

Perspectives on a Post-Election Movement

A Strategy for the Movement

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(Below is a draft of a perspectives document. It is very basic, but hopefully it is something we can all agree on and utilize as guidance for our work. It is written both for internal use and for public distribution. Comments, criticisms, and specific amendments — additions, deletions, alterations — are welcome. —Ron)

Build the Movement

We support the current and future actions of all those fighting against President-elect Donald J. Trump and everything he and his administration stand for. We reject the calls of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and others to give Trump a chance. Trump's business record and his campaign rhetoric make it clear who he is: a hustler, a liar, and a crook; a racist, misogynist, xenophobic, and anti-LGBT bigot, an arch-manipulator and a sociopath. (Even if he doesn't believe every word he has said, the fact that he said them is proof of what he represents.)

We wish to broaden and deepen the movement. We work to base the movement primarily in organizations of working people and other oppressed members of our society, in workplaces, communities, schools, hospitals, churches, and other economic and social institutions. We work to make this movement militant, to utilize a variety of tactics of direct action, including picket lines, strikes, sit-ins, occupations, and blockades, as well as mass demonstrations.

As part of this, we urge the movement to organize defense guards (armed, if necessary) to protect people—individuals and communities of ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, women, and LGBT people; and institutions—labor unions, community, civic, and political organizations, and churches— from attacks by right-wing thugs and the police.

Unite the Movement

A broad array of people and movements are the targets of Trump's reactionary, authoritarian program: Blacks, Latinos, Asians, First Americans, and other oppressed ethnic groups; Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious minorities; immigrants both legal and undocumented; women; the LGBT community; the environmental movement and other progressive movements. We encourage these groups to coordinate their struggles and to unite them into one powerful movement.

Expand the Movement

While a core of Trump supporters are racist, misogynist, xenophobic, anti-gay, and authoritarian, many of those who voted for him are not. This includes millions of people who backed him mostly out of hatred of Hillary Clinton and the arrogant, self-righteous, and greedy liberal elite of which she is a part; millions of people tired of the inefficiency, dishonesty, and corruption of the federal government and, in fact, of government at all levels; millions of people who are suffering from the crisis-ridden economic system we live under (and which Donald Trump, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and the entire class of politicians defend), who have been left behind by the brutal march of globalization, people whose communities have been devastated by automation, pro-corporate trade deals, and the corporate drive to slash wages to boost profits. These victims include significant numbers of white men who have been left out of — in fact, demonized by

— the liberal narrative of “identity politics,” under which everybody deserves extra help except them. While there are racist attitudes among this section of the population, we should not write them all off and leave them to the mercy of demagogues like Trump. Our movement needs to address and fight for their legitimate needs. We need to reach out to them, listen to them, and talk with them, not dismiss them as irredeemable “deplorables,” as Hillary Clinton did.

For an Independent Movement—Fight both the Republicans and the Democrats

We work to make the movement independent of, and hostile to, the entire ruling class and the political elite — Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives — that serves it, in fact, to see itself as opposed to that class. We advocate direct action in the streets, in the factories and other workplaces, and in our communities, rather than mobilizing people to passively vote for pro-capitalist candidates. These were the tactics that contributed, for example, to the success of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s; they led to far greater change than ‘lesser evil’ voting ever did or will. While we fight to make clear the overtly reactionary politics of the Republican Party, it is particularly important that we work to expose the two-faced policy of the liberal politicians, the Democratic Party, the liberal organizations, and think tanks, who promise to fight for the needs of people oppressed by the system under which we live but whose underlying goal is to defend that system.

This includes left-liberals like Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. Both claim to be champions of the working class and other oppressed people, but, whatever they say and whatever they think, both are integral parts of the system. Bernie Sanders calls himself a Democratic Socialist and says the system is rigged in favor of what he calls the “billionaire class.” He has even called for a “political revolution.” But changing the political system while leaving the economic system intact will not liberate us. Although he calls himself a socialist and has a background in the Marxist movement, he has never actually named the system — capitalism — and has never called for its overthrow and its replacement by socialism, the direct, cooperative, and democratic management of society by working and oppressed people. He has never targeted the liberal billionaires, such as Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, George Soros, Tom Steyer, and Haim Saban, but instead has directed his fire solely against the conservative billionaires, such as the Koch brothers (who did not even support Donald Trump).

Sanders’ program amounts to a massive expansion of the federal government, the same government whose prime job is to defend the system that oppresses us, here and abroad. (Bernie Sanders’ “socialism” is really state capitalism, a system under which the government owns the property and acts as the sole capitalist. This is not liberation; it is slavery.) Sanders, Warren, and those who support them claim to want to return the Democratic Party to its historic role as the party of working people, which gave the country the New Deal. This is a myth: the Democratic Party is not, never was, and never will be the party of working people; it is, always has been, and always will be the party that pretends to be for working people in order to defend the system. The New Deal was not a gift from the Democratic Party to the working people of America. It was a paltry set of reforms that was enacted to head-off and domesticate a militant, radical working class movement that threatened to become revolutionary.

Build a movement for revolutionary democratic socialism

We want to transform the current and (hopefully) growing movement from one of protest against Donald Trump into one consciously committed to overthrowing the brutal, unjust, and corrupt system we live under. For now, this means patiently explaining what this system is, how it works, and why it can never be reformed into a system that works for all the people of the society. (This is because capitalism, by its very nature, entails a tiny group [class] controlling society's productive apparatus and the levers of power, including the state, in order to exploit the majority of people to produce profit.) It also means describing the social system we propose to establish – one without economic classes, without rich and poor, one that is based on the direct, democratic, and cooperative management of the economy and all of society by the vast majority of people, especially those at the bottom. Finally, it means explaining how what we are calling for differs from those, such as Bernie Sanders, whose conception of socialism is for the government – the state – to take over society and for this government to be dominated by a class of bureaucrats who will supposedly run it “for the people.”

Look for Revolutionary Allies

We should investigate whether there are other organizations, groups, and individuals – anarchists, revolutionary socialists, libertarian Marxists – with whom we might coordinate our actions. We should aim to build such an alliance, if we can, around several key points:

1. Direct action vs. Electoralism
2. Hostility to both parties vs. Support for Democrats
3. Anti-statism vs. Statism
4. Revolution vs. Reform
5. Libertarian socialism vs. State capitalism

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