

Protesters demand *real* action on climate change



By CHRISTINE FRANK

On the eve of the UN Climate Summit in Paris, some 785,000 people marched and rallied in 2500 locations around the world to demand concrete action to phase out fossil fuels and implement clean, renewable energy to prevent catastrophic warming of Earth's atmosphere—with a *binding* agreement to achieve that. Perhaps the largest action took place in London, where about 50,000 marched from Hyde Park to the site of government offices in Whitehall.

Despite the ban on demonstrations in France due to the State of Emergency declared after the Nov. 13 terrorist attacks, 10,000 lined the streets and formed a human chain along the originally-designated route of a climate march that had been unjustly prohibited. The action was initiated by Indian activist Vandana Shiva.

Another 5000 demonstrators gathered in the Place de la Republique in Paris on Nov. 29 to put pressure on the UN's COP 21 climate talks. The peaceful protest was brutally attacked by police with clubs, beatings, and tear gas, followed by 289 arrests. The government slandered the action as violent, when clearly the onus was on the cops, not the protesters.

Actions defying the ban took place in other French cities as well. Dozens of French environmental activists who oppose the attacks on their civil liberties have been placed under house arrest, and computers, documents, and personal effects have been confiscated in police raids. Clearly, the French authorities are applying a double standard toward climate crisis ac-

tivists when enforcing their "special measures" since they are allowing remembrances for the 11/13 dead, sporting events, concerts, trade fairs, and Christmas markets but not peaceful actions to defend the climate from the onslaughts of the fossil fuel industry.

Unlike many reformist environmentalists and NGOs, who have passively accepted the suppression of the right to assemble and refused to speak out, more militant protesters are saying, "Stop Polluters, Not Demonstrators!" and "Change the System, Not the Climate!" Civil disobedience is being called on Red Line Day, Dec. 12, the final day of the conference.

The police-state tactics that define a demonstration as two-plus people with a shared political message, and silence the voices of dissent, now allow the giant transnationals to freely manipulate the delegates.

It's no accident that some of France's and the world's biggest polluters—EDF, the state-owned electrical firm; BNP Paribas, one of the largest banks; Air France; and GDF Suez—are major sponsors of the UN climate talks. No less than 20% of the conference's proceedings are underwritten by corporations, allowing Energy Giants such as Shell and Chevron to influence the deliberations through pressure tactics and backroom deals.

We have known for years that the major obstacle to progress has been Big Oil, Gas and Coal along with Big Auto, who have financed climate denial to cast doubt on the science. *Inside Climate News* and the *Los Angeles Times* recently exposed the cover-up by Exxon/Mobil in which the company lied about fossil-fuel combustion causing global warming. Its own sci-

entists already knew of the consequences of hydrocarbon burning back in the 1970s, but their findings were deliberately suppressed by Exxon executives. Consequently, the public was misled for decades.

As for the talks themselves, they began on Nov. 30 with heads of state making one statement after the other late into the night as to the dire situation in which the world finds itself and how COP 21 must mark a turning point in history.

Yet, the 170 voluntary national pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions between 2020 and 2030 coming from countries responsible for 97% of global carbon pollution fall woefully short of what is actually needed to keep the global temperature increase under 2 degrees Celsius.

In fact, according to a dozen different studies, current reduction goals are likely to cause a cataclysmic 2.7-3.7C rise instead! Low-lying, small island nations rightly insist on a much safer temperature ceiling of under 1C, and for good reason. The Marshall Islands, which are only six feet above sea level, are disappearing below rising seas, largely due to melting ice sheets. Many residents have already fled their homeland.

Their president delivered to the conference floor 350.org's demand to keep at least 80% of fossil fuels underground and to finance a just transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050. Finance equity is especially important for poor nations so they can avoid a dirty path to the decent quality of life to which they

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Chicago marchers decry coverup of shooting by police



By ADAM SHILS

CHICAGO — On Oct. 20, 2014, Laquan McDonald, 17, was fatally shot by Chicago Police Officer Jason Van Dyke. McDonald, suspected of stealing car radios, was only armed with a knife.

The police car dash-cam video shows McDonald some yards from the police officers and not moving toward them when Van Dyke opens fire. Although McDonald has fallen to the ground and appears to be incapacitated by the first shot, the officer fires 15 more times. Van Dyke had to be stopped by other police officers from reloading at the end of the volley.

More than a year after the shooting, on Nov. 24, 2015, Van Dyke was charged with first-degree murder—the same day that the dash-cam video was finally released.

The administration of Mayor Rahm Emanuel has come under fire for fighting release of the video

for over a year. Some have suggested the delay was meant to insulate the mayor during his re-election effort. A week after the video was released, Emanuel fired Police Superintendent Garry F. McCarthy.

All this occurs in the context of the post-Ferguson attention to the shooting of African Americans by police officers and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement. Demonstrations, mainly of young people, started immediately after the video was made public.

As protesters wove through the streets, the chant rang out: "Sixteen shots!" Protesters have expressed outrage that it took 13 months after the killing to indict Van Dyke. He was allowed to draw a salary during the entire period.

Recently, attention has focused on the possibility that the police intentionally erased footage from a security camera at a Burger King near the site of McDonald's shooting. While the angle of the camera would not have shown the actual killing, it would

have shown the events beforehand and, perhaps more importantly, police activity in the minutes after the shooting. In addition, the Burger King manager has charged that the FBI seized the video recorder, including all of its surveillance footage.

On "Black Friday", Nov. 27, the Rev. Jesse Jackson called for a demonstration in the Michigan Avenue "Magnificent Mile" shopping area. Despite rain and high winds, perhaps 1000 to 1300 people took part.

The march was predominantly African American, and much of the traditional Black leadership of Chicago supported the march. Both Bobby Rush and Danny Davis, long-term elected officials, were prominent, as was mayoral contender Chuy Garcia.

At the assembly point, the Rev. Jackson raised the demand that an independent prosecutor be assigned to the case, as well as federal intervention. "Who knew what about the tape," he asked, "When, and who covered it up?"

Before the march even began, a contingent of perhaps one to two hundred, carrying the traditional red, black, and green flags of the Black nationalist movement, split away. The main demonstration then marched north through the Michigan Avenue shopping area.

The march ended at Water Tower Place, where a rally was to be held. Jackson and the other speakers faced considerable heckling from the breakaway contingent. In a confrontation, the platform's sound system was disabled. This led to Jackson and his entourage leaving the demonstration.

After some of the shops on Michigan Avenue had closed their doors to protesters who were trying to get out of the rain, some demonstrators, in groups of 10 to 20 people, linked their arms and began to block the shop entrances. These blockades continued for several hours. While there was a large police presence, there were only a small number of arrests. One group of about 20 continued a blockade of Macy's into the evening.

Protests have steadily continued. On Nov. 28, three relatively small demonstrations took place. One was at City Hall and one on Cottage Grove Avenue, with limited blockading of Michigan Avenue shops. ■

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.

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Protesters demand, 'Justice for Jamar!' as Minneapolis cops clear their camp

By KAREN and JOHN SCHRAUFNAGEL

"To us, he was a loving young man. America has a criminal record. Minnesota has a criminal record against Black people. So if we are judging people against their past, let us start at the head"

—Kenya McKnight, spokesperson for Jamar Clark's family, Nov. 17, 2015.

MINNEAPOLIS—At 12:45 am on Sunday morning, Nov. 15, police here shot Jamar Clark, an unarmed Black man, in the head as he lay on the ground handcuffed. This was reported by numerous witnesses and confirmed by cell-phone video. Since it happened, the capitalist politicians, police, and news people have undertaken a coordinated effort to spin the message away from that truth.

Since Nov. 15, protesters have maintained a continuous presence at the Fourth Precinct on Minneapolis' North Side, a predominately Black working-class neighborhood. Black Lives Matter Minneapolis sent text messages at midday on Nov. 15 calling people to the "scene of the crime," and the response has been powerful.

Unlike previous occupations with unclear demands, Black Lives Matter Minneapolis, together with the NAACP and the entire community, are united in demanding "Justice for Jamar," "Release the Tapes" (referring to all the video of the shooting currently in police possession, which they refuse to make public), and "Prosecute the Police."

"We've been saying for a long time that Minneapolis was one bullet away from Ferguson. Well, that bullet was fired last night," said Jason Sole, an associate professor at Metropolitan State University and a member of the local NAACP chapter, at a protest on Nov. 16.

Soon after the murder occurred, a "village" sprung up on Plymouth Avenue directly in front of the Fourth Precinct building. Mel Reeves, a long-time activist and resident of the neighborhood, described the scene in a Facebook post: "Village is the right term for the tent city that has developed on the grounds of the Fourth Precinct. ... Every kind of cuisine you could think of has been served free of charge at the Village. All you have to do is show up and support the protest and you can get your belly full. ... Since it's cold, the young people got people to donate warm clothing and gloves. Folks who didn't have winter clothing have been supplied some pretty nice coats and gloves; for free."

We conclude our report on the first week of the occupation with some comments from Mel Reeves that place the protest in perspective:

"Our enemies don't rest, so the head of the Minneapolis police federation, Lt. Bob Kroll (rhymes with troll) opened his 'lie hole' and said he is sure the cops would be exonerated. For the record, I use the word federation because there is no such thing as a 'police union.' Unions are formations of working people. The police are by their status as enforcers for the system enemies of working people, usually taking the side of the employer over the employee, boss over worker, the rich over the poor, white over black, and of course the side of a rigged law against the rights of the people. It's why they kill white people as well..."

"The last thing the system wants is people in the streets. I mean in their downtown streets, interrupting commerce and even worse, giving other people ideas. Make no mistake, the power structure hates protest. They are well studied and they know that's how revolutions start."

White supremacists attack BLM encampment

On Nov. ?? white supremacists attacked the encampment at the Fourth Precinct. Black Lives Matter Minneapolis member Miski Noor delivered a statement on the attack press on Nov. 24:

"What happened last night was a planned hate crime, and an act of terrorism against activists who have been occupying the Fourth Precinct to demand justice for Jamar Clark, a Black man shot and killed by the Minneapolis police department. Shortly before 11 p.m., four masked gunmen approached our encampment site outside the Fourth Precinct and began filming, the same behavior that had been exhibited by armed white supremacists who had previously visited the encampment and issued threats.

"Community members approached the men and asked them to identify their purpose and to please



(Above) A cop takes aim near the encampment of protesters at the Fourth Precinct police station.

remove their masks. When they refused, they were escorted away from the encampment site. About 1/2 a block away from the precinct, the masked men opened fire, shooting five people, including one who was shot in the stomach, and required surgery.

"Despite earlier statements from the police about the impending threat from white supremacists, the police instead maced citizen journalists and peaceful protesters. They made disparaging comments to those at the protest, instead of taking the threats seriously. We reiterate that we have zero faith in this police department's desire to keep our community safe. ...

"White supremacists had already begun visiting the encampment in the preceding week; they had posted videos threatening anyone who believes that Black Lives Matter here. But we will not bow to fear or intimidation. Black Lives Matter exists to fight against this type of violent white supremacy, dangerous anti-black rhetoric and criminalization of black people. Because of that we are re-committing our occupation of the fourth precinct until we get justice.

Demonstrating that "we will not bow to fear and intimidation," thousands showed up for a 2 p.m. rally, which filled the streets of Minneapolis, marching all the way to City Hall. The march was followed by a memorial concert back at the precinct with prominent local artists and members of the Clark family, who reiterated the family's unequivocal support for the ongoing occupation.

(A letter, which received quite a lot of press, stated that the family thought the protesters should go home, in view of the danger posed by white supremacists. This letter, in fact, came out of Congressman Keith Ellison's office.)

Again, Mel Reeves supplies important perspective: "No matter how one views these events, the blame, the fault, should be placed squarely where it belongs, at the feet of the social, political, economic system which smoothly uses white supremacy to keep the races divided so they can enhance their bottom line; profit."

Because week two also contained the Thanksgiving holiday, organizers and supporters put together "Blacksgiving." The Facebook invitation read: "Please join us as we reject a history of violence, genocide, and oppression, and host a #Blacksgiving in front of the 4th Precinct where community members have been occupying, demanding #Justice4Jamar since Sunday, November 15th." Over 500 made it to the site for some part of the day. All enjoyed community spirit and were well fed.

Politicians say the camp must go

Week three started with Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges holding a press conference to announce that the two-week-old occupation needed to end "for the health and safety of everyone in the neighborhood." Surrounding herself with every Black politician and community leader coopted enough to side with property over people, the mayor asked the protesters to

voluntarily leave the encampment. The theme of the morning was "enough is enough."

Congressman Keith Ellison, who represents Minneapolis and had previously visited the protesters and expressed solidarity with their cause, said he did not want to see police move the encampment out, "But what alternative do we have if they won't voluntarily move?"

Nekima Levy-Pounds, Minneapolis NAACP president, spoke to protesters at the Fourth Precinct (in a "personal capacity," meaning the NAACP is now distancing itself from her comments and actions): "Now I heard about that press conference Mayor Hodges did earlier with the old-guard leadership. Everybody that stood with Mayor Hodges is not part of the solution, they're part of the problem. ...

"We will not continue to tolerate old-guard Black leadership, sitting at these tables, looking for power, looking for grant money, selling out our community. ... And I'm tired of these politicians, knocking on our door, asking for our vote, and then they get in office and don't do diddly with the political power that they have. We asked them to change the laws and the policies that are oppressing people, and they'd rather focus on storing political capital than doing the right thing on behalf of the people.

"They don't care what happens to the poor and vulnerable, because if they did they would have held the 4th Precinct and the Minneapolis Police Department accountable a long time ago. But instead, what did they do? Continue to rubber stamp the system, continue to pay out millions and millions in excessive force complaints, to settle those lawsuits. As far as I'm concerned, every member of government who played a role in that has blood on their hands because if they held the police accountable a long time ago, Jamar Clark might still be alive."

Also on Monday, Nov. 30, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman announced that he had charged the four gunmen who shot five protesters at the encampment one week earlier with riot and assault. But he declined to charge any with attempted murder, hate crimes, or domestic terrorism.

Responding to both outrages—Mayor Hodges' subtle threat to forcibly evict the protesters and Freeman's failure to charge the white supremacists appropriately—Black Lives Matter activists and allies visited City Hall twice on Tuesday. In the morning, clergy and interfaith activists sat in at City Hall, reiterating the demand to #ReleaseTheTapes, while calling for an end to this #TaleOf2Cities that are separate and unequal.

At 4 p.m., more than 150 people, mostly young, gathered outside City Hall, saying among other things "#WeChargeTerrorism: attacks by armed terrorists against our movement will not be tolerated, and continued terrorism from the Minneapolis Police

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(Left) A woman places a sign of solidarity near the site of the Nov. 27 assault on a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs.

Colorado clinic assault reflects wide attack on women's rights

By ANN MONTAGUE

As soon as the news first broke of a gunman's murderous assault inside a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Col., women all over the country understood the meaning of the attack.

The Nov. 27 shooting was another attack on a woman's right to abortion. But that is not how it was reported. Even as seven ambulances and the local SWAT team complete with armored vehicles rushed to the scene, the on-the-scene news reports were suggesting that it was a robbery at a bank next door to a "health clinic." For some unknown reason, they said that the "robber" had run into the clinic.

Once the media started saying it was a Planned Parenthood clinic and he killed three and wounded nine persons, they quickly declared that they had absolutely no idea about the shooter's motive. But certainly, the local media remembered that Planned Parenthood in Colorado Springs was the site of large anti-abortion protests over the summer after abortion opponents released secret, edited videos supposedly of Planned Parenthood officials' discussing the selling of fetal organs for research.

On Aug. 22, the day of nationwide protests to defund Planned Parenthood, local news reports stated that more than 300 people had protested outside the clinic in Colorado Springs. At the same time, death threats against abortion providers rose sharply around the country. This year alone, arsonists at-

tacked four Planned Parenthood clinics in Washington, California, Illinois, and Louisiana.

Robert Lewis Dear Jr., the man who police say staged the deadly shooting at the Planned Parenthood clinic that offers abortion services, said, "no more baby parts" after his arrest. Planned Parenthood reported that witnesses had said that the gunman was motivated by his opposition to abortion. An official who has been briefed on the investigation told the *Washington Post* that the attack was "definitely politically motivated."

Two of those who were murdered by the gunman had accompanied friends to Planned Parenthood. Kerre Stewart, 29, was a father of two girls and an Iraq veteran. Jennifer Markovsky, 35, was a mother of two who was with a friend at the clinic. The third victim was campus police officer Garrett Swasey.

In a press release, Dawn Laguens, executive vice president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said: "It is offensive and outrageous that some politicians are now claiming this tragedy has nothing to do with the toxic environment they helped create. Even when the gunman was still inside of our health center, politicians who have long opposed safe and legal abortion were on television pushing their campaign to defund Planned Parenthood and invoking the discredited video smear campaign that reportedly fed this shooter's rage"

The day before the attack on the clinic, Republican Presidential candidate Marco Rubio stated that

"*Roe v. Wade* is law but it is not settled law." In 2016, the Supreme Court is taking on its first abortion case in eight years. The justices announced on Nov. 20 that they will hear arguments over a Texas law that would leave only 10 abortion clinics open across the state. The High Court previously blocked parts of the Texas law.

While Republicans continued to attack Planned Parenthood, Democrats were quick to divert the issue of women's reproductive rights to that of gun violence. Leading the charge was President Obama, who simply urged the nation to "do something" about the pattern of gun violence.

While the Democratic Party has used the War on Women as their mantra, they have not been authentic fighters for our rights. In 1976 they passed the Hyde Amendment, which prohibited the use of Medicaid money to pay for abortion services for poor women. This has occurred repeatedly when Democrats were in the majority as well as Republicans.

A majority of people in the U.S. support a woman's right to abortion and contraception. The current attacks on Planned Parenthood are assaults on all women because it is an ideological war to erode the rights won by the second wave of feminism. The way to start winning the battles of the war on women is to mobilize our numbers and not be diverted.

To achieve abortion rights and birth control for every woman, perhaps we could look back at history. Currently, there is an excellent movie being shown around the country called "Suffragette." It is the history of the last stage of the struggle of working women in England for the right to vote.

The leader of that movement was Emmeline Pankhurst, who wrote some advice for American women. While the issue was suffrage, it certainly applies to a movement that demands abortion and birth control rights for all in 2016. In Pankhurst's book, "My Own Story," she writes, "I can assure the American women that our long alliance with the great parties, our devotion to party programmes, our faithful work at elections, never advanced the suffrage cause one step.

"As far as I am concerned, I did not delude myself with false hopes. I was convinced of the futility of trusting in political parties. Look at how and why the agricultural labourers won their franchise. They won it by burning their hay-ricks and demonstrating their strength in the only way English politicians understand. The threat to march a hundred thousand men to the House of Commons played its part in securing the agricultural labourer his political freedom."

That is good advice to consider as we move into the election charade next year. We need to build a movement with the strength and independence of the struggle for women's suffrage if we want to win safe abortion and available birth control for all. ■

General strikes in Greece

By MARTY GOODMAN

Since the Sept. 20 election that enabled Greece's Syriza government to retain power, there's been an uptick in mass action. Protests focused on the government's proposed tax hikes and plans to cut pensions for retired workers.

Some 25,000 trade-union members marched in the first anti-memorandum strike against Syriza in a 24-hour strike in Athens on Nov. 12. Another 10,000 marched in Thessaloniki, Greece's second biggest city.

The strike was called by the Civil Servants Confederation (AD-EDY) and the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and the Communist Party-linked "PAME," the "All-workers' Militant Front." The red flags of Communist Party supporters in PAME flew in big contingents. Syriza's labor policy office hypocritically denounced "neoliberal policies" and encouraged party members to march.

One worker said, "I am protesting against the government because they are making fools of us." Many demonstrators held banners declaring "No more!" and "It won't pass."

On Dec. 3, workers once again walked off their jobs to join a general strike called by the unions to protest austerity. The 24-hour walkout shut down public services and transportation, closed schools, and forced hospitals to function with reduced staffs. ■

... Justice!

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Department must end." Protesters pointed out that white terrorism is far more common and more deadly than any foreign threat. Finally, supporters were urged to contact Mike Freeman at 612-348-2146 and tell him not to use a grand jury in the Jamar Clark case (grand juries DO NOT indict cops) but to appoint a special prosecutor instead.

Beginning late Monday evening, tweets started coming that the police were staging and seemed to be preparing to evict the protesters. At 3:45 am on Dec. 3, over 100 Minneapolis Police violently evicted the #4thPrecinctShutDown and bulldozed the camp, putting an end to 18 days of a peaceful 24/7 protest and arresting eight.

Kandace Montgomery, an organizer with Black Lives Matter Minneapolis, said: "This morning Mayor Hodges, Council member Blong Yang and Barb Johnson, and Minneapolis Police showed yet again that they would rather tear down Black communi-

ties than address the needs of our community. Though they destroyed the community space we created, they will not destroy our resolve to fight until we get justice for Jamar Clark, or the bonds created across a diverse set of communities."

Organizer Mica Grimm added, "We reiterate our demands: Release the tapes, appoint a special prosecutor with no grand jury for Jamar Clark's case, institute a safety plan to protect Minneapolis residents from continued police violence, and address racial disparities plaguing our communities."

Twelve hours later, over 400 converged on City Hall, taking their message directly to the mayor and city council. The peaceful protesters with Black Lives Matter Minneapolis endured a white supremacist terrorist attack, police violence—mace, batons, less lethal bullets—and freezing temperatures to demand justice for Jamar Clark and Black people in Minnesota.

Organizers are grateful to the thousands of supporters who stood with them in the weeks since Jamar Clark was murdered by Minneapolis police. "Our work is not over; it has just begun." ■

Thousands in Bay Area protest Paris climate talks

BY JEFF MACKLER

OAKLAND, Calif.—Organized by a broad coalition of environmental, social justice, labor, antiwar, anti-racist, and faith-based groups across Northern California, some 3000 mobilized on Saturday, Nov. 21, to demand immediate action to stop and reverse global warming and associated climate-change-influenced catastrophes.

The mobilization was part of the worldwide effort to protest the Nov. 30–Dec. 12 UN COP21 Paris climate conference, where little or no substantial actions were expected to stop and reverse the climate crisis.

Major organizing efforts began here some five months ago, an important factor that made the Oakland march and rally the largest in the U.S. to date among the many planned in cities across the country both before and after the UN-sponsored Paris talks.

Some 200 groups endorsed this action, initiated and sponsored by the Northern Climate Climate Mobilization. Fifty to sixty dedicated activists, representing almost as many organizations, met bi-weekly for months and then weekly to broaden and build this essential “movement of movements” to demand immediate action to eliminate fossil fuel-based energy systems and rapidly replace them with 100 percent clean, safe, and sustainable alternatives to “Defend the Planet.”

In fact, “Defend the Planet” against corporate and government polluters soon became the eye-catching focus of coalition flyers and of the eight-foot advertisements that were posted at seven BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) train stations, at a cost of \$7000. There was little or no doubt among the coalition activists that the consequences of the corporate polluter profit-driven policies to increase fossil-fuel extraction, and the government’s associated actions to promote these policies, threaten life on earth.

The high-spirited and colorful march was led by some 100 Native American



Idle No More frontline community activists from Sonoma County to San Jose. It contained new, diverse—but still only modest—representation from the critically necessary sectors of the country’s labor, youth, and oppressed nationalities. The multi-cultural outpouring, included several bands and singing groups, youth contingents, socialist contingents, LGBT groups, high school student organizations, and more.

Speakers at the rally included the main leaders of the San Francisco and Alameda county labor councils, an IBEW local president, and a key representative of the California Nurses Association. All these organized modest contingents of workers in the mile-long march from the Lake Merritt Amphitheater to Oakland’s Frank Ogawa/Oscar Grant Civic Center Plaza. Keynote speaker May Boeve, national executive director of 350.org, stressed the need for a united mass movement to challenge the governments worldwide whose UN climate proposals fall far short of the measures needed to stop and reverse the horrific consequences of global warming.

The adopted demands included opposi-

tion to oil wars, racism, the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, corporate and government-backed and implemented policies that foster increased, not decreased, fossil-fuel extraction as well demands for reparations to fund poor nations around the world to guarantee the introduction of sustainable energy systems, a just job transition for all workers at union wages, civil and democratic rights for all in a world where Black Lives Matter, for immigrant rights, and an end to environmental racism.

Following a month of democratic discussion and debate, these points of unity and demands were hammered out and adopted unanimously, an indication of the growing radicalization and sophistication of the climate-crisis movement. Indeed, the ideas presented by the local chapter of System Change Not Climate Change and various socialist groups found a hearty reception among virtually all the activist participants. See the full demands and points of unity at NorCalClimateMob.net.

A spirited and enthusiastic post-Nov. 21 evaluation meeting on Dec. 3 attributed

the fact that this year’s march was not qualitatively different in size from last year’s Sept. 21 effort to the relative lack of national coordination.

It was noted that local climate actions initiated by national 350.org were organized mostly on a last-minute basis and on a number of different dates before and after the Paris talks. In contrast, last year’s Northern California mobilization significantly benefited from the “wind in our sails” flowing from the New York City mobilization of 400,000 organized by the People’s Climate March.

This year’s relatively diffuse choice of mobilization dates and organizing activity limited most U.S. actions to a few hundred participants at best. The post-COP 21 Dec. 12 national and international

mobilizations promoted by 350.org and other world environmental organizations have been called to make the point that an ongoing movement is sorely need “through” Paris and afterward.

At the close of the UN conference, 350.org leaders are expected to set a national date for coordinated May 2015 spring regional mobilizations in some nine to 12 U.S. cities.

Meanwhile, the Nor Cal Climate Mob, as this new Oakland-based united front mass action coalition is popularly known, voted unanimously at its Dec. 3 evaluation meeting to continue its efforts through the spring actions.

The S.F. Bay Area branch of Socialist Action played an important role in helping to initiate the Nor Cal Climate Mob and build its September 2014 and November 2015 marches. Socialist Action’s tent was a popular rally attraction, with activists purchasing some \$150 in *Socialist Action* newspapers and pamphlets. Forty-two participants, mostly youth, signed our mailing list for more information and to meet Socialist Action members. ■

... Climate

(continued from page 1)

are entitled and rich nations can bear their responsibility for the global warming they have directly caused over the last 265 years.

The series of climate talks that have taken place over more than two decades have done very little to stop the planet’s race toward runaway climate change. Annual global carbon dioxide emissions have risen steadily from 21 billion tons in 1992 to 32 billion in 2012. The wretched showing of every nation that has participated fails to inspire confidence that the next two weeks of dithering will accomplish anything.

Climate scientist James Hansen has criticized the talks as being “half-assed and half-baked” because the worthless, non-binding agreement they are working toward will actually allow emissions to increase until 2030! What is needed is an immediate, rapid, and drastic reduction in greenhouse gases from all sources—a deep decarbonization—while leaving fossil fuels in the ground and implementing a crash program of renewable wind and solar power along with clean mass transit, funded by eliminating the war budget.

Obama’s Clean Power Plan, which so many mainstream environmentalists tout, is a joke in comparison since it includes deadly nuclear-power plants, fracked natural gas, and the endless perpetuation of the destructive car-truck culture. In Paris, the president announced that he plans to allocate funds for more research and development on new energy technologies, increasing the budget from \$5 billion to \$10 billion and enlisting a coalition of high-tech entrepreneurs.

We already have clean technologies. They just need to be implemented ASAP, so he should be spending the money on producing them and providing green jobs. The call for more R&D has been used for years as a stalling tactic, and if by “clean technologies” he means risky carbon capture and sequestration methods, he can forget it. The chances are all too great for a massive belch of carbon dioxide suddenly being released from a geological formation and suffocating all life



(Above) 5000 marched in Edinburgh, Nov. 28.

around at ground level.

Needless to say, the U.S. goal to reduce emissions by 26–28% below 2005 levels by 2030 is not impressive when one considers the administration’s “all of the above” strategy for providing energy.

The European Union, a bloc of 28 rich nations that emit one-tenth of global emissions, the third highest after China and the U.S., still uses an absurd carbon-trading system, which amounts to licenses to pollute. Increased solar power and energy-efficiency measures became non-binding in the EU’s package due to relentless lobbying by Carbon Barons Shell, BP, Total, and Statoil, who wanted emissions cut by a single “technology-neutral” target that would encourage a fuel switch from coal to natural gas. This is because there is a fracking boom underway on the continent. Poland’s energy is 90% coal combustion, and it will not easily give that up, and Germany balked at car fuel-efficiency standards following the scandal over VW’s rigged emissions tests.

As for China, the world’s leading polluter, thanks to the success of industrial nations having off-shored production and thereby exported their carbon emissions, it has announced that it will launch a national carbon market in 2017 based on the U.S. Environ-

mental Defense Fund’s design. Given the level of corruption in that super-growth, market economy, there will be plenty of profiteering from the scheme but not much of a decline in global-warming pollution.

Then there is India, which plans to build yet more coal-fired power plants to fuel its raging economy. Australia is a major coal exporter, and Canada is heavily invested in filthy tar sands, so it is not too likely they will meet whatever pathetic goals they have set since none have taken the pledge to overcome their addiction.

As the journal *Science* states, the world is at a “climate crossroads” and to limit warming to any level, carbon emissions must ultimately be brought to zero well before 2100—in fact, the sooner, the better. That will require replacing the fossil-fuel-based, growth economy with one that is sustainable, democratically planned, and guided by eco-socialist and climate-friendly principles. To accomplish that, it will take a powerful worldwide movement linked from country to country that mobilizes millions in the streets. It’s really the only option we have to save Mother Earth for human habitation. ■

The socialist alternative to 'lesser-evil' politics

Patrick Sison / AP



(Left) Nov. 7 protest outside studios where Trump appeared on "Saturday Night Live."

By JEFF MACKLER

That the leading Republican Party presidential candidate, multi-billionaire Donald Trump, is a full-blown reactionary caricature of a capitalist politician is now the common parlance of most major media outlets. Even the relatively conservative *Washington Post* featured a Dec. 1 Dana Milibank column entitled, "Donald Trump Racist Bigot."

Milibank, reflecting the general unease at Trump's virulently racist, misogynist, and xenophobic outbursts, wrote: "Let's not mince words: Donald Trump is a bigot and a racist. ... There is a great imperative not to be silent in the face of demagoguery. Trump in this campaign has gone after African Americans, immigrants, Latinos, Asians, women, Muslims and now the disabled..."

"It might be possible to explain away any one of Trump's outrages as a mistake or a misunderstanding. But at some point you're not merely saying things that could be construed as bigoted: You are a bigot."

"It has been more than a quarter century since Trump took out ads in New York newspapers calling for the death penalty for "criminals of every age" after five black and Latino teens were implicated in the Central Park jogger case. The young men, convicted and imprisoned, were later cleared by DNA evidence and the confession of a serial rapist—and Trump called their wrongful-conviction settlement a "disgrace."

"Since then," Milibank continued, "Trump led the 'birther' movement challenging President Obama's standing as a natural-born American; used various vulgar expressions to refer to women; spoke of Mexico sending rapists and other criminals across the border; called for rounding up and deporting 11 million illegal immigrants; had high-profile spats with prominent Latino journalists and news outlets; mocked Asian accents; let stand a charge made in his presence that Obama is a Muslim and that Muslims are a 'problem' in America; embraced the notion of forcing Muslims to register in a database; falsely claimed thousands of Muslims celebrated the 9/11 attacks in New Jersey; tweeted bogus statistics asserting that most killings of whites are done by blacks; approved of the roughing up of a black demonstrator at one of his events; and publicly mocked the [physical] movements of *New York Times* (and former *Washington Post*) journalist Serge Kovaleski, who has a chronic condition limiting mobility."

What is perhaps a bit different in today's virtually year-round election hyperbole is the fact that virtually every one of the dozen or so Republican presidential contenders have remained all but silent as

Virtually all of the other Republican contenders for president have remained silent as Trump spews out his noxious diatribes.

Trump daily spews out his noxious diatribes. Indeed, until quite recently, most of the corporate media relished covering Trump's every anti-social rant, fearful perhaps that failure to do so might lose them critical media ratings.

Trump himself has repeatedly affirmed that *any* coverage, especially *free* media coverage—and to date he has by far had the lion's share of the latter—could only work to his advantage.

On Nov. 8, Trump delighted in the opportunity to appear on the popular "Saturday Night Live" television show, where wacked-out comedian Larry David, who plays the part of an obnoxious liberal racist on his "Curb Your Enthusiasm" show, took up DeportRacism.com's offer of a \$5000 prize to publicly heckle Trump and call him a racist. David, who has yet to collect his winnings, did just that—with Trump's explicit and prior, if not enthusiastic, agreement. In capitalist America today, a real live, laughing, racist billionaire is a profitable talent to broadcast!

Meanwhile, the front-running Trump has a dozen Republican challengers, including the second in the polls—retired surgeon, Christian fundamentalist, and climate and evolution denier Ben Carson. All afford Trump virtually free rein in his fear and hate-mongering campaign, with a few occasionally and cautiously seizing the opportunity to one-up this racist bigot in order to better capture an ever greater portion of the Republican Party's alienated, largely middle-class, Tea Party-enthusiast voter base.

No doubt Trump's rants find fertile soil in a small layer of the overall electorate, but even less in the general population, some half of which increasingly does not bother to vote.

But Trump's backwater histrionics are not new to the increasingly polarized and crisis-ridden world capitalist scene. Overtly far-right, if not neo-fascist, views are similarly expressed in France, England, and across Europe. In the former two nations such right-wing parties have, for the first time in nearly a century, outpolled the traditional capitalist stalwart parties of the status quo.

Trump is the American reflection of overtly racist and neo-fascist ideology—if not a conscious experiment with it. His racist rants in some instances have encouraged the use of violent physical attacks by his disaffected followers, who find his scapegoating of the oppressed to their liking.

Democratic Party charade

On the Democratic Party side of capitalism's electoral charade, this ruling-class party's lead candidates take the opposite tack, portraying themselves as the font of progressive values.

In their first nationally televised debate, all five of the original Democratic Party contenders, led by "socialist" Bernie Sanders and matched by Hillary Clinton, enthusiastically decried the "casino capitalism" of Wall Street.

Their purported vision of the future society is one in which the U.S. "returns" to the moral values of its much fantasized "small

business" and "hard-working little man" roots, where prosperity awaits all who conscientiously put in the effort. References to America's slave-labor and robber-baron origins are absent in this scenario.

Given President Obama's significantly declining poll ratings, none of the present Democratic Party contenders sought his overt political support. "Mums the word" with regard to Obama's record of leading the nation in implementing each and every corporate assault against unions, workers, and the poor. None chose to identify with Obama's unprecedented corporate largess in the form of multi-trillion-dollar bailouts to the richest sectors of the U.S. ruling class.

Rhetoric aside, Sanders' Democratic Party voting record stands at 98 percent, while Hillary Clinton's financial support from corporate America's giants, as with Obama before her and Bill Clinton earlier, topped all contributions to her Republican opponents.

We might add that former Secretary of State Clinton backed to the hilt every imperialist war effort of the Obama administration from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya to today's U.S. war efforts in Syria. Obama's countless covert and drone wars abroad murdered millions while stuffing the coffers of the military-industrial complex at home. But virtually no comment from Bernie or Hillary!

Meanwhile, Obama's hard-working "legacy" promoters struggle today to posture the president as a keen environmental advocate, an ally of immigrant communities, a champion of health care for all, a friend of the working class, a champion of democratic rights, and a man who is reluctant to send more troops to fight in the interests of U.S. imperialism.

Obama has become the media-promoted rational champion of climate science, currently partaking in the UN-sponsored Paris talks as the chief "defender" of the earth against the ravages of global warming. Yet, Obama's administration holds the modern-day record for increasing the use of fossil fuels, opening the floodgates to corporate off-shore drilling, and maintaining the obnoxiously high government tax breaks for the leading Big Oil polluters.

Obama's recent squelching of the infamous Keystone XL pipeline provided his administration a momentary fig leaf of credibility that immediately vanishes when contrasted to the massive increase of environmentally destructive pipeline complexes in place or under construction across the country.

Obama, the "Great Deporter," with a record two million immigrants brutally forced out of the country to his credit, gifted \$13 trillion in bailouts over the past seven years to the corporate elite. He presided over

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the wholesale shredding of civil liberties (as so ably exposed by the Snowden revelations). His signature “affordable” health care legislation gifted \$3 trillion over the next 10 years to the private and largely monopolized insurance, hospital, and pharmaceutical industries—as opposed to a single-payer alternative that would have saved \$1 trillion in government expenditures over the same period.

A Dec. 5 *New York Times* article entitled, “Jobs Report Seen as Strong Enough for Fed Action” [to raise interest rates on today’s nearly zero-rate “loans” to corporate America] nevertheless revealed some bitter truths about the Obama administration’s seven-year record.

“At 62.5 percent,” *The Times* notes, “the proportion of Americans in the labor force remains near mid-decade lows. The jobless rate for African-Americans rose by 0.2 percentage points in November to 9.4 percent, which is more than twice the 4.3 percent for white Americans.”

“Moreover, *The Times* adds, “the economy is still 2.8 million jobs short of where it would have to be to match pre-recession employment levels while also absorbing new entrants into the workforce. ... Even if the current trend continues, that so-called ‘jobs gap’ will not be closed until mid-2017.”

Another Dec. 5 *New York Times* article, “Lawmakers Near Deal on Billions in Tax Cuts,” notes that the upcoming bipartisan tax-cut legislation, in almost all cases written behind the scenes and negotiated secretly by the technocrat specialists of the corporate elite, amounts to nothing less than a five-year duration transfer of \$840 billion from us to them—from tax-paying working people to the tax-avoiding richest portion of the one percent that really rules America.

A general shift to the right

Today’s political/electoral drama, almost always devoid of the crooked corporate machinations that lead to tax cuts and other perks for the super-wealthy, can best be summarized: “The Republicans talk the talk: the Democrats walk the walk.”

The silky and “progressive”-sounding Democratic Party election-time jargon is no accident or fluke. It is consciously designed to pose this wing of the ruling class as the “civilized” representatives of an egalitarian society that respects, if not cherishes, democratic and human rights and economic fairness.

Similarly, the Republicans’ election posturing as a racist nut-case party of almost deranged hate-mongers, climate deniers, and war hawks is not without its own logic. The extreme *verbal* political divergence between Democrats and Republicans lays the foundation for capitalism’s well-honed election-time lesser-evil scenario, wherein alienated voters who would more than likely abandon the two-party shell game—a 60 percent majority favor a new third party, according to a recent Gallup poll—feel compelled to once again allow themselves to partake in “choosing” capitalism’s preferred horse in the race.

The seeming Republican Party scapegoating mania combines well with a generalized disgust with “establishment” politics, and it allows Democrats to move ever further to the right. Few doubt that President Obama and his Democratic Party political, social, and economic policies are far to the right of the most “evil” Republican propositions of yesteryear.

This generalized shift to the right of ruling-class politics, and the associated feigned public disputes, never fail to reach resolution in the hidden congressional and corporate corridors, where “compromise” solutions, always at the expense of the vast majority, are routinely arrived at.

The chaotic and crisis-ridden capitalist system itself—in a crisis virtually equal in magnitude to that of the Great Depression of 1929—best accounts for today’s public partisan discord. Different wings of the ruling elite are today at odds with regard to how much, how fast, and with what means—mass repression or “friendly” persuasion—to most effectively advance their common corporate interests.

Sanders pledges to support any Democrat

It is in this context, where massive disillusionment with and alienation from “traditional” capitalist parties and politics has reached new heights, that one can also understand the rise of long-time registered “independent,” now “socialist,” Bernie Sanders, as well as the racist social dissident, Donald Trump.

Bernie Sanders is now an official Democrat, having pledged in advance to support whoever of his party competitors emerges from the upcoming election primary contests as the winner. In some recent polls in the early primary states, like New Hampshire and



Bernie Sanders fills the bill as the central shepherd of the unwary back into the Democratic Party.

Iowa, Sanders’ ranking appears to be in the political ballpark—that is, he could win.

It was perhaps some 50-60 years ago, when I first encountered the “lesser evil” dichotomy at work—Kennedy vs. Nixon and Johnson (LBJ) vs. Barry Goldwater—that I half seriously predicted that the time would come when the ruling-class elite, when it believed it was necessary to head off a likely working-class move toward a break with the capitalist two-party duopoly, would run a “socialist” for president, under the Democratic Party imprimatur, of course.

That day has arrived, with “Bernie” filling the bill almost perfectly as today’s central shepherd of the unwary back into the Democratic Party fold.

Sanders’ service record on capitalism’s behalf falls well within the boundaries of ruling-class politics. He supported the Obama administration’s wars in Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen—although he, like most other liberals who feigned opposition to the Iraq War, including Obama, now claim that this war was a “mistake.” The Saddam Hussein government after all, they have been compelled to admit, never had “weapons of mass destruction.” The U.S. slaughter of 1.5 million Iraqis, we are told with a straight face, was a mistake!

“Socialist” Sanders gave his assent to countless trillion-dollar military appropriations bills, including all congressional measures that supported Israel in its genocidal drive to eliminate any Palestinian presence in their historic homeland.

Thus, campaigning for and organizing mass forces to demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops from every nation on earth is not within the Sanders campaign’s calculated political territory. He knows full well that any real socialist would view U.S. imperialism’s wars everywhere as nothing less than the extension and embodiment of U.S. ruling-class policies at home.

Sanders has indeed disappointed some of his liberal and even “socialist” supporters today due to his perceived “weakness” on foreign-policy issues and his failure to unequivocally challenge and condemn the ever-increasing brutality and police murder of unarmed Blacks. When confronted with a Black Lives Matter representative who jumped onto the stage demanding to know where Sanders stood on America’s deepening racist attacks, the “political revolutionary” was speechless and quickly exited, leaving the audience stunned. When he was soon afterward advised that his well-crafted liberal image had to include a modicum of support to Black rights, he meekly assented, but to the point of significantly interfering with Clinton’s prior turf “claim” to the Black vote.

Sanders has also made clear that he is not the kind of socialist that seeks the social ownership of the nation’s wealth and the establishment of a revolutionary state that once and for all places society’s means of production and wealth in the hands of and under

(Above) Sanders and Clinton at Oct. 13 “debate” of major Democratic Party presidential candidates.

the democratic control of those who produce it, in the framework of a government of the working class and its allies. Sanders’ “socialism,” he insists, includes respect for private property—operating, perhaps, in a bit more humanely manner.

In short, Sanders, like his “socialist” counterparts in France or in the Scandinavian countries, seeks a “kinder gentler capitalism.” The fact that he seeks to emulate Europe’s historically bankrupt social-democratic capitalist model while these nations are engaged in supporting all of NATO’s wars and imposing the same, if not worse, austerity measures against their respective working masses is not unexpected.

In these troubled times “Bernie,” in fact, perfectly fills capitalism’s needs for legitimacy. His chatter about the need for a “political revolution” in the U.S. is subordinate to his quarter-century service as Vermont’s leading elected official—unchallenged by the Democratic Party. His current assignment, for which he will undoubtedly be richly rewarded down the line, is to corral working-class discontent back into the capitalist framework and, when the Peter Pan fairy dust has cleared, to back Hillary Clinton.

Santa is in exile!

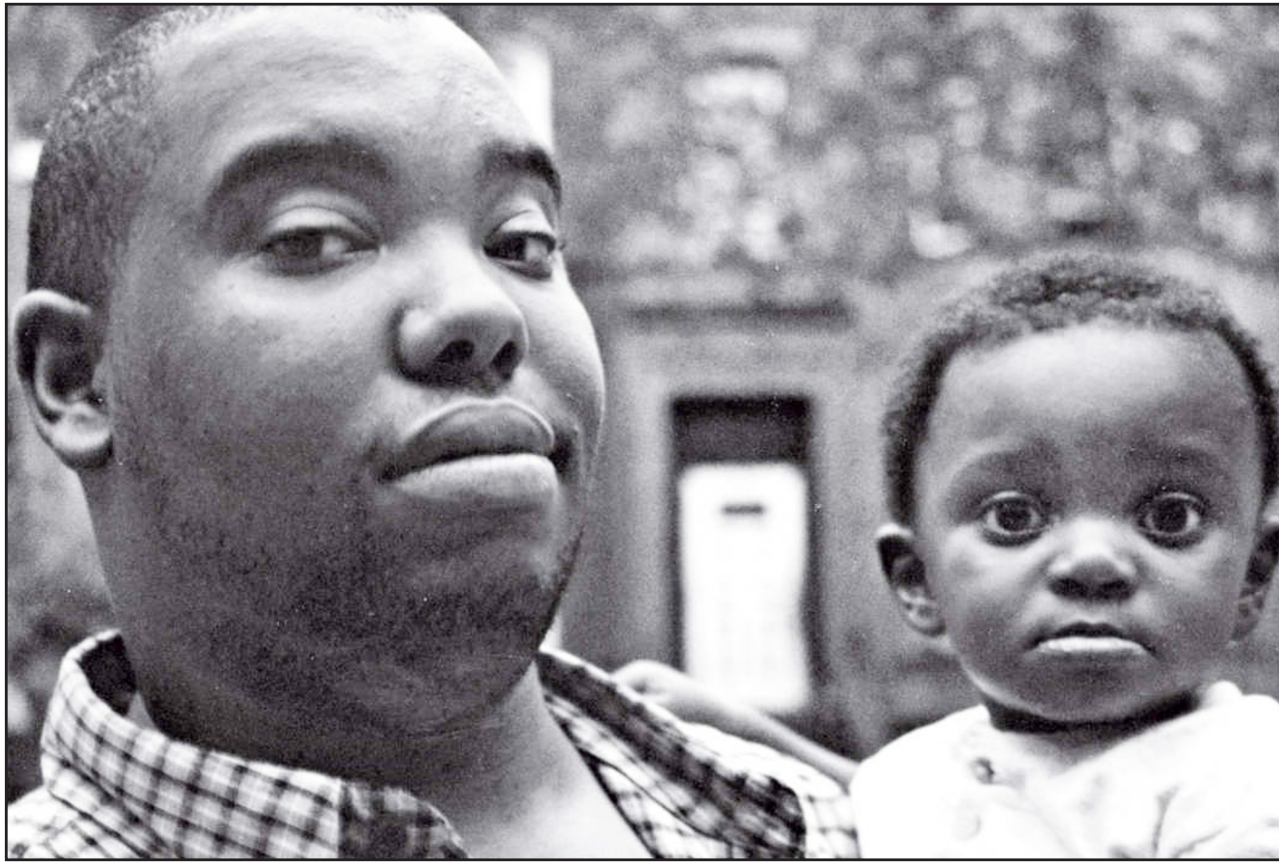
There is no Santa Claus on Wall Street, dear friends—neither in the form of Bernie and Hillary nor charitable gift-giving billionaires like Gates and Zuckerberg. Indeed, the *real* Santa likely abandoned his North Pole abode at the first signs of Industrial Revolution capitalist-caused global warming.

That once pristine ice-capped area, increasingly barren today, is the domain of happy Obama’s helpers, including the Chevron Corporation, which seeks to mine the exposed earth for the very fossil fuels whose continued use spells doom for all human kind. The *real* Santa likely moved his helpers to cities around the world to join the fight to restore his homeland and ours, and to return to the people of the earth the opportunity to collectively build a joyous world, free from those who would irrationally destroy it in the pursuit of profit.

Another Christmastime hero, a young Jewish rebel who lived a bit more than 2000 years ago, may have left us with some insightful words to ponder. “Drive the money changers from the temple,” he exhorted. Not a bad holiday admonition! Indeed, the socialist movement of the early 19th century did include followers of Jesus, who believed that socialism was the modern-day expression of the teachings of the Lord.

Today’s Marxist revolutionaries base themselves on a qualitatively grounded or materialist understanding of the roots of capitalist society’s countless horrors. As the gap narrows between workers’ mounting hatred of the dread consequences of capitalist exploitation and oppression and their reluctance to enter the fray to challenge it in all its fundamentals, we will see countless millions of new and clear-sighted fighters break with all of capitalism’s ruling-class-based institutions of coercion and control.

That day is not far over the horizon. Today, the conscious organization of a deeply-rooted mass revolutionary socialist party—aimed at ending capitalist rule forever and bringing forth a new world dedicated to advancing the finest yearnings for freedom, justice, and equality—is Socialist Action’s reason for being. Join us! ■



(Left) Ta-Nehisi Coates holds his son Samori in the summer of 2001.

A new voice in literature chronicles the anguish of racial oppression

By JOE AUCIELLO

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *“Between the World and Me”* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 152 pp., \$24.

When Ta-Nehisi Coates spoke to an overflow audience at Boston College last October as a distinguished guest of the Lowell Humanities Lecture Series, he was introduced by the Law School dean as a new voice in the tradition of great African American authors, from Langston Hughes to James Baldwin and Toni Morrison. It was a remarkable statement about a 40-year-old writer whose publications include only two brief books (with an eventual third, a collection of award-winning magazine essays from *The Atlantic*, etc., no doubt in the offing).

Perhaps it will also turn out to be a prophetic statement about Coates, whose second work just won the National Book Award for Nonfiction. For now, in one sense, at least, the statement about Coates’s literary legacy is certainly true: Coates writes social commentary even when he is at his most personal. He clearly cites not only Baldwin and Morrison but also Richard Wright, Amiri Baraka, and Sonia Sanchez, whose tradition and influence on “Between the World and Me” “is all baked in there,” as he commented in an interview on receiving the award.

“Between the World and Me” is written in the form of a letter to Coates’s teen-age son, Samori. As such, it intentionally follows—clearly in homage—James Baldwin’s letter to his nephew in “The Fire Next Time” (1963). Any number of pages and observation from Baldwin’s book could be lifted entirely and placed in Coates’s text.

The point here is not to fault Coates for lack of originality but to praise the quality of his prose—for Baldwin was a sublime writer—and, more importantly, to highlight a social reality that, after more than 50 years has in profound ways remained unchanged. Since America continues to murder the souls and bodies of Black people, and to do so routinely, just as it did in Baldwin’s day, Coates can’t help but describe what he sees and feels. And, in the process, if he punctures the pretensions of “hope and change,” then so be it. Better to be a foe of facile optimism.

Coates writes about racial oppression in the most intimate of terms. The opening sentence of his book finds him explaining to the confused host of a news show “what it meant to lose my body.” As he explained in his talk at Boston College, that which he lost was actually taken or stolen. “The kind of oppression that Black people feel in this country is very, very physical. It’s about people taking possession of your body.”

In “Between the World and Me,” Coates writes: “It is hard to face this. But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociol-

ogy, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.” Or, as he says more concisely, “The answer is American history.”

While Coates’s book is rooted in history, it is not a work of history, or even reportage. Nor is it an essay in the traditional sense of the term, where an author presents a statement of opinion and supports it by example and argues with appeals to reason and logic. “Between the World and Me” is more of a meditation or reflection that moves, not as point by point, but more by the free association of topic and thought. Here, too, the influence of James Baldwin is evident.

Coates also follows Baldwin in tearing apart the fairy-tales in which much of this nation takes comfort. In “The Fire Next Time,” Baldwin writes, “The American Negro has the great advantage of having never believed that collection of myths to which white Americans cling: that their ancestors were all freedom-loving heroes, that they were born in the greatest country the world has ever seen, or that Americans are invincible in battle and wise in peace. ... Negroes know far more about white Americans than that...”

Coates’s target is the same; he calls them the Dreamers, the white Americans who without question trust in the American Dream and who are blind to the reality of Black oppression on which this Dream was built and on which its continued existence depends.

As Coates first describes it: “I have seen that dream all my life. It is perfect houses with nice lawns. It is Memorial Day cookouts, block associations, and driveways. The Dream is treehouses and the Cub Scouts. ... And for so long I have wanted to escape into the Dream, to fold my country over my head like a blanket. But this has never been an option because the Dream rests on our backs, the bedding made from our bodies.”

Coates develops this point further into the book. “The Dreamers accept this as the cost of doing business, accept our bodies as currency, because it is their tradition. ... Black life is cheap, but in America black bodies are a natural resource of incomparable value.”

America is dangerous for Black people, and children must be trained—Coates recounts beatings by his father—to know the contours of that danger and to fear it. “Fear ruled everything around me,” Coates writes, “and I knew, as all black people do, that this fear was connected to the Dream out there, to the unworried boys, to pie and pot roast, to the white fences and green lawns nightly beamed into our television sets.”

One of the most troubling and moving sections of “Between the World and Me” is Coates’s account of the police murder of a friend from Howard University, Prince Jones (and, in the third section of the book, a visit to Jones’s mother). It is a tale so essential to the book, told so artfully, with a climactic point so surprising, that in deference to readers, it will not be summarized here.

What can be raised instead is a possible link between the title of the book and the useless and tragic

murder of a young man. Coates includes the opening lines of a poem by Richard Wright and ends with the phrase “between the world and me.” Wright’s poem, originally printed in the 1930s, is included in his talk, “The Literature of the Negro in the United States,” published with three other lectures as the book, “White Man, Listen!” (1957).

Wright’s poem is a “vision of horror” about a man who comes upon the remains of a lynching and gazes at the “stony skull.” In a nightmare sequence of the poem, he becomes the victim: “The dry bones stirred, rattled, lifted, melting themselves into my bones.” The mob, too, returns to life, and the lynching takes place again until, finally, the narrator’s skull becomes the skull he had seen.

The terrible merging with the victim in Wright’s poem—a powerful identification—captures the relationship between Coates and his fellow Howard graduate, Prince Jones. The fate of one could easily have been the fate of the other.

In his lecture, Wright comments, “The horrors that confront Negroes stay in peace and war, in winter and summer, night and day.” This is Coates’s conviction as well and is a major reason for the book’s popularity and controversy.

As Coates writes toward the end of the book, “The killing fields of Chicago, of Baltimore, of Detroit, were created by the policy of Dreamers,” and so the incidental and accidental, the latest tragedy on the nightly news, is really typical and deliberate. “The same hands that drew red lines around the life of Prince Jones drew red lines around the ghetto.”

So, for all of Coates’ attention on the personal, the book speaks to a larger condition. He unsparingly depicts just how the powerful social context of America, a culture that can be at the same time blind and hostile, impacts him and his family. Coates would likely agree with the statement that begins Angela Davis’s autobiography: “... the forces that have made my life what it is are the very same forces that have shaped and misshaped the lives of millions of my people.” His account is most sociological when it is most autobiographical.

“Between the World and Me” is no political tract. Readers searching for an overall social analysis and solution, whether reformist or revolutionary, will be disappointed. Coates offers no prescription for social change, no basis even for believing that change will occur, and no apology for his opinion, despite the imperative need for progress. There is, fortunately, no “happy talk,” à la Cornel West.

This point is made more as observation than criticism. The absence of a program does not detract from the importance and value of a book that describes American culture in the most personal and powerful terms. Like Baldwin’s “The Fire Next Time,” a brutally honest account of *what is* constitutes a large step towards *what can be*. Raising essential questions is part of that “stride towards freedom,” to cite Martin Luther King Jr.’s phrase.

In the book’s concluding paragraph, Coates writes, “The Dreamers will have to learn to struggle themselves, to understand that the field for their Dream, the stage where they have painted themselves white, is the deathbed of us all.” The question of what might motivate white people (all of them, or by class division within white society?) to struggle, and how white people will come to learn and understand, is not even asked.

At the same time, Coates says to his son: “And still I urge you to struggle.” No political platform is suggested here, as Coates discusses the need for struggle only in personal, existential terms. “Struggle for the memory of your ancestors. Struggle for wisdom... Struggle for your grandmother and grandfather, for your name.”

Essentially, a father is saying to his son, “You will have to find your own way.” For older readers already engaged in any form of social protest and political activity, this answer cannot be fully satisfying, but there is also an undeniable truth to the statement.

A young generation will have to engage socially and collectively, as in fact, it is doing. In the early decades of his adult life, Coates found no adequate body of thought and no substantial organization to further the beliefs and values he felt. He is hardly to blame for the weakness of left movements; yet lessons of the past are still relevant and valuable. Such lessons can be found, analyzed, and applied as a newly developing movement considers appropriate. So, it is necessary to agree with the advice Coates gives his son, “And still I urge you to struggle.” ■

Trumbo — The Hollywood witch hunt

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

TRUMBO, written by John McNamara, from the book by Bruce Cook. Directed by Jay Roach. With Bryan Cranston, Helen Mirren, and Diane Lane.

Hopefully, word of mouth will encourage the general public to see this engaging film, in part because of the contemporary relevance of its focus on the consequences of not swearing an oath of loyalty to the U.S. government.

In the late 1930s and early '40s, many artists, writers, and intellectuals who sympathized with the poor, the labor movement, and the fight against fascism aligned themselves with the Communist Party—which was then following the Stalinist policy of the “Popular Front.” Hence, when the government’s anti-communist witch hunt got underway soon after the end of the Second World War, many in Hollywood were placed under suspicion.

Lists of names were drawn up, and those named were subpoenaed by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). Novelist and screenwriter Dalton Trumbo (here in an award-worthy portrayal by Bryan Cranston) had joined the Communist Party in 1943, and he was on that list. Trumbo was one of the highest-paid screenwriters at the time, making about \$4000 a week. He had an affable, understanding wife, Cleo (Diane Lane); and children. He had a lot to lose.

Under Jay Roach’s direction, the film recreates the era of the government witch hunt. Everyone was afraid, especially when people lost their jobs, their reputations, their families, or their lives (as some committed suicide). Many were shunned by friends and neighbors, and their children were bullied and even kicked out of school.

In “Trumbo,” actors like Edward G. Robinson (Michael Stuhlbarg) and John Wayne (David James Eliot) are shown reviling Dalton Trumbo to his face or avoiding him completely because of his alleged communist sympathies. Robinson ratted on Trumbo in his testimony before HUAC.

Another nemesis of the screenwriter was Hollywood correspondent Hedda Hopper (Helen Mirren), who ends people’s careers with her villainous tongue, pen, and poisoned hat-pin (she was known for her elaborate headgear). Hopper skewered Jews, communists, Blacks, LGBT people, and anyone who didn’t fawn to her—no one was spared.

In 1947, when called to testify before HUAC, Trumbo refused to testify. When told to answer “yes” or “no” to the question of whether or not he ever was a member of the Communist Party, he replied that anyone who thought it could be answered “yes” or “no” was a moron. He and nine others, known as the Holly-



(Above) Dalton Trumbo is 3rd from left.

wood Ten, were subsequently charged with contempt of court. Trumbo spent 11 months in federal prison in Kentucky. The film shows him being hassled and taunted by his fellow inmates.

Trumbo’s career was basically over; no studio in California would hire him. When he was released from prison in late 1950, he moved with his family to Mexico City, where he could crank out screenplays undisturbed and send them to Hollywood under pseudonyms. Jay Roach’s film avoids depicting the move to Mexico, and instead takes the tack of simply moving him to another neighborhood, where he is eyed with suspicion.

The film shows Trumbo getting a writing job at a B movie studio run by a Frank King (the unparalleled John Goodman, effective in another studio boss role). King hands him a stack of scripts to “fix” in short order. Trumbo organizes a kind of assembly line in his home for his screenwriting pals and engages his kids, now teens with lives of their own, to proof read, type, and hand-deliver scripts directly to studios. He becomes a bully, insisting that what he does puts food on the table. Somehow, Cleo keeps it all together.

There is a wonderful scene based closely on Trumbo’s real life where he writes in his bathtub, a plank holding his Royal manual typewriter, along with scissors and glue for cutting and pasting. There are pages everywhere.

Trumbo submits one of his own scripts, “The Brave One” under the name of Robert Rich, which wins an Academy Award. Another, in 1953, is about a princess who goes incognito in Rome and falls in love with a commoner: Trumbo renames it “Roman Holiday,” and gives it to Ian McLellan Hunter to pass off as his work. It wins an Academy Award. (In 1993, 40 years after its release, Trumbo received the award posthumously.)

Hedda’s career landed in the hopper (I couldn’t resist) when Kirk Douglas (Dean O’Gorman, who recreated Douglas’s look and voice beautifully) and director Otto Preminger (doppelganger Christian Berkel) insisted that Trumbo’s name appear as screenwriter for “Spartacus” in 1959. In the film, Preminger practically moves in with the Trumbos to oversee script changes.

Dalton Trumbo also wrote the screenplay for “Exodus.” Shortly after the release of these two films and his readmission into the Writers Guild of America, the era of the blacklist ended. He continued with his prolific output until he spent his last days in a hospice and died in 1976 of a heart attack at 70. Cleo lived to be 93 and collected his posthumous awards.

“Trumbo” is a compelling film in its detail. Roach’s work with the actors allows us to empathize with the real-life people that they portray. ■

By BILL ONASCH

LABOR BRIEFING

• **Big Three Done**—Many observers put emphasis on the number and duration of major strikes as a gauge of worker combativeness. It’s an important measure to be sure, and it’s been very low for years. But it misses some major shifts underway in the labor movement.

Between the Sept. 14 expiration of UAW national contracts with General Motors, Ford, and Fiat Chrysler until the announcement late Nov. 20 that a new Ford contract had been ratified, not a single day of work was lost. Yet it was anything but smooth sailing for the bosses and UAW bureaucracy.

A *New York Times* story opened, “After five months of bargaining and divisive ratification votes, the United Automobile Workers ... completed new labor contracts covering more than 140,000 workers at the three largest American automakers ... finalizing the agreements proved to be a painstaking process, because many workers opposed the terms negotiated by UAW leaders.”

The workers at Fiat Chrysler rejected a first Tentative Agreement by a 2-1 margin but later ratified a second deal that rearranged the total package. An overall majority voted for the TA at General Motors but skilled trades workers rejected it—causing some delay before the UAW leadership finally

declared it ratified. At Ford, the outcome was unknown until literally the final hour. The results announced were “yes” votes of 51 percent of production workers, 52 percent skilled trades, and 92 percent salaried.

Clearly, these workers are no longer just happy to have a job. The industry is thriving, profits have been swelling. They expected to share in this recovery after a demoralizing decade of major give-backs—super-sized at GM and Chrysler by a White House-dictated bankruptcy.

While these new four-year contracts, especially at Ford, were the first in more than a decade with some improvements, there was still much disappointment with the stinginess of their “partners.” Many believed it was time for: their first general wage increase in 10 years to be even bigger; a quicker path than eight years to eliminating divisive two-tier wages; hourly raises every year instead of lump sums every other year; and restoring cost-of-living adjustments. The skilled trades at GM were upset about new changes in classifications and work rules.

There was bitterness at Chrysler over hated Alternative Work Schedules, which remain essentially unchanged.

But this sentiment has not yet produced an effective *organized* opposition within the union, and it fell short. The time to start building a class struggle alternative to the failed strategy of “partnership” is *now*. Valuable lessons can be found in the formative history of their union as well as current examples in the teacher unions and Teamsters.

• **Kohler Has Begun**—As Big Three bargaining was winding down, 2000 workers at two Kohler plants in Wisconsin walked out after a 94 percent rejection of the plumbing products maker’s “last, best, and final offer.”

In 2010, when new housing construction had bottomed out, UAW Local 833 reluctantly followed the giveback pattern set by their International union at the Big Three and agreed to a two-tier wage structure. According to the local, under the expired contract veteran workers earned an average of \$22.50 an hour while 400 workers hired since 2010 get about \$12.50 on average. With plenty of work today, the workers are united and determined to achieve wage parity. A Green Bay TV station reported that thousands of strikers, family members, and supporters from other unions, held a Saturday mass march and rally in Kohler Village out-

side Sheboygan.

There’s a strong tradition in Local 833 of lasting “one day longer.” In fact, they set a record for the longest strike in U.S. history. A 1954 strike for a first contract was met with scabs and strikebreakers, and there were frequent company complaints of violence on and off the picket line, as each side dug in. It wasn’t until 1960 that the NLRB finally found Kohler guilty of bad-faith bargaining and ordered all discharged strikers reinstated with back pay. It took five more years to reach agreement on the monetary award—\$3 million in back wages to 1400 workers and 1.5 million to their pension fund.

Since then there had been only one strike—16 days in 1983. It will probably take more than 16 days to win a just settlement this time—but not as long as 1954.

• **Rejection by Car Haulers**—There is yet another important battle shaping up. A giveback agreement covering 4000 Teamsters at two car-hauling companies was shot down by an 87 percent vote in October. The Teamsters bargainers have said they want to hear what problems the ranks had with their deal before going back to the table. They feign surprise that a contract that would have cut wages, messed with driver’s work hours on the road, and allowed job loss through subcon-

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Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Alberta's new energy policy— A marketing triumph!

By BARRY WEISLEDER

With the bar set so low by previous regimes in the oil patch, it seems that all the new Alberta government had to do was suppress a burp to be considered a leading agent of positive climate action. In truth, despite all the fanfare, the new energy policy of Premier Rachel Notley's Alberta NDP government is more a "marketing triumph" than a substantial effort to tackle global warming.

According to media reports, Alberta's overall carbon emissions will be allowed to grow. There are no hard targets for emission cuts, only the vague pledge that they will begin to fall below today's levels by 2030. Alberta coal plants will gradually be shut, but they were slated to be closed anyway.

The new cap on dirty oil emissions is so high that the tar sands will be able to grow another 43 per cent, roughly until 2030. Presently, they emit 70 megatonnes per year. With an annual cap of 100 megatonnes, there's plenty more damage to the environment in store.

Alberta's proposed carbon tax will hit consumers in the pocket book, regardless of ability to pay. It

will cost an additional 7 cents a litre at the pump, and it will cost workers and the poor in other ways too as prices on related commodities rise.

The carbon tax would apply to all sectors of the economy and be phased in by Jan. 1, 2018, to \$30 per tonne. When fully in effect, it would take in \$3 billion a year. Notley promised that all the money would be invested in green initiatives within Alberta, including research and public transportation.

But it won't keep the carbon in the ground. It will transfer wealth to the private-sector firms that will get the contracts. And in polishing the image of Canada's most polluting province, it will profit the biggest polluters on the planet, breathing new life into their schemes to build more pipelines, including east through Canada, and south through the USA.

Does that explain why oil industry giants are so happy with Rachel Notley's plan? At the news conference announcing her policy, in the company of several other big oil executives, Suncor CEO Steve Williams said, "This plan will make one of the world's largest oil-producing regions a leader in addressing the climate-change challenge." Sure. When pigs fly. ■

Fossil fuel giants reap gov't subsidies

The Canadian government still funds the fossil-fuel industry to the tune of \$2.74 billion (U.S.) annually, despite a G20 pledge made in 2009 to totally phase out such support.

About 60 per cent came from Ottawa in 2013 and 2014, with the rest coming from the provinces, according to a report from the Overseas Development Institute and Oil Change International.

The report also found that \$2.7 billion in additional money flowed to the industry in the form of loans and loan guarantees, primarily through Export Development Canada.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau could have said at the G20 meeting on Nov. 22 that he would redirect that support to clean energy sectors. But he didn't.

It is cold comfort that Canada is not the worst offender. Russia provided eight times the subsidies and more than twice as much public financial support to fossil-fuel extractors. Annual U.S. subsidies amounted to \$20.5 billion; though on a per capita basis, it is 20 per cent lower than Canadian levels.

The report considers a subsidy to be any dollar value associated with direct spending or lost tax revenue in a government budget.

Trudeau's campaign platform pledged to "fulfill Canada's G20 commitment to phase out subsidies for the fossil-fuel industry," starting with the Canadian Exploration Expenses tax deduction. You can now add this to the growing list of broken Liberal promises. — B.W.

NDP identity crisis deepens over 'what went wrong'

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Following a disastrous federal election campaign in which the labour-based New Democratic Party lost over a million votes and 60 per cent of its parliamentary seats, Leader Tom Mulcair disappeared for two weeks. When he re-surfaced, he launched an internal enquiry into "what went wrong." But does he really want to know? Who, and how will he ask?

A short questionnaire sent by the federal office to members across the country was slanted towards reaffirming yesterday's worn-out campaign slogans. It was a superficial survey. It provided little space for critical input on policy or principles. A fund appeal was annoyingly part of the pitch.

"We will be taking time in the months to come to analyze what happened," Mulcair told a news conference in early November. "I've asked party president Rebecca Blaikie and national director Anne Mc-

Grath to start that process immediately."

The NDP leader said he wants a "top level panel" to conduct the inquiry, including outgoing MPs, like pro-establishment figure Paul Dewar, and party elders. There don't appear to be any socialists involved in the exercise. The Socialist Caucus, the organized left in the party whose antiwar, free university tuition, secular schools, and mass public housing policies have been adopted by party conventions, has yet to receive a call from the "top level panel."

As *Toronto Star* columnist Chantal Hebert wrote on Nov. 14, "It is as if the NDP's establishment is determined to keep a lid on the post-election discussion and a de facto leadership review." The effort appears to be in vain. A growing chorus of prominent members is decrying the party's "crisis of identity." Charlie Angus, the Timmins-James Bay MP, told the *Globe and Mail*, "We have to start a complete rebuilding of the party, the brand and our

identity."

Cheri DiNovo, an NDP member of the Ontario Legislature, is quoted in the Dec. 1 *Toronto Star*: "Blaming the mainstream media and the Liberal strategists is a little like farmers blaming the weather." "The only entity we can change ... is ourselves." The change proposed by DiNovo is that the NDP reclaim the values of democratic socialism. It needs a vision in which "socialism" isn't a four-letter word. "We have to remember who the hell we are. And honestly, Canada's waiting."

The depth of the crisis was revealed in a Forum Research opinion poll published shortly after the Oct. 19 federal election. It showed that a staggering 72 per cent of NDP voters surveyed were satisfied with the election outcome. What does that say about the educational value of recent NDP campaigns when so many NDP supporters seem to see so little difference between NDP and Liberal Party policies that they are comfortable with a Liberal

majority government—even when the NDP was poised to win government up to seven weeks prior to the election?

Thus far, hardly any NDP MPs have pledged to support four more years of Mulcair in the top job. Most are being coy. Charlie Angus said his vote on the leadership review issue at the federal convention, set for Edmonton, April 8-10, will depend on the ideas Mulcair puts forward for a rebuild.

The NDP Socialist Caucus contends that the problem is much deeper than who is the leader. It insists that a clear break with pro-capitalist policies and undemocratic internal practices is required to save Canada's labour party. At the same time, only a move to force a leadership change will galvanize the party and labour union ranks to rise up, to articulate their demands, and to take control of the process. For that reason, socialists say, "Now's the time for Mulcair and his team to go!" ■

Morneau already hinting at Liberal austerity

It's the oldest economic gambit of newly installed capitalist governments—the worse than expected balance sheet. And Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's new Finance Minister, Bill Morneau, will now show why his appointment was such a hit on Bay Street.

Morneau wasted no time to claim that the Stephen Harper Conservatives left Ottawa's finances in worse shape than anticipated, making it more difficult for the new Liberal federal government to live up to its promises.

Trudeau pledged to increase Ottawa's expenditures for infrastructure and support payments for families. He said he would run budget deficits for \$9.9 billion in 2016, \$9.5 billion in 2017, and \$5.7 billion in 2018 before returning to a small surplus in 2019. But according to parliamentary budget officer Jean-Denis Frechette's calculations for the next two years, the Liberal government could face a \$13 billion deficit in 2016, and a \$16 billion deficit in 2017.

Without a major increase in corporation and personal wealth taxes, both of which have been declining for decades, Morneau will move to either cut back promised new spending or find billions in annual reductions in existing government programmes, beyond the \$3 billion in savings within four years the Liberals already promised to find.

One thing is certain. Morneau, a millionaire businessman and former executive chair of Morneau Shepell, one of the largest human resources services organizations in Canada, will not disappoint his Bay Street buddies. — B.W.

... LABOR

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tracting would be so unpopular.

Alexandra Bradbury offers them some more clues in an excellent *Labor Notes* story (labornotes.org/2015/11/carhaulers-vote-down-awful-deal). The far from silent super-majority is demanding that three opposition leaders who are part of a reform slate challenging the Hoffa leadership in next year's election of top officers be added to the car-haul bargaining committee.

• **Not So Convenient for Workers**—The *Workday Minnesota* website (workdayminnesota.org) reports that workers occupied the lobby of the corporate headquarters of SuperAmerica, a popular chain of filling station-convenience stores in the Upper Midwest. Their demands included instituting two weeks' notice of work schedules for all employees; establishing a health and safety committee; and ensuring equal pay and opportunity for promotion of people of color and women. On November 10 SA workers "marched alongside striking food service workers, janitors and other hourly workers at a large rally outside of Minneapolis

City Hall to urge city leaders to adopt policies that help working families, including raising the minimum wage, fair scheduling and an end to wage theft."

• **Making the Connection**—Also from *Workday Minnesota*: "Underscoring the connection between labor rights and human rights, more than 200 Twin Cities union members and leaders rallied outside the Minneapolis 4th Precinct to support community demands for justice for Jamar Clark, the 24-year-old African-American man shot and killed by police."

• **Practice Can Make Perfect**—The militant Chicago Teachers Union conducted a "practice vote" to determine the readiness of the ranks to approve a real strike if need be; 97 percent in effect said bring it on. The union used a similar format—partially because of legal issues—three years ago before a strike that beat back many of the take-away demands of Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Their old contract expired in the summer and currently the parties are in mediation required by state law. The CTU has worked hard to earn and maintain support from parents and the communities that was crucial to the success of their 2012 strike. ■

If you have a story for *Labor Briefing*, please contact billonasch@kclabor.org.

By MARTY GOODMAN

Enraged Haitians took to the streets in the thousands in the wake of the rigged Oct. 25 elections in Haiti. Protests took place throughout November in Port au Prince in support of the candidates, but were sometimes met with right-wingers armed with machetes, clubs, hammers, and guns, as cops looked on.

One man was wounded by a machete, another shot and killed by a Haitian police unit associated with the regime of President Michel Martelly, a U.S. puppet. Several died at the hands of what are presumed to be Martelly loyalists.

Independent election observers have called the vote a sham—which included ballot stuffing, improper counting, and improper procedures. While not as violent as the Aug. 9 provincial elections, which saw widespread fraud, violence, and intimidation, a joint report by the National Lawyers Guild and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) declared in a Nov. 24 release, “Haiti’s Oct. 25, 2015, presidential and legislative elections fell far short of minimum standards for a fair election,” and supported calls for an “independent investigation of widespread allegations of fraud.”

The election included an incredible 128 political parties. In desperate Haiti, where unemployment is at some 70%, elections are seen by opportunists of all stripes as a vehicle for personal advancement.

Presidential candidate Jovenel Moise, the anointed candidate of Martelly of the PHTK party, took top spot for president with 32.8% of the vote. Moise faces second-placed LAPEH candidate Jude Celestin, the pick of former president Rene Preval, with 25.3% of the vote, both destined for a Dec. 27 runoff election. Placing third was populist Moise Jean-Charles, with 14.3%, and fourth was Dr. Maryse Narcisse, a favorite of the popular former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, with only an improbable 7%.

Fear of violence and the well-founded expectation of vote rigging led to a voter turnout on Oct. 25 of only 23% of eligible voters. In the August election, 13% of voting centers were closed due to violence, intimidation, and fraud. It was understood that the election, called a “selection” by many Haitians, was engineered by the Martelly regime, which has thrived on increasing repression.

Haitian attorney Mario Joseph, who is on the board of the IADL, stated, “President Michel Martelly is not capable of holding democratic elections.” Indeed, the rabidly pro-U.S. president and former rap artist has ruled by decree for over four years, having let parliament expire without holding required elections. In lieu of elections, he has appointed judges, mayors and “interim executives.”

More than 916,000 accreditation cards were issued to political party monitors who were not required to vote at any particular voting center, opening the way to massive amounts of multiple voting. In fact, a black market in such cards would fetch anywhere between \$2 and \$30. As a result, up to 60% of the 1.6 million votes could have been fraudulent!

The Brazilian Igarape Institute conducted a poll of 1800 voters in 135 voting centers across Haiti and determined that the vote tallies seemed wildly askew. It found that Celestin was favored by 37.5%, populist Jean-Charles was favored by 30%, and 19.4% for Narcisse. The poll revealed that Jovenel Moise was chosen by only 6.3% of those polled.

A coalition of eight political candidates, known as G8, have demanded an “independent inquiry” into the election, which was conducted by the Provisional Electoral Council (CED), a pliant body of political ap-

Pro-U.S. dictator steals Haiti election



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

PARC KADO Refugee Camp, Anse-a-Pitres, Haiti, Oct. 16—Some 3000 refugees are living in squalor in refugee camps in the southern border town of Anse-a-Pitres, since the Dominican government started deporting Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. The region is non-arable with no possibility of farming and no work. So far there has been no help from the Haitian government and very sporadic assistance from a couple of NGOs.

The conditions of the camps are abysmal. People are literally starving to death. Many of the residents have been there since June, when the Dominican state ramped up its deportations. The Haitian government is criminally negligent. The occupation forces are not to be found. And now there is a perfect storm with the introduction of cholera in the camps—challenged immune systems from malnutrition, no sanitation, and no place to wash one’s hands. The slow-motion genocide has gone from a crawl to a sprint. — TONY SAVINO

pointees that has proven its loyalty again and again to Haiti’s rapacious ruling class and to U.S. imperialist manipulation. Washington subsidized the election charade with \$30 million.

The Obama administration and the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States (OAS) have turned a blind eye to the gross improprieties of the election. The OAS, while acknowledging incidents of violence, nevertheless said that they “did not affect the overall voting process.” The UN, the U.S., Canada, and the European Union have all given legitimacy to this caricature of an election.

Blatant U.S. manipulation of the 2010 Haitian elections in favor of the Martelly run for president was a backdrop to the current wave of protests. Some 2000 documents released by the news agency Wikileaks documented U.S. intervention in 2010 by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the U.S. Embassy as well as corporate pressure on the Haitian parliament to vote against a small raise to the minimum wage of \$5 a day. Bill and Hillary Clinton both pressed the CED to bump up Martelly in the 2020 election from third to second place, enabling him to successfully challenge the front-runner, Mirlande Manigat, and win.

Martelly is known as a close associate of supporters of the former Haitian dictator, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier. After the election, in 2012, Martelly joined the Clintons and U.S. celebs at the ribbon-cutting ceremony at a sweatshop industrial park in Caraol in northwestern Haiti. During the ceremony, in which the Haitian president drew praise from Hillary as a far-sighted leader, Martelly declared, “Haiti is open for business!”

None of the parties in the election deserve the support of the Haitian masses. None are workers’ parties, despite the vague populist rhetoric of some like

Moise Jean-Charles. Although Jean-Charles has called for an end to the despised U.S.-led UN military occupation force known as MINUSTAH, his promises are full of vague liberal slogans, not the fighting words of socialism and revolution. Earlier in the election cycle, Jean-Charles, once a follower of pseudo-radical president Aristide, joined with leftists in boycotting the election, but threw his hat in the ring as the election grew closer.

Haiti needs to break with middle-class and reformist leaders. Haiti needs revolution. The misery of daily life is worse than under the U.S.-backed Duvalier family dictatorship (1957-1986).

An earthquake in 2010 killed over 200,000 and displaced over 1 million, from which Haiti has not recovered. Thousands still live in makeshift tents, betrayed by Western governmental and private pledges of relief. The “reconstruction” effort headed by Bill Clinton and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have squandered billions in so-called relief, much of which went to beltway corporations, not to Haitians. Hundreds of millions went to defray the costs of a renewed U.S. military occupation, cynically undertaken by the Obama administration after the earthquake tragedy.

Moreover, tens of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origins have fled the Dominican Republic’s racist deportation orders, only to be dumped and abandoned in isolated regions by the Martelly regime. The Martelly government has now engaged an Israeli security firm to guard its borders.

Elections will not solve Haiti’s problems. For that, it is necessary to build a workers movement, and a revolutionary movement and party, to expel imperialism and Haiti’s blood-sucking ruling class once and for all! ■

... Paris attack

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two Muslim women in Brooklyn said that a man assaulted them, elbowing one and spitting in her face, and telling them that he was going to burn down their “temple.”

One woman, who wears a hijab, said she was talking on her phone when suddenly she felt a spray of saliva hit her and heard someone yelling, “Go back home, you terrorist!” She had already been singled out three times by the police for bag checks while traveling on the subway system. “I didn’t feel like a person anymore,” she said. “It’s like the hardest feeling in the world. You feel like

you have no allies; you feel like you are alone.”

The latest excuse for scapegoating Muslims derives from the killing of 14 people in San Bernardino, Calif., on Dec. 2. As we go to press, the reasons for the attack remain unclear, but ISIS in a radio broadcast referred to the two assailants as “supporters of the Islamic State.”

A version of the *New York Post’s* Dec. 3 cover, distributed in the paper’s digital edition, trumpeted the words “Muslim Killers” in giant letters superimposed over an image of injured victims of the San Bernardino shooting. Robert McCaw, government affairs department manager for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, called the headline “despicable.”

He added, “Muslims are no more responsible for yesterday’s terrible events than Christians are for [the

shooting at] Planned Parenthood.”

Socialist Action agrees with the conclusions of our French comrades in the Nouveau Parti Anti-capitaliste: “The only response to wars and terrorism is the unity of the workers and people, over and above their origins, their skin color, their religions, across the borders, to fight together against those who want to silence them, to dominate them, to do away with this capitalist system which generates cruelty.

“To put an end to terrorism, it is necessary to put an end to the imperialist wars that aim to perpetuate the plundering of the wealth of the peoples dominated by the multinationals, to force the withdrawal of the French [and U.S.] troops from all countries where they are present, in particular in Syria, in Iraq, in Africa.” ■

Paris attack leads to broad crackdown on civil liberties

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

In the space of less than two weeks, the world recently witnessed three massacres outside the home base of the Islamic State (ISIS) for which the jihadist group took credit. On Oct. 31, a homemade bomb brought down a Russian airliner over the Sinai, killing all 224 people on board. On Nov. 12, a double suicide bombing killed 43 in Beirut. And the next day, ISIS-linked operatives killed 130 at several sites in Paris.

In a communiqué, ISIS said that Paris had been targeted primarily in retaliation for French air attacks on its forces in Syria, and also because Paris is “the capital of prostitution and obscenity.” The jihadists stated that they had destroyed the Russian aircraft to avenge their comrades who had been killed by Russia’s participation in the war. In regard to Beirut, ISIS said that the attack was focused on killing Shiites, whom it considers as apostates.

The Paris shootings, because they took place in an iconic Western capital, have captured the headlines for weeks. The Russian air crash has gathered far less commentary, while the slaughter in Beirut has been generally ignored in the media. Many commentators in Lebanon have remarked that this reflects the feeling in the West that Arab lives matter less than those of Europeans.

Of course, these were all events of intense horror, no less in Paris than anywhere else, and the wave of solidarity and sympathy for the French victims and their families is fully justified. Misplaced, however, is any solidarity with the warmakers who rule the French nation.

A clamp-down on civil liberties

As if the ISIS atrocities were not grim enough, governments around the world—from Europe to the United States—have used them as a ready excuse for ramping up political repression and clamping down on civil liberties. Border crossings have been slammed shut against Middle Eastern refugees and immigrants in general, with the explanation, as recently expressed by a Bavarian official, that “Paris changes everything.” In an interview with the German newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, French Premier Manuel Valls said that it was “not possible” for Europe to accommodate any more refugees.

Amidst patriotic calls to “unite the nation,” governments have ignored or even fomented racist attacks against Muslims, who are witch hunted as “terrorists.” They disregard the fact, of course, that Muslims have been the main victims of terrorist attacks.

The Nouveau Parti Anti-capitaliste (NPA) pointed out concerning the French government: “Once again, the main people responsible for this surge of barbarian violence are calling for national unity. They are trying to turn the dramatic situation to their advantage to choke off indignation and revolt. They have a ready-made scapegoat—Muslims. We reject any national unity with those responsible for wars—the bourgeoisie, Hollande, Sarkozy, and Le Pen.”

As if to prove the point, French President François Hollande declared immediately that the Paris shootings constituted an “act of war,” and blustered that “France will destroy ISIS.” Two days later, he ordered an air attack on Raqqa, the ISIS “capital city” in Syria. The attack was carried out with U.S. logistical support. According to Reuters, the bombs hit several medical clinics and a museum.

Meanwhile, in order to “protect freedom” in France itself, Hollande (leader of the mis-named “Socialist” Party) declared a three-month state of emergency,



Laurent Cipriani/AP

which he is proposing to extend for an additional three months. The edict, which was quickly ratified by the General Assembly and the Senate, enables authorities to conduct searches without warrants, tighten border restrictions, declare curfews, enforce control over the media, and ban protests and public assemblies. These regulations were added to legislation passed in September that allowed the government to tap phones, place listening devices in homes, shut down websites, monitor private computers, and impose travel bans—all without any judicial oversight.

On Dec. 3, French Premier Valls said that police had conducted over 2000 raids since the Nov. 13 shootings, in which more than 260 people had been taken in for questioning; most of them were detained in jail. This is in addition to the 289 people arrested and 174 detained on Nov. 29 when police attacked a demonstration of over 5000 climate activists with tear gas and clubs. More than 360 people have been put under house arrest—including at least 24 environmental activists who were involved in planning protests around the COP 21 international climate conference.

Following the Nov. 29 police attack, the NPA stated: “These arrests are proof that the special measures stemming from the state of emergency are effective not against ISIS’s terrorism but against all those who exercise the most fundamental right of demonstration. While the heads of states will be meeting tomorrow in Paris at the COP 21 conference, all those who do not want to let them decide of the fate of the planet and humankind are being repressed.”

“They think all Muslims are terrorists”

All of the ISIS attackers in Paris, according to French authorities, appear to have been EU citizens. Most of them were raised in the slums of Belgium and France, where unemployment is high. As an indication of this, in 2013, the official jobless rate for immigrants in France was 17.3%, close to 80% higher than for the native-born population. Young people often believe, with strong reasoning, that they have “no future.”

A BBC reporter recently brought a camera team to a largely Muslim district in Paris, where he asked a group of young men in the street how they felt about the shootings by ISIS operatives. “Muslims don’t do this,” one replied. “Muslims don’t kill.” The men expressed their apprehension about racism and prejudice in French society: “When I come to France, people do like this,” said one, as he demonstrated with his

(Above) Paris police arrest people at Nov. 29 protest of world inaction on climate-change. Nearby, in the Place de la République, tributes were left for victims of the ISIS shootings.

body how some people shy away from him, “because I’m Muslim, I’m Arab. That’s no good, my friend, because they think that all Muslims are terrorists.”

As the cameras rolled, a couple of cops began to search two young men, seemingly randomly, who were standing nearby. The men who were being interviewed remarked, “Look at this. It happens every day. ... We feel like we are in a prison.”

In fact, rather than solve the problems of poverty, joblessness, and hopelessness, the ruling-class policy in France—as in the United States—is to round up the “surplus population” and throw them into a *real* prison, behind walls and bars. Studies say that from 60 to 70 percent of inmates in French prisons are Muslims, although Muslims make up merely 8 percent of the French population. It is in the penal institutions that many demoralized young men come under the influence of the jihadists.

Scapegoating Muslims in the U.S.

According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), reports of violence and threats against Muslims in the United States—have been on the rise since the Paris attack. There is little doubt that the climate for these incidents has been fired up by racist statements by U.S. politicians—Donald Trump calls for a database to track Muslims and a ban on Muslims entering the U.S.—and by attempts by the House of Representatives and several state governments to halt entry of Syrian refugees.

There have been several reports of people of Middle Eastern descent being removed from airplanes after other passengers reported that they felt unsafe with them aboard. For example, Southwest Airlines officials ejected two men from their seats on Nov. 18 after the men had been overheard speaking Arabic.

“We’ve never seen so much backlash against the Muslim community” since the Sept. 11 Trade Center attacks, said Sadyia Khaliq, director of operations for CAIR’s New York office. “I’m frightened.” In one incident cited by CAIR, a cab driver in Pittsburgh, originally from Morocco, was shot by a passenger who had ranted about ISIS “killing people.” In another incident,

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