

We can beat the climate destroyers



Christine Irvine | Survival Media Agency

By BRUCE LESNICK

Humanity faces a multi-faceted crisis. Endless wars of imperial aggression, both overt and covert—from Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Afghanistan to Yemen, Palestine, and Central and South America. These conflagrations compel those at the bottom of the economic pyramid to fight and die to protect the wealth and privileges of those at the top. These wars destroy human beings and our natural environment, but also opportunities and resources that could be allocated to human betterment.

Nuclear arsenals remain on hair-trigger alert, with fearsome destructive potential, one accident or a single myopic policy decision away from wiping out the entire human race. Economic inequality, having already reached obscene proportions, is showing no sign of slowing down or reversing course.

Racism, xenophobia, sexism, and other forms of hate-filled discrimination are used to distract and divide those victimized by the current state of affairs

and to hinder a united fight by all of the oppressed against our common oppressors.

And then there's the matter of climate Armageddon. The world is heating up as a result of economic and energy *policy choices*. These choices have maximized profits for the super-rich 1% while threatening the very biosphere we all depend on for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We know that the burning of fossil fuels and the resulting additional carbon in our atmosphere are driving rapid planetary warming. We know this, not because a majority of climate scientists *believe* it to be true—that's not how science works; after all, majorities of scientists have been wrong on occasion. We know this crisis is real because a substantial amount of *data* has been collected that corroborates the climate change hypothesis, and because key scientific *predictions* based on the theory of human-accelerated climate change have been born out by evidence and experience.

This year, climate change has been directly impli-

cated in a number of extreme weather phenomena: Record-breaking heat waves have taken place the world over—even surprising many scientists in their quantity and severity.

Michael Wehner, a climate researcher at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, told the journal *Axios* in July, "While I expect that high temperatures records will continue to be broken at abnormally high rates because of global warming, I would not have guessed that so many would be broken in the same year."

Hellish forest fires have broken out from Europe and Scandinavia, to the western U.S. In July, while some 38,000 square miles of forest were in flames in Siberia, the smoke covered all of Canada. Smoke from the fires turned early mornings black as night in British Columbia. Pollution from the fires in California and Oregon were measurable on the U.S. East Coast.

While drought has plagued the southwestern U.S., southern Europe, and the Middle East, tremendous floods have inundated southern Asia, Japan, and the

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John McCain: Reactionary bigot to the end

By STEVE XAVIER

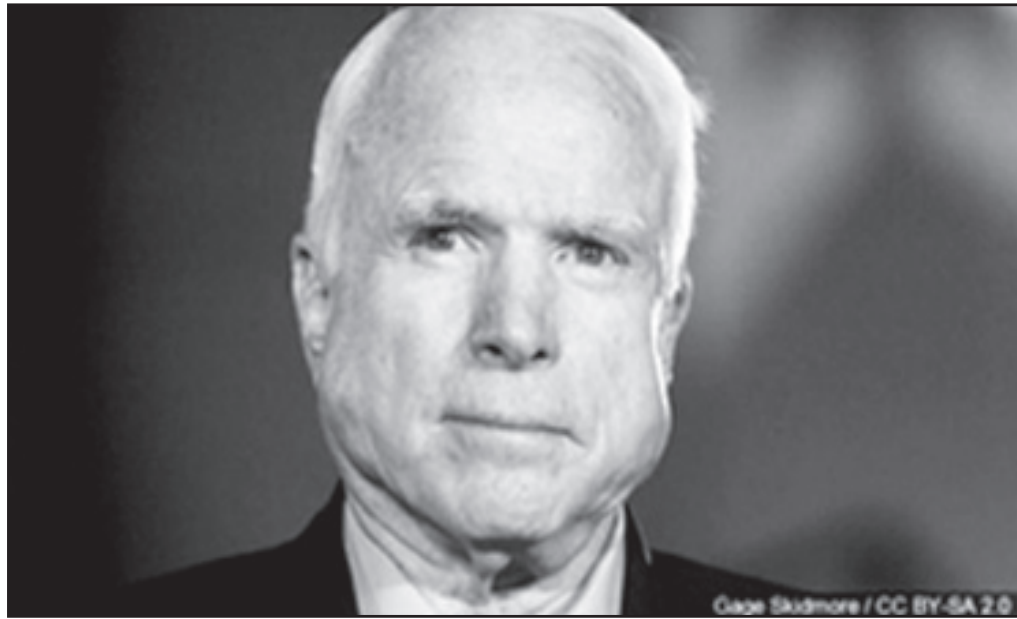
John McCain, the right-wing U.S. Senator and war criminal from Arizona, has died after a struggle with brain cancer. More recently, McCain has been a thorn in the side of Donald Trump's presidency on certain aspects of policy.

Predictably, liberals and social democrats have joined with conservatives and centrists to heap praise on McCain for his "humanity, decency, and courage." The Democratic "socialist" congressional candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez praised his "human decency," and Bernie Sanders extolled his "decency and humanity." This praise is misplaced.

A Navy pilot during the Vietnam War, McCain was shot down during a bombing mission and held as a prisoner of war in Hanoi for 5 and a half years. He entered politics, running for the House of Representatives in 1982, where he was a supporter of the reactionary foreign and domestic policies of the Reagan administration.

McCain's record was thoroughly reactionary to the end. He voted for the Trump tax cut for the rich and was a consistent supporter of every U.S. imperialist war and aggression overseas—from Cuba and Nicaragua to Iran, Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq. He famously sang "bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb Iran" during an event.

He was a defender of Israel's violent attacks on the Palestinian people and opposed any notion of a Palestinian



Case Skidmore / CC BY-SA 2.0

state. He called for a U.S. attack on Syria in 2013 and was a vocal supporter of the Saudi-led slaughter in Yemen.

McCain expressed his hatred of "gooks," a racist term for Asian people. When challenged for this slur, he showed no regret and said he would continue to call his former captors that word.

McCain supported Central American death-squad regimes in the 1980s and the murderous Contra war against the Nicaraguan Revolution, including a personal contribution to a Contra terrorist group. He was a board member of the U.S. Council for World Freedom, the U.S. branch of the World Anti-Communist League, which was linked

to Iran-Contra money transfers and death-squad activity in Central and South America.

He voted against the Martin Luther King holiday. He also opposed sanctions against the South African apartheid regime. He never met a budget cut he didn't like that attacked poor and working people. He supported privatization of Social Security, a move that would be disastrous for older workers.

McCain played a role in the sale of mining rights, on indigenous Apache land in Arizona, to copper mining interests. This was made possible by a provision added to the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act with Mc-

Cain's collusion.

Capitalist politicians, both right or "left," play a game that exists to preserve the power and privilege of the few. It's the rules of this game that allow the various players to praise McCain "despite our differences."

We hear no mention of his racism, service to big business, or warmongering. It was Trump's violation of these rules, by mocking McCain's war record, that helped liberals embrace McCain's "maverick" status.

The rules set limits within which the bourgeois politician operates; ignore them and you become the object of scorn. One day, it's likely that some rightist GOP politicians will talk about how they "respected" Bernie Sanders "despite our differences."

Working people have no stake in the game played by both parties of bourgeois politics. Instead, the working class and oppressed need a party of their own, a party that fights daily in the interests of all of the victims of this system. In the end, what is at stake is not "differences" between factions of ruling class politicians.

What is at stake is the future of humanity and the planet. To fight for a better world, we need a new politics, not participation in the political games of our class enemies.

The genteel standards of bourgeois politics don't apply to fighters for socialism. ■

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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. We maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International.

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

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NY's 'progressive' Dems attack housing rights

By MARTY GOODMAN

Marty Goodman / Socialist Action

On Aug. 8, the New York City Council voted to rezone the mostly Hispanic Inwood section of Northern Manhattan, despite angry marches, civil disobedience and the occupation of uptown Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez's office.

The gentrification measure, which covers 59 blocks, will undermine the human right to affordable housing for Inwood's 43,000 residents, three-quarters of whom are Latino, mostly Dominicans. A full 25% of Inwood's population lives below the poverty line, yet the median rent has increased 38% between 2002 and 2014, compared with 24% city-wide.

"It's an ethnic cleansing," said Lena Melendez, 53, of Northern Manhattan is Not for Sale, an anti-rezoning group. Emily Goldstein of the Association for Neighborhood Housing and Development, said, "Overall the neighborhoods that are being rezoned are mostly low-income communities of color. They've all had many years of disinvestment, and now they're facing this idea that, in order to get reinvestment they've needed all along, it has to come with a rezoning."

Sagiv Galai of Manhattan Legal Services asked the question, "Why does a thriving, vibrant community like Inwood need to accept a rezoning in order to merit investment by the city?"

One of the real-estate vultures eyeing Inwood, Signature Realty CEO Lazer Sternhell, has said of Northern Manhattan, "The prices are better than the rest of the city and investors are flocking to that neighborhood." The Mayor says he plans to rezone up to 15 neighborhoods and create and preserve 300,000 units of "affordable" housing by 2026.

Right from the start, Inwood tenant advocates were barred from initial rezoning discussions, while real-estate hustlers and corporate operatives had an open invitation. But the community did fight back with large meetings and mobilizations.

On Aug. 3, after a protest at Rodriguez's office, about a dozen tenant activists peacefully occupied the councilman's office. By evening it was a standoff, with an agreement by cops and apparently Rodriguez to let a smaller crew stay overnight. The next day, the protesters were removed by cops. On Aug. 6, two days before the final vote, some 80 protesters marched through the neighborhood and about a dozen sat in and blocked traffic at a busy intersection on Broadway. The protesters blocking traffic were arrested, but soon released.

On Aug. 8, the day of the City Council vote, several dozen protesters arrived at City Hall but were kept out on orders of the Council, police said. However, about a dozen protesters managed to get in and from a balcony chanted, "Shame! Shame!" and threw paper money at the Council. The activists were thrown out of the meeting. One was arrested, but let go. The Council voted in favor 43-1, with one abstention.

Mayor Bill de Blasio's cynical election theme was "A Tale of Two Cities," appealing to a working class whose standard of living was under attack, yet de Blasio nevertheless accepted large campaign donations from real estate. A de Blasio ally is Dominican-born Councilman Rodriguez, an ex-radical who represents the uptown 10th District. Rodriguez promised constituents that rezoning would preserve Inwood. Both capitalist politicians are viewed as "progressive" Democrats.

The plan to drive out the poor

The Inwood plan, somewhat modified after community outrage, will allow dozens of new nine to 30-story buildings in a neighborhood where six-story apartment buildings and one to two-story commercial buildings are the norm. Perhaps most deadly, is the expansion of ballooning market rate rents into the most highly rent regulated community in the city.

The new buildings would be required under "Mandatory Inclusionary Housing" (MIH) to include either 25% of units to be affordable for those making 60 percent of the area median income or 20 percent of units for those making 40 percent. Protesters say the target incomes, \$56,340 and \$37,560, would still be too high for many extremely low-income residents.

The "affordable" housing will not benefit many in the neighborhood. Northern Manhattan is not 4 Sale and the Metropolitan Council on Housing say that



De Blasio pals and 'socialist' Cynthia Nixon

Interesting are the campaign choices of gubernatorial candidate Cythia Nixon, who is challenging incumbent Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic primary. Nixon labels herself a "democratic socialist."

Several past and present members of Nixon's staff are past and present employees or owners of Hilltop Solutions, a private company that promotes candidates and liberal causes. Hilltop has numerous ties to City Hall. Several Hilltop personnel were in and out of the de Blasio campaign and later at City Hall. Moreover, Hilltop's Bill Hyers was de Blasio's campaign manager and served as chairman of de Blasio's defunct "Campaign for One New York," a so-called non-profit that came under City investigation for conflicts of interest but was given a "waiver."

Former Hilltop Solutions employee Rebecca Katz was senior de Blasio campaign advisor. Another former Hilltop employee and his campaign's High Dollar Finance Director was Hayley Prim, now Nixon's campaign manager. Sam Nagourney, another Hilltop employee, was the finance manager for de Blasio.

The Nixon campaign told *Socialist Action* that campaign director Prim did not engage in formulating zoning proposals while at City Hall because she left the Mayor's administration in March 2015 to re-join Hilltop. Yet, the mayor's zoning plans, in fact, began earlier. In any case, Hilltop's website says Prim's role at City Hall was that "she helped craft the mayor's ambitious affordable housing plan." Did any other Hilltop consultant advise de Blasio on his racist zoning plans? — M.G.

they demand 50% of new units to be set aside for families who make less than the community median income.

The city's so-called "affordable" rates are calculated on citywide median income, not local income. The area median income is calculated using the entire city and the surrounding suburbs. For a household of three, the median income is \$93,000. The Census Bureau, however, says that the median household income in Inwood is less than \$46,000.

The plan claims it will create and preserve 4100 units of affordable housing, including 925 units on city-owned land and 675 units that will be established in market-rate buildings under housing rules that require developers to build affordable housing. A new Inwood Library plan, opposed by many activists, would include about 175 affordable apartments combined with a new library branch and community services. As an incentive, \$200 million is supposed to be pumped into the neighborhood for parks, street improvements, and educational and cultural needs.

But rezoning is merely a Trojan Horse for market-scale rents, expensive stores, upscale restaurants, and undermining the local culture.

Said Karla Fisk of the Inwood Small Business Coalition, "Small businesses are already being forced out because commercial landlords are not renewing their leases in anticipation of the rezoning going through. It will result in mass displacement of people of color."

Inwood was the fifth rezoning to pass, following East New York in Brooklyn, downtown Far Rockaway in Queens, East Harlem in Manhattan, and Jerome Avenue in the Bronx. All of de Blasio's plans, except one, are in Black, Latino and Asian working

class neighborhoods.

Rezoning is always presented as a way to "help" distressed communities, not funding services, or clamping down on greedy landlords. In the 2016 book, "Zoned Out!" by Tom Angotti and Sylvia Morse, the authors write, "Mayor de Blasio's approach to planning and housing follows the long tradition of government acquiescence to the carving up of the city into separate enclaves for rich and poor, for black, white, and brown people."

Long-time tenant activist Nellie Bailey put it this way to *Socialist Action*, "Rezoning is racist, class warfare, in particular against Blacks and Latinos and a few working-class whites. It's ultimately about maximizing profits for the real-estate oligarchy and along the way getting rid of Blacks and Latinos. All five boroughs will be an enclave for those of European descent."

"Bill de Blasio is a fake progressive. His neoliberal housing policies are just as deadly for Blacks and Latinos as in the Bloomberg administration." De Blasio's re-zoning plans were approved by the Democratic Party majority on the City Council. The same was true of the re-zonings led by billionaire former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who promoted his vision of a "Luxury City." Bloomberg's zoning changed New York City with the help of the Democratic Party!

New York's gentrification is part of a national housing crisis, which is another injustice of capitalism. Socialist Action calls for 100% affordable public housing, under tenant control. We say, "Stop gentrification! Housing is a right!"

(Photo above) Police detain a housing activist on Aug. 6 after protesters blocked traffic on Broadway.



(Left) New York City nurses joined the People's Climate Mobilization in September 2014.

... Climate action

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Midwestern region of the United States.

The summer heat wave has its roots an extraordinary stalling of the jet stream wind, which usually funnels cool Atlantic weather over North America and Europe. This has left hot, dry air in place for far longer than usual. The stalling of the northern hemisphere jet stream has been linked increasingly to global warming, in particular to the rapid heating of the Arctic and resulting loss of sea ice.

This year, the oldest and thickest Arctic sea ice has started to break up, opening waters north of Greenland that are normally frozen, even in summer. Until now, this event had not been observed since satellite records began in the 1970s. Yet it occurred twice this year due to warm winds and an extreme heat wave in the northern hemisphere.

All of that creates a self-perpetuating cycle, as warmer Arctic temperatures release more CO2 from permafrost, glaciers, and lakes. Airborne soot from forest fires also enhances the greenhouse effect, in turn boosting temperatures. "This is the face of climate change," said climate scientist Prof. Michael Mann of Penn State University. "We literally would not have seen these extremes in the absence of climate change."

Donald Trump's rejection of the Paris Climate Accord (anemic though that agreement was), his weakening of already inadequate auto fuel efficiency standards, his approval of the Keystone XL pipeline, his plan to open an additional 77 million acres of the Gulf of Mexico to oil drilling, the EPA's rollback of coal pollution standards and its plan to allow additional greenhouse gas emission from existing power plants—all of these policies move us in the wrong direction.

But when it comes to climate action, the Democrats are no better than the Republicans. We were headed in the wrong direction even before Trump was elected. The Obama administration financed three times as much overseas fossil fuel development as the Bush administration that preceded it. Obama's "all of the above" energy policy reversed a decline in U.S. petroleum output and vastly expanded fracking for natural gas.

In a 2012 speech about repealing subsidies to Big Oil, Obama bragged about opening millions of acres to oil exploration and vastly increasing offshore drilling. After pointing out that the biggest U.S. oil companies took home more than \$80 billion in profits a year earlier, while receiving "billions in tax giveaways," he said that nevertheless, "drilling for oil has to be a key part of our overall energy strategy. ... We've quadrupled the number of operating oil rigs to a record high. We've added enough oil and gas pipelines to encircle the earth and then some."

Follow the money

It's important to note that global warming and all of the other above-mentioned calamities have a common beneficiary—the wealthy 1%. And in every case, it's the 99%, at home and abroad, who are expected to bear the greatest burden and pay the highest cost.

Think about that. When you follow the money, it's clear that those with the most wealth and power have the least to gain and the most to lose by fixing any of the problems we face. Indeed, from the perspective of those at the top, nothing is broken; the world is funneling wealth upwards, just as it should.

This tells us a great deal about what it will take to fix climate change and the many other serious problems we face. Understanding that a few benefit from the status quo, it's clear that we have to gather together and

organize the many who are harmed by the political and economic order that has led to this problem, and fight against those whom have profited from the madness. This means two things:

There is no "we"; there is only "us and them." There are two opposing sides in this struggle.

Asking those few with wealth and power to *please do the right thing* is not a very effective strategy and it hasn't gotten us very far up to now. A much better approach would be to *take* the power and wealth into our own hands—into the hands of the majority—and use that power to directly address the problems we face. This would shift us away from the defensive posture of beseeching the unelected minority that has been running the show for generations to kindly consider the greater good, even if it meant acting against their own interests.

Which side are you on?

How does all of this apply to the climate change movement today? What does this tell us about our allies and our opponents? What demands should we be organizing around right now to move us in the needed direction?

Above all else, we have to be able to identify who's on our side and whom we're up against. In the days of kings, the imperial court was comprised of more than just the royal family; it included advisors, senators, officers, functionaries and courtiers of all sorts. Today too, the "court of the 1%" has many plenipotentiaries and hangers-on. It's easy to identify energy magnates and other corporate overlords as part of the oligarchy. But all too often, people fail to recognize the oligarchs' loyal lieutenants in the Democratic and Republican parties. Both are key political instruments of the 1%.

The Democratic and Republican parties are much more than two independent organizations made up of better and worse individuals. Both parties are institutionally owned by corporate America. If the two parties compete with one another at all, it is only in seeking greater favor from their common master. So, it should be clear that any climate strategy aimed at playing one corporate party off against another is doomed from the start.

And who are our allies in this fight? Broadly speaking, it is all working people, the entire 99%. Every person who lives from paycheck to paycheck suffers more harm from climate calamity and other systemic problems than any small advantage that one profession, one geographic location, one race or sex might appear to provide over others. This is true not only for teachers, nurses, factory workers, garbage collectors and the like, but also for coal miners, pipeline workers, oil and chemical workers.

"But wait," you might say. "Don't workers in the energy industry have a vested interest in the status quo?" No, they don't, not when you look at the big picture. However, unless the climate movement is proactive and strategic, workers in those key industries can be manipulated into *believing* that their interests lie with the climate destroyers, and that they would have to pay a heavy personal price if fossil fuel production were halted as a part of a comprehensive climate change solution.

To counteract this fallacy and to promote class-wide solidarity, several demands must be put front and center. Here are two of them:

- Guaranteed jobs for all, at union-scale wages!
- Full salaries and retraining, at union wages, for all workers displaced by climate mitigation, for the entire time they are out of work!

These should not be thought of as pie-in-the-sky, propagandistic slogans. Rather, these are life or death demands for the climate movement. Without them, natural allies in the fight to address runaway climate catastrophe would be divided against themselves. But with these demands at the forefront, the movement promotes uni-

ty and deals a blow to the very heart of those who have been profiting from the world's demise.

In this way, the climate movement can take the lead, demolishing the argument that fixing the climate can only come at the expense of jobs. At the same time, this approach brings into clear focus exactly who we can count as our friends and our enemies.

Taking the offensive

There is another key demand that the climate movement must champion in order to move from perpetually playing defense to finally taking the offensive. At present, the energy industry is owned by private corporations and run solely for profit. This blocks progress on climate change in multiple ways:

With the present setup, it's highly profitable for monopolies to ignore greenhouse gases and other pollution produced in the generation of energy. So, the current for-profit corporations have every incentive to continue business as usual.

Because the energy monopolies are awash in wealth, they have an abundance of funds available for buying politicians, hiring lobbyists, paying for ads and other propaganda, and using their wealth in multiple ways to tip the political scales in their favor.

Even though energy is critical to our economy, and responsible management of energy policy is vital for the environment, the major shareholders and boards of directors of the current energy behemoths are completely unaccountable to the wealthy 99%. We didn't elect them and we have no say in *who* runs those essential industries or *how* they're run.

To get beyond these scandalous impediments, the climate movement must demand: Nationalize the energy industry under workers' and community control! In contrast to nationalization under *corporate* control or under the control of some new government bureaucracy beholden to the 1%, nationalization under workers' and community control means:

- Workers in the industry would 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.

To break the logjam and implement a rational energy policy, the energy industry must be converted to public ownership. As with the other demands described above, taking the energy industry out of private hands is not a luxury we might shoot for in the expectation of settling for less. On the contrary, we will either nationalize the energy industry under workers and community control or we will not be able to stop runaway climate change. This is a battle we cannot lose if we hope to win the overall climate war.

A shift in priorities

We know that to truly address global warming will take a huge shift in priorities. We need a massive public works program to transition to a green, sustainable economy—building clean mass transit, retrofitting existing buildings, and transitioning to 100% sustainable energy. Farmers will need assistance transitioning away from fossil-fuel-intensive practices to sustainable, organic agriculture.

The waste endemic to the capitalist system will have to be addressed—from its hugely destructive, carbon-intensive war machine to its promotion of senseless consumption and endless commodity expansion based, not on human needs, but on the push for ever-increasing profits.

But to accomplish these tasks requires a mighty force that can challenge the powerful actors having a vested interest in business as usual. In this respect, we have to recognize that the climate movement has gotten stuck in a cul-de-sac of unclarity. It's imperative that the movement fully recognize whom we're up against and what it will take to win this fight.

We'll get stuck and remain rudderless until we recognize that working people, who produce all the world's wealth—an aggregate treasure stolen by the 1% and used to power their reign—are the only ones with everything to gain and nothing to lose in the fight to rescue the train of civilization that's gone so completely off the rails. ■

By FRED LINCK

Below are remarks by Socialist Action Senatorial candidate Fred Linck to an Aug. 25 Connecticut rally in solidarity with the national prison strike.

Organizers reported in the first days that incarcerated people in 17 states had joined the strike—risking severe punishment for their effort. Some were engaged in refusals to work, in hunger strikes, and in sit-ins. The Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), the main outside group supporting the strike, reported that “thousands” of prisoners were participating.

The actions were carried out to protest unjust sentencing laws, poor living conditions, and the continued existence of slavery within the U.S. penal system. Solidarity rallies have taken place in at least 21 cities, as we go to press.

Good afternoon everyone, Thank you for being here to stand in solidarity with incarcerated people across the country who went on strike on Aug. 21. My Name is Fred Linck and I am running for the U.S. Senate as Socialist Action’s candidate in Connecticut.

Incarceration is a business—a business that, like war, makes some people exceeding wealthy but does not make our world a better place. Americans are 5% of the world’s population, but we house 25% of the world’s incarcerated people—2.3 million people in total. Some 536,000 of these are in pre-trial detention. One in five of these people are locked up due to a non-violent drug offense. A good portion of those 2.3 million people work for pennies on the dollar, making super-profits for the companies they work for.

Last October, Frank Dwayne Ellington, an Alabama state prison inmate on work assignment, showed up at a chicken factory; he was assigned to a cleaning position at a plant run by the major poultry company, Koch Foods. But when a machine he was cleaning ensnared his arm, it pulled him into the machine and killed him on the spot.

The exploitation of prison and immigrant labor are two central features of labor in the United States today. Whether hounded by immigration authorities or incarcerated by the state, these workers’ rights are shredded in order to squeeze extraordinary profits from their labor. This strike is a step towards changing that.

Prisons appear to be paying incarcerated people less today than they did in 2001. The average of the

Socialist Action candidate calls for solidarity with U.S. prison strike

Bradley Allen / Indymedia



minimum daily wages paid to incarcerated workers for non-industry prison jobs is now 86 cents, down from the 93 cents reported in 2001.

In Colorado, for example, it costs an incarcerated woman two weeks’ wages to buy a box of tampons, maybe more if there’s a shortage. Saving up for a \$10 phone card takes almost two weeks for an incarcerated person working in a Pennsylvania prison.

This is how exploitation of prison labor works. The workers are paid next to nothing for their work while the prison charges exceedingly high amounts in fees for that labor, as well as high prices at the commissary for necessities, or what might make life behind bars a bit more bearable.

At last count, an estimated 6.1 million Americans (1.4 million of whom are still incarcerated) remain barred from voting due to a felony conviction. This is one way to expand the disenfranchisement of many communities. The state targets Black, Latino, immigrant, and poor communities, ensuring that more felonies come from these areas. And then they take away the voting rights of those caught in the net.

These are some of the reasons prisoners are striking across the country. This is why it is so important for us to be here in solidarity with them.

Our society is split into two classes. The owners of the largest business and banks, and those that sell our labor to be able to sustain our lives. We are all oppressed one way or another, but solidarity can give us the strength and understanding essential to break the hold this outmoded system has on our lives.

Solidarity teaches us that our oppression is linked, that we have more in common with the workers all over the world than we do with those right here who maintain an order which allows them to extract massive profits from our work.

Solidarity can also form the basis of a new society. A society that uses the abundance of this world, that uses the creativity and ingenuity of all people to ensure that no person goes without food, clean water, health care or education.

When we come together like the incarcerated are coming together for this strike we can make this new society a reality. ■

Rise for climate, jobs, and justice!

By DON HARMON

“Rise for Climate, Jobs and Justice” is one of the rallying cries for the march and protest to be held in San Francisco and many other cities on Saturday, Sept. 8. (Sept. 6 in New York City.)

In San Francisco, the march will begin at 10 a.m. at the Embarcadero Plaza and continue up Market Street for a rally at the Civic Center. Some 300 organizations have endorsed the San Francisco action, including 54 labor organizations.

The Peoples Climate Movement, with climate organizations such as 350.org, launched the “Rise for Climate, Jobs and Justice September 8” mobilization. People from around the country and the world will take to the streets to demand bold action on climate change.

In the past year, the Trump administration has acceded to the oil, coal, and automobile industry moguls by rolling back numerous climate and health policies. Recently, more than 200,000 people marched in Washington, D.C. to show their resistance to Trump’s life-killing actions. This year the Peoples Climate Movement aims to transform this energy into action, to build both local and national climate movements calling for a just transition to a 100% renewable economy.

The Sept. 8 day of protest evolved from California Gov. Jerry Brown’s

call for a Global Climate Action Summit to be held in San Francisco, Sept. 12-14.

According to its website, the Summit “will bring together state and local governments, businesses and citizens from around the world to showcase climate action taking place, thereby demonstrating how the tide has turned in the race against climate change and inspiring deeper national commitments in support of the Paris Agreement.”

Among those in attendance will be former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, actor Alec Baldwin, scientist Jane Goodall, former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, and other elected officials. Also, such capitalists as Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff and Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson will be attending.

Governor Brown, though he has been a long-time supporter of the oil and fracking industries in California, now wants to place himself in a leadership position in the growing climate change movement that shouts “Keep it in the ground!” As a capitalist politician, Brown contradicts himself. He and his ilk represent the problem, not the solution.

Climate activists can use Brown’s initiative to advance climate justice far beyond the governor’s limited, corporate-led response and build connections that will lay the groundwork for a fighting movement that is not hemmed in by the capitalist par-

ties of either Democrats or Republicans. Climate change attacks working families all across the planet.

In the U.S., the working class, people of color, and the poor are most heavily impacted by dirty air and water, and are suffering with increasing levels of cancer and respiratory issues.

Sept. 8 organizers, through many planning meetings held throughout the Bay Area, are building connections and linking climate activists together around important issues such as economic and racial justice, gender equality, workers rights, and immigrant rights.

“Brown’s Last Chance” will be one of the marching contingents, calling on Gov. Brown to end all new fossil fuel permitting in California and undertake the conversion of industry to sustainable methods of production.

Among the demands for Sept. 8 are “Stop Fossil Fuels! Build 100% Renewables!” “No to the Keystone XL Pipeline!” “The Oil Companies Don’t Care About Lives, Only Profit!”

As Desmond Tutu said, “People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change.” The Sept. 8 protests are our opportunity to voice our opposition to corporate destruction of our planet and to build a growing movement that is independent of the capitalist parties and their politicians. ■

‘Capitalism must die!’ say UN climate researchers

Capitalism and global sustainability do not mix, states a recent paper for the UN’s 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report. A research team from academic institutions in Finland, who wrote the report, said the planet is in trouble if the current economic order continues.

Western countries have based their societies on an abundance of cheap energy, they say, which no longer exists: “Economies have used up the capacity of planetary ecosystems to handle the waste generated by energy and material use.”

Despite this fact, the paper stated, the dominant economic theories continue to predict continued material growth. In order to guarantee a high quality of life for future generations, the authors argued that new economic systems will have to be created, rather than the band-aid approach governments are now taking.

The researchers said it would be necessary to implement a global “Marshall Plan” in order to collectively restructure society worldwide with the goal of eliminating carbon dioxide emissions entirely. Researchers gave a deadline of 2040 for the United States and Europe to reduce carbon emissions to zero, and 2050 for the rest of the world.

However, the scientists cast doubt on the ability of renewable energy sources to sustain current consumption levels. The only viable solution to attain a goal of zero emissions, the paper stated, is for humanity to use substantially less energy. ■

Inside Trump's trade bluster



(Left) German Chancellor Angela Merkel faces off against Trump during trade discussions at the June G-7 conference in Quebec.

By JEFF MACKLER

Analyzing President Donald Trump's excoriating traditional U.S. trading partners at the Group of Seven's (G7) May meeting in Quebec, Marxist economist Michael Roberts commented: "What all these Trumpist antics revealed is that the period of the Great Moderation and globalization, from the 1980s to 2007, when all major capitalist states worked together to benefit capital in all countries (to varying degrees) is over. The Great Recession of 2007-8 and the ensuing Long Depression since 2009 has changed the economic picture.

"In a stagnating world capitalist economy, where productivity growth is low, world trade growth has subsided and the profitability of capital has not recovered, cooperation has been replaced by increasingly vicious competition—the thieves have fallen out."

The "thieves" here include the most powerful capitalist nations on earth. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Europe's most influential leader and representative of its most powerful economy, concluded similarly. *The New York Times* summarized Merkel's views as follows: "The United States of President Trump is not the reliable partner her country and the Continent have automatically depended on in the past. Clearly disappointed with Mr. Trump's positions on NATO, Russia, climate change and trade, Ms. Merkel said that traditional alliances were no longer as steadfast as they once were and that Europe should pay more attention to its own interests 'and really take our fate into our own hands.'"

We should note here that Merkel's May 7, 2017, remarks were made a year before Trump's Quebec outburst, an indication that the June 2018 Quebec G7 fireworks were far from a first in the ongoing tensions between ever-competing world capitalist entities.

Merkel continued, "The times in which we could rely fully on others—they are somewhat over."

Two additional paragraphs from Robert's assessment make the point that, notwithstanding Trump's disgusting reactionary hyperbole on an ever-broadening range of issues, the antics of a "rogue" president are subordinate to the reality of the deepening world capitalist crisis. The margins for long-term resolution via the major international institutions that previously served to at least partially mitigate major disputes have narrowed.

U.S. elites in overall agreement with Trump

Trump's seeming idiocies include withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement, withdrawal from the nearly worthless 21 Paris climate accords, his ultra-reactionary racist immigration policies—though similar to Obama's in separating detained/imprisoned parents from their children—praise for the Supreme Court's approval of the "constitutional" right (freedom of religion?) of a baker to refuse to prepare a

'In a stagnating world capitalist economy ... cooperation has been replaced by increasingly vicious competition.'

— Marxist economist Michael Roberts

wedding cake for an LGBTQI couple, a proposal/suggestion to his National Security Council to increase the U.S. nuclear weapons stock "100 fold"—also similar to Obama's proposals to "modernize" the U.S. nuclear weapons stock—and his most recent order to establish a sixth arm of the Pentagon (the "Space Force") to militarily "defend" U.S. "interests" in outer space. It can be demonstrated, however, that on virtually every front, his twisted politics have a rational core—that is, to advance what he perceives as the policies required to protect a weakened U.S. capitalism from its competitors abroad, while advancing their interests against U.S. workers at home.

Obviously, he is an embarrassment to the majority of the ruling-class elite. Virtually every major corporate newspaper and media outlet in the country daily pillories his too overtly right-wing tweets and pronouncements, but the essence of his direction, as opposed to the form, is not too dissimilar from mainstream ruling-class views.

Robert's summary is quite apt: "At the [G7] meeting Trump slammed into the other leaders, claiming that their governments were imposing 'unfair' trading rules on US products and they needed to reduce their surpluses on trade with the US. The other leaders had already responded to the US tariff measures with planned reciprocal tariffs on key US exports and now they replied to Trump's attacks with arguments and evidence that, on the contrary, it was the US that restricted foreign imported goods and services."

Roberts concludes dramatically: "And thus the trade war has begun—a war that the major capitalist economies have not engaged in since the 1930s depression and which was supposed to be resolved by international agreements like General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the post-war period. Trump has called the WTO the worst possible trade deal and NAFTA the next worst (for America)."

Rules governing the now fragile WTO

The WTO, established in 1995, today includes 164 nations. It was formed to resolve trade disputes via

a system of binding arbitration wherein a seven-member panel, operating under established rules, has the final word. Over the past two decades, the U.S. has brought more disputes to the WTO than any other nation, winning, according to Trump administration figures, more than the global average. This is Trump's way of stating that more often than not the U.S. has been the victim of unfair practices of its competitors.

In truth, the founding rules of the WTO, as we shall see, operate to the advantage of the U.S. and its previously associated great imperial partners. Partners no more in a world based on ever-increasing competition for ever-decreasing world markets, each player seeks to impose its own rules to the advantage of its own capitalist class.

But there is a "Catch 22" in the WTO's "rules," that is, a series of *exceptions* to this "free trade" agreement that allow for its violation for claimed reasons including environmental protection, national security. Today, Trump has repeatedly cited the WTO's "national security" exceptions to impose punitive tariffs on its leading competitors.

With this in mind, the WTO may be in danger of collapse. During this month, September 2018, four of the seven arbitration panelists are scheduled to be replaced, leaving but three—the bare minimum needed to issue rulings on trade disputes. If the Trump administration continues to refuse to reach agreement as to who will replace these termed-out arbitrators, in just over a year's time only one will be left, a number insufficient, according to WTO rules, to operate.

Needless to say, the choice of arbitrators is crucial. *In the multi-billion dollar game of international trade agreements, there are no neutrals.* The top dogs want their "expert" arbitrators in place to decide such disputes. A number of Trump's internationally prominent critics have not been silent on this matter. The Aug. 13, 2018, *New York Times* made this clear as follows:

- Jennifer Hillman, professor at Georgetown Law Center: "It's putting tremendous stress on the system. There are those who would go so far to say that the U.S. has almost effectively withdrawn from the WTO by engaging in all the unilateral tariffs we've seen."

- Rufus Yerxa, president of the National Foreign Trade Council and a former deputy director general of the World Trade Organization: "If the United States has rewritten the rules of the WTO system to say you can do anything you want if it's in your national security interests, be prepared for every country in the world to come up with a new definition of what is its critical national security interest."

- Roberto Azevêdo, current WTO Director General, referring to the WTO challenges to Trump's aluminum and steel tariffs: "Whatever the outcome—regardless of how objective, balanced and unbiased it is—somebody is going to be very unhappy."

- Marc Vanheukelen, European Union ambassador to the WTO, speaking to a July meeting of the organization's 164 members at its Geneva headquarters: "In such a world, where power has replaced rules as the basis for trade relations, it will be the smallest and poorest that will be hurt the most."

The Times noted that "Mr. Vanheukelen was among dozens of members who stood to complain that the WTO was on the verge of becoming dysfunctional. Many blame the Trump administration for encouraging other countries to flout long-established rules of the game and introducing a confrontational tone to an organization that has traditionally functioned by consensus and good will."

China and erosion of "trade consensus"

Today, in the context of a crisis-ridden world capitalist economy, "consensus" and "good will" have been cast aside, with the ruling classes of all declining nations, including the most powerful, finding themselves ever more locked into the deadly competition

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for markets and profits, ever maneuvering to stay afloat at the expense of their capitalist adversaries and always at the expense of its own workers.

It is doubtful that any section of the U.S. ruling class involved in steel and aluminum production objected to Trump's imposing tariffs on competitive foreign imports for these commodities, or, for that matter, on any others where U.S. corporations lag behind foreign competitors. What irked the anti-Trump wing of the U.S. ruling class was less Trump's defense of one or another key section of U.S. capital and qualitatively more the fact that he failed to do so in the "civilized" framework of the WTO, where they believe that the United States still retains the upper hand.

But the relationship of forces in the world capitalist order, and thus in the WTO, has undergone some important changes over the past decades. China is a classic example. China's WTO entry in 2001 was conditioned on its respecting foreign corporations' intellectual property rights—that is, agreeing not to compete in the future when its own primitive factories could, in time, be converted to state-of-the-art technologies, which the U.S. today insists are protected by U.S. patents. These "inviolable" intellectual property rights, as with the U.S.'s claimed national security interests, are at the center of Trump's steaming rhetoric against Chinese exports to the U.S.

For close to two decades and to this date, the level of Chinese labor productivity has lagged far behind that of most capitalist nations. But this is rapidly changing. With regard to an increasing number of key commodities traded on world markets, including major machine tools for industrial production and high technology hardware, China's productivity levels are rapidly increasing—ever more closing the gap and thus posing a threat to U.S. corporate interests.

In the imperialist mindset, any nation seeking to introduce modern and competitive technology is considered a threat. Trump today, and the broader sections of the U.S. elite for the past decades, had always considered China the perfect solution to the growing incapacity of the United States to effectively compete on world markets.

China offered a virtually unlimited supply of cheap labor for hire to U.S. and foreign corporations more generally. Not too long ago, for example, teenage women were housed permanently in dormitory factories and paid six cents per hour. These labor conditions, as well as tax-free guarantees and other perks sent profit-declining U.S. manufacturers there to boost their prospects. Today, the average Chinese wage is closer to \$2.50 per hour, a labor price that has led some of the capitalists to leave for lower wage nations like Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand. The paradise of near-slave labor in China has given way today to the Chinese ruling class's effort to create its own "middle-class" market to consume China's cheap commodities, the same market that U.S. capitalists hoped to dominate.

We need only add here for future edification that in the course of creating this internal market, China's income disparity has soared to be among the greatest on earth, with the vast proportion of its new wealth going to the capitalist elite and the new middle class of perhaps 300 million people, while the remaining 1.1 billion languish in overall poverty or close to it.

Trump's denunciation of China for "stealing" U.S. technology was followed by his administration's widely publicized list of proposed tariffs on Chinese imports. The list includes 1102 categories of goods, all focused on high-tech industries like nuclear reactors, aircraft engine parts, ball bearings, bulldozers, motorcycles, and industrial and agricultural machinery. These are precisely the categories in which China has employed the advanced robotics and related super-modern production technologies—that is, intellectual property rights.

Chinese capitalists long ago estimated that their agreement to subordinate their economies to U.S. and world imperialist investment in order to secure the necessary initial foreign investment was temporary and would, in time, allow them to participate on world markets as serious competitors. That time has come—hence the Trump countermeasure tariffs aimed at perpetually keeping China as a second-rate player. Obviously, neither China nor the European Union nations, nor any other "self-respecting" big time capitalist entrepreneur, intend to remain permanent second-rate players.

North American Free Trade Agreement

NAFTA is another example of how trade agreements are arrived at. It emerged as the joint product of essentially the entire U.S. ruling class. Both NAFTA and the U.S. congressional vote to admit China to the WTO were accomplished under the aegis of the Bill Clinton



(Above) Chinese medium-tech workers construct Apple-Foxcon cell phones.

The paradise of near-slave labor in China for foreign consumption has given way to China's effort to create its own middle-class market to consume its products.

Democratic Party administration. But both were opposed, for the sake of appearances only, by the then House majority Democrats, who (falsely) claimed to be interested in protecting U.S. workers against cheap foreign labor. Similarly, in the case of China's admission to the WTO the vote in favor included only 74 Democrats joined by 164 Republicans, the latter a congressional minority at that time, but joining with the needed Democrats to accomplish an overall ruling-class objective.

Despite its "free trade" imprimatur, NAFTA incorporated a myriad of negotiated protectionist measures aimed at defending the weaker sections of U.S. capital. It was the product, as with all such trade agreements, of the broadest deliberations between U.S. capitalists on the one hand, and similar negotiations with Mexican and Canadian elites on the other, with the latter two compelled to make concessions to the stronger U.S. capitalists in order to remain players—but lesser players to be sure.

Ruling class agrees with Trump's policies

In truth, there are no fundamental disagreements among the U.S. elites regarding trade. As a generalization, every sector has long become accustomed to behind-the-scenes deals wherein its particular interests are protected at the expense of foreign competitors. Undoubtedly, the lines sometimes become blurred when the "foreign competitors" are in reality U.S. corporations. But this too is usually factored in during the course of the usual secretive dealing that marks top-level decision-making.

There were near-zero objections, for example, when a bipartisan Congress gifted \$1.5 trillion in tax relief to the corporations and banks of the ruling rich, a fact that in and of itself enabled bourgeois economic analysts to post and predict some figures that indicated a modest, but one-time uptick in otherwise stagnant GDP figures.

Similarly, there were few, if any, objections when Congress boosted annual military spending by an unprecedented \$80 billion, an amount exceeding even Trump's initial request. We note here in passing that the \$80 billion increase exceeds Russia's total annual military budget of \$50 billion—as compared to the U.S.'s budgeted \$1 trillion for overall war purposes! On June 21, 2018, the U.S. Senate, by a vote of 85-15, approved this military budget. The few "doves" that voted "no," like Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and "libertarian" Rand Paul, did so likely to preserve their future political "peace candidate" credentials.

Working people have no stake in trade wars

The recent joint statement by Socialist Action (U.S.) and our sister party Socialist Action/Ligue pour l'action socialiste in the Canadian state summarizes

our views well:

"Global capitalist competition [including the current trade wars] is a completely unavoidable aspect of the system of private profit. As competition results in new innovation and automation temporarily increases the rate of profit for the first innovators these gains are soon offset again by the rapid adoption of even newer technologies by competitors and the consequent resumption of the fall of profit rates.

"In their desperate struggle to fight the falling rate of profit, (or, as Marx said, "the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall), capitalists try to reduce costs by attacking trade unions and workers' rights, by attacking wage and benefit levels, by attacking general social benefits such as education, medical, and pension benefits, by refusing to accept responsibility for the massive environmental damage caused by cutthroat capitalist competition, and by transferring production to low-wage, unregulated areas both within and outside their own countries...

"The world's working people have no interest in this potential world conflagration. In the end, when capitalists win, workers lose—a fundamental law of the capitalist system that has been verified time and again over the past decades and centuries. The common interest of workers lies in defending working people everywhere against all the onslaughts of capital. This means international solidarity on every front, from united worldwide efforts to organize workers into powerful unions to united opposition to capitalist wars and the capitalist destruction of the environment...

"There is no such thing as peaceful and/or regulated competition among capitalist nations. No self-respecting capitalist is in business to be the world's "nice guy." There are only winners and losers in this deadly game of production for private profit. Donald Trump simply tore the mask off the brute face of a predatory system in decline. Justin Trudeau plays the same game as Trump on the world scene and makes sure that everyone knows that Canadian capitalism can bare its own claws in the profit game."

The most serious representatives of the U.S. ruling class would much prefer a more verbally tempered president, one like Obama, or even Hillary Clinton, who would seek the counsel of the leading ruling-class representatives—that is, of the traditional team of cabinet and other "advisers" who are less blatant in guaranteeing the real interests of the nation's leading bankers, financiers, and corporate magnates.

That Trump has fired one after another of his advisers who are slightly less noxious and more cautious in their rhetoric, after each has counseled him to moderate his vitriol and embarrassing tone and tweets, is subordinate to the fact that no section of the ruling class, including their Democratic and Republican Party spokespersons, has broken with Trump on fundamental policies that favor the rich over the 99 percent.

Working people have no interest in the outcome of the upcoming "lesser-evil" electoral charade that is today being orchestrated to a fever pitch by the corporate media. A break with ruling-class politics is on the order of the day. The formation of an independent labor party based on a reinvigorated, democratic, and fighting union movement, in alliance with all the oppressed and exploited, would be a major step forward in challenging capitalism's current dominance in the political and economic arenas. ■

Debate on Nicaragua — Capitalist reform or socialist revolution?



(Photo) Cuba's revolutionary example: Fidel Castro (left) and Che Guevara (ctr.) lead a march in Havana, May 5, 1960, for the victims of the explosion on the freighter *La Coubre*, considered one of the CIA's first attempts to sabotage the Cuban Revolution.

By JEFF MACKLER

Part II. (Part I appeared in last month's issue.)

In today's epoch of worldwide imperialist intervention and war, real revolutions are hard to make, even harder to maintain, and sometimes difficult to define in their evolution or degeneration. Today's antiwar movement debate on the still-unfolding dynamics operating in Nicaragua is a case in point. Here we propose to discuss this question in the context of the lessons learned from past efforts to challenge capitalist rule.

In 1979, Daniel Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) led a revolution in Nicaragua overthrowing the U.S.-backed Anastasio Somoza dictatorship, which had murdered 50,000 people. Two decades earlier, Fidel Castro's July 26 Movement, also in large part a guerrilla struggle, overthrew the U.S.-backed murderous Batista dictatorship in Cuba.

Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution defeated the old regime via a parliamentary election in Venezuela, as was the case with Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva's Workers Party-led election victory in Brazil. Over the past decade or so similar Latin American parliamentary electoral victories in the context of the "pink tide" brought to governmental power left-oriented or radical regimes in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Honduras.

In a similar vein, in 1994, Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) came to political power via an election that codified the previous regime's agreement to end the racist apartheid system and allow for an election that insured Black-majority political rule. Here too, the previous apartheid regime was armed and backed to the hilt by U.S. imperialism, with Mandela himself remaining on the U.S. terrorist list long after his election.

The example of the Russian Revolution

And then there was Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party-led revolution that on Oct. 25, 1917, overthrew the coalition capitalist government of Alexander Kerensky in Russia and ushered in the world's first socialist revolution. For the purposes of this discussion, the Oct. 25 date is instructive. Indeed, every one of the above-mentioned events had its decisive moments or turning points. The Russian Revolution of Oct. 25 was preceded two weeks earlier by a special meeting of the Central Committee of Lenin's Bolshevik Party.

The full name was the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party Majority; the last word, "Majority," translates into the Russian *bolshinstvo* or "Bolshevik." That detail is significant:

A 1903 split in the RSDLP resulted in Lenin's faction winning a majority. Lenin aimed to organize a party of professional revolutionaries whose central objectives, 14 years later, were the seizure of power by the revolutionary mobilization of the workers and poor peasants, the abolition of the remnants of feudalism, the abolition of capitalism, and the establishment of

a democratic workers' state aimed at immediately beginning a transition to a socialist society in Russia and worldwide. Every word of this last sentence is relevant to our present discourse.

With this in mind let us return to that Central Committee meeting two weeks before the Oct. 25 Russian Revolution. Lenin's blunt proposal was to take power, *in two weeks*, in the largest nation on earth, a nation that occupied one-sixth of the land surface of the planet. It was an imperialist nation centrally engaged in the ongoing first imperialist World War, a nation with a massive army led by experienced generals of the Tsarist regime, a nation aligned with the most powerful imperialist countries that ever existed—the U.S., Great Britain, France, and Japan, along with their allies.

Lenin's proposal stunned his Central Committee. The sheer notion of taking power seemed to be the ultimate expression of fanaticism, of adventurism, of a total disconnect with the reality of the moment. But Lenin's proposal was approved. Leon Trotsky, the head of the Petrograd (St. Petersburg) Soviet's Military Revolutionary Committee, was assigned the task of organizing the insurrection on Oct. 24. Frightened that they would all be arrested, key Bolshevik leaders opposed Lenin's proposal, including Lev Kamenev and Gregory Zinoviev, who blew the whistle on the revolution and publicly attacked Lenin's proposal in a non-Bolshevik newspaper.

But the Oct. 24 seizure of power via the storming of the government's operational headquarters at the former Tsar's Winter Palace in Petrograd and the arrest of the Alexander Kerensky government's top leaders—minus Kerensky, who fled—was successful. An estimated six or perhaps eight people lost their lives on this day.

The old government essentially fell on its own dead weight. It needed but a single decisive push at a critical moment to relegate it to a brief mention in historical accounts. No one came to its defense except a pathetic parade of the city's bourgeoisie dressed in their finery and demanding of the Bolshevik soldiers and workers, whom they scolded and threatened with arrest, that the Kerensky government be returned to power. They were politely escorted away.

The Bolshevik had seized the moment that cried out for resolution. They had won over vast sections of the army, virtually the entire working class and a peasantry in revolt against a feudal autocracy allied with the nation's capitalist class, who insisted on pursuing Tsarist imperial war aims at the expense of the lives of countless millions of Russia's conscripted army.

A day later, Oct. 25, the action was overwhelmingly approved by a meeting of the All Russian Congress of Soviets, where the Bolsheviks had won a majority. This body of soldiers, who were mostly peasants, and workers, democratically elected by their peers from every quarter of society, became Russia's new revolutionary government. To a standing ovation that lasted several minutes, Lenin announced to the 649

delegates representing 318 provincial and local soviets across Russia, "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order." And they did! And immediately!

Within days, this All-Russian Soviet [Council] of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Deputies approved and implemented a series of decrees that shook the world. It nationalized all the land of Russia and granted the peasant soviets the authority to distribute it to the nation's poor peasants—the vast majority of the population; it decreed the right of self-determination of Russia's Tsarist-conquered and oppressed nations, including their right to secede; it decreed its intention to immediately end Russia's participation in the imperialist war, and it carried out this promise within months; it established worker's control of the nation's factories as a prelude to their formal nationalization; it nationalized all capitalist banks and related financial institutions and established a monopoly of foreign trade.

It renounced all foreign treaties that the previous governments had imposed by force on other nations; it abolished all laws discriminating against women and decreed the absolute right to divorce and abortion while establishing free childcare; it banned all discriminatory laws aimed at persecuting people because of their sexual and gender preference; it established soviet bodies at the local, regional, and national levels as the formal governing institutions of the new state with all elected delegates subject to immediate recall and paid wages no higher than an average skilled worker in their occupation.

Most important, it put out an international call to the world's revolutionary fighters to follow the Russian example, to establish new revolutionary parties everywhere, and to join to construct a new party for world revolution. Less than a year later, the Communist International was established. It included the best revolutionary fighters and their new parties from around the world.

The example of the Cuban Revolution

Some 40 years later, the Cubans followed a similar path. Within six months of their 1958-9 defeat of Batista's army, they implemented a massive land reform and abolished capitalism. At an early meeting of Cuba's central leaders, Fidel Castro is said to have asked, "Is there anyone here with experience as an *economist*?" A young Argentinian, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, raised his hand and was approved for the assignment. When later asked about his *economic* credentials, Che, a trained doctor of the medical profession, responded, "I thought Fidel asked for an experienced *communist*." Che proceeded to lead in the implementation of Cuba's early efforts to convert nationalized capitalist enterprises to a rational, democratic, and integrated system of production aimed at meeting human needs as opposed to maximizing capitalist profits.

The Cubans continued to deepen their revolution with the steady implementation of measures to empower the masses and win their confidence in the socialist future and in their revolutionary government. It invited Latin America's best revolutionary fighters to Havana to attend international conferences to discuss how the Cuban example could be applied everywhere.

To this day, beleaguered, embargoed, blockaded, sanctioned, invaded, and having thwarted some two dozen CIA-confirmed and promoted assassination attempts on Castro's life, the Cubans continue to set a sterling example for revolutionaries everywhere.

The Russian and Cuban Revolutions set an example that is as relevant today as it was in decades past. Both definitively abolished capitalist rule as the precondition for their survival and because of their dedication to the highest aspirations of humankind for a world of equality and social justice. They were based on the fundamental proposition that only the formal abolition of the monstrous capitalist system of endless war, plunder, exploitation and human degradation, can provide the foundation for the building of a

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... Nicaragua

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new society. *Capitalism cannot be reformed in the U.S. or anywhere else on earth!* Whatever temporary “reforms” are won in struggle will always be subject to reversal, until the beast itself is slain at the hands of the vast majority in every nation.

Latin America’s “pink revolutions”

Today’s debate on the present course of the FSLN in Nicaragua and all other “pink revolutions” provides critical lessons for serious revolutionaries and social justice activists. First and foremost, as we have demonstrated, the deadly hand of U.S. imperialism is always at work, seeking any and all openings to weaken and defeat insurgent movements and governments that in any manner challenge capitalist prerogatives. Nothing is new in this respect. Anything less than expecting the worst from the imperialist colossus and all its parties would be naïve at best and dangerously mistaken.

Revolutionary Russia and Cuba planned for the worst by cementing the loyalty of the vast majority, who stormed the heavens to make the revolution, beginning with a decisive break with minority capitalist rule and the implementation of a planned economy that prioritized human needs. This included campaigns aimed at eradicating institutional racism and national oppression, nationwide literacy campaigns and the establishment of quality systems of free education and health care. The people were armed, with the right to keep their weapons to defend their class interests. Their perspectives were internationalist to the core, reaching out to the people of the world for support and extending solidarity to their struggles.

In sharp contrast, the FSLN leadership, along with all the other “pink tide” or social democratic reformist leaderships, began with the proposition that upon achieving *governmental* power they could and would *coexist* with capitalism. This coexistence was expressed by the simultaneous inclusion of leading capitalists in their governments and in the associated and inseparable promise that capitalist wealth and property in the means of production and in the land would be respected.

When decisive moments presented themselves in Nicaragua, as when the two leading capitalists in the initial five-member 1979 government, the Junta of National Reconstruction (JGRN), Alfonse Robelo and Violetta Chamorro, resigned in 1981, the FSLN left their positions *open or reserved for their return or to be replaced by other major representatives of capitalism*, a statement to the world that, resignation or not, the FSLN’s commitment to capitalism had not changed. Robelo went on to join or form a series of opposition capitalist parties culminating in 1987 with his helping to found the National Resistance that represented the murderous Contras—the Honduras-based military operation, armed and financed by the U.S., that took the lives of 15,000 Nicaraguans.

Following Daniel Ortega’s and the FSLN’s 1990 presidential election defeat, a reflection of both the deep demoralization arising from the constant Contra terror, sabotage, and military incursions in the north *and* the failure to introduce any significant land reform and other major incursions on capitalist property—a deadly reality that fueled some support for the Contras among Nicaragua’s landless peasants and poor workers—the FSLN splintered into fractious infighting.

Ortega lost two subsequent presidential election bids while becoming skilled at endless maneuvers with a variety of Nicaragua’s capitalist elites as he prepared for and won the 2006 election. Essentially absent as a spokesperson and active leader of the oppressed masses, Ortega reappeared 16 years later as the presidential candidate of an electoral coalition including Nicaragua’s Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), the Catholic Church, and some leading capitalist politicians.

Venezuelan oil & FSLN’s social programs

Some solidarity activists today tout the FSLN’s more recent social programs that are said to have raised the standard of living and wellbeing of its people to the highest levels in Central America. This was accomplished through the largess of Venezuela, via 2007-2016 oil shipments at half the market price valued at \$3.7 billion and with generous payment due dates on half the value of the already reduced oil price postponed to 23 years at a 2 percent interest rate. The FSLN in turn sold the oil at full market value and used 40 percent of the profits for its popular programs to provide microloans to small businesses, as well as food and housing subsidies for the poor.

Venezuela’s massive contributions over the same



(Above) A protester in Masaya holds a cartoon likening Ortega to the former dictator Somoza.

period helped to boost Nicaragua’s GDP growth, largely due to promoting its private sectors, to an annual average of 4.1 percent.

Similar and generous terms were negotiated between oil rich Venezuela and its “pink tide” allies in Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador, as well as with revolutionary Cuba. Well and good. But here a fundamental question arises in full force. In Nicaragua’s capitalist economy, as with all other capitalist states, who is responsible for the distribution and utilization of the remainder of the profits from the sale of Venezuelan oil—the 60 percent or \$2.3 billion that was not spent on social programs? Was this huge amount by Nicaraguan standards overseen by a democratic workers’ state to meet social needs or by a capitalist state that inherently subordinates human needs to the private profit of the elite?

Here we re-state the self-evident proposition that no self-respecting capitalist, however “democratically minded,” is in business to lose money. The terms “progressive capitalist” or “non-neoliberal capitalist” are oxymorons of the first order. In Nicaragua, the Ortega leadership and its family and personal associates, as we demonstrated in my previous article, “Nicaragua: Dynamics of an Interrupted Revolution,” in the August issue of *Socialist Action*, are steeped in ownership and control of a broad range of leading capitalist enterprises and have been so since 1990, if not before. It cannot be otherwise in a capitalist state.

Today, with the massive drop in world oil prices, and in the context of a world economic crisis, Venezuela’s economy, dominated by oil production, could only suffer grievous blows. These have been undoubtedly magnified by drastic U.S. economic sanctions and a host of other imperialist measures aimed at destabilizing the country. We would be remiss in omitting that, like Nicaragua, Venezuela is a capitalist state, with its major factories, land, and banking institutions owned and operated by the capitalist elite, who today, have every intention of once again collaborating with imperialism to undermine and eventually overthrow any government that in the slightest way interferes with their accumulation of profits.

The same is true for Brazil. Lula came to head that government after his fourth presidential run in 2002. But unlike his previous runs, he was the candidate of an electoral coalition of his trade union-based Workers Party (PT) and a reactionary right-wing Catholic party that provided its central, multi-millionaire leader as Lula’s running mate. To insure that Brazil would remain in the world capitalist orbit and pay its debts to its leading financial institutions, Lula’s first parliamentary effort was to impose a massive austerity program that severely cut into workers’ pensions and other vital social programs. PT senators and members of the Chamber of Deputies (lower house in Brazil’s bicameral system) who voted against Lula’s austerity measures were summarily expelled from his party.

Today, the “pink tide revolution” is in rapid decline, with Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador reverting to reactionary regimes via the electoral process, wherein discontented sectors of the working class and the poor, enticed by a capitalist cabal and corporate media largely left intact, undoubtedly registered their discontent at the polls. With Venezuela similarly under siege—incapable of resolving its deep economic crisis and maintaining its commitment to its capitalist system at the same time—and with the Honduran government overthrown in a U.S.-supported coup, Nicaragua is high on imperialism’s hit list.

All the self-proclaimed “socialist” leaders of these governments, their best intentions notwithstanding, believed they could make a bargain with the devil—to coexist with the class enemy. All of these reformist

capitalist governments had their own distinct politics and ideologies. These ranged from ingrained reformism, if not personal corruption, to an honest, if not well-founded belief that an outright challenge to the capitalist state order would inevitably bring on isolation, embargo, CIA-instigated internal subversion, or active intervention—either by the orchestration of a military coup or overt U.S. intervention and war. All of the above are imperialism’s stock-in-trade.

The revolutionary alternative

From our vantage point there is another alternative, the variant of Lenin and Fidel—socialist revolution, the mobilization of the masses of workers and peasants to challenge and defeat capitalist power in all its manifestation and to place the fate of the new nation in the hands of the people themselves, organized democratically in soviet-type institution.

Over the past decade or so this alternative was on the order of the day, with massive working-class mobilizations across Latin America driving the discredited capitalist regimes from political power and radical anti-capitalist ideas on the ascendancy. What was lacking then, and now, was an international revolutionary socialist party with deep roots in the struggles of the oppressed everywhere, coordinating its efforts for a common end.

Socialist revolution was on the agenda in the mass consciousness of the vast majority of the entire continent. What was lacking then, and now, is a revolutionary leadership intent on throwing fear and caution to the winds, and relying on the capacity of the revolutionary masses to determine their own fate. This *combination* of mass anti-capitalist consciousness and the capacity to repeatedly mobilize to challenge the capitalist status quo *and* a revolutionary party with the program, will, discipline and mass implantation with every progressive struggle, is unbeatable.

What we have observed over these past years, decades and centuries has never been the incapacity of the masses to struggle but rather a profound crisis of revolutionary leadership. The FSLN, once capable of heroic deeds, opened the door to socialist revolution in 1979. But its leaders were disabused from this course, at least in part, by the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy of the former Soviet Union, who warned against a break with capitalism and instead counseled “peaceful co-existence” with it.

History has repeatedly demonstrated that these “socialism in one country” bureaucrats regularly traded revolutionary possibilities that they influenced as bargaining chips in secret deals with imperialism to preserve their own interests and privilege at home.

They made clear that should the FSLN embark on a challenge to capitalist rule they would receive no aid from the USSR. The Stalinist regime did the same with regard to the Salvadoran Revolution, also underway in 1979, and with regard to Grenada’s 1979 revolution led by Maurice Bishop, who was later murdered by the Stalinist misleader, Bernard Coard.

The same forces aligned to the USSR’s counter-revolutionary bureaucracy pressured the South African ANC and its South African Communist Party partner to agree to place the Black mask of an ANC government over the white racist face of a still-in-place apartheid capitalist regime rather than organize to bring it down. These tragic decisions largely accounted for all these lost revolutionary opportunities. These events are still under debate today, but the lessons are clearer than ever. Capitalism will not be defeated by halfway measures and agreements to

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Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Quebecois go to the polls

By ROBBIE MAHOOD

Oct. 1 is election day in Quebec, the first under a new law that requires a new mandate every FOUR years.

As the population wearies of cutbacks in health care, education, and social services, the Liberal Party government of Philippe Couillard is facing defeat. But this will not be at the hands of their traditional rival, the Parti Quebecois (PQ).

The bourgeois nationalist PQ is in crisis. It was responsible for calling Quebec's two referenda on independence in 1980 and 1995. But it has consigned another referendum to the indefinite future, if ever.

Losing its *raison d'être* as the party of sovereignty, it is bleeding support mainly to the Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ), a populist right of centre party, now poised to oust the Liberals. Under former PQ

Minister, Francois Legault, a CAQ government would deepen austerity while scapegoating immigrants and posing as the best defender of Quebec's "interests" in negotiations with Ottawa.

That leaves the small "left" party, Quebec Solidaire (QS). By pushing a pro-independence and anti-austerity agenda, QS hopes to win over sovereigntist and working-class voters from the PQ. But at 10% in the polls, the most that can be expected is adding a few more deputies to its current roster of three out of 125 in the National Assembly.

This election testifies to the stagnation of bourgeois parliamentary politics in Quebec. A stifling ideological consensus envelops the Liberals, the CAQ and the PQ. For most voters the choice is whether to toss out one band of corrupt reactionary politicians and replace them with another. Only QS provides some

measure of relief.

This reflects the current lull in social and class struggles in Quebec. That is the price for the dead weight of the bureaucratic leadership of Quebec's unions. Having thrown their weight behind the PQ's bourgeois nationalist project in the 1970s, they now find themselves in a greatly weakened position after years of concessions and retreat.

Union leaders have confined their intervention in this election to "interrogating" the three parties that might win. Their strategic horizon is limited to securing a seat at the table when neo-liberal politicians sit down with Quebec's business class.

The union brass is still not willing to countenance a definitive break with the PQ, only signalling to vote against the Liberals and the CAQ.

This is despite a QS election programme that the unions can certainly support: public dental care, ending public funding of private schools, free education from pre-school to university, re-orienting primary health care to the public sector, abolishing the fees families must pay to place their children in the province's day-care centers, a promise to invest in mass transit, and a quick transition to a \$15 per hour minimum wage.

QS embodies contradictory elements. It is a progressive or "left" party, but far from a labour or socialist party. Its evolution is increasingly determined by elec-

toral calculations. The sometimes-radical party programme is often trimmed by the leadership so as to stay within Quebec's liberal capitalist consensus. For example, a commitment to the COP 21 target of a 2/3 cut in carbon emissions by 2030, was scaled back so as to close the gap with the position of the neo-liberal parties.

On the other hand, QS decisively rejected an electoral pact with the PQ. And its programme tilts leftwards, demarcating it from its rivals. It represents a partial break with the ruling-class parties and there is potential for it to become a class alternative, by seeking union affiliation to the party and advancing a clear working-class agenda.

That is the perspective the Ligue pour l'Action socialiste fights for within and outside of QS and the basis for our call for a critical vote for QS. We deplore the decision of the newly relaunched provincial NDP to put up candidates against QS in this election. This will divide the pro-working-class electorate.

The rationale for this decision can only spring from a sectarian and nationalist reflex based on loyalty to the federal Anglo-Canadian state.

The provincial NDP seeks to take votes away from another much more established party of the reform-minded left just because it offers a progressive (yet, like the NDP, hardly socialist) vision and platform in the framework of an independent Quebec. ■

Why I am running for Toronto City Council

By PETER D'GAMA

I am the Socialist Action candidate in the Oct. 22 municipal election in Toronto because I want to bring a Workers' Agenda to City Hall. For the past decade I have seen inequality grow while corporate profits, particularly those of the financial sector, rise astronomically.

Life for workers has become more precarious as we have to settle for jobs paying minimum wage and work long hours just to meet the high cost of housing, both rental and for home ownership. Many workers have been pushed into precarious economic situations, which land some on the streets.

This situation is made worse by capitalist politicians preaching cuts to social and community services and for privatization of public assets such as mass transit.

I ran in 2010 as an independent socialist to protest the militarization of the city during the G20 Summit. Today I am running as a member of Socialist Action—for a Workers' Agenda that is anti-capitalist, that seeks to take back public space and assets controlled

by private interests.

The city, as radical geographer David Harvey famously said, is a site for class struggle. While we are not yet in a revolutionary period reminiscent of the Paris Commune of 1871 or the Russian Revolution of 1917, when workers took control away from bourgeois interests, we do see that socialism is becoming more relevant to young workers seeking to escape the traps of the capitalist mode of production.

I am running to stop landlords and large real estate investment trusts from making huge profits at the expense of renters who face whopping increases and deteriorating living conditions. Housing is a human right, not a privilege. As such we have to prioritize human needs, not private profits, by imposing strong rent controls and by building public housing massively.

We need a housing agency that acts as a developer, utilizing city owned land, and by nationalizing a construction company to facilitate rapid building of affordable housing. Socialist Action aims to stop the sharp decline of investment in public transit and to

build Light Rapid Transit and a downtown relief subway line, while at the same demanding free and accessible public transit.

As a long-time paralegal and community organizer in Etobicoke North, I am running not to be another seat holder, but to be a worker/activist who opposes neoliberal policies on council and on the street.

I pledge if elected to take only 50% of a Councillor's salary and spend the rest on community organizing to mobilize workers in Etobicoke North against anti-worker policies such as reduction of minimum wage, cancellation of LRTs, and advocate for a just energy transition and the creation of green jobs. That includes putting solar panels on the roofs of city-owned buildings, making sure that green jobs are unionized, and ensuring that projects come under democratic workers' and community control.

I stand with the theatrical stage workers represented by IATSE Local 58 and against the union-busting antics of Exhibition Place and City Council. Stop contracting-out. End the lock-out. Defend decent jobs. Improve wages, benefits and pensions. Organize the unorganized. Workers make the city run; workers should run the city. ■

Will Jagmeet Singh's campaign in Barnaby South save the NDP?

By GARY PORTER

Jagmeet Singh, elected Federal Leader of the NDP on Oct. 1, 2017, will run in the anticipated Burnaby South by-election for a seat in Parliament. This could be a tremendous opportunity for Singh, the NDP, and the working class across Canada. The election will focus, in part, on the critical shortage of affordable housing and on the Trans Mountain pipeline extension.

After much hesitation, Singh now opposes the twinning of the Trans Mountain pipeline from Alberta to the Pacific coast through Greater Vancouver. The line would threaten ocean species with the inevitable leakages and spills of heavy, filthy bitumen. Bitumen sinks to the ocean floor; it cannot be cleaned up and leeches out toxins for years.

Singh publicly advocates free universal pharma care, dental care, eye-care and free post-secondary education. Such provisions are already common in the state medicare services of nations much poorer than Canada. To finance it, Singh says: "One of the massive ways we can afford that is tackling the offshore tax havens that exist. Our current government doesn't have the will, the conviction or the courage to do anything about it."

He is correct of course, but the real problem isn't merely finding where capitalists hide their profits. It is the profit system itself, a system that must be replaced by social ownership and workers' democratic control.

Singh states that he is not necessarily opposed to

government deficits. That is a step past Tom Mulcair's dogged loyalty to a balanced budget in the 2015 federal election—when the NDP lost over half its seats.

But Singh does not challenge capitalism, nor the imperialist foreign policy that flows from it. He does not mention, let alone advocate socialism. In that respect he is even more timid than Democratic Party loyalist Bernie Sanders in the USA.

Singh, to many, seems more style and less policy. Since the leadership race, party support has fallen. The NDP has had difficulty raising funds and has failed terribly in by-elections. Not a single NDP federal candidate has been elected. Why? It is simply because Singh has advocated modest reforms to a system based on capitalist profit, not human need.

If Singh took a clear stand against the austerity policies of the capitalist parties, if he advocated a policy of building tens of thousands of publicly owned, affordable homes for workers and the poor, if he made a strong defense of workers' and union rights, and pushed unambiguously to expand medicare to include pharma care and dental care, and campaigned to enact free post secondary education in his first term as Prime Minister, millions of Canadians would listen.

If he mobilized workers and the poor in Canada and demanded much steeper progressive income taxes, including a maximum income above which taxes would be 100%, in addition to shutting down tax shelters and imposing harsh sentences for tax evasion by the rich, millions would cheer.

It is time for the NDP leadership to break with Cana-

dian imperialism and start fighting for the exploited and oppressed of the world. If Singh began a massive social media campaign to expose the lies of the Israeli state and its imperialist allies in Ottawa and Washington, if he explained clearly why he supported the rights of Palestinians against apartheid Israel and stood up for the people of Venezuela and Syria under attack, millions would begin to grasp the nature of Canadian imperialism.

If he advocated getting Canada out of NATO, and ending the sale of arms to the Saudis and the Israeli state and to the Ukrainian far-right government, he could distinguish himself indelibly from Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Conservative leader Andrew Scheer.

To be credible on the environment, he must distance himself from British Columbia NDP Premier John Horgan on the massive Site C power dam. It is being built to support a fracking industry. Singh should advocate nationalization of the oil and gas business in order to wind it down and to build in its place a massive, publicly owned green energy industry.

He has said little in defense of workers in Canada, the United States and Mexico as the ruling classes heat up their trade war. When he has spoken, it has been to support the interests of Canadian capitalists in the fight with American capitalists. The NDP should be defending the interests of workers across the continent.

He has said virtually nothing in defense of workers

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Earl Balfour (1936-2018), a tireless labor and socialist activist

By DAVE RIEHLE

MINNEAPOLIS—May Day Bookstore was filled to capacity by friends, comrades, and fellow workers of Earl Balfour, a much loved and respected socialist and militant worker, who died on June 26 after a long illness.

Earl was born in 1936 in Hartford, Conn., one of the historic centers of the industrial revolution. At age 18 he was apprenticed as a tool and die maker at the mammoth Pratt and Whitney Aircraft Company, employing some 30,000 workers under one roof. He followed this trade for a lifetime, renowned for his skill in designing and crafting machinery of all types, including fully functional model steam locomotives.

"He will be missed," wrote one of his friends, "for his acerbic wit, his signature hats, and his commitment to the revolutionary labor movement." Earl's first encounter with socialism, as he recalled it, began when some Communist party supporters handed out copies of *The Daily Worker* at the trade school he and his buddy attended. Thrilled to have such dangerous literature in their hands, they retreated to the roof of the Hartford Athletic Club, where they had part-time jobs, to closely examine the contraband.

The Hartford Athletic Club was the elite spot for the local ruling class. It had some private rooms for members that didn't feel in condition to drive home after tiring social gatherings. As it happened, one of the tasks assigned to Earl and his friend was to run the passenger elevator after hours for the convenience of the members and guests. U.S. Senator Prescott Bush (R-Conn., 1952-1963) not infrequently availed himself of this service. Senator Bush was not popular with the employees of the club, according to Earl, because he was a heavy drinker, and a cheap tipper. So, as a revenge of the weak, when one of the boys had to run this wobbly personage up to his floor late at night, they would stop the elevator about three inches above the floor and watch him fall on his face.

Celebrity biographer Kitty Kelley somehow heard about this from journalist and ex-convict Harley Sorensen, and if you wish, you can look "Balfour, Earl" up in the index of her Bush family book and read all about it.

Earl was far from a frivolous man and what he was truly celebrated for among his comrades and friends was always managing to be in the fighting center of any picket line or other worthy cause. (See accompanying photo from the UFCW Local P-9 strike, April 1986, at the Hormel plant in Austin, Minn.)

A friend writes: "Earl was involved in the local Iowa Pork strike (1984), support for UAW Local 879 at the Ford Assembly Plant in St Paul, and with the Teamsters during the UPS strike. He drove the lead junker car as a part of a mobile picket that shut down the scab gate at Northwest Airlines. He disabled the car in the road and was arrested by police, as he was in the 1985 Greyhound strike when he fell down in front of a scab bus.

"Earl helped plan and participated in every commemoration of the 1934 Teamsters strike in Minneapolis, and became particularly close to Trotskyist strike veterans Harry DeBoer and Jake Cooper. He supported the American Indian Movement facing off hundreds of white racists in spear-fishing struggles in the 1990s."

He was also a man known for his unfailing generosity, kindness, and human solidarity, qualities treasured by often just casual acquaintances, who were evicted, broke, or in other troubles heaped on them by the capitalist system. Then the pick-up truck arrived to move furniture and unsecured loans were issued. After retire-

ment, he joined the volunteers at the May Day. He was my friend and comrade for 50 years.

His youngest son Jeff, an International Representative for the United Auto Workers Union, who presided at the memorial meeting, said, "Earl Balfour dedicated his life to fighting for workers, opposing imperialism and war, and supporting the struggles of the oppressed. If there was a picket line blocking scabs from going through a plant gate, homeless activists taking over an empty HUD house, or demonstrators marching against war and imperialism—Earl was right there in the middle of the action.

"He was a tireless fighter. During his last years, he canvassed for local living wage campaigns, continued to attend demonstrations, and worked the counter at Mayday Books. He also took a new generation of younger activists under his wing. They would come to early to meetings to hear Earl's funny stories and learn from a lifetime of activism and hard earned wisdom.

"Earl taught us that there is dignity in work and honor in struggle. He touched the lives of generations of trade-union and progressive activists who will proudly carry on his legacy. He will be sorely missed by his comrades and family." ■

Mumia's supporters rally at courthouse



Over 100 supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal's struggle for freedom gathered at the court in Philadelphia on Aug. 30.

Based on a newly discovered letter from an Assistant DA under former District Attorney Ron Castille, Philadelphia Judge Leon Tucker ruled in favor of a motion for a continuance of Mumia's hearing until Oct. 29. The letter discusses Mumia by name and talks about pushing for his execution, in order to "send a message."

Attorney Judith Ritter (above photo) told *Socialist Action* that this ruling could open the door to the introduction of new evidence linking former Castille—later, a Pennsylvania Supreme Court judge who illegally ruled on Mumia's case—to a

new appeal to the state Supreme Court. That in turn could allow for a new Post Conviction Relief Act hearing and, possibly, to Mumia's freedom.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, an award-winning journalist and former member of the Black Panther Party, was railroaded for the 1981 murder of police officer Daniel Faulkner in a trial that was marred by prosecutorial and judicial misconduct.

As precedent, in the 2016 *Williams v. Pennsylvania* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court held that "under the Due Process Clause, there is an impermissible risk of actual bias when a judge earlier had significant, personal involvement as a prosecutor in a critical decision regarding the defendant's case." ■

... Barnaby South

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and the poor in Ontario faced with the barrage of cutbacks and attacks on their living standards by the savagely right-wing Doug Ford provincial Tory government.

Burnaby South is currently an NDP seat. It is the scene of one of the major environment battles in Canada. It is a seat with many resident unionized workers. The NDP will not get a better chance to

prove its worth.

Now is the time for Singh and the party leadership to face up to reality. Their utter failure to deal with most of the real problems facing workers and the poor in Canada is leading to a stunning, demoralizing decline in party fortunes.

This is a golden opportunity to take up the Socialist Caucus program and move sharply to the left. Now is the time for rank-and-file NDP members to demand a sharp left turn. In Burnaby, Vote NDP, and fight for a socialist policies. ■

... Nicaragua

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rule in partnership with capitalism.

Today it appears that the leading players in the recent mass mobilizations and counter-mobilizations in Nicaragua have perhaps once again entered into a dialogue to resolve their differences, a dialogue in which the voices of the vast majority of working people are absent.

While the evidence is still unclear as to the origins of the violence that erupted during and immediately following the April mass protests against the government's decision to reduce pensions and increase taxation rates, the FSLN's monopoly of police and military power and its control over all the state institutions leads us to question its denials with great skepticism. Some 300-400 people have been killed. The wounded are said to have been at least 2000. But we also cannot be blind to the possibility that the hand of imperialism, via its CIA secret teams and provocateurs, may

have been involved.

In truth, however, the question as to who fired first is subordinate to the truth that mass opposition to the FSLN's austerity measures was fully justified and reflected a deeply held anger and frustration by working people that their standard of living and general conditions were in decline.

Nicaragua's wages are among the lowest in Latin America; its foreign-owned free economic zone low wage sweatshop maquiladoras exist to serve imperialist needs for cheap labor. The majority of the population is relegated to the "informal" sector of the economy—that is, to selling trinkets and other petty commodities and food on the streets to survive.

In the U.S. the first obligation of antiwar and social justice activists is to unconditionally support Nicaragua's right to self-determination, free from every form of imperialist intervention—from the heinous congressional NICA Act (Nicaragua Investment Conditionality Act), aimed at restricting Nicaragua's access to international lending institutions, to U.S. government sanctions and U.S.-backed financing of NGOs and National Endowment for Democracy operations aimed at bringing down the FSLN government.

Only the Nicaraguan people have the right to decide their fate. U.S. Hands Off!

Inside Nicaragua, as with every nation on earth, we are partisans of the formation of a deeply rooted revolutionary socialist party aimed at organizing the nation's poor and oppressed for a definitive break with capitalist rule—a party totally independent of the Daniel Ortega/FSLN capitalist rulers and their capitalist associates as well as against today's dissidents organized by the COSEP, the Catholic Church, and other opposition capitalist forces who look to U.S. imperialism as their savior.

Any serious opposition to the FSLN government must be known as champions of a new world, a world free from all forms of capitalist exploitation, a world where democratic rights and decision making are institutionalized, where environmental degradation is outlawed, where the rights and traditions of indigenous peoples are honored, where women are equal in every respect—including access to free and legal abortion, which is banned in Nicaragua today.

In short, Nicaragua's future, as with all other nations, depends on the emergence and consolidation of mass forces dedicated to socialist revolution. ■

Organized labor slow to defend the rights of immigrants

John Leslie / Socialist Action



By JOHN LESLIE

Trump's reactionary immigration policies have created a climate of fear in immigrant communities. Deportations, workplace raids, and hate crimes are on the rise as ICE, police, and far-right vigilantes target immigrant workers and their families. Naturalized citizens are now the object of administration reviews of their citizenship status, based on the expansion of a policy originally put into place under Obama. Under Trump, families and communities are being ripped apart.

Trump's rhetoric against the foreign born, and calls to "build the wall," have reached a fever pitch as the midterm elections loom. The point of Trump's campaign is to energize his base while enforcing a sense of terror to silence immigrant workers and their supporters.

Trump and his allies are currently working overtime to politicize the rape and murder of Molly Tibbetts, an Iowa college student, by a man who is allegedly an undocumented farmworker. Molly's family has called for Trump and company to stop using her memory for political gain.

The number of workplace raids has doubled under Trump. During the George W. Bush years, large workplace raids hit meatpacking, agriculture, and other employers. While Obama is known for deporting a record 2.5 million immigrant workers during his tenure, the number of large-scale raids was smaller. Since Trump took office, the number of ICE raids have doubled. ICE has announced its intent to quadruple the number of workplace raids compared to the Obama years.

Liberals and their allies in the labor bureaucracy have concentrated mostly on appeals to vote for Democrats in the November midterm elections alongside some mass mobilizations. These demon-

strations have mainly been aimed at getting out the vote for the Democrats.

Union leaders, like AFL-CIO top Richard Trumka, have denounced family separation and the enforcement policies of the administration, but actions speak louder than words. While there are examples of working-class resistance to the ICE raids and immigrant bashing, the response of the unions as a whole has been slow. Tech workers, at Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and other firms have taken stands against their employers' cooperation with ICE. Airline flight crews have refused to serve on flights carrying children separated from their families.

Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, are part of the U.S. working class. In some sectors, unions are organizing immigrant workers. Hospitality workers, organized by UNITE-HERE, are a shining example of how the union movement could gain members and renewed militancy. The Painters' Union has also made strides in organizing immigrant painters and drywall finishers.

Building trades unions often repeat the "they're stealing our jobs" myth, while the housing sector, where many of the workers are immigrants, is left largely unorganized by these same unions. An aggressive organizing drive, aimed at housing construction workers, would help strengthen the economic and political position of all of the construction unions.

A lesson could be learned from the 1992 drywallers' strike in Southern California. Hundreds of sheet rockers built a movement to demand fair treatment, wage increases, and health benefits. Eventually, the drywall installers joined the Carpenters' Union, which ended up signing more than 50 employers. In the process, the drywallers defied *la migrá* and waged an inspiring struggle against the bosses. This fight also forced the Carpenters' Union, at least for a time, to organize Mexican workers in the housing sector.

(Above) about 2000 East Coast trade-union members marched in Philadelphia for immigrant rights on Aug. 15.

On Aug. 15, a labor-based march for "Liberty & Justice For All: Labor United To Free The Children" was held in Philadelphia. It was a missed opportunity; the turnout of about 2000 fell far short of the organizers' expectations. While many unions endorsed, and some labor bureaucrats showed up to speak, the unions generally failed to mobilize their ranks. The notable exceptions were UNITE HERE, which brought members from all over the Eastern Seaboard, the Laborers (LIUNA 332 and 57), and the Painters (IUPAT).

The march and rally was endorsed by the Building Trades Council, the AFL-CIO, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), SEIU, Teamsters, community, and faith-based organizations. The most visible local teachers' presence was the Working Educators rank-and-file caucus of the PFT.

Trump's attack on immigrant workers and communities is part of the larger ruling-class offensive against working-class people. The terror campaign against undocumented immigrants weakens all of the U.S. working class. The unions must recognize that the undocumented are a component part of the U.S. working class and act accordingly. An all-out defense of the rights of immigrants is central to a broader working class fightback against union busting, austerity, and concessions.

One example of what could be done is the Rapid Response Network built by pro-labor forces in Western Massachusetts. The Pioneer Valley Workers Center has created a democratically run network to mobilize the community against ICE raids. Organizing and mobilization are important, but as long as the union movement is subordinated to the Democrats, we will be fighting with one hand tied behind our backs. ■

