

The International Socialist Organization mobilizes behind Democrats' right-wing diversion on Kavanaugh

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In response to the conflict within the political establishment over the nomination to the Supreme Court of Brett Kavanaugh, the US pseudo-left is marshaling its forces behind the Democratic Party.

The Democratic Socialists of America, the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative and other organizations have thrown their support behind the “Stop Kavanaugh” and “Rally Against Patriarchy” protests today, organized by International Women’s Strike USA. The DSA published a special notice about the protests on its website under the headline, “Unleash your fury.”

The DSA, ISO, et al. (along with the Democratic Party) have shown no similar concern or energy in response to the internment of immigrant children in concentration camps, tax cuts for corporations, attacks on healthcare and food stamps, Trump’s fascistic diatribe at the United Nations or his administration’s threats to escalate the war in Syria and carry out missile strikes against Russia.

Nor, for that matter, did they seek to organize protests against Kavanaugh when all that was involved was the appointment of an arch-reactionary and enemy of the working class to the Supreme Court.

Alleged sexual abuse and misconduct is *the issue* around which the pseudo-left chooses to mobilize for definite political reasons. By focusing on the allegations of sexual violence against Kavanaugh, the Democrats and their affiliated organizations can bury and divert attention from fundamental class issues, while rallying support among layers of the upper-middle class animated by the politics of race and gender.

An editorial (“She Speaks For Us and We’ll Stand With Her”) published by the ISO on its website SocialistWorker.org on September 24, several days before the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings involving Kavanaugh and his accuser, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford, makes clear the outlook and politics of this layer.

It displays, first of all, a disinterest in and contempt for

basic democratic rights, including due process. The ISO in its editorial simply asserts as though it were a proven fact that Dr. Ford was sexually assaulted by Kavanaugh when she was 15 and he was 17, though these are as yet unproven allegations. A central slogan in the demonstrations today is “We believe Christine Blasey Ford.”

Dr. Ford, a psychology professor, appeared sincere during her testimony. But from a legal standpoint, she has thus far presented little corroborating evidence to back up her charges. There is no way to know on the basis of publicly available evidence what happened or did not happen on a summer night in 1982 in the Maryland suburbs of Washington D.C.

The position taken by the #MeToo campaign and its promoters in the Democratic Party and media that accusation is tantamount to proof and the accused must be assumed to be guilty runs counter to basic democratic principles that were established after centuries of struggle against feudal absolutism. This repudiation of the presumption of innocence is the tradition of the right, not the left.

Genuine socialists firmly uphold democratic principles, even when the accused is a political reactionary. As history has shown time and again, the destruction of due process rights will be turned sooner rather than later and with far greater savagery against the working class and left-wing political opponents of the government.

The right-wing politics of the #MeToo campaign is in line with the factions of the ruling class backing the Democratic Party. The ISO editorial is unashamed in its enthusiasm for a Democratic Party victory in the midterm elections. “According to just every indicator,” it writes, “the Democrats will make major gains in the midterm elections. They will likely regain a majority in the House, and they even have a shot in the Senate...”

However, the ISO declares regretfully, “even with a Democratic victory, the next Congress won’t take office until four long months from now.” Moreover, “a Democratic

Congress—if the party’s lawmakers don’t appease and concede—might be able to obstruct further Republican proposals, but it would face major obstacles to undoing the damage that the administration and its Republican allies have done legislatively.”

The line could not be clearer. Political reaction is equated entirely with the Republicans. The Democrats are a legitimate and desirable alternative. The worst one can say of them is that they tend to “appease and concede” to the Republicans. Opponents of Trump must, according to the ISO, focus their efforts on stiffening the Democrats’ spines.

The editorial likewise hails the decision of the Democratic Party to base its campaign against Kavanaugh’s confirmation entirely on allegations of sexual abuse. It states: “And with a right-wing fanatic in the White House and Republican majorities in both houses of Congress, it had seemed to most people like it was an uphill battle to stop Kavanaugh.

“But Blasey’s courage in confronting her attacker these many years later has exposed the truth, not only about him, but those who stoop to new lows to defend him... This is a golden opportunity to not only stop a reactionary judge, but galvanize opposition to the whole Trump regime.”

What is “golden” about the opportunity provided by the allegations of sexual violence is that it allows the Democrats to divert attention from and cover up fundamental class issues. The Democrats do not want to speak about Kavanaugh’s role in the attempted right-wing political coup against Bill Clinton, in drafting the torture policy of the Bush administration, in supporting mass surveillance and virtually unlimited presidential powers, or even in attacking the right to abortion.

Neither are these issues taken up by the ISO.

Along with the promotion of the Democrats, the ISO encourages the crudest reformist illusions in the efficacy of protest to the ruling class and its political system. Genuine socialists seek to broaden the outlook animating popular opposition to reactionaries such as Kavanaugh and Trump, revealing the underlying class relations of capitalism that give rise to political reaction and militarism. They seek to imbue the indignation of workers and youth against such figures with socialist consciousness, explaining the need for an independent political struggle by the working class against the entire system and all its parties and political representatives and institutions.

The ISO does precisely the opposite. Thus, its October 1 article published in response to the Ford-Kavanaugh Senate hearing (“The time to act is now: Stop Kavanaugh!”) hails the wretched display of phony moralizing and mud-slinging and the subsequent decision to reopen the FBI background check into Kavanaugh as a victory for the working class.

“The Senate hearings on Brett Kavanaugh have transformed US politics,” gush the authors, Elizabeth Schulte and Alan Maass. “This time, our world [the ISO never speaks in terms of classes] stopped them from getting their way, at least temporarily.”

There is, in fact, nothing remotely progressive about the Democrats’ (and the ISO’s) opposition to the “Trump regime.” The Democrats are in fundamental agreement with the Republicans on the issues most critical to the ruling class. Their differences center on questions of US imperialist foreign policy, with the Democrats lined up behind the dominant factions of the military/intelligence apparatus in demanding a more aggressive policy toward Russia and Syria. This goes hand in hand with the Democratic-led campaign for internet censorship in the name of stopping Russian-inspired “fake news.”

The ISO and the other organizations that comprise the pseudo-left support the Democrats in this conflict within the ruling class. The ISO has been among the most fervent promoters of US imperialist operations in the Middle East, openly aligning itself with neoconservatives and other advocates of war.

By mobilizing opposition around the sexual violence allegations against Kavanaugh, the ISO can assist the Democrats in covering up the real, right-wing basis of their opposition to Trump.

They are terrified of the growth of social opposition and anti-capitalist sentiment in the working class, which has begun to break free of the corporatist trade unions. They see the Kavanaugh hearing as an opportunity to pollute public consciousness; conceal the fact that the basic division in society is class, not gender or race; and advance the interests of privileged sections of the upper-middle class, which seek to use identity politics to secure a greater share of the wealth of the top 10 percent.



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