

# Trump promises more perks for big business



By MARK UGOLINI

Events surrounding the Nov. 8 presidential election confirm the depth of the crisis that U.S. capitalist rulers find themselves in. We've seen growing turmoil and major divisions between and within both major parties. The two-party system, for years a stable bulwark of U.S. capitalism, has been exhibiting signs of distress. The transition of power from one party to another is not as seamless and predictable as in the past.

Since the 2008-9 world financial recession, the world economy has remained in stagnation. Among major factors underlying this crisis is a generalized decline over many years in overall corporate profits and in the rate of profit. This stagnation feeds the austerity campaigns of governments worldwide, taking a massive toll on workers and the most oppressed.

The United States has seen an ever-escalating capitalist offensive against working people. Attacks are aimed at overturning gains won in past struggles of workers and oppressed: real wages have failed to grow despite productivity growth of nearly 22 percent since the late 1970s, and severe unemployment persists. It was reported this month that 95 million U.S. workers have dropped out from the workforce, a historic high. These workers are not accounted for in the monthly government-reported unemployment rate.

This is combined with speed-up and unsafe condi-

tions on the job, longer working hours, rapidly vanishing pensions, rapidly escalating health-care costs, heightened racist violence, and attacks on rights won in years past by minorities and women. A byproduct of this generalized offensive has been an accelerated erosion of the social safety net—government programs designed to help the unemployed and the poor.

Fundamental agreement remains between the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties to advance forward this assault on working people, but tactical differences are deepening on exactly what path to follow, and how quickly and aggressively to proceed.

We can fully expect that the anti-working class offensive, including racist violence and the anti-immigrant harassment and deportations of the Obama administration, will continue and most likely accelerate during the Trump administration.

Trump's initial steps during the transition, including his selections for important government posts, can provide some indication of his priorities but fail to reveal a definite direction. However, hints of where the new Donald Trump administration may be headed are already emerging in some areas. Here are three areas that deserve attention:

#### Regulations and taxes

Among Trump's first appointments was the selection of Wilbur Ross for Commerce Secretary and Steven Mnuchin for Secretary of the Treasury. The selection of Wall Street traders and hedge-fund bil-

lionaires to two key economic positions should be no surprise, despite Trump's populist-sounding campaign rhetoric.

Speaking in West Palm Beach, Fla., in October, Donald Trump declared that it is the "global power structure that is responsible for the economic decisions that have robbed our working class, stripped our country of its wealth, and put that money into the pockets of a handful of large corporations." Trump spent millions on media ads promoting that sentiment, which is felt widely among U.S. workers.

In a series of tweets on Dec. 4, Trump continued the populist rhetoric of his election campaign, reiterating his pledges to tear up international trade agreements, declare war on companies that off-shore their workforce, and add stiff tariffs to goods from countries like China and Mexico if they are perceived as taking U.S. jobs. The *Washington Post* commented on Dec. 5 that "these comments set up a clash with Republicans who have long argued in favor of free trade and against excessive intrusion by government into the affairs of business."

The *Post* pointed out, however, that although Trump's stated policies "put American companies in an extraordinarily difficult position," corporate lobbying groups have remained nearly silent for now.

We can expect that in the end, like Obama, the Trump administration will pursue policies that maxi-

(continued on page 5)



# Fight for 15: 'We're not backing down'

Marty Goodman / Socialist Action

By ANN MONTAGUE

Fight For 15 National Organizing Director Kendall Fells, while helping arrested protesters get out of jail in New York, stated, "We have a tone change. The change is, 'We're not going to back down' and 'We're not going to be bullied.'" He was surrounded by signs and t-shirts that gave the same message. The signs made clear that the escalation of the Fight For 15 movement, vividly expressed on Nov. 29 with walk-outs and rallies in hundreds of U.S. cities, was also a fight against xenophobia, racism, and sexism.

While many union members around the country have expressed dread of Washington's policies over the next four years, these workers are showing the way forward. They are building on their wins with great determination and grit. But of course, these actions were planned to take place regardless of who was elected president. They never were diverted or changed their focus throughout the entire election period.

This was the fourth anniversary of the movement for a \$15 minimum wage, which started with 200 strikers in New York City. This year, workers walked off their jobs, marched, rallied, sat in, and got arrested in 340 cities and at 20 airports, declaring that they won't back down no matter who is in the White House or the State House.

Once again, new groups of workers joined in the national actions. This is the first time that Uber Drivers joined



the Fight for 15, and it is the beginning of gig workers protesting side by side with traditional labor. These workers who are in temporary positions and often do contract work for short periods of time are often overlooked by traditional unions, but they are finding that they are welcome in the growing movement of low-paid workers.

Adam Shahim, an Uber driver in Pittsburg, Calif., said that even though he worked 40 hours a week he could not make enough to pay his bills. In a statement released by Uber protest organizers, Shahim said, "I would like a fair days pay for my hard work, so I joined with fast food, airport, home-care, child-care, higher education workers who are leading the way." He also explained that although it was difficult

(Above) Hundreds of SEIU 32BJ members, in raincoats, sit in at New York's La Guardia Airport, Nov. 29.

to know how many Uber drivers were striking, the bosses will know when they look to see how many drivers did not open their app on Nov. 29. This is the beginning for those who are looking for ways to organize and act collectively in the new gig economy.

There was also a more traditional action at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, where workers went on strike to protest wages and union rights. The shuttle drivers and house-keeping staff protested being prevented from joining SEIU-Health Care Pennsylvania, which is the largest health-care workers union in the state and repre-

sents 45,000 workers.

In cities where the movement for 15 has been strong over these last four years, the size of the strikes and rallies continue to increase. Reports from *Socialist Action* correspondents in Kansas City, the San Francisco Bay Area, Hartford, Chicago, the Twin Cities and elsewhere show that an energized and expanded movement continues to grow. In Minneapolis, 21 people were arrested, including some who were arrested while they were being interviewed by the press. Los Angeles seems to be the only city where a fully militarized police force was used to arrest people participating in a peaceful sit in.

The struggle for a \$15 minimum wage has brought \$61.5 billion in raises to low-wage workers, according to a report just released by the National Employment Law Project. The study estimated that this means increased wages for 19 million workers. More than \$40 billion came to the workers in California, New York, Seattle and SeaTac, Wash., and Washington, D.C. These are all places that adopted a \$15 minimum wage either by ballot measure or governmental action.

As a result of the movement for a \$15, Democrats in some states have moved to make small raises to the minimum wage. But many activists have called these raises, "Too low and too slow." Now activists have redoubled their demands, pointing out that anything less than \$15 is still a poverty wage. This is happening in Connecticut and in Massachusetts.

In Massachusetts, a month before the minimum wage is moving to \$11, a statewide coalition is pushing again for \$15. Previously, they dropped their

(continued on page 3)

## 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: Dec. 6, 2016  
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

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

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



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

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: [socialistactionnews@yahoo.com](mailto:socialistactionnews@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org)

## WHERE TO FIND US

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

- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 [gary1917@aol.com](mailto:gary1917@aol.com)
- PROVIDENCE: [ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM) (401) 952-5385
- SALEM, ORE.: [ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET](mailto:ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET)
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, [sfsocialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:sfsocialistaction@gmail.com)
- WASHINGTON, DC: [christopher.towne@gmail.com](mailto:christopher.towne@gmail.com), (202) 286-5493

## SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

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

## Socialist Action

### Subscribe now!

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action newspaper, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.  
Or subscribe on-line with a credit card at [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org).



# Standing Rock and white supremacy

By CHRIS MATO NUNPA

*Chris Mato Nunpa, Ph.D, is a retired associate professor in Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies at Southwest Minnesota State University. Mato Nunpa is a Dakota name and means "Two Bear."*

Ho Mitakuyapi, Owasin cantewasteya nape ciyuzapi do! In the Dakota Language, this is a greeting that means, "Hello, my relatives. With a good heart I greet all of you with a handshake!"

On Dec. 4, the Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would not issue a permit for the DAPL [Dakota Access Pipe Line] to drill underneath the Missouri River. As an Indigenous person, a Dakota man, I was absolutely delighted to hear the news and I rejoiced. One reason for my happiness and thankfulness—no Native person had been shot and killed.

Since the violence, on the part of the neo-Nazi Morton County Sheriff's deputies, was escalating against the unarmed water protectors, it was only a matter of time before one of our people would be murdered. So, there was a temporary respite with the news of the denial of a permit to DAPL.

As it is, one young woman had her arm almost blown off by a concussion grenade (a war-time weapon), and another teen-age woman lost sight in her right eye when a canister of mace was thrown in her face. This young Indigenous woman is having difficulty getting medical treatment since she doesn't have insurance or sufficient financial resources.

As of Monday, Dec. 05, DAPL was still there. They still had their planes and helicopters flying low over the Oceti Sakowin ("Seven Fires") Camp all night. They, DAPL, still had lights shining on the drill pad all night. These are intimidation tactics designed to disturb sleep and reduce morale so that the water protectors will leave camp. However, these scare tactics have been going on for months, and I do not think they will work now.

I am absolutely amazed, but not surprised, at the blatant racial hatred and discrimination displayed by not only the Gestapo-like Morton County sheriff's deputies in their violence, in which they appear to take joy against the water protectors, but also by the Euro-North Dakotans. A number of our Native people have been asked to leave places of business, or they wouldn't sell to them, in Mandan and Bismarck.

One of the Native journalists was followed and intimidated by a man who was wearing a skull mask. Fortunately, he was not hurt. Others are followed and sometimes stopped by white men in their cars and vans. I even heard that in one black van, it turned out that these intimidators were actually police, which is chilling. As I understand, advice is given to the campers: don't go into town alone and travel the road alone—take one or two persons with you.

The nearby towns of Mandan and Bismarck, in their relation to Cannonball and Ft. Yates, are bastions of racism, discrimination, and white supremacy. Or to use a phrase of one of our Dakota poets, these towns "are stained with hate."

It reminded me of my Dakota/Lakota/Nakota colleagues who have said to me that South Dakota was their Alabama, their Mississippi. Then, when I was talking, at breakfast in the Prairie Knights Hotel, to a Lakota man, a member of the Standing Rock, about what I heard about South Dakota, he replied, "Well, North Dakota is like our Alabama and our Mississippi, too." So I will consider South Dakota as Alabama, and North Dakota as Mississippi.

I wish to say that my home state of Minnesota is no slouch, either, when it comes to racism and white supremacy. Minnesota placed bounties on the scalps of my Dakota People (\$25, then \$75, finally, \$200). And they also forcibly removed ("ethnically cleansed")



(Above) Gen. Wesley Clark Jr. and other U.S. armed forces veterans kneel before Leonard Crow Dog at the Standing Rock reservation on Dec. 5 to ask forgiveness for U.S. transgressions against the Native Peoples over the centuries.

my Dakota People out of their ancient homelands, Mini Sota Makoce, "Land Where the Waters Reflect the Skies, or Heavens," or Minnesota. The name Mini Sota Makoce is a reference to the thousands upon thousands of lakes in our homelands, of which the state of Minnesota is a part.

Minnesota used concentration camps ("death camps"), forced marches ("death marches"), mass executions, and uttered savage cries—"extermination or removal," "exterminate the wild beasts" (the Dakota); "utterly exterminate" (the Dakota), or "kill the lazy vermin" (referring to the Dakota)—to name a few of the recorded racial epithets. The above-mentioned acts are genocide. This is what "genocidaires," perpetrators of genocide, do.

Another thing I would like to mention here is that a number of clergy came up to Standing Rock to stand in solidarity with the People and with the water protectors in their resistance to DAPL. Several of them went into the State Capitol in Bismarck, N.D., and prayed in a foyer. They were arrested.

One of the things I noticed right away is the "gentle" way they were treated; they were treated differently. That is, there was no beating on their heads with batons, no spraying of mace in their faces, no shooting in the face with rubber bullets or on the bodies with bean bags, no strip-searching of these men of the cloth, no being placed in dog-kennel-like cages, or being kept in jail for several days, like many of our women and men were (including my younger daughter). The clergy were non-violent, just like the non-violent unarmed Native water protectors.

Of course, there were a number of non-Indigenous peoples, allies, who were shot with rubber bullets. One had her arm almost blown away, others were arrested, and appeared in court to fight the trumped-up charges. Some of these white people were treated just like Native Peoples.

In the past 524 years of what I call Wosice Tanka Kin (Dakota for "The Great Evil"), there have been times, along the way, when the Church, and its clergy, worked hand-in-hand, or cooperated, with the state and with the military. They were complicit in the invading, killing, stealing, destroying, occupying, and

tol to demand a \$15 minimum wage. In January 2017, the minimum wage is scheduled to increase to \$10.10, but like workers in Massachusetts they are saying that the compromises in the past are just not good enough.

Alvin Major, who works at KFC in Brooklyn, N.Y., would agree. He went on the first fast-food strike in 2012 when he was making \$7.25 and now he is making \$10.50. But he says he will continue to strike for \$15. "I used to be scared when I first went on strike. Not anymore. We don't have a union, but we are acting like one." ■

## Standing Rock Victory: How Real?

"It's wonderful," said Dave Archambault II, the Standing Rock tribal chairman, to supporters at Standing Rock, North Dakota, in reaction to a Dec. 4 decision by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deny running an environmentally hazardous oil pipeline under the Missouri River at Lake Oahe near the Sioux reservation. "You all did that. Your presence has brought the attention of the world," Archambault II said.

The decision instructed the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and the Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) to seek an alternate route. The DAPL and ETP plan will cost \$3.7 billion to complete a 1172-mile gas pipeline to Illinois. Lake Oahe is a source of drinking water.

The struggle was boosted by a call to U.S. veterans to "Stand with Standing Rock." In early December, some 2000 veterans came there.

The corporations, emboldened by climate denier Donald Trump, say that they will continue. On the other side, Chairman Archambault II has asked supporters to go home for the harsh winter months. Others have vowed to stay on to monitor the situation. Victory to Standing Rock! — MARTY GOODMAN

the exploiting. I was glad that these clergy, in 2016, were trying to be supporters of Standing Rock People, of the water protectors, and of our allies, instead of helping to kill us.

Dr. Cornel West, one of my intellectual heroes, came to the Oceti Sakowin Camp. There were two comments that I will mention here. One was the possibility that the water-protectors group might, eventually, be considered a domestic terrorist group. This would occur with some legal shenanigans by the big oil corporations, the neo-Nazi police, and the state governments. And, later on, this would be done with the full cooperation of the U.S. government under the fascist-type U.S. president.

Dr. West, when asked about what he felt about the Oceti Sakowin Camp, said that he could feel 500 years of resistance and resilience. The Indigenous Peoples there at the camp resonated with that comment.

As I indicated in the opening paragraph, the victory is temporary, and many of our people are saying we need to be vigilant. Energy Transfer Partners have indicated they are committed to finishing the Dakota Access Pipe Line.

There is a lot of uncertainty and apprehension as to what is going to happen when the president-elect becomes the president in late January 2017. However, no matter what happens, the water protectors are in this struggle for the long haul, to protect the water, to protect Ina Maka, "Mother Earth," to protect the animal relatives, to protect the sacred sites, and the burial sites.

Mini Wiconi, "Water is Life!" Ho Mitakuyapi, wopida tanka owas eciciyapi do! "My Relatives, I express my deepest appreciation to all of you!" ■

## ... Fight for 15

(continued from page 2)

ballot measure campaign when it looked like the state legislature was going to raise the minimum wage. A third of the state workforce still makes less than \$15 an hour.

In Connecticut, on Nov. 29, the same day as fast-food workers were striking for \$15, a hundred low-wage workers descended on the State Capi-





(Left) Union activist Oliwia Pac speaks to Nov. 29 rally at Chicago's O'Hare airport.

## Chicago airport workers walk out

By MARK UGOLINI

CHICAGO—On Nov. 29, about 500 courageous low-wage workers at O'Hare airport walked off the job at 10 a.m. to demand an end to unfair labor practices. The workers also expressed their solidarity with fast-food, hospital, health-care, and other low-wage workers who were simultaneously demonstrating nationwide for a \$15 minimum wage and union rights.

"Fight for \$15" protests took place in more than 340 cities across the country. Concurrent rallies were held in 18 other airports around the country, including Boston, Washington, D.C., Denver, Atlanta, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Newark.

Chicago's striking airport baggage handlers, cabin cleaners, janitors, and wheelchair attendants were joined by supporters, overwhelmingly local union members, in a militant protest of about 2000 outside the airport's departure entrance. Rally speakers called out airport and city government refusal to take action to correct widespread abuse of low-wage airport workers, most of whom are earning Chicago's minimum wage of \$10.50 per hour.

For the past year, low-wage workers at the nation's second busiest airport have been supported by Service Employees International Union (SEIU), building their case for \$15 and a union and fighting against a campaign of employer retaliation against worker organizers. Low-wage workers at the airport typically work for Air Scrub Inc., Prospect Airport Services, Air Serv, or the city of Chicago, which provide contract labor services to the airport and the various airlines.

Union activist Kisha Rivera, 41, an airplane cabin cleaner, explained the plight of the O'Hare workers when she addressed the airport rally. She described a pattern of employer abuse including wage theft—short-

ing employees of hours worked, especially overtime on their paychecks. She also described unsafe working conditions and hazards widespread throughout the airport. "We are treated like the garbage we clean in the planes," said Rivera: "We're not asking for special treatment, we're asking for decent treatment. We're asking for decent wages. We're asking—No! We are *demanding* respect!"

Another activist, Oliwia Pac, who works several service jobs for Prospect Airport Services, spoke to the crowd about the unity and determination of airport workers: "Over the last three years workers like me have been building a movement for \$15 and union rights. And now we are on strike after employers retaliated against us for coming together.

"While airlines are raking in billions, the workers who are keeping the airport running can barely make ends meet, and every day workers face serious problems. ... We brought to light rampant wage theft across the airport as well as hazardous and unsafe conditions. I've had my wages stolen. I've been injured on the job. It's unacceptable. A world class airport should treat its workers with respect, and protect our rights. ... A world class airport should pay its workers a living wage. ...

"But so far the airport has not been listening to us, and the city has failed to protect us against an employer that retaliates against us. The result [the strike vote] shows we are ready to take matters into our own hands. We can't rely on our employers, we definitely can't rely on the city to protect us. We can only rely on ourselves!"

Prior to the rally, SEIU Local 1 President Tom Balanoff told *Socialist Action* that the union was committed to stand by the airport workers to counter the inaction of the airport and the city: "There are thousands of workers here who work in poverty, they don't earn living wages. The airlines have been very successful. ...The workers

are demanding living wages. They spend the money, that's how they build their communities. The purpose of the strike is to elevate the voice of the workers so that the powers that be know that we are united, that we are fighting and we are not going to give up."

Balanoff described a fundamental shift that came with sweeping deregulation of the airline industry in the late 1970s: "All these jobs used to be good-paying union airline jobs, then when they deregulated the industry, they contracted out all these jobs, took people to minimum wage, no benefits, and non-union. Deregulation—they said it would be the greatest thing ever. It's only the greatest thing ever for the airlines. The employers don't want to recognize the union. If they don't want to recognize the union they are going to have to deal with these strikes."

In his speech to the crowd, Balanoff announced that the airport workers decided the strike would be just one day, and they had not intended to disrupt airport schedules, although that may well not be the case in the future. "We will be back!" he said, pointing to the need for a larger scale response in the future if the city and airport continue to ignore low-wage workers.

Non-union workers were joined at the protest by some unionized airport workers, including gate agents from Communications Workers of America and ramp workers from Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 571.

*Socialist Action* spoke with Gilbert Huertas, president of Local 571, who described his local's support for \$15 and unionization of all airport workers, and dissatisfaction of his entire 1200-member local in the wages and benefits in their existing six-year contract. Much of his local membership is paid well below \$15 per hour. "We are all underpaid," said Huertas. "To be honest, I've worked here 28 years and I'm only making \$15.76 per hour."

The O'Hare low-wage workers voted in favor of the strike one week earlier in an election assisted by SEIU Local 1. However, Air Serv, a subcontractors that employs nearly 300 low-wage workers at O'Hare, filed a lawsuit arguing that the workers should be bound by the Railway Labor Act, which requires mediation and other processes to prevent strikes. The SEIU argued that since the workers are not directly employed by the airlines, they are protected by the National Labor Relations Act. On the day before the scheduled O'Hare strike, a federal judge denied Air Serv's motion.

In another interview with *Socialist Action*, Kisha Rivera discussed a meeting between workers, the union, and an employee representative the day before the strike. Rivera showed the company the results of the strike vote, and said the workers wanted a guarantee that there would be no retaliation against striking workers. She reported that the company representative agreed not to take disciplinary action against the strikers, but that the workers would be vigilant to identify and fight back against any reprisals.

"We are used to getting written up or fired if we miss work on a normal day," Rivera said. "We have no way to even protest. ... Now he [the company representative] promised us that we won't get fired or written up for striking. We have many witnesses to what they told us. But he was so angry when he left the meeting. His face was red as a beet! We will be watching what they do!" ■

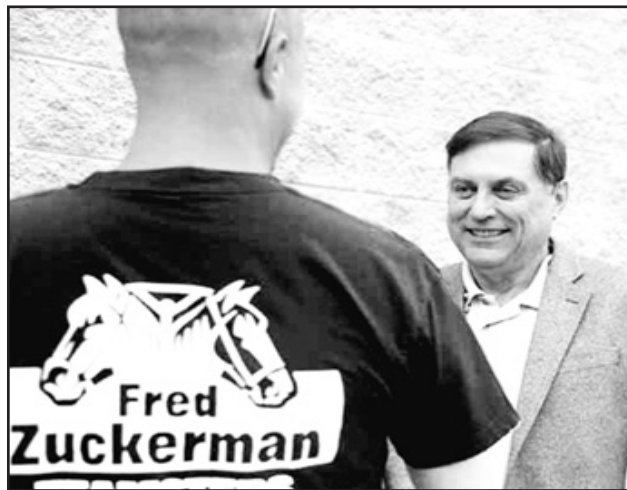
## LABOR BRIEFING

By BILL ONASCH

**The Other Election**—There was never any doubt that the working class would lose the election of a new POTUS. That one was a contest between lesser or maximum evils. Heads they win, tails we lose.

But while that face-off dominated the press and airwaves ad nauseam, little attention was given to the election of the top leadership of one of North America's most important unions—the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

To be sure, that wasn't a battle for control of the government. But a defeat of the incumbent Hoffa-led bureaucracy by the opposition Teamsters United Slate would not only have advanced militant, adversarial unionism, new organizing campaigns, and union democracy in the IBT; it would have also



(Above) Teamsters presidential candidate Fred Zuckerman speaks with a supporter.

inspired similar struggles in other unions.

It was a cliff-hanger at the top of the ticket. Challenger Fred Zuckerman, a militant out of the car-haulers sector, won the Midwest and South regions

in the U.S., while Hoffa barely held on to the East and West. But Hoffa piled up a lopsided win in the Canadian locals, and that made the difference: Hoffa-51.5 percent, Zuckerman-48.5.

The *Journal of Commerce* reports that "employers that have dealt with Hoffa" are "relieved" by Hoffa's election win because of his record for negotiating "deals involving wage and benefit concessions."

The forces that built Teamsters United will not go dormant until the next election. Their strength ensures there will be battles ahead against the bosses and bureaucrats on many fronts.

**Will There Be a Walk in the Park?**—Earlier this year, General Electric sold its sprawling Louisville GE Appliance Park complex to Qingdao Haier of China for \$5 billion. The new employer demanded a new agreement to replace the IUE-GE contract covering 4000 blue-collar Park employees.

Their laundry list of take-back demands was long and brutal, including an end of the eight-hour day; a reduced sub-tier wage of \$12 for new hires; elimination of seniority bumping rights; and a complicated restructuring of company contributions to a 401(k) retirement plan.

All workers would get \$5500 in cash spread out over four years—but no hourly wage increase. And they demanded a new health-care plan based on Health Savings Accounts. Seventy-two percent of 3700 members of IUE-CWA Local 761 voted to reject. As we go to press no new talks have been scheduled.

**In the Cards**—Service Employees International Union Local 26 has won a "card check" recognition to bargain for 600 Air Serv workers at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport. Air Serv is a Delta Airline subcontractor employing baggage handlers, cabin cleaners, cart drivers, wheelchair agents, unaccompanied minor escorts, lavatory workers, and water-service fillers. ■

If you have a labor story appropriate for this column please contact [billon@kclabor.org](mailto:billon@kclabor.org)



# ... Trump

(continued from page 1)

mize corporate profits and curry favor from corporate CEOs, bankers, Wall Street investors, and hedge-fund managers. Working people will pay, one way or the other.

Trump's cabinet appointments make this all too clear. The Nov. 30 *New York Times* reports that these appointments are "the most powerful signal yet that Mr. Trump plans to emphasize policies friendly to Wall Street, like tax cuts and a relaxation of regulation, in the early days of his administration. ... That approach has been cheered by investors (the stocks of Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley have been on a tear since the election)."

The measures that Mnuchin and Ross have said will be on the table under their administration include significant tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy. This, they promise, will "create more jobs," a reprise of the "trickle-down" theory of the Reagan years. A recent study by the Tax Policy Center found that under the tax policies advocated by Trump, the country's richest 1 percent would receive a 13.5% tax reduction, while the "middle class" as a whole would receive only a 2% reduction and some would get a tax increase.

## Infrastructure projects and job creation

In the last week of the campaign, Trump's promotion of a massive, job-creating infrastructure improvement program helped attract the "rust-belt" working-class voters he needed to put him over the top in the Electoral College. Trump pledged \$1 trillion to a national program of infrastructure construction and repairs. Since the election, Bernie Sanders and other Democratic Party leaders offered to work with Trump on this effort.

Recently, more has been revealed on what Trump supporters in Congress and Wall Street are envisioning. The Nov. 29 *New York Times* reported that Trump's infrastructure plan was key to Wall Street exuberance following the Trump victory: "Stock traders celebrating Donald Trump's election have been bidding up equity prices on a risky bet. ... The hope, reflected in financial firms' postelection tip sheets for investors, is for a robust program of tax cuts and new spending, especially for infrastructure projects."

The *Times* said that while a growing section of Wall Street and economists have changed their view and now believe greater government spending is needed to stimulate the economy, Trump's Republican followers in Congress had something different in mind, envisioning a plan laden with massive corporate tax breaks but short on government stimulus spending.

A noted Goldman Sacks economist "suggested to clients that 'a modest infrastructure package' is more likely. But even that probably would not come as soon [as] 2017." If an infrastructure program is developed, it will most certainly be temporary in nature, and unable to reach a scale necessary to address the pressing need.

Only a massive and sustained public works program can address society's most urgent needs: repairing and constructing housing, roads, and bridges; adding, modernizing, and refurbishing schools and public transportation systems; preserving farmland and forests; and initiating a crash program to upgrade the power grid and transition toward 100 percent renewable energy sources.

## Health care and Medicare

Trump appointed Republican Congressman Tom Price as Health and Human Services Director, responsible for implementing changes in health care. Price is notorious as an adversary of women's reproductive rights, having cosponsored legislation in the House to assign "personhood" to a fetus.

Price is also a staunch opponent of the Affordable Care Act (ACA or Obamacare). He wants to replace it with one that also bolsters the insurance industry, and the rest of the burgeoning multi-billion-dollar health-care industry. The Republican goal is a plan that provides significantly fewer obstacles to profit generation than Obamacare.

Price's vision is contained in what the Nov. 30 *New York Times* calls a "detailed and comprehensive" plan, entitled the Empowering Patients First Act of 2015, which is still under discussion in Congress.

This is an insurance-based plan without Obama-care's markets and with severely reduced federal subsidies. Instead, it would provide "age-adjusted tax credits" for the purchase of individual and family health-insurance policies and would promote "health savings accounts" through Wall Street investment houses. The objective would be to "encourage" indi-



viduals and families to bear the full brunt of insurance cost, while at the same time raking in hundreds of millions in new profits via account fees and service charges for the investments houses.

The Republican plan, like ACA, centers on generating profits for doctors, hospitals, and insurance and pharmaceutical companies. But it would more drastically slash regulations that stand in the way and greatly curtail subsidies for the poor. *The Times* says that the bill "would, among other things, roll back the federally financed expansion of Medicaid in 31 states and the District of Columbia, taking coverage away from 14 million poor people."

While Trump promises not to touch Medicare, making fundamental changes to this program enjoys significant bipartisan support in Congress. *The Times* reports: "A plan backed by Mr. Price and the House speaker, Paul Ryan, would turn Medicare ... into a program in which people would buy private insurance through what is known as premium support. The idea is to turn Medicare into a voucher program, designed to limit federal spending while forcing seniors to bear more of the cost."

While we must vigorously oppose any steps toward rollback of Medicare and Medicaid, and elimination of insurance subsidies and other positive features of ACA like coverage for pre-existing conditions, the solutions offered by the capitalist parties don't come close to addressing the urgent need for accessible and comprehensive health-care services.

Despite the fact that earlier this year a Gallup poll revealed that 58 percent of Americans support replacing the ACA with a federally funded health-care system, the two capitalist parties continue to pursue only plans that promote profits for the powerful big-business interests.

The only truly effective solution is one that takes insurance companies and profits out of the picture entirely. Neither has anything to do with providing quality health care. We need a single-payer system as a step toward a universal, government-funded national program in which health care is provided to all as a basic right.

## The Trump victory and the road ahead

Once the dust settled after Trump's victory, the "Never Trump" Republicans began to recognize the changed reality and rally around their newly anointed president-elect. The Democrats were slower, some in deep shock; but the "first family" took the lead, with the president demonstrating unity in a friendly advice-sharing meeting with Donald Trump, and with a separate exchange of pleasantries between Michelle Obama and Melania Trump.

Obama pleaded with his reluctant followers to recognize the essential truth of the two-party system: "We're actually all on one team." The Wall Street backers of Hillary—bankers, traders, speculators, and hedge-fund market manipulators—were all quick to recognize that nothing truly important had been lost, as the stock market rose to record-level highs.

Despite the virulent expressions of racism and sexism displayed by Trump during the campaign—which gave a swift boost to the ultra-right fringe—and the steady stream of insults, rants, and repulsive behavior, millions responded to his populist-sounding message. These voters viewed Trump as an agent of change—someone capable of shaking things up, who in a distorted way embodied their distrust and hatred of a political system and a news media that ridicules, belittles, and ignores them.

Trump made significant inroads among the working class and the rural poor. The Clinton team had largely

(Above) Donald Trump is mobbed by admirers. But many will find that his populist campaign rhetoric against the big corporations and the "global power structure" was nothing but a sham.

abdicated the field of battle for these votes.

It was the brutal reality that working people experienced during eight painful Obama years that resulted in the lack of interest and participation in the election by millions. They remembered Obama's first major act as president in 2008, quickly heeding the pleas of the ruling rich that a massive "bailout" of the banks and hedge funds to the tune of well over \$7 trillion was so urgently needed that the economy would be hurled into oblivion without it. Remaining in their memory also was the reality of their rapidly vanishing jobs, unions, and pensions.

Despite Obama's relative popularity among Blacks, and high turnout in past elections, sizable numbers of working-class and poor Blacks, whose conditions worsened over the last eight years, chose to stay away from the polls on Election Day. They also remembered how Hillary Clinton had labeled Black inner-city youth "superpredators" and the Clintons' role in mass incarceration, promotion of "crime bills," and the war against Black women and children in the long-fought campaign to "end welfare as we know it."

All this heightened a sense of alienation and fed Trump's argument that to Hillary and the Democrats, working people, Blacks, and other minorities are merely heads to be counted every few years when elections come rolling around.

As it turned out, only 44 percent of eligible voters made it to the polls. More Blacks and Latinos voted for Trump than voted for Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney in 2012.

While truly deplorable racism expressed itself among white working-class voters in this election, it has not just now appeared on the scene. It was bred, fostered, and taught for years by Democratic Party politicians (some with long histories of close association with the KKK).

Trump won a hearing from white workers on the racist, anti-immigrant message of "saving American jobs" at the expense of the jobs of immigrant workers. This jingoist "America first" nationalist ideology is fully integrated in the propaganda of the reactionary labor union bureaucracy, which they have taught in union meetings and union leadership "training" seminars for years.

Most of the labor fakers responsible for promoting this racist message call themselves progressive Democrats. This ideology is reactionary to the core, as it pits U.S. workers against Mexican workers and those of other countries, and is now fully integrated as a core principal within the Democratic Party.

Essentially, the rise of Trump and his electoral victory is a result of a vacuum in political leadership within the U.S. working class and the oppressed. Despite the modest efforts of our Socialist Action presidential campaign and the campaigns of other small socialist parties, U.S. workers never had a horse in the race.

A mass political party of labor, organized through its unions and fully independent of capitalist parties, could have filled this void and presented a political program advancing the demands of the working class, opposing all forms of racism and sexism while championing the struggles and issues of all those oppressed under capitalism.

This is a fighting program, rejecting collaboration with our oppressors, and relying solely on our capacity to organize independently in mass struggle to defend our interests. ■



# The legacy of Fidel Castro



By JEFF MACKLER

Fidel Castro Ruz, Cuba's revolutionary leader, president, and prime minister for five decades, died in Santiago de Cuba on Friday, Nov. 25. He was 90 years old. Although one of the most profound, clear-sighted, honest, and dedicated revolutionary leaders of the past half-century, Castro has been demonized by the corporate media as a dictator, tyrant, murderer, and torturer.

These same critics—especially the government of the United States, whose 50-year illegal embargo/blockade of Cuba has been condemned by virtually every other nation—have no qualms about supporting the world's real tyrants, provided only that they offer zero resistance to the interests of the world's dominant imperialist powers. In the minds of Fidel's critics, his "original sin" was to challenge and overthrow capitalist power and prerogatives in Cuba and to spread Cuba's liberating message worldwide.

The 1959 establishment of the Cuban workers' state on an island of only 11 million people shook the world and continues to do so.

"Fidel," as he was referred to by friends and comrades around the world, was the son of a wealthy landowner. With a Jesuit secondary school education, he graduated from the University of Havana in 1945 with a degree in law. He engaged in radical student struggles, but was not yet dedicated to socialist revolution, and became a member of the traditional bourgeois opposition formation, the Orthodox Party. His 1952 candidacy for the Cuban national congress was cut short with the military coup of Colonel Fulgencio Batista, a former Cuban president (1940-44), who now abolished Cuba's constitution and installed himself as dictator.

As a human rights attorney for the poor, Castro filed an unsuccessful lawsuit challenging Batista's action on constitutional grounds. Not long afterward, he and a youthful band of radical followers, mostly students, organized a failed military attack on the Moncada and other police barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953. While Fidel and his young comrades were foiled in their expectations that the Moncada attack would spark a nationwide revolt, the date nevertheless became synonymous with and is celebrated as the beginning of the Cuban Revolution.

Fidel was tried before a Batista court and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Less than two years later, however, and on the occasion of Batista's 1954 post-coup election victory, the dictator, seeking a modicum of legitimacy for his regime, and facing broad opposition from working-class and bourgeois forces, declared an amnesty and freed all Cuba's political prisoners, including Fidel and his brother Raul.

Fidel represented himself in court and defended his attack on Moncada. His concluding statement, four hours in length, was a ringing denunciation of the Batista tyranny and a magnificent and prophetic statement of what was to come. He concluded: "I do not fear the fury of the miserable tyrant who snuffed out the life of 70 brothers of mine. Condemn me, it does not matter. History will absolve me."

Indeed it did! Two years later, Castro and 80 revolutionary fighters, including the Argentine doctor, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who had originally signed on as a medic, arrived in Cuba on a 61-foot well-worn wooden yacht built for a few dozen at best—the *Granma*. They set out to begin a two-year guerrilla war in the Sierra Maestra, which defeated successive waves of U.S.-backed and armed Batista forces.

The guerrillas won the support of Cuba's peasant

masses and were aided by a well-organized underground support network in Cuba's major cities. Their July 26 Movement, beginning with skirmishes at local Batista outposts, vanquished the main force of the Batista Army in Santiago de Cuba. In time, commanders of the revolution, including Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos, led military columns that defeated qualitatively larger but increasingly demoralized and disintegrating Batista forces across Cuba.

## The rebels enter Havana

In a speech from Santiago de Cuba, Fidel proclaimed the revolution's victory on New Years Day, Jan. 1, 1959. Batista and his entourage fled to the Dominican Republic the following day. A week later, Fidel and his comrades, 10,000 strong, and having defeated an army five times their size, triumphantly entered Havana to be welcomed by hundreds of thousands of cheering Cubans.

But Cuba's socialist course was not immediately assured with the military victory of the July 26 Movement. The fundamentals of capitalist power, including the private, largely U.S., ownership of Cuba's land and property, remained in the hands of foreigners or the Batista-era capitalist elite, including Cuba's anti-Batista capitalist supporters of the 1959 revolution. The central question of which class shall rule—the masses of workers and peasants or the capitalist few—remained unresolved.

Castro, still a revolutionary democrat, initially named key anti-Batista bourgeois figures to the central posts in the Cuban government, including anti-Batista politician Juan Miro Cardona as prime minister, Judge Manuel Urrutia as provisional president, and Cuban banker/economist Felipe Pazos, a one-time International Monetary Fund official in Washington.

In short order, however, beginning a few weeks after their initial appointments, these capitalist figures proved incapable of meeting the ever growing aspirations of the Cuban masses for land and fundamental changes that advanced the well-being of the vast majority.

Thus, the modern history of the Cuban Revolution begins with the early and critical decisions of the Castro team as it confronted both U.S. imperialism and Cuba's national capitalist class. Both forces fully expected that Castro and his followers would differ little from past idealistic and well-meaning bourgeois revolutionaries in other countries, who had illusions that their visions of justice, reform, and democracy could be achieved within the capitalist framework.

Castro himself had honestly explained to prominent U.S. journalists, like Herbert Mathews, a *New York Times* editorial writer who visited Castro and the July 26 Movement guerrilla fighters in the Sierras, that he was not a "communist" but merely a dedicated revolutionary whose interests were not in conflict with those of the United States.

The conquest of military power in Cuba marked only the beginning of a transformation process that would unfold over the next two years. At each juncture, the Castro team was confronted with decisions that would either return Cuba to the capitalist orbit or irrevocably embark it on a socialist course.

## Land reform

The first steps along the socialist road were taken when the initial capitalist appointees proved incapable of implementing the revolution's most important promises—including a land reform that would, as Che Guevara, the first Minister of Agrarian Reform, argued, employing the credo of the 1911 Mexican Revolution, "grant the land to the tillers."

In May 1959, under Fidel's leadership, Cuba began confiscating U.S.-owned land and distributing it to Cuba's poor peasant masses. This had been the policy of the July 26 Movement before the formal conquest of power. Land in the countryside that had been liberated during the course of battle with the Batista army was given to the affected peasants, thereby cementing their loyalty to the revolution while winning new fighting forces for the revolutionary army.

In the course of the next two years Cuba's land reform exceeded any in modern history since the great Russian Revolution of 1917, when the party of Lenin

(continued on page 7)



(continued from page 6)

and Trotsky nationalized the land of a nation that was one-sixth of the earth's surface and granted it to peasant committees for distribution to Russia's most oppressed, who represented 90 percent of the population.

Needless to say, Cuba's evolving and ever-deepening land reform program alienated both U.S. business interests that were the predominant owners of Cuba's arable land, and landed interests of Cuba's national capitalist class. The latter increasingly separated themselves from the Castro-led revolutionary process, including financing and arming, with U.S. support, short-lived counterrevolutionary militias in the Escambray Mountains aimed at Fidel's overthrow.

With every step toward implementing the revolutionary promises of July 26 Movement, the U.S. government countered with threats of dire consequences. Fidel and his evolving team consistently responded by deepening the ongoing revolutionary process. When the U.S.-owned oil refineries refused to process Soviet crude oil, they were nationalized. The U.S., under the Eisenhower administration, responded by cutting off Cuba's sugar quota, which accounted for a huge portion of Cuba's then largely "one-crop economy."

With regard to the economy and the ouster of former Batista-era banker Felipe Pazos, the initial head of Cuba's National Bank, Fidel, in search of a replacement, was said to have asked Cuba's core leadership group if anyone in the room has experience as an economist.

Che Guevara raised his hand and was so appointed. Soon afterward, this humorous but incisive episode reveals, when asked about his "economist" experience, Che responded, "I thought Fidel asked if there were 'communists' in the room." As head of Cuba's central bank Guevara proceeded to adopt a series of measures to centralize Cuba's economy and organize Cuba's wealth and industries to benefit the Cuban masses as opposed to the previous capitalist elite.

A critical choice was required when soon after the January 1959 victory, the Cuban masses organized mass tribunals and court martials to bring to justice some 500 of the worst of Batista's murdering and raping death squad criminals. The ensuing public trials, often conducted in huge stadiums with thousands of Batista's victims present, many of whom proffered uncontested testimony as to the old regime's monstrous crimes, were challenged by the U.S. government on the grounds that "due process" in the U.S. definition of the term, was denied. Few, if any, however, denied the guilt of Batista's assassins.

U.S. officials demanded that Castro intervene to stop these trials with forces from the revolutionary army. Once again, he and his team refused. The murderers were shot before the firing squads of the revolutionary people when the mass verdict, "Al paredón por los terroristas!" (To the wall with the terrorists!) was proclaimed by Cuba's aroused and participating masses. As with every serious revolution in history, including the 1776 American Revolution and the U.S. Civil War, justice is rapidly dispensed by the long brutalized victims of ruling-class murder and tyranny.

### The Bay of Pigs invasion

In addition to U.S.-backed military incursions, not to mention some 100 recorded U.S.-orchestrated efforts at Fidel's assassination (some put the figure at 600), the U.S. terminated all diplomatic relations with Cuba and imposed soon afterwards a vicious and illegal embargo/blockade that continues to this day.

The U.S. break with Cuba was followed by the CIA's secret training in Nicaragua and Guatemala, both U.S.-backed dictatorships, of some 1500 Miami and New Jersey-based Cuban exiles for the infamous April 17 invasion of Cuba at the remote Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs). Two days earlier, CIA pilots employed B-26 bombers in a failed effort to cripple Cuba's modest air force. The attack signaled to Fidel and Cuba's armed forces that an invasion was imminent.

U.S. intelligence agencies had predicted that their sponsored invaders would be immediately welcomed by what they conceived of as the "Communist-oppressed Cuban masses." It never happened. In truth, the invasion was secretly conceived by the U.S. military as a plan to enable the invaders to plant their counterrevolutionary flag as occupiers of Cuban territory, and immediately call for U.S. official recognition and military support.

Fidel himself, in a tank at the Bay of Pigs, and at the risk of his life, took command of Cuba's defense. In less than three days, over a thousand invaders were captured and 100 were killed. Cuban government losses were also significant.

Whatever remnants of capitalist property remained



at the time of the 1961 U.S. invasion were eliminated outright when, in the name of the Cuban people, Fidel announced that his revolution would proceed to nationalize the holdings of the Cuban capitalist class and all foreign-owned capitalists, "down to the nails in the boots of their shoes."

It was only after the Bay of Pigs that Fidel formally announced, on Dec. 2, 1961, that he was a Marxist-Leninist. The previous month, he had declared that Cuba's revolution was socialist in character.

Cuba's revolutionary internationalism included its sending thousands of Cuban fighters to support the Angolan government's defense of its sovereignty when confronted with a massive armed invasion by South Africa's military aimed at restoring a pro-U.S. regime in that country.

At the famous 1986-87 Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, Cuban troops defeated the U.S.-backed South African invasion, in time contributing to the end of South African rule of its protectorate in Namibia, and, in 1994 to the end of South Africa's apartheid system. Nelson Mandela, in a subsequent address to the Cuban people, stated that Cuito Cuanavale was "a turning point for the liberation of our continent and my people."

### Fidel: the evolution of a revolutionary

Fidel Castro was a bold and courageous revolutionary fighter who came to realize from direct experience that his democratic and egalitarian aspirations could not be realized within the framework of the capitalist system, which is inherently oppressive and predatory.

Under his leadership and with the massive political and moral support of all Cuba's oppressed and exploited, Fidel first led in the conquest of military power against a brutal U.S.-backed dictatorship. He proceeded to lead in the establishment of what he hoped would be an egalitarian capitalist democracy with equal rights for all. He quickly came to understand that his initial liberal capitalist allies had no intention of sharing their wealth and economic prerogatives with the Cuban masses, and they were quickly eliminated from formal government power.

For another six months, more or less, Cuban society existed in a contradictory form that revolutionary socialists characterize as a workers and farmers government—that is, a government in which the political forms are under the control of the representatives of the mass of workers and small farmers while the economic forms remain dominated by capitalist property relations.

The Castro leadership resolved this contradiction early on, with each adopted measure increasingly limiting the economic power of Cuban capitalism—both the foreign and the native variant. By mid-1959 Cuba became a workers' state, having effectively and qualitatively eliminated almost all capitalist private property relations.

For the first time in the Western Hemisphere, a free nation, revolutionary Cuba, devoted its resources to the advancement of the interests of the vast majority. Cuba's literacy program became of model for the world. On a volunteer basis, students—more than half were women—were encouraged to leave their schools and universities to head for the countryside. By day, the students joined the newly landed poor

peasant farmers to toil in the field; by night, in the still electricity-lacking rural areas, they taught these same poor farmers to read and write, in short order raising Cuba's literacy levels to the highest in the world.

Cuba's prostitutes (Havana had become infamous for its mafia-owned gambling casinos and brothels) were trained to take their place among Cuba's finest teachers. Rent on all forms of housing was limited to 10 percent of income, and soon phased out completely. A qualitatively expanded and free system of quality health care and education was established throughout the island. Cuba today graduates a higher percentage of its population with post-college degrees than any other nation.

All kinds of government financial support to Cuba's peasant poor were advanced, including low or zero-interest loans for the purchase of seeds and machinery. Cuba abolished all forms of institutional racism, established mass women's organizations, trade unions and the famous Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. The latter were neighborhood-based and armed committees to defend Cuba against U.S.-initiated terrorist activities. Indeed, revolutionary Cuba functioned as a nation of armed people with weapons in hand to defend their own interests.

### Fidel meets with Malcolm X

Cuba, thoroughly racist and segregated under Batista rule, boldly brought its anti-racist message to the U.S. in 1961 when a Castro-led team attended a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. When news that a high end mid-town Manhattan hotel had refused rooms for the multi-racial Cuban delegation, Malcolm X, then a leader of the Nation of Islam, invited the Cubans to stay in Harlem.

The New York chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, led by Bertha Green, a member of the Socialist Workers Party, followed up on Malcolm's challenge and reached an agreement with the Cubans to spend their days in Harlem's Hotel Theresa, where Fidel met with Malcolm—a stunning rebuke not only to U.S. racism but to a good portion of the U.S. socialist left who at that time rejected Malcolm's revolutionary black nationalism as "racism in reverse."

The Castro-team's internationalism was not limited to words. Believing that Cuba's guerrilla example could be extended to other countries, in the mid-1960's Cuba organized teams of fighters to establish guerrilla "foci" in every Latin American country except Paraguay and Mexico.

### Cuba and permanent revolution

There was no doubt that Cuba's revolutionary idealism and dedication to peasant centered rural revolutionary struggle to remove Latin American dictatorships flew in the face of the Stalinist USSR's view that socialist revolution in poor countries was not on the agenda.

But Fidel and his well-intentioned revolutionary fighters tended to underestimate the critical importance of constructing urban-based mass revolutionary workers' parties of the Leninist type and instead focused on relatively isolated rural guerrilla warfare, not as an adjunct to the seizure of power but rather, as

(continued on page 11)





# Nationalize the energy industry!

By **BRUCE LESNICK**

On Nov. 18, the Obama administration banned oil and gas drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans for the next five years, while allowing drilling projects to go forward in the Cook Inlet (southwest of Anchorage, Alaska) and in the Gulf of Mexico. The media have noted the strong possibility that when Donald Trump assumes office, his administration would try to rewrite this blueprint in order to ramp up off-shore oil drilling even more.

The environmental movement points out that if the worst effects of climate change are to be avoided, the world's remaining oil and gas deposits must remain in the ground. Yet the U.S. government, under Republican and Democratic administrations alike, has ignored these warnings and continues to feed the oil companies' hunger for profits.

In this article, Bruce Lesnick outlines why and how these companies should be taken out of the hands of the billionaire tycoons, and nationalized to be run by working people.

We know that human activities are adversely affecting Earth's climate. Scientists began to draw our attention to the link between fossil fuels, greenhouse gases, and climate in the 1980s. Since then, the evidence for anthropogenic climate change has become overwhelming. All that's left to debate is what to do about it.

Under the current setup, energy conglomerates that owe their fortunes to fossil fuels have every incentive to dismiss global warming and to cast aspersions on climate change research. The top five oil companies (BP, Chevron, Conoco Phillips, Exxon Mobil, and Shell) reported combined profits of \$93 billion for 2013. That's more than the U.S. budget that year for Education (\$71.9 billion) or Housing (\$46.3 billion.) It's more than 10 times the federal budget for environmental protection (\$8.9 billion).

The more coal, oil, and natural gas that get burned, the more the climate is thrown out of whack, and the more these companies are rewarded financially.

If we're serious about addressing climate change, nationalization of the energy industry must become a central organizing demand. Nationalizing the big energy companies would make all the difference to the fight to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Right from the start, it would eliminate profit from the energy calculus and remove a large pool of money that's used to manipulate government policy. It would make it possible to embark on a plan for a sustainable energy future, which would focus on the needs of the population and the planet as a whole, rather than on the reckless aggrandizement of a few.

But the issue of nationalization does raise many important questions: Is it moral? Is it legal? How would it work? Is it practical? Should the owners of nationalized industries be compensated?

## Who's morality?

Let's first examine the question of morality. Do "we, the people" have any moral right to take a key national industry out of private hands and convert it to public ownership? One way to approach this is to consider the balance sheet: what does the population "owe" to

the industry, and what does the industry "owe" to us?

To begin with, the oil, gas, coal, and nuclear companies receive tens of billions of dollars every year in government subsidies. In other words, a healthy portion of the profits these companies report year after year come directly out of our pockets. In the case of nuclear, it's doubtful that the industry would break even without massive public subsidies and insurance guarantees.

In addition, publicly supported academic research has laid the foundation for a great deal of the technology and innovation that allows the energy industry (and others) to turn a profit.

Then there are the so-called external costs of energy production. These are the depletion of limited resources, destruction of the environment, and poisoning of communities that are all built in to the current industry model. These costs are "external" in the sense that energy companies don't pay them; there are no entries for these items in their books. Instead, these costs are born by the public. A 2010 study by the National Resource Council put these costs at \$120 billion for the year 2005 alone. This is more than the total combined, record-level profits of Exxon, Shell, Marathon Oil, and Chevron in that year.

If all of this weren't enough, we can add to the social debt of the energy industry the fact that for generations they have been blithely churning out greenhouse gases that scientists tell us are threatening the very survival of humanity.

So the energy companies owe a huge debt to society. What about the other side of the moral ledger? Weighing in favor of the right of the energy monopolies to continue business as usual is a body of corporate law and historical precedent which, taken together, assert that production for private profit represents the height of nobility. This is manifest in U.S. foreign and domestic policy, which operates on the principle that the pursuit of corporate profits is more central to "freedom" and "democracy" than free speech, human rights, and other lesser notions.

So the moral contest comes down to this: how does the claim of the energy tycoons to pursue profits through private ownership and control of our energy infrastructure stack up against the right of the majority to defend ourselves from the damage, theft, abuse, and destruction that have been wrought by the energy corporations for generations?

The question answers itself. Defenders of the status quo would have us assign monumental weight to corporate "rights." But only in a moral universe that values the accumulation of wealth above community well-being can corporate law and historical tradition compare with the right of the population as a whole to take action to prevent our own extinction. It's a question of whether to prioritize human needs or profits.

## The matter of legality

Would nationalizing the energy industry be legal? Given the strong moral case for nationalization, this question is less pressing than it might appear. One could get lost in the thickets of the constitution and federal and state law regarding corporations and private property, but we ought to recognize some basic truths:

What's legal and what's just are not necessarily the same thing. Many things we know to be unjust were once legal: slavery and Jim Crow segregation, for example. Many things we know to be just were once illegal: the right of women to vote, the right of workers to form unions, etc. Moreover, laws are not applied equally across the board. When it comes to interpreting and enforcing the law, the rich and powerful are treated quite differently than the rest of us.

The law is not absolute, but is interpreted to fit the times. Just a few years ago, same-sex marriage was illegal in most states. Today, long-standing laws forbidding same-sex marriage have been struck down left and right. Woman's right to abortion was proclaimed by a conservative Supreme Court during the Republican administration of Richard Nixon. What tipped the balance was a massive movement in the streets.

Even where the law appears to be clear-cut, "one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws," as Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his 1963 *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. With the moral ledger for nationalizing the energy industry pointing so squarely to the need to place the rights of people and the planet ahead of the desire by a few for private profit, any law that might be used to block nationalization of the industry *must* be unjust.

## What would it look like?

Suppose a majority of Americans were convinced of the need to nationalize the energy monopolies as a step toward forestalling climate calamity. How would it work, exactly?

What would *not* be helpful would be to create a new government bureaucracy, run from the top down by politicians whose campaigns are funded by the usual corporate behemoths. To do this right, we need a new national energy sector that is run completely democratically: Workers in the industry should elect their own supervisors and have final say over safety and working conditions.

Policy, priorities, and directions for the new energy sector should be set by a national board comprised of delegates from regional energy committees as well as elected representatives of the workers within the energy industry, workers in other industries affected by energy policy, scientists, and engineers.

All energy policy representatives should be elected and subject to immediate recall. For compensation, they should receive no more than the average pay of those they were elected to represent.

Workers whose jobs are lost due to new priorities and directions in energy policy should be guaranteed retraining, and full union wages for as long as they remain unemployed.

A concise way to summarize the above principles in a slogan would be: Nationalize the energy industry under workers' control!

## Can it be done?

We know the climate is in trouble, and nationalizing the energy conglomerates seems like a fine idea, but is it practical?

So often, we confuse what is practical with what is easy. It would be easy to continue to prostrate ourselves before corporate politicians and the for-profit energy companies. We could continue to plead for reason at the next international Conference of Parties (COP), but the results are likely to be as dismal as was the case with COP1 through COP22. Time is short. The movement needs a new demand and a clearer focus.

It's popular to talk about the need for "getting money out of politics". But no policy could be more marinated in wealth than allowing an entire sector of the economy—particularly one as crucial as energy—to be steered by the need to maximize profits for a handful of private owners.

Since burning fossil fuels has proven highly profitable for the energy corporations, we will not be able to stop global warming unless we break the link that subordinates the needs of the many for a rational energy policy to the desire of a few to maximize their profits. In this sense, nationalization of the energy industry is as practical as it gets because without taking this step, without changing the rules of the game, we simply won't be able to solve the climate crisis.

## What would it cost?

After examining the moral balance sheet and adding up the costs, it would be hard to make the case that the energy magnates are owed a single penny. Quite the reverse. Taking into account generations of depletion, destruction, pollution, devastation, state subsidies and highway robbery, the oil barons have a monumental and growing debt to society. On moral and rational grounds, these companies are owed nothing in compensation for nationalization.

(continued on page 9)



# The Man Who Loved Dogs

By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

*"The Man Who Loved Dogs," by Leonardo Padura. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 2014. Originally published in Spanish in 2009 as "El hombre que amaba a los perros." Available in hardcover and paperback in both languages.*

With the publication of "The Man Who Loved Dogs," Cuban writer Leonardo Padura joins the ranks of outstanding Latin American writers that include Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Pablo Neruda, and Roberto Bolaño. But this captivating work of historical fiction is much more. It is an important and timely political act that introduces Trotsky to Cuba and Latin America while at the same time exposing the crimes of Stalinism.

Padura, born in 1955 in Havana and educated at the University of Havana, is a novelist, essayist, and investigative reporter. His work has been recognized in both Cuba and the Spanish-speaking world. In 2012 he won Cuba's National Prize in Literature and in 2015 he won the Princesa (formerly Principe) de Asturias Literary Prize, sometimes called the Latin American Nobel Prize.

The novel is told from the perspective of three narrators: Leon Trotsky, Ramón Mercader (the Soviet agent who assassinated Trotsky in Mexico), and Iván Cárdenas, a failed Cuban writer working in Havana at a veterinary magazine. The title of the novel is ambiguous: all three men loved dogs. Trotsky's life is followed from his internal exile in Siberia by Stalin, through his external exile in Turkey, France, Norway, and finally Mexico. Mercader's life is followed from his childhood in Barcelona through his participation in the Spanish Civil War to his training as a Soviet agent in Russia and his pursuit of Trotsky. Iván's life is told, with flashbacks, from his meeting in 1977 with a "man who loved dogs" who may, or may not be, Trotsky's assassin. As the novel progresses, the lives of the three narrators become connected in interesting and subtle ways. Sorry, no spoilers in this review!

Padura based his portrayal of Trotsky's life on extensive historical research, including a careful reading of Trotsky's published works during his exile and the three-volume biography by Isaac Deutscher. But Padura's skill as a novelist brings Trotsky to life, and the reader feels great compassion for his tragic circumstances.

Much less is known of Mercader, but Padura makes up for this by careful use of the facts that are known along with an interesting novelistic technique—Mercader is placed at important historical events such as the Moscow show trials of 1937-38, where Stalin tried, after forcing confessions, the vast majority of the leadership of the 1917 revolution. By the end of the trials, Stalin had arrested and executed almost every important veteran leader of the 1917 revolution, three of the five Soviet marshals, and over two-thirds of the central committee. He also had arrested or shot several thousand



(Above) Leon Trotsky testifies at tribunal in Mexico concerning Stalinist armed attack on his house on May 24, 1940. Standing at left is U.S. socialist Joseph Hansen.

officers of the Red Army, which Trotsky had founded and once led.

Iván is based on Padura's experience and the experiences of his generation, a generation that grew up with the revolution, fought in Angola, and suffered through the special period of the 1990s. All three narrators are not merely narrators. They are also symbols: Trotsky, of the revolution betrayed; Mercader, of the crimes of Stalinism; Iván, of the Cuban people and their revolution. Ultimately, this novel is a triple tragedy, but one that also points the way to a better future.

Having read the novel in both Spanish and English, I can attest that the nearly flawless translation by Anna Kushner captures Padura's voice beautifully and is itself a work of art.

Padura is best known in Latin America for his Mario Conde (the Count) novels, based on the police detective and later private investigator/book buyer Mario Conde. Each of the Conde novels is a wonderful work of detective fiction, a love poem to the Cuban people and culture, and a political expose. The novels (in their English translations) are "Havana Blue," "Havana Gold," "Havana Red," "Havana Black," "Adios Hemingway," and "Havana Fever."

The early novels were written during the special period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when aid disappeared and Cuba experienced the hardships caused by the U.S. economic blockade. These novels are especially interesting as they depict daily life during this time. Politically, each of these novels focuses on a different social problem. For instance, "Havana Blue" focuses on corruption in the Cuban Communist Party. "Havana Gold" focuses on illegal drugs in Cuba. Other novels focus on the persecution of homosexuals, the role of organized crime in pre-revolution Cuba, and the censorship of writers in Cuba.

"The Man Who Loved Dogs" was widely reviewed in the capitalist press at the time of its English-language publication. *The Independent* (Feb. 13, 2014) hailed it as a "monumental work." The reviewer for *The New York Times* (Jan. 21, 2014) wrote that Padura "has made his entrance to the Latin American Modernist canon by writing a Russian novel." *The Wall Street Journal* (Feb. 7, 2014) described the novel as "a rewarding read, despite its excesses."

*The Washington Post* (March 27, 2014) describes Padura as "Cuba's greatest living writer and one who is inching toward the pantheon occupied by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mario Vargas Llosa." Perhaps the most lavish praise came from *The Financial Times*. Their re-

viewer (Jan. 31, 2014) described the book as "a stunning novel" and a "monumental, intricately structured work."

Great works of literature are inherently ambiguous, and Padura's novel is no exception. We all read these works with our own eyes. How could it be otherwise? Still, one can't help noticing in these reviews an effort to both acknowledge a great work of literature while at the same time distorting its political content.

*The Independent* (Feb. 13, 2014) describes the novel as "a fictional survey of two equally ruthless revolutionaries, Trotsky and Stalin, of the mass murders and show trials, and of the trusting millions caught up in it." *The New York Times* (Jan. 21, 2014) highlights the parts of the novel critical of Cuba and Cuba's treatment of writers.

*The Washington Post* (March 27, 2014) views the novel as an attack on Fidel Castro, "who is never mentioned by name, [but] his creation—the Cuban revolution—is rendered here as a crumbling tropical gulag." And not to be outdone, *The Financial Times* (Jan. 31, 2014) described the novel as an "insightful exploration of the ways in which communism corrodes the human spirit and justified the most monstrous of crimes."

These are old tricks: equating the crimes of Stalin and Stalinism with Trotsky or Lenin, distorting the historical record, and ignoring political and economic context. Trotsky did not kill millions, orchestrate show trials, or deceive and manipulate millions—that was the doing of Stalin and the degenerated bureaucracy that he represented. Castro did not starve the Cuban people during the special period—that was the doing of the United States and the U.S.-led embargo. In my reading, there is only one published review that accurately captured the political message of the novel: A long and historically detailed review published by *In Defense of Marxism* by Alan Woods (Jan. 14, 2014). No surprise there.

"The Man Who Loved Dogs" is many things: a carefully researched work of historical fiction, a gripping spy novel, and a complex work of detective fiction. Politically, the novel introduces Trotsky to Latin Americans, presents the crimes of Stalinism, and explores the relation between Stalinism and the Cuban revolution. And it is also, as Padura himself has said, a book "relevant to the moment we are living through." ■

## ... Energy

(continued from page 8)

There is justice in this position, but we need not hold it up as an unbreakable principle. If, by some miracle, a modest offer of compensation would induce the energy profiteers to give up the fight, abandon their claims, and cooperate in transforming the industry to public ownership under workers' control, then such a deal might be worth considering.

But we shouldn't hold our breath. The starting point must be that the right of the majority to a healthy planet trumps any corporate charter and any putative claim for compensation.

If humanity is to win the climate fight, we need to understand what it will take and be more focused in our demands. We need to be fully cognizant of who our friends and enemies are. Only then can we build a movement powerful enough to defend the rights and needs of the majority.

By calling for nationalization of the energy industry under workers' control, we strengthen the climate change movement in multiple ways: by identifying the key obstacles in our path; by embracing our natural allies and unmasking our adversaries; by providing a strategy around which a fighting movement can coalesce; and by focusing our collective strength in such a way as to strike a real blow at the very heart of the problem. ■

## ... Women's march

(continued from page 12)

This was the same sentiment expressed in Poland when the abortion bill was defeated.

In an article in the *New Yorker* magazine, Ariel Levy spoke with Francesca Comencini, who spearheaded the women's movement against the misogynist leader of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi. In 2011, she and her sister created massive feminist "manifestaciones," a series of impassioned demonstrations throughout cities and villages across Italy. Berlusconi resigned nine months after her group, "Se Non Ora, Quando," (If Not Now, When) held demonstrations that involved more than a million people. She believes mass demonstrations can send

the message, "women are the nation!"

In the United States, in 2004, a million people marched on the Washington, D.C., mall in the March For Women's Lives, which focused on women's reproductive freedom. Since that time, however, attacks on reproductive rights have increased. Misogynists have become further emboldened by the election of Donald Trump. What were micro-aggressions and individual attacks during the campaign will likely become magnified into legal and policy changes that affect the lives of all women—unless we protest.

It has been 12 years since the last mass women's march in the United States, and now it is time for women to hit the streets of Washington, D.C., and other cities on Jan. 21 to send the message that women will fight for their rights. ■



# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

## Trudeau clings to Harper's odious laws

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Canada's Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, John McCallum, can designate innocent groups of individuals arriving in Canada for discriminatory treatment.

Designated Foreign Nationals (DFNs) are subject to mandatory detention for lengthy periods, with minimal review. There is no right of appeal to the Refugee Appeal Division for those whose refugee claims are denied.

Even if a claimant is eventually recognized by Canada as a refugee, he or she cannot begin the process

of bringing relatives to this country for at least five years—a violation of the fundamental right to speedy family reunification.

The DFN regime was introduced in 2012 by Stephen Harper's Conservative government. The Justin Trudeau Liberal government pledged to rectify this odious policy. Notwithstanding complaints from groups like the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers and Amnesty International Canada, no action has been taken.

Trudeau also proclaimed that 2015 would see the last first-past-the-post Canadian federal election, heralding the prospect of proportional representation at

the 2019 vote. He also promised a new relationship with indigenous peoples. At a minimum, that must mean heeding First Nations' cry for no new pipelines. Instead, he approved the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline on Nov. 30.

Then there's the goal of ending tax breaks for the rich, including the use of highly regressive executive stock options. Ninety per cent of that benefit goes to the top one per cent of earners, among them the top bankers and heads of mining and telecommunications corporations.

That's to say nothing of putting an end to accepting hefty political contributions from corporate big wigs who pay to have dinner, and thus direct access, to the P.M. and his cabinet ministers—a practice that Justin said did not pass the sniff test, however technically legal it may be.

Affordable childcare? Forget it. Poverty and homelessness? Study it. End the combat role for Canadian Forces abroad—by increasing deployment in Eastern Europe and by sending troops to Africa? Right.

So, now we can chalk up another broken promise. It seems there's just no place at the Trudeau table for refugees. ■

## Why we turned our backs on Trudeau

In the waning hours of Monday evening [Oct. 24] at the Canadian Labour Congress's Young Worker Summit, a surprise guest was announced. The 400 young union activists who had gathered in Ottawa to address the issues facing their generation would be face-to-face with the most influential decision maker in the country: Justin Trudeau. As Prime Minister Trudeau began to speak to the large crowd on Tuesday morning, dozens of young workers representing various unions across sectors stood together and turned our backs to protest the hypocrisy of the Liberal government's actions while in office.

The protest was a symbolic rebuke of a leader who has turned his back on young workers. For us, turning our backs was how we chose to communicate to the prime minister. It was a physical representation of what we believe labour and social movements must do when confronted with anti-worker and pro-corporate policies.

As the initial agitators rose from their seats, we were joined by other work-

ers from across the convention floor who are tired of watching the government use political rhetoric to hide gross inaction. We do not believe the prime minister was there to have meaningful dialogue that will result to lasting progressive policy changes.

In just the past few weeks we saw the government turn its back on electoral reform. We saw them push pro-corporate trade deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). We saw the finance minister trade cash for access while telling young people to accept the reality of precarious work. We saw the prime minister reassert his opposition to a \$15 federal minimum wage. And we saw them approve the LNG pipeline despite huge implications for the environment and Indigenous land rights.

The government is long on words but short on action. The prime minister is MIA on the issues that matter to us as young workers, but eager to "dialogue" with us for the sake of a photo-op. That

is why we turned our back. We are not his photo op.

During our protest, the prime minister attempted to pit worker against worker and condemned the action as being disrespectful and counterproductive to the interests of young workers. We say it is his broken promises that are disrespectful and counterproductive.

Things escalated quickly beyond the vetted questions and armchair discussion with young workers shouting for serious action on a variety of critical issues:

There were calls to stop Kinder Morgan pipeline project, to end the repression of Indigenous land defenders and climate justice activists including the 99 youth arrested in front of Parliament Hill on Sunday, to reject the TPP, to raise workers out of poverty by meeting the demands of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, to deliver an affordable childcare program, to repeal Bill C-51, to end unjust Canadian military operations around the world, to institute anti-scab legislation, to implement free post-

secondary education and many other issues. Beyond the selfies and the carefully crafted image, young workers are increasingly seeing that Trudeau's government holds little meaningful promise for workers of any age.

As the event came to a close, the prime minister told the room he would "be back." We sincerely hope he does return, but we have some words of advice about how he should prepare for his second visit.

Prime Minister Trudeau—return having kept your promises on electoral reform, on the federal minimum wage, and on meaningful climate action. Return with a plan to address the human rights violations still facing countless citizens of this country. Return and demonstrate action, not just words. Otherwise, return expecting to face the same response you received on Tuesday. ■

By Jessica Sikora, Erin Warman, OP-SEU; Cory Weir, Unifor; David Anderson and Suleman Bashrat, UniteHere; Kim Abis, CUPE; Brianna Broderick, USW; Alexander Lambrecht, Northern Territories Federation of Labour. Reprinted from RankandFile.ca.

## Victory for public education in Mass. referendum

By JOE AUCIELLO

BOSTON—In Massachusetts, a November ballot question that would have allowed for the creation of up to 12 new charter schools per year was soundly defeated. What's more, the most resounding setbacks for charter supporters occurred in the very cities where the new schools would have been formed. In Boston, where charter schools were promoted as the alternative to mediocre or failing schools, the ballot initiative lost by 62 percent to 38 percent.

Charter schools are public schools, but they operate separately from local school districts and local school boards. Teachers, for instance, are not required to have state certification. The schools typically have no teachers' union and are not required to adhere to union contracts.

Equally important, if not more so, is the fact that funding for charter schools comes from tuition paid by the students' local school districts. This reduces the amount of money available to serve students in the "sending" schools, resulting in a statewide loss to public education of an estimated \$400 million. Considering that public schools are already chronically underfunded, the real loss is far greater.

Massachusetts already has 80 charter schools, with an enrollment of more than 40,000 students. Another 30,000 students, including many minority children, are currently on charter school waiting lists.

This electoral contest was a vote with national implications. From 2003-2013, the number of charter schools throughout the United States more than doubled, from approximately 3000 to 7000, with 3 million students. Had the results been different, the Mass.

campaign for charter schools would have become a template for similar initiatives to defund and dismantle public education in other states. The conservative agenda that is hostile to teachers' unions would have scored a victory by increasing the number of schools where union contracts are not allowed.

Such measures, as former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders noted, were "Wall Street's attempt to line their own pockets while draining resources away from public education at the expense of low-income, special education students, and English language learners."

So, when the state teachers' unions went on a campaign to mobilize their members to counter the charter school propaganda, teachers turned out in large numbers, talking to voters directly in door-to-door efforts and by staffing phone banks.

The ballot proposal in favor of charter schools did not fail through lack of funds, prominent backers, or a professional organizing effort. Twelve million dollars was raised by September, and an additional \$12 million was spent before the November election. That \$24 million set a record for money spent on any ballot question in Massachusetts. It was also \$10 million more than the amount raised by state and national teachers' organizations. Much of the money was spent on well-produced, skillfully written television commercials featuring charter school teachers in their classrooms, spinning feel-good messages. These ads assured viewers that charter schools not only enhance learning opportunities for their students, they do so without creating any ill effect on public education.

In a brazen blend of political acumen and deceit, the

commercials asserted what is not true while not actually lying. They claimed that charter schools reimburse costs to the public schools for the students who leave. In Barnstable County, for instance, the reimbursement rate was approximately 15 percent, which meant that Cape Cod and Islands schools lost roughly \$15 million.

These misleading ads flooded the airwaves and completely outspent the opposing message.

The source of this ample, pro-charter treasure-chest was deliberately made obscure. In addition to support from figures like the heirs to the Wal-Mart fortune, the largest source of funding was a New York-based organization called "Families for Excellent Schools." Despite requests from journalists, this umbrella organization has not revealed its donors, which may well include a contingent of corporations.

The defeat of the right-wing agenda in Massachusetts is a significant one—it shows that money and propaganda do not make victory inevitable—but the triumph is not yet decisive. The anti-union reactionaries also rally around the slogan: "The struggle continues." What's more, they possess the resources to mount another campaign practically anywhere in the country.

As a presidential candidate, Donald Trump spoke of increasing the number of charter schools and voucher programs, which provide students with public funds for private school tuition, including religious schools. President-elect Trump's appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education, an advocate for "school choice," that is, charter schools and voucher programs, shows that before long the battle to defend public education will need to be joined once again. ■



# Nine defendants sentenced in 'Minneapolis Terror trial'

By KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

MINNEAPOLIS—The show trial dubbed by our local capitalist media, “Minnesota’s Terror Trial,” ended in November with the sentencing of nine young men (eight Somali and one Oromo) who pled to or were convicted of charges relating to alleged attempts to join the “designated foreign terrorist organization” ISIS (the Islamic State).

The pre-sentence period—which lasted for five and a half months—and sentencing were another roller coaster ride through the Criminal Injustice System for the young men, their families, and their communities. They have been on this roller coaster since the Countering Violent Extremism Program (“CVE”) came to town almost three years ago.

District Attorney for Minnesota Andrew Luger has been the program’s champion and point person since its inception, bringing together Homeland Security, the FBI, and state, county, and city law-enforcement agencies and bearing down on the local Somali community with enticements and entrapments designed and destined to “divide and conquer” this previously cohesive community of immigrants and first-generation American citizens.

In this process the judge is supposed to play a mediator role between the prosecution and defense, seeking the truth and insuring some measure of “fairness,” but working-class people and oppressed communities know this system has never served us. Marx and Engels wrote in the “Communist Manifesto”: “Your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into law for all,” and nearly 170 years later, this is as true as ever.

Judge Michael J. Davis, Senior District Court Judge for Minnesota, showed remarkable hubris from start to finish. The fact that a Black, civil rights award-winning jurist has taken it upon himself to find and eliminate what he repeatedly referred to as a “terror cell” in the Somali community is surely no accident. Before the final day of sentencing, the judge told the packed courtroom, “This community has to understand that there is a jihadist cell in this community—its tentacles spread out.”

The two young men who cooperated with the prosecution and testified against their friends, Abdullahi Yusuf and Abdirizak Warsame, were the first to be sentenced and they received the lightest sentences—time served for Yusuf and 30 months for Warsame. The prosecution took the unusual step of testifying on behalf of these cooperators, and even though the judge himself



(Photo) Farhiyo Mahamed (rt.), mother of defendant Abdirahman Daud, who was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

said he still believes Warsame is a “jihadist,” he closely followed the prosecution’s lead and issued the light sentence, an appropriate reward for a job well done at trial.

The “next round” of sentencing was for the four young men who pled guilty but did not cooperate with the prosecution. The prosecution was asking for 15 years each for Zacharia Abdirahman, Hamza Ahmed, Hanan Musse, and Adnan Farah. The extremely prejudicial ISIS videos that played such a dramatic part in the trial were back for sentencing. The judge revealed that he watched hours and hours of these videos to prepare himself to issue sentences.

With each defendant in turn he proceeded to clear the courtroom of young children and play a gruesome video, continuously prodding the defendant: “How could you watch this? You watched video after video over and over. How could you support this organization? Are you a terrorist?”

As at trial, it was clear the men were taken as ISIS proxies, as if watching these videos was equivalent to personally committing the atrocities. “I am a terrorist” defendant after defendant declared in shame.

The defense attorneys seemed to agree that the best strategy was to accept the label of “terrorist,” argue that the experience since being arrested had enabled a transformation, and beg for mercy. It was a very demeaning process, excruciatingly painful to watch for those who care about the defendants personally or care about justice generally. And it was

all the more painful because the mercy that was begged for was not granted. Abdirahman, Ahmed, Musse and Farah will serve 10 years each.

On the final day, the young men who were convicted at trial on charges including Conspiracy to Murder outside the United States, which carries a possible life sentence, appeared one after the other in Judge Davis’ courtroom.

While the capitalist press has implied that some defendants accepted pleas (which meant they must be guilty) while others CHOSE to go to trial (showing a “refusal to take responsibility for their actions”) and many supporters have asserted, equally problematically, that the bravest young men from the group steadfastly refused to plead to something they did not do and insisted on going to trial, both of these positions mistakenly placed power in the hands of the defendants that they never really had.

The truth is that the Criminal Injustice system in this country does not give defendants this level of self-determination. Those who pled guilty did so under the enormous pressure of multiple charges, each carrying potentially long sentences, knowing that members of their circle had already succumbed to the pressure. Some were even “cooperating” with the prosecution, knowing that no Muslim tried on such charges during this seemingly endless “War on Terror” has been found “not guilty” by a jury.

If that pressure were not enough, a Superseding Indictment was filed in October of 2015. In that indictment, filed more than six months after the bulk of

the arrests in this case, the charge of Conspiracy to Commit Murder Abroad—which carries a potential *life* sentence—was added to the list of charges on the five young men remaining. At that point, it seemed inevitable that anyone offered the chance to plead to the lesser charge, carrying a 15-year sentence, would do so.

This was a chance that was never offered to Mohamed Farah, Abdirahman Daud, or Guled Omar. To his credit Adnan Farah held out until the trial was almost ready to begin. He was being pressured mercilessly to not only plead, but to testify against his older brother. His 10-year sentence is likely punishment not for anything he did but for how long he held out against the full power of the U.S. government.

As for the elder Farah, Daud, and Omar, the prosecution had decided these young men were going on trial for their lives. At the end of a deeply flawed trial, the three were found guilty.

Mohamed Farah was the first to appear. He was made to watch the graphic ISIS video that ends with the burning alive of a Jordanian pilot. Had Mohamed Farah set a Jordanian pilot on fire? It did not matter. The judge sentenced the 22-year-old to 30 years.

The next to appear was Abdirahman Daud, and the same public shaming that we had become so familiar with took place. He was given 30 years.

And finally, it was time to sentence Guled Omar. Many point out that Guled was one of the first people the FBI approached when CVE came to town. They wanted him to work with them, spying on his friends. He refused over and over again. So the FBI decided he was dangerous and drew a target on his back.

The prosecutor called him “irredeemable,” but the Judge seemed more concerned with his charisma. “You’re charismatic, and that’s why you are being locked up for the period that you are.” The 21-year-old received a 35-year sentence.

Abdirahman’s mother commented to me that it almost felt like there was no judge in this case, just the defendant, her boy, against the entire government. No mediator between them, just a government mouthpiece. It was clear from the start and throughout that this prosecution was political in nature. Now it falls on all of us to stand by these young men and their families through their harsh sentences. No Justice, Just US. ■

## ... Fidel Castro

(continued from page 7)

the central directing agency of the revolution.

While successful in Cuba, Cuban-supported rural guerrilla warfare had to be abandoned as it became clear that isolated guerrilla struggles, especially with U.S. imperialism on the alert as never before, could not substitute for the construction of deeply rooted and disciplined, urban-based, revolutionary working-class parties.

Like all human beings, Fidel Castro and his compañeros in the Cuban leadership were never without flaws, mistakes, and shortcomings. Despite its socialist and democratic spirit and practice, beleaguered Cuba failed to establish the forms of direct democracy that characterized the highest point of the Russian Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky.

Soviets (the Russian word for workers’ councils, as the basis for the political rule of the working masses) do not exist in Cuba. In essence, Cuba’s Communist Party makes most of the key decisions in Cuban society. In Socialist Action’s view, a revolutionary workers state finds its fullest expression in the formal, direct, democratic, and institutionalized rule of the working masses. A revolutionary party, no matter how dedicat-

ed to the people’s cause it may be, cannot substitute itself for the working masses.

The Cuban leadership’s forging of democratic workers’ councils today would be the surest way to ensure the ongoing commitment of the Cuban people to the revolution’s historic goals, as well as the efficient planning of an economy that best represents the interests of the Cuban masses. Fidel was keenly aware of the Stalinist nature of Cuba’s Batista-era pro-Moscow Popular Socialist Party. The latter opposed Fidel’s July 26 Movement’s struggle for power as “ultraleft,” if not “Trotskyist.”

In the view of Cuban Stalinists, whose policy was to seek a rapprochement with so-called progressive capitalist governments, including Batista’s during his first presidency, socialist revolution was premature and impossible in poor and neo-colonial countries. This contrasted with Trotsky’s conception of the revolutionary process in the modern era—demonstrated to the world with the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Trotsky believed that, as in Russia, any successful revolution must be “permanent,” that is, it has to both accomplish the democratic tasks that modern capitalism could no longer implement and it has to place the working class, as opposed to capitalist reformers, in power.

The Cuban Revolution amounted to a rejection of the Stalinist “two-stage” conception of revolution, where-

in overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with a workers state with the goal of building socialism are relegated to the distant future, if at all. This remains the critical issue that today separates revolutionists from pro-capitalist reformists.

Venezuela is a prime example of the latter strategy, where the Hugo Chavez/Maduro governments, unlike revolutionary Cuba, failed to challenge the essential framework of Venezuelan capitalism. Venezuela’s land, banks, and key financial institutions, as well as significant portions of its massive fossil fuel resources, have remained in the hands of its capitalist ruling class. This single fact explains Venezuela’s tragic devolution today.

To his death, Fidel remained the harshest critic of U.S. imperialism, constantly cautioning Cuba’s leaders to beware of the capitalist-restorationist intentions that underlie the Obama administration’s current overtures.

Cuba’s historic socialist revolution, its fundamental break with capitalism, demonstrates to revolutionary fighters everywhere that capitalism cannot be reformed, that capitalism is incompatible with human progress, that capitalism cannot exist without racism, sexism, exploitation, and war. This is Fidel Castro’s lasting contribution to humanity’s future, a legacy of uninterrupted struggle to usher in the world socialist order. ■



## Join the women's march on Washington, Jan. 21



By ANN MONTAGUE

A mass march of women will take place in the U.S. capital on Jan. 21, 2017. This is the first full day that Donald Trump will be president, and will follow demonstrations that are being called for Inauguration Day. The call states, "We will stand in solidarity with our partners and children for the protection of our rights, our safety, our health and our families."

Although it focuses on women, the march and rally will also include and speak to the demands of other oppressed groupings: "We support the advocacy and resistance movements that reflect our multiple and intersecting identities." This includes "immigrants of all statuses, those with diverse religious faiths, particularly Muslim, people who identify as LGBTQIA, Native and indigenous people, Black and Brown people, people with disabilities, the economically impoverished, and survivors of sexual assault."

Women have responded in massive numbers to the call for a march on Washington. This is in response to decades of attacks on abortion rights, physical attacks on Planned Parenthood and murder of abortion providers. We have seen a rise in rape culture and increasing violence against women. Women continue to struggle to survive on poverty wages at the same time that many face the increasing burden of unpaid work in child care and elder care.

On top of all this has been the blatant misogyny waged throughout the presidential campaign that ended with the election of Donald Trump. Within days of hearing the election results, a grandmother in Hawaii invited 40 of her friends to march on Washington D.C. with her. Response was swift with an outpouring of enthusiasm. Once it hit social media, within two

days 45,000 women said they were coming and the latest figure is 100,000.

"It is the most organic thing you have ever heard of," noted Bob Bland, who was one of the first women to start organizing the march. The loose organizing structure quickly consolidated all the Facebook pages into a national page and added a page for all 50 states to coordinate transportation and lodging. This also has assisted many cities to have their own marches in concert with the actions in Washington.

Three prominent women of color have been added as national co-chairs. Tamika Mallory is the youngest executive director of the National Action Network and Carmen Perez is an activist with juvenile and criminal justice issues. Linda Sarsour is a Palestinian-American Muslim who is doing outreach nationally to Muslim women. The three of them led a march from New York City to Washington D.C. in 2015 demanding changes in the criminal justice system.

The co-chairs issued a statement indicating that the work of the march will reach far beyond Jan. 21. They emphasized, "The work of this march is not only to stand together in sisterhood and solidarity for the protection of our rights, our safety, our families and our environment—but it is also to mend the divides between our communities, and it will be ongoing."

The Washington march will follow on the heels of militant actions around the world that have resulted in important victories. In October and November, there were mass women's strikes in Poland, Iceland, France, and Argentina. As a result, Poland's Prime Minister Beata Szudlo, who had previously expressed strong support for a draconian abortion ban, told the BBC, "I want to state very clearly that the Law and Justice government is not working on any legislation

changing the rules on abortion in Poland."

The bill, introduced by the Law and Justice Party, had strong support from the Catholic Church. But even the Conference of the Polish Episcopate, the central organ of the Catholic Church in the country, had an abrupt turn around. The bill had once been a high priority for them, but after the strikes they posted a statement on their website saying they do not support any legislation that calls for punishing women who have an abortion. Both houses in the parliament voted it down, and there are no plans for a compromise bill.

In November, women in Turkey won a victory after angry protesters took to the streets across the country. As a result Prime Minister Binali Yildirim withdrew a bill that would have pardoned men who have been convicted of having sex with girls if they have married them. Women said that it would legitimize statutory rape and encourage the taking of child brides.

The government had claimed it was meant to free men who had been imprisoned for marrying an underaged girl even though she or her family had given their consent to the marriage. Women were particularly outraged with the word, "consent." Elif Shafak, one of Turkey's best selling novelists, spoke to the BBC about consent: "What does that mean? We're talking about children here. So if the rapist negotiates with the family, if he bribes or threatens the family, the family can withdraw their complaint and say there was consent, no force involved?"

The bill was withdrawn just hours before a final vote had been scheduled. One woman tweeted, "As long as there is solidarity among women, we are powerful".

(continued on page 9)