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Socialist Response to Trump's Address to Joint Session of Congress

By Kshama Sawant
March 2, 2017



Sisters and Brothers,

In just 5 weeks, Donald Trump has unleashed a series of vicious attacks on one group of Americans after another. From his Muslim ban to the ramping up of ICE raids to his anti-trans executive order to his budget proposal to slash vital public services.

The ruling class is sharply divided about Trump. Capitalist strategists are horrified by the growing popular revolt and the damage his reckless policies and conduct will inflict on their system. Yet much of Big Business is salivating at the prospect of Trump's corporate tax cuts and radical deregulation.

But there is a growing unity amongst millions of working people that they want no part of Trump's bigoted, misogynist agenda. There is a mood of rebellion on a scale not seen since the Vietnam war.

Trump can be defeated. The protests in this first month were a tremendous starting point, but far more will be needed.

We need to disrupt business as usual through peaceful mass civil disobedience. Shutting down airports, highways, ICE offices, and prominent businesses.

On March 8, International Women's Day, a "Women's Strike" has been called by the organizers of the January 21 marches. Let's take this up, and build for the largest actions possible.

May 1st, or "May Day," is International Workers Day and has long been a day of working class action globally.

In 2006, immigrants brought the tradition of May Day back to the United States. Millions marched, many went on strike, and helped force back egregious anti-immigrant legislation.

This year, facing Trump's brutal attacks, immigrants are again organizing *en masse*.

Discussions are also underway about strike and protest action in the labor movement, which is facing unprecedented attacks, with national "right to work" laws coming down the pike.

Working people have enormous potential power to fight Trump by shutting down the profits of big business.

This can be done through traditional strikes by the majority of workers at a workplace, but also by many non-union workers through taking the day off, calling in sick, or through other creative means.

We want the largest possible show of force, while keeping in mind that some actions would be too risky for some workers to take part in.

To be successful we cannot limit our movement to purely defensive battles against Trump.

We need to also fight offensively for concrete gains that can inspire the broader working and middle class.

We must not only oppose attacks on women's rights and Planned Parenthood, but also fight to extend reproductive care, for it to be free and accessible to all women. For paid family leave and affordable childcare. And a national \$15 minimum wage.

I supported Bernie Sanders' call for nationwide protests to defend the positive aspects of Obamacare, and to demand Medicare for all, a universal single-payer healthcare system.

This approach offers a real potential to undermine Trump's base, but most of the Democratic Party leadership completely rejects it because of their ties to the insurance industry and Big Pharma.

Donald Trump now says healthcare "is complicated," but I have a simple solution.

Many Democratic Governors are denouncing Trump's attacks on ACA. But why don't they immediately move to implement single-payer systems in their own states?

California is already discussing such a plan. My own state of Washington, along with Oregon, could come together in this effort. Along this blue West Coast we can develop a joint, single-payer alternative to the dysfunctional private health insurance system.

To most effectively fight the right we need an opposition party that is 100% against Trump & Billionaire Class. A party that helps organize mass movements from below.

The Democratic Party leadership is completely opposed to such an approach, as we saw again just this weekend in the DNC chair election.

While the Democratic establishment has stood against Trump, their opposition has been unreliable and far from sufficient

To the extent they have opposed Trump it has been grassroots pressure that has dragged them into it. This is due to their multi-faceted links to big business, their pro-capitalist program, and their conservative outlook.

Tens of thousands of people, primarily young people, are joining socialist organizations like Socialist Alternative but particularly the Democratic Socialists of America.

We need to build this emerging socialist movement towards a new socialist party. The space exists for such a force of 50,000 members to develop rapidly.

Such a new left party can be a forerunner to a mass workers' party at a later stage.

A new left party will need to work alongside the larger number of anti-corporate workers and youth who are still looking towards progressive Democrats in their fight against the corporate establishment.

If Democratic activists do not succeed in fundamentally transforming the Democratic Party – which unfortunately I do not believe will happen – they should draw all the necessary conclusions and leave the Democrats and work to build a new mass party.

Because this is not only about Trump.

It is this predatory system of capitalism, in decline and crisis, that has given rise to Trumpism. Oxfam recently reported that 8 people now own more wealth than half the world's population. This is the reality of the failed capitalist system.

We need fundamental change – an overturning of the capitalist oligarchy through a political, economic and social revolution which puts power in the hands of the overwhelming majority: of workers, youth and all those marginalized by this oppressive system.

The wealth of these 8 richest billionaires should be confiscated and democratically allocated for the needs of the majority.

Wall Street and the big fossil fuel companies represent an existential threat to the future of humanity and our environment. They must be also brought into democratic public ownership and their resources deployed for socially necessary production, including a massive expansion of renewable energy.

Sisters and brothers, socialism is not only possible, it is necessary. Our fight is not only against Trump and the right wing, but for a different kind of society. For a world based on equality, democracy and environmental sustainability: a socialist world.

Solidarity.