

A lesson in “lesser-evil” politics: Democrats join forces with Republican Speaker Mike Johnson

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15 May 2024

Only six days after Democrats in the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to keep ultra-right Republican Mike Johnson in office as Speaker, Johnson appeared outside of Donald Trump’s criminal trial in Manhattan. He denounced the charges brought against Trump, declaring the innocence of the fascist ex-president, and threatened a congressional investigation into the prosecutors to “hold them accountable.”

The top Republican in Congress, second in the line of succession to the presidency after Vice President Kamala Harris, echoed Trump’s claim that there was no case against him and that the charges of business fraud to cover up hush money payments constituted “election interference.”

A bevy of top Republicans have appeared at the Manhattan courthouse over the past 10 days, acting as surrogates for Trump. Johnson’s joining in this campaign of vilification and bullying is certainly no surprise. He played a significant role in Trump’s efforts to overturn the 2020 elections, spearheading an appeal for judicial intervention, which failed, and then voting against the certification of Biden’s victory, even after the mob attack of January 6, 2021 aimed at blocking the congressional vote.

More significant than Johnson’s own statements is the fact that the Democrats over the past month have forged what amounts to a coalition government with the Republicans, with Johnson playing a central role. In the process, the Democrats have exposed the bankruptcy of the policy, advocated by liberal commentators and pseudo-left groups like the Democratic Socialists of America, of supporting the Democrats as the “lesser evil” to Trump and the increasingly fascist Republicans.

The Democrats did not vote to keep Johnson in office because they had any illusions about his representing a “moderate” alternative to open fascists like Marjorie Taylor Greene, who pushed for his ouster as Speaker. Rather, their votes were a quid pro quo in return for Johnson’s agreement to bring a \$95 billion supplemental war spending package to a vote, split up into separate measures for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.

After these passed the House, Biden hailed Johnson for “putting our national security [that is, American imperialism] first.” The vote came a month after the bipartisan passage of Biden’s fiscal year 2024 budget, which included a record \$826 billion for the Pentagon.

Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joseph Kishore pointed out the domestic political implications of the massive funding for both the war against Russia in Ukraine and Israel’s ongoing mass slaughter of the Palestinian population of Gaza, as part of a series of tweets posted Wednesday. He wrote:

Johnson and Biden appeared side-by-side at a Capitol Hill ceremony to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day, where they each vilified the student protests as antisemitic and vowed eternal support for the state of Israel, established through the dispossession of the Palestinian people and sustained by decades of massive military and financial subsidies from Washington.

The Republicans and Democrats are full partners in an unfolding world war, in which American

imperialism is fighting Russia in Ukraine, stoking conflicts in the Middle East that threaten war with Iran, with Israel as the spearhead, and building up Taiwan as a military base for a coming war with China.

The working class at home is to be made to pay for the war drive of imperialism through the destruction of jobs, living standards and social benefits. This includes Medicare and Social Security, which are to face the budget-cutters' knife on the pretext that "there is no money," even though unlimited trillions are made available for war.

As Kishore pointed out, a particularly foul role is played by figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders, "who promote the Biden administration and insist that workers and young people must support the Democrats as a counter to Trump."

These advocates of "lesser evil" politics are directly complicit in the crimes of the Biden administration. At the same time, they help create more favorable conditions for the right-wing demagoguery of Trump, allowing the fascist ex-president to posture as an opponent of "endless wars" and a defender of Social Security and Medicare.

There is no "lesser evil" in the choice between the imperialist warmonger Biden and the fascist demagogue Trump. The Democrats and the Republicans represent two reactionary factions of the corporate and financial oligarchy.

The central question is the independent intervention of the working class in opposition to war, the assault on democratic rights, and the attacks on jobs, living standards and the entire social position of working people.

An important step in this direction came late Wednesday night, with the announcement that academic workers in United Auto Workers Local 4811 in the University of California system voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike against the police attack on protests against the genocide in Gaza. This expresses the broad opposition in the working class as a whole to the genocide, which is fully supported by both the Democrats and the Republicans.

Rank-and-file academic workers should mobilize to oppose the plans of the UAW apparatus to limit the struggle to "selective strikes." An all-out strike of 48,000 UC academic workers should be accompanied by a fight to mobilize all autoworkers in the UAW and

beyond through the development of a network of rank-and-file committees.

It is through what Trotsky referred to as the "direct *interference* of the masses in *historical* events" that the fight against imperialist war and dictatorship must be waged. This intervention must proceed through the building of a revolutionary socialist leadership in every section of the working class.



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