

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



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## **Building for International Women's Day and May Day Strikes**

Letter from the EC: February 23, 2017

Trump's attacks on working class people, immigrants and the environment continue. The resistance has delivered damage to Trump, and there is potential for the movement to escalate. SA members have helped to pass resolutions in a few unions across the country supporting the idea of strike action on both March 8th and May 1st. We should continue to amplify this call for the union leaders, women's organizations and immigrant rights groups to organize strikes across the country, particularly on May 1st.

These will not be mostly traditional strikes but will largely have the character of individual or small groups of workers taking the day off work, calling in sick, leaving work early to join a day time rally, like was seen in the Occupy Oakland strike at the end of 2011. However, the actions taken on March 8th and May 1st will still represent a big step forward under American conditions by helping to popularize the idea of strikes and a more working class based strategy. Comrades should read the material we have recently published on the SA website for more of our thinking and how we pose it.

The EC will be working to help provide branches with materials to build for strikes and working-class action on International Women's Day and May Day. Others will undoubtedly organize the main protests, but we can popularize the idea of strike action, sell papers and get contacts for Socialist Alternative in this heightened mood. We will have an online petition, leaflets, posters, model union resolutions, anti-Trump merchandise and sign-up sheets to use at paper

sales and protests to popularize the idea of May Day strikes.

Trump and the resistance against him represent a radically new political situation. We are in highly volatile and uncharted waters. This puts a premium on political discussion to stay on top of new developments and come to a common understanding of what is happening and the implications for our work, program, strategy and tactics.

This bulletin contains some important political documents from our National Committee meeting this past weekend to help the organization adjust to this new situation. The US Perspectives Update and the Immediate Priorities resolutions were passed unanimously at the meeting and amended by their authors based on the discussion at the NC. The document dealing with Our Tactics in the Anti-Trump Resistance is being presented here as a discussion document, and it was not voted on at the National Committee (NC).

Every branch should hold a special branch meeting within the next 2 weeks with an NC meeting attendee giving a report back (skyping in where needed) on the political and organizational conclusions drawn at our recent National Committee meeting. Branches should make a serious effort to mobilize members to attend this important meeting and should contact the EC if they do not have a NC attendee in their branch.

The recent NC meeting also held an important discussion on SA's approach to fighting oppression, and we will be producing another Members Bulletin on that topic in the coming weeks.

Over 50 people have registered national Summer School in the last 5 days! There are only 5 days left to get the “early bird special” registration fee by the end of February. This Summer School will help train and politically educate ourselves to build the socialist movement in the anti-Trump resistance. Comrades can stay longer to help with the exciting Ginger Jentzen campaign in Minneapolis. We will be joined by international visitors from Mexico, Quebec, Canada and possibly Spain as well as the International Center of the CWI. Get registered today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution with over 300 socialists from across the country and all over the globe!

Comradely,  
Bryan Koulouris, for the Executive Committee

### **U.S. Perspectives Update: The Trump Regime and the Developing Rebellion**

Drafted by Tom Crean and Philip Locker,  
2/13/17

*Unanimously approved at the February National Committee*

Since this document was drafted the Trump regime has become less stable. His National Security advisor has resigned under a cloud of lies, and this could lead to further investigations. Trump’s arch-reactionary proposal for Labor Secretary was pushed back and forced to withdraw. Following this we had the incredible spectacle of Trump’s rambling and confrontational press conference. There is growing alarm within ruling circles, and the potential for a more rapid fall of Trump is possible. At the same time Trump is on the offensive on immigration, transphobia and at

Standing Rock. A majority of the ruling class still supports (or tolerates) Trump and they will be very cautious about bringing down a President given the damage it would inflict on their political system. Trump’s position can also be strengthened based on new events. While the movement against Trump is correctly emboldened we should warn against any complacency. Trump remains a very serious threat, and it will require a far stronger movement to defeat him, including decisive working-class action which major strikes on May Day would point towards.

#### **Introduction**

On January 22, Trump and his cabinet of billionaires launched their blitzkrieg issuing 20 executive orders in 10 days. Trump's early actions targeted immigrants, Muslims, women's reproductive rights, health care, the environment and regulation of the financial sector. And there is a lot more to come.

But Trump has also sparked a wave of mass protest, completely unprecedented for any newly elected president. This is the biggest revolt in U.S. society since the Vietnam War. The slogans and mood at the protests reflects the low level of people first moving into action with liberal and patriotic illusions; we should be patient with this because it is an inevitable part of the early stages of widening struggle. Alongside this though, there is a mood to take decisive and determined action to stop Trump’s agenda.

Besides the millions who participated in the women's marches on January 21, tens of thousands went to airports across the country on January 28 to protest the ban on allowing people from seven majority Muslim nations into the U.S. and to demand that people who had already

arrived and were being detained should be released. Tens of thousands more participated in protests against the ban in subsequent days. Record numbers flooded the Senate with messages against the nomination of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education and Republican congressmen have been forced to flee local town halls by angry protesters denouncing them because of the threatened attack on health care.

Of huge importance there is now also a layer of tens of thousands of people are subscribing to socialist magazines, joining socialist organizations and stepping up to regularly attend protests and political events. This phase of mass struggle, interest in socialist ideas and determined direct action will likely last, with ups and downs, at least through the summer.

Trump also suffered his first major setback as federal judges halting his poorly conceived and poorly executed ban. In the wake of this fiasco, Trump's poll numbers began to slump. While he entered the White House as the least popular newly elected president in modern history, Trump retained the support of his base in the first days of the administration as he was seen to be acting decisively on his promises. The Muslim ban did not appear to be unpopular initially with his base but as the days passed and the media put a human face on those being kept from entering the country support clearly slipped.

Whether this is the start of a deeper slide in Trump's support remains to be seen. What is clear is that sections of society, particularly youth and women at this stage, are being radicalized by the Trump presidency. This radicalization, as we explain below, is now laying the basis for a full-blown "Tea Party of the left" which is forcing the Democratic Party leadership to take a more

aggressive, oppositional stance to maintain their credibility. This is an extension of the trends we pointed to in the Sanders campaign last year. It confirms our view that society is not shifting to the right but there is a very deep polarization. The other side of this polarization is that the Trump presidency is opening the door for the development of a more serious and virulent far right than we have seen in decades.

In the medium term the Trump presidency could deeply damage the right and lay the basis for sweeping electoral defeats for the Republicans. His administration could even implode. But 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. We must not conclude that even with the weaknesses already exposed that Trump will inevitably be defeated. We must also bear in mind that Trump can take advantage of terrorist attacks and possibly foreign military conflicts to distract from his domestic difficulties.

### **Characterizing the New Regime**

This is a deeply reactionary regime with real authoritarian and Bonapartist tendencies. It has threatened to purge the state apparatus of any dissent, promoted "alternative facts" and declared that it's at "war" with the mainstream bourgeois media. Trump tweets about a "so-called judge" and "outrageous, political" rulings. Lurking in the background of the administration's most provocative acts is the far right nationalist Steve Bannon.

There is a lot of talk from liberals and some on the left about the unprecedented nature of the

Trump regime and some have gone further to argue that the ground is being laid for a dictatorship. Based on Trump's actions and statements it certainly can't be excluded that he might be prepared to go in a much more authoritarian direction at a certain stage.

While Trump's presidency certainly is unprecedented, we also need to remember that the American ruling class has been prepared again and again to unleash the state against its opponents in ways which violate their own constitution, from the Palmer Raids in 1919 to the McCarthyite witch hunt against the left in the 1950s to the attacks on the black freedom movement by J Edgar Hoover's FBI using agent provocateurs, smear campaigns and targeted assassinations. Reagan's administration was also deeply reactionary. The ruling class have given ever greater powers to the "imperial presidency," making the U.S. head of state the most powerful in the Western world. Bush junior's administration was also extremely right-wing and carried out police state type measures after 9/11.

But to date there has been no point where the U.S. ruling class, the strongest in the world, was prepared to simply abandon bourgeois democracy which has served them so well. And they see no reason to abandon it now. Furthermore there are a number of ways for the ruling class to exert pressure on Trump despite the enormous power of the presidency.

But at the moment, as an article in the New York Times (February 5) pointed out, "President Trump's hyperactive first days in office, along with evidence that the two Republican-controlled houses of Congress will do the president's bidding with few questions asked, leaves the judiciary as the only branch of government

standing between the new administration and constitutional chaos." We should expect that the Supreme Court will defend the prerogatives of the judicial branch. But as the same Times article pointed out, opponents of Trump pinning their hopes on the Supreme Court should remember that Chief Justice Roberts backed up some of the most unconstitutional measures of the Bush administration and once signed a dissenting opinion which began with the words "America is at war with radical Islamists" and then added his own statement which railed about the American people losing control of foreign policy to "unelected, politically unaccountable judges."

The possibility of a full blown constitutional crisis if Trump at some stage decides to ignore the rulings of federal judges certainly cannot be ruled out. This combined with an ongoing mass movement could create truly explosive conditions in society. Of course certain events like terrorist attacks can aid Trump in justifying authoritarian measures, but a full blown authoritarian power grab would face popular resistance on a scale possibly never seen in U.S. history as well as moves by sections of the ruling class to block him.

### **Trump's Foreign Policy and the World Economy**

Some of Trump's actions – including setting out to rip up the limited regulation of the financial sector (Dodd/Frank) brought in by Obama and promising to lower taxes for the rich – are making Wall Street happy. The energy sector is salivating at the prospect of ripping up environmental regulation.

But on many fronts, Trump is deeply disquieting to key sections of the ruling class here and internationally. The Muslim ban, for example, is opposed by large sections of big business

because they see it as literally bad for business. 130 companies, centered in the tech sector, signed an “amicus curiae” (“friend of the court”) brief to the federal appeals court in San Francisco opposing the ban.

Trump has threatened to pull apart key elements of the “post war order,” calling NATO “obsolete,” indicating that the pulling apart of the European Union would be a good thing, while pushing “America first” protectionist rhetoric which threatens to ignite a trade war with Mexico and China. And of course he keeps refusing to criticize Putin although other members of his administration have.

At the recent Davos, Switzerland gathering of the super-rich, Xi Jinping, the head of the Chinese Communist Party, gave a speech promoting China as the staunchest defender of globalization. This is certainly an ironic turn of events. But it is even more incredible to hear Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the head of the Eurogroup which includes all the Eurozone finance ministers, declare, “We've always said that America is our best friend. If that's no longer the case, if that's what we need to understand from Donald Trump, then of course Europe will look for new friends. China is a very strong candidate for that.” (New York Times, January 31).

Trump has linked his foreign policy to his oft stated promise to bring good jobs back to the U.S. He claims this will happen by punishing U.S. companies that make goods elsewhere for import back into the U.S. This will allegedly force them to make the goods here. He has also threatened foreign companies (eg from Germany) which make goods in Mexico or other countries aimed at the U.S. market. He has promised domestic manufacturing companies that he will rip up all

regulations (eg environmental) that allegedly constrain them.

Most dramatically he scrapped the Trans Pacific Partnership and has threatened to pull out of or renegotiate NAFTA. We obviously don't mourn the demise of the TPP because of its corporate anti-environment, anti-labor agenda. NAFTA and other trade deals have contributed to the massive loss of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. But the bigger cause was automation.

Under capitalism today the invidious choice is between continuing with some form of neoliberal globalization or returning to the protectionism and isolationism of the interwar period. As the CWI has argued, globalization has already run out of steam. For example global trade growth which fueled globalization has stalled. But the alternative of protectionist policies is also a complete dead end. It would be enormously challenging to impose across the board tariffs in an era where the global supply chain makes it very difficult to define goods as “made in the U.S.” In reality such an approach would only accelerate the relative decline of U.S. imperialism compared to its rivals, first and foremost emerging Chinese imperialism.

The shaky world economy is heading towards a new downturn but a trade war would tip it immediately into a sharp recession which would lead to a massive loss of jobs in the U.S. China is the number 2 and Mexico is the number 3 trade partners of the U.S. in terms of volume of trade. Trump doesn't seem to grasp what a disaster this would be for his own political position but he also may believe that the rhetoric he is using is a good “negotiating position” from which he can extract “better deals” from key trading partners.

Nevertheless even if this is his plan he is playing with fire. The ruling class may force Trump to retreat from this protectionist posture which most of them strenuously oppose. An indication of the opposition serious protectionist measures would face was the negative reaction of corporate America to the half-baked proposal for a 20% tax on imports from Mexico to make Mexico “pay for the wall,” a cost which in this scheme would largely be passed on to American consumers.

### **Trump Facing Setbacks on Several Fronts**

The botched launch of the Muslim ban is a real setback for Trump but this should in no way lead us to conclude that he will inevitably fail on all other fronts. For one thing, the ban itself, or key parts of it, could ultimately be upheld by the courts or Trump could issue a new executive order less liable to successful legal challenge.

But Trump and the Republicans are now in trouble of their own making on another key front: healthcare. Having made the “repeal and replacement” of Obamacare such a central plank, the Republicans are facing the predictable problem of delivering on their promise without millions losing health care coverage thereby creating a full blown political catastrophe for themselves. The biggest issue is the extension of Medicaid which brought healthcare to millions of working people and which Republicans want to repeal. This benefits many in rural areas where Trump won big so he needs to tread very carefully. What is really astonishing is that the Republicans did not actually have an agreed plan for what was to replace Obamacare.

Now Trump says it may be 2018 until a new system is in place while Paul Ryan says “definitely” by the end of this year. The entire

situation is likely to infuriate a section of right wing activists while anti-Trump activists are putting serious pressure on Republican Congress members who could be vulnerable in 2018. Somewhere between now and the mid-term elections the Republicans will have to unveil, pass, and defend their alternative which is very likely to please almost no-one and may in fact be simply a watered down, worse version of Obamacare.

### **How the Anti-Trump Movement Will Develop**

We obviously welcome the difficulties the Republicans are facing. But we need to ask: what is likely to be the main focus of resistance to the Trump administration in the coming weeks as the Muslim ban is fought out in the courts and healthcare recedes temporarily as a galvanizing issue?

We are likely to see massive mobilizations in the coming weeks against the ramping up of mass deportations, against a right wing appointee to the Supreme Court and against Trump's shredding of environmental regulations. The organizers of the Women's March have called for a “general strike”/ “day without a woman” on International Women's Day, March 8. April 15, tax day, will see actions across the country. There will be a march for science on Earth Day, April 22 and a likely massive environmental march on April 29. All of this activity could culminate in May Day protests and strike actions on a scale not seen since 2006. We have been absolutely correct to call from the start for 100 days of resistance and pointing to the key role of mass non-violent civil disobedience and strike action as well as mass demonstrations.

But it is the attacks on immigrants that are likely to create the sharpest confrontations as has

already been indicated by the resistance to the ban. This however is only the beginning of attacks on immigrant communities with the expansion of the ICE force and the border patrol and widening the net massively for who is targeted for deportation. One estimate is that 8 million would now be “eligible” to be deported out of a total of 11 million undocumented immigrants although clearly carrying out that scale of deportations is logistically almost impossible. There are already reports of people with no criminal record whatsoever being targeted for deportation.

A key flashpoint in the struggle against the deportation juggernaut will be “sanctuary cities” but it could also spread beyond them if the administration orders widespread workplace raids. There are an estimated 300 sanctuary cities around the country and many of them are not on the coasts. Trump's threat to cut federal funding from these cities may be very difficult to implement legally but nevertheless certain symbolic battles may take place which will be key in galvanizing people.

The real issue, as we have raised, is if Trump orders ICE to return to workplace raids and neighborhoods sweeps, especially in major urban areas. This is actually the only way for the state to really ramp up deportations beyond the levels of the Obama administration. This could detonate strikes and more serious attempts to slow the deportation machine down with mass confrontations with the ICE forces.

Furthermore, real working class resistance to the deportations, foreshadowed by the Taxi Workers Alliance's brief strike in New York on January 28, would have a lot more support from native born people, including sections of the native born working class, than in 2006.

While it may seem dangerous for Trump to head down this path, it is hard to see how he avoids it having been humiliated by the courts on the ban, with the Obamacare repeal stalled and with ruling class resistance to his trade agenda. If Trump is not seen to deliver results, the more reactionary sections of his base will become disillusioned. And he clearly has the legal authority to undertake this escalation.

### **Medium Term Developments**

Obviously the current pace of demonstrations and mobilizations will not last indefinitely. At some point the movement will hit a lull either because of a clear defeat; a clear victory which brings this phase of struggle to a conclusion; or simply exhaustion. This could happen as early as the summer of 2017 although it's impossible to be definite at this juncture.

In the second half of 2017, the question of ousting the Republicans in Congress in the midterms will begin to become a bigger point of discussion. When we come into 2018 this will be a central focus for the liberal left and progressive workers. The developments inside the Democrats and Republicans are discussed below.

But we need to be clear that there are a whole series of issues which can lead to very serious conflicts with the Republicans and if the movement is emboldened by even partial victories, it can come back even stronger after a lull and even in the midst of a midterm election campaign.

To take one example, the immediate fight over the nomination of Gorsuch to the Supreme Court could become very sharp with the Senate Democrats under enormous pressure to filibuster. The Republicans will almost certainly defeat this



opposition and the choice of Gorsuch was skilful. He satisfies conservatives but is far from the most provocative figure Trump could have chosen. But the key point which many bourgeois commentators have raised is that this is only the first step in the Republican campaign to secure full domination over the court. It is highly likely that another justice will pass away or resign during the next three years and if the Republicans still control the Senate they will have the opportunity to put in another reactionary. This could raise the possibility of Roe v Wade being overturned for real.

### **New Women's Movement**

As we have seen in the past few weeks, a new women's movement is being born, with a radical layer of younger women coming to the fore. The Democrats will of course seek to co-opt this movement but this will be a two-edged sword as they come under serious pressure from the movement to fight harder for the defense of women's rights, first and foremost reproductive rights.

The program from the January 21st Women's March as well as their call for strike action on International Women's Day shows a potentially explosive mood among women to fight Trump. While Trump's misogyny fueled the rage, the immediate focus of this will be defending Planned Parenthood and the fear over the Supreme Court. The issue of violence against women is also a key issue, especially among young women and students.

The Women's March was not initiated by NOW and NARAL, but it reflected their politics. Planned Parenthood has tremendous authority in the movement, and unfortunately their leadership has often blocked mass action. However, with the

changing mood towards resistance, the mainstream women's organizations will either adapt or new ones will be formed. Students will be at the forefront of this process with activism on campuses being a key center of a new movement, especially the more radical wing. We could also see a combination of pressure from below affecting the mainstream women's groups while there are attempts to form new organizations. We should point to fighting unions like the nurses and some teachers' locals as a potential fighting force in the women's movement. This also points to the role of the working-class action and a united fightback.

### **Labor Struggles**

There is a coming battle over union rights. One possible way this battle could develop is against general national right to work legislation moving forward through Congress. This would be difficult to pass. With Trump busy courting certain private sector unions, particularly in the construction industry, he will possibly be more focused on attacking public sector unions. This could either take the form of more anti-union legislation directed specifically at the public sector or the Supreme Court taking up another Friedrichs style case and creating right to work conditions in the public sector nationally.

As we have explained in previous material, the reaction of the leadership of the labor movement to the threat of Friedrichs which ended with Scalia's death, was utterly weak. Key public sector unions like AFSCME, SEIU and the teacher unions, NEA and AFT, focused on signing up agency fee payers without any campaign to galvanize members into visible opposition which was necessary even if the likelihood of losing the legal battle was high. However since then the situation has changed as a result of the wider

developments in society including the Sanders campaign and the Trump election.

Already we have seen some high profile battles in the past year especially the Verizon strike which indicate a growing combativity, obviously from an extremely low level of class struggle. The Sanders campaign caused a wider debate in the labor movement about its political strategy with several unions including NNU, CWA, ATU and the American Postal Workers Union now forming a clearer left pole. It is also an indication of the mood in the base of some unions that after the election the AFT, whose leader Randi Weingarten was rabidly anti-Bernie, came out in support of Keith Ellison for head of the DNC. More generally the combativity of the wider anti-Trump movement, the increasing discussion of strike action, etc can have an effect on a section of the existing unions and could create the conditions for a much more serious pushback on anti-union attacks by the Republicans.

With the current explosive mood, discussions around workplace action and even strikes can initially work their way around the union leaderships. We see this with the calls for strikes on March 8 and May 1. The limited taxi drivers' action in New York and even the "boss sanctioned" Comcast strike against the Muslim ban has given new life to a discussion about strike action. In every decisive battle against Trump, we should point to the potential power of the working class and that the labor leaders need to back up the struggles against this reactionary agenda because the unions are also a target of right-wing policies.

### **BLM and Democratic Rights**

One other area that needs to be highlighted is the coming attack on BLM and the left and the

attempt to criminalize dissent. BLM activists are definitely in the cross hairs of this administration which intends at some point to unleash the state apparatus against them and probably other sections of the left using one excuse or another. Already we have seen Trump threaten to send "the feds" into Chicago, a center of the new black freedom movement. Trump also threatened to withhold funds from the University of California after the Berkeley campus authorities cancelled Milo Yiannopoulos' speech. At least 10 state legislatures around the country are discussing bills aimed at criminalizing dissent by, for example, making the blocking of highways or disrupting pipelines felonies punishable by time in prison (<https://theintercept.com/2017/01/23/lawmakers-in-eight-states-have-proposed-laws-criminalizing-peaceful-protest/>). An immediate point of conflict is clearly Standing Rock where Trump is aiming to rapidly complete the Dakota Access Pipeline, where unfortunately the state is in a strong position to complete the pipeline.

We must stress at every stage the vital importance of building the widest possible anti-Trump movement centered on the principle of "an injury to one is an injury to all." The debate on strategy and tactics is already in full flow and we must energetically engage in this to stress the need for a bold program which does not include simply defensive demands but also far reaching demands like a \$15 minimum wage, abolishing college tuition, ending mass incarceration and a massive investment in green infrastructure to create millions of good paying union jobs. There is the real danger of the movement or sections of it being subsumed into the Democrats' timid electoral and legal strategy. And there is also the danger of ultra-leftism coming from anarchist "street fighting" or a crude identity politics

rejection of class politics undermining the left within the movement.

As we have done at every stage we must insist on the lessons of history and the key role of the social power of the working class in galvanizing the youth and all oppressed sections of society in fighting and defeating the right. We must insist that the key task in fighting the right and the far right is political and also underline the strategic necessity of splitting the working class portion of Trump's base if we are to give the right a resounding defeat. Bernie Sanders' campaign as we have repeated over and over shows that this can be done but not if the leadership of the anti-Trump movement is controlled by the corporate wing of the Democratic Party. They are anathema to most of the white working class but also have zero capacity, as they amply demonstrated in the presidential election, of inspiring black and Latino workers.

### **Trump and the Republican Party**

As we explained earlier, the ruling class is severely divided, with some willing to work with Trump to advance their own sectoral interests, but significant sections lining up to oppose Trump, from their own class standpoint. The state apparatus is also clearly split. These divisions are a very favorable factor for the development of the anti-Trump movement.

But they are not so far leading to major cracks in the Republican Party itself, though such a development is implicit in the situation. There are several reasons for the relative unity among the Republicans so far. First of all, the Republican leadership agrees with a substantial part of Trump's agenda including repealing Obamacare, cutting taxes and environmental regulations, going after public sector unions and – up to a

point – going after Muslims and immigrants. We should not forget that large parts of the Republican Party in Congress is to the right even of the very reactionary Republicans of the Bush era. They find it hard to pass up the opportunity to push through so much of their agenda despite the qualms many of them have about Trump.

A second factor is the unholy deal which Trump made with the Christian right to win the nomination and the election, symbolized by making Pence the vice presidential nominee. Trump personally may not care about abortion but he has now created what the Christian right considers its best opportunity to overturn key parts of the “liberal agenda” in a generation, especially Roe v Wade.

The final factor in keeping the Republicans in line is Trump's implicit threat that if they don't follow his line he will work to have them replaced by more pliable Trumpians in the mid-terms. Up until now this has to be seen as a very credible threat although there are some Republicans in the House representing districts where they have less of a majority who may come under intense pressure to break from the Trump line in the coming months.

### **The Crisis of the Democratic Party**

We will produce separate material on our approach to the Democrats and the socialist left but a few points are necessary here.

A key recent article in the New York Times (January 30) painted the following picture of the situation in the Democratic Party as they try to keep up with the radicalization of sections of their base:

“The swelling anger over Mr. Trump’s week-old administration is fueling a surge of spontaneous activism that some Democrats say they have not seen since the Vietnam War. The growing and seemingly organic energy offers Democrats a prime opportunity to ride a backlash to electoral success this year and next, the same way Republicans capitalized on Tea Party rage against President Barack Obama in 2010.

“But the fury is also spurring liberal voters to demand uncompromising confrontation and resistance from their elected officials to a president they believe poses an existential threat to the country. The Democrats’ increasingly assertive base wants the party’s leaders to eschew any cooperation with Mr. Trump: They are already expressing rage at some senators for confirming the president’s cabinet appointees, and for their willingness to allow a vote on his pick for a vacant Supreme Court seat...

“Even some of the Democrats most beloved by the left are proving vulnerable to increasingly pointed criticism about their handling of Mr. Trump. Ms. Warren faced searing anger from liberals last week over her willingness to vote for the confirmation of Ben Carson, the neurosurgeon and former Republican presidential candidate, for secretary of housing and urban development. Some activists at the national committee’s meeting shouted that she had “sold us out” when her name was mentioned.

“Ms. Warren was forced to write a Facebook post explaining her vote that began, “OK, let’s talk about Dr. Ben Carson.”

The problem is very clear. The base of the Democratic Party is more inflamed than at any point since Watergate. They are looking to the party leadership to stand firm against Trump. A section, already radicalized by the Bernie campaign, is even less willing to compromise.

The Senate Democrats were having difficulty even opposing Trump's odious cabinet appointments with 14 of them voting for every single one of them up until they collectively held the line against Betsy DeVos. Key leaders like Chuck Schumer clearly understand the necessity for a firmer approach and to make some concessions to the left of the party. He and Harry Reid, the outgoing leader of the Democrats in the Senate, both support Keith Ellison for DNC chair. It is a measure of the desperation of the Congressional Democrats that after almost overwhelmingly rejecting Sanders, they are now frequently hiding behind him as the most credible face of the party.

This points again to Sanders' contradictory role both as the de facto leader of the left in the party leading the challenge to the pro-corporate leadership but also providing them political cover.

There is now increasingly open talk about emulating the Tea Party by creating a sustained grassroots campaign aimed at “stiffening spines” or preparing to oust Congressional Democrats who are not prepared to fight in the primaries next year. It is possible up to a point for this approach to have an effect. What is not possible is for the left to turn the Democrats into a “people's party.” In the most extreme and still unlikely case, the party could split with a minority of its elected officials going to a new left party.

But the dynamic being created points clearly in the medium term to a serious clash where the most radical section of the movement, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, can spin out away from the Democrats completely. Within this broad radicalized layer is the rapidly growing DSA.

It is not possible to be precise about the timing of these developments but just as we said that Trump's victory had in the short term narrowed the space for a new left party, the scale of the radicalization underway now points to that space opening up again in the next few years possibly in a very rapid and dramatic fashion.

But it should be underlined that this is a medium term perspective and that at the moment the energy of large numbers of activists is pointed at fighting the corporate leadership of the party with a view to reforming it or "taking it back."

Will 2018 be a repeat of 2006, when there was a dramatic swing to the Democrats due to the political fallout from Bush's increasing unpopularity? The Democrats that year won a majority of the state governors as well as taking control of the House. Such a dramatic shift – which would significantly alter the political terrain and objectively constrain Trump – can by no means be excluded but it also not inevitable for a number of reasons including gerrymandering and the geographical polarization of politics in the U.S. today.

### **Conclusion**

As we stated when Trump won, he is the living embodiment of decaying, predatory capitalism. His victory, far from inevitable, reflected the polarization in society, the effect of right wing populism in the absence of a real left alternative

and the loss of control by the ruling class over their own political system.

With Trump in office and ruling class division on full display, the political crisis of the system is only deepening. To the political crisis an economic crisis could soon be added with a downturn in the world economy, possibly aided by Trump's policies, provoking a recession in the U.S.

Most importantly, a mass movement on a scale never seen this early in a presidency has rocked society and could trigger the revival of the class struggle and the long dormant labor movement.

There is the real danger of Trump's administration going in an even more authoritarian direction or inflicting temporary defeats on the movement. But this will only lead to even more explosive eruptions at a later date. Under Reagan, the right had the enthusiastic backing of the ruling class. Conditions were more favorable for the right but their victory was by no means inevitable. Today conditions are more favorable broadly for the left although mass consciousness and the understanding of activists is still at an extremely low level. Most important is the opening to socialist ideas among young people.

What is critical as we keep stressing is the program of the movement, its appeal to the working-class and avoiding the twin traps of becoming co-opted by the corporate Democrats and ultra-leftism.

The role of the left in the movement will be decisive. Socialist Alternative has huge opportunities but we must orient correctly to building the movement, the left and our own

forces using a flexible tactical approach aligned to firm Marxist principles. The situation is ripe in the next period for the emergence of a mass or semi-mass left party and of a powerful Marxist current of thousands.

## **Our Strategy and Tactics in the Anti-Trump Resistance**

*Drafted by Philip Locker and Tom Crean, 2/15/17*

### **1. Character of the Trump Presidency**

The Trump presidency has ushered in a profound change in the political situation in the U.S. and internationally. Trump's policies and conduct represent a break with the traditional spectrum of ruling class politics. Trump is aggressively pursuing a hard-right nationalist agenda, continuing his right-wing populism and attacks on the establishment while displaying significant authoritarian and Bonapartist tendencies, and continuing the bizarre, erratic, and reckless behavior that characterized his campaign.

The ruling class is sharply divided in regard to Trump. The most rapacious, arrogant, and short-sighted sections support Trump. At this stage, the majority of corporate America is supporting or tolerating Trump on the basis of a very short-term and narrow-minded enthusiasm for his agenda of tax cuts and deregulation. But among important sections of the capitalist class, especially within the political establishment and state apparatus, there is significant alarm, anxiety, and opposition. This is not only based on opposition to Trump's policies. They are also increasingly horrified at the political consequences of Trump's presidency: its potential to damage U.S. imperialism internationally, the

undermining of the legitimacy of the Presidency and the political system, and the enormous political upheaval and revolt he is triggering.

Trump is so far outside the control of key sections of the ruling class, at least to a significant and highly unusual degree. At this stage the strategists of capitalism have not succeeded in bringing Trump to heel through the normal checks and balances of bourgeois politics. Over the coming months, the ruling elite will attempt to rein Trump in—or at least limit his ability to damage their interests. If they are unable to succeed, the question of removing Trump will be posed. However, it remains to be seen if sections of the ruling class will be able to muster the necessary political will and determination to successfully carry out such decisive and risky measures.

### **2. Character of the Resistance**

From the standpoint of Marxism, however, the most important development is the scale, breadth, and intensity of the movement bubbling up against Trump. The grassroots energy on the left is probably the largest since the Vietnam War era. There is a veritable ocean of resistance. We have already seen: some of the largest protests in U.S. history, in the form of the women's marches on January 21; a continuous wave of anti-Trump protests, meetings, and activism; large scale direct actions around #OccupyAirports; and now a significant national discussion about the need for strike action.

Underneath this developing mass movement is an extremely widespread politicization of society. There is a deep polarization within the country. It is important to recognize that Trump's base is still intact, but what stands out at this stage is the

scale of opposition to Trump. Trump not only lost the popular vote in the November 2016 election, but shattered previous records by reaching a majority disapproval rating within 8 days of taking office.

This mass anti-Trump sentiment is of course not homogenous. A substantial section is still “soft” and passive in its opposition to Trump and can be moved toward or away from Trump depending on events. But what is absolutely decisive for us is the large section of the anti-Trump populace, though still a minority of the country overall, that intensely and actively opposes Trump. They do not see Trump as having any legitimacy and believe he represents an existential threat. There is a feeling that the “existing order” is intolerable, and an all out struggle against him is needed.

This amounts to a mood of rebellion within significant sections of U.S. society. There are large elements of a 1968-like situation developing, though starting from a much lower consciousness and with a far weaker left and labor movement. This represents the biggest opportunity for the radical left in the U.S. since the Vietnam War era.

Key factors fueling this anti-Trump movement are: a) the popular anger at Trump’s right-wing agenda, which is a significant overreach given the underlying balance of forces and public opinion in U.S. society; b) the radicalization and struggle that has been developing since 2011 and reached a high point during the Sanders campaign in early 2016; c) Trump’s widely perceived lack of legitimacy to govern, which flows from his losing the popular vote as well as his vulgar and obnoxious conduct; d) strong opposition to Trump from large sections of the ruling class.

Trump has acted as a great unifier, bringing together all the various strands of discontent into a common struggle against a hated target. But

within this sea of resistance there are many different political trends and a wide variety of political approaches. Broadly speaking, we can separate them into four main groupings, with the caveats that there is much overlap between them and there is great variety within each.

The largest wing is liberal. This trend rests on the movement’s limited experience and its less active, older, and better-off layers. It reflects the outlook of the leadership of the Democratic Party as well as the leadership of some of the most influential and popular organizations (e.g., Planned Parenthood, ACLU, NAACP). It is reinforced by the mass media and sections of the ruling class. However, it is important to recognize that within this wing there are different shades, ranging from a more compromising establishment liberalism to a more fighting, left, and working-class liberalism.

The second and third main groupings are the progressive Democrats and left populists, exemplified by Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, respectively. The fourth and smallest trend is the radical left, which contains within itself many different strands, including the left wing of the Sanders movement, BLM and left-wing identity politics, socialists, and anarchists.

#### “People’s Power” and “Strike Action”

We saw on the Women’s marches and other mass demonstrations a feeling of “people power.” This represents a tremendous step forward, but it also reflects the low level of consciousness the movement is starting from, with widespread illusions in liberalism and populism. The working class has yet to put its own independent stamp on the anti-Trump movement in a decisive way. While many union members have participated in

protests as individuals, the organized union presence has been very limited – and, in the leadership of the movement, practically nonexistent.

At the same time, we can see the seeds of independent class action and demands within this elemental stirring of the masses. This was highlighted in the strike against Trump’s Muslim ban by New York City taxi drivers and the walkout of Comcast workers in Philadelphia.

A widespread discussion of taking strike action such as a women’s strike on March 8th, May Day strikes, and even a general strike has begun to spread in a spontaneous manner. It is noteworthy how quickly this idea has been taken up and how widely it is being discussed. This underlines the widespread politicization, the explosive mood of rebellion, and the hunger for determined and fighting methods. Millions are searching for a way forward, for the means to strike heavy blows against Trump, and are stumbling toward working-class methods of struggle though still within the context of a movement of “people’s power.” Regardless of the degree to which these calls materialize in actual strikes, which remains an open question, the very fact that this discussion has broken out is an important.

The strikes being discussed currently share many similarities to those that took place in 2011, first as part of the battle against Scott Walker in Wisconsin and later that year during the Occupy movement. These were far from traditional labor strikes. They were more the character of individual protest, of tens of thousands taking a day off work, calling in sick or taking vacation time in order to go out and protest. Only a small minority of the strikes were collectively organized

work stoppages that brought out a majority of workers at a workplace.

This was especially the case with the Occupy “General Strike” that took place in the Bay Area at the end of 2011, where tens of thousands skipped work and marched and only two unions organized collective strike action at workplaces (mainly the ILWU and somewhat the Oakland Education Association). In Wisconsin, there was a greater weight of organized labor in the movement, with the University of Wisconsin’s graduate students and public school teachers taking strike action and a discussion within labor about the idea of organizing more widespread strikes. But even there, the underlying dynamic was still a loose, unorganized, sentiment for strike action that erupted from below. Even in the case of the school teachers in Wisconsin, it had strong elements of a mass walkout triggered by the example of students walking out.

The experience of the Fight for 15 strikes is also relevant. While embracing radical, working-class methods of struggle, the strike, these largely had the character of political protests, with a minority of workers refusing to work in order to join a rally than organized strike actions taken collectively by the majority of workers at their workplaces.

The lack of organization and the very limited authority of the labor leadership or other left forces means freshly politicized layers are very open to new ideas, including socialism, as we have seen again and again. There are no deeply-rooted, authoritative leaders or organizations that people are waiting on to give them a lead. This has advantages, while also bringing its own serious complications.

This lack of organization and vacuum on the left has a dual character. On the one hand, combined with the reach of social media, there can be a big



openness to new ideas which surge forward from below in a rapid fashion. This dynamic, along with the extreme conservatism of the union leadership and the weakening of the labor movement overall, points to the likelihood of explosive actions starting by going around the official union leaders and structures, and often to initially start off among fresh, unorganized workers. But it also means the traditions, organization, and activists with experience in actually organizing a collective workplace strike to shut down businesses are missing.

It is quite possible that on March 8 we will see rallies across the country during work hours, with tens of thousands taking the day off work, calling in sick, or walking out of work. However, organized collective work stoppages involving the majority of the workplace will be a small minority on March 8. This would still represent a significant advance for the movement – a popularization of strike action which can be built upon and points towards more organized, collective, workplace strikes. We could see similar developments on May 1 but with larger numbers, more collective work actions, and a much higher level of union participation. For example, the Seattle Education Association voted to call for their state union to organize strike action on May 1 and the Seattle president of the Central Labor Council has publicly supported the idea of strikes on May 1.

In this context, there is great potential for the minority of left-wing unions that supported Sanders to gain a significant echo for more distinctly working-class demands and methods of struggle if they were prepared to give a bold and decisive lead. Unfortunately, the leaders of even these unions have so far mostly failed to rise to the occasion.

### Ebb and Flow of the Movement

This is still a very new movement. Trump has only been in office for a few weeks. The situation is extremely volatile. Such a fast-moving situation is similar to the 1930s, when Trotsky remarked that perspectives and tactics had to be worked out for a timescale of weeks and months rather than years. While being ready for sharp and rapid turns in the situation, it appears that we can expect a continuation of large-scale protest and struggle against Trump through the summer.

The movement will go through ebbs and flows. The high level of activity seen over the past few weeks cannot be sustained forever. There will be periods where the movement pauses to catch its breath, digest its experiences, and draw lessons. Different layers will move at different speeds and at times in different, even opposite, directions.

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 spreading. New events, such as terrorist attacks or foreign conflicts, can also undermine the movement and strengthen Trump for a time.

We must learn how to boldly advance when there is a surge forward in struggle, how to maintain our balance and avoid ultra-left adventures or opportunist adaptations when there are temporary lulls, and how to make an orderly retreat when there are defeats and the movement is receding.

Throughout these twists and turns we can help the most dedicated workers and youth by preparing them with an overall analysis, a realistic perspective, and a socialist strategy and program. The precondition for us to play this role is to not lose our heads, to keep a sense of proportion, and to stress first and foremost the need for political discussion and debate within our ranks to clarify the many new issues that will continue to be thrown up.

### **3. Our Program and Strategy to Fight Trump**

There is always the danger when there is a sharp turn from one period to another that an organization, no matter how revolutionary it is, lags behind. The most revolutionary party in history, the Bolsheviks, repeatedly lagged behind events at a number key turning points in the Russian revolutionary movement, which required sharp debates within their ranks to correct their course in time. Marxists need to be able to recognize a changed situation and then consciously work out the consequences that flow from it. We need to break from the old formulas, slogans, and thinking that we developed over the past 8 years of the Obama administration. The burning question of this period that will test all political trends on the left will be: "What is the most effective strategy to fight Trump?" We must put forward a program, strategy, tactics, slogans, and terminology that correspond to this radically new terrain, consciousness, and movement.

The key points we have so far developed are:

#### a) Resistance, Not Collaboration

While elementary for socialists and radicals, such a point cannot be assumed to be already understood by wider layers. In fact, a key task for the movement is to conduct a relentless ideological struggle against appeals for compromise and collaboration made by the right-wing of the Democratic Party and some labor leaders, exemplified by Hillary Clinton's statement after the election that "Trump deserves our support" and that we should "give him a chance." While this argument has lost steam since Trump has taken office, it can re-emerge again.

#### b) Building a Mass Movement

Rather than waiting until the 2018 and 2020 elections to vote out the Republicans, our focus should be on building a mass movement in the streets now that can block and eventually bring down Donald Trump.

We advocate for mass, collective struggle that is linked to our overriding task: building the power of the 99%, i.e. working people and all those marginalized by the capitalist elite. We measure the effectiveness of all strategic and tactical questions based on whether they help to enlarge the movement and raise the level of organization, consciousness, and confidence of working people and youth.

#### c) Determined, Fighting Tactics

Our argument for the need for the movement to go beyond symbolic

protests and embrace mass non-violent civil disobedience and mass direct actions to shut down business as usual was brilliantly confirmed by the eruption of protests and occupations at airports across the country in response to Trump's Muslim ban.

Of course, this does not mean we have an ultra-left attitude of opposing or having a dismissive attitude towards large-scale, mass marches. The two tactics are dialectically related. The size and sweep of the January 21 Women's March events directly helped to give confidence to the tens of thousands who flocked into airports a week later to shut them down. But we do stress that the anti-Trump movement will need to find ways to go beyond routine protests by disrupting the normal functioning of the economy and threatening the profits of big business.

Many different tactics can point in this direction: student walkouts, highway blockades, sit-down protests to block deportations or immigration detention facilities, etc. Most powerful is the ability of workers to shut down production, distribution, and services through workplace actions like slowdowns, sickouts, walkouts, and strikes.

Such ideas are getting a big response in the movement so far. There is a strong and widespread hunger for bold actions and fighting methods. With a stronger leadership, there is no doubt we would have already seen in key urban centers much larger student walkouts, highway shutdowns, and even strike action by

certain sections of unionized workers. We should be to the forefront in championing mass rallies and strikes on March 8 and May 1 as strategic steps forward.

### Against Ultra-Leftism

At the same time we must guard against the pull towards ultra-left and adventurist tactics that will appeal to some of the most angry youth and workers who are frustrated at the lack of bold action. As Lenin explained, ultra-leftism is the penalty for the sins of the opportunist leaders. The appeal of ultra-left direct actions is directly related to the timidity of the liberal and opportunist leadership of the movement so far.

Our job as socialists and Marxists is not always to advocate for or support the most radical- or extreme-sounding demands, proposals, strategies, or tactics. Our obligation is to argue for the demands and tactics that are needed to win and will be most effective for the development of the working-class movement and the fight against capitalism. In this year of celebration of the Russian Revolution we should study the example of the Bolsheviks' opposition to the Petrograd workers' efforts to seize power prematurely, before the majority of the working class nationwide was ready.

We do not support direct action by isolated groups of activists, no matter how well-meaning, that plays into the hands of the police and right-wing media

in demonizing the movement and erecting barriers for wider layers of workers to join the struggle. While this is obvious when we look at the violent tactics of the black bloc, we faced similar considerations in a less-straightforward situation at the protests at SeaTac when the numbers of protesters began to dwindle but a key section of those that remained felt strongly that the protests and occupation should continue.

While basing ourselves on the fighting spirit of the most dedicated workers and youth, we need to take into account how any action will be perceived and understood by wider layers of the working class. We orient to the most advanced layers but we must politically assist them in finding a road to the masses rather than isolating themselves. That is why we must stress when we talk about direct action and civil disobedience the need for it to be done by large numbers in a peaceful and well organized manner. It is also why we completely oppose the out-of-touch and damaging antics of the black bloc, the main effect of which is to strengthen the hand of the state to repress dissent.

### Fighting the Far Right

*Update: Since this was written, Milo Yiannopoulos has "fallen from grace" in far-right circles. However, we think that the analysis and tactics discussed below are very significant for how to deal with far-right figures, an issue which unfortunately will likely come up again soon.*

This is related to the discussion and debate among activists about how much to focus on "fighting fascists" and how to deal with the speaking tour of the vile Milo Yiannopoulos at university campuses. We share the horror of many activists at the growth of extreme right forces and strongly agree they must be vigorously fought. However, in our view the main task for activists is to be engaged in building the mass anti-Trump movement and fighting to build a powerful left-wing of that movement rather than prioritizing, as some on the left do, small scale skirmishes with far-right forces.

As socialists we argue for building well-organized mass protests against right-wing provocateurs like Milo Yiannopoulos when they do public events. There has been a debate on the left about if Milo and others should have "no platform," i.e. not be allowed to publicly speak. While Milo spouts far-right racism, sexism, and bigotry, we do not agree he is a fascist, though even more extreme-right and fascist forces are using his events to organize and build their base.

Even when dealing with fascists, there is nothing automatic about a "no platform" position. We support denying fascists and other extreme-right forces a platform and crushing them before they can gain a foothold. But this can not be artificially done, especially where they have succeeded in reaching a broader audience who will need to be broken from them firstly through political debate. The fight against fascism is 90% a political struggle. The CWI has had to

engage in debate with far right forces at times in the past period given the support for and confusion over the role of far-right and right-populist forces that exists among sections of workers in Europe.

Given the strong support for democratic rights that exists at this time, and the lack of clarity among workers and youth on whether to shut down Milo or other far-right forces, it is usually not effective to demand universities refuse to allow them to speak. In areas where they are widely opposed, we should argue for building massive, well organized, peaceful protests against them. If the protests are large enough that it becomes impossible for figures like Milo to go ahead with their events that would be ideal, but we also need to be mindful that in many cases this will not be possible at this stage. Violent tactics in the current situation will often isolate the protests, make it harder to draw in the large numbers needed at these events, and could provide political ammunition for the right to justify increased police repression.

There is no ready-made formula for how to deal with far-right and fascist forces in every instance. The tactics necessary flow from the balance of forces, the nature of the right-wing threat, and the strength of the mobilization against the reactionaries. In cases of outright fascists who are widely opposed and seen as an immediate threat, “no platform” tactics can be combined with mass mobilization. However, the central struggle would still remain political by opposing right-wing

populism and also the capitalist policies that make it possible for the “anti-establishment” right-wingers to gain a base.

We need to focus on the struggles that are affecting millions of people and not on adventurist efforts by leftists. Right now, our key focus should be on proposals like strikes for May 1st to build working-class action against Trump’s right-wing agenda.

d) **Bold Demands**

To inspire huge numbers to take action, we need fighting demands that point to an alternative vision of society that puts people and the environment above the profit-driven agenda of big business. Of course, we need to mobilize to defend against the barrage of attacks from Trump and the Republicans: on immigrants’ and women’s rights, on the gains that were won through the Affordable Care Act, defending public schools, etc.

But this needs to be linked to putting forward audacious demands that can inspire people with the promise of a dramatic improvement in their lives – demands like those popularized by Bernie Sanders, such as Medicare for all, a \$15/hr minimum wage, free higher education, an end to racist mass incarceration, and taxing the rich to fund a public works program that creates jobs, rebuilds infrastructure, and develops green energy and mass transit. Bernie’s bold program inspired enthusiasm from millions, especially young people, while

Hillary's timid, corporate-friendly proposals of tinkering around the edges failed to mobilize them.

In this new situation we should highlight the slogan "Fight Trump and the Billionaire Class" which points in a bolder, more fighting direction while still connecting effectively to the broad mood to resist Trump.

e) Splitting Trump's Base

In order to defeat Trump, it will be vitally necessary for the mass movement to win over sections of workers who mistakenly voted for Trump. A clear class approach and series of demands will be critical. If the anti-Trump movement is led by establishment liberalism, it will be much harder to undermine and split away Trump's working- and middle-class base. This is personified in the increased appeal of Sanders over Clinton to a section of Trump voters last year.

Such an approach will require a political and ideological struggle within the anti-Trump movement against not just the pro-corporate Democrats, but also leftist trends, especially those who argue against a class appeal on the basis of a form of identity politics. This is related to an argument that the white working class, or white men more broadly, are fundamentally reactionary due to them "benefiting" from Trump's policies. While agreeing that the movement should fight against the sexism and racism that does exist within broad sections of the white working class (and U.S. society more

broadly), and while rejecting the idea of watering down the movement to the lowest common denominator, we need to explain that successfully defeating Trump will require winning over a section of voters who did support Trump, so as to isolate the hardened reactionaries behind him.

f) Demanding the Democrats Fight Trump

Another front in the struggle against Trump is in Congress and in state and local governments. The anti-Trump movement has exerted enormous pressure already on the Democrats, forcing them to take a firmer stance against many of Trump's nominees and proposals, including talk of filibustering Trump's Supreme Court nominee, and many Democratic governors and mayors coming out strongly (at least in words) in defense of sanctuary cities and against Trump's Muslim ban. There is a groundswell from the base of the Democrats demanding determined efforts against Trump and against collaboration with him, seen in an avalanche of phone calls and emails to members of Congress, protests outside their homes demanding they stand up to Trump, etc.

We should participate in such efforts 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.

#### **4. Our Approach to the Democratic Party**

Such an approach can understandably raise questions in some members' minds: are we sowing illusions in the Democrats by demanding they vigorously resist Trump? Our position is that the Democratic Party is dominated by big-business, pro-capitalist interests and that we advocate for the building of a mass workers' party.

However, we must base ourselves on the needs of the movement and help the best workers and youth generalize from their experience. There is no doubt that the anti-Trump movement will try to push the Democrats to block Trump's right-wing agenda. Through this process the Democratic Party and its different wings will be tested. The criteria that they will be measured against by those revolting against Trump will be: "Do they meet the needs of the struggle against Trump and the billionaire class?" Experience will teach again and again the cowardly outlook of the Democratic Party leadership, their

conservatism in fighting Trump, their big-business ties, and their other myriad limitations. However it is important we understand the illusions and confusion that exist in this young movement. We will need a patient approach as the movement will require some time and experience for an important section to come to grips with the reality of the Democratic Party.

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.

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.

#### New Situation

How we deal with the Democrats needs to start with recognizing we are in a new situation. Politics for progressive workers and youth are now dominated by the question of fighting Trump. This has altered how the Democrats are 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. Alongside this we have seen a certain strengthening of liberalism as a leading current within the anti-Trump mood and movement.

At the same time, the outlook of the best workers and youth is that there needs to be an all-out struggle in the streets to resist Trump. They are not waiting for the 2018 or 2020 elections to vote out Trump and the Republicans. Our emphasis at this stage should be based on this healthy mood by putting forward our ideas for how to build the strongest mass movement.

Important sections of this movement will be radicalized and will draw far-reaching conclusions about capitalism and the character of the Democratic Party. But even within this layer, *at this stage*, their focus is on building a struggle from below and not on forming a new party. While many are very critical of the Democrats, their primary concern is seeing Trump defeated. The large majority of the most left-wing elements are still hoping that the Democrats can be pushed to the left rather than looking to build a political alternative to the Democrats, though of course this could change at a later stage.

Last year's Sanders campaign and the incredibly high profile Sanders currently enjoys are major factors that have helped make this outlook so widespread. Given how close the left-wing Sanders campaign came to winning the Democratic primary last year, the dominant conclusion that has been drawn is that such an approach can perhaps succeed in taking over the Democratic Party, though this is combined with significant skepticism given their experience with the obstacles thrown up against Sanders.

Since the November election, the Democratic leadership has moved to bring Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren to the forefront to try and take account of the mood of the Democratic base and the discrediting that Clinton's defeat meant for the establishment. Since then, we have seen the public profile of Sanders continue to rise, with him arguably being the most prominent figure in Democratic politics currently in the country. It is undeniable that this has had an impact on the perception of broad layers of workers, who see Sanders and his left populist approach as a leading representative of the Democratic Party.

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 have recently spoken at the airport protests and other anti-Trump rallies, strongly denounced Trump's attacks on sanctuary cities, and displayed a firmer opposition generally to Trump's nominees and policies.

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,” by creating a sustained grassroots campaign aimed at “stiffening spines” of Democratic politicians or preparing to oust in primaries those seen as refusing to fight.

#### Left Attempts to Reform the Democratic Party

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.

There are many different pathways to such a party, and we do not elevate to a principle one of these paths above the others. As long as we are clear about our strategic aim, we can be very flexible in the tactics that we deploy. We recognize that many activists are hoping that the Democratic Party can become such a “people’s party.” What would it take to actually achieve this?

Left forces like Our Revolution and Bernie Sanders supporters would need to unambiguously demand that the Democratic Party and its candidates refuse all donations from corporations and the super-rich; 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 that the party is opened up for mass membership involvement and democratic

control. To wage a serious battle for such a program, the Sanders wing would need to bring together its forces in an organized way, with a structure that allows for democratic involvement from below.

Clearly posing the tasks that would be required to transform the Democratic Party makes immediately clear how farfetched such a project is. An overwhelming majority of Democratic politicians would never abide by such conditions. Merely the threat of a powerful left force in the Democratic Party actually implementing such a program would likely trigger a split in the party. The left wing emerging from such a split could be the basis for building a broad, membership based, left party. If this was to develop we would welcome it and would want to be part of such an effort.

However, we are very skeptical about the prospects for such a scenario. Firstly, the leadership of the new left forces around the Democratic Party have not adopted such a clear program. Sanders, Our Revolution, and other forces have been extremely vague about what their program is for the Democratic Party. And the political character of the other “left” Democratic politicians is qualitatively far weaker than Sanders, as has been demonstrated in the politically weak campaign of Keith Ellison for DNC chair.

Second, the new left forces coming into and around the Democratic Party are largely unorganized and lack a clear consciousness of what they are fighting for and how to achieve it. Sanders and Our Revolution are not effectively organizing their base. Third, the big-business, establishment wing of the Democrats is well-organized, quite conscious of its interests, and

fiercely determined to check the influence of the left. 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. Taken together these factors make it 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. This will lead to successive waves of activists becoming enraged at the Democratic Party. The question of leadership will be key in determining whether these activists come out of this process demoralized or if, instead, they find themselves ready to move forward with the project of building a left alternative to the Democrats.

There are openings in the Trump era to form a radical-left or even socialist party of tens of thousands. We can see an outline of this in the rapid growth of the Democratic Socialists of America. The development of such a force could play an important role in preparing the way for a much larger semi-mass formation of hundreds of thousands to develop at a later stage once the conditions become more favorable.

Our tactics in the current situation will need to be very flexible and developed based on the concrete conditions around us at each stage. We will need to work alongside left-wing workers and youth who are trying to transform the

Democratic Party, while maintaining our own independent political banner and program.

Things could move much more quickly on the political plane if Bernie Sanders were prepared to give a firm lead and launch a new party. Given the depth of the current anger and the authority of Sanders, such a left-populist formation would likely gather together a few hundred thousand members very quickly. Even then, however, there would be limits. The big mass of progressive workers and youth would still most likely be subject to an intense mood of wanting Trump and the Republicans out and would likely still need to go through the experience of the Democrats being pushed into power. Unfortunately, it is very unlikely that Sanders will be prepared to give such a lead, though intransigence by the establishment Democrats and pressure from below could, under certain conditions, push him much further than he plans.

#### Our Tactics Toward the Democrats in the Anti-Trump Movement

In the new anti-Trump movement, there is a strong mood for unity. We need to stress the need for the broadest *unity in action* of all those who are prepared to fight Trump and the billionaire class, including sections of the Democratic Party.

There is no avoiding that at big rallies and events there will be Democratic politicians speaking – or leaders of key organizations like Planned Parenthood or unions, who will promote the Democratic Party. At some events we organize, especially where our branches are relatively large and well-established, it can sometimes be to our advantage if we can force left Democrats – or even establishment Democrats – to endorse and speak at the event, which will help to draw in

larger layers of workers and youth. This will need to be judged on a case by case basis, depending on the record of the specific politician and how they are perceived.

It is critical that at these events our speakers are free to advocate our policies for fighting Trump and raise our political criticisms of the pro-corporate Democrats. Alongside our speakers, we need to struggle to spread our message among the crowd by selling our paper and distributing leaflets.

The broad anti-Trump movement is an arena for struggle and debate between its different wings. In the broadest terms, there is a struggle between the dominance of the establishment liberals and a leftwing. We want to strengthen the leftwing of the movement and build a Marxist backbone of this wing.

**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.**

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.

## 5. Democratic Socialists of America

A major development has been the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). After Trump was elected they grew from roughly 7,500 members to 13,000 at the end of December. By mid February they had grown to 17,000 members. In many cities they are having membership meetings of hundreds of people at a time. This is now the largest socialist formation in the U.S. since the 1960s, and it is poised to grow further in the coming months.

DSA has its roots as an anti-communist, social-democratic trend which was committed to a long-term strategy of transforming the Democratic Party. Until only a few years ago it was a largely inactive organization in significant decline with many of their members often reluctant to publicly identify as socialist. This began to change following Occupy, when a layer of younger, more radical elements around the newly-launched journal *Jacobin* started to join DSA as a place to get organized that was not dominated by the sectarianism of most of the rest of the far left.

Things began to more seriously change with the Bernie Sanders campaign. DSA, especially its younger left wing around *Jacobin*, threw itself energetically into the Sanders campaign, appealing to the left-wing youth around Sanders to join DSA to build a socialist movement. DSA was the main beneficiary on the radical left of the Sanders campaign, growing from around 5,000 to 7,500 members.

We paid a price for not calling for a vote for Sanders from the beginning, not more energetically joining People for Bernie, and not launching “Movement for Bernie” earlier. Hypothetically, if we had taken such a position from the start of the campaign and we had a politically-consolidated force of 1,000 members at the start of the campaign, we could have captured a bigger section of the space on the left of Sanders campaign than we did. However, even under these more favorable circumstances, DSA or similar forces would have likely outpaced us. DSA’s (incorrect) position of not campaigning for Sanders to run as an independent, and it being an organization that after the Democratic primaries encompassed forces which called for a vote for Clinton and other forces that supported Stein, were positions that were more popular and easily accepted than ours.

At that time we saw the radical, youthful supporters of Sanders disoriented and scattered once Sanders endorsed Clinton. This phase lasted until the November election. Our Revolution did not succeed, by and large, in keeping this layer together. This was due in part to the political approach it had of supporting Clinton, but more decisively by it not being an organization that people could join and get organized with. While Our Revolution remains an important reference point and banner and in some areas has an important grassroots life, it has mainly been used as a top-down email list to announce things. Our Revolution has focused more on electoral work than DSA, and DSA has a much bigger presence in the dynamic movement developing against Trump. This feature has made DSA more attractive to newly-radicalizing young people who want to fight Trump and build a socialist left.

Trump’s victory re-energized the Sanders left, bringing them back together in the huge outpouring of protest against Trump and outrage at the establishment Democrats who failed to beat Trump. In this new situation, DSA has grown dramatically, becoming a rallying point for many of the best left-wing supporters of Sanders that drew the conclusion that they needed to get active. Its socialist profile strengthened its attraction for these layers, but at least as crucial was the fact that it was an organization that people could join and organize around and that had a broad and inclusive character. In addition, many of the key leaders on the leftwing of the Sanders campaign (e.g. People for Bernie, Labor for Bernie) joined DSA, further strengthening its momentum.

DSA is evolving and changing rapidly. It would be a mistake to view it in a static manner, as if it were the same as the old DSA. There remains an important rightwing within DSA which is based on DSA’s traditional politics. But it appears that this is a minority and that the new people joining DSA are overwhelmingly supportive of the more left-wing current around *Jacobin*. DSA will be holding a convention later this year, which will help clarify its politics in this new situation.

Among the new layer joining DSA, there is a searing hatred of the Democratic Party establishment and enthusiasm for building a broad-based socialist movement. There is a wide range of views inside the organization. Some DSA members want to build a left-wing alternative to the Democrats, but the majority sentiment is for energetically pursuing a “Tea Party of the left” strategy towards the Democratic Party while at the same time identifying openly as socialists. “Reforming the Democrats” is not seen as a long-term strategy like the old DSA argued for. Naomi

Klien summarized this rising sentiment well when she said: “The Democratic Party needs to either be decisively wrestled from pro-corporate neoliberals or it needs to be abandoned” ([The Huffington Post, 1/21/17](#)).

We welcome the growth of DSA. We wholeheartedly support the fact that thousands of people, maybe soon to be tens of thousands, are building a broad socialist organization. This is a big step forward on the path to rebuilding the socialist movement in the U.S., and represents an important section of the Sanders left beginning to get organized. We want to work together, collaborate, discuss, and debate how to build the socialist wing of the anti-Trump movement.

DSA is a broad organization, with a wide variety of political views within it. Such a force is needed, as we have long argued. It is to be welcomed that it has taken on a socialist form. At the same time, there is also a need for a distinct, coherent Marxist organization which can systematically campaign for revolutionary socialist policies within the broader movement. Socialist Alternative is working to build such a Marxist force while collaborating with all genuine elements to also build the broader left.

There is no doubt, however, that concrete issues will arise that will trigger discussion and debates within DSA. What is their vision of socialism: a social-democratic model like Western Europe, or a Marxist view which aims for workers’ power and a fundamental transformation of society? More pressingly: as a larger force, what will DSA actually do? What will its policy be in the debates that break out in the anti-Trump movement? Will DSA join with us to call and build for strikes on March 8 and May 1? What will be its policy in the labor movement? Will DSA run their own

candidates? If so, will those candidates run independently of the Democratic Party or within the Democratic primaries? How will DSA hold them accountable to its politics when they get elected to public office or to leadership positions in the broader movement? Do they have a way to combat the huge pressures towards opportunism and careerism that such positions inevitably create?

We will want to engage in these discussions and offer our proposals of what DSA and other socialists can do to have the best impact. Many who are now joining DSA will be very open to our views on these issues. But we are at a very early stage. Many can draw revolutionary socialist conclusions on the basis of their own experience in the struggle as they test out different ideas in practice. Marxists like ourselves can assist this process by working together with DSA and its members, establishing a friendly and honest dialogue, and bringing our positions forward into the debates that will inevitably arise as the movement naturally encounters roadblocks and forking paths on the road of struggle.

It is important we discuss the development of DSA throughout our ranks to clarify why it is growing, what this growth represents, and the nature of our specific role as we interact with this process – namely, building a distinct revolutionary socialist organization that will collaborate with DSA and others while openly putting forward our Marxist politics. While fighting to educate our ranks on the purpose and political character of SA, we need to make sure we do not adopt a sectarian, haughty attitude toward DSA. It is inevitable that the movement will need to build broader organizations at this stage, and we should not feel like we are competing to outgrow DSA. At the same time, we

should be open and clear with members of DSA about our political views and positions. When the DSA puts forward positions that we disagree with, we should not hide our disagreements but consistently argue our case to the DSA membership in a way that is clear, direct, friendly, and patient.

Branches should look to send representatives of SA to attend DSA events, firstly to listen and learn from their growth and to gain a better understanding of this new phenomenon. We should be open and transparent about being part of Socialist Alternative, adding our views to the discussions and seeing who is interested in reading more about our politics after the events. Nationally we are working to open up formal lines of communication between our organizations, along with *Jacobin*, to be able to exchange experiences and identify where we can collaborate.

## **6. Our Role in this Period**

SA was the first to recognize the space opening up in U.S. society to build a new, broad, socialist movement. We quickly identified this opportunity based on our experience in Wisconsin and with Occupy, and then with the Sawant campaign in 2012. This was further confirmed by the Moore and Sawant campaigns in 2013 and the Spear campaign in 2014, the growth of *Jacobin*, and most of all in the Sanders campaign. We highlighted the huge gap between the opportunity to build the socialist movement and the very limited forces that recognized it and were trying to organize it.

SA was able to grow dramatically in the last period (from 250 to 1,000 members in just a few years), develop a strong national profile, gain

tremendous experience, and provide a trailblazing example of how to popularize socialism. We revealed the huge vacuum of political organization to the left of the Democratic Party, showed how the Fight for 15 could be won, and our role within the Sanders campaign was a model of how to firmly maintain political principles along with extreme flexibility in tactics. We immediately recognized following the November 2016 election that there would be a massive anti-Trump movement and an even bigger space than before to build a vibrant socialist pole. But starting as a very small organization we were not able to fully fill the space that was opening up.

Now, with the huge growth of DSA, events are finally starting to catch up with the objective potential. DSA is likely to quickly grow to 25,000 members. But even this is not likely to completely fill the space that has opened up for socialist and radical politics in the anti-Trump movement. Depending both on the policies and approach that DSA adopts and on the course of objective events, we could see DSA grow toward 50,000 members. This would lay the basis for DSA – or possibly a new radical-left formation including DSA - to develop relatively quickly towards 100,000 members.

In the course of these developments we want to engage in the closest possible dialogue with the most serious and far-thinking layers of workers and youth. These new left forces can fall into crisis quite quickly if they fail to measure up to the needs of the situation as has repeatedly been the case with new left developments internationally over the past period (i.e. NPA in France, Respect in England and Wales, the SSP in Scotland, the RC in Italy, etc, etc). The example of SYRIZA in Greece is only the most recent

illustration of the complete inadequacy of reformism to meet the needs of the working class in this era of capitalist decay. This failure of reformism is even further underlined through the bitter international experience of the working class over the past 100 years.

These new left forces will need the clearest and most effective political ideas, strategy and tactics to avoid serious setbacks and repeating the mistakes of the past. Marxism is the only political trend which is able to consistently represent the needs of the working class and the oppressed. For new left forces to be able to navigate the huge challenges they will face, a powerful Marxist current will absolutely be needed to help politically guide these new forces. We can help play this role if we are able to provide an accurate and up-to-date appraisal of the current tasks facing the movement. On this basis we aim to spread Marxist ideas and build our forces.

Our rejection of reformism and assertion of the need for a clearly Marxist leadership is not a “foreign” or “theoretical” idea that is irrelevant to the practical needs of building an “American” socialist movement as many leaders of the US left believe. The reformism of the U.S. labor leadership, along with the pragmatism which permeates their entire outlook, has been a devastating failure, even on the most practical grounds of defending U.S. unions from the onslaught of neo-liberal capitalism.

While the growth of DSA is a great step forward, it is lacking in political clarity. Strong reformist and pragmatic trends exist within its ranks. In our view, without a rounded out revolutionary program guided by the ideas and methods of Marxism, the socialist movement will not ultimately succeed in overturning capitalism.

More immediately, the road to a mass socialist movement will be delayed and complicated if it is dominated by reformist trends. That is why we are committed to spreading the influence of Marxist politics in this new socialist movement and the wider anti-Trump movement.

We are confident that on the basis of experience, along with the necessary discussion and debate within the movement, big sections of the new socialist movement will draw revolutionary conclusions and adopt the standpoint of Marxism. That is not to say that we have all the answers. We genuinely seek to work together with this newly emerging socialist movement, to collaborate, to discuss, and to learn from it.

The development of DSA as a broader left organization, and the scale of the anti-Trump movement, is more sharply clarifying the character and role of our organization. Over the past period, the vacuum on the left and our own dynamism created certain illusions that we were or could play the role of a broader left force. Under specific conditions, and with the right approach, it is possible for a revolutionary organization to mobilize broader layers behind it. The CWI has argued that in the post-1991 world situation that Marxists face a dual task of rebuilding a broad working-class movement *and* building its revolutionary forces.

But, as we have stressed, there are severe limits to what small revolutionary forces can do to rebuild the broader workers’ or left movement. To truly accomplish that task will require big movements of the working class and the oppressed, which will lead to the creation of broader organizations and the forging of a new activist layer. Socialist Alternative is not and

cannot be a substitute for a broader party or movement.

Socialist Alternative is *not* a broad organization. We are an organization based around the distinct set of ideas of genuine Marxism as developed by the CWI. Marxists must be part of the broader movement and can play a critical role at times, but on the condition that they maintain a sharp political clarity and rigorously pay attention to building a revolutionary organization.

The scale of the anti-Trump movement has helped to make clear the small size of our forces when the masses really begin to move, as well as the liberal and populist consciousness of these layers at this stage. As a small revolutionary organization, our role is first and foremost a political one: to engage in a battle of ideas on the left, to intervene in the mass anti-Trump movement to spread our socialist and Marxist politics to the radicalizing minority, and to help politically win the advanced sections to a program that can effectively lead the struggle against Trump.

Where possible, we can also have a wider impact by taking bold initiatives that demonstrate in practice what is needed. For example, we can help initiate a wider discussion on – and make concrete steps towards – organizing strikes throughout the country on May 1. But, on the whole, we are not going to be able to organize the mass anti-Trump protests and actions that will continually take place, nor will we need to.

The question will be: how will the massive energy of the anti-Trump movement be harnessed? To what ends will it be directed? We can play a key role by intervening in the political and ideological battle that will rage within the movement and helping the most serious and determined

activists find the necessary political analysis, program, strategy and tactics to win. And whether the most effective methods are taken up will contribute more than anything else to the success or failure of the movement – in accomplishing its immediate aims, but also in whether it is able to ultimately take on the capitalist system itself.

We need to use these new developments to help raise the level of understanding in our ranks of the Marxist character of our organization and its distinct role within the broader movement to lay the basis for a powerful revolutionary party. This is especially crucial at a time when such a large percentage of our membership is very new to the organization.

The opportunities to build Socialist Alternative significantly outstrip our current capacity to seize them. As a revolutionary organization, we can grow to 3,000 or 5,000 members in the Trump era, and possibly even more on the basis of a broader regroupment of new forces joining together with us around a clearly revolutionary Marxist program.

But to do so we must rapidly develop a significantly wider layer of Marxist cadre within our organization – socialist activists who have a clear grasp of Marxism, who can organize and help lead Socialist Alternative, and are able to relate to and work within the broader movements. We need to politically convince a wider layer of members to step up their involvement in building SA and their political understanding of our politics in contrast to the other main political trends on the left. On that basis we can train and develop a new layer of recruiters, branch committee members,



campaign organizers, Marxist writers, theoreticians, and pioneers to build in new areas.

The new situation ushered in by Trump's election and taking of office provides great opportunities for us as well as big political challenges. The role of the leadership of Socialist Alternative will be decisive in this process. The role of the National Committee and branch leaderships must be first and foremost focused on this political development of our ranks along with politically leading the organization to navigate the rapidly changing situation. If we can make significant headway in politically raising the level within SA and training a significant new layer of cadre, we will be poised for making big breakthroughs in the stormy period ahead.

### **Immediate Priorities for Building SA February 2017**

Our two inter-related tasks for the Spring of 2017 are to intervene in the anti-Trump struggles and to step up political education in Socialist Alternative during the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

#### **Campaign for strikes on March 8 and May 1**

The momentum behind strikes and direct action on May Day and even International Women's Day is growing. Although rapidly-moving events could shift our priorities in the anti-Trump struggles, we should focus on building the biggest most determined strikes mass actions for March 8th and May 1st. The national organization will be providing leaflets, sign up sheets, model resolutions and articles to help branches carry this out. Popularizing the idea of working-class

action to beat back Trump's agenda can help us gain experience and build the organization.

#### **Political Education**

Trump represents a radically new political situation. We are in highly volatile and uncharted waters. This puts a premium on political discussion to stay on top of new developments and come to a common understanding of what is happening and the implications for our work, program, strategy and tactics. Flowing from this, every branch should hold a special branch meeting within the next 2 weeks with an NC meeting attendee giving a report back (skyping in where needed) on the political and organizational conclusions drawn at our recent National Committee meeting. Branches should make a serious effort to mobilize members to attend this important meeting and should contact the EC if they do not have a NC attendee in their branch.

Branch meetings should also always be giving political updates on the rapidly changing situation and discuss our program and proposals for the anti-Trump movement to help comrades grasp our methods and intervene in struggles.

Our primary concern right now is cadre development rather than numerical growth. We will of course continue to grow, and recruitment discussions can help us develop cadre. The main immediate goals of the NC and BCs though should be developing more recruiters, more comrades to sell the paper, more members who can lead study groups on the New Member Education Program and more comrades who can be trained into roles on Branch Committees.

## **Paper Sales**

Paper sales can be a concrete measurement of how boldly we're intervening in the anti-Trump struggles and how much we're popularizing our Marxist ideas. Branches can work with paper sale targets for each protest, individual sale, and by month. For big national days of action, we should develop targets locally and nationally. This can build upon our success: January 20th and 21st saw the biggest sales of our paper in one weekend ever! Given our priority of consolidating new members and developing a wider layer of cadre, a key focus for BCs should be working to increase the number of comrades who sell the paper, including possibly setting targets for this. This can help pave the way for a national campaign on paper sales later in 2017, including subscriptions.

## **SA Summer School**

Mobilization and preparation for the national Summer School in the Minneapolis area on Memorial Day weekend will be key tools for us to consolidate the organization. The "early bird" special to save \$55 will only last until the end of February. This should help motivate a rapid growth in registration after the NC meeting. We also should extend our local and national targets (on the next page) to reach 300 registrations to the end of March.

To help prepare for the Summer School, we need to conduct study groups in the branches for the New Member Reading Program (NMRP) as well as documents from this NC and readings on the Russian Revolution. A new NMRP will be produced by early March, and we should have the goal of getting every active member to read it by the Summer School. Branches should begin fundraising ASAP with parties, sales of anti-Trump materials and local financial appeals to send key

comrades to the Summer School. BCs should rapidly identify priorities for who we want to attend the School and who needs financial assistance.

### **Targets:**

1. Well-attended reports in every branch in the two weeks after the NC meeting with attendees giving the lead-off.
2. 300 Summer School Registrations by the end of March
3. Study groups on the school readings involving all comrades we want to prioritize sending to the camp, as well every active member reading the new NMRP by the Summer School.
4. Local fundraising to subsidize registration and necessary travel costs for the Summer School.