

New wave of racist cop killings sparks outrage



By MARK UGOLINI

The deeply racist character of police operations in Black communities is again on display with four more horrific murders by cops occurring within just 15 days of each other. The latest victims are Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Okla.; Keith Lamont Scott in Charlotte, N.C.; Alfred Olango in El Cajon, Calif.; and Carnell (CJ) Snell in Los Angeles.

On-going protests have erupted in each of these cities, with thousands demanding that the killer cops be prosecuted and jailed. On Sept. 21, protesters in Charlotte, shouting "Hands up! Don't shoot!" were met by police in riot gear. The governor declared a state of emergency there, and called up the National Guard in response to widespread community outrage.

On Oct. 4 a march in Charlotte was organized by a coalition of groups demanding "an end to the war on Black lives and Black communities." Nationwide solidarity actions were held on the same day.

Police killing of Carnell (CJ) Snell

The latest in a string of fatal police shootings occurred on Oct. 1, when 18-year-old CJ Snell was gunned down near his home after being chased by police. Associated Press says Snell's mother, Monique Morgan, reported receiving a call informing her that

her son had been shot five times in the back.

Police said they had been chasing a car they were attempting to stop, thinking the car might have been stolen. When the car stopped, the driver and passenger got out and ran in different directions. The cop that chased Snell killed him near his home. Police say they recovered a gun.

Witnesses told a CBS affiliate that Snell was running with his hands up, screaming for officers not to shoot. Snell's younger sister, Ternell, said she saw police chasing her brother and moments later heard gun shots: "At the end of the day," she said, "the cops came and shot my brother, killed my brother."

Relatives and neighborhood residents gathered near the scene in protest, some with Black Lives Matter signs. Where CJ was shot, someone wrote a message in chalk on the street: "Say his name."

Police killing of Alfred Olango

On Sept 27, Alfred Olango, 38, a father of two and un-armed, was shot down in the parking lot of an El Cajon restaurant by police officer Richard Gonsalves less than one minute after arriving at the scene.

Gonsalves and another cop were responding to a 911 call from Olango's sister, who asked for assistance with her brother. She described Olango as mentally disturbed and unarmed, and walking aimlessly into

traffic by a strip mall. It took the police about an hour to respond to this call, yet within one minute after arriving they drew their guns, four shots were fired, and Olango lay dead on the pavement.

After three days of protests, authorities released two videos on Sept. 30 showing Gonsalves fatally shooting the un-armed Olango. Both videos are poor quality and without sound. In one of the videos a woman close to the police shouted, "Officer, don't shoot him!" Dan Gilleon, a lawyer for the family, said, "[The video] shows a cowboy with his gun drawn provoking a mentally disturbed person."

Initial indications are that community outrage has not been pacified, as the videos seem to raise new questions about the police response. The police also released photographs of a four-inch electronic cigarette device that Olango had in his hands when he was shot. Police say they mistook that for a gun.

Gonsalves was disciplined last year after allegations that he sexually harassed a lesbian co-worker. He was defended by police and government officials while many in the community called for him to be fired.

Police killing of Keith Lamont Scott

On the afternoon of Sept. 20, Keith Lamont Scott, 43, a father of seven, was shot and killed in the parking

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Mineworker retirees demand pension and health coverage

By MARK UGOLINI

Thousands of retired miners and supporters converged on Washington, D.C., on Sept. 8 to demand government action to shore up retiree pension and health-care benefits. These benefits have been under a constant barrage of attacks from coal companies, which are determined to shed themselves of responsibility for the health and security of both union and non-union miners and retirees.

Retirees and their dependents also want assurance that existing health benefits and pensions will remain in place. The United Mineworkers of America (UMWA) says the health and future of 120,000 retired miners and their families are at stake.

UMWA reports that its members traveled in more than 120 buses to the protest—from Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Under the impact of the coal company assault over many years, gains in retiree health care and pensions that were won in past union battles have been eroding. Current laws under attack by coal companies provide some guarantees for lifetime care for mine workers. These were largely won in 1946 from militant strikes that involved over 400,000 union miners.

During 1945 and 1946, a nationwide strike wave also involved other industries—including railroad, auto, and steel. President Truman assisted the coal companies' strike-breaking strategy by attempting to force arbitra-



tion, and eventually by threatening the UMWA with a \$3.5 million fine. However, the eventual settlement included some gains for the miners, including safer working conditions and a "promise" of health benefits and retirement pension "from cradle to grave."

One D.C. protester was Bill Musgrave, a retired miner from Boonville, Ind., and UMWA Local 1196. Musgrave, who has been diagnosed with cancer, told the *Evansville Courier*: "It took me a while to [find out you have to] fight as hard to keep something as you did to get it initially. ... Unfortunately the government has decided to back out of the obligation they made to the mineworkers in 1946. ... Seems like the government, they have the money to bail out

the bankers and the corporations, and we're not even asking for a bailout."

A married couple attending the protest described the need for additional medical coverage, given their family's medical costs of over \$13,000 per month. Cindy Scherzinger told the *Courier*: "You go to union meetings, and it looks like a retirement home. Everyone there has their own set of problems."

Coal companies, especially those with union-organized mines, have been declaring bankruptcies, and pressing courts to allow them to evade pension and health-care obligations to their workers. One of most recent examples was Patriot Coal, a subsidiary of Peabody Energy that closed down via bankruptcy last year.

The attack on retirees is part of a broader attack against all union miners. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, since 2014 nearly 191,000 coal-mining jobs have been lost. Many mines that have not closed down suffer large-scale layoffs and dismissals. Workers are being thrown out on the street, and those who remain face ever increasing forced overtime hours, and steadily degrading and unsafe working conditions.

This trend will likely continue as capitalist owners are always finding new ways to expand their profits, and as they have demonstrated, will close mines in a heartbeat as they see new and greater opportunities for profit elsewhere.

Coal companies are also under pressure as the economy shifts away from fossil fuels, a necessity to address the urgent problem of global warming. And it has long been well known that generating energy with fossil fuels is also devastating to the health of mineworkers, who for years have been victims of black lung disease, and other chronic illnesses specific to work in mines.

The economic impact of this necessary transition to clean energy needs to fall squarely on the coal companies and their capitalist investors, who bear full responsibility. Guaranteed jobs at top union wages must be provided to any worker displaced during a transition to clean and renewable energy sources.

"Our party stands in solidarity with mine workers and retirees currently under attack from the coal bosses,"

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Socialist Action: Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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Organizing against U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico

Socialist Action reporter Ernie Gotta recently interviewed Francisco A. Santiago of Juventud Hostosiana (JH), a youth group for Puerto Rican independence affiliated with the Movimiento Independista Nacional Hostosiano (MINH).

This article continues a series that Socialist Action is publishing on the movement against the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). You can search for JH on Facebook and see photos and videos of the recent protests. A member of JH will also be traveling to participate in Youth for Socialist Action's regional conference, "The Solution is Socialism" on Oct. 22 at Central Connecticut State University. Find out more at Facebook.com/CCSUUSA.

Socialist Action: What does PROMESA mean for the future of workers and students in Puerto Rico?

Francisco Santiago: The PROMESA bill is basically the culmination of the neoliberal economic implementation process in Puerto Rico, which goes side by side with the enforcement of the colonial relations in the island. First of all, it is necessary to assert that Puerto Rico never went through a decolonization process with the establishment of the Commonwealth since its position as a non-incorporated territory was maintained. This meant then, as it does now, that Congress has plenipotentiary powers over the island, its people, and its future.

Puerto Rico is "owned by but is not part of" the United States, which means that it is just a piece of private property that is being used by the U.S. government as it sees fit at the expense of the opinion in the island. The PROMESA Act arrives as the U.S. government's response to the Puerto Rican government debt crisis. This debt crisis had its first signs at the turn of the century and manifested itself with the start of the economic depression in 2006.

Since 1990, the Puerto Rican government under the Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP) and Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) have privatized the health system, the communications system, the only international airport, key highways, and other sectors of the main government. It has fired thousands of government employees, raised tuition in the public university, begun cuts in services, and closed hundreds of schools, among other actions in detriment of the people.

In the meanwhile, it has liberated the movement of capital, lowered progressive taxes in favor of regressive taxes, and created a scheme of "economic recovery," exemplified by Law 20 and Law 22 of 2012. This law gives complete tax exemption to millionaires who move to the island and have a minimum of five employees hired by them. All of this was completed under great scandals of corruption under all levels of government by both parties. In conjunction with the cuts, depression, colonial limitations in government, and elimination of possible areas of fiscal resources, we have the government debt crisis.

PROMESA is the neoliberal technocratic dream. Its main goal is the complete payment of the debt defended by vulture funds. Its members are appointed directly by the president of the United States. It can't be judicially reviewed or prosecuted. It will have powers over all of the government and can receive politi-



(Above) Protester confronts a delegate to the Aug. 31 PROMESA conference in San Juan, P.R.

cal gifts. If you combine these characteristics with the ability to change local legislation, be it labor themed or environmental, to sell all activities of government at will, you have the epicenter of the continuation of corruption in detriment of the people and in the benefit of vulture funds and big capital.

So how is this detrimental for the future of workers and students? First of all, as long as the colonial relation persists, Puerto Rican workers and youth will always have a limited stake in the economy and will be faced by an abnormal level of unemployment and underpaid jobs, [and] our inability to have relations with other countries and to decide our collective future based on our own interests. This limits our ability to develop in the future.

In terms of the PROMESA bill, by reading the preamble it can be quickly pointed out that its only reason for existence is the payment of the debt. Puerto Rican economic development is not mentioned, nor is the progress of the Puerto Rican people.

But it is necessary to emphasize that PROMESA is not the sole creation of the U.S. government, but also of local economic forces aligned with the U.S. government that want to use the situation in benefit of their own individual interests. In that sense there are big sectors in Puerto Rico that right now, even in the economic depression, are benefiting from the situation.

We must ask ourselves what type of development we want and for whom? The Juventud Hostosiana stands for the real development that comes with social justice and participatory democracy, which means that we will only construct alternatives that benefit the workers and the marginalized in our society.

S.A.: Can you briefly describe the protests?

F.S.: Many of the people that are now participating in the protests come from past experiences, and in the case of the movement in the capital area, these experiences are intertwined with the 2005 and 2010 public university students' strike.

It has a starkly young demographic tone, which in part is product of the overwhelmingly bleak perspec-

tives of the future. In terms of the fight against the PROMESA bill, protests started in early April with the announcement of the bill.

A group of organizations—which included Juventud Hostosiana (JH), Juventud Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (JPIP), Juventud Partido del Pueblo Trabajador (JPPT), Coalición Playas Pal' Pueblo, Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores (MST), among others—partially paralyzed the Federal District Court of Puerto Rico two times and completely paralyzed the Federal Court, the Quiebras, once. Also in the process, sectors of the civil camp organized in the Coalición Contra la Junta de Control Fiscal Federal.

With the signature of the PROMESA bill by President Obama in June, a group of protesters started a civil disobedience camp in front of the Federal District Court of Puerto Rico, which has served as a school for new people that want to get involved in the fight against colonialism and PROMESA. It has also signified a symbolized resistance against the newest act of imperialism by the United States.

In this process we also had protests in sections of Homeland Security and other federal government sites across the island. These actions gave way to the creation of other groups and the Jornada Se Acabaron las Promesas, which was the main coordinator of the protests that stopped the first PROMESA Conference for the rich on Wednesday, Aug. 31. They also stopped Grupo Ferrer Rangel Media (GFR Media) a few days earlier, which is the only daily newspaper in the island and is aligned with big corporate interests. This protest was of definite importance because of the tone that it set in the protests.

The combativeness, the coordination, and the moral force that characterized the whole day has given way to the possibility of dreaming, and that is one of the

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Taking sides at Standing Rock

By BILL ONASCH

Socialist Action's vice-presidential candidate Karen Schraufnagel has filed extensive reports to this paper about the confrontations last month in remote Standing Rock, North Dakota. Efforts aiming to halt construction of a pipeline from the Bakken fracking fields to refineries in Illinois drew world attention to several important issues concerning Indigenous People's rights, environmental and climate justice, and peaceful protests under violent attack.

Less publicized has been an escalating division among the top officials in the union movement. The AFL-CIO issued a statement endorsing the pipeline and chastising its opponents—nothing surprising in that.

But major AFL-CIO affiliates—Amalgamated Transit Union, American Postal Workers Union, Communications Workers of America, and National Nurses Unit—

took strong principled stands in support of the protesters. So did some non-AFL unions such as the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers and the Service Employees International Union. The Pride at Work constituency group and the Labor Network for Sustainability also weighed in on the side of the demonstrators.

This solidarity infuriated the Building Trades bureaucrats, who were eager to go forward on temporary jobs for their dues-payers—including desecration of tribal burial lands. They called them out through a confidential internal letter to the heads of all AFL unions from Sean McGarvey, president of North America's Building Trades Unions, representing 14 crafts.

The letter also slandered the protesters as threatening violence against union workers. The only violence exhibited at Standing Rock was by the company's hired "security" thugs. It was no coincidence that the

AFL's official statement soon followed this scurrilous letter.

To the chagrin of the not easily embarrassed pipeline bureaucrats, brother McGarvey's missive was leaked to Jon Queally, a conscientious journalist at the *Common Dreams* website. He verified its authenticity before posting a PDF copy online and collected a lot of "no comments." One of the few to speak on record was the never bashful Rose Ann DeMoro of the NNU, "What we're seeing here is the pipeline company—and this is nothing new—pitting workers against workers."

Queally also quoted labor historian and co-founder of the Labor Network for Sustainability Jeremy Brecher: "The core of the problem is that the AFL-CIO has consistently opposed significant cuts to climate-destroying projects, like Dakota Access, while failing to adequately advocate for policies that would actually address climate change in a worker-friendly way."

Finally getting these divisions at the top out in the open is progress. The next indicated step is involving the union ranks—and unorganized workers and students—who have a stake in the debates around class and climate justice. ■



Chicago teachers set strike date

By MARK UGOLINI

CHICAGO—On Sept. 28, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) House of Delegates announced plans to strike on Oct. 11. Negotiations with Chicago Public Schools on a new contract have made little progress since they began over 22 months ago. The union has been without a contract since June 30, 2015.

Over 90 percent of the union's 25,000 teachers participated in a strike authorization vote conducted Sept. 21-23. Over 95 percent voted in favor of a strike, a percentage easily surpassing the legal requirement that at least 75 percent approve strike action.

The Oct. 11 strike date gives the Chicago Board of Education the 10-day notice required by law. Until then, negotiations will continue. "If we cannot reach the agreement by then, we will withhold our labor," said CTU President Karen Lewis at a press conference following the CTU House of Delegates meeting. "It's time to move this along." This would be the third strike of public school teachers since Democratic Party Mayor Rahm Emanuel took office in 2011.

According to the CTU blog site: "This should come as no surprise to the Board, the mayor or parents because educators have been angry about the school-based cuts that have hurt special education students, reduced librarians, counselors, social workers and teachers' aides, and eliminated thousands of teaching positions."

A major issue is the mayor's determination to make teachers pay for their pension. What Emanuel is pushing for would result in a decrease in teachers' take-home pay. His primary target is the city's 7 percent contribution to the teacher pension fund. Since teachers don't receive social security benefits, the pension is key to their compensation because it's all they have to retire on.

As expected, the capitalist-controlled media are lining up behind the mayor and Illinois Republican Governor Bruce Rauner, who have been claiming for months that state and local governments are "broke." The mayor and governor for months have been preparing a coordinated assault on the teachers, part of a generalized austerity offensive especially targeting unions throughout the state. One storyline being played out in the media is that the "selfish" teachers are only concerned with their pensions, are generally overpaid, and don't work hard enough. All are lies that fly in the face of the facts.

The *Chicago Tribune* ran an editorial that claimed that the 95.6 percent strike authorization vote was illegitimate and undemocratic since the union utilized a petition process, and not a "secret ballot—which would permit dissent." The *Tribune* compared the CTU voting process to "North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un [who] notched an even more convincing victory—100 percent—to confirm his leadership in the Supreme People's Assembly" and former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who "swept to victory with 99.96 percent of votes cast.

(We shudder to think of what happened to the recalcitrant .04 percent.)"

In reality, the CTU is a model for democratic functioning. Full and open discussions of important decisions take place freely among the membership within the schools and within its elected House of Delegates.

The union estimates that since 2010, CTU has given up more than \$2 billion in lost pay raises, employer contributions to the pension fund, and thousands of teacher layoffs. Just this year, erosion of teachers' income through the loss of pay and benefits, and lay-offs of teachers and paraprofessionals, account for hundreds of millions of dollars.

The impact of cutbacks to Chicago public schools has been devastating, primarily affecting schools in Black, Latino, and working-class communities. Students were victims of school closings and consolidations over the last few years especially. In 2013 the mayor closed 50 public schools, affecting close to 40,000 Chicago students in low-income communities.

This year, consolidations have continued with an August announcement of another 1000 layoffs. Special education teachers, nurses and social workers, predominantly Black, are the hardest hit.

As the union and its supporters have been saying for some time, the budget "crisis" is manufactured—city and state governments are "Broke on Purpose." The city had no problem finding money when it decided recently to add 1000 cops to the payroll. The problem is that financing public education is low priority for the Democratic and Republican politicians that run city and state governments.

A teachers strike supported by a broad social movement against austerity and for public education can bring huge pressure on the governmental authorities to re-align their priorities. Sufficient funds to fully support public education are available by taxing local billionaires like real-estate developer Ken Griffin (Illinois's richest man), his friends, and the corporations that do business throughout the state, and make huge sums in profits each year.

Support for the teachers is growing. The Chicago Teacher Solidarity Campaign was re-established on Sept. 20 with over 100 supporters from unions and community organizations. The group held a news conference outside City Hall on Oct. 4, and presented the mayor a statement of solidarity signed by more than 50 unions and parent and community organizations declaring they will stand solidly with the teachers when they go on strike. On Oct 6 supporters organized "walk-ins" in over 50 schools and mass leaflet distributions building support for the strike. ■

LABOR BRIEFING

By BILL ONASCH

• **Striking Nurses Vote On New Offer**—At our deadline, more than 4000 RN members of the Minnesota Nurses Association were preparing to vote on a new contract offer from Allina Health Care in the Twin Cities area. After an earlier "warning strike," the nurses began an open-ended walkout on Labor Day. They have been joined on the picket lines by unionists from AFSCME, SEIU, and other union and community supporters. A Federal mediator brought the parties back to the table during the last week of September, when the company modified its prior "last, best, and final offer." It was described by the St. Paul *Union Advocate* as "a three-year contract proposal from Allina that makes some gains on staffing and safety—two of their top issues—but wasn't good enough to win a recommendation from the union's bargaining team." Picketing continued during the voting.

• **They Left Before the Overture**—The *New York Times* reported, "The musicians of the fabled Philadelphia Orchestra went on strike on Friday [Sept. 30] just before their season-opening gala concert, rattling the classical music world and silencing one of the nation's great ensembles a little more than four years after it emerged from bankruptcy. "The strike—called on the same day

that musicians on the other side of Pennsylvania at the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra walked out on strike—came as the Philadelphia's players sought to recover some of the pay they lost to concessions during the recent bankruptcy."

The Philadelphia strike was settled two days later. Musicians voted 73-11 to accept a three-year contract, with a raise of 2% in the first year, and 2.5% in the remaining years. The Ft. Worth Symphony is also on strike.

• **Second Time Works**—The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers didn't give up after losing a union representation election at a Memphis Electrolux oven plant. The Swedish-based appliance giant is totally unionized at home but uses the same union avoidance measures as most American bosses in the USA. On a second try, IBEW had assistance from IG Metall—the union representing Electrolux workers in Sweden. The Memphis workers voted 461-193 for the union.

• **Tired Of Being Taken For a Ride**—Lucy Nicholson opened a Reuters dispatch, "Nearly 14,000 Uber and Lyft drivers in New York have signed up to join the local branch of the Amalgamated Transit Union, according to a union spokesperson. The group plans to rally at the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) headquarters next week to

demand a formal vote on unionizing. The 14,000 sign-ups exceed the 30 percent threshold that federal regulators say must trigger an official vote, the union says."

• **Farmworkers Victory**—*Labor Notes* reports, "After three years of tireless organizing, 500 farmworkers at Sakuma Brothers Farms in Washington State have finally won union recognition. The berry pickers, mainly indigenous migrants from Mexico, began their fight with a work stoppage in 2013 and never let up. They formed an independent union, Familias Unidas por la Justicia, and launched boycotts against Sakuma and its major client, multinational berry distributor Driscoll's, calling for the farm to recognize the union and negotiate. This year the boycott went international, as the Washington workers joined in solidarity with berry pickers in San Quintín, Mexico, who have led massive strikes for higher wages and benefits and against sexual harassment on the job...."

"Sakuma agreed to an election and on September 12, workers voted yes by an overwhelming 77 percent. It's a rare win for an independent local farmworker union."

• **Academics Unite**—*Workday Minnesota* reported, "The effort to form a faculty union at the University of Minnesota moved forward Tuesday with a ruling by the state Bureau of Mediation Services affirming that 1,500 tenure-track and 1,000 contingent faculty should be in one bargaining unit. Supporters of MN Academics United, an affiliate of Service Employees Interna-

tional Union Local 284, had sought to keep the groups together. The move sets the stage for a union election later this fall, organizers said. No date has been set yet." ■

Ann Montague and Michael Schreiber contributed to this Labor Briefing. If you have a labor story appropriate for this column please contact billonasch@kclabor.org.

... Mineworkers

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said Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action presidential candidate. "It's part of the generalized global crisis of capitalism—making the working class pay more and more in every way to satisfy the ruling class's insatiable drive for profits.

"Both capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans, are in lock-step agreement on the goal of maximizing profits for corporations at the expense of the working class. Workers need our own party, a Labor Party.

"We support pensions for all at top union wages, and for closing down the profit-gouging insurance industry to establish a universal and free national health system that meets the medical needs of all 'from cradle to grave.'" ■

Socialist Action presidential tour wins new support

By RON CARMICHAEL

In a series of East Coast debates and public forums from Sept. 15-26, Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action's 2016 presidential candidate, spoke to enthusiastic audiences about the relevance of revolutionary socialist politics today. Mackler's tour included public meetings in New York City, Albany, Boston, Providence, Hartford/New Britain, and Philadelphia.

In the course of his 12-day tour, close to a dozen social and political activists expressed interest in joining Socialist Action, opening up new opportunities for socialist education, party-building activity, and participation in rising social movements in all of the cities he visited.

This month, Socialist Action's vice presidential candidate, Karen Schraufnagel, will begin a speaking tour of several Upper Midwestern cities, including Chicago, Madison, Duluth-Superior, and Waukeesa, Wis. See socialistaction.org for more information.

Jeff Mackler was joined in a Socialist Action-sponsored forum in New York City by former political prisoner and people's attorney Lynne Stewart and New Abolitionist leader Ralph Poynter, who have endorsed Mackler's presidential campaign.

In Albany, Mackler was joined in a debate format entitled, "The 2016 Elections: Humanity's Future in Troubled Times." Speakers included Joe Seeman, a Hillary Clinton supporter and volunteer organizer with the Working Families Party, Citizen Action of New York, MoveOn.org, and the Bernie Sanders network of the Capital Region. Also speaking were Peter LaVenja, co-chair of the New York State Green Party, who supported Jill Stein. The Albany Public Library debate was initiated by activists in the Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace and chaired by Joe Lombardo, national co-coordinator of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC).

Mackler's central debate themes often began with the statement, "All the critical issues of our time that so many agree on today—rampant racism and police murder of unarmed Blacks, sexism, homophobia, endless imperialist wars, mass incarceration of Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans, environmental destruction and, indeed, the immediate global warming threat to life on earth, the worldwide imposition of unprecedented austerity measures of every kind—are inherent in and inseparable from the functioning of the capitalist system. As this predatory system is based on human exploitation and oppression, it has no alternative other than to resolve its crises at the expense of the vast majority."

Mackler insisted in all his tour forums and debates that "the U.S. and worldwide capitalist crisis cannot be resolved by a change of the palace guard—by the election of yet another capitalist politician beholden to a social system that subordinates human needs and life itself to the profits of the one percent."

He counterposed the corporate-promoted illusion that significant social gains can be achieved by the election of one or another capitalist or pro-capitalist party or candidate to the socialist perspective that working-class victories have always been the product of massive, independent working-class and allied mobilizations independent of and against the policies of all capitalist parties. "History repeatedly teaches us that only capitalism's victims, the vast majority of working people, organized to fight for their own interests through their own organizations, can change the course of history.

"While workers today find themselves shocked and often in despair at the generalized attacks on their lives, they are far from accepting the legitimacy of Wall Street rule. In time, and in the not too distant future, their deeply held anger and hatred of capitalist injustice will give way to new forms of struggle, including a fundamental expansion, reconstitution, and democratization of today's unions, whose bureaucratic mis-leaders act as a major firewall to channel discontent into the graveyard of social movements, the Democratic Party."

Without exception, Mackler's Democratic Party and Green Party debate opponents cited the reactionary, racist, misogynist, Islamophobic views of Donald Trump to urge support for Hillary Clinton or Jill Stein. "Lesser evil" arguments were in full bloom during virtually every debate as speakers minimized or offered soft criticisms of Clinton's record of warmongering and racism while insisting that the "fascist" Trump had to be stopped.

Jill Stein supporters, on the other hand, pointed to the need to organize to elect Green Party candidates at the local level to build a mass electoral base aimed at reforming capitalism, usually along the lines of the pro-capitalist social democratic parties in Europe. Stein supporters called for a 50 percent cut in military spending as well as free college tuition and health care (all achievable goals, they argued) in the framework of a reformed, kinder, gentler capitalism—one whose banking and fundamental corporate structures could be altered without challenging the private profit basis of the system itself.

Mackler's critique of his Green Party opponents cen-



tered on their view that "independent political action" essentially excluded the fundamental proposition that any effective challenge to capitalism required the organization and re-organization of the working class through their own revitalized institutions—democratic, fighting and qualitatively expanded trade unions—that are funded by and controlled by workers themselves.

Without this independent working-class perspective—coupled with its expression in the political arena with a fighting Labor Party, controlled by working people—Mackler argued, the Green Party perspective amounted to organizing a vague multi-class electoral alliance that can only be limited to reforming a system that cannot be reformed.

The Boston debate, entitled, "Elections 2016: Humanity's Future in a Troubled World: What About War, Climate, and Social Justice?" included Jill Stein supporter Danny Factor, the Green Party candidate for State Assembly; and Hillary Clinton supporter and 350.org member Rosalie Anders, also a board member of Massachusetts Peace Action (speaking for herself rather than for the organization). Mackler was also joined on the debate panel by Democratic Socialists of America National Political Committee member Jared Abbot, who was listed as advocating, "Vote Strategically to Defeat Trump—Greens or Democrats." Abbot argued for DSA's perspective of voting Green in "safe states" and for Clinton elsewhere.

The debate was sponsored by United for Justice with Peace and chaired by Marilyn Levin, a leader of UJP and the co-national coordinator of UNAC.

Socialist Action in Philadelphia co-sponsored Mackler's forum in that city with the on-line journal *Left Voice*. Mackler was accompanied at the podium by *Left Voice* editor Juan Cruz Ferre, who supports Mackler's campaign. Ferre recounted the experience of the Socialist Workers Party (PTS) of Argentina in winning 1.5 million votes in the last presidential election when three revolutionary socialist parties joined to form the Workers Left Front (FIT). The FIT won several seats in the Argentine parliament while participating in several major working-class mobilizations that challenged the government's austerity offensive.

The Providence forum, sponsored by Rhode Island Socialist Action, was held at the Direct Action for Racial Equality headquarters and included welcoming remarks by the DARE director as well as from LGBTQI activist, Josh Kirby.

Mackler's forum in New Britain, Conn., was sponsored by the campus Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) Youth for Socialist Action, a youth group in solidarity with Socialist Action. It was attended by some 35 young people, mostly students. Mackler noted that this audience was by far the most advanced in rejecting "lesser-evil" politics and in solidarity with fundamental socialist ideas.

"Youth today," Mackler observed, "are keenly aware of the broad range of social injustices that permeate society and are, indeed, directly affected by the present and long-enduring capitalist crisis. Unlike previous generations, they cannot look forward to stable living wage jobs and are increasingly chained to enormous and unpayable college tuition debts. They are generally the most attuned to the struggles of the most oppressed, are supporters of the growing Movement for Black Lives and against the racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia and endless wars that are capitalism's norm across the globe."

To date 31 CCTU students have joined the YSA chapter,

Speakers at the Socialist Action forum in New York City: (From left) Ralph Poynter, Jeff Mackler, Lynne Stewart, and chairperson Marty Goodman.

plus several others who signed up at Mackler's campus forum. "Today's youth radicalization bodes well for the mass working-class struggles to come," Mackler said. "Socialist Action's steady gains among these youth is an achievement and a major source of inspiration to deepen our efforts to build a revolutionary party." ■

... Puerto Rico

(continued from page 3)

most important aspects of any social struggle.

S.A.: How can Puerto Rican workers and students stop PROMESA and other policies of U.S. imperialism?

F.S.: In Juventud Hostosiana, we are of the idea that what is necessary in the present is a battle on all possible fronts. No matter what type of action a person takes, if it is politicized against the bill or U.S. imperialism it will find in us a friend. We believe that our role, and the role of others, is not to homogenize the struggle or try to grasp only one way, but to serve as a connection between multiple "trenches" as to make a whole front instead of little defenseless and isolated castles.

In that sense, we have outlined four actions to take in the coming months: the strengthening of the organization at all levels, civil disobedience, alliances with other sectors, and constant propaganda.

S.A.: What did Juventud Hostosiana learn from their recent experience in Cuba? How does it apply to the fight for independence?

F.S.: The Juventud Hostosiana, since its inception, has had ties with the Cuban youth in part because of the historical ties between our mother organization, the Movimiento Independiente Nacional Hostosiano (MINH) and the Cuban revolutionary government.

Cuba and Puerto Rico have an unbreakable historical bond that will intertwine the history of both nations for years to come. More so, we who believe in an anti-capitalist independence for Puerto Rico also believe in the integration of the Latin-American region for the betterment of our different peoples. We believe in Latino-americanism and in the dream of a bigger "Patria Grande" and a Confederation of Antilles, which was also the belief of many of the great Caribbean heroes of the 19th century.

In that sense I recite a passage of a Puerto Rican Poet Lola Rodríguez de Tió: "Cuba y Puerto Rico son, de un pájaro las dos alas, ambas reciben flores y balas, sobre un mismo corazón. (Cuba and Puerto Rico are, of a bird both wings, both receive flowers and bullets, upon the same heart.)" ■

ENGINEERING THE CLIMATE



AN ACT OF MAD DESPERATION!

By CHRISTINE FRANK

As a last-ditch effort to curb runaway global warming, while avoiding a definitive halt to fossil-fuel combustion, scientists, governments, entrepreneurs, and even right-wing think tanks are advocating various highly dangerous technologies to block solar radiation or draw down atmospheric carbon to cool the planet. Touted as Plan B, these risky methods come under the label of either Solar Radiation Management (SRM) or Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR).

SRM techniques under consideration include placing space-based solar deflectors in orbit, spewing sulfate aerosols into the stratosphere, and seeding clouds to increase their brightness. CDR techniques include Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) of CO₂ from power-plant flue gases, the iron fertilization of the oceans to stimulate phytoplankton blooms, and burning acres of trees for biochar burial in soils.

For any of these ruinously expensive, energy-intensive techno-fixes to work, they must be applied on a planetary-wide mega-scale, at great risk to Earth's natural systems and human societies. Their implementation could result in an array of disastrous unintended consequences due to reckless human interference.

A case in point would be the initial Grand Experiment of employing fossil fuels to power the Industrial Revolution, which got us into this mess in the first place. Over the two-and-a-half centuries of hydrocarbon burning and steadily rising carbon dioxide emissions, the growing evidence that greenhouse gases were warming the planet was either ignored, denied, or deliberately suppressed by those who profited from the coal, gas, and oil industries.

With that in mind, any child worried about his or her future could easily grasp the folly of using Mother Earth as a laboratory for geoengineering experiments, yet scientists as well as some so-called environmentalists, who both should know better, are ready to push the panic button in order to "buy time."

To buy time for whom, we may ask? It is clear that quick-fixing the climate will allow the capitalist class to conduct business as usual by never having to give up fossil fuels. That is why Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson declared back in 2007 that adapting to extreme weather and rising sea levels is an "engineering prob-

lem" that has "engineering solutions."

That's right, Rex, with the help of Yankee ingenuity and American know-how, we can engineer our way out of ecological collapse so you and your ilk will be free to pillage, plunder, and pollute for profit until the natural world descends into chaos. There may be a Plan B, but there is no Planet B! A growing number of climate crisis activists are realizing that and demanding a ban on geoengineering experiments, funding, and implementation.

We now know from paleoclimatic evidence that dramatic changes on a planetary scale are difficult to reverse and can lead to irreparable harm, even mass extinctions. Earth's climate system is a complexity of natural variables and feedback loops. All of the planet's matrices—atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, cryosphere, and lithosphere—interact in non-linear and subtle ways to create a self-regulatory whole. Therefore, a change in the solar flux could cause an imbalance in the global heat budget and alter atmospheric circulation, precipitation patterns, and ocean currents to the detriment of life in the affected regions. Needless to say, the economic costs of launching an array of sun shields or mirrors into orbit would be astronomical.

The release of sulfate aerosols mixed with polluting jet aircraft exhaust into the stratosphere would also have detrimental side effects. Historically, tropical volcanic eruptions that release sulfur particles can cause warmer winters over land masses in the Northern Hemisphere, whereas eruptions at high latitudes weaken the Asian and African monsoons, causing droughts. Adding aerosols to the stratosphere could exacerbate ozone depletion by providing more surfaces on which harmful chemical reactions take place. Also, blocking sunlight would mean less for renewable solar power. Acid rain that kills forests and aquatic life could be another ill effect.

A flotilla of ships spraying seawater into the air in order to increase Cloud Condensation Nuclei (CCN) and brighten marine stratocumulus clouds may not be the "Silver Lining" that is promised. It could backfire with a counterproductive reduction in cloud cover because of all the industrial pollutants present over the ocean adding to the mix.

For years, carbon capture and sequestration have been used to foster the myth of Clean Coal. With a

handful of exceptions, most coal-fired power plants have not deployed CCS because of the enormous expense and energy required to create the solvents to absorb the CO₂ from the smokestacks and to pressurize and pipe the supercritical gas underground into a secure geologic formation. Critics have pointed out the dangers of the highly pressurized carbon dioxide migrating through the rock fissures and belching out at the surface where it would smother anything breathing at ground level.

Supposedly, the CarbFix project in Iceland has succeeded in mineralizing carbon pollution from a geothermal power station by pumping it into subterranean volcanic basalt formations. The *in situ* process took only two years rather than millions, greatly improving on geologic time scales. The major drawbacks to applying this technique on a world scale are the availability of basalt formations, the energy required to transport the carbon dioxide from its source, and the amount of water—25 tons per each ton of CO₂—necessary to pipe it into permanent geologic storage. It would require a massive infrastructure.

Then there are always the problems of pipeline ruptures and wellhead blowouts plus the hazards of deep-sea drilling. The more complex the mechanical means, the more things that can go wrong.

Dumping a slurry of iron sulfate into the ocean to increase marine phytoplankton populations has had limited results in drawing down carbon. What has happened in actual trials is that iron fertilization encourages a feeding frenzy among the zooplankton grazers, resulting in very little carbon actually being sequestered as dead plankton or fecal matter—marine snow—in the deep ocean.

Also, there is the danger of undermining the integrity of the food web. Neurotoxic algal blooms can poison fish, shellfish, and marine mammals, and nutrient overloading can deplete oxygen and create dead zones in the world's seas. Also, methanophilic bacteria could take advantage of the situation and release massive amounts of dimethylsulfide (DMS) into the atmosphere, blocking the sunlight needed for photosynthesis.

Because no government is forcing the Big Polluters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, panicked scientists and politicians say that conventional means of mitigating global warming are not working. Therefore, we need to resort to more drastic measures, and they are receiving encouragement from wealthy entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates, Richard Branson, and Mark Lynas, who are eager to patent every wild, hair-brained scheme coming down the pike. The result is the privatization of global warming mitigation strategies to satisfy their greed. It raises the question of who ultimately controls the thermostat and whether they have the right to imperil the lives of everyone else.

Another reason why we are not winning the struggle to save the climate is the cowardice of the weak, reformist environmental groups, who are afraid to challenge the Carbon Barons head on, so they compromise by promoting electric cars instead of clean mass transit. Fearing the wrath of Big Auto, the Union of Concerned Scientists has harped endlessly on improved fuel-efficiency standards because it too cannot give up its worship of the internal combustion engine.

For years, the Sierra Club falsely advocated natural gas as a "bridge or transitional fuel" until it was revealed that its leadership had been taking millions in donations from the industry. Even climatologist James Hansen believes in "green nukes" by advocating thorium reactors.

The delusional sci-fi fantasy that human beings can control powerful natural forces is based on the mechanistic view that the Universe is a giant clockwork that can tolerate endless tinkering without consequence. Only the democratic control of science for the benefit of society will allow us to work with Mother Nature instead of against her.

We already have renewable wind and solar technologies at our disposal, which will enable us to leave the fossil fuels in the ground. Instead, of torching trees for biochar, we should be saving the world's forests from the logger's chainsaw. To increase the carbon-storage capacity of Earth's badly depleted, lifeless soils, organic matter must be recycled to regenerate their health and fertility instead of flushed into the ocean. Organic food production, not genetic monsters and toxic chemicals, will feed the world.

To implement these sustainable measures, we must first get rid of the economic system and the class that puts profits before human and ecological needs. ■

An 'ordinary' man in revolutionary times

By CLIFFORD D. CONNER

"Unsinkable Patriot: The Life and Times of Thomas Cave in Revolutionary America," by Michael Schreiber, 2016. Available from Amazon.

Thomas *who*? If Thomas Cave's name does not ring any bells, it does not indicate a deficit in your education. He was not an outstanding historical figure in any sense, and his name was lost to history until Michael Schreiber recently undertook a prodigious effort to restore it to our collective human memory. So why would anyone want to read a lengthy biography of a thoroughly ordinary person named Thomas Cave? I can think of several good reasons.

One is that even the lives of ordinary people often have their extraordinary aspects and moments, or at least produce the material for interesting stories, and Thomas Cave's was exemplary in that respect. His is an epic saga of war, battles on the high seas, revolution, the birth of a new nation, imprisonment and escape from prison, epidemic disease, love, financial ruin, and triumph. Everything a novelist could want, with the added bonus that it is, as movie publicity often boasts, "based on a true story." The chapters devoted to Cave's maritime adventures, for example, are as drama-packed as the sea novels of Patrick O'Brian.¹

Another reason is that the very act of rescuing a forgotten-for-two-centuries life from oblivion can itself make for a fascinating tale. The subtext of this biography—the author's sleuthing in the archives—is a detective story worthy of Agatha Christie.

But the book's primary virtue stems from the fact that it is not only a biography—a "life"—but a "life and times." The times Thomas Cave witnessed and participated in were among the most transformative periods in all of human history. It was the era of what some historians have called the Atlantic Revolution, which combined the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the liberation of Haiti by a slave uprising, the Great Rebellion in Ireland, and a powerful radicalization in Great Britain. As is generally acknowledged, three of these historic upheavals, the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions, resulted in irreversible social change that—for better and for worse—created the world we inhabit today.

Furthermore, the other two social cataclysms, generally perceived as unsuccessful revolutions, nonetheless also indelibly affected the futures of their countries. The divisions in Irish society that were exacerbated by the 1798 Rebellion have to this day not fully healed. The resistance of the rebels to British savagery was so courageous that today, more than 200 years later, Irish nationalists still derive inspiration from the spirit of 1798. And the lasting relevance of the deep radicalization in late-18th-century Britain is encapsulated in the title of E. P. Thompson's well-known history of the epoch, "The Making of the English Working Class."

Schreiber gives attention in several chapters to the activities of Irish rebels who sought refuge in Philadelphia, and reports on the prejudice and repression that some of them were subjected to while in exile.

Students of the history of France will find valuable material on that country and its people throughout the volume. There are two major sections on France; the first discusses Thomas Cave's visits to Nantes and Paris as a seaman, and the second has to do with French visitors and immigrants in Philadelphia. The latter included acrobat and pastry chef Etienne Simonet; the balloonist Jean Paul Blanchard; the controversial French ambassador Edmund-Charles Genet; French doctors, including Jean Deveze, who treated victims of the 1793 yellow fever epidemic; and French colonialist refugees fleeing the Haitian Revolution.

Thomas Cave's very "ordinariness" meant that he was as representative a participant in the Atlantic Revolution as anyone could possibly have been. He was born in Ireland to a family of "middling" social status, emigrated to America as an indentured servant, served in the American navy during the Revolutionary War, was imprisoned in England for a number of years, and found his way to France, where Benjamin Franklin helped him and other revolutionary fighters return to America.

After the Revolution, Cave settled in the capital city of the newborn United States, Philadelphia; politically supported the democratic opposition to the conserva-



(Above) "Election Day at the Statehouse, 1815," by John Lewis Krimmel.

The times Thomas Cave witnessed were among the most transformative periods in all human history.

tive Federalist party; defended the Revolution's gains as a lifelong militiaman; felt the impact of the Haitian Revolution as fleeing French colonialists sought refuge in Philadelphia; and wound up, at the time of the War of 1812, in charge of Pennsylvania's main arms depot, the State Magazine.

Meanwhile, like most ordinary people, Thomas Cave married and had children, and had to find a way to provide for them and himself. He began during his term of indenture as a semiskilled artisan, developed his skills first as a miller and later as a brewer, and eventually transformed himself into a small businessman by opening his own breweries in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and even New York City. His career as an entrepreneur, however, was fraught with rapid swings between success and failure. Just as in earlier life he had survived servitude, extreme difficulties at sea, and years of harsh imprisonment, he likewise rose repeatedly from bankruptcies and debtors' prison to embark on new commercial ventures. That, combined with his devotion to the American Revolution, explains the book's title: "Unsinkable Patriot."

There are two particular aspects of Michael Schreiber's writing that make "Unsinkable Patriot" simultaneously an enjoyable and an educational reading experience. First is his narrative skill—a gift for storytelling that elevates a mass of detailed data above its mundane context and commands a reader's attention. And second is that he is a historian with social consciousness and a social conscience, joining the likes of C.L. R. James, William Appleman Williams, Mary Frances Berry, Howard Zinn, and the aforementioned E. P. Thompson, to name just a few. As such he does not simply parrot the standard patriotic foundation myths that are taught to American schoolchildren, but clarifies the deeply contradictory nature of the Revolution.

Thomas Cave paid for his passage from Ireland to the Land of the Free by agreeing to be unfree for four years as an indentured servant in Pennsylvania's Cumberland Valley. "By the time Thomas was brought to the valley in 1771, almost all of the local Indian peoples," Schreiber writes, "had been wiped out by warfare and disease or pushed west." In the war against the Indians that had preceded Thomas's arrival, the whites' strategy had shifted early on "from defense to extermination, as some settlers formed armed death squads." At the same time, "British army commanders authorized germ warfare against the Indians, giving them blankets laden with smallpox."²

Schreiber illustrates the state of contemporary relations between the settlers and the natives with an anecdote about a white woman who made the difficult journey from the Cumberland Valley to Philadelphia carrying the scalp of a dead Indian: "Money was given for dead Indians much as it was for the tails of wolves,

big cats, and squirrels—all of which were marked as competitors for the land's resources."³

When the American Revolution erupted in 1776, it undeniably represented a major step forward in the history of human progress, but its moral and political paradoxes were equally undeniable: "Some of the men who in years past had participated with ... vigilante groups against the Native American people quickly transformed themselves into ardent revolutionists and advocates of popular democracy."⁴

Some historians have labeled the genocide of the Native Americans, not unjustly, "the American Holocaust." But perhaps an even deeper contradiction was the presence of slavery within an ostensible movement for universal human liberation. Describing Thomas Cave's social environment in the early 1770s, Schreiber writes: "Most of the Cumberland Valley residents of that era would have thought it unremarkable that their pastor, who preached 'the brotherhood of Man,' would have held another human being in permanent bondage. In fact, most of the large landowners of the district, the core supporters of the Presbyterian Church, were slaveholders themselves, and hardly feared the wrath of hellfire for such actions. Dominance by the white race, they reasoned, was the natural order of things."⁵

Even Thomas Cave himself, for one period of his life, was a slaveholder. After the death of his first wife, Catherine, in 1795, he remarried two years later. His second wife, Lydia, was the daughter of a large landholder, and she apparently brought some slaves with her into the marriage. Although Schreiber has quite a bit to say about the sociology of slavery in the Revolutionary era, he was unable to unearth much information about the specific circumstances of the Cave family's human property.

Cave's death in May 1815 neatly coincided with a major watershed in world history. "Historians frequently focus on 1815 as the year in which the revolutionary era ... was at last reduced to embers," Schreiber writes. "The clarion call of egalitarianism, sounded first in the American Revolution and far more distinctly in the French, was now muffled. ... And so, as America heedlessly raced toward its 'manifest destiny,' slavery was expanded into new cotton-producing territories in the West, exclusion and terror were redoubled against Black people in the North, and the Native peoples were uprooted and massacred."⁶

By focusing on the life of Thomas Cave, Schreiber has created a meticulous portrait of the era as seen through the eyes of a rank-and-file American revolutionary. This is, therefore, an exemplary "people's history"—a comprehensive and highly coherent account, from an essentially working-class perspective, of the American experience from the 1770s through the War of 1812. ■

* The first of 20 in Patrick O'Brian's "Aubrey-Maturin" series of sea novels was "Master and Commander," which was made into an acclaimed 2003 film.

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U.S. leftists leap into Democratic Party swamp



(Left) As he promised, Bernie Sanders endorsed Hillary Clinton. It is hardly reasonable to expect Sanders, the candidate of a capitalist party, to suddenly become a working-class champion.

By JEFF MACKLER

Out of the starting gate real quick came Bernie Sanders, self-proclaimed champion of a U.S. “political revolution” and “democratic socialism.” Sanders’ initial dark horse image was quickly abandoned as the corporate media quickly granted him equal time, as soon as he affirmed that he was running as a Democrat in Wall Street’s preferred party and would support the rigged convention’s choice. Indeed, Sanders was the perfect candidate at a time when the appeal to traditional corporate politics and politicians had reached a modern-era low.

Sanders was a long-time member of the Democratic Party congressional caucus with a 98 percent Democratic Party voting record—war budgets and racist legislation included—and a professed Vermont “independent” who was without exception the priority-funded and endorsed choice of the Democratic Party hierarchy, including President Obama’s twice official endorsement.

This was exactly what his party’s spin doctors needed; 57 percent of registered Democrats, according to a *New York Times* poll preferred socialism over capitalism. With an ever deepening eight-year worldwide capitalist crisis in progress, Sanders was capitalism’s recipe to refurbish the Democratic Party’s deeply-tarnished image and once again channel the unwary back into the ruling class’s priority instrument, its firewall to contain social explosions.

But if there was a political tragedy in this years’ electoral scenario, it was qualitatively less capitalism’s endless and repeated variations of “lesser evil” politics and qualitatively more the socialist left’s virtual total capitulation to the two party, or three party—Greens included—capitalist shell game.

The Green Party, a largely middle-class or multi-class, and pro-capitalist reformist group, as well as a number of traditional “socialist” organizations—like the Democratic Socialists of America, the Communist Party, and the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism—have been known on the left for their decades-long and near exclusive electoral focus on the Democratic Party.

The Communist Party, for example, which supported Clinton in the Democratic primaries, calls for “building a multi-class alliance that includes the Democratic Party establishment” in a campaign to “defeat the extreme right and GOP [and] its oligarchic backers.” In 2016, unfortunately, other left groups have readily joined these reformists in the Democratic Party swamp.

Socialist Alternative champions Sanders

With this year’s election cycle the once-promising Socialist Alternative party has all but broken with any semblance of working-class independence by championing the Bernie Sanders campaign and initiating the “Movement 4 Bernie,” including taking for good coin Sanders’ pseudo-radical “democratic socialist” rhetoric and empty proclamation to be leading a “political revolution” inside the Democratic Party!

Socialist Alternative’s support for the Democrat Sanders, while urging him to break with the Democrats to be the Green Party’s presidential candidate, serves to foster illusions in capitalist politics—most importantly, the notion that the leading party of the multi-millionaire and billionaire ruling rich can be magically transformed from the inside, as opposed to being defeated by a working-class-controlled party, combined with massive social struggles aimed at capitalism’s abolition.

Socialist Alternative and its twice-elected socialist Seattle city council member, Kshama Sawant, have taken grave steps toward undermining the very essence of

Sawant’s well-deserved socialist election victories—efforts that Socialist Action actively supported and helped to finance.

But we were not totally uncritical of several of Socialist Alternative’s flawed campaign tactics. We strongly disagreed with Sawant’s listing of several local Democrats on her campaign literature, her acceptance of significant campaign contributions from Democratic Party officials, and her attendance at local Democratic Party fundraisers.

In our view, these were important errors that tended to undermine the central thrust of the Sawant campaigns, which aimed at counterposing a principled socialist and working-class platform to the boss class’s Democratic Party.

But Socialist Alternative went on to deepen its break with working-class political independence. In a July 31, 2016, Real News Network interview with Rania Khalek, Sawant stated: “He [Sanders] decided to run as a Democrat. We don’t agree with that, *but we supported him anyway*, because we feel that tens of millions of people were connecting with his call for a political revolution” (emphasis added).

In commenting on Socialist Alternative’s “Movement 4 Bernie” petition, Sawant stated, “Over 120,000 people signed that petition because they wanted Bernie to continue his political revolution outside the Democratic Party if the Democrats didn’t let him continue as their nominee. And in that petition we said that if people aren’t convinced of the idea of running in every state then let’s run in the safe states. So I think that the safe states idea can be used as a tactic, but I think fundamentally what people need to grapple with is, you know, the fact that we need to build an independent party.”

And so, Sawant lends legitimacy to voting for Sanders only in “safe states,” while impliedly urging or accepting the legitimacy of a vote for Clinton in all the rest.

Further, during an Amy Goodman “Democracy Now!” commentary immediately following the September Clinton-Trump nationally televised debate, Sawant stated that Trump needs to be “trounced” in the November elections while she bemoaned the fact that Clinton was the least capable of doing the trouncing, again implying that Sanders would have done a better job of it. While Sawant repeated her support for the Jill Stein Green Party candidacy later in the same commentary she nevertheless informed her supporters that Trump’s defeat at the hands of Clinton was high on her priority list and that there were “fundamental” differences between the two.

For Sawant, the prime example of an “independent party” is the middle-class pro-capitalist Green Party, or some such class-undefined political variant. Prior to her first run in Seattle, Socialist Alternate sought out a joint city council election effort with the Green Party, but the Greens rejected the proposal, leaving Socialist Alternative with no alternative but to run an open and credible socialist campaign.

ISO urges Sanders to run as Green

In a similar vein, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) also urged Democrat Sanders to run as the Green Party candidate, as if a capitalist party politician can be converted to a working-class champion of “political revolution” with the stroke of a pen. The ISO is no newcomer to middle-class politics, having supported Ralph Nader’s campaigns in the past.

Nowadays, Nader is urging a “billionaire” to run for president. In 2000, he negotiated a deal with Pat Buchanan’s right-wing Reform Party for ballot status in some seven states in return for a damning interview in Buchanan’s *American Conservative* magazine, where

Nader, tit for tat, felt compelled to agree with much of Buchanan’s reactionary anti-abortion and anti-immigrant views.

Also committed to “third party” politics is the socialist group, Solidarity, whose members are often active builders and sometimes candidates of the Green Party. Taking yet another leap off the cliff of working-class politics, Bay Area Solidarity members also backed the Richmond Progressive Alliance, a Democratic Party/Green Party electoral formation that last year supported an open Democrat, Tom Butt, for mayor in order to “defeat the Chevron candidate.” Butt won.

The above socialist groups that bent to the ruling class’s move to legitimize Sanders and posture him as a socialist who was acceptable in ruling-class circles were by far not the exception. Both the Workers World Party and its offshoot, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), not infrequently supporting “progressive” Black and Latino Democrats in the past like Jesse Jackson, called for a Sanders vote in various Democratic Party primaries even though both presented their own candidates for the presidency. Jill Stein too urged a Sanders vote in the California primaries.

One happy and welcome exception to the broad capitulation of the socialist left today is the small but important Socialist Party presidential campaign, which rejects support to capitalist and pro-capitalist parties in all their variations.

But more generally, it has virtually become the norm for often well-meaning socialists to support so-called independent parties like the Greens or the Rainbow Coalition, or even open Democrats like Sanders, as opposed to working toward the construction of parties based on, controlled by, and beholden to working-class organizations, namely trade unions.

The fact that the U.S. is perhaps the only major capitalist nation on earth with no tradition of working-class-based political independence manifested by a Labor Party or mass Socialist Party has proved to be a major disorienting factor. It has also contributed to socialist organizations’ often inventing nearly irrational reasons—“political revolution”—to support one or another “progressive” Democrat with a view to breaking the stranglehold of this party’s capitalist predators over its ranks.

In truth, the party ranks have absolutely zero control or influence in this exclusively controlled ruling-class instrument. Or more accurately, there are no “ranks” in the Democratic Party, only a diverse association of individuals who are rounded up every four years or so to pay homage to the ruling class’s proffered candidate.

Organizing the power of the working class

Simply stated, there will be no political or any other revolution in the U.S. or anywhere else in the world that is not driven forward by consciously organized working-class power.

A democratically-organized fighting labor movement, in alliance with and in full solidarity with every struggle of the oppressed, is a prerequisite for any significant challenge to capitalist prerogatives. However diminished in size and influence, highly undemocratic, terribly bureaucratized, and often corrupt the trade unions might be, the fight to transform them into fighting instruments at the service of workers is necessary to achieve future social progress.

The patient but critical struggle to build a class-struggle left wing in today’s trade unions, and in those that will be founded to defend workers’ interests in the future, is inseparable from the exercise of workers’ power for the common good.

For revolutionary socialists from the time of Karl Marx to the present, the most critical questions, indeed, the only relevant question regarding achieving social progress, is which class shall rule? The vast majority who creates all wealth, or the tiny minority who effectively steals it to perpetrate its brutal rule?

It is in this context that revolutionary parties sharply oppose any and all efforts to reform any capitalist or pro-capitalist party. All of them are the finely tuned instruments of minority rule. The capitalist class, through its chosen parties and representatives, holds a monopoly of power at all levels of government and in society more generally.

History has assigned capitalism’s abolition and the construction of a truly socialist society to the one force capable of the task, the vast working-class majority.

Socialist Action’s presidential election campaign is aimed at building a mass revolutionary socialist party deeply integrated into every struggle in which humanity strives for liberation. Join us! ■

Green Parties: The real history

This year activists received an education in corporate politics when Wikileaks revealed the dirty tricks played on Bernie Sanders by Hillary Clinton operatives. Just as in corporate America, you can't find two cents worth of democracy in the Democratic Party. For those tired of the corporate rule of both major parties, the Green Party (GP) seems a way out—or so you might think. But, facts matter. A close look at the Green movement is overdue.

There are Greens in 70 countries. If you're anti-capitalist, some of their politics may surprise you. Some Green parties and many Green leaders have been in capitalist governments, dishing out austerity and supporting imperialist war. The Greek Green Party, for example, agreed to the SYRIZA government's 2015 austerity "loan" package of the European Union on behalf of its crooked banks and backed by the U.S.-dominated IMF. Below we'll focus on Green politics in Germany, France, and the U.S.

The German Greens

The Green Party movement began as an organized political force in Germany in 1979, during the intense struggle against deployment of U.S.-supplied nuclear weapons and mass mobilizations against nuclear power following the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster. They first entered parliament in 1983 with 5.6% of the vote. Following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986, the GP demanded the immediate shut-down of nuclear facilities and gained in popularity.

Soon, an internal battle erupted between what was called the "realists" (Realos) and fundamentalists (Fundis) over joining in coalition with the mainstream, so-called party of labor, the Social Democratic Party (SPD). In 1998, the GP entered the SPD government as a junior partner, which lasted until 2005. A prominent Green, Joschka Fischer, became Foreign Minister. Fischer also supported and helped draft the most severe welfare cuts since World War II, known as Hartz IV, labor laws that slashed benefits.

In 1999, betraying the Green's pacifism and opposition to the U.S.-run NATO military alliance, Fischer voted for sending German troops to fight with NATO forces in Kosovo and Serbia, and later, in the U.S.-led war drive in Afghanistan in 2001. Kosovo and Serbia were the first foreign deployment of German troops since World War II, officially banned in 1945, but rescinded after the Cold War. Today, German troops are in 16 countries, from Afghanistan to Mali—with the help of the Green Party!

When the capitalist financial crisis of 2008 erupted, the German GP supported a corporate bailout and austerity aimed at working people. Katharina Fegebank, General Secretary of Hamburg's Greens, said, "Such a reform could only have been launched by a red (SPD) and green alliance. If the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and the FDP (Free Democratic Party) had taken the initiative, it would have caused a revolution" [note: the conservative CDU and FDP are mainstream capitalist parties.]. In fact, the GP is in a coalition government in Hamburg with the CDU of Chancellor Angela Merkel—the same party that raped Greece's working class via its leading role in the European Union (EU), devastating Greece with unpayable debt and austerity!

As a result, many Greens abandoned the party and joined the Left reformist Die Linke, an amalgam of former East German Stalinists, Social Democrats, and others. The German Green Party has continued its rightward spiral, in particular advocating a bellicose policy toward Russia.

Jutta Ditfurth, a GP co-founder who quit in 1999, called the party, "a neoliberal party on bikes." Ditfurth says the Greens have "59 years of experience" in numerous regional and national capitalist governments, that is, administering cuts, worker exploitation, and "law and order."

The French Greens

French Greens often express their political axiom as "neither right nor left," an opportunist view echoed by many German Greens.

In 1997, the French Green Party, as part of the Plural Left coalition, first gained a parliamentary representative and later representation in the European Parliament. In 2010, the Greens fused with Europe Ecologie to form the EELV. In 2012, despite a 1997 decision of the Greens not to enter government, the EELV joined the administration of President François Hollande of the Socialist Party, a capitalist government fully committed to imperialism.

EELV National Secretary Cecile Duflot resigned to take an appointed post as Housing Minister (2012-2014) in the Hollande cabinet. Another leading Green, Pascal Canfin, was Minister for Development under the SP's Minister of Foreign Affairs. In February 2016, Hollande named an EELV member, Emmanuel Cosse, as Housing Minister.

The Greens achieved some gains in agreement with their SP partner: a pledge to reduce nuclear energy from 75% to 50% by 2025 and to shut down 24 nuclear reactors, a tax on carbon emissions, and increased taxes on the wealthy. Although the party has not backed Hollande's austerity measures, as a governmental partner the EELV has enabled France's capitalist class to hammer the workers—under the guise of being "pro-labor!"

In 2013, at a time when unemployment was 10.6%, Hollande sponsored a bill that allows companies to temporar-



(Above) Jill Stein, Green Party candidate for U.S. president, takes a selfie with Vermont supporters.

ily cut workers' salaries or hours during times of so-called economic difficulty and makes it easier for bosses to fire workers. In addition, workers' pension contributions were increased by Hollande, despite mass protests. Hollande vowed to cut 50 billion from public spending in 2017.

On the international front, Hollande's SP government refused to back Greece in its fight against the European Union's austerity demands. France retains membership in the U.S.-led NATO military alliance, which has provocatively placed military units near the Russian border. Moreover, the SP government has given military support for the reactionary Saudi dictatorship in its deadly war on Yemen's Houthi rebels. France sold \$18 billion in weapons to Saudi Arabia last year.

Green Party of the U.S.

During the current presidential cycle, the Green Party's presidential candidate, Jill Stein, proposed to self-styled socialist Bernie Sanders to run as the Green candidate. Although Sanders had voted with the Democrats 98% of the time, Stein wanted him to switch parties as if it were merely a question of changing hats! In California, Stein asked voters to back Sanders in its primary. It was all quite at odds with her double-talk about the Democratic Party as "counter-revolutionary."

Some leftists in the Green Party now make the boast, echoed by the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the Aug. 9 issue of its Socialist Worker newspaper, that the August GP convention adopted an "explicitly anti-capitalist" plank (Amendment 835), which called for "an alternative economic system" based on "workplace and community democracy."

Where's the socialism in this resolution? Are greedy Wall Street crooks to be nationalized or not? And what does "workplace and community democracy" really mean? It's miles short of a socialist program—i.e., for nationalization of the economy under worker's control. How can "workplace and community democracy" replace capitalism if society remains in the hands of the bosses? The GP's slight-of-hand here is meant to placate radicalizing youth, while not alienating middle-class voters. (As of Oct 3, the "anti-capitalist" plank does not appear on the GP website.)

The Greens do not call on working people themselves to take up the class struggle, pushing aside union misleaders if need be. Nowhere does the Green Platform advocate striking as a powerful weapon for workers, public or private. Their proposals for a \$15 an hour minimum are laudable, but there's no call for workers themselves to organize the fight for \$15 (and more!), and not wait years for politicians to bestow raises that have been lowered in value.

Lastly, the platform says, "End police brutality and mass incarceration. Create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to understand and eliminate the legacy of slavery that lives on as pervasive racism in the economy." Indeed, ending racist police murders is urgent, but a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission?" Socialists demand, "Black control of the Black community," not "reconciliation" with racist cops! The GP doesn't call for socialism, and like Green Parties worldwide, is objectively a liberal capitalist party.

The Socialist Action campaign

Socialist Action is running Jeff Mackler, a decades-long antiwar and anti-racist fighter, for U.S. president, and Karen Schraufnagel, an anti-Zionist and antiwar activist from Minneapolis, for vice president. Our candidates and members build struggles and demonstrations, unlike the mainly electoral Green Party. We champion non-sectarian, demo-

cratic mass-action united fronts.

We don't expect to win the White House, of course, but we are bringing socialist politics to a whole new generation as well as veterans of the struggle. We never support Democrats. We seek a genuine socialist transformation through revolution, without neglecting day-to-day struggles. And we know that elections don't bring socialism, only revolution does.

Agree with us? Join Socialist Action or check out our campaign at www.socialistaction.org. In this election year, it's the most revolutionary thing you can do! ■

... Prison strike

(continued from page 12)

ganized strikes. Most prisoners in Georgia do not work on Fridays but said that they planned to join actions on Sept. 12.

Reports from other areas of the country include 400 prisoners in Kinross Correctional Facility in Michigan, who held a protest in the prison yard and caused property damage resulting in 150 prisoners being transferred to other facilities. Clallam Bay Correctional Center in Washington State is in lockdown after actions there.

Many women prisoners refused to work, went on hunger strikes, and/or led uprisings in Central California, Kansas, and Lincoln, Neb.

An important part of the strike was to show visible solidarity outside the prison. Actions took place in 15 major cities and dozens of smaller towns around the country. This was an attempt to shine a light on the inherent racism of mass incarceration and also reveal the facts surrounding huge profits being made from free labor.

The support actions seem to have been as successful as the strikes themselves. For example, in Corvallis, a small college town in Oregon, a picket line was organized by the IWW. Bart Bolger, the strike demonstration organizer, spoke to the importance of the strike tactic: "I really believe in the prison strikers' strategy of withholding labor to create leverage and force change. Hunger strikes get attention but hurting the bottom line for the prison profiteers gets results."

The informational picket in front of the Benton County Courthouse included students from Oregon State University and the organization Allied Students For Another Politics (ASAP!). They had done their research and found that the demands of the strikers hit close to home. One of them had a sign that said prison labor had been used to build the OSU solar farm, a green energy project. Prisoners were paid 93 cents an hour to assemble solar panels for the project.

The struggle will continue until prisoners see the changes they are demanding. Prisoners in many areas are now organizing for the next wave of strikes. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>



(Photo) A billboard in British Columbia. The Pacific Northwest LNG plant would be located on one of B.C.'s major salmon rivers.

as “a cheap simulation of justice.”

Health-care funding is another credibility loser for Trudeau. The issue is transfer payments from Ottawa to the provinces. After growing at 6 per cent a year for a decade, subject to the terms Liberal PM Paul Martin reached with the provinces in 2005, which Stephen Harper upheld, transfers are scheduled to grow only about 3 per cent annually, starting in 2017. Harper built in that drop in funding. It made the provincial governments very angry. In the 2015 election, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair promised to restore the growth rate to 6 per cent, at a cost of \$36 billion over 10 years. The Liberals under Justin Trudeau were deliberately vague. Then in late September 2016, federal Health Minister Jane Philpott admitted that Harper’s plan for transfers is Trudeau’s too.

Sadly for the provinces, the Canada Institute for Health Information reports that total health spending in Canada “has fallen gradually in the past few years” as a share of GDP. “Since 2011, health spending has decreased by an average of 0.6 per cent per year.”

Military aggression abroad

On the foreign affairs front, notwithstanding his canola summit in China, and restored diplomatic relations with Iran, Trudeau pursues a course bent on aggression and military weapons sales abroad. The Canadian military is gearing up to support a major French “counterterrorism” operation in northern Africa. This occurs in the wake of NATO’s obliteration of Libya’s secular Gadhafi regime.

A Canadian air force general commanded the NATO bombing campaign, which quickly opened up political space for al-Qaeda-linked fighters there and across the region. The Liberal government has said it will commit up to 600 troops to UN “peacekeeping” duties. Without saying where the soldiers will be deployed, National Defence, Global Affairs, and the RCMP conducted a “reconnaissance mission” to Mali in August. Canadian military aircraft carried nearly 40 tonnes of equipment between France and Africa last year.

Notably, Canadian “aid” is not going to countries where Canadian-supported coups resulted in devastating human rights abuses, such as Honduras or Egypt. But why Mali? Does it have anything to do with Trudeau’s bid for a United Nations Security Council seat? Or could it be because Mali is a major supplier of uranium, or because Canadian gold mining operations at Nampala, which recently reported positive cash flow for Canadian firm Robex, got Ottawa’s attention. Mali happens to be the third-largest gold-producing country in Africa.

Sometimes the prospect of immediate profits from mineral resources take a back seat to larger considerations of geo-political power. Canada is sending an additional 500 troops to Latvia for an open-ended mission to help its imperialist allies to scare the Russians. It’s a move so provocative that Mikhail Gorbachev (former top bureaucrat of the USSR, and a strong critic of Vladimir Putin) warned: “NATO has begun preparations for escalating the Cold War into a hot one. All the rhetoric in Warsaw just yells of a desire almost to declare war on Russia. They only talk about defence, but actually they are preparing for offensive operations.”

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For Trudeau Teletubbies, the jig is up!

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s protracted political honeymoon appears to be coming to a close. General irritation with his unctuous, almost unbearable lightness of being is taking hold—especially as his “sunny ways” imagery collides with the real actions of the Liberal government. One New Democrat MP scored media high fives when he compared Trudeau to the bright-colored characters in a British TV show for children who look like babies stuffed into cuddly animal costumes with TV antennae on their heads and screens on their bellies. “How do you wrestle with Teletubbies who want to keep hugging you?”

Well, the group hug is over, and the jig is up. It turns out that Trudeau’s agenda is not that different from his predecessor’s, the uber-Conservative PM Stephen Harper. What a rude awakening that must be for many of the folks who voted Liberal in October 2015, hoping and expecting to get something completely different.

A glance at just a few federal departments—environment, indigenous peoples, health care, and foreign affairs—is enough to see the trend.

B.C. gas project approved

On Sept. 27 Ottawa gave the green light to a massive liquefied natural gas project on the coast of British Columbia. The Pacific Northwest LNG would involve a pipeline across the province and a terminal to export the liquefied gas from northern B.C. to Asian markets.

Touted as the largest private-sector development in Canada’s history, the megaproject is the first approved by

Trudeau and provides a framework for upcoming decisions on the merits of pipelines designed to bring Alberta oil to eastern and southern ports. Absent is the agreement of several First Nations communities who have serious concerns, including over the health of wild salmon habitat.

Environmentalists, from the Sierra Club to the David Suzuki Foundation to the Pembina Institute, oppose the plan despite the 190 conditions attached to it by the feds. Even with a cap on the project’s greenhouse gas emissions (one of the conditions), Pacific Northwest LNG would significantly raise B.C.’s greenhouse gas output. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency calculated that it would be “one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in Canada.”

How does that jibe with the promise by Catherine McKenna, the rookie environment minister, who proclaimed when she got her job last autumn that the carbon-reduction targets set by the Conservatives were a minimum. Now it’s clear that the Liberal government will be lucky to come anywhere near to meeting Harper’s low-bar targets.

In any case, shouldn’t Ottawa promote the spending of billions on making wind and sea wave turbines, solar panels, and geothermal technology, rather than on conduits to increase the flow of climate-change-causing fossil fuels?

Instead of obtaining a “social license” from indigenous peoples, as he promised to do, Trudeau has been issuing construction permits for BC Hydro’s Site C dam, over the objection of First Nations that have taken the government to court. An article in the British *Guardian* newspaper referred to Trudeau’s “lofty rhetoric” on indigenous rights

Pension concessions sell out young workers

By SID RYAN

The tentative collective agreement reached between General Motors, Canada and Unifor on Sept. 19 thrust the pension issue, defined benefit (DB) versus defined contribution (DC) plans, back into the public spotlight.

Under a DB plan, workers are guaranteed a specific amount of monthly pension income based on employee-employer contributions and the worker’s years of service. The employer is obligated to ensure the plan is fully funded to meet this pension promise.

On the other hand, DC plans are basically savings plans that do not guarantee a fixed amount of monthly income; they depend on the vagaries of the stock market. The employer has no future obligations with respect to security of retirement income for former employees, which is why bosses fight so hard to convert DB into DC plans.

Recently, Canada Post Corp clashed with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) in a high-profile, year-long and futile attempt to force the union to sell out future employees by accepting a much inferior DC pension plan.

During tough negotiations, CUPW President Mike Palacek wrote an inspirational letter to future employees of Canada Post, dated 2036. In it he “reminded” them of the sacrifices made by past generations of postal workers who fought for the good wages, benefits and DB pension plan that they enjoy.

His message was really addressed to his current membership, urging them to be strong and not to sell out the future

generation of workers. His members rose to the occasion. They preserved the DB pension plan for the workers of 2036 and beyond.

Palacek understood that if his union folded and accepted “two-tier bargaining,” where future workers are denied the same wages and benefits as current employees, that the cancer would spread like wild fire into every workplace in the country, across public and private sectors alike.

Young workers will see this deal as the “boomer generation” pulling up the ladder behind them, selling out the next generation without a fight.

The arguments advanced by employers and right-wing lobbyists about the ongoing viability of DB plans are bogus. RBC Investor & Treasury Services conducted a study of 120 DB pension plans in 2014. It found an average 14.2 per cent return on investments. DBRS, a Toronto-based rating agency, reviewed 64 major pension plans in 2014 and found they were funded at 94.7 per cent levels—well above the 80 per cent range viewed as the danger zone for pension funding.

When asked in April 2015 about General Motors’ push for new hires to accept the lesser DC pension plan, Unifor President Jerry Dias said, “This is a huge fundamental issue for us as an organization. ... defined benefit pension plans would come under pressure at all employers that have them.”

He added, “If you take a look at the profitability of the industry today, there is no need for them to make that kind of a request.” GM announced it is on track to meet its 2016

financial target of 10 per cent returns on investment.

The “fundamental issue” Dias was wrestling with in his 2015 interview was this: if Unifor agreed to scrap DB plans for new hires in GM, it would result in the eventual end of DB plans for the entire auto industry and beyond.

Despite the known consequences of such a move, he inexplicably signed a tentative agreement with a profitable GM—providing what is arguably the biggest concession ever given to a major employer in Canada—which will have serious ramifications for every union collective agreement in the country.

The Ford Motor Co. and FCA (formerly Chrysler) will now expect the same concession from Unifor. This is very bad news for public-sector unions. Right-wing propagandists like the Fraser Institute will rush to cite this concession to push their agenda to end DB plans in the public sector.

Clearly, young workers will see this deal as the “boomer generation” pulling up the ladder behind them, selling out the next generation without a fight. Two-tier bargaining divides the membership and weakens the union from within. It makes it all the more difficult to organize young workers when they see the older generation giving concessions to employers that previous generations fought so hard to gain—essentially screwing them out of a secure future.

Will GM workers retiring in 2036 on poverty-level DC pensions look back at the deal struck in 2016 by their union and say we should have fought harder and used that 96 per cent strike mandate to protect our pensions? ■

Sid Ryan is past president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. This article first appeared in the Huffington Post. It is re-published with permission of the author.

... Police

(continued from page 1)

lot of the University City apartment complex in Charlotte, N.C. Police initially claimed that Scott posed an “imminent threat” to the safety of police officers.

Protests in Charlotte have been especially intense, as the African-American community is outraged by this killing on top of other instances of police violence against Black residents of the city. In 2013, a white Charlotte police officer, Randall Kerrick, was charged with voluntary manslaughter after the murder of Jonathan Ferrell, an unarmed Black man. Last year, a judge ruled a mistrial in the case, and Kerrick walked away a free man.

One Charlotte protester, Justin Carr, was fatally shot on Sept. 21 near the Omni Hotel. The police deny that they fired at him, and have arrested and charged someone else with the shooting. Within the community there is widespread suspicion that the police are covering up their responsibility for this murder, especially since eyewitnesses reported that riot police fired a barrage of rubber bullets into the crowd at the time Carr fell to the ground after being shot.

Charlotte community activist B.J. Murphy told *The New York Times*: “Everybody in Charlotte should be on notice that black people, today, we’re tired of this bull. We’re tired of being killed and nobody saying nothing. We’re tired of our political leaders going along to get along; they’re so weak, they don’t have no sympathy for our grief. And we want justice.”

On the day of the killing of Keith Lamont Scott, police had been waiting at the University City apartment complex to serve a warrant on another person, presumably a resident in the apartment complex. Scott’s family reports that he was reading a book in his parked car in the building’s parking lot while waiting for his son to arrive home from school.

After the killing police were quick to develop a story that Scott had a gun in his possession, even though family and some at the scene insisted he was carrying a book when he was shot, and not a gun. According to the initial police story, Officer Brentley Vinson, a Black undercover cop, fired the shot that killed Scott after Scott opened the door of his car and got out while threatening police with a gun. Family and many who witnessed had an entirely different story. Vinson was not wearing a body cam, and was placed on administrative leave immediately following the shooting.

Police finally responded to intense public pressure by releasing two short videos on Sept. 24, only a portion of the videos that they have in their possession. The released videos prove conclusively that Scott’s hands were at his side as he backed out of his car and was in no way acting in a threatening manner.

The New York Times reported: “It was clear from the two angles that he had nothing in his right hand. It was unclear what, if anything, Mr. Scott, who was right-handed, had in his left hand.” The Sept. 24 video belies the original police story that Scott was threatening them as he got out the car.

One question has been what exactly prompted the police at the scene to target Scott in the first place, since their stated mission was to serve a warrant to someone other than Scott. There had been no complaint to police of any illegal activity at the apartment complex. On Sept. 24 the police responded that they targeted Scott because they saw him rolling a marijuana cigarette and also saw he was in possession of



handgun while sitting in his car. This led the police to assume that he was a “threat” to public safety.

Earlier, Scott’s wife, Rakeyia released a short cellphone video of some of what transpired. She had come to the parking lot to give Scott a battery charger and found the police around his car. During the video, which did not capture the shooting of her husband, she repeatedly shouted, “Don’t shoot him!” “He has no weapon!” and “He didn’t do anything!” She also shouted to police that he has Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), a result of a recent motorcycle accident.

After stonewalling for about two weeks, and after widespread community outcry for public release of all videos records, the city’s police chief finally released 6 minutes and 45 seconds of additional video on Oct. 4. The police had claimed that releasing this video would “compromise” an investigation of the shooting. The new video shows Scott handcuffed and dying on the pavement while police look on. Again, this new video clip shows no evidence that Scott had a gun in his possession, or that his behavior was in any way a threat to anyone.

The district attorney in Charlotte has asked for a state inquiry into Scott’s killing. In most cases of police shootings, of course, so-called “impartial” investigations by state authorities take months and years to complete. In many cases, no charges at all are brought against racist cops. In others, as took place in July in regard to the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, the judicial process ends up in a sequence of acquittals and dismissals of charges. In Chicago, one culmination of all the investigations into the murder of Laquan McDonald is the recent decision to hire nearly 1000 more cops!

Police killing of Terence Crutcher

In Tulsa, on Friday, Sept. 16, four days earlier, a police video provides conclusive evidence that 40-year-old Terence Crutcher, unarmed and a threat to no one, was gunned down for no reason. The fatal shot rang out while Crutcher had his hands in the air, standing next to his SUV, which was stalled in the middle of the road. A father to four children, Crutcher was on his way home from a class at a local community college.

Betty Shelby, the white cop who fired the fatal shot, was responding to a complaint of an abandoned car, and justified the killing by saying she “felt threatened” and that Crutcher had failed to respond to police commands, despite the fact that the video shows absolutely no evidence of threatening behavior.

It’s hard to understand how Shelby could have felt threatened, with three additional police officers

standing by her side as she shot and killed Crutcher. Initially, Shelby claimed that Crutcher was reaching inside the car for a weapon, but later video evidence confirmed that the car window was closed and splattered with Crutcher’s blood, proving that Shelby’s claim was false.

Not surprisingly, as has become typical in many cases of police violence, Shelby’s body camera was turned off at the time of the shooting. Shelby, who was also carrying a stun gun, chose to use live ammunition instead.

None of the police at the scene made any attempt to revive or provide medical assistance to Crutcher, as he lay dying on the ground. On Sept. 22 Shelby was charged with “felony manslaughter in the first degree” by the Tulsa County District Attorney.

Benjamin Crump, an attorney for the Crutcher family, remarked: “When unarmed people of color break down on the side of the road, we’re not treated as citizens needing help. We’re treated as, I guess, criminals—suspects that they fear.”

Adrian Colbert, a Black resident of Tulsa who lives near the scene of the shooting, told *The New York Times*: “He had his hands up, and they popped him. But that’s something we’re used to. It goes back to 1921. What happens here usually gets swept under the rug.” Colbert was referring to Tulsa’s 1921 racist rampage by white residents, in which roughly 300 African Americans were massacred.

Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action candidate for U.S. president, in a recent statement condemned the so-called U.S. “justice” system as a source of the problem: “It’s outrageous! In city after city we see the same rotten features of U.S. capitalism that foster and promote entrenched institutionalized racism.

“It’s a system that truly breeds racism and profits from it. It will never, of its own accord, put a stop to these horrors unless forced to through massive protest and struggle of working people and oppressed. Ultimately, this means independent political struggle directed squarely against the capitalist government, and the twin parties of capitalist rule, the Democratic and Republican parties.

“We support protests to end racist violence in the streets of Tulsa, Charlotte, El Cajon and Los Angeles—as we did in Ferguson, Chicago, Baltimore, Milwaukee and so many other cities across the U.S. We stand with all who rise up against racist injustice. We demand an immediate end to cop violence in minority and working-class communities across this country. Prosecute and jail killer cops!” ■

... Trudeau

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This deployment adds to the hundreds of Canadian troops already playing war games in the Ukraine, where Trudeau took his nine-year-old son in July. The Liberals kept their promise to remove Canada’s fighter planes from the war in Iraq, but compensated by tripling the number of Canadian “military advisers” on the ground there.

When Trudeau spoke to the United Nations Assembly in September, he sweetly intoned, “We’re Canadian and we’re here to help.” He showed what he meant by that, in practice, when he recently approved the export of \$15 billion worth of armed vehicles to Saudi Arabia, a country which is occupying parts of Yemen, and is the beheading capital of the world, widely condemned for its horrible human rights record.

Not to be outdone by Harper, Justin Trudeau’s Canada now ranks second in arms exports to the Middle East for the first time in his-

tory, behind only the United States.

But why stop there? We could examine the government’s failure to amend, let alone rescind the intrusive and repressive Bill C-51 that gives Canada’s spies and police unprecedented powers, money and resources. We could look to Trudeau’s broken promise to restore home mail delivery where it was curtailed. We can reflect on Ottawa’s paltry planned increase in Canada Pension Plan payments to seniors, or its undiminished allegiance to the so-called free trade deals, the TPP and CETA. The list seems almost endless.

But the point is this: When the fresh coat of paint called Justin Trudeau is stripped away, one sees basically the same austerity agenda designed to perpetuate capitalist rule, to maintain the dominion of the 0.1 per cent over the rest of us.

To end the pernicious cycle of capitalist political fakery and abuse, it is necessary to terminate the socio-economic system itself. The break-up of the Liberal political honeymoon is a welcome step in that direction. ■



Oct. 22: A one-day conference

**Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Conn.**

Sponsored by CCSU Youth for Socialist Action

**Information: [https://www.facebook.com/
events/211030272631856/](https://www.facebook.com/events/211030272631856/)**

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

SOCIALIST ACTION

Thousands of prisoners strike to 'end slavery'



By ANN MONTAGUE

Sept. 9 saw thousands of incarcerated men and women go on strike to take a stand against civil and environmental injustice in their respective prisons. The multi-state strike in the United States was organized both inside and outside of the prisons.

As we go to press three weeks later, organizers report that at least 20 prisons in 11 states continue to protest. The Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC) says that protesters have been punished, with several facilities in lock down, and prisoners kept in their cells and denied phone access.

IWOC media co-chair Azzurra Crispino told "Democracy Now!" that in some areas there have been shifts to hunger strikes. In the Merced County jail in California, over 100 prisoners are on a hunger strike including the wife of one of the prisoners: "They are calling for a 2000-calorie diet, an end for solitary confinement for juvenile detainees, and for the firing of Lieutenant Moore, who's been particularly sadistic as a guard there. And there have been continuing hunger strikes in Michigan, as well as Ohio. In Michigan, Dying to Live, Cesar DeLeon, and others have been on a hunger strike for more than a hundred days. They are calling for an end to long-term solitary confinement past a year."

Another advocate, Pastor Kenneth Glasgow, gives prisoners the credit for successful organizing inside the prisons: "We want to give them all the credit and all the applause we can. They have overcome religious barriers, racial barriers, geographical barriers, and also they have overcome incarceration barriers. And by overcoming those barriers, were able to organize, lead and initiate this prison strike."

Some unions have begun addressing the twin issues of racial justice and economic justice with all their members. These discussions have moved from mere individual solutions to the need to end "institutional racism." There is no clearer example of institutional racism than the prison system.

Michelle Alexander, in her book "The New Jim Crow,"

wrote, "I came to see that mass incarceration in the United States had emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow. No other country in the world imprisons so many of its racial or ethnic minorities as the U.S." Since the beginning of the so-called drug war in 1982, the U.S. penal population exploded from 300,000 to more than two million in less than 30 years.

The 13th Amendment

The National Prison Strike calls attention to the 13th Amendment of the Constitution—generally believed to have ended slavery in 1865. But there was a loophole, which says, "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." It was a common practice in 1865 for plantation owners to lease Black convicts out of the prisons to work their fields, and today prisons are a multi-billion-dollar industry.

Inmates in federal and state prisons run recycling plants, fight fires in California and Georgia, and run call centers for state agencies. They make uniforms for McDonalds, prepare artisanal cheeses for Whole Foods, run call centers for AT&T. Think of a major corporation, and they are getting free labor from prisoners. That is why the National Prisoner Strike was a "Call To End Slavery In America."

Some states do allow prisoners to be paid, but it is always under \$1 an hour, and in most states they are paid nothing. In federal prisons, half of the wages are withheld for "room and board." The prisoners have to use whatever remains to pay for necessary items that must be purchased from the prison, such as toilet paper, deodorant, menstrual products, and laundry detergent.

Ray, who is being held in St. Clair Correctional Facility in Springville, Ala., explains why he has been organizing the strike: "The businesses involved understand that this is an operation of slavery and everyone is exploiting the free labor out of the prisons." Ray believes that every action will spread work stoppages

to more prisons, incrementally slowing down the profit motive that drives the prison system. They are also striking to address conditions within the prison and publicize toxic work conditions, extreme heat, insufficient access to health care, and contaminated drinking and bathing water.

For example, in Texas this summer there were an unreleased number of deaths in state prisons as internal temperatures reached 140 degrees on some days. Only 30 of 109 Texas State prisons have air conditioning. There have been cases of heat stroke, extreme dehydration, and other heat related conditions. The state of Texas houses 146,000 inmates and is in the middle of a lawsuit charging "deadly heat" in their facilities.

There are also prisoners who are working unpaid in the Texas Correctional Institution (TCI) Chemical Plant without air-ventilated safety masks. Whenever an auditor or inspector is at the gate, a warning system goes off to shut down all activities that have been deemed illegal or hazardous by the fire marshal.

Alabama's "Slaughterhouse"

Organizers currently estimate that prisoners in over 40 facilities in 28 states are participating in the actions. The earliest report came from Holman State Prison in Atmore, Ala., where the Free Alabama Movement has been organizing since 2014.

Their initial strike was back in May, and the most recent strike in September was a result of continued organizing both inside and outside the prison.

Inmates report, "all inmates at Holman Prison refused to report to their prison jobs without incident. With the rising of the sun came an eerie silence as the men at Holman [lay] on their racks reading or sleeping. Officers are performing all tasks."

Prison officials in Alabama confirmed that correctional officers refused to report for the evening shift on Sept. 24 at Holman. There are 17 officers in a prison with a thousand prisoners. Prisoners state that there are stabbings on a regular basis and call the facility "The Slaughterhouse."

An incarcerated organizer, Kinetik Justice, described the situation: "A lot of the guards are terrified of what's going on, and refuse to go into the dormitory. ... There's a growing consensus in this place that if you don't have somebody that loves you or cares about you in the dormitory, then you're almost guaranteed to be a dead man, because the officers are not coming to save you."

"We knew the administration was not going to protect us. We took it upon ourselves to try to instill some type of discipline within our own structures to maintain some type of order, until we could get some help from society in the form of creating a task force to do a fact-finding mission and some reporters to actually come up in here and tell the Department of Corrections to let us see your transfer logs, let us see your segregation release logs, let us see the body charts, let us see the officer sign-in logs—let us see documentation that proves that it is what you say it is, in contrast to what you say the propaganda of the Free Alabama Movement says it is."

Currently the strike at Holman has ended, as some additional officers are being brought in and the prisoners are able to move around and get out of the dormitories.

Prisoners in multiple Alabama prisons, at least two others in Florida, Fluvanna Women's Prison in Virginia, and prisoners in North and South Carolina or-

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