

**Political Update to National Board**  
**August 3, 2016**  
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The Democratic National Convention did what it needed to be in place for next 100 days, largely united and focused on Dump Trump, elect Hillary Clinton, and take control of the Senate and House. It was a huge and diverse gathering with much emotion and protest as part of the scene.

Post convention, labor and people's organizations are already full speed ahead. This is an election to defend our democratic rights and all our rights and for survival. It is an election to create conditions favorable to move forward the struggle for jobs, an end to racial profiling and economic inequality and continue the Political Revolution.

A landslide voter turnout and rejection of Trump / Republican hate and fear is necessary and possible.

Four parts: What we did. What happened. Our strategy. Next 100 days

**1. What we did**

We began planning some months ago for this occasion which would usher in the final stage of the 2016 elections.

- People's World - four staff reporters filed over 30 stories, Larry, CJ, Patrick, Chauncey covered both the Democratic and Republican conventions. Tim and Margaret contributed from the ground in Philly.
- The distribution team of at least 17 handed out 7,000 Handy Guide to Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy . Special appreciation to the core of four who distributed every day for four days in the middle of a heat wave -- Margaret, Ben, John V, Diane. Everyone had accounts of people who said they were glad the Communist Party was there. There were none lying around, people wanted to take it home and read it. The title, cover and inside were all interesting. The pamphlets were distributed at many venues. The largest two locations were outside the Pennsylvania Convention Center where delegates and guests were going in and out to attend sessions during the day, and at the March for a Clean Energy Revolution.
- About 15 marched in a contingent with our "One Person One Vote banner People and Nature Before Profits. Communist Party USA." Appreciation to comrades who came from Philly, MD and DC to march. With more targeted effort, the contingent could have been larger.
- The Communist Party had a staffed table for all three days of the Progressive Central organized by Progressive Democrats of America. Members of congress, delegates and grass roots people came for various presentations. Appreciation to Rookie, Margaret, Jenn and to John B for the display banner.
- We attended many sessions of the Labor, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian Pacific Island, LGBTQ, youth, seniors caucuses where members of Congress spoke along with national leaders in the field, delegates and guests. In the Native American caucus John Lewis' ringing call to stand together for justice and dignity brought everyone to tears and a standing ovation.
- We went to various satellite events including Rev Barber's Moral Monday Revival, an SEIU Fight for 15 press conference at City Hall, a CLUW/NOW reception and two events held prior to the DNC by the College Dems and Peoples Convention.
- The comrades who participated came from Philly, MD, NY, FL, CT, WA, IL. It was great that John Bachtell was there for three days. Special recognition to Tim Wheeler and Jenny Kenny who worked with me. And especially to the Philly comrades. Having the convention in a city with an organized Communist Party made it possible to have a much larger presence and participation compared to the last three conventions that Tim and I have covered.
- We were in contact with several delegates during the convention to discuss developments and learn

what was happening behind the scenes.

-- There are things we could have done differently or better, and things we did good, but overall it was a project that inspired and gave confidence to those who participated. It showed that the Communist Party is a welcome part of the broad people's movements, and that with preparation and organization we can make a significant contribution. It adds to our responsibility for our participation at the local level and nationally going forward. As one comrade put it, "It is a joy, a feeling of strength when all of us turn out and participate with our own literature and banner and our own voice."

## **2. What happened**

The contrast with the Republican convention in Cleveland was night and day. The hate and fear anti-people messages and platform of Trump and the Republicans are very frightening. Every day there is a new surprise to contend with from this campaign. Even President Obama has felt compelled to call Trump unfit to be President. Many Republicans are running the other way, fearful for their own political futures.

We arrived in Philly with a big question mark how would the Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton delegates weave together especially in light of the wikileaks revelations about the role of the DNC during the primary. There was a highly charged atmosphere. .

Bernie Sanders role was exemplary. He had received 14 million votes which brought many thousands of young people into the political process. He had 1900 delegates pledged to a program of economic and social equality. The Clinton campaign understood the need for unity to win in November, and began negotiating in the weeks leading up to the convention. The first big result was the agreement for support of free public higher education for students with family income under \$125,000 a year. While not all of the resolutions to the platform committee were adopted, 80% were, including \$15 minimum wage, abolishing the death penalty, a modern day Glass-Steagel Act, a public option for health care, expanding Social Security, a climate summit in the first 100 days. As well there were compromises on the rules to make the primary process more open in the future. Richard Trumka said this is the most pro-labor progressive platform that the Democratic Party has ever produced.

Bernie Sanders was clear throughout on the necessity to defeat Trump as the next immediate step in the political revolution. He called upon his delegates to follow that lead. Most did, although some could not yet transition. While everything wasn't smooth and treatment of individual Bernie delegates was not always good, throughout the caucus and council meetings, and from the podium during convention proceedings, recognition was made and space was given to allow a unity process to gel. A Bernie delegate from Missouri CBTU told me that at least 90% of the Bernie delegates were ready to follow their candidate's approach as the convention proceeded. As Hillary Clinton said in her acceptance speech, "we created this progressive platform together, let's make it happen together." It won't happen without a struggle including on issues like fracking and the TPP and foreign policy and reigning in Wall St. But the door is open and the challenge is there.

An outstanding feature of the caucus meetings was the impact of Hillary Clinton breaking the glass ceiling for President after Barack Obama had broken the color bar. In the Native American caucus it was announced that there are six Congressional candidates running this year. Candidates for public office were highlighted in the Asian Pacific Island caucus and the LGBTQ caucus as well. The Youth caucus included a presentation from a leader of Working Families Party in NY. The door is opened wider for many barriers to be broken. An anti-racist consciousness is growing. There is a wide understanding especially within labor that the economic struggles and the struggles for racial equality are interconnected.

The point was made by Jesse Jackson that many of today's established leaders got their start in politics working for his Presidential campaigns. We can expect many more to emerge out of the Bernie Sanders campaign. Just yesterday, Washington state Sen. Pramila Jayapal won her primary for Congress in Seattle, joining Zephyr Teachout and Jamie Raskin all supported by Bernie Sanders and other progressive groups with the goal of adding to the strong fighters for peoples needs in Congress. During the convention, a meeting was held to establish the new organization formed from Bernie's campaign, Our Revolution. Larry Cohen and Ben Jealous were among the presenters. The emphasis will be on down ballot elections. We should be in the mix and offer candidates in these local elections. Bernie Sanders announcement of Our Revolution gives three priorities it will focus on: bringing millions of working people and young people into the political system; inspiring, recruiting and supporting progressive candidates; and "elevating political consciousness by educating the public about the most pressing issues confronting our nation and the bold solutions needed to address them."

There were a number of remarkable moments during the official convention proceedings, including the roll call, the speeches of Bernie Sanders, Michelle Obama, President Obama, Elizabeth Warren and the Mothers of the Movement, and Kzhir Kahn. I would like to call attention to the significance of Rev William Barber being invited to speak in prime time, as one who has been leading civil disobedience actions in North Carolina and throughout the South for voting rights, health care and social justice for years. His call for a revival of the heart of America and his mention of Palestinian children reflected the power of grass roots organizing to influence the political process. Just after the convention, voting rights victories were won in the courts in North Carolina, Wisconsin and Texas.

The speech of Richard Trumka should also be noted, along with other labor leaders on the first day, reflecting the large number of union member delegates at the convention, key to the outcome in November. In the Senior caucus, made up primarily of union retirees, pollster Celinda Lake underscored that the election is now a tie and winning union members to vote for Hillary Clinton can decide the election. In every caucus the point was emphasized that voter turnout will be the deciding factor.

### **3. Our strategy**

This convention showed the correctness of our strategy for a broad front to defeat the corporate extreme right-wing, developed in 1980 when extremists gained control of the Republican Party and newly elected President Reagan began union busting in the PATCO strike.

In 2008, at the stadium in Denver when Barack Obama accepted the Democratic Party nomination, Tim and I saw the embodiment of this broad front -- multi-class, multi-Party, multi-racial and multi-generational -- that elected the first African American president. In Philadelphia, we saw a maturing of the broad front to defeat a proto-fascist Republican candidate. While the Democratic Party, itself a multi-class formation and still largely controlled by a section of capital, is the electoral vehicle at this time for labor and progressive allies, the seeds for a party independent of corporate control are clearly being sown.

Our emphasis within that broad front is the core forces for social change: the labor movement, African American, Latino, Native American, Asian Pacific, LGBTQ, women, youth voters. The Communist Party is a part of these core forces. We give expression to the theoretical necessity to defeat corporate right-wing extremists in this country. We embody unity in action. We should be self-critical that sometimes we emphasizes the broad front to the exclusion of our own role, which is a necessary one.

We approached the Democratic convention in relation to Republican convention which was more than a whiff of fascism. In contrast, in Philadelphia there was a wonderful diverse composition of delegates, guests, and people on the streets.

The people's movements had a great impact on the convention itself, and immediately after the convention are in full motion. Just in the the few days since the convention: Labor has been part of the Clinton-Kane bus tour in PA and OH, and has begun door knocking in the battleground states. Fight for \$15 is holding a national convention in Virginia this month. Peoples Action just completed its conference highlighting an economic and social justice agenda for grass roots organizing in 30 states. Rev. Barber's Moral Monday movement is touring the country with a revival call to action. Black Lives Matter has issued its agenda. The 12 point Women's economic Agenda was issued this week by EPI. Ballot initiatives are gaining steam around the country on key issues including for universal health care in Colorado. The climate change movement, immigrant rights movement, peace movement are gaining momentum. Youth are on the streets in action.

This is where we need to be in the next 100 days and ongoing. To win a landslide in this election, to defeat Trump and the Republicans and elect Hillary Clinton and a Democratic majority in the Senate and House, is a giant task. We are setting the bar high. We can do it if we stick together. Some who are angry at the corporate forces in the Democratic Party want to vote for Jill Stein or just stay at home. But such an approach is self-defeating. It is not the way to win living wage jobs or stop police brutality or save the planet, because it gives an opening to the extremist right-wing. Some say that if they live in a blue or red state that is not a swing state, it is a safe state to vote for Jill Stein or just stay at home. But that is an argument that ignores the possibility of creating a landslide vote that can change the political climate in our country and give a huge boost to organizing for economic, racial and environmental justice. It also ignores the importance of a landslide vote to clearly reject Trump's "dog whistle" politics of hate and racism. We should discuss this out in the Party and with our friends and allies, and reject the "safe state" argument.

The most persuasive argument to convince many working class and struggling people to register and to vote is a simple comparison of the positions of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. At stake is the existence of a Department of Education, Environmental protection, voting rights, union rights, immigrant rights, health and safety, abortion rights, threat of nuclear war and the Supreme Court to name a few. The Voting Rights decisions that just took place in the lower courts are just one indication of how important the Supreme Court is.

The next point is our Election Plan of Action that was adopted by the last meeting. In that point we will talk about the tools we have and proposals for how to engage every member and make this 100 days a full collective movement and party building effort to get out a landslide vote for a sweeping victory.

#### **4. Election Plan of Action**

Without going into detail, our plan has five sections: *1. Discuss the urgency and stakes of this election to defeat Trump and change Congress 2. Determine priority election districts in your area. 3. Door knocking and phone banking with labor and allies. 4. Voter Registration and Education and 5. Communist Party visibility and message:*

#### **Club or District activities**

\* Local Communist Party booths at summer festivals with literature and voter cards and sign-ups for more information have been very successful.

- \* Share any locally produced fliers, t-shirts, buttons to give ideas to other districts and clubs
- \* Hold forums or special club meetings and invite friends to discuss the stakes of this election

**Literature on-line and print available for order (all should be posted on our website)**

- \* People's World sign-up cards to use with voter registration (*now available*)
- \* Handy Guide to Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy -- English and Spanish (*now available*)
- \* Immigration Myths and Realities pamphlet (*now available*)
- \* Brochure on Trump and Why Vote (*to be issued in August*)

**Websites and Face Book**

- \* Build our influence through People's World circulation, ie assembling lists of activists and campaign volunteers to send election articles to regularly
- \* Write up local election experiences for People's World and for cpusa.org
- \* Develop memes and other social media promotion, based on election reports and articles

**Webinars**

- \* Sign up and promote upcoming election webinars organized with the Education Department
- \* Attend club and district leaders call to be scheduled on the elections

The specifics we are focused on now include:

- Helping prepare districts and clubs for discussions and making plans
- Calls to individual members in unorganized areas with the auto dialer this month
- Prepare to deploy staff to key states, Ohio, Florida and Pennsylvania
- Additional travel to work with districts on the elections
- Share and circulate People's World election articles and send in stories on local races

Our goal is to reach everyone of our members and beyond with our strategy and ways to get plugged in. Reaching them takes a lot of different forms including statewide teleconferences We should put out an appeal for people to work in Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania and stay a week and work with the districts. In addition to organizing staff going into the key states for longer periods. Emphasize People's World circulation of articles, video, content. Especially from labor day on utilize People's World and articles in a big way to expand influence day to day. Possibly produce a video to reach young people? Special section on Party website with tools for 2016 mobilization, ways to get involved, voter registration, links to key articles.

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