

Scientists: End fossil fuel combustion now!



By CHRISTINE FRANK

In a recent climate study published by James Hansen and 16 colleagues, the world was warned that two degrees of warming could lead to a rapid, catastrophic melting of land-based ice sheets and a sea-level rise of three meters or 10 feet in 50 years if fossil fuel combustion does not cease immediately. That large a rise in sea level would flood most coastal cities and render them uninhabitable, forcing millions of people to flee inland.

The report was released four months before the UN climate summit in Paris, where nations are to formulate a binding agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate climate change, which is reaching runaway proportions.

Hansen and his team are convinced that the warming limit of two degrees Celsius, which was decided upon with no scientific basis whatsoever, is a formula for ecological disaster and economic collapse.

With warming of only 0.9 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, there is already an enormous loss of the planet's ice masses, with widespread

effects on natural and human systems—weather, species behavior and biodiversity, food production, water resources, and health.

It is a crime to cultivate the delusion that we can adapt to climate change while continuing to burn hydrocarbons for the sake of convenience and the private profit of the Carbon Barons.

Low-lying, small-island nations have long demanded a one-degree Celsius limit, whereas, a total of 100 nations support a ceiling of 1.5. So then, what should it be?

Looking at paleoclimatic evidence from the warm interglacial period prior to this one, the researchers found that sea levels rose *five to nine meters* while the global temperature was less than one degree centigrade warmer than today. We must remember that the human climate forcing of fossil-fuel combustion is much stronger than that of the natural alterations in Earth's orbit and axial tilt, which are what influenced the flux and flow of the great ice masses of the past.

The study also draws upon geological evidence in the Bahamas that powerful storms in the North Atlantic were

caused by increased temperature, pressure, and moisture gradients as the planet warmed and the ice melted. In addition, a good deal of the paper focuses on how the Gulf Stream that warms Britain and Western Europe was shut down in ancient times due to the injection of freshwater from melting land ice that dramatically changed seawater salinity and affected the thermo-haline circulation of the ocean.

Both of these conditions could be repeated if Earth's energy imbalance—more heat trapped by greenhouse gases, with consequently less being released into space—is not corrected soon.

The main thing to understand as we get close to the Paris summit is that greenhouse gas emissions have risen 2.6% per year since 2000, compared with 1.5% from 1973-2000. Turning the atmosphere into a waste dump for carbon pollution has led to carbon dioxide concentrations of 400 parts per million, over 40% more than pre-industrial levels.

When we consider that paleoclimate CO₂ of 450 ppm was enough to melt most of Antarctica, and that current

(Above) 400,000 marched in NYC in 2014 to demand action to stem climate change. Huge worldwide protests are planned this year.

growth rates have more than doubled since the 1960s, we are perilously close to an irreversible cataclysm. That is why Hansen declared an overshoot several years ago when he maintained that atmospheric concentrations over 350 ppm are too high, hazardously so, and called for a drawdown to 350 or lower.

The world continues to feel the heat. Only nine months into 2015, it is safe to say that it will probably be the warmest year on record given the temperature records that have been broken around the globe so far. The El Nino will undoubtedly be adding to the trend. Temperatures have climbed steadily upward from 1950 to 2010, and there has been no hiatus or slowdown in warming over the last 15 years, as some have thought.

As far as the status of the cryosphere is concerned, all we need do is take a serious look at the present to see what the future will bring. New observa-

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Snowden exposes new NSA spy operations

By JEFF MACKLER

Edward Snowden, renowned for his 2013 exposure of all pervasive U.S. government Internet and telephone spying on virtually all Americans, if not the entire world (no exaggeration), has once again blown the cover off corporate America's collaboration with the nation's top super-spy entity, The National Security Administration (NSA).

Snowden's most recent revelations—once again, documents from the NSA itself—were released to The New York Times and ProPublica. They refer to AT&T's "highly collaborative" relationship with the NSA and its "extreme willingness to help."

AT&T, utilizing a series of what The Times refers to as "legal rules" and secret court orders, provided the NSA with billions of e-mails, including all such communications to and from the United Nations, an AT&T customer. While the Snowden-released documents did not specifically mention that AT&T was the central NSA source, The Times and ProPublica investigators confirmed "a constellation of evidence" and other confirmations from "several former intelligence officials" implicating AT&T.

The NSA's spy operations were conducted through its secret Fairview program, established in 1985 and ramped up immediately following the Sept. 11, 2001, World Trade Center bombings. The Fairview documents, according to The Times, contained "technical jargon specific to AT&T." In one month shortly after the 9/11 bombings, AT&T collected 400 billion internet meta-data records, leading the top government surveillance agency to brag—secretly, of course—that the NSA has a "live presence on the global net." The Orwellian notion that Big Brother is listening all the time has the ring of truth today.

While previous Snowden revelations had exposed NSA spying on the UN, AT&T was not known as its direct vehicle until The Times investigations in recent weeks. AT&T representatives, when asked to verify the veracity of the Snowden documents, replied, "We don't comment



on matters of national security."

Similarly, in response to AT&T customer lawsuits and a myriad of other legal filings aimed at ending government surveillance, U.S. courts have repeatedly upheld Obama administration pleadings arguing that a public exposé of government spying would reveal "state secrets that would be damaging to national security."

In the name of "national security," the government's legal machinery repeatedly insists, almost always with court approval, that the Constitution's Fourth Amendment guarantees of the "right to privacy" and "protection against unreasonable search and seizure" are essentially worthless. Indeed, any "laws" or constitutional interpretations that were previously on the books to protect privacy, freedom of association, and other hard won democratic rights are today routinely re-written—formally as legislation or behind the scenes in the form of secret court orders that trample fundamental rights.

While the 2013 worldwide outcry against U.S. government surveillance of close to all internet and cell-phone

communications around the world—a formal goal secretly stated by the NSA—has subsided, little or nothing has changed. The Times could only

wonder, for example, whether the UN spying continues to this day.

The new Snowden documents point to the Special Service Operations (SSO) division of the NSA as the secret cover for AT&T and other internet providers like Verizon, also exposed as a government surveillance collaborator but of a lesser magnitude in comparison to AT&T. The SSO accounts for 80 percent of the information that the NSA collects.

AT&T's explicit "partnership" with the NSA was quite lucrative indeed, yielding in 2011 alone \$188.9 million to the nation's top internet provider at the time and "extremely willing" collaborator.

AT&T's services went far beyond spying on the United Nations. At the behest of the NSA, it installed the agency's then experimental spy equipment in 17 of its national internet hubs and collected virtually everything that came its way, including "foreign to foreign" and "foreign to U.S." communications.

Following the 2013 Snowden exposés, the NSA claimed that its UN spying operations, "for technical reasons" only, was limited to mostly land-line calls. This too has now been exposed as a lie, with the new Snowden documents revealing that in 2011 alone the AT&T turned over 1.1 billion domestic cell-phone calls daily to the NSA.

NSA technology now collects bulk metadata on virtually everyone. In addition, it appears to have achieved the capacity to record the names and phone numbers of all callers and recipients. A simple click or two on an NSA computer can well open the door to everyone's personal, political, and economic affairs.

The U.S. emerging police state only awaits the moment when mass surveillance passes over to mass repression, the ultimate weapon employed by all ruling-class elites when massive and generalized discontent becomes clearly focused and directly threatens capitalist rule itself. At that special and inevitable moment in history when the vast majority become conscious of their exploitation and oppression and move to fundamentally challenge their domination by the few, history will once again record the birth of a new society free from all the horrors of the present decaying social order. ■

Socialist Action: Where we stand

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics—not alliances with the bosses' parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women,

queers, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. We are internationalists, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with their own nation's capitalist class. We seek to link struggles across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons. That is why we maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International

Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution, instead of seeking to merely reform or work within the system. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism.

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: Sept. 2, 2015
 Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor.



For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 268-9429, socialistaction@imi.net

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Syriza splits after sell-out to banks

By MARTY GOODMAN

Since being elected in January, Greece's Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) was for a time the most followed movement on the international left and the hope of millions of long suffering Greek workers.

But those wishful sentiments were buried in July with the most brutal "loan" and austerity package yet, finalized in August with Europe's leading financial institutions. The new agreement, often referred to as "the memorandum," amounts to 86 billion euros (\$93 billion) for the crisis-ridden Greek economy, already on the hook to the top capitalists of the European Union for 300 billion euros (\$330 billion).

Brokered by the Syriza-led government, the memorandum contains vicious attacks on Greek workers—all in the name of the "free market" and capitalism. The agreement hikes taxes on foods, goods and services; rips up labor rights (which will lead to wage cuts and mass layoffs); and increases pension health-care costs by 50% (almost 40% of Greek retirees live in poverty).

The agreement mandates 50 billion euros to be paid by the privatization of public institutions. Virtually none of the "loan" package addresses joblessness or aid to impoverished Greek families. Most of the borrowed funds will be kept out of the reach of the Greek people in Luxemburg banks, and then go right back to repay debts to private banks and institutions.

Conditions in Greece remain a nightmare for working people. Unemployment is at depression levels of 26%, and for youth it's 60%; the number of children living in poverty is now approaching 50%; a Greek medical study found that 54% of Greeks were undernourished; pensions were reduced by 27% between 2011 and 2014.

The memorandum is Greece's third loan from the predators of European capitalism, nicknamed "the Troika." They are the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the enforcement arm of the World Bank. Both the IMF and the World Bank are U.S.-dominated institutions, which have been responsible for the mass impoverishment of hundreds of millions by imposing "free trade" policies that aid the rich at the expense of the poor.

Selling the memorandum

The memorandum was negotiated by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, the Syriza leader who had promised voters that his party would reject all austerity deals with European banks. Tsipras submitted it to parliament on July 15, where it passed 229 to 64. Thirty-two "no" votes came from Syriza MPs, most of whom were in the party's Left Platform, while seven other Syriza MPs abstained or were absent. The Left Platform comprised about 30% of Syriza's Central Committee.

The loan package was then approved by European parliaments despite substantial opposition, especially in Germany, the leading funder. Despite ruffled feathers over the loan on the German right, however, German capitalism is doing well in Greece. In August, a German firm acquired control over 14 Greek airports as part of the memorandum's privatization provisions. In fact, Germany is the biggest investor in Greece.

Moreover, a recent study by the German Halle Institute for Economic Research found that investors have flocked to the "safe haven" of German government bonds, pushing down its interest rates paid to bondholders. The German government has thus saved 100 billion euros, more than the 90 billion Germany is believed to have "loaned" Greece, the study found.

That is all quite apart from the billions German imperialism still owes Greece and other nations for the death and destruction during World War II.

The trade arrangements of the Eurozone were established to favor the more wealthy "Northern tier" countries like Germany and France, who impose disadvantageous economic terms on the poorer and "less productive" "Southern" countries, such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, etc.

Crisis and a split in Syriza

Enraged by Syriza's betrayal—likened by some to April 21, 1967, the day the Greek military seized power—25 of Syriza's Left Platform MPs have formed a breakaway party called Popular Unity. Led by Left Platform leader Panagiotis Lafazanis, who was minister of energy before Tsipras purged seven top Syriza government officials who had voted "no" on the memorandum.

Lafazanis accused the government of selling out to



Popular Unity leader Panagiotis Lafazanis.

the "dictatorship of the Eurozone." Popular Unity, he says, will continue the original reformist goals of the Syriza party, which include nationalizing the banks, canceling "most" of the debt, stopping payment on the debt, rejecting privatizations, and saying "no" to the memorandums. It will try to remain in the Eurozone, if possible, says Lafazanis. So far, the party's statements have not mentioned socialism.

Confronting a crisis of confidence, Tsipras has called for a new election for Sept. 20. He resigned as prime minister on Aug. 20, in accordance with the Greek constitution, and was replaced by a temporary caretaker government. "I feel the deep moral, political obligation to submit to your judgment," Tsipras explained. Many Greeks, of course, might not be convinced of Tsipras' sincerity given the fact that—just a day after the July 5 referendum, in which the Greek people had overwhelmingly rejected the Troika's loan package, he negotiated a deal in Brussels that was even worse. The new deal slashed public spending by an *additional* 4 billion euros!

Moreover, a Sept. 20 election will not provide enough time for the Greek people to properly discuss the issues. Left Platform critics also cite Tsipras' unwillingness to discuss his negotiating strategy, let alone heed parliamentary calls for a Syriza convention to discuss the memorandum before paying the Troika some 3.2 billion euros in interest on bonds that were due Aug. 20. Most cynically perhaps, Tsipras has called for an election before Greeks will fully feel the brunt of the memorandum's impact.

Helena Smith, the Athens correspondent of London's *Guardian* newspaper, astutely observed, "the application of neo-liberal policies on a resistant populace can only come from the left..." Capitalism depends on reformist parties like Syriza, especially during a crisis, which then win the trust of workers only to betray them.

The Syriza government is a capitalist coalition government, not a workers' government. Since Syriza did not win a majority in the January election (36%), it needed a partner to maintain a functioning government. Accordingly, Syriza formed a coalition with the Independent Greeks (ANEL), a right-wing party that is anti-immigrant but also ostensibly anti-memorandum, and it is tied to other capitalist parties in government.

History has demonstrated again and again (Spain, Chile, Haiti, etc.) that the working class cannot achieve its goals, let alone make a revolution, when tied to the capitalist class. The rise of the fascist Golden Dawn Party in Greece is a grim reminder of the costs that mis-leadership may bring to a workers' movement lacking a bold revolutionary alternative.

Not surprisingly, a poll conducted in August reveals that Syriza is backed by only 22.2% of voters compared to its nearest competitor, the conservative "New Democracy," with 21.2%. In the first poll after Tsipras' resignation, Popular Unity is backed by 8%, well past the 3% barrier for a seat in the parliament. The fascist Golden Dawn party comes in fourth in one poll, with 6%; the neoliberal "socialists" of PASOK and the Stalinist Communist Party (KKE) both received 4.5%.

Realignments in the Greek left

The SYRIZA coalition began in 2004. The dominant political tendency within it has been the reformist "Euro-communist" split-off from the Stalinist KKE. Both Tsipras and the Left Platform's Lafazanis trace their political origins to that movement.

Several radical left tendencies also operated within Syriza, including Trotskyists, Maoist Stalinists, and anarchists, particularly from Greece's Occupy movement. A number of these leftists have now joined Popular Unity. The new party has taken 13 radical left groups into membership, two of them being the largest organizations formerly within the anti-capitalist coalition ANTARSYA.

Popular Unity's public statements indicate that, like Syriza, it will prioritize electoral gain over building mass workers' movements. Popular Unity says that it wants "a wide, anti-memorandum, progressive front" and that it will present candidates in the upcoming election. In an Aug. 21 blog post, former Left Platform leader Stathis Kouvelakis stated that Popular Unity would "provide an expression to social forces that do not necessarily recognize themselves as part of the left but want to fight austerity," thus re-opening the door to the political opportunism and unprincipled alliances of Syriza.

Standing outside Syriza and Popular Unity are the forces remaining in the anti-capitalist ANTARSYA coalition, such as OKDE-Spartakos, supporters of the Fourth International and co-thinkers of Socialist Action. ANTARSYA has exposed Syriza's sellouts and has been very active in mobilizing against the fascist threat and protesting against the memorandum.

Seven ANTARSYA members were arrested on July 15 by cops in front of the parliament building in Athens, including at least one from OKDE. Four of the seven were found not guilty, including an OKDE member. The remaining three were sentenced with unprecedented severity, with the maximum probation period of three years.

There can be no solution for Greece under capitalism. Building a revolutionary party in Greece is necessary if the struggle of the workers, the youth, and the specially oppressed is to succeed. Down with the moratorium! Cancel the debt! Long live international solidarity with the Greek struggle! ■

See www.socialistaction.org for other articles, providing extensive coverage on Greece.



Northern California climate activists set sights on COP21

By NICHOLAS ISAAC

As governments and some 40,000 corporate negotiators, scientists of different persuasions and other mostly corporate-friendly parties prepare to attend the Nov. 30-Dec. 12 United Nations Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris, environmental and climate-crisis organizations are preparing massive and perhaps unprecedented mobilizations around the world.

Fear is widespread that this 21st UN-sponsored climate meeting will propose nothing to stop the earth's temperature from rising beyond the point of no return—the point where catastrophic and irreversible changes threaten all life on earth. Few environmental and related movement organizations believe that the world's greatest polluters have any intention of subordinating their profitable fossil-fuel extraction to the interests of humanity. Indeed, the greatest of the polluters, the U.S. and China, have every intention of *increasing* their production and use of fossil fuels!

Activists from 350.org and a broad range of other concerned organizations on the East Coast are making preparations for a massive mobilization in Boston on Dec. 12, the last day of COP21. They chose the last day of COP21 to indicate their lack of confidence in any of the “solutions” proposed to date and to state unequivocally that only a massive international movement, a “movements of movements,” is capable of saving the earth and its inhabitants from the destructive forces of today's profit-driven polluters.

In Northern California, a broad coalition of environmental groups, labor unions, social justice, antiwar, and human rights groups, and a number of socialist

parties, has been meeting in Oakland union halls for the past two months to plan a mass march and rally through downtown Oakland on Nov. 21.

Leading organizations include 350.org chapters in all Bay Area counties, the Sunflower Alliance—which focuses on defending frontline communities—System Change Not Climate Change, and a host of groups aimed at fighting California fracking, coal transport, explosive bomb trains, and environmental racism. Socialist Action, Solidarity, DSA, ISO, and CoC have also been actively building this effort.

The Northern California Climate Mobilization (NCCM) traces its origin to its Sept. 21, 2014, mobilization of 5000 in Oakland in solidarity with the historic New York City march of 400,000 on the same date.

The coalition's meetings have democratically discussed, debated, and hammered out an impressive list of points of unity and demands, perhaps the most advanced in the U.S. climate-crisis movement to date.

The Northern California Climate Mobilization demands reflect a growing awareness that the powers that have no intention of implementing any “solutions” other than the ineffective palliatives that meet the corporate-driven headlong rush for *increased* fossil fuel extraction, not to mention endless oil wars for imperial domination.

This is in contrast to the 350.org-sponsored mass march through Midtown Manhattan last year, which had no formal demands or speakers, and was led by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, former Vice President Albert Gore, and an assortment of some 25 elected Democrats.

This year, after another 12 months of capitalism's

pillaging the environment and an outpouring of scientific confirmation of global warming rates exceeding initial predictions—not to mention unprecedented and deadly heat waves everywhere—the movement has taken some important steps forward.

The NCCM demands include: “A global agreement to implement dramatic and rapid reduction in global warming pollution—Keep fossil fuels in the ground!” and “100% clean, safe, renewable energy!”

Central demands also include: “End all fracking, tar sands mining and pipelines, offshore drilling, arctic drilling! Stop expansion of the extractive economy! Wind, solar, geothermal power now! No coal exports or crude-by-rail bomb trains in Northern California!”

The coalition also focuses on a host of inseparable issues aimed at uniting the broadest sectors of working class America, oppressed people and the labor movement. These can serve the emerging and critically necessary U.S. “movement of movements” quite well as an initial political orientation for effective mass resistance to the doomsday scenario increasingly pressed forward by corporate America's “profits first at any cost,” ruling elite. The NCCM states that all of the above are “the conditions necessary to create...

- “A world united to repair the ravages of climate change:

Industrial countries and polluting corporations of the global north need to pay their ecological debt to society and to the global south by providing funding for developing countries and vulnerable communities worldwide to adapt to the impacts of climate change and convert to sustainable economies.

- “A world with an economy that works for people and the planet:

Billions of dollars for energy efficiency and conservation. We need a just transition to a sustainable, demilitarized economy based on renewable energy, clean transportation, and jobs for all at union wages. Convert water-wasting, polluting factory farms to sustainable organic agriculture. End corporate personhood; end ‘money equals free speech’; end billionaire purchase of elections.

- “A demilitarized world with peace and social justice for everyone; where Black Lives Matter; where good jobs, clean air and water, and healthy communities belong to all:

“End all forms of oppression and discrimination. No to environmental racism and pollution of indigenous, low-income, and frontline nations and communities. Respect all indigenous lands. No militarized police. No wars. No nuclear weapons or power. A true ecological approach must integrate questions of justice to protect biodiversity, honor all life on earth, and lift all people out of poverty.” (See NorCalClimateMob.net.)

California, which has experienced 1.3 degrees Celsius of warming in the last 100 years—and the rate of warming has accelerated in recent decades—is currently in the midst of a historic drought that has completely eliminated drinking water in some areas. There is no time to wait while the capitalists talk it over.

The only way to prevent further devastation is to build a powerful worldwide mobilization whose focus goes far beyond targeting climate-change deniers and a few egregious corporations, but leads in the direction of challenging capitalism itself—the polluting and pillaging system ruled by the minority corporate elite who are destroying the planet. ■

... Climate

(continued from page 1)

tions since the last IPCC report show the world's ice masses in serious and irreversible decline. There has been a 50% loss in Arctic sea ice over the last decade. The 2015 winter maximum Arctic sea ice extent was the lowest on record in February and came 15 days earlier than usual. The lowest summer minimum was in 2012.

In the warm season, thick, old multi-year ice is being exported out of the region through the Fram Strait between northwest Greenland and Canada and into the Beaufort Gyre, where it meets its doom. Consequently, the North Polar ice cap has lost a tremendous amount of mass as it becomes increasingly thinner, younger, and vulnerable to melting.

A warmer Arctic is also having a strong influence on weather patterns in temperate regions because of the heat imbalance between the North Pole and the Equator, affecting the behavior of the Jet Stream and Polar Vortex. Most importantly, the dramatic loss of albedo or reflectivity due

to there being less white ice and more dark water constitutes a positive feedback that is further warming the region and melting yet more ice.

Seasonal snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere, which has been below average for 10 years in a row, plays an important role in how much solar energy is reflected or absorbed. Snow cover reflects 90% of the sunlight that reaches it, whereas, snow-free land and dark ocean absorb so much more.

The timing of seasonal snow melt also affects the length of the growing season, the dynamics of spring river runoff, permafrost thawing, and wildlife populations. Evidence is emerging that over the long term, amplified warming of the Arctic is driving the rate of snow cover loss and other ecosystem responses. The rate of loss in the Northern Hemisphere has been 19.8% per decade, which exceeds the rate of summer sea ice loss.

The state of the permafrost is another serious matter. It comprises one quarter of the land in the Northern Hemisphere and stores massive amounts of carbon as CO₂ and methane. The upper active layer that seasonally thaws has been growing with rising temperatures and losing its

label “permanent.” As a result, coastlines are collapsing.

On Alaska's North Slope, researchers found that 55% of the soil carbon floating in rivers is being oxidized into carbon dioxide as bacteria devour organic matter and belch CO₂. Methane is rising from lakes in plumes. On the continental shelves around the Arctic Circle, thawing methane hydrates are becoming increasingly unstable as sea ice melts, triggering unprecedented emissions from submarine sediments beneath the seafloor.

Russian scientists have found methane hotspots in the Laptev Sea, and over 250 plumes were seen rising near Spitsbergen due to a one-degree centigrade temperature increase in the current. In autumn, over the Eurasian and North American shelves, methane levels are between 20 and 25 parts per billion. The release of these greenhouse gases from the tundra and seabed are a positive feedback that can erupt into an enormous carbon bomb if things keep heating up.

Ordinarily, the Greenland Ice Sheet is frozen to its land base. However, rivers of melt-water are cutting walls and steep canyons into the ice, and water is plunging into moulins or sinkholes, causing the

ice to slip from its moorings underneath and toward the sea. The volume of melt-water into the ocean from the Isortoq, a terrestrial river, is astonishing, over twice the flow of the Colorado River.

Superglacial lakes can also drain in hours, releasing up to 30 million cubic meters of freshwater to the sea. The continent is actively deglaciating. There has been a marked speed-up since 2010, with a 2-3% increase each summer in the acceleration rate.

Antarctica is another story. Although its sea ice extent has been increasing recently, it does not cancel out the losses in the Arctic Ocean, which are much greater than the gains around the South Pole. The increase in sea ice there is due to westerly winds in the Southern Hemisphere forcing the ice away from the continent, pushing the edges out, and creating spaces for more ice-making. This is occurring, ironically, because global warming has increased the temperature gradients between the pole and the Equator, making the westerlies stronger.

Also, the ozone hole over the region has had an impact. Normally, the ozone

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Connecticut activists target fracked gas expansion

By CHRISTINE MARIE

Connecticut climate justice activists are calling for a statewide mobilization on Sept 17 at the site of a state government hearing preliminary to the issuance of air quality permits to a power plant to be sited on Towantic Hill in the rural town of Oxford.

On that date, a call to action signed by leading pipeline opponents from 350CT, the Connecticut Sierra Club, New England Food & Water Watch, and the Toxics Action Center says, “we have the opportunity to unite all the climate justice organizations and activists in the state in an impressive mobilization to say NO to an important anchor of the Connecticut fracked gas expansion.” A drive to gather endorsers from environmental and social justice groups is underway.

Competitive Power Ventures (CPV), whose name says it all, has gotten the conditional approval of the Connecticut Siting Council to build a 785 MW dual-fuel combined-cycle electric generating plant in Oxford. This type of generation, which involves a turbine that can burn both natural gas and liquid fuel (oil), is increasingly popular in the industry in some parts of the country because it can boost profits by 43%, depending on where the plant is located in the various supply chains as well as price fluctuations in fossil fuels.

For the environment, however, there is no benefit. The threat to the climate from plant emissions is only one of the environmental threats posed by the new plant.

The plant would draw a million gallons of water annually from the Pomeraug River. According to a blog for *On the Water* by local resident Ron Merly, this water would be used to cool the turbines at the plant. The waste-water from the plant will then be both piped and trucked to the Naugatuck Waste Water Treatment Plant and then be released into the Naugatuck River.

“There is no sufficient data on whether or not the treatment plant can remove the heavy metals and ammonia from the contaminated water,” Merly says.

It is methane emissions, though, that are driving state activists to see this plant as one of the important lynchpins of a state energy plan gone off the rails. The governor of Connecticut issued, in April of this year, a joint action plan with the governors of six New England states that centers on building a massive new infrastructure for “natural” gas (<http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?Q=564676&A=4707>). The “natural gas” that is being pumped through this expanded system is actually produced by fracking in Pennsylvania and other states.

Conservative estimates published by Patterson Clark in the *Washington Post* (April 14, 2014) say that the methane plumes coming off of fracking sites in Pennsylvania comprise up to 17.3% of the gas being forced



out of the earth by the insertion of toxic chemicals. Because methane is at least 34 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO₂, the burning of gas would possibly be less damaging to the climate than the burning of coal only if the emissions at the fracking site were under 3.2% of the total extracted.

This means, Clark says, that producing fracked gas can affect the climate to a worse degree than the burning of coal! The Environmental Defense Fund put out some numbers to quantify the danger. Currently, the gas and oil industry is emitting methane at a rate of 7 million tons a year. This is equivalent, the EDF says, to the climate impact of 160 coal-fired plants running for 20 years.

Since Clark’s helpful summary of the climate impact of fracked gas emissions a year ago, the EDF has been releasing the results of a research project designed to further quantify methane emissions. The astounding results forced the Environmental Protection Agency to propose new standards that are expected, when finalized, to force the industry to cut annual methane emissions by 20-40%.

The measurements gathered by one of the EDF studies and being used by the EPA, however, are likely to be greatly undercounted. On Aug. 4, Touché Howard, a methane emissions expert who actually helped to develop the emissions sensor technology, challenged the accuracy of the EDF study overseen by chemical engineer David Allen.

Howard revealed that the Bacharach emissions sensor used in the study regularly failed. In some conditions, Howard has reported, the Bacharach sensor provided readings of 1-6% methane in the air when the actual amounts varied from 7-73%!

The new EPA proposal, hugely inadequate before Howard’s revelations, will clearly not be sufficient to stave off the climate impact of the fracked gas expansion that is underway.

In New England, that expansion from the current situation, in which 40% of power comes from gas, includes not only new power plants, compressor stations, and the exponential growth of intrastate pipelines to businesses and residences but also the permitting of major 42” high-pressure interstate transmission line expansions.

These include Spectra Energy’s Algonquin Incremental Market (AIM) project and Kinder Morgan’s Connecticut Expansion and Northeast Energy Direct projects. The gas traveling through such lines can be under 850 pounds of pressure, meaning that ruptures can be catastrophic.

Educators from 350CT, the Sierra Club, and Food & Water Watch have been traveling throughout Connecticut, speaking at dozens of forums in small towns around the state. Residents have been mobilizing for hearings and open houses held by the Federal Energy Regulatory Agency, the state government, and the energy companies, themselves. Local committees have anchored resistance at many points along the pipeline paths. Pickets and press conferences have made the movement visible to growing numbers of people.

The main task ahead is to unite the dozens of town committees, state environmental organizations, and the movements for social justice into a powerful movement that can force the state government to halt the fracked gas expansion and implement an emergency plan to replace fossil fuel use with sustainable sources of power such as solar and wind.

The mobilization on Sept. 17 will be an important step along the way and build toward regional demonstrations at the time of the climate talks in Paris. ■

Climate disaster in Bangladesh

Badrul Alam, a representative of the BKF-BKS movement in Bangladesh, was in France in June 2015 and was interviewed by Pierre Rousset for the Fourth International on-line journal, International Viewpoint. For the last four years, the BKF-BKS has organized caravans for climate justice, food sovereignty, and the rights of women. Below is a portion of his replies to the interview:

We do not trust the governments and global institutions to curb global warming. However, Bangladesh is one of the countries most immediately affected by the effects of global warming. It is situated on a flat and low delta, at the confluence of the Jamuna (Ganges), Padma (Brahmaputra) and Meghna rivers. It is a region with very fertile soils through the deposits of alluvium, but threatened by floods: the major part of the territory is at least 12 meters in height—of which 10% is located below sea level, under the protection of dykes.

In addition, the population density is especially high: we are the 94th biggest country by surface, but the 8th biggest by population. By and large we have a population density more than twice that of the Netherlands—for a population of approximately 160 million! So any rise in the ocean level and any extreme climatic phenomenon have dramatic consequences. We are truly on the front line in terms of climate!

To the overall effects of the contemporary capitalist mode of development on climate change, we must add its local effects. Let us take the example of the large-scale production, in the southwest of Bangladesh, of shrimp destined, inter alia, to the European market. The dikes in the polders have been opened, and the very rich land where poor peasants were working has been drowned under seawater to create pools for breeding.

In the short term, the villagers have benefited from an attractive income through aquaculture; but this industry has destroyed coastal vegetation (mangroves and so on) as well as the biodiversity that was a refuge and a natural protection against the assaults of the ocean. It caused salinization of surrounding lands and their desertification, ren-

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Dr. Julio A. Muriente Perez (center), co-president of the Movimiento Independista Nacional Hostosianos (MINH) addresses the Socialist Action forum “Puerto Rico Under Attack” at the Carriage House Theater in Hartford, Conn., on Aug. 21.

Many young Puerto Rican activists from the city came to hear one of the island’s most prominent independence advocates speak on the roots of the debt crisis and the way forward for the beleaguered population. The need for new networks of solidarity was an important theme of the discussion. To the left of Dr. Muriente is Socialist Action speaker Mike Pinho, and to the right, local activist and translator Jorge Limeres.

U.S imperialism imposes Iran nuclear accord

Atta Kenare / AFP / Getty Images



(Left) Demonstration outside a nuclear reactor in Tehran in November 2014 as nuke talks were going on between Iran and six major powers.

By JEFF MACKLER

The U.S. credo with regard to Iran today might well read, "Only civilized nations and their leaders should have nuclear weapons!"

Included in this U.S.-allied circle of civilized nuclear-weapons nations is India. But we hear no U.S. complaints regarding India's racist Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who essentially praised the communal murders of 1000 Muslims and suggested that all non-Hindus leave his country.

Nor is nuclear Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who routinely orders the slaughter of Palestinian Gazans and whose government illegally occupies 90 percent of historic Palestinian land, placed beyond the "civilized nation" pale.

Or perhaps the Pakistani nuclear dictatorship, or the French, whose troops slaughter tens of thousands of Africans as France reasserts its grip over its African neo-colonies? They too are civilized. In the case of France, the country is simply following the imperial mantra of Rudyard Kipling's "white man's burden" in bringing "peace" to "terrorist-ridden" Africa—and plunder too.

We might add the other imperialist nations among the ranks of "civilized" countries, including the United States itself, whose surrogate African dictator-led armies slaughtered some six million Congolese over the past decade to steal that nation's rich mineral resources.

Yes, the U.S. is the properly named Great Satan—the racist, imperialist, warmongering U.S. government, "under God," of course, that today presides over the illegal embargo of Iran and imposes all pervasive sanctions that have qualitatively reduced the quality of life of nearly all Iranians, sequestered Iranian government bank accounts, stolen billions of dollars in Iranian funds, and cut off Iran from world oil markets—again, in the name of "civilization!"

According to the Arms Control Association, which monitors the number and type of all nations with nuclear arsenals, "the United States has 1,597 strategic nuclear warheads deployed on 785 ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers. The Federation of American Scientists estimates that the United States's non-deployed strategic arsenal is approximately 2,800 warheads and the U.S. tactical nuclear arsenal numbers 500 warheads. According to the U.S. State Department, the United States possessed 4,717 active nuclear warheads as of September 30, 2014, including tactical, strategic, and non-deployed weapons."

Further, the Obama administration has announced plans to upgrade its nuclear arsenal over the next three decades at a cost of \$1 trillion. This is the deed

No source has ever verified Iranian plans to develop nuclear weapons.

of a "civilized" nation that holds in its blood-stained hands the immediate capacity to wipe out all life on earth!

Iran, by contrast, has zero nuclear weapons. No source—the imperialist-created International Atomic Energy Commission included—has ever verified Iranian plans to develop nuclear weapons.

No credible evidence has been presented that Iran's intentions have been otherwise. Iran has not violated any international or other treaty obligations regarding nuclear weapons. Its development and deployment of the technology to purify uranium for nuclear power generation, medical purposes, and scientific research is totally within the parameters of all international treaties.

Yet the recent Iran-U.S. "negotiated agreement" was conducted under the threat of even deeper sanctions and the strongly implied, if not explicit, warning that the U.S. and its Israel puppet are prepared to bomb Iran's enrichment facilities should they deem Iran in violation of the imperialist-imposed "agreement" and "having exhausted all peaceful means" of persuasion.

In our view, the world's imperialist bully has no moral, political, legal, or any other standing to demand that Iran or any poor and oppressed nation accede to its demands. Need we remind our readers that the U.S. is the only nation on earth to explode nuclear weapons on civilian populations, having instantly obliterated over 100,000 people (with an equal number dying from injuries and radiation sickness in subsequent months) when it bombed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945?

Need we recall the 1953 military coup orchestrated by the Central Intelligence Agency that removed Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and replaced him with dictator Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi, who promptly signed over Iran's nationalized oil reserves, the second or third largest in the Middle East, to U.S. corporations?

This U.S.-imposed dictator/king, with direct CIA assistance, established the most murderous secret police in the world, the SAVAK, which imprisoned, and often tortured, 70,000 Iranian dissidents. With U.S.

aid and instruction, the Shah built the world's sixth largest army.

After the Iranian people in 1979, in the world's largest peaceful demonstration of seven million in Teheran, forced the Shah to flee, where he took refuge in the U.S., the Iranians had the audacity to return control of its oil reserves to the Iranian nation.

As punishment for this anti-imperialist transgression, the U.S. armed and financed its Iraqi ally, Saddam Hussein, then touted as a Middle East democrat, to attack Iran in a 10-year war that took the lives of one million Iranians and another million Iraqis. The U.S. government preferred that both oil-producing nations destroy each other's refining capabilities in order to improve the competitiveness of U.S. oil corporations.

And when this seemingly endless war began to tilt a bit too much to the Saddam Hussein side, members of the Reagan administration surreptitiously sold Tow missiles at \$1 million each to the still demonized Iran, in order to even the battlefield score while keeping the war going. In the insane and "civilized world" touted by U.S.

apologists, war is good for oil profits and for the military-industrial complex too!

The terms of the present Iran-U.S. "agreement" are heinous—but they are certainly in line with the stipulations of most treaties that victorious imperialist nations impose on their victims. In essence, Iran is to be subjected to the most intrusive inspection of its nation imaginable. Language has been included that essentially allows this inspection to continue in perpetuity.

Simultaneously, the vast proportion of the U.S. and imperialist-imposed sanctions remain in place, with virtually all of the \$100 billion sequestered from Iranian overseas bank accounts remaining under U.S. control.

Iran's oil production is to be reduced below the level of two years ago. Virtually all proceeds from its sale of oil are to be administered by U.S. agencies, which will supposedly dole out Iran's oil revenues to Iran as U.S. and allied "inspectors," deem fit.

A single summary of but one small aspect of this agreement is sufficient to reveal its predatory nature: "In the next six months, Iran's crude oil sales cannot increase. Oil sanctions alone will result in approximately \$30 billion in lost revenues to Iran—or roughly \$5 billion per month—compared to what Iran earned in a six-month period in 2011, before these sanctions took effect.

"While Iran will be allowed access to \$4.2 billion of its oil sales, nearly \$15 billion of its revenues during this period will go into restricted overseas accounts. In summary, we expect the balance of Iran's money in restricted accounts overseas will actually increase, not decrease, under the terms of this deal."

In essence, Iran, an independent nation, has been placed in a form of permanent servitude. It has been compelled to agree to horrific restrictions on its economy, including not only short and long-term oil production but gold and other valuable resources as well, thus subordinating its sovereignty to imperialist designs.

In this "civilized"—or better, Orwellian world view—when U.S. oil dominates international markets, and the glut of the very fossil fuel resources whose continued use spells doom for humankind has reduced oil and gas prices to less than half their previous levels, U.S. corporate interests are well served by keeping competitive Iranian oil off world markets.

What conclusions can serious antiwar and social justice activists draw from this monstrous state of affairs regarding the U.S.-Iran agreements? The answers seem obvious:

First and foremost, we must demand the immediate

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Bernie Sanders and the working class

By ANN MONTAGUE

Socialist Action has published several articles in recent issues exposing Bernie Sanders and the Democratic Party. This included a look at past primary elections that were used to raise workers' hopes that there would be a place for their aspirations within the Democratic Party. Another article looked at Sanders' role in Congress and his history with the Democratic Party.

It is also important to investigate what is happening now in the working class in relation to the Sanders campaign. Examining the changing attitudes towards socialism and independent labor campaigns can help us to see beyond Sanders in order to evaluate the shifts in the working-class electorate.

We are in the midst of a financial and social crisis that has been festering for almost a decade. The economic crisis has brought on an upsurge of fightback activity from low-wage workers. At the same time, however, most union workers have yet to respond with the same militancy as their non-union low-wage brothers and sisters.

Long-time union activists have frequently asked each other, "Where are all the young workers?" The first answer is that many of them are in the Fight For \$15 movement, and the second answer is that they are attending Bernie Sanders rallies. We have seen in the period of about 10 weeks this summer over 100,000 people crammed into sports arenas in a variety of cities to hear Sanders' populist message about economic inequality and the fight against the "billionaire class."

The many millennials, students, and young workers at the Sanders rallies have been joined by union members—a lot of them. These groups are all motivated by the same anger. They are angry at Wall Street and the taxpayer bailout of the banks, the lingering effects of the financial crisis, skyrocketing rents, the high cost of health care and shrinking income while the wealthy 1% profits from policies of austerity, war, and the prison industrial complex.

Crisis of union democracy

In the labor movement today, there is nothing as routine as the union bureaucracy's deciding to support the Democratic presidential candidate. An early endorsement is often expected to show the Democratic Party bosses that there will be money and foot soldiers ready for them regardless of their anti-labor policies during the previous four years. Preaching "lesser evilism" to any union member who might balk at their marching orders is also part of the routine.

This year is slightly different. Distrust is evident toward Hillary Clinton on a signature labor issue, the unpopular Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and also because of her close ties to Wall Street. The fact that Clinton is openly raising \$2 billion for her campaign has also not gone well in the unions.

With the populist Bernie Sanders on the scene, many union members are saying "slow down" on endorsements. The issue within some unions has moved from which candidate to support to "why don't the members have a vote?"

When Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), announced they were the first national union to endorse Clinton, there was a strong backlash among teachers across the country based on the undemocratic process and rumors that Clinton had offered Weingarten a position



in her cabinet.

A month later, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) announced it would endorse Hillary Clinton. President Tom Buffenbarger announced in a press release that the decision was made based on an internal survey of 1700 members. Again the union members were irate. One comment on their Facebook page was indicative of the members: "What a sham. Not in the least bit democratic ... only 1700 out of 600,000 members is not a majority. ... You guys need to wake up and listen to the members."

Mary Kay Henry, president of SEIU, could see the way the wind was blowing and quickly said that there would be no early endorsement and that they would continue pushing issues of economic inequality.

When the National Nurses Union was the first national union to endorse Sanders, the most common comment from union members was about their process. As one member of a different union, who didn't support any Democratic Party candidate, commented, "Did you see that? Their members all voted. It was the members who actually made the decision."

While on the surface it appears that this is merely a disagreement over which candidate the union will endorse, it could be the beginning of deeper conversations about the struggle for union democracy. Hopefully, more specific discussions will also take place concerning Sanders' lack of any solution to the attacks on workers that are increasing every day.

The lack of union democracy regarding presidential endorsements is not the only thing that has agitated the rank and file this summer. In July and August there were events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Medicare. But instead of the regular "lobby and call your legislator" event, there were working-class rallies to demand the expansion and improvement of Medicare.

These rallies were called the National Day of Action to Protect, Expand and Improve Medicare and were organized by National Nurses United, Labor Campaign For Single Payer, AFL-CIO, and the union-based Alliance For Retired Americans. One of the largest rallies was on Aug. 8 at the Westlake Mall in Seattle, where 5000 rallied for both "Medicare For All" and Medicaid expansion. The energized Seattle labor movement showed up, coming off of their winning a \$15 minimum wage, their growing movement to fight skyrocketing rents, and the re-election campaign of socialist

Seattle city council member Kshama Sawant.

Every time there is a spark of rebellion in the working class, it ignites more activity. Two years of regular fast-food strikes became a movement of low-wage workers. The activity expanded from one-day strikes to include union bargaining campaigns. Then it moved to mass rallies and marches aimed at local governments. Now union members are emerging from decades of acceptance that union bureaucrats should make the decisions about candidate endorsements.

Poll results reflect the changing attitudes towards the major capitalist parties and an increasing interest in socialism. A Gallup Poll completed in 2014 shows that 43% of respondents do not identify themselves as Democrats or Republicans. They consider themselves "independent." This percentage is a new high for Gallup, which has been polling on this question since 1988. Identification as a Democrat has declined the most during this period.

A poll in June of this year showed that 52% now support "government redistribution of wealth" by increasing taxes on the rich. This is the greatest support for wealth redistribution that has been measured since 1940. The pollsters also asked if respondents would vote for a "socialist" for president, and a high 47% answered that they would do so. The combination of increased support for wealth redistribution and the fact that the word "socialist" is no longer taboo demonstrates a major shift.

For a labor party!

This is the time to start talking about an independent workers' party. Workers both young and old are angry at the economic and the political system, and while at this time many are turning to a self-described "socialist" who is running as a Democrat and who has said he will support the eventual nominee of the Democratic Party, some union members are talking about a party of their own.

The traditional labor party is based in the union movement. While union membership in the United States is low compared to countries that have traditional labor parties, the labor movement itself has been energized by the movement of low-wage workers and their allies.

An August Gallup Poll reports that increasing numbers support unions while union membership remains at about 12%. Approval of unions jumped to 58%, which is an increase of 10% since 2009.

There was also an increase of those who want unions to have more influence on the political process (37%). However, those calling on the Democratic Party candidates for solutions to the problems we face will never find satisfaction. The fight against the "billionaire class" cannot be waged by the party controlled by billionaires.

Likewise, the struggles against racism and anti-immigrant bigotry will not be championed by the Democratic Party. They will never stop saying that the solution to racist cops is body cameras, and that the solution to the immigration "problem" is to increase the militarization of the border and to increase enforcement of laws against undocumented workers.

A labor party is not only about elections but about building a fighting labor movement to achieve major change.

Building independent workers' power in the political arena as well as in the workplace and the streets can help build a bridge from anger and disappointment to a successful struggle for pressing demands. The call for a labor party can be that initial step. ■

... Iran pact

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and total end to all U.S. sanctions, embargoes, and other acts of war against the people of Iran. We recognize no imperialist "right" to deny oppressed and poor nations their right to self-determination. This principle applies to all nations oppressed and exploited by imperialism, regardless of the policies of the leadership of these nations.

Second, we demand the immediate, unilateral, and total destruction of the entire U.S. arsenal of nuclear weapons. The twin existential threats of nuclear war and catastrophic fossil-fuel-induced global warming are a direct and inherent product

of the capitalist/imperialist system. The disarmament of the warmakers remains central to any realistic antiwar strategy.

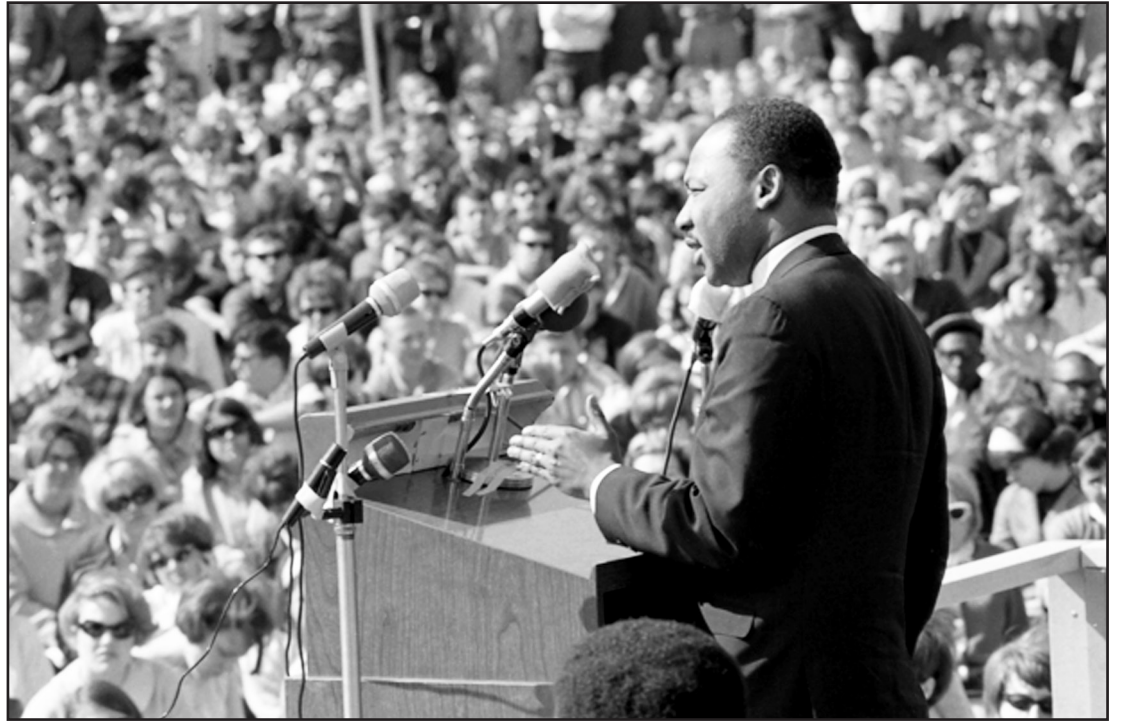
Third, we must unreservedly support the right of self-determination of oppressed nations and peoples, including, in the case of Iran, its right to sign humiliating treaties if it deems this necessary to thwart, however modestly and temporarily, imperialist intervention and subjugation.

Finally, we cannot become advocates of this imperialist-imposed agreement, lobbying or otherwise urging one or another wing of the U.S. ruling elite to sign it. Our demands must continue to be:

- U.S. Out Now from the Middle East!
- End all Sanctions and Embargoes!
- Support Iran's Right to Self-determination!
- U.S. Hands Off Iran! ■

Joe Johnson — The Man Without a Country

St. Paul Pioneer Press



By BILL ONASCH

Joe Johnson passed away Aug. 5 in Chippewa Falls, Wis., at age 84. His long life was marked by resolute opposition to war, local and national leadership in the Socialist Workers Party, government persecution, an exceedingly frugal life style, and from middle age, devoted care to his mother during her final years.

I first met Joe when I transferred from the Chicago branch of the Socialist Workers Party to the Twin Cities in the fall of 1965. After a long dry spell during the Fifties, the SWP was beginning to grow once more. This was primarily the result of a youth radicalization expressed through developments such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committees involved in civil rights, the Free Speech Movement launched in Berkeley, and the “New Left” Students for a Democratic Society—who organized the first national protest against the Vietnam War.



The party’s Young Socialist Alliance, founded in 1960, participated in and recruited from these movements. The Twin Cities had done particularly well in campus recruiting, but many transferred elsewhere upon graduation and reinforcements were needed. At the request of the party’s national secretary Farrell Dobbs, three of us from the Windy City headed to the Land of Sky Blue Waters.

Joe Johnson was the branch organizer and a member of the national committee. He didn’t reside at the party headquarters at 704 Hennepin in the heart of downtown Minneapolis but, except when assignments took him elsewhere, he always seemed to be there day and night. When he wasn’t involved in a meeting, or tidying up the premises, he would be devouring books and newspapers, acquiring a thorough knowledge of theory and program as well as being up on current events. That’s also where he usually dined, utilizing the small kitchen to cook simple but wholesome dishes—which he was always willing to share.

The diverse composition of the branch then was certainly challenging to the organizer. There were still a number of strong-willed old-timers, including Ray Dunne, Harry DeBoer, and Jake Cooper—who had been involved in the historic 1934 Teamsters strikes and did hard time in the Sandstone prison after their conviction in the 1941 Minneapolis Smith Act trials. Their decades of valuable experience through ups and downs in the class struggle had to be meshed with the growing raw new levy of mainly campus youth.

With the help of Helen Scheer as part-time assistant organizer, Joe found ways to earn the respect and confidence of both groups and steered just about everyone into an appropriate assignment.

The party and YSA’s top priority then was the movement against the rapidly escalating Vietnam War. SDS did not follow up on their early success with the April 1965 March on Washington, and independent campus

and community antiwar groups took up the fight.

One of the most successful was the Minnesota Committee to End the War in Vietnam, launched by students, radical pacifists, and “Old Left” radicals. Weekly business meetings on the University of Minnesota campus were often attended by dozens and planned a variety of activities that ultimately included mass marches. A fortnightly newsletter with a circulation that reached more than 2000 was edited and largely written by YSA comrades and sympathizers. It was printed on an offset press at the party headquarters, and that’s where the big mailing job, aided by a donated Addressograph, was also done—always with Joe’s efficient help.

Joe encouraged the YSA comrades to take the lead in this area of work while he mainly played a supportive role. But one suggestion he made had a big impact—old-fashioned street corner rallies. We started almost literally outside the front door of the party headquarters at the busy intersection of Seventh & Hennepin. Using a step ladder and bullhorn, a dozen or so antiwar activists took turns giving very short agitational speeches for ending the war by bringing the troops home now.

Pausing passersby were asked to sign the antiwar committee mailing list. Joe didn’t speak but watched our back for any signs of trouble.

We got a mainly good response with only occasional heckling the first time out. But trouble came in the form of a squad of Minneapolis cops at a July 16, 1966, rally that had attracted a big crowd left over from a festival parade. The bulls in blue declared the rally to be an illegal assembly and that everybody involved was under arrest.

A Minnesota Supreme Court opinion later stated, “The circumstances of defendant Joseph D. Johnson’s arrest are equally uncertain. Chief of Police Calvin Hawkinson testified that he arrested Johnson when Johnson physically interfered with Hawkinson’s attempt to subdue an unknown lady who attacked the police. He testified that ‘Johnson put his arms in between and tried to push us apart.’”

Even though the statute of limitations has long since passed, I won’t name the “unknown lady” who went on to a distinguished career as an expat political and cultural writer in Europe. She had the height of a WNBA player and didn’t take kindly to being grabbed on the arm by a cop. She sent him reeling with a shove Bill Russell might have used on Wilt Chamberlain. Before Joe was nabbed by the Chief of Police, he advised Ms. X to head for Dayton’s—a nearby big department store, where she quickly blended in with the crowd of shoppers and exited in the next block.

The law the cops used for their bust was an ordinance passed in response to IWW Free Speech sidewalk rallies during the First World War. It required assemblies of more than 10 persons to display an American flag on a staff of specified dimensions. As a result of the antiwar movement’s revival of Wobbly tactics—at Joe’s suggestion—it was finally declared unconstitutional.

But Joe was somewhat preoccupied in those days

(Above) Joe Johnson was active in the struggle against the Vietnam war. Here Martin Luther King speaks against the war at University of Minnesota’s campus in St. Paul, in April 1967.

(Left) Prison rebellions such as the one at Attica, N.Y., in 1971 stirred Joe Johnson to write his pamphlet, “The Prison Revolt.”

with a party-led defense campaign against even more serious government persecution that threatened him with deportation or prison.

As a teenager, Joe avoided being drafted to fight in the Korean War that he strongly opposed by migrating from Wisconsin to Toronto, Canada. He became active in a Steelworkers local on his job and came to respect cothinkers of the SWP he encountered there. When they learned of his precarious legal status, they counseled him to return to the States and turn himself in rather than having this threat hanging over him the rest of his life. Whether this was the best advice could be debated, but that’s what Joe did.

The authorities in the Twin Cities were glad to see Joe and promptly awarded him free room and board at a minimum security prison in Springfield, Mo., for a little over two years. He told me some interesting tales about his incarceration, including the chance to meet the famous Birdman of Alcatraz. When he was finally given a new suit and 20 bucks in cash and told to go some place else, Joe headed to the Twin Cities to resume his life as a socialist antiwar agitator.

But it turned out the government wasn’t yet through with Joe. They said Joe’s support of a resolution in the union he belonged to in Toronto favoring a Canadian labor party violated a section of the infamous Smith Act prohibiting political activity in a foreign country. The penalty was exile. He was expected to self-deport—remaining in jail until he did.

The main issues in this ultimately victorious campaign were well stated in a pamphlet “They Have Declared Me A Man Without a Country”—unfortunately long out of print and not freely available in print or digital format.

In a letter to *Socialist Viewpoint* many years later, Joe described the logical fallacies of the government’s case, “One of the legal problems (among many) that the government had was that I was native born, as was my mother and father. And, I had already served two-plus years in prison as a citizen of the United States for a ‘crime’ only a citizen could commit—refusing to fight in the Korean War for political reasons.”

The SWP was familiar with other sections of the Smith Act. The party had been the first victim of its anti-Red persecution in a 1941 trial that sentenced 18 leaders—many also prominent union leaders—to prison for politically opposing the government’s drive to take America in to the Second World War. They also had some successful experience fighting deportations such as a decades-long delay of expelling Swedish immigrant Carl Skoglund—a chief strategist of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes—until he died at a ripe old age in his adopted country.

The party retained Doug Hall, a top-notch labor lawyer, and later assistance from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee as well, for Joe’s legal defense. The SWP also rounded up an impressive list of allies in the labor and civil liberties movements to launch the Committee to Oppose the Deportation of Joe Johnson, and Joe was sent on a remarkable national public

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By BARRY WEISLEDER

On Aug. 25, over five years after the fact, a disciplinary tribunal found Toronto Police Superintendent David (Mark) Fenton guilty of exercising unlawful or unnecessary authority, and discreditable conduct. Fenton was one of the senior cops who ordered hundreds of protesters and bystanders surrounded, “kettled,” and detained during the G20 summit in Toronto in June 2010.

Very few of the over 1100 people held in the largest mass arrest in Canadian “peacetime” history were convicted of any crime. Even fewer cops were penalized for the bullying, beatings, and incarcerations they inflicted on the innocent.

Cops searched and arrested without due cause, operating under a secret regulation passed by the Liberal Ontario government just weeks earlier—and scrapped only in June 2015.

For the multitude of physical assaults on people legally demonstrating, only one cop, Constable Babak Andalib-Goortani, has been convicted

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Five years after Toronto G20 A license to ‘kettle’

in a criminal court, and his paltry 45-day jail sentence was later reduced to probation and community service. Of the eight officers found guilty by police disciplinary tribunal hearings of committing serious wrongdoing, only four received penalties, ranging from a reprimand, to five days’ loss of pay, and a two-month demotion.

And now Fenton, whose sentencing hearing is scheduled to begin on Dec. 21, could be slapped with a reprimand, or dismissal.

Lawyer Paul Cavalluzzo, who represents some of the kettling victims,

pointed out that if Fenton, who has nearly 27 years on the force, chooses to retire before being sentenced, “it would make the situation more absurd than it already is.”

“People should be held to account. The chief of police at the time (Bill Blair) is running now for federal Parliament for the Liberals. The Prime Minister [Stephen Harper, who abruptly moved the summit from rural Huntsville to downtown Toronto – editor] is on the hustings trying to get re-elected. Why aren’t people concerned about the fact that so many Canadians peacefully

protesting were arrested? That to me is just intolerable”, said Cavalluzzo.

Retired judge John Hamilton, who was asked by Blair to preside over the disciplinary tribunal, ruled that Blair could not be subpoenaed to testify, because as police chief he was the hearing’s officer, with Hamilton his designated representative, and furthermore, that his evidence would be irrelevant to the hearing. Really?

Bill Blair’s party of choice, the federal Liberals under Justin Trudeau, voted for Harper’s notorious Anti-Terrorism law C-51, which expands police powers to spy on and detain people, and to disrupt organizations seeking social and environmental justice.

Don’t let them catch you calling Canada “a police state.” ■

Energy East pipeline condemned by OEB

New Democratic Party Leader Tom Mulcair can’t have it both ways. It’s either build an oil pipeline, or protect the environment from further harm.

Many NDP members and voters favour keeping the oil in the ground, a view expressed by Linda McQuaig, the party’s star candidate in Toronto Centre, before she was slapped down by Conservative Party henchmen and silenced by Mulcair’s managers.

But the Ontario Energy Board bolstered the argument for keeping the bitumin buried. The OEB, in a 96-page report issued in mid-August, says that the risks exceed the rewards when it comes to the \$12 Billion Energy East pipeline proposed by TransCanada Corp.

A major oil spill would likely cost more than \$1 billion to clean up. It would cause long-term contamination of drinking water, land, and aboriginal hunting and fishing grounds. That’s weighed against 4200 jobs to build the line, only 1400 once the pipeline is in operation, and a forecast injection of up to \$19 billion in wages and taxes in the 40 years after oil starts flowing from Alberta to the East Coast.

Then there’s climate change—an incalculable consequence. A new pipeline, even one immune to stress corrosion, would encourage more tar-sands development, which would increase carbon emissions and thus escalate global warming.

Not surprisingly, business groups are lobbying for Energy East. Indigenous communities along the planned route are mostly opposed. Public opinion in Quebec is strongly against it.

Ultimately, it’s up to the National Energy Board and the federal cabinet to decide.

Now, however, is the time for NDP members, socially conscious labour unionists, and environmental activists to weigh in on the issue. Tom Mulcair’s vague policy—for a pipeline that meets an environmental review more rigorous than Stephen Harper’s—should be dumped in favour of a plan for a rapid shift to green energy alternatives. Such a shift must be premised on No New Pipelines, and public ownership of Big Oil and Gas, under workers’ control, to fund and engineer the transition.

— B.W.

Petition to Tom Mulcair, federal New Democratic Party Leader

We, the undersigned, applaud Federal NDP Leader Tom Mulcair for advocating a national child-care plan, a \$15/hour minimum wage, and for opposing repressive Bill C-51 and the extension of the bombing of Iraq, and into Syria.

At the same time we call on Tom Mulcair to advance, as a priority, the following policies, which we call the 4 P’s, as part of the current NDP election platform:

- **Pharmacare:** A national drug plan will save Canadians over \$7 billion, and is urgently needed to improve public health, especially of seniors and the poor.

- **Pipelines:** The big drop in the price of oil presents a golden opportunity to oppose pipeline construction, to re-tool, and to go for green energy conversion (wind, hydro, solar, geothermal and biomass). To fund that gigantic energy shift, it will be necessary to conscript the enormous accumulated wealth of the resource corporations by nationalizing Big Oil and Gas under workers’ and community democratic

control, while respecting Indigenous peoples’ rights.

- **Progressive Taxation:** It will cost much money to provide \$15/day childcare and other vital social expenditures required. The federal NDP should insist, not only on plugging tax loopholes, but on steeply taxing big business, the banks and the super-rich, while phasing out the regressive HST.

- **Palestine:** Over 2000 residents of Gaza were slaughtered by Israeli forces last summer. Benjamin Netanyahu and his racist Likhud coalition were re-elected after promising there would never be a Palestinian state.

The two-state solution is dead. The alternative is a one-person, one-vote, democratic secular Palestine. We ask Tom Mulcair to support the demand of Palestinian unions, civil society and unions across Canada and around the world that call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against the Zionist state until its apartheid practices end.

To sign and/or download this petition, go to www.ndpsocialists.ca. ■

... Joe Johnson

(continued from page 8)

speaking tour.

He recalled, “For myself, the most exciting part was an extensive national tour I took speaking about the case and raising funds for my defense. The tour was over 99 days and 25,000 miles long that took me to most of the States, most of the large cities and all of the branches of the SWP in the U.S. The cost of the tour was smallest that anyone had knowledge of. The Greyhound Bus Co. had a promotion travel ticket that year (they never repeated it) where you could get a national one-way ticket for \$99.00 that would last for 99 days.

“We worked out a master-ticket for myself. I went first to Seattle; then down the West Coast; then back to Denver; then to Texas and the South; then up the East Coast to New Jersey, New York, Boston, etc.; then to the Midwest; to Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, etc.; then back to Minneapolis. I spoke on TV, radio, had newspaper interviews, a full page in the *Christian Science Monitor*, etc.

“I traveled light with one small duffel bag. I tried to sleep in a bed every two or three days. Comrades made me a guest in their homes and gave me cooked meals and a change of underwear. I lived on approximately \$2.15 per day. I was able to raise thousands for the defense case and a large number of people told me they joined the party after my speeches. We won the case and I enjoyed the tour greatly.”

It was typical of Joe’s spartan endurance that what would have been an exhausting sacrifice for most of us

was for him exciting and enjoyable. The victory came when courts struck down the deportation section of the Smith Act.

For personal reasons I moved to St Louis in 1968 where for three years I helped build a new YSA chapter where there was no functioning SWP branch. In this relative isolation I didn’t fully appreciate the scope of changes taking place in the party on the national level and in the Twin Cities branch. The old party leadership was intensively training new young ones. Jack Barnes was slated to take over the national secretary position from Farrell Dobbs, and YSA leaders were being sent to branches to become organizers.

When I moved back to the Twin Cities in 1971 I found a much bigger branch in a new spacious headquarters. Antiwar work was at its peak but the party was also intervening in a resurgent feminist movement, a new environmental movement, an experiment with building a new independent Black party, and even some modest trade-union work. The Twin Cities Socialist Forum was thriving, branch bookstore sales were growing by leaps and bounds, and the party ran some lively election campaigns.

Joe Johnson, who was neither youth nor old-timer, was no longer organizer and had to adjust to a new role in the party. While this couldn’t have been easy, I never heard him complain, and during this period of party prosperity he gave new young leaders the support they needed and deserved.

Relieved of the demands of branch organizer, Joe devoted some attention to issues of strong personal interest. One was solidarity with workers behind bars—he’d been there. In 1972, in response to several brutally re-

pressed prison protests, Joe wrote a popular pamphlet for the SWP, “The Prison Revolt.”

He also welcomed a long overdue shift in SWP policy embracing what is today known as LGBT rights.

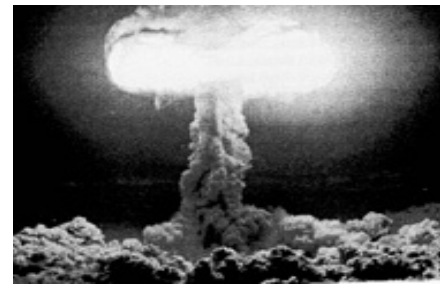
When the U.S. ruling class finally had to withdraw from Vietnam—partly due to a mass antiwar movement that had begun to penetrate even active duty GIs—what had been the party’s central area of work and recruitment for a decade came to an abrupt halt. The Barnes leadership launched a series of dizzying, mostly ill-advised “turns.” One that had an unavoidable universal impact was the turn to “community branches.”

An early division of the big Twin Cities branch in to Minneapolis and St Paul branches made sense. But soon the Minneapolis branch was further subdivided into three very small ones. One of them conducted their branch meetings at a McDonald’s. The prominent public face of the SWP nearly disappeared. Joe didn’t hesitate to speak out against these schemes.

But these organizational disasters proved to be a precursor of a fundamental revision of the party’s theoretical and programmatic heritage by what had evolved into a national leadership clique around Jack Barnes. Those who didn’t hail the new changes were thrown out in waves of mass expulsions. Many of those came together to form Socialist Action.

By this time Joe was headed back to his family home of Chippewa Falls to care for his elderly mother and to eke out a living running a bookstore. He maintained friendly relations with old comrades to the end. His exemplary contributions to building a revolutionary party will be missed and remembered. So will his loyal and generous friendship that touched so many of our lives. ■

Learning to live with the Bomb



(Left) The ruins of Hiroshima after the U.S. bombed the city on Aug. 6, 1945.



By BILL ONASCH

Sept. 2 marked the 70th anniversary of the formal surrender of Japan, which put an end to World War II.

There were some World War II firestorm air raids on targeted civilian worker neighborhoods in Hamburg, Dresden, and especially Tokyo that were nearly as horrible and deadly as the first crude atomic bombs used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. But those earlier atrocities—in violation of international law—required the use of hundreds of planes striking at peak weather conditions. The world was shocked to learn the devastation in the two medium-sized Japanese cities was the result of a single bomb dropped on each from a B-29.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of this darker day for humanity we are still told it was really a humanitarian act. It is claimed this demonstration of horror actually saved millions of American and Japanese lives that would have been lost in a ground invasion of the Japanese homeland.

Rarely mentioned in the mass media, but confirmed by multiple sources, were the desperate efforts during the summer of 1945 by Japanese officials to initiate back-channel surrender talks. They sought only one condition—a guarantee that their Emperor would remain.

These overtures were curtly rejected as Truman, Attlee, and Stalin stuck to the game plan of the Potsdam accords insisting on *unconditional* surrender. Of course, after the Japanese capitulated, and General Douglas MacArthur was designated to oversee the occupation of Japan, his first order of business was to retain the Emperor he saw as a valuable buffer against the revival of the Japanese communist and socialist movements.

The use of atomic bombs was not essential to the total Allied victory that the Japanese—running out of food and fuel and even morale—were prepared to accept months earlier. Their introduction was not intended to end the Second World War but rather to serve notice on the postwar world that the USA was now a super-power on a scale never before seen.

Not only did America emerge with a robust economy while others were in shambles—the ruling class in this country could boast of having a monopoly on a new terrifying weapon of mass destruction. More than that, they had shown they were prepared to use it. This not very veiled threat was particularly aimed at the Soviet Union and the emerging Chinese Revolution. Further expansion of the Red Menace, now embracing a third of the world's population, would not be tolerated.

But this monopoly was soon broken as the Soviet Union quickly developed its own nuclear weapons. That led to a Cold War arms race—building ever bigger bombs and intercontinental ballistic missiles, launched from both land and sea, capable of delivering them. The now two super-powers soon accumulated between them enough power to destroy every living thing on the planet—many times over. Each side had the capability to launch “massive retaliation” if attacked.

There could be no winners in such a war. The two great powers adopted a doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction, known by the appropriate acronym MAD. There was one really close call during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis that was resolved through compromise just short of Doomsday.

When the Soviet Union began to disintegrate 25 years ago—in no small part due to enormous spending on MAD—Russia took control of the nuclear forces. A series of treaties between the new ex-KGB Mos-

cow regime restoring capitalism and the USA agreed to stop targeting one another's cities and drastically reduced their number of strategic nuclear weapons. The current limit for the U.S. is a “mere” 1605—down from a truly mad Cold War peak of more than 31,000.

Paltry as this new limit might seem, it's enough to destroy every major population center outside the USA. Surely even Dr Strangelove would be satisfied with that firepower, and you would think there would be no plans to build new ones. But even common sense is no match for the ambitious goals of “our” ruling class.

In an informative piece on the *Aljazeera America* site, Michael Pizzi and Micheal Keller write, “... American taxpayers will soon be spending more on nuclear weapons in real dollars than they have since the end of the Cold War. In October 2013, just four months after calling for yet another one-third reduction in the stockpile, President Barack Obama announced plans to ‘modernize’ the entire nuclear arsenal over the next 30 years, arguing that updating and replacing the so-called nuclear triad—the submarines, jets and ballistic missiles designed to deliver warheads—will help create a leaner, sleeker nuclear fleet.

“But leaner doesn't mean cheaper, at least not in the short term. According to a recent study by two researchers at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Jeffrey Lewis and Jon Wolfsthal, Obama's modernization program could carry a price tag of over \$1 trillion, vaulting nuclear weapons spending relative to the overall defense budget to a level comparable to the 1980s.”

Of course, while not unimportant, cost is not the only objection that should be raised to this bipartisan backed plan. As long as these weapons exist there is always the danger that they will be used, if not intentionally like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, then accidentally, or through miscalculation. From what I hear from many eager candidates for president, I would not trust them with the launch codes.

Fidel Castro was at Ground Zero during the closest we have come to MAD becoming reality during the 1962 Missile Crisis. Now retired at age 89, he still writes perceptive observations about the state of the world. He has said, “Numerous dangers threaten us, but two of them, nuclear war and climate change, are decisive, and both are ever farther away from coming close to a solution.”

Fidel is spot on. Nuclear War, followed by Nuclear Winter, would be swift and catastrophic. Climate Change will be more insidious, spanning decades. Both threaten the future of civilization, perhaps even our species. Both are caused by human activity that can be altered.

Fidel goes on to say, “I think it is a basic duty of all serious and sane persons, who number in the millions, to fight to postpone and perhaps to prevent that dramatic and imminent event [nuclear or climate catastrophe] in today's world.”

It is the American ruling class and their government that has been, and continues to be, the prime culprit in the crimes leading to both overarching crises.

While a promising climate action movement is shaping up, the same cannot be said for the nuclear weapons threat. Many have become complacent over the quarter-century of weapon-reduction treaties with Moscow.

One of the biggest employers in my hometown is a plant making triggers for warheads, operated by Honeywell and unionized in the IAM. They recently moved in to a giant new facility—leaving an environmental mess behind at the old. Both the bosses and union bureaucracy are enthusiastic supporters of “modernizing” the nuclear arsenal because it means huge profits and some decent paying jobs.

That's why we also need to pay attention to this other crisis. We must develop a Just Transition program to protect the nuclear industry workers as we advocate eliminating new production, and dismantling existing stockpiles—just as sane and serious worker climate activists are starting to do for the vast economic restructuring needed to stop climate change. ■

Climate disaster in Bangladesh

(continued from page 5)

dering it unfit for cultivation.

As for the shrimp, they are now victims of infectious diseases. The “market” doesn't care: if necessary, capital will bring destruction elsewhere. But the local population is sunk into poverty. This problem is in fact not recent; it dates back to the early 1990s. In a region where shrimp aquaculture has been developed, nine villages resisted, under the impetus of a woman

who was murdered by the police. These villages have become an island of greenery, biodiversity, an example of food sovereignty, a living condemnation of the agro-industry. It is this type of struggle in which we are engaged for the defense of the peasantry, but also precarious workers, street vendors and the urban poor or indigenous peoples (Adivasis).

We [also] have provided aid to the textile workers who were victims of the collapse in Dhaka of the Rana Plaza industrial building in 2013 (aid to the hospitalized first, and then the purchase of sewing machines for women workers with lifetime disabilities), or to villages affected by floods or exceptional cold in the north. ■

Theatre

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

“Two Trains Running,” staged by The Multi Ethnic Theatre in association with Custom Made Theatre as part of an August in August event in San Francisco.

“Two Trains Running,” which premiered in 1990, is set in the 1960s. It is one in a series of plays by the internationally known, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, August Wilson, who died in October 2005. He had written what he called his “Pittsburgh Cycle,” plays about Black lives in the United States, for each decade from the 1900s through the 1990s.

“Trains,” takes place over a few days in 1969 in the “Hill District” of Pittsburgh, Pa.—a once thriving Black neighborhood that was demolished through the misguided policies of the city’s Urban Redevelopment Authority. This production was directed by Lewis Campbell (who also designed the set).

Wilson, like other 20th-century playwrights, such as Eugene O’Neill, wrote plays that unfold slowly, asking the audience’s patience as the characters take their time telling their stories. The dialogue throughout concerns the relationship of Black people to whites, and much of it tracks with the current issue of white cops shooting innocent-Blacks.

In this theatre, the audience sat on three sides of a realistic set, depicting a typical diner complete with booths, a jukebox, and pass-through window to the kitchen. Memphis Lee (an excellent Bennie Lewis, whose scowl almost outdoes the late Toshiro Mifu-



© Charlie Teele Harris

‘Two Trains Running’

ne’s) owns and runs the diner. A blackboard lists prices of the era for fried chicken with dumplings, beans and corn bread, and steak and potatoes that range from 65 cents to \$2.35; coffee is a nickel.

Lee and his customers, each of whom slowly reveals their soul, seem to find it hard to escape the confined world of the diner. Although they complain about the events that are shaping their community, they are steeped in lethargy, and need prodding in order to try to take control of their lives.

Sleek, catlike, well-dressed Fabian Herd plays a 40s-something Wolf, a numbers-runner. Old man owner Memphis Lee, who comes off angry most of the time and rails at cook/waitress Risa (played with quiet introspection by Beverly McGriff), warns Wolf about using the diner’s payphone for his business. The city wants to buy his building cheap and tear it down, part of the city’s misguided “urban-renewal” and gentrification policies, which would force out Black and poor residents.

A heavy-set, older man, Holloway (Stuart Elwyn Hall), is sprawled in his booth, doing crossword puzzles, or studying racing forms. He often interjects meaningful philosophical comments into the conversations, but does nothing to defend Risa from the constant criticism by Memphis Lee.

For most of the first act, we hear about West, the undertaker—black suit, black hat, black gloves. When we finally meet him (Vernan Medearis), he looks like he had once been a much larger man. Sporting a gray goatee, he comes in for his cuppa, always reminding Risa to bring the sugar packets, which he stashes in his pockets, thinking no one will notice.

On opening night at this theatre, Anthony Pride replaced Geoffrey Grier as the believable, pathetic character of Hambone, who is obviously mentally ill. Seems that a decade earlier he was duped by a white butcher into painting a fence in return for a ham, but he never got paid what was promised. Regulars want him to shut up, but Risa is sympathetic.

At one point, Lee goes into a long, physical rant about the white man’s exploitation of “niggahs” (a word used prolifically throughout the play), using the metaphor of comparing their actions to stacking cordwood, keeping Black people down and thus increasing The Man’s wealth.

Sterling (a stocky, handsome Keita



(Above) August Wilson.

(Left) A waitress at Crawford’s Cafe in 1945 in Pittsburgh’s old Hill District.

Jones), a newcomer, shows up halfway through the play as the harbinger of revolutionary action. He is a young, idealistic, ex-con who has been influenced by the work of Malcolm X. He brings to the diner the current events of the time about which the others seem uninterested or cynical, and a stack of flyers for a Black Power rally building up outside.

The play ends with the noise of shouting outside and Sterling rushing in with Hambone’s payment. Offstage, there’s an unexplained explosion and sirens, possibly police action directed at the Black Power demonstrators.

August Wilson’s plays are always relevant, especially now in the time of Black Lives Matter. His plays are often staged in the United States—in fact, throughout the world. I encourage readers to find one playing in your area and make a point to see it.

“Radio Golf,” Wilson’s final play in the Cycle, will be staged by this company in August 2016. ■

... Climate

(continued from page 4)

layer absorbs sunlight, which makes the stratosphere warmer, but now that the ozone is damaged and depleted, it makes the stratosphere colder and the area below as well.

The real problem facing the continent is the steady and rapid disintegration of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS). Its two largest glaciers—the Pine Island and the Thwaite—are in trouble because the grounding lines that pin the ice shelves to the bedrock are below sea level. Warm seawater has been steadily eating away at the floating ice and its underpinnings. As the ice shelves lose mass and their buttresses erode, their ability to hold back the land-based glaciers, which are the source of sea-level rise, is greatly weakened. It is believed that the WAIS glaciers are past the point of no return since they have been speeding up for the last 40 years.

Because mountain peaks are warming faster than valleys and plains, alpine glaciers are in long-term retreat on every continent in every climate—temperate, tropical, and polar—a trend that became apparent in the 20th century. Several hundred of the world’s glaciers are losing between one-half and one meter of thickness per year, two times the average loss of the last century.

Glacier National Park had 150 of its namesake formations in 1850. The number has been reduced to 25, and Alaska is losing ice at the rate of 75 billion tons

annually. The disappearance of mountain glaciers, which feed many of the major rivers of the world, has undermined the storage and timed release of water, threatening freshwater and food supplies. Moreover, the thawing of these land-based glaciers adds to sea level and accounts for one-third of its rise.

From paleo evidence, Hansen *et al.* conclude that sea-level rise came in pulses and occurred quickly and that ice sheets can melt at a non-linear rate—that is, exponentially, not incrementally—shedding enormous amounts of mass in decades rather than millennia, as the more conservative IPCC holds.

The UN panel has said that sea levels will rise three feet by 2100, a gross underestimation in comparison and a view long held in suspicion by others because existing climate models are underestimating the impacts of ice sheet melt. In contrast, Hansen believes that Greenland and Antarctica will melt 10 times faster than currently predicted.

The time of relatively stable climate since the last Ice Age is known as the Holocene, but because of powerful human influences on the climate, it has been labeled the Anthropocene by some. With the birth of agriculture and the clearing of forests for crops, humans were already influencing the climate 10,000 years ago. With the intensification of capitalist industrialization and mechanized warfare at the beginning of the 20th century, that process became even more intense. That is why Hansen now refers to the present as the Hyper-Anthropocene, and he believes that the very fabric of civilization will be torn to pieces if a serious and



concerted effort is not made to meet this planetary crisis head on.

Unfortunately, Hansen’s solutions are still on the weak side, demanding the mild reform of a carbon fee or tax, although we would not object to taxing polluters clean out of existence if it were possible. His call for nuclear reactors powered by thorium are completely unacceptable as well.

The only way to stop further environmental devastation by a greedy capitalist class that refuses to give up its fossil-fuel-based economy is to nationalize the entire energy industry and put it under democratic workers’ control. At the same time, we must ensure a just transition with retraining, union wages, and full benefits for all workers making the shift from the production of dirty fuels to clean, renewable energy.

There is not one capitalist politician who supports such sweeping change. In fact, every short-sighted, self-serving

vote hustler running in the elections this year is for maintenance of the status quo because their interests are tied hand and foot to the Energy Giants. That is why climate crisis activists and those struggling against environmental racism in their communities and on tribal lands must take their protests to the streets.

We must create a powerful movement for ecological and social change, and one of the best ways to do that is to build on the momentum of the People’s Climate March of last year and organize huge mass demonstrations demanding real action to cut greenhouse gas emissions from all sources to zero as soon as possible.

Plans for protests are already underway in many parts of the world leading up to the November-December climate talks, and we encourage all those wanting to save Mother Earth for human habitation and future generations to dedicate themselves to that effort. ■

Vote NDP — without illusions

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The political sea change represented by the orange wave in 2011 seems about to wash ashore the first labour-linked federal government in Canadian history.

The union-based New Democratic Party led opinion polls in early September, and is poised to form a majority in Parliament after the Oct. 19 vote. While pundits debate whether this political tsunami is due to mass disaffection with the authoritarian Conservative regime under Stephen Harper more than popular infatuation with the NDP's milquetoast election platform, undeniable is the fact that the two-party system that dominated Canada for a century and a half is a thing of the past.

To say that this makes the Canadian establishment nervous is an understatement. The ruling rich would much rather limit the "practical" choice of voters to the Bay Street-backed Liberals and Tories. In fact, Capital is so rattled by the polls that a section of big business has pushed the Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau to campaign ostensibly to the left of the NDP.

To create jobs and stimulate the recession-bogged economy, Trudeau pledges to spend billions to repair infrastructure and to reduce taxes on the "middle class." He forecasts three years of federal budget deficits. NDP Leader Tom Mulcair stubbornly insists that he will not even contemplate a deficit budget, prompting Trudeau to predict that Mulcair would be forced to renege on bold multi-billion-dollar spending plans, ranging from child care to health care.

Clearly, the Liberals are guilty of supreme chutzpah. It was former Liberal Finance Minister and Prime Minister Paul Martin (now campaigning alongside Trudeau) who imposed the biggest cuts in federal spending in Canadian history. Still, Tom Mulcair has a serious problem. Without substantially increasing taxes on giant corporations and the affluent, which runs counter to his mantra of holding the line on personal income tax, providing tax credits for businesses that invest in innovation, and his proposal to reduce the small business tax rate from 11 to 9 per cent, Mulcair is cutting himself off at the knees.

Even if the Canadian economy does not descend deeper into recession, an NDP administration, under tremendous pressure from Bay Street, would likely trim or postpone indefinitely its promised reforms, thus alienating its popular base. Likely is a re-play of the Bob Rae Ontario NDP regime of the early 1990s, which not only abandoned its promise of public auto insurance, but slashed spending, contracted-out services, and imposed unpaid "holidays" on public employees.

Mulcair's effort to shake the spendthrift image of the NDP, unjustly fostered by the corporate media, by aping the fiscal conservatism of the Tories, follows in the shaky footsteps of Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath. She apologized to the party faithful for a disastrous June 2014 provincial election campaign.

Mulcair, in the short run, may get away with it because the Harper Conservatives are forced to wear the current economic downturn. They look like dictators and warmongers, and are up to their eyeballs in deceit over the Mike Duffy, et al, Senate spending scandal.

Nonetheless, over time, Mulcair will have to square his social promises with his tax policies. He will have to deal with his contradictions on pipeline construction, international "free trade" deals, support for police and the military, and his persistent excuses for the atrocities committed daily by the Israeli apartheid state and its merciless siege of Gaza.

Party controllers have lately demonstrated a rising intolerance of legitimate political differences in the ranks. Nova Scotia NDP candidate Morgan Wheeldon was forced to resign for calling Israel's 2014 attack on Gaza—which killed more than 2200 people, among them over 500 children—a war crime. NDP member Syed Hyder Ali, who sought the nomination in Edmonton Wetaskiwin, was blocked for quoting a 2014 state-

No coalition with the Liberal Party!



(Above) NDP Leader Tom Mulcair.

(Below) Liberal Party Leader Justin Trudeau.



hearing as a result of an NDP win. Those who promote steeply progressive taxation of big business and the rich to reduce glaring inequality and to meet human needs, those who want a foreign policy based on solidarity with the oppressed and firm opposition to war and imperialism, those who demand an end to state spying on everyone and a halt to repression of social justice seekers will feel the wind at their backs.

At the same time, it is clear that the NDP tops, who are now trying to establish their bone fides with the Canadian corporate elite, will resist efforts from below to hold them to their progressive pledges. They will step on the toes of leaders of labour affiliates. They will disavow social protest movements.

Their commitment is to *capitalism with a human face*. It is hard to imagine a more monumental contradiction in terms, even at the best of times. Today the world economy is in recession, with waves of desperate refugees fleeing the ravages of imperialist intervention and environmental disasters induced by the heartless private-profit system.

If the betrayal of Syriza, a supposedly radical leftist party in Greece, was predictable, the retrenchment of an NDP regime in Ottawa is almost a foregone conclusion. And an NDP coalition with the Liberal Party, or even with the Green Party, would only furnish more excuses for retreat from a progressive platform, let alone rule out a Workers' Agenda—so the notion of an NDP alliance with any capitalist party should be rejected in principle.

The merit of fighting for an NDP government is not diminished by the pro-capitalist outlook of its leaders because the prospects for socialism depend on the class struggle, not on the low political horizons and the narrow career ambitions of party officials.

For the class struggle to advance the interests of the vast majority, partisans of the working class should be organized to fight for socialist measures. That effort must take place both inside and outside the party and its labour affiliates.

An NDP victory will raise the confidence of working people to assert their demands. It will alter the relationship of class forces to the disadvantage of Capital and in favour of the popular majority.

In the remaining weeks of the campaign, socialists will seize the opportunity to canvass their neighbours in support of local NDP candidates, collect signatures on the 4Ps petition being circulated by the NDP Socialist Caucus (see page 9), and urge people to **Vote NDP, without illusions.** ■

ment by Amnesty International to the same effect.

Jerry Natane of Nunavut, the mayor of Clyde River, was tossed because, in his words, "I often side with the Palestinians because of all the hardship they are facing and because nothing is being re-built over there."

In Toronto Centre, the party brass silenced star candidate Linda McQuaig for publicly stating the obvious, that much of the Alberta oil should be kept in the ground if Canada is to meet its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

These positions are problematic for the NDP leadership, particularly in Quebec, where such issues strongly resonate and the party enjoys a commanding lead in the polls over the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Greens, and the nationalist Bloc Québécois. The BQ is tainted by its association with anti-worker laws enacted by its provincial cousin, the Parti Québécois, in recent decades.

That should not be confused with an absence of support for Quebec sovereignty. The staunchly federalist Mulcair will still have to ride the tiger of Quebec's national aspirations, given that up to half of his MPs will likely hail from that nation/province, drawing much support from ex-BQ voters.

This is the longest election campaign in modern Canadian history (a tactic the autocrat Harper may already regret). Much can still happen to change its course. The point, however, is not simply to interpret the train of events, but to influence it.

An NDP victory will open the space for leftist ideas. It will likely secure and restore home mail delivery, un-muzzle scientists working for federal departments, eliminate some of the egregious tax breaks for the rich, lift the lid on the murder and disappearance of thousands of aboriginal women, raise the minimum wage, and possibly establish quality, public child care for up to a million kids.

Those who advocate national Pharmacare, and public ownership of Big Oil and Gas to facilitate a major shift to green energy systems, will gain a much wider