

Vote Socialist Action!



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

Jeff Mackler for president; Karen Schraufnagel for VP A FIGHTING SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN!

By THE EDITORS

Working people around the world face are facing strong social, economic, and environmental crises. That's true even in the richest country in history, the United States. The cause of these crises can be traced to a single source—a social system ruled by exploiting employers and ruthless bankers. In the U.S., this tiny minority rules through a two-party political monopoly, subverting real democracy.

Socialist Action fights for reforms of this system on the road to our ultimate goal—to replace capitalism with a socialist society in which the majority truly rules. That's how we can assure a peaceful, ecologically sustainable, just, and prosperous world.

To advance this message, we are running Jeff Mackler for U.S. president and Karen Schraufnagel for vice president. Below is a summary of the main planks of the Socialist Action Platform.

Urgent action to stop climate change!

The greatest crisis yet faced by humanity has been created by the global capitalist economy based on fossil fuels. The half-measures agreed to in the Paris Climate Treaty last year are insufficient to stop global warming short of catastrophe for future generations.

- We would declare a Climate Emergency and begin a massive crash program to achieve needed conver-

sion to 100 percent clean renewable energy sources—such as solar, wind, tidal. This effort requires a democratically planned massive restructuring of our economy.

- We would also launch a new Climate Emergency public sector by socializing the energy, transportation, and finance sectors of the economy. This new sector would develop an achievable plan for conversion by scientists, engineers, and data management professionals—and implemented in the workplace by management elected by the workers, who know how to get work done.

- We would leave no worker behind in this new economy. Certainly, many present jobs tied to fossil fuels would be eliminated. But there would be many more new jobs created as we switch to a cleaner, sustainable economy. We would guarantee a Just Transition to provide those losing jobs with retraining and relocation assistance, while maintaining their living standards until they find suitable new employment.

End the wars! Bring U.S. forces home now!

We live in a time of perpetual war—and with a real threat of nuclear annihilation, whether intentional or by miscalculation. Wars such as those in Afghanistan,

Black Lives Matter!

(Archives photo above) Socialist Action was at the scene when thousands of New York City high schoolers held a protest against the August 2014 police violence in Ferguson, Mo., and elsewhere.

This month, once again, people chanting “Black lives matter!” filled the streets in outrage over the wanton police shooting of Black people. Alton Sterling was killed by Baton Rouge, La., cops on July 5. Video shows that Sterling was on his back, pinned to the ground, when police shot him point blank several times.

Then, on July 6, a Falcon Heights, Minn., officer shot and killed a Black kitchen worker, Philando Castille, in his car as he was reaching for his driver's license. A woman and child were inside the car at the time.

The 2016 Socialist Action Campaign joins in demanding an end to these racist police killings. Jail killer cops! Black lives matter!

Iraq, Libya, and Syria have been waged as part of the geopolitical strategy of corporate America. “Regime

(continued on page 7)

Supreme Court dashes immigrants' hopes

By GRACE MONTESI

Michael Bryant / Philadelphia Inquirer

On June 23, the U.S. Supreme Court tied 4-4 regarding an immigration action taken by President Obama in 2014. The decision left in place a lower court's ruling that had blocked implementation of the program. Officials in our so-called democratic system have once again disregarded the immigrant rights movement and let down the hopes of some 4 million immigrants affected by Obama's proposal.

These millions of parents of U.S. citizens and permanent residents were hoping for a positive ruling on the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Resident (DAPA) program.

This program would have provided temporary relief from deportation to parents and permanent residents who have lived in the U.S. since 2010. It also would have allowed them to obtain the all-important work permit that enables them to work without fear.

Additionally, having work permits could aid these immigrants in finding better jobs with improved conditions and the overtime pay that many are denied when receiving "under the table" wages.

On Monday, June 27, the immigrant rights movement marched in Connecticut against Obama's deportation machine and the Supreme Court's deadlock on Obama's relief policy. The Connecticut Immigrant Rights Alliance organized the demonstration and civil disobedience action. The protest included many parents of U.S. citizens or



permanent residents who would have benefitted from the president's executive action on DAPA and those who would benefit from the expansion of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

Nine people, including undocumented youth, were arrested for blocking Main Street in Hartford. Those arrested came from a variety of organizations, including Connecticut Students for a Dream, Unidad Latina en Acción of New Haven, and Amistad Catholic Worker House.

Lucas Codognolla, an undocumented youth organizer from Stamford who was arrested, said: "Our message was heard loud and clear. We will not stand for deportations and the racialization of communities of color. We will continue to take action and make sure that our immigrant communities in Connecticut are safe".

The majority of protesters in Connecticut were released with a promise to appear. The community was able to collect bail money funds in solidarity with those detained.

(Left) The Rev. Adan Mairena is arrested for blocking a street during a June 28 protest by immigrants and their supporters outside the ICE offices in Philadelphia.

We hope that this will be the start of a renewed effort against deportation in Connecticut and the region.

In Atlanta, Ga., affected community members and allies marched to the ICE field office, where "Operation Border Guardian" has been used to conduct raids in the region targeting teenagers from Central American fleeing gang violence and poverty for deportation. The members of the Georgia #Not1More coalition called on the Obama administration to dismantle ICE and put a moratorium on deportations now.

The next day June 28, protesters from the organization Juntos and others rallied outside the Philadelphia ICE office. Several protesters were arrested for blocking an expressway entrance.

The Not One More Deportation network helped coordinate the nationwide actions (NotOneMoreDeportation.com).

These types of civil disobedience are expected to ramp up as a reflection of the immigrant community's frustration with continued deportations of immigrants with family and community ties in the U.S. ■

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!

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We are all Orlando!

By ANN MONTAGUE

On June 12, the nation and the world were stunned when a mass shooting took place in Orlando, Fla., at the Pulse, a gay nightclub. Forty-nine people were killed and 53 wounded. Five people remain hospitalized.

This was the deadliest attack in the United States since Sept. 11, 2001. The shooter opened fire and took hostages. After three hours the police stormed the bar, where 300 patrons were trapped. The shooter, Omar Mateen, 29, was killed in a shootout with law enforcement officers.

The LGBTQ community and friends are pouring out to attend vigils across the U.S. and the world. In the first two days after the massacre, 250 vigils were organized in the U.S. and numerous events also took place in Brazil, Australia, Canada, Ecuador, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Poland, Puerto Rico, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, and Great Britain. Readers can find a continual updating of vigils and solidarity actions at weareorlando.org.

This mass murder did not happen in a political vacuum. In the last year over 100 bills discriminating against LGBTQ people have been introduced and are pending in 22 states. Several bills allow any person or business to deny services to same-sex couples based on their religious objections. In some states judges may refuse to marry same-sex couples, and in others adoption and foster-care agencies may refuse to provide any services that conflict with their religious beliefs about marriage, regardless of what is in the best interests of a child.

Some laws allow health professionals to deny services to LGBTQ people by citing religious objections, and others prevent local governments from passing nondiscrimination protections, including LGBTQ protections, that go further than protections at the state level. Nine states place restrictions on the use of public bathrooms by transgender persons. All these laws have the same goal—to further legalize discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

History of violence

Author, journalist, and gay-rights activist Michelangelo Signorile reminds us, “The brutal reality that jarred Orlando’s LGBTQ community, and the entire nation, is something that LGBTQ people have always experienced, as gay and lesbian bars and clubs have been targeted consistently by those who harbor hate toward LGBTQ people. And it’s a reminder of the animus against LGBTQ people that still exists, and the ever present danger with which we still live.”

On June 24, 1973, an arsonist set fire to the Up Stairs Lounge, a gay bar located on the edge of the French Quarter in New Orleans. The result was the deadliest single event to affect the gay community in U.S. history until this weekend.

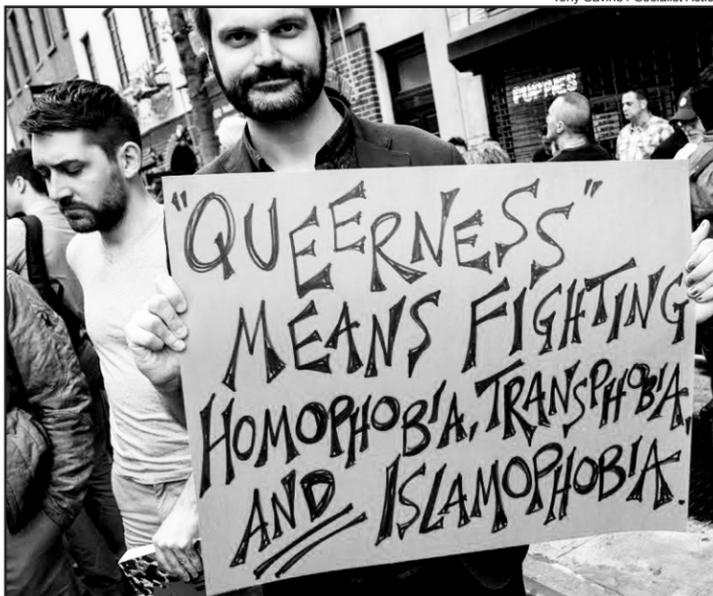
Thirty-two people were killed, and some bodies were never identified. The primary suspect was never charged with the crime. There were also the delayed injuries—lost jobs, fear, public ridicule and severed families. The devastation was compounded by the homophobic reactions and utter lack of concern by government and religious leaders and the general public.

In 1996, Eric Rudolph targeted lesbian bars, and in 1997 detonated bombs in the Other Side Lounge, a lesbian bar in Atlanta. The press coverage of him only covered his actions at abortion clinics. In 2014, Musab Masmari was convicted and sentenced to 10 years for setting fire to a Seattle gay nightclub on New Years Eve in 2013. Last year, there were a series of unsolved attacks on gay men coming out of gay bars in Dallas. In one case, a man was dragged into a van and beaten with a baseball bat.

The LGBTQ community has always been victim of the oppression of invisibility, and there was no clearer attempt to erase their identity than the ongoing coverage of this massacre. Many news organizations are refusing to center the conversation around exactly what this is—a homophobic, transphobic attack, in which 49 members of the queer community, mostly people of color, were slaughtered in one of the few places that they feel safe, during the one time of year when LGBTQ people celebrate in public. To make this



(Above) Protesters light candles outside the historic Stonewall Inn at June vigil in New York City.



point, Owen Jones, a writer for the *Guardian*, walked off the set of a Sky News studio set interview, where they had refused to say the attack was specifically on the LGBTQ community.

Islamophobia

As soon as the report came out that the shooter was Omar Mateen, whose parents had emigrated from Afghanistan, some were quick to connect him to “Islamic terrorism.” The press quickly took up this narrative and ran with it, even before a perfunctory investigation had begun. The Muslim community once again was forced to defend itself against attacks scapegoating them for the tragedy. Presidential candidate Donald Trump, who reiterated his call for a ban on the entry of Muslims into the United States, assisted in deepening the climate of bigotry.

Rasha Mubarak, Orlando regional coordinator for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said in a statement. “The Muslim community joins our fellow Americans in repudiating anyone or any group that would claim to justify or excuse such an appalling act of violence.” There has been a large turnout of Muslims at the hundreds of vigils across the country.

Samra Habib, a lesbian and a Muslim, pointed out in the *Guardian*: “We are now used to the fact that, every time a criminally misguided Muslim commits an act of violence, the entire religion and all its followers are questioned and placed under suspicion in a way that isn’t replicated with other faiths. We—and this of course includes queer Muslims—have to take extra care walking down the street at night and entering our mosques for fear of Islamophobic attacks. Muslim organizations and activist groups are tasked with the responsibility of releasing public statements, apologizing for the actions of terrorists and reminding the world that Islam promotes peace so innocent Muslims who are just trying to go about their daily lives don’t suffer repercussions....”

“Our thoughts must for now be with those in Orlando. But over the next few days, as we try to recover from this atrocity and begin to piece together what it all means, it’s important to remember that Islam is exploited by religious extremists all over the world, often in attacks committed against other Muslims. ...

This can’t be boiled down to us v them. We’re all experiencing the same tragedy together.”

Unfortunately, Islamophobes were not the only ones with a biased agenda. Early descriptions of the attack by the media merely stated, “A bar has been attacked.” This would have been like referring to the 2009 attack on the Holocaust Museum in Washington as merely an “attack on a museum.”

But even worse was what we heard afterwards. The Democrats, who always come to the LGBTQ community for money and votes, claiming that they are “friends,” instantly diverted all discussion away from homophobia and transphobia. Their single focus was on exploiting the mass murder for their own narrow political agenda. After a few words of condolences, hours and hours were spent talking about “gun control,” and any discussion of addressing the motivation of the massacre was absent.

In the first place, if any of them cared at all about the homophobia and transphobia that motivated this terrorist attack, they would have demanded long ago the passage of the Equality Act, which is languishing in Congress. The legislation would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations in all 50 states.

While the bill would not end institutionalized homophobia any more than the 1964 Civil Rights Act ended institutionalized racism, it would outlaw discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations throughout the country.

Instead of yelling and screaming about the lack of gun-control legislation, it is time for all people who really care about the LGBTQ community to be outraged about the continuing violence they suffer and the lack of basic legal protections against discrimination and for basic human rights. ■

No to Austerity in Puerto Rico!

The austerity offensive of U.S. imperialism has recently been focused on Puerto Rico. On June 30, Barack Obama signed a bill into law that sets up a colonial-style, federally-appointed “fiscal control board.” *The New York Times* said it would “restructure its [Puerto Rico’s] \$72 billion total debt so it can manage payments, and ... guide what is sure to be a painful recovery process.”

Puerto Rico’s natural resources are ripped off by international corporations, and the products these generate are then sold back to the Puerto Rican people at hugely inflated prices. To buy back these essentials, the Puerto Rican government has had to borrow massive sums at high interest rates. Both capitalist parties have lined up in support of this colonial “Control Board” to enforce collection of the huge Wall Street-imposed debt.

The Socialist Action 2016 campaign of Mackler/Schraufnagel demands: “Self-determination for Puerto Rico! No to imperialist-imposed austerity! ■



High court strikes down Texas anti-abortion law

By ANN MONTAGUE

Women celebrated in front of the U.S. Supreme Court Building after a 5-3 ruling on June 27 reaffirmed *Roe v. Wade* and struck down two provisions of a Texas state law that restricts women's access to abortion. The 2013 law that the court nullified required all abortions to take place in ambulatory surgical centers or mini hospitals, instead of regular clinics. Many state legislatures have passed laws similar to the Texas law, which are designed to regulate abortion clinics out of existence.

These so-called TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws violate a woman's right to safe and legal abortion. The Texas law HB 2 requires clinics to invest in expensive building upgrades to meet the more stringent standards of ambulatory surgical centers. It also mandates that doctors obtain admitting privileges at nearby hospitals.

National Advocates For Pregnant Women (NAPW) and the NYU School of Law Reproductive Justice Clinic filed an amicus brief on behalf of 14 organizations saying that the Texas law would prevent some wom-

en from having an abortion; force others to have an abortion outside of safe medical settings; and make those who do so potential targets for arrest and prosecution. The Court's decision strikes down that law.

This decision came in the context of increased numbers of women demanding their right to abortion. As this law was being debated, women from across Texas marched and sat in at the state capitol to demand their rights. Women came together who had fought for the right to abortion in the streets that had brought about the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, with younger women who had never before imagined a time when abortion was illegal and a safe abortion was not an option.

Justice Stephen Breyer, writing for the majority, made clear that these laws are unconstitutional: "Unnecessary health regulations that have the purpose or effect of presenting a substantial obstacle to a woman seeking an abortion impose an undue burden on the right to an abortion."

As to the admitting privileges provision, Breyer said there was "nothing" in the record of the case to show that the requirement advanced the interest of pro-

tecting women's health. "Each [requirement] places a substantial obstacle in the path of women seeking a previability abortion, each constitutes an undue burden on abortion access, and each violates the Federal Constitution".

It was interesting that even Justice Anthony Kennedy saw this law as unconstitutional. Kennedy has been involved in 12 cases addressing abortion restrictions. In those 12 cases, he has voted on whether 21 different abortion restrictions could take effect. In all instances except one, he has always allowed restrictions on abortions.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg concurred with the opinion written by Justice Breyer and added a short but clear statement that was aimed at state legislatures around the country telling them that any cases restricting access to abortion violated *Roe v. Wade* and would be struck down: "Abortions are statistically safer than many simpler medical procedures, including tonsillectomies, colonoscopies, in-office dental surgery and childbirth—but Texas does not subject those procedures to the same onerous requirements. Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers laws like HB.2 that do little or nothing for health, but rather strew impediments to abortion, cannot survive judicial inspection."

It was interesting to note that a few hours after the decision, Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Warren were appearing together at a large rally in Cincinnati. It was billed as a major speech in which the two women were campaigning together for the first time. Both speeches were telecast in full on MSNBC, and after it was over, veteran journalist Andrea Mitchell seemed shocked that not one word had been uttered by either woman about the Supreme Court's abortion decision. Later, Mitchell reported that she was told that the Clinton campaign didn't think Cincinnati would necessarily be that receptive to the issue.

There was another victory for women at the Supreme Court today. This was a win for two million home-care workers. Two and a half years ago, the Labor Department finalized a rule requiring that home-care workers be paid at least the federal minimum wage for all hours worked as well as overtime pay when they work more than 40 hours in a week. It was stopped by a lawsuit that was filed by the International Franchise Association and the home-care industry.

The Supreme Court refused to hear the case, so the Labor Department rule will go into effect. The ongoing union organizing of home-care workers in both the public and private sector and their demand for respect and dignity, along with their alliance with fast-food workers in the Fight For 15, has given them the visibility and power to influence the U.S. Supreme Court. Congratulations! ■

By BILL ONASCH

• **Trump Close to White House**—The highest profile current real estate project of the presumptive Republican presidential nominee is the conversion of the historic Washington DC Old Post Office, within sight of the President's residence, into a luxury hotel. Trump does not own the new Trump International Hotel—he is leasing the property from the Federal government. That makes the renovation work subject to prevailing wage rules—essentially union scale—mandated by the Davis-Bacon Act.

Politico ran a story alleging at least one sub-contractor on the lucrative project was paying workers considerably less than prevailing wages—and had pay stubs from workers to verify the claim.

The Labor Department says they have an "open investigation" of the charge. But since the complaints involve a sub-contractor, it's unlikely the former reality TV star's company will be liable for any damages.

• **Craps In Atlantic City**—UNITE HERE was able to negotiate tentative agreements at four of the five remaining casinos around the Boardwalk but a thousand union members are on strike at the Trump Taj Mahal. The presumptive GOP presidential candidate no longer has any stake in the property but is well compensated for use of his name. No body would pay to use the name of the current owner—the notorious corporate raider Carl Icahn—but he is said to be on Trump's short list for the next Treasury Secretary. The issues are basically everything in the contract. The strikers, singing and chanting, greet would-be customers 24-7.

LABOR BRIEFING

• **Honeywell Lockout In South Bend**—On May 9, Honeywell locked out more than 300 workers in UAW Local 9 at their South Bend aircraft component plant and brought in temporary strike-breakers to assist white shirts in partial production. The main issue in dispute is health insurance. Other nearby UAW Locals have helped maintain a lively picket line and the locked-out workers have been able to collect state unemployment benefits.

• **Kept From Their Appointed Rounds**—As we go to press, Canada Post, the crown corporation running the country's postal services, has served the legally required notice that they will lock-out their 50,000 employees belonging to the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. The dispute over the company's "final offer" center on pensions and job security.

• **Nurses In Motion**—Affiliates of National Nurses United have conducted two strikes of limited duration, settled one contract just before a strike deadline, and 345 SEIU ancillary workers at one of the properties where nurses were striking rejected a concession laden company offer.

The two strike targets that remain to be settled are about 5,000 nurses at Allina hospitals in the Twin Cities region and 1,800 at a Kaiser facility in Los Angeles. The tentative settlement was reached for 300 RNs at Watsonville, California Community Hospital which, according to the NNU website, "nurses were able to suc-

cessfully address significant staffing concerns, and achieve economic improvements, and protection of their health coverage."

• **Rope Line**—175 workers at two Bridon American plants in Exeter and Haverhill, New Hampshire went on strike June 27. The company, manufacturing wire rope used in the oil drilling and fracking industries, feigned surprise that the workers, represented by UAW Local 1612, rejected the "generous" final offer.

Union Shop Chairman Brian Rothenberg told the local paper, *Citizen Voice*, "We would never negotiate in the press but clearly, the men and women who work at Bridon have felt that the health care and wage issues are not sufficient." The union is maintaining 24-7 picket lines.

• **Public Service Matters**—That was the slogan of dozens of Washington State Employees rallying in front of the Labor & Industries Department in Olympia. The *Olympian* reported, "Washington Federation of State Employees, the state's largest union, organized Tuesday's rally—the first in a series around the state—to raise awareness about setbacks in the public sector workforce over that past decade and the importance of the upcoming labor contract."

The AFSCME affiliate is bargaining for 30,000 workers who have never recovered from a negotiated cut in wages and benefits in 2010. Many fall in to the definition of working poor. Currently, 600

leave state service every month.

• **15 Now On Minneapolis Ballot**—Both AFL-CIO and Change to Win unions backed a successful petition effort by the 15 Now Minnesota coalition to put the \$15 city minimum wage on the Nov. 8 Minneapolis ballot. If approved, Minneapolis would join more than 30 cities nationwide with similar minimum wage ordinances, including Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

• **VW's Labor Policy Like Their Emission Tests**—*Rivet* reports, "Volkswagen is being accused of going back on its pledge to recognize the United Auto Workers union at the automaker's only U.S. plant, which is in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The unions' secretary-treasurer has released a 2014 document that states VW would recognize the UAW union as the representative of its members, in exchange for the union dropping a challenge to the outcome of a union election at the plant.

"About 160 skilled trades workers voted to be represented by the UAW during last year's election. The union says the written 2014 agreement stemmed from negotiations at a meeting led by Volkswagen's then-chief financial officer, who has since been named chairman amid the company's diesel emissions cheating scandal."

• **Not Just Cursing the Darkness**—Nursing assistants, housekeeping employees, dietary workers, and laundry staff voted overwhelmingly for union representation at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children and Delaware County Memorial Hospital, near Philadelphia. They will now bargain for contracts through Local 1199C—an AFSCME affiliate. ■

What's left as Sanders bows from the race?

By BRUCE LESNIK

With the demise of the Bernie Sanders campaign for the Democratic Party nomination, discussion has turned to what should come next. Some, including Seattle socialist city councilwoman Kshama Sawant, have agitated for creating a generic “party of the left.” But what does that mean? As we shall see, it’s a troublingly vague slogan whose beauty, if it exists at all, is solely in the eye of the beholder.

But first, we must step back and survey the lay of the land. Those inspired by Sanders’ campaign and those disillusioned with the two major parties come in various favors:

1) In the first category, there are those who see the status quo—characterized by unequal distribution of wealth, endless war, rampant racism, unemployment, mass incarceration, and diminishing expectations—as fundamentally unjust, while having no coherent analysis whence comes the injustice. These are *liberals, progressives, or populists*: concerned, well-meaning individuals who decry society’s illness with no clear idea of its fundamental cause.

2) At the next level are those who have come to suspect that the drive for corporate profits conflicts with the exigencies of humanity as a whole. As a result, this stratum accepts that in order to solve society’s fundamental problems, capitalism might have to go. However, those in this group are fuzzy about what it means to supplant capitalism or how such a change might come about. They favor amending the current system, hoping that gradually, bit-by-bit, it can be converted into something fundamentally different. The historical name for this outlook is *social democracy*.

We should note that the minimal requirements of this grouping already exceed the program and perspective of many of the popular opposition voices of today—including Bernie Sanders, Ralph Nader, the Green Party, Bill McKibben of 350.org, and others—each of which accepts the continued existence of capitalism and so consigns themselves solidly to the populist category above.

3) In the final category are those who hold that eliminating capitalism means nationalizing the banks and critical industry under workers control; dismantling Wall Street and the Pentagon; building new institutions of workers democracy to replace the current corporate-occupied government; and creating workplace, regional, and national committees of working people to democratically plan and run the economy. This perspective calls for replacing the current political and economic system from top to bottom with a new system, democratically run by working people, which prioritizes human needs over profits. Those who advocate this approach are called *revolutionary socialists*.

Once again, we can see that the philosophical underpinning of this category (revolutionary socialism) exceeds the program and outlook of some well-known activists—Naomi Klein, Michael Moore, and Cornel West among them—thus positioning these activists squarely in the social democratic camp.

Beyond horseshoes and hand grenades

When the goal is to save humanity from extinction, half-measures won’t cut it; close is not good enough. The liberal and social democratic approaches fall short; the revolutionary socialist approach is what is needed to save the world. Of course, one can object to this assertion, but then you have the responsibility to demonstrate why tweaking the current system has gotten us precisely nowhere in the last 250 years.

One might ask, as propagandists for the ruling rich always do, “Why can’t you point to a single example where revolutionary socialism has created the utopia you advocate?” It’s a loaded question, but one requiring a response nonetheless.

First, there is the simple logical rejoinder: if non-existence of an ideal result were grounds for declaring that an approach is a failure, then the pro-capitalist, liberal, and social democratic strategies would all be condemned on those very grounds—doubly so, in fact, since each of these has been implemented or attempted countless times in recent history, unlike revolutionary socialism.

Then we must answer the disingenuous element inherent in the question as it is posed by defenders of capitalism—a disingenuousness that even some critics of capitalism fail to appreciate as they blithely repeat the challenge. First, every attempt at a revolutionary socialist advance the world-over has been ruthlessly attacked by the very forces who cynically assert that such an advance is not possible or practical. Second, the unfortunate truth is that no socialist



revolution has yet occurred in any advanced capitalist country. Therefore, to judge the efficacy of revolutionary socialism by its success or failure in small or isolated countries, under siege by the forces of global capital, is akin to judging the seaworthiness of a ship that’s forced to navigate in a puddle.

If we accept that a full-blown political, social, and economic revolution is what’s needed to fix the world, then certain conclusions are inescapable:

For working people to take over the management and running of the government and the economy, they have to be organized.

Working people have to be on board with the plan and clear on the goal. They have to be willing and able to fight for political and economic power in their own name.

Working people have to be crystal clear as to who’s on which side, and who their friends are and who their enemies are. Current government institutions, police, and spy agencies are not benign vessels that can be bent to the will of whomever gets the most votes. They are the creations of, by, and for the 1%, designed to maintain their minority rule. Those institutions need to be replaced by genuine democratic structures, responsible to and controlled by the majority.

In this context, what does it mean to break free of the Democratic and Republican parties? What does it mean to build an independent party of the “left”?

Breaking free in the very narrow sense of forming a separate party is not enough. Clearly, another party of the 1% would be not be a step forward. Neither would it be sufficient to build a new populist party of those simply disillusioned with the two major parties. To truly break free means to build a party of, by, and for the working class.

But what does *that* mean? How do you ensure that a new party doesn’t just spout lofty rhetoric but is actually an exclusive instrument of the working class—that it gets its power, authority and marching orders only from that class? You base it on the fighting organizations of that class—labor unions, committees of the unemployed, organizations and communities of the most oppressed sectors of the working class: African American, Latino and Native American. A convenient name for such an organization is a labor party.

Yes, current labor unions are for the most part small, bureaucratic and even corrupt. But that just means we have more work to do. Building a labor party goes hand in hand with organizing. Every workplace and industry that doesn’t currently have a union should fight to organize one. Every existing union that’s hobbled—whose leadership is too cozy with the bosses, that’s saddled with an undemocratic structure, or whose leaders are unwilling to break with the two capitalist parties and fight politically and economically for the needs of the union and the working class as a whole—needs to be overhauled and retaken by the ranks.

This is what really breaking from the two major parties would look like. This is what would really set us on the road to transforming society.

Left out

So now it should be clear what’s wrong with calling for a generic “new party of the left” or “new party of the 99%.” It’s too vague. It’s a Rorschach test. Anyone envisioning such a party sees whatever they want to see. Such populist conglomerations are not anchored organically to any class and so cannot be counted on to lead the kind of changes that are needed.

Those who argue for this inkblot concept are caught

in a tangle of logical contradictions. For example, *is the Green Party that “new party of the 99%”?* If so, then why call for the creation of a *new* party at all? If not, why not? What is the Green Party missing, exactly? Advocates of the “new party of the left” don’t know or don’t say. However, if instead we use the framework outlined above, there is no confusion. We have no trouble recognizing the Green Party and all similar class-agnostic formations as fitting comfortably within the populist category.

“Safe” states

Not surprisingly, a lack of precision on what it means to break with the Democratic and Republican parties leads to other problematic positions.

We see Sawant argue that Sanders should run as an “independent” once his bid to win the nomination of a major capitalist party comes up short. But more than that, he is urged to consider *not* running in states where the race between the two capitalist parties is close. The rationale—the same one the Green Party used in 2004 at great cost to its reputation—is that the “independent” candidate should not be seen to be a “spoiler.” The message here is painfully schizophrenic: break with the parties of the 1%, but—just kidding—if the race is close, make sure the least-worst of the capitalist politicians wins at all costs!

(If Sanders won the Democratic nomination, would Sawant’s Socialist Alternative party urge everyone to *vote Democrat* in November? If so, we are witness to a sad reversal, where a fighting socialist organization embraces the notion that change can indeed come through the Democratic Party. If not, how confusing for those whom Socialist Alternative has mobilized to go all out for Sanders in the primaries.)

In defense of language

Sanders says he is campaigning for a “political revolution.” Sawant and other genuine socialists have embraced this call and taken it up as their own. This is indeed strange since the expression has historically been used to describe a change at the top that is *distinct from* a fundamental change of the whole. The expression “political revolution” was popularized by Leon Trotsky in his fight against Stalinism in the Soviet Union. In that context, it was a call to replace the murderous, bureaucratic regime at the head of the Soviet state with a form of workers democracy, while retaining the socialized economy and property relations that had been won in the Russian revolution. The idea was to replace the rot at the top without reverting to capitalism.

Sanders clearly uses the term in a similar way. His political revolution is all about rearranging things at the top without challenging the underlying economic system. Again, a lack of clarity on what independent political action really means, and an over-eagerness to build a vague “new party of the left,” has led some to embrace Sanders’ half-baked slogan instead of critiquing its fatal limitations.

Language matters. It can be used to enlighten or to deceive. If someone is in the habit of substituting the word *salad* for the word *chicken* wherever it’s used, and they tell you that they eat nothing but salad every day, that doesn’t make them a vegetarian; it makes them a disingenuous manipulator of language. Sanders calls himself a socialist and pretends to be for some kind of revolution. Ignoring his abuse of language adds to the lack of clarity and makes it harder to explain to people what breaking with the parties of

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Interview with Jeff Mackler

Socialist Action presidential candidate

By NICK BAKER

We are seeing a renewed interest in socialism today. The campaign of Bernie Sanders, who claims to be a “democratic socialist” to mask his 98-percent Democratic Party-line voting record, has given publicity to the word “socialist,” and many young Sanders supporters call themselves socialists. The Sanders candidacy is no accident. His “democratic socialist” and anti-establishment-sounding “political revolution” rhetoric is aimed at shepherding the growing hatred of tens of millions back into the safe channels of capitalist elections and the rule of the one percent.

Due to this evidence of the possibilities available to socialists right now, Socialist Action has decided to run a presidential candidate, Jeff Mackler, to build support for working-class, independent, socialist politics. I sat down with Jeff Mackler to talk about the campaign, key issues in the election, and the increased interest in socialist ideas.

I asked Mackler why he had entered the U.S. presidential race, despite having no chance of winning. “Elections in capitalist America are the billionaire’s game,” he responded. “Working people have no horse in this race. We have no billionaire candidates, corporate funders, or corporate media behind us. We control no aspect of the rigged electoral charade. But socialist election campaigns can win in another sense. We can use the occasion when interest in politics is at a high point to advance the struggles of the vast majority (the 99 percent) who today struggle against the inherent evils of capitalism.”

“Socialist Action is a party of and for every struggle that aims to organize capitalist’s victims independently of and against the policies of the ruling rich. We strive to be part of and help lead the independent, democratic, mass-action united-front mobilizations that are aimed at increasing working-class self-organization, consciousness, confidence, and unity.”

“We aim to be an integral part of organizing the vast majority against the one percent—not only against the one percent in the abstract, but against all their institutions of power. Socialism, as opposed to its adulterated conception put forward by Bernie Sanders, is truly a revolutionary project as well as a necessity.”

The real socialist revolution in the U.S., and everywhere else in the world, will usher in for the first time in human history a society in which the vast majority who create the nation’s and the world’s wealth will democratically rule in their own name, through their own institutions, and in their own interests, as opposed to the private profit corporate anti-human interests of the present ruling elite.”

I asked Mackler why he believed that the electoral system was rigged. “Capitalist elections are in the exclusive purview of the billionaire rich. Their twin parties—the Republicans and the Democrats—and their

local, state, and national electoral and judicial institutions devise, interpret, and enforce their exclusionary election laws. Their corporate propaganda media effectively exclude coverage of all views but their own. At best, and at great cost, socialists are able to achieve ‘legal’ ballot status in but a handful of states—and even here, no matter the seriousness of our campaign efforts, we are consciously excluded from coverage.”

“Having said this, however—and with full knowledge that the elections are rigged—Socialist Action’s campaign does intend to win in a very real sense. That is, we are asking our campaign supporters to check out our Facebook page, website (www.socialistaction.org), and other social media outlets, and meet us in the streets where people unite to fight back. We want to win these thousands to our socialist campaign.”

I asked what Socialist Action’s key campaign objectives are. Mackler responded, “First and foremost, we want to educate and help organize radicalizing people to definitively break from the twin parties of capitalism and all of its candidates.”

“We believe that all of the evils that people across the globe are becoming keenly aware of are inherent in the capitalist system itself. These include endless wars; government-promoted racism, sexism, and homophobia; mass deportations and demonization of immigrants; all-pervasive government surveillance in the name of ‘national security’; the imposition of massive across-the-board austerity measures against the broad spectrum of working people and youth; and the irreversible consequences of fossil fuel-induced global warming. This system threatens all life on earth. Its madness daily poses the existential threat of burning the planet until it becomes uninhabitable or nuclear wars that murder billions in almost an instant and reduce the planet to a state of radioactive oblivion.”

Mackler continued, “Today capitalism and its very intelligent purveyors, that is all those who consciously understand its horrors and yet organize to sustain it, have gone to great lengths to camouflage and disorient its growing numbers of critics. The Democratic Party, ever fostering the illusion that the system can be effectively reformed, has always been capitalism’s first line of defense. It is complimented by a host of other firewalls against the emergence of independent expressions of working-class organization, including the present parasitic pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy.”

“Selecting the least offensive of the millionaire and billionaire candidates that the ruling rich periodically offer us during the election season,” Mackler insisted, “is both a utopian pipedream and a critical impediment to principled working-class politics.”

“Socialist Action’s campaign is aimed at today’s



(Top) Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action candidate for president.
(Below) Karen Schraufnagel, candidate for vice president.

new fighters against injustice: at the youth who have learned from experience that their prospects are bleak in the capitalist framework, at the demeaned and exploited immigrant workers, at those who are inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement’s wide-ranging rejection of U.S. racism and its institutionalized system of police murder, at the millions who are rapidly coming to understand that the fossil-fuel corporate magnates, like all others, subordinate the future of humanity to their private profits.

“Our campaign is aimed at working people who want to revitalize and democratize the trade unions and expand union power to the 90 percent of workers who are without unions today. It is aimed at fostering the construction of a class-struggle left wing in the unions, a militant fightback current that seeks to organize the majority to fight in the political and economic arenas to challenge the bosses’ parties on all fronts.”

In this context we are advocates of independent working-class political action based on a reinvigorated, fighting, and democratic trade-union movement in alliance with all the oppressed and exploited—that is, for a labor party that compliments and enhances labor’s power in the economic arena with its own instrument in the political arena.”

Mackler concluded, “Whenever working people independently organize to advance their own interests—in mass mobilizations in the streets, in trade-union struggles at the point of production, on picket lines, and at public meetings and rallies—we are part of the struggle.”

But we harbor no illusions in the nature of the beast. It must be replaced in all its fundamentals by the massive and concerted actions of the vast majority. That’s the real meaning of the social and political revolution that serious socialists fight for every day and seek to bring into being in a new world, where the horrors of the present social order are forever ended.” ■

The 2016 socialist platform

1) Abolish the U.S. war machine now!

- Bring all troops home now! Close all U.S. foreign and domestic military bases. End all military spending now—not a penny for war!
- U.S. out of the Middle East!
- No to U.S. overt and covert wars, drone wars, oil wars, privatized death squad wars, sanction and embargo wars or wars for the re-colonization of Africa.
- Abolish NATO and all other imperialist military alliances!
- Self-determination for all oppressed nations and peoples.
- Self-determination for Puerto Rico. No to imperialist-imposed austerity in Puerto Rico. Abolish Puerto Rico's debt to U.S. banks and speculating hedge funds.
- Self-determination for Palestine! End all U.S. aid to apartheid Israel. For a democratic, secular Palestine with the right of all Palestinian refugees to return. Solidarity with Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns.
- U.S. hands off the Cuban Revolution.

2) Immediate conversion to 100% renewable power: sun, wind, geothermal and micro-hydro! Keep all fossil fuels in the ground!

- Guarantee jobs at top union wages for all fossil fuel workers during and after a just and rapid transition to clean and renewable energy systems.
- Rapid conversion to carbon-sequestering agro-ecological farming.
- Immediate halt to expansion of all new fossil fuel extraction and transportation projects
- 100% tax on all fossil fuel corporations. Zero profits for the polluters. Close down and dismantle the fossil fuel industry, from extraction on up.
- Dramatically expand mass transit—especially for low-wage workers. Reverse urban sprawl and unsustainable development patterns. Remediate and expand our forests, wetlands, and natural eco-systems.
- For an immediate cleanup of Native American, African American and Latino communities that have been victimized by environmental racism.
- No to nuclear weapons. Shut down all nuclear power plants now.
- U.S. reparations and zero interest loans to neo-colonial and island nations suffering from climate change due to past practices of the major industrial and imperialist nations.

3) Jobs for all at top union wages!

- Shorten the work week by 25 percent with no cut in pay, so that everyone can work and enjoy more free time. Modern technology should benefit the exploited 99 percent, not the boss class one percent.
- Create a massive public works program to provide jobs at top union wages through building homes, converting to 100% renewable power, expanding mass public transportation, constructing hospitals, parks, schools,



and other social necessities. Priority should be given to projects where they are most needed—especially in Black and Latino communities.

- Raise all pensions, Social Security benefits, unemployment and disability compensation, welfare, and veterans benefits to top union wage scales and protect them with cost-of-living escalator provisions.
- For \$15 and a union now as a first short step on the road to a much higher minimum wage to sustain a quality standard of living.

4) Quality health care, education, and housing for all as basic rights!

- Close down the profit-gouging “health-care” insurance companies and establish a single-payer system in rapid transition to a universal and free national system—that is, socialized medicine.
- Use the savings towards provision of quality health care for all and retraining insurance workers for new jobs.
- Free quality public education at all levels from the cradle to the grave. Cancel all student debt.

- Void all drug patents to cut public costs to a minimum.
- Cancel all medical debt.
- End all home foreclosures. Establish and expand rent-control to combat the mass-displacement of poor and oppressed communities through gentrification.
- Massive government funding to repair, modernize, and build homes – starting where need is greatest.

5) End the racist, slave labor for profit prison-industrial complex!

- End the racist school-to-prison pipeline. Build schools, not jails.
- Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, Oscar Lopez Rivera, and all political prisoners.
- Abolish the racist and classist death penalty. Rapidly empty the prisons while immediately organizing quality, humane rehabilitation facilities to rebuild ruined lives.
- Prosecute and jail killer cops
- De-criminalize all drugs. Take the profit out of drug trafficking. End the racist “war on drugs.” Massive in-

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... Vote Socialist Action!

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change” imposed by U.S. military power and proxies leaves only “failed states” and is a recruiting tool for those seeking revenge in America and Europe. And these “failed states” have generated 65 million desperate refugees looking mainly in vain for some safe place to relocate. “Regime change” is the job of the people of those countries—not the U.S. military.

American workers have no interest in wars that serve only our bosses. The principle applies: “working-class solidarity has no borders.” As we divert the enormous sums spent on war to better use, we will share the “peace dividend” with those who have been victimized by wars of intervention. As the great pioneer American socialist Eugene V. Debs said at the time of the First World War—“For us there is no war but the class war.”

Health care for all

Socialist Action supports the popular demand for Canadian-style single-payer health care for all as a transitional reform leading to superior socialized medicine—such as won by the British Labor Party decades ago, and the even better system put in place by the Cuban Revolution.

For Fifteen Now! There are two complementary currents in the mass movement for \$15 an hour. It began with fast food workers striking and demonstrat-

ing nationwide for “\$15 and a union,” an upsurge that is not only still growing but that now includes other low-wage workers—even adjunct college instructors. The other component has won numerous victories in establishing state and local minimum-wage increases progressing in stages to \$15. Socialist Action has been supportive of both approaches as a modest down-payment toward an adequate raise.

Human and civil rights

The American working class is among the most diverse in the world. It embraces those whose ancestors were indigenous, others brought here as slaves, and immigrants from many lands. When mutually respected, these differences can make us strong. But the ruling class stirs up bigotry and suspicions to try to keep us divided and fighting among ourselves.

This also enables them to pay women, workers of color, and undocumented immigrants far less in wages. Segregated communities pay more for rent and mortgages—and even groceries. Whether in “prosperity” or recession, African-American and Latino workers are last hired, first fired, always with much higher unemployment rates. Racism and sexism is profitable for bosses and merchants, and they depress wages and conditions for the whole working class.

The poverty and despair among youth in depressed, segregated neighborhoods, which have been articu-

lated by movements like Black Lives Matter must become the concern of all.

Women workers deserve equal pay for work of equivalent value. We need to fix the inequities of Social Security that leave many widowed or divorced women penniless in old age. Socialist Action supports employer-paid quality, professional child care for working mothers and public funded care for those looking for, or unable to work. We fight against the sometimes violent attacks by the theocratic right on women’s access to birth control.

We applaud the judicial victory allowing same-sex couples to marry if they so desire. But even that advance is facing attacks by religious bigots in public office. The same “social conservatives” have stirred up fresh targeting of transgender people with the so-called “bathroom laws.” And violence against LGBT Americans has continued, as we were reminded by the mass killing at the Pulse club in Orlando.

For a labor party

Socialist Action is part of the historic tradition that works simultaneously for a revolutionary socialist party and for a party based on the foundation of our only class-based mass organizations—our unions. We think that a labor party will come about as the outgrowth of a reborn democratic, fighting union movement. A labor party will be a giant step forward toward breaking the ruling-class political monopoly and will work toward putting a government in power that is run by and for the working class. ■

Get involved in the Socialist Action campaign! For more information, see www.socialistaction.org.

U.S. threatens Syria war escalation



By JEFF MACKLER

When a June 16 *New York Times* front-page article blared, “51 U.S. Diplomats Urge Strikes Against Assad in Syria,” I could almost hear the war drums beating at the U.S. State Department and White House. These “mid-level diplomats,” with varying U.S. government Syria assignments over the years, “urged the United States to carry out military strikes against the government of President Bashar al-Assad to stop its persistent violations of a cease-fire in the country’s five-year-old civil war.”

Both the U.S. government and its diplomats charge that Russia’s “violations” consist in targeting U.S.-backed and funded terrorist groups aimed at overthrowing the Assad government. Heaven of heavens! Unlike the U.S. government and its reactionary allies in the region, and NATO, neither the Russians nor the Syrian government distinguish between U.S.-organized and fostered terrorists like the Al Qaida-affiliated Al Nusra Front and ISIS. The latter group and its offshoots are funded and/or abetted by one or another U.S. imperialist ally in the region, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the other Gulf monarchies as well as NATO, while the U.S., not too secretly these days as we shall see below, turns a blind eye to the Nusra Front, whose forces freely intermingle with and regularly collaborate with U.S.-armed groups aimed at Assad’s removal.

The “51” called for a “a judicious use of stand-off and air weapons, which would undergird and drive a more focused and hard-nosed U.S.-led diplomatic process.” This “judicious” U.S. air war, essentially a “no fly zone,” would signal a direct confrontation with the Russians, who presumably would be given the option to have their aircraft “stand off” or be shot down.

In September 2015, Russia accepted the Syrian government’s request to intervene against the ISIS and the Nusra Front/Al Qaida terrorist attacks, not to mention against the attacks of the 1400 armed militias organized by the Saudis, Qataris and their allies, and the tens of thousands of armed jihadi fighters that joined the effort as they freely filtered through Turkish borders with Turkish government aid and approval (see *The New York Times* editorial of June 29, 2016). The fact that Al Nusra is formally on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations is ignored when its terror is directed against the Syrian government.

While these diplomats employ the polite language of their trade, few would deny that their recommended “hard-nosed” and “stand off” use of “air weapons” signals nothing less than a potential military confrontation with Russia, an existential confrontation that may not exclude a nuclear war.

With the commencement of Russia’s bombing of *any and all* terrorist groups in Syria, there has been no “diplomatic” agreement of just who is to be bombed, or better, which terrorist organizations are to be bombed. The “51” memo argues that unless a U.S. air war is contemplated, “Mr. Assad will feel no pressure to negotiate with the moderate opposition or other factions fighting him.” Note the delicate reference to “other factions,” that is, as we will see below, Saudi and U.S.-armed factions hired to do imperialism’s bidding.

What began in Syria in 2011 with mass peaceful protests against the neoliberal austerity measures imposed by the capitalist Bashar al-Assad government, undoubtedly and initially a promising and welcome component of the Arab Spring mobilizations that challenged the status quo in the region, rapidly devolved into a U.S. and allied imperialist war aimed at “regime change” American style. The Assad government’s firing on peaceful demonstrators proved to be the perfect pretext to accomplish in

Syria what the U.S./NATO “humanitarian” and “regime change” war did in Libya. That one-year onslaught leveled the Libyan nation’s infrastructure and murdered ten of thousands.

While *The Times* argued in its June 16 article that “there is little evidence that the Obama administration has plans to change course” and that it “has emphasized the military campaign against the Islamic State over efforts to dislodge Mr. Assad,” the opposite has been the case. The very next day a *Times* headline read that “[Secretary of State] John Kerry Is Said to Side With Diplomats’ Critical Memo on Syria.”

With the Russia intervention a year ago, along with the Iranian militias and Hezbollah fighters, U.S. imperialism’s fortunes in Syria have been significantly diminished. Large swaths of the country, including important cities previously under ISIS or Al Qaida control, have been retaken by Syrian government forces. It is in this context that the “51” memo can best be understood.

Classified CIA reports reveal U.S. war aims

The corporate media-promoted fiction that the central U.S. military target in Syria is ISIS, and not a U.S.-imposed regime change to remove Assad, is belied by the facts. A June 26 *New York Times* article entitled “C.I.A. Arms for Syrian Rebels Supplied Black Market, Officials Say” asserts: “The theft of only a small portion of the U.S. weapons bound for Syria and stolen by corrupt Jordanian officials highlights ‘... the messy, unplanned consequences of programs to arm and train rebels—the kind of programs the C.I.A. and Pentagon have conducted for decades—even after the Obama administration had hoped to keep the training program in Jordan under tight control.’”

The Times continues, “The United States and Saudi Arabia are the biggest contributors [in Syria], with the Saudis contributing both weapons and large sums of money, and with C.I.A. paramilitary operatives taking the lead in training the rebels to use Kalashnikovs, mortars, antitank guided missiles and other weapons.”

And further, “The existence of the program is classified as are all details about its budget. American officials say that the C.I.A. has trained thousands of rebels in the past three years, and that the fighters made substantial advances on the battlefield against Syrian government forces until Russian military forces—launched last year in support of Mr. Assad—compelled them to retreat.”

And again, “The training program is based in Jordan because of the country’s proximity to the Syrian battlefields. From the beginning, the C.I.A. and the Arab intelligence agencies relied on Jordanian security services to transport the weapons, many bought in bulk in the Balkans and elsewhere around Eastern Europe.”

The Times continues, “The program is separate from one that the Pentagon set up to train rebels to combat Islamic State fighters, rather than the Syrian military. That program was shut down after it managed to train only a handful of Syrian rebels.” Indeed, the figure is estimated at five rebels! The remainder of these U.S.-trained anti-ISIS fighters literally turned over their U.S. weapons to ISIS and/or to groups fighting Assad. Others just quit.

Further exploding the myth that “Syrian moderates” were leading the fight against Assad, *The Times* reveals that “President Obama authorized the covert arming program in April 2013, after more than a year of debate inside the administration about the wisdom of using the C.I.A. to train rebels trying to oust Mr. Assad.”

And finally, “The decision was made in part to try to gain control of a chaotic situation in which Arab countries were funneling arms into Syria for various rebel groups with little coordination. The Qataris had paid to

smuggle shipments of Chinese-made FN-6 shoulder-fired weapons over the border from Turkey, and Saudi Arabia sent thousands of Kalashnikovs and millions of

rounds of ammunition it had bought, sometimes with the C.I.A.’s help. By late 2013, the C.I.A. was working directly with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other nations to arm and train small groups of rebels and send them across the border into Syria.”

I couldn’t help but note the hypocrisy of these “51” diplomats concluding their recommendation for an air war against the Assad government by asserting, “It is time that the United States, guided by our strategic interests and moral convictions, lead a global effort to put an end to this conflict once and for all.” Could it be that these “moral” diplomats were unaware that almost from day one of the Syrian events, the deadly hands of U.S. imperialism and its allies were revved up to prepare for Assad’s removal?

Indeed, six months earlier, a Jan. 23, 2016, *Times* article entitled, “U.S. Relies Heavily on Saudi Money to Support Syrian Rebels” essentially reported the same information, but with regard to Saudi Arabia, stating, “When President Obama secretly authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to begin arming Syria’s embattled rebels in 2013, the spy agency knew it would have a willing partner to help pay for the covert operation. It was the same partner the C.I.A. has relied on for decades for money and discretion in far-off conflicts: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

“Since then,” the article continues, “the C.I.A. and its Saudi counterpart have maintained an unusual arrangement for the rebel-training mission, which the Americans have code-named Timber Sycamore. Under the deal, current and former administration officials said, the Saudis contribute both weapons and large sums of money, and the C.I.A. takes the lead in training the rebels on AK-47 assault rifles and tank-destroying missiles.”

And finally we are informed that “The support for the Syrian rebels is only the latest chapter in the decades long relationship between the spy services of Saudi Arabia and the United States, an alliance that has endured through the Iran-contra scandal, support for the mujahedeen against the Soviets in Afghanistan and proxy fights in Africa. Sometimes, as in Syria, the two countries have worked in concert. In others, Saudi Arabia has simply written checks underwriting American covert activities.”

To fuel the drive to increase U.S. and allied imperialist intervention in Syria, we are once again witness to a demonization campaign, this time directed at President Assad, who is charged by the “51,” and a host of other imperialist warmongers, of violating all the so-called cease-fire agreements negotiated in February, including denying food shipments to “starving people” in Darya—a suburb outside of Damascus—and of bombing U.S.-backed rebels who are supposedly fighting ISIS. Headlines screamed in late June that Assad had promised to retake “every inch” of his country from his invading foes.

Dare we assert that the imperialist-occupied portions of Syria—at one point some 50 percent or more of the country—represent a fundamental violation of the right of oppressed nations to self-determination? Here we are reminded of the rueful refrain of antiwar activists during the period when 500,000 U.S. troops for 10 years rained death and destruction on Vietnam, murdering four million people, mostly civilians. “We must teach the Vietnamese not to invade the land they were born in!”

We must teach Assad to never say that he is intent on retaking Syria from the imperialist invaders! We must bomb that nation to smithereens until the Assad government agrees to the imperialist propositions laid out by the U.S.-constituted and Saudi-led coalition of every imperialist backed force—almost all external to Syria—31 groups to date, that seek a piece of Syria!

Dare we comment on the alleged starvation of the people in cities previously taken over by U.S.-backed terrorist groups and today surrounded by Assad’s forces? Do these include the “rebel”-controlled Damascus suburbs from which U.S. and Saudi-backed terrorists had been daily lobbing bombs and rockets into Damascus? Should we side with ISIS forces who have been expelled from Palmyra and are now fleeing? Or the similar forces in the northern city of Aleppo? Should we lend credibility to confirmed reports that the “cease fire” had been used by U.S.-backed “rebels” to re-arm themselves? On this latter point, the evidence affirms Assad’s position.

A more accurate version of what is happening in the previously “rebel-controlled” Aleppo appeared in the Feb. 18 *Boston Globe* as an opinion piece by Brown University researcher Stephen Kinzer, who wrote: “Coverage of the Syrian war will be remembered as one of the most shameful episodes in the history of the American press. Reporting about carnage in the ancient city of Aleppo is the latest reason why.

“For three years, violent militants have run Aleppo. Their rule began with a wave of repression. They posted notices warning residents: ‘Don’t send your children to

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By MARK UGOLINI

John Riddell and Mike Taber, *"To the Masses"* (Haymarket Books 2016), 1299 pp., \$55

Thanks to John Riddell and Mike Taber for the huge effort over many years that has brought us "To the Masses" and the other wonderful books that make up their series on the Communist International in Lenin's time. Now in print is nearly the entire documentary record of the first four historic congresses, rich in lessons for the entire working-class movement.

I finished reading *To the Masses* recently, and what an interesting journey it was! In some ways it reads like a good novel, telling the fascinating story of the central political struggle of the Third Congress. The appendices are excellent, and I followed John's advice to read them as they are referenced in the main body of the book. I found myself frequently flipping between the chapters and the Appendices. This helped me follow the political debate, and allowed a fuller appreciation of the unfolding story.

Most valuable to me were insights into the Comintern leadership—how they interacted and engaged others in political discussion and debate. But most interesting was how these leaders led (or attempted to lead) on the most critical political questions—both when adherence to political principle was paramount, and compromise was an absolute necessity.

In some cases, the path forward required parting ways with currents that had become mired in national chauvinism and opportunism. But in the absence of fundamental differences, Comintern leaders were tireless in efforts to bring competing currents together to create stronger national sections. High priority was placed on avoiding unnecessary splits in these sections.

Despite the quality and experience of the Russian leaders, the task of building a centralized International seemed at times beyond their capabilities. Building an International in the conditions they faced was clearly a huge step into largely uncharted waters.

When challenged at the Congress, leaders of the Communist International Executive Committee (ECCI) admitted to serious errors in the direction they provided national sections. To help correct these errors they repeatedly pleaded with national sections to assign its central leaders to work in the International center, and thereby strengthen the work of the ECCI.

Lenin was in attendance at some of the plenary sessions, but missing from others. However, he often was active in hallway debates among delegates, sometimes unexpectedly popping in on important commission sessions with a powerful verbal message.

For much of the congress, Lenin was part of the minority, on the political "right" wing. And he seemed quite natural in this role. He appeared comfortable in warding off harsh polemical attacks, and was unfazed even when these harsh polemics came from the youngest, least experienced delegates. It was common for the most prestigious and authoritative party leaders to be severely criticized during intense, though generally comradely, political debate.

One major discussion at the congress was the role of the German party (VKPD) in the "March Action" it had initiated during March 1921. In response to provocative police actions against miners in Central Germany, the VKPD launched initiatives in action designed to spark (or push) the working class into a more generalized revolutionary uprising. These VKPD actions resulted in a serious working-class defeat.

Lenin and Trotsky both spoke out forcefully against the ultra-left strategy and tactics employed by the

TO THE MASSES!



(Left) Clara Zetkin.

is the greatest of political crimes ... It is sometimes forgotten that we learn the art of strategy, precisely and soberly estimate the enemy's power, and analyse the situation, rather than rushing into battle to break the wall of passivity or, in the words of another comrade, 'to activate the party'" (pp. 578-79).

But I most appreciated what I learned about Clara Zetkin, and the prominent political role she played. What principled and courageous leadership she demonstrated at the congress! With very few backers initially, she stood in firm opposition to the congress majority, and was passionate and committed to her position. Zetkin's steadfastness had a huge impact on the debate and helped change many minds, which proved critical in altering the political direction of the congress. In one congress session she said:

"Comrades, here is my position: Because the Zentrale (Central Bureau of German CP) had an incorrect political orientation to the revolutionary offensive, it came to a false position regarding the March struggle and was not in a position to carry out the struggle in the necessary fashion ... the errors of the March Action were not mistakes like those that take place in every struggle and are to some degree unavoidable. Rather the mistakes were organically rooted in the erroneous theory of the offensive itself ... In the future, actions will be required that are a question of life or death for the party. If they are conducted according to the schema set up by the new theory, that means destruction

of the party, and the revolutionary proletariat in Germany will thereby lose the leadership it requires."

She then challenged the congress to broaden the debate:

"I will express this opinion of ours frankly, although it will encounter vigorous resistance. Along with many comrades in Germany and other countries, I firmly believe that criticism of the errors and mistakes must not be restricted to the party organization and the party press. This criticism should properly be presented to the broadest public and the masses themselves ... Our workers themselves ... demand that the errors and weaknesses of the party be openly discussed, because such debates, if conducted objectively, are educational and enlightening for them as well. The proletarians have a right to this in another sense as well. They must pay for our policies and our errors through their sacrifices, their liberty, and their lives" (pp. 545-47).

For the most part, democratic processes prevailed at the congress. A vibrant and healthy political debate and discussion was certainly on display, and the Third Congress and the International clearly benefited from it.

I plan to devote some time spreading the word on the importance of this work. "To the Masses" contains important lessons for anyone seeking a better understanding of revolutionary Marxist history, and also for those working to advance the struggles of the working class and oppressed. ■

German party, and ran into a whirlwind of criticism by the German delegation and many other delegates at the congress.

At a plenary discussing Strategy and Tactics Lenin presented a minority viewpoint: "If the congress is not going to wage a vigorous offensive against such errors, against such 'leftist' stupidities, the whole movement is doomed. That is my deep conviction ... we are organized and disciplined Marxists ... We Russians are already sick and tired of these leftist phrases. We are people of organization. In drawing up our plans, we must proceed in an organized way and try to find the correct line ... Show me a party that has already won the majority of the working class ... we must win the majority of the working class..."

"In Europe, where almost all the proletarians are organized, we must win the majority of the working class. Anyone who fails to understand this is lost to the Communist movement; he will never learn anything if he has failed to learn that much three years after the great revolution" (pp. 465-67).

In a subsequent session Trotsky followed up on this theme:

"This celebrated philosophy of the offensive, which is completely non-Marxist, has arisen from the following curious outlook: 'A wall of passivity is gradually rising, which is ruining the movement. So let us advance, and break through this wall!'... We are obligated to say frankly to the German working class that we regard this philosophy of the offensive as the greatest of dangers, and that to apply it in practice

... War in Syria

(continued from page 8)

school. If you do, we will get the backpack and you will get the coffin.' Then they destroyed factories, hoping that unemployed workers would have no recourse other than to become fighters. They trucked looted machinery to Turkey and sold it."

Kinzer presents accounts that "Turkish-Saudi backed 'moderate rebels' showered the residential neighborhoods of Aleppo with unguided rockets and gas jars."

Today, at the behest of the U.S., the Saudi government was assigned to form a "High Negotiations Committee" supposedly to represent at the bargaining table all forces that seek the overthrow of the Syrian government—terrorists and U.S. stooges alike. There are no "progressive" or "moderate" forces in this imperialist cabal.

With the Russian intervention, again at the invitation of the Syrian government, the influence of U.S.-backed forces is declining, hence the heightened threats of a U.S. air war signaled by the "51" U.S. diplomats.

Today the UN reports that there are 65 million refugees and displaced people in the world, the great majority in the Middle East and Africa—almost all the victims of the chaos reigned on poor nations by the imperial powers, who seek the re-colonization of the planet by whatever means required. These include endless covert and overt wars, drone wars, privatized death squad wars and wars orchestrated by subservient U.S. allies.

On Russian intervention

The fact that the Russian, Iranian, and Hezbollah interventions in Syria have thwarted U.S. regime change efforts, at least for the moment, is a plus for Syria regardless of Russian intentions. Syria's right to self-determination, that is, its freedom from U.S. imperialist intervention, however constricted under the present circumstances, opens far greater opportunities for Syrians to rebuild and organize for their own class interests than under the imperialist boot.

While the Russian government has repeatedly indicated its willingness to partner with the U.S. in a brokered "negotiated" settlement wherein President Assad could be "peacefully transitioned" out of office, the objective

effect of Russia's intervention has been to weaken the imperialist grip on Syria. Such a defeat for the U.S. government would represent a significant gain for the Syrian masses.

Few doubt that the Vladimir Putin government is qualitatively less concerned with Syria's right to self-determination than it is with Russia advancing its own interests, including privately seeking U.S. assurances to lessen the European Union and U.S.-imposed sanctions on Russia imposed after the EU-U.S.-backed fascist-led coup in Ukraine and perhaps to diminish U.S. and NATO's ongoing moves to place troops and nuclear weapons on Russia's borders. While these are certainly vital and legitimate concerns of the beleaguered Russian state, my point here is also to be absolutely clear that while for capitalist Russia Syria's right to self-determination is negotiable, for antiwar fighters in the U.S. and the world over it is not. Our starting point must be to reject any "right" of imperialism to impose any "negotiated settlement" on any oppressed nation.

Self-determination for Syria! U.S. Out Now! Abolish the U.S. war machine! ■

Brexit vote: A blow to the corporate elite

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The following article reflects the views of Socialist Action in the Canadian state. The editors are printing it as a contribution to the discussion on the topic, and hope to print additional commentary in subsequent editions of our newspaper.

John Pilger, the award-winning journalist and documentary film maker, hit the nail on the head. When 52 per cent in Britain voted to leave the E.U. it was a devastating blow to the British ruling class and the European grand masters. It is not a matter of choosing between the European Union and the United Kingdom. Instead, as Pilger says, it is a matter of recognizing the virulently anti-working class agenda of big business in both the U.K. and the E.U.—an agenda of austerity and growing inequality, of pillage of the environment, and endless wars of intervention.

So the Earth moved on June 23. It did so for an array of reasons that have as a common denominator mass opposition to the arrogant establishment and its hideous policies. Now the big capitalists are on their heels, spitefully lashing out at the voters, especially those they regard as the “ignorant losers in the globalization game,” who “should never have been trusted with such an important decision.” Referendum? Never again, the rich bastards say.

But the genie is out of the bottle. The U.K. Conservative Party is deeply divided. And the British rulers may lose more than “their markets” in Europe; they may lose the North of Ireland and Scotland in the bargain. It is also, as Pilger correctly argues, a blow for peace, and against the New Cold War aimed squarely at Russia and China. The question now is this: Will the radical left take the

initiative, and act to win the broad left to a course of mass struggle to reverse social cuts, privatization and layoffs? Or absent that, amidst so much hand-wringing over the fake democracy and illusory humanity of the E.U., will the left allow UKIP (unilaterally anointed by the business media as the sole voice of Brexit) to enjoy the benefit of the majority vote against the tyrants of the E.U.?

As Tariq Ali wrote in Counterpunch, Brexit “was a revolt against the political establishment (former Labour Party Leader Ed Miliband acknowledged this fact) and had Jeremy Corbyn come out for LEAVE his party would have been in a very strong position. The Tories are wounded. Labour and others should demand an early election. Impossible to wait till 2020. And the election campaign should be waged fiercely for an anti-capitalist programme and fighting the Right on racism/xenophobia, etc. Mass campaigning of the sort that won Corbyn the leadership is the way forward.”

Jeremy Corbyn needs to shift radically to the left, and to mobilize his base against capitalist austerity. His movement must quash the Blairites who are now out for his skin, targeting him as a weak campaigner for the troika. What hypocrites! The Blairites governed in the spirit of Margaret Thatcher, laying the basis for the social misery that found a popular outlet in the Brexit vote.

This is a turning point in Britain, a potentially terrific one. Sadly, some British leftists fail to recognize that. Worse, they continue to defend a totally unprincipled line of setting their political compass according to the positions of assorted left liberals, social democrats and “left” labour bureaucrats. Just imagine if “Remain in the E.U.” had won. Every-

one now in charge of disaster capitalism would be celebrating. Celebrating what? The status quo, of course. Instead, we have a new situation where

the only obvious result is that there are question marks over everything. It is a situation that socialists should welcome—and then quickly get to work.

On June 23, the Momentum group in the British Labour Party issued a statement, which included the following: “We recognise that people voted ‘Leave’ for many reasons. Much of this vote reflected anger in communities which have experienced many years of industrial decline with the subsequent loss of secure employment.

“Many such working-class communities have been utterly neglected for years by those in power. Millions appear to have chosen ‘Leave’ to vote against the unfettered globalisation that has seen living standards stagnate or fall, as the cost of living rises. We share this scepticism of big business dominance, austerity and distant elites, be they British, European or Global, and share that demand for a country where working people have control. “Many ‘Leave’ voters usually vote for Labour, or are working people Labour should represent.

“Now the Party and the whole labour movement needs to show the country that it alone can offer working people genuine control over their lives, workplaces and communities. Labour must clearly demonstrate how it will improve lives through policies that will increase wages, tackle the housing crisis, and give people a greater say at work and in their communities.”

Amen. This is the view that should now be advanced in the New Democratic Party and in unions across Canada, as we continue the fight against the TPP and CETA, the latest of the nefarious corporate trade deals. ■

Defiance in the Old South

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

“Free State of Jones,” directed by Gary Carr.

The Free State of Jones is based on a true Civil War story, a little known story, because its subject matter is in a controversial gray area.

Here we have Newton Knight (a spot-on Matthew McConaughey at his scraggly, unkempt, bearded best), a Confederate soldier—a nurse, no less—who deserts. Although married to Serena (Keri Russell, in a thankless role) with a toddler, he comes to live with and eventually marry “in the eyes of the Lord” a Black woman, Rachel (a believable Gugu Mbatha-Raw), a house slave and healer.

At one point, Knight is being chased as he runs through the wilderness by what one character tells him are “nigger dogs,” dogs that slave catchers use to hunt down runaways (the “N” word is used profusely throughout). He ends up hiding out in the swamp in an area occupied by runaway slaves who come to accept him. “Horses can’t handle the swamps,” Moses,

the head of the hideout tells him.

Knight reaches an epiphany when he realizes that poor men are fighting for the rich so that the rich can stay rich and the poor poor, which resonates today. People are people, and all people should be free. He does something about it by leading poor white farmers and slaves in an extraordinary armed rebellion against the Confederacy.

In effect, he launched an uprising that led Jones County, Miss., to secede from the Confederacy, creating the Free State of Jones. Knight continued his struggle into Reconstruction, distinguishing him as a compelling, if controversial, figure of defiance.

Carr created an interesting, but whip-lashing change of scene by suddenly fast-forwarding 85 years to a Mississippi courtroom where his very white-looking grandson, Davis Knight (Brian Lee Franklin) is being tried for miscegenation as he is married to a “pure” white woman. Court records had revealed that he is the son of Knight and Rachel’s offspring. The law was not repealed until 1967.

This is a suspenseful, well acted, beautifully shot film about a little known segment of history and of one man’s futuristic vision regarding human beings and their ability to live together freely and peacefully. ■

... Socialist 2016 platform

(continued from page 7)

vestment in restorative justice, mental health, and drug treatment services.

- End “zero tolerance” school policies. Cops out of the schools!
- Abolish racist “moneyball” extortion schemes including defendant-funded court proceedings, mandatory court surcharges, fines and fees.
- Abolish all racist exclusionary election laws.
- For Black and Latino-organized control of Black and Latino communities. Police out of Black and Latino neighborhoods!
- Reparations for African-American, Puerto-Rican, and Mexican-American communities in compensation for wealth stolen over centuries.

6) Immediate amnesty, legalization and equal rights for all immigrants. End the racist, Islamophobic “War on Terror!”

- End all deportations now! Repeal all anti-immigrant legislation. Close down ICE.
- Demilitarize and open the borders.
- No to the surveillance, persecution, demonization and government-orchestrated frame-up trials in Muslim communities in the U.S. and worldwide.

7) Abolish all racist, sexist, and homophobic discriminatory laws and practices!

- Equal pay for equal work.
- Affirmative action with quotas to remedy past discrimi-

nation and prevent future discrimination.

- To assure economic independence for women, government-financed, free 24-hour child-care centers and maternity leave with full pay. Guarantee the right of every mother to raise a healthy child.
 - End violence against women and the LGBTQI community.
 - Repeal the Hyde Amendment. Free unrestricted abortion on demand. Reproductive justice now. End coercive contraception projects targeting low income women and women in prison. End the criminalization of pregnant women.
 - Free Purvi Patel.
 - Ban workplace and housing discrimination and adoption restrictions based on sexual orientation or gender identity
 - Outlaw discrimination by businesses or employees based on sexual preference or gender identity Repeal all local, state and federal discriminatory laws against LGBTQI people.
 - Quality safe housing for youth and workers facing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- 8) Defend civil liberties! Abolish the “national security” state!**
- End all government surveillance. Abolish the National Security Administration and all other secret and repressive government spy agencies. Stop the persecution of all whistle blowers like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden!
 - Repeal the Patriot Act and all other anti-democratic legislation. End all restrictions on the right to organize, assemble, and protest.
- 9) For a democratically-planned socialist economy in which the banks, basic industries and all natural re-**

... Sanders

(continued from page 3)

the 1% actually means.

Is building a labor party practical? Absolutely. Organized labor, diminished and battered though it may be, has significant financial and human resources. For the last several elections cycles, tens of millions of dollars and thousands of labor foot soldiers were placed at the disposal of the major capitalist parties.

Those resources, shifted from the parties of the 1% to labor’s own campaigns, would give the new-formed party instant viability. Meanwhile, such a shift in resources would deal a body blow to the Democrats and Republicans.

But there’s something more behind the idea of a labor party that really boosts its viability. Working people produce everything.

All of society’s wealth, though distributed unequally, has its origin in the labor of ordinary people. This gives us tremendous power. If the 1% took a day off, nobody would notice. But when all working people take the day off, it’s called a general strike, and the entire country grinds to a halt. What’s needed is not some new party in the abstract, but a new tool that can be used by working people to fight for political power as a class, with the ultimate aim of replacing the rule of the capitalist minority with the democratic rule of the working-class majority.

Along the way, in our zeal to build the movement we know is needed to set the world right, we should remember: success is not measured by how many people you have marching behind your banner, but by the number of people marching behind your banner *in the right direction.* ■

sources are the collective property of working people—the 99%—and democratically operated for human betterment not the individual profits of the 1%.

- Tax the rich and their corporations, not working people! End corporate bailouts! [Note: \$32 trillion in corporate bailouts was granted to corporate America in the years immediately following the 2008 economic crash.]
- Close all tax loopholes for the rich. Nationalize all illegally “offshored” corporate profits.
- For a steeply graduated progressive income tax!
- 100% tax on all incomes over \$300,000. Zero percent tax on all incomes under \$50,000.
- Low interest, long-term government loans to protect small farmers gouged by banks and food trusts.
- End all military and military-related spending: Use the money saved towards a massive public works program and to fulfill the demands above.

10) For working-class political action independent of and against the twin parties of capitalism

- For a united, democratic and fighting labor movement that champions the economic, social and political interests of all working people. Organize the unorganized 90 percent! Repeal Taft Hartley and all other anti-union legislation.
- For a Labor Party based on a revitalized, democratic, and expanded labor movement allied with the oppressed and exploited.
- Open the corporate books for union inspection!
- For a workers government and a fully democratic society of, by and for working people and the oppressed! Abolish capitalism! For socialism! ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Leadership race off to a rocky start — NDP brass to forego democracy

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The \$30,000 entry fee, and the 25 per cent tax on campaign funds raised, are bad enough barriers. Now the requirement to collect hundreds of signatures of NDP members in five different regions of a vast country, including 100 from specifically designated equity-seeking groups, makes it virtually impossible for working-class NDP members to be eligible to run for Leader. Ironically, the new rules will tend to exclude members of the very same equity groups whose signatures are required. And any NDPer who is not a veteran professional politician, or who is not rich, can just forget about being an “official” candidate for Leader.

To make matters even worse, the One Member One Vote process means that party members will not gather in one place to discuss the merits of the candidates. The capitalist media will have a predominant influence on popular perceptions of the contenders. NDP members will not meet before the election to decide the policies that the new Leader should implement. If there is only one ranked ballot cast, they will be unable to make second and third Leader choices as the sequential vote results are counted and revealed at each step.

But even if two or more separate ballots are cast after the bottom candidate on the list is dropped each time, the voters are atomized. They make their choices in isolation — except from the barrage of propaganda issued by the corporate media and the big spending candidates. This is a prescription for establishment rule, not for working-class political action.

The lessons of the failed election campaign in 2015, and the spirit of the change-hungry NDP federal convention in April 2016, appear to be lost on the party federal council. It presents a tone-deaf response to the cry for greater democracy, accountability and transparency. It makes a mockery of the demands and needs of the working class base of the party.

Will the NDP, having been driven deeply downwards in the polls by its conservative, autocratic leadership, continue to ape the parties of big business? Or will the rank and file take charge and fight to win democracy and socialist policies? More than ever it is clear: To survive, the NDP must turn sharply to the left!

Fortunately, there is a socialist candidate for Leader, and soon there may be two. Cheri DiNovo, NDP MPP for the Toronto provincial riding of Parkdale-High Park, is running as a loud and proud socialist. When she

launched her campaign on June 7, she declared that she refused to pay the \$30,000 entry fee. After being derided in the media as “unserious”, Cheri said she would pay up, but only under protest. (The NDP Socialist Caucus is petitioning to abolish the fee. For details visit www.ndpsocialists.ca.)

Avi Lewis, film-maker and co-author of the Leap Manifesto, is actively considering a run for Leader too. It is common to have several contenders from the party right wing, so why not have more than one from the left?

In a message to a June 26 picnic co-sponsored by the

Socialist Caucus and Momentum in Toronto, Cheri DiNovo summed up her political platform: “Our New Democratic Party looked more like the ‘old’ Democratic Party south of the border in the last election and is still controlled by those who want to ‘win’ by becoming neo-liberals. We’ve seen how well that works in elections in Ontario, BC, Olivia Chow’s (Toronto) mayoral bid, and the last federal debacle. Crazy is doing the same old things and hoping for a different outcome. As I’ve said before: the only place left to go is left. Particularly with Trudeaumania 2.0 putting leftist lipstick on a neo-Liberal pig.

“We need to remember who we are, who we were envisioned to be by our founding mothers and fathers. We need to become Socialists again. We need to posit an alternative to the casino capitalism that has become a fatal disease. We need to, yes, take a Leap, and enact the sort of strong legislation that makes us a beacon on climate change rather than a contributor to the climate crisis.

“We need to eradicate income inequality, provide everyone with the education, health care, child care, housing, and green employment they need. Everyone, yes everyone, should be in a union. This used to sound utopian to many. Now to imagine a world of the 1% existing into the next century sounds more than utopian—it sounds insane.” ■

A challenge to academic socialists: Take a Leap!

By ROBBIE MAHOOD

It is well and good that Socialist Project (a Toronto-based group led by left academics and former labour bureaucrats) welcomes the Leap Manifesto and the modest new opening to the left that exists in the NDP—now that the party has effectively embraced Leap and turfed Mulcair. This is a welcome departure from the ritual feeding off the sins of social democracy we so often see in the SP e-publication, *The Bullet*. Socialists should engage with real developments in the labour movement and there is a tacit recognition that, like it or not, this includes the NDP.

But given an influx of new activists into the NDP (some are already there), it seems the authors would have Socialist Project stand aside, neither impeding nor encouraging such a development. That stance would seem to be designed to preserve (at least for the SP) the option of a new “left” party.

The nature of such a party is not specified. Would it be a re-edition of social democracy from its earlier, rather mythic, heroic days, or perhaps it would take its inspiration from recent new “left”

parties in Europe like Syriza, Die Linke, Podemos, or closer to home, Quebec Solidaire? Surely not a Leninist combat party in the tradition of the early Canadian Communist Party!

The authors approach this dilemma with rather excessive delicacy, pretty much conceding everything to process. Not so much a party, but a “project of transcending capitalism.” Not a “genuine storehouse of the truth,” but rather offering “strategic spaces” to develop “better socialist ideas and alternatives.” Pretty thin gruel. Do we really have to reinvent the wheel?

Vancouver-based writer Roger Annis, in his comment on the article, at least broaches the question of program and strategy. But why have all initiatives to form a new party over the past 40 years met with failure? History shows that new parties emerge from important upsurges in the class struggle, or from splits in degenerating reformist parties, whether of social democratic or Stalinist lineage. So far, neither of these apply to Canada, or apply only to an insufficient degree.

Socialists need to be present in all facets of the class struggle, and the NDP is an important arena as recent events have shown. Socialist Project should intervene in the NDP as an organized tendency, rather than watch as supporters move back into the NDP as individuals. That is indeed the only way to avoid the perils of entryism and adaptation to opportunism—by fighting for class-struggle policies, and doing so where it really matters. ■

(Disclosure: I am actively involved in the NDP Socialist Caucus. — R.M.)

... Pipeline fighters

(continued from page 12)

the Canadian government had failed to sufficiently consult with the First Nations impacted by the project. The newly elected Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said his administration opposes the pipeline, and the project is generally considered dead.

The Northern Gateway line was first proposed in 2004. It would have carried tar sands oil 1177 kilometers from northern Alberta west across northern British Columbia to the deep-water port of Kitimat. The oil would then have been loaded onto supertankers and shipped along the B.C. coast, which is rugged rainforest. A study estimated that cleanup from a single oil spill along the coast would cost \$9.6 billion, kill fisheries, and do untold ecological damage.

The pipeline route passes through the unceded territories of the Nadleh Whut’en, Nak’azdli, Takla Lake, Saik’uz, and Tl’azt’en First Nations. These Indigenous groups formed the Yinka Dene Alliance, which passed the “Save the Fraser Declaration,” banning the pipeline from their territories. The Alliance was supported by Unifor, Canada’s largest private-sector labor union.

Despite the legal ban enacted by First Nations and massive public opposition to Northern Gateway, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s cabinet approved the project in 2014. Canada’s natural resources agency labeled the First Nations and environmentalists opposing the project “adversaries.” The Yinka Dene Alliance had to sue in Canadian court to

enforce their own laws in their territories. While the pipeline is now essentially dead, the Yinka Dene Alliance continues to push for a ban on oil tankers along the B.C. coast.

TransCanada Energy East

TransCanada’s 4,600-kilometer-long Energy East Pipeline would carry 1.1 million barrels per day of crude oil from Alberta and Saskatchewan to refineries in Eastern Canada. The eastern terminus in Saint John, New Brunswick, would include a marine terminal for loading oil tankers to export tar sands oil to Europe. According to a report by the Council of Canadians, a social justice non-profit, the pipeline puts the drinking water of five million Canadians at risk.

Other pipelines that have met strong opposition include the Enbridge Octopus (through Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois), the Alberta Clipper, Line 3, Line 61, Line 66, Line 5, and Sandpiper. The Northeast U.S. is seeing a growth of pipeline expansion projects to bring in fracked natural gas from the Mid-Atlantic and the South. A longer version of this article, at www.socialistaction.org, discusses these projects.

The Sandpiper line would carry 375,000 barrels per day of Bakken crude oil from western North Dakota through northern Minnesota to Superior, Wisconsin. On the way, it would pass near dozens of lakes and wetlands and the headwaters of the Mississippi River. Many of the lakes threatened by an oil spill are used by Ojibwe people for harvesting wild rice, a sacred plant and food source. All of the Enbridge pipelines in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan pass through

the Ceded Territories, a large portion of those states where Ojibwe tribes retain hunting, fishing, and gathering rights guaranteed by 19th-Century treaties with the federal government.

For An Immediate, Just Transition

The movement victories over Keystone XL, the Northern Gateway, Sandpiper, and Northeast Energy Direct pipelines shows the power of an organized mass movement against fossil fuels. The movement is not yet strong enough to directly challenge the existing oil and gas supply lines, but more victories like these can help build confidence and bring new activists into the fight.

It is imperative for the many small grassroots groups fighting pipelines see themselves as part of the broader movement for climate justice, and to understand that their backyard is one small arena in a much larger battle against the unfolding climate catastrophe wrought by capitalism.

The call for a halt to fossil fuel production should be accompanied by calls for 100% clean, renewable energy sources now; paid retraining and guaranteed jobs at union wages for all workers displaced by the transition away from fossil fuels; immediate clean-up of communities suffering from environmental racism; climate reparations to impoverished nations suffering the brunt of the climate catastrophe and other key demands of the climate justice movement.

We must replace capitalism with an economic system that values the future of humanity over short-term profit. ■

Pipeline fighters resist climate catastrophe



Huffington Post

By CARL SACK

Humanity is faced with a worsening climate catastrophe. In June, levels of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere topped 400 parts per million at the South Pole, a concentration not seen on this planet in the last four million years. Scientists at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii, which is registering 407 ppm carbon dioxide as of this writing, say that the concentration there is now probably permanently above 400.

The significance of this milestone is massive. NASA scientist Dr. James Hansen has written that 350 parts per million is the upper limit of Earth's carbon dioxide concentration, "if humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted." Carbon dioxide concentrations were last at 350 ppm around 1985.

Human-induced climate change is already wreaking havoc. May 2016 marked the 13th consecutive hottest month on record in global average temperature, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The permanent drought and major wildfires in the western U.S., the huge Horse River Fire that destroyed parts of Fort McMurray in far northern Alberta, Canada (ironically the epicenter of Canada's tar sands oil boom), the bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia, the killer heat wave in India, and many more unfolding disasters are all attributable to a warming world.

Yet, the world's capitalist rulers are actively pouring gasoline onto the climate fire. U.S. politicians from President Barack Obama on down have cheered on the expansion of fracking for oil and natural gas, which has only slowed slightly in the face of a historic fossil fuel glut. Fracking continues to be exempted from most federal environmental regulations, despite its routinely poisoning of local air and water supplies, causing earthquakes, and releasing huge amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas over 80 times as powerful as carbon dioxide over a 20-year time span.

Last December, with the support of both Republicans and Democrats, Congress quietly lifted the country's 40-year-old ban on crude oil exports, allowing frack-

Human-induced climate change is already wreaking havoc, yet the world's capitalist rulers are pouring gasoline onto the climate fire.

ing for oil in the Bakken fields of North Dakota and Montana to go full speed ahead even when domestic demand can't keep up. In June, the Democratic Party's Platform Committee reiterated that party's support for fracking, rejecting a proposal to call for a national moratorium on it.

In Canada, the federal government continues to actively promote the development of tar sands. Tar sands oil is the dirtiest energy source on the planet. Mixed in with soil, it takes huge amounts of energy to extract and refine, and has resulted in massive deforestation and pollution in the boreal forest region of Alberta. James Hansen has called the full development of the tar sands "game over for the climate."

Laws limiting fossil-fuel production at the source are necessary to combat climate change, yet the agenda of Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals alike seems to be just the opposite. In their calculus, short-term profits for U.S. and Canadian fossil fuel companies trump the future livability of the planet. Likewise, the representatives of the global capitalist class utterly failed to implement meaningful limits on greenhouse gas emissions through the most recent international climate accord, the Paris Agreement, signed last December.

In a June 30 article in the journal *Nature*, several climate scientists warn that all of the non-binding pledges for greenhouse gas reductions made by countries as part of the agreement, if fully implemented, would result in a disastrous global temperature increase of 2.6-3.1 degrees Celsius by 2100. The agreement aspires to hold global temperatures to "well below 2 degrees Celsius," a number which would still mean famine and displacement for millions.

There is hope in the climate justice movement, which continues to build its power to stop fossil fuels even in the face of long odds. Activists are fighting back against the expansion of pipelines used to carry oil and gas from the point of production to refineries and export terminals—and in some cases they are winning.

Although plenty of oil and gas are getting to market, pipelines represent a choke point for future production. The 2016 Crude Oil Forecast from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, which represents Canada's tar sands industry, concludes that "Canada's oil supply will soon greatly exceed its current pipeline capacity." Denying the fossil fuel industry this capacity is a symbolic blow against the industry and shows that it is vulnerable to movement pressure.

Much of the growing pipeline resistance has also been driven by more local concerns. If a line bursts, it can devastate farmland, ecosystems, and waterways. This nightmare visited Michigan in 2010, when an Enbridge Energy pipeline ruptured and spilled 1.1 million gallons of heavy tar sands crude into the Kalamazoo River, the largest inland oil spill in the U.S. to date. Tar sands oil is heavy and thick and pumped at high pressure, putting a large amount of stress on the pipes. Along natural gas pipelines, compressor stations release large amounts of methane, along with toxins such as benzene, toluene, sulfuric oxide, and formaldehyde.

The most famous pipeline battle to date was over the Keystone XL line, which would have cut across the central U.S., bringing 800,000 barrels per day of tar sands oil from northern Alberta, Canada to the Gulf Coast. In the face of a national groundswell of opposition, the Obama administration denied the pipeline's permit to cross the Canadian border, killing the project. Now activists are fighting to keep Keystone's successors at bay.

Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline

Another victory on the scale of Keystone XL took place at the beginning of June. A Canadian Federal Court of Appeals revoked Enbridge Energy's permit for their proposed Northern Gateway tar sands pipeline through British Columbia. The court found that

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