although Tony and Jeremy's document argues for greater branch involvement in decision-making (with which we agree), we are concerned that this suggestion would actually result in the opposite outcome.

The first part of the weekly BO meetings have always had a political discussion, and then the second part was usually a more practical discussion on our next steps as an organization (which in itself often brings up political questions). The Party-Building Team aims to give the BOs and — through them — the branches ownership of the political and organisational proposals. For example, the SEC brought the discussion about Affordable Seattle to the BOs very early on to get feedback. The SEC also brought the discussion about a 2017 ballot initiative for affordable housing early on to the BOs. Their feedback, together with the City Committee discussions, convinced the SEC that it was best not to go ahead with the ballot initiative in 2017. The City Committee also had good political discussions about our demands around Block the Bunker based on initial and early discussions with the BOs.

We cannot see how proposing that less frequent BO meetings that have more of a study group character would help the BOs and the branches have more ownership politically and organizationally of our work. This is especially true for working comrades; it sounds counter-intuitive that more meetings are better for working comrades. But the reality is that without a clear structure of regular meetings and involvement, it can be much harder for comrades who are not full-timers to stay on top of what our organization is doing and to influence and own it.

We fully support strengthening the role of the City Committee in guiding the work in Seattle, as Tony and Jeremy suggest. But weakening the role of the Branch Organizers meetings would be counter-productive in giving branches a space to assert themselves and play a role guiding the Seattle work on a weekly basis.

6. LEADERSHIP

We are concerned that Tony and Jeremy's document unintentionally downplays the importance of leadership. For example, their document argues: "Too often, already fully-developed campaign proposals and initiatives have arrived at the branches via the Party Building Team (PBT), staff meetings, full-timers, and the Branch Organizer meetings. This has resulted in creating the sensation of a 'conveyor belt' process."

We disagree that the leading bodies (which has mainly been the elected SEC, not the bodies mentioned above) should not bring well thought-out proposals to the wider membership. In practice, such an approach would actually make it harder for the City Committee or the wider membership to have a meaningful discussion and participate in making decisions. We also are concerned this would be a recipe for making our work less strategic, less organized, and more clumsy.

Elected leadership bodies have a responsibility to brainstorm, draft, debate, and present well thought-out proposals to the membership. That is a big part of what we elect leaders to do. Those who draft proposals should share with the membership the thinking and debate behind the proposal to involve the members and help them take ownership over the process. The membership then has the power to reject, amend, or adopt those proposals. This back-and-forth process of proposals, feedback, criticism, and debate is the best way to come up with the best final product.

(Proposals do not have to originate only in leadership bodies; all members and branches are encouraged to make suggestions or proposals through the structures of our organization. In fact,

we saw a number of members moving proposals relatively recently at our last citywide convention.)

Every BC knows from experience that branches would not function well if the BOs and BCs did not draft ideas and proposals to present to branches for feedback and debate. In the same way, our Seattle organization would become weaker and less effective if the SEC and City Committee were not drafting proposals to discuss and debate with one another, the BOs, and the wider membership.

Whenever possible, the SEC needs to be responsible for working out ideas and drafting proposals well in advance, to allow time for full discussion, concerns, feedback from the City Committee, Branch Organizers, and the wider membership. This is particularly important for working comrades and comrades from oppressed communities to have ample time to give input.

The weekly Branch Organizer meetings have played a crucial role in providing a timely two-way dialogue about proposals, often floating ideas in the BCs or branches to test them out and allow a real dialogue to take place before proposals are finalized by the SEC and City Committee.

In reality, strong centralized leadership structures are essential for providing the framework for the maximum membership involvement, political education, and democratic control over the work. A weaker, less organized leadership will not empower the members. Enabling branches to give more input requires a strong leadership and clear centralized decision-making structures.

A strong leadership with transparent structures and well thought-out proposals will make clear how members can weigh in and put their stamp on the discussions and decisions. To actually achieve this requires a stronger, not weaker, central leadership in the form of the SEC and full-time resources for the efficient functioning of a citywide leadership. The weakening of the SEC and PBT in 2017 has made it harder, not easier, to bring thought-out discussions in a prepared manner in advance. This is not to suggest that the SEC always succeeded in the past in bringing proposals early enough or with sufficient preparation. This is a constant challenge that is part of the political development and strengthening of all our leadership bodies.

7. CITY-WIDE DECISION-MAKING AND NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED BRANCH WORK

We support the idea of branches looking to focus on specific issues in their neighborhoods in order to sink roots in communities where that makes sense. This is an essential aspect of our drive to divide up larger branches and establish as many small and neighborhood-based branches as possible. Branches focused on building a base in certain neighborhoods could also help us recruit and develop more members of color.

At each stage, we have to concretely weigh up the pros and cons of community-specific work in a certain neighborhood in order to balance that with city-wide, national, or even international priorities. We are not a loose federation of autonomous branches. Our strength stems in part from our numbers and unity.

If an individual branch wants to launch a major initiative that will absorb a lot of their time in their one specific neighborhood, it could be a great idea, but they first should run it by the SEC to consciously weigh up whether the local campaign will conflict with other city-wide priorities. We also have to consider the important strategic priority of orientating our work to the issues that are

engaging the most recruitable workers and youth, which, at this stage, are often not campaigns based in only one neighborhood. Many people are being radicalized by international and national issues such as inequality, racism, the climate crisis, Trump, Bernie, etc.

Branches and branch committees serve as basic building blocks and democratic units of the organization. However, branches' specific weight and decision-making role changes as we grow. When we began election campaigns in 2012 and began growing rapidly in 2014, we had to create new city-wide structures to use our party in the most effective way. We created the City Committee first and foremost to be the political rudder of the local organization. As a relatively large body of 27 people, it has to focus on discussing and debating political perspectives and guiding our overall work.

One individual branch is not sufficient for harnessing and directing the potential that exists with a city-wide membership of 200 and 10 branches, or democratically deciding the work of the city-wide organization. We need all our branches to be able, when necessary, to act in a unified fashion to strike the sharpest blow against our political enemies in the political establishment and make the biggest impact for our politics.

For example, at the time of writing this, we need to turn all Seattle branches urgently to try to help elect Ginger in Minneapolis. This requires using the central full-timers (who have not gone to Minneapolis) to assist the branches to participate in phone-banks by using phone-bank shift targets. In addition, we want to make the most of the the November 1 campout at City Hall. Both these campaigns should be taken up by all branches in a collective, unified way as much as possible.

We need city-wide leadership bodies to oversee and direct all our various areas of work such as the City Council or union work, which go far beyond the boundaries of any one branch. The City Committee is empowered to make decisions on behalf of the entire city-wide organization, since it is elected by the citywide membership at the City Convention. The City Committee elects the SEC to serve as a day-to-day leadership, with an overview and decision-making power over all areas of our work: the Party-Building Team, union work, student work, City Council work, etc. The SEC is accountable to the City Committee, and all its decisions are subject to the City Committee's review and can be overturned by the City Committee. And, in turn, the City Committee is accountable to the citywide membership meetings and the City Convention, which can review and overturn the City Committee's decisions.

Although we will always need to adjust our structures to adapt to new situations in the future, these city-wide structures have served us well in meeting the challenges of recent years.

8. INTEGRATING OUR COUNCIL WORK AND OUR WIDER PARTY WORK

We fully agree with the need for greater communication, integration, and coordination between our council office and our party/branches.

The starting point to strengthen the cohesion of our council work with the wider work of our party is political. Bringing the central political challenges and discussions facing our council office - our key priorities, demands, and messaging - into the City Committee and into the branches for democratic discussion, feedback, debate, and decision-making is the most important way to create collective ownership and improved coordination.

We fully appreciate the tremendous pressures and workload that both the SEC and the council office are under. We have tremendous respect for the fantastic work that the SEC, Kshama, and the council office have done. In order for SA to learn the most and reap the maximum benefits from this tremendous work, we think it would be better if there were more political discussions on the City Committee about the key plans, strategies, and policy ideas of our council office. We also think that we can all collectively do better in regularly informing the branches of the work our council office is undertaking.

Wherever the organization agrees to take up campaigns and initiatives centered around our council office, we should find creative ways to integrate the branches into the practical work. In this respect, the recent integration of the Affordable Seattle mobilizations for the People's Budget was an excellent example. But we need to make sure to bring important *political discussions* from the council work into the City Committee and branches, not only opportunities for involvement.

We suggest that our SEC and council office prioritize making time for a council aide to draft regular political reports about our council work to share with our City Committee and branches. Council staff and the SEC would review the draft before circulating it to the City Committee. This flow of political information would help a lot to improve coordination between branches and our council office, and it would better equip the City Committee to guide all our work city-wide.

One challenge we should keep in mind is that our council office is regularly compelled to carry out initiatives that are completely correct and necessary, but they are often not high priorities for the branches to take up. In order to recruit to a revolutionary organization, our branches often have to orient to a politicized minority, whereas our council office often has to address the immediate needs of specific constituents and a broad electorate who are not always as radicalized or engaged in mass struggles. This is not always the case but sometimes, for example, our council office has to orient toward faith based groups or non-profits, whereas SA branches are often engaged with activist groups like the People's Party and DSA. Sometimes this means that our council office and our branches have to put forward slightly different slogans and demands, even when we are intervening on the same exact issue. There are no easy or universal solutions to these built-in tensions, but they require conscious political discussion and democratic decisions by the elected leadership bodies of the organization.

This is part of why we are concerned about the approach Tony and Jeremy's document suggests for how to integrate the branches into the council work. There is a risk that local branches would get mixed messages about priorities from our council office and our elected party leadership bodies. We welcome initiatives from our council office, but they should be discussed and coordinated on an ongoing basis with the elected structures -- the SEC, and on wider issues with the City Committee. Initiatives from our council office need to be considered in conjunction with the priorities set by the membership through the democratic structures before determining which initiatives, demands, and slogans make sense for our branches to take up.

9. TARGETS

Tony and Jeremy's document argues: "Campaigning has sometimes meant BC members having had to give up important branch development work in order to meet targets." In our experience, the NC, SEC and PBT aims to bring proposals for targets to branches as a starting point for the branch to discuss and amend based on their discussion, not as a dictate. Even after branches discuss and

adopt targets, they should be a rough guideline, a goal to shoot for, not a mandatory quota. BC members shouldn't run themselves ragged trying to meet targets or substitute themselves for the lack of their members' engagement. Targets should be used to help us analyse a political situation, estimate what is possible in a specific political context, clarify priorities, set a collective goal and, on the basis of politically motivating those goals, maximize members' participation in activities. Targets should also be reviewed periodically as we are working toward the targets, and also after we complete the campaign, in order to review our progress and assess the merits of our perspectives and tactics.

It is true there has been, at times, a gap between how we aim to use targets and how they actually get implemented. Comrades at all levels of leadership should strive to avoid these imbalances. This is part of the necessary process of new BCs learning how to use targets and strike the right balance in their work.

It is somewhat inaccurate for Tony and Jeremy's document to claim that "targets have often been attached to campaigning work, without corresponding targets for other important branch building and cadre development work." We have had targets not only for campaigning but also for cadre development, paper sales, recruitment, study groups, summer camp participation, and fundraising to enable comrades to participate in camps and summer schools.

In the Ginger Jentzen campaign, we are seeing again how our use of targets, along with our politics, allow us to punch above our weight. Part of what separates us from others on the left is our serious, scientific approach to our work. Through discussion of our perspectives, we determine where we want to go and then develop targets to measure our impact on events.

10. BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESSES

In order to make further big strides forward in building SA in Seattle, sinking roots in the working class, and developing cadre, we believe we need to develop plans to carry out a bold campaign in 2018 that can harness our accumulated size and weight. One possible option the City Committee has begun discussing is doing a major affordable housing campaign in 2018 alongside our allies. We should use the next few months to discuss our options at all levels of the Seattle organization.

A significant victory for affordable housing in 2018 would put us in the best position to re-elect Kshama in 2019. It would also once again have an impact on the left across the country, helping to strengthen SA as a pole of attraction for the best workers and youth. Such a campaign, alongside other priorities like resisting Trump and the lawsuits against Kshama, will also serve as a vital framework for activity that will greatly aid the development of our members by providing concrete campaigns for members to step into, to take on political and organizational responsibilities. A serious campaign that draws in other important forces will also provide an invaluable experience in struggle where different ideas and politics will be put to the test in a real living battle.

A vital part of developing cadre is winning trust and leadership within broader movements, communities, workplaces, and unions. A bold campaign for affordable housing will open up big opportunities for a wider layer of members to take on leading roles in building the campaign and sink roots in key neighborhoods, movements, workplaces, and unions.

We should be looking to take significant steps forward in building SA in Seattle in 2018 to lay the strongest foundation for re-electing Kshama in 2019. With a strong political leadership, a dynamic campaign, and a systematic approach to political education and party-building, we should strive to develop the cadre to enable us to grow to 300 members and 15 branches possibly as early as 2018. This would position us well to not only lead a successful campaign to re-elect Kshama in 2019, but also fight to establish a wider slate of independent left and socialist candidates for City Council in 2019, which would represent a major breakthrough for independent left politics, not only in Seattle, but nation-wide.

SEC Response on the Seattle Structures Debate

Submitted to the Seattle City Committee for discussion, 1/23/18

A number of very important issues over how Seattle Socialist Alternative organizes itself have come up around the discussion initiated on our structures. This short document is not meant to be a comprehensive statement on those issues, but rather a brief comment from the SEC on some of the key questions alongside several concrete proposed changes to our structures.

The SEC will produce a Seattle perspectives document in the coming weeks to be discussed and debated first in the City Committee meeting and then at the upcoming Seattle Convention open to all Seattle SA members.

In addition to building around housing issues, the anti-Trump movement, the women's movement and cadre development in the coming months, we will also need to participate in a broader independent defense campaign surrounding the lawsuits targeting Kshama.

Out of this debate we are confident the City Committee will arrive at proposals to better build our organization, develop leaders, strengthen the connection between the branches and Council Office and further solidify links with the national and international organization. We thank Tony W, Jeremy P, Sarah W, Ramy K, Emily M, Justin B, Rebekah L and other Seattle City Committee comrades for their contributions to this discussion.

Seattle and National Conventions

This year Socialist Alternative will be holding a National Convention (date and location TBD), which is our highest decision-making body made up of elected delegates from all over the country and with representatives from the international leadership of the CWI present.

The pre-convention discussion period and the National Convention itself will be opportunities to develop cadre in our branches. Engagement with the national discussions around the anti-Trump movement, the midterm elections, DSA, #MeToo, party-building and many other topics at the national level will help develop Seattle comrades as well as input from the CWI leadership.

The Seattle Convention, tentatively planned for late March, needs to be well-prepared with a document on local perspectives that will help trace out the economic, social and political terrain for our work. Flowing from this, the SEC will bring a draft priorities resolution to the City Committee as well that will be further developed and decided at the City Committee in advance of the convention. The Seattle Convention will elect a new City Committee which will elect a new SEC.

Leadership Structures

The City Committee needs to further develop into a strong leadership body for the Seattle organization. This means a CC that discusses national and local perspectives and works out the central tasks for building Socialist Alternative in the Seattle area. It should aim to meet monthly, or more often as needed, with proposals sent out well in advance of the meeting, allowing all comrades to fully participate in leading the Seattle work. To allow comrades to schedule and prepare for their participation in CC meetings, we will plan to hold them on the third Saturday of each month, adjusted as needed to avoid important conflicts.

The SEC is the day-to-day leadership of the Seattle organization, and needs a regular overview of the work. In addition to this, the SEC is re-establishing the Council Strategy Team - an SEC sub-committee necessary to focus on more detailed policy and strategy questions - which will be made up of Kshama, Ty and Calvin, with others invited as needed. The current SEC has chosen Ty and Calvin to convene SEC meetings at present. The SEC will give monthly political reports to the City Committee meetings on our key discussions and activities, alongside proposals for the work of SA Seattle going forward.

The Branch Organizer meetings should come together generally once a month. Ideally, this would happen shortly after the City Committee each month, which as the citywide elected leadership should set the tone for the organization that month. We should be flexible about the regularity and timing of the branch organizer meetings, allowing ourselves the room to respond to events. BO meetings should continue to be centered around political discussions but with an effort to include more non-fulltimers in giving lead-offs, with somewhat more focus on the concrete challenges facing BC's, along with the tasks of implementing City Committee decisions.

These changes are designed to aid political development and give a greater role to the elected citywide leadership body of the City Committee and more space where possible for BCs and branches to take ownership of their work. These changes can also help limit the number of hours spent in meetings so that Branch Organizers can focus more on activity, study groups and individual discussions that can help them develop the work. Branch organizers should have a fulltimer (or other experienced member) assigned to them for regular individual discussions on their branch's work.

Integration of Party Building, Council Work, and Branches

Our council position in Seattle is the collective achievement of Socialist Alternative and the CWI, and how we use this position is fundamentally rooted in the wider strategic aims of building the Marxist movement in Seattle and internationally. This general principle in no way contradicts that, in Seattle especially, the work of the whole organization must be heavily geared toward defending and strengthening this "stronghold in enemy territory" that we've carved out. Our

Council Office is our strongest weapon for campaign work, socialist propaganda, and building the party, and the work of SA Seattle should aim to take full advantage of this position. There is of course a danger of linking up our branches and wider party to the council work in an imbalanced way or under-emphasizing other aspects of our work. However, an overcorrection for these potential pressures poses the opposite risk of underutilizing our strongest asset to develop SA's position in Seattle politics, and can also deprive our branches of the extremely valuable experience of building struggles around the opportunities opened up through our council work.

Unfortunately, over the whole past period, the SEC feels there has been an exaggerated separation between our work in the Council Office and the rest of the organization. We urgently need to overcome this politically, and we feel a part of this should be through a shift in our structures.

One part of this should be changing the composition of our weekly staff meetings to include comrades both from the Council Office as well as other local SA and national SA fulltimers. This will help raise the political level of the discussion and strengthen the connection to our work in the Council Office. We also want to encourage greater participation and responsibility for branches in the campaigns and coalitions currently centered around our Council Office. Part of this will include, in coordination with the SEC, more direct lines of communication between the Council Office and the branches where needed.

Every leading comrade should be involved in party-building work, and we want every member to be involved in strengthening our organization. The role of the Party Building Team is to help organize and lead this wider work, under the direction of the CC, the SEC, and the elected national leadership. The SEC has asked Calvin to attend to the PBT meetings for now to strengthen the cohesion of our work. The roles on the Party Building Team (Emily, Jordan, Kailyn, Sasha, Ty) and the Council Staff (Ted, Rebekah, Adam, Kshama) will continue to be worked out in practice with full and regular reports given to the City Committee.

We feel that the proposals above can strengthen our capacity as a revolutionary Marxist organization in this key stronghold of the US section of the CWI. Our structures need to be flexible, changes need to be tested out, and further shifts in our structures will flow from changes in the objective situation, the strength of our organization and the needs of cadre development as well as the class struggle itself. In this way we can build our organization, win further victories in Seattle, and prepare to help lead the working class to victory against capitalism.