

Capitalism cannot solve the climate crisis



By **BILL ONASCH**

This year's Earth Day, hosted by the UN, was staged to be all about climate change. The chosen venue came attached with some historical irony. The land for the New York City complex housing the United Nations Headquarters was donated by John D. Rockefeller. His father started him off as a director of Standard Oil—main ancestor of Exxon-Mobil—as well as U.S. Steel. He was also a director of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company at the time of the bloody Ludlow Massacre that slaughtered wives and children of striking coal miners.

Accompanied by brass bands, and many school children bused in for the occasion, representatives of 170 countries were on hand for a ceremonial signing of the accord adopted by the Paris Climate Summit last December. President Obama was in England celebrating Queen Elizabeth's 90th birthday, but Secretary of State Kerry, with a granddaughter on his lap, signed for the U.S. Al Gore, who had signed the first climate treaty in Kyoto in 1997—which President Clinton declined to submit to the Senate for ratification—was present and beaming. Among other VIPs was Leonardo DiCaprio.

So when can we expect all this pomp to change our circumstances? An AFP story explains that it won't be at a galloping pace—more the speed of the creatures that the French like to turn into escargot:

"The next, and final, procedural phase will be rati-

fication by individual governments. Countries which do not sign the document on Friday can do so in the year that follows. The agreement sets out broad lines of attack against climate change. It defines the goal of limiting global warming to 'well below' two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit)—1.5C if possible. It does not prescribe deadlines or targets for curbing planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions: these are described in further detail in non-binding pledges countries filed to shore up the pact.

"On current trends, scientists say, the world will warm by 4C over benchmark pre-Industrial Revolution levels—or 3C if countries live up to their pledges."

A 4C world could not sustain human civilization as we know it; 3C would be only marginally less disastrous. It could take many centuries for the greenhouse layer to dissipate to pre-industrial levels. Even if the current non-binding pledges were met, we would be bequeathing unrelenting misery to future generations.

Since the dominant driving force of global warming is fossil fuels, the solution would seem obvious—commit to completely replacing fossil fuels with clean, renewable, freely available energy sources like solar, wind, and tidal, as quickly as possible. That is in fact what nearly all climate scientists propose. There are credible estimates that an emergency crash program could accomplish this goal in 20-25 years.

But those who own the polluting global economy, and control most governments, reject such measures that mortally threaten their profits and rule. They will not agree to more than tactical tinkering. That's why the non-binding goals are all over the map.

The U.S. largely relies on a temporary reduction in power-plant emissions due to conversion from coal to now cheaper fracked (and methane-spewing) natural gas. In fact, half of Obama's pledge had already been accomplished when his plan was initially announced nearly two years ago. However, tiny Holland, home base of Royal Dutch Shell, has a wary eye on rising sea levels. They plan to ban all cars other than plug-in electrics by 2025—while Shell continues business as usual elsewhere.

Like pesky dandelions in the garden, nuclear power advocates, in the camp of General Electric, are again sprouting, fertilized by the lack of progress toward needed elimination of fossil fuels. In late April, Eduardo Porter wrote a *New York Times* article entitled, "Liberal Biases, Too, May Block Progress on Climate Change." He says, "Ted Cruz's argument that climate change is a hoax to justify a government takeover of the world is absurd. But Bernie Sanders's argument that 'toxic waste byproducts of nuclear plants are not worth the risks of the technology's benefit' might also be damaging."

(continued on page 5)

Chicago workers fight for \$15

By MARK UGOLINI

CHICAGO—Low-wage workers and their supporters turned out in force at over 300 locations in the U.S. and over 40 countries on April 14 demanding a \$15 minimum wage and union organizing rights. The prime target was McDonald's Corporation, referred to as a "poster-child" for unfair labor practices and poverty wages for low-wage workers worldwide.

In Chicago, over 1000 protesters, including hundreds of fast-food and other low-wage strikers, gathered at the "Rock and Roll" McDonald's, Chicago's "flagship" restaurant, to cap a day of actions around the city. A spirited rally heard striking McDonald's workers Angel Mitchell and Dominique Bouie, Tess Raser of Assata's Daughters (a group of young Black women prominent in Chicago Black Lives Matter), and others.

Earlier in the afternoon protesters gathered outside the penthouse condominium of billionaire Ken Griffin, the richest man in Illinois. Griffin is a major donor to Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, and his hedge fund Citadel has \$132 million invested in McDonald's. A strong opponent of Fight for \$15, and promoter of Rauner's "Turnaround Agenda" austerity plan, Griffin also advocates more school closings in Illinois. Griffin has been rewarded with millions in tax breaks in real estate and other business transactions with the city.

Outside Griffin's penthouse, I spoke with Sheldon Sims, a 27-year-old father of two and striking McDonald's worker from a South Side restaurant. Sims had just arrived on one of several buses filled with striking co-workers and other low-wage workers.

"I'm here to fight for my right to a living wage," said Sims. "I go to work every day and bust my ass to make \$8. I've got two kids at home and \$8 is not going to do shit for us. Period. ... And even if we do get \$15, we need a union ... it could be SEIU or we may organize our own



Mark Ugolini / Socialist Action

union ... but we need to work together with anyone stuck at \$8 [per hour]."

From Griffin's penthouse, marchers proceeded to the Bank of America nearby, focusing attention on the bank's greed. Bank of America has investments of over \$2 billion in McDonald's, ranking among its top institutional investors. The Chicago Teachers Union has charged the bank with failing to disclose the risk of "toxic" interest-rate swaps in investment deals involving Chicago Public Schools.

These predatory bank swaps with financial institutions including Bank of America have resulted in losses of over \$500 million to Chicago public schools, and resulted in \$77 million in profits for Bank of America.

"This is our Global Day of Action," said rally chairperson Angel Mitchell. "But today ... is not just about fast-food workers. Other workers, like child-care providers and health-care workers and nursing-home workers, have realized that \$15 is the least employers can do.

"With billionaires ... and corporations that pay poverty wages to employees all across the world ... it's obvious that McDonald's is leading a Global Race to the Bottom,

paying poverty wages, [with] no benefits, no respect, and unsafe working conditions."

Dominique Bouie, who does contract hourly work for McDonald's and is a leader of Warehouse Workers for Justice, described her workday, beginning at 3 a.m., when a large number of workers are "sorted" by management to determine who will be allowed to work the shift starting at 4 a.m. Only selected workers receive the \$8/ hour rate for making McCafé cups.

"McDonald's is a multi-billion [dollar] company ... they can satisfy their customers but cannot satisfy their workers—the people who make it possible to sell the products. ... We have families. We have lives we need to be able to pay for. You look at your child and you tell them, 'I can't afford to get those shoes you need or I can't afford those books.'"

Striking McDonald's workers reached out to other low-wage workers during early-morning activities. Beginning at 6 a.m., striking McDonald's workers stood with adjunct professors at Loyola University and with workers from Sheridan Shores Nursing Home. In Chicago's South Shore neighborhood, McDonald's strikers also joined with child-care workers, Chicago teachers, and warehouse workers.

"It's not just fast-food workers who are getting hurt. All of us are suffering," said Mitchell, as she concluded her remarks at the rally. "By striking today we are all collectively, from all various work industries, holding McDonald's accountable.

"Today, we are making history. We made history with Chicago teachers a couple of weeks ago [April 1] by raising our voices and standing up for funding. We just won the biggest raise in history with \$15 for millions of workers in California and New York statewide. And Pennsylvania nursing home workers have also won \$15 in contract negotiations.

"We know that we can win this! ... Until we have respect on the job, safe working conditions on the job, and until we get \$15 on our paycheck and union rights, we will not stop until we win!" ■

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. 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.

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.

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, LGBT people, 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.

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. 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. 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!

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: May 5, 2015
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

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

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



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

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: socialistactionnews@yahoo.com
Website: www.socialistaction.org

WHERE TO FIND US

- BUFFALO, NY: wmysocialist@google.com
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, chisocialistaction@yahoo.com
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: adamritscher@yahoo.com. www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com
- KANSAS CITY: kcsa@workernet.org (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE, KY: redlotus51@yahoo.com, (502) 451-2193
- MADISON, Wis.: Northlandiguana@gmail.com
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, socialistaction@visi.com
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: philly.socialistaction@gmail.com

- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 gary1917@aol.com
- PROVIDENCE: ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM (401) 592-5385
- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com, (202) 286-5493

Socialist Action

Subscribe now!

— \$10 / six months — \$20 / 12 months — \$37 / two years

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

— I want to join the Socialist Action Newspaper Supporters Club.
I enclose an extra contribution of: — \$100 — \$200 — Other

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action newspaper, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
526 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ont. M6G 3R4, (416) 535-8779
<http://socialistaction.ca/>

Capitalists get bailed out, workers get sold out

By JEFF MACKLER

Eight years into the world capitalist crisis—the Great Depression of the modern era—no nation on earth can boast anything resembling a recovery. Stagnation and continued decline are the norm the world over, with the broad imposition of austerity measures taking an ever-increasing toll on the working masses and oppressed, while imperialist wars for domination and plunder proceed seemingly with no end.

There are no Keynesian “solutions” by which means the ruling class might seek to mitigate capitalism’s inherent contradictions by investing in even the most modest public works and related programs to create jobs for the ever-increasing numbers of unemployed and underemployed workers.

In contrast to the 1929 Great Depression, when the Roosevelt administration sought to implement public works programs—none of which came close to mitigating the unprecedented employment, desperation, and misery inflicted on workers—today’s ruling classes the world over reject (or better, are incapable of) implementing even token measures.

In the U.S. during the late 1930s it was only the massive conversion of vast sections of the economy to war production that eventually provided a modicum of relief. In contrast, with U.S. war spending today in all its manifestations at an all-time high at \$1 trillion annually, the economy remains stagnant.

Government bails out big corporations

Today’s “pump-priming” or “stimulus programs” are squarely aimed at massive government bailouts, nearly interest-free loans, and related monetary measures that go directly to capitalist banks and related financial institutions, which in turn invest trillions of dollars in ever-multiplying forms of stock-market and other speculative instruments that bring additional trillions in “profits” for the super-rich and only misery to the vast majority.

This financialization of capital has taken on unprecedented and almost unbelievable forms. While the U.S. Federal Reserve “loans” the major banks and financial institutions funds at nearly zero-interest rates, the European Central Bank has “loaned” its own flagging banks and corporations \$7 trillion in *negative* interest rate schemes. Germany’s negative rate loans today exceed \$1.5 trillion; Japan’s are \$4.5 trillion! And now China has announced that it too engages, U.S.-style, in multi-billion-dollar bailouts of its own corporate elite.

Negative interest rate loans, believe it or not, mean that the world’s major central banks give its associated banks and financial institutions *free* money. For example, if a central bank “loans” a corporation \$1 billion at a negative interest rate of 10 percent, the recipient corporation or bank is “obligated” to repay the lender only \$900 million.

In the U.S., the “near-zero interest rate” loans of the Federal Reserve are called “quantitative easing” or “economic stimuli.” Until recently, they amounted to some \$89 billion monthly—on top of the \$32 trillion in direct bailouts since the onset of the 2008 depression. These loans are supposedly designed to stimulate the economy by encouraging banks and corporations to invest in job-creating endeavors like infrastructure improvements, new factories, or some sort of commodity-producing industries.

However, this near-free money was instead virtually gifted to the banks and related financial institutions, which in turn poured it into the stock market and other speculative ventures.

Increasingly, “casino” or “Ponzi-like” bubble capitalism has been the result, wherein the qualitative increase in the percentage of capitalist profits are invested in banks and speculative instruments as compared to investments in commodity-producing industries. We attribute this shift to the constant decline in the average profit rates in the manufacturing and related industries.

These never-ending and diverse forms of bailouts of an ever-flagging world capitalism have taken grotesque forms, including corporate utilization of “loopholes,” purposely imbedded in the U.S. tax code, which allow major corporations to avoid hundreds of



Stigtryggur Johannsson / Reuters

billions of dollars in taxes by setting up shop in other countries.

The recent exposure of the Charles Pfizer pharmaceutical giant’s attempted use of these “loopholes” to “renounce its U.S. citizenship” by buying a foreign corporation to avoid billions in taxes (known as inversion) was foiled in early April 2016, at least for the moment. But Pfizer’s totally legal but embarrassing maneuver had zero effect on at least 40 other major corporations that previously and successfully had employed the same “renunciation of corporate citizenship” loopholes.

Similarly, the recent “Panama Papers” revelations that big-time capitalists around the world use various offshore hideouts to avoid taxes was trumped when top U.S. tax experts demonstrated that the same kind of tax avoidance havens, but based on U.S. soil, are routinely employed by the super-rich and their corporations.

Even more recently, in mid-April 2016, the anti-poverty organization Oxfam International revealed that U.S. corporate giants such as Apple, Walmart, General Electric, and Bank of America had stashed \$1.4 trillion in secret tax havens. Oxfam’s research demonstrated that for every dollar these corporations had paid in taxes, they received \$27 back in the form of government subsidies and bailouts!

All of the above and innumerable other “legal” devices are available for the exclusive use of the ruling rich because they control the state power—or better, they *are* the state power. These “perks,” coupled with the “illegal” corruption that is endlessly coming to light, are employed with impunity by the ruling rich in the U.S. and worldwide. Although these methods are routinely practiced when the corporate foxes legally inhabit the governmental henhouse, the intensity with which they are employed is the reflection of a crisis-ridden world system that knows no way to escape from the bounds of its inherent contradictions.

Austerity for the working class and poor

The same ruling elite that employs the levers of state power to try to resolve their crises is today imposing unprecedented and across-the-board austerity measures on the working class everywhere:

- By all indices, the gap between rich and poor has reached unprecedented proportions, with more than 90 percent of all new wealth since 2008 going to the wealthiest 1 percent or less. There is no shortage of official statistics demonstrating the ever-increasing gap between the rich and poor.

- In the context of ongoing worldwide capitalist globalization, the world labor market is undergoing dramatic and accelerating changes, with millions of once “living-wage” jobs in the major imperialist nations now outsourced to the “periphery,” that is, to poor and relatively underdeveloped low-wage or near slave-wage nations. The fact that many of these new workers, in order to survive, must continue to farm or carry on other income-earning activities outside of “work” is but another example of capitalism’s compulsion toward the super-exploitation of labor—a super-exploitation that falls disproportionately on women—to resolve their inherent contradictions.

(Above) April protest in Iceland against Prime Minister Sigmundur Gunnlaugsson, after the Panama Papers revealed that his wife owned a company with funds in an off-shore tax haven.

This vast proletarianization process has transferred hundreds of millions of previously rural workers to major cities and employed them in modern factories. We have yet to see a qualitative increase in the organization and unionization of these future working-class fighters, but such a dramatic shift is inevitable.

In China and Russia, while there has been a significant increase in the number and frequency of strikes—over 2000 in China in 2015—most are limited to immediate critical demands, especially demands to be paid for work performed. That is, the new breed of capitalist exploiters in these countries, and almost all others where labor can be had for below-poverty-level wages, operate under conditions of extreme repression and highly regimented working conditions. Unions are largely banned or government controlled. Wages are often not paid for long periods of time, if they are paid at all, and capitalist bosses often close their obsolete or unprofitable plants and “disappear” without penalty.

Another example is the Apple Corporation, the richest in the world, employing over a million workers under the most horrific working conditions, using its Taiwan-based Foxconn corporation’s modern factories in mainland China. It is only a matter of time and leadership until this proletarianization process results in the crystallization of new forms of democratic trade unions that win the confidence of workers and fight to defend their interests.

In the United States, although industry has been dispersed in recent decades to new areas of the country, including many districts that are still non-union, the concentration of workers in key hubs for manufacturing and distribution reinforces the strength of the working class. These new plants include at least a dozen assembly plants in the Southeast United States built by “foreign” or “international” corporations.

In due time, these bastions of ruling-class power will be challenged by a new and re-invigorated labor movement, perhaps not qualitatively different from the mass upsurge in the 1930s that saw capitalism’s non-union mass production industries bow to a rapidly emerging union power, led in significant part by conscious revolutionary or radical forces. ■

Going to the Left Forum?

Don’t miss the two panels sponsored by Socialist Action Newspaper

- **South Africa: Liberation or Economic Apartheid?** Patrick Bond, professor at U. of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; Glen Ford, *Black Agenda Report*; Marty Goodman, Socialist Action
- **Greece & Syriza: What happened?** Manos Soufloglo, Organization of Communist Internationalists-Spartacus (Greece); Eric Poulos, member, AK-NY, a Greek-American solidarity group

The Left Forum will take place on the May 20-22 weekend at the John Jay Law Center in Manhattan.



Chicago State students and staff protest layoffs and program cuts

By MARK UGOLINI

Chicago State University (CSU) announced the layoff of more than 300 employees, effective on April 29. Widely considered only the first round of layoffs, it impacts about one-third of the university's workforce. CSU and other Illinois state universities have been denied funds for nearly the entire academic year, resulting in layoffs, furloughs, or other program cuts at all 12 of the state's public universities.

These cuts are a result of the failure of the Illinois state government to provide desperately needed funding for public education and social services throughout the state.

CSU is a predominantly Black university, located on Chicago's South Side. Its more than 4500 primarily low-income students are hardest hit, and most are critically impacted by the 10-month-long freeze on educational funding in Illinois. CSU is dependent on Springfield for more than 30% of its funding, a greater ratio than other public colleges that rely more heavily on endowments.

The April 30 *Chicago Tribune* reports the CSU layoff "will reduce the number of non-instructional employees by nearly half. Faculty members were spared during this initial wave of cuts but are likely to be affected later."

CSU's dire financial situation has been well known since last year when Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner blocked passage of a state budget and escalated implementation of his "Turnaround Agenda," an austerity plan to privatize schools, break unions, and cut desperately needed social services across the state.

In February, notices of potential layoffs were sent to all 900 CSU employees, admitting that payroll costs could not be met past April due to lack of state funding. Later in the year, the administration instructed students and employees to turn in keys to rooms and buildings in preparation for an end-of-term school closing.

On April 22, the Illinois state legislature, as part of a broader state-wide \$600 million "emergency" funding package, approved \$20 million for CSU. While this measure provides some relief, the funds ap-

proved for CSU are less than 60% of what it expected to receive during this fiscal year, and not enough to prevent layoffs and additional cuts. Not all of the \$20 million is immediately available to the school, and some funds need to be used immediately to pay off existing debts incurred since the funding freeze began 10 months ago.

The package calls for state universities to split \$356 million, while community colleges are to receive \$74 million. That amounts to a roughly 70 percent cut compared to the funding bill passed by the state legislature that Rauner vetoed in 2015. Some \$170 million is targeted for Monetary Award Program scholarships for low-income students who were denied payment during the funding freeze.

During 2016, CSU implemented program cuts because of lack of funds. Administrative costs have been reduced 20%, and the school's spring term ended two weeks early to ensure students could graduate before the money ran out.

Paris Griffin, president of Chicago State's Student Government Association, told the *Columbia Chronicle* (the Columbia College student newspaper) that she is anxious about what the school will look like next semester. "I am running out of financial aid; I do have a scholarship, but as of now, [it] will only be able to be used at Chicago State," Griffin said. "I have one year left, so there's no school I will be able to transfer to that will accept all of my credits. I may not have to start completely over, but I will have to [do some things] over, and I honestly don't have the money or resources to do that."

"Even though 60 percent of something is better than nothing, we also know there is no budget in place for 2016-17," said Chicago State senior Darren Martin. "So it seems like are we preparing ourselves for another battle. We don't know what the future will hold and what will happen next year."

Bob Bionaz, president of the University Professionals of Illinois Local 4100, representing about 330 mostly faculty CSU employees, spoke to local CBS News. The union is bracing for layoffs later this year as faculty contracts are due to expire this summer. "We're not affected yet," he said, "but this is a blue-

print for what we're going to deal with."

On April 30, the Rev. Jesse Jackson condemned Rauner for ignoring the needs of Chicago's Black and minority communities: "We were deceived in thinking that we at least had breathing room until the fall. We were betrayed," he said. "Given the number of Black and Brown people involved, it has heavy, heavy racial and sensitivity implications." Jackson was accompanied by CSU students and community members at Chicago's South Side headquarters of Operation Push.

Two days earlier, a CSU graduating class of 850 students heard Rev. Jackson at commencement ceremonies. A gathering well attended by the local media, it took the form of a large protest rally for CSU funding. Nearly every speaker paid tribute to the CSU students, faculty, and staff who stand united in the fight against education cutbacks. Despite the widespread uncertainty they faced over the last year, they mobilized together, making their voices heard in numerous protests, rallies, and demonstrations on campus and around the city.

Clearly, the \$20 million "emergency" aid package is no more than a token measure—too little, and too late. Many millions more in funding are required to repair a system that is seriously broken. Fortunately, students, faculty and community members understand this and continue to organize, and drive forward for a real solution.

Campus activists have joined forces with community and labor groups, combining the struggle for CSU funding with the citywide movements against police violence, for a \$15 minimum wage, and in support of Chicago teachers. CSU students and faculty played a prominent role in the April 1 Day of Action on the theme "Fund Our Futures," attended by nearly 20,000 teachers and supporters.

South Side community members are organizing through Operation Push, local churches, and the recently formed Black Committee to Save Chicago State University, which has held rallies to generate additional support for full funding of CSU.

"The city of Chicago and the state of Illinois are proving that they do not value Black lives," said Joan Padayiro, an organizer with Black Youth Project 100 in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*. "Police officers are enabled to kill Black women with impunity while Black community assets such as Chicago State University are divested from."

The struggle for sufficient state college and university funding is integrally connected to the broader fight against austerity and Rauner's "Turnaround Agenda." At its core, this is a political struggle against union-busting, and to defend and expand public education, pensions for state workers and teachers, and desperately needed social services.

In this fight, the natural allies of students are Chicago teachers and public workers currently under assault, as well as others fighting for union rights, against police violence and all forms of racial discrimination, and others engaged in struggle.

In addition to mobilizing in the streets, the battle needs to find expression in the political arena, in opposition to both capitalist parties. Needed gains will not be won by relying on liberal Democrats in the Chicago city council or the state legislature in Springfield. A strategy that focuses on lobbying is one that relies on liberal politicians, and can only yield piecemeal and token results.

Ultimately, the political power of working people in Illinois needs to be unleashed, and this can find expression in independent political struggle to expand the rights of working people—a fight squarely in opposition to both capitalist parties. ■

Chicago Teachers Union considering strike

After rejecting recommendations of a fact finder, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) is considering a strike after a 30-day "cooling-off period" is set to expire on May 16. The CTU membership has already authorized a strike; and the CTU House of Delegates is empowered to set the date of the strike, if one is necessary.

A 10-day advance notice is required when a strike is called, and the CTU must decide whether the strike would occur before the end of the current school year (June 21), or at the start of the fall term in September.

CTU has been without a contract since June 30, 2015, when the contract reached after the seven-day strike of September 2012 expired. Talks between

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and CTU have been ongoing for the past 18 months.

On April 16, the fact finder, Steven Bierig, recommended that the parties reconsider an old CPS contract offer that had already been unanimously rejected by the CTU bargaining team. On the same day, the CTU formally rejected the proposal, thus starting a 30-day countdown to a possible strike.

The CTU House of Delegates gave union officers authority to immediately reject the fact-finding report if its conclusions offered "no substantial breakthrough in terms of class-size limits, reasonable economics or the closure of devastating loopholes."

"The clock has started," said CTU President Karen Lewis. "CPS has created a fiscal mess and refuses

to go after hundreds of millions of dollars in existing revenue that is already out there. ... We have no choice but to prepare ourselves for a possible strike."

A CTU press release explains: "The previously-rejected contract proposal made by CPS on January 29 would result in teachers taking home less in earnings at the end of the proposed four-year contract than they earn today."

The proposal would also phase out over two years a 7 percent CPS pension contribution, and freeze salary "steps and lanes" increases. Both of these have been features of teacher's contracts over many years, and remain key issues for the teachers.

— MARK UGOLINI

LABOR BRIEFING

By BILL ONASCH

Why Detroit Teachers Are So Sick— In January, so many Detroit teachers and paraprofessionals called in sick, the entire DPS system had to be shut down. For legal reasons, the Detroit Federation of Teachers did not officially sanction that job action but did help explain why dedicated educators were in the streets rather than classrooms. It was a desperate measure to call attention to desperate conditions of overcrowded classes in crumbling buildings, many infested with rats.

And they made no bones about who they held responsible—the same austerity, privatizing, union-busting state government responsible for poisoning Flint’s water system. As it turned out, the then Emergency Manager of DPS appointed by Governor Rick Snyder had earlier been the overseer of the Flint outrage and has since resigned from state employment in disgrace and under investigation for possible criminal charges.

Since the January teacher warnings



Carlos Osorio / AP

that received sympathetic public response, things have gotten worse. Even the starvation funding in the contrived financial crisis imposed by the state are running out. When the governor’s current managers said they would not be able to make scheduled salary payments in July and August, and that summer sessions would be canceled, the union called everybody out sick

again for two days, starting on May 2. Over 1500 teachers did not show up for work, and the district closed 94 of its 97 schools.

Although the teachers returned to work, the union blasted legislation pending in the Michigan House that would advance money to restructure the district. The proposed bill would forbid existing labor agreements from

(Photo) Detroit Federation of Teachers President Ivy Bailey speaks at May 3 rally outside school district headquarters.

being transferred to the new district, and would restrict collective bargaining over work schedules and school calendars.

Like their sisters and brothers in Chicago, the Detroit teachers need to develop solidarity in action of all those who are facing the same fight throughout the city, state, and nationally, as governments serving the banks impoverish the public sector.

Widening Generation Gap—Continuing a pattern imposed by the top leadership of the International Association of Machinists at Boeing and other highly profitable companies, the IAM has concluded an agreement with United Technologies, covering a thousand workers in Connecticut. While providing for a 12 percent raise, and bonuses totaling \$4500 over the next five years, the pact also establishes a sub-tier for new hires, who will be frozen out of the union’s pension plan. ■

If you have a suggestion for “Labor Briefing,” please send it to billonasch@kclabor.org and mention “Labor Briefing” in the subject.

... Climate

(continued from page 1)

He bolsters his attack on an alleged anti-science left with a Pew poll showing that a big majority of the American Association for the Advancement of Science favors more nuclear power.

Some scientists, of course—even the dean of climate scientists, Dr James E. Hansen—have in utter desperation shown conditional support for nuclear power as an emergency stop-gap measure due to inaction on replacing fossil fuels with safe, clean, renewable energy, available free of charge.

It is true that nuclear power plants produce negligible greenhouse emissions where they generate electricity. But their advocates ignore the vast amounts of emissions resulting just from mining, refining, and transporting their fuel. The fuel is not renewable—it depends on a dwindling supply of extractable uranium. They are anything but safe. Reactor accidents can be catastrophic. And there’s no known proven method for safe disposal of waste that can remain dangerous for centuries. These objections are not political bias—they are based on solid science.

Polluted hot spots

The oil and gas sectors continue to prolong their destructive pursuit of profits even while hailing the signing of agreements negotiated at the Paris COP21 summit last December. Hansen concisely characterized that deal as “bullshit.” But we don’t have to wave the white flag just yet.

There are credible estimates that an emergency crash program to completely replace fossil fuels with clean, renewable energy could be accomplished in 20-25 years.

To completely clean up the environmental mess, we will require more than new fuels. Some messes will need decades of remediation—such as General Electric’s settlement obligation to keep dredging the Hudson River until it is completely free of the PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl) they routinely dumped from the now closed, UE-organized Hudson Falls plant.

Some newly revealed even more dangerous localized hot spots continue to pop up. An April 28 *Wall Street Journal* article begins, “About a mile from homes in Missouri’s St. Louis County lies a radioactive hot spot with contamination levels hundreds of times above federal safety guidelines. But there are no plans to clean it up. That is because the location, tainted with waste from atomic-weapons work done in local factories decades ago, has been deemed by the federal government to be effectively inaccessible and not a threat.”

But they quickly follow, “However, a group of private researchers funded by an environmental activist, including a former senior official of the Clinton administration’s Energy Department, is challenging those assurances. They say a recent sampling they did suggests contamination from the radioactive hot

spot is entering a nearby stream, known as Coldwater Creek, and then traveling downstream into the yards of homes. The contamination involves thorium, a radioactive material that can increase a person’s risks for certain cancers if it gets inside the body, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.”

In the U.S. overall, we have an even bigger challenge. If we are to build an ecologically sustainable society providing a good standard of living for all, we have to halt and reverse the urban sprawl that has been the linchpin of post-World War II domestic ruling-class strategy. They have done a thorough job of integrating this scourge—socially and environmentally harmful in so many ways—into the American Dream of the vanishing “middle class.”

Convincing workers that we need to phase out suburbia and instead renovate, rebuild, and repopulate our collapsed urban cores—and reclaim the forests, wetlands, and farmland that used to surround and nourish our cities before being wrecked by irrational “development”—will not be an easy sell. Tougher yet will be winning them over to the fact that we can’t sustain each individual’s having their own personal car, truck, or SUV. Electric powered public transit in the cities, and plug-in electric vehicles in rural areas, will need to become our dominant forms of daily transportation.

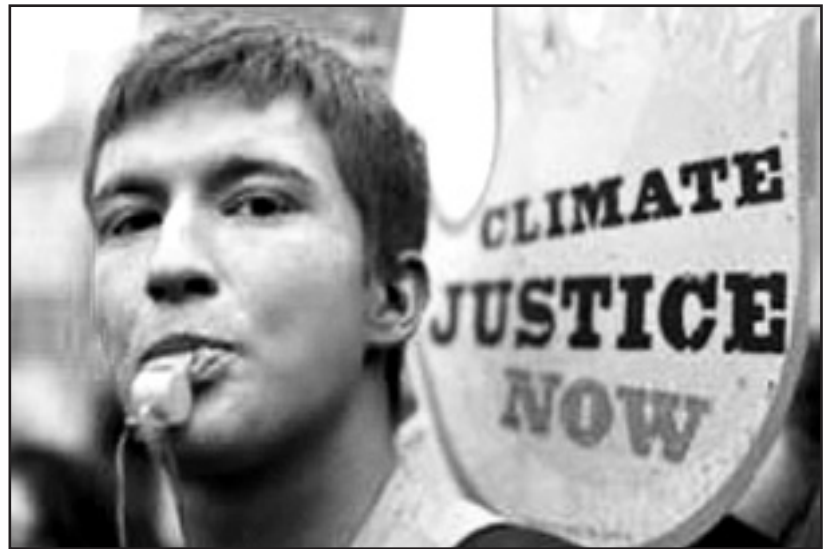
A key role for labor

Trying to reason with the Establishment to do the right thing is a fool’s errand. Because of their vast reserves of wealth produced by our labor, they can live with some reforms they don’t like. But they know the steps needed to survive the climate crisis they have created put the future of their very system of rule by the rich at mortal risk.

On the other hand—with no illusions about the difficulties—I have confidence we can educate and organize the working-class majority to not just support but lead the struggle to satisfactorily resolve the greatest crisis humanity has yet faced. My optimism is two-fold. It is in the material interest of our class to do so, and only our class has the social and economic clout to defeat the climate-wrecking bosses and bankers.

There are already hopeful signs in the union movement. On a global scale, there is Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, with affiliates representing 4.6 million workers in 17 countries on every inhabited continent—nine of them in the United States. They have produced an excellent short YouTube animation, introducing workers to climate change—and what can be done about it—suitable for showing at union meetings or any gathering of workers.

The Labor Network for Sustainability is a U.S. affli-



ate of TUED that is developing educational programs for American unions and collaborates with other climate action movements like 350.org. And some major unions, such as the Amalgamated Transit Union, National Nurses United, and the Service Employees International Union, have for the past few years mobilized their members for actions against the Keystone XL pipeline, and participation in the 400,000-strong 2014 People’s Climate March in New York.

Victories of American social movements, such as civil rights, antiwar, and women’s rights have all been accompanied by visible protests in the form of mass demonstrations and/or mass civil disobedience. All of these were assisted by support from wings of organized labor. Building a broad climate action movement through such tactics is needed right now.

But the scope and urgency of the climate crisis—not to mention the other class issues flowing from globalization, wars of intervention, incarceration, deportation, austerity, and a host of other ills—requires us to simultaneously prepare to go beyond protest. We need to aim to take political power out of the hands of the ruling rich. We must replace the rule of greed, war, and pollution with a working-class government that can implement our plan to save our biosphere so that we can all “Make a Living on a Living Planet.”

But this is the Achilles Heel of the American labor and social movements. Every other industrialized republic has at least one mass working-class party—most of them established in the 19th century. Only in America has the ruling class been allowed to have a virtually uncontested monopoly of all things political through their control of the two major parties. The long track record of numerous attempts to capture one of these parties on behalf of our class proves it is every bit as doomed as winning over the master class itself through reasoned civil discourse.

Reviving the movement for a class-based labor party is a vital component of a Class & Climate program in the country with the biggest economy and biggest concentration of the super-rich. ■

Hillary Clinton, Kissinger, and the coup in Honduras



AFP / Getty Images



By ANN MONTAGUE

Clinton is a proponent of 'regime change,' a term meaning the U.S. claims the right to violate the sovereignty of any nation to remove its leader.

(Left) Honduras police detain peasant leaders at Tegucigalpa protest. Peasants are protesting World Bank-funded palm oil plantations' takeover of their land. The oil is exported to Europe for bio-fuel.
(Top) Hillary Clinton.
(Below) Henry Kissinger.

In one of the early Democratic Party debates, in order to inflate her credentials as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton threw out an off-the-cuff comment about her relationship with Henry Kissinger: "I was very flattered when Henry Kissinger said I ran the State Department better—better than anybody had run it in a long time.

In 2014, when Clinton reviewed Henry Kissinger's book, "New World Order," she called him a "friend" whose counsel she "relied on."

This was all too much even for Bernie Sanders, who had refrained from criticizing any of Clinton's actions when she was Secretary of State. Sanders stated that Kissinger was "no friend of mine" and launched into describing Secretary of State Kissinger's nefarious role in the bombing of Cambodia. He did not use the word "war criminal," but this was the verdict of the International Tribunal at The Hague, and summons for his arrest issued by judges in France and Spain are still in effect.

While Secretary of State, Kissinger oversaw the destruction of civilian populations and the assassination and kidnapping of leaders who got in his way.

It is well known that Clinton is a strong proponent of "regime change." This is an innocuous term that means that the U.S. claims the right to violate the sovereignty of any nation to enable the removal of that nation's leader. This can be done with massive military might, creating instability, financially and militarily supporting opposition groups, or with a wink and a nod to the nation's military.

What many people might not know is that this includes removing popularly elected leaders. Two examples in history were Salvador Allende in Chile (1973) and Manuel Zelaya in Honduras (2009).

The U.S. role in Chile

Henry Kissinger, Nixon's Secretary of State, spoke openly about his involvement in the coup in Chile. One of his most famous statements is also a description of what is meant by "regime change": "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist [sic] due to the irresponsibility of its people. The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves."

Declassified documents show that Kissinger set up a two-track plan. One was ostensibly diplomatic and the other was a strategy of destabilization, kidnapping, and assassination designed to provoke a military coup. One out of every seven members of the command staff of DINA, the notorious Chilean intelligence agency responsible for many of the worst human rights atrocities during the Pinochet years, were graduates of the notorious U.S. Army School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.

Once the coup had been completed, on Sept. 11, 1973, and Augusto Pinochet and his cohorts were in the good graces of U.S. corporations, they turned to

making fortunes for themselves from the privatization of public services.

Honduras military overthrows Zelaya

President Manuel Zelaya was a popular leader who won election in 2006 with a coalition of unions, indigenous leaders, LGBT activists, and women's rights supporters. He was not a socialist but a large landowner and a social reformer. Zelaya supported a 60% wage hike, which angered U.S. corporations like Chiquita Brands International and the Dole Food Co., who were concerned that the higher minimum wage would spread to other countries in Latin America.

Zelaya put in place other liberal policies, including free education and meals for children, subsidies to small farmers, lower interest rates, and free electricity. As a result, Honduras saw a 10 percent decline in poverty.

The Honduran international airport, Toncontín, is one of the most dangerous in the world. For years prior to the coup the Honduran authorities had discussed the possibility of converting the U.S. Air Base at Soto Cano (also called Palmerola) into a much-needed civilian airport. The U.S. military would be moved to another base on the Honduran coast.

Venezuela agreed to reciprocal trading agreements to help finance the new airport. Right-wing Hondurans protested the use of Venezuelan funds, but after a major airline crash at Toncontín, President Zelaya announced that they would proceed with construction at Palmerola. A couple weeks after Zelaya had announced that the armed forces would engage in the construction, the military rebelled.

The coup was carried out by Gen. Romeo Vásquez Velásquez, the head of the of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Honduran military and by Gen. Luís Prince Suazo, the head of the air force. Like the notorious Chilean intelligence agency, they were trained at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly called the U.S. Army School of the Americas) at Fort Benning.

On June 28, 2009, Zelaya was overthrown by the Honduran military, who broke into his home and kidnapped him at gunpoint. They forced him onto a plane that flew him to Costa Rica and dumped him onto the tarmac. According to Zelaya, an Honduran military plane flew him to Costa Rica and stopped to refuel at

Soto Cano, the Honduran air base that is home to 600 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

The coup was followed by months of protests by the Honduran people against the de facto government led by Roberto Micheletti and for a return of their president. While virtually all Latin American governments condemned the coup and called for Zelaya's restoration, Secretary Clinton, who had been in Honduras a few weeks before, immediately called for elections to bring in a new government.

Using the word "crisis," Clinton immediately praised the Honduran military for bringing "stability" to Honduras. She detailed some of her actions in her book "Hard Choices," published in 2014. Days after the coup, she teamed up with Mexican Foreign Secretary Patricia Espinosa to forge a response: "We strategized on a plan to restore order in Honduras and ensure that free and fair elections could be held quickly and legitimately, which would render the question of Zelaya moot and give the Honduran people a chance to choose their own future."

In regard to Chile, Kissinger, the U.S. president, and the CIA were all on one page. But on Honduras, President Obama initially stated that it was a coup and Zelaya should be returned. WikiLeaks also reveals that the former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, Hugh Llorens, sent a cable to Clinton with the subject line, "Open and Shut: The Case Of The Honduran Coup." The cable said, "there is no doubt" that the coup was "illegal and unconstitutional."

The U.S. Embassy listed arguments by supporters of the coup to claim its legality, and dismissed each of them, saying, "none ... has any substantive validity under the Honduran constitution." The Embassy went on to say that the Honduran military had no legal authority to remove President Zelaya from office or from Honduras. They characterized the Honduran military's action as an "abduction" and kidnapping.

Nevertheless, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton quickly did everything she could to help the military coup in Honduras succeed, at the same time that it was violently cracking down on the media and the opposition. She inferred that Zelaya was legally removed from office and she violence baited the Honduran people who were non-violently demanding the

(continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)

return of their president.

Clinton claimed that Honduras was on the verge of a civil war. The “elections” that she helped organize for November 2009 in Honduras were not recognized as legitimate by the rest of the region and the world. The Organization of American States, the European Union, and the Carter Center all refused to send observers.

Rosemary Joyce of the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) said: “The election was conducted without the presence of certified international observers that would be necessary to accept the results even in normal times, let alone with the election conducted under a government exercising fierce repression of the media and of free speech. It was a ‘demonstration election.’ An election held for little other purpose than to buff the image of an anti-democratic government.”

Yet Clinton continued to claim that the situation was merely a “crisis,” not a coup, and that Zelaya should be replaced with hastily called elections. The fraudulent election was financed by the National Endowment for Democracy, known for its pro-U.S. obstructive practices in Latin America and around the world, and the U.S. State Department.

In 2013, when Xiomara Castro, the wife of Manuel Zelaya, ran for president, over 30 candidates of her Libre party were murdered. The right-wing presidential candidate, Juan Orlando Hernandez, was declared the winner, although many international observers reported evidence of intimidation, vote buying, and other irregularities at the polls.

The Clinton e-mails

In January 2016, three batches of Secretary Clinton’s e-mails were released. The Center For Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) has reported that while many of the e-mails are heavily redacted, they give a clearer picture of how Clinton handled international developments during her tenure at the State Department.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, then Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, sent an e-mail to Clinton on Aug. 16, 2009, strongly urging her to “take bold action” and to “find that [the] coup was a ‘military coup’ under U.S. law,” a move that would have immediately triggered the suspension of all non-humanitarian U.S. assistance to Honduras: “I got lots of signals last week that we are losing ground in Latin America every day the Honduras crisis continues ... even our friends are beginning to think we are not really committed to the norm of constitutional democracy.”

Fifteen House Democrats asked the State Department to “fully acknowledge that a military coup has taken place.” They expressed concern that “every passing day gives Micheletti and his associates the chance to tighten their illegitimate hold on the reins of power.”

As we know, Clinton spurned this advice, which meant that millions of dollars of U.S. military assistance continued to flow to the military coup. While strategizing the best way to keep Zelaya out of power, Clinton’s e-mails mention working with Lanny Davis, a former advisor to President Bill Clinton, who was working as a consultant for a group of Honduran businessmen that supported the coup.

Horrible aftermath of the Honduran coup

The decisions made by Clinton contributed to the enormous damage done to Honduras since the coup. Poverty has increased, and violence has spiraled out of control. The U.S. government has continually increased military assistance to Honduras, despite alarming reports of killings and human rights abuses by the military and security forces.

Honduras is the size of New Hampshire, and before the coup there were five military bases. After the coup the number of bases has doubled; the U.S. instituted multi-million-dollar projects to build two U.S. naval bases. One of the bases is on Guanaja in the Bay Islands, which destroyed a popular tourist destination that had been known as a diving mecca for its pristine waters.

Honduras rapidly descended into a period of extreme violence after the coup, as security forces suppressed protests. The British organization Global Witness has released figures that show at least 109 people were killed in Honduras between 2010 and 2015, for taking a stand against destructive dams and mining, logging, and agricultural projects. Of the eight victims whose cases were publicly reported in 2015, six were from indigenous groups.

A major LGBT leader and activist with the front of resistance against the coup was assassinated on Dec. 14, 2009. Ten days before his murder, Walter Trochez was kidnapped, beaten, interrogated, threatened with death, and told to cease his activism. He managed to



escape after being told they had orders to kill him. Trochez was documenting and publicizing homophobic killings and crimes committed by forces behind the coup. He also was documenting human rights violations committed during anti-coup demonstrations.

Three days after his body was found, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission stated, “The death of Walter Trochez is the 16th known murder in the LGBT community since the military coup. The accelerated rate at which LGBT people have been killed in the last seven months shows a targeted pattern of violence.” The fact that at the same time Hillary Clinton was making sanctimonious speeches about U.S. advocacy of LGBT human rights around the world shows the height of hypocrisy.

Honduran feminists speak out

Hillary Clinton has built her presidential campaign around her self-proclaimed dedication to fighting for women’s rights and her experience as Secretary Of State. Honduran feminist artist Melissa Cardoza has another view of Secretary Clinton’s legacy in Latin America: “As is well known, she supported the coup d’état in my country, which has sunk a very worthy and bleeding land further into abject poverty, violence, and militarism.”

“In Honduras, women suffer widespread gender violence as well as a crisis of human rights abuses since the U.S.-backed 2009 coup that ousted democratically elected Manuel Zelaya.”

Neesa Medina of the Honduran Women’s Rights Center told Telesur that the coup has had an impact on all human rights, but particularly the rights of women. “As a member of a feminist organization we are severely affected by the U.S. support for militaristic policies in other countries, which always has a negative effect on the lives of women”. In Honduras the femicide rate increased by over 260% between 2005 and 2013. In 2014, 513 women were murdered, and in 2015 one woman was killed every 16 hours.

Since 2009, Tegucigalpa has become known as “The Murder Capital of the World.” Since 2009, 59 journalists have been assassinated in Honduras, with 12 journalists assassinated last year and four murdered so far in 2016 as of April.

Adding to her shame is Hillary Clinton’s stance in regard to the refugee children who have fled Honduras and other Central American countries. In a 2014 interview with CNN, for example, Clinton said that children arriving in the United States should be “sent back” to their violence-prone countries. “We have to send a clear message, just because your child gets across the border, that doesn’t mean the child gets to stay,” she said. Recently, however, in debate with Sanders, Clinton backtracked from that position.

The assassination of Berta Cáceres

On March 3 of this year, two assassins broke down the back door of the home of indigenous activist Berta Cáceres and killed her. Last year, Cáceres was given the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for her 10-year fight against the Agua Zarca Dam, a project planned along the river sacred to the indigenous Lenca people. She led the struggle against Canadian and U.S. corporations for promoting development that the people considered threats to their very existence because they eliminated access to the rivers, forests,

(Above) Protest outside in Tegucigalpa demanding justice for Berta Cáceres. On May 1, four people were arrested in connection with the murder. It is thought that at least two suspects have ties to the military, and two or three are connected to the company building the Agua Zarca dam.

and mountain environments critical for agriculture, food, and water.

Cáceres and Gustavo Castro co-founded the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). They led the movement that was pressuring the Honduran government to ratify a law that requires the free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous communities before projects can proceed on their land.

Recently, thousands of people converged on Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, in a massive mobilization to demand justice for Berta and an end to repression and government support for corporate interests. All around Tegucigalpa, her face has been spray-painted next to the words, “Berta did not die. She multiplied.”

A week after the death of Berta Cáceres, another member of COPINH, Nelson Garcia, was shot to death. Before he was murdered, Garcia was at the site of the Rio Chiquito eviction, where Honduran police and military were violently forcing the community out by destroying homes and crops. Garcia went to his mother-in-law’s home, where two gunmen were waiting for him and shot him dead.

The following week, the Dutch development bank FMO and the Finnish development bank Finnfund said they would suspend funding of the Agua Zarca Dam. In a statement, FMO said it was “shocked” by the deaths and would halt all activities in Honduras.

Berta’s daughter, Bertha Zuniga Carceres, came to the United States to demand an international investigation of the recent deaths. She was also concerned that “since the coup hundreds of concessions were given for hydroelectric exploitation, for mining.” She pointed out that a number of projects aimed at dispossessing the population have been established, including “model cities” to house people who were displaced.

“So, we are actually experiencing the results of the coup d’état now with the establishment of a whole series of projects that are strengthening an economic model that represents the pillage of the common goods of nature.”

COPINH states that more than 300 hydroelectric dams are planned for Honduras, of which 49 are on COPINH lands. In addition, 872 contracts have been handed out to corporations for mining alone. The majority of these are planned for indigenous lands.

Brigitte Gynther of the Washington-based School of the Americas Watch told Telesur, “The U.S. is essentially financing this repression.”

At the same time, colleagues and relatives of Cáceres in Honduras have raised questions about the role of Honduran soldiers and police in her March 3 death. They cite what they call a pattern of intimidation and abuse by security forces, including a national police unit called Los Tigres, which was set up by U.S. Special Forces soldiers over the past two years and receives funding and training from the United States. Before

(continued on page 9)

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

NDP convention best in decades Mulcair is out; change is in

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The stunning defeat of Leader Tom Mulcair, and the launch of a cross-country discussion of the Leap Manifesto, signals a shift in the relationship of forces in Canada's New Democratic Party. The right-wing forces of the party and the union bureaucracy are now on the defensive. The "progressive," soft-left is ascendant. Will the left seize this golden opportunity to fight for an anti-capitalist agenda and make North America's only mass, union-based political party a weapon in the fight against austerity and climate catastrophe?

As over 1700 delegates gathered in Edmonton, Alberta, for the April 8-10 NDP federal convention, two things were evident. Firstly, it was clear that Mulcair, who led the disastrous election campaign in which the party lost a million votes and 60 per cent of its parliamentary seats last October, did not enjoy the confidence of a large majority. Secondly, anti-pipeline sentiment was pervasive, at least outside of the Alberta delegation, and the appetite for action against catastrophic climate change would prevail.

The conflict over carbon-based energy came to a head when Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley made a provocative gamble. She went on television the night before the convention to demand that a west-to-east pipeline be built, with the help of the federal government. That put Mulcair, who had been wavering, after initially supporting the Pipeline East, in an impossible position. He continued to waver, and was mostly absent from the convention floor, thus sealing his fate.

Former Ontario NDP Leader and UN diplomat Stephen Lewis delivered the coup de grace with an electrifying speech on Saturday night. Lewis topped Notley by persuasively arguing that an extensive transition to green energy would be the greatest job creator on earth.

But few, outside of the NDP Socialist Caucus, predicted Mulcair's precipitous fall. When delegates voted 52 per cent on Sunday morning in favour of launching a leadership race to replace the former Quebec Liberal cabinet minister, the convention and the country were stunned. Party honchos and bourgeois pundits forecasted that Mulcair would get over 70 per cent support, which they insisted would be enough for him to stay on as Leader. No one saw the 48 per cent sinker ball coming. But the signs were there.

After the Socialist Caucus launched a national campaign for Leadership Review in late October, a number of prominent NDP leftist figures called for change at the top. Ontario MPP Cheri DiNovo and Sid Ryan, former president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, led the way. NDP electoral district association presidents and local labour council officials added their voices. Then 37 prominent Quebec NDP activists issued an open letter calling for change in the party's direction. On the other hand, five heads of unions publicly backed Mulcair. And the mass media weighed in, mostly on his side. The party staff commandeered huge resources to conduct highly manipulated telephone town halls, and to host scores of events to promote "fighter" Mulcair across the country.

But that was countered by the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, Hassan Yussuff, who predicted that Mulcair would be defeated. In fact, on the eve of the vote, leaders of CUPE and UNIFOR "released" their delegates from a pledge to support Mulcair. This came after the 274-strong Labour Caucus, which met on Saturday morning, took no position on the issue. In the words of Bob Dylan, "It doesn't take a weatherman to know which way the wind is blow'in'."

The convention showed Mulcair the door, but asked him to pause at the exit—to stay on as parliamentary Leader until a race to replace him can be orchestrated. That contest will culminate in a one-member-one-vote election, and a policy convention, to be held 18 months to two years from now.

Delegates also voted about 60 per cent in favour of conducting a grassroots discussion of the environmental and social justice proposals in the Leap Manifesto. Toronto Star columnist Tom Walkom describes the document as "middle of the road." Journalist and former NDP star candidate Linda McQuaig asks, "What's with all the ruckus over the Leap Manifesto? ... Reports of its scarieness have been greatly exaggerated; its call for a transition from fossil fuels to green energy is solidly based in



(Above) NDP Leader Tom Mulcair

science and widely accepted."

This begs the question: why have the capitalist media and bourgeois politicians been pouring abuse on the Manifesto, and on NDPers who backed it and who voted to dump Mulcair?

The reason is simple: they fear that the party right wing will lose control of the apparatus. They worry that the left will gravitate towards radical socialist politics that call into question, not only capitalist austerity, but the system itself. The ouster of "balanced-budget at-all-costs" Mulcair, and the warm welcome accorded Leap's critique of growing inequality, job precariousness, and environmental plunder greatly disturb the Canadian Establishment.

Will the Canadian left turn up the heat, and work to set the agenda for fundamental change? Well, that would require quite a break in practice—an end to navel gazing by leftists outside the NDP, and an end to nit-picking and name-calling by some inside the labour-based party.

The answer will come soon as local forums and discussions get underway. The openness to such debates has rarely been so great. The convention in Edmonton, despite its rigged policy priorities process, and dubious guest speakers (like John Ashworth, one of the most right-wing members of Jeremy Corbyn's British Labour Party leftist Shadow Cabinet), was nonetheless the most open NDP convention in decades.

A proliferation of independent issue campaigns and candidates greeted delegates at registration. This included CUPW members for postal banking, folks who want to abolish the monarchy, and proponents of proportional representation in parliament. One group, with scissors in hand, snipped hundreds of credential-holding lanyards embossed with Mulcair's name and replaced them with plain ribbons. Soon a huge pile of discarded lanyards accumulated on the Shaw Communications Centre carpet, while a tray heaped high with Tom Mulcair buttons sat ignored on the registration counter.

Party officials provided the Socialist Caucus a venue for its meetings, along with a display table in the hallway—after refusing SC requests for three months. The socialists faced no hassle from officials when they unfurled a huge banner "For Democracy and Socialism Back in the NDP" in the main corridor, and even on the convention floor. Likewise, the SC had no problem distributing nearly 900 copies of its full-colour, glossy magazine *Turn Left*, nor any difficulty collecting over \$850 in donations and revenue from sales of literature and buttons at its highly visible campaign depot.

For the first time, the meetings of the NDP socialists were listed in the official Delegate Kit, and the group name was spelled with capitals "S" and "C." Six meetings of the caucus took place, all well attended.

Over 70 people signed up to join the SC, which worked cooperatively and successfully with Momentum—the NDP's left alternative to austerity—with RENEW the PARTY, and New Democrats for the Leap Manifesto. A joint lunchtime meeting of supporters of Leap and the SC brought together about 60 delegates, chaired by this writer, to discuss floor tactics for the Sunday morning environment issues debate.

In the weeks leading up to the convention, the SC gained wide media attention, including in-depth interviews in leading newspapers. At the same time, venomous attacks by National Post writers and by former senior NDP staffers Gerry Caplan and Robin Sears appeared.

They claimed the SC has little influence—before Mulcair was defeated, before the Leap discussion was launched, and before various socialist policies won significant support in policy workshops.

Jointly with Momentum, the SC ran 16 candidates for party executive and federal council posts. Vote results, ranging from 5.2% to 15%, revealed a significant hard-core radical left base. It also indicated that, while the broad membership wants change, it is not yet convinced of the need for a Marxist programme. But the SC will continue to make the case for revolutionary change.

That was the essence of my presidential candidate speech to the convention, which elicited rounds of applause. Toronto's Marit Stiles, who was elected NDP president, and Montrealer Elaine Michaud, who ran second, refused to say whether they wanted a Leadership Review, and only vaguely indicated that they favoured some kind of "reform" and "renewal."

Delegates demonstrated significant support for socialist policies on Palestine and BDS, favouring the need to dedicate 80% of convention time to discussion of resolutions (as opposed to less than 32 per cent presently), to establish public Pharmacare, and to institute steeply progressive taxation. These issues were featured in the 4 Ps Petition circulated by the SC during the summer of 2015, signed by hundreds of party members. The SC attracted over 30 per cent delegates' support for an early bid to amend the convention agenda. This was later attempted by the sizable Quebec delegation.

The Persons Living with disabilities Caucus won an important change that will benefit all members. It requires that resolutions and proposed constitution amendments be posted and circulated weeks before a convention, not just days in advance. The convention also adopted a more open and accountable candidate vetting process. This gain was in response to the outrage provoked by decisions of the federal office to block or rescind several potential NDP candidates in 2015 who expressed pro-Palestinian views.

What's next? The key tasks facing the party left include:

- Promote and advance the discussion on the Leap Manifesto.
- Emphasize the need for public ownership and democratic control of Big Oil and Gas, and the entire energy sector.
- Demand justice for indigenous peoples. Economic restitution is the basis for moral reconciliation. Resource corporations and the government must pay.
- Explore running a socialist candidate for NDP Leader, or support someone like MP Nikki Ashton, Linda McQuaig, or Avi Lewis. Defeat MP Nathan Cullen who argued for a coalition with the Liberal Party in 2011, and who favours fossil fuels and more resource extraction projects provided a "social license" is obtained from First Nations.

The dethronement of Mulcair occurred less than two years after Ken Georgetti was deposed as reigning Canadian Labour Congress President. Two incumbents forced out of top positions by a major body of working class delegates in Canada is unprecedented. It is a reflection of the keen appetite for change. It is testament to the resurgence of socialist ideas in Britain, in the USA, and beyond. It is also a sign of things to come in Canada.

Socialist caucus presidential candidate's speech to NDP convention:

My name is Barry Weisleder. I am a union organizer and a proud socialist—working to put socialism back in the NDP. It's time for a Democratic Revolution in Canada and the NDP.

We want proportional representation in Parliament and membership control of the message this party takes to the electorate. Our fight is for the working class, not what Liberals call the "middle class."

The NDP should stop apologizing for being a labour party. Working people *make the country run*. Workers should *run the country*. With real wages frozen for 30 years, and deep in debt, workers need a raise. A minimum wage of \$18/hour would be a good start. We need homes, not bombs. We need trains in Canada, not tanks shipped to Saudi Arabia. We need schools and hospitals on the ground, not CF18s in the air. The NDP should fight to make the polluters pay, to build renewable power, not pipelines. Let's uphold indigenous people's rights, not condone corporate blight. We demand fair trade, not CETA and the TPPA.

Now's the time for public and democratic control of the economy. That's the way to provide useful, well-paid employment for laid-off oil workers, for farmers and fisherfolk suffering from the effects of climate change, for youths and minorities stuck in McJobs, facing a precarious future. Isn't it crazy to rely on monopoly control by giant banks, greedy telecoms, big pharma, agribusiness and WalMart, and to expect anything other than deskilling, speed-up, growing inequality, social decay, and racist police violence?

Our struggle is not for a "balanced" budget. It's for a Workers' Budget that puts people before profits. Yes, we will balance the budget – on the back of Conrad Black,

(continued on page 11)

Socialist Democracy is the sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Ireland.

At first sight, the Tale of 1916 seems a simple one. On the one hand, there was a small band—an alliance of socialists and revolutionary democrats. On the other hand, were the British imperialists and their Unionist supporters.

Even if we stay within that narrative, The Rising had enormous significance. It was founded upon a wide range of working-class struggles across Ireland and Britain and extending across Europe and the USA. Across the world democrats took inspiration from the rising, especially around anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa. Yet at a deeper level there was class conflict within all the elements associated with 1916.

Connolly and the Citizen Army arrived at 1916 through a bitter struggle with Irish capitalism in the Dublin lockout of 1913. Connolly claimed this as a drawn struggle, but it was, in fact, a Pyrrhic victory for the employers. Their main target, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union survived and the smaller employers had been scared enough not to support any attempt to revive the strategy of the general lockout in Dublin. However, they were able to deny union recognition to the workers, and their leaders, the biggest ones, were able to exclude the unions from their workplaces altogether.

What was especially significant about 1913 was the reasons for the setback. Alongside the onslaught of the state and the employers and the relative weakness of the Irish working class ran a strong reformist current in the trade-union and labour movement. Connolly, in debates with the Belfast socialist William Walker, had already condemned the "gas and water socialism" that set as its goal the narrow aim of seats on the councils and municipal reform.

However, the problem was much larger than that dispute indicated. Across Europe, the trade-union and labour movement had developed its own bureaucracy and become partly integrated with the structures of capitalism. There was a widespread view that, if the social democratic parties could win a majority in parliament, they would be able to use the structures of the capitalist state to institute socialism. In the heartlands of the imperialist powers, sections of the working class saw themselves as an aristocracy of labour, having common interests with their imperial masters. The Ulster loyalists were an extreme example of this current, combining an often quite militant trade-union consciousness with an abject political loyalty to their Protestant bosses.

They were not socialists, but William Walker tried unsuccessfully to win them by his combination of milk and water socialism and Protestant unionism. His current was linked to the British reformists whose social patriotism deferred to royalty and the Empire.

The reformist current had found its expression in the writings of Eduard Bernstein, the German social democrat. He used the social democrats' division of "maximum" (socialism) and "minimum" (immediate reforms) to abandon the first ("the ultimate goal is nothing") and urge concentration on the second, the improvement of capitalism. The British Fabian movement was an example of this political shift.

The true cost of reformism was spelt out in the trenches of the First World War. The mass International of working people, the 2nd International, had seemed to be an invincible bulwark against war. Its leadership had declared that the workers would not fight and would rise up against war and institute a revolution. However, when war was declared, the reformist leaderships swung behind "their own" national capitalist classes and sent an entire generation of European workers to the slaughter.

This background lent a sharp urgency to Connolly's decision to press for a Rising. He felt it absolutely essential that the declaration of the International be upheld and that the workers rise up against the imperialist killing machine.

The revolutionary nationalists of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) felt a similar urgency. British propaganda had based itself around "gallant little Belgium" and the "freedom of small nations" while at the same time delaying on home rule. The revolutionists foresaw the carve up and decay of empires that would follow the war and felt it essential to put forward Ireland's claim to nationhood, summed up as "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity."

Connolly's decision was within the context of rebellions and revolutions across Europe during and after the war, culminating in the workers' seizure of power in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Lenin remarked that the Irish had "risen too soon" but the necessity for rising was never in doubt. The IRB was also proved right. The war was followed by increased assertion of national rights across the British Empire, and its gradual decay. The Indian nationalist movement especially drew heavily on the Irish example.

Class Struggle in Ireland: 1916



(Above) Trade-union members trained by Jack White drill in the Irish Citizens Army.

As with the socialists, there were divisions among the nationalists. These were much sharper, being based on a struggle between contending classes within the movement. The class division showed itself at the onset of the Rising, with the leadership of the Irish volunteers countermanning mobilization orders, dooming the Rebels to rapid defeat.

The Irish nationalists, representing local capital but excluding the unionist industrialists and the landed gentry, wanted limited home rule, a provincial assembly without any power over foreign affairs within the British Empire. The revolutionary nationalist current, based in the Irish petit bourgeoisie, wanted an Irish democracy and an independent economy.

From a Marxist point of view, the revolutionary democrats exhibited great courage and determination. However, their vision of a revolution based simply on national self-determination would always include a space for an Irish capitalism that would inevitably be subservient to British imperialist economic interests, and that class would inevitably betray the nationalist revolutionaries.

In times of upsurge, the nationalist revolutionaries would break from the restraints of the Home Rule capitalists. However, there was a fault line amongst them between those, like the official volunteer leadership before the Rising who were clear in wanting a stable capitalist society and who feared losing control of their movement, and those who were happy to take the risk. When the downturn came, the conservative wing was able to block with its Home Ruler (and even unionist) opponents, while the revolutionary nationalists often went into military opposition, leading to further splits.

The British Empire faced a struggle with revolutionaries, while in the background was an Irish capitalist class subservient to imperialism and a weak working class with a strong reformist current. The outcome was partial independence, partition, civil war, followed by a society with the migrant boat the only escape from the grinding oppression of church and state.

Looking back, it is important to remember that many of the participants were unaware of the full extent of the divisions in their movements. Connolly saw himself as debating with other trade unionists and socialists who could be won to revolution. On the international stage, as part of the general reshaping of the working-class movement, even Lenin believed that he was following closely the programme of German social democracy rather than re-establishing a revolutionary independence of the working class.

Within the working class the battle between revolution and reform was fought out in a series of skirmishes that were seen as individual disputes rather than a clash of worldviews. It was clear to Connolly that he was isolated within the world socialist movement, an isolation made more intense in that, unlike Lenin, he did not have a relatively homogeneous political party behind him. He tried to make up for this by building working-class militancy to clash with Britain, but he was unsuccessful.

After the Rising, the leadership of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party (then united in the syndicalist manner) used Connolly's name in vain whilst adhering to reformist (though never actually unionist) principles closer to those of his reformist opponent, William Walker. In the current peace process, they capitulate utterly to unionism.

Since 1916 the class struggle has ebbed and flowed. There were many heroic struggles by the working class, including general strikes, determined fights by railway workers, and the eruption of bitter struggles by farm

labourers. And, inspired by the Russian Revolution, a wave of soviets swept the country. But we have never succeeded in building an independent working-class leadership. The reformists in the Labour and union leaderships time after time have succeeded in dismantling the struggle and making peace with capitalism.

The revolutionary nationalist movement has ebbed and flowed with the class struggle. When strong, it commits to armed struggle. When that fails, as it inevitably does, it surrenders to the capitalists. The latest collapse is a mighty fall, with Sinn Féin operating the mechanisms of a sectarian austerity administration within a British colonial structure.

The American author William Faulkner remarked in relation to the U.S. Deep South that: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." This is certainly true of Ireland today; 1916 and its aftermath saw a partial and incomplete national revolution. Both parts of the country remain firmly in the grip of imperialism, and workers continue to flee the country. Those who stay are ground down by a rapacious ruling class.

The carnival of reaction predicted by Connolly is here today. The completion of the 1916 rising remains a task for the working class. ■

... Honduras

(continued from page 7)

she died, Cáceres warned U.S. visitors about Los Tigres, describing the unit as a "repressive" force in her region of western Honduras.

Secretary Clinton enabled the coup with a wink and a nod to the military by supporting fraudulent elections and by avoiding the word "coup," which ensured that U.S. military aid would continue to flow to the murderous regime. According to *Foreign Policy In Focus*, the U.S. gave \$37 million in direct aid to the Honduran military and security forces from the date of the coup through 2013. But equally culpable are all Democrats. During the current presidential campaign no one, including Bernie Sanders, has said a word about the ongoing human rights crisis in Honduras and U.S. culpability.

Dan Beeton, international communications director for the Center for Economic and Policy Research, told AlterNet that the "Obama administration is loathe to put any pressure on the Honduran government. I would say, worse than that, they are pretending there is not a problem. It's hard to understate Clinton's actions in Honduras. Clinton needs to answer why she did this and why they thought this was a good idea."

Yet Clinton refuses to answer any questions about her role in Honduras. The newly issued paperback edition of her book has been wiped clean of the sections on Honduras that appeared in the first edition. Nevertheless, the murderous outcome of her actions in 2009 cannot be erased from the memories of the Honduran people. ■



Film

Eye in the Sky

By JOE AUCIELLO

"Eye in the Sky," (2016), a film directed by Gavin Hood, written by Guy Hibbert, with Helen Mirren and Alan Rickman.

The arc of the suspense story is familiar enough. Begin the tale in normal times, introduce a disruptive element whose threat deepens until it is ultimately destroyed, and conclude with a return to normalcy.

To this successful formula, "Eye in the Sky" adds a sheen of high seriousness by basing the film's conflict on a moral question fraught with a contemporary urgency. In the war against terrorism, what is the value of a single human life—especially when that life belongs to an innocent, young girl?

To sweeten the question, know that this child—happiest when playing with her hula-hoop—is no terrorist herself and shows no inclination of ever becoming one. An early scene reveals her reluctant submission to sharia law and dislike of the Muslim extremists who would prohibit her free-spirited play. Foreigner she may be, but at bottom, she's just like us. Hers, therefore, is a life that matters.

The story begins with Colonel Katherine Powell (Helen Mirren), a British officer in command of an intelligence unit, using surveillance drones to track an Islamic terrorist organization in Kenya. One of their leaders is a British national, who thus far has been an elusive target.

With the assistance of these U.S. Air Force drones and agents on the ground, the terrorists and their leaders have been detected and followed to a safe-house. A Kenyan military unit is standing by to arrest the group, until an undercover agent discovers that several young men are being outfitted with bombs hidden in suicide vests. The British-American mission is thus changed from "capture" to "kill," which requires Col. Powell to obtain legal authorization.

Here the story and setting shift from military bunkers to government offices, back and forth, in a mad-dening game of political hot-potato, as each political official tries to avoid taking responsibility for a decision that, should it backfire, would most certainly result in career-ending blame.

Intensifying the legal and moral dilemma is the appearance next to the "kill site" of a young Kenyan girl of elementary-school age. She arrives to sell the bread her mother bakes and sets up a make-shift stand by the road-side. The presence of an innocent civilian could possibly abort the attack—a possibility the military officers are desperate to avoid. The American drone-operator, in fact, refuses to launch the Hellfire missiles on Col. Powell's order and insists that appropriate procedures be followed and verified, despite the growing likelihood of a terrorist suicide bombing that would murder scores of people.

Therefore, given the imminent threat, Col. Powell decides to go around the military regulations that would protect noncombatants. She issues a command-by-suggestion to one of her officers to create the computer model that will "prove" the relative safety of the child when the bombs rain down. Permission is thus granted, and the airstrike is launched, with predictable results.

"Eye in the Sky" is an excellent film of its type. Tautly written, fast-paced, well acted and directed, the movie has earned critical and financial success. The flaws of the film, which become apparent with a slight degree of thought, are actually no obstacle to its popularity. Popcorn and propaganda mix well.

Of course, the characters must be simplified and the plot streamlined, but most importantly of all, the Americans and British—at least their military—must be favorably portrayed. Criticism is largely confined to government officials, who provide a convenient and enjoyable foil.

Begin with Dame Helen Mirren, who plays the colonel in combat camouflage. She is an appealing contrast to the "testosterone-deprived" civilian politicians. As the latter bunch dicker and dither, her job is to bark, "We have to strike now!" with ever-increasing degrees of urgency.

Veteran actor Jeremy Northam, in the role of Defense Minister, shows that in his acting school days he surely earned top grades in the Spineless Bureaucrat and Sniveling Coward classes. The late Alan Rickman, as a character who need only be named "General," is largely limited to expressions of respectful exasperation with the politicians and government officials, all ap-

parently graduates of the Neville Chamberlain School of Diplomacy.

While General is not overly troubled about blowing a little girl to pieces, the audience knows nonetheless that he is a good and decent man because, before going to work and urging the death of an innocent, he frets about the right toy to buy for a grandchild.

From such a solid moral foundation, "General" delivers the film's indecent applause line, the one forbidding civilians from faulting the military since only soldiers "know the cost of war." The government official who receives this tongue-lashing makes no reply, and silence signifies the truth of the statement. It is also a cue to the public. Here, a bit of dialogue resolves the tragedy in the story, which the audience has been admonished to accept without a contrary word.

But there is every reason to question the military's justification of anything it does. The soldiers and "cost of war" line is the kind of contrived falsehood that George Orwell identified as "political language," that is, a statement "designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."

Only soldiers know the terrible price of war? Unspoken in this simple-minded platitude is the presumption that the fierce, unforgiving urgency of combat creates the circumstances that requires and even excuses any instance of indiscriminate killing. It's the standard-issue defense of war crimes and atrocities. Of course, it is also a point that must not be mentioned, much less acknowledged.

Unacknowledged too is the consideration that hardship and poverty are at the center of this movie, directly linking the soldier who fires the drone missile to the young girl who is killed by it. He's sitting in a desert bunker, sweating, with a reluctant finger on the trigger, because, after college, jobs were scarce, and the Air Force offered four years of a secure income. The girl could have left the target site after selling her wares, but a plot twist allows her to re-sell them, and poverty compels her to stay. Financial need drives both these characters, damaging the psyche of one and destroying the body of the other—a word chosen for all of its connotations.

This is the story within the movie that the audience will not notice, much less consider. Will the film compel many of its viewers to ask about the estimated number of civilian deaths resulting from drone air strikes? Not likely. Will many viewers notice that while the "Eye in the Sky" centers on the possible risk to one civilian, real-life scenarios frequently involve multiple victims? Again, not likely.

To ask these kinds of questions is to spoil the fun. Maybe soldiers know the cost of war, but movies are made to guarantee that audiences know the pleasure of it.

After the film credits roll, viewers of the movie will later that evening become viewers of television news. They will eventually see reports—if not one night, then another—of the U.S. military's accidentally blowing up a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Afghanistan, bombing a wedding party in Yemen, or Air Force gunships launching drone strikes that shred the flesh of dusky-skinned people in various parts of the world.

"Eye in the Sky" will reassure these viewers that every measure possible to secure civilian safety was considered and taken, even at risk to the lives of U.S. soldiers. Surely, the federal government and its armed forces could do no less.

After all, they're the good guys. ■

... Verizon

(continued from page 12)

On." Verizon started alleging that union sabotage was responsible for glitches in service. This was likely an exaggeration, if not an outright lie, to cover up incompetence of management and "temporary replacement" scabs who were attempting to do strikers' work.

On the 15th day of the strike, the company made their "last, best and final offer." Their wage proposal was improved to 7.5 percent over the life of the contract. But they wouldn't move on issues like lengthy out-of-town transfers, or limits on outsourcing—or even on offshoring of bargaining unit work. The offer was rejected without scheduling any further palaver.

Strikers have received an outpouring of support in many local communities. One CWA worker from Local 1051 in Springfield, Mass., stated that they've received a much stronger expression

of support from people passing by the picket line than they had on their 2011 strike.

The two unions have mobilized impressive demonstrations of thousands of members and allies in several cities. In an afternoon rally that took place on the day of the walkout, about 8000 workers marched in the streets of New York City. They were joined by Democratic Party presidential hopefuls Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton at different times. Both candidates gave lip service in support of the striking workers, although it should come as no surprise that the Wall Street-backed Clinton has had close ties with Verizon in the past, even receiving a \$225,000 honorarium for a speech given in 2013.

Senator Sanders paid a visit to a wireless retail store in Brooklyn, where he addressed a crowd of about 150 workers. As his campaign rallies have swelled into the tens of thousands, however, Sanders has failed to use them as a forum to rally solidarity with the

strike and to call on his supporters to join the workers on the picket line.

Although the Democratic Party has claimed to be the friend of organized labor, it has frequently acted to snuff out working-class struggles. As far back as 1941, for example, "New Deal" President Roosevelt broke the 75-day Allis-Chalmers strike by sending in the National Guard to smash the pickets.

A more modern example of betrayal of the labor movement by the Democrats can be found in Chicago. On April 1, nearly 20,000 CTU teachers and supporters gathered to fight austerity measures put forth by Republican Governor Bruce Rauner and Democratic Mayor Rahm Emmanuel to privatize schools, break unions, and cut desperately needed social services.

A few days later, in Connecticut, nearly 1000 marched to oppose \$900 million in cuts proposed by Democratic Gov. Daniel P. Malloy. In a state with one of the highest wealth gaps between the richest 1% and the 99%, it's obvious

that such cuts would affect the most vulnerable people in the state. Many social services would be without funding, schools would be closed, and 2000 state employees would find themselves unemployed. And all the while, no taxes would be increased on the rich.

In an era when walkouts of 39,000 are seldom seen, and the labor movement struggles to gain footing after decades of union busting by both the Democratic and the Republican wings of the ruling class, the battle being waged by the workers of the CWA and IBEW must be admired. A victory for the workers of Verizon would be momentous for the labor movement and an inspiration for workers not only in the U.S. but worldwide.

At our press deadline, May 5, the unions have asked for support as they expand picketing and demonstrations at Verizon stores nationwide. Verizon workers need and deserve active solidarity from the entire labor movement in what will likely be a bitter battle. ■

ART

By CHRISTINE MARIE

"Astro Noise," Whitney Museum of American Art, Feb. 5 - May 2, 2016.

In the "Seeds of Time," Frederic Jameson famously wrote of our cultural moment, "It seems to be easier to imagine the thorough-going deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness of our imaginations."

In response, many artists have taken it upon themselves to try to find ways to communicate the reality of the increasingly obscure mechanisms of the contemporary global capitalist system, giving some sort of materiality to its circuits of finance, its systems of transportation and communication, its maps of surveillance infrastructure, and the interrelationships among sites of extreme exploitation, in the hope that artistic practice can once again be deeply intertwined with some kind of revolutionary practice.

Allan Sekula made films and photographs of global maritime trade that tried to make palpable the system of commodity production and its basis in the exploitation of low-wage workers. Trevor Paglan has tracked surveillance satellites and photographed "choke points," the clusters of fiber optic cable offshore of the U.S. and Europe where the NSA tries to intercept information traveling over the internet.

In "Astro Noise," an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, documentary filmmaker Laura Poitras builds on this impulse with an immersive installation designed to force museum goers to move from a simple intellectual awareness of the extent of the new surveillance state to the kind of knowledge enriched by experience and emotion.

"Astro Noise" was first conceived by Poitras in 2012-2013 while exiled in Berlin to avoid U.S. government confiscation of film footage she was editing, and at the same time, receiving the first e-mails from Edward Snowden, a disembodied voice she knew only as Citizen Four. The context of her creative work, as noted in her "Berlin Journal"—excerpts of which are included a companion volume to the show—was the impending imprisonment of John Kiriakou, an ex-CIA agent put away for telling a reporter about the torture going on at black sites, the suicide of Aaron Schwartz who was facing imprisonment for trying to "free" academic journals from commercial pay walls, and her own secret meetings with Julian Assange.

C4, as she calls Snowden, could be the agent of entrapment, for her, or for Assange, or even other collaborators, she worries. She wants to publish audio of Chelsea Manning before being shut down. She records her expectations that proceeding to engage with Snowden would likely land them both in jail or exiled. These musings are interspersed with her thoughts upon re-reading "1984" and Cory Doctorow's "Homeland," as well as accounts of her nightmares and extreme physical reactions to anxiety.

In the midst of all this, she critiques the naïveté of her first film about Iraq, "My Country My Country": "As if appealing to people's consciences could change anything. Ten years into this war it is obvious that other forces are at work." As the engagement with Snowden proceeds, she realizes that a film may not be best way to empower viewers. She imagines an art exhibition that could create an aesthetic experience and reveal information in a way that more directly engages.

She turned to Whitney performance curator Jay Sanders to execute that idea. Installation, she and her collaborators hoped, might be able to do what highly layered, complex, and non-didactic documentary films, such as Poitras' "The Oath," seemingly could not—position the viewer in a less passive relationship to the outrages of state spying and torture.

"Astro Noise," then, represents a most serious effort by an artist given unparalleled trust by some of

Laura Poitras: 'Astro Time'

NY Times



(Above) Laura Poitras in her studio with objects exhibited at the Whitney Museum.

the most important whistleblowers of our time—and radicalizing under the pressure of events—to bring capitalist reality home in an important venue for mass culture. While the reality of the increasingly rapacious art market and liberal character of public art institutions like the Whitney make one initially suspicious of her choice of venue, there is no doubt that the thousands of New Yorkers and tourists who found their way to her show are more politically sophisticated and thoughtful about how to act than before they went in.

In addition, Poitras and her collaborators on the accompanying text, *Astro Noise: A Survival Guide for Living Under Total Surveillance*, have taken every advantage of the privileged space still accorded art to try to break through the normalization of 24-7 spying that is the goal of much popular culture dealing with the so-called War on Terror, streaming panels and creating a book that stands alone and offers theory as well as fiction.

One ponders entering the spaces of the installation while gazing at giant vibrantly colored images that lightly reference the giant color field paintings hanging in other parts of the museum. The images are in fact the output of a British spy program named ANARCHIST and were created from the intercepted feed of Israeli drones. I was immediately reminded of standing in a house in Ramallah with a fellow activist who explained that the sound I heard was the noise of drones that flew 24-7 in a grid pattern over the entire West Bank, allowing the Israeli government to track each individual at any point in time, day in and day out.

Once inside the first darkened space, the viewer confronts a room-size dual-channel video screen. On one side is slow-motion film of New Yorkers in a stadium reacting to the sight of the Twin Towers falling. As one walks around the divider, and looks at another giant screen, one finds oneself thrust into a mud-floored room where several prisoners, including Salim Hamdan (*Hamdan v. United States*), are hooded and interrogated by masked U.S. soldiers. The footage was declassified some time ago, at the time of the Hamdan trial; it is not its newness but its projection, which puts one in the room, which makes the experience so shocking.

The viewer next enters the "Disposition Matrix," a long narrow series of halls punctuated by narrow slits that remind one of the eyeholes in a prison cell door. Through the slits one can view part of the Snowden "archive" of leaked documents, including the graphics and world maps that various spy agencies used to promote their tradecraft at conferences, as well as the

cartoonish sketches used inside the agencies to boast of their omnipotence. The position of the slits forces the viewers to share a narrow space and spurs strangers to interact while trying to decipher just what they are seeing.

One of the most moving elements of *Disposition Matrix* is a video interview with Murat Kurnaz, an innocent sold to the U.S. for bounty and then secretly rendered. Kurnaz describes how he was tortured by being hung by his wrists from the ceiling and how he felt after the man hanging in front of him was left in place long after his death.

"Disposition Matrix" feeds into the space called "Bed Down Location." The space is named with the phrase that U.S. troops use to designate a site where a target sleeps in preparation for the assault. Museum-goers enter the darkened room and lie down facing up at the projection of night skies over Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, watching the stars and the glints of drones constantly in motion above them. A faint sound of drones and intermittent transmissions from drone pilots completes the experience of being a target night after night and for years on end.

Poitras' own experience of surveillance is the theme of another space. Viewers watch the eight-minute clip of video she took from the roof of the home of an Iraqi family who lived in the Green Zone, a clip that intelligence service documents on the adjacent wall explained led to Poitras' becoming a person of interest, stopped 40 times at airports with her working materials confiscated, before she fled to Berlin.

Despite this harassment and a reasonable fear of imprisonment for dealing with classified materials that shame the U.S. government, Poitras has made a show that is not about the inescapable totality of the police state but about resistance, the resistance of Murat Kurnaz, Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, herself, and countless numbers of Iraqis, Afghans, Somalis, Yemenis. She clearly hopes that we, too, will resist, in solidarity with all of the victims who have allowed her to turn her camera upon them.

The socialist movement that we need in these dire times is a movement like those of the past, in which the heroism of the world's working people in their battles for freedom, dignity, and justice nourished artists and an intelligentsia, who in turn created new ways to comprehend our situation and empower our action. Laura Poitras and her collaborators on "Astro Noise," the exhibition and the book, should be thanked for making this vision a little less remote. ■

... NDP convention

(continued from page 8)

on the family fortunes of Thomson and Irving, the Westons, Pattison, Desmarais, Richardson, McCain, Munk, Stronach, Peladeau, and all the non-elected barons of Bay Street. By taxing their off-shore billions, and by conscripting their trillions in fixed assets, an NDP government will have no trouble leading the transition to a green and democratic economy, and setting an example that just might save civilization on Earth.

As president of the party I will work to ensure that NDP election campaigns reflect members' priorities. By devoting 80% of convention time to policy debate we can reason together. I will oppose any move to rescind or block

a candidate nomination for reasons of political difference within the frame of our principles. Candidates who have the courage to stand up for Palestinians, and oppose the Zionist apartheid state and NATO, should be praised, not punished.

NDP conventions must be more accessible to workers, women and the poor. Lower registration fees, and bigger subsidies for travel should be the rule. I see the NDP as the party of labour and social justice movements in the streets, not just in Parliament.

I will push the party to invite more unions and community organizations to affiliate. More of the money raised should go to EDAs for year-round local organizing and direct participation in the class struggle. The huge economic barriers to run for NDP Leader should be removed.

Many hard working party supporters gave millions of dollars for a campaign they hoped would offer a real alterna-

tive to austerity and inequality. Now they want their money back. Much more discussion is needed at the local level about NDP aims and policies. Members want real in-put, instead of dinnertime donation calls, instead of seeing the resources of the party used to lobby members to give the Leader one more chance, instead of telephone "town halls" where tough questions are filtered out.

Why am I running for president? To give members a voice, to give delegates a choice, to keep hope alive. At a time when the NDP is at 11% in the polls, when more NDP supporters say they'd vote for the Liberals than the current NDP leader, we need a change of direction.

We need to go back to the future—to the working class roots of the party. Together we can put democracy and socialism back in the NDP, and build the cooperative commonwealth in our time. ■

Verizon workers fight corporate greed

By MIKE PINHO and BILL ONASCH

On April 13, nearly 40,000 Verizon workers on the East Coast, from Maine to Virginia, walked off the job. In the largest U.S. strike in five years, workers from the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) walked out in response to the concessions that telecom giant Verizon has been demanding.

Workers have been without a contract for the past 11 months. The unions offered some concessions on health-care costs, but the company wasn't appeased, still not budging on numerous drastic take-aways.

Verizon is demanding cuts to workers' health care, freezing pension benefits at 30 years, and outsourcing call-center jobs to non-union, low-wage places such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and the Philippines. The company is also seeking the ability to send field techs out of their home states for up to two months at a time. This would place additional strain on families who are already feeling the daily pressures of life in capitalist society, where the ruling 1% aims to slash funding for social services and schools.

Verizon claims that concessions would save money in the company's declining land-line sector. The company, like AT&T, has encouraged customers to switch to less labor-intensive and largely non-union wireless service. There is little doubt that eventually, amidst a shrinking customer base, Verizon hopes to abandon



Marty Goodman / Socialist Action

land-line operation entirely.

At the same time, Verizon has been unwilling to negotiate a first equitable contract for its wireless retail-store workers. The retail workers are some of the company's lowest paid employees, even though in 2015 the company raked in more than \$18 billion in profits—paying its CEO Lowell McAdam \$18 mil-

lion and an additional \$230 million to other top executives. The company has also invested \$5 billion on share repurchasing, by buying its own stock and then jacking up the price to increase profitability.

Fortune magazine ran a story headlined "Verizon Brand Takes a Hit With Consumers As Strike Drags

(continued on page 10)

Bernie Sanders: Democratic Party loyalist to the end

By JEFF MACKLER

The pundits who style themselves as experts in the mathematics of primary contests are now insisting that Bernie Sanders cannot win the Democratic Party nomination.

Including his 53.5 percent win in Indiana on May 3, in which he actually lost ground in his race with Hillary Clinton, Sanders now needs 65 percent of all remaining pledged delegates for a majority and 82 percent of *all* remaining delegates—including super-delegates. The latter have been handpicked by the Democratic Party hierarchy and pledged long ago to vote for Clinton.

It is not the math, however, that motivates Sanders. He clearly explained his view in a recent KQED National Public Radio (NPR) interview: "I think we are perpetuating the political revolution by significantly increasing the level of political activity that we're seeing in this country. I think it is good for the United States of America and good for the Democratic Party to have a vigorous debate, to engage people in the political process."

NPR reported that by staying in the race, Sanders believes he is "energizing voters" and therefore "boosting the Democratic Party to victory in November." He contended that Democrats do well when turnout is high and that Republicans do poorly when turnout is high. "So I'm going to do everything I can to stimulate political discourse in this country and get young people, working people, involved in the political process."

Following four primary contest losses to Clinton at the end of April, Sanders insisted that even if he lost the nomination he would fight for his delegates to have substantial representation on the Democratic Party's "Platform Committee," where party leaders supposedly would hammer out the program to be



implemented should Clinton win. But only the most naïve in politics believe that ruling-class policies are decided by a handful of delegates cloistered in the backrooms of party conventions.

Bernie Sanders, despite his protestations to the contrary, has been a welcome addition to the periodically orchestrated "lesser evil" shame employed by ruling-class leaders, who know full well that capitalist elections are essential to maintaining the myth of democracy, on the one hand, while dissipating the anger and hatred at its policies into safe electoral channels, on the other.

Well before Sanders proclaimed his "democratic socialism," national polls—the Pew polls of three years ago, for example—indicated that socialism was on the minds of millions. Three years ago, a Pew poll indicated that 46 percent of youth 30 years old and under preferred socialism over capitalism, with 43 percent preferring capitalism over socialism. The figures for Black youth were higher, with a significant majority preferring socialism—in their view, a more egalitarian and less predatory society, in which human soli-

darity and social welfare trump the greed of the elite one percent.

Sanders is undoubtedly correct in recognizing his role in the past year as bolstering the credibility of the Democratic Party and its capacity to absorb "dissident" ideas, or, perhaps better, "dissident" rhetoric. And Hillary Clinton and her advisers understand shell-game politics just as well, as demonstrated by their efforts to remake one of capitalism's most heinous warmongers and racist apologists into the feminist, humanist, anti-racist, and environmentally concerned politician they are projecting today.

In due time, we will "feel the Bern" of Sanders' hustling votes on Clinton's behalf to save the nation from the "greater evil"—Donald Trump. Step one in the current two-stage "lesser evil" game was Sanders' shepherding the growing anti-capitalism sentiments back into the Democratic Party. Step two now includes Sanders' making every effort to do the same with those who have been hornswoggled into his orbit but who may yet decide to quit in disgust with the thought of voting for Clinton.

The fact that capitalism's media pundits felt compelled to play along with Sanders' fake socialism is an indication of the questioning nature of our times and the deep discontent that is percolating in the consciousness of working people.

In time, when the inevitable and broad-ranging fightback takes shape in forms independent of and against the twin parties of capital, working people will find new political avenues and mass organizations of struggle to express their hatred of capitalist austerity. This combination of renewed and massive mobilizations in the streets, in reinvigorated union fightbacks and in anti-racist, anti-sexist, and pro-environmental struggles will undoubtedly find an expression in the political arena. ■