


DRAFT OF AN EIGHT-POINT PLATFORM FOR MAKING A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH ON 'LEFT UNITY'

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By Carl Davidson, Bill Fletcher, Jr. and Pat Fry

Introduction: The following eight-point proposal is designed to initiate both a discussion and a process. The points can be further refined, and subtracted from or added to. Given the scope of the challenges ahead of us, there is a certain degree of urgency, but it is also wise to take to time to start off on a sound footing, uniting all who can be united. The main things it wants to bring into being at all levels—local, regional, national or in sectors—are common projects. Some of these already exist, such as the Left Labor Project in New York City, a good example of what we are advocating here. It brought together organizers from CCDS, CPUSA, DSA, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, and other independent left trade unionists and activists. Over a few years work, it was able to build a far wider alliance bringing together the city's labor organizations and allied social movements to bring out tens of thousands on May Day.

We know that many of us are already involved in a wide variety of projects. But is there any compelling reason we have to do this separately, behaving like a wheelbarrow full of frogs trying to win a common goal? A good case in point is Chuy Garcia's mayoral campaign in Chicago. Wouldn't this campaign be better served if we worked together in a planned way to draw in and skillfully deploy even more forces? Or take the labor-community alliance projects building solidarity for labor strikes or the campaign for an increase in the minimum wage? We can all make a long list here, but the core idea should be apparent, at least for starters, and we invite your responses and queries.

1. We need something new. The left is not likely to find critical mass through mergers of existing groups, although any such events would be positive. But a new formation to which all would be equally cooperative in a larger project—call it a Left Front or Left Alliance—would have a greater impact. Groups participating in it could retain whatever degree of autonomy they desire, such as keeping their own newspapers, national committees, local clubs meeting separately, and so on. Every group involved can exercise its own independence and initiative, to the degree it finds necessary. But all would be striving in common to help the overall project succeed. While the US situation is not strictly comparable, the Front de Gauche in France, Die Linke in Germany, PODEMOS in Spain and Syriza in Greece serve as examples.

2. We need a 'project based' common front. At the grassroots level, it would be comprised of joint projects—electoral, union organizing, campaigns against the far right, for a living wage or reducing student debt, for opposing war, racism, sexism and police violence, and many others. The existing left groups in a factory, a neighborhood, a city or a campus, would be encouraged to advance the joint projects.

3. We need a 'critical mass' at the core than is both young, working class and diverse. While people from all demographics are welcome, the initial core has to be largely drawn from the Millennials, those born after 1980 or so. And the core also has to be a rainbow of nationalities with gender equity, and well-connected to union and working class insurgencies. If the initial core at the beginning is too 'white' or too '1968ers', it will not be a pole with the best attractive power for a growing new generation of socialist and radical minded activists.

4. We need a common aspiration for socialism. That's what makes us a 'Left Front or Left Alliance' rather than a broader popular front or people's coalition. We are strongly supportive of these wider coalitions and building the left is not done in isolation from them. But we also see the wisdom in the concept: the stronger the core, the broader the front. Moreover we do not require a unified definition on what socialism is; only that a larger socialist pole makes for an even wider, deeper and more sustainable common front of struggle.

5. We do not need full agreement on strategy. A few key concepts—the centrality of fighting white supremacy, the intersection of race, class and gender, the alliance and merger of the overall workers movement and the movements of the communities of the oppressed—will do. We can also agree on cross-class alliances focused on critical targets: new wars, the far right and the austerity schemes imposed by finance capital. Additional elements, perspectives, nuances and 'shades of difference' can be debated, discussed and adjusted in the context of ongoing struggle.

6. We need a flexible but limited approach to elections. We can affirm that supporting our own or other candidates is a matter of tactics to be debated case-by-case, and not a matter of 'principle' that would exclude ever voting for any particular Democrat, Green or Socialist. We see the importance for social movements to have an electoral arm that presses and fights for their agenda within government bodies.

7. We need to be well embedded in grassroots organizations. Especially important are the organizations of the working class and in the communities of the oppressed—unions and worker centers, civil rights and women's rights, youth and students, peace and justice, churches and communities of faith, cooperatives and other groups tied to the solidarity economy, and other community-based NGOs and nonprofits.

8. We need to be internationalists. But we do not have to require support for any particular countries or bloc of countries and national liberation movements, past or present. But we do oppose the wars of aggression, occupations and other illicit interventions of 'our own' ruling class, along with the hegemonism, 'superpower mentality' and Great Power chauvinism it promotes. That is the best way we can promote world peace and practice solidarity and assistance to forces beyond our borders.

[Carl Davidson and Pat Fry are national co-chairs of Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism. Bill Fletcher Jr. is a member of several socialist organizations and author of 'They're Bankrupting Us! And 20 Other Myths about Unions' Comments can be sent to carld717@gmail.com]