

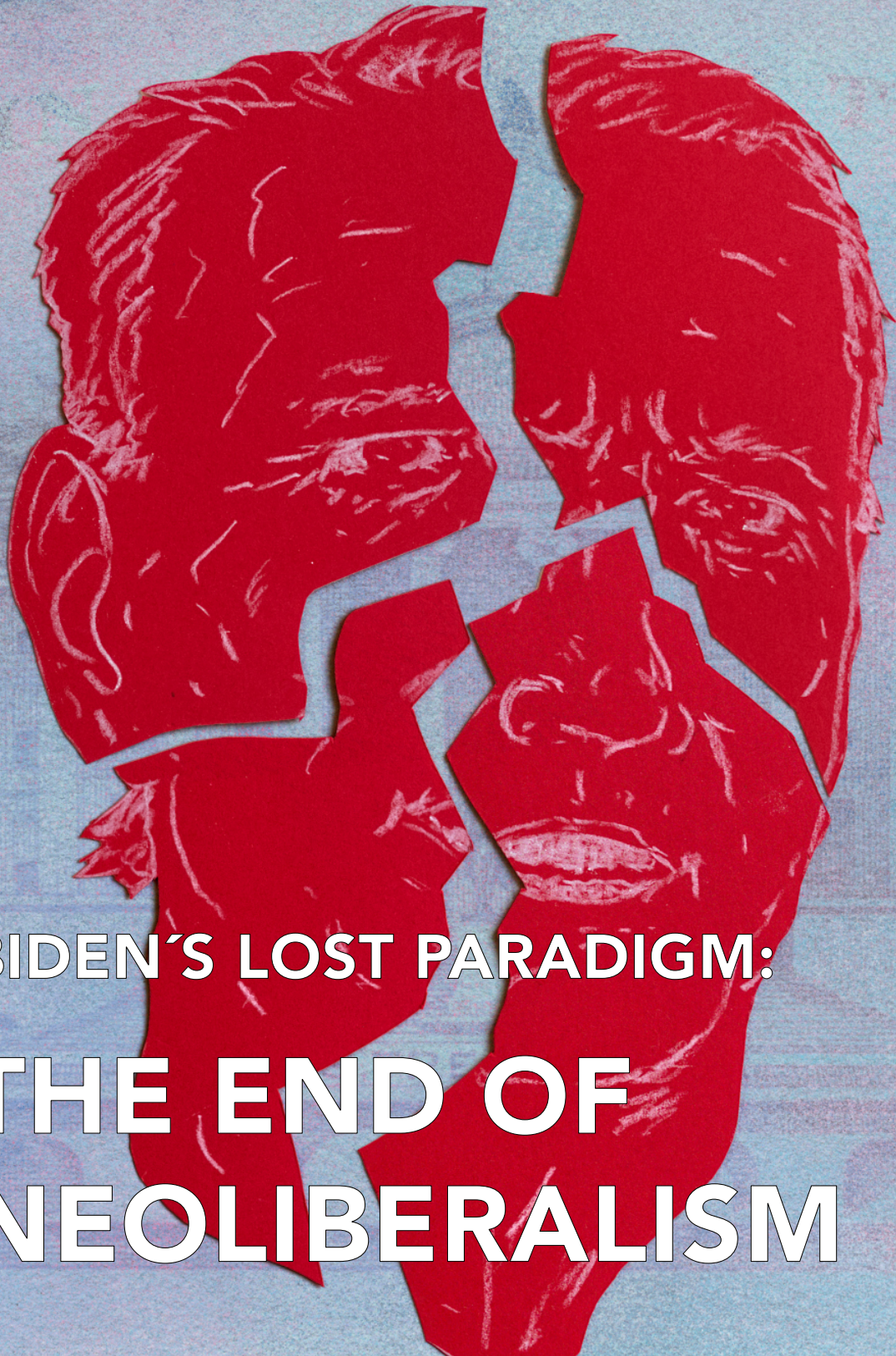
reform & revolution

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BIDEN'S LOST PARADIGM:

**THE END OF
NEOLIBERALISM**

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Dear Reader,

Three major shifts are underway in the US. This edition of our magazine deals heavily with the changes we face from the new Biden administration. A staunch and lifelong hack for neoliberalism, Joe Biden just made it into the highest office when the world did not allow him just to continue. While deeply rooted in the capitalist system, Biden and the Democratic Party elite are stumbling through managing the fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, deeply in fear to repeat the mistakes of the early Obama years: to spend too little to have an impact on the economy and to negotiate too much with Mitch McConnell Republicans and lose the House or the Senate before anything gets done. More importantly however, this administration is under the huge pressure of a polarisation in society and a huge shift to the left of the Democrats electorate. The socialist left, especially DSA can build on the successes, on the debates around a \$15 minimum wage, the setbacks due to concessions to moderate Democrats as well as on our successes with pushing a working class agenda forward.

Second, the whole society still under the impact of last years huge Black Lives Matter movement watches the murder trial against the police who killed George Floyd on May 25, 2020. [...]

Third, the Trumpian right does not hesitate to exploit the tragic fate of refugees arriving at the southern border. It's disgusting. However, decisive for them to be able to exploit that is the inability of the Biden administration to change the course [...]

In solidarity,

The Editorial Board of *Reform & Revolution*

DSA PRE-CONVENTION

With a number of resolutions out for debate and the first draft for a DSA platform out, the pre-convention period for DSA has started. When delegates from all chapters and at large will come together in the first week of August to debate those resolutions and decide on a new platform, there will be a number of key questions.

The national electoral committee proposes a resolution that could at least continue the discussions where the 2019 Convention left off: DSA builds toward a dirty break and sets its goal toward a new mass working class party. The emphasis is too much on the dirty part of the break and no vision on how to work toward the break is given. Amendments can help. But overall: a good start. See: [Shortlink]

Reform & Revolution supports 3 key resolutions toward that goal: to put the break in the dirty break. You can find more on that on page [XX] and online [Shortlink].

In preparation for the convention, DSA organizes a series of pre-conferences. Make sure to sign up for them to be ready to run as a delegate for your chapter or at large [Shortlink]

In this magazine, we also positively critique the first draft platform, see page [XX]. Let us know what you think, send us your resolutions and comments: info@reformandrevolution.org

The Road from Nevada

BY PHILIP LOCKER AND STEPHAN KIMMERLE

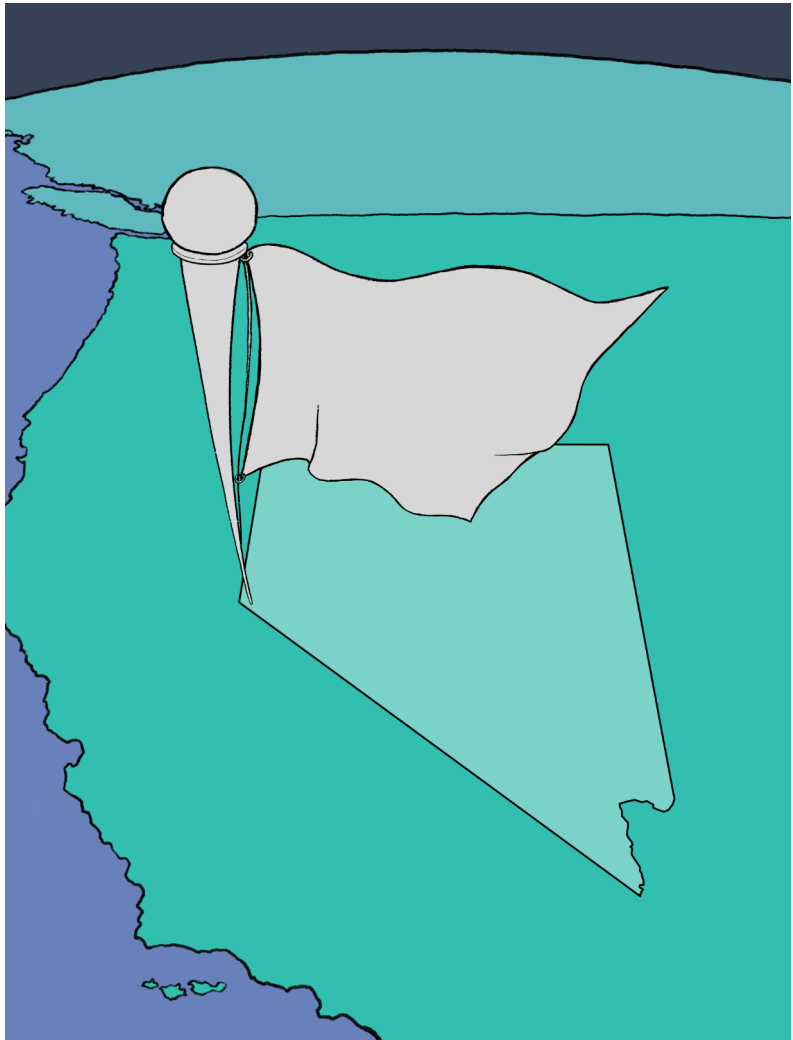
ILLUSTRATED BY BENJAMIN WATKINS

Bernie Sanders' supporters recently swept the elections for the leadership of the Nevada state Democratic Party. The centrist machine took the money and ran. What does this reveal about the potential of a realignment strategy to reform the Democratic Party?

On March 6, “The NV Dems Progressive Slate,” a coalition of left-wing candidates, swept the elections for the leadership of the Nevada state Democratic Party, winning all five seats. Four of the candidates were members of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and all five were supported by DSA. The left-wing victory was the culmination of a wave of organizing since Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign.

This was a blow to the “Reid machine,” the party apparatus assembled by former Democratic Party Senate Majority leader Harry Reid. A leader of the establishment wing of the Democratic Party, Reid still plays a central role in Nevada politics.

In an attempt to stop the Berniecrats, Reid and establishment forces formed a “Progressive Unity Slate” for the party leadership election. They based their campaign on the claim that the left was divisive. Yet even before the election, fearing defeat, the establishment moved \$450,000 out of the party's accounts into the



Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. Then shortly after the left won the leadership elections, all the state party staff resigned and all consulting contracts were severed. So much for "unity."

The Las Vegas Review-Journal quoted “one operative with close ties to the party” as saying “the Reid machine is not the central committee. It's the operatives, volunteers, fundraising and orga-

nizing capacity, all of which can be accomplished outside of the state party organization.”

Jon Ralston, founder of the Nevada Independent, explained to CNN: “Reid folks have vowed to set up a separate entity because they have no faith in the party to do what they have done successfully for more than a decade: launder (legally) money through the party to pay for voter programs.”

This shows that Reid's people—and the Democratic establishment more generally—will not just hand over their big business electoral machine if the left wins a majority in party elections.

What does it mean to take over a state party?

“Did Democratic Socialists seize the means of Nevada's political production?” asked David Colborne, a member of the Libertarian Party writing for the Nevada Independent. He explained that the reality is far from the hype in much of the media:

Did the Democratic Socialists of America actually take over the Nevada Democratic Party? Will Senator Cortez-Masto suddenly come out in favor of Medicare for All? Are elected Democrats in Carson City going to start quoting Das Kapital, or will Gov. Sisolak write fundraising appeals quoting directly from The Conquest of Bread? Will Murray Bookchin's The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years become a blueprint for Nevada's politics over the next few years? Are Nevadans going to have to learn the difference between a Dengist and a Maoist, or between an anarcho-syndicalist and a mutualist? Will our families be organized into book club affinity groups and forced to read some theory?

Absolutely not.

He went on to point out that “state parties don't guide policy or messaging. State parties also do

not exist to elect candidates; in Nevada, they don't even exist to select candidates, unless your party is small or you're running for president ... The most meaningful prize Democratic Socialists won in Nevada last weekend was the state party's social media accounts.” And he concludes:

That's why, if you've been wondering why the so-called “Reid machine” [...] let a bunch of amateur activists seize control of the state party, there's a simple explanation. Only clueless amateurs would think the state party was worth fighting for in the first place.

There is undoubtedly a lot of truth in Colborne's description of the very limited power of the official Democratic Party structures. However, that is only one part of the larger picture. Colborne underestimates what the left has achieved, and more importantly, ignores the potential these new positions and legitimacy could offer for the radical left to promote their policies, build their base, and organize campaigns. Three illustrations of this are:

1) The left's success in winning the leadership of the state party is a reflection of the real strength that they have built in Nevada through Sanders' 2016 and 2020 campaigns and critically, the building of an ongoing membership organization out of these campaigns in the form of DSA. In 2020 the Sanders campaign won a very hard-fought primary battle, including a majority of Las Vegas unionized hotel workers despite the union leadership actively campaigning for Biden. This seems to have been a defining battle, with this recent DSA takeover emerging as the fruits of the intensive organizing work behind Bernie's 2020 victory.

To be able to build influence in Nevada, to win electoral races, and win positions in the Democratic Party, the progressive slate

had to build its own organization, its own financial resources, and its own grassroots political base. All of this was done independent of the official Democratic Party structures struggles that took place on the terrain of the Democratic Party, like the Sanders campaigns). The backbone of this effort was the DSA, which has grown rapidly in Nevada over the past several years. It was only by building DSA, an independent organization with its own membership structures that democratically decides its own political policies, that the left built the power to successfully organize to win the state party leadership elections.

Reid's people emphasize that the real Democratic Party is not the official leading committees but their network of influence and connections. The left also needs to register a similar point, but from the opposite class standpoint—the real “party” that the left leads is DSA and the activist forces built since 2016, rather than the formal Democratic Party leadership positions they just occupied.

2) The victory in the Democratic Party elections can be used to further build DSA itself as an independent, democratic, membership organization. In an interview on the Deconstructed podcast, Keenan Korth, an organizer with the progressive slate was asked: “How many of the five-person slate are DSA members?”

Korth responded “I believe four of them are formally dues-paying DSA members and one of them located in Carson City County simply does not have a local org to join. But we are certainly trying to get DSA up and running in every county here in Nevada, so that our inside-outside strategy works in every county.”

3) The Berniecrats and DSA in Nevada have built their forces by using a fighting, movement-building approach. There will be a huge pressure on the new left-wing

leaders to tone this down in running the state Democratic party. To succumb to this would be a serious mistake; instead the victory in the state party elections should be used by the new leadership as a larger platform to step up their grassroots, movement-building efforts. In that regard the comments of Judith Whitmer, the new state party chair and member of DSA, on her vision following the resignation of all the state party staff could be promising.

Speaking to the Deconstructed podcast Whitmer said “now that we are faced with a clean slate, to me, that’s nothing but an opportunity to rebuild the party even more quickly, and build a team out of staff, and volunteers, and rank-and-file members, and consultants that have been doing incredible work to engage new constituencies. It was a big part of the Sanders campaign, the outreach to Latino and Hispanic communities, to Muslim communities here in Nevada; in particular, we had an extraordinary engagement with the broader Muslim communities.”

The danger here is that too many left liberal Democrats use similar rhetoric without taking up any of the real work of activism, struggle, and movement building. A basic first step would be to launch an open struggle for the Nevada Democratic Party, and all its elected politicians, to cut off all financial ties with big business and instead raise money from working and middle class people linked to campaigning for progressive policies that would benefit them.

Nevada and the Dirty Break Strategy

DSA agreed at its last national convention in August 2019 that it aims to build a new working-class party in the future, while for now tactically running candidates on the Democratic Party ballot line where this is advantageous. While different comrades place varying amounts of emphasis on how

much independence to aim for in the short run, this is generally understood as a “dirty break” strategy. This strategy is opposed to a “clean break” from the Democrats, of just announcing a new party immediately, because the forces consciously supporting independent left politics are currently very weak. The idea is to instead build DSA and a stronger working-class base in preparation for a meaningful break, and to form a real mass organization that can challenge the Democratic Party.

Other comrades in DSA argue for a “realignment strategy”—a long-term strategy of reforming the Democratic Party and moving it to the left. The successes of Bernie Sanders and the Squad around Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, as well as the shift to a more Keynesian approach by the Biden Administration, has put wind in the sails of these forces. The recent Nevada wins will also be used to reinforce their case.

But a closer look at the experience in Nevada reveals much more than that: it shows how quickly the “big tent” of the Democratic Party (a coalition between a wing of the capitalist class, labor, and a progressive electoral base, but with capital in the dominant position) will tend to break down if the left actually gains even limited power. “Unity” in the eyes of the Democratic establishment means the left has to line up behind them as the lesser evil against the Republicans. If the left were to exert meaningful control over some sections of the party it would lead to a split between the big-business and working-class wings. In effect, this would mean an end to the Democratic Party as we know it and the emergence of a new, independent working-class party.

Other left-wing activists across the country are attempting to carry out the same strategy as in Nevada, working to take over local

and state Democratic Parties. Their success will rely far more on their ability to build an organized independent political base than winning formal positions within the Democratic Party. Like in Nevada, this means building DSA (or other democratic, left-wing membership organizations) into a strong, well organized, movement of working people. Such a project—building a member-run, democratic, working-class, socialist organization—is in reality a political party, whatever name one calls it.

Where the left succeeds in winning positions of leadership within the Democratic Party, they will come under huge pressure to moderate their policies and be co-opted into the liberal capitalist framework of the Democratic Party. To overcome this the left will need a determined oppositional approach to the Democratic establishment and a willingness to stand against appeals for “party unity.”

The Corbyn Experiment

Asked about the Nevada Democratic Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, who is facing re-election in two years, the Nevada Democrats’ new leader Judith Whitmer expressed her disappointment. Whitmer believed she had really great conversations with the Senator prior to state party elections, but “suddenly, everything sort of seemed to change or go off track.” As it turned out, Cortez Masto was a key figure in recruiting Whitmer’s opponent for state party chair and even tried to put pressure on Whitmer to drop out of the race.

Whitmer continues in the interview with Deconstructed: “So I’m not really sure about that or why, because I thought we had a fairly decent relationship. And I reassured her that we weren’t going to primary her and we were planning on going all-in on making sure she got reelected. So it seems kind of

strange to me that you wouldn't see the value of what we've been able to do, and how well we organize, and how we're winning these elections by keeping everybody actively engaged. It seems to me like she would see the value of that and want to utilize that."

Unfortunately Whitmer's hopes for unity with establishment politicians like Cortez Masto sounds very similar to the mistakes made by Jeremy Corbyn and his close supporters in the British Labour Party. When the socialist was elected leader of the Labour Party with an upswell of support from young people, hundreds of thousands joined the party, doubling its size and pushing for the most left-wing electoral program in recent history.

Unfortunately, Corbyn made a serious mistake of trying to appease his establishment opponents in the party. He did not support running primary challenges against them, instead allowing sitting members of parliament to continue to be the Labour candidates, no matter how anti-Corbyn they were and regardless of the opinions of the rank-and-file members of the party. The Labour politicians rewarded Corbyn's appeasement with an unrelenting campaign against the left, eventually succeeding in removing Corbyn as the party leader (after a gruelling five-year war of attrition), while thousands of Corbyn supporters were expelled, neutralized, or left the party.

The Reid machine was just as ruthless in their approach—take the money and run. They are very clear that they will use that money to continue working through their own structures to back corporate candidates. Attempting to negotiate with forces like that because they have formal membership in the same organization is useless. The left would be wise to learn the lessons from this experience.

Peaceful coexistence between the left and the big-business wing of the Democratic Party is a pipe dream. Either big business or the left will dominate the party. If the left secures control and breaks the influence of corporations over the party, the establishment will revolt. The left must not allow this threat of a split to act as a pressure to water down its policies or strategy. Instead we need to be crystal clear that the only viable way forward is an all-out struggle against the establishment and their corporate backers.

Clear Political Program Needed

It's a bit hard to find out what the progressive slate actually stood for in concrete political terms. Dr Zaffar Iqbal, now second vice chair, wrote in the election campaign: "In the face of the worst pandemic in living memory, we need healthcare as a human right. In the midst of a financial crisis, we need an economy that serves working people. As we grapple with the legacy of bigotry, we need to dismantle systemic racism and fight for true justice, true inclusion, and true change."

On February 12, Judith Whitmer emphasized "everyone deserves a right to a job with livable wages," healthcare as a basic human right, affordable housing, education "without the threat of debt," and a "society that values people over profit."

Alongside this there was a lot of rhetoric about party unity, diverse voices, and fresh ideas, but little in terms of specifics about what those fresh ideas were. That is why it is important to clearly and explicitly call for concrete policies: Medicare for All, \$15 minimum wage, tuition free higher education, taxing the rich, a Green New Deal, slashing the bloated budget for police and the criminal justice system, abolishing ICE, legalization of undocumented immigrants, etc. Unfortunately, the

progressives have not put forward that kind of clear program, making it harder for their base to hold them accountable even as the pressure they face to water down their policies is set to dramatically grow.

We will see in which direction the new leadership will move. At the moment, it appears that there is a lack of the dynamic approach that Bernie Sanders employed with his call for a political revolution against the billionaire class. Without a call to working-class people to get involved, to build movements, to get organized in labor, to join DSA, even the general calls for healthcare as a human right will shatter when confronted with the power of the pharmaceutical and insurance industries.

To be most effective the new leaders will need to name the specific capitalists and establishment figures to organize against, and put forward a strategy to fight them. If they do not educate and prepare their supporters by openly explaining the need to challenge the framework of the capitalist system itself with a fundamentally different democratic socialist society based on gender, racial, and economic justice, the Nevada DSA and the newly elected leaders of the Democratic Party will disappoint their supporters and leave room for a return of the establishment.

In her February 12th statement Whitmer also wrote "United, we can make the promise of this country a reality at last. When we fight together, we win together!" This can get in the way of the need for the new left leadership to develop a clear public profile as fundamentally different from "normal" politicians who so often repeat similar empty rhetoric.

"Uniting" with the members of Congress who filled their coffers with donations from the pharmaceutical industry will not win us

Medicare for All. Will the new leadership of the Democrats in Nevada spell that out and primary incumbent Democrats who represent Wall Street and big business?

The Struggles Ahead

DSA's August 2019 national convention adopted an electoral policy that stated:

DSA is committed to building a political organization independent of the Democratic Party and their capitalist donors... In the longer term, our goal is to form an independent working-class party, but for now this does not rule out DSA-endorsed candidates running tactically on the Democratic Party ballot line.

This approach can also include the possibility of taking over various Democratic Party local chapters or

even the machinery of various Democratic state parties. However, winning these positions does not mean we have now built a party as a real organized force.

A party in the socialist sense of the word, an organized political force of the multiracial working class fighting for their own class interests, needs to be a democratic membership organization of activists rooted in workplace and community struggles, in labor, the movements for Black Lives, and the environment. It will not just be a tool to run successful candidates but will need to use those campaigns and elected officials to build the organized power of working class people, build movements, and build up the strength of its own party.

DSA in Nevada is doing much of this by organizing grassroots

campaigns and using recent successes in the Democratic Party to build DSA. The success of taking over the Nevada Democratic Party opens new opportunities to build DSA and social movements, which could be an important contribution to building the forces of a new party in reality (a political alternative to the big business controlled Democratic Party). However, it also brings new pressures and challenges on DSA and the left in Nevada to water down their policies and fighting strategy in order to maintain unity with the Democratic establishment. To resist these pressures we need to keep our focus squarely on building up the independent and organized forces of the left to wage an all-out struggle against big business and its representatives in the Democratic Party. ■

Putting the Break in the Dirty Break

RESOLUTIONS SUPPORTED BY THE REFORM & REVOLUTION CAUCUS FOR THE COMING DSA CONVENTION IN AUGUST 2021

DSA's 2021 National Convention is fast approaching. A major issue facing DSA is how it relates to the Democratic Party and its strategy for independent working class politics. As the 2019 DSA National Convention stated, DSA can play a role in taking steps toward building a new working class party. In our view, this includes a "dirty break" strategy.

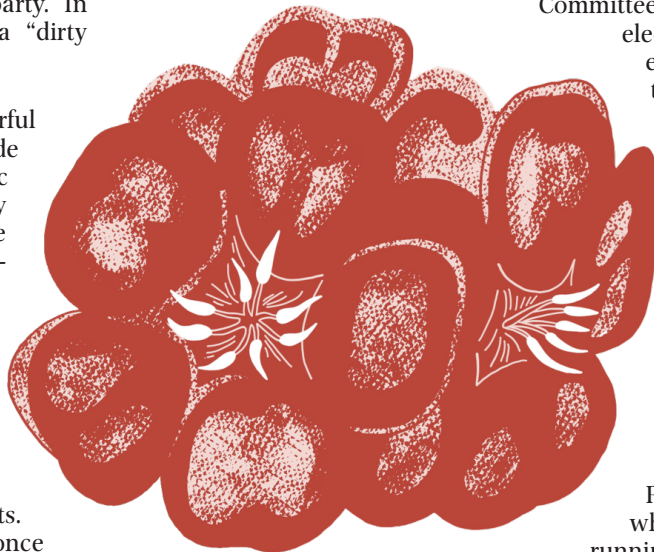
We need to build a powerful base which can include running on the Democratic Party ticket, if tactically necessary. However, if we do not also take the necessary steps to break free of one of history's most enthusiastic capitalist and imperialist parties, we run the serious danger of just reinforcing the existing power of the Democrats over labor and other movements. This would allow them - once more - to funnel our energy into lesser evilism.

That's why we are asking you to support the following three resolutions. You can find links to the full text of the resolutions here: bit.ly/3a14X6A

Campaign for a Democratic Socialist Party

This resolution reaffirms DSA's goal to build towards forming an independent working class party. As AOC has said, "We don't have a

left party in the United States. The Democratic Party is not a left party. The Democratic Party is a center, or a center-conservative, party." As a step in this direction, the resolution would create a campaign for a Democratic Socialist Party



focused on growing the DSA to 150,000 members and providing political education on the need for our own party.

Running 10 Independent Candidates in 2022

This resolution would ask the DSA National Political Committee to identify the 10 most promising 2022 races around the country where it is possible and effective to run DSA candidates independent

of the Democratic Party ballot line (in addition to other races where DSA candidates run on the Democratic ballot line). DSA would promote these 10 independent electoral candidacies nationally, and the National Political Committee and the National Electoral Committee will ask DSA members elected to public office to endorse and promote these candidates.

DSA Candidates' Political Message about the Democratic Party

This resolution urges all DSA candidates to clearly promote a consistent socialist message about the big business character of the Democratic Party, regardless of which ballot line they are running on (Democratic, independent, or third party) and spells out key aspects of that message. This includes DSA candidates clearly stating their affiliation with DSA, clearly differentiating themselves from corporate or centrist Democrats, and campaigning to build working class organizations. While not a hard rule, it would politically help move DSA candidates towards a more consistent, cohesive, and socialist message in their campaigns regardless of what ballot line they tactically decide to run on.

Let's Talk about Building Power

BY STEPHAN KIMMERLE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

Some thoughts on the role of a program of a broad, multi-tendency, democratic socialist organization and how to improve the first draft of DSA's new platform

DSA's Platform Subcommittee is asking for feedback on their initial platform draft. However, that link takes you to a page with a form that asks you to rate the individual sections of the first draft. You can score each section between zero - "needs work" - and ten - "support as written." In my view, the discussion needs to be a bit wider and provide feedback on the initial draft beyond questions of whether sections need more work or not. Here are some thoughts.

A Platform for a Big-Tent Organization

DSA is a democratic, membership-run, big-tent organization fighting for democratic socialism. It is sometimes chaotic, not always efficient, often lacking a unified focus, with different forces pulling in different directions. Yet it is also the best tool we have to bring a wide array of activists together, to impact the class struggle in the US and internationally, to test out our ideas in practice, to have meaningful debates on how to change the world, and to attract even more people to the socialist cause. It would be mistaken to view the goal of this platform discussion, culminating at the DSA national convention in early August 2021,

as declaring one tendency within DSA the "winner" of this competition of ideas, once and for all. Any platform has to preserve the fundamental character of DSA as a broad umbrella group for a process of organizing and political clarification that will play out in the future. Fortunately, the first draft published by the DSA Platform Subcommittee is clearly written with that intention.

A Program of Actionable Items

A program like The Communist Manifesto from 1848 explains the world in a cohesive way to outline a strategy to change it. The current first draft of the platform subcommittee does not. Is this a weakness? Perhaps not, as a multi-tendency socialist organization has different needs than the Communist League that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were writing for when they penned the Manifesto.

In fact, Marx and Engels themselves proposed a different approach than the one they applied in the Manifesto during the discussion about a unifying program for a multi-tendency organization in 1875 in Germany after a merger between two trends of the German workers movement. They proposed an "action program" for this broader socialist party, a merger between two trends of the German workers movement, which was then trying

to clarify its views and bring activists together.

Both Marx and Engels were upset about the theoretical confusion of the new draft program, a document called the Gotha Program. Engels wrote to August Bebel in March 1875: "Generally speaking, less importance attaches to the official programme of a party than to what it does. But a new programme is after all a banner planted in public, and the outside world judges the party by it." And Marx stressed when writing to Wilhelm Bracke, "Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes." Marx went on to argue that if it wasn't possible to have a clearer rounded out program, "one should simply have concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy. But by drawing up a programme of principles (instead of postponing this until it has been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity) one sets up before the whole world landmarks by which it measures the level of the Party movement."

In my view, the DSA national platform subcommittee made the right choice in drafting a platform of actionable demands rather than a program of fundamental principles.

The draft of DSA's platform does not read as clearly as The Communist Manifesto, and lacks its sharpness of analysis and historical

perspective. Nonetheless, it is well suited for its purpose: to offer a unifying arena for a struggle of democratic socialists from different political tendencies to move forward together in discussion and united action.

Recent campaigns by the National Political Committee (NPC)—for example, the 100k recruitment drive and the PRO Act campaign—point in a great direction. They helped overcome some of the chaotic appearance of DSA, though not via a top-down diktat by the leadership that artificially constrains which activities members and chapters are officially supposed to take part in. Instead these campaigns provided an offer to engage, to use the organization's resources, and to discover what we can achieve together if comrades voluntarily take part in joint campaigns. If the platform points even further in this direction, giving campaigns more of an edge and putting up sharper demands, then that's great.

Transitional Approach?

Each section of the draft platform is separated by whether they represent immediate, medium-term, or long-term demands.

You could read this as carving out a minimum program, separated from general socialist proclamations. You could also read it as the opposite, as an attempt to link today's concrete struggles to the need to fundamentally transform society, to be willing to engage in the real struggles of the working class and oppressed, while simultaneously not forgetting to raise the level of consciousness and push the struggle forward to the need to abolish capitalism.

Which one is it?

It would be good to explicitly clarify within the platform the interaction between short-term and long-term goals. This issue closely relates to an important long-term debate inside the socialist and workers' movements. As Leon Trotsky argued in the Transitional Program (1938):

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of

bridge, since the word socialism is used only for holiday speechifying. (Emphasis in original.)

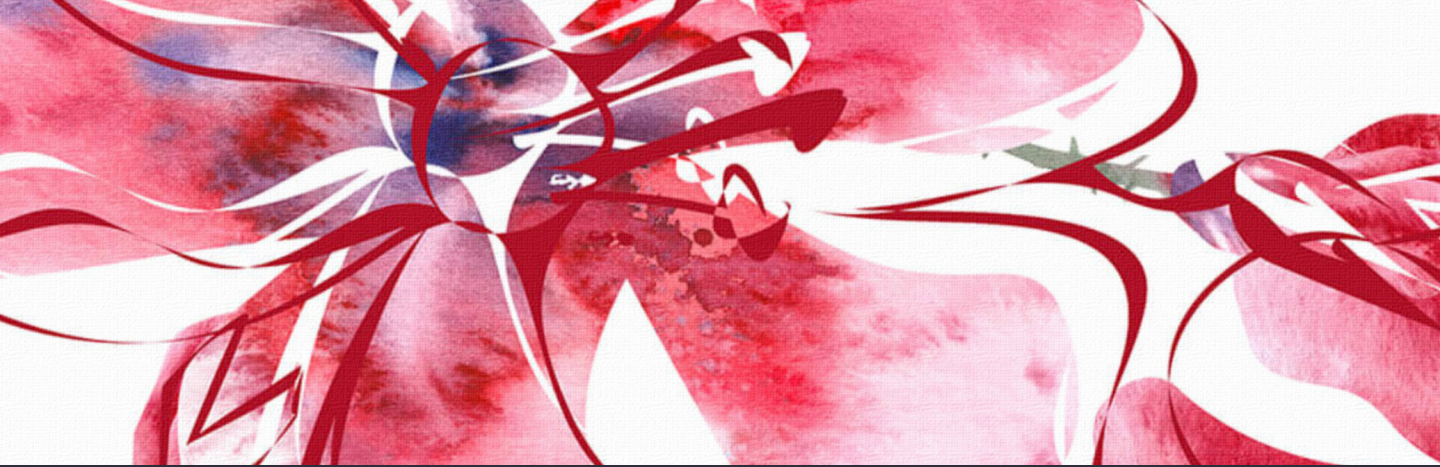
The subcommittee might well take their cue from how this is phrased in The Communist Manifesto. Given the way in which DSA supports movement work, it would be worth it to mirror the bold language from the Manifesto, so that we are not only “against the existing social and political order of things” but we combine our immediate working-class struggles with an outlook that represents the future, one where we can directly challenge the ruling capitalist class' position in society. The Manifesto, in its essence, builds that bridge between today's demands and a socialist future.

Such a viewpoint could also be more clearly expressed if the platform makes our

progressive capitalism, divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the minimum program which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the maximum program which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum program no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need of such a

demands more concrete. For instance, part of what makes Bernie Sanders' housing program sharp is that it gives numbers (10 million new homes); the draft platform could use more of this type of radical concreteness. Separating demands into the “long term” can rob us of the opportunity to inspire people to fight for them in the here and now. For





example, today we are talking about the fight for \$15 in down-to-earth practical terms of how to win. But when that fight started, it was a very bold, even startling, demand. That boldness helped to raise people's sights and imaginations, inspiring visions of a life where work has real dignity and security. That inspiration moved mountains and led to the wholesale transformation of the political situation, which is what now allows us to talk in practical terms about winning \$15 nationwide.

How do we fundamentally change society?

Potentially driven by the desire not to overreach or go beyond what DSA can legitimately declare in its platform at this point in time (given the current status of discussions and debates and its status as a multi-tendency organization), the program omits a lot of questions out or references them implicitly.

Reading between the lines of the draft platform, one can surmise that DSA regards the global multiracial working class as the decisive agent for the fundamental, democratic socialist change. But it's not until you reach page 5 of the 16-page document that it is spelled out explicitly, buried under a subpoint about the carceral state: "The power to create a truly democratic society is found in the organization and self-activity of the working class." This is a basic

point; let's find a way to emphasize it.

One can also infer from the draft that DSA promotes and bases its activism on organizing working-class and oppressed people in movements to build the power needed for social change, based on the references to the power of movements and the central place of demands around labor, but again, let's make that plain.

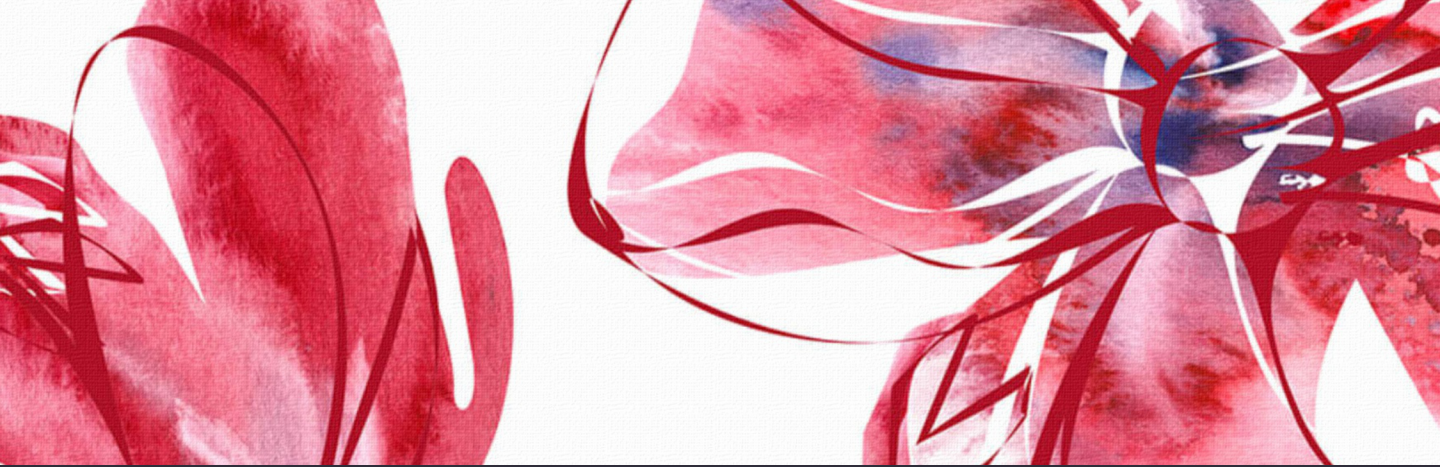
One critical point is that the platform is deeply unbalanced about how to change society. It starts with a set of democratic demands, which in themselves are good and absolutely needed. It's true that the working class and the socialist movement have been, and continue to be, unconditional fighters for democratic rights, to unite working and oppressed people in struggle and to win the best possible conditions in which to carry future struggles forward (union rights, free speech, voting rights, etc.). However, to point the way forward entirely in terms of such demands comes off sounding essentially parliamentarian, and in effect means accepting the official institutions of bourgeois politics as the only "legitimate" arena in which to advance our causes. Within those demands the language is quite legalistic and the proposals very much oriented to what appears "doable" in a legalistic setting (for example: short

term, DC statehood; long term, a new constitutional convention).

In contrast to that, the platform would benefit from a clear statement about the character of the capitalist state. DSA could explain that the institutions of this state cannot be just taken over and used in the interest of the working class and the oppressed.

And this leads to a significant shortcoming of the draft platform: It does not deal enough with the question of power and where it comes from. Working-class power develops as the day-to-day struggles and movements that they generate both train the class collectively and inspire individuals to evolve into effective fighters for socialism. This is key. It is not something that can be handed by the capitalist state. Successful struggles around legal and democratic rights can illustrate the level of power working-class movements have amassed. But though democratic reforms reflect concessions or attempts to pacify these movements, they are not the source of that power. We do not (and cannot) depend or rely upon it.

Listing the different issues under different subchapters of the draft without a framework of building working-class power siloes each issue, and the draft neglects to explain how all these issues and demands are interconnected under capitalism, and how a socialist fight for them requires a



broad united working-class movement on all of them. A clear preamble or a conclusion added to the draft could help to overcome that weakness and put the demands into a better framework.

Fight the Power

The power of the ruling class is mentioned as a description of the status quo, rather than a challenge to overcome. How can we discuss a full implementation of the Green New Deal without any idea of how to take hold of that power by taking it over into democratic public ownership? How do we convert the most powerful parts of industry over the last decades — the fossil fuel, automobile, and military-industrial complex — without openly addressing the need to take the corporations that produce them into public ownership?

At the moment these corporations hold “their workers” hostage, who depend on them for jobs and careers. How can we guarantee good, plentiful jobs and a decent future for workers that depend on these industries for employment if not by taking over the material wealth in those industries, the means of production, and converting that production? Some may argue that we do not want to own these corporations as they are inherently unfit to play a role in any environmentally sustainable future. But without dealing with their power, without dealing with the jobs and the wealth they

privately own, we will not develop a system of production that is fit for that future.

There is no need for a debate on the best terms to describe how the working class should own the means of production. The draft platform speaks about “worker ownership of every workplace,” demands to “nationalize and socialize (through worker and community ownership and control) institutions of monetary policy, insurance, real estate, and finance” and more. So far, so good. But the question of taking the top 500 corporations into democratic, public ownership is not just an economic question of reorganizing society along the needs of the masses in alignment with the needs of a sustainable environment. It is also a political question, to take away the centralized power of the capitalist ruling class, to allow us to democratically implement the fundamental changes needed by and through the overwhelming majority in this society.

A Little Bit More Fire, Please

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*, said:

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.

The inspirational dignity of working-class struggle, of socialist

internationalism, of solidarity without borders is a political issue. The DSA platform needs to focus more clearly on the global multiracial working class banding together to build a new society based on economic, gender, and racial justice. The social force for change — as expressed in movements and working-class organizations, from labor to tenants unions to a future independent party of the working class — needs to be strengthened. The platform can still be a short and action-focused outline, but it should also be something that serves to inspire people to join us in the struggle to change the world.

In this critique, I have aimed to contribute in a constructive way to the discussion around DSA's new platform. I very much appreciate all the hard work that comrades put into drafting this platform, and my heartfelt thanks goes out to all comrades who have been involved in the process so far. This draft is a good starting point for discussion. Let's build on it together. ■■

Stephan Kimmerle was a member of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) for 25? years and a member of the CWI's International Secretariat for 9? years. In 2018, he left the CWI to join DSA, and now he is a Co-convenor of the Seattle DSA District 2 group and a member of DSA's Reform & Revolution caucus.

COVID Shines a Light on Women's Struggles

BY SARAH WHITE KIMMERLE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

As we begin to see glimmers of light at the end of the tunnel of the global pandemic, many are taking stock of the impact of the past year. Who carried society through these difficult months? Who risked their health to care for children and elders? Who risked their lives to make sure the grocery store shelves remained stocked? The answer is, primarily, women.

In many key sectors of “essential work,” women make up the majority of workers who have been at the forefront of confronting this crisis. Most visibly, it's been nurses and environmental service workers making their own PPE out of trash bags and sharing photos of themselves on social media, with faces bruised and sores on the bridges of their noses from wearing tight masks for 12-hour shifts. Seventy-six percent of healthcare workers are women. Fifty-three percent of building cleaning service workers are women. But it's also the checker at your local supermarket who has hundreds of people streaming past her in the checkout line during an 8-hour shift. It's the women who care for the children of essential workers in daycares and preschools, 85% of whom are women. According to the Center for Economic Policy Research, 64% of all frontline industry workers are women. Despite the odds, women have kept society functioning.

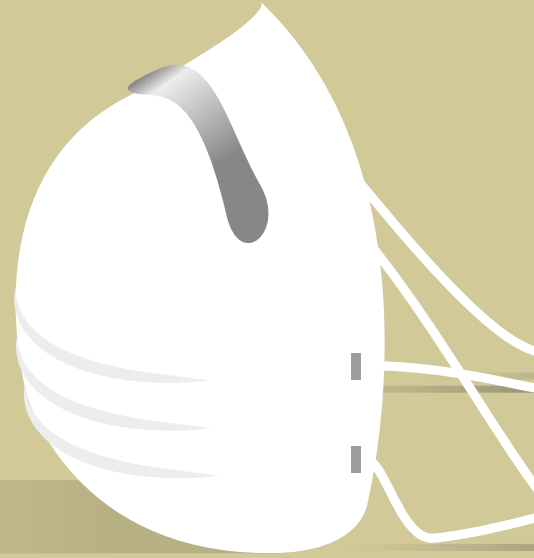
Yet — and this is the cruel logic of the capitalist system — women

have also borne the brunt of the COVID recession. Over four million workers, most of whom are women, have left the workforce, either through job loss or leaving to care for children or elders (NY Times, 3/15/20). Women's participation in the labor force fell to 57%, the lowest since 1988, according to government data and the National Women's Law Center. This represents an historic setback for women financially, but also socially.

In the midst of a global pandemic and a healthcare crisis, a time when our society should be investing in hiring more healthcare workers, many nurses have been laid off, while billionaires grew their fortunes to the tune of \$1 trillion (Forbes, 1/26/21).

And with increased social isolation came an increase in the prevalence of intimate partner violence and child abuse. Under stay-at-home orders, many women and children, cut off from their support in the community, were unable to access services or get away from violent family members. This has been further exacerbated by women's loss of income as they left the workforce because, as the New England Journal of Medicine noted in 2020, “economic independence is a critical factor in violence prevention.”

As we come out of this crisis, it is time to boldly demand fundamental changes to what many recog-



nize

as an untenable situation for women. We need free childcare for all, paid staff to provide family support services, a \$15/hr minimum wage, Medicare for all, paid family and sick leave, an extended eviction moratorium, and cancellation of rent and student debt.

We are the essential workers who are keeping things moving throughout this pandemic, if not in the workplace, then at home, unpaid, caring for elderly family members recovering from COVID or children who've been out of school for a year now. We are essential, not the bankers and the billionaires, and we want what's ours!

Jobs for All

The COVID economic recession is unique from past recessions in that the sectors which have been hit predominantly employ women, whereas typical recessions have

hit male-dominated industries like construction and manufacturing. Over five million women are unemployed as a result of the pandemic, according to the National Women's Law Center report.

As women stream out of the labor market, decades of progress for women are threatened. These job losses occurred in low wage, insecure, and services sector jobs which primarily employ women, disproportionately women of color. In addition, in healthcare, as profitable elective surgeries were delayed, hospitals' profit margins took a big hit.

The resultant furloughs and layoffs came as the need for patient care, albeit less profitable care, surged due to

the pandemic. There are numerous reports among healthcare and education workers of burnout, PTSD, and many are leaving, or considering leaving, their fields because of the working conditions.

The job losses in healthcare highlight how capitalist society isn't designed to take care of you and me and our communities' health. During a healthcare crisis, a rationally planned economy would invest in hiring more nurses, but under capitalism you saw layoffs and services being cut. And as people delayed non-urgent healthcare and elective surgeries, in 2020 insurance companies posted "earnings... twice as large as the previous year" (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2020). Billionaires increased their profits by a staggering \$1 trillion over the course of the pandemic, while hospital nurses worked double shifts and nursing home nurses worked short-staffed. We need an economic system that provides living-wage jobs for all

based on the needs of society, not the profits of the billionaire class.

Childcare is Not a Private Matter

The childcare crisis in the US existed well before the pandemic. Plagued by low wages, high turnover, limited availability, and high tuition, neither childcare workers nor families were well served. And now as a result of the pandemic, it's expected that 4.5 million slots will be permanently lost from daycares. The failed response to COVID, which prioritizes corporate profits over public health, has only exacerbated these problems, which come at the highest cost to mothers.

And while unemployment has hit women hard, the crisis is much deeper than this one problem. Tens of thousands of women have been forced out of the workforce to care for elders or children who have been out of school for a long time, without access to their usual social support network. Without free high quality childcare for all, many women are forced to choose between a paycheck and leaving their kids home alone with nothing more than a TV to babysit.

It's past time for a solution to the childcare crisis. The recent stimulus plan from Biden is a step in the right direction. But it needs to be made permanent and expanded to include free high quality child and elder care for all, with no means testing, and high quality public sector union jobs for educators, day care workers, and all staff.

End Violence Against Women

At home, many women also endured an isolation of increased time spent with violent partners. A New York Times writer likened intimate partner violence to an "opportunistic infection, flourishing under conditions created by the pandemic" (4/14/20). And as women face worsening economic prospects, their ability to leave

abusive situations without the threat of homelessness has narrowed. One in three women experience intimate partner violence — an astonishing number that demands radical and immediate action.

Economic aid to women will have an immediate impact on their ability to leave violent situations when they feel ready to do so. But beyond temporary aid, we need living-wage jobs to provide ongoing economic security for women. We need Medicare for All so women don't have to fear losing healthcare for themselves and their children if they need to leave violent partners. We need full abortion rights to remove an unwanted pregnancy being used as a means of control by abusive partners. The #MeToo movement is emboldening many women to stand up against violence; now it's time for a thoroughgoing reckoning of the sexism that plagues our communities once and for all.

Time for a Change

The unique tragedies of the pandemic borne by women demand bold and transformative change. While more directly lethal to men, COVID's impact on women has been devastating, even more so for women of color. Most women's pay and working conditions don't match the essential role our labor plays in keeping society functioning, but the pandemic revealed just that. One thing has become clear — we are not all in it together; the billionaires have padded their pockets while women have struggled to keep their families and communities' heads above water.

Biden's first relief package was a big step forward, despite failing to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour or provide relief checks for undocumented workers. We need to use the momentum to make these gains permanent and expand the social safety net, both to better the lives of women and our communities. Let's use this crisis to fight for a better world for all, for a socialist society!

A Strategy to Eradicate COVID-19 - an Interview with Paul Murphy

BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

Paul Murphy is a member of the Irish Parliament and he led the successful working-class movement against the government's attempts to impose taxes for water in X year, and he is a member of RISE (Revolutionary Internationalist, Socialist, Environmentalist).

Alex Moni-Sauri: To start with, what is Zero COVID? Is it a misleading name?

Paul Murphy: So zero COVID means zero community transmission of the virus. A good alternative term for community transmission is mystery transmission. So when a case arises and you can't say you got the case from your brother or your partner or whatever and you don't know where someone got it, that's a mystery transmission, that's community transmission. And that means there could be a whole bunch of other people who got it from the same place, and they haven't been traced.

So a Zero COVID policy is about getting the numbers of total cases down and establishing the public health infrastructure to find, test, trace, isolate, and eliminate community transmission. It doesn't mean that you will never have community transmission again, but it means you can get to that. A good example is Ireland and the US have zero fire policies. It doesn't mean that we don't have

any fires, but, when we have a fire, we don't say, "Oh, sure, there's just fire everywhere." Instead, we try and stop the fire and aim to have zero fire.

And so, what policies would this entail to meet that goal? What would that look like?

In countries where you have transmission out of control like Ireland and definitely the United States, zero COVID does entail lockdowns, but effective ones, and because they're more effective, they're relatively shorter lockdowns. To give the Irish example, right now we have a lockdown that's very hard on ordinary people. So we've all been confined to five kilometers from our homes since December and will be for another month. People can't visit, it's extremely hard, but 40% of the construction industry is still open. The meat factories, they kind of have to stay open, but there's huge outbreaks there because the meat factory owners are cutting corners. About twice as many people in this lockdown compared to the first lockdown are being forced to travel into work when they could be safely working from home.

So employers are able to flout this lockdown very widely. And so, we say this lockdown should be enforced on employers, trade unions should be empowered to have inspections, and we should fine employers who aren't comply-

ing. And so, there is an element of lockdown in zero COVID, but we do it sharply and effectively. And then it's about establishing the infrastructure so you can actually find, test, trace, and isolate the virus.

And then linked to that, people need to be supported to be able to do that. And that, in our opinion, means you need to have socialist policy. For example, we need to build a proper quality national health service, which in the US, you'd call Medicare For All. That's an important thing to do. Secondly, everyone's incomes and homes need to be protected. So you need to cancel rents, mortgages, etc. to make sure people can get through this together.

Are there any examples of these zero COVID policies being successfully implemented?

Yeah. There's certainly much more positive examples than Ireland or the US. The US is really down to the bottom of the world's list. Ireland now, out of the whole European Union, has the most days of lockdown over the past year. And it's not because they're doing some effective zero COVID strategy; it's because they are repeatedly opening up for businesses and then things get out of control. And then they've got no other weapons apart from lockdown. And so, there are many countries which have implemented policies which approxi-

mate zero COVID: Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Vietnam – in those countries, basically life has gone back to normal.

A few weeks ago, there was an outbreak in New Zealand. In Ireland, because a big section of the media is very anti-zero COVID, they try to make this big news to say, "Oh, zero COVID doesn't work." But the response to the outbreak was that they had three days of lockdown in New Zealand, and then they had dealt with the community transmission and then the country reopened. Whereas in Ireland, we're now in our third month of lockdown – of just this most recent round of lockdown. And we've been in lockdown for most of the last year. Because that's the funny thing, they tried to say zero COVID equals lockdown, when in reality, the name of the official government policy in Ireland is "Living with COVID." That's just a disaster. You can't do that.

There are many countries which have implemented policies which approximate zero COVID: Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Vietnam – in those countries, basically life has gone back to normal.

People of color are being hit much harder – higher percentage of deaths, vaccine rollout is leaving out huge sections of people of color, greater economic tolls. How does zero COVID address that?

Yeah. The traveler community, which is like an ethnic minority within Ireland, people who historically have not lived in houses, they

have lived in caravans and travel around the country and have their own culture and language and are an extremely oppressed group. Racism against travelers is extremely widespread, relatively low levels of life expectancy, education, etc. Just as oppressed groups are being hit hard by COVID around the world, in Ireland incidences of COVID and outcomes of COVID for travelers are significantly worse. So for vaccination rollout, that needs to be taken into account. For example, travelers need to be put into higher-priority groups because of their vulnerability to getting it, and also their likelihood of more negative outcomes, if they do get it.

The other factor is the general policies to support people. So the government in Ireland was forced in the first lockdown, when COVID first hit, under pressure from below, to implement something called a "pandemic unemployment payment," which has a higher rate than the normal rate of unemployment payments. But since then, the government has been trying to cut the number of people who got the higher rate, as well as bring down the higher rate. Traditionally, unemployment benefit is about 200 euros a week. The pandemic unemployment payment is 350 a week.

But the government started on a strategy of suggesting that some people were making loads of money, loads more than they were previously when they were at work, blah, blah, blah. And so we have tried to campaign, to oppose any attempt to divide workers. The reason 350 euros was chosen is because that's the minimum you need to live a somewhat decent life.

If we do achieve zero COVID and eventually can reopen again, what should happen? What needs to change for the future of mutations, for possible future



global pandemics, and how will the economy develop?

Yeah. It's not something nice to talk about, but we're likely facing more pandemics in the future. That's what all the epidemiologists say. In a sense, we've been lucky to get away without a global pandemic up until now, or in recent decades. I think there is a fundamental question about humanity's relationship to nature. The practices of capitalist agriculture are a big accelerating factor in the risk of pandemics emerging. That is one thing we need to address as socialists. We need a different sustainable model of agriculture, which doesn't pose the same risks.

One thing that is clear, or really should be clear to people, is who is

essential and who creates wealth. Who produces stuff? And it isn't Jeff Bezos, and it isn't the Irish equivalent of Jeff Bezos, it's the worker in the factory, it's the delivery person, it's the nurse, it's the person in the grocery store. The establishment and the media try to avoid that conclusion, but I think that's out there, the idea that workers are really essential, and that's very positive.

The other thing is, I do think we should draw out the connections to climate change. In a way what we've been through, that's only, unfortunately, a glimpse of the nightmare of the climate catastrophe within our lives, if we don't follow the science the way we should be following the science. The organization of society for profits, stands in the way of doing

what is necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Therefore, the conclusion is not to allow our society to be run for short-term profit, which means, taking over the fossil fuels, taking them out of the hands of Big Oil and saying, "We're going to control them, and they're going to stay in the ground." It means taking the airline industry and other industries out of the control of the current owners and taking them in the hands of ordinary people and then enabling us to plan the economy based on human needs.

The K-shaped Recovery: The rich got richer, the rest of us got screwed

BY TOM BARNARD

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

The economic pain wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic has been unprecedented, with job losses far steeper than in any recession dating back to the 1980's.

Unprecedented job losses for workers

There were 9.5 million fewer workers on payrolls in February 2021, than a year ago, before the pandemic took hold. At the current pace of job growth, according to a March 5 briefing by the Council of Economic Affairs, it would require more than two years of job growth just to get back to pre-pandemic levels. Over this same time period, more than 4 million workers have dropped out of the labor force. Official unemployment figures given in the mainstream press rarely cite the U6 measure of unemployment that counts these workers, and it is an open question as to how many of these people will ever return to work.

With Biden's \$1.9 trillion recovery plan and a few favorable economic indicators, it is tempting to assume the overall economy is well on its way back to pre-pandemic conditions. But what we are actually seeing is a "K-shaped recovery" – the unequal distribution of economic pains and gains. The K-shaped recovery essentially splits an economy in two, with winners and losers broken down economically and socially, exposing differ-

ences between industries, class, race and gender.

For people in upper income brackets, the pandemic recession caused little pain, especially once the initial shock passed. Roughly 86% of upper income adults report their finances are in good, or even excellent, shape. The same survey found this to be true as well for about 6 in 10 adults with at least a four-year college degree, white and Asian Americans, men and those who are 65 and older.

For the super-rich, the pandemic was a bonanza. After 11 months of misery, total US billionaire wealth increased \$1.3 trillion since mid-March 2020, an increase of 44 percent. As of February 19, the country's 664 billionaires now have combined wealth of \$4.3 trillion, up from just under \$3 trillion since last March. An earlier report by Swiss bank UBS found that billionaires increased their wealth by more than a quarter (27.5%) just during the height of the crisis from April to July. According to a recent Oxfam report, the world's 10 richest billionaires have collectively seen their wealth grow by \$540 billion over this period. UBS reported that billionaires' wealth had hit "a new high, surpassing the previous peak of \$8.9tn reached at the end of 2017."

Part of this meteoric increase in billionaire wealth came from the recovery of global stock markets from their nadir in March and

April. The S&P 500 is up more than 65% since the March low and closed 2020 with a 16.3% gain for the year. The Nasdaq is 44% higher for the year, posting its best one-year performance since 2009. Tech was by far the dominant sector in 2020, surging more than 42% for the year, as the pandemic forced more people to work from home. This shift drove up demand for cloud services and computer equipment. Consumer discretionary spending, meanwhile, jumped 32.1% this year, boosted by more people shopping online. Amazon shares alone skyrocketed by 76.3% in 2020.

Although this surge was unprecedented, it is not unusual for financial markets to recover faster than the overall economy. This phenomenon simply underscores the fact that the market is a playground for the rich, who, despite a temporary dip in the economy, can invest large sums of money in stocks when they are at a low point, in expectation of gains as it recovers. Working people, having no such resources, are largely shut out of the global financial casino. In addition, with limited opportunities for productive investment, capital tends to flood into speculative markets, fueling massive bubbles, as it has in a section of the tech industry.

Job losses hit women and minorities hardest

Job losses in this recession present a vastly different picture from previous recessions. Job losses in low wage industries like restaurants, hospitality and retail went far deeper than in better paying occupations. Also, the changes in lifestyle — less eating out, less traveling, no live entertainment — have allowed some Americans to make their financial lives healthier. In a Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll, roughly 4 in 10 Americans say they've been saving more money than usual and about 3 in 10 have been paying down debt faster than usual. The majority of jobs lost in the crisis have been in industries that pay low average wages, with the lowest-paying industries accounting for 30 percent of all jobs, but 58 percent of the jobs lost from February to December 2020, according to Labor Department employment data. Jobs in low-paying industries were down more than twice as much between February and December 2020 (11.3 percent) as jobs in medium-wage industries (4.9 percent) and nearly four times as much as in high-wage industries (3.0 percent). The leisure and hospitality industry alone accounts for around 36 percent of all jobs lost during the pandemic.

Official statistics published in the media rarely reveal the disproportionate effect of race and gender. A Council of Economic Affairs study indicated that the largest sections of workers who lost their jobs were Black and Latina women. Apart from job losses in the restaurant and hospitality sectors, women have also left the workforce in vast numbers to provide care for their children, especially during at-home virtual schooling, underscoring the traditional inadequate access to childcare in the U.S.

The intersection of class, race and gender are also illustrated by the

unemployment crisis. Michelle Holder, an economist at John Jay College, noted that the two biggest sources of job losses among Black women have been cashiers at stores and restaurants, including fast-food, and in child care. Holder said she fears that many of those jobs likely won't return, even as the pandemic fades, as some shifts in the economy become permanent.

For example, business travel is unlikely to return to previous levels as more meetings are conducted remotely. Many health care appointments are now held online, thereby reducing the need for some staff in doctor's offices. The accumulation of these types of economic shifts may end a decade-long narrowing of the Black-white unemployment gap, given that many lower-paid jobs are disproportionately held by Black workers.

"There are significant changes coming in terms of where we work, what jobs will be available," Holder said. "All this will hit women, low-wage workers and people of color."

Hunger, unpaid rent and utility bills stalks the poor

Between past due rent, late fees and unpaid utility bills, Americans owed \$70 billion by the end of January, when the federal eviction moratorium was originally set to expire. Back rent owed by about 11.4 million renters averages about \$6,000 per household, or around three-and-a-half months' rent, according to Moody's Analytics.

According to a report by Feeding America, at least 35 million people faced hunger in the US before Covid-19, including more than 10 million children. But with the pandemic, 18 million more children could become food insecure, bringing the total to more than 52 million people in the country. Although this can be explained in

part by low wages and job losses, many children lost access to free school lunches, as K-12 schools have been shut down. And, a recent survey found some 22 million adults — 11 percent of all adults in the country — reported that their household sometimes or often didn't have enough to eat in the last seven days, according to Household Pulse Survey data collected March 3-15. This was far above the pre-pandemic rate of 3.4 percent. Black and Latino adults were more than twice as likely as white adults to report that their household did not get enough to eat: 20 percent and 19 percent, respectively, compared to 7 percent of white adults.

The Biden plan will help, the question is how much?

The American Rescue Plan Act, as the Biden recovery plan is officially named, is projected to dramatically reduce poverty and narrow disparities by race — at least for the year ahead. Even a temporary reduction in hardship, particularly among children, would be a welcome step forward. The latest stimulus will reduce poverty by a third, lifting nearly 13 million Americans out of it, according to an analysis by Columbia University's Center on Poverty and Social Policy. Black Americans, Hispanic Americans and poor families with children are set to benefit the most. Child poverty would be reduced by more than half, the researchers predicted. Evidence from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities suggests that reducing childhood hardship and poverty would yield improvements in education and health, higher productivity and earnings, less incarceration, and other lasting benefits to children and society.

Yet, the temporary character of the Biden stimulus means many of these gains could be quickly reversed. In a recent Pew Research Survey, 44% of respondents say it will take them three or more years

to get back to where they were financially from when the pandemic started, and one in ten said they would never get back there.

Another question to think about when the country's economy would get back to normal is: what is normal? As Fed Chair Janet Yellen said in a message to her department's staff recently, "People worry about a k-shaped recovery to the pandemic -- and that is a cause for concern -- but long before Covid-19 infected a single individual, we were living in a k-shaped economy, one where wealth built on wealth while

certain segments of the population fell further and further behind."

A substantial indicator of that racialized economic disparity was home ownership – 75% for whites, only 44% for Black people, according to Census Bureau figures. Wage inequality has been rising since the late 1970s in America, as the post-war economic growth burst slowed down. Since the turn of the millennium, wage growth has been strongest for higher-wage earners, according to the Economic Policy Institute.


So while stimulus checks and aid for the unemployed (many of them part of the rising percentage of

long-term unemployed) and assistance to families will be welcome, lasting improvements in living standards will require sustained mass struggle. Despite the extraordinary stimulus in response to the immediate crisis, without pressure from below we should not expect the Democratic Party leadership to take serious measures to increase in the minimum wage, expand unionization, or to block the tsunami of evictions when Federal and State moratoriums end. As we outline in other material, the role of socialists in building a sustained mass fightback can make a decisive difference.

The Lost Paradigm

BY STEPHAN KIMMERLE

ILLUSTRATED BY BENJAMIN WATKINS



The End of Neoliberalism and the Difficulty of Developing a New, Stable Regime of Accumulating Capital

"It changes the paradigm," Joe Biden said on March 12, celebrating the passing of the \$1.9 trillion stimulus package in Congress. "For the first time in a long time, this bill puts working people in this nation first."

The largest part of this package will actually end up in the hands of working-class people. As New York Times columnist David Brooks put it, "the poorest fifth of households will see their income rise by 20 percent; a family of four with one working and one unemployed parent will receive \$12,460 in benefits. Child poverty will be cut in half."

Bernie Sanders praised the package despite being "bitterly disappointed" that raising the minimum wage to \$15

was taken out of the legislation: "[F]or working-class people, this is the most significant piece of legislation passed since the 1960s."

In addition, Biden is proposing a \$3 trillion infrastructure investment program, partially to tackle the climate crisis. He also wants to make some of the policies in the first \$1.9 trillion package permanent which could amount to another \$1 trillion.

These total up to \$5.9 trillion and come on top of the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act passed under Trump in summer 2020, and the \$900 billion package last December.

Democrats also passed the PRO Act in the House, which would redefine class relations in the favor of working people: abolish "right

to work" legislation in the states, allow solidarity strikes, ban union busting like Amazon's practices in Bessemer, Alabama, and increase the ability of workers to form a union and get a first contract.

House Democrats have also sent HR1, a voting rights bill, to the Senate to undo some of the voter suppression that is disenfranchising poor people and people of color.

Did the long term politician Joe Biden turn from a neoliberal into a working class fighter? Is this the start of a new age of social democratic policies by the Democratic Party?

The limitations of the measures taken do not allow such an enthusiastic description:

1) This is still a “welfare” policy that focuses mostly on one time money payments, not on lasting efforts to build high quality services for working class families like publicly organized, high quality, free and unionized childcare or free healthcare. This is significantly less than what working class people were able to achieve in Western Europe and especially the Scandinavian countries in the 1970s. (It still needs to be emphasized that even there, not touching the foundation of capitalism, the concessions made to the working class were undermined and reversed as soon as the balance of power was shifting away from working class people.)

2) To pay for these measures, money is borrowed, not taken from the ruling class. The intention of a huge part of the infrastructure package is to make US corporations fit for competition with China and transform the US economy toward a more climate friendly way of production without touching corporate profits.

3) It is still limited. It seems very unlikely that the PRO Act or HR1 will pass without a major rebellion to push moderate and pro-Wall Street Democrats to abolish the filibuster in order to pass pro-working class policies.

In summary, Biden does not make corporate America sweat in fear for its power. The wealth of the top one percent in the US, the richest people in human history, remains untouched.

However, it would still be a huge mistake for the left in the US to ignore the impact of these changes in the short term on living conditions of working people in the US and in the openings this provides to fight for lasting, fundamental change with socialist policies.



Neoliberalism was not just the dominant ideology of all major parties, from the conservative right to the liberal left, in all advanced capitalist countries. From the late 1960s until 2007 it was the dominant practice of enforcing a certain regime to accumulate profits that - with booms and busts - worked for the capitalist classes, especially the powerful financial industry.

It went into crisis in 2007, beyond just a crisis of a business cycle. The decline of major parties of capitalist rule like social democracy in Europe, the lack of trust in all institutions of this system, the search for alternatives from the populist reactionary right like Trump and Bolsonaro as well as an resurgence of search for socialist ideas in the US are all expressions of this instability the capitalist system is experiencing at the moment.

And in this mess, Biden and the ruling class stumble along. Without a believable paradigm, they are under pressure from the right toward economic nationalism and - in the car of Biden more importantly - a shift to the left in

John Maynard Biden?

New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote: “This moment is like 1981, the dawn of the Reagan Revolution, except in reverse.” He argues: “The role of government is being redefined. There is now an assumption that government should step in to reduce economic insecurity and inequality. Even Republicans like Tom Cotton and Mitt Romney, for example, are cooking up a plan to actively boost wages for American workers.” Is this the return of Keynesianism?

The supporters of the ideas of John Maynard Keynes - with huge differences amongst themselves - all at least agree that the state has an active role to play to make the capitalist economy work and all Keynesianists want to stick to the current capitalist mode of production. Right-wing Keynesians want to achieve a stimulation of demand in crisis by state interventions, creating better conditions for capitalism by infrastructure projects, and then save that money in the following boom of the business cycle. Left wing Keynesians want to transfer resources in a lasting way into the hands of workers (increasing wages) and ongoing social services and welfare to make capitalism work better in the interests of allegedly all people beyond any classes.

Biden's initial steps, while large in themselves, do not yet allow to judge where this would be going. However, Biden is in many ways forced to do something new. The paradigm that he served loyally his whole political life was neoliberalism. And that's not working anymore, not even for the capitalists. This is not yet about a new paradigm, it's about a lost paradigm and the instability that follows.

The State of the Economy: Fictitious

The New York Times wrote on January 1, 2021: “The central, befuddling economic reality of the United States at the close of 2020 is that everything is terrible in the world, while everything is wonderful in the financial markets. It’s a macabre spectacle. Asset prices keep reaching new, extraordinary highs, when around 3,000 people a day are dying of coronavirus and 800,000 people a week are filing new unemployment claims. Even an enthusiast of modern capitalism might wonder if something is deeply broken in how the economy works.”

The Economist reported at the end of 2020: “[T]he cash held by the world’s 3,000 most valuable listed non-financial firms has exploded to \$7.6trn, from \$5.7trn last year (see chart 4). Even if you exclude America’s abnormally cash-rich technology giants—Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Alphabet and Facebook—corporate balance-sheets are brimming with liquidity.”

Graphic: Economist, Dec 9, 2020

How much of that is real?

In the hunt for more money, capitalist investment is based on expected revenue. If stocks of one company promise to return \$1 million in one year and the capitalist expects 10 percent return of investment, then the stocks could be sold for \$10 million, no matter what the stocks represent. If a certain amount of credit that another capitalist wants to take leads to a return of \$2 million and our capitalists stick to an expectation of 10 percent return of investment any price below \$20 million would be great, anything beyond that would not be interesting. (Of course, the risks involved would need to be priced in.)

The price of these stocks or these credit bonds are fictitious, as they are based on future projections, like the future profits of a corporation. That does not mean that they are not real. It just means that they are not yet real and it includes the possibility that they turn out not to be real and not to be realizable.

So what's behind the huge increase in prices of shares and assets? Quantitative easing, the huge amount of money that was pushed into the markets especially in the aftermath of the 2007/08 crisis and again in this Covid-19 crisis leads to a huge amount of money in the hands of the rich. This is expressed in bubbles in stocks, real estate, raw materials and so on. Commentators used the term “everything bubble” for this phenomenon.

As long as these bubbles grow, the expectation of a certain rate of return of investment for the stocks of a company can be met by just other people buying those stocks on higher prices in expectation for future dividends and stock price increases. However, at a certain time, the question will be posed: Are these corporations actually producing the profits to back up that bet? At some point, this question is posed in all clarity. And if the answer is no, then the bubbles burst.

A simple example: The rise and fall of the Game Stop shares summarizes the highly speculative character of those adventures. The real company, Game Stop, lost its business model (they kept selling computer games in shops, while everybody moved to online games and online shopping of those games), but the investors, putting their money in Game Stop did not care about actual profits being made.

With huge sympathy from millions around the globe, amateur stock market actors punished some hedge funds which were betting against the shares of Game Stop. Ordinary people with some cash on hand dreamt of making some money on the stock markets, getting their share and punish some hedge funds on the way. As long as they found another investor who would pay more for the shares, who cares about the company and its actual business model? The share price rose from around \$35 to almost \$350. At a certain point - the reality kicked in and the question was posed: Will others actually buy those shares on ever higher prices? What will those shares actually present to the owners over the next years? Suddenly, the economic situation of the corporation did matter and people lost a lot of money.

While hedge funds and other “professional” investors looked down on the “amateur” investors who bought - based on Reddit recommendations - shares of Game Stop, much too much of the stock markets today are basically driven by the same mechanism. A huge instability hangs over the economy.

If this triggers a crisis, it hits society hard. If a crisis would only eliminated the excesses of speculation, it would still be a dramatic interruption of business relations. However, as fictitious capital is actually playing a big role in also driving real investment in productive development under capitalism forward (as you can't distinguish between those categories in advance), a shock of elimination of fictitious capital leads to a generalized credit crunch, a contraction of the economy and a complete “over-correction” of the previous

What's Next after Neoliberalism?

It is always dangerous to prophesy, particularly about the future

- Danish proverb

Cuts, privatisations, attacks on wages and unions - all of that is part of neoliberal policies. Those policies are and have always been disputed - but are not simply over. However, neoliberalism is on different levels at its end.

Paul Mason wrote in May 2017 about neoliberalism:

"[Y]ou can put an economy on life support, but not an ideology. [...] The human brain demands coherence—and a certain amount of optimism. The neoliberal story became incoherent the moment the state had to take dramatic steps to support a failing financial market. The form of recovery stimulated by quantitative easing boosted the asset wealth of the rich but not the income of the average worker—and rising costs for health care, education, and pension provision across the developed world meant that many people experienced the 'recovery' as a household recession." (The Nation, 4. Mai 2017)

On a deeper level of a "long wave of capitalist production" neoliberalism created a situation that it can't overcome. Keeping Mandel's mistake in mind (see sidebar) it's possible to outline some of those contradictions and where some developments point to:

1) Transitional periods between regimes of accumulation are tumultuous themselves

The transformation from an old, established regime of accumulation to a new one is a period of uncertainty and battles. The lack of an actual model of how to move forward economically and politically, the lack of a convincing story how capitalism would lead into a brighter future itself creates an openness and a search for ideas and alternatives that can benefit all kinds of right wing populism and reactionary ideas, but also a socialist left globally.

2) The End of the Fossil Fuel Bound Faction of Capital

The fossil fuel driven complex of capital (car industry, military production, oil producing corporations, ...) will lose power, this way or that way. It's possible that a shift toward renewable energies is further delayed with dramatic consequences for the living conditions on this planet. However, even under such a scenario there's no lasting future for those industries.

A reorganization of energy production, mobility and power will destroy a significant amount of capital bound in the old industry. That could - if capitalism would be dynamic enough - open a certain outlet for new factions of the capitalist class to move forward and develop new pockets of profit production. At least, it already triggers some shifts within the ruling class as David Harvey wrote in Jacobin (June 2016): "Furthermore, what has

Mandel's mistake

Ernest Mandel, who is very helpful to understand the long waves of capitalist production, got it wrong about neoliberalism. Looking ahead, he characterized (in "Late Capitalism", 1972) the period that we now know as neoliberalism: "The slow absorption of the "industrial reserve army" in the imperialist countries acts as a block to a further rise in the rate of surplus-value despite increasing automation. The class struggle attacks the rate of profit. The intensification of international competition and the world currency crisis work in the same direction. Slow-down in the expansion of world trade." He envisioned a slow-down of the expansion of world trade and, in other writings, an increasing role of the state and New Deal practices.

Why did he get it wrong? Such long waves of capitalist production (or: regimes of accumulation) do not develop simply out of objective necessity and changes in the technical composition of capital, but out of the living struggle between the classes globally and domestically within those objective conditions of commodity production.

Mandel did not foresee the huge setback in consciousness of the working class and its organizations that followed the fall of the Soviet Union. Social democratic parties moved sharply to the right as soon as the pressure from below, from the working class and from the labor movement, lessened. A huge opportunity followed to increase profits through lowering the income and transfers to working class people: wages, social security, pensions etc were cut.

In the words of David Harvey (in "A Brief History of Neoliberalism", 2005): "The capitalist world stumbled towards neoliberalization as the answer through a series of gyrations and chaotic experiments."

been called the 'new capitalist class' of Bill Gates, Amazon, and Silicon Valley has a different politics than traditional oil and energy.”

However, new technologies, for example electric cars or self driving cars, reduce the number of workers needed significantly (electric cars are simpler to produce, self driving cars will lead to a boom of car sharing and taxis businesses and reduce the number of cars needed). They could lead at least in the short term to mass unemployment, social upheavals and economic repercussions.

3) Digital Revolution

The digital revolution has reached the factories and will continue to have a deep impact in automation, including the replacement of workers. Capitalism seems to be able to absorb the possibilities of these technologies mainly in reducing human labor, and much less so in creating new products and markets. So far, many of the new key players have very weak models of profit production: Google sells its users to advertisers - a parasitic way to benefit from the surplus value produced by the working class in other spheres of production. Amazon as a huge sales platform does not do much to be innovative or creative, it's mainly monopolizing its power as a platform (though the largest part of the company's profits comes from AWS, its web services, which might have more potential to actually create something). Microsoft, Apple and Co have mostly benefited from branding and monopolizing power.

4) Economic Nationalism follows to Globalization

Under neoliberalism, profits were accumulated in the growing and more and more parasitic finance sector, far away from the real production and centralized in the hands of corporations of imperialist countries. To allow this concen-

tration of profits, borders for capital had to be opened up. Globalization as the right to insert and exert capital to and from markets was dominant. Deregulation was a central part of that process.

However, all talk about transnational corporations ended immediately when the crisis hit and the imperialist countries saved their corporations, not any transnational ones. The US was concerned about GM and Ford, while the German state cared about Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz.

Resistance in the form of populism from the right and left has only followed the huge setback of this process seen in the crisis of 2007/09. Donald Trump and Boris Johnson gave these tendencies of neo-nationalism only their faces and rhetoric.

Today, there is a reverse of course, away from globalization and toward currency wars and economic nationalism. Some stronger players attempt to strengthen their economic blocks (Germany attempts to keep the EU together and punish separatism) while others try to balance between different powers (countries of the global south might try to balance between China and Western imperialists). The general tendency goes back to protectionism and nationalist conflict.

One factor of global importance is the failure of the US to play the role of a unifying, dominant force. Past attempts to move forward with more global integration were backed by the power of the US, like the expansion of the WTO. The failure of the Doha round to build on the WTO marked a shift. David Harvey wrote: “Geopolitically, the United States is not in a position to call the shots globally as it was in the 1970s. I think we're seeing a regionalization of global power structures within the state system — regional hegemony like Germany in Europe, Brazil in Latin

America, China in East Asia.” (Jacobin, Juni 2016)

5) The End of Stable Money

Under neoliberalism, the credo for all federal banks needed to be the stability of the money they controlled. David Harvey described that about the US:

In October 1979 Paul Volcker, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank under President Carter, engineered a draconian shift in US monetary policy. The long-standing commitment in the US liberal democratic state to the principles of the New Deal, which meant broadly Keynesian fiscal and monetary policies with full employment as the key objective, was abandoned in favour of a policy designed to quell inflation no matter what the consequences might be for employment.

The “independence” of the federal banks - for example enshrined in the creation of the European Central Bank to govern the Euro - was part of that necessity to guarantee the accumulation of capital within that neoliberal regime.

“Quantitative easing” as a process of printing and expanding the available amount of money has replaced any neoliberal credo on that front. The price will be paid with huge instabilities in the near future - undermining the stability to accumulate capital that allowed the neoliberal regime to function.

5) From Increased Exploitation to a Comeback of Workers' Power?

To increase profits under neoliberalism, wages were attacked and labor weakened. A large sector of low paid workers expanded and unionized workers lost jobs or became subject to competition by either moving production abroad or by moving it to the anti-union south of the US with ever expanding “right to work” legislation.

Long Waves of Capitalist Production

“The history of capitalism on the international plane [...] appears not only as a succession of cyclical movements every 7 or 10 years, but also as a succession of longer periods, of approximately 50 years,” wrote the Marxist economist Ernest Mandel in his book “Late Capitalism” in 1972. Beyond the business cycles with their boom and bust, Mandel argues, there are periods of expansions and contractions like Keynesianism from the Second World War to the 1970s, or we could add, Neoliberalism from the 1970s to the crisis of 2007/08.

These “long waves of capitalist production” are often associated with the economist N. D. Kondratieff. He analyzed how certain technical conditions of production, their ascent and then their decay coined the economic development. Kondratieff was criticized for this view as too narrow: These changes, roughly every 50 years, are not understandable simply out of technical or economical conditions.

It is possible to explain business cycles of 7 to 10 years out of those technical and economic conditions. Leon Trotsky wrote about these shorter cycles: “The periodic recurrence of minor cycles is conditioned by the internal dynamics of capitalist forces, and manifests itself always and everywhere, once the market comes into existence.” Trotsky then puts this in contrast to the longer waves: “As regards the large segments of the capitalist curve of development (50 years) which Professor Kondratieff incautiously proposes to designate also as cycles, their character and duration is determined

not by the internal interplay of capitalist forces but by those external conditions through whose channel capitalist development flows. The acquisition by capitalism of new countries and continents, the discovery of new natural resources, and, in the wake of these, such major facts of a 'super-structural' order as wars and revolutions, determine the character and the replacement of ascending, stagnating or declining epoch of capitalist development.” (Quoted from Mandel's Late Capitalism)

Mandel summarizes Trotsky's argument: “[...] while classical cycles can be explained exclusively in terms of the internal dynamics of the capitalist mode of production, the explanation of long waves demands 'a more concrete study of the capitalist curve and the interrelationship between the latter and all the aspects of social life'. In other words, Trotsky objected to a monocausal theory of 'long waves' constructed by analogy with Marx's explanation of classical cycles by the renewal of fixed capital.” (Mandel, “Late Capitalism”, 129)

To understand periods like Keynesianism (1940s to 1970s) or Neoliberalism (1970s to 2000s) in more than a “monocausal” way, there are different causal factors coming into play:

Technical changes in the main spheres of production (steam power and trains at one time, fossil fuel based car-chemical-military industrial complex based mass production at another) are one factor (and in short: they play an important role in first devaluating amassed

constant capital of a previous period and then building up a new mass of constant capital that drags down the rate of profit).

The struggle between different ruling classes internationally is another factor. Their ability of cooperation and internationalization (in the late 19th century or in the period of globalization) versus their increase in economic nationalism including their imperialist wars (period of two world wars) have an impact as well on the way capitalist in different countries can amass profits.

The class struggle with the working class - the strength of the working class to win higher wages under Keynesianism and its weakness under Neoliberalism - also impact how on the one side mass demand is created and on the other side profits are directly affected by higher wages or other forms of transfer of resources to the working class (social security, pensions, welfare state).

This is why the term regime of accumulation might be a better name and description of the “long terms of capitalist production”: The question is how different ruling classes can make sure that the accumulation of capital is working for them. The answer partially relies on how they are able to impose their interests on other classes internationally and domestically.

In that sense, neoliberalism is more than an ideology or a set of policies, it was the regime of accumulation over the last decades.

The sharpened exploitation of the working class undermined the markets that capitalists found domestically. It was replaced by a global expansion of capitalism. However, that can't continue. On top, wage cuts and union busting for example in the US led to a shift of consciousness to the left. While resistance of labor has been so far relatively weak (in its total numbers, despite some impressive struggles like the teachers' red state revolt), a growing sentiment and demand for example for an increased minimum wage is pushing back.

Under neoliberalism, exploitation was expanded externally and domestically: The fall of the Soviet Union and the compared to that slower process of re-introduction of capitalism in China has brought billions of workers under the control of production for profits and widened markets significantly. That process is done. Domestically, new markets were created

and more workers made subject to profit production: the number of women in the workforce increased, privatisations brought more industries in the spheres of surplus production.

These measures worked for some time. Now, a new militancy of struggles in workplaces with a predominantly female workforce like in hospitals or in education challenge the profits made in those industries. Any new plan for privatisations finds huge resistance of working class people after we experienced the devastating consequences of such policies over decades.

The working class internationally is slowly recovering from the setbacks of the 1990s. Consciousness and organization are on a much lower level than in the largest part of the 20th century. However, especially the shift to the left in the US and its impact

internationally, the ongoing battles in Latin America and the resistance under the surface in China are giving some hope for future battles and are signalling some end of the super-profits based on super-exploitation.

The End

While politicians might want to continue neoliberal policies and some try to cling on to neoliberal ideologies, the fundamental way how neoliberalism functioned for capitalist reproduction found a dead end in the crisis of 2007/08 - a dead end it itself created.

Biden and other capitalist leaders are merely stumbling forward. The question is, whether the working class internationally and the socialist movement can exploit this situation.

Mutual Aid

BY WHITNEY KAHN

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

In the aftermath of Trump's election in 2017, confidence in governing institutions plummeted. From the COVID-19 pandemic and record-breaking hurricanes and wildfires, to the recent "Texas Freeze," the state failed to respond quickly and adequately. Instead, millions of people stepped up to help their neighbors survive these crises. As we barrel from one crisis to another, and the capitalist systems many people thought would protect us are failing to meet basic needs, interest in the ideas of Mutual Aid are growing in the Democratic Socialists of America.

Mutual aid has borne some of the most hopeful moments among several especially dark years. In a

sea of capitalist greed beyond belief, again and again working people have demonstrated their deep capacity for compassion and community. These experiences have shaped the outlook of tens of thousands of newly radicalized socialists, as DSA rapidly grew to nearly 100,000 in the Trump era. But they have also provoked a lively debate among socialists over the role of mutual aid initiatives within the wider struggle to end capitalism.

Most of the time, when communities self-organize to respond to crises or the failures of capitalist institutions, only a radical minority will self-describe their activity as "Mutual Aid." In the same way, millions of workers engage in

daily forms of collective resistance to workplace injustices but don't see themselves as part of a wider "class struggle." The job of socialists is to engage in these organic forms of working class self-organization, to help people understand the political significance of their own activity, and to anchor this activity firmly within a wider strategy to win a socialist transformation of society.

There are many types of Mutual Aid. These include union strike funds, food delivery, fundraising to pay for abortions, putting water in the desert for migrants crossing the border, tail light repair clinics, ride-share systems, free medical care, and many more. Mutual Aid is a vital factor in the lives of many working-class communities, but in times of social crisis and/or mass social movements, Mutual Aid efforts can take on a more central and organized form.

But how does Mutual Aid contribute to a revolutionary strategy to overthrow capitalism and replace it with an egalitarian society based on mutual cooperation? Within DSA, some members argue that a strategy of building Mutual Aid networks is sufficient, or view these networks as the foundation stones for the struggle to transform society.

Big Door Brigade, an online hub for mutual aid efforts, offers a working definition of mutual aid on their website.



Photo: Mutual Aid by Timothy Vollmer, tinyurl.com/MutualAidWall, copyright: CC BY 2.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/

“Mutual aid is when people get together to meet each other’s basic survival needs with a shared understanding that the systems we live under are not going to meet our needs and we can do it together RIGHT NOW!”

While Mutual Aid has a strong appeal, it cannot be substituted for a strategy focused on winning working-class control over society to abolish capitalist social relations and replace them with bottom-up forms of organization. This means throwing out corporate executives and undemocratic workplace structures, reclaiming the products of our collective labor, and re-organizing production to sustainably meet human need rather than profit.

on the basis of free association.

Mutual Aid as a Strategy

The definition on Big Door Brigade goes on to hint at this debate (my emphasis).

Mutual aid projects are a form of political participation in which people take responsibility for caring for one another and changing political conditions, not just through symbolic acts or putting pressure on their representatives in government, but by actually building new social relations that are more survivable.

Dean Spade’s Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity in This Crisis (and the Next) has become a touchstone for discussions about Mutual Aid in DSA. He writes,

Mutual aid is only one tactic in the social movement ecosystem. It operates alongside direct action, political education, and many other tactics. But it is the one that most successfully helps us grow our movements and build our people power, because it brings people into coordinated action to change things right now.

So while Mutual Aid strategists like Spade may have respect for other tactics such as strikes, mass protests, and electoral campaigns, they see mutual aid as the core of a successful strategy to change the world. This is in line with the anarchist tradition, which focuses on activities that emulate a classless society (often called “prefigurative politics”), and attempts to provide a vision of what a different world could look like. While they can be powerful examples, mutual aid efforts are inevitably limited by the hostile terrain of capitalist society

In other words, mutual aid must be part of a broader strategy to challenge the capitalist class for control over state power.

Spade is skeptical about the ability of mass movements to lead social transformation by demanding concessions from the state and the capitalist class. He writes,

[M]ovement organizations could fail to provide any real relief for those whose lives are most endangered and leave newly scared and angry people to the most passive and ineffective forms of expressing their opinions.

While neoliberalism has undoubtedly reversed many victories of social movements, socialists would not be justified in dismissing the revolutionary potential of an organized working-class, not in adopting a romantic belief in the potential of mutual aid projects to lead the way forward -- especially when people are overworked, under-paid, and, especially in many communities of color, subjected to racist state violence.

Winning Reforms and State Power

While Spade correctly criticizes the dominant reformist approach of many “movement organizations,” he dismisses the possibility of linking the fight for reforms under capitalism to a revolutionary strategy:

[R]eforms emerge in the face of disruptive movements demanding justice but for the most part are designed to demobilize by asserting that the problem has been taken care of, meanwhile making as little material change as possible.

However, even when Spade acknowledges reforms that did significantly lift up poor and working class people, he seems to focus narrowly on the danger of co-option. For example, the Black Panther Party fed over 10,000 children at the height of its Free Breakfast Program. Further, The Black Panther Party was always linking mutual aid back to building support for their revolutionary 10-point program, and unapologetically using it to build their party and support for revolutionary socialism. This strategy helped expose the racist failure of US capitalism to provide basic necessities to low-income communities. But the scale of the Panther’s program pales in comparison to the 14.5 million that the governmental Free Breakfast Program feeds today -- a reform won by the political pressure the Panthers created. Spade, writing in Truthout last October, seems to emphasize only the negative side of the reform:

The government’s attacks on the Black Panther Party are evidence of mutual aid’s power, as is the government’s co-optation of the program: In the early 1970s, the U.S. Department of Agriculture expanded its federal free breakfast program — built on a charity, not a liberation, model.

Spade is right to warn that liberals will attempt to spin every concession working people force out of them as an example that gradual change within capitalism is the only realistic -- and acceptable -- path to progress. But socialists have often helped millions of working people draw the opposite conclusion: that reforms are only won through struggle, and that if our class organizes on a larger

scale and in a direct fight for political power, far more can be won.

Don't dismiss the power of mutual aid

However, those who agree with a strategy of revolutionary confrontation for state power should not be so quick to dismiss mutual aid as an inherently liberal and non-revolutionary tactic. Many tactics can be used to lead

working people into a dead-end. But does not make it an essential quality of that tactic.

For example, Marxists have run in parliamentary elections and created political parties around the world. This does not automatically make elections a “revolutionary” tactic. As such, they can be used in a revolutionary way to demonstrate the limits of reforms, or they can be used in a reformist

attempt to use the capitalist state machinery to legislate our way out of capitalism.

In navigating the complex political pressures and challenges we face, the following principles can help guide socialists in evaluating whether a mutual aid project fits into a broader strategy of revolutionary transformation.

Four Questions to Guide for DSA's Mutual Aid Work

1. Is the Mutual Aid Project Linked to Clear Demands?

No mutual aid project alone can fully meet the needs of the working class. But if mutual aid is used as a tactic to organize the working-class and oppressed communities, then having systemic demands on those in power is key.

The Black Panther Party tied all of their projects to building support for their famous “Ten Point Program,” which they understood as a tool to mobilize Black people into a worldwide working class struggle for socialist revolution.

A more modern example of the power of transformative demands is the way that the Texas DSA Chapters reacted to the devastating winter storm and collapse of the power grid in February. DSA members were among the first to hit the ground to help address neighbors immediate needs. They did so openly as socialists, and linked mutual aid to demands for a Green New Deal, and called for bringing the power grid in Texas into public ownership.

2. Who Do We Say Should Pay for the Crises of Capitalism?

Mutual Aid can take the form of strike fund contributions or bail support, or offering basic life-sustaining help to neighbors forced out of their homes by floods, fires, or unemployment. But the overwhelming majority of society's resources are concentrated in the hands of the capitalist class and the state, asking working class people to sacrifice in solidarity with those in greater need should be combined with clear calls to make the rich pay.

The Black Panther Party solicited donations to the Free Breakfast for Children program from local businesses. But they didn't just ask like a corporatized non-profit. According to Kurt Schaeffer, writing for the Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project:

Elmer Dixon said that the Seattle Panthers had concluded that Safeway was profiting handsomely due to the patronage of Central Area customers. In return the company should therefore donate eggs and sausage for children's breakfasts. In July of 1969, Elmer Dixon presented a letter requesting \$100 each week for the breakfast programs. The letter added that if the stores did not comply, the Party would raise the request by \$25 each week. The stores rebuffed the demand so the Party set up pickets and attempted to institute boycotts.

These tactics caused the Safeway to close and another grocery store to open who did contribute. To this day, there's no Safeway in the Central District.

3. Are We Helping to Build the Confidence and Fighting Capacity of Workers?

In 1912 in Lawrence, MA, young women mill workers were forced to work as much as 56 hours a week. Their average life expectancy was 26 years old. When a law lowered the length of the workweek to 54 hours, the bosses decided they would comply and lower the wages accordingly. But these women, barely surviving as it was, said no. Organized by the radical Industrial Workers of the World, they began what would be called the “Bread and Roses Strike”. While working mothers stood the picket lines for

two months without pay, sympathetic families cared for many of their children. This mutual aid kept the strike going, and the mill owners were eventually forced to concede 20% wage increases.

In recent times, Bread for Ed, Tacos for Teachers, DoNut Cut Education, and other DSA-led mutual aid actions supported the educator strike wave of 2018-2019. These efforts strove to help socialists connect with teachers to build fighting rank-and-file groups, popularize a class-struggle program, and campaign to democratize and transform the unions.

In sum, mutual aid needs to compliment, not replace, the patient work of building the socialist movement and popularizing socialist ideas within the labor movement.

4. Are We Building DSA Out of Our Mutual Aid Work?

Around the world, most successful mass socialist parties, from the Social Democratic Parties of the late 18th century until today, have linked their wider political demands and their party building work to projects that meet the immediate needs of working people. From health clinics to sports and cultural centers, from food banks to schools, and so much more. Especially in the early era of socialism, and in countries where the workers movement has not yet won as many social welfare provisions (or where they've been stripped away), such programs can be pivotal to building mass unions and socialist parties.

Given the neoliberal erosion of social programs, and the deep poverty facing more oppressed sections of the working class, DSA will need to learn this history if we aim to sink roots in the working class and grow into an organization of hundreds of thousands in the years ahead. When done well, these Mutual Aid

programs can serve as entry points to recruit people into the struggle for a better world. When done poorly, they're merely a service for a passive "customer" base -- or charity. I can't tell you how many "member benefits" and "exclusive discounts" letters I've gotten in the mail from my union, and not one of them that I can remember was ever paired with any call to action.

There's an understandable worry among DSA members that linking

solidarity and mutual aid efforts with recruitment will come off sounding like a 'socialist time-share pitch.' This leads many to default away from proudly repping DSA. It's easier to "do the work" and put that aside. But if you believe, like I do, that the only motorforce for change is mass action and political organization by the working class, disenfranchised poor, and oppressed communities, then linking DSA's Mutual Aid work to an active

campaign to build DSA's membership is vital.

While some people may well have too much on their plate to get involved, that's clearly not the case for everyone. History is made by mass movements of people who are overburdened and exhausted, yet sometimes find the energy to unite and overthrow oppressive laws, systems, and ruling classes.

Women and Nature: Towards an Ecosocialist Feminism

BY JESS SPEAR

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEX MONI-SAURI

Originally published in Rupture magazine in February 2021, this article examines the connection between the exploitation of women and of nature under capitalism. Jess Spear argues against the dominant idea within ecofeminism “that women’s connection to nature is rooted in their reproductive biology.” She makes the case that “[t]he essentialism of some strands of ecofeminism leads us down a path of biological determinism that so much of second wave feminism was fighting to destroy, and we are still struggling against,” including the very idea of “women’s work.” Instead, Spear aims to establish a fresh Marxist basis for ecofeminism, pointing to the material conditions under which both natural resources and women’s social reproductive labor are treated as “free gifts” to capital.

It was hot outside that day. In the remote area of KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa a young man watched as five men approached him on the porch. “Could we have a drink?” one of them asked. As they finished the water they asked if they could go inside and thank the woman that lived there. The young man led them in the front door. Moments later shots rang out as the men gunned down the young man’s grandmother and environmental organiser, Fikile Ntshangase, and raced out.¹

The death of Ntshangase removed a thorn in the side of the Tendele

Coal mining company. They had been pressing for over a decade to get the small number of remaining families to vacate their land so their mining operation could expand.² Like Berta Cárceres before her, the resistance of Ntshangase and her community is part of a long history of people defending nature as part of defending themselves, their history, their culture, and their future. The role of women like Ntshangase and countless others in defense of nature and with it, life, illustrates the connection between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of nature.

The rise of ecofeminism

Wherever the forces of destruction attempt to cut down trees, pollute our air and water, and rip away the earth for minerals, women have been leading the resistance. In the cities and communities, women have fought for clean water, air, and land for their families to flourish. From the very first “tree huggers” in the Chipko Movement in India³ (pictured above) and the Comitato dei danneggiati (Injured Persons’ Committee) protesting pollution in Fascist Italy⁴ to the peasants in La Via Campesina, the people of Appalachia fighting mountaintop removal and indigenous defenders of the Amazon, women have been and are today leading communities in struggle against capitalist destruction of our environment.

The rise of second wave feminism alongside environmental movements in the 1970s led to the emergence of ‘ecofeminist’ politics which saw “a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women”.⁵ The term ‘ecofeminism’ was coined by the French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death) published in 1974. One of the first ecofeminist movements is the Green Belt Movement - aimed at preventing desertification by planting trees - in Kenya started by Wangari Maathai in 1977.

Of course, many men are also fierce campaigners against capitalist destruction, organising mass movements to defend the forests and land, like Chico Mendes in the Amazon and Ken Saro-Wiwa in the Niger Delta, who were both tragically murdered for their activism. However, the most well-known environmental activists today are undoubtedly women: Vanessa Nakate and Greta Thunberg, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Naomi Klein, and Vandana Shiva. Even here in Ireland, Maura Harrington helped to lead the Shell to Sea campaign and today the most well known radical environmental activist is arguably Saoirse McHugh.

That both women and nature are dominated and exploited is undeniably true. The question for

ecofeminists and ecosocialists is why and what can be done about it?

Ecofeminism, patriarchy & capitalism

For some ecofeminists, women's affinity to nature comes from 'their physiological functions (birthing, menstrual cycles) or some deep element of their personalities (life-oriented, nourishing/caring values)'.⁶ In this way they "understand" nature, whereas men do not and cannot. Women have a spiritual connection to "Mother" earth. These ecofeminists locate the exploitation and oppression of women and nature in patriarchy, where men control, plunder, rape, and destroy both. Climate change is literally a 'man-made problem that requires a feminist solution'.⁷ The feminist solution in this case is more women's voices, more women in positions of power, and more women at the table discussing their experiences and their ideas on what to do about environmental problems.

Undeniably society is patriarchal (see box). We know it from the statistics and we women know it from the million and one experiences we've had that reinforce the idea that men are better, stronger, smarter, and overall more capable.

Patriarchal ideas, norms, and behaviours have devastating impacts today on women. Not only from the discrimination, abuse, and violence they face from men as well as the state and state-supported institutions. The highly gendered division of labour in society means women are not only working outside the home to ensure their families have all they need to live, they are also putting in on average three times more hours than men⁸ at home. In Ireland, women labor in the home an extra 11 hours a week⁹ compared to men. This impacts the kinds of jobs they can take, which affects salary and wages, working conditions, and whether

they are free to fully develop their interest and talents.

Women are also at the frontlines of environmental destruction, toxic pollution, as well as climate and ecological breakdown. In Flint, Michigan it was the women in the community who raised their voices when the effects of lead poisoning became clear, and who today, six years on, are still fighting for clean water.¹⁰ As subsistence farmers, producing half the food globally, and in the global South, planting and harvesting as much as 80% of the food¹¹, women are forced to reckon with desertification, lack of nutritious food, access to clean water, and destruction of nature in general more than men. In a natural disaster, women are also 14 times more likely to die.¹²

The experiences of these women, who make up the majority of the poorest people on the planet, who have and will be more impacted by the pandemic and its aftermath¹³, should be brought to the center of discussions about solving climate change and ecological breakdown. Not only because they are most affected, but also because they have unique knowledge and skills that will be key to planning how we can establish a more harmonious interaction between society and nature. Vandana Shiva explains that,

"In most cultures women have been the custodians of biodiversity. They produce, reproduce, consume and conserve biodiversity in agriculture. However, in common with all other aspects of women's work and knowledge, their role in the development and conservation of biodiversity has been rendered as non-work and non-knowledge."¹⁴

The involvement of women in farmer and peasant organisations expanded the struggle for food sovereignty to include combating gender-based violence and equality for women. The women within

La Via Campesina for example 'defend their rights as women within organizations and society in general...and struggle as peasant women together with their colleagues against the neoliberal model of agriculture'.¹⁵ They help organizations understand the many obstacles preventing women from joining and contributing to movements, in particular 'the division of labor by gender [which] means that rural women have less access to the most precious resource, time...'¹⁶

Central to ecofeminism is a rejection of human domination and control over nature in favor of a recognition of '...the centrality of human embeddedness in the natural world'.¹⁷ As John Bellamy Foster¹⁸ and other metabolic rift theorists have contended, this is also a central point in Marx's critique of capitalism (see page 72). Marx wrote that "[human beings] live from nature...nature is [our] body, we must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if we are not to die. To say that [our] physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for [we] are a part of nature."¹⁹ Unless we struggle for a complete transformation of our society-nature interaction, where production is organized in an ecologically balanced way, the rift between nature and humanity will worsen with devastating consequences for human health, environmental destruction, climate disruption, and irretrievable biodiversity loss.

Ecosocialist feminism

While ecofeminists rightly point out the subordination and domination of women and nature as having a common cause, Marxist ecofeminists (or what I would call ecosocialist feminists) disagree that women's connection to nature is rooted in their reproductive biology. The essentialism of some strands of ecofeminism leads us down a path of biological determinism that so much of second

wave feminism was fighting to destroy, and we are still struggling against.²¹ We also need to reckon with the revolution in the gender /sex binary demanded by trans, intersex, and gender non-conforming people who do not and will not fit into the simple male/female categories and all the cultural baggage that goes with it.

While we recognize the unique knowledge women have in care work, for families and for nature, we don't accept that it's inherently female or feminine, as some ecofeminism suggests. Cleaning the house, cooking meals, raising children, farming to feed your family, or gathering the daily water is not "women's work", but rather the needs of society forced onto their backs. "Saving the planet" is not inherently women's work or responsibility either.²² We want to end the gender division in and outside the home and we demand this work is organized amongst the wider community, for example through free public childcare, community laundromats and canteens. This would have the effect of freeing women from this work now, but would also open the door to a society in which the community is responsible for organizing social reproductive work and sexist ideas about "women's" vs. "men's work" can begin to wither away. Women will then be free to choose what work they want to engage in, including the farming, environmental/ecological work so many already perform, enriching all of society by their contributions.

In contrast to "essentialist" ecofeminism, ecosocialist feminism sees women's "connection" to nature and our environment as socially constructed and reinforced for material reasons. "[W]omen are not 'one' with nature...[we've] been 'thrown into an alliance' with it."²³

Capitalism treats nature and women's social reproductive labor as 'free gifts', completely outside

the formal economy (and therefore without value) and yet absolutely central to its ability to generate profits. For example, the value of an old growth forest is not accounted for when the trees are felled and the wood used to make furniture. Under capitalism the value of a commodity (whether it's a shirt or a house) is based on the average amount of labor power used to make it, including the work that went into acquiring the materials, but not the "value" of the raw materials in themselves. It's the same for domestic labor. Labor in the home - the cooking, cleaning, and shopping - ensures workers are fit and able to labor in the workplace day after day; and the labor required in birthing and caring for children ensures a new generation of workers is prepared to enter the workplace and create wealth for the capitalists. This is all done primarily by women and for free as far as capitalism is concerned. These 'free gifts' - from nature and women - are 'expropriated' by capitalism. They are taken and consumed in the process of capital accumulation without compensation, cheapening the cost of production and externalizing the real costs onto the rest of society.²⁴

For Marxist ecofeminists, the domination of men over women in society and nature at large is therefore not a result of patriarchal ideas alone. Their continuation and utilization by capitalism maintains divisions between women and men (alongside black/white, straight/LGBTQ, cis/non-binary) workers and poor people to ensure profits continue and their rotten class system endures.

Most importantly, ecosocialist feminists underscore the crucial difference between working class or peasant women and women who make it to the top echelons of power. Ecofeminism can sometimes "over-romanticiz[e] women and women's history..." and "[assert] a 'totalizing' image of a universalized 'woman',... ignoring women's differences".²⁵ While all

women experience sexism, the needs and demands of "women", even working-class and peasant women, are not uniform. Not all working-class women were forced into the role of housewife. As black revolutionary socialist Claudia Jones explained in her essay 'An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!', capitalism's structural racism meant that black women in the 1940s were often the main breadwinner in the family and had to work long hours, usually cleaning or childminding for white families, before they came home to labor for their own.²⁶

We also need to keep in mind that the call for more women's voices is all too easily met within capitalism with the Josepha Madigans, Angela Merkels and Ursula Von Der Leyens of the world. The new Biden administration in the U.S. is the most recent case in point with the first black and Asian vice president and the first indigenous woman to lead the Department of Interior.

The rise of the new women's movement alongside a growing climate justice movement gives impetus to ecofeminist ideas, which is overall positive (despite the essentialist arguments, which must be strongly countered). Yet, as long as private property rights are upheld for corporations to do basically whatever they want to the forests, land, and water with impunity and as long as states act in their interests against ours²⁷, whether it's by the hands of men or women, nature will continue to be destroyed, the climate disrupted, and women will disproportionately suffer (with poor, black and brown and marginalized women suffering the worst). We must go much further and demand an ecofeminism that is unflinchingly anti-capitalist and socialist and move towards an ecosocialist feminism that sees our labor as the beginning of the way out. Under patriarchal and racial²⁸ capitalism, working women and peasants labor in and outside the home.

This dual role gives them an insight into the unsustainability and destructive character of capitalism. It's why so many movements for radical change are led by women, despite the extra barriers in our way. But it is in our labor in the workplaces and where we produce for capital that we have the most power to fight and win.

Like fuel to the engine, profit is what powers capitalism, and all profit comes from our labor in the workplace. Whether we're cleaning the floors, staffing the cash register, or operating machinery on a production line, our labor is what keeps the capitalist system going. If we decide to take collective action, to slow down our work or even go on strike, for an hour, a day or indefinitely, it would bring businesses, cities, and even whole countries to a grinding halt. This means workers, which comprise the exploited and oppressed majority, actually have tremendous potential power when we are organized.

Women workers alongside the men in their workplaces have used their power to fight back against the sexism they experience - as McDonald's workers did²⁹ - and to go after big oil - as teachers in West Virginia did.³⁰ When the INMO went on strike in 2019 they made clear that their demands for pay and retention directly impacted the inadequate health-care we all receive³¹, and while they didn't win everything they demanded, they won more than the government was originally offering.³² We need to build on these examples and countless others from history, strengthen our ties in workplaces as well as the community and get organized to challenge patriarchal capitalism wherever it attacks life, in society and our environment.

BOX: Capitalism & Patriarchy

Capitalism emerged from a patriarchal feudal society in which male private property inheritance demanded women's bodies and lives were subordinated to the needs of the family. All kinds of sexist ideas supported women's supposed inferiority to men, though the forms of oppression women experienced was of course uneven across class and racial lines. Peasant women certainly weren't forced to learn multiple languages and the basics of etiquette to attract a husband. They worked in the fields and in the home. But they were nonetheless affected by the ideas and culture that emanated from the top of society because as Marx explains, "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas...The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas..."²⁰

Patriarchal norms and behaviors, and crucially the laws that enshrined men's right to own property (including the women of their family), meant that men would become the first capitalists, not women. While rich women were confined to stuffy drawing rooms, crocheting and waiting for the day they would marry and ensure property inheritance continued along the male line, working class women and peasant women, who had no property, labored as mothers, carers, and domestic servants, regardless of how much they had to work outside the home to survive. Today this continuation of social reproductive labor by women means that even though in many countries they've gained political and civil rights - through persistent struggle by countless women as well as LGBTQ+ people and men - the ability of working class and poor women to exercise these rights continues to be restricted. It is hampered by both capitalism's dependence on the free labor they

perform in the home, the undervalued care work and often precarious, part-time work they do in the formal economy, and the sexist ideas that persist and ensure the gendered division of labor is reproduced year after year, generation after generation.

Notes

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14. Mies, M. and Shiva, V., 2014, *Women's Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation* from Ecofeminism, Zed Books, New York.

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16. Ibid

17. Mellor, M. (1996) 'The Politics of Women and Nature: Affinity, Contingency or Material Relation?', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 1, no. 2.

18. See Marx's Ecology (2000) by John Bellamy Foster and Karl

Marx's Ecosocialism (2018) by Kohei Saito.

19. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm

20. Marx, Karl, 1845-6, *The German Ideology*, Part I: Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook B. The Illusion of the Epoch.

21. That is, reproductive ability should determine (and in many cases, limit) your role in the home and in the workplace to those deemed "women's" work - child-minding, cooking, cleaning, teaching, nursing, and so on.

22. www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/06/eco-gender-gap-why-saving-planet-seen-womens-work

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24. See monthlyreview.org/2018/01/01/women-nature-and-capital-in-the-industrial-revolution/

25. Mellor, M. (1996) 'The Politics of Women and Nature: Affinity,

Contingency or Material Relation?', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 1, no. 2.

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27. www.optimistdaily.com/2020/12/indigenous-leader-from-ecuadorean-amazon-wins-goldman-environmental-prize/

28. 'Racial' capitalism denotes the history of capitalism's development was a history of brutal chattel slavery, genocide of indigenous peoples, and immense destruction of the natural world. "Capital" Marx wrote in *Capital* Volume 1, "[came] dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt".

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reform & revolution

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 seek to contribute to a living Marxism that analyzes new developments in society and engages in the ideological debates facing the left in the 21st century.

A central question activists are grappling with is the relationship between fighting for reforms and the need to fundamentally change the whole

system. Our name is taken in honor of the answer that the famous Marxist Rosa Luxemburg gave to this question: “Between social reforms and revolution there exists for [the Marxist movement] an inseparable connection. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim.”

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.

Capitalism is fundamentally undemocratic because the real levers of power are in the hands of billionaires who control the economy, the mass media, the government, and the state, including the army, courts, and the police. 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 resist Trump and the whole billionaire class, if you want to fight all forms of oppression, 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

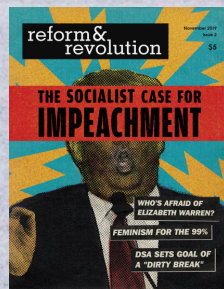
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