

## Native people fight to stop Dakota pipeline

Tom Stromme / Bismarck Tribune



By KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

*Karen Schraufnagel is the Socialist Action candidate for vice president of the United States in 2016.*

The indigenous-led fight is heating up to stop the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline that has been devastating sacred native burial grounds.

Resistance continues to grow at the Sacred Stone and Red Warrior camps, undeterred by mace and attack dogs. Thousands of indigenous brothers and sisters from tribes all across the country and their many allies are heeding the call to #DefendtheSacred and #KeepItInTheGround because #WaterIsLife.

This is a historic gathering up of the indigenous nations. Of the 566 federally recognized tribes, more than 150 have been represented in the camps and on the front lines fighting this pipeline. That means more than a quarter of the tribal nations in this country are in on this fight. As Lakota activist and Twin Cities resident Coya White Hat-Artichoker said when she visited the camp in early September: "They underestimate us. They don't realize that the last time we came together like this, we killed Custer."

On Sept. 2, a lawyer for the Standing Rock Sioux tribe filed an emergency motion in Federal Court. Dakota Access has repeatedly claimed the pipeline would not

violate any sacred sites. A landowner (this particular parcel is not reservation land) and tribal experts filed discovery testimony to the judge deciding whether to grant an injunction against Dakota Access to halt construction.

The discovery testimony pinpointed the archeologically unique areas and sacred sites including grave markers. This should have been followed by an official survey by the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office after the Labor Day holiday weekend. Instead, immediately after the filing, bulldozers were at the site digging up the sacred land.

To get to the area, Dakota Access leapfrogged 15 miles from current construction, in a move clearly designed to short circuit injunctive relief. Dave Archambault II, Standing Rock tribal chair, stated: "Dakota Access Pipeline and Energy Transfer Partners brazenly used bulldozers to destroy our burial sites, prayer sites and culturally significant artifacts. They did this on a holiday weekend, one day after we filed court papers identifying these sacred sites."

"These grounds are the resting places of our ancestors. The ancient cairns and stone prayer rings there cannot be replaced. In one day, our sacred land has been turned into hollow ground."

The Dakota Access Pipeline will cross four states as it transports oil from the Bakken fields (in western

*(Photo) Young protesters rally next to road being constructed to aid in building pipeline near the Standing Rock reservation.*

North Dakota) to a distribution center in Illinois. The intended route includes passage *under* the Missouri River. When the pipeline leaks or spills into this vital waterway, the consequences will be catastrophic for every living thing. Fortunately for all of us, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe calls this area home, and have taken it upon themselves to protect our mother earth from her assailants.

In the lapdog capitalist press, the protectors of our land and water are described as "violent" while the profit-hungry, pollution-loving earth destroyers are simply "defending." But just who and *what* are the police and attack dogs "defending?"

According to Bloomberg's 2015 profile: "Kelcy Warren is Having Fun in the Oil Bust." Warren, the founder of Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the Dakota Access Pipeline, has amassed a \$7.3 billion personal fortune. Like so many capitalists, his fortune seems to increase with disasters. His main residence is a 23,000 square foot home on 10 acres in Texas. In addition, he owns three ranches (one is over 11,000 acres), a house in Lake Tahoe, and an island off of

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# New court ruling in Palestine activist Rasmia Odeh's case

By MARK UGOLINI

On Aug. 29, the defense case of 69-year-old Palestinian rights activist Rasmia Odeh took an unexpected and potentially ominous turn when presiding Federal Judge Gershwin Drain ruled that Odeh will be subjected to up to 18 hours of intensive psychological testing by an appointed government forensic examiner whose job is to undermine her legal defense and bolster the prosecution case.

Defense attorneys for Odeh countered on Sept. 6 with a court motion to "require the government to disclose the identity and all other relevant information concerning the expert ... and to identify any formal tests that the designated individual intends to administer." The U.S. Attorney's office has thus far refused to provide the defense legal team with this important information.

A prominent figure in the Palestinian national liberation movement, Odeh was wrongly convicted in 2014 of immigration fraud for failing to disclose her conviction by an Israeli military court more than 40 years ago. She was later sentenced to 18 months in prison, her U.S. citizenship was revoked, and deportation to Jordan was ordered.

In 2015 Odeh appealed her conviction, charging that Judge Drain had issued rulings that blocked her from presenting her case. She and her legal team have effectively argued that the charges against her were politically motivated; and in February 2016, Odeh won an important victory when the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals vacated her immigra-



tion fraud conviction. The court ruled that Judge Drain was wrong in his handling of the case, especially his refusal to allow the defense to present medical evidence that Odeh had suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Odeh suffered from PTSD during interrogations in which she was accused of intentionally deceiving immigration authorities of her unlawful conviction and imprisonment while under Israeli occupation.

Through multiple rulings favorable to the prosecution during the trial, Odeh was prevented from telling her story. While a political prisoner under Israeli occupation in 1969, after being subjected to over three weeks of brutal sexual, physical, and psychological torture, she was coerced by the Israeli military into

a false confession of involvement in Jerusalem bombings.

The Aug. 29 decision by Judge Drain to subject Odeh to new psychological interrogation allows the prosecution an attempt to discredit the detailed evaluation already conducted by noted clinical psychologist Mary Fabri, an expert with an extensive background in treating victims of torture. After an extensive examination of Odeh, Fabri concluded that her PTSD could have prevented her from recalling many important details while under questioning of Israeli and immigration authorities.

Michael Deutsch, lead defense attorney for Odeh, reacted to Judge Drain's decision: "While Rasmia has become the most famous target of a political trial in the U.S. today, she has always avoided

discussion of the crimes committed against her in that Israeli prison in 1969. The government case against Rasmia is based on the word of her Israeli captors, and yet at every turn, Judge Drain has denied her defense the right to challenge those statements in his courtroom. Once again, his latest decision favors the prosecution's endless attempts to cover up the crimes of Israel against Rasmia."

Judge Drain also cancelled a scheduled Sept. 22 hearing at the Detroit courthouse, where the Rasmia Defense Committee had been planning a rally of supporters from throughout the Midwest.

Nesreen Hasan of U.S. Palestinian Community Network (US-PCN) told Palestine America: "It's unfortunate that the judge sided

with the prosecution, but we're still going to fight. ... [I'm] concerned for the health of Rasmia because the psychological evaluation will be a triggering process. The ruling just goes to show that the prosecution doesn't care about her health and doesn't care that they are causing her to relive her trauma."

The government's legal offensive represents a political attack on Rasmia Odeh and the broader movement for Palestinian rights. "The case against Rasmia is a thinly veiled political prosecution," said Dima Khalidi, director of Palestine Legal. "And the Appeals Court's decision to send the case back confirms that the District Court inappropriately excluded expert testimony

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## Socialist Action: Where we stand

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

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

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

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism. Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

**SOCIALIST ACTION** Closing news date: Sept. 7, 2015  
 Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

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

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



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# Mumia challenges state misconduct

By RACHEL WOLKENSTEIN

We are reprinting this excerpt from an article at [www.rachelwolkenstein.net](http://www.rachelwolkenstein.net). As staff counsel for the Partisan Defense Committee, the author worked on the legal team for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Mumia's Aug. 7 petition has been filed by attorneys Judith Ritter and Christina Swams.

A new legal action filed by Mumia Abu-Jamal in the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas on August 7, 2016, provides a path in the courts to overturn Mumia's conviction and win his freedom. The legal underpinning is the recent precedent-setting U.S. Supreme Court decision *Williams v. Pennsylvania*, 136 S.Ct. 1989 (2016), which holds it is a violation of the due process right to an impartial tribunal free of judicial bias if a judge participating in a criminal appeal had "a significant personal involvement as a prosecutor in a critical decision" in a defendant's case.

Ronald D. Castille was a senior Assistant District Attorney during Mumia's 1982 trial and the Philadelphia District Attorney during Mumia's direct appeal of conviction and death sentence. Ronald D. Castille was a Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court during the entire period of Mumia's appeals of his post-conviction proceedings from 1995-2008.

Mumia made motions to Justice Castille to recuse himself from his post-conviction appeals to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1996-98 and again in 2002 on grounds of bias and conflict of interest, but Castille refused. Mumia raised Castille's denial to recuse himself as an appeal issue in the federal courts, but it was ignored.

The District Attorney's office and Justice Castille did not disclose, or denied or minimized any direct role District Attorney Castille had as a prosecutor in capital prosecutions, including jury selection and other prosecutorial trial conduct and appeal strategy and preparation. As stated in the new filing, "The high profile and political sensitivity of Mr. Abu-Jamal's case increases the likelihood that Justice Castille's minimization of his involvement in the case was not credible."

Castille's role as both prosecutor and judge in Mumia's case, in light of the *Williams* decision, opens the door to a court decision vacating (overturning and dismissing) all Pennsylvania Supreme Court denials of Mumia's post-conviction petitions. If this new legal action succeeds, Mumia would get "do-overs" to the legal challenges he made to the racist frame-up conviction, for which he has now spent close to 35 years in prison, almost thirty in solitary confinement on death row.

This new legal action can lead to renewed challenges to all the state's unconstitutional racial, political and class biased procedures and state misconduct that resulted in Mumia's frame-up conviction before the pro-cop and racist judge Albert Sabo who declared



before trial, "I'm going to help them fry the n----r."

Mumia's other challenges to his conviction include: Ineffective assistance of trial counsel; the prosecution's intentional exclusion of African-Americans from his jury; the Prosecution's summation argument that Mumia would have "appeal after appeal" depriving Mumia of the constitutional standard of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt and the importance of the jury decision in determining guilt and a death sentence; denying Mumia the right to self-representation and to be in the courtroom during his trial; police and prosecutorial fabrication of evidence of guilt—false hospital confession, phony ballistics evidence, lying witnesses Cynthia White, Priscilla Durham, Robert Chobert—and suppression of evidence of Mumia's innocence—Veronica Jones, Dessie Hightower, William Singletary, Ken Freeman, Arnold Howard and the confession of Arnold Beverly.

In other words, Mumia would be able to re-appeal the entirety of his frame-up conviction before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. If the new appeal wins, Mumia will get a new trial, if not dismissal, on grounds of gross state misconduct in prosecuting Mumia.

And should a new trial be ordered, the prosecution has no evidence to present against Mumia. The three legs of the case—eyewitnesses, confession and ballistics—have been proven to be manufactured by the police.

This is what should happen under the U.S. Supreme Court holding in *Williams*. But Mumia's case isn't any case. There is no other case in the United States that has faced as much orchestrated hostility from the Fraternal Order of Police and both parties of U.S. capitalism as that of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The legal and political caveats for a winning strategy to free Mumia: Legal action that underscores Mumia is innocent and framed in a political and racist prosecution that denied every aspect of due process and a fair trial; and an intensified international campaign of publicity and protest demanding Mumia's

# Supporters demand anti-viral treatment for Mumia Abu-Jamal

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

PHILADELPHIA—On Sept. 7, supporters of Mumia's defense rallied outside Pennsylvania Governor Wolf's office here to demand that the state act immediately to administer the necessary life-saving medication to Mumia Abu-Jamal and all other prisoners with hepatitis C.

On Aug. 31, a federal court turned down Mumia's suit to obtain the anti-viral drug based on a technicality—the suit was filed against the wrong state agency. The "proper" agency, Pennsylvania's hepatitis C committee for prisoner treatment, didn't even exist at the time of filing over one year ago.

Pam Africa of the International Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal stated, "What we see here is another attempt to kill Mumia, an innocent man, by other means. We are also demanding his immediate release."

On the positive side, U.S. District Court Judge Robert Mariani also declared that Pennsylvania's protocol for treatment of its prisoners for hepatitis C is unconstitutional (prisoners must be diagnosed to be nearly at immediate risk of death before receiving the proper medicines), and that it could prolong the suffering of the state's nearly 6000 prisoners with Hep-C.

The medication that Mumia has been trying to obtain has about a 95% cure rate, but is exorbitantly expensive in the United States.

"We won everything but the injunction we sought, and will be moving expeditiously to bring additional defendants before the court so Mr. Abu-Jamal can receive the treatment he is entitled to under the U.S. Constitution," said Bret Grote of the Abolitionist Law Center, which is handling the legal aspects of Mumia's medical case.

Mumia contracted the disease from a blood transfusion after he was shot by a police officer in the 1981 event for which he was framed up and given the death penalty. The hepatitis has caused him extreme suffering—including diabetic shock, anemia, rapid weight loss, and an itchy skin condition. Left untreated, hepatitis C can be fatal. ■

freedom now!

Mumia's case embodies the police terror and shootings on the streets, the false and frame-up prosecutions in the courts, the dehumanization and warehousing of mass incarceration, and the ultimate act of "legal" lynching in the racist death penalty. ■

# Bravo Colin Kaepernick!

By JEFF MACKLER

Jeff Mackler is Socialist Action's candidate for U.S. president in 2016.

San Francisco 49er superstar quarterback Colin Kaepernick roiled the racist establishment when he "took a knee" rather than stand and salute the American flag during the playing of the national anthem on Aug. 26 before the 49ers final pre-season game against the San Diego Chargers.

This was the fourth time, but the first in uniform during this year's pre-season games, that Kaepernick, who led the 49ers to the Super Bowl in the 2012 season and to the N.F.C. championship game in 2013, refused to stand.

Kaepernick, who is biracial, said during a post-game media conference, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses Black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way.

There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."

After recovering from several injuries and three surgeries since 2014, Kaepernick will likely be the 49ers' back-up quarterback as the 2016 season begins.

Kaepernick has been pilloried by racist bigots across the country but has also received wide support among 49er fans and social justice activists. He was joined in his refusal to stand by 49er teammate Eric Reid. The following week, Seattle Seahawk cornerback Jeremy Lane, similarly refused to stand during the National Anthem in order to "stand beside" Kaepernick.

Megan Rapinoe, one of America's most prominent female soccer players, also knelt during a National Women's Soccer League match a few days later stating that she was "disgusted by how Kaepernick has been treated" and would continue to kneel throughout the season."

In an article entitled, "Insulting Colin Kaepernick says more about our patri-



tism than his," the National Basketball Association's all-time leading scorer, Kareem Abdul Jabbar aptly noted: "What should horrify Americans is not Kaepernick's choice to remain seated during the national anthem, but that nearly 50 years after Ali was banned from boxing

for his stance and Tommie Smith and John Carlos's raised fists caused public ostracization and numerous death threats, we still need to call attention to the same racial inequities. Failure to fix this problem is what's really un-American here." ■





(Photo) Socialist Action correspondent TONY SAVINO reported on the condition of Haitian workers deported from the Dominican Republic:

“The conditions of the [refugee] camps are abysmal. People are literally starving to death. The Haitian government is criminally negligent. The occupation forces are not to be found.

“And now there is a perfect storm with the introduction of cholera in the camps; challenged immune systems from malnutrition, no sanitation and no place to wash one’s hands. The slow-motion genocide has gone from a crawl to a sprint.”

The UN says it will announce a plan to address the epidemic within two months.

Scientific studies concluded that in 2010 the UN’s Nepal contingent of the ongoing U.S./UN military occupation of Haiti had disregarded health practices and UN guidelines by dumping human feces into a tributary of the Artibonite River. The Artibonite runs through Haiti, providing irrigation and drinking water. Cholera, an easily curable disease that attacks the digestive system, spread like wildfire. The deaths in Haiti are comparable in number to all the deaths attributed to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014.

Cholera victims suffer from dehydration caused by severe diarrhea or vomiting, which can be overcome by supplying clean water—which was not provided by the well-funded military occupation. Scientists have found that the epidemic could have been prevented with a basic health kit for less than \$2000.

The most recent UN sanitary review by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the period between July 2012 and June 2014, long after the cholera outbreak, found so many sanitary problems at UN bases that it deemed them “unsatisfactory.” Cholera is once again on the increase since 2014.

“Victims are living in fear because the disease is still out there,” said Mario Joseph, a prominent Haitian human rights attorney who represents cholera victims, told protesters gathered in Port-au-Prince last month. Weekly sit-in protests demanding justice and reparation are ongoing in front of the US Embassy.

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## Haiti cholera outrage: UN guilty!

By MARTY GOODMAN

“The UN’s policy is morally unconscionable, legally indefensible, and politically self-defeating,” says a UN report on the unprecedented cholera epidemic that began Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. So far, cholera has claimed 10,000 lives—maybe more—and infected some 800,000. It is the worst cholera epidemic of modern times. UN policy in Haiti, orchestrated by US imperialism and racism, amounts to murder.

The as yet unfinished UN report was made public on

Aug. 8 and was authored by UN “rapporteur” Philip Alston, a poverty and human rights expert. For years, the UN, including its Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and UN agencies, had stonewalled and denied all responsibility for the catastrophe. Often, the UN cited Haitian “hygiene” to arrogantly deflect blame.

After the UN report was sent to Ban Ki-Moon, a spokesman for the Secretary General wrote, “Over the past year, the UN has become convinced that it needs to do much more regarding its own involvement in the initial outbreak and the suffering of those affected by cholera.”

## Puerto Ricans protest U.S.-imposed austerity

By ERNIE GOTTA

Protesters in San Juan, Puerto Rico, stood firm blocking the opening of a conference that would green light and deepen the imposed austerity on the island’s working class and oppressed. Activists successfully stopped the first meeting to discuss the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). This bill was cooked up in the halls of the U.S. Congress and is the most recent way Uncle Sam has found to exploit and extract wealth from Puerto Rico for the benefit of Wall Street.

Over 100 years ago, in 1898, Puerto Rico was invaded by the U.S. military

during the Spanish-American War and took the island from its old Spanish colonial rulers in the Treaty of Paris. By 1917 the new colonial masters passed the Jones Act, imposing U.S. citizenship on all Puerto Ricans.

Immediately following the passing of the Jones Act, nearly 20,000 Puerto Ricans were drafted into segregated units of the U.S. military during the First World War. This colonial arrangement subjected Puerto Ricans to U.S. federal law without any real representation and included tax exemptions for corporations based in the States.

Furthermore, the island was involuntarily transitioned from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy by

business owners seizing the moment to make greater profits.

Today, 45% of Puerto Ricans live in poverty and there is massive unemployment. In 2014, 80,000 left the island because of economic conditions. Forced into the diaspora, there has been a 9% drop in population. The PROMESA bill will be a continuation of past colonial policies and will guarantee a deepening of the economic crisis for millions of working and poor people. The bill will be implemented by a Washington-appointed financial control board and aims to lower the minimum wage for newly hired young workers from \$7.25 to \$4.25.

On Labor Day, protests were orga-

nized by workers and students at Walmart locations in Puerto Rico, where the company employs 14,000. About 55% of these workers are employed part-time for less than 30 hrs a week for \$9 an hour. A statement advertising the protests read, “Our lives are worth more than their profits! May the crisis be paid by the rich ones!”

The AFL-CIO, SEIU, AFSCME, and others representing more than 50,000 workers in Puerto Rico urged Congress to vote against PROMESA: “H.R. 5278 provides no economic stimulus, and in fact takes money out of the economy by reducing the minimum wage and overtime protections.”

Organizing efforts in solidarity with the struggle in Puerto Rico are picking

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## An innocent man on Death Row: Free Kevin Cooper!

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

The life of Kevin Cooper, an innocent man who has spent over 30 years on Death Row at San Quentin Prison, robbed of most of his adult life, lies in the balance. Though clearly innocent, he was convicted of a horrific murder of three members of a family and their child guest, and has exhausted all his legal appeals. Several judges have dissented from decisions upholding this death sentence, stating: “California may be about to execute an innocent man.”

How can the life of an innocent person, who has been framed and spent 30 years on death row for a crime he didn’t commit, be saved? And, saving his life, does *not* mean converting his death sentence to Life-Without-Parole, which many call “slow death row,” because the prisoner only leaves prison dead. Kevin Cooper must be freed, not executed, not kept in prison another day!

Norm Hile and David Alexander, Kevin’s lawyers obtained through the Innocence Project, submitted a clemency petition to California Governor Jerry Brown, in an effort to save his life.

California’s execution machinery has been halted for the past several years, but law enforcement is fighting to bring it back, placing it on the ballot with a deceptive name, “The Death Penalty Reform and Savings Initiative” (California proposition 66). If they succeed, Kevin is going to be executed, unless Governor Brown grants

the petition.

The petition is a remarkable document. It is a comprehensive explanation of everything that can go wrong to execute an innocent person.

Most important: the petition completely proves Kevin Cooper’s innocence. Twelve sections explain the planting of evidence, the “questionable” treatment of evidence, and the finding of new evidence. The petition gives seven examples of some of the innocent prisoners who were executed, including Cameron Todd Willingham, Carlos DeLuna, Ruben Cantu, Claude Howard Jones, and David Spence in Texas, Leo Jones in Florida, and Troy Davis in Georgia. It also discusses the growing number of people exonerated after serving long prison terms for crimes they did not commit.

The petition includes the book by Patrick O’Connor, “The Chino Hills Murders and the Framing of Kevin Cooper,” who also wrote an excellent book about the frame up of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Exhibits include the “Final Merits Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights,” part of the Organization of American States, which calls for a review of the trial and sentence.

Significantly, two former prosecutors, both who sent innocent men to death row (one who was executed in Texas, and one who spent 30 years on death row in Louisiana), have written to Governor Brown in support of clemency, both convinced of Kevin’s innocence. Letters of support have come as well from the American

BAR Association, the California Lawyers Association for Criminal Justice, Bryan Stevens, and Andrea D. Lyon, Dean of Valparaiso University School of Law and the first woman in the U.S. to defend a death penalty case as lead counsel.

Benjamin Crump, president of the National Bar Association, wrote Gov. Brown: “Black Lives Matter is not a mere slogan. It reflects many forms of racial discrimination that continue to infect our criminal justice system. The disproportionate percentage of wrongful convictions that affect black Americans, such as Mr. Cooper, is a disgrace at all levels and in all states. As a preeminent voice of African-American lawyers, the National Bar Association is especially concerned about this phenomenon. Mr. Cooper’s case is a leading example. ....”

Kevin Cooper, although suffering post-traumatic stress in the wake of coming within three hours and 42 minutes from lethal injection in 2004, became a passionate supporter of human rights and a cogent writer and speaker against the barbarity of capital punishment. He writes about how the “justice system,” especially capital punishment, is “the last vestige of slavery,” used only against the poor.

This website publishes many essays by Kevin Cooper: [www.savekevincooper.org](http://www.savekevincooper.org). The clemency petition can also be read there. And the Prison Radio website, [www.prisonradio.org](http://www.prisonradio.org), has audio recordings of Kevin reading his essays. ■



# Corbyn again set to beat Labour's right wing

By BARRY WEISLEDER

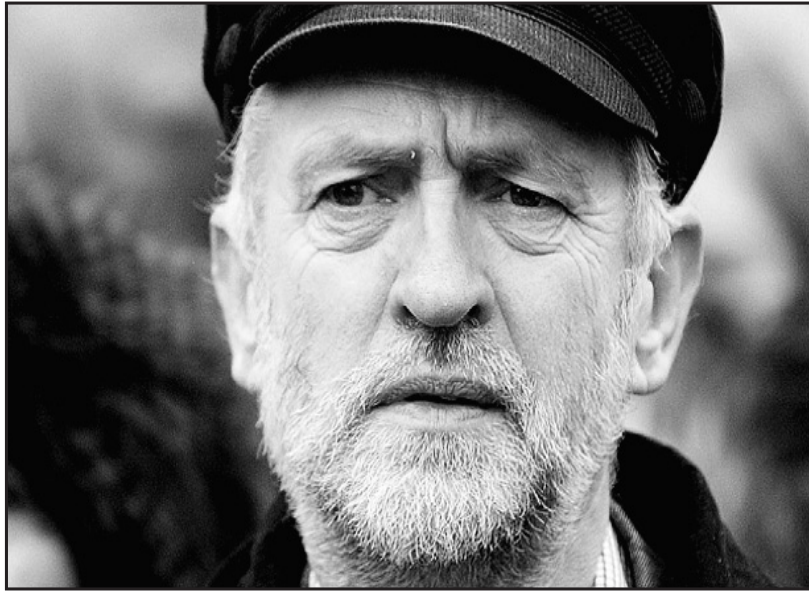
British Labour Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn is on track to retain his job and defeat the right-wing challenge to his leadership. The 67-year-old, self-described Marxist campaigns for re-nationalization of public utilities and railways, and for unilateral disarmament of nuclear weapons.

Corbyn beat out three other MPs to become Leader in October 2015, after attracting hundreds of thousands of new members to the party. Now he faces an all-members' vote. The result will be announced on Sept. 24. The election was triggered by non-confidence expressed by about 70 per cent of the Labour MPs just after the Brexit referendum in late June. They accused Corbyn of failing to campaign for the "Remain in the EU" side with sufficient enthusiasm.

Now it is clear that it is the majority of LP MPs who are out of touch with the rank and file. As Corbyn speaks to huge rallies across Britain, his remaining opponent, MP Owen Smith, is fading. Another adversary, MP Angela Eagle, pulled out of the race on July 19, and endorsed Smith.

In August, the British High Court ruled that people who joined the Labour Party after Jan. 12 must be permitted to vote for Leader. But Labour officials were granted a right of appeal. The appeals court (including judges appointed by former Prime Ministers David Cameron, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown) ruled with the Labour establishment, thus trimming the voters' list. This is a small setback for Corbyn, who continues to attract new members who seek a radical political alternative to the Tory coalition government, now led by Theresa May, and to the LP Blairites.

The validity of memberships is still in contention. One member was banned for listing on Facebook



(Left) British Labor Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn

that she "f-cking loves the foo fighters." Another was removed because she voted for the Green Party two years ago. Still, most observers agree that Corbyn has more than enough supporters to win convincingly.

This was evident in August when LP members elected a new National Executive Committee. All six pro-Corbyn, Momentum-backed candidates for the NEC won, thus making for a clean sweep. In addition, 83 per cent of Constituency Labour Parties (local electoral district LP associations) voted to re-nominate Corbyn for Leader. Smith obtained the support of only 11 per cent, slightly more than the number of CLPs that expressed no opinion.

In another development, Labour MP Sarah Champion, who was one of several who quit Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet right after the Brexit vote, has been

reinstated after she "unresigned" back to her old post. Others who walked out on Corbyn are now rumoured to be looking for a way back. The tide has turned. Even Social Democratic Party founder David Owen expressed support for Corbyn, opposing Owen Smith's EU-remain policy and praising Corbyn's stance on the National Health Service, stating that it is an improvement on LP policy that in recent years accepted partial privatization.

Supporters of the pro-war, austerity-friendly, ex-LP Leader and former Prime Minister Tony Blair have posted angry messages on the party's official Facebook page. Many threaten to stop their monthly automatic donations to the party. Their money may be missed more than their odious politics, but the swelling movement for a socialist, working-class agenda can easily make up for all of it.

Speculation is rife that a split in the parliamentary caucus and the party as whole is imminent, especially as numerous MPs who were behind the failing coup against Corbyn face de-selection in their constituencies prior to the next general election.

A split by the right wing, as occurred in 1981, will produce a rump that may eventually seek refuge in the Liberal Democratic Party, perhaps even in Conservative ranks. This prospect opens up the possibility that the LP under Corbyn will move further to the left, posing a significant challenge to capitalist austerity, and maybe more. ■

By BILL ONASCH

• **Open-ended nurse strike warning in Minnesota**—At our deadline for this issue, *Workday Minnesota* reported, "Nurses and supporters gathered Wednesday at a Minneapolis park for a solidarity rally before Monday's scheduled strike by 4800 nurses against five Allina Health facilities. The unfair labor practice strike is set to start at 7 a.m. Monday, Labor Day. Picketing will take place around Abbott Northwestern, Mercy, Phillips Eye Institute, United, and Unity hospitals as well as Allina's headquarters, the Minnesota Nurses Association said.

"This is an open-ended strike," said Rose Roach, MNA executive director. "These nurses have never felt more disrespected and more devalued by this employer in their entire careers. They are mad."

Nurses have been in talks with Allina Health since February. Hospital negotiators would not offer new proposals or address outstanding nurse proposals without demanding concessions on nurses' health insurance plans, the union said. Several unions, including Education Minnesota, AFSCME, SEIU, and the United Steelworkers, announced last week that they would picket with nurses in the event of a walkout."

• **Private school grad students win major NLRB ruling**—In a reversal of policy set by a Bush-era board, the NLRB has ruled that grad student teaching and research assistants at private schools meet the definition of employees under the Taft-Hartley Act covering most private-sector workers. This means they can organize unions and they can't legally be fired for taking collective action in their interests. It's estimated that this ruling gives rights to at least 100,000 TAs and RAs. The status of these grad workers in public schools depends on state labor laws.

• **Temp rights also expanded**—The Labor Board also fleshed out more details flowing from the landmark *Browning-Ferris* decision last year. Most attention was then focused on "shared responsibility" of fast-food corporations with their franchised operations. The new clarifications will also apply to com-

panies that contract much—sometimes all—of their workers from third-party temp labor outfits. For example, this gives workers in the giant logistics belts now surrounding many cities more legal rights—and leverage in dealing with their actual bosses who mostly have vulnerable consumer "brands."

• **A fashionable win**—*Labor Notes* reports, "The high turnover in retail makes organizing a huge challenge. But a thousand workers at eight Zara stores in Manhattan beat the odds and unionized. It's a first for Zara workers in the U.S. The Spanish-owned fashion outlet had agreed to recognize the union after a majority of workers signed cards, a milestone they reached in July.

They'll be members of Retail Workers (RWDSU) Local 1102. Their win relied on international solidarity, in the form of an agreement between the retailer's parent company and a global union. But equally crucial was the help of a New York City worker center, the Retail Action Project (RAP), that specializes in building workers' skills, including action on the job."

• **Labor "friend" shoots down \$15 in Minneapolis**—When labor-backed 15 Now and allies collected 20,000 signatures to put a \$15 minimum wage charter amendment on the November ballot, they encountered more opposition than just the Chamber of Commerce. Democratic Mayor Betsy Hodges argued that the city didn't have authority for such a measure under state law. After her objection was rejected by a Hennepin County judge, the city legal department found a friendly black robe on the state Supreme Court to prevent the proposal's going to voters. Polling indicated this boost in wages for 100,000 working poor would have won 2-1.

• **St. Paul sick leave ordinance delayed**—In the other Twin City, an earned sick and safe time ordinance appears headed for council approval after some delay in editing language. It's modeled on laws recently adopted by about 25 cities—including Minneapolis. It would

require all St. Paul employers to provide an hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked—with a 48 hour annual cap. Such modest local reforms have arisen because the USA is the only major industrial nation without national legislation covering all workers. It would benefit 70,000 St. Paul workers who currently have no paid sick time. A final vote was expected Sept. 7.

• **It's in the bag**—After being certified by the NLRB, over 200 full-time workers at a Virginia plant producing all Lipton products sold in the U.S. are now part of

the United Food & Commercial Workers.

• **No hang-up at AT&T**—With the Verizon strike fresh in everyone's mind, the Communication Workers of America peacefully settled a complicated bargaining of four regional agreements covering 42,000 AT&T Mobility workers benefits. (Wages and conditions are negotiated separately, coming up next in two years.) Defying the current bargaining trends, most workers will get at least a modest reduction in health insurance costs. CWA is in a stronger position in non-landline operations than at Verizon because of AT&T's acquisition of already unionized Cingular several years ago. ■

*If you have labor news that would be appropriate for this column, please contact billonasch@kclabor.org*

## LABOR BRIEFING

## ... Cholera in Haiti

(continued from page 4)

Attorney Joseph is part of a class suit launched on behalf of 2000 cholera victims and survivors filed in 2013 by the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), headquartered in Boston. On Aug. 18, responding to the IJDH suit, the U. S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the United Nations' "immunity" claims.

The IJDH now has 90 days to decide whether to seek an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court. Said Brian Concannon, Jr. Esq., executive director of IJDH, "Our goal has always been to secure remedies for victims, whether in or out of court and we will keep working through all available forums until that occurs." Concannon added, "We want results on the ground: lives saved, and people compensated."

In the courtroom, the Obama administration took the side of the UN's claims of so-called "immunity." In fact, UN officials asked Obama's Justice Department to argue in court for legal immunity, which it did in July.

Haiti's epidemic followed on the heels of the tragic 2010 earthquake

centered in the Port-au-Prince capital, which killed over 200,000 Haitians, injured hundreds of thousands, and displaced 1.5 million. The human cost was magnified by decades of U.S. support to one corrupt and brutal regime after another, resulting in appalling housing, unemployment, a lack of health care, and generalized misery.

The current military occupation is one of many. In 2010, President Barack Obama ordered a 20,000-strong U.S. military-led occupation, using the UN as a fig leaf, to re-invade Haiti following the earthquake. "Humanitarian" concerns were cited. Translation: Reconstruct Haiti according to a World Bank, neo-liberal sweatshop agenda.

Socialists say that the UN is merely a coalition of capitalist and imperialist nations. Liberal Senator Bernie Sanders and Green Party candidate Jill Stein have both called for "multinational" interventions, when necessary. Haiti proves them dead wrong.

Socialists demand, "U.S./UN out of Haiti!" As Cuban revolutionary leader Commander Fidel Castro has said: "In an oppressed country, even the dead cannot rest in peace." ■



# Chilean coup: The first 9/11



By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

Sept. 11, 2016, marks the 43rd anniversary of the violent 1973 coup in Chile against the elected left popular front government of Salvador Allende. Like the ancient Roman god Janus, imperialism has two faces. One face is political, the other economic. We must, if we wish to change the world, understand both faces. The first 9/11, as the coup is sometimes called now in Chile, provides us a glimpse of the political face of imperialism.

Chile is one of the most economically developed countries in Latin America and has been a major supplier of crucial natural resources for the capitalist world system for over 200 years—first guano in the 1800s, used for fertilizer, and later copper in the 1900s. Today, it is still the leading source of copper in the world as well as the second leading source of lithium. In addition, Chile is a major supplier of fruit, wine, and salmon to the world market.

As capitalism transformed the earlier latifundio system (large landed estates producing food for local markets) and exploited the mineral wealth of the country, a strong working class arose. The working class was represented by a mass-based Socialist Party (founded in 1933), and a mass-based Communist Party (founded in 1922) that later aligned itself with the Stalinist leadership of the USSR.

A number of reforms were carried out in the 1960s under Christian Democratic presidents, but these reforms did not satisfy the growing working class. In 1970, Unidad Popular, a coalition of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party—along with the moderately leftist Radical Party and other forces—won the presidency in a three-way race that split the vote between the ruling-class parties, the Christian Democrats and the right-wing National Party. The candidate for the Unidad Popular coalition was Dr. Salvador Allende. Allende represented the left wing of the Socialist Party and had served for many years as a senator in the Chilean congress, where he was known as a strong defender (and participant) in strikes and unionization drives. Unidad Popular won 36% of the vote.

Unidad Popular sought a path to socialism within the rule of law, relying on the electoral process, as well as mass actions such as strikes, organizing drives, and marches. After Allende's election in 1970, workers and peasants began to take more direct action, expropriating large estates and factories. Unidad Popular nationalized the large mines, transformed the education system, and carried out a massive land reform. An immediate impact was that real wages increased by over 20% in 1970-71; real minimum wages for blue-collar workers increased by over 50%.

## The Empire strikes back

U.S. intervention in Chile was in line with Washington's long-standing policy in the areas of the world considered under "our," meaning the U.S. imperialist, sphere of influence. When possible, the U.S. imperialists would rule through elected pro-capitalist govern-

## 43 years ago — CIA aided the Chilean military in overthrowing the elected government of Salvador Allende.

ments, but when necessary, the U.S. would install pro-capitalist dictatorships or authoritarian regimes. The U.S. would invade if needed or if convenient (as it did in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama) or it would use covert operations, as it did in Guatemala in 1954. The U.S. turned to the national armies of the various client states, whose officers had been trained in the U.S. or at the School of the Americas (originally located in Panama) as an additional tool of control.

Even before the 1970 election, the U.S. used covert operations to prevent a Unidad Popular victory. With the victory of Allende, the U.S. launched a program to prevent his inauguration, and later, it used the CIA to destroy the economy and to create the conditions for a coup. But the economic damage caused by the U.S. was still not enough to alter the congressional elections of 1972. Unidad Popular increased its number of seats by eight, strengthening its position in congress, but it fell short of an absolute majority.

Immediately afterwards, Nixon convened and attended a meeting of the National Security Council, chaired by Henry Kissinger, and adopted National Security Decision Memorandum 93, a plan for additional covert operations and economic warfare, along with a push for a military coup. The plan eventually included the blueprints and development of a secret police force and a plan to restructure the Chilean economy along neoliberal lines.

## The coup

The coup was preceded by a series of crises, including a CIA-supported bosses' strike in October 1972. This strike included small business owners, truckers, and medical doctors and increasing opposition from within the military. The truckers' strike created widespread food shortages and hardships. At the same time, CIA-supported right-wing paramilitary groups, carried out extensive economic sabotage. Finally, opposition within the Chilean military increased. Allende tried to control this opposition by bringing military officers into his cabinet.

The planning for the coup accelerated in 1972 after NSDM 93. Pinochet was not directly involved but also did nothing to prevent or forestall the coup. Ironically, given that he later emerged as the Jefe Supremo (Supreme Ruler), Pinochet was not "our man in Chile." That distinction went to the commander of the Chilean air force, General Gustavo Leigh, and the commander of the navy, Admiral Jose Toribio Mereno.

The coup started in the early morning of Sept. 11. The navy revolted first and seized control of Valparaiso (where the navy high-command is based). The army and air force soon followed by surrounding and attacking the Palacio de la Moneda, the Chilean White House located in the heart of Santiago.

The military selected Sept. 11 in order to prevent Allende from announcing a national plebiscite on his government, a measure he hoped would forestall a civil war or military coup. Allende planned on resigning if he lost the plebiscite. Allende killed himself shortly after addressing the nation for the last time in order to prevent his capture by the military. After destroying much of the Palacio de la Moneda, the military took control of the building and of the entire government.

The junta quickly acted to reverse all of the progressive measures taken by the Unidad Popular government and to implement an economic "reform package." The economic measures were contained in a document called "the brick" (el ladrillo) for its size—over 500 manuscript pages. The brick was developed by conservative economists working for the CIA.

Pinochet soon emerged as the key figure in the junta, in part because of his creation and direct control of a new secret police force, La DINA, made up of members from all the military services, CIA operatives, and members of the paramilitary groups. The structure and training of DINA was provided by the CIA, allowing Pinochet to create it quickly.

DINA soon carried out a series of brutal killings and tortures, including of military officers who did not support the coup. By the end of 1973, over 1823 political leaders and activists had been killed. The killings were not random but often used CIA kill lists of leading figures prepared before the coup. Tens of thousands were held as political prisoners or tortured, while hundreds of thousands fled to exile or were forced to leave.

## The struggle against the dictatorship

Both the Socialist Party of Chile and the Communist Party of Chile talked of armed resistance to a military coup. While a few plans were made, they were poorly conceived, and the workers' organizations were given no arms to resist the coup either before or immediately after Sept. 11, 1973. Both political parties were shattered by the repression but had somewhat recovered by the early 1980s, when they started organizing within Chile, creating an underground resistance.

The Socialist Party opted for protest in coalition with the Christian Democrats and other groups who had also been repressed by Pinochet. In the late 1980s, the Socialists moved more and more to "legal" and "constitutional" methods to counter the Pinochet regime.

Around 1977, the Communist Party began to advocate armed resistance, creating an armed wing, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR in its Spanish acronym). The FPMR's most dramatic act was the failed assassination attempt on Pinochet in September 1986. The FPMR later broke from the CP, and most of its members were captured and killed. The sabotage and killings carried out by the FPMR had little effect on the regime other than to increase the political repression. In addition, a third group that had given support to the Allende government, the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), attempted some armed actions against the Pinochet regime.

In 1988, the opposition succeeded in forcing a national plebiscite on the dictatorship. The "no" vote won by 54.7% and thus forced a transition to a managed "democracy," with Pinochet remaining commander in chief of the armed forces and a senator for life. The constitution was highly restrictive, although some of the most undemocratic provisions were later removed. To this day, Chile remains one of the most neo-liberal capitalist states in the world, with a high level of privatization in all sectors. In recent years, the Socialist and Communist parties have returned to government, sharing power with the Christian Democrats and other pro-capitalist, "center-left," and reformist parties.

We must remember the experience in Chile, the lessons both positive and negative, as we struggle for a better world. ■



# Bill McKibben: 'Mobilize like in WW II'

By BILL ONASCH

*"Our only hope is to mobilize like we did in WWII."*

This quote is from the title of an article by Bill McKibben in the *New Republic*. First through his books and articles, and increasingly through promotion of demonstrations and civil disobedience, McKibben has earned recognition as the most prominent American environmentalist. Among his achievements was his leading role in the successful fight to stop construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. With the help of tech-savvy Millennials, he initiated 350.org, utilizing the power of the internet and "social media" to create a global network of information and coordination linking hundreds of thousands of climate activists.

The views McKibben expresses in his latest article are an important advance for him and will likely stimulate interest and debate about a strategy that is vital to the very future of humanity. McKibben writes, "It's not that global warming is *like* a world war. It *is* a world war. And we are losing."

The current headlines he cites about "natural" disasters across the world and in our own country, supplemented with excerpts from scientific studies, establish a *prima facie* case to support his assertion. This prize-winning author emphasizes his declaration of war is more than an attention grabbing metaphor,

"By most of the ways we measure wars, climate change is the real deal: Carbon and methane are seizing physical territory, sowing havoc and panic, racking up casualties, and even destabilizing governments. ... Its first victims, ironically, are those who have done the least to cause the crisis. But it's a world war aimed at us all. And if we lose, we will be as decimated and helpless as the losers in every conflict—except that this time, there will be no winners, and no end to the planetwide occupation that follows.

"The question is not, are we in a world war? The question is, will we fight back? And if we do, can we actually defeat an enemy as powerful and inexorable as the laws of physics?"

He immediately begins to reply, "To answer those questions—to assess, honestly and objectively, our odds of victory in this new world war—we must look to the last one. ... Defeating the Nazis required more than brave soldiers. It required a wholesale industrial retooling."

McKibben, who is a pacifist and doesn't have a class perspective, more or less accepts the narrative we are all taught in school and pop culture that World War II was a battle between freedom and evil totalitarianism—a yarn much flawed, to say the least. But "wholesale industrial retooling" was key to the victory of the Allies over the Axis—and a similar emergency restructuring is likely the last chance for defeating global warming. We can't and don't need to defy the laws of physics. But, in my view—though not in the other Bill's—we can and must replace the laws of the global capitalist market.

McKibben relates some important findings of scientists who have taken the initiative to calculate both what it would take to stop climate change and whether we have the required material and other resources to do the job. The most advanced and remarkably detailed assessments have been done by the Atmosphere and Energy Program at Stanford University chaired by Mark Z. Jacobson. They have concluded that we have enough of everything needed to implement near total replacement of fossil fuels with existing clean, renewable energy technology before the



**'Climate change ... is a world war aimed at all of us.' — Bill McKibben**

(Above) During World War II, millions of women and men were mobilized into the workforce.

present crisis becomes irreversible disaster.

If we have the science, technology, and material means to win this war, then why are we still losing? McKibben's failure to recognize the role of classes in society prevents him from drawing some essential conclusions. Through a combination of education and protest movements, he seeks to convince the present decision makers in government and the economy to do the right thing.

But those in charge are selected by the ruling class. The capitalists became the ruling class through the Industrial Revolution they led. In this country they also had to fight a bloody Civil War to eliminate their slaveholder competition. And their Industrial Revolution, first fueled by coal, later adding oil and natural gas to the mix, also launched global warming.

Swedish scientists postulated global warming caused by what we now call greenhouse gases in the 19th century—though they thought it would take centuries to develop. Shortly after World War II, oil company scientists became concerned not only about smog-producing car exhausts but possible long-range damage from carbon emissions accumulating in the atmosphere.

In 1964, government scientists briefed President Johnson on the basics of global warming. LBJ told them to keep their theories to themselves and soon proceeded to launch the Vietnam War. His former Air Force Chief of Staff advocated bombing Vietnam back to the Stone Age—and American jet fighters and bombers, one piloted by Lt. Commander John McCain, dropped more tons of bombs on that small country than were used by all sides throughout World War II.

At least the inner sanctum of the class that rules were well aware of their climate-wrecking ways long before science teachers had even heard the term global warming. Of course, destruction of our biosphere is not their goal. But they see that as a collateral danger for future generations. In the here and now, fossil fuels and the industries that depend on them are the linchpin of the global economy that has made them the richest elite in history. Rational arguments for change are not persuasive. Like Simpleton in the German fairy tale, they will never voluntarily surrender their Golden Goose, to which so many have become stuck—even if in the end we all get our goose cooked.

While McKibben likely understands how ruthless some capitalists may be, he has been a slow learner about those who serve them in government—and as he acknowledges, it's only governments that can mobilize on the scale needed.

Much like the motivational psychology that many apply to children, McKibben has in the past urged us to thank President Obama for the watery soup sold by the White House as nourishing a global plan to reduce carbon emissions. Just a few weeks ago, McKibben was Bernie Sanders' point person on climate in the Democrat Platform negotiations.

In the early stages of dealing with the veto-happy Clinton team, he was like a vegan finally observing how sausage is made. But then he writes, "To my surprise, things changed a couple weeks later, when the final deliberations over the Democratic platform were held in Orlando. While Clinton's negotiators still wouldn't support a ban on fracking or a carbon tax, they did agree we needed to 'price' carbon, that wind and sun should be given priority over natural gas, and that any federal policy that worsened global warming should be rejected.

"Maybe it was polls showing that Bernie voters—especially young ones—have been slow to sign onto the Clinton campaign. Maybe the hottest June in American history had opened some minds. But you could, if you squinted, create a hopeful scenario."

And later he adds, "...the Democratic platform asserts, 'We are committed to a national mobilization, and to leading a global effort to mobilize nations to address this threat on a scale not seen since World War II.' The next president doesn't have to wait for a climate equivalent of Pearl Harbor to galvanize Congress."

I'm willing to give McKibben the benefit of the doubt on being naive, not cynical. Major party platforms are hardly a line of march to secure objectives over the next four years. They are mostly bait-and-switch—or bait-and-forget—to lure certain voter groups. The enhanced climate plank in the Democrat Platform is calculated to draw in millions of reluctant Sanders supporters who might otherwise vote for the Greens or stay home on Election Day. It wasn't a hostile Congress that led to President Obama's quashing a promising agreement at the Copenhagen Climate Summit during his first year in office, with his party controlling both houses of Congress.

To use an idiom familiar to The Donald—there's fat chance of a climate-friendly Trump administration. There is only a slim chance of *any* part of the Democrat climate program being seriously pursued by a President Clinton.

To get the wartime mobilization that McKibben ably advocates will require a change in which class rules. The dominance of the bosses and bankers who got us into this war—and who prevent the needed counter-attack—must be replaced with a government of and for the working-class majority. That's the only force with both the class interest and the economic and social power to get the job done.

## ... Dakota

(continued from page 1)

Honduras; he has been meeting with the Hillary Clinton-installed president of Honduras about potential projects.

Bloomberg quotes Warren as acknowledging the converse relationship between his personal success and what is good for the rest of us: "the most wealth I've ever made is during the dark times."

The idea that land needs to be protected is perceived as a threat. The idea that water needs to be protected is perceived as a threat. Profits are threatened by people's right to breathable air and drinkable water. This is capitalism in the 21st century. ■



# Socialist Action convention sets ambitious goals

Tony Savino / Socialist Action



The Seventeenth National Convention of Socialist Action was held Aug. 19-21 in Kansas City, Mo. The convention was preceded by the party's traditional three-month pre-convention discussion period, which included some 50 written contributions from SA members.

Delegates from across the country presented reports of their work in many movements—including struggles against global warming and for climate justice, Black Lives Matter and ending racist cop violence, women's and LGBT rights, the \$15 minimum wage, the antiwar movement, and in the trade unions.

A project that will take center stage in the next few months is the Socialist Action election campaign of Jeff Mackler for U.S. president and Karen Schraufnagel for vice president. Both candidates will be speaking in some 20 U.S. cities during the lead-up to the elections. Socialist Action branches and at-large areas will organize distributions of campaign material at political meetings, transit stops, and door-to-door in working-class neighborhoods.

Jeff Mackler, who noted Socialist Action's recruitment of Black and Latino youth and its expansion to a number of cities, summed up what is at stake in the 2016 elections: "There is no doubt that the ruling class is well aware of the mounting discontent bubbling up in broad sectors of the population—and especially among youth and in the working class and oppressed nationalities more generally. Both the Clinton and Trump campaigns are aimed in different ways at channeling the disgust over declining opportunities

for decent jobs, capitalist austerity, institutionalized racism, sexism, environmental destruction, and more back into safe channels. The two-party charade, in which voters are cajoled into supporting the 'lesser evil,' is the major device that this country's rulers use at election time to divert and dilute this discontent.

"Our job is to present a working-class alternative and to pose the most important question of all: the need for working people to reject capitalist politics and politicians and rely on themselves politically. The working class and its allies among the oppressed, acting in their own interests, have the power to win real and substantial victories."

The convention opened with discussion that highlighted some of the major aspects of the political situation around the world. The Political Resolution approved by convention delegates described the situation this way: "Eight years into the world capitalist crisis—the Great Depression of the modern era—no nation on earth can boast anything resembling a recovery. Stagnation and continued decline are the norm the world over, with the broad imposition of austerity measures taking an ever-increasing toll on the working masses and oppressed, while imperialist wars for domination and plunder in all their manifestations proceed seemingly without end on every continent."

At the same time, the report pointed to opportunities in the emergence of important struggles of working people and minority communities against many aspects of capitalist oppression. It listed, for example:

- The fight against increasingly harsh austerity and

union-busting attacks on U.S. workers, reflected in the strike of Verizon workers, the on-going fight around a new Chicago Teachers Union contract, and other struggles.

- The battles of low-wage workers for a \$15 minimum wage and a union.

- The fight against racist cop murders and the growing strength of the Movement for Black Lives and other anti-racist groups and coalitions emerging in Black and other communities of oppressed peoples.

- The growing struggle against climate change and for a quick and just transition to 100% renewable sources of energy—a struggle that includes the demand for an immediate ban on fracking.

- The movement against deportations and extending the rights of immigrant workers.

Socialist Action supports and participates in all of these struggles and plans to deepen involvement in the coming year.

In discussion on the Organizational Report, the delegates outlined plans for this fall and beyond. A series of tasks were outlined that project Socialist Action "outward" towards heightened engagement with radicalizing workers and students engaged in struggle against capitalist oppression. The report and discussion encouraged SA members to obtain unionized jobs in the industrial workforce where possible.

The convention approved a National Sales Drive designed to make sales of the paper a central part of the activity of every SA branch and at-large area. Also approved was an effort to improve the newspaper's content and quality by adding staff and encouraging local areas to make frequent contributions that feature involvement of SA members in local struggles. An important national fund drive of \$25,000 was also planned.

In regard to Socialist Action's antiwar work, discussion was devoted to evaluating the course of the war in Syria. The convention re-affirmed Socialist Action's major positions adopted over the past several years and summarized as follows in an article in the January 2016 issue of *Socialist Action* newspaper:

"In the wake of virtually all U.S. Middle East wars over the past decade and longer, 'failed states' have been the inevitable outcome. In Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan, death and destruction and endless inter-ethnic wars waged by competing tribal-based reactionary groups are accompanied by almost unbelievable human suffering—poverty, disease and starvation—U.S. imperialism's trademark and legacy for whom-ever it conquers.

"Again, unconditional support to the right of self-determination of all oppressed nations, free from all imperialist intervention in all its manifestations, is a central and strategic component of revolutionary socialist politics. Having affirmed this fundamental

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## Hear the Socialist Action candidates!

**Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action's candidate for U.S. president, will participate in a series of panel discussions and debates with a broad range of political activists. For details call: 510-268-9429 or contact [socialistaction@lmi.net](mailto:socialistaction@lmi.net).**

- Sunday, Sept. 11, 10:30 a.m., Niebyl Proctor Library, 6501 Telegraph Ave, Oakland, CA 94609

- Friday, Sept. 16, Pearl Studios, 500 8th Ave., New York City, 10018, [Spewnyc@aol.com](mailto:Spewnyc@aol.com) or call 212-781-5157

- Sunday, Sept. 18, 2 p.m., Community Room (2nd floor), Albany Public Library, 161 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12210, 518-281-1968

- Monday, Sept. 19, 7 p.m., Encuentro 5, 9 Hamilton Pl. Suite 2a, Boston, MA 02108 (near Park St. Station)

- Wednesday, Sept. 21, 7 pm, DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality), 340 Lockwood St., Providence, RI 02907

- Thursday, Sept. 22, 7 p.m., Central Connecticut State University, Camp Room, Student Center, New Britain, Conn.

- Sunday, Sept. 25, 2 p.m., William Way LGBT Center, 1315 Spruce St., Philadelphia

**Karen Schraufnagel, Socialist Action's candidate for vice president, will speak:**

- Friday, Oct. 14, DePaul University Loop Campus, 333 S. State St., Rm. C108, Chicago

## Socialist activist Lillian Pollak dies at 101

By MARTY GOODMAN

Lifelong revolutionary Lillian Pollak was buried on Aug. 10 surrounded by family, friends, and comrades in the Wellwood Cemetery in Farmingdale, Long Island. She was 101 years old.

Lillian suffered a stroke on Aug. 1. She was in a coma ever since. It was her written wish that she not be kept alive by drugs or artificial respiration should such a situation occur.

Lillian was one of the few remaining radicals to have been alive during the 1917 Russian Revolution. She became active in radical politics at age 16, joined the Communist Party, and later joined the Trotskyist movement—then within the Communist League of America, and after 1938, the Socialist Workers Party. For a few years, Lillian was a member of Socialist Action.

Lillian was an activist until the end. She participated with Women in Black, a group in solidarity with the struggle for Palestinian rights, in their weekly vigils in Union Square. She often sang with "The Raging Grannies," an antiwar, anti-racist choir, which performed at innumerable protests

and leftist events in New York City. Only two months before her death, Lillian attended a Socialist Action film showing on South Africa, and stopped by our book table to discuss socialist ideas and buy books.

Lillian and her comrades visited Leon Trotsky in Mexico, which was described in her semi-autobiographical novel, "The Sweetest Dream," published in 2008.

"The Sweetest Dream" was the story of her life and loves in the 1930s, and also describes life in the New York revolutionary movement during that period. The book cover shows Leon Trotsky in the rear with Lillian below and to the right in the photo. On the far left is Natalya Sedova, Trotsky's wife. The book can be purchased on Amazon.com. If you can, buy the later version for best readability.

For more about Lillian, go to YouTube and enter Lillian Pollak, which lists her reading her poem on occupied Gaza, "Cousin, do not come." YouTube also features interviews with Lillian. A film is now being made in her honor. We will all miss her terribly. Lillian's favorite Trotsky quote was, "Life is beautiful ... live it to the fullest." ■



By BILL ONASCH

*Below are major portions of the trade-union report that Bill Onasch presented to the Socialist Action National Convention on Aug. 20 in Kansas City, Mo.*

We're gathered here in the hometown—or at least home metropolitan area—of James P. Cannon. It's common to personify important historical trends. Without a trace of hero worship, we consider ourselves to be in continuity with the Cannon current established first in the Communist Party, and later as a founder of American Trotskyism, and still later playing a prominent role in launching our world party, the Fourth International.

In addition to these programmatic and organizational landmarks, Cannon, who began his service in the workers movement as a self-described foot-loose organizer in the IWW, knew a thing or two about unions. He considered our work in the only class-based mass organizations in this country to be essential to building a party primarily proletarian in composition, leadership, and orientation—a transition belt bringing our transitional program in to living day-to-day struggles.

But I understand that my task this morning is not biographical. It is a supplemental report to the Political Resolution about the state of the unions and our work in them today.

Younger comrades have mostly seen a labor movement in decline, if not crisis. We are constantly reminded that union membership numbers and density have plummeted. There are fewer strikes, and strike victories have become as rare as steak tartare. As we have noted, although the union bureaucracy is far from monolithic, the mainstream seeks “partnership” with the bosses and doesn't hesitate to sell out the next generation through tiered give-backs.

But this is not the first time American unions have faced such a dismal conjuncture. Certainly, conditions were no better during the Depression year of 1934 when Minneapolis Trotskyists led what was aptly titled in an excellent film “Labor's Turning Point”—the great Teamsters strikes well chronicled in books by Farrell Dobbs, and new material recently published by Cannon's biographer, the Canadian socialist Brian Palmer.

We don't see anything so imminently transforming today. But a Socialist Action National Committee discussion last September did note some promising stirrings and decided to expand coverage of labor actions in our press. Even more has happened since.

#### For 15 and a union!

Perhaps the most promising development came from a most unexpected source—the Service Employees International Union. Andy Stern would have been my pick for most loathsome top union bureaucrat during his reign at SEIU for far more reasons than I have time to enumerate. They include sweetheart deals that the Mob would envy. He also engineered an unprincipled split in the AFL-CIO, then headed by his predecessor and mentor. But then Andy retired, with an adequate pension, in order to serve President Obama on a blue-ribbon commission tasked to slash Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—a betrayal that failed only because congressional Republicans wouldn't touch anything coming from Obama.

Even before that failed attempted backstabbing, Stern was dissed by the SEIU executive board he could no longer bully. They rejected his designated successor and instead replaced him with Mary Kay Henry. It turned out that sister Henry was a bit of a throw-back to what was once a bigger current in movement politics—a Catholic radical. She's a great admirer of Pope Francis, who throws pizza parties for the homeless and speaks out on climate change. But she diverged from Church doctrine by becoming a founder of SEIU's Lavender Caucus, advocating the interests of LGBT workers.

For several years, SEIU has promoted a mass movement of fast-food workers around the demand for a \$15 minimum wage—“15 and a union.” Not since the CIO upsurge in the 1930s has a major union paid any attention to the working poor. To their credit, SEIU went all in, and has spent tens of millions of dollars and countless hours of staff time on this effort. The movement has grown far beyond anyone's expectations. Along the way, other groups of low-wage workers—home care, airport service, child care, even adjunct college professors—have been embraced.

Last weekend saw a new milestone in the progress of the movement for 15 and a union with the Richmond, Va., convention and mass march involving thousands from around the country. Though workers of all colors are involved, African Americans are clearly the majority, with a strong representation of Latino workers as well. The Richmond events raised slogans of the fledgling Black Lives Matter movement

# Trade union report to the Socialist Action convention

Sam Mastriano / Socialist Action



and the demands of immigrant workers.

SEIU is also one of the unions most active around combating climate change. Others include National Nurses United, UNITE HERE, UE, and the Amalgamated Transit Union. Most are affiliated with the Labor Network for Sustainability and/or the global Trade Unions for Energy Democracy. Both of those coalitions are strong advocates of Just Transition, and the TUED calls for socializing all energy and restructuring and operating the industries under worker management.

Last September, at the time of our discussion in Socialist Action's National Committee, the UAW was in the midst of negotiating national contracts with the Big Three automakers, covering 140,000 workers. Back in the day, this bargaining helped set a pattern for improvements for other industrial workers. But, especially since the transformative 2007 sell-out agreements, they have been utilized by the bosses to secure givebacks from nearly all unions.

Last year had some unpleasant surprises for the bureaucrats and their management “partners.” They had picked Fiat-Chrysler—the weakest of the three—for the lead negotiations. For the first time in decades, however, a tentative agreement recommended by the bureaucracy was rejected by Chrysler workers. This further emboldened the ranks at GM and Ford. The Kansas City-area Ford plant—the second biggest—voted to strike, ostensibly over local conditions.

Fiat agreed to rob Peter to pay Paul by rearranging the same money package, and with the use of scare tactics, their UAW partners managed to sell a second vote. More was won, including phasing out the hated divisive two-tier wage rate for full-time workers. Even then, the vote at Ford was razor thin. The lack of any substantial organized national union opposition allowed the bureaucracy to escape only bruised and embarrassed, but not bloody.

#### The Verizon strike

I wrote in our paper about the Verizon strike: “Strikes are the most basic and common expressions of clashes between workers and employers. Cartoonists often illustrate these fights as heavyweight boxers slugging it out in the ring. Using that metaphor, there are few knockouts. Most winners and losers are usually determined on points for the best punches and most adept footwork. Against the pre-match odds, most of the bosses' media, as well as union officials, and left observers, award the 39,000 Verizon workers who dared to strike the telecommunications giant a win on points.”

The unions had recognized that Verizon's “brand” was vulnerable in the highly competitive nationwide wireless market. Not only were rallies of thousands of strikers and supporters held in the numerous major cities in the strike's East Coast jurisdiction; CWA, along with Jobs with Justice and other allies, held informational pickets at Verizon retail stores across the country.

When another Socialist Action supporter and I showed up at a Kansas City solidarity event in a ma-

yor shopping center we wore our Labor Party caps. This stimulated some good, friendly discussion with CWA Bernie Sanders supporters about the need for workers to have a party of our own.

When the White House finally reluctantly intervened in the strike, with the Secretary of Labor personally mediating, it was mainly to save face for Verizon. Both Clinton and Sanders felt obliged to make photo-op appearances on the picket lines. The old taboo against major strikes in a presidential election year was successfully defied.

The final deal was not completely concession-free. The unions had agreed before the strike to contribute more toward their health insurance. But they beat back most of the onerous demands in the company's last, best final offer. The company dropped the demand for technicians to accept out-of-town temporary transfers for up to two months and pledged not to offshore more work and to instead create 1500 new call center jobs. A first contract beachhead in wireless retail stores was established. Verizon withdrew their previously insisted pension cap, and a 10+ percent wage increase over the four-year contract was won. That's why it was the strikers—and all class-conscious workers—who were doing a victory dance at the end. ■

## ... Puerto Rico

(continued from page 4)

up. The Connecticut branch of Socialist Action will fly in a member of the Juventud Hostosiana who has been active in the PROMESA protests for the one-day socialist conference at Central Connecticut State University on Oct. 22.

Melisa Vargas Echevarria, a feminist and climate justice activist from the Working Peoples Party in Puerto Rico, will be on a quick tour of the Northeast United States. Echevarria is the spokesperson and representative for the Puerto Rican activists camping in front of the U.S. Federal Court in San Juan, in response to PROMESA. She is also a member of a coalition that seeks the protection of the environment and opposes the privatization of the island's beaches for the benefit of hotel chains like Marriot and Hilton.

We urge all to stand in opposition to PROMESA and join us at these upcoming events:

- A Dialogue with Melisa Vargas Echevarria, Thursday, Sept. 15, 5:30 p.m., at Arise for Social Justice, 467 State St, Springfield, Mass.
- Puerto Rican Parade, Sept. 18, assemble at 10 a.m., Main Street and Wason Ave (north end), Springfield, Mass. ■



# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

## Green Party puts BDS on political agenda

By BARRY WEISLEDER

When the convention of the Green Party of Canada adopted a resolution in early August that advocates Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against the State of Israel, it simultaneously put BDS on the mainstream Canadian political agenda, and applied enormous pressure on the labour-based New Democratic Party to do the same.

The Leader and sole Green Party (GP) member of Parliament, Elizabeth May, immediately threatened to resign over the motion. But when she saw that her attempt at blackmail wouldn't kill the policy, she pivoted—instead asking her party to re-visit the motion, with a view towards rescinding it eventually.

May's maneuvers, seeking to appease the Canadian corporate and political elite, reveal much about the bourgeois, undemocratic nature of the GP and its leadership.

Ironically, the image of the GP on BDS is rather overblown. The approved resolution itself is quite narrow and limited. It targets only "those sectors of Israel's economy and society which profit from the ongoing occupation" of the West Bank, and only "until such time as Israel implements a permanent ban on further settlement construction ... and enters into good faith negotiations with representatives of the Palestinian people for the purpose of establishing a viable, contiguous, and truly sovereign Palestinian state."

In other words, it advocates a two-state, bantustan-type "solution," in which some Palestinians would be prisoners inside a weak, surrounded, and impoverished statelet. The policy excludes a general economic boycott of the oppressor state and economy. The occupation of the West Bank would continue; most Palestinians abroad would still be denied the right of return; and the apartheid wall would remain as a militarized barrier to freedom.

Nonetheless, the GP policy (at least for the time being) "opposes all efforts to prohibit, punish, or otherwise deter expressions of support for BDS." This welcome stance comes at a time when the Conservative Party seeks to outlaw the boycott, which enjoys significant support internationally, including from unions across Canada. It follows the declaration by the Justin Trudeau Liberal government that defends the right to advocate BDS, while it vigorously opposes the actual boycott and staunchly backs the Zionist state—a position shamefully echoed by the Tom Mulcair NDP leadership.

But change is in the air. As shown by the debate in the GP, coupled with the trend in global public opinion, and the growing desperation of Israel backers, support for self-determination for Palestine continues to break down barriers. ■

By ELIZABETH BYCE

## Postal workers buy time

TORONTO—In late August, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and Canada Post Corporation (CPC) reached two separate tentative agreements—lasting only two years—covering CUPW's 50,000 members, both the urban workforce, and the rural/suburban mail carriers.

The union, which wanted one agreement for both its bargaining units, said in a public statement that key bargaining points—like the protection of its defined contribution benefit plan for current and future members—were secured.

Throughout 10 months of negotiations, Canada Post insisted on a two-tier pension plan that imposed on all new hires a defined contribution plan, leaving the defined benefit plan for current workers only. CPC said this was needed to halt the escalation of pension plan costs. The tentative agreements, subject to ratification

by union members in September, show that the union also prevented more closures of Canada Post outlets. "We went into this round determined to achieve new collective agreements without roll-backs and we succeeded," CUPW said in a statement.

Despite this, pay inequity chiefly for women members remains. The union did, however, secure a review of the pay structure. "We negotiated a pay equity review process that will not get tied up for decades in the courts," the union stated. "This pay equity process will be completed in 19 months, and our RSMCs [rural suburban mail carriers] will know the results quickly."

According to CUPW's research, Canada Post's pay system—which allocates compensation for suburban and rural workers according to the number of packages

delivered—disproportionately affects its female members. About 70 per cent of the rural and suburban group are women. On average, they receive nearly 30 per cent less than men in the urban unit for doing the same work.

Wage increases for rural and suburban workers—which make up about 8000 of CUPW's members—would rise 1.5 per cent this year, and 1.5 per cent next year. For the larger urban group, which covers about 42,000 mail sorters and carriers, a one per cent wage increase was agreed for this year, followed by a 1.5 per cent increase next year.

Other key improvements for rural and suburban mail carriers include the recognition of seniority from the date of hire for workers who began before 2004, as well as the extension of the unit's health-care plan, ensuring RSMCs are entitled to

the same paramedical services as their counterparts in the urban unit.

Essentially, the two-year agreements buy time for postal workers, while the Canadian government completes its review of the future of the postal service, and the CUPW continues its popular campaign for postal banking, and a new fleet of electric-powered vehicles. For details see [www.CUPW.ca/CanadaPost-Review](http://www.CUPW.ca/CanadaPost-Review).

If the latest agreements are ratified, postal workers will soon be back in bargaining, still facing a belligerent management. During the summer Canada Post twice issued, and withdrew, lockout notices. The federal government appointed two mediators. CUPW twice extended a 72-hour job action notice. So, the struggle continues. Solidarity with postal workers remains a top priority for all who want to replace capitalist austerity with greater equality and good environmental stewardship. ■

## ... Convention

(continued from page 8)

working-class principle, support to self-determination is not at all synonymous with political support to the governments or regimes of these oppressed nations—in the case of Syria, the Bashar al-Assad government. Socialists have no illusions that the Assad regime represents any form of revolutionary nationalist or otherwise progressive break with capitalism...

"Nevertheless, the removal of Assad's oppressive capitalist Syrian regime is the sole responsibility of the Syrian people, not U.S. imperialism and its reactionary allied forces.

"Socialist Action's unanimously adopted 2014 national convention Political Resolution makes this absolutely clear: "Today's war in Syria is a war between U.S. imperialism's direct and indirect capitalist-fundamentalist and reactionary forces on the one hand and the capitalist Assad government on the other. The Syria masses have no independently organized political, military or economic presence. Under these circumstances, Socialist Action stands full square against U.S. imperialism and those allied with it in Syria and elsewhere. In accord with our support to the right of self-determination of all oppressed nations, even those under capitalist rule, we are for the defeat of the U.S.-backed imperialist intervention in all its forms."

The January 2014 article continued, "Syria's right to self-determination necessarily includes the right of the Syrian government to seek and accept the support of the militia fighters that are today defending Syria against imperialist intervention in several of its manifestations....

"In a similar vein, the agreements recently signed by Syria with Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia to share intelligence information in fighting ISIS, al-Qaeda and all other groups aimed at removing the Assad government, including

the 13-nation U.S. imperialist-led 'coalition,' fall squarely within Syria's right to self-determination. This includes Syria's agreement to accept Russian air, naval, and related military support to accomplish the same end....

"Undoubtedly, the Russian capitalist government of Vladimir Putin has its own reasons for accepting Syria's invitation to intervene, including NATO's increasing encroachment on its borders and the U.S. and European Union economic sanctions. Revolutionary socialists suffer no illusions that capitalist Russia can serve as Syria's strategic ally in the present war. Indeed, the Putin government has consistently and cynically offered itself as a mediator in the Syrian war, repeatedly proposing a 'negotiated solution' wherein all parties, including U.S. imperialism and its NATO allies, as well as the Saudis and others, will collectively decide Syria's fate....

The article continued, "The Russian intervention may well have prevented the overt marching of reactionary jihadist/religious fundamentalist groups or other imperialist-allied forces into Damascus with a resulting Libyan-type chaos, anarchy, and bloodbath to follow. Historic tragedy has a habit of unfolding in a myriad of forms—some less devastating than others. Here we have a distinction, perhaps with a significant difference, in that the opportunities for future Syrian anti-capitalist struggles may become somewhat improved.

"Antiwar and social justice fighters can best help to tilt the scale in favor of Syria's people and future class-struggle fighters by building the most powerful U.S. movement possible demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. military aid and forces in all their manifestations from Syria. Removing the imperialist boot from Syria and the Middle East more generally best opens the door for the oppressed masses to resume their struggle. U.S. out now! Self-determination for Syria!" ■

## ... Rasmea Odeh

(continued from page 1)

about the trauma Rasmea continues to endure from the torture she suffered while in Israeli prison. ... Judge Drain's latest ruling, allowing the government to put her through hours of interrogation from a hostile government expert, could enable him to again exclude this testimony, and thereby affirm the previous conviction against Rasmea. The prosecution has stopped at nothing to keep the fact of Israel's well-documented torture practices from consideration in Rasmea's case, and it's clear that they are intent on continuing to victimize her, and shielding Israel from scrutiny."

Rasmea Odeh's case in the U.S. is closely linked to the fate of Palestinian prisoners and detainees currently under Israeli military occupation. B'Tselem reports that as of the end of April 2016 nearly 6300 security detainees and prisoners were held in Israeli prisons.

USPCN, the Rasmea Defense Committee, and other supporters of Palestinian rights will be mobilizing throughout the Midwest to protest outside the court hearing in Detroit on Nov. 29, when government prosecutors will be challenging the expert defense testimony.

In a statement released Sept. 6, Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action candidate for U.S. President expressed full support for Rasmea: "The continued prosecution of Rasmea Odeh is an outrage for all who oppose political repression and defend democratic rights. We stand up for Rasmea and all Palestinian political activists and prisoners under continuous assault by the Zionist Israeli state and the U.S. government. We support and join in building the protest in Detroit on Nov. 29 to drop all charges against Rasmea.

"Our job as supporters of Palestinian rights in the U.S. is to mobilize to demand freedom for Rasmea Odeh, and beyond that, to direct our fire against massive U.S. military support, over \$3 billion per year, to the racist, apartheid state of Israel, a state built and maintained on the brutal colonial oppression of the Palestinian people. We demand 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!" ■



# ... Mexico

(continued from page 12)

Aristegui, who was in charge of making public the existence of the “White House,” and afterward was fired for it. Now bringing a lawsuit for “moral damage,” he is demanding millions of dollars of “compensation” from Aristegui for the prologue that she wrote for the book “Peña Nieto’s White House: The story that shook the government,” and demanding that the book’s publisher, Grijalbo, remove the prologue.

So, in fact there will be no punishment, and impunity will prevail, as it has always prevailed in the highest levels of the government. In that too Mexico is special. As in Spain, Brazil, and many countries, corruption is a congenital disease of capitalism, especially in its governments. But in many of these countries as well, the struggle against corruption sometimes has effective results and can appreciate as certain former rulers are imprisoned. Not in Mexico; there are innumerable cases to prove it.

There is the scandal of Humberto Moreira, the ex-governor of Coahuila and ex-president of the PRI, arrested in Spain a few months ago and freed immediately under pressure from the Peña Nieto government. At the same time, there are the scandalous cases of the two outgoing PRI governors of Veracruz and Chihuahua, who are publicly identified as being involved in dirty businesses that involve billions of pesos. And in the case of Veracruz, Javier Duarte is implicated in several infamous assassinations of journalists critical of his government. All indications are that they will go unpunished, thanks in no small part to the Peña Nieto government.

The crude, classist character of justice can be seen quite clearly in Mexico’s prisons, full of petty criminals and many innocent people caught up in a justice system that is also corrupt. Prisons that were created for populations three or four times smaller than what they currently hold. Cells designed for three or four prisoners that today are packed with 10 or 12 people, some of whom have to sleep tied to the bars. But also for a small minority there are cells that seem more like hotel rooms for stars.

## CNTE: Igniter of the masses

Since May, demonstrations beginning in the southern strongholds of the teachers union, CNTE [National Education Workers’ Coordination]—Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Michoacán—have spread all over the country with more or less force. The waves have reached all the way north, with demonstrations in Baja California, Sonora, and Nuevo León. It even reached Mexico City, where Local 9 of the SNTE [National Education Workers’ Union], the largest union with around 100,000 teachers, began to mobilize.

The breaking point that caused the surge of protests nationwide was the Nochixtlán massacre [on June 19, when police opened fire on striking CNTE teachers who were blockading a highway, killing 13]. The government had to give in, agreed to “negotiate” with the representatives of the teachers, and even saw itself forced to move its biggest piece within the teachers’ union bureaucracy, the flashy leader of the SNTE, its general secretary, Juan Díaz de la Torre, propelling him to lead a “re-evaluation of education reform,” crudely trying to snatch away the banners of the dissident teachers.

For its part, the most extreme section of the bourgeoisie, that had been pushing for a no-holds-barred policy against the CNTE—a group called “Mexicans First”—along with business owners affected by the mobilizations, blockades, and occupations of highways and railroads (hotel owners in Oaxaca, and mining, automobile, and steel businesses) demand a government crackdown and proclaim in a manifesto, “We don’t want a government that folds its hands,” and openly call for the “use of force.”

All these movements, from an untimely trip by Peña Nieto to Washington to meet with Obama in recent days to the appointment of a new president of the PRI, a functionary completely unknown to the public, a technocratic government official (he was the director of the Federal Electricity Commission), are the palpable demonstration that in the upper layers of the establishment something very important is happening. And no wonder—the temperature of the crisis rises every day.

So July 26 arrived, 22 months after the Iguala massacre and the disappearing of the Ayotzinapa students, the demonstration of the family members of the 43 students was held again and coincided with the start of several days of mobilizations that the CNTE and its allies had planned in 27 states and Mexico City, in which the various contingents got together to defend the rejection of the government’s educational reform and the demands that they have in their local areas.

Confronting the official “bargaining tables” at which



the government wants to ease teachers’ unrest, the CNTE announced a meeting on Aug. 3 to discuss a “democratic education project” in which a combination of intellectuals and progressive academics who had declared solidarity with the protests would participate, where they would present alternative proposals to the government’s education reform.

On exactly that day, the representatives of the CNTE, after a break in negotiations, restarted the endless, exhausting series of talks, delaying tactics, and empty words with management, in which the government only delays, in hopes of overwhelming blows that put an end to the protests. The problem is that in Nochixtlán they knew what they were confronting, and that to put themselves at risk of even greater repression—perhaps even a new Tlatelolco—would be totally counterproductive.

But also the favored action of the leadership of the CNTE is becoming wearying, consisting of mobilizing and negotiating and then doing it all over again. It has taken them more than 20 years with these tactics. It is a vision that stays within the limits of trade unionism without having been able to forge a comprehensive independent strategy that displays totally and forcefully the potential for struggle not just of education workers but of all Mexican workers.

It is on this strictly political level where we find the heart of the problem. The firm and intransigent struggles of the CNTE teachers and their allies still have not led to the forging of revolutionary political objectives, despite the social context urgently demanding them. It is evident that today the level that the extraordinary mobilization of primary and secondary education workers has reached—for they are the ones who make up the rank and file of the CNTE—is inspiring many other groups, especially workers. But we must bring them together into a combined struggle.

For example, we must organize all of the teachers in order to form a movement that covers the entire country. This would mean a democratic restructuring of the leadership of the CNTE that would allow for the inclusion of representatives from the different movements of the center and the north of the country that currently are not part of the CNTE. Or also address itself to the tens of thousands of workers in universities who are beginning to understand that the consequences of this “education reform” will be devastating for them. Everything indicates that on the agenda in the next period is the preparation of overwhelming actions that have never been done in the history of Mexican workers, especially the struggle for a national strike.

## Presidential succession in 2018

Peña Nieto and the leaders of the parties are now preparing for the 2018 presidential elections. The situation of the PRI makes it almost a “mission impossible” for the novice politician Enrique Ochoa, the party’s new president, to know and ensure that the PRI’s presidential candidate will succeed Peña Nieto. But nor was the Mexican bourgeoisie in a comfortable position before the disaster of the restoration of the Peña Nieto government. The other bourgeois party that it counts on, the PAN, isn’t exactly very popular in the hearts of the masses.

The PRD [Democratic Revolutionary Party] is dismissed as a major player—and its role is that of a satellite of the two main bourgeois parties, since it has remained in tatters after its shameless alliance with those in the Pact for Mexico, and above all for its nefarious role in the events in Iguala.

Morena (National Regeneration Movement), the party of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, is only supported by a minority of bourgeois groups, and it appears very difficult—in spite of its openly conciliatory politics—for it to gain the support of the more significant groups of the dominant class.

Up to now, the majority of the leadership of the CNTE has come from popular-front organizations and traditions, promoted by Stalinist groups and their offshoots (Maoists, Hoxhaists, etc.). In practice, this has meant that, without openly saying it, the CNTE’s orientation initially clearly favored PRD-style politics. Today, with the PRD’s resounding crisis, many are turning to López Obrador. But an alliance with Morena will be the classic case of what Trotsky called—referring to the alliance of the socialist, communist, and anarchist leaders in the Spanish Popular Front in 1936—an alliance with “the bourgeoisie’s shadow.”

Indeed, why should Mexican workers, instead of forging their own political alternative, independent and powerful, loyal to their own interests, support a party that subordinates them to “the bourgeoisie’s shadow?” Why continue with the traditional copying of bourgeois groups that characterized the workers’ movement in the 20th century, led by the nationalist leadership and Stalinist reformists like Vicente Lombardo Toledano?

The CNTE, its allies, and the combination of independent, socialist, and revolutionary groups that work in the movement of resistance and struggle against the policies of the Peña Nieto government and the rest of the bourgeois parties must prepare themselves before the next crucial challenges that they will confront very soon and begin to discuss and forge the anti-capitalist strategy that for the first time in the history of Mexico will allow the strength of its workers to rise up as the only democratic and independent alternative politics capable of liberating the people from the convulsive state of decline that they find themselves in today, as a result of the policies of violence, corruption, and repression of the ruling class.

The education workers’ fight has created the conditions to put into effect this inspiring and revolutionary perspective in Mexico today. It is the task of the most conscious sectors and the vanguard to begin the efforts to reach this objective, bringing together meetings and actions that work in that direction. ■



## Oct. 22: A one-day conference

Central Connecticut State University  
New Britain, Conn.

Sponsored by CCSU Youth for Socialist Action

Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/211030272631856/>

Speakers include: David Farrell (YSA), Hannah A. Holleman (Ecological Marxism), Charles Post (Origins of U.S. Capitalism), Alan Sears (Marxism and LGBTQI Liberation), Wendy Z. Goldman (Women, the State, and Revolution), Edmond Caldwell (Culture of the Paris Commune), Johnny E. Williams (State as a Social Control), Juan Cruz Ferre (Electoral Strategy in Argentina), Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action candidate for President.



## Crime and punishment in Peña Nieto's Mexico



Jorge Luis Plata / Reuters

By MANUEL AGUILAR MORA

On July 18, in the National Palace at the enactment ceremony of a package of laws to create the National Anti-Corruption System (SNA), in front of an audience composed of hundreds of public officials, and flanked on both sides by the presidents of the houses of the Congress and secretaries of state, President Enrique Peña Nieto “apologized.” These were his words: “Even though I acted in accordance with the law, this mistake affected my family, hurt the institution of the presidency, and damaged confidence in the government [...] I felt the irritation among Mexicans firsthand. I understand it perfectly; for that reason, with all humility, I ask your forgiveness.”

He was referring to the scandal that Carmen Aristegui and her team of journalists sparked in November 2014, when they made public the Peña Nieto family’s acquisition of a mansion (the “White House”) worth several million dollars, that was built by a construction company favored by his government with contracts worth billions of pesos in a situation that appeared transparently to be a typical case of influence peddling and flagrant corruption.

### A Fake Apology

As we know, in these times of permanent crisis, it is fashionable for presidents to ask for forgiveness. In the last few years many have, from Paraguay and Argentina to France and Norway. But the outrageous arrogance of the dictatorship of the “peculiar,” “adaptable,” and “flexible” Mexican presidency during the greater part of the 20th century has been decisive, so that in 100 years, there are only two such occasions, prior to the recent one by Peña Nieto.

The first was in 1911, when the dictator Porfirio Díaz, from the ship that would carry him to his exile in Europe, declared that he had never done anything to cause the revolution that forced him to resign, and if history found it to be so, he would apologize for it now. The second occasion was in 1982, when a tearful

### The struggle of the National Organization of Education Workers against the school reform has put hundreds of thousands of protesters into the streets.

José López Portillo apologized to the poor for having been unable to eliminate their misery.

Why did Peña Nieto apologize? All the critical analyses agree in pointing to the terribly disastrous results of last June, in which, among other losses, the PRI [Peña Nieto’s party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party] lost several governorships in states where it is traditionally dominant. The tremor that made itself felt in the highest circles—and the first victim—was the powerful president of the PRI, Manlio Fabio Beltrones, who had to resign immediately, thus removing himself as a possible successor for Peña Nieto in 2018.

In that defeat, which seemed more like an electoral massacre, Beltrones himself recognized that the PRI was paying for what the Peña Nieto government had done. And indeed, since 2004 the popularity and public approval of the actions of the president have plummeted, surpassing the record popularity drop of the previous PAN [National Action Party] government of Felipe Calderón. In fact, the electoral defeat cannot be separated from the decisive defeat of the policy of structural reforms that has been the hallmark of the Peña Nieto government—a defeat that even bourgeois groups recognize, including some leaders of the Catholic Church.

A year and a half passed between November 2014 and the “humble apology.” Much will have been discussed in the president’s inner circle that this man would decide to bend his arrogance before a nation that had turned its back on his overwhelming majority—if we pay attention to the “popularity” polls so

(Above) Mexican police attack June 19 protest of striking teachers in Oaxaca.

in fashion.

But within this resounding fall of a government that aspired to restore the dominance of the PRI, the struggle of the CNTE (National Organization of Education Workers) against the school reform stands out without a doubt, having put in motion throughout the country the numerous education workers’ unions—mobilizations that since May have put hundreds of thousands of protesters in the streets, resulting in the awakening of others in the working class.

The highlights of the career of decline and illegitimacy of the current government consist of a list in which the issue of the «white house»—even though it provoked not just «irritation,» as Peña Nieto said, but great popular outrage—is far from being the most serious. Tlataya, Ayotzinapa, Nochixtlán, greenlighting energy privatization, «education» reform that in reality is labor counter-reform, spiraling national debt, alarming devaluation of the peso, an unparalleled boom in corruption in the states and the federal government itself, these are the true highlights that have sunk the Peña Nieto government.

The president asked for «forgiveness» at the announcement of the new anti-corruption laws that have already brought his absolution, since they include presidential immunity. In addition, as he didn’t break any law in the matter of the “White House,” it was all legal. The “forgiveness” was for a “mistake” he made, not for a criminal offense.

The “damage to the institution of the presidency” and the «distrust of the government» must have been because the Mexican people are very cynical and attributed the fact to an act of corruption. But no, it was all a misunderstanding of “perception.”

At the same time, and despite the “humble apology,” Joaquin Vargas of the television channel MVS Communications, driven by Los Piños, is hounding Carmen

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