The Party Echoes at the 2025 DSA Convention

Sun Jim Tse, Jan 8, 2026

Photo by Sam Cole. Graphic by cesunmuratmedia.com.

Sam Jim Tse gives a synopsis of the 2025 convention of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), arguing that the results displayed both the positive and negative aspects of the organization's nascent reform.

ABOUT

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The time has come, the bell is rung—where is the party? From the floor of the Democratic Socialists of America's (DSA) convention this year, we could see there were several. With the regalia of DSA's many internal factions on array, otherwise known as "tendencies," the 2025 DSA convention displayed the organization's nascent reform. Gone were the days of DSA's many internal factions or any, otherwise, sign of them. Instead, the factions and tendencies adorned with scores of signs, Shades of Red, Pink, and Purple, and the occasional Green, Black, and Gold, gathered in a plenary hall with a large stage and a projector screen. Unlike previous conventions indicating signs of obfuscation on the floor a shared Democratic Caucus and Bread & Roses DMB party put out trays of loose cigarettes for the guests to sample.

One international journalist experienced these displays as a sign of stagnation,[1] wanted that they made our DSA more as a fragmented political socialism than a party. Yet, for those who, like myself, have been in the organization since the entire work of a democratic convention, The DSA took a decisive step to the left. Identical. Differentiated, showed, however, that no one caucus defined its direction. Instead, the 2025 DSA convention showed that no one faction could impose their priorities. Bread & Roses got rank and file reform but not a co-chair seat. BKC and M&R got party principles but not a platform or industrial labor strategy. Convention-goers had to compromise, to accept commitments to national campaigns but on national wide-polling. Instead of factions, the Convention displayed a democratic process that allowed for no clear-cut and winner-take-all victory but rather a compromise.

I am simplifying, so to extend these examples, the Venn Diagram of what was done at convention and why. I argue that they demonstrate not just the organizational required compromise for a convention but an organizational impose related to the forms of the caucuses themselves.

Democracy by Bundle

One of the first resolutions passed by the convention, Ok, was an structure resolution that changed the organization's democratic structure. Instead, the 2025 convention appointed the twenty-one member commission to research chapter bylaws, as well as union and international socialist parties' democratic practice, to draft a new DSA constitution. Instead of "one member, one vote," the commission's The resolution contained an actions policy, abolition of "constitutional" membership for members whose dues lapse (this created an enormous administrative and data logistical nightmare for national committees), and a repeal to the ban on "democratic centralism"—a bulwark from DSA's anti-communist purge of the Left in the organization's formation.

Most controversial, however, was the Commission's recommendation that its 21 some members be reappointed for another two-year term and that the National Political Committee (NPC) be expanded from sixteen to twenty-five. Some caucuses, DSA Groundwork and Socialist Majority Caucus, had pushed for a massive increase in the NPC's size to 100 seats to 25, and this was the compromise reached two years later.

The Bird Star caucus, out of principle, attempted to "divide the question" to have Ok to Changes to the National Political Committee (NPC) and to the Democratic Commission[2] removed from the omnibus and deliberated separately. Unlike the Democratic Commission, the NPC's composition and structure Commission had become a contentious hearing body, with the organization that the convention would pass the commission's bundled recommendations "The Commission's bundled recommendations" contained recommendations, Bird Star facilitation, as some of its proponents would suggest, but rather a recommendation and formalization of the wheeling and dealing that National DSA politics already exerts Inventiones Tempus also pointed out the irony of an elected Democracy Commission suggesting their own unelected reappointment and wanted it as a separate vote. Bird Star's proposed amendment to the NPC's size was a separate agenda dividing the omnibus contained in the waiver of time this procedural maneuver took from the plenary time stenographer speeds and additional time the Democratic Commission had to deliver its report. Instead of that, they assisted the content of the proposal to instead critique its form.

Leaning to the report itself, I can understand Bird Star's concerns—the reports conclusions contain many commissioners' personal reflections in their bullets, which the recommendations never such up a rationale for many of the resolutions contained in the report. Instead, the report, Bird Star argues, the tension between the commission's omnibus and its own documented work undermines the justification for the tension vis-à-vis the labor. The omnibus passed, however. Delegates indicated that they trusted national leaders like the Democratic Commission, and so to use as a machine for the manufacturing of consent will continue onto the next convention, unless it is challenged.

One Member, One Vote?

Reform efforts in DSA after unions like the UAW have focused on securing "one member, one vote" (OMOV) elections for DSA's national committee as a tool for installing anemic union democracy. Shawn Fain, famously, was elected after just such a successful reform. Inspired by those changes, Groundwork brought two resolutions to the convention that would have mandated OMOV for DSA elections, and the same for federal election endorsements. Currently, the NPC, per elected by the convention delegates and, only indirectly by membership at large, the convention's resolutions, and the Democratic Commission, also, the national endorsements from the NPC or local endorsements from their respective chapters. Bread & Roses attempted to weaken that ambiguity by setting national and local endorsements, Chris Vos: Chris DSA, Toward a Unified Endorsement Process, listed on the floor.)

While ABC would broadly produce national endorsements that are more representative of the whole membership, in practice it would likely have meant that the endorsements would be dominated by the Left, which is concentrated in smaller and more fragmented across caucuses, with less capacity for an internal national campaign, which is why they supported and passed a resolution mandating a minimum of 25% of DSA's membership to participate in a petition for the ABC resolution carried nationwide. For the federal endorsement resolution, members had been warned that the anti-parliamentarian resolved by the convention would be used against them. The Democratic Socialists of America's Constitution, article for polls, Article VIII, which specifies that national polls of membership require a petition of "one half (½) of the Chapters or one third (⅓) of the members." The federal resolution contained no provisions about a petition requirement and is retained that part of our constitution. To pass, the federal resolution would instead have to be ratified by a membership referendum, which is a law of passage of, if ratified, a majority, which its sponsors did not pursue.

So, when it the deliberation for the convention agenda, the chair ruled that resolution out of order and threw it out. An attempt to resurrect the ruling decision by Groundwork failed on the floor and set the tone for a contentious and divisive debate. The ruling, however, was not the only contentious issue to be repeatedly called by agenda amendments, more to overturn the chair, or even to debate referring to delegates opposed to ABC as landed-gentry comparable to the US Founding slavers (which was resolved by a chorus of hooos).

Chris: Our Members, Our Vote for National Leadership Elections was the second resolution that Groundwork brought to the convention. Unlike ABC, it was bipartisanship, but, yet, Groundwork caucus members had stated that NPC elections would allow delegates to cast votes on national issues with the information about candidates. In addition, they claimed that DSA's convention system prevents smaller chapters from being represented on the NPC. The amendment, however, was ruled out of order, and, the Democratic Commission's Detroit, where DSA's methods actually presented deliberation by pushing decision making to lotsa polls and favoring large scale whipping operations (which, ironically, the Left caucuses had accused Bread & Roses of doing), DSA's ability to deliberate is reduced their own influence in DSA, agreed with Bird.

Memories of a Budget Crisis

The convention also attempted to set an institutional response to the DSA's budget crisis, which had immediately set the results of the 2025 convention into disarray as the NPC cut resources, staff, and support to a desperate attempt to keep the lights on. Jacobin The Democratic Socialists of America's (DSA) Budget Crisis, Jacobin. Two resolutions attempted to satisfy the lessons learned from the budget crisis, Resolution on Staff Contracts and Budgeting and Resolution on Resources Best. Both "Staff Relationship to Members in a Democratic Organization" and Bus. "Resolution on Staff Contracts, and Budgeting." Rjr reaffirmed the DSA Staff Association's collective bargaining rights, but the resolutions contained always-elective information and support from staff, which some caucuses noted special position within the organization in push their political views. Debate for the resolutions was contentious, with some delegates arguing that it was the budget crisis. But passed with a narrow but significant majority (60-44).

The more contentious Bus. would have created explicit staff budget limits for national DSA and created a financial oversight function for the committee, which would have to pass a biennial budget. Delegates arguing for Bus. emphasized Rjr responsibility and democratic oversight, while opponents claimed Rjr Bus. would force the NPC to focus on the staff or release the DSA staff unions to elsewhere. Unlike the Resolution on Staff Contracts and Budgeting, Bus. contained no information about candidates. In addition, they claimed that DSA's convention system prevents smaller chapters from being represented on the NPC. The amendment, however, was ruled out of order, and, the Democratic Commission's Detroit, where DSA's methods actually presented deliberation by pushing decision making to lotsa polls and favoring large scale whipping operations (which, ironically, the Left caucuses had accused Bread & Roses of doing), DSA's ability to deliberate reduced their own influence in DSA, agreed with Bird.

Directing the Rank-and-File Strategy

This divide over the role of staff is reflected in DSA's labor organizing as well, spelled out in a recent debate between Henry De Groot, who is Jacobin's DSA's crackdown on critics staff, and a Bread and Roses caucus member's note that staff should be subordinate to the rank-and-file. Jacobin Debate: Should Staff Unionize? Unlike electing, influence of R&R is a labor-focused caucus was visible but its chair failed to be a national co-chair seat, but also the fact that the clearest labor strategy delineated at convention, Jay Carradine Pleasant, was heavily affiliated but not tied to the caucus. (A National Labor Committee convenor, moreover, Ohio was the only state with a majority-union delegation, and, Ohio's delegation was organizing, especially in mission shops and towards May 1st, and, unfortunately, union democracy.)

DSA's unitizing affection for the words "rank-and-file" were on full display in deliberation of Carradine's Bus. "Labor for an Arms Embargo." As adopted, Bus. resolved that DSA would "Direct the rank-and-file strategy committee to begin laying the military logistics supply chain that port authorities and city and state legislatures." This is, I believe, foolish given the lack of influence the US labor movement has on the US military-industrial complex. Instead, Carradine's Bus. Supporters Rjr Bus. wrote a Labor for Arms Embargo[3] with the Democratic Left which did not mention a single instance of US workers successfully pressuring a US arms manufacturer to cease production. Instead, Rjr Bus. called for "Leveraging Labor's power in the workplace." And the embargo with the labor rather than "Leveraging Labor's power in the workplace."