

Federal Government Shutdown and the Duopoly System of Two-party Politics

Both Republicans and Democrats fail to represent the majority of people inside the United States

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After the failure of the Republican and Democratic Senators to reach an agreement on a national budget, the federal government was shut down on January 19.

After three days of recriminations from both sides of the political aisles, the government was reopened on January 22. What is described as “essential services” were continued over the weekend of the closure.

Nonetheless, the character of the corporate and government-sponsored media in covering the shut down almost completely ignored the plight of federal employees and those who are recipients of their services. For example, amid a flu epidemic in dozens of states, workers at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would have been furloughed.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is ostensibly the last line of defense to ensure that people are not being subjected to unwarranted harm through actions carried out by corporations and governmental entities, would have been shuttered due to the legislative logjam. If there had not been a compromise on the third day of the shutdown, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which during this period processes the tax returns of employees and business owners, those looking forward to a refund would have had to wait until the stalemate was resolved.

Democrats Abandon Immigrants and Working People

On day three of the crisis, the Democratic Party leadership in the Senate in essence capitulated to the anti-immigrant policies of the Trump administration and their Republican counterparts. Although the Republicans said they would continue the debate on the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA), where an estimated 800,000 people who came to the U.S. as children, remain undocumented.

The Trump administration is seeking funds for the construction of a supposed “security wall” along the border with Mexico. This was a key campaign propaganda plank of the current president during 2016. Not only would there be the building of a wall whereas the Mexican people would be forced to pay for the monumental project.

It does not appear at this time that the government of Mexico is going to assume the expenses of this security program initiated by the U.S. Just days prior to the temporary governmental closing Democratic Senators appeared to be willing to trade votes for funding

the wall in exchange for a reprieve on the DACA residents.

Just one day after the Democrats signed on to an agreement to keep the government open for only another three weeks into early February, Senator Charles Schumer of New York said that he was withdrawing the offer on the border wall. Why would the Democratic Party, which has as its electoral base within the working class, middle class and nationally oppressed communities, approve funding for constructing a wall that is clearly a hostile act against neighboring Mexico as well as complete affront to people of Latin American descent residing in the U.S.? Moreover, the costs and labor associated with such a security wall is a complete waste of the tax dollars of working people as well as human resources. The astronomical funding needed for the wall could be utilized in rebuilding roads, healthcare infrastructure, bridges, schools, water systems, environmental safeguards, clean forms of energy, among other pressing needs.

This is a revelation for those who still consider the Democrats as a viable political alternative to the thoroughly ultra-right wing dominated GOP. The acceptance by Schumer and others of this compromise is not a political trade off. It is a betrayal of the constituencies who they will appeal to in the upcoming midterm elections aimed at winning enough seats to shift the balance of power between the two ruling class parties.

An article published by the CNBC television network on this subject noted that:

“Democrats said on Tuesday (Jan. 23) they had withdrawn an offer to fund U.S. President Donald Trump’s border wall, as tough negotiations over the future of young illegal immigrants known as “Dreamers” resumed in the Senate. A day after the end of a government shutdown linked to wrangling over immigration, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said he pulled the offer because of what he said was Trump’s failure to follow through on the outlines of an agreement the two men discussed on Friday (Jan. 19).”

However, will Schumer and the Democrats once again sell out the immigrant community, increase hostilities towards Mexico and other Central American states compounded with redirecting much needed funding for social programs, viable job creation and real infrastructural improvements to the wealthiest corporations? The U.S. Conference of Mayors refused to meet with Trump on January 24 after he threatened the major urban areas, which have declared themselves as sanctuaries for undocumented workers, making them targets for dragnets by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) through Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).



ICE Raids on 7-11 stores in the United States

These questions take on a broader significance as the impact of the recently passed tax bill engineered by Trump and the Republicans, providing a windfall of potential tax earnings from corporations to the public sector, right back into the coffers of the largest and most profitable companies in the world. Although some of these firms are saying that they will implement incremental increases in wages to its lowest paid workers, the cutting of social programs funded by the government will in fact cause greater harm to the majority of people.

Even the Democrats within the House of Representatives are also expressing their willingness to fund a border wall in exchange for what is considered favorable legislation on the “Dreamers.” One Illinois Congressman, Luis Gutierrez, who has been projected as a champion of the immigrant community, said:

“If that is what it is going to take to get 800,000 young men and women and give them a chance to live freely and openly in America, then I’ll roll up my sleeves, I’ll go down there with bricks and mortar and begin the wall.” (Chicago Tribune, Jan. 23 article by John Kass)

The author of this Chicago Tribune article goes on to emphasize:

“Unfortunately, Luis’ hands aren’t made for bricks and mortar. Yet even as he promised to help build Trump’s wall, I heard something in his voice: the sound of Democrats caving. And soon, the shutdown was over, the Dreamers felt betrayed, the hard left was livid, and Trump and the Republicans had an amazing victory in the immigration debate. Unfortunately, some in the Democratic Media Complex are having a difficult time dealing with this reality. Some are still in denial, pretending there were no winners and losers. Others clearly seek refuge in fantasy. Happily, most of us wake up from our dreams to

live in the place where reality bites. And there it is: The Democrats caved, and Trump and the Republicans won.”

The Need for a Party of the Working Class and the Oppressed

These developments surrounding the debates over a national budget is indicative of the failure of the two party ruling class system in representing the majority of working class and nationally oppressed as it relates to immigration policy, racism, gender parity, the demand for higher wages and benefits within the workforce. During the administration of President Barack Obama the DHS deported [more undocumented people](#) than any previous government in U.S. history.

Today under Trump, the Democrats are projecting themselves as defenders of DACA while willingness to build a border wall is within the realm of possibility. Working class and People of Color communities need their own political party which can speak in the name of the majority within U.S. society.

Absent of a major break with the Democrats among their key constituencies and the formation of a mass party of the people, these compromises will continue. Despite the rise of the stock market to unprecedented levels and the prospects for larger profits among the mega-corporations, the plight of the working class, nationally oppressed and poor people in general will worsen.

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