

The socialist response to the election of Trump

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On November 10, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) hosted a live-streamed meeting, “The Election Debacle and the Fight Against Dictatorship,” analyzing the causes and consequences of the Trump victory and elaborating a political strategy for the working class to fight back against an incoming Trump administration.

The event featured SEP National Chairman David North, SEP National Secretary and presidential candidate Joseph Kishore, SEP National Committee members Eric London and Tom Carter and SEP vice presidential candidate Jerry White.

The meeting was essential in providing a political orientation for workers and youth, in the United States and throughout the world. It was held only five days after the election and less than two months before Trump’s return to power, with an agenda of establishing a political dictatorship and implementing a massive social counterrevolution.

Under these conditions, the most critical question is the development of an orientation and perspective to prepare the coming struggles. Amidst the endless coverage in the media in the aftermath of November 5, there is virtually nothing that seriously analyzes the political, economic and social causes of the election outcome, including the complicity of the Democratic Party, let alone elaborates a viable strategy for countering Trump’s far-reaching plans for dictatorship and mass repression.

There is clearly an audience for a more serious response. The live event was watched by over 2,000 people globally and, as of this writing, views of the recording on different platforms are approaching 10,000.

The two-and-a-half-hour meeting and the reports that were delivered need to be studied. Below is a summary of some of the essential issues addressed, but this cannot replace listening to and carefully considering the contributions.

In opening the meeting, North stated, “The election of Donald Trump, the first fascist president of the United States, is the culmination of the protracted crisis of American democracy.” This had to be understood, North emphasized, as an expression of deeper social and political processes.

The focus of the meeting, he said, would be “a Marxist analysis,” centered not on Trump as an individual “but on the class forces and interests that have found expression in this election. The essential premise of our analysis is that the coming to power of the second Trump administration signifies a fundamental realignment of the American political superstructure, long in preparation, corresponding to the real social relations that exist in the United States.”

The emphasis on the objective sources of Trump’s victory does not in any way lessen the political responsibility of the Democratic Party for the debacle. Rather, it is the essential basis upon which the response of the Democrats itself must be understood. In his introduction, North stressed that, in contrast to the SEP, which is issuing severe warnings about the plans of a second Trump administration, the Democrats are doing everything to cover them up.

“Prior to the election,” he noted, “Biden and Kamala Harris repeatedly

warned that Trump represented an existential threat to American democracy. The ‘f word,’ fascism, featured prominently in the pre-election discourse. What a difference five days makes. The ‘f word’ has been preemptively sent back into political exile now that Trump has won the election. Forgive and forget is the new motto of the Democratic Party.”

North referred to the brief statement by Biden following Trump’s electoral victory. He noted that Biden proclaimed no political ceremony more sacred than “the peaceful transfer of power, even when the recipient is a fascist who had been preparing a second and more violent coup in the event that he lost the election.” North added:

It should be recalled that Hitler’s elevation to the office of German Chancellor on January 30, 1933 was also a peaceful transfer of power. The violence came afterwards. Now, it is not the position of the SEP and the WSWs that the accession of Trump to the presidency is the equivalent of Hitler’s 1933 victory. The United States is not Weimar Germany, and the transformation of the United States into a police state dictatorship backed by a mass fascist movement will not, whatever Trump’s intentions, be achieved overnight.

There will be struggle, enormous struggle, but it would be politically irresponsible, and actually contribute to the success of Trump’s aims, not to recognize the dangerous implications and real consequences of last Tuesday’s election. At the very least, it is necessary to take Trump at his word.

The working class must and will fight against the Trump administration, North said, “but that fight must be prepared. It requires analysis. It requires a sober and careful approach to political events. The last thing it needs is panic and hysteria. ... The time for serious politics has begun.”

Joseph Kishore’s report elaborated on these themes and provided an overview of the causes and implications of Trump’s victory. He focused on the staggering concentration of wealth in the hands of a capitalist oligarchy, including figures like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos. This is the defining feature of American capitalism, he said, with 800 billionaires now possessing a combined wealth of more than \$6.2 trillion.

Kishore also emphasized the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to the deaths of 1.5 million people in the United States, and the beginning of a period of “total war,” as described by leading foreign policy journals, which includes the genocide in Gaza and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine—the central focus of the Biden-Harris administration.

Global war is incompatible with democratic forms of rule, Kishore explained. “Social spending must be slashed to pay for war. The working class must be disciplined behind war. The class struggle must be

suppressed in the interests of war. Opposition to war must be crushed and criminalized. The domestic corollary to total war is political dictatorship.”

In discussing the Democrats’ complicity in and response to the election of Trump, Kishore stressed the reactionary role of identity politics and the Democrats’ fixation on issues of race and gender, used to advance the interests of privileged layers of the upper-middle class. “The Democrats could not and were opposed to making any appeal based on the interests of the working class,” he said, “instead, haranguing voters for not turning out for Harris, allegedly due to racism and hatred of women.”

Eric London’s report was focused on a detailed analysis of the election data, accompanied by charts, emphasizing the political shifts within the working class, with Trump able to demagogically exploit social anger. “The Democratic Party lost about 10 million votes from the last election to this election,” he explained, “a massive historic collapse in support.”

London highlighted the dramatic decline in support for Harris among workers of all races, while noting increased Democratic support only among the affluent. “The Democratic Party... ran a campaign based on a combination of right-wing economic policies, imperialism, and identity politics... Black men, Latino men, and young people all shifted significantly away from the Democrats.”

Reviewing exit polls and other data, London explained, “Only a quarter of the population says they are suffering from no hardship. ... Harris did very well among these voters, among voters who have nothing really to worry about financially.”

London also reviewed recent literature documenting the anti-democratic character of the political institutions of American capitalism. “This is an oligarchic system in which 90 percent of the population has absolutely no say in having any of the policies which they largely support be enforced by either party.”

Tom Carter’s report provided a detailed and chilling review of the plans of the second Trump administration and the political forces conspiring to impose a dictatorship in the United States. He noted that Biden’s declaration, in response to Trump’s victory, that “we’re going to be okay” is aimed at “covering up the extent of the danger” and preventing the development of a mass movement against Trump and the Republicans.

“Trump is planning a massive deportation operation,” Carter explained, that “would require the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of police and soldiers, together with the construction of internment camps.” He also reviewed Trump’s plans to target political opponents, including Marxists and socialists, for arrest and deportation.

Carter pointed to the Republicans’ Project 2025, which includes efforts to subordinate the entire state apparatus to the will of the president. “Trump and his wing are saying, ‘Your loyalty is not, in fact, to the Constitution, but to Trump, because he won the popular vote and therefore supposedly represents the ‘will of the people’... That’s just a translation into English of the leader principle, the [Nazi] Führer principle.”

Every basic democratic right is under assault, Carter said, and Trump is backed by a Supreme Court that has declared the president immune from criminal prosecution for “official acts.” Among the many authoritarian measures on the agenda of the incoming administration, Carter noted, “Trump has said teachers will be required to ‘teach students to love their country, not to hate their country,’ and any teacher who resists this will be fired.”

Jerry White’s report addressed the basic and fundamental question, summed up by North in introducing him: “Is there a force capable of overcoming these dangers, of resisting these attacks? Is there a force which has an interest in doing so?” The answer to this question is yes: The American and international working class.

North cited a passage from *The Holy Family*, written by Marx and Engels in 1844, which established the revolutionary role of the working class due to its position in capitalist society: “It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the

moment *regards* as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is visibly and irrevocably foreshadowed in its own life situation as well as in the whole organization of bourgeois society today.”

There is enormous confusion among workers, North noted. “How could there not be given that they are lied to relentlessly. However, the objective possibility for overcoming the problems in consciousness lies “in the contradictions of capitalism itself, in the reality of the class struggle.”

Jerry White documented these conditions through a detailed review of the social reality of American capitalism. This is characterized by massive inequality and the intensifying social crisis produced by declining living standards, soaring prices and increased exploitation. “Labor’s share of income fell from about two-thirds, or 64 percent, in the first quarter of 2001, to 55.8 percent in the first quarter of 2024,” he noted, with social inequality “directly corresponding to the artificial suppression of the class struggle by the trade union bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO.”

But there are many expressions of growing opposition in the working class, including at least 24 major strikes involving 220,000 workers in 2024. “The social counterrevolution” being prepared by the Trump administration “is going to escalate the class conflict,” White explained, “as the naked class interests of the Trump presidency are revealed to millions and millions of workers, including those who voted for Trump.”

In ending the meeting, North stressed the central conclusion that must be drawn from the election of Trump: the building of a revolutionary movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International, in the United States and throughout the world.

“The election,” North said, “is a global event. ... The crisis in the United States is one that reverberates throughout the world.” And the conditions that have produced Trump are evident everywhere. “The growth of right-wing fascist movements is not an exclusively American phenomenon. ... This is an international process because capitalism is international.”

The building of an international socialist leadership is both urgently necessary and possible. The same contradictions that produce fascism, dictatorship and world war also produce the basis for overthrowing capitalism through the development of a revolutionary movement in the working class.

But this is not automatic. “There is an objective need for a revolutionary socialist movement,” North said, “but the building of such a movement is the product of the decisions that people make to intervene in the historical process.”

The election of Trump will produce immense political shocks, and the “American Earthquake” will reverberate throughout the world. There will be countless efforts, on the part of the ruling class and its political agents to divert the development of a revolutionary movement against capitalism, to create new political traps.

The central message of the Socialist Equality Party meeting is that the working class can only orient itself through the revival of genuine socialist politics, revolutionary politics, the politics defended through the entire history of the Trotskyist movement. As David North put it in beginning of the meeting, “The time for serious politics has begun.”

The political orientation of the working class requires the development of an understanding, of a political perspective, rooted in historical experience. Only on this basis will it be possible to carry out a fight against the Trump administration, against the turn of the ruling class to fascism and dictatorship, and against the capitalist system that is the root cause of fascism.

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges all of our readers to watch the full meeting of the SEP, “The election debacle and the fight against dictatorship,” share the reports above as broadly as possible on social media, and make the decision to join the Socialist Equality Party and build

the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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