

Supreme Court vacancy exposes bankruptcy of the Democratic Party

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The resignation of Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, which will give Trump another pick for the court and an opportunity to determine its trajectory for many years to come, has exposed the impotence and bankruptcy of the Democratic Party.

Trump has said that his appointment will come from a list of 25 candidates compiled during the 2016 presidential campaign with the assistance of the arch-reactionary Federalist Society. Whoever is chosen, the selection will serve to consolidate the power of the far-right on the court, fulfilling Trump's pledge to strengthen executive power and undermine or reverse previous decisions on basic democratic rights.

Trump clearly feels emboldened by recent court decisions, including one upholding his racist ban on refugees from predominantly-Muslim countries. Though the administration faces mass popular opposition, it is seizing the offensive. Trump is traveling around the country, threatening his opponents, and seeking to whip up his crowds with openly fascistic rhetoric.

The Democrats, on the other hand, appear cowardly and feckless. At the slightest sign of genuine popular anger against Trump, the Democrats collectively wag their fingers and deliver sermons against "incivility." Nothing frightens them more than the emergence of a mass popular movement against the billionaire thug in the White House. After all, is there not a danger that such a movement might be directed not only against Trump, but against the entire political establishment and the economic interests it defends?

During the 2016 election campaign and in the year and a half since Trump's inauguration, the Democrats' opposition to Trump has been focused obsessively on the alleged manipulation of the 2016 election by the evil bogeyman, Vladimir Putin. The actual aim of this campaign has been to compel Trump to implement the more aggressive anti-Russia policies demanded by those factions of the CIA and other intelligence agencies with which the Democratic Party is aligned.

The other major preoccupation of the Democrats has been the promotion of identity politics, which has found its most vicious expression in the #MeToo witch hunt. While the relentless preoccupation with sex has played well with the Democratic

Party's affluent upper-middle class constituency, it has fallen flat with the great mass of working people, whose main concerns relate to problems arising from their class position in capitalist society, rather than their gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

Against the backdrop of the explosion of social inequality, the mass incarceration of immigrants in detention camps and the certainty of escalated attacks on democratic rights (including the right to obtain an abortion) with the impending shift of the Supreme Court still further to the right, the political impotence of the Democratic Party and the bankruptcy of its make-believe "anti-Trump" strategy is being totally exposed.

In its lead editorial Thursday, the *New York Times* gave voice to the Democrats' political demoralization. In a pathetic exercise in handwringing over the fate of the Supreme Court after Kennedy's retirement, the editors write, "If the last few days hadn't been dispiriting enough for those who believed the Supreme Court could still stand for reproductive freedom, equal rights for all Americans, a check on presidential power, a more humane criminal justice system and so much more, Wednesday afternoon brought the coup de grâce." With Kennedy's departure, "the court is very likely to lock in an unmoderated, hard-right majority for the rest of most of our lives."

The *Times'* solution is the same that it has given innumerable times before: vote for Democrats in November. "For those who face the future in fear after Wednesday, there are no easy answers — but there is a clear duty. Do not for a moment underestimate the importance of getting out and voting in November."

The claim that electing Democrats will do anything to alter the trajectory of bourgeois politics is belied by history. In 2006, under conditions of widespread hatred of the Bush administration, the Democrats won major victories in the congressional elections that gave them control of both houses of Congress. In 2008, they won the presidency and expanded their congressional majority.

But what followed was a continuation and expansion of the reactionary policies of Bush. The Obama administration bailed out the banks while ensuring the continued erosion in the living standards of the working class. His signature domestic policy, the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, has increased health

care costs for workers. Social inequality soared to levels not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Internationally, the administration continued the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, while launching a new war in Libya and organizing the CIA-backed civil war in Syria. Its contempt for democratic principles was embodied in the assertion that the president has the power to assassinate anyone, including US citizens, without due process.

The Democratic Party is a party of lies and cynicism, of millionaires and billionaires, whose main fear is of a social explosion in the United States, which would not only negatively impact stock values, but pose a threat to the entire capitalist system. As a result, they are incapable of defending any democratic rights, including the right to an abortion and gay marriage.

The Democrats are aided in their efforts at political camouflage by the organizations of the upper-middle class, the parties of the pseudo-left. The politics of racial, gender and sexual identity that is the stock-in-trade of these groups is bound up with conflicts over access to positions within corporations, universities, the trade unions and the state apparatus. The interests they represent are separate from and hostile to those of the working class.

The campaign of Democratic Socialists of America member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who defeated Joseph Crowley in a New York congressional primary election on Tuesday, demonstrates the role played by the pseudo-left. While tapping into social discontent to defeat Crowley, the fourth highest Democrat in the House of Representatives, Ocasio-Cortez has moved quickly to burnish her establishment credentials and demonstrate that she is, in the end, nothing more than a garden variety bourgeois politician.

There is no trace of genuine socialist demands in the program of the DSA and its allies in the International Socialist Organization and similar pseudo-left parties. They say nothing about fighting for democracy in factories and workplaces, which is not possible without ending the economic dictatorship exercised by the corporations and the all-powerful Wall Street investors and establishing workers' control over economic life. They say nothing about fighting for the redistribution of wealth in the interests of the working class. In fact, they say virtually nothing about basic needs, such as guaranteeing jobs, raising wages, cancelling student debt and providing free and universal health care. They either abstain from the fight against imperialist militarism or, as in the case of the ISO, offer dishonest rationalizations for endorsing US military operations.

Urgent political conclusions must be drawn. The conflict between Trump and the Democrats is a struggle between two reactionary factions of the ruling elite. A genuine movement against Trump must come from below, from the broad mass of the population, the working class, which is completely excluded from political life. Such a movement must treat association with the Democratic Party and all its operatives as

the greatest political danger.

This year has seen significant initial expressions of working class struggle, which has developed independently of and in opposition to the corporatist trade unions aligned with the Democratic Party. These struggles must be extended. New organizations, especially rank-and-file committees in factories and workplaces, must be built to unite every separate struggle and direct them against the entire state apparatus and the capitalist system it upholds.

There must be a systematic effort to develop a socialist political leadership in every section of the working class. The defense of immigrant workers must be based on an understanding that the attack on immigrants is an attack on all workers, and that the police state methods of rule that are being developed will be used against all opposition to the policies of the ruling class. It is in the working class that the defense of democratic rights, including opposition to racism and the attack on the right to abortion, must find a real and solid social foundation.

The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the fight to arm the developing objective working class movement with an uncompromising revolutionary perspective. In the 2018 elections, the SEP is running Niles Niemuth as its candidate in the 12th Congressional District in Michigan. In this campaign and in all its political work, the SEP is advancing a socialist program for a workers' government to secure the rights of the working class, expropriate the wealth of the financial oligarchy, transform the giant banks and corporations into publicly controlled utilities, and establish workers control over the workplace and the process of production.

It is only such a movement that will be capable of fighting Trump, halting the right-wing rampage, and advancing the interests of the working class.

We urge all those who are serious about defeating Trumpism, defending democratic rights, opposing war and ending corporate rule to contact and join the Socialist Equality Party.

For information on joining the SEP, click here.



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