

Two years of the Trump administration

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23 January 2019

Two years ago, on the eve of the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States, the *World Socialist Web Site* published a Perspective column calling this ceremony “an event that will live in infamy.” The article noted the widespread sense that under Trump the United States “has embarked on a path that will lead to a disaster of unimaginable dimensions.”

The WSWWS insisted that Trump was not an accident or aberration, but rather the expression of the profound decay of American democracy over many decades:

History has caught up with American capitalism. The protracted process of economic and social decay has been covered over for decades with democratic phrases that served to disguise the gap between the official political myths and the underlying reality. But the mask has now come off. Donald Trump personifies the corruption, ruthlessness, parasitism and essentially fascistic mindset of the capitalist oligarchs who control the United States.

Two years on, there is not the slightest reason to alter that assessment. The political conflict that has erupted over the partial shutdown of the federal government, now in its second month, has no precedent in modern American history. It is an indictment not merely of Trump, but of the entire US political establishment, Democrats and Republicans alike.

The US political system is careening towards disaster, not because it took a “wrong turn” on November 8, 2016, but because both Trump and his nominal opposition in the Democratic Party, in different ways, represent the historical failure of American capitalism.

If Trump is a billionaire criminal elevated to the

supreme position in the US political system, his 2016 opponent, Hillary Clinton, had far more support among the billionaires than he did. She had, after all, pledged to do their bidding and serve their interests in her closed-door talks with Wall Street audiences, which were made public by WikiLeaks in the weeks before the election.

If Trump is a blustering militarist who has regularly threatened the use of military force, including nuclear weapons, against foreign rivals, his opponent Clinton had far more support in the military-intelligence apparatus and took every opportunity to flaunt it. Her final campaign appeals were directed not to working people abandoned and pauperized under the Obama administration, but to the national security elite, denouncing Trump as soft on Russia and setting the stage for the campaign of anti-Russian propaganda and lies that followed Trump’s Electoral College victory.

Trump has ignited a global trade war while openly preparing for war with Iran and pouring hundreds of billions into a nuclear build-up directed against China. The Democrats have largely supported his trade war policies, while substituting Syria and Russia for Iran and China as their preferred initial targets for military aggression. These are not alternative policies, merely different roads to the same destination: all-out war to maintain the global domination of American imperialism.

There are minor differences between Trump and the Democrats on domestic policy. But again, these relate to methods and techniques of achieving essentially the same aims. The month-long federal shutdown is supposedly the result of irreconcilable differences over immigration and Trump’s demand for a border wall. But one year ago, at the mid-point in Trump’s presidency, in the midst of another, much briefer federal shutdown, the Democrats signed on to a deal very similar to the one Trump offered them on

Saturday.

A Perspective column by this writer a year ago today noted that Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer had visited the White House for one-on-one talks in which he offered full funding for the border wall, \$25 billion, in return for Trump's agreement to legalize the status of the nearly 800,000 young undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children, who were granted limited rights to work or attend college under the DACA program established by President Obama.

Trump ultimately rejected the offer and demanded even more concessions, including restrictions even on *legal* immigration, only because he sensed the weakness of the Democrats and thought he could do more to appeal to his fascistic anti-immigrant "base."

As we wrote then: "As a political event, the federal shutdown is a demonstration that the American ruling elite as a whole, and not just Trump personally, is 'unfit' to run a large, complex society of more than 330 million people." That was written after a shutdown that lasted only three days, as opposed to the current shutdown, now in its 33rd day, which has caused a vast disruption of the US economy, air travel, scientific research and oversight functions like food safety inspection and monitoring of environmental hazards.

If the first year of the Trump administration was dominated by the phony opposition of the Democrats, using leaks from the military-intelligence apparatus and the media howling against alleged Russian "meddling" to attack Trump *from the right*, the second year of Trump has seen the emergence of the social force that alone is capable of providing a genuine alternative to Trump *from the left*: the American working class.

The past year has seen massive strikes by teachers, conducted outside of and over the opposition of the unions. These broke out in Republican-controlled states like West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona. More recently, teachers have struck in Democratic-controlled states like Washington and California, where 33,000 Los Angeles teachers have entered their second week on the picket lines. The teacher walkouts, broadly supported by parents and students, have been part of a wider radicalization among working people, reflected in strikes by auto workers, telecommunications workers, utility workers and many others.

The rise in political consciousness among working people is seen above all in the growing popular outrage

over the attacks being perpetrated against immigrant workers—the forced separation of refugee parents from their children, the jailing and tear-gassing of desperate asylum-seekers, the rising number of workplace raids, and Trump's deployment of the military on the US-Mexico border and his demands for a border wall.

American workers are beginning to recognize the working people of Mexico and Central America as their allies. The ruling class's fear of this awakening solidarity is the only politically serious explanation for the complete silence of the American media on the general strike of auto parts workers in Matamoros, Mexico, only a few miles south of the Texas border, which provides an inspiring example of a mass mobilization of the independent strength of the working class.

In the third year of the Trump administration, the central issue is the mobilization of the working class as a conscious political force, independent of both right-wing factions of the US ruling class, who battle like scorpions in a bottle while American society continues its plunge into social, economic and cultural decay. This means the building of the Socialist Equality Party, its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, and the *World Socialist Web Site*, as the instruments for the political education and independent organization of the working class.



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