

reform & revolution

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Overturing Roe:

A Decision They
will Regret



Back to the Fight
for Feminism,
Black Lives, and
Workers' Rights!

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reform & revolution

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Into the Dark

BY ALEX MONI-SAURI AND STEPHAN KIMMERLE

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Just how dark is this political moment? The Supreme Court has turned into an activist force of ultra-conservative fundamentalists. Despite all the progressive promises, the Biden administration is paralyzed and is failing to do anything significant for working-class and oppressed people. Wall Street Democrats do what they always do when in power: turn hope and expectation into despair and resignation. Meanwhile, Trump's Republican Party appears set to win the midterms.

Unfortunately, the left is not brightening things up. Since Biden took office, social movements have stalled. Despite all-out attacks from the right, the response from the left has been lackluster, amounting to relatively small protests for reproductive rights.

DSA nationally is in disarray. Since the national convention in 2021, (at which our concerns about DSA's direction were raised and then dismissed), membership activity has atrophied, numbers have declined, and DSA's political impact eroded. The Bowman debacle was just one of many examples underscoring that the strategy of DSA's leadership is, in practice, trailing the left wing of the Democratic Party. We are witnessing the results of DSA's retreat from a bold socialist strategy and any attempt to build toward a "dirty break," and from using our current successes (whether on the Democratic Party ticket or not) to actively promote and organize for an independent Democratic Socialist Party.

Still, there are many chapters of DSA fighting back and trying to move the organization forward. Many activists are digging into the long-term work of rebuilding the labor movement. There are real reasons to be hopeful about the renewed layer of workplace activists trying to revive and organize the labor movement, often from scratch.

Yes, this work is beginning from a very low level. Yes, it will take time. Yes, these are little candles in a sea of darkness. But this work remains deeply important for rebuilding the strength of the working class.

As we can see with Starbucks, the biggest organizers are the bosses. A new layer of workers – including those who were skeptical about unionization – are getting a lesson in what "being a partner" really means to management. The relatively moderate strategy of Starbucks Workers United, to file for union elections and negotiate in good faith, is easily undermined by what bosses do best: class struggle from above. If nothing else, these attacks force workers forward – and into a growing number of strikes.

Rays of Hope

The same dynamic plays out in our political situation: the extreme overreach of the Supreme Court in abolishing abortion rights will backfire because it goes so completely against public opinion, and especially against the beliefs of the rising generation.

The struggle for economic, racial, and gender justice is popular with generations who were politicized during the Great Recession and Occupy and radicalized through the Sanders' movement and mass protests for Black Lives. The darkness we face now is deep – but the contradictions within it are explosive.

This makes it absolutely imperative for socialists to boldly make the case for a rupture with this political system and its economic base. We have limited time, given the climate crisis, assaults on democracy, and growing despair. But we have very good reason to look forward to the coming eruptions of struggle.

In solidarity,
Alex Moni-Sauri and
Stephan Kimmerle



Starbucks Workers Intensify Campaign



BRYAN WATSON AND CONNOR RAUCH

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Experiences of DSA’s Starbucks Worker Solidarity Campaign in Seattle

“Strike! Strike! Strike!” came the clarion call that broke the early morning still on July 17, announcing the arrival of dozens of Seattle Roastery workers to their strike line. Nearly 100 people – the vast majority being Starbucks workers – walked the picket line at the iconic Starbucks Roastery in Capitol Hill. Over the whole weekend, starting on Thursday and culminating on Sunday with this big walkout at the Roastery, Starbucks workers went out on strike at four stores in Seattle. The workers were protesting Starbucks closing

five stores in the hometown of the international corporation – two of which were unionized – and management’s refusal to begin the legally required bargaining process with Roastery workers.

While the entire weekend was a show of strength, the strike at the Roastery was the most powerful. The Roastery is the crown jewel of Seattle Starbucks, and holds a special place in Starbucks’ line up of stores. There are only four Roasteries in the US. It’s also the brainchild of Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz and where he regularly gets his coffee. On an average weekend day the store makes \$50,000 to 60,000! And with over 100 workers, it’s the largest workforce at a single location.



Strike at the Starbucks Roastery in Seattle on July 17.

Photo: Bryan Watson

Changing Mood at the Starbucks Roastery

Nearly 80 percent of the 60 Roastery workers scheduled that day went on strike. The Starbucks Roastery was forced to close early, costing them thousands of dollars. But more importantly, **it was an escalatory action that brought newly radicalized layers of workers into collective militant action, workers who had never been on strike or taken any workplace action before. Moreover, it was coordinated across multiple stores and drew Starbucks workers from Olympia and Marysville.**

Unlike other stores, the vote to unionize was relatively close at the Roastery and Starbucks has been contesting it. This makes it significant that the shop went on strike with such a show of force – in solidarity with those stores which were closed and demanding that Starbucks’ management respects the vote to unionize at the roastery itself.

The Pacific Northwest has been the epicenter of strike action. In Seattle we’ve seen nearly a dozen so far this year! At these strikes, up to this point, there was usually a core group of workers – mainly Starbucks worker organizers – determined to take action: both participating in and leading the strikes and workplace actions. But at the Roastery you had dozens of workers getting involved who had never participated in strike actions before.

One worker explained to us that after 15 years at Starbucks they initially were lukewarm about the union. They thought that maybe it wasn’t necessary, believing that Starbucks was a progressive company and that they take care of their workers. But, they said, basically under the hammer blows of Starbucks union busting, they were convinced that they needed a union. They saw that things were getting worse with

a lot of pressure being applied on their coworkers. Then they saw the store closures. The actions of Starbucks top management tore asunder the mask of progressivism that the corporation wears, revealing the true ugliness beneath – the true visage of Starbucks’ top management – cruel, savage, and motivated by one thing and one thing only: profits. That convinced them not just that they needed a union, but that they needed to get involved. That harkens back to the old saying, the boss is the best organizer!

Radicalizing Approach

The strategy from Starbucks Workers United from the start was to emphasize, “we are partners; we are not organizing a union in conflict with management.” The idea was to file union recognition votes with the NLRB, win those elections, and then start negotiations. In that strategy, the idea to go on strike so early, in some cases before stores had won union elections, was not part of the plan.

However, the workers were very quickly confronted with the need to hit back, or at least counter Starbucks’ union busting. So in the early stages of the unionizing campaign, there were one-off strikes, a day or a few days at individual stores. As that went on, the tactics changed and the workers reached out to other stores and started to coordinate across stores and between cities. That is still on a basic level right now, but it’s definitely going in the direction of further escalation and further collective action. That will be decisive to fight through and win. Furthermore, Starbucks workers have started to go to “cold shops” (stores with no known union activity) to talk with workers about unionizing and discreetly handing them “palm cards” with contact information. This, like the wave of strikes, was the Starbucks workers rewriting the playbook themselves.

Starbucks Workers United (SBWU) initially had a more conservative approach. They did not put forward concrete demands and – in the early stages – asked the DSA solidarity campaign not to go to other stores and try to encourage workers to also take action. SBWU was focused on developing the work on a store by store basis.

The Starbucks workers weren't prepared for the onslaught of the union busting and the intimidation that followed, but that changed the rhythm of the fightback as well. The slow, incremental, more conservative approach that they tried first did not deliver the hoped for outcomes leading many workers to reach for more firepower to strike back against Starbucks.

Starbucks' management's battle plan is simple: a war of attrition and trying to run the clock out. Starbucks is legally required to begin negotiations once there's a successful unionization vote. However, they are betting that if they delay and drag out the process they'll outlast the workers. The Starbucks lawyers will use every opportunity to do this – if they are legally required to respond in 30 days, they'll respond at 11:59pm on the 30th day with a proposal they know will be rejected, restarting the clock.

We saw the first coordinated strike action between stores in June. Workers at seven stores across Seattle took strike action and rallied in Pike Place Market near the first Starbucks store in protest of the so-

called Heritage District, a unit of stores in and around Seattle's Pike Place Market that Starbucks redistricted as a pretext for forcing out union activists and supporters (along with as many as two thirds of their co-workers). The roastery strike built on that coordination, bringing Starbucks workers from across the city and region in a massive show of force.

That's exactly what's needed to cut across the tactics of intimidation, delay and inaction. The next step will be to deepen the organizing across the region and more national coordination to mobilize community support and joint workplace action. Moreover, Starbucks workers continuing to agitate at "cold shops," with support from unions and community organizations, is a key way to expand the campaign, stretch management thin, and win substantial contracts.

For the labor movement in general, the power of all the other existing unions unified could also be used to make the large support visible among working people. The power of the organized labor movement could be a real game changer to counter Starbucks' union-busting attacks.

Seattle DSA's Starbucks Workers Solidarity Campaign

Seattle DSA was there from the start. Since before the first store filed for unionization in Seattle, we've

been poster around the city raising awareness about the union campaign. We've been tabling weekly outside of unionizing/unionized shops to build a list of supporters in Seattle using a pledge sheet, to let customers know about the union effort and Starbucks union busting. We've been able to use those lists to mobilize people for solidarity actions and to picket lines, to donate to the strike fund, and more. We've also built a robust social media effort through @VentiSolidarity on Twitter. In total we've conducted over 75 public facing events, from weekly tabling, Suds & Solidarity, strike support, "Weekend of 500 Posters," and more!

The main tool to organize this work was the *Starbucks Worker Solidarity Campaign* that we launched. Seattle DSA set it up with co-chairs who are Starbucks workers. They are the main drivers of it. We are in communication with them on all fronts. We discuss where to put our tables, what to do and when, and what to bring to support the strike.

Seattle DSA and our *Starbucks Worker Solidarity Campaign* has really been the primary support network for these workers, especially when they go on strike. We've provided community support and supplies. We've provided picket signs. We've raised thousands for the strike fund. We've talked to customers. We've gathered thousands of signatures for the "no contract, no coffee" petition. DSA's Starbucks Workers Solidarity Campaign is proud that the success of our community support and petition served as an inspiration for a nationwide community support petition now launched by SBWU.

The *Starbucks Solidarity Campaign* was also a tool to bring DSA members in Seattle together after this long pause of in person interactions due to Covid. As a part of the campaign, we organize "Suds and Solidarity" meetings where comrades get to know each other in a friendly atmosphere and discuss developments in the Starbucks union drive and the labor movement in general. After a "Suds and Solidarity" event we go out and poster in the community with our solidarity posters. We've put up over 2000 solidarity posters across the city! This has really been successful in spreading the word and getting people involved. That was one of the more attractive things to draw DSA members into activity. We also mobilized for a rally in protest of the firing of the Memphis 7, organized by Kshama Sawant's council office, which was really successful.

Through this whole process, we have been able to get really close to the Starbucks workers. We are their first stop when they look for community support. Several

Starbucks workers have now joined DSA. That is based on not coming in with a lecturing tone, but of listening to the workers and trying to provide support.

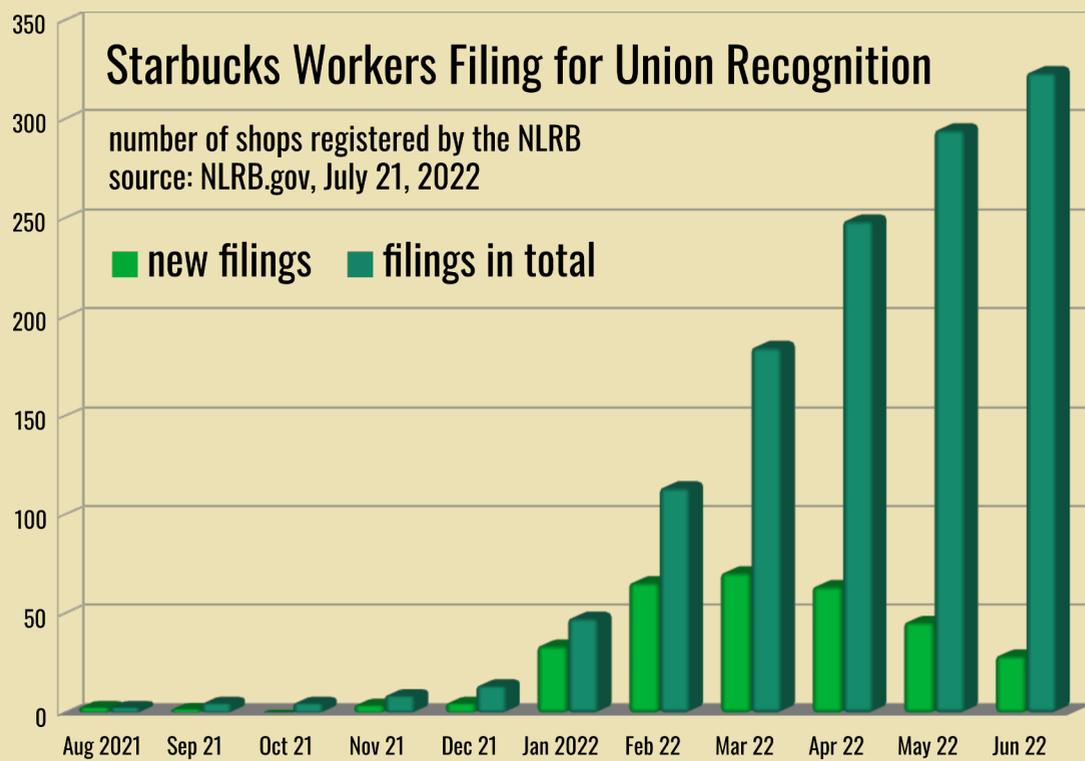
That's the role of socialists: To genuinely fight alongside the Starbucks workers for their contract and for their unionization effort, to help advance class and socialist consciousness, and to suggest and support a class struggle orientation. What Seattle DSA has been doing is militant trade unionist activity. In the past, that might have been more initiated by established trade unions and union activists. But those traditions have been lost over the whole past period by the schemes of business unionism and the decline of the workers' movement. So in a way we are rebuilding and reconnecting with these traditions of strike support, developing community support for the strikers, and for the union workers.

However, socialists need to also go beyond this. The working class in past periods was more fully aware of the class divide and the boss's motivation. And so in the context of a labor movement dominated by business unionists who have been managing the defeat of Labor and not being a real force in people's lives, in addition to reestablishing militant trade union traditions, a part of the task for socialists is to try to help workers connect the dots to the broader capitalist system and help reestablish an understanding of class and the motivations of the bosses and owners. Starbucks doesn't make lattes. They make profits.

Socialists must help expose the capitalist system, but not in the over the top way where the workers moving into action feel what we're saying is overshadowing their struggles. We don't want them to think that socialists come in and just talk about capitalism, that we don't really care about them and their struggle, that we just have an agenda that we want to impose, and that we're just lecturing them. This approach, however correct some of the things being proposed may be, only strengthens the hand of the bosses and the business unionists by driving workers away from the ideas and doesn't move the meter any closer towards building a robust, combat organization of the working class.

The Starbucks workers through their fighting instincts and bold actions have blazed a path forward for other Starbucks workers and the broader labor movement. ■

Bryan Watson is the treasurer of Seattle DSA and a co-chair of its Starbucks Worker Solidarity Committee. Connor Rauch is a member of Seattle DSA and organizes community outreach and tabling for the Starbucks Worker Solidarity Campaign.



A Class Struggle Strategy to Win a Union at Homegrown



STEPHAN KIMMERLE SPOKE WITH
IVY VANCE AND MANYA JANOWITZ

@STEPHANKIMMERLE

“If we’re putting this much pressure on Homegrown just to be recognized as a union – then we are going to win a contract, too.”

Homegrown, a Pacific Northwest company that owns a chain of restaurants and cafes, and its own food production plants, employs roughly 250 people. Ivy Vance is a restaurant worker for Homegrown; Manya Janowitz works as a delivery driver for the company.

Your organizing campaign at Homegrown is happening in the middle of a bigger wave of unionizations around Starbucks and Amazon. Do you see yourself as part of that?

Manya: Yes, I think so. We are feeling it’s actually possible to win. It matters that we have wind in our sails.

Ivy: Yes, this is a revamping of the labor movement and it includes a lot of young people.

Let’s focus a bit on Homegrown. What’s the problem with your employer? They write on their website: “Food is the liaison between our earth and our community.” And later: “[w]e are responsible for our social and environmental impact as well.” Sounds great!

Manya: [laughs] Where do we start?

We’re not able to sustain ourselves on these jobs, even though they like to talk a big game about being sustainable and being a local progressive company. Most of my coworkers at the distribution center struggle with housing. On the wholesale side of the company, the production facility in Auburn is one

of the lowest paid workforces, starting at \$16 an hour. It can be really long shifts, but also we don’t get guaranteed 40 hours. It’s really irregular. And from both sides, the wholesale side and especially in the cafes, people really struggle with exhaustion; the workload is too much and we feel burned out at the end of a shift.

We know that the NLRB and all American labor law is not set up for the workers.

We don’t get any vacation time for the entire first year. They count on high turnover. The medical benefits are unaffordable. Especially if you have a family or dependent, you could be paying a thousand dollars or more a month. You don’t actually get healthcare until you work there for seven months. And we could go on ...

... and that’s why you decided to unionize. What happened so far in this process?

Ivy: In June, we went public with our demand to management to recognize our union. In the beginning of the year we started slowly recruiting our coworkers and creating a pretty big workers’ committee to form a union. So by June, we felt we had a lot of coverage. There are around 250 people overall, in all the cafes and the distribution and production centers. So we talked about it and we knew we wanted to go public before or during the summer because that’s when Homegrown is the busiest. And it’s also when we were the most exhausted, especially in the cafes because it picks up a lot. Last summer, especially, we had very little support and there was the heat wave and that really rocked us. We decided we’re not gonna sit through another summer without fighting back.



On June 3, Homegrown workers delivered a majority petition to the company demanding a card check process to register the union.

Photo: Maris Zivarts

You chose a bit of a different route compared to the Starbucks workers. Starbucks workers filed shop after shop for a union recognition vote with the NLRB. That’s not what you did, right?

Ivy: No. So our plan is to not go through an election process yet, but to demand recognition because we know that the NLRB and the election process and all American labor law is not written for the workers. It’s written for employers to have control over what we want. And we don’t believe that we need an election. If we have a super-majority of our coworkers signed up on union cards, that is a vote, signing a union card is a vote. So we’re asking for the management to accept a card check and recognize us. We have more than 70 percent of the people signed up, that’s enough.

So if it goes through the NLRB process – like the Starbucks workers – you file and months later, the NLRB organizes the vote and then you vote and then you’ve got a year to negotiate a contract – or maybe not. And during that long period, things often fall apart.

So you decided to take a shortcut?

Manya: I wouldn’t call it a shortcut. I think it’s just a different strategy than what you see from the incredible organizing that’s going on at Starbucks right now where the first thing that those workers do when they

go public is to file for an election. Many stores have won that, and yet they’re still fighting Starbucks to actually sit down with them at the table and win the changes that we all need in these jobs.

We don’t believe we need an election if we have a super majority of our coworkers signed up.

We’re not fighting for union recognition just because we want a union in name only. We’re fighting for union recognition because this is the vehicle by which we want to build power and win actual changes in our lives.

So you are demanding a card check. And now the management ignores you and they hope that there is a high turnover and the drive collapses.

Ivy: That’s what they want.

Manya: Yes, that’s their plan. Their plan is to wait us out. So our plan is to act and to keep escalating and to get stronger and stronger. And so we’re building towards disruptive actions and also building towards a strike vote and a strike.

Ivy: We turned in our majority petition, we didn't sleep at all, and then not even 12 hours later, after turning in the petition, we're at my store picketing with 20 to 30 people for two hours. They didn't like that at all. Sales were cut in half.

Manya: The boss's strategy right now is to try to divide us from each other, the different workers from wholesale, from production or from the cafes. They're trying to divide the committee we formed to organize our unionizing efforts from everybody else. They're trying to demoralize us. They're sending emails that are very, very condescending. They're trying to delay. So they're trying to force us into an election where they delay the process.

And since June, we are doing the opposite. We bring our coworkers together. We get to know each other outside of the job. We organize protests, pickets, and action. We're making it public what's happening at Homegrown. The fact that we can't sustain ourselves at these jobs. We tell the truth about what's happening in our jobs. And we're doing that at pickets and by creating disruption for the company too.

We want respect at the job.

We organized pickets outside of the Homegrown stores. And then we also get to do pickets where we're picketing the product that is made in wholesale cafes and delivered by me and my coworkers. We've been to St. Joseph's Hospital in Tacoma. We've been to St. Ann's Hospital in Burien. We've leafleted at countless independent coffee shops. We're picketing the product, not the hospital. We just say "Hey, don't buy Homegrown. Don't buy Molly's."

The challenge is that you have a diverse workforce that the employer tries to divide?

Manya: Yes, I would say the cafe demographic is more similar to the Starbucks workers, a lot younger, at least in Seattle. Then it's different in wholesale, in the production kitchen. This is a facility in Auburn where it's basically two lines just like a sandwich factory making pre-packaged sandwiches and food all day. It's almost all immigrants, mostly older women, particularly from Mexico and El Salvador, so mostly Spanish speaking and many monolingual Spanish speakers.

It's been really cool to see cafe workers and workers in the production facility connect and meet each other and start to build relationships.

You've mentioned the things you want to change. What are your demands?

Manya: We want to increase the floor right now. The lowest paid workers are making \$15.50. That floor goes up to \$20 and we want equivalent raises, \$4.50 raises for all across the board. In the cafes, we want tip transparency, tip lines on all orders. That's a huge deal. There are DoorDash orders and other apps – often a majority of cafe sales – that aren't tipped. And so that's a way that workers are losing out on money. We want real vacation time. And then we want safety and healthcare at the job, immediately. We want safe equipment and safe working conditions. That's actually a really big deal on the warehouse side, for the drivers, where I work, because our vans are not kept safe and they're not inspected. And we want minimum staffing levels.

But actually, one of the biggest demands for us is respect at the job. There are managers who harass and talk down to workers. There are managers who don't take issues of harassment from customers seriously. We want to be listened to when we bring up safety issues and issues about our work, because we're the experts at our own jobs! And we want to be seen as real people, as more than just sandwich makers.

Usually, employers in an anti-union effort try to present a union as this third party, an alien force coming from the outside. Have you experienced that?

Manya: I can tell you a brief anecdote. A group of my coworkers and I at the Renton distribution facility last week went to our warehouse manager about safety issues that were happening at work. We had a coworker fall in the walk-in freezer because there was ice on the floor that wasn't taken care of. And we've had multiple issues with the vans being unsafe to drive and not being serviced and our safety wasn't being taken seriously. So we went straight to the boss and we talked about it with her and she was extremely antagonistic. And one thing that she tried to say was, well, if this is about the union then why aren't they here? And my coworker and I basically shouted in unison, it's us! We are the union! But they keep trying to do that. And so we keep saying, it's us, we're the union.

You've mentioned a potential strike vote soon. You have not yet filed for union recognition with the NLRB, but you are preparing more protests?

Manya: Ivy and I, and our coworkers, we cannot wait another year for these changes. Like we can't keep being this burned out, not having adequate health insurance, barely scraping by. So we're taking action, as soon as possible. Basically we're building towards being able to disrupt this company over the next month. Maybe by the time the magazine you are interviewing us for goes to print.



Photo: Maris Zivarts

We would love to be out of date! Does this mean that you would never file with the NLRB? Do you actually want a contract and union recognition?

Manya: We want to be recognized as a union. We're organizing with UNITE HERE, Local 8. So, yes, we want to have the backing and become members of that union, a really powerful union here in the Northwest for food service workers. We want a contract as soon as possible. We want these demands, in writing that the company is going to respect them and that they're going to respect us. We still might file with the NLRB, but if we do we want it to be in a situation where we have power because we've been showing it, and where Homegrown is scared of us and what we can do.

DSA has played a big part in our public actions and in mobilizing community members to support us.

Ivy: If we're putting this much pressure on Homegrown just to be recognized, if we're moving to a strike vote and to strike, if we're doing actions – multiple actions every week – then we are going to

win a contract swiftly because they know what we can do.

You are both also members of Seattle DSA. What is the role of socialists in such a struggle?

Manya: In this campaign in particular, it's been really important to have the mobilization power of DSA. DSA has continued to play a big part in our public actions and in mobilizing community members to support us, to be part of picket lines.

But then I also think the role of socialists in labor in general is for these movements to be combined. We have to find a way to connect the socialist movement and the labor movement in a way where socialists are playing an active, leading part in their unions, pushing really bold strategies forward. I think that's our part of this revitalization of labor that's so desperately needed.

Ivy: And I would hope that other DSA members would see what we've done as DSA members, as workers, and we can talk to them and we can help them win their campaigns at their stores. I know there's a lot of restaurant workers and warehouse workers in DSA and I would like to engage them more. Hopefully, we can build many more labor campaigns out of this. ■

The Inflation Rip-Off



BY KIP HEDGES

@CWHEDGES15

How Workers Can Fight Inflation and Climate Change

Going to the grocery store or driving to the gas station has become a stomach churning experience for tens of millions of workers in the United States. Inflation, at 9.1 percent according to US Inflation Calculator, has reached its highest point in four decades. Older people on fixed incomes are being forced back into the workforce. Overtime and second and third jobs are becoming a necessity for millions, as inflation lays waste to budgets.

The So-Called “Wage Price Spiral”

Inflation has become a political hot potato. The right wing blames President Biden and the Democrats. They advance three main steps that could be taken to bring inflation down.

Inflicting pain on workers is at the heart of their plan.

First, the right wants to end aid to workers facing eviction and slash measures giving direct assistance to people already working two jobs and struggling small businesses. They blame pandemic relief on workers and small businesses for inflation, saying the flood of dollars into the economy is the culprit.

Second, they claim aggressive action is needed to bring wages down. According to Republicans, wages for workers are too high. In this view they are joined by Democrats.

Lastly, to bring skyrocketing gasoline prices down, more oil must be brought out of the ground. They are demanding President Biden allow more drilling on Federal land, never mind the effect on climate change and record high temperatures across the globe.

For their part, the Democrats are relying on the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates. They believe this will slow down the economy, making jobs less plentiful. This in turn will ease a very tight labor market, forcing workers to take jobs at lower rates of pay, thus stopping the so-called “wage price spiral.” Inflicting pain on workers is at the heart of their plan.

More Oil?

Like Republicans, Biden believes more oil must be pumped to bring down the price of gas. Although gas prices have come down slightly, they are still 58 percent higher than ten years ago according to usinflationcalculator.com.

Oil companies in the US are presently using only a fraction of the leases from the Federal government available to them. The price and supply of oil is tightly controlled by companies like Exxon, Chevron, and Conoco. Certainly there has been some disruption of world oil supplies because of the war in Ukraine, but as Biden’s recent trip to Saudi Arabia to encourage more production proves, producers are holding supply off the market and reaping super profits as a result.

“Supply Chain Problems”

The pandemic has certainly disrupted supply chains in the US. But these problems were emerging even before the pandemic. “Supply chain problems,” a phrase that is commonly used by both political parties and business leaders, is attributed almost mystical power. What’s a supply chain? Simply put, it’s how goods move; rail, truck, ship, aircraft. Trucking, which accounts for 71 percent of the movement of goods, according to Forbes magazine, used to be a good blue collar job. No more. Because of low wages and harsh conditions, many truckers have left the profession.

Alltruckjobs.com points to several factors forcing hundreds of thousands of truckers to find other jobs. Truckers are not usually paid for time spent waiting to be loaded, driving down the amount of money truckers are actually paid. At the Port of Los Angeles trucks waiting to be loaded can sometimes be measured in days. Trucking companies increasingly are ignoring maintenance to boost profits. This means more last minute and unscheduled repairs that cost truckers money. Trucking companies also try to force truckers to ignore safety rules, according to Alltruckjobs.com.

Federal regulations governing trucking are key to driver and public safety so truckers resist, but often end up leaving the field. In short, the desire for ever higher profits is causing a shortage of truckers and thus, a “supply chain problem.”

On the nation’s railroads, crew sizes have been cut, wages for new workers slashed, and hours extended. Paralleling trucking, railroad owners desire to increase profits at the expense of workers is driving workers from the industry. The airline industry, as anyone who has flown recently knows, is experiencing a similar phenomenon with a now chronic shortage of workers. All of this means a shortage of goods on the shelves. Under a capitalist economy, a shortage of goods means higher prices and inflation.

The Economic Policy Institute has some interesting statistics that help us get to the root of the problem. Nominal wage growth has lagged far behind inflation, dampening, not increasing inflation. What has contributed mightily to inflation is a dramatic increase in profits over the past two years. Fatter corporate profits have driven over 50 percent of the increase in prices over 2020 and 2021. From 1979 to 2019, profits contributed about 11 percent to price increases. This certainly points to some possible solutions.

An Emergency Plan to Fight Inflation

What is to be done? Organizations like DSA must offer solutions that are easily understandable to working-class people and provide a pole of attraction for those who want to fight. We might call our program an *Emergency Plan To Fight Inflation*. Top on the list must be strict price controls given the fact that higher prices and profits are at the heart of the crisis. Increasing taxes on corporate profits should be next in our program. Both of these would address the problem and also be popular with any working class person.

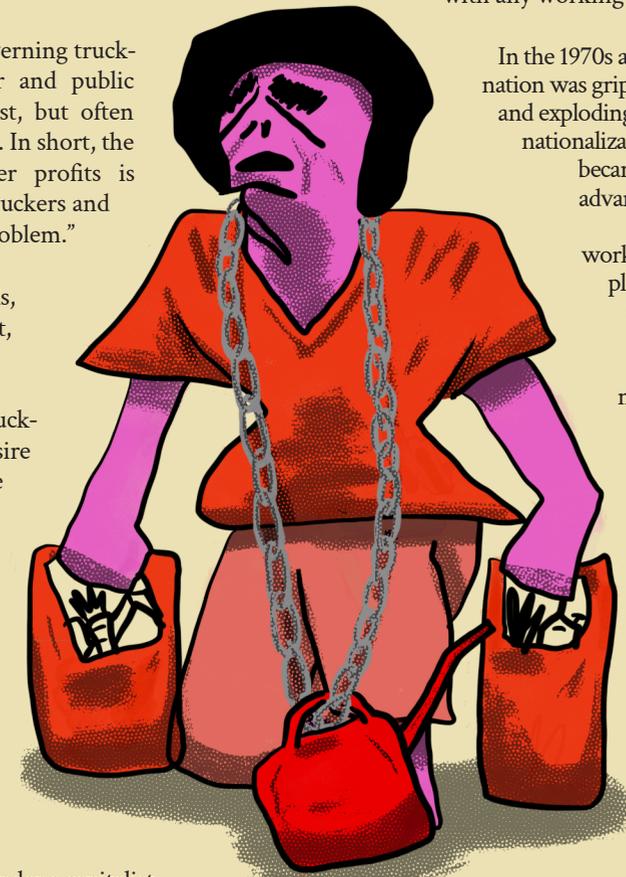
In the 1970s and early ’80s when the nation was gripped with oil shortages and exploding gas prices, the call for nationalization of the oil industry became popular. It’s time to advance this demand again.

Gas prices are driving workers into despair. Once placed under the control of the government, oil companies would no longer be able to manipulate the market, control supply and drive up prices. Instead of being a funnel into the pockets of billionaires, profits could be used to finance the long delayed implementation of a Green Economy. While making this a reality would take a movement of huge proportions, with economic shocks and climate change upon us, raising the

nationalization of big oil companies points us in the right direction. Only the concerted activity of working class people can bring the crisis of inflation and climate change to an end.

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Art by **Sean Case**

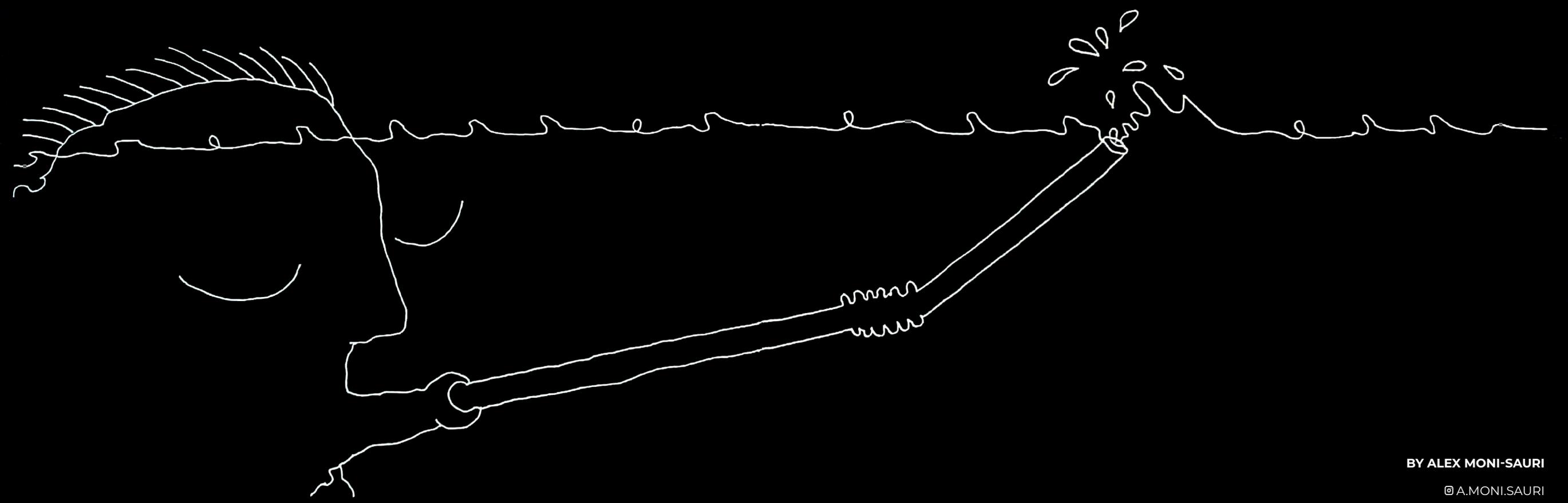
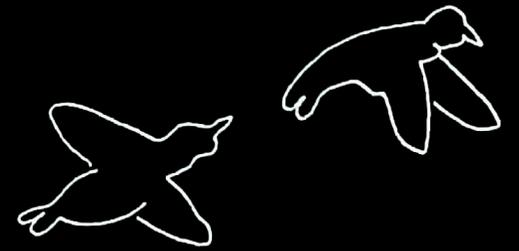


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BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

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Dead Weight Democrats



BY SEAN CASE

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DSA Must Distance Itself from the Democratic Party

As the 2022 midterm elections approach, popular wisdom tells us that the Democratic Party is headed toward a bloodbath. Having failed to deliver on key campaign promises – from raising the minimum wage to acting on the student debt crisis, from dealing with healthcare costs to taking on structural racism and voter suppression – the Biden administration is hemorrhaging support. Add to this the interrelated crises of the war in Ukraine, the highest rate of inflation in a generation, and the still-churning pandemic, and that popular wisdom seems pretty sound.

While in the immediate term such conditions are likely to benefit the Republican Party in the form of Congressional majorities, the full story is more complicated than support simply shifting from the party in power to the party in opposition. Rather, working people’s trust in both parties has eroded

significantly, as well as their trust in institutions of government more broadly. This is not simply a shift to the right; it’s an opportunity for the socialist movement.

Biden’s Failures

When Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election, it was widely noted that large swaths of voters voted for him not out of excitement for the Democratic Party or their platform, but rather to defeat Trump. In the first months of his presidency, the American Rescue Plan earned Biden and the Democrats much support. Policies like the expanded child tax credit and direct stimulus checks were extremely popular and helped soften the blow to working people from the Covid crisis.

But big Covid relief funding is firmly in the rear view. The child tax credits are gone, the stimulus checks spent. The Payment Protection Plan, meant to help small businesses weather the pandemic, was raided by big business. The Democrats’ next big

piece of legislation – the Build Back Better Act – is on the cutting room floor of Congress because the administration and Democrats refused to fight and mobilize for it. The pause on student loan payments is up at the end of August, the debt hanging over borrowers like the proverbial sword. Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour has been wiped from the agenda. The crisis of affordable housing is punishing working people all over the country.

In August, pieces of the Build Back Better Act (BBB) were picked up and formed into the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), a piece of compromise legislation that nonetheless partially delivers on some of Biden’s campaign promises. But the impact of this legislation on voters’ attitudes remains to be seen. It’s a pale shadow of BBB, which was already not ambitious enough. If passed, the IRA would be the biggest investment in fighting climate change ever made, and its efforts to lower prescription drug prices will be welcome news to many. But it focuses narrowly on consumer interventions like making it easier for people to buy electric cars rather than overhauling and expanding our neglected public transit systems; it provides minor incentives for companies to source emissions-free energy, but it also requires the federal government sell off more public land and water for drilling and offers tax credits to coal plants that use carbon capture technology rather than shutting them down altogether; it raises the minimum tax rate on certain corporations but fails to truly punish those responsible for the climate crisis and inflation.

Inaction on and abandonment of key campaign promises now seems to be the least of Biden and the Democrats’ worries. With inflation nearing ten percent, working people are feeling anxious and looking for someone to blame.

The Supreme Court’s recent anti-abortion decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson* and a fresh crop of mass shootings pushed the popular anti-Democratic sentiment back somewhat, but likely not enough to make a significant difference electorally. Besides, Democrats have largely squandered the opportunity presented by rising anger at the Supreme Court and over gun violence. Rather than move to codify abortion rights by removing the filibuster, they’ve instead used the *Dobbs* decision simply as a fundraising opportunity. While Congress managed to pass some modest gun control legislation in the wake of recent mass shootings in Uvalde and Buffalo, that legislation – in its bipartisan toothlessness – fails to meet the moment.

94 percent of Democratic voters under age 30 don’t want Biden to run again.

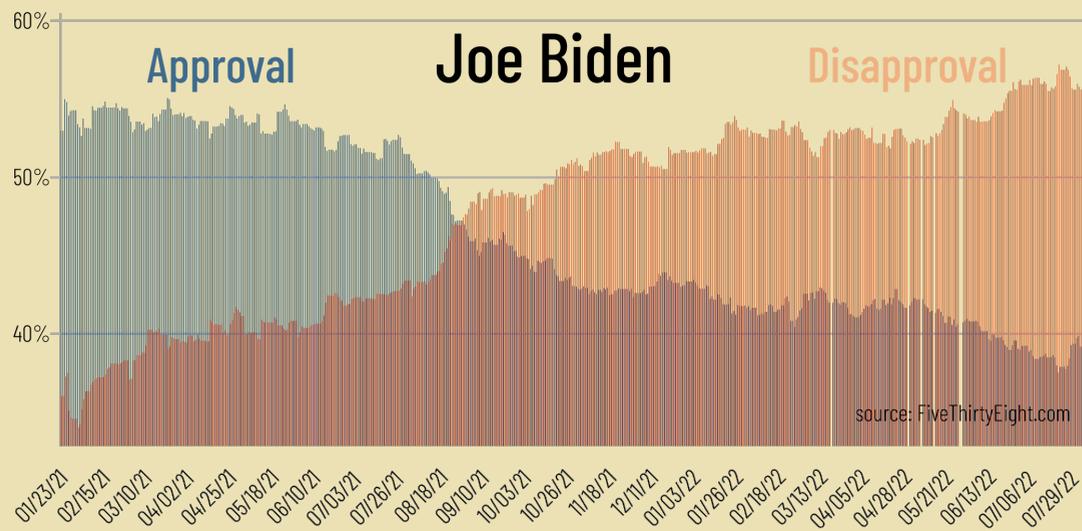
Biden’s approval rating is staggeringly low, languishing in the low 30s, lower than Donald Trump’s approval rating at any point in his presidency. Over 70 percent of voters don’t think Biden should run for reelection, including 64 percent of Democratic voters. Biden’s level of support is even lower among Democratic voters under age 30, a whopping 94 percent of whom don’t want him to run again in 2024. There’s a slight bump in support for the Democratic Party among voters who rank issues like abortion and gun violence as their top priorities, but that support is divorced from any outlook of positive action on those issues, and such voters are a slim minority. The economy – specifically inflation – is overwhelmingly the motivating issue for voters, especially working-class voters and voters of color.

Democratic Gaslighting on the Economy

Faced with criticism on the economy, Biden and the Democrats are quick to point out that unemployment is at a historic low, that consumer spending is strong, and that gas prices are falling slowly but surely. The response, essentially, is: “the economy is fine, it’s great! What are you complaining about?” This is the kind of tone-deafness that has the Democratic Party losing support from working people, especially those at the economic edge.

Recently, the Commerce Department announced the US’s GDP has fallen for the second consecutive quarter, marking a recession. The Biden administration is desperately attempting to downplay this fact. But working people don’t need Commerce Department reports to tell them the economy is sour, recession or not. They know from everyday living, from expanding grocery bills to suffocating gas prices, to sharp rent and mortgage increases.

While Biden touts the strength of the economy, the Federal Reserve has been raising interest rates in an attempt to tamp down inflation, risking further economic downturn. Such moves punish the working class first and foremost while failing to address the root causes of inflation – the capitalist class and its constant drive for profit, even (perhaps especially) in moments of crisis. But, for the Democratic Party, going after the windfall profits of the oil or pharmaceutical industries is untenable, even though it would likely prove popular with the very voters whose support they’re losing; they know where their bread is buttered. Instead, Democratic



policy is to once again crush the working class, exerting downward pressure on wages and upward pressure on unemployment, a policy that will push more and more people into precarity, poverty, and homelessness.

Trump and the Republican Party

The recent mass shootings in Buffalo and Uvalde and the right's culmination of decades of anti-abortion activism in the *Dobbs* decision may stem from the Democrats' bleeding this November. Recent polling has Democrats gaining modest ground. But the upcoming midterm elections are still the Republican Party's to lose. Trump being the wild card that he is, a receding of the Red Wave is certainly possible.

Trump's continued hold over the party presents a unique problem to the GOP. Like Biden, Trump's popularity is waning, though not as precipitously. Nearly half of likely Republican primary voters do not want him to run in 2024, many of those saying they'd sit the election out if he were the nominee. The House's January 6 hearings seem to be having a negative effect on Trump's support. A significant minority of Republican voters appear poised to abandon Trump due to his role in the riot.

Yet Trump still has by far the largest and most dedicated base in the party. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, himself borrowing heavily from Trump, is a distant second in hypothetical primary matchups. Nearly 50 percent of likely Republican primary voters say they'd support Trump against any other candidate. Trump-backed Congressional candidates have been beating out less extreme personalities in primaries across the country, some of whom, like Dr. Oz in Pennsylvania, may very well lose to their Democratic challengers. There's also the distinct possibility Trump will announce his 2024 candidacy before November, changing the narrative terrain of the election and putting the GOP on less sure footing.

Political Ennui

It speaks volumes that two deeply disliked figures such as Biden and Trump are nonetheless poised to once again be the nominees of their respective parties in 2024. Both threaten the success of their parties this election, in different ways. Neither party has anything to offer the working class in this country. Many seem to be realizing that fact. Nearly 60 percent of people polled believe the US government is dysfunctional and in need of serious reform.

Voters across the spectrum are losing faith in elections. On the right, that loss of faith takes the form of conspiracy theories about the 2020 election

pushed by Trump and his allies. On the left, it takes the form of despondency and pessimism. Self-identifying progressive Democrats are increasingly skeptical of voting after seeing Democratic politicians fail to protect abortion rights, pass meaningful gun control laws, or make serious headway in combating climate change. People under 30 are particularly disaffected, nearly 50 percent saying voting makes no difference in their lives. They're not wrong.

Seizing the Crisis for the Socialist Movement

Flatlining support for Biden, Trump, the Supreme Court, and Congress presents an opportunity for socialists if we can organize to harness the moment. The despondency of working people in response to the crises facing them – from climbing inflation to eroding civil rights – is understandable. They see no outlet for meaningful change in their lives in either major political party. Socialists, and DSA and in particular, have a responsibility to show a way forward. That way forward must begin with distancing ourselves from the Democratic Party, with the explicit goal of forming a new party of the working class.

The upcoming DSA convention in 2023 is an opportunity to reorient ourselves toward breaking from the Democrats.

While socialists in Congress have raised DSA's profile somewhat, they've been largely ineffective and often disappointing. The failure of AOC, Jamaal Bowman, Cori Bush, and others to form a coherent bloc in the House, especially with the tight margin of control the Democratic Party has in that body, is baffling. They must do a better job of distinguishing themselves from Pelosi and the rest of the Democratic Party – for example by forming an open and bold socialist caucus. Though they all have their bright spots (Bush's protest against lifting the eviction moratorium comes to mind), DSA electeds fail to be accountable to the organization and its platform, with Bowman's votes on funding Israeli military efforts being the most reprehensible examples but likely not the last. The strategy of DSA members in Congress, and the predominant strategy within DSA, is one of realigning the Democratic Party. It's a losing strategy. The alternative would be to use elected positions – even those won on the ticket of the Democratic Party – to boldly criticize the Democrats in the interest of building movements for climate justice, canceling student debt, Medicare for All, and so on.

The increasing disaffection of poor and working-class people toward the Democratic Party tells us the Democratic Party is an albatross DSA must shrug off. DSA voted to adopt a "dirty break" strategy at its 2019 national convention, but unfortunately took a step back from that strategy in 2021. The upcoming convention in 2023 is an opportunity to reorient ourselves toward breaking from the Democrats and toward forming a new party of the working class. Adopting such a strategy – and fully committing to it – can help pull DSA out of the unconfident and inward-looking haze it's been in under the Biden presidency.

Forming such a party will be a tremendous undertaking, and it will need to include many forces outside of DSA. But DSA can begin modeling how such a party could operate and boost the confidence and size of its membership through its organizing. Electorally, DSA should identify races in which to run independent socialist candidates, up and down the ballot. The twenty-odd major cities with nonpartisan local elections are a great place to start. DSA's national organization should support local chapters with funds and staffing to wage such campaigns, urging existing members of those chapters to democratically decide who amongst them to run in particular races and on what common platform.

A party of the working class would need to go beyond electoralism. It would need deep roots in workplaces and social movements. Helping workers organize their workplaces, intervening in social movements with clear and bold demands, and serving as a hub of community activity should be the bread and butter of such a party. DSA's current Starbucks Solidarity work is a good example. Let's do it with Amazon workers too.

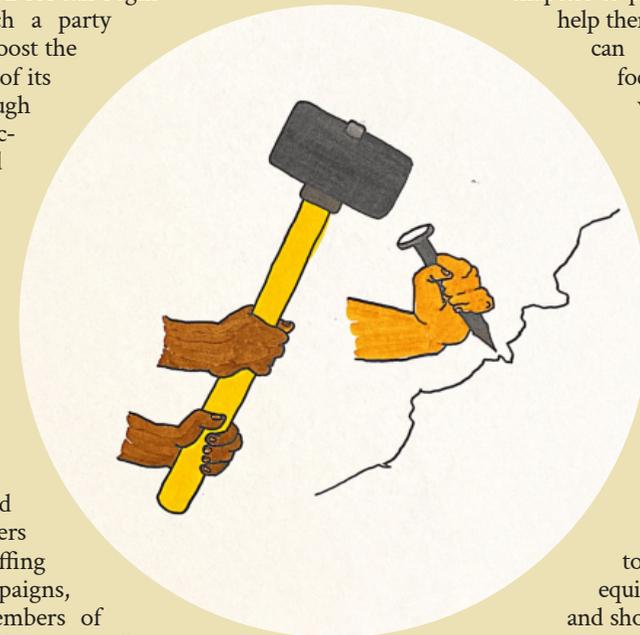
As the right-wing assault on abortion access continues in the wake of the *Dobbs* decision, it's critical that DSA increases its engagement in the burgeoning movement to defend reproductive rights. DSA's national organization should have a plan to turn out an organized contingent of socialists to the Women's March's "Weekend of Action" on October 7 to 9 in as

many cities as possible, providing resources to local chapters in order to turn out and prepare their membership. Such protests will draw out radicalizing layers who are fed up with the Democratic Party and want to fight to retake, protect, and expand their rights. Armed with concrete demands for Medicare for All, ending the filibuster, and packing the Supreme Court, socialists at these protests can win those radicalizing layers over to socialist ideas and the project of building a new working-class party.

At its 2021 national convention, DSA passed a resolution to supply matching funds to local chapters wishing to rent office space and hire staff. National should go out of its way to encourage local chapters to pursue those efforts and help them fundraise. Hiring staff can help chapters better focus their organizing work in ways an all-volunteer-run organization simply can't. Paying dedicated socialists to build the socialist movement locally can boost everything from chapter communications capacity to member engagement and fundraising. Chapter office spaces can be places for staff and members to work out of, store equipment, host meetings, and should be expanded wherever possible into community centers of sorts – hubs of organizing activity, offering political education, workplace organizing workshops, social events, and more. Such spaces will be necessary building blocks for a new party of the working class.

Poor and working-class people are more and more disillusioned with Biden and Trump, with Democrats and Republicans, with our decrepit institutions in general. Without a positive option, they'll opt out of politics altogether. By focusing on building our organizational capacity, on bold and outwardly facing socialist messaging in our campaigns, we can be that positive pole of attraction. Now is the time to intercept despairing workers and invite them to help us build a better world. ■

Sean Case is a line-cook and proud parent to a dog and two cats. He's a member of Seattle DSA and the Reform & Revolution caucus.



Seeing Red



BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

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Back to the Fight for Legal, Accessible Abortion: We Can Win More Than the Narrow Rights Granted by Roe

At the Seattle protest on the day the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the air was heavy with shock, despair, and anger directed sharply toward SCOTUS and the Democratic Party. Organized by the Reproductive Justice Coalition, (of which Seattle DSA is a part), there was a strong showing of groups from the radical left and widespread interest in socialist ideas. Drawing around 4,000 people at its peak, the tone of the rally was much more markedly radical than usual for a US public protest – and from all reports across the country, Seattle was no exception.

This decision was a massive overreach on the part of the ultra-conservatives on the Supreme Court. Nearly 70 percent of people in the US support abortion in some form, and 80 percent told Gallup they were “more likely to vote for a Democrat who favors leaving abortion decisions up to pregnant people and their doctors.” The discrepancy between the court’s decisions and the will of the people is on one hand not surprising, since the Supreme Court is an undemocratic institution that has never represented the interests of oppressed and working-class people. But the flagrancy – in direct opposition to the majority, in the third year of a pandemic, with severely restricted access to healthcare, dwindling medical infrastructure, climbing rates of inflation, and a deepening economic crisis with no relief in sight – seemed to be an astonishing miscalculation of how much misery the US population is willing to bear.

Handing down a brutal, unpopular ruling could lead to the rise of powerful movements from below.

Handing down a brutal, unpopular ruling amid compounding crises already risks triggering a level of despair and turmoil that could lead to the rise of powerful movements from below. In the 1960s and ’70s, the ruling class was eager to accommodate some of the movement’s demands – like granting limited abortion rights via *Roe v. Wade* – out of fear that the activism of the feminist, labor, and civil rights movements of the time would otherwise radicalize working-class people much further. At the time, the ruling class recognized that continuing to deny such basic rights was not in the interest of the smooth functioning of the state; the years ahead are likely to pose a similar question.

The decision to overturn *Roe* came down with full Democratic control of both the White House and Congress, discrediting not just the Supreme Court but the Democratic Party for a much wider layer of people than before. The role of the Democratic Party is further exposed in its response to the ruling, acting as a safety valve against pressures from below as it tries to channel the energy and demands for fundamental change into the narrow confines of a call to vote, again, for the Democrats.

How Did We Get Here?

Some on the socialist left attempt to find the logic behind this overreach in rigid economic considerations, such as the idea that banning abortion is driven by capitalism’s need for expendable workers. This paints the capitalist class as a cohesive, well-oiled machine, with a rationally formulated agenda for social policy. Reality is much more chaotic.



Protest in Seattle after the decision of the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe* was published on June 24.

Photo: Stephan Kimmerle

The vicious war against bodily autonomy for women and pregnant people is not rooted in a simple economic interest of the capitalists, but in reactionary, misogynistic ideas stoked up by a system which rules by division. The expression of these ideas in far-right, ultra-conservative forces (like the Christian right or Trumpism) comes from the need to counter the unifying force of our resistance. This has little to do with what the ruling class itself actually believes, or what the direct interest of profits dictate. It’s a symptom of capitalism itself, which cannot exist without oppression, without racism, without sexism, without a war against women and gender non-conforming people.

Driven by divide-and-rule tactics, the ruling class often finances, supports, and even builds reactionary ideas and movements (through corporate mass media, for example). But there’s a degree of unpredictability inherent to this strategy, as ideas and movements develop dynamics which can grow beyond the needs and control of the ruling class – as we see now with the rise of a populist far right.

The decision to overturn *Roe*, against the will of the majority and in a time of extreme precariousness, is evidence not of an ascendant, unified agenda of the capitalist class, but the heightened state of its internal conflict and the instability of its rule.

This does not at all diminish the threat of escalating right-wing attacks on our most fundamental rights. On the contrary. Far-right activists will only be fueled by raging culture wars, and further legislative attacks on our reproductive rights and beyond may be pushed through the courts while Congress and Biden appear so immobilized. For the left, our immediate task is to work out a coherent strategy for fighting back.

Mutual Aid

On the relief front, there are efforts to organize mutual aid networks to provide safe access to abortion by helping women in trigger-ban states travel across state lines and by making other forms of abortion (like the so called “abortion pill,” which consists of Mifepristone and Misoprostol) available through the mail. Emergency action in this vein will be needed to mitigate some of the inevitable harm that will come to abortion seekers and providers, but it’s an extremely limited and temporary solution without an organized political strategy.

The threat of legal and physical retaliation toward people who assist in illegal abortion means that even the most well-organized mutual aid networks will be very fragile and vulnerable to disruption. The idea that people will be able to break the law in a unified

and consistent enough way so as to make it unenforceable is not reliable either; without a political movement of our own to offer direction and protection for such forms of action, the risk to individuals and their families will simply be too great.

The Democrats

It's obvious that the Democrats in Congress will not act on their own in any meaningful way. We hold no illusions in their benevolence or ability to act on behalf of working people, and we know that it's not plain ineptitude that prevents them from taking action – it's a broken political strategy. The Democrats are the party of liberalism, of rules, of measured adherence to norms and reverence for state institutions. Even (and maybe especially) amidst such broad disillusionment in the function of our democracy, the role of the Democrats will be to keep up the act, to try to maintain the illusion of a solid structure instead of a vanishing myth.

The bombardment of campaigning and fundraising blasts from the Democrats, calling on us daily to vote harder and

cop/bad cop" routine, and are unable to abandon it, even as the wheels come off the wagon.

This doesn't mean, however, that the Democrats and Congress are not susceptible to public pressure. In fact, the instability and weakness on display is a sign that they very much are. Again, a situation in which rogue far-right forces push massively unpopular rulings through an immobilized administration is not at all favorable to capitalist interests, if challenged by a mobilized, radicalizing movement from below. Under conditions of pressure from below, the contradictions within the capitalist class will be further exposed – and the visibility of such internal conflict is a danger to its own ability to rule.

Women's March Calls for "Weekend of Action" October 7 to 9

At the protests in June, Seattle DSA and others called on Planned Parenthood, the Women's March, Sanders, AOC, and labor to organize for a Million Person March on Wash-



Mobilization by the Women's March for a Weekend of Action October 7 to 9, including a March on Washington DC, act.womensmarch.com/sign/oct-march-pledge

ington, DC, donate more, make clear that they're banking on public outrage around *Roe* to win seats in the fall. Public outrage will certainly grow with the inevitable tragedies, deaths, and imprisonment to come as a result of this decision. But it's a toothless strategy, even for the Democrats, as the wave of outrage and disillusionment may result in declining support in November. With full control of the White House and Congress, the total inaction on the part of the Democrats to protect abortion rights damages the likelihood of voters turning out for a powerless "lesser evil."

Without a political party of working people as a viable alternative, it could also foreseeably lead to bolstered support for Republican and far-right alternatives, as we saw with the election of Trump. The two parties have long relied on the "good

ington, DC, to fight for our reproductive rights and to prepare for a mass feminist strike.

In July, the Women's March organized a number of protests in DC, and Planned Parenthood took some action toward organizing a feminist strike.

The Women's March is now calling for a "Weekend of Action" on October 7 to 9, in DC and many more cities – including a March on Washington on October 8. This is a welcome rallying cry, and one that DSA, Sanders, the Squad, and Planned Parenthood should throw their full weight behind to turn this weekend of action into an uproar.

With a dynamic movement which threatens to go far beyond the limited rights granted by *Roe* – demanding free health care for all; Medicare for All; unapologetic, accessible abortion across the US;

free childcare and education; jobs and social security; affordable housing; and more – we can force Democrats (and even "pro-choice" Republicans like Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski) to pass the Women's Health Protection Act and codify abortion rights for all states, including those which have successfully undermined abortion access for poor and marginalized people over the last decades.

Is Abortion Winnable in the Short Term?

Many forces on the socialist left correctly identify the need to build and sustain mass resistance, to fight against the undemocratic rule of the Supreme Court, and to form a political movement of working people to propel us toward a rupture with capitalism. There is no doubt that any reforms or protections won under capitalism are under constant threat of erosion, and the fight for our future depends on our ability to organize locally, nationally, and internationally to break capitalist power.

Unfortunately, this message is often paired with a dismissal of engaging in short-term battles, or in electoral battles at all, which limits both the tools we have at our disposal and our ability to bring broader layers of people into struggle.

In a recent editorial for the *Tempest Collective* (tempest-mag.org/2022/07/after-roe/), Natalia Tylim writes,

We need to reject any illusions of a short-term fix. The starting point needs to be overturning the existing constitutional order, like they did in Chile, and like the Civil Rights, Abolitionist, and Suffrage movements in this country did in previous centuries... all tactics have to be weighed against the illusion that there is a short-term, institutional fix.

When we confront the far right outside clinics, when we march, when we call for the delegitimization of the courts and the political system itself, we will hear forces tell us that our demands are not realistic and that they are doing more harm than good.

This formulation pits our structural, medium- and long-term demands against the immediate need to fight for protection of our bodily autonomy, and undermines our ability to do so. It pits the fight for reforms (like winning back abortion rights through the Women's Healthcare Protection Act) against the fundamental change needed to secure and dramatically expand the rights we've already won.

Socialists must use every tool available to us and pair the consistent, full-throated call for a break with capitalism with the need to fight for every winnable reform that can improve the lives of working people.

This does not mean seeding illusions in the viability of state institutions, nor does it mean constraining the scope of our demands. In order to organize a truly mass movement, on a scale that could contest and ultimately break the power of the capitalist class, socialists must advocate for fighting tactics that are concrete and achievable in the present moment.

So, what is achievable? We believe that we can build a movement here and now that will force the ruling class and its representatives in both parties, as well as in the state apparatus and the Supreme Court, to act. They will act to contain our movement, not out of agreement, benevolence, or allegiance to democracy. But it would provide immediate relief to countless people in need of safe access to abortion, and it would radicalize many more to witness, again, the real power we build through our movements.

By contrast, to call for the disbandment of the Supreme Court or the overturning of the Constitution *as a starting point* feels out of reach to a majority of people, on the socialist left and beyond – and for good reason, given the current weakness of the left and the lack of a political party to express our demands or direct working-class power. If our message is simply that the system is broken and we need a new one, lacking a concrete, viable strategy to bridge the gap, it will only deepen the sense of despair and disempowerment on the left, and fail to spread socialist ideas among working people who aren't yet convinced of the need for class struggle. Our task is to draw people into mass movements and build our confidence and strength through the experience of collective organizing.

The Role of Socialists

Of the left progressives in Congress, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) has been the most vocal with her ideas for possible action. Her proposals to pack the courts, curtail judicial review, build clinics on federal land, and repeal the Hyde Amendment are all options that could help mitigate the severity of the crisis. They're all good demands – the question is: How can we win them?

AOC seems to rely on the hope that somehow the Democrats will be willing to facilitate these proposals, and all we have to do is get them on the desk.

AOC's approach is ineffective not because it places demands on the Democrats in Congress, but because it fails to establish any lever of public pressure to back them up. Simply calling for measures that legislative institutions could or should take up, without also linking those demands to a clear anti-capitalist message and calling for organization and mobilization from below, *does* continue to sow illusions in the

started not so much with Roe but in state houses, and raged hottest over the last decade.

For socialists who paid any attention to politics since 2010, this emphasis on the Tea Party Republicans' historic sweep of the 2010 midterm elections might give rise to a moment of hope: Was the *New York Times* about to feature a serious analysis weaving together the rise of right-populism with the Democratic Party's disastrous bailout of Wall Street during the Great Recession and wider neoliberal policies? Was the article about to offer a clear warning to Biden and the Democrats in 2022 to avoid the mistakes the party made following Obama's 2008 victory – the last time they controlled both houses of Congress and the White House?

There needs to be an analysis of how and why the far-right populists were able to defeat both the traditional GOP big business establishment and the Wall Street-backed Democratic Party.

Unfortunately, despite the pretense of a deep dive into how populist right and “pro-life” movement triumphed, the 4,000 word article didn't feature a single reference to the 2008 economic crisis, the bank bailouts, or the foreclosure crisis. There was no reference to the generalized failure of the Democrats to deliver on promises of “hope” and “change” during Obama's 2008 campaign, and no attempt to draw parallels with Biden's failure to deliver Build Back Better or any of his big campaign promises.

The Tea Party's Populism

Zernike's almost singular emphasis on the 2010 state house elections is also revealing of her ideological blinders: equally important, the Democrats also lost 64 seats in the House of Representatives in 2010, the most sweeping defeat for either party since 1948. And Democratic Party setbacks and loss of voters continued at all levels up through Trump's victory in 2016. While Obama's re-election in 2012 stood in contrast to this trend, he also lost 3 million votes compared to 2008, and his margin of victory against billionaire venture capitalist Mitt Romney shrunk to just 5 million votes compared to 10 million against John McCain in '08.

Emphasizing state-level Republican victories and omitting their national victories helps her avoid any wider analysis of *how and why* the far-right

populists who now dominate the Republican Party were able to defeat both the traditional GOP big business establishment alongside the Wall Street-backed Democratic Party.

Zernike acknowledges that “Tea Party-backed candidates [in 2010] had campaigned on fiscal discipline and promised indifference to social issues,” but then quickly moves on, explaining how it became politically expedient for Tea Party populists to embrace the religious right. But this issue isn't a secondary one. While open racism, anti-LGBTQ+ attacks, and banning abortion did not have majority support, most workers were enraged at the corporate corruption of both political parties and the impacts of the Great Recession.

Zernike fails to explain that the Tea Party's message of “fiscal discipline” was intimately linked with their opposition to Obama's bailout of Wall Street – a vast corporate welfare program at taxpayers expense that the right-wing of the Republican Party opposed. After failing to pass on their first attempt, the Wall Street bailout took a bipartisan campaign uniting the traditional Republican establishment with Obama and most Democrats in Congress to overcome the opposition of the Republican-right.

Obama's Wall Street Bailout

While most of the US left and labor movement were also critical of the bank bailouts, they remained muted in deference to Obama. No mass demonstrations were organized to demand the criminals on Wall Street be jailed, much less calls for public control of the taxpayer-funded banks. This historic failure demoralized the Democrat's working-class voter base, leading to low turnout in 2010, and left the political field wide open to the Tea Party to position themselves as the anti-Wall Street opposition and, increasingly, as the populist party of “Mainstreet.”

No serious left political challenge to Obama and the Democrats was organized until the Occupy protests in 2011 and then with Bernie's 2016 race, but again the Democratic Party leadership's campaign of dirty tricks against Sanders' paved the way for Trump.

When Obama bailed out General Motors and Chrysler in 2009, effectively taking them into public ownership, instead of using taxpayer money to maintain union wages and benefits, his administration helped force through 50% wage cuts for new hires, cut retiree health benefits, and replaced workers' defined benefit pension with a 401K. The central goal of Obama's auto-bailout was to restore the profitability of the auto bosses and Wall Street shareholders.



Occupy Wall Street March 16, 2012. The 2011 labor uprising in Wisconsin and then Occupy Wall Street both won mass popular sympathy. The “five-year campaign” of Bernie Sanders between 2015 and- 2020 and the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America gave an even further indication of the potential to channel working class anger away from Trumpism and into a positive movement for change.

Photo: Michael Fleshman, tinyurl.com/OccupyWallStreetFleshman, Copyright: CC BY-SA 2.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/

An historic opportunity to retool the US auto-industry into a massive green jobs program to tackle climate change was wasted. Tragically, the corrupt UAW leadership went along with this disastrous approach, ignoring calls from left trade unionists to organize for an alternative vision of a publicly-run auto industry to serve the needs of people and the environment, not shareholders and banks.

After three decades of Democratic Party leadership on free-trade deals and deregulation of finance capital, is it any wonder that workers in Michigan and other Midwest industrial heartland states turned against them in 2010 and since?

Trump's Rise was Avoidable

Like the Tea Party before him, in 2016 Trump similarly avoided the abortion debate and many other pet issues of the religious right. Judged by his policy positions on most hot-button social issues in the 2016 race, Trump was widely viewed as a “moderate” Republican. Instead Trump focused on opposition to the Democrats free-trade deals, the

bipartisan disaster in Iraq, and promises to “clear the swamp” of corruption in Washington. Trump styled himself as a champion of the white working class, playing on their anger and sense of betrayal by the Democratic Party, and cynically twisting this anger into a racist, sexist, right-wing narrative.

The “five-year campaign” of Sanders between 2015 and 2020 and the growth of DSA gave an even further indication of the potential to channel working class anger away from Trumpism.

The rise of the right was not inevitable. In this period, there were repeated indicators that bold working-class politics could have gained mass support and deeply undercut the cynical populist appeals of the Tea Party and Trump. The 2011 labor uprising in Wisconsin and then Occupy Wall Street

both won mass popular sympathy. The “five-year campaign” of Bernie Sanders between 2015 and 2020 and the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America gave an even further indication of the potential to channel working class anger away from Trumpism and into a positive movement for change. But that potential was wrecked by the full-scale war waged by the Democratic establishment and corporate media against Bernie’s campaigns and other left challenges.

Zernike is right to highlight the Tea Party Republicans sweep of the 2010 elections as the key turning point in the fight to defend abortion rights. But alongside her co-thinkers in the leadership of the Democratic Party, she appears willfully blind to the deep class anger at neo-liberal politicians and the wider political dynamics driving the ascent of the right-populist Republicans. Without recognizing these dynamics, liberalism remains incapable of drawing the necessary political lessons to change course today.

Liberalism’s Self-Justifying Story

In place of a serious appraisal of *how and why* the Democratic Party saw so many decisive setbacks between 2010 and 2016 (and may be plunging toward another electoral defeat in November), the only explanation offered is that clever Republican strategists simply outmaneuvered Democrats at the state level. Zernike emphasizes that:

“Republican strategists, however, had an eye on the states in the 2010 midterms. In The Wall Street Journal, Karl Rove, the architect of George W. Bush’s victories, wrote that a group called the Republican State Leadership Committee was aiming to flip 18 legislative chambers where Democrats were holding the majority by four or fewer seats... The group spent just \$30 million — less than the cost of some Senate races. Republicans won 680

seats, more than the Democrats had won in the post-Watergate election of 1974.”

She then approvingly quotes New York state senator Daniel Squadron’s analysis:

On the far right, they realized that the most lasting impact of 2010 would be in the states... On our side, state power was a footnote. The lesson we took was ‘Focus more on midterms’; the lesson they took was ‘Wield power in states.’ And today, both sides are reaping what we sowed.

The idea that the growth of far-right political forces in US society can be reduced to such tactical decisions by party leaders is ludicrous on its face. Across the globe, far-right parties have grown dramatically since the Great Recession. Can this global trend be simply chalked up to tactical errors by left-liberal capitalist parties everywhere?

Clearly a more serious analysis is needed, one that examines the rise of the right as a consequence of deepening inequality and the incapacity of global capitalism to take society forward – alongside the betrayals of formerly social democratic and left parties over the last 30 years.

Instead Zernike offers a self-justifying narrative for liberalism that obscures the deeper failure of corporate-backed Democrats. It obscures how Democratic-Party aligned leaders of the mainstream feminist organizations failed sustain the movement for reproductive rights, much less advance the wider fight for social and economic justice.

Zernike never mentions the mass feminist movement and broad social upheavals in US society in the 1960s and 70s that forced the US ruling class and Supreme Court to grant abortion rights in the first place. Instead, her survey of the failures of abortion rights organizations emphasizes their struggle to convince major donors to back state-level

Democrats. Zernike only mentions, in passing, how “NARAL had cut its number of state affiliates nearly in half between 1991 and 2011.” She never asks (or answers) why NARAL, NOW, and the other liberal feminist groups – groups who initially rose to prominence in an era of mass feminist struggle – are so incapable today of building a grassroots movement to fight to Republican attacks.

Three Factors of Defeat

Instead of this false liberal focus on clever Republican strategists, the left should aim to popularize three major factors that explain the setbacks and defeats of the abortion rights movement – factors which should also inform our strategy in the years ahead:

First, Democrats played with defending reproductive rights during elections, but failed to actually fight. In his 2008 campaign, Obama famously promised to codify Roe into federal law, but then made no attempt to do so once elected. This repeated pattern has demoralized and sapped confidence from progressive voters while expanding the confidence and political space for right-wing activism.

Instead of promoting a bold abortion rights movement, Bill and Hillary Clinton introduced the slogan that abortion should be “safe, legal and rare.” Over decades, even when they had majorities, the Democrats made no attempt to overturn the anti-abortion Hyde amendment.

Second, abandoning mass-movement politics in favor of a narrowly electoral and lobbying strategy has been a disaster. Polls today show unprecedented support for abortion rights, alongside wider demands for gender, racial, and economic justice. So why are we suffering setbacks when the movements of the 1960s and 70s – despite confronting a much larger portion of the population holding conservative views – achieved so much progress?

Part of the answer is that the US ruling class of that era felt forced into granting major concessions to cut across the various mass movements of the era. The political establishment feared these movements would further radicalize, join forces, and threaten capitalist rule (which was happening across the world at the time).

The 2017 and 2018 Women’s Marches against Trump drew record-breaking numbers into the streets. But these protests were limited to liberal politics and backing Democrats and were led initially by

backers of Clinton’s disastrous 2016 campaign. While most participants undoubtedly supported a much broader program of gender, racial, and economic justice, many Women’s March leaders actively fought attempts to give expression to a more radical mass-movement politics.

Socialists should whole heartedly support and build the upcoming Women’s Marches’ “Weekend of Action” for abortion rights October 7th – 9th, but DSA should mobilize to them with our own demands and fighting strategy, aiming to pressure the mainstream feminist organizations to call bigger, bolder actions.

Third, without a fighting, working-class political alternative to corporate politics, Republicans will continue to win through populist appeals.

The pattern of Democrats pretending at election time to stand on a pro-worker, pro-environment, social justice platform, then just caving-in to corporate pressure once in office, will continually re-open space for Republicans to win. The appeal of Tucker Carlson, Trump, the Tea Party, and others like them can only be effectively answered by a bold working-class, anti-establishment, left-wing political movement.

There is no path to victory if the fight for abortion rights continues as single-issue lobbying effort on corporate politicians. To be successful, today’s movement for reproductive rights must be part of the wider struggle for building a mass left political alternative, capable of competing for power against both corporate parties. Bernie Sanders’ two presidential runs and the election of DSA candidates across the country, despite using the Democratic Party ballot line (in most cases), have proven the potential to build mass support for socialist politics.

Anger is again growing at the Democratic Party leadership’s failure to defend abortion rights, alongside their failures to advance working-class demands more generally. This rising anger translates to rising possibilities to win over the Democrats’ still massive (if shrinking!) voting base among workers, women, and oppressed communities to the need for building a left political alternative. DSA’s messaging in the reproductive justice movement should find creative and consistent ways to popularize this vision. ■

Ty Moore is a union organizer and member of Tacoma DSA’s Steering Committee, where he is helping to lead a broad tenant organizing campaign. Ty serves on Reform & Revolution’s Editorial Board and has been active in the socialist movement for two decades.



Obama in 2008: “First thing” we do is pass Freedom of Choice Act.

Obama 2009: Freedom of Choice Act “is not the highest legislative priority.”

Image based on photo by Center for American Progress Action Fund, tinyurl.com/obama-photo-2007, Copyright: CC BY-SA 2.0

Is Anywhere Safe?



BY ROSEMARY DODD

📧 MARXIST_BARBIE

A Socialist's Response to Gun Violence

The nation is reeling from a spate of mass shootings, including a racist rampage at a grocery store in Buffalo, NY, a massacre of school children and teachers in Uvalde, TX, and a 4th of July parade shooting in Highland Park, IL. It seems before we can even catch our breath from one mass murder, a new act of gun violence rocks the county. Shootings in churches, shopping centers, concert venues, and schools have become a grisly part of American life, leaving millions asking: is anywhere safe? And, crucially, what can be done to curb the carnage?

Why is this Happening?

We live in a deeply violent society, and I'm not talking about the video games conservative pundits

like to scapegoat. Completely unaware and ignorant of what he was revealing, Pete Buttigieg tweeted on October 2: "I did not carry an assault weapon around a foreign country so I could come home and see them used to massacre my countrymen." The US was founded on slavery and displacing native peoples, we have one of the most deadly police forces in the world with more police killings than any other developed nation, racist mass incarceration, and the ruling class is engaged in perpetual imperialist wars, either directly or via proxy. That's not to mention the day-to-day systemic violence of poverty, inequality, brutal working conditions, and the denial of basic services such as living wages and universal healthcare.

It's no wonder that the social decay of the capitalist system and a society torn apart by contradictions creates a pressure cooker that leads to destructive behavior. And when you add on top of that more guns

than there are people, you get a powder keg of potential violence. The US has the highest number of guns per capita, nearly double that of the second place country.

Other capitalist nations do not have nearly the level of violence we have in the US. The US's unique position as the leading imperialist power and enforcer of the global economic order leads to a particularly violent culture. Society's values are ruling class values: competition and individualism dominate over community and altruism. It's not just gun violence that reveals the societal decay: drug overdose deaths topped 100,000 last year, up almost 30 percent from the year before (CDC.gov).

The relative success of mass workers' parties in the past in other advanced capitalist countries brought more affordable healthcare for all and some social safety nets, leading to reduced tensions in society and a higher value of human life throughout society. The organizational and political weakness of the labor movement in the US allowed much deeper contradictions of economic and racial discrepancies to foster despite tremendous wealth and luxury for the billionaire class. This led to a much more tense, brutal and violent culture.

like arming teachers. They also propose increasing already bloated police budgets, but those proposals are falling flat in light of the disgraceful police inaction in Uvalde, where armed officers waited over an hour while students and teachers were murdered before acting. Increasing policing in schools doesn't protect students, it leads to more violence and enforces the racist school-to-prison pipeline.

Republican lawmakers' refusal to implement even modest gun reforms is wildly out of step with their own base. 77 percent of Republicans support expanding background checks to all firearm sales (Morning Consult, March 2021). Even 72 percent of National Rifle Association (NRA) members agree with universal background checks, a position the NRA firmly opposes.

Democratic politicians only seem better on this issue because of how extreme the Republicans are. Despite making reducing gun violence a central campaign promise for decades, they have done next to nothing on the issue, including when they controlled the presidency and both houses of Congress during Obama's first term. In fact, prominent Democrats poured resources into supporting a pro-gun, anti-abortion politician in Texas against a primary challenge from the left. Now, one and a half years into Biden's term, Congress has passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the first significant gun legislation in nearly 30 years. The Democrats and the couple dozen Republicans who bucked their party's traditional line to vote in favor only acted due to mass outrage over gun violence. But what will this legislation actually do?

It mostly creates funding and incentives for states to implement gun control, allocating money for "red flag laws" that temporarily

What Mainstream Parties are Offering

Politicians from both major parties offer no meaningful solutions to out-of-control gun violence. The grotesque Republican politicians rode into office on a mix of gun lobby money and a toxic individualist ideology that embraces a libertarian, anything-goes approach to guns. Their "solution" to gun violence? You guessed it – more guns.

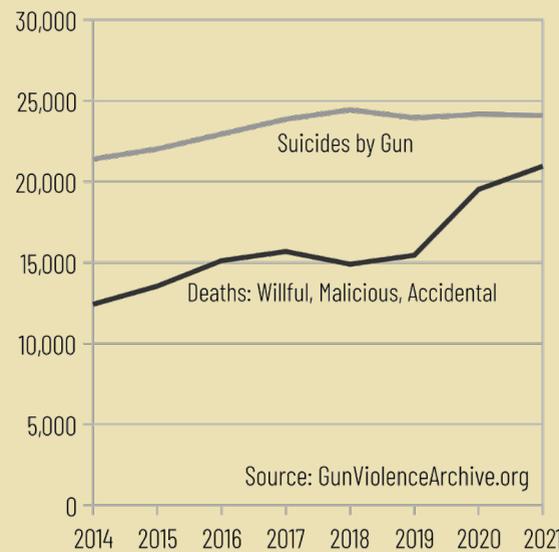
Republican politicians parrot the discredited "good guy with a gun" narrative to advance absurd ideas

Arming Workers?

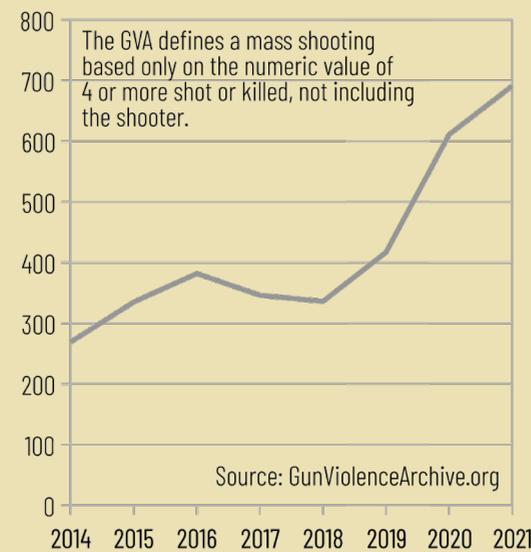
Many socialists feel uncomfortable discussing or supporting gun control because of the tension between controlling regular people's access to arms and the need for revolution. One doesn't need to be convinced of the need for an armed uprising against the state to feel uncomfortable with the idea of police and the military having a monopoly on force. In fact, regular workers have frequently armed themselves during militant labor action, sometimes effectively and sometimes less so.

So should socialists oppose any gun regulation? Not necessarily. In revolutionary situations and in escalating labor and social conflicts all over the world workers have found ways to arm themselves when necessary. While socialists certainly shouldn't support the state taking all weapons away from workers, the political questions posed in such situations and the movement's ability to win over large sections of the military are more important than individuals owning guns.

Gun Related Deaths



Number of Mass Shootings



Mental Health

Mass shootings inevitably bring up the issue of mental illness. While it would be hard to argue that a mentally healthy person would, for example, shoot a family member then murder 21 children and teachers like the Uvalde shooter did, it's important to note that being diagnosed with a mental illness has only a slight correlation with increased violence, with 3 to 5 percent of violent acts being committed by people with a serious mental illness. In fact, mentally ill people are ten times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population (Mental-Health.gov).

It's easy for Republican politicians to scapegoat mentally ill people for mass shootings. If a mass shooting is simply a case of a sick individual, the way we structure our society and economy bears no responsibility. That being said, universal, high-quality mental healthcare under a Medicare for All system would doubtless save many lives – by preventing suicides and helping to identify potentially violent individuals before they act on those impulses. In fact, 54 percent of gun deaths in the US are suicides, a tragic reflection of the way our capitalist society fosters sorrow and lets down people in need.

remove guns from people who have been found to pose a risk to themselves or others. It closes the “boyfriend loophole,” meaning those convicted of abuse but who are not living with or married to the victim will be barred from buying a gun. It also includes enhanced background checks for prospective gun buyers under 21. Measures that Biden advocated for but were not included in the bill were a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines, universal background checks, and provisions allowing gun manufacturers to be sued for how their products are used.

While some of these measures may help, they largely tinker on the edges and fall far short of the sweeping change necessary to address not just gun regulation, but the social ills that lead to gun violence in the first place.

Gun Control

At least some gun control proposals could save precious lives, although the likely efficacy of these measures can be overstated. For example, many gun control advocates have suggested banning assault weapons, but they account for only three percent of gun deaths, while handguns account for 59 percent (PEW Research Center, February 3, 2022). High capacity magazines increase fatalities in mass shootings, but, while terrifying and all-too-common, mass shootings accounted for 513 deaths in 2020, versus 45,222 overall gun deaths. However, in mass shootings in which a high-capacity magazine was used, five times as many people were shot, suggesting that banning this type of weapon could reduce deaths in mass shooting situations.

One of the most popular proposals, with 84 percent support, is universal background checks (Morning Consult, March 10, 2021). Universal background checks should disqualify people from purchasing weapons who have demonstrated

violent behavior, not exclude people with non-violent drug offenses.

Gun control has historically been passed and implemented in racist, anti-worker circumstances. For example, gun control was first passed in California (and championed by then-Republican governor Ronald Reagan) to target the open carrying practiced by the Black Panther Party. This sparked a wave of racially-motivated gun control laws across the country, which were supported by the NRA.

It's also worth noting that gun control measures would be enforced by the police, an institution involved in mass murder of Black people on a daily basis, the purpose of which is to protect private profit, not preserve human life.

Another proposed reform is to allow regular people to sue gun manufacturers when their products take lives. Companies have been shielded from liability since 2005 by a law called the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. Despite this, the families impacted by the Sandy Hook massacre were able to successfully sue the company Remington, the first time a gun maker has been held accountable for the role of its weapon in a mass murder.

This demand correctly points to the criminal role these companies play in promoting and profiting off of violence. While holding manufacturers open to civil lawsuits is a step in the right direction, it would be much more powerful to take weapons manufacturing into public ownership. The US government is certainly not the ideal steward of weapons, but taking the profit motive out of the equation would be a huge step in the right direction. It would eliminate advertising for guns that preys on vulnerable young men by suggesting owning weapons is the best way to keep

your “man card,” as a series of Remington ads put it. Research shows that men who feel like their masculinity is threatened are more likely to want to purchase firearms, and Remington is just one of many companies that exploit these insecurities for profit.

While certain gun control measures and policy changes could save lives in the short term, the fundamental question is who controls guns, capitalists and their politicians, or the working class? Right now, the workers' movement is atomized and disorganized and unable to self-regulate weapons, leaving a vacuum filled by the ineffective and brutal policing system. Ultimately, arms need to be controlled by all of us under a truly democratic workers' state that would provide collective, responsible control over guns.

Socialism is the Answer

The ruling class and their two political parties have no realistic answer to the rampant violence because they are intrinsically opposed to restructuring society to be based on human need rather than private profit. There's no panacea for interpersonal violence, but imagine for a moment a world where all people have healthcare, adequate food and shelter, education, childcare, eldercare, and free access to fulfilling things like art and entertainment. Where grassroots democracy was extended to schools, workplaces, and all other parts of society, giving regular people real agency in their own lives. Where, as a society run by and for working people, we strove to root out racism, sexism, transphobia, and other ideologies that divide us.

Of course, such a world would still have problems, but it's hard to imagine the same level of violence in a society where people's physical, social, and emotional needs are met to the greatest extent possible. And that's the society socialists are fighting for, meaning we have the only realistic solution to drastically reducing violence in the long term. But does that mean we need to wait for a socialist society before we can work to stem the bloodshed? Of course not!

Our Program for Reducing Gun Violence:

- Demilitarize and disarm the police. Elected civilian oversight of police with full hiring and firing powers to point towards a community model of safety. This will unfortunately not change the fundamental character of the police, but put some breaks on the violence spread by this force today.



March for Our Lives on 24 March 2018 in Washington, D.C.

Photo: Lorie Shaull, tinyurl.com/abolish-nra, Copyright: CC BY-SA 2.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/

- Release non-violent drug offenders and end the war on drugs
- Drastically slash the military budget and stop funding wars abroad
- Take weapons manufacturers into public ownership
- Fund programs that reduce inequality and provide basic services like Medicare for All (including free, high-quality mental healthcare), free college, and raising the minimum wage
- Build mass movements to fight racism and other bigoted ideologies
- Cut military and police funding and tax the rich to invest in communities most affected by gun violence, particularly Black communities

As the movement against gun violence grows, it's vital that socialists join and fight earnestly alongside those who are rightfully outraged about gun violence and the inaction of politicians. Socialists have a role to play in building the working-class, radical wing of this movement. While fighting for short-term reforms, socialists must continually point to capitalism as the system standing in the way and raise the need for a socialist society based on human need rather than private profit.

Rosemary Dodd is a bartender and a member of DSA's Reform & Revolution caucus; she was a member of the Steering Committee of DSA in Portland, Oregon, and is now moving to North Carolina.

Climate Change Will Trigger a Migration Crisis



BY ROBERT SHIELDS

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Against the Racist and Against the Liberal Response to Migration

There is no doubt climate change is the defining issue of our time. In the backdrop of war and political corruption, climate change is wreaking havoc on the human race throughout the world. The impact of climate change will have devastating consequences on us all but especially those living in the most vulnerable parts of the world.

What is not being talked about enough is the consequences on human life as a result of climate change.

2021 was tied for the 6th hottest year on record with 2018. Even with the slow down of travel with the pandemic, our global temperatures did not slow. In California, an early heat wave in this Spring of 2022 broke records throughout the Golden state with some cities reaching 100s before Easter arrived. Europe was ravaged by a heatwave that killed over 1,900 people and saw London reach the hottest day they have ever recorded. The Mayor of Seville, Spain decided to implement a hurricane-like naming system for these heat waves. The first one being called, "Zoe."

When talking about climate change, we often hear about droughts, heat waves, and rising sea levels. What is not being talked about enough is the consequences on human life as a result of climate change. In a world that is much hotter and facing less fresh water in many parts of the world, this will deliver a blow to the amount of habitable places and ability to grow food.

Bangladesh is already feeling the effects of climate change as growing crops has been difficult and the increase in cyclones has displaced tens of thousands of people. Two-thirds of the country live within 15 feet of sea level making millions of people vulnerable to climate change. These events have already started the migration of thousands of people within the country to seek safer areas.

The Great Migration Crisis

For socialists, we should be aware of the start of this great migration crisis that has been forced upon us by climate change. Sea levels will rise as much as 10 to 12 inches by 2030 according to a newly published report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the US. According to the World Bank, it is estimated that by 2050, 200 million climate refugees will leave their home. How governments and political parties will respond to this crisis will be very important to watch.

The long awaited IPCC climate report was released in February 2022, noted that most of the migration will be within national borders. People will seek safer areas in their own coun-



Women, walking with what possessions they can carry near the town of Jowhar, Somalia.
Photo: AU/UN IST/Photo/Tobin Jones, public domain

tries and seek to go outside those borders as a last resort. This is important to highlight because some countries could use climate migration as a reason to heightened xenophobia and deter migration to other countries.

While migration to other countries will be on the rise in the near future, internal migration will be the primary way of travel. In the United States, people have already begun migrating due to the devastating wildfires on the west coast and the many hurricanes that hit the gulf coast. The megadrought in the Southwest has not pushed people to move just yet but this could be inevitable.

According to those interviewed in a Wired article, it is estimated as much as 50 million Americans will migrate by 2050 within the US alone to move from these vulnerable areas. Most will seek the New England area and Midwest as safe havens. The San Francisco Examiner stated, "Between \$8 billion and \$10 billion of existing property in California is likely to be underwater by 2050, with an additional \$6 billion to \$10 billion at risk during high tide."

A Socialist Response

In preparation for the upcoming migration crisis throughout the world, socialists must intervene. The consequences for so many people moving within and outside borders will be difficult. The people who will be impacted the most will primarily be poor, have few resources, and be people of color.

Poor people are driven into other places to compete with people there for affordable housing and jobs.

People will be forced to leave their homes without being able to sell them. For the people who do own homes, they will find they no longer have value. Miami, Florida is projected to lose \$33 billion alone in home value by 2100 and over \$300 million by 2033, according to *GOBankingrates*. With these losses also come huge losses in jobs and economic stability.

As a result of climate change, the US will face one of the largest internal migrations of humans and see the largest loss of housing it has ever faced. This will create massive poverty and social problems for millions. Working families and people of color will face issues at disproportionate levels.

Migration out of poverty, out of wars or out of the climate crisis causes huge challenges: Poor or newly impoverished people are forced to leave their homes and are driven into other places, either domestically or in other countries to compete with the poorest people there for affordable housing, for jobs, and for social services. In a situation where all over the US – one of the richest countries on this planet – a lack of affordable housing, of good paying jobs, of affordable health care and decent social services is plaguing so many working-class people, the starting point

of dealing with additional needs of refugees and migrants needs to be taken seriously.

Pro-capitalist politicians, media and parties have two responses: there is a liberal one – “welcoming” refugees and immigrants to allow them to settle – and then leave them and the previous population on their own, let them drive down wages, compete with non-refugee working-class people to drive down living standards (and with that the expenses for wages and other public services that might be financed by taxes on the rich or on corporations).

The other, Trumpian response is an anti-immigrant, racist stance to direct the anger of marginalized and poor communities against migrants who allegedly take away the scarce resources.

Make the Rich and the Corporations Pay

As socialists, we reject both. Relocating millions of people is an economical, logistical and social challenge. The question is how this is done and who will pay for it. It is urgent to fight now for affordable housing, unionized jobs, for Medicare for All and social security for all, paid for by the rich and the large corporations.

The consequences of climate change and these upcoming migrations are the blame solely of the billionaire class and unchecked capitalism. Corporations and energy companies continue to burn fossil fuels that emit these temperature raising

gasses in the air for their profits. Under capitalism, profits are put before the health of us and the planet. They force upon consumers an endless need for growth and consumption all while emitting dangerous pollutants into our environment.

With midterm elections on the horizon, Biden and the Democrats have worked out a deal on climate action in the Inflation Reduction Act. When passed, it will give tax breaks in every sector dealing energy including greener electricity, electric vehicle tax credits, and money to develop cleaner technologies. While this is better than what we have had under the previous status quo, we have to be clear this still puts the power of our climate in the hands of corporations who are seeking to make billions off green technology.

Bolder action will be needed to curb our current emissions. We need to support the millions of people who are already dealing with severe weather in places like the West Coast with wildfires, flooding that has been occurring more frequently, including the recent floods in Eastern Kentucky, and the looming sea level rises on the Gulf of Mexico.

Stopping the current pace of climate change will require us to continue to build the climate change movement – and to defend all refugees, domestic or from abroad, against racism, against exploitation and in a struggle for affordable housing, jobs and a life of dignity for all, refugees and non-refugee people. In short: a struggle for a socialist Green New Deal. ■

Robert Shields is a member of DSA in Los Angeles.

US Mexican border, south of San Diego, California, at the Pacific Ocean. From the US side, facing south.

Photo: Tony Webster, tinyurl.com/US-Mexico-Border, Copyright: CC BY 3.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en



Working-class Ecology: Exposing the "Hidden Abode" of Capitalist Production



BY BRANDON MADSEN

f BMMADSEN

Book Review | *Climate Change as Class War: Two Main Strengths and Weaknesses of Matthew Huber's New Book*

The urgency of the threat posed by climate change has never been clearer. As I write these lines, deadly heat waves are sweeping across much of Europe. Despite the increasing availability of green and renewable energy sources, yearly global carbon dioxide emissions have resumed their steady rise after the temporary pandemic-induced downward blip in 2020.

Polls continue to show that the Green New Deal has majority support in the US, yet the environmental movement here seems as far as ever from gaining real political power and winning meaningful transformative victories. How can this be? What can socialists do about it?

Enter Matthew Huber's new book, *Climate Change as Class War: Building Socialism on a Warming Planet*. Huber, a professor at Syracuse University and member of Syracuse DSA, has attempted to tackle these questions based on a materialist class analysis of the social and political forces at play. Though not without its shortcomings, on the whole it is interesting, thought-provoking, useful, and well worth a read for any socialist who finds themselves grappling with the questions above. It deserves serious and critical engagement.

In that spirit, this review attempts to draw out two of the most important strengths and weaknesses of the book.

Strength #1: Unapologetically bases itself on the power of the working class

Climate Change as Class War never wavers from the idea that Earth's only salvation lies in the power of the working class. It correctly identifies all problems of ecology as inherently linked to what Marx once called the “hidden abode of production” and its domination by capital. The biggest single contributor to both carbon emissions and total energy consumption, both in the US and worldwide, is industrial production.

“To defeat the entrenched power of the capitalist class, we will need a mass popular movement” that “only the working class has the capacity to achieve.”

In 2015 “the industrial sector consumed more of the world's energy (54.8 percent) than the commercial (7 percent), residential (12.6 percent), and transportation (25.5 percent) sectors combined.” And that's just the direct energy usage; the interests of “the industrial sector” (corporations) also have a large influence on the way transportation, housing, etc., are organized. Chapter 1 is filled with these types of statistics, which clash glaringly with the bourgeois media's focus on individual lifestyles and consumer habits. “To defeat the entrenched power of the capitalist class,” as Huber writes in the introduction, “we will need a mass popular movement” that “only the working class has the capacity to achieve.”

Huber's case for the centrality of the working class rests on three main points. First, since workers constitute an absolute majority within developed capitalist societies, it is impossible to build a genuinely democratic or majoritarian movement without winning a decisive chunk of the working class to the project. Second, workers collectively have a unique strategic advantage in any struggle against capital because of their central role in both commodity production specifically and the smooth running of society in general, which in turn means structural power over capitalists' ability to make profits. This linchpin role grants the working class an unparalleled capacity for disrupting and undermining "business as usual." Finally, given its disenfranchisement from ownership in the means of production under the rule of capital, the working class has "a fundamental material interest in transformations in the relations of production" – a material interest, that is, in socialist revolution.

This working-class approach is explicitly counterposed to an approach based on following the lead of the "most oppressed" layers of society or those "directly affected" by environmental devastation, such as the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the small island nations whose very existence is threatened by rising sea levels, or the poor communities routinely used as dumping grounds for toxic industrial waste. There is an obvious moral appeal within calls for this most-oppressed-first type of policy. The problem, however, as Huber correctly points out, is that these layers on their own do not constitute a powerful enough social force for winning out against capital; they represent a small minority of the US and world population, and do not as a group have any special levers of economic or social power that would help ensure victory. Undoubtedly, it would be the moral and political obligation of any environmental or workers' movement to take up the core demands and struggles of these layers, but that is altogether different from seeing in the most directly affected communities a solid strategic basis for winning a battle against the entrenched power of capital.

Strength #2: Stands firmly against the "politics of less"

The main political trends in the environmental movement today are all, in one way or another, burdened by what Huber succinctly and accurately calls a "politics of less." Whether it be regressive carbon taxes or left-wing theories of "degrowth," Huber correctly argues that these politics stand in stark contrast to building the type of broad-based working-class movement that is necessary.

The market-based variant. On the market-based, individualistic wing of the movement, these poli-

tics manifest as additional money costs that must be imposed to "correct" the functioning of the market in such a way that the real environmental and economic costs of fossil fuel use and production are taken into account on the corporate balance sheets. This might be as straightforward as a carbon tax or as roundabout as a cap-and-trade scheme.

Whether costs are imposed directly or indirectly, the ones to bear them in the final analysis are individual consumers, who are understood in this framework to be the core drivers of climate change. NGOs and think tanks spend millions of dollars commissioning intricate scientific studies to try to calculate the exact amount of carbon emissions associated with each private activity of each private individual – one's so-called "carbon footprint."

Working people are already sick to death of being told to make do with less, and any environmental program that smacks of this will be a complete non-starter.

As a general rule of scientific inquiry, if you ask wrong questions you'll get wrong answers. Asking about individual carbon footprints is a perfect example of this rule in action. As Huber writes in the introduction:

The theory of consumer sovereignty assumes that producers are captive to the demands of consumers, indeed that they are simply responding to the latter – rather than what is in fact the case: production constrains consumption choices. Much consumption (like driving) is not a "choice" but a necessity of social reproduction (getting to work). Moreover, when we choose commodities, we can only choose those that are profitable to produce in the first place.

The overwhelming majority of carbon emissions take place in the spheres of industrial production and transport, whose modes of operation exist prior to and largely independent of consumption. Just as a worker can only apply to the jobs already on offer, a consumer can only purchase products already on the market, and only what they can afford. There is no built-in mechanism for decision-making by workers or consumers about what types of work are to be done, what types of products are to be produced, and so on. The influence of purchasing decisions can only operate at the margins of the existing framework, and consumer-based strategies are innately incapable of driving

the type of fundamental transformation needed for putting the brakes on environmental devastation.

Given all of the above, together with the collective nature of most production in today's world, there is no meaningful sense in which a given quantity of emissions can be traced back to the decision of an individual consumer. The starting point for all consumption lies in the "hidden abode of production," which capital goes to great lengths to discourage us from investigating, because this abode also houses the rotten center of capitalism itself. Inside the churning reactor core of the capitalist system is the ruthless exploitation of both humanity and nature, without which the system could not function.

The radical left variant.

To its credit, the radical left wing of the environmental movement does not fall into this same trap. It correctly focuses on the processes of collective production rather than individual consumption. But it still stumbles into the politics of less in the form of "degrowth" – the idea that a continually expanding economy is not environmentally sustainable, and so, even on the basis of a democratically planned decarbonization of production, it would still be necessary to cut back on total energy usage and material throughput compared to the current trajectory. Often cited in support of this idea

are the non-renewable, rare-earth elements currently used for harnessing otherwise green and renewable energy (solar panels, wind farms, batteries, electric vehicle motors, etc.) and also in the manufacture of popular consumer electronics such as cell phones. The negative environmental impact of extracting such materials also frequently comes up in this context.

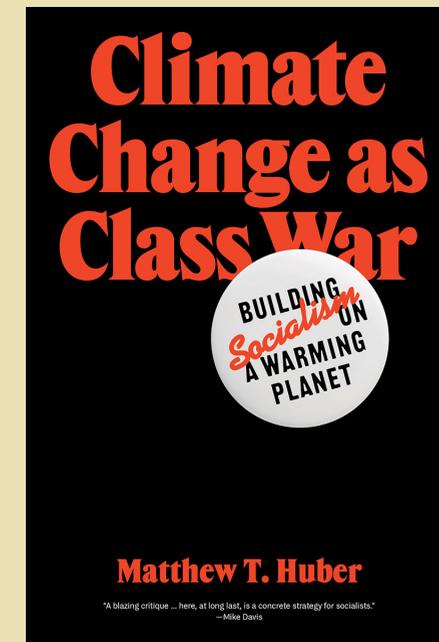
If the market-oriented right wing of the movement misses the forest for the trees, the degrowth-oriented left wing misses the forest for the continent: it shifts the focus so far toward the aggregate production of society that the class divisions so central to the solution of the problem become blurred. As Huber outlines very well in Chapter 4:

[I]t is clear that this kind of politics will not attract the masses of working-class people in an increasingly unequal economy. Due to wage stagnation, debt, and the evisceration of social services, most have already given up on the idea of "affluence" and live hand-to-mouth, struggling to afford the basics of life.

The burning question on the minds of most working-class people is not what will happen to the economy in aggregate, in terms of GDP, but what will happen to *their own* standard of living, and that of their friends, family, and neighbors. Any environmental program that is not unambiguously centered around an *increase* in working-class prosperity is politically dead as a tool for organizing and mobilizing a mass working-class movement. The ones who should have to tighten their belts are the wealthy elites, while the overwhelming majority of society sees immediate, tangible, material benefit. Regardless of any technical limitations a workers' state might run into on the question of environmentally sustainable production, this economic starting point of improved living standards for the masses is non-negotiable if we ever hope for workers to take power in the first place.

One of the strongest and most convincing points in the whole book is that most working people are not going to be mobilized because they

are convinced in the abstract of the scientific necessity of combating climate change, and they certainly are not going to spend their time and energy fighting for something that sounds like more austerity. Working people are already sick to death of being told to make do with less, and any environmental program that smacks of this will be a complete non-starter. What *can* mobilize workers is a bold program linking the necessary overhaul in production and transport to good, secure jobs and universal public services that make their lives easier. This is the main strength of the Green New Deal framework, and how it was able to garner such widespread popularity in such a short period of time, despite being sidelined by the political establishment of both parties.



Weakness #1: Attributes too much explanatory power to “the professional class”

Climate Change as Class War is divided into three parts. The first third focuses on the capitalist class, the last third on the working class. The middle third of the book is devoted to what Huber terms “the professional class,” which he makes clear is meant to refer to the same social grouping as Barbara and John Ehrenreichs’ “professional-managerial class” (PMC) and Erik Olin Wright’s “contradictory class locations,” among other formulations. He makes clear that he considers this a mostly new class that only came to represent a significant force in society during the post-WWII economic boom.

Despite the apparent centrality of the professional class to the overall narrative, nowhere do we find in this book a consistent definition of what it is. At first, it is identified with the “unproductive intellectual laborers” formula of Hal Draper, referring to wage- and salary-earners whose work is primarily mental and not linked to surplus-value production. A page or two later, it is defined in terms of its relatively autonomous conditions of work, relatively secure positions, and ample opportunities for careerism, identified with what Nicos Poulantzas called the “new petty bourgeoisie.” Then within a couple more pages, it is again redefined in terms of educational credentials (“educated wage earners” à la Barbara and John Ehrenreich): those whose jobs

require a bachelor’s degree or higher, essentially. Nowhere is it clarified which or how many of these criteria are required or sufficient for demarcating a group of employees as belonging to the professional class.

In choosing to call this chunk of society a “class,” Huber deviates from the scientific Marxist definition of class that he announces he is adopting at the beginning of the book. Ever since the beginning of bourgeois society, there have always been certain layers of workers whose jobs required special education, certification, or other formal credentials, and who were comparatively privileged relative to other layers of workers in terms of pay, working conditions, autonomy, or other factors. Traditional craft unionism was based on precisely these layers of workers. But up until now, Marxists have never considered these workers to be of a different class.

By his own passing admission, this layer does not constitute a class in the proper Marxist sense of the word, because it does not have its own distinct relationship to the means of production. Furthermore, it can be imbued with either bourgeois or working-class politics depending on its subjective outlook. But, he says, it’s just “snappier” to talk about it in class terms – and so he then continues treating it like a class throughout the rest of the book. To justify doing so, he suddenly pivots to say, partially quoting the Ehrenreichs, that:

Marxists cannot solely understand class as an objective relationship to the means of production. Class is also ‘characterized by a coherent social and cultural existence; members of a class share a common life style, educational background, kinship networks, consumption patterns, work habits, beliefs.’

This is not simply a matter of terminological nitpicking. According to Huber, this professional class is the progenitor of essentially all the problematic ideas in the environmental movement, which flow from its nature as a social class: guilt surrounding its comparatively high level of consumption and a proclivity as a knowledge-work class to frame the foundations of the climate struggle in terms of abstract knowledge, convincing others of the science, etc., rather than in terms of material interests.

The biggest problem with this conception is not its theoretical inconsistency surrounding the “professional class” itself but the fact that it bleeds over into an underestimation of the role of the *capitalist* class. The dead-end ideas that abound in the “professional” NGO and think tank sections of the climate movement have their roots in the *pressure exerted by the bourgeoisie and its politicians*, who disproportionately fund the grants and make the donations that are the main lifeblood of professional scientists and activists – and this is only the most blatant among the countless subtle ways that capitalist pressure can be brought to bear. In Chapter 3, Huber himself quotes the following passage from Hal Draper, but seemingly passes over the main inference about the capitalist class that Draper is alluding to:

‘Contributions to the symphony orchestra, university, church, or opera association come out of the same fund as expenditures for butlers, yachts, private chefs, or fashionable paintings and also ... prison wardens, generals, politicians, lawyers, judges, Boy Scout leaders, or asylum-keepers.’

The bureaucracy of the nonprofit-industrial complex, much like the labor union bureaucracy, acts as a *transmitting medium* for *capitalist pressures*. The working class of course exerts its pressure as well, but this is currently much weaker and therefore tends to affect mainly the language in which policies are presented, rarely their fundamental content. This role of certain professional layers as a medium for exerting political pressure onto social movements stands in contrast to the position of a class unto itself, acting in accordance with its own historic class mission and unique class interests.

In the first third of the book, the capitalist class is discussed only in terms of its economic concerns for profit-making. Profitability is, to be sure, its top priority at all times, but that doesn’t mean it is unaware of or unconcerned with other issues, such as

the climate crisis, that could threaten the overall stability of its profit-making system as a whole. The most farsighted sections of the bourgeoisie are deeply concerned with exactly these types of structural problems. Huber takes capitalists in high-carbon and direct-extraction industries – who genuinely do tend to be quite unconcerned with environmental issues – as representative of the class as a whole, but the real picture is more complicated.

The perennial international climate summits, where bourgeois politicians from around the world converge to seek agreements on climate policy, are not simply cynical conspiratorial maneuvers to dupe the public into thinking their rulers are actually doing something. They reflect a genuine recognition of the problem by the bourgeoisie of the world and a sincere attempt to get it under control – without questioning the capitalist system. The repeated failure of one summit after another to reverse the global emissions trend reflects the insurmountable barriers to progress imposed by the logic of the market and the nation-state. The bourgeois inability to go beyond the capitalist framework dooms these summits to failure from the very start – but the more farsighted representatives of that system still try to take action, however futile it may be.

The tinkering, dead-end ideas that bourgeois politicians bring into their climate summits (carbon taxes, green energy subsidies to corporations, cap-and-trade schemes, pollution fines, recycling, energy-efficiency standards, consumer-education policies, etc.) are largely the same ones being pushed onto the movement by the “respectable” environmental organizations. This is not primarily because the capitalists were pressured by the movement to take these positions (or at least pander to them publicly); quite the opposite, it is because the movement was pressured by the capitalists via the medium of the NGO bureaucracy and their ilk.

Weakness #2: “Socialism in One Sector”

Throughout the majority of the book, Huber systematically builds a strong case that nothing short of a broad-based movement, armed with a rounded-out, working-class program and drawing in the majority of society, stands any real chance at solving the climate crisis. So, when the conclusion he presents in the last few chapters turns out to be a much more narrow and partial “socialism in one sector” approach, as a reader one experiences a certain sense of vertigo or whiplash.

The argument goes like this: since the taking of power by the working class is still far off in the abstract and distant future, while the climate crisis

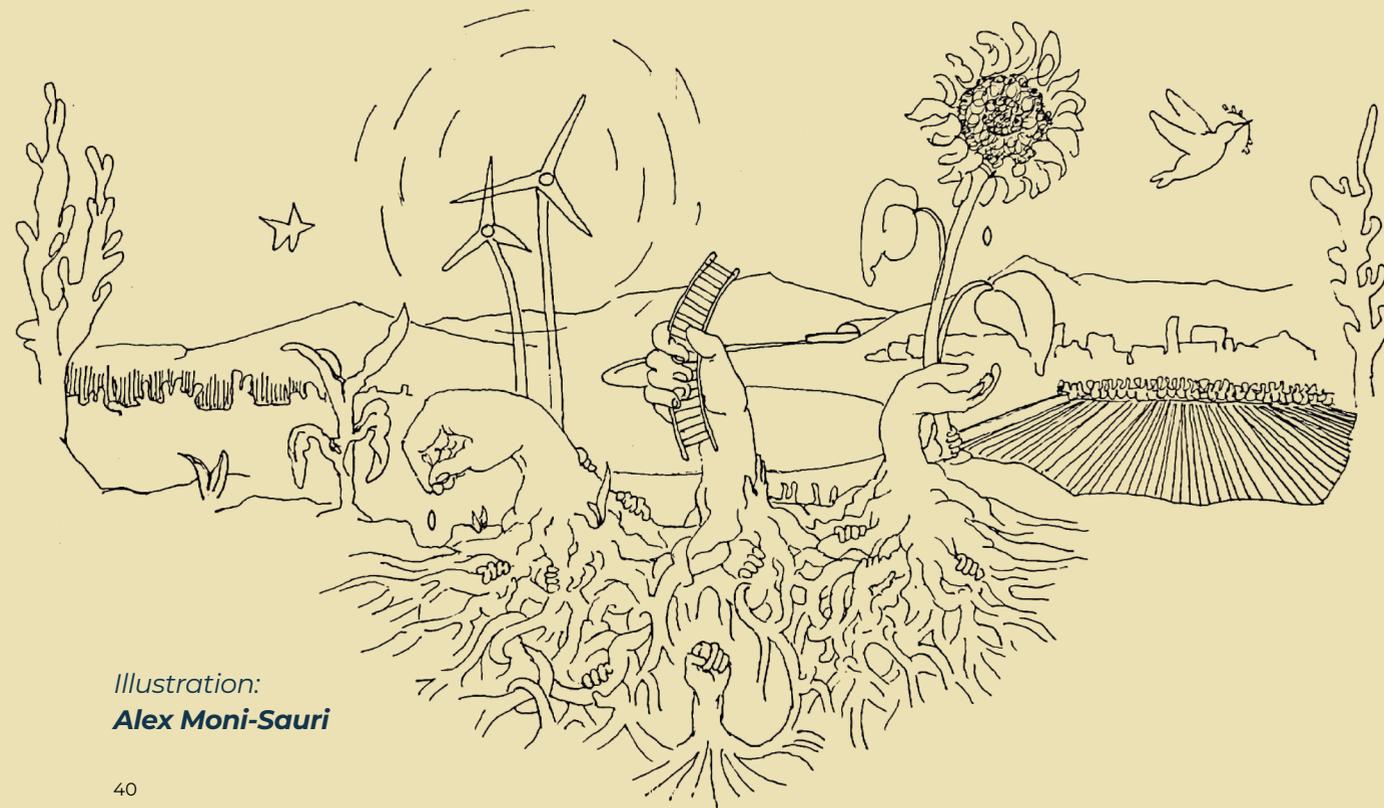


Illustration:
Alex Moni-Sauri

is immediate and pressing, we need a shortcut that allows us to deal with the climate crisis even before labor as a whole has decisively defeated capital. Therefore, we should lean on the disproportionate disruptive and productive power in the hands of energy-sector workers to force nationalizations in that industry under democratic worker control, which would then be used to carry out a worker-friendly Green New Deal-style decarbonization.

Suddenly, it turns out that we don't need a majority of workers at all, but only the five to six percent of them who are employed in energy production. According to Huber, their ability to shut down society as a whole through the threat of mass blackouts is the type of power that can bring the capitalist class to its knees and force bourgeois politicians to accept or carry out nationalizations under democratic worker control. And winning the energy workers to this program is primarily a matter of putting sufficient organizing resources into building a radical left-wing caucus in the energy sector unions.

"Socialism in one sector" is the phrase coined and used by Huber himself in the book. It is a tongue-in-cheek allusion to Stalin's abandonment of Bolshevik internationalism under the slogan "socialism in one country," as if to acknowledge with a sense of self-conscious

irony and nervous laughter how much friction there is between this formulation and the theory he had been building up in the hundreds of preceding pages. The comparison is more apt than the author likely intended. Even the stated motivations are similar: Stalin deemed international proletarian revolution too unrealistic in the short term to be useful as the basis for the solution of Russia's crises, so he grasped for a theory that painted the issues and their solutions in simpler, easier, and narrower terms.

To be fair, Huber does not paint this as a substitute for a broader taking of power by the working class, only as a stepping stone to get there – one that prioritizes tackling the environmental crisis first and foremost but continuing to build from there toward all-out workers' power in society generally. Nonetheless, the whole concept seems out of step with the living dynamics of real social movements.

The problems with "socialism in one sector" fall into two main categories.

First, it's not really a viable shortcut. The workers' movement cannot be simply a collection of individual workplace or industry-based groupings, each pursuing its own policy disconnected from the wider struggle. This is a hundred times truer still when it comes to extremely militant tactics (like threatening large-scale blackouts) linked to bold fighting demands (like nationalizations of industry). It is extremely unlikely that the mass of

workers in a given sector would be willing to pursue this type of militant policy unless they felt the support and confidence of the wider working class firmly at their backs. And if they attempted it without wider support, they could be isolated, defeated, fired, and replaced with relative ease.

Second, it underestimates the immediate relevance of socialist revolution. If, in the foreseeable future, we can build a working-class movement strong enough to force nationalizations of entire industries, then a socialist transformation of society cannot be viewed as something far off in the abstract and distant future. The very thing that would compel the ruling class to nationalize a significant chunk of the economy is if they perceive a revolutionary threat to their power. Once they see a movement strong enough to carry out nationalizations, they would likely act to pre-empt and cut the legs out from under that movement by carrying out the nationalizations themselves, under the terms most favorable to themselves that they could get away with. In doing so, their goal would be to split away important bases of support from the movement by painting it as no longer necessary. The nationalizations would be under bureaucratic control by capitalist politicians, not democratic workers' control, and thus would likely be adminis-

tered in a way that continues to pit worker prosperity against the environment in a zero-sum game. They may also attempt to reprivatize these industries once they judge the worst of the political crisis has passed.

The role of Marxists should be to safeguard the future of the movement in the present – among other things, by warning of and attempting to inoculate against the demobilizing effects of these types of maneuvers, and consistently advocating the necessity of the working class as a whole taking political power into its hands.

Still, I highly recommend that other socialists read *Climate Change as Class War* and use the tremendous insights provided there to build and radicalize the environmental movement, striving to imbue it with a solid, working-class outlook and approach. ■

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Photo: Ted Eytan, September 23, 2019, Climate Strike, Washington, DC, tinyurl.com/climate-strike-dc, Copyright: CC BY-SA 2.0



The Struggle to Defeat Neofascism and the Reorganization of the Left



BY FERNANDO SILVA

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PSOL supports Lula's Campaign Against Bolsonaro but Advocates Its Own Political Program

The October elections in Brazil will have a significant impact on the debate over the direction of the country, after a period of scorched earth tactics against all kinds of people's rights under four years of president Jair Bolsonaro's administration, an openly far-right government. Elections are taking place for the president, 27 state governors, 513 Federal Deputies, all state legislators, and one third of the Senate.

Former President Lula – Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva from the Workers Party (PT in Portuguese) – the main leader of the Brazilian left historically, stands out clearly as the candidate favored to win the elections. The latest polls in May, June, and July suggested he might even win in the first round.

Against this backdrop, Bolsonaro is threatening to repeat, in an even more violent manner, the Trumpist strategy of denouncing the elections and refusing to acknowledge the result if he loses. Bolsonaro has been attacking the Supremo Tribunal Federal (Supreme Court), the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (Superior Electoral Court) and the electronic voting system (used in the country uncontested since 1996). He has been spreading a myriad of lies against his opponents and calling for his supporters to engage in putschist street mobilizations.

The danger of a "Brazilian Capitol uprising" or something similar is even greater than the Trumpist adventure in the US, since Bolsonaro has strong ties and support in part of the Armed Forces and in state police forces. Moreover, there are signs that Bolsonaro may

create a provocation just before or during the elections, trying to make them unviable instead of trying to change their outcome after they are held.

Coups and Setbacks

Since 2016, Brazil has experienced a historic roll-back of rights – social, economic, environmental, and democratic. This period opened up with the judicial/parliamentary/media coup that overthrew President Dilma Rousseff. The goal of this blatantly undemocratic operation was to deepen an agenda of neoliberal reforms and remove former president Lula from the political scene.

The government of Michel Temer (2016-2018) took power and passed a constitutional amendment freezing public spending for 20 years as well as neoliberal reforms to the labor laws. The year 2018 was another peak of the reactionary wave, with the assassination by two former police officers of Marielle Franco (a socialist feminist opponent of police brutality and a member of the Socialism and Liberty Party – PSOL), Lula's imprisonment, and Bolsonaro's electoral victory.

Under the Bolsonaro government, the scale of attacks against people's rights has deepened. During the worst years of Covid, Bolsonaro's genocidal policies claimed the lives of approximately 700,000 Brazilians, due to the president's refusal to support vaccination, masking, and basic safety measures.

Under Bolsonaro also came the neoliberal pensions reform, environmental destruction on an unprecedented scale, the institutionalization of the extermination policy against indigenous and Black populations (the majority in the country), especially in the peripheries of big cities, and increased violence against women and LGBTQIA+ people and political violence in general.

A Turn in the Situation and Bolsonaroist Despair

The point is that the pandemic and the neoliberal agenda have greatly deepened Brazil's historic social inequality, worsening the economic crisis (sky-high unemployment, the highest inflation since the 1990s) and the social crisis (increased job insecurity). Hunger has returned to the level of tens of millions of people. Thirty-three million people face hunger on a daily basis (according to a Pennsan Network study), and around 61 million live in permanent food insecurity (according to a UN report).

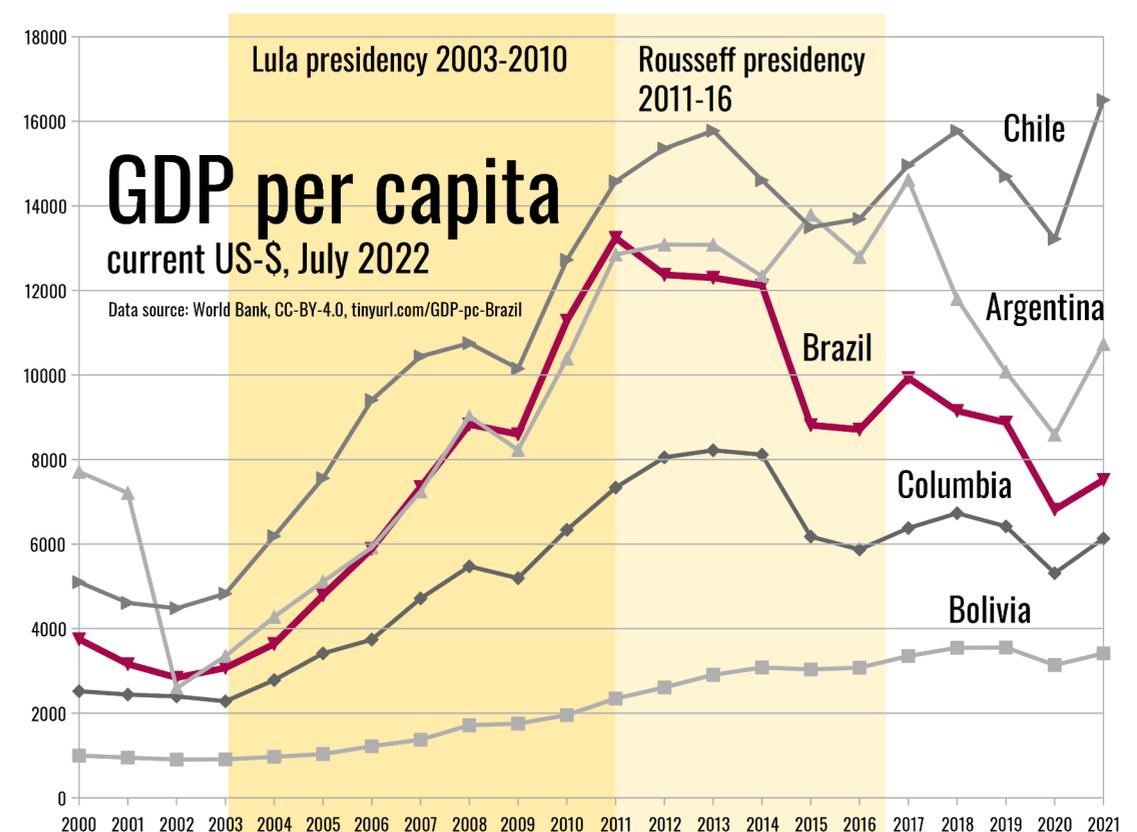
In 2020, with the beginning of the pandemic, Bolsonaro's support began to weaken and he gradually lost his majority support. There was also a growth in popular resistance, which peaked in 2021 in the National Campaign against Bolsonaro, with regular street demonstrations in over 500 cities across the country. Calls for his impeachment grew, but the president was shielded by the Chamber of Deputies.

But in this case, what could have been seen as a sign of the government's strength was in fact its opposite; because in order to avoid impeachment, Bolsonaro handed control of the narrative to the so-

called "Centrão" (the bourgeois parliamentary majority that historically controls the National Congress). This was the opposite of what he had said in his election campaign and during part of his term in office when he had attacked the Congress for its corruption – which in the end became a characteristic of his own government and its family clan.

Lula's release from prison in late 2019 was also an important factor for the opposition. It was an important victory that increased the prospect of winning the elections.

Finally, the Brazilian situation shouldn't be looked at in isolation from the broader context across Latin America, where authoritarian or neofascist projects have been defeated a number of times in recent years. Trump's defeat was a weakening factor for Bolsonaro, as well as the defeats of the coup in Bolivia and the coup attempt in Venezuela, the mass movement in Chile, and the election of the leftist Boric as President of Chile. The recent election victories in Colombia of President Gustavo Petro and his running mate Francia Marquez and the massive anti-neoliberal mobilizations in Ecuador set the tone of a strong left/progressive shift on the continent, which has increased the isolation of the Bolsonaroist project.



The Race is Undecided, But We Can Win

But it would be a serious mistake to assume the left will win the Brazilian elections. Not only the elections, but Brazil's direction in general remains undecided for a number of reasons.

First, it's unclear what effects Bolsonaro's desperate social benefit measures will have; he increased emergency aid for the poor and provided a subsidy on gas prices as well as assistance for truck drivers. It remains to be seen whether these measures will help Bolsonaro recover some popularity, which could improve his chances in the election.

Secondly, Bolsonaro may take steps toward organizing a coup as a Plan B. Or if he doesn't have a majority in the institutions of the political regime or in the Armed Forces for a coup to keep him in power in the case of an electoral defeat, provocations and adventures might be instigated to make the electoral process simply unviable. But he has enough parliamentary and social support to try some sort of legal maneuvering after a provocation, which could be instigated at the extremist demonstrations scheduled for September 7 (Independence Day in Brazil).

Lula has on his side a clear social majority among many groups: the poor, the working class, Black people, young people, women, the LGBTQIA+ community, middle-class progressives, and almost all social movements and the Left.

Bolsonaro is the expression of a clearly neofascist social current among the masses, with strong support among white men, connected in general to the agribusiness sector, and to the leadership of the Christian fundamentalist churches (and at least half their supporters). He also has most of the support among business, especially small and medium-sized business owners. Bolsonaro also has strong support in sectors of the Armed Forces, the Police Forces, and the Milícias (paramilitary forces that control, by now, around 60 percent of Rio de Janeiro). In addition, he also has preached a broad armament of his civilian social base – there are now 1600 “shooting clubs” in the country, half of them created during Bolsonaro's government.

To disregard these factors would be to celebrate victory before the struggle is over, which would be a mistake in a situation that tends to be turbulent and violent. This situation demands not only winning the popular vote, but also, as soon as possible, mobilizing the people to denounce the coup attempt and organize international solidarity.

The tactical tasks for the next few months are clear: to beat Bolsonaro in the elections, guarantee Lula's inauguration, and defeat any coup attempt. Therefore, what we need is a massive, broad, democratic mobilization.

The Future of the Reorganization of the Left

Many of the possibilities for Brazil's direction will be decided, or at least drawn with greater clarity, with the outcome of the elections and the potential social and political clashes around them. The struggle to defeat neofascism in Brazil, however, will not be over with the elections, even if the most positive scenario prevails (Lula's electoral victory and the inauguration of a new government). This would be like thinking (although the countries are clearly different) that Trump's electoral defeat would mean the end of Trumpism and the militarized far-right in the US. The struggle to defeat Brazilian neofascism and the presence of ultra-reactionary thought among sectors of society will be a long-term struggle.

This future will partly depend on the strengthening and growth of a new socialist, programmatic, and radical Left. We need a generational renewal to help reinvigorate social movements in Brazil because the contradictions in the hegemonic force of the Brazilian Left – Lula and the Workers' Party (PT) – are far too big.

The program of Lula's candidacy – and the kind of governance it envisions – are not a break from the previous period of PT governments. Obviously the PT is more progressive than the neofascism Brazil is facing, but the PT continues to be a project of class collaboration between the working class and the ruling class. It is not by chance that Lula has a vice-presidential running mate who is the former

governor of São Paulo, Geraldo Alckmin, a historic and organic political leader of the neoliberal right wing and of the ruling classes of the richest state in the country, not to mention being connected to the Opus Dei, an ultraconservative order of the Catholic Church.

The social and economic development model proposed by the PT for the reconstruction of Brazil, after this period of Bolsonaro's scorched earth policies, remains within the framework of capitalism. It does not propose a break with agribusiness, extractivism, nor the dominance of finance capital. The PT plans to reclaim a series of public and social rights and make some environmental reforms, but retains the old utopian, unrealizable logic of trying to serve two masters at the same time – capital and labor. It is no accident that Lula's campaign program refuses to propose the repeal of the neoliberal pension and labor reforms of the Temer and Bolsonaro governments, just to name a few of the most glaring contradictions.

Lula's election, alongside the shifts to the left in Chile, Columbia, and other Latin American countries, may consolidate a more general shift in the balance of forces on the subcontinent. Our struggle, then, will be to deepen this shift as far as possible, winning the structural reforms that were blocked in Brazil during the 2000s. If back then Brazil experienced the most limited progress in this regard, the challenge is to put the country on the frontline of a more radical, deeper process of social and political victories for the exploited and the oppressed.

Defeat Neofascism, but No Responsibility for a New PT Government

The place of the socialist Left, and of PSOL in particular, in Brazil is in Lula's campaign, on the frontline of the struggle for his victory and to defeat neofascism.

PSOL resolved not to accept positions inside a Lula government and has advocated its own political program for the country.

But we believe that positioning ourselves on this side of the barricades must be combined with critical independence, defending a different project for the country – a strategic vision of rebuilding the country on anticapitalist and eco-socialist bases.



Tribute to Marielle Franco in São Paulo, Brazil: In 2018 two former police officers assassinated Marielle Franco, a socialist feminist opponent of police brutality and member of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL).

Photo: Elias Roviello, tinyurl.com/MarielleFranco-Roviello, Copyright: CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/

This means a foundation for a break with class collaboration projects.

For this reason, PSOL resolved not to accept positions inside a Lula government and has also advocated its own political program for the country. We have preserved our autonomy for the building of a new strategic project, anchored in popular mobilization, and that, beyond the central task of defeating the far-right, seeks to shift the balance of forces in favor of the working class and its most exploited and oppressed sectors.

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reform & revolution

A Marxist Caucus in DSA

The Reform & Revolution caucus of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) stands in the revolutionary socialist tradition which fights to end economic inequality, racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression.

The resurgence of socialist ideas and the explosive growth of DSA represent the biggest opportunity in decades to build a mass socialist movement in the United States. Our caucus stands for building DSA into a mass socialist party rooted in the struggles of the working class and the oppressed. We also seek to contribute to the construction of an organized Marxist current within DSA which is committed to international socialism.

Our magazine strives to provide a forum for lively debate on the program and strategy that social movements need, drawing on lessons from past struggles.

We view the capitalist system – with its nonstop global competition for profits and power – as the main driver behind inequality, oppression, and the climate crisis. We stand for bringing the major corporations that dominate the economy into public ownership and replacing the anarchy of the market with democratic economic planning in order to meet the needs of people and the planet.

We advocate for a dramatic expansion of democracy in which all aspects of society – including our workplaces, neighborhoods and schools – are democratically run by popular assemblies and workers councils that are elected and subject to recall.

If you want to fight the billionaire class, if you want to resist all forms of oppression and fight for an eco-socialist world, join DSA at dsausa.org! If you want to find out more about joining the Reform & Revolution caucus of DSA, please email us at info@ReformAndRevolution.org

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