

Demonstrate on International Working Women's Day, March 8!

International Working Women's Day was established by socialists early in the past century. It was used to promote equal rights, to protest sex discrimination, and to push forward the struggle for the liberation of women. Today, the actions of the Trump Administration are refueling this great tradition, with International Women's Day marches planned all over the country. There is no mystery why:

Male-supremacist Trump is moving to shred what is left of the gains the women's liberation movement made in the 1970s. The Republicans are putting women's health care needs on the chopping block, and are moving to take away what are left of reproductive rights, especially the legal right to choose an abortion. (Already, so many states have enacted abortion restrictions that the right to choose has become a mere paper right for millions.) This means large numbers of working and poor women will risk permanent injury or even death with “back-alley” abortions each year, whereas well-connected rich women will always be able to get safe abortions from doctors or by traveling.

What is more, women will disproportionately suffer from the Trump-led offensive against immigrants and national minorities, and against education and social services. For example, as a result of Trump's anti-Muslim incitements, women wearing hijabs are being constantly attacked on the streets of America, more so than Muslim men. Additionally, women still only have roughly 80% of the income of men. One reason is because of the kinds of jobs they're channeled into. According to the right-wingers, however, this is the women's own fault, i.e., they just “choose” to work in low-paying industries!

But there's massive opposition to this reactionary onslaught, e.g., around four million people demonstrated in the January 21st women's marches, making it the largest one-day protest in U.S. history.

All progressive people now want to take this great outpouring farther, but with what perspective? We suggest the following:

1) The experience of the women's movement—on abortion rights, on job discrimination, on child care, on a livable wage—shows that every step women take toward equality and liberation comes into conflict with the interests of wealth and capital. The doubly-exploited status of working women is far too profitable for the capitalists to give up without a vicious fight.

2) Rights and equality are therefore only won through mass struggle—the crucial lesson of the women's liberation movement that arose in the 1960s!

3) The movement for women's liberation strengthens the other mass movements of the oppressed, and in turn it gains strength from them.

4) Today this means supporting and building the trends of women active in defense of immigrants and refugees, active in the Black Lives Matter and indigenous rights movements, active in the environmental movement, etc. And it means rallying the masses in the latter movements to support and build the movement for women's liberation.

5) Women's liberation is not only bound up with fighting for the interests of women in the daily struggles of the working class, but with the emancipation of the working class from the chains of capital itself. Today's technical and economic developments provide the economic basis for vast improvements in the situation of women, but, when won, these advancements are always partial and can never be enduring so long as the economy is run for profit. Socialism—abolishing the profit system and building a society based on mutual benefit for all—must therefore become the underlying goal of today's struggles. Socialism is what will spread the benefits of large-scale production and modern technique to

everyone—so that working women do not drudge their lives away on thankless and unpaid chores, but stand up as equal masters of all spheres of life, along with working men. Thus the struggles for women's rights are part and parcel of the overall struggle for emancipation of the working class. The two must develop together, and real socialism requires the complete emancipation of women.

But the Democrats oppose this fighting, working-class perspective for building the women's movement with another: Get out the vote for them in 2018 and 2020. Forget that Bill Clinton threw millions and millions of poor women and children under the bus by signing legislation ending “welfare as we know it,” or that Obama deported record numbers of immigrant women. And ignore that in face of the Republicans moving to outlaw funding for Planned Parenthood, and in face of the anti-abortion bullies picketing Planned Parenthood clinics and harassing users, groups led by Democratic Party politics oppose a real fight to defend the clinics! In practice, their sabotage looks like this:

On February 11 the anti-abortion fanatics of the ProtestPP Coalition held protests outside clinics nationally. But the Planned Parenthood big-shots “requested” that pro-choice activists not counter-protest in the same locations, they preached “non-engagement,” and when they organized rallies these were far away from the clinics! Despite this large numbers of counter-protesters went to the clinics anyway—often outnumbering the anti-abortion reactionaries ten to one—where they militantly chanted against the anti-abortion bullies and supported the clinic workers and patients.

It is only a defiant movement like this that can beat

back the Republican-led attacks, and they certainly can be beaten back. Look at what happened last year in Poland:

The right to choose an abortion was already severely restricted, but the new government controlled by the right-wing nationalist Law and Justice party (PiS) put up legislation to completely ban abortions, and to impose prison sentences on women having them and on doctors performing them. Furthermore, PiS was backed by the powerful Catholic Church. But month after month women organized protest demonstrations that continually grew in size. Then, when up to six million Poles left work or marched against the ban on October 3, the “mighty” right-wing government threw in the towel...for now, at least. Along with this, a strong wave of support for the liberalization of the present abortion law developed, and a section of activists are pressing ahead for abolishing all restrictions.

International Working Women's Day 2017 comes at a time when women all over the world remain brutally oppressed. In Haiti, Southeast Asia and everywhere they're super-exploited in sweatshops. In Palestine they're oppressed by Zionism, while in Syria they not only have to deal with the Assad tyranny and ISIS, but also with Islamist tyrants who've attached themselves to the just people's uprising. As well, right-wing governments in numerous countries are struggling to tear up the gains women have made. But everywhere resistance is being organized. This is the insurance of a better life for women and men; and it is why we salute the working women of the world on March 8.

Seattle Communist Study Group
March 2, 2017

International Women's Day March Against Trump

Wednesday, March 8, 6 pm, Westlake Park (4th and Pine)

Hosted by Socialist Students and Councilmember Kshama Sawant

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