

Climate movement defeats Keystone XL pipeline



By CARL SACK

On Nov. 6, U.S. President Barack Obama formally denied TransCanada's application for approval of the Keystone XL oil pipeline.

The 1200-mile-long pipeline would have carried heavy crude oil (called bitumen) from tar-sands mines in northern Alberta, Canada, across the U.S. Great Plains states to oil refineries on the Gulf Coast. Tar-sands oil is the most carbon-intensive energy source ever exploited, and its full development has been called "game over for the climate" by NASA climate scientist James Hansen.

Obama's decision to nix the pipeline a month before the Paris climate summit is a momentous victory for the growing mass movement against climate change. National organizations such as 350.org, CREDO, Rising Tide, and the Sierra Club have worked to focus international media attention on the Keystone pipeline over the past five years.

Obama himself said in his statement on the decision that the pipeline occupied "an overinflated role in our political discourse"—a role that only came to pass after the mass movement forced it into the national spotlight through protests, blockades, and mass arrests at the White House that challenged what was originally widely considered a done deal.

"Just a few years ago, insiders and experts wrote us off and assured the world Keystone XL would be built by the end of 2011. Together, ranchers, tribal nations and everyday people beat this project back, reminding the world that Big Oil isn't invincible—and that hope is a renewable resource," says a statement by 350.org Executive Director May Boeve on the group's website.

The resistance to Keystone was spearheaded by local and regional coalitions like Bold Nebraska and the Cowboy Indian Alliance, which overcame animosity between white ranchers and Native American tribes in the Great Plains and blockaded parts of the project. Once they took notice, national organizations provided networking and publicity to build local protests around the country and mass civil disobedience in Washington, D.C. Much of the energy for the movement came from young people looking for ways to oppose the ecocidal actions of fossil-fuel companies and nonsensical U.S. climate policy.

These protests culminated in the massive People's Climate March in September 2014, which drew over 400,000 activists to New York City in the largest U.S. protest against climate change to date. That march would have been even more powerful had it made explicit demands on the country's political rulers for a swift transition away from fossil fuels. Nonetheless,

it put the government on notice that a do-nothing stance on climate change is no longer tolerable to a growing proportion of the population. It demonstrated the possibility of a powerful mass movement around climate change taking shape.

Environmental journalist Bill McKibben, 350.org's founder, gave a realistic assessment of the Keystone victory in an op-ed in *The Guardian*: "Given a realistic chance to affect the future, people are ready to take action. ... Today was a good goal scored, but we're still way behind. ... There's no guarantee that we can beat climate change, but there's every guarantee we're going to give it a hell of a fight."

Until now, unfortunately, the strategies of national groups like 350.org and the Sierra Club have resulted in their being slow to tackle some pipeline projects that are worse than Keystone XL. A 2013 Open Letter to the Anti-Tar Sands Movement from the Michigan Coalition Against Tar Sands, which is fighting Enbridge Energy tar sands pipelines in that state, reads in part, "The constant focus of the tar sands narrative around the President as the ultimate decision maker is ... disempowering to communities bearing the burden of existing infrastructure. ... While kxl is a large part of the problem, it is time for the mainstream

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Twin blasts kill Turkish activists

(Left) Protesters duck as first bomb explodes.



By YASIN KAYA

At least 106 peace activists were killed and over 400 wounded on Oct. 10 in twin explosions near the central train station in Ankara, Turkey, as tens of thousands gathered for the “Labour, Peace and Democracy Rally.” Several labour unions and mass organizations convened the event to urge an end to the violence between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

Among the victims were members of the People’s Democratic Party (HDP), political party of the Kurdish nationalist movement, the Republic People’s Party (the main opposition), as well as socialist parties such as the People’s Houses, the Party of Labour, and the Socialist Party of Refoundation.

The Turkish government failed to provide security measures prior to the rally. Police were absent when the bombs exploded. But right after the blasts, the police raced to the scene, only to fire tear gas at the crowd, including the dead and the dying.

The ruling Justice and Development Party did not only

fail to take safety precautions; it was complicit in the blasts. The government turned a blind eye to the growing presence of ISIS, which allegedly carried out this attack. As People’s Democratic Party co-chair Selahattin Demirtas told CNN International, ISIS suicide bombers cannot conduct such attacks without support from “elements within the state.”

And as Arzu Cerkezoglu, general-secretary of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DISK), stated, the issue is not only about “who detonated the bomb but those who are politically responsible: The president, the prime minister, [Ankara’s] mayor, and the police chief.”

This was only one of several recent attacks on democratic forces in Turkey. Explosions hit HDP’s final election rally in Diyarbakir just two days before the June 7 elections. Despite this, the HDP managed to pass the threshold of 10% of the total votes—required to take seats in parliament. That made it impossible for the AKP to reach a super-majority, and scuttled its dreams to change the country’s parliamentary system into a presidential system that could give Recep Tayyip Erdogan

(founder of the AKP) more executive powers. Despite the government’s best efforts, the HDP had electoral success, while the AKP could not get enough seats to form a single-party government. But optimism among the progressive forces waned when 33 Kurdish and Turkish activists were killed in July in the Turkish border town of Suruç. A suicide attack targeted university students who were planning to show their solidarity with the Rojava (Kurds in Syria) people, especially with those who fought against ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known as ISIS), to maintain local control of the region, and build a grassroots democracy based on local popular assemblies.

The government framed the bombings as an act of “terrorism.” It declared ISIL responsible, but also attacked Kurdish forces by ending the ceasefire and suspending the peace negotiations with the PKK. It declared a state of siege in different parts of the Kurdish region, and violently attacked civilians in Cizre (Sirnak), Nusaybin (Mardin), and Sur (Diyarbakir).

One of the perpetrators of the Ankara blasts was identified as Yunus Emre Alagöz, the younger brother of Abdurrahman Alagöz, who was responsible for the Suruç bombing. Many reports suggest both Yunus and a second suspect, Ömer Deniz Dündar, are linked to ISIL. And according to the daily *Hürriyet*, the names of the two suicide bombers have been circulating for months as potential threats; the police were informed that precisely such an attack was being planned.

Despite these strong links, the Turkish government tried to manipulate public opinion by blaming the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, the armed wing of the Kurdish movement, for the blasts.

Amid these circumstances, Turkey’s voters went to the polls on Nov. 1 for the snap election that was called after coalition negotiations between the AKP and the bourgeois opposition parties broke down. The AKP managed to win 49.5% of the vote and a comfortable majority of seats in parliament, while the HDP, which had to scale down its electoral campaign after the massacre, lost votes.

Beyond the electoral process, however, hope is linked to signs of growing solidarity between the Kurdish and Turkish peoples, along with a revitalization of the working class as a strong political actor. ■

Socialist Action: Where we stand

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. 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.

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!

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,

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

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.

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, instead of seeking to merely reform or work within the system. 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.

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UAW & Chrysler downsize inequality

By BILL ONASCH

The first Tentative Agreement between the UAW leadership and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles was shot down by the ranks—by a two-to-one margin. It was the first defeat of a Big Three national TA in a generation. But while this venting of disappointment was widespread, it was not very organized or focused. Though an indicated first step, rejection alone is not a solution. An alternative program needs to be advanced.

Former dissidents, such as those in New Directions and the Auto Caravan, who once had influence in some Big Three locals, could have played a role in shaping a policy attractive to the naysayers. But those oppositionists are now mostly retired—some migrating to sunnier new locations. The fragmented rejectionist majority could not pull together a viable alternative on the fly through social media.

At least months of advance preparation on the shop floor around clear objectives is required. That is the perspective encouraged by the leadership of more adversarial unions like the Chicago Teachers Union and National Nurses United. But in the top-down structure of the UAW, such initiatives have to come from below.

In this absence of a unified opposition, the self-perpetuating Administration Caucus bureaucracy that has ruled the UAW without interruption since the days of Walter Reuther was able to recover from a stinging defeat. After retaining—at members' expense—a prominent public-relations firm, they were able to work with their company "partners" to quickly craft a new deal. It was a grab bag of putative additional raises for some, spread out over eight years, offset by new immediate concessions to management. Little, if any, new money was on the table.

Not seeing credible options, the package was accepted as the best that can be done. The swing in the second vote was as dramatic as the previous thumbs-down. Seventy-seven percent of production workers, 72 percent of skilled trades, and 87 percent of salaried workers voted in favor of the second TA.

Chrysler was the targeted company to set the pat-



Bill Pugliano / Getty Images

tern for contracts with the much bigger General Motors—which recently announced a record third-quarter profit—and Ford as well. As this is written, UAW leaders have approved tentative four-year contracts with both GM and Ford.

An article from *Automotive News* opened: "The UAW's new contract with Fiat Chrysler will set the pattern for how first General Motors and then Ford Motor Co. fix the divisive two-tier wage system at their factories, said sources familiar with the negotiations. The UAW has no plans to resuscitate Tier 2 hiring caps at GM or Ford, aiming instead for the approach taken at FCA US that guarantees lower-paid Tier 2 workers an eight-year ladder of predetermined annual raises until they reach full wages of \$30 an hour, the sources said."

Downsizing inequality

Many news stories about the new contract proclaimed the second-class Tier 2—established in the

(Above) Workers at Chrysler's Warren truck plant.

historic give-back 2007 Big Three contracts—would be eliminated. This is an exaggeration to say the least.

The wage rate of the 43 percent of Chrysler's UAW workforce in Tier 2, topping around \$19 an hour in the expired contract, will catch up with the new Top Tier rate of \$29 + change—in eight years. Since the contract just approved will expire in four, that requires faith—perhaps misplaced—in the company to voluntarily abide by today's promise in the next negotiations. At best, it is a lengthy journey to the two rates coinciding, not merging.

No Tier 2 workers will actually be upgraded to Top Tier when the differences include not only wages but defined benefit pensions rather than a 401(k) and better health coverage as well. And, there are other new reminders of their still inferior status. The new

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Stop the medical execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

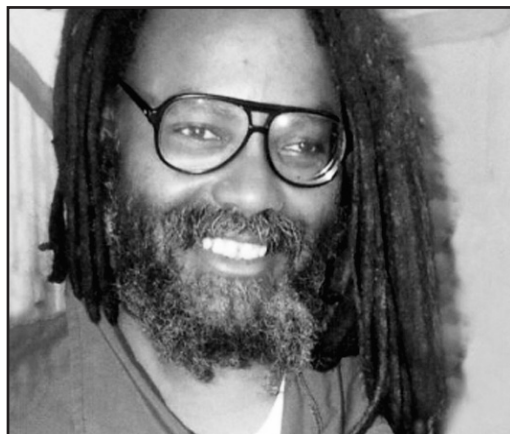
BY JEFF MACKLER

Hundreds of San Francisco Bay Area activists rallied on the weekend of Oct. 16-18 to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, perhaps the world's best known political prisoner and an innocent victim of a racist and government-orchestrated 1981 frame-up trial that initially imposed the death sentence.

Following decades of denied appeals, a federal district court finally decreed that the death penalty had been improperly imposed, and ordered that Pennsylvania authorities either conduct a new trial or impose a sentence of life-imprisonment without possibility of parole. Fearing that the mountain of evidence of Mumia's innocence might reverse his conviction in another new trial and grant him freedom, Pennsylvania authorities, who had previously and repeatedly pledged to impose nothing less than the death penalty, opted for life imprisonment.

Mumia is now serving his 34th year of a life sentence at SCI Mahoney prison in Frackville, Pa. His fight for freedom and a new trial has been supported by Amnesty International, the European Parliament, some 17 national U.S. trade unions, and millions of anti-racist activists, human rights, and social justice organizations around the world.

Mumia has been denied medication that essentially cures active hepatitis C, a liver disease that he contracted when he received a hospital blood transfusion in 1981 after being shot by Philadelphia police officers. Today his long dormant Hep C has flared up with a vengeance, leaving him hospitalized a few months ago—barely able to stand for more than a few moments, his body and hands swelled to enormous proportions, unable to speak,



(Left) Mumia in 2013.

dazed, and essentially incoherent.

While the worldwide campaign initiated by the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal has forced the Pennsylvania Bureau of Prisons to render Mumia a modicum of care, his struggle for the readily available anti-viral medication is today a top priority.

Robert Boyle, Mumia's attorney in this matter, told Bay Area audiences via a telephone hookup that "Mr. Abu-Jamal's hepatitis C can be cured—and the painful and dangerous consequences alleviated—if the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections would administer the direct acting anti-viral medication that has now become the standard for treatment for hepatitis C infections."

"According to the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease," said Boyle, "this hepatitis C treatment results in sustained virologic response which is tantamount to virologic cure."

Shockingly, 10,000 Pennsylvania prisoners today suffer from hepatitis C. None receive this cure. Undoubtedly, this kind of statistic is repeated with regard to prisoners across the nation! In Penn-

sylvania, and in capitalist America more generally, we hear the claim that life-saving medications "cost too much money."

Mumia's Bay Area tour featured Pam Africa and Ramona Africa, long-term Free Mumia and MOVE Nine leaders, representing the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE Organization, both tour co-sponsors. The MOVE Organization, founded by lay attorney and social justice fighter John Africa, is a revolutionary humanist social movement and serves as the defense organization fighting for the release of the MOVE 9 (now six), victims of a police and government 1985 frame-up, who are serving long-term sentences and repeatedly denied parole.

The Bay Area tour represented an important step forward in re-invigorating Mumia's freedom struggle and in winning support for critically necessary medical treatment. The tour was initiated by the Northern California-based Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), the latter a longstanding antiwar and social-justice coalition that has long championed Mumia's freedom.

Over \$4000 was raised for the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal in the course of four successful meetings in San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, and Sacramento. Some two-dozen prison-rights, social-justice, socialist, and radical organizations supported the tour and sent speakers to address the enthusiastic rallies.

The Oakland rally was addressed by

former political prisoner Angela Davis, who has been raising funds in speaking engagements across the country for Mumia's freedom. Messages of solidarity from freed political prisoner and frame-up victim Lynne Stewart and from Pulitzer Prize novelist Alice Walker were read at all meetings.

Speakers presenting greetings to the various rallies included Diane Block, California Coalition for Women Prisoners; Claude Marks, director, Freedom Archives; Barbara Blong, Coordinating Committee, Northern California Committees of Correspondence for Socialism and Democracy; Walter Riley, National Lawyers Guild; Judith Mirkinson, National Boricua Human Rights Network; Jack Heyman, Labor Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal; and Judy Greenspan, Workers World Party.

Additional speakers included Tom Lacey, chair, S.F. Peace and Freedom Party; Steve Willet, CCDS Nor Cal Coordinating Committee; David Welsh, Haiti Action Committee; Larry Shoup, Green Party and System Change Not Climate Change; Nick Baker, Socialist Action; Mary Prophet, delegate, Alameda County Central Labor Council; Gloria LaRiva, ANSWER Coalition; Carol Seligman, Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia; and Kim Serrano, Speak Out Now.

The four rallies were chaired by this writer, representing the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and the United National Antiwar Coalition.

For further information, contact the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal at (510) 268-9429.

Donations for Mumia's freedom and for the fight for medical treatment can be made payable to International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and mailed to Pam Africa, 5329 Catharine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143. ■



Calif. activists gear up for Nov. 21 climate rally

BY JEFF MACKLER

OAKLAND, Calif.—As the 21st United Nations Conference of Parties (COP21) approaches, climate-crisis activists in the U.S. and around the world are gearing up for massive protests both before and after the Nov. 30–Dec. 12 UN meeting set for Paris. Some 40,000 government, corporate, and “civil society” representatives are expected to accomplish little or nothing with regard to binding agreements to qualitatively reduce carbon emissions or to rapidly move to a 100 percent sustainable system of energy production based on solar, wind, geothermal, and other non-polluting technologies.

In Northern California, over 150 environmental-based, social justice, faith-based, labor, and socialist organizations have come together to form the Northern California Climate Mobilization (NCCM), which is organizing a mass march and rally on Nov. 21 at Oakland’s downtown Civic Center/Frank Ogawa Plaza.

NCCM organizers hope to significantly surpass last year’s Sept. 21 action of 5000 in Oakland that paralleled the nationally organized 350.org People’s Climate March of 400,000 in New York City.

With an initial budget of \$16,000, activists have planned a major rally that includes leading representatives from a diverse range of organizations, including May Boeve, executive director of the national 350.org, the heads of the San Francisco and Alameda County central labor councils, the Sierra Club, Black Lives Matter, and a host of frontline and indigenous community activists as well as a number of leading performing bands and poets.

To date, some 60,000 flyers have been distributed in all Bay Area counties. The Silkwood Affinity Group of the Sunflower Alliance raised an additional \$7000 to

place eight-foot billboards at seven key Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations and on BART trains. Several buses have been chartered to bring outlying activists from Santa Clara, Sonoma, and Sacramento counties.

Nov. 21 was chosen by NCCM leaders, as opposed to the internationally scheduled date of Nov. 29, to maximize participation and avoid the usual difficulties associated with organizing mass events over the

Thanksgiving weekend.

As compared to last year’s Sept. 21 mobilization here, which was essentially limited politically to the rather vague entreatments of the New York City event, NCCM meetings, following some months of discussion and debate, adopted a rather comprehensive set of points of unity and demands.

The demands reflect the growing awareness that to win in this existential struggle to literally save humanity from the horrors of fossil fuel-induced climate catastrophe, a mass worldwide movement is necessary, which includes all struggles for social and environmental justice.

NCCM demands are listed in the box on this page.

Over the past year, NCCM has emerged as a leading united front and ongoing coalition aimed at the education and broad mobilization of working people in all their diverse manifestations to challenge the undeniable evidence of climate catastrophe. With each passing day, increasing layers of the world population have come to understand that immediate, drastic, and unprecedented measures are now required to defend all life on earth from those who would subordinate it to fossil-fuel interests and corporate profiteers and their governments.

The fact that international and U.S. climate crisis activists and organizations have called for continued mass mobilizations *through* COP21 is a crystal clear statement that few, if any, of the organizations currently engaged

in this vital struggle have any confidence in the ability of world “leaders” to fundamentally change their present doomsday course. 350.org and other leading groups have already begun discussions of follow-up mass mobilization in the spring of 2016. ■

For information about NCCM see: NorCalClimateMob.net or contact: info@norcalclimatemob.net.

N. California Climate Mobilization demands

A global agreement to implement dramatic and rapid reduction in global warming pollution!

Keep fossil fuels in the ground!

100% clean, safe, renewable energy!

End all fracking, tar sands mining and pipelines, offshore drilling, arctic drilling.

Stop expansion of the extractive economy. Wind, solar, geothermal power now.

No coal exports or crude-by-rail bomb trains in Northern California.

A dramatic and rapid reduction in global warming pollution is necessary to create a world united to repair the ravages of climate change!

Industrial countries and polluting corporations of the global north need to pay their ecological debt to society and to the global south by providing funding for developing countries and vulnerable communities worldwide to adapt to the impacts of climate change and convert to sustainable economies.

A world with an economy that works for people and the planet!

Billions of dollars for energy efficiency and conservation. We need a just transition to a sustainable, demilitarized economy based on renewable energy, clean transportation, and jobs for all at union wages. Convert water-wasting, polluting factory farms to sustainable organic agriculture. End corporate personhood; end “money equals free speech”; end billionaire purchase of elections.

A demilitarized world with peace and social justice for everyone; where Black Lives Matter; with justice and respect for immigrants and migrants; where good jobs, clean air and water, and healthy communities belong to all.

End all forms of oppression and discrimination!

No to environmental racism and pollution of indigenous, low-income, and frontline nations and communities. Respect all indigenous lands. No militarized police. No wars. No nuclear weapons or power. A true ecological approach must integrate questions of justice to protect biodiversity, honor all life on earth, and lift all people out of poverty.

New England climate justice movement plans actions

By CHRISTINE MARIE

Climate activists in New England are buoyed by the role they have played in the recent decisions rolling back extreme extraction projects and pushing ahead on a series of demonstrations to build the kind of movement necessary for the giant tasks ahead. Actions to mark the opening and closing of the Paris climate talks are the focus of a great deal of organizing attention.

• In Connecticut, a coalition of groups led by 350 CT and including the Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter, the InterReligious Eco-Justice Network, the Green Party of Connecticut, the police brutality group Hartford Action, and dozens of other local pipeline, power plant, and environmental action groups, are building toward a state-wide demonstration on Saturday, Nov. 21.

The protest, which is demanding “100% Renewable Energy for 100% of the People,” is targeting Governor Dannel Malloy,

who has been the most public figure driving forward a disastrous expansion of the fracked gas infrastructure in the state.

Organizers pose the issue in this way in their literature: “We can be a leader in renewable energy technology, creating new jobs, lowering energy prices and stabilizing our climate, *OR* we can continue the status quo of using and expanding gas pipelines and dirty energy projects that keep us dependent on fossil fuels, damage our air quality, exacerbate climate change and make our residents less safe.”

To learn how to develop closer ties with residents whose children suffer asthma at an alarming rate due to the remaining coal-fired plant in the town of Bridgeport, 350 CT recently sponsored a forum on the history of the movement to fight environmental racism featuring a local African American activist, Desmond Batts. And to learn how to better think about the kind of movement that is needed in Connecticut, 350 CT activists joined with Hartford Fight for Fifteen \$ to canvas res-

taurants to sign up workers for the Nov. 10 low-wage worker rally in the state’s capital.

At a recent meeting, 350 CT voted to attend as many Black Friday pickets at Walmart as possible, in order to spread the word about the Nov. 21 demonstration and the relationship of an emergency renewable-energy program to the creation of good union jobs. Activists interested in helping to build the rally can email “organizers@350CT.org.”

• “Jobs, Justice, and Climate: Defending New England’s Future!” is the banner under which New England 350 is assembling partners for a rally on Dec. 12 in Boston.

The protest, which will take place on the Saturday after the end of the Paris climate talks, is seen as the first step in the creation of broad coalition of climate justice and economic justice organizations capable of pulling off a powerful regional action in conjunction with actions at sites of extreme extraction around the globe.

Unions, as well as low-wage-worker and immigrant-rights groups, are involved in shaping the rally so that it will really express the relationship of climate justice to the creation of a just, equitable, and sustainable economy. Students and direct action groups are looking to the date as the occasion for theatrical activities inspired by Flood Wall Street.

The first blast of information about the rally pointed out: “No matter what happens in Paris, we know what we need: real climate solutions that create secure union jobs and strengthen community power and resiliency.

“And to get there, we need to build an unstoppable grassroots movement that can unite organized labor, immigrant rights, racial justice and climate-justice groups” (see http://350mass.betterfutureproject.org/jobs_justice_climate_rally_to_defend_new_england_s_future).

Groups looking for updated information and transportation information can RSVP on the 350 Massachusetts website. ■

... Climate

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movement's figureheads to stop exclusively referring to this pipeline and discouraging us from working on other tar sands issues."

350.org relies on local groups to take on powerful multinational fossil-fuel corporations first. Their national committee selects local issues to support based on which fights have legs, leadership, and strategic value. This approach, at least so far, has allowed several cross-border pipelines bigger than Keystone to slip by under the radar.

To their credit, 350 has taken on a raft of other climate-change initiatives, from international fossil-fuel divestment to fighting the expansion of coal and tar-sands mines. The group is playing a major role in organizing international protests around the upcoming Paris Climate Talks.

In the Sierra Club, little attention was paid to pipeline projects other than Keystone until local chapters around the country demanded that the national organization allocate resources to fighting them. There are now efforts within the Club to coordinate local pipeline fights.

In Minnesota and Wisconsin, Enbridge Energy LLC has been rapidly expanding its Lakehead Pipeline system for years to accommodate both tar-sands oil and oil from the Bakken fields of western North Dakota, eastern Montana, and southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Local coalitions, including 350.org and Sierra Club chapters, are fighting the expansion.

Enbridge plans to triple the capacity of its Line 61 pipeline, which crosses Wisconsin lengthwise, including virtually all of the state's major waterways. It will soon carry up to 1.2 million barrels of tar-sands bitumen per day, and was already up to 950,000 barrels per day in October. In addition, the company is now mulling over whether to build a new "twin" line alongside 61 that would carry another 450,000 barrels per day, bringing the total up to 1.65 million. The maximum capacity planned for Keystone XL was half that—830,000 barrels per day.

Every capacity increase promises to result in new oil spills that are poisonous to drinking water, deadly for wildlife, and very difficult to clean up. A 2010 report by the National Wildlife Federation outed Enbridge's atrocious safety record, which then consisted of over 800 spills since 2000, including a 2008 spill that released over 1 million gallons of oil into Michigan's Kalamazoo River. Cleanup from that spill is ongoing.

Unlike Keystone, which public pressure forced a lengthy review of, Enbridge pipelines that cross the U.S.-Canada border have received the red carpet treatment from the Obama administration. The U.S. State Department rushed to approve the company's application to divert oil from one existing border crossing to another, thus avoiding a requirement for a presidential permit like the one that ultimately stopped Keystone.

Enbridge directly credits the failure of Keystone XL for giving them the market to transport tar sands. "Now that we've got demand from our shippers ... [they] have asked us to bring the capacity up," an Enbridge spokesperson told the author in July 2014, when the expansion was on the drawing board.

Other companies are building pipelines as well. According to *The New York Times*, two million barrels of new oil pipeline capacity has come on line in the Gulf of Mexico region over the past three years, and more lines are planned. But there is growing resistance to new oil pipelines on the local level that could strengthen and rejuvenate the mass movement—if grassroots activists are given the publicity and resources that national groups have to offer.

On Nov. 2, seven protesters in Duluth, Minn., were arrested during an occupation of the Enbridge offices there. That protest was organized by a coalition of Native American and non-Native activists. Honor the Earth, a Native American non-profit group based in Bemidji, Minn., has organized multiple horse-riding protests and blockades against the company's proposed Sandpiper Pipeline, which would transport oil from the Bakken deposits to Midwestern refineries.

In Western Canada, First Nations groups are fighting Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline project. That project would include two parallel pipelines between western Alberta and a marine terminal in British Columbia, transporting tar-sands crude westward for export to Asia, and natural gas condensate eastward. The Stephen Harper administration approved the project on Oct. 5, but many legal challenges and potential mass civil-disobedience campaigns lie ahead.

First Nations are also fighting Kinder Morgan's proposal to expand its Trans Mountain pipeline, which runs from the Alberta tar sands to a Vancouver-area port, from 300,000 to 890,000 barrels per day.

Sixty-six First Nations signed the Save the Fraser



(Above) Miles of unused pipe meant for the Keystone XL Pipeline sit in a lot in North Dakota.

Declaration in 2010, declaring that they would not allow any tar-sands pipelines to cross their territories. The group spearheading the declaration, the Yinka Dene Alliance, also has released open letters to the Chinese people—the future recipients of most B.C. oil shipments—appealing for solidarity. It has filed complaints with the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, claiming that the pipeline infringes on Aboriginal land titles. The Alliance has been the victim of spying by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In a model for American workers, Unifor, Canada's largest private-sector union, has thrown its support and solidarity behind the First Nations opponents of tar sands. Unifor represents some 310,000 Canadian workers, including workers in tar-sands refineries. They are calling both for the oil to be processed domestically rather than shipped abroad, and for a transition to renewable energy sources.

In the U.S., the United Steelworkers, Amalgamated Transit Union, National Domestic Workers Alliance, and three nurses unions opposed the Keystone pipeline. Unfortunately, building-trades unions were universally and vocally in favor of the project, and the executive committee of the national AFL-CIO passed a statement in support of building more pipelines.

This very short-sighted enthusiasm for oil pipelines rests on the basis of its providing short-term construction jobs. According to Politifact, the 875-mile-long northern segment of Keystone would have created 3900 construction jobs over two years but only 50 long-term operating positions. Other pipelines have similar job numbers.

Rather than pushing for a 180-degree pivot to clean renewable energy sources, which could employ many times the number of workers as pipelines, many U.S. labor misleaders applaud the expansion of U.S. and Canadian pipeline systems and other fossil fuel projects that threaten human existence through their impacts on the climate.

Climate activists should seek to win over unions by pointing out that there are no jobs on a dead planet and demanding a just transition to renewables with guaranteed full employment at union wages for displaced fossil-fuel workers. To bring the disparate struggles over local projects together into a cohesive whole, we need a broad-based, democratic, politically independent, and mass action-oriented coalition that can create cohesive demands and pilot the overall movement.

The upcoming Paris climate talks provide an opportunity to move forward in this vein. Capitalist world powers are planning for an international carbon-emissions agreement that many expect will allow for an overall increase in emissions, which could set a course for a catastrophic temperature increase of 4 degrees centigrade or more. Climatologists have warned that any increase over 1 degree poses severe threats to human society, but we are currently on track for a 4-6 degrees rise by 2100.

350.org has called for a "global weekend of action" on Nov. 28-29, consisting of local actions around the country. In a note of progress since the People's Climate March, the group now is promoting the general demand to "keep fossil fuels in the ground and finance a just transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050."

Globally, there will be mass protests in many larger cities, culminating in what is expected to be the larg-

est mass mobilization around climate change to date, in Paris on Dec. 12. The London-based Campaign Against Climate Change is planning a mass protest on Nov. 29. In the U.S., the NorCal Climate Mobilization, a coalition of environmental and labor groups, is organizing a rally on Nov. 21 in Oakland, Calif.

Such protests are important opportunities for building the movement. We encourage all readers to attend one of the planned mobilizations, or to bring fellow activists together to build one in your local area. All out to save the climate! ■



Sawant wins in Seattle

-On Nov. 4, Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant won re-election to her seat on the Seattle city council. In a state with voting by mail only, the ballots will continue to trickle in. But at press time, she has received 55.04% of the votes while her Democratic Party opponent, Pamela Banks, has 44.37%.

Sawant won a hard fought campaign with hundreds of volunteers. She also defeated an onslaught of money (\$400,000) that went to her opponent. At the beginning of the campaign the Democratic mayor said the priority must be to not re-elect Sawant, so that things "can be normal again on the city council."

Pamela Banks told her supporters to not worry since there would be plenty of money for her campaign, including out-of-state Democratic Party PAC funds. Two weeks before the election, Banks also received Republican money to help defeat the socialist Sawant.

In her election night speech, Sawant addressed the amount of corporate cash that was used to try to defeat her: "We have shattered the myth that there is nothing an independent candidate can do against the avalanche of corporate money."

She also pointed out that the Democratic Party is not a tool for the working class to obtain power. "We need a new political party that is 100% on our side, a broad-based working-class party."

— ANN MONTAGUE

South African students win first big victory

Ihsaan Haffejee / Anadolu Agency / Getty Images



(Left) Some 10,000 rallied in Pretoria, Oct. 23, the largest student protest since the 1976 anti-apartheid demonstrations.

By PATRICK BOND

DURBAN—An historic victory over South African neoliberalism was won on Oct. 23, after the most intense three-week burst of activist mobilization here since liberation from apartheid in 1994.

University students have been furious, as their cry “Fees must fall!” rang out on campuses and sites of political power across this society. But though there will be an effective 6% cut in tuition for 2016, the next stage of struggle looms, with demands for free tertiary education and university labor rights atop the agenda.

The #FeesMustFall movement’s first victory comes at a time that the African National Congress (ANC) ruling party confronts unprecedented economic pressure and social unrest. GDP growth will be only 1.5% this year and probably the same next year, lower than population growth. This is the most unequal of any major country, and the official poverty rate (at \$2/day) has recently risen to 53%.

The World Economic Forum last month judged the South African working class as the most militant on earth—the position amongst 140 countries held since 2012, when 34 mineworkers were massacred at Marikana—and the police reported recently that last year, nearly 2300 protests turned “violent” (in police terminology). The deregulated corporate elite enjoys the world’s third highest profits, yet remains intent on looting the economy at a rate as fast as any. All these measures have amplified since the ANC took power in 1994.

The desperation flash point this month was the announcement of double-digit increases in university tuition fees. Students demonstrated not only against local managers at more than a dozen campuses. Their organizations united across the ideological spectrum, from socialist to nationalist to even the center-right student wing of the main opposition party, and hit national targets.

The trajectory through race to class

They began by storming the parliamentary precinct in Cape Town on Oct. 21, then marched to the Johannesburg and Durban headquarters of the ANC on Oct. 22 and 23, and finally demonstrated—more than 10,000 strong—at President Jacob Zuma’s office in Pretoria on Oct. 23.

There, restraining fences were torn down by some of the activists, and tyres and latrines were burned, with police once again responding by using stun grenades, rubber bullets, and water cannons. Refusing to come out to address the crowd, instead Zuma held a

University students’ cry, ‘Fees must fall!’ rang out on campuses and sites of political power across the country. Now the struggle enters a new stage.

press conference where he conceded to the students’ main demand: no fee increase for next year (in spite of general price inflation expected to be 6%).

The current insurgency began last spring with sporadic acts of fury. At the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, small groups of students burnt an administration building and nearby cars, and students were then caught bringing human excrement on campus presumably for throwing, a tactic used successfully six months earlier to catalyse the dismantling of a hated statue at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

That was the #RhodesMustFall movement. Within a few weeks of a “poo protest,” in which excrement was hurled at the prominent likeness of 19th-century colonial mining lord Cecil Rhodes, thousands cheered [in April 2015] when the statue was removed from the scenic campus.

But their other demands for university transformation and “decolonization”—racial equity, a different campus culture, curriculum reform to promote Africanization, labor rights for low-paid workers, more indigenous African professors (there are only five out of more than 250 senior faculty at Cape Town)—were unsuccessful.

After a breather, at UCT and Johannesburg’s University of the Witwatersrand (“Wits”), the country’s two traditional sites of ruling-class reproduction, student protests revived this past month. Of the 19 tertiary institutions that erupted in protest, these two were the best organized, most sustained and non-violent, mainly using the tactic of entrance blockades, then moving to the nearby arterial roads.

Disciplined student leaders emphasized non-violent civil disobedience, with white students often taking place on the front line of struggle as buffers, given their skin privilege. Worsening police brutality and occasional clashes with higher-income drivers who tried driving through the blockades did not deter the activists.

On Oct. 21, inside Cape Town’s Parliament House,

the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters’ (EFF) support for their cause came before Finance Minister Nhlamhla Nene delivered his medium-term budget speech, which EFF leaders ardently tried to postpone, before being forcefully evicted. Outside, thousands of courageous students broke through a fence and nearly made their way into the main hall where Nene was holding forth.

But although there is still plenty of scope for fiscal expansiveness, Nene’s budget was heartless: no new money for universities (just condemnation of “unconstructive” student protests), and a tokenistic \$0.75/month rise in grant payments to the poorest pensioners and disabled people (who currently receive \$105/month). Nene dishonestly claimed that this plus a prior tiny raise offered in February are “in line with long-term inflation.”

Since the inflation rate for poor people is much higher than the norm due to the far higher share of faster-inflating food, housing, and electricity costs in their budgets, in reality he imposed a 2% cut.

Nene did find funds for a three-year \$63 billion infrastructure program whose major projects promote, first, exceptionally destructive coal exports mainly by multinational corporations; second, the Durban port-petrochemical complex’s expansion; and third, iron-ore exports. Yet there is vast world over-capacity in coal, shipping and steel, with South Africa’s second major steel producer barely avoiding bankruptcy last month. But these White Elephant mega-projects continue to get the lion’s share of state, parastatal and private infrastructure funding.

The influence of big business on Nene’s budget team is blatant: for example, the world’s largest mining house, BHP Billiton, still gets electricity at 1/10th the price of ordinary consumers. Corporate tax evasion and illicit financial flows are now notorious. Nene made a down payment on nuclear reactors worth \$100 billion, as well as the first funding tranche for another pro-corporate investment, the BRICS New Development Bank, whose target capitalisation (spread among five countries) is \$100 billion.

Credit-rating agencies & a “communist” minister

Whether seen through the eyes of students, workers, the poor, women and environmentalists, Nene’s budget begs for intensified social struggle. Oct. 21 was, however, the first time that a major spontaneous protest targeted the finance minister at such a sensitive moment. For Nene, the only objective appeared to be appeasing the banks’ credit-ratings agencies.

As Reuters reported, Nene “downplayed the effect of university students storming parliament as he delivered his medium term budget on the credit rating of Africa’s most advanced economy. ‘What matters for the ratings agencies is our response as government in addressing these challenges,’ he said about the students’ demands to keep tuition fees unchanged.”

Government’s response was a combination of widely condemned police brutality and ineffectual seduction by the ruling alliance’s left flank, especially the SA Communist Party, whose leader Blade Nzimande is also Minister of Higher Education. He was shouted down by protesters outside parliament when he tried to explain why their demand was unrealistic and they would face a 6% increase.

Nzimande’s 2013 Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities found “the amount of government funding is not sufficient to meet the needs of the public university system. ... Government

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Just transition on the road through Paris

By BILL ONASCH

The world market for cars and trucks is booming. So are profits in most of the industry. Unionized auto workers in the U.S. have been properly focused the past few months on contract negotiations with General Motors, Ford, and Fiat Chrysler that determine their wages, benefits, and working conditions for the next four years. (An article elsewhere in this paper reports on their status as this edition went to press.)

But, in the long run, this most important sector of manufacturing is—or at least should be—doomed. The growing proliferation of personal vehicles for transportation—overwhelmingly fueled by gasoline, ethanol or diesel—is incompatible with urgently needed efforts to stop the rise in global warming that is altering our climate and threatening the very biosphere essential to human civilization.

Road transportation is second only to electricity generation in carbon emissions that are the principal cause of climate change—27 percent of the global total, still over 20 percent even in the United States, despite many EPA regulations.

Yesterday's fad of "green" agrofuels did little to clean the air, while driving up the price of corn. Hybrids too have produced almost negligible benefits. "Clean diesel" results so recently hailed as the Next Big Thing were achieved by cheating on tests. The restricted range of the best plug-in electrics limits their utility to mostly short local trips—and their climate-friendly potential is only fully realized when their charger taps electricity generated by non-fossil sources.

The bottom line is that car dependency has to be left behind on the Road Through Paris.

Just Transition

Socialist Action supports the principle of Just Transition, long advanced by sectors of organized labor. Whenever jobs are eliminated to advance social goals, society is obligated to assist affected workers. When the now dormant Labor Party was founded at a 1996 convention of 1400 labor activists, they included in a well rounded program of reforms:

"The Labor Party calls for the creation of a new worker-oriented environmental movement—a Just Transition Movement—that puts forth a fair and just transition program to protect both jobs and the environment. All workers with jobs endangered by steps taken to protect the environment are to be made whole and to receive full income and benefits as they make the difficult transition to alternative work. The cost of this Just Transition Income Support program will be paid for by taxes on corporate polluters."

As it is even clearer today that millions of present jobs must be eliminated as we restructure an ecologically sustainable economy, Just Transition must move to center stage.

Some whole industries will need to be shut down as soon as possible. That certainly is the case with the extraction and processing of fossil and nuclear fuels. Coal miners, for example, will need to be prepared for



Whenever jobs are eliminated to advance social goals, society is obligated to assist affected workers

new skills—and possibly relocated—as this dirtiest of all fossil fuels is replaced by clean, renewable energy sources.

As we leave climate-wrecking fuels in the ground, we must not leave any worker behind in a wrecked community. Nor will we have to. The restructured, democratically planned economy we envision will be the biggest creator of new jobs in human history.

Just Conversion

There's no use for coalmines if coal can't be burned. But some industries complicit in climate change can be converted to sustainable use. There are at least 900,000 jobs directly tied to the auto industry just in the USA. We should fight to save every one of them. But that doesn't mean saving the corporations—or even the product line. There are some big historical lessons that can guide us—along with even some more recent efforts in the United Auto Workers.

In January 2007, I was invited to speak at a unique gathering—a Labor & Sustainability Conference in St. Paul. It was hosted by UAW Local 879, representing workers at Ford Twin Cities Assembly—slated for closing in 2008, with its Ranger pickup-truck work offshored to Thailand

The state-of-the-art St. Paul plant, which had gone

through numerous retoolings and renovations since its 1924 opening, had a rare asset. All of its electricity was zero-emission hydroelectric—directly supplied by its very own dam on the nearby Mississippi River. The union was proposing that instead of demolishing the plant, Ford should turn it over to the workers as a publicly owned facility to build cleaner buses needed by the regional transit authority. This sensible, practical option won wide public support.

The conference was endorsed by a number of unions, academics, and elected officials. While not formally sponsored by any mainstream environmental groups—or even the Blue-Green Alliance—it attracted a good mix of dozens of labor and environmental activists for two days of panels and workshops, always followed by discussion, of the Ford workers' proposal as well as other sustainability issues.

In my remarks, I reminded them that such conversion had once been successfully carried out. In April 1942, all auto production in the United States came to an abrupt halt, and no more cars were built for nearly four years. Truly Big Government had taken charge of virtually the entire economy to produce for war. No autoworker lost their job due to conversion of their plants to building planes, tanks, and jeeps. In fact, their numbers and hours of work reached unprecedented heights.

It was a triumph of industrial mobilization. But its production was geared to inflict massive death and destruction—certainly not something we want to promote today.

Instead, I posed the rhetorical question, "But can't such plants, along with their workers, be converted to serve a new green economy? As a matter of fact, one proposal for using the plant across the street being abandoned by Ford is to build clean mass transit vehicles—and we need a lot of those if we are serious about Global Warming."

Unfortunately, Ford, and the local capitalist political Establishment, who were understandably hostile to the worker initiative, were able to quash the conversion despite its popular support. Success along these lines will first require a restructuring of the labor movement as well—on the community and political levels as well as the shop floor.

Meeting the new challenges of climate change will succeed only if we revive the old class-struggle traditions of the only force with both the interest and power to take on the climate-wrecking ruling class—the working class.

Getting workers on board

Some progress is being registered. Prominent climate movement leaders such as Naomi Klein, author of the best-seller "Capitalism vs. the Climate, This Changes Everything," are now promoting Just Transition. This demand is the centerpiece of the program of the growing Labor Network for Sustainability (<http://www.labor4sustainability.org/>).

And even some mainstream unions—such as the Service Employees International Union, Amalgamated Transit Union, and National Nurses United—have started mobilizing their members for climate actions.

As Socialist Action joins the worker contingents traveling the Road Through Paris, this newspaper will provide news and analysis of the fight for Class and Climate Justice—a struggle we can't afford to lose.

... South Africa

(continued from page 6)

should increase the funding for higher education, to be more in line with international levels of expenditure." But Nzimande had refused to release a 2012 commissioned study on how to finance free tertiary education.

A boost to anti-austerity activism

Students simply refused to accept Nzimande's 6% tuition rise. So the march on Pretoria two days later—and threat of a full storming of Zuma's office—must have been the decisive factor in the state's reversal. Although the cost of deferring a tuition increase is estimated at between \$150 and \$300 million, by making this concession Zuma has given encouragement to many more protests and Pretoria marches in future.

For those in the society watching and rooting for the students, this was a critical moment, perhaps ultimately as important as the breakthrough Treatment Action Campaign fight for free AIDS medicines 15 years ago. For as Nene signalled, a more damaging period of austerity looms. Thanks

to Nene's tight-fistedness, there will be a relatively small budget deficit (3.3% of GDP), but financial commentators are full of threats about South Africa's following Brazil's recent downgrading to a junk-bond rating by Fitch, Standard&Poor's and Moody's, the creditors' cruel rating agencies.

The class war rages on. Other student demands remain outstanding: free tertiary education for poor and working people as the overall goal, and an end to labor casualization and outsourcing for low-paid university workers. Many such workers barely receive \$100/month, and with a poverty line of \$60/person/month, raising a family on starvation wages is impossible.

The task of retaining this visionary student-worker alliance in coming weeks and maintaining a national presence will be as difficult as is the multi-class "United Front" organizing now underway. Difficult yes, but now, nothing seems impossible in this exceptional site of class struggle. ■

Patrick Bond is with the UKZN Centre for Civil Society in Durban. He co-authored the new book "Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neo-liberalism and the Search for Social Justice." A version of this article appeared in CounterPunch.

A new look at 1959 novel about Trotsky



(Left) Leon Trotsky and his wife Natalia Sedova in exile in Mexico.

By JOE AUCIELLO

Bernard Wolfe, *"The Great Prince Died: A Novel About the Assassination of Trotsky,"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959/2015), 416 pp., \$18.

Credit the critical and popular success of two recent novels, "The Lacuna" by Barbara Kingsolver and "The Man Who Loved Dogs" by Leonardo Padura, for the re-publication of this 1959 historical novel by Bernard Wolfe, with a new afterword by novelist William T. Vollmann. A slightly rewritten hardback version appeared in 1975 with the title "Trotsky Dead."

For eight months in 1937, Wolfe was a secretary to Leon Trotsky at the beginning of his Mexican exile. This was the time of the Moscow Trials, orchestrated by Stalin, which resulted in the forced confessions and execution of many former leaders of the Bolshevik Party, who had been charged with sabotage, treason, and espionage, and for conspiring to restore capitalism in Russia. Throughout these trials, Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov were the main defendants, *in absentia*. Their execution required greater planning and effort from Stalin's secret police.

Based on these experiences, and his impressions and speculations about them, Wolfe has written a novel of sorts, in which Victor Rostov is essentially a stand-in for Leon Trotsky. In Wolfe's account, Trotsky in his final years "must have been" wracked with unacknowledged guilt for his role in the Bolshevik suppression of a sailors' rebellion at the Kronstadt naval base in 1921. These unspoken self-recriminations, "a very particular agony" that Wolfe assumes tormented Trotsky, "interfered with his will to live." In Rostov, Wolfe has created a character who craves his death; that Trotsky has earned his fate is the central idea of the novel.

Unfortunately, Wolfe is no novelist. At his best, his writing is simply dull. Characters are thinly drawn, and none are developed. Dialogue becomes speechifying, where not one but several characters serve as mouthpieces for the author, all making the same point, repeatedly. Description is minimal; plot development is nonexistent.

There are affectations to a poetic style; the influence of stream-of-consciousness narration occasionally and woefully intrudes. When Wolfe reaches for a literary flourish, his prose reads like an awkward translation into English. The heavy hand of the author is everywhere and is unavoidable.

In a favorable "Afterword" to the book, novelist William T. Vollmann describes Wolfe's writing as "uninspired," with "wearisome redundancies." While Vollmann will allow that Wolfe's style can sometimes be effective and that he can, on occasion, generate narrative interest, Vollmann does say, "Wolfe continually undermines his own verisimilitude, eschews subtlety, has a tin ear for dialogue, etcetera. — Enough."

Well, not just yet. Add that Wolfe's writing is infused with the sensibility of a peeping-Tom pornographer. The behind-the-counter "dirty books" style of cheap 1950s dime-store novels is presented here as insight into feminine psychology. Perhaps an element of the risqué was meant to be entertaining or avant-garde, but it makes a contemporary reader cringe.

Though Wolfe's literary gifts are limited, he does make the most of what technique he does have. He

is particularly fond of foreshadowing. From the very first chapter, Rostov is shown trying to dodge the fateful topic he cannot bear to consider. "When do we get to the Kronstadt chapter?" his secretary asks. Rostov's gestures show the question disturbs him, since he "pursed his lips and fingered his pointed beard." He answers the question by saying that other matters must take priority.

Perhaps the answer is legitimate and the fidgeting of no consequence? Should a reader think so, or not notice the exchange about Kronstadt, the second chapter develops the hint and puts the matter more squarely. Again, Rostov is made uncomfortable by a mention of Kronstadt ("the word for which there was no answer"). This time, though, one of his trusted guards plays the key role. In fact, the guard is shown to be more insightful of Rostov than he is of himself. Ultimately, the climactic scene of the novel is not the assassination but the verbal confrontation about Kronstadt between Rostov and this guard, Paul, formerly Rostov's strongest supporter.

The parallel is hard to miss. Just as the fictional guard is supposedly more perceptive than the fictional Trotsky, more aware of the significance of Kronstadt and its political and psychological implications, the real secretary—Bernard Wolfe—is supposedly more perceptive and aware than the real Trotsky. Here, in short, is the essence of the novel. It's as if Wolfe hauls Trotsky into a court where Wolfe is the prosecutor, judge, and jury.

Curiously enough, it is the defects of "The Great Prince Died" that are its main source of interest. At issue is more than just tendentious and simplistic political analysis, though Wolfe's sophomoric understanding of history and politics is certainly no virtue. Ultimately, though, the novel fails as a work of fiction. To what extent does the author's re-writing of history contribute to the literary failure?

Historical fiction admits to a large degree of latitude, after all. An author has ample room to create, and strict fidelity to truth is not necessary. Yet, facts matter. Wolfe's argument is not predicated on the unknown or unknowable, the soil where historical fiction thrives. Instead, he develops his ideas by ignoring or brushing aside what is known and what is not convenient for his theme.

That is, Wolfe does not use fiction to fill in the gaps of history or to explain what history cannot access. There are no gaps: the issue of Kronstadt was raised towards the end of Trotsky's life, and he put his opinions in writing, defending Bolshevik policy and his personal role in making and carrying out that policy.

The real issue, the contention that gave rise to the novel, is that Wolfe is dissatisfied with Trotsky's (and Lenin's) analysis of Kronstadt and the reasons why the revolt was repressed. "The Great Prince Died" isn't "history as it might have been" but "history as it wasn't."

Of all the literary genres, fiction may be the most forgiving. So, Wolfe should not be faulted for telescoping events, shifting crucial dates, omitting some historical figures, simplifying others, all in the interest of a lively story. Let Wolfe also have his fictional Trotsky lead the armed assault against the Kronstadt guns, even though the real Trotsky was not actually present and was never expected to be. Many of these alterations, and others, are permissible if the essence of history,

as it is generally known, is accurately depicted and if the changes add to the overall artistic effect of the novel.

Still, even granting a large degree of artistic license, false history produces a bad novel. If the central conflict in a work of fiction is historical, but the conflict is untrue, then the problems the characters encounter, and the characters themselves, cannot develop organically from the story's events. They must instead be manufactured and imposed on the plot.

For the traditional realist novel (contrasted with mystery or romance, where plot is most crucial), the literary element most essential for the reader's interest is characterization. Whether virtuous or evil, conflicted or confused, typical or exotic, the central character must be credible. Without plausibility of character, a reader's pleasure lessens with every turn of the page. Historical fiction does not escape this law.

Wolfe has Rostov writing a book about Stalin, but this fictional Trotsky is unable—because of a psychological block—to complete the chapter on Kronstadt. During his exile in Mexico, Trotsky did continue his work on such a biography, though by Stalin's order the murderer struck before it could be completed. The actual manuscript, in fact, is stained with Trotsky's blood.

Not surprisingly, the conflict about Kronstadt in 1921 is mentioned only briefly in the biography for the best of reasons: Stalin played no vital role in the events. Further, the short account that Trotsky writes gives no indication that he suffered from a troubled mind about the rebellion or its suppression. Instead, what does disturb Trotsky are the many falsehoods that had grown around the Kronstadt uprising.

In fact, Trotsky criticizes as untrue the point of view that Wolfe will later turn into a full-length novel: "The Stalinist school of falsification is not the only one that flourishes today in the field of Russian history. Indeed, it derives a measure of its sustenance from certain legends built on ignorance and sentimentalism; such as the lurid tales concerning Kronstadt. ... Suffice it to say that what the Soviet government did reluctantly at Kronstadt was a tragic necessity; naturally the revolutionary government could not have 'presented' the fortress that protected Petrograd to the insurgent sailors only because a few dubious Anarchists and Es-sars [Social-Revolutionary Party] were sponsoring a handful of reactionary peasants and soldiers in rebellion" ("Stalin," p. 337).

Do words like "reluctantly" and the statement of a "tragic necessity" point to an unacknowledged personal torment roiling within Trotsky's heart? On this flimsy basis, Wolfe answers "yes" and proceeds to invent a character driven by remorse to a deserved self-suicide. It has little to do with the real Trotsky, who wrote unequivocally: "I was a member of the government, I considered the quelling of the rebellion necessary and therefore bear responsibility for the suppression."

Is such a statement insufficiently clear? Might an admission of responsibility indicate an admission of guilt? To remove any such doubt, Trotsky concluded: "But I am ready to recognize that civil war is no school of humanism. Idealists and pacifists always accused the revolution of 'excesses.' But the main point is that 'excesses' flow from the very nature of revolution, which in itself is but an 'excess' of history. Whoever so desires may on this basis reject (in little articles) revolution in general. I do not reject it. In this sense I carry full and complete responsibility for the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion" (See "More on the Suppression of Kronstadt," in V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, "Kronstadt," p. 97).

How accurate to history does the historical novelist have to be? To the general question, only a general answer follows: The novelist must be accurate enough and the story must be true enough to be plausible. The reader must trust the story enough to believe in it. A work of fiction built on history must succeed as a work of fiction.

In "The Art of Fiction," a stately manifesto for artistic freedom, Henry James wrote: "The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting." James added that the ways in which a novel could be interesting were "innumerable." He had not reckoned on "The Great Prince Died," which has not produced even one point of interest. ■

By BILL ONASCH

LABOR BRIEFING

(St. Paul) Union-Advocate

• Socialist Action members in Minneapolis write: "On Saturday, Oct. 10, over 400 enthusiastic participants joined a rally and march on U.S. bank in Northeast Minneapolis. U.S. Bank has actively lobbied against fair wages and treatment for workers and simultaneously financed dirty industries.

"The concurrent exploitation of workers and the earth is bringing together previously separate struggles into broad coalition efforts. Minneapolis Works, the organization that put together this march consists of seven different unions, plus a variety of community organizations and the environmental umbrella coalition MN 350.org.

"Minneapolis Works is trying to pass a city ordinance that will guarantee sick time and safe time; protect against wage theft, require fair minimum hours and reliable scheduling, and provide a \$15/hour minimum wage.

"Speakers pointed out that US Bank claims to be green, all the while funding the dirtiest energy projects like Tar Sands, Enbridge, and fracked gas pipelines. The bank also pretends there's no money to pay workers more, but it paid \$240 million for naming rights to the new Vikings Football Stadium.



"The very diverse crowd included young and old, immigrants from many countries—Ethiopia, Somalia, Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Cambodia, Liberia—in addition to longer term residents of all races. Our personal sentiment, which was shared by everyone we spoke with, was that it was truly inspiring to see all the different people and groups coming together to fight our common enemy. No more divide and conquer!"

• An AP dispatch from Seattle reports, "After protests and questions

(Above) December 2014 fast-food protest in Minneapolis.

about whether the University of Washington would be required to follow Seattle's \$15 minimum wage law, the university has decided to boost pay for all affected workers. After raising all campus wages to at least \$11 an hour in April, UW announced Monday it would increase its minimum wage to \$13 in January and \$15 at the beginning of 2017.

"This decision applies to all workers

on campus, including students, and follows the law's rules for large employers. The new wage agreement will affect about 5500 people, including 3500 student workers. The university estimates the cost for raising all workers to at least \$13 an hour in 2016 will be \$3.2 million. Students disrupted an April regents meeting, demanding higher wages. The university announced a few days later that it was increasing the minimum pay for student workers to \$11 an hour."

• From the Minneapolis *Star-Tribune*, "Teachers unions are strong, but in St. Paul, muscle is being flexed in new ways. Rather than simply work on behalf of candidates, the St. Paul Federation of Teachers teamed with parents this year to coordinate and bankroll a Caucus for Change movement that challenged incumbents and lifted four political newcomers to prized DFL Party endorsements. Now, contract talks are underway between the teachers and the school district, and as candidates enter the final weeks of the election, the union could soon find itself with maximum leverage: a new majority on the seven-member board already endorsing its contract pursuits."

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... Chrysler pact

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contract increases the signing bonus for Top Tier by a thousand dollars while Tier 2 gets nothing additional.

The rejected deal provided bigger profit-sharing payouts to Tier 2; now, in this regard, they will be equal. Even if all goes as projected, in eight years Tier 2 will still be second-class members of Unequal Auto Workers.

Still, a \$10 raise, even so spread out, looked attractive to many making \$19 or less. The *Wall Street Journal* estimated the \$25 goal for Tier 2 in the first TA would have increased Chrysler labor costs 10 percent. Since most of the \$4 improvement is back-loaded to the next contract, the new deal should leave that 10 percent pretty much intact. Currently, Chrysler labor costs are somewhat lower than GM and Ford and close to the biggest non-union transplant, Toyota. To the relief of both UAW president Dennis Williams and Fiat CEO Sergio Marchionne, that won't change much.

Deleted from the approved TA is any mention of Dennis Williams' pipe-dream of establishing a health-care co-op covering all employees of the Big Three. This ill-advised proposal, vaguely mentioned in the first deal, would be a sort of super-VEBA, like the one that UAW pensioners got stuck with in 2007. This understandably made many members nervous. Except for a new emergency-room co-pay, current health benefits remain unchanged.

But unchanged isn't so great for Tier 2, who have a six percent co-pay of sure-to-rise medical expenses. And the much better benefits enjoyed by the Top Tier are threatened with a steep tax on their so-called "Cadillac plan"—mandated by Obama's Affordable Care Act. The UAW should be working with those unionists in the Labor Campaign for Single-Payer for Canadian-style health care instead of constantly sacrificing wages to feed the private insurance robber barons—who are the only winners in "ObamaCare."

What workers don't receive

There's no reinstatement of the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), pioneered by the UAW, that protects wages from inflation. For many years, the formula of annual three percent productivity raises coupled with COLA made UAW members the highest paid workers in manufacturing.

Top Tier workers will get two three-percent raises under the ratified contract—their first boost in a decade—and two four-percent lump-sum payments that don't get folded into the wage rate. Inflation was one factor in the 21 percent decline in real wages in the auto industry in the last available comparison of 2003-2013.

A very big issue for affected workers is the Alternative Work Schedule, requiring rotation through different shifts of four 10-hour straight-time days. Not used by GM or Ford, this mean-spirited work change was solely devised to get 20 hours a day production without paying overtime rates. Most workers consid-

er it exhausting and unhealthy and hate the disruption it causes to family and social life.

The Sept. 18 *Detroit Free Press* ran a story titled "UAW Wins Changes to Hated FCA Alternative Work Schedule." But this tempting appetizer was followed by pretty thin soup:

"The UAW says its new [first] tentative agreement with Fiat Chrysler includes 'significant alternative work schedule changes,' designed to quell discontent among workers over the schedules. The tentative agreement, reached Tuesday, would pay workers more for Saturday shifts and prevent workers from being scheduled on consecutive Fridays."

That hardly addresses the complaints about the loss of the eight-hour day, regular shifts and regular days off, much less exhaustion and safety concerns. There was nothing more in the ratified contract.

And what about jobs?

From World War II to the 1970s the American auto industry was nearly 100 percent unionized in the UAW. UAW membership peaked at 1.5 million in 1979. Today the number of active working members is about 390,000, along with more than 600,000 retirees who receive pensions and health-care payments negotiated by the UAW. Membership at Big Three plants has dropped 42 percent in just the last decade. Only 15 percent of parts-makers are unionized. A substantial number of today's UAW members are outside the auto industry. For example, I pay dues to UAW Local 1981—the National Writers Union.

Much of the membership loss has been due to automation, outsourcing, and offshoring. But perhaps a bigger factor has been the game-changing rise of Asian and European-owned "transplants" building cars, SUVs, and light trucks in the USA—and taking nearly half the share of U.S. production away from the Big Three. Counting parts suppliers and transplants, the auto industry still employs 900,000 workers. The UAW has failed to organize any transplant start-ups.

The UAW strategy since the 1980s has purportedly been all about jobs. Saving jobs was the rationale for giveback bargaining.

Chrysler took advantage of unrestricted Tier 2 to go on a hiring spree, adding about 15,000 workers in the last few years. That's coming to a halt. The union summary of the new contract projects adding 2959 jobs at some plants over the next four years while eliminating 2856 at others. That means a whopping 103 new jobs are expected. There has been no change in plans to move Dodge Dart and Chrysler 200 work to Mexico—where wages are about 20% of Tier 2.

Full-time adequate staffing has also been eroded since the introduction of temp workers to cover peaks of short-term absences and individual vacation days on Mondays, Fridays, and weekends. The temps currently start at \$17 an hour and can earn up to \$22. They have truncated health benefits, pay union dues, and are first in line for regular entry-level openings.

Once given an inch, the bosses always try to take a kilometer. Not included in the highlight summary of the TA provided to the ranks was a substantial new concession to the company—allowing management



Cops attack Toledo Autolite strikers in 1934.

to use temps every day, with the potential of increasing temp share of all work hours from four to eight percent. This would get Chrysler close to nonunion Toyota.

After the rejection of the first TA, both union and management warned there wasn't any more money available for improvements. Clearly, union bargainers granted Chrysler the ability to double temp usage to help offset the cost of ballyhooed raises for Tier 2 workers.

But that's not all they gave away. Under the newly approved contract, new temp workers will start at less than \$16 and top out at \$19.28 an hour. (The national average wage of private-sector production workers is currently \$21.08.) They also lose profit sharing that they would have received in the rejected first TA.

And the doubling of temp share of work means these workers will have a longer wait for regular Tier 2 openings. There was similar chiseling on wage rates for some MOPAR and Axle workers. These givebacks pay Fiat Chrysler today for promised gains for some workers eight years down the road. It is a fresh reenactment of the parable of lions being led by asses.

Lessons from history

A key historical turning point in the movement that led to the launching of the CIO United Auto Workers was the 1934 Toledo Auto-Lite strike. It took place at a time of mass unemployment. Class lines were quickly and indelibly drawn, and the whole city chose sides.

Instead of scabbing, most jobless workers followed the lead of the socialist-led Lucas County Unemployed League, and thousands stood with the union in defiance of court injunctions and even a mobilization of the National Guard. Two strikers were killed, dozens injured, and many arrested before victory was achieved.

The Toledo unemployed made such sacrifices because they saw the union as a broad social movement that benefited the working class as a whole. The Toledo example was a precursor to the later solidarity generated by the Flint sit-downs and other battles that transformed the auto industry from low-wage

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Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Trans-Pacific Partnership — A charter of big business rights

By JOHN ORRETT

Alongside burgeoning global trade is the concentration of power in giant Trans National Corporations (TNCs), able to move production to places where labour costs are the lowest. En route, those firms bully, threaten, and reduce the wages and benefits of their workers. The Trans Pacific Partnership, like its “free trade” predecessors, is a charter of rights for the TNCs. The great secrecy surrounding its negotiation reflects the fact that, once again, the interests of working people will be sacrificed on the altar of globalization and private profit.

Information issued and leaked about the TPP indicates that the deal will not help but hurt workers’ rights and standard of living. Several industries in Canada will suffer. The auto industry is one. Japan’s rulers want their vehicles imported duty-free, with just 30 per cent of the parts manufactured and assembled in Canada, the U.S., or Mexico—down from the 60% content presently required under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

UNIFOR, Canada’s largest private-sector union representing auto workers, warns that this would “kill

thousands of Canadian auto jobs.”

Canada’s dairy and poultry industry and its supply-managed systems will be open to more foreign competition, something that will cost heavily in lost revenue. In fact, during the latest federal election campaign, the former Conservative government promised hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation payments to soften the blow of the TPP. The millions would come from revenues that could be applied to meet human needs, rather than serving an arrangement that will mostly benefit multi-national food conglomerates.

Wikileaks revealed the chapter related to intellectual property rights and patents. *Toronto Star* technology columnist Michael Geist warns that the TPP will require significant changes to Canada’s copyright laws. TPP changes concerning internet use and online practices would put privacy at risk.

New rules governing corporate lawsuits would increase claims by foreign corporations against the Canadian government over national policy and court decisions. Pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly is already suing the Canadian government for \$500 million regarding patent rules. The aim of the TPP is to extend the life of corporate patents—a policy that will cost consumers

across the 12 signatory countries millions of dollars in higher prices for medical drugs indispensable to good health and well being.

Canadian authorities are now in the last stages of negotiating the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement with Europe. Many of the same problems with the TPP are evident in CETA too. The latter provides for even greater TNC powers in the area of government services and procurement policy. At risk is the preferential purchasing of costly items, such as subway cars, from local manufacturers, and it facilitates the sale of government services to the lowest bidder, even if it is a foreign service provider.

Ontario province, Canada’s industrial heartland, may lose thousands of jobs under CETA since its biggest export to Europe is low-labour-intensive gold, while its largest imports are high-labour-input pharmaceuticals, autos, and auto parts.

Tom Mulcair and the NDP leadership, while opposing the TPP late in the recent election campaign, should have been mounting opposition to both deals much earlier, not just on the eve of the signing. They should know that these deals are being crafted by the international captains of industry, whose main objective is to increase their power and profits at the expense of millions of workers and the environment.

Socialists are not against trade. But we do oppose trade deals that weaken the bargaining position of unions and the workers they represent. We are against trade deals that jeopardize government safety regulations and public services. We are against the export of jobs to low-wage zones. To reduce carbon emissions associated with long-distance transport, we favour local sources, and reluctantly accept long-distance trade in goods that cannot be obtained nearby, provided that the producers are decently paid, and enjoy good benefits and a safe working environment. In other words, “fair trade” is inseparable from an international, ecological workers’ agenda. ■

Ontario Public Service deal is bad news

By JULIUS ARSCOTT
President, OPSEU Local 532

On Oct. 29, Ontario Public Service (OPS) workers voted to ratify a tentative collective agreement. The majority of those who cast a ballot supported the deal (Central agreement 67%; Unified 78%). But a substantial number rejected the concessionary deal—more than said “no” to the previous one. Labour militants now face the task of organizing at the grassroots level to build an effective fight against future cuts and concessions. The following article was written just prior to the vote.

Ontario government workers, over 40,000 represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees’ Union, are being asked to ratify a three-year (2015 to 2017) concessionary tentative agreement. Many of the major rollbacks sought by management, such as a 12-step wage grid with a 5% pay reduction at the bottom step, were fought off. But workers are now asked to ratify a deal filled with concessions that would continue the downward spiral of wages. It reflects the

“Net Zero” budgetary stance of Premier Kathleen Wynne’s Liberal Party.

Numerous locals, particularly in the Toronto region, made it a point to fight for a non-concessionary agreement at the demand-set in 2014. Several tiny gains won could have been negotiated in any round of bargaining. They are not a break-through.

Since bargaining began, large portions of the membership have been mobilized in an unprecedented way. Membership and unit meetings, coffee break gatherings, a bigger union presence in the workplace, pickets at Liberal Party fundraisers, have all contributed to the building of local capacity.

A very strong strike vote (Central: 90%, Corrections: 96%, and Unified: 88%) occurred early in negotiations, in the face of drastic cuts. Members now deserve a better result.

The tentative agreement includes cuts to wages, a two-year wage freeze (on top of the two years suffered due to the previous collective agreement). The employer is completing the elimination of termination pay by disallowing the accumulation

after Dec. 31, 2016. There is language anticipating the future privatization of public services and provisions, which would allow the employer to expand its use of “flexible” part-time employees, as opposed to full-time employees.

One of the most regressive attacks is on the 2700 members on Long Term Income Protection (LTIP). In the latest arrangement, once LTIP is received, the insurance carrier can force members into work plans or “forced rehab,” even if contrary to a doctor’s orders. If members don’t comply, they lose their benefits.

The employers began negotiations by attempting to bury public-sector workers in an avalanche of major rollbacks, to generate enough pressure to ensure that they could steal some portion of wages and benefits. Members reacted in a strong way, and took a clear position for a non-concessionary deal.

The decision to fight back was made in the wake of recent concessionary agreements. Some workers believed we had to “do our part” towards recovery from the economic recession of 2008. Members are increasingly asked to do the work of

two or more employees. We are understaffed and underpaid. The employer has thanked us for our hard work by unilaterally imposing a 50% premium on post-retirement benefits, and doubling the eligibility period from 10 to 20 years of service.

The cost of living continues to rise. The 1.4% increase does not nearly match the rate of inflation (cost of living). If you are on the grid anywhere but at the top, you suffer. If you are planning a change in career, you suffer. If you are converting to full-time or just started your career, you really suffer.

The employer continues to use divide-and-rule tactics. Now is the time to stand up, to protect all workers in the OPS, even those yet to be hired. After all, it’s the new workers who will be our future, and the future of the services on which the public relies. Now is the time to organize rank-and-file groups in every union local to defeat this bad deal, to replace union officials who urge us to accept it, and to advance a Workers’ Agenda to change the direction of our union and society as a whole. Act together now, organize now, or face a steeper climb tomorrow.

Vote NO to the Unified and Central tentative agreements! ■

... Chrysler pact

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sweatshops to what became for a time the most rewarding jobs in manufacturing.

As we again see revealed in the Chrysler bargaining, the polar opposite class-collaborationist perspective of the ruling Administration Caucus has instead undermined the most basic solidarity even within the ranks of the UAW. They betray not only the union’s proud heritage but also present dues-payers. Whether their personal intentions are good or bad, they have paved the road to industrial purgatory.

It will take more than prayers of others to escape to a better destination. It begins with the UAW ranks’ asserting democratic control of their union. And in all industries, it will require the broader working-class majority to reclaim our stolen class identity and revive class-struggle strategy and tactics on the job, in the community, and in the political arena. ■

... LABOR

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• Last December, a lame-duck Congress, scrambling to avoid another government shutdown, passed a huge omnibus appropriations bill, which included the Kline-Miller Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014. Many such funds, which collectively cover about 10 million workers, are in trouble. Rather than requiring employers to put more money in to keep their promises, the new law facilitates reneging on their obligations if they convince the Treasury Department it’s necessary to stay solvent.

While there are still some procedural formalities, the Teamsters Central States Pension Fund is confident that the Treasury—who saved so many banks “too big to

fail”—will approve massive slashing of pension checks. The first of these are expected to hit 115,500 of 400,000 retired Teamsters truck drivers and inside workers starting next July—with cuts of as much as 50 percent, a number that could only grow with time.

On Oct. 10 dozens of retired and working Teamsters protested outside the Local 41 hall in Kansas City. Teamsters for a Democratic Union strongly objects to this attack and supports alternative legislation. The TDU slate in next year’s election of national Teamsters officers will make pensions a major issue as they work to oust the Hoffa regime, which over the past 17 years did little to protect retirees.

• Occasionally, employers file unfair labor practice charges against unions, but the United Electrical,

Radio & Machine Workers (UE) are under a unique attack by an Israeli-based Zionist outfit. The Israel Law Center, which claims to be a civil rights group and a defender of terror victims, is harassing UE because their recent convention voted to support the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions campaign against Israeli repression of Palestinians.

BDS has broad labor support in Europe and Canada but UE is the first national union in the USA to sign on. With a straight face, the U.S. and Israeli shysters claim that UE’s solidarity violated Taft-Hartley Act prohibitions against secondary boycotts. They also urge General Electric to “avoid labor accords” with UE—which has a national GE contract. ■

If you have labor-related news you’d like to share in this column contact billonasch@klabor.org.

UNAC: U.S. out of Syria!

This statement was issued by the United National Antiwar Coalition's Administrative Committee.

We ask antiwar forces in the U.S. to join together to plan actions to protest the growing U.S. intervention in Syria. The most recent step has been to introduce up to 50 Special Forces combat troops to work with what are called "moderate" rebel groups to fight against Islamic State/Daesh. This violates earlier promises by the Obama administration not to send troops to Syria.

Contrary to the official White House announcement, journalists have pointed out that the mission is a combat one and that troops are likely to face combat. It is an escalation of what is already a major U.S. intervention and war. The intervention is an illegal invasion under international law; the Syrian government is recognized throughout the world and has not invited U.S. troops.

The so-called moderate forces supported by Washington are part of a broader alliance that includes the Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate, the Al-Nusra Front. U.S. forces could end up in combat with Russian forces, in Syria at the government's invitation, that are in combat against Al-Nusra. Both Al-Qaeda and Islamic State are aligned with the murderous anti-Shi'ite bigotry of the U.S.-allied Saudi Arabian regime and clergy. In Syria, as in Yemen, the Saudis are waging war with active U.S. support.

We reject the ongoing provision of U.S. weapons to forces waging war in Syria—also a violation of international law and an act of war. Likewise, the traffic in illegal oil and weapons to and from Syria by U.S. allies must be exposed and stopped. No foreign country has the right to wage war against Syria or to demand regime change in Syria—the Syrian people must decide their future.

Antiwar unity is necessary to push back the new U.S. ground intervention, which is similar in character to the disastrous 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. Because its scope and posture are quite different, mobilizing in the streets will be more difficult at first. Part of our attention must be to oppose calls for an expanded U.S. air war, "no-fly" zones, and the like. It is possible to form local and national coalitions for non-intervention, however, based on the principle of self-determination for the Syrian people.

U.S. troops out of Syria! No air war against Syria!

Films

99 Homes

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"99 Homes," set in Florida, is an excellent socio-economic film that could have been a documentary. I'm glad it isn't. It is a well-acted, powerful drama, based on the 2007-9 economic collapse, when banks foreclosed on thousands of homes—resulting in "legal," yet ruthless, evictions.

It started out as a housing boom. Realtors convinced low-income people and those with bad credit that they could buy a home and have the American Dream. They offered them subprime mortgages, low payments with little or no money down. Innocent victims showed up at real estate offices where they completed eligibility forms. Little did they know that once these forms got into the hands of mortgage brokers, their stated income was fudged to satisfy lenders.

By the end of 2007, the economy tanked and people were not able to make their mortgage payments. The housing market collapsed. Many went to their banks for loans or asked for extensions, but were denied. The banks soon foreclosed on their homes, and homeowners found eviction notices tacked to their front doors.

Andrew Garfield plays Dennis Nash (a more nuanced character than the one he played in "The Social Network"). Nash builds houses. He's also a general handyman who knows his way around air-conditioning, electrical, and plumbing systems.

Nash, and Lynn, his mother (Laura Dern), who works out of the home as a hair-dresser, and his preadolescent son, Connor (a believable Noah Lomas), live in a modest detached home in a Miami suburb. As an independent contractor, he had had



lots of work during the housing boom. When it all fell down, he had none. He couldn't pay his bills, let alone his mortgage.

There's a harrowing scene of their forced eviction, ordered by the sheriff and overseen by the cut-throat, Machiavellian realtor, Rick Carver (an intense, excellent Michael Shannon).

The Nashes end up at a sleaze-bag, motel. But Nash is determined to get his house back, no matter what. Director Rahman Bahrani manages to build suspense by focusing on Nash, his strategy, and his relationship with Carver.

Carver makes a deal with Nash, some of which entails illegally faking records regarding the removal and installation of appliances for which the bank will pay. Nash knows it's wrong, but Carver sells him on the idea that in a world of dog-eat-dog, it's best to strive to be a survivor. "Don't get emotional about houses," says Carver. "They're just boxes."

At this point, like Faust, Nash has sold his soul to the devil, so desperate is he to move out of the motel and reclaim his home. Eventually, his goals are inflated; he dreams of acquiring a mansion and a swimming pool, and other lavish luxuries. It's sad to see him end up by evicting people with the same ruthlessness as when he was a victim. When he is forced to evict a friend, he finds himself at a crossroads and takes the right path, though it costs him dearly. ■

... Canada vote

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your bottom dollar it won't be proportional representation. If anything, it will be "ranked balloting," a mechanism is designed to distribute second and third preferences to establishment parties. The discredited Senate, with or without the fig leaf of "non-partisan" appointments, will continue to squander money and oxygen.

The Liberals said they'd halt the termination of home mail delivery, but not reverse it—much less restore lost mail services and maintain letter carrier jobs.

Legalization of marijuana will be welcomed by consumers. At the same time, it will primarily mean huge profits for politically well-connected growers and marketers.

Trudeau will go the COP21 conference in Paris in December. He will talk a good game on climate change. But his commitment to the oil patch, to tar sands development, to "cap and trade" (i.e., the sale of permits to burn carbon) will show where he really stands on climate justice and indigenous people's rights.

Trudeau pledged to end Canada's combat mission in Iraq and Syria, but not to end Canadian Forces' involvement in NATO, and in so-called training operations in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Congo, Darfur, Sudan, the West Bank, and Haiti—all in support of right-wing regimes. Ottawa's backing for the Zionist apartheid state of Israel will be undiminished.

Canada should accept many more Syrian refugees. Even if Trudeau's goal of 25,000 by the end of 2015 is met (extremely unlikely), the causes behind the displacement of millions—war and climate change—can be addressed only by halting western military intervention into the resource-rich countries of the South and East. Pious Liberal promises to re-settle hordes of refugees cannot ameliorate the profit-lust and dire humanitarian consequences of imperialism.

Instead of taking a wait-and-see attitude, labour and social justice activists need to hit the streets now to demand positive action from the Trudeau government on all these fronts.

Good jobs for all. Tax the rich. Repeal C-51 and anti-labour laws C-377 and C-525. No to the TPP and CETA. Fully restore home mail delivery. No new pipelines. Nationalize Big Oil and Gas and the giant banks, and invest heavily in public green energy systems. Justice for indigenous peoples. Canada out of NATO. Bring the troops home. For public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy under workers' and community democratic control. Those should be the demands of every union, of every working-class and popular organization, and of the NDP.

Sadly, for decades, the party and labour brass have



(Left) Tom Mulcair of the New Democratic Party. The labour-based NDP lost 59 seats in Parliament.

been veering to the right. The result has been more and more concessions to Capital, and less democracy in the workers' organizations.

Electorally, it has been a time of weak, short-lived electoral gains, followed by setbacks and disasters for the NDP. Between 2011 and today, the party blew a provincial election in British Columbia, lost government in Nova Scotia after only one term, failed to advance in Ontario (where provincial Leader Andrea Horwath pledged no new taxes and a balanced budget—sound familiar?), and the NDP government in Manitoba plunged in popularity. The jury is still out on Rachel Notley's crew in Alberta, whose first provincial budget took a direction opposite to Mulcair's.

But the verdict on Mulcair and company is clear. The NDP brain trust masterminded the biggest loss of seats in party history. Many good MPs, like Megan Leslie and Andrew Cash, went down to defeat. They will be missed. Pro-military Peter Stoffer, and the profane anti-socialist Pat Martin, not so much. The party was shut out in Atlantic Canada and Toronto. It was severely cut down in Quebec.

Sadly, star social justice advocate Linda McQuaig failed in her second bid in Toronto Centre. Happily, leftist MP Niki Ashton, who ran for federal Leader in 2012, was re-elected in Churchill, Manitoba. She is joined in Parliament by left economist Erin Weir from Regina-Lewvan. So, there is hope. But hope must be accompanied by political clarity, unity in action, and relentless struggle from the bottom up.

The NDP, the only mass, labour-based political party in North America, remains viable as a potential challenger to capitalist austerity, climate injustice, social inequality, racism, sexism, and war. Jeremy Corbyn's stunning leadership victory in the British Labour Party, ongoing grassroots opposition across Europe to the EU bankers' agenda, the Bernie Sanders phenomenon in the USA (although he is with one of the bosses' parties), and even the ouster of the hated Stephen Harper regime in Ottawa all show a growing appetite for significant change.

That is the agenda the NDP Socialist Caucus vigorously advances. We will discover Canada's Jeremy Corbyn as we take up the struggle against the ruling rich, their state, and the misleaders of the working class. ■

Socialist Action (Canada) invites you to its Education for Activists Conference: 'Reform or Revolution!'

Friday, Nov. 20

7 p.m. "Is social democracy over? From Mulcair to Corbyn to Tsipras" with Marty Goodman, Socialist Action (U.S.); Robbie Mahood, Montreal branch, SA/Ligue pour l'Action socialiste.

Saturday, Nov. 21

10 a.m. "Is China imperialist?" What does the Chinese economic downturn mean for world capitalism? - Yasin Kaya, Socialist Action (Canada) and PhD candidate York University.

1 p.m. "Why inequality?" with Jim Stanford, chief economist for UNIFOR, a regular commentator on CBC-TV; and John Clarke, provincial organizer for the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty.

4 p.m. "Where is U.S. politics going? Trump, Sanders, \$15 Now, Black Lives Matter." Marty Goodman, Socialist Action (U.S.).

University of Toronto, Woodsworth Residence, 321 Bloor Street West, Room 35.
Admission: \$5 per session or PWYC / \$10 in advance, \$20 at door for entire program.

Canada: Tory brutes yield to sunny Liberal deceivers

By BARRY WEISLEDER

It was a shift from dark, overtly reactionary ideas to a deceptively sunny version of the prevailing corporate agenda. That's what voters across Canada got on Oct. 19.

Many people were spooked by the autocratic, racist wedge politics of the Stephen Harper Conservative regime. Desperate for "change," they opted for the major party that *seemed* to offer a bigger break with the mean, fearful, bleak status quo. That was the Liberal Party, led by photogenic, 43-year-old Justin Trudeau.

In the process, change-seekers demoted the labour-based New Democratic Party of Tom Mulcair from first to third place in the polls.

Mulcair made it relatively easy for Trudeau to appear to outflank him on the left. The NDP chief ran a stodgy, overly cautious election campaign whose balanced-budget mantra appealed futilely to fiscal conservatives. It offered little respite for the sufferers of the war on wages, and for victims of the ravages of precarious employment. On pipeline building, Mulcair went from being an advocate to being ambiguous. His weak policy on the environment, including his feckless "cap and trade" position, hurt the party in Quebec as much as his principled defense of the right of Muslim women to wear a veil in public.

A great amount of money was spent on the 11-week campaign, the longest in modern Canadian history. Over \$40 million was spent just by the Liberal Party, and over \$50 million by the Tories. The NDP likely spent a lot less. But the big spenders pumped up the Liberals from third to first place.

Which begs the question: Why did significant sectors of big business turn away from Harper, and towards Trudeau, especially over the past year? Could it be that the Conservatives' harshly confrontationalist, bullying behaviour hurt more than it helped the rulers to implement the capitalist austerity agenda in Canada? Perhaps a significant section of the corporate elite would rather access the scientific data that Harper buried. Perhaps the bosses prefer not to risk shattering illusions in bourgeois democracy when Liberal deception will suffice.

Time for Mulcair and his team to go!

In any case, the triumph of the Liberal Party was not just a condemnation of the authoritarian, manipulative rule of the Harper-led Conservatives. It was not just a rejection of their loaded omnibus bills, repeat prorogations of Parliament, and voter suppression tactics. Nor was it simply a triumph of style over substance, a la Trudeau. It was also an indictment of the overall political direction of the NDP.

The course taken by the party is not exclusively the fault of Tom Mulcair. But those responsible for it certainly include the staff he selected and the stifling political culture that he, and the iconic Jack Layton before him, fostered.

As a *Globe and Mail* column argued on election day, "The most unpardonable mistake, however, was to think the NDP could move blandly to the centre without the Liberal Party filling not only the progressive vacuum left behind but also seizing the 'change' mantle that allowed it to claim its legitimacy as the true alternative to the Tories."

Certainly, Canada's "first past the post" electoral system grossly exaggerated the parliamentary outcome in favour of the Liberals. With only 39.5 per cent of the popular vote, the Liberal Party captured 55 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons (184 of 338 MPs). The Conservatives' 31.9 per cent share of the votes translated into 99 seats, or 29 per cent of the Commons. The NDP's 44 elected MPs, a precipi-



tous drop from 103 seats in 2011, represents only 13 per cent of the seats, despite garnering nearly 20 per cent of the votes cast in 2015. Also underrepresented are the Bloc Quebecois, which picked up 10 seats, and the Green Party one.

But there is no denying the massive move to the Liberals. Millions of ballots were transferred from past NDP supporters, as well as from new and occasional voters. The overall turnout rose from 61 to 68 per cent of the eligible electorate. The union-linked NDP, which campaigned like a fiscally conservative big business party, failed to win the hearts and minds of people looking for action to lift the country out of economic stagnation, and to reverse deepening social inequality.

In the wake of "the NDP's disastrous move to the mushy middle," as described by Desmond Cole in the *Toronto Star* on Oct. 15, the NDP Socialist Caucus called on Tom Mulcair to resign as federal leader. It asked the party's federal executive to set in motion a process to select a new leader and adopt a new political course that will advance the interests of working people, youths, seniors, women and the victims of bigotry, racism, and militarism.

The NDP "brain trust," including Brad Lavigne, George Smith, Ann McGrath, and Karl Belanger, ought to go too. They vanished the party's adopted policy resolutions from the NDP website. They blocked or removed pro-Palestine New Democrats from being party candidates. They silenced Linda McQuaig for stating the obvious—that oil and gas resources must be left in the ground if Canada is to meet its carbon-emission goals and curb catastrophic climate change.

Clearly, the problem is not just the Leader and a small group of party officials. It is a large, super-centralized apparatus; it is a lack of internal democracy and debate; and it is a general political direction that subordinates the needs and aspirations of millions to the survival of an outmoded and environmentally toxic economic system. Lasting change must be generated from the bottom up. But surely, that must include seeking the removal of the Leader and officials who do not listen to the membership.

Enter the Lyin' Liberals

Folks, get ready. Be prepared to be disappointed by the past-masters of deceit and deception—by the party that held the reins of government in Ottawa longer than any other in the 148 years since Confederation.

Trudeau and the Liberals promised a tax break for middle-income earners. It will amount to peanuts. Slightly higher taxes on upper incomes will not put a dent in the banks and giant corporations that are raking in billions, often hiding their riches in offshore accounts. In fact, the politically well-connected super-rich in the construction sector will be the prime beneficiaries of new expenditures slated for infrastructure repairs.

Law C-51, which boosts police powers, will not be repealed, only amended to insert an "oversight" mechanism. Will that be anything like the "oversight" exercised by judges, acting in secret, concerning Muslims and Arabs detained in Canada for many years without formal charges or trial? In addition to voting for C-51, the Liberal Party backed Harper's law against "Barbaric Cultural Practices," objecting mainly to the name.

Perhaps they will rescind the "snitch line." Perhaps they'll repeal the law to strip the Canadian citizenship of dual citizens convicted of "terrorism" in thought or deed. But curb police powers? Just ask newly minted Liberal MP Bill Blair, the former Toronto police chief who was in charge when over 1000 G20 protesters were detained without charge in 2010.

Justin Trudeau said he wants to examine the still-secret details of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement. He hastened to add that the Liberal Party is pro-trade. That really means it favours corporate property rights over the needs of the vast majority of the population. Expect to see the TPP ratified in Parliament, and CETA likewise, regardless the cost in auto and farm jobs, higher medical drug prices, and the loss of environmental and social protections that will be even more subject to corporate challenge before trade dispute tribunals.

Will the promised public enquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women produce another hollow "apology," or will it lead to punishment of negligent police officials? Will it issue a set of recommendations destined to gather dust, or cause a real transfer of corporate wealth to indigenous communities to foster good jobs, quality health and education services, and end the super-vulnerability of young women to drugs and sexual abuse?

Trudeau pledged electoral reform. But you can bet

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