

Trump makes an appeal to the fascistic right

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As the political warfare in Washington escalated, President Trump went to Huntington, West Virginia Thursday night for a campaign-style rally bringing together the fascistic themes that the White House has been developing over the past several weeks.

Posturing as the defender of coal miners and other working people against immigrants, environmentalists and unnamed “special interests,” Trump welcomed the Democratic governor of West Virginia, billionaire coal boss Jim Justice, who announced his switch to the Republican Party at the rally.

Trump invited other Democrats to support his right-wing policies and drop their campaign, backed by the military-intelligence apparatus, over alleged Russian interference in the 2016 elections. “The reason why Democrats only talk about the totally made up Russia story is because they have no message, no agenda and no vision,” he said.

This characterization of the Democratic Party is accurate as far as it goes. The maniacal focus of the Democrats on the Russia investigation leaves a political vacuum in which there is no opposition within the official political system to Trump’s right-wing rampage against democratic rights and the social gains of working people.

Trump seeks to exploit this rhetorically with demagogic boasting about the (nonexistent) revival of the coal industry and the (fictitious) growth of manufacturing jobs. The real content of his economic program is revealed in the “achievement” to which he gave first place in his litany of supposed successes: “the all-time-high stock market,” which enriches billionaires like Trump and Justice, but comes at the expense of the jobs and living standards of workers.

Trump combines bogus claims to stand up for working people with vicious law-and-order and anti-immigrant demagoguery, featuring the usual list of villains: “radical Islamic terrorists,” “drug smugglers,”

“human traffickers” and “vicious, violent gangs.” Of those actually responsible for the terrible conditions of life in areas like West Virginia—the giant corporations and banks overseeing mass layoffs, wage-cutting and the opioid plague that has ensued—Trump said not a word.

The visit to Huntington is the latest in a series of public appearances through which the White House has carried out a step-by-step campaign to mobilize support from the police, the military, Christian fundamentalists, white racists and outright fascists.

While there has been an authoritarian thrust to the Trump administration going back to his inaugural address, what has unfolded over the past two weeks is a calculated political maneuver, beginning with Trump’s July 22 speech to a naval audience at the christening of the new aircraft carrier USS Gerald Ford.

Trump spoke last week before an audience of uniformed police on Long Island and urged them to be “rough” in treating people they arrested, particularly those involved in Latino immigrant gangs.

There have been open appeals to racism and anti-gay bigotry: Trump tweeted his decision that transgendered individuals will not be “permitted to serve in any capacity in the US military.” The Justice Department has taken the position that anti-gay discrimination by employers does not violate civil rights laws, and there are reports that it is preparing to charge that universities with affirmative action programs are engaged in “anti-white” discrimination.

On Monday, the new White House chief of staff, retired Marine General John F. Kelly, was sworn into office, replacing Reince Priebus, former chairman of the Republican National Committee, and putting a military man in the top White House job for the first time in nearly half a century.

And on Wednesday, Trump policy adviser Stephen Miller appeared at the White House press briefing to

announce Trump's support for legislation that would cut the number of legal immigrants by 50 percent while enacting an openly racist standard favoring speakers of English and those desired by corporate employers, rather than family members.

Increasingly, the administration's political appeals are separated from any legislative or electoral agenda. The focus is on the persona of Trump himself and the building of a political movement around him.

Miller's re-emergence Wednesday, after being sidelined for several months due to the initial debacle of Trump's anti-Muslim travel ban, brought the most openly authoritarian of Trump's top aides before the public and the press once more. He engaged in a widely publicized clash with Jim Acosta of CNN, in the course of which Miller inadvertently revealed the direct connection between the Trump White House and the fascist right.

In an exchange involving the famous poem by Emma Lazarus, embossed on the Statue of Liberty (which includes the line, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free"), Miller declared that the poem "was added later, is not actually a part of the original Statue of Liberty." As both the *Washington Post* and the *Jewish Daily Forward* have pointed out, Miller's remark was not original to him, but reproduces positions circulating in the fascist and neo-Nazi right, voiced at different times this year by Rush Limbaugh of talk radio, Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, and white supremacist Richard Spencer.

Trump and his closest aides are seeking to exploit the widespread hostility to the Democratic Party as the party of the liberal economic elite, including large sections of Wall Street, with an entirely bogus posture as the advocate of the "forgotten man", as Trump put it during the election campaign and again on Thursday night. But Trump lacks even the semblance of an economic program to address the spread of mass impoverishment and social misery.

The Democrats are saying nothing about Trump's fascist appeals. Instead, they are doubling down on their anti-Russia campaign. There were reports Thursday that independent counsel Robert Mueller has convened a special grand jury in his investigation into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 elections and Trump campaign collusion with Moscow.

Leaks from within the White House and the

intelligence agencies continue at an unprecedented level; most recently, the *Washington Post* published transcripts of Trump phone conversations with leaders of Mexico and Australia, giving an embarrassing glimpse of the president's bullying and double-dealing approach to his foreign counterparts.

These attacks are motivated by differences within the ruling elite over foreign policy. While Trump has sought to accommodate his critics, most recently by signing a stringent new sanctions bill directed against Russia, he is also seeking to mobilize his ultra-right base and push back against his ruling class opponents.

The Democratic Party will do nothing to oppose Trump's effort to mobilize ultra-right and fascist elements to attack the working class and destroy democratic rights. Their criticism of Trump is entirely within the framework set by the national-security establishment: he is soft on Russia, erratic overall, and preoccupied with his family's personal financial interests rather than the interests of Wall Street and American imperialism as a whole.

At the same time, the Democrats are leaving open the possibility of working with Trump, particularly on a "tax reform" that will lead to a new windfall for the corporate and financial elite.

The struggle against the ultra-right and in defense of democratic rights is a struggle to unite all sections of the working class—black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and immigrant—on the basis of common class interests, to defend jobs and living standards and oppose the growing danger of imperialist war. This is possible only through the independent mobilization of working people against the two big business parties, the Democrats and Republicans, to fight for a socialist and internationalist program.



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