

Democrats capitulate as Republicans secure votes to install far-right justice on Supreme Court

By Barry Grey and Jacob Crosse
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On Tuesday, Utah Senator and former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney announced that he would support a vote prior to the November 3 election on Trump's nominee to fill the seat on the US Supreme Court vacated by the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The announcement virtually assures the installation of a far-right justice, to be named by Trump on Saturday, who will shift the court even more decisively against abortion rights and democratic rights in general.

The Democratic Party, whose response from the outset has combined cowardice and dishonesty, sank to the level of farce. Even as the top Democrat in the Senate, Charles Schumer, was denouncing the Republicans for their "hypocrisy" and pleading for a change of heart, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was secretly negotiating with Trump's treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, to extend funding for the federal government until after the election.

For all her talk of "taking nothing off of the table" to oppose Trump's antidemocratic court move, Pelosi was focused on preventing a plunge in the stock market by reaching a bipartisan deal with the Republicans on a continuing resolution before the September 30 deadline. The two announced a deal Tuesday afternoon and the Democratic-controlled House quickly passed it in a bipartisan 359-57 vote.

The supposed leader of the "progressive" Democrats in the House, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, could not even summon up the nerve to vote "no" and instead voted "present" on the bill.

So much for going "all-out" to oppose a court appointment that will be used to attack not only abortion rights, but all that remains of the past gains in civil rights, voting rights and social rights, from the eight-hour day to child labor laws, and accelerate the drive toward dictatorship. Rather than use the threat of a government shutdown as leverage against Trump's Supreme Court coup, the Democrats rushed to demonstrate their fealty to Wall

Street and pass the spending bill.

They have evinced no such urgency when it comes to restoring the \$600 weekly unemployment benefit that expired at the end of July, leaving millions of laid-off workers and their families without the means to pay rent and put food on the table.

The contrast with Trump and the Republicans, who wage open war against the working class, could not be starker. Trump forced a government shutdown at the end of 2018 when Congress failed to give him the full amount he demanded to build his border wall with Mexico. After the end of the shutdown, he declared a national emergency at the border and illegally appropriated money from the Pentagon to build the wall, without any resistance from the Democrats, who soon after voted to fund his war on immigrants.

The same day as Romney's announcement and the passage of the continuing resolution in the House, the campaign of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden reiterated his opposition to passing legislation, should the Democrats win back the Senate and capture the White House in November, to expand the Supreme Court so as to break the stranglehold of the far-right. This was confirmed on Tuesday by a top Biden aide, who spoke anonymously to the Associated Press and called for "de-escalation" in the one-sided battle on Capitol Hill.

The one thing the Democrats never considered was appealing to the mass popular hatred for Trump in the working class and youth of the country. They could have called for all those opposed to Trump's attacks on abortion rights, his promotion of police and fascist violence, and his threats to declare martial law, defy an election defeat and impose a dictatorship to march on Washington. No doubt such a call would bring out hundreds of thousands, which is precisely why the Democrats rejected it out of hand.

They are fearful of the right, but even more hostile to and terrified by the growth of left-wing social opposition and

anti-capitalist sentiment in the working class. They have spent the entire three-plus years of the fascist Trump administration working to suppress popular opposition and channel it behind their reactionary anti-Russia campaign.

On this and other questions of US imperialist foreign policy, including what they deem Trump's hesitancy to militarily confront Russia in Syria and the broader Middle East, the Democrats act with ferocity. First, they championed the Mueller investigation and after that collapsed, they carried out the impeachment of Trump, entirely on the basis of his withholding of military aid in Ukraine's war against Russian-backed forces in the eastern part of the country.

But when it comes to the basic democratic rights and social needs of the working class, they are utterly feckless. Their capitulation to Trump on the Supreme Court issue must be taken as a foretaste and warning of how they will react to an attempt by Trump to sabotage voting and steal the upcoming election.

The Democratic Party already ceded without a fight the 2000 election, handed to George W. Bush by a Republican majority on the Supreme Court. Al Gore, who won the popular vote, said at the time that he did not want the presidency if he lacked the support of the military.

Even when they had a lopsided majority in Congress and controlled the White House, the Democrats did nothing to defend the interests of working people. After Obama's landslide victory in 2008, the Democrats had large majorities in both the House and the Senate. They did nothing to reverse the looting of the economy by the super-rich or put a halt to the endless wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. Instead, Obama packed his cabinet with reactionaries like former New York Fed President Timothy Geithner and Bush administration Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

Obama expanded the bailout of Wall Street, imposed massive job and wage cuts on autoworkers, expanded the war in Afghanistan, continued the war in Iraq and launched new wars in Libya and Syria. His only major social measure, Obamacare, strengthened the grip of the hospital, drug and insurance corporations over health care and increased out-of-pocket costs for millions of workers.

The Obama administration allowed the Guantanamo concentration camp to remain open, expanded illegal NSA spying, shielded Bush administration torturers, and stepped up the drone assassination program, including the murder of US citizens. It persecuted Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange.

The very notion that workers should look to the institutions of the capitalist state, including the Supreme Court, to defend their democratic and social rights is a

dangerous fallacy. The Supreme Court is a bastion of capitalist rule. For the vast bulk of its history, it has opposed any extension of democratic rights and ruthlessly protected the property and profits of big business.

The relatively brief periods when it supported democratic and social reform, such as the period of the post-World War II boom, were times of mass social struggle, including the civil rights movement, when the dominant factions of the ruling class felt they had no choice but to make temporary concessions to the working class.

Today, millions of workers and youth are moving to the left and entering into struggle. The protests against police violence, as significant as they are, represent only the heat lightning before the storm of social struggle that is coming.

Social anger and opposition are being intensified by the horrific death and suffering from the coronavirus pandemic, the result of the homicidal policies being carried out by the Trump administration with the de facto support of the Democratic Party. The policy of "herd immunity" expressed in the back-to-school and back-to-work drive has already claimed over 202,000 lives.

Yet despite that, the ruling class is able to shift the Supreme Court further to the right in order to intensify its attacks on the working class. Basic lessons and conclusions must be drawn.

The Democratic Party is a guardian of definite class interests: those of the capitalist ruling elite. It is not and never can be an instrument for progressive change.

Trump's packing of the Supreme Court with reactionaries is further proof that nothing can be defended on the basis of an acceptance of the existing economic and political framework, including the capitalist two-party system. Democratic rights are incompatible with the staggering and ever-growing levels of social inequality generated by capitalism and imposed by all of its political defenders.

There can be no defense of democratic rights outside of a struggle for socialism. The task is to bring to bear the immense social power of the working class in a conscious and unified struggle to put an end to capitalism and establish workers' power and socialism.

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