

Building Political Power: 2016-2018 FRSO Strategic Orientation

Excerpts from the Strategy adopted at the 2016 Congress of FRSO (11th Congress).

3.5. Some comrades, when they hear us talk about contesting for government positions and using elections as a key element of our strategy (and not just a sometimes tactic) get very concerned. They think that what we are proposing is that socialism can be legislated through elections or without overthrowing the existing capitalist state. They think we are spreading the illusion that capturing elected or administrative positions is the same thing as having political supremacy—confusing limited offices with state power.

3.6. We acknowledge and believe it is crucial to understand the difference between state power (political supremacy) and the occupying of certain positions—and subordinate ones at that—within government. And we believe the approach in Jackson points towards a revolutionary way of engaging the existing capitalist state. We must not confuse occupying a tactically advantageous position within the government with being able to take over government as a whole as a means for implementing socialism. There are at least three facts that will keep state power in the hands of the capitalist class even as we engage in struggles over government positions: (1) they will continue to control the state and federal layers of government not to mention the courts, federal reserve, etc. (2) they will continue to control the military/repressive forces, and (3) they will still control the means of production and therefore the major resources needed to run society.

3.7. Having acknowledged this, we believe that too many comrades concerned about the illusions and limits of governmental positions have not grasped the real uses of contesting and occupying positions on this terrain of struggle. The reality is that a great many important decisions get made by government bodies. And not only this, but elections, when led by an independent political organization, are a tremendous means through which people become politically conscious. Why? Because in the course of elections people become deeply and precisely acquainted with all the different forces who are vying for power as well as the different social forces whose leadership is being contested for. This process is incredibly rich with educative experience for the raising of political class consciousness.

3.8. What's more, the arena of government is also a place where the various sections of the ruling class come into conflict with one another and is therefore a place where it becomes possible to pit one section of the enemy against the other as well as to win sections of the progressive middle strata to our demands or program. As organizers we do this around our issues in every one of our campaigns. Understood from this angle, every campaign is essentially a united front effort to divide the enemy and win a majority of allies (strategic or tactical) to our side. The arena of government is a critical place for waging this struggle and, as mentioned earlier, for educating the masses about the interests and nature of the system and other political forces. It is only through this kind of thoroughgoing struggle and education that it becomes possible to expose (read: isolate) the ruling class and win mass support for revolutionary transformation. Why should we only use this method when fighting for issues? Should we not also use it in a systematic political strategy?

3.9. Further, in our analysis, white supremacy is not some rootless ideology floating in the heads of white people. From its very origins white supremacy has been a system organized and re-organized through the political system and political struggle. From the invention of the white race and racial slavery to the racialization of Mexicans in the Southwest to Jim Crow to mass incarceration to attacks on voting rights and new forms of urban/suburban and political district gerrymandering and segregation, white supremacy and the struggle against it has and will continue to depend on the organization of racial relations through the political arena.