

# Committee for a Workers' International

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To the US EC

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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 Saunio for the International Secretariat.