

To *Detroit/Seattle Workers' Voice* mailing list
October 21, 2024

On the coming election

There is a reactionary wave in a large part of the world, including the growth of far-right, anti-immigrant, and neo-fascist parties in Europe. Trump's MAGA, white supremacist offensive is part of this wave, and a second Trump presidency would be a major encouragement for it, and an orgy of right-wing revenge. One would think that the entire American left would be vigilant against this. But a major sign of the deep crisis in the orientation of the radical left is that it is badly split on this. Our view of the coming election was expressed earlier (see "The importance of voting for Harris in the coming election", <https://www.comunistvoice.org/DSWV-241014.pdf>). Below is a similar view by the League for the Revolutionary Party. - Joseph Green, Detroit Workers' Voice

Defeat Trump – Vote for the Lesser Evil And Prepare to Mobilize Against the Republicans' War on Democracy & Both Parties' Imperialist Crimes!

October 14, 2024 by the League for the Revolutionary Party (Excerpts)

This year's election confronts working-class and left-wing voters with a stark choice.

On the one hand, if Trump's Republicans regain power they are literally promising that blood will flow in the streets. They are determined to impose their agenda of white-supremacist Christian nationalism and unchecked capitalist exploitation, reversing a century of labor, women's and civil rights gains. Towards this end, they vow to violently crush any protests of resistance. ...

On the other hand, Kamala Harris's Democrats are the party whose betrayals of their supporters paved the way for Trump's rise. Now, with their enabling of Israel's genocidal wars and their continued enforcement of Trump's anti-immigrant policies, they are paving the way for his possible return to power. At a time of economic stagnation and rising costs of living at home and of growing horrors abroad, the Harris campaign's central message seems to be a demoralizing commitment to follow through on Joe Biden's promise last time – "nothing will fundamentally change."

This miserable choice is a bitter confirmation of the Marxist understanding of elections in capitalist society. As Lenin wrote: "Marx grasped this essence of capitalist democracy splendidly when ... he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!"[2]

But both Marx and Lenin also insisted that when working-class and oppressed people have no viable alternative party of their own and an election offers only a choice between two parties of oppressors, simply wishing a plague upon both houses could be disastrous. ...

With the Biden/Harris administration currently partnering in an ongoing genocide in the Middle East; bragging that they're "deporting more people than Trump"; [4] and boasting of expanding fossil-fuel drilling faster than Trump did even as they claim to recognize that it is driving catastrophic climate change,[5] one thing is certain: the difference between the Democrats and Republicans is not the moral character of their leaders. ...

LRP on the need to vote for the lesser evil in this election

We know that the Democrats are not champions of the working class and oppressed people. The Biden/Harris administration's support for Israel's fascistic government shows their contempt for democracy and human rights abroad, and their McCarthyite smears and police repression of protests in solidarity with the Palestinians indicates that they are prepared to stomp on many democratic rights at home. Nevertheless, one need not hold any illusions in the Democrats to see that they have a stake in the preservation of key rights that working-class people need. A Republican victory threatens to take those rights away; the Democrats, for their own reasons, defend them. That is why socialists must advocate voting for Democrats to keep the Trumpists from power.

Socialists' electoral support for the Democrats is purely tactical. Presidential elections are times when people's attention is most sharply drawn to political issues and strategies. So if socialists use every opportunity – meetings, rallies, door-to-door canvassing – to advocate both voting for the Democrats while warning against their anti-working-class dedication to exploitation and imperialism, we will have the best chance to start the building of the independent anti-capitalist working-class party that workers and oppressed people need. Towards this end, we must explain that capitalism itself is responsible for the horrors of imperialism made so visible in Palestine and now Lebanon; we advocate socialism as the only real alternative. ...

Further, campaigning for the largest possible vote for Democrats is essential because the Republicans are planning to claim victory regardless of the election's results. For them, the 2020 elections and Trump's failed January 6 coup were a rehearsal from which they've learned how to better attempt another undemocratic seizure of power. Trumpist activists are preparing to intimidate Democratic voters and sow chaos in order to throw the results into doubt; Trumpist election officials are poised to throw out Democratic electors; Trumpist politicians are ready to replace them with Republicans; and Trumpist judges all the way to the Supreme Court are poised to help them get away with it. Mobilizing for the largest possible Democratic vote is thus essential to prepare working people to defend their right to vote and have their vote counted – including through mass demonstrations and strikes – when Republican officials and courts attempt to steal the election.

Confronted by this crisis, however, the socialist left is as divided and disoriented as ever, with significant elements arguing against encouraging a vote for the Democrats and offering a disparate collection of rationalizations for their position. Rather than recognizing reality and proceeding from the interests of the working class and oppressed, some begin with abstract principles – in this case, the myth that Marxists never support bourgeois candidates. [6] Others recognize that Trump's Republicans are indeed the greater evil but refuse to take responsibility for stopping them, on the grounds that supporting the lesser evil always compromises the left and leads to the greater evil anyway. But this argument is only true so long as one ignores the historical examples that contradict it, not least of which is that the Bolsheviks used the "lesser evil" tactic for years, when there was no viable workers' candidate, to buy time to build their strength as a prelude to revolution.

The primary justification for leftists' opposition to voting for the Democrats is Biden/Harris's support for Israel's genocide; in this situation, they say, a vote for the Democrats is a crime against morality. Indeed, the idea of voting for imperialist politicians who are fueling a genocide should be a repugnant proposition to all decent and politically informed people. The fact that such a vote has to be considered reveals the desperately weak state of the organization and the struggles of working-class and oppressed people today. But moral opposition to voting for Democrats only threatens to make things far worse.

It is necessary to recognize reality: no matter whether Trump or Harris wins, U.S. foreign policy will continue to back Israel as a pillar of imperialist domination of the Middle East. As difficult as it is to imagine the plight of the Palestinian people becoming worse, Trump threatens to make it so. ... Moreover, since Trump promises to use the army to crush protest movements and since the Republicans are planning a sweeping overturn of democratic rights, our side will have far less freedom to organize against U.S. imperialism's crimes under his administration.

LRP on the need to vote for the lesser evil in this election

Nevertheless, some leftists are so opposed to the Democrats that they go so far as to welcome the possibility of helping Trump win. Thus Cornel West's Justice for All Party, Jill Stein's Green Party and the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) are running their own presidential campaigns, and these have the potential to siphon enough votes away from the Democrats to cost them the election. It is no wonder that these campaigns are being actively supported by Trump and the Republicans. Cornell West is "one of my favorite candidates," declared Trump, and "I like [Jill Stein] very much" too, adding in explanation "You know why? She takes 100% from them. He takes 100%." Their campaigns are receiving support from Republican donors secretly donating to their campaigns and Republican activists collecting signatures to get some of them on the ballot.[8]

Most of the time these campaigns deny that they are deliberately helping Trump. But shockingly, in a recent speech introducing Jill Stein at a campaign event, Kshama Sawant, well known for having been elected to the Seattle city council as an open revolutionary socialist, proclaimed such an intention. She hopes to achieve something "historic" – punishing Kamala Harris and the Democrats for their responsibility for the Gaza war by focusing their efforts on the state of Michigan and its large Arab and Muslim population – in order to hand Trump the presidency![9]

No matter who wins, mass actions like protests and strikes will be essential to fight the ruling class's attacks at home and abroad. So will political action in elections, where working class and oppressed people can come to see the need for their own candidates and their own political party, to challenge both parties of capitalism and imperialism. ...

Full text and footnotes are at http://www.lrp-cofi.org/statements/defeat_trump_10-14-24.html. < >