

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 be 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 of 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, Melanchon--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.

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 millennials, 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.