

Who is Charles Schumer?

James Brookfield
24 November 2016

The 2016 elections that have brought the quasi-fascist Donald Trump to the Oval Office also saw the Democrats suffer losses in Senate races that were almost entirely unanticipated and left them the minority in the chamber.

This reversal coincides with the passing of the leadership baton among Senate Democrats from Harry Reid of Nevada to Charles Schumer of New York. Portrayed in the media as a pugilistic leader and, in some press accounts, as the person in whom Trump has “met his match,” the New York senator has consistently favored the more right-wing factions of the Democratic Party. His ascension to the leadership position should be the occasion for an examination of his politics, as expressed in the election’s aftermath and his preceding career.

Tellingly, Schumer was nearly tripping over himself with obsequious gestures to Trump, even before all the ballots have been counted. On one Sunday talk show, Schumer went so far as to claim that during the campaign Trump had occasionally “voiced very progressive and populist opinions.” An example of greater sycophancy or effort to fool the public would be hard to find!

In other interviews that aired last weekend, Schumer presented the Democrats in the Senate as both would-be collaborators with Trump and a brake on the president-elect’s most reactionary tendencies.

Schumer repeatedly and unctuously appealed for Trump to “work with us” as much as possible while claiming, absurdly, that the Democrats would “fight” the new administration when it favored business interests and the wealthy over the “blue collar” voters that supported him, as though this would occur from time to time rather than being the essence of Trump’s plans.

In an interview with Fox News, Schumer repeated the plea for Trump to “work with us” three times. He used

the same language on ABC’s “This Week” and NBC’s “Meet the Press.” The supposed logic of his appeal was that Trump had won support from working-class voters who had previously backed Obama, by promoting Democratic positions on trade, infrastructure, and jobs and rejecting the traditional Republican policies. This explanation left out entirely any mention of the actual record of the Obama administration, which has presided over a “recovery” where 95 percent of the gains went to the wealthiest 1 percent of the US.

Schumer hails from the so-called centrist wing of the Democratic Party. His campaigns have received tens of millions from Wall Street and the wealthy, including a contribution of more than \$8,000 from none other than Donald Trump.

In the 2016 elections, Schumer, functioning as the head of the Democratic Senate campaign, backed the more right-wing candidates for the Democratic nomination wherever there was a contest, including Patrick Murphy in Florida and Evan Bayh in Indiana. Murphy’s father, a wealthy real-estate executive, poured \$1 million into his campaign. For his part, Bayh had worked for a hedge fund and joined various corporate boards after previously serving two terms in the US Senate. He was considered an “ideal” candidate since he brought with him a war chest of \$10 million left over from previous campaigns. Both Murphy and Bayh lost by wide margins.

Schumer’s background in capitalist politics extends back to the 1970s when he was elected to the New York state legislature. He later served in the US House of Representatives from 1981-1999 before winning election to the Senate in 1998.

In his 35-year career in the federal legislature, Schumer has combined devotion to the banks with economic nationalism and support for US imperialism around the globe.

Like his then fellow Senator from New York, Hillary

Clinton, Schumer voted to authorize the Iraq war in 2002 on the basis of lies about supposed weapons of mass destruction. Noticing the shifting political winds, Schumer later criticized the Bush Administration's conduct of the war and politely suggested that a team of generals review it. Nonetheless, he continued to vote for funding for the war. He supported US interventions in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. Likewise drone assassinations and, with limited reservations, NSA spying. Additionally, in 2007, he voted for a "Sense of the Senate" resolution to label the Iranian Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organization. He supported sanctions against Teheran and opposed the six-nation deal with Iran that lifted sanctions in return for Iran limiting its nuclear power program.

Today, Schumer parrots the line that Russia is "menacing" Eastern Europe and has commented approvingly on NATO expansion and military exercises on Russia's doorstep. He lashed out at Vladimir Putin in 2011 for "helping Edward Snowden escape." The senator would have greatly preferred to see the whistleblower—who exposed massive government spying on the population of the entire planet—put on trial for his life back in the US.

Schumer is a diehard supporter of the oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel, telling a 2010 gathering of the Orthodox Union in Washington DC that, "since the Palestinians in Gaza elected Hamas, while certainly there should be humanitarian aid and people not starving to death, to strangle them economically until they see that's not the way to go, makes sense." As though such strangulation would take place without people starving!

In 2011, Schumer was also a vocal proponent of trade-war legislation directed against China for allegedly artificially suppressing the value of its currency to lower the prices of Chinese goods overseas and undercut its global competitors. At the time, he stressed that American firms could compete with Chinese businesses "on a level playing field" as other proponents of "insourcing" claim. To be sure, this is possible—by continuing the dramatic lowering of wages and benefits of US workers.

Schumer also backed legislation in 2011 that has "much tougher border security" (the senator's own words) than anything that Trump has proposed. In cruelty towards migrants, Schumer clearly sees a

kindred spirit in the chauvinist Trump.

Trump appears to have taken the measure of Schumer. Said the incoming president, "I have always had a good relationship with Chuck Schumer. He is far smarter than [former Senate minority leader] Harry R[eid] and has the ability to get things done. Good news!" As something of an expert in political theater, Trump sees in Schumer and fellow Democrats rather contemptible figures who will, with episodic posturing to the contrary, fall in line and facilitate implementation of his reactionary agenda. Social resistance, however, is inevitable and will take place increasingly outside of the confines of both capitalist parties.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact