

# **Dual Power**

**A Strategy To Build Socialism In Our Time**

DSA Libertarian Socialist Caucus

December 31, 2018

# Contents

<b>Preamble</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Current Situation</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our Vision Of Socialism</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What Is Dual Power – And How Do We Build It?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Counter-Institutions And Counter-Power</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Key Sites Of Struggle</b>	<b>11</b>
Industrial Democracy . . . . .	11
Solidarity Economy . . . . .	12
Community Councils And Assemblies . . . . .	13
Tenants Unions . . . . .	14
Mutual Aid . . . . .	15
Municipalist Syndicalism & Mass Dual Power Organizing . . . . .	15
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>

# Preamble

“We believe in the socialist principles of common ownership and that worker control over workplaces can only be advanced through the creation and support of worker-owned firms, radical trade unions, workers’ and neighborhood councils, popular assemblies, credit unions and alternative banking systems, community land trusts, and other directly democratic non-state institutions. The power of socialist parties and socialist governments should be subordinated to these more decentralized grassroots formations.”

From the founding statement of the Libertarian Socialist Caucus, 2017

The Libertarian Socialist Caucus of the Democratic Socialists of America aspires to create a socialist society freed from all forms of hierarchy and domination. The question has been raised from both inside and outside of the Caucus: how do we get from here to there?

Since the Caucus’s founding, we have been engaged in the long process of exploring and experimenting to find an answer to this question. Though we came from all walks of life and from across the country, our faith in radical democracy meant that we were confident a shared practice and a common struggle would allow us to slowly find our way together. After more than a year of discussing our experiences and ideas, organizing projects within and between our locals, and building lasting institutions both inside and outside of the DSA, we have finally arrived at a consensus as to the broad outlines of a revolutionary strategy that fits our current context and material conditions. It is now our shared view that the path to socialism in our time is to build **dual power**.

# The Current Situation

Since Occupy Wall Street, socialist organizing has been on the rise in the United States. In its wake, a series of increasingly radical movements demanding the transformation of society from the ground up have emerged. With the 2016 election, this slow but steady movement ramped up so that we now have the most active and vibrant socialist movement in America since the 1960's. As we've grown more numerous and more powerful, the question of strategy looms large. What kinds of victories are actually possible under our present circumstances? Given the balance of power between us and capital and its lackeys, what concrete actions are to be done so that socialism can be won? What do age-old debates about reform vs. revolution have to tell us—and can they help us at all? These are the critical questions comrades are asking across our movement, and much depends on the answers.

The path we have chosen to undertake begins with the realization that the State has failed us.

There was a time when it seemed to many that socialism could tame the State and use it to create a “welfare state” for the benefit of all. Yet before most of us were even born, the State was fully recaptured by capital, which only offers us crumbs and the rusted scrapings of neoliberalism, the reigning capitalist mode of governance. Neoliberalism is the latest scheme that the bosses have constructed to steal what rightfully belongs to us all. It is the capitalist reaction to the preceding social-democratic order that was forged in the wake of the Great Depression and the cataclysm of world war. At that time, these disasters finally pushed the capitalist class to compromise with the working classes, creating a system which allowed some (but hardly all) ordinary people a decent standard of living for the first time under capitalism.

Neoliberalism was the brutal and ruthless counterrevolution that was birthed in the 1970's against these lukewarm reforms. From public goods seized by the capitalist class in the name of “privatization” to the defanging and destruction of industrial democracy, from setting the workers of the world against each other in bids for the lowest wages to the brutality of the speed-up and hyper-surveillance which are now ubiquitous in the workplace, neoliberal capitalism has destroyed any possibility of a decent life for the common person. The capitalist crisis is the gnawing, depressing constant of our daily lives that we have sadly grown accustomed to. What's more, the all-consuming grow-or-die imperative of capitalism is unsustainable, and neither our species nor the planet can survive if things continue as they are. Unless production is socialized, with vast amounts of industry becoming automated, this technological process will only serve to benefit the elites. We need strategies that work to effectively construct the liberated world we wish to see, a world which prioritizes all biological life over bloated, opaque, private power and the reckless profit seeking of the ruling class. We believe that the State cannot build that world for us, that we must build it for ourselves.

# Our Vision Of Socialism

It helps first to know what we're fighting for. So let's define our vision of the socialist society we want to build.

We seek to abolish capitalist commodity production and wage labor—that is, the system in which ordinary people are deprived of their means of survival and forced to work under the dictatorial command of the rich in exchange for tokens (usually too few) that we must use to purchase our basic needs—and replace these with a system where the key infrastructure of society is owned in common, managed through direct democracy by the people themselves, and used to produce and allocate goods and services to each equitably and according to their needs. In broad terms, the power to make decisions in a socialist society should reside with those affected by them: workers should run their workplaces and communities their common affairs, with production and investment directed by and for all those involved.

Even further than this, we aim to construct a socialism which attacks all hierarchies and forms of domination. Our socialism is not just the socialism of industrial factory workers, but of all workers—including those who produce culture, those whose care work cultivates the human beings who reproduce our society, and those who cannot work at all. We must abolish prisons and the carceral state and replace these with restorative justice, mediation, de-escalation, rehabilitation, and conflict resolution. We must end imperialism and abolish the militarist state, replacing these with a system of international cooperation between equals that can heal the divides between the many communities of the planet and raise living standards in places underdeveloped and overextracted by colonialist and capitalist exploitation. We need to burn down patriarchy and abolish the racial caste system, replacing these with gender parity, racial equity, and democratic pluralism at all levels of leadership and decision making. Finally, we must work to pursue a rapid, just transition away from a fundamentally unsustainable fossil fuel capitalism whose hunger for profits is destroying our shared ecology—not only through climate change but also mass extinction of nonhuman species, ocean acidification, disastrous levels of pollution, and more—to move us toward an ecosocialism capable of rebalancing the needs of all humans with our obligations to the nonhuman world from which we sprang.

That's the world we want to build. Now to return to the question of how we'll build it.

To accomplish these things as a movement of the working classes in all our variety, we must organize with all who are exploited and oppressed by the capitalist system. That means working together not just in the workplace, but in our communities (online and in real life), our blocks and our prisons, our schools and our neighborhoods, our homes and our streets, to build grass-roots working-class power. We recognize that this includes those workers engaged formally and informally at the point of production, logistics, and realization, but also those who are unemployed, retired, incarcerated, dependent, or disabled, and all those who do not own and control the means of capitalist production as part of the 1% or their lackeys.

Ours is an emergent strategy that will unfold in unique ways in a variety of different contexts. The struggle will be different in different places, and our tactics will have to change accordingly.

Nevertheless, we believe that a shared path has opened up in struggles around the world, and this is the one we wish to pursue here in the United States. It consists of building our way toward our ultimate goal of libertarian socialism, assembling it piece by piece. We believe our current projects and pursuits must mirror—and, in mirroring, become—the world we want to emerge from the ashes of capitalism. In short, our method consists of embodying the world we dare to dream.

# What Is Dual Power — And How Do We Build It?

“Self-management will only be possible if people’s attitudes to social organization alter radically. This in turn, will only take place if social institutions become a meaningful part of their real daily life.”

“Workers’ Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society” by Cornelius Castoriadis, 1972

Let’s get specific.

How do we effectively build political space where direct democracy, mutual aid, solidarity, and an ecologically sustainable human existence can prevail? To start with, we need to be able to provide for our immediate needs. In doing so, we must organize to seize control of powerful nodes of production, reproduction, and realization while simultaneously cultivating models of the society we wish to live in.

**Dual power** is a strategy that builds liberated spaces and creates institutions grounded in direct democracy. Together these spaces and institutions expand into the ever widening formation of a new world “in the shell of the old.” As the movement grows more powerful, it can engage in ever larger confrontations with the ruling class—and ultimately a contest for legitimacy against the institutions of capitalist society.

In our view, dual power is comprised of two component parts: (1.) **building counter-institutions** that serve as alternatives to the institutions currently governing production, investment, and social life under capitalism, and (2.) organizing through and **confederating these institutions to build up a base of grassroots counter-power** which can eventually challenge the existing power of capitalists and the State head-on. In the short term, such a strategy helps win victories that improve working people’s standard of living, helps us meet our needs that are currently left unaddressed under capitalism, and gives us more of a say over our day-to-day lives. But more excitingly, in the long run these methods provide models for new ways of organizing our society based on libertarian socialist principles. They create a path toward a revolutionary transition from a capitalist mode of production. This revolution will liberate us from both the need and the drive to create wealth for the rich, making possible a socialist mode of production that seeks to benefit all of humanity and free us from the lonely confines of commodity relationships.

The Libertarian Socialist Caucus is organizing to build networks of community councils, popular assemblies, tenant unions, and other bodies of participatory democracy that form a counterweight to the authoritarian institutions presently governing our lives, organizing society in parallel against capitalism and the State. Democratic labor unions can seize the workplace; worker-owned cooperatives can build it anew in democratic form; tenant unions can take control of housing; our councils and assemblies can restructure political authority around our own processes of

confederal direct democracy. *This framework of building popular power outside the governing institutions of our present system, to challenge and eventually displace those institutions with truly democratic ones of our own making, is the heart of **dual power**.*

# Counter-Institutions And Counter-Power

There are many examples of various counter-institutions, but they all share some core characteristics: they are directly democratic, are created and run by the people who benefit from them, and are independent of control by the State and capital alike. By building these organizations, working-class people can create a new form of social, political, and economic power that exists in tension and opposition to the power of capitalism and the State. Counter-institutions can include, but are not limited to: community councils, popular neighborhood assemblies, worker's councils, syndicalist unions, rank-and-file trade unions, worker-owned cooperatives, locally and regionally networked redistributive solidarity economies, participatory budgeting initiatives, and time banks. They also include collectives committed to the provision of mutual aid and disaster relief, tenant unions, community land trusts, cooperative housing, communal agriculture and food distribution systems, community-owned energy, horizontal education models, childcare collectives, and community-run health clinics, to name a few. These structures cannot exist in isolation but must actively network and support one another across communities and regions. Where this dynamic is newly emerging, counter-institutions must strive to support the creation and fostering of similar organizing. When possible, these counter-institutions link up politically, economically, and socially to form a self-sufficient ecosystem; and ultimately, confederate into direct-democratic political bodies **in and across communities all over the world**.

Our goal in building up this infrastructure is to create **counter-power**. Counter-power is our ability to **delegitimize, disrupt, and demonstrate our power against** the current regime by developing and deploying cutting-edge cultural and organizational practices. These practices form part of the direct action toolbox which can collectively be used to undermine and delegitimize social, political, and economic hierarchies while demonstrating working-class power and forging new narratives rooted in solidarity. Working-class communities that organize to take care of various issues affecting them—from street repair to food distribution, brake-light clinics to lead clean-up in neglected buildings—all show the limits of the neoliberal state's ability to solve our problems and thus **delegitimize** it in the eyes of observers. Work strikes and stoppages, rent strikes, highway blockades, and mass demonstrations that overwhelm the authorities' ability to maintain "business as usual" are all part of how the working class **demonstrates its power**. Serious **disruption**, when it proves necessary, requires that we first develop the capability to organize large actions such as general strikes, factory or other infrastructure seizures, and mass uprisings that establish autonomous areas of working-class organization and bases for mobilizing to take control of our whole society.

Once these methods combine and embolden a large and organized mass base, they represent a direct contestation of the ruling institutions of society, and we have then entered into a situation of true **dual power**. At this stage, the "powers that be" are rivaled by a counter-power which has become strong enough to provide the real possibility of overthrowing the existing social order, and it becomes unthinkable to take even one step back.

We believe that countless alternatives are already sprouting up in the cracks of the capitalist system, and that these must be nurtured in order to blossom into a free, democratic, and just world. The old system will not fall from any single blow; instead we must constantly be probing, experimenting with new iterations of dual power organizational forms, until we have created an irresistible set of concrete facts on the ground whereby the new, liberated world competes for legitimacy against the old, dying, and illegitimate order.

## Key Sites Of Struggle

What does a dual power strategy look like on a grassroots level? As we've already discussed, the strategy is designed to meet particular needs in specific contexts; this will necessarily vary from place to place and movement to movement. In a sense, what's more important about dual power is the general principle around which organizers can design specific interventions in their own communities.

That said, it's helpful for the purposes of illustration to walk through some concrete examples. To that end, here are a few key sites of struggle that our Caucus has identified through our activity and ways we think we can fight for libertarian socialist dual power.

### Industrial Democracy

In modern capitalism, the owners and bosses use their tools of state and corporate coercion to force us to hand over our time. On threat of starvation they force us to live and breathe on their clock for a shitty bargain: a wage set by our masters that is as low as our collective power will allow, and which is closer and closer to the bare minimum level for a person in any given community to be able to survive. These wages are little more than a reminder of how much time we have lost by making profits for them—profits which they can command without effort, tossing the leftovers at those of us who have produced it (if only just enough to get us to show up to work the next day). This is the world we live in, where in the heart of “democratic” societies, most people spend most of their days toiling in workplaces which are absolute dictatorships. In these tyrannical workplaces where we have no say in what gets done or how to do it, our natural creativity and initiative is drowned in the despair of a world where the only real choice is between wagelessness and a sophisticated form of slavery. Under neoliberalism, our labor unions have been continually subjected to waves of legal assaults that chip away at the marginal legal power that they built up during the New Deal era. As the labor movement was stripped of power, bureaucratized, and removed from the shop floor into the “halls of government,” the unions became alienated from their original goal, namely building working-class power and extending the ideal of democracy into the workplace.

We can fight back in our communities and workplaces through organizing with our fellow workers, listening to their concerns and building collective power with immediate material demands as well as providing our vision for the revolutionary overthrow of capital and all its associated oppressions. As socialists and syndicalists we can salt into non-union shops, dual card, embed ourselves into already existing unions, and consistently call on the unions to build true industrial democracy. We can boldly proclaim that we will not tolerate acquiescence by union bureaucrats who, more often than not, answer to the capitalist class through backroom bargaining while growing comfortable on large salaries rather than defending the interests of the working-class rank and file.

It's no longer enough for unions to demand higher wages and safer working conditions: they must return to their roots and agitate for direct worker control of production and investment. **Industrial democratic unionism** builds toward radical self-management and direct democracy of workers on the shop floor. We believe that the ultimate goal of union agitation must be **direct democracy in the workplace**.

There already exist models of workplace direct action and of building workers councils **within and outside of** the current union framework which point to places where workers can reassert control over the means of production. For example, in workplaces where many unions work side by side in a context with many unorganized workers, impromptu committees of rank-and-file workers can coordinate solidarity and direct action that union bureaucracy and labor law is designed to stifle. On the other hand, large and established unions of state workers are often the only organizations presently strong enough to exert serious counter-power in fighting the intensified destruction of the commons. Wildcat strikes by teachers across "right to work" states has finally demonstrated the power of workers over and above our state-sanctioned rights. Rank-and-file dissident movements within highly bureaucratic and oligarchical unions like the Teamsters have fought to take over unions and democratize them so that they will be run by the workers themselves and actually fight for their class interests. Finally, syndicalist unions like the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) are already run as confederated direct democracies and have won crucial victories organizing new shops, particularly in precarious, low-wage industries like fast food which the established "business unions" have largely avoided. In other countries, syndicalist unions like Spain's Confederación General del Trabajo organize as many as 80,000 members, host their own TV news shows, and confederate into internationals like the new International Confederation of Labor, showing that confederal direct democracy is more than capable of reaching a scale rivaling that of the biggest unions.

All of these options should be on the table. Libertarian socialists must craft a new industrial democratic unionism using whatever tools and tactics fit local contexts. The capitalists have used everything at their disposal to ensure their hegemonic reign over the working class—where our lives are dominated by our work—and in order to create bottom-up socialism, we must organize in our workplaces. Our tactics are direct action, strikes, sit downs, and slowdowns to demand deliveries for immediate on-the-job gains, all to give the bosses an offer they can't refuse. Those tactics in turn will only be possible if we create democratic, militant and independent organizations of workers. The infrastructure of industrial democracy can only be built by creating **dual power**.

## **Solidarity Economy**

The goal of syndicalism is traditionally worker control over production, and its classic model is for the workers to simply take over their workplaces in a revolutionary situation. But short of that, what can radical workers do in the meantime? And are there potentially piecemeal, legal ways that workers can wrest control over their jobs?

Solidarity Economy initiatives are dedicated to seeding worker-owned cooperatives, economic democracy projects, time banking, community land trusts, publicly owned and democratically self-managed socialist enterprises, and a variety of cooperative economic endeavors federated throughout the country and internationally. Dual power organizing includes creating and net-

working alternative libertarian socialist enterprises that are rooted in principles of economic justice, worker control, and internal democracy. Worker-owned cooperatives, committed to increasing democracy within the economy begin in the workplace. **Worker ownership and control is a principal objective of dual power.**

Cooperatives by themselves however, are not enough. It is necessary to bring a socialist vision to any economic enterprise, and that these enterprises are intrinsically tied directly to our communities in need, ensuring a larger vision of ecological and communal health. Here, too, the work is already beginning to be done. Cooperativist movements have sprung up in many of the most neglected communities in the United States often led by working-class people of color seeking to revitalize neighborhoods and cities left completely desolate by deindustrialization, white flight, and systemic disinvestment. In this context, cooperatives are a way not only of putting power in the hands of workers, but of creating a new ecosystem of interdependent enterprises and financial institutions, all of them under democratic control. These endeavors can get a dead economy moving again, create employment which transcends the wages system through worker-ownership, build sustainable food and energy sovereignty, and lay the groundwork for a just transition into ecological sustainability. The Working World and the Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative are two examples of organizations that support this work on a mass scale. In Cooperation Jackson, a radical movement openly attempting to build dual power in Mississippi, such economic development through creating a solidarity economy is explicitly tied to a revolutionary political program directed by ongoing people's assemblies.

We also need to establish standards for how cooperatives are run internally. In order for our vision to remain committed to building these as socialist institutions, we must not emulate the traditional capitalist firm, which is highly competitive and extracts wealth to the top while reproducing the social, political, and economic hierarchy of owner and bosses over laborers. We must remain committed to the immediate benefit of our communities within a larger ecosystem of a cooperative commonwealth. The basis of our larger socialist vision must be firmly situated in community- and worker-management of our own social, economic, and political institutions of direct democracy, solidarity, and mutual aid. Therefore, in order to ensure the socialist nature of a solidarity economy network, these cooperative enterprises must be tied to direct-democratic community councils and assemblies and play a redistributive or social role in any given community, **laying the foundations for the revolutionary transition toward a bottom-up socialism.**

## Community Councils And Assemblies

The building of community councils or assemblies can take a multitude of approaches but typically falls into two categories:

1. Entering into **already existing** civic institutions, neighborhood councils, associations, block clubs, etc, and injecting them with direct-democratic, anti-authoritarian, and anti-capitalist goals and processes.
2. **Creating our own councils** and popular assemblies based on material conditions that demand action. This option requires that we assess the needs and conditions of communities, canvass door to door, and meet people where they are at. We must first identify urgent

problems in the community before calling for public assemblies focused on addressing these problems, building engaged communities to combat the alienation of capitalism.

Some of these assemblies will evolve around single-issue campaigns that dissolve when the goal is met; others will build into long-term, permanent counter-power institutions. When people realize the collective power that materializes when we work together, we can choose to embody our ideals by making more and more decisions collectively in a direct-democratic assembly. This would allow us to live our lives with meaning and empowerment, leaving behind the paltry trappings of consumerism, anti-democratic top-down workplaces, spiritual hollowness and environmental degradation that currently afflict our hearts and minds.

These popular councils and assemblies aren't just nice things to have; they are the building blocks of a bottom-up socialism at the community level. The best propaganda for libertarian socialism is not any philosophical text but rather the lived experience of assembly democracy, a transformative experience many of us in the Caucus have now lived through. Knowing that it's not only possible but better for people to run their own affairs in a democratic manner can invigorate our movement and raise it to such a point that we will be fully prepared to take on the hierarchical State and capitalist class which both rule over us with an iron fist.

## **Tenants Unions**

A dual power tenants union is a group of tenants who work together to wield collective power against a shared landlord, management company, or development company in order to improve their housing conditions. While in general, tenants unions may organize for more affordable, habitable, and safe housing, the issues that a union decides to organize around are ultimately decided on by its members. Tenant unions help us develop working-class power by empowering us to directly apply collective pressure on our landlords without the permission of city governments or other third parties. They can also be a force that puts pressure on local politicians to address abusive landlord behavior in our respective districts. Because tenant unions are ultimately run by tenants and community members, they create spaces for ordinary people to grow our collective power and practice democratic organizing which can be used to exercise leverage over our exploiters.

As socialists organizing with—and as—tenants, we should work to bring together such organizations, if they already exist, into city- and region-wide federations to articulate economic and political demands that a single tenant union could not do by itself. As with the limited demands of trade unionism, it isn't simply enough to advocate for lower rents and more maintenance in our buildings. We must construct a tenants' movement that cuts across neighborhood boundaries, involves tenants from different housing situations such as multi-unit buildings, public housing and SROs, and builds class consciousness through shared struggle against the common enemy of the owning class. We must fight not just for better conditions, but for robust community-controlled collective housing in the form of institutions such as community land trusts, housing cooperatives, and public housing.

## **Mutual Aid**

“The mutual-aid tendency in man has so remote an origin, and is so deeply interwoven with all the past evolution of the human race, that it has been maintained by humankind up to the present time, notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history.”

Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution by Pyotr Kropotkin, 1902

Providing for the immediate needs of people in our communities can also act as a support system for our on-the-ground organizing. Mutual aid is an essential aspect to our biological species and promotes the positive flourishing of our collective humanity. Our best instincts are those which serve others, helping each other wherever and however we can, organizing consciously for what is best for our species and our common ecology. Mutual aid institutions and networks raise material goods and services for the entire working class while contributing to other organizing endeavors. Providing material aid for striking workers, clothes and food for those facing homelessness, bail bond funds for marginalized communities who are targeted by the police and the criminal justice system, material aid for teachers and students who are facing austerity measures, and disaster relief for those affected by climate change and natural disasters, are all ways in which we can organize for a better world, today.

Mutual aid is often painted with the same brush as capitalist ideas of charity. This ignores the fact that mutual aid is the work we do to support each other in struggle wherein people take on the responsibility of caring for each other's needs. As we build skills and share them with each other, we are able to create a more immediately survivable environment, challenging alienation and capitalistic relations through reciprocity and solidarity. This can also be an aid to our struggles. For example, the wildcat teachers' strikes gained extensive popularity through providing a replacement for free lunches to low-income students unable to attend classes due to the strike.

But it's not just that mutual aid can ease material conditions or help striking workers so that they have more power against the bosses. Its assault on the existing power structure runs much deeper. Consider this: if mutual aid can meet the food needs of everyone in a city without them having to pay for the food, what's the point of paying for food in the first place? Start asking questions like this, and you can quickly start to unravel the capitalist economy itself in that local area. Capitalism is based upon a network of institutions that draw their power from control and exclusion. Free access is capitalism's poison. By building up the capacity to universally provide resources on a non-market basis, we plant the seeds for capitalism's ultimate destruction.

In all this, we must remember that mutual aid runs not from the socialist movement to the grateful workers but is something workers do for each other on an egalitarian basis. We must work to ensure our mutual aid raises each other up as opposed to charity which hands down from “on high.”

## **Municipalist Syndicalism & Mass Dual Power Organizing**

Since the resurgence of DSA beginning in 2016 there has been much discussion about what it means to build a mass movement of working people to fight for socialism in the United States. We believe that dual power is critical to building any kind of mass movement with any promise

of creating real socialist democracy. To go further, it is critical to bring delegates from such organizations together in local councils and congresses to build solidarity, militancy and knowledge across communities. Building these networks is key to breaking out of silos and **building mass dual power**.

This brings us to **municipalist syndicalism**—a framework that ties industrial democratic organizations, the solidarity economy, popular assemblies, councils, mutual aid, and the communities in which they are embedded together to form a confederal cooperative commonwealth. Such a synthesis is the glue which holds together the dual power strategy for building libertarian socialism. The cooperative commonwealth is the linking up of participatory, direct democratic assemblies with rank-and-file union democracy, with worker-run cooperatives, and other institutions of dual power as they struggle to dismantle capitalism and all forms of domination. These organizations, utilizing direct-democratic processes, mutually reinforce one another and steadily combine our efforts to intensify our collective power. Unions can use their initial fundraising advantage to buy spaces the movement as a whole can use or seed cooperative ventures; cooperatives, once established, can provide the material resources, such as food and housing, to help strikes keep going until the bosses are forced to capitulate; assemblies can organize the fight for legislation that gives greater support to cooperatives, such as allowing unions to automatically take over businesses and turn them into coops once they reach a certain size, as well as help establish mutual aid projects and community commons which form the initial pilots of programs that can later be municipalized and established community-wide. All of this coordination helps to keep internally democratic unions connected to popular neighborhood assemblies & councils and the solidarity economy—and it keeps all of them accountable and democratic. Once established, dual power institutions that work to expand municipalist socialism in this or that community then confederate first regionally and then as a vast international network of similar “fearless cities” dedicated to revolution against capitalism and fascism, and to the dedicated construction of libertarian socialism. This decentralized, networked, organizational architecture can prioritize the universalization of economic democracy and the redistribution of goods and services to all, across respective communities and regions.

# Conclusion

The **dual power** strategy is the result of much consideration and long conversations within the Caucus. Based on our experiences, our study of past movements, and our participation in current movements across the country, we believe it is the surest path to anything like socialism in our lifetimes. Given the ongoing disintegration of the political and economic order as well as a rapidly shrinking window to avert the ecological crisis, we must prepare to take meaningful action sooner rather than later. A dual power approach combines the most revolutionary aims with the most hard-headed pragmatism, and this is why we believe it has the best chance of winning.

This strategy should certainly appeal to those already committed to libertarian socialism. But we think it will also appeal to socialists who want to believe in the efficacy of apprehending State power to transform our political economy from capitalism to socialism, but are made hesitant by an honest reflection upon the profound and tragic failures that have characterized attempts at state socialism in the past, from the assassination of Swedish prime minister Olof Palme to the CIA-backed coup in Chile to the dissolution of the factory committees after the Russian revolution. Seizing state power intensifies hierarchy and social forms of domination instead of dissolving them, by making socialist “fixes” impositions upon the broad international working classes rather than a product of their own self-activity. As we have been reminded by democratic socialists from Luxemburg, to Harrington, to Öcalan, to Sanders, any socialism worthy of the name must grow out of the power developed in the community and working people. For libertarian socialists, that power can only legitimately be expressed through assemblies and councils, for these constitute the **dual power basis** of any transition that is far-reaching and radical enough to finally replace the functions of capitalism, the State, and other forms of domination with relationships rooted in mutual understanding, trust, and care.

Crisis and revolution are in the air. Given the way the world has been moving, if we engage in the hard work of building the base for dual power, such a transition may be coming even sooner than many of us think.

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



DSA Libertarian Socialist Caucus  
Dual Power  
A Strategy To Build Socialism In Our Time  
December 31, 2018

[dsa-lsc.org](http://dsa-lsc.org)

[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)