(Proposed) Joint Statement on Kshama Sawant, the campaign for a $15/hour minimum wage and the independent class movement of the proletariat

We are activists with a spectrum of views on some of the most important questions of our time. We have witnessed, following the dispersal of the Occupy movement, nationwide and in Seattle, the development of the campaign of Kshama Sawant, who is widely described as a “socialist”, and the movement for a $15/hour minimum wage.

We believe that these new developments are sufficiently important, and sufficiently complex, that our movement needs clarity concerning what is happening. We intend to contribute to this clarity in the form of this joint statement.

We note that the campaign of Kshama Sawant, as well as the campaign for a $15/hour minimum wage, has benefited from support by a section of local trade union bureaucrats and, most prominently, one of the most popular newspapers in Seattle, the Stranger, with a weekly circulation of nearly one hundred thousand.

We believe that all activists should support the campaign for a $15/hour minimum wage as it will lead to better conditions of life for some of the most oppressed sections of the workforce, as well as experience in struggle and, above all, increased confidence in what can be achieved by struggle.

At the same time, we understand that the development of the movement of the working class and oppressed goes beyond the struggle for partial demands and, in particular, must develop independently of support from trade union bureaucrats and institutions such as the Stranger—as these kinds of bureaucrats and institutions have proven, in the past, to be false friends of the movement—with a history of withdrawing their support at the most critical possible moment.

We believe the most important contradiction within the movement of the working class and oppressed is between:

1. The dependent section—the section of the movement which is based on support from trade union bureaucrats, sections of the press, the non-profit industrial complex, and a host of institutions and professionals who tend to gravitate in and around the left wing of the Democratic Party, and

2. The independent section—the section of the movement which is determined to develop in a way which will remain independent of the bureaucrats and professionals described above.

We believe the most important section of the movement, the core which will push things forward, is the section which is determined to develop in a way that remains independent.

We want to encourage activists, including activists who are involved in the campaign for $15/hour, to develop or maintain an interest in the independent section of the movement—which is focused on a world which is not ruled by the one percent—and which is not limited by the perspective of struggling only for those reforms which are acceptable to our current ruling class, the bourgeoisie.

Of course, even the most servile puppets of the one percent will claim to be “independent”. Therefore, in order to separate fact from fiction, and to encourage activists to support the development of the independent section of the movement, we resolve to encourage discussion and an exchange of experience and knowledge of the deepest problems of the long-term development of the our movement—including (1) how can we get from where we are now (ie: a world of imperialist war and deepening austerity) to where we need to go (ie: a world without classes that is not based on commodity production)—and also (2) what kind of organizations does our movement need and how can we create these organizations?

We therefore intend to encourage this necessary discussion by supporting the following forms of democratic information, knowledge and experience sharing:

▶ public discussion
▶ public debate
▶ public meetings
▶ public joint statements
▶ public exchanges of space (blogs, facebook, etc)

We believe that democratic information sharing focused on the decisive questions will, over the course of time:

(1) Create clarity concerning who is who (ie: which people and which trends are committed to the development on the independent movement of the working class and oppressed) and

(2) Assist those trends and activists (who are committed to the development of an independent movement) to: confront the deeper problems of the movement—and overcome the religious sectarian divisions which undermines our movement by keeping us isolated from one another.