

Trump takes White House, Working people under fire



Patti Supone / NJ Advance Media for N.J.com

By MARK UGOLINI

The Republican Party takes primary charge of the U.S. government this month, with Donald Trump sworn in as president and both houses of Congress under Republican control by a slim majority.

The new administration is taking shape with announcements of key government cabinet posts. These include a combination of professional politicians, former military officers, and powerful captains of industry and finance.

As in past cabinets, leading billionaire capitalists will be well represented. They include Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, a longtime Wall Street investor and speculator; Linda McMahon, Small Business Administrator; one of Trump's biggest campaign donors; and Betsy DeVos, Education Secretary, who comes from a family of billionaires and plans to privatize public schools.

Big name Wall Street industrialists and financiers include Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, a hedge fund manager, Goldman Sachs trader, and Hollywood financier; Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, president and CEO of Exxon Mobile; and Andrew Puzder, Labor

Secretary and CEO of fast-food giant CKE Restaurants.

The new team will bring new policies, but the overall goal of Trump's Republican government will be the same as that of the Democratic Party preceding it—to conduct the business of the tiny capitalist ruling class, and remove obstacles that stand in the way of profits for Wall Street and the banks.

Both capitalist parties struggle to overcome years of economic stagnation and lagging profits. Major divisions have emerged on how to correct this, but under capitalism new policies can't solve this issue in a fundamental or lasting way.

Driven by this crisis, the new administration has only one recourse—to continue imposition of the severe and ever escalating austerity offensive that began in the 1970s and has continued through each succeeding presidential administration. Along with union busting and economic attacks on the standard of living of working people, the offensive's broader features include racist police violence; new attacks on abortion rights; anti-immigrant harassment, particularly targeting Muslims; and widespread deportations. In all these areas, attacks will continue, and likely accelerate.

While much is not yet known about the new Trump administration or its priorities, some of its direction is becoming clear.

Domestic policy

We can expect big tax cuts for the rich, while regulations on corporations and financial firms will be eliminated or relaxed. The appointment of Scott Pruitt, a climate denier and longtime supporter of the fossil-fuel industry, to head the Environmental Protection Agency signals full backing of the oil, coal, and natural gas interests, as well as fracking. Regulation of these industries will be targeted.

The selection of Andrew Puzder for Labor Secretary points to additional attacks on workers. Puzder is only interested in labor and unions to the extent that he can limit their power. His goal is to get rid of unions or minimize their influence, not to defend them. As head of a big fast-food chain, his job was to exploit workers.

Puzder opposes minimum-wage increases above the current \$7.25 per hour, which has been in place since 2009. Earlier this year he proudly told *Busi-*

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Conn. activists demand 100% renewable energy & jobs

By SUSAN ROGERS

"To Change Everything, It Takes Everyone!" Under this mantra of the new climate justice movement, 400 Connecticut activists joined a "March for Jobs, Justice, and a Livable Earth" on Dec. 3. Picket signs carried the slogans voted up by the planning committee and included: Emergency Transition to 100% Renewable Energy Grid! Mass Electrified Transit for All! No to the Fracked Gas Buildout! No to Environmental Racism! No to the State Budget Cuts! and Yes to Jobs & Justice!

The event broke new ground for the climate movement in the state, garnering significant union endorsement and the participation of some of the newest strikers from the Hartford Fight for Fifteen.

The speaker's platform and march route demonstrated the organizers' goal of making concrete the relationship of the fight to halt runaway climate change and the struggles for jobs and racial justice. For example, at the kickoff rally of the event, activists heard from John Harrity, the president of the state machinists' council, who spoke of the contribution workers can make to building a fossil-fuel-free world. Bishop John Selders, of Moral Majority CT, a group well-known for actions against police brutality, educated the crowd about the power of the Black radical tradition and the need for social movements to learn this history.

The first stop on the march was Union Station, a train and bus depot, where Mustafa Salahuddin, the president of



Courtesy of Connecticut Sierra Club

the Bridgeport, Conn., Transit Workers Local 1336, spoke of his union's commitment to fight for green mass transit for all. At TD Bank, activists expressed solidarity with the water protectors and veterans at Standing Rock.

At the Main St. Burger King franchise, Vanessa Rodriguez, a Dunkin' Donuts worker who was arrested in the recent Fight for 15 day of action, explained why she had chosen to sit down in the street. "I did it because we are all strong together. Whether it is the Fight for 15, climate change, or immigration, if we stand together we will win!"

Although the protest was launched by the usual trinity of the most active state climate organizations—that is, 350 CT, the Connecticut Sierra Club, and the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network—organizers hammered away in the call on the need for a climate

movement that was linked to the everyday struggles of working people. The call began, "The fight to preserve our planet and halt climate warming is inextricably tied to the struggle for all the other elements of a decent human life: jobs, health, equality, and justice."

The drive for endorsements was accompanied by more language about this commitment and said: "The climate movement stands ready to campaign with the labor movement, the Movement for Black Lives, Native Americans, climate refugees, immigrant communities, environmental justice activists, conservationists, and other community movements for a massive program of good green jobs and a turn to focusing on the needs of people over fossil fuel profits."

Immigrant rights activists who were approached about participating in the

march asked for more explicit attention to the threat hanging over them of more deportations, and the 350 chapter voted to add that the march was not only against environmental racism but would "Stand with Immigrants and Climate Refugees."

In the end, the protest was endorsed by not only a large number of local climate action and peace groups, but also by the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and by four major state labor organizations. The latter included the State Council of Machinists, the Amalgamated Transit Union, the Greater Connecticut Area Local of the American Postal Workers Union, and the Connecticut UAW Cap Council.

The increased willingness of labor unions to endorse local climate actions is likely based, in part, on the opening created when many national AFL-CIO affiliates openly bucked the reactionary position on Standing Rock that was expressed by the federation president, Richard Trumka. But the now daily media coverage of the growing evidence that catastrophic change is inevitable without drastic encroachments on the prerogatives of big business is also having its impact on the ranks of the labor movement.

All this speaks to the potential of the April 29 People's Climate March in Washington, D.C., to put hundreds of thousands of working people in the streets and to kick off a new wave of organizing the unorganized millions who are ready to fight for a decent life in an unpolluted world. ■

JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: Jan. 11, 2016
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

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

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



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

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Stand with Standing Rock!

By MARTY GOODMAN

More than bitter winter weather lies ahead for hundreds of Native American nations and their supporters battling hazardous fossil-fuel pipelines on sacred Sioux land at the Standing Rock camp near Cannonball, North Dakota. A far more bitter struggle looms for Native American rights and climate justice with the incoming Trump administration. Former Texas Governor Rick Perry, Trump's choice for the Department of Energy, is a climate-change denier and sits on boards of Energy Transfer Partners and Sunoco, two companies involved in the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Oil company execs are vowing to complete the pipeline despite a Dec. 4 decision by the Obama administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to not give the go-ahead to Dakota Access Pipelines (DAPL) to dig pipelines under the Missouri River at Lake Oahe, a source of drinking water for the Sioux nation and millions downstream. The decision instructs the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct an environmental study with community input, a process that could take one or two years.

On Dec. 13, the New York *Daily News* posted a recording it had received in which Mathew Ramsey, a top exec at Energy Transfer Partners, DAPL's parent company, was said to be telling ETP staff, "I've got to tell you, election night changed everything." Ramsey said on the recording, "We fully expect as soon as he is inaugurated this team is going to move to the final approvals, and DAPL will cross the lake."

Vulture capitalist and President-elect Donald Trump has declared his support for the pipeline and is personally invested in DAPL for up to \$1 million. Also invested are many of the corporations of Trump's billionaire pals, such as Chase Morgan bank, the Bank of America, TD Bank, and Wells Fargo—which alone has invested \$467 million. The pipeline will extend 1170 miles from the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota through sacred Sioux land to Illinois and ultimately to the Gulf Coast. The cost is \$3.7 billion.

A lawsuit filed by Earthjustice on behalf of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe contends that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers violated the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and other federal laws in allowing the pipeline to be dug under Lake Oahe. If the Army Corp's permission to dig is restored, or if the federal court in North Dakota accepts DAPL's arguments, pipeline construction could resume.

North Dakota's laws are the strictest when it comes to allowing out of state public defenders to represent "water protectors" facing charges in court, now totaling at least 550. The Water Protector Legal Collective (WPLC) of the National Lawyers Guild provides legal support but is overwhelmed and urges the state to relax its guidelines. Seventy-five North Dakota lawyers have been assigned 165 cases, but an additional 264 water protectors remain without lawyers.

The WPLC has also called for the dismissal of State Attorney Ladd Erickson for his inflammatory comments in court, referring to water protectors as staging "fake news" and "simply props for videos of stage events." The hearings have been postponed, and the Trump administration's actions will ultimately determine the continued relevance of the lawsuit. Whatever happens, the first rule of capitalism will still apply: 'laws are meant to be broken' ... if they stand in the way of profits!

Originally, DAPL was to traverse an area close to the mostly white Bismarck, some 50 miles distant, but when the plan encountered opposition, the pipeline was rerouted to Standing Rock. DAPL is in violation of the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie and the treaty of 1868. In the 1950s, hundreds of thousands of acres of Sioux land was seized to make way for a dam, with little or no compensation. In the treaties, the Sioux agreed to keep the area undeveloped and for hunting, but it is now ravaged by fossil-fuel polluters.

Demonstrating corporate contempt for the environment, a recent examination of oil spills in the last 30 years revealed over 8700 pipeline spills. On Dec. 13, two hours from Standing Rock, a pipeline spilled an estimated 176,000 gallons of crude into the Ash Coulee Creek. Sunoco Logistics, DAPL's future operator, has the worst safety record of all. According to government statistics, it has had over 200 leaks since 2010. Last October, a Sunoco gas pipeline ruptured in Pennsylvania, spilling 55,000 gallons into the Susquehanna River.

The outrage at Standing Rock is a continuation of 500 years of the rape of Native American rights through massacres, racism, land theft, and forced dis-



Stephanie Keith / Reuters

Other Pipeline Struggles

Struggles against gas pipelines have erupted across North America, some a threat to Native peoples. New Jersey is facing a number of pipeline projects, including one that would cross the ecologically sensitive Pinelands area. The Sabal Trail Transmission, a \$3.2 billion gas pipeline, would cut through Alabama, Georgia and Florida. In tiny Alpine, Texas, protesters are fighting another Energy Transfer Partners pipeline.

In western Canada, the \$6.8 billion Trans Mountain gas pipeline is being built to carry oil from the Alberta fields to terminals in Vancouver; in addition to the \$7.5 billion Enbridge Line 3 project. Both projects are enraging Native Canadians.

On Jan. 6 in New York, the "Montrose 9" water protectors were sentenced in the Cortlandt Town Court by Judge Daniel McCarthy for "trespassing," i.e., peacefully blocking access to Spectra Energy's Algonquin pipeline construction in November 2015. Each pled "necessary defense," meaning that they had exhausted all other avenues to stop the reckless act of building a gas pipeline near the

Indian Point nuclear plant and under the Hudson River. They described the danger as "imminent."

The judge dismissed the defense's request to drop the charges, thus shielding Spectra's politically connected corporate criminals. The Montrose 9's attorney, Martin Solar, will file an appeal. The Montrose 9 were sentenced to a \$250 fine plus a \$125 "surcharge" and five hours of community service. The courtroom was filled with 100 supporters, who stood silently in solidarity.

Spectra has completed its hazardous 42-inch pipeline through sacred Ramapough Lenape land; it passes 105 feet from safety facilities of the Indian Point reactor. If the accident-prone nuke had a Fukushima-style meltdown, New York City, some 30 miles south, would be in its kill zone. (Breaking news: Indian Point may close in 2021.)

Spectra's pipeline has completed one-third of its route up the East Coast. Spectra pretends that the pipeline is three separate projects for greater leeway in circumventing regulations.

We say, keep fossil fuels in the ground! Stop Spectra! Victory to Standing Rock! 100% renewables now! — M.G.

placement. DAPL is a textbook case of environmental racism and is in violation of international laws and agreements on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Veterans arrive in Standing Rock

Many attribute the timing of Obama's Dec. 4 decision to the president's fear of political blowback after 2000 veterans of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan arrived at the Oceti Sakowin camp at Standing Rock.

Upon his arrival, U.S. Navy veteran Brandee Paisano said, "I didn't think I have to do it here, on this land, so here I am. This is what I need to be doing." Army veteran Angie Seacrest said, "We want them to know that, though they may be feeling like they're left out there alone, they're not."

The veterans often described themselves as "human shields" between cops and water protectors. The National Nurses United Union sent \$50,000 to fund the expenses of the "Veterans Stand for Standing Rock."

On Nov. 1, Obama said that he would let the situation at Standing Rock "play out" for several weeks—that is, regardless of Native American rights. Obama's cynical posture came just days after cops, DAPL's private security goons—with links to the notorious security firm Blackwater—and the National Guard brutalized peaceful water protectors on Oct. 27, arresting over 100 (see the November *Socialist Action*). Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton remained silent about the brutality.

Arrests at Standing Rock included the use of rubber bullets capable of breaking bones, concussion grenades, water cannons in sub-freezing weather, tear gas, rifle-propelled bean bags, and—shades of Mississippi in the 1960s—attack dogs. Peaceful water protector Sophia Wilansky may lose her arm after being hit with a projectile fired by police goons.

In December, vigilantes attempted, KKK style, to silence Native Americans. In Bismarck, N.D., two white men in masks violently confronted a car driven by

men from Standing Rock. The masked men threatened to assault them and bragged about sexually assaulting their wives. Also in December, three indigenous people were chased by white men in a pickup truck and masked men in snowmobiles. The attackers chased them at up to 100 mph on dangerously icy and snow-covered roads.

As with other struggles under capitalism, the struggle to stop DAPL will depend on the fight waged by Native American peoples and their working-class allies, especially oppressed communities.

Standing with Standing Rock

A movement to divest from DAPL has erupted nationwide. According to the divestment group #defundDapl, the total divested from DAPL is nearly \$44.5 million from 17 institutions. Some 334 divestment actions took place in December alone.

On Jan. 1, protesters marched in the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, Calif. In Minneapolis a giant "Divest NoDAPL" banner was hung from a scaffold high above a Chicago Bears vs. Minnesota Vikings game held at the U.S. Bank Stadium. U.S. Bank is an investor in DAPL. In Seattle, Kashama Sawant, a city council person and a socialist, is demanding that Seattle divest \$3 billion from Wells Fargo by December 2018.

It is critical that the struggle to defend Standing Rock include the demand to free American Indian Movement political prisoner Leonard Peltier, still in jail since 1976 on frame-up charges of killing two FBI agents during the 1975 siege at Wounded Knee, S.D. Supporters cite retracted testimony by one witness who suffered FBI intimidation, suppressed evidence, and a lack of proof, which even Peltier's parole commission admits.

The demand for his freedom is supported by Amnesty International and human rights supporters worldwide. Supporters called on Obama to pardon Peltier. ■



While settlements expand, UN again condemns Israel without sanctions

By MARK UGOLINI

On Dec. 23, the UN Security Council voted 14-0 to condemn Israel for “flagrant violation” of international law by constructing and expanding Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The U.S. abstained from the vote rather than employ its standard practice of vetoing resolutions critical of Israel. Until now, the Democratic Party administration of Barak Obama had consistently shielded the Zionist state from UN criticism for violations of international law.

The resolution, initially sponsored by Egypt, was delayed after intense pressure from Israel and U.S. president-elect Donald Trump. Egypt temporarily pulled back the resolution; however, it was quickly reintroduced and jointly submitted for vote by New Zealand, Venezuela, Senegal, and Malaysia.

It demands that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory” and declares “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.”

Much in the resolution is not new. For the most part it reaffirms and reiterates previous Security Council resolutions condemning Israel for land theft and other repressive aspects of Israel’s colonial occupation of Palestinian territory.

The current resolution demands that Israel halt “construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law.”

The UN renews its description of Israel as an “occupying power,” and as such requires that it provide all necessary protection of civilians guaranteed under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The UN also regards as unlawful “all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.”

This UN action should be welcomed by all supporters of Palestinian rights. Once more, it brings world attention to the horrific plight of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation and apartheid rule. As such,

it provides impetus to the struggle for Palestinian self-determination, and the worldwide movement to expose the Israeli occupation and defend Palestinian rights.

However, this resolution, like past UN resolutions, is toothless, failing to include enforcement provisions and sanctions that could force compliance and restrain Israel from its ongoing colonial expansion.

In *Electronic Intifada* on Dec. 22, Ali Abunimah, a Palestinian-American journalist and author, wrote: “... this resolution, like its predecessors, takes no action. In a masterful example of empty diplomatic phrasing, the draft only commits the Security Council ‘to examine practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of its relevant resolutions.’ ... This leisurely ‘examination’ has been going on for half a century now while Israel continues to violently steal and colonize Palestinian land.”

Yet, according to reports, Israeli officials are very concerned that the whirlwind of international exposure around the resolution, and an emboldened Palestinian-rights movement, will widen support for sanctions against Israel and its products, and heighten likelihood of prosecution of Israeli officials before the International Criminal Court.

Israel, in fury over the UN vote, responded by declaring the resolution a “shameful move against Israel” and retaliated against sponsoring countries New Zealand and Senegal, ordering their ambassadors to return home, and cutting off all aid programs to Senegal. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also directed a reduction in diplomatic activities with countries that voted for the resolution, and called emergency meetings with leading diplomats from the U.S. and the 14 countries that participated in the vote.

Al-Jazeera reported on Dec. 25: “[Israel’s] army radio reported that [Defense Minister] Lieberman has ordered Israeli security to halt cooperation on civilian matters with the Palestinians, while retaining security coordination. ... Right-wing Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan said on Saturday night that Israel should ‘announce a full annexation of settlement blocs’ in response to the resolution. Education Minister Naftali Bennett of the far-

right Jewish Home told army radio that his party would ‘soon propose a bill to annex Maale Adumim’, a settlement city east of Jerusalem.”

Zionists rain fire on the Obama administration

Much of Israel’s fire has been directed against Barak Obama’s Democratic Party administration for this time failing to shield Israel from the wrath of international condemnation. Netanyahu charged that the Obama administration “not only failed to protect Israel against this gang-up at the UN, it has colluded with it behind the scenes.” He indicated that he looked forward to working with Trump to negate the effects of the resolution.

A flurry of public attacks on Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry came from Israeli diplomats, U.S. Senators, right-wing blog sites, and lobbyists immediately following passage of the resolution. Morton Klein, the president of the right-wing Zionist Organization of America, was furious, proclaiming, “Obama has made it clear that he’s a Jew-hating anti-Semite.”

All this is taking place despite Obama’s recent decision to grant Israel its largest military aid package ever—\$38 billion over 10 years! If despite this huge windfall, which will be used to expand Israel’s military occupation, anyone still thinks that Obama’s actions at the UN makes him a defender of the Palestinian people, a closer look at the facts is warranted.

In a long line of U.S. presidential administrations that have staunchly backed the Zionist state, that of Obama is near the top of the list. Obama has done more to shield Israel than just about any of his predecessors, and has demonstrated in action the “unshakable bond” between his administration and the apartheid state of Israel and its policies.

The Dec. 23 UN resolution is the only one critical of Israel that Obama has refused to veto. George W. Bush allowed six similar UN resolutions through without veto; and his father, George H.W. Bush, proceeded in the same manner on nine resolutions critical of Israel.

An Op-Ed piece in the April 10 *New York Times* by Lara Friedman reports that “a careful examination of the record shows that, since 1967, every other American president allowed, or even had America vote for, Security Council resolutions taking Israel to task for actions and policies toward the Palestinians and other Arab neighbors.”

For a democratic, secular Palestine!

Despite the positive features mentioned above, some aspects of the resolution actually undercut the struggle for Palestinian rights. The resolution totally ignores the centrality of equal rights for Palestinians. Most significantly, it promotes the so-called two-state solution as central to resolving of the historic issue, implying that a separate Palestinian state in and of itself is the answer.

Clearly the imposition of a Bantustan-like state on the Palestinian people, under conditions of squalor and poverty, without equal social or political rights, and without equal access to natural resources, housing, and other social necessities would be no solution at all.

Only a democratic and secular Palestine extending throughout the historic territory of the Palestinian people, with full rights guaranteed for all regardless of nationality or religion, can effectively replace the current system of settler-colonial domination.

The resolution also ignores and limits the right of Palestinians to resist the illegal occupation. It calls for confiscation of “illegal” weapons and equates the right of Palestinians to self-defense and military resistance to colonial occupation with “terrorism.”

In addition, nowhere in the resolution is there mention of the decade-long illegal siege of Gaza, or the right of Palestinians in the diaspora to return to their homeland.

In the midst of diplomatic maneuvering, finger-pointing, and political posturing between Israel, resolution backers, and U.S. government officials, the horrific reality on the ground for Palestinians is ever worsening. Israel continues to act with impunity. It is clearly doubling down, stealing more land, expanding existing settlements, and adding new ones with reckless abandon. ■

Trump declares unquestioning support for Israel

The new Republican administration has clearly taken unquestioning support for apartheid Israel to a new level. The selection of David M. Friedman as U.S. Ambassador to Israel is a “green light” for Israel to accelerate land-theft from Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Jewish settlements there have long been declared illegal under international law.

Friedman, who refers to the West Bank by its Biblical name, Judea and Samaria, does not recognize the rights of Palestinians to any part of these territories or to East Jerusalem, which are currently occupied by Israel. Friedman plans to work “from the U.S. Embassy in Israel’s eternal capital, Jerusalem,” rather than Tel Aviv, where the American Embassy has resided for many years.

Palestinians have long sought Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state, and moving the embassy to Jerusalem will be considered an outrage throughout the Arab world. Friedman is connected to ultra-religious Jewish settlement groups and raises money for them. He was also a major contributor to the Trump election campaign.

Despite minor differences on settlements, the Democrats and Republicans agree on the most critical questions. Both see Israel as the bastion of U.S. imperialist interests in the Middle East and a critical ally, justifying huge sums in military aid from the U.S. each year; both fully support Israel as a Jewish exclusive state, in which non-Jewish residents are relegated to second-class status, without equal rights; both fully support imposing a Bantustan-like

state on the Palestinian people without real political or military sovereignty; and both also reject granting all Palestinians and non-Jewish residents equal rights, including the right of all Palestinians currently living outside historic Palestine to return to their homeland.

The creation of the state of Israel was an act of colonial domination based on Jewish religious supremacy over the Palestinians, who are persecuted, deprived of basic rights, and relegated to second-class status. This master-slave relationship must end before a truly just society can be built—a democratic and secular state throughout all of historic Palestine, which recognizes full and equal rights to all regardless of religion, race, or national origin.

— MARK UGOLINI

... Trump

(continued from page 1)

ness Insider his true feelings about workers and automation: The good thing about machines is that “they are always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there’s never a slip-and-fall or an age, sex, or race discrimination case.”

Trump promotes “law and order” and giving police departments a free hand to act with limited constraints. His comments target Black and Latino communities victimized by a spate of highly publicized racist police murders over the last few years. Trump believes that local police departments are not strong enough.

Trump selected Jeff Sessions, an Alabama racist with a sordid history, for Attorney General, and retired General John Kelly for Director of Homeland Security. They will team up to implement this “law and order” policy. Both back police against opponents of police violence. They also support the War on Drugs, militarization of the police, mass incarceration of Black youth, and the growing private prison industry that sustains itself on slave prison labor.

New attacks will be directed against immigrants, with stepped-up deportations and harassment. Trump will continue and likely expand Obama’s aggressive deportation of over 2 million immigrants. Trump agrees with Obama’s method of targeting “undesirables” or “non-deserving” immigrants who may have been arrested or jailed in the U.S. Using this distinction, the incoming administration will first target the approximately 3 million immigrants in the “bad immigrant” category.

The idea that a certain category of immigrant in some way deserves deportation is unacceptable and will only divide the immigrant rights movement, which stands opposed to *all* deportations. It also provides political cover for politicians to unjustly label large sections of the immigrant population as “criminals.” Nothing can be farther from the truth.

Trump wants to reverse the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court ruling that affirmed the legal right of women to abortions, and stated that any candidate for Supreme Court justice must share his view. Since a new nominee will be selected by Trump early in his first term, it’s clear that the on-going fight for abortion rights will be near center stage.

Foreign policy

As the preeminent world power, the United States under Republican-majority rule will continue to assert its dominance throughout the world. U.S. foreign policy is designed to pave the way for the insatiable drive of powerful corporate giants to dominate markets anywhere in the world.

The capitalist crisis is global, as no nation on earth can boast of a “recovery” or an economy free from stagnation or decline. Along with widespread imposition of austerity measures worldwide, imperialist wars of domination and plunder continue unabated throughout the world.

As Obama leaves office, the U.S. is engaged in at least seven wars (Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia), either by direct military intervention or through client states and mercenary armies. In many, drone warfare prevails, and the CIA provides leadership utilizing covert methods. In others, U.S. military Special Forces provide training and support for local troops or intervene directly on their own. Meanwhile, regular U.S. imperialist troops remain stationed at some 1100 military bases around the world, from which drone attacks and deadly covert actions are regularly planned and executed.

Foreign policy will be led by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, CEO of Exxon, one of the most powerful multi-national corporations. Tillerson has strong ties to Russian government officials and oil magnates from years of partnership managing their shared oil interests. Tillerson and Exxon are sure to prosper mightily.

Foreign policy will also be shaped by two retired generals, Secretary of Defense James “Mad Dog” Mattis and National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. Mattis was a central leader of U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which destroyed those countries and killed hundreds of thousands in the process. Flynn, an Islamophobe who believes fear of Muslims is “justified,” supports targeting Muslim organizations and mosques with surveillance and spying. Both will be instrumental in executing and possibly expanding involvement in U.S. wars.

‘America First’

The foreign policy theme of the new administration will be “America First.” Trump raised this slogan dur-



ing his campaign largely as a false promise to U.S. workers that his administration would remedy stagnant job growth by means of a system of tariffs and other protectionist devices aimed at increasing the volume of products that are “Made in America.”

But “America First” also has a military connotation. Large doses of anti-Muslim rhetoric are used to project a strong image of U.S. military strength and dominance worldwide. This posture demands subservience from less powerful nations. It will be a foreign policy that “respects” authoritarian figures such as Russian President Vladimir Putin and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Trump also seeks closer ties with Philippine dictator President Rodrigo Duterte, whose government has overseen extrajudicial killings of thousands of suspected drug dealers. In accepting a congratulatory call from Duterte following Trump’s victory, the president-elect communicated approval for these police actions.

Democratic Party administrations also have a long history of supporting tyrants and dictators. The Obama administration provided full-throated support for dictatorial regimes like the Saudi monarchy, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Persian Gulf states including Qatar and Bahrain, and Idriss Deby in Chad. Obama greatly expanded funding for apartheid Israel—which has 1.8 million Palestinians under siege in Gaza, rules by military occupation, regularly tortures Palestinian political prisoners, and has a long history of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial murders (for more on Israel, see articles on page 4).

Trump’s “America First” approach is at odds with Obama’s foreign policy posture, which uses different methods but is designed to achieve the same result. Obama’s program ostensibly focused on “building trust” with other countries. The Dec. 29 *Washington Post* described it as a “collaborative approach and emphasis on international norms [to] convince other countries to partner with the United States to do things that were not always popular.”

Clearly, these differences are purely tactical. The goal is to force compliance with U.S. interests, and the differences concern how best to posture on the world stage to achieve that result.

There is little doubt Trump plans a massive buildup in military spending, exceeding spending during the Obama years. He has called for 90,000 more Army soldiers, dozens of new Navy ships and hundreds of warplanes, and bolstering nuclear and missile defense. As expected, justification for this massive buildup is the “heightened threat of terrorism.”

Forbes cited an expert analysts on the cost: “[a] good ballpark estimate ... is about \$800-900B higher over ten years than the most recent president’s budget requests. *Foreign Policy Magazine* estimates about \$100 billion more than the Pentagon has currently budgeted for Trump’s first term.”

Trump is proud to admit that a big chunk of military spending will go to upgrading the military nuclear arsenal, continuing and expanding Obama’s work in this area. In fact, Trump is calling for “a new nuclear arms race.” He wants the U.S. to “expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes.” The U.S. currently has 4500 nuclear



warheads, including 1800 deployed strategic nuclear weapons, far surpassing all other countries that have them.

The new administration will build on the work of their predecessors. Despite Obama’s carefully crafted statements posing as an opponent of nuclear weapons, he has taken major steps to strengthen the U.S. nuclear military capability with an extensive “modernization” program, which the Dec. 22 *New York Times* reported “may cost up to \$1 trillion over three decades. It features new factories, refurbished nuclear arms and a new generation of weapon carriers, including bombers, missiles and submarines...”

This “modernization” means replacing older and outdated missile systems with smaller more streamlined versions equipped with new technology that makes them much more accurate in hitting targets and more difficult to shoot down.

Staunch bipartisan military support for Israel, the only military nuclear power in the Middle East, has further heightened the risk of nuclear war. Former President Jimmy Carter estimated in 2014 that Israel’s nuclear arsenal totaled somewhere near 300 warheads, with ample delivery systems to deploy them.

Obama’s award to Israel of a record \$38 billion in military aid over the next 10 years will greatly strengthen its nuclear capability and poses a grave risk of nuclear war in the region. To this day, Israel denies it has a nuclear program and it refuses to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Republican electoral victory reflected the absence of class-conscious political leadership within the organizations of the U.S. working class and the oppressed. That’s why revolutionary socialists raise the pressing need for a Labor Party in the United States, based on a fighting and re-energized labor movement.

Such a party, fully independent and opposed to capitalist parties, could have filled this void and presented a political program that fights for working-class issues, demands an immediate end to U.S. wars around the world, opposes all forms of racism and sexism, and champions the struggles of all those oppressed under capitalism—a program that relies solely on the independent power of working people and their allies organized in mass struggle. ■

Can capitalism liberate women?



By DAVID KIELY and CHRISTINE MARIE

Anticipating a Trump administration and a conservative Congress, women and their allies are marching in Washington and in scores of other cities on Jan. 21. The fact that the Washington march blossomed from a little seed into a huge national undertaking almost overnight is a sign that millions of people are ready to fight for the defense of women's rights and the advancement of the women's movement.

Any long-term strategy needs to start with a clear view of the root causes and fundamental bases of sexism and gender discrimination.

One of the most pressing questions facing our movement has to do with the relationship of women's oppression to the capitalist economic system as a whole. Is it possible to complete the project of women's liberation within our current social and economic system? How one responds to this question will determine, to a great degree, the kind of movement we set off to build. It will determine our effectiveness and ultimate success.

Women's liberation groups have discussed strategy based on this question in every stage of the struggle over decades. Looking at the anthropological, historical, and theoretical elements that undergirded those previous debates is a prerequisite for our own deliberations. Together, these elements can give us a fundamental understanding of the inner workings of a gendered class society and how class and gender reinforce each other.

Women in indigenous society

Women's subordination did not always exist. In fact, they played a role of leadership in early societies, before the development of distinct social classes.

Women's social position, far from being biologically determined, is specific to the ways in which different class societies are organized economically. Women's status has not gradually improved as society "evolved" from "primitive" to "civilized" but, on the contrary, has shifted, often negatively, with the development of new property relations and the kinds of social organization that accompany these relations.

Anthropologists such as Eleanor Leacock and Silvia Federici have established a significant body of research documenting pre-capitalist gender relations. Federici shows in her writings that indigenous society in the Americas was far more egalitarian for women than in Europe after the transition to capitalism. Many indigenous societies were based mainly on consensus, lacking most of the formal authority we find in later civilization, and women often controlled economic life.

According to Leacock in her book, "Myths of Male Dominance" (1981), pre-Columbian Iroquois women had a great deal of control over society, including the

"the de facto power to veto declarations of war and to intervene to bring about peace." These native women managed "the household," but that had little in common with "household management" in patriarchal society.

In Iroquois society preceding the colonizers, management of the household meant control of all food stocks, treasury, and fur. This was everything they needed to survive and to trade amongst neighboring tribes. Women could exercise control over society because they were at the center of the public economic life of their society. The arrangement of production for sustenance and development did not itself lead to patriarchy. It was only the colonial introduction of new property relations into band society that began to tie production to patriarchal norms.

In fact, the European interlopers were often shocked at the kinds of gender equality they found in indigenous tribes in the Americas. Leacock described one account from a Jesuit priest regarding relationships of 17th-century Montagnais-Naskapi life: "Noting that women had 'great power,' he expressed his disapproval of the fact that men had no apparent inclination to make their wives 'obey' them or enjoin sexual fidelity upon them. He lectured the Indians of this failing, reporting in one instance, 'I told him then that he was the master and that in France women do no rule their husbands.'"

The Jesuits who first encountered the Montagnais-Naskapi in the 17th century in Canada had attitudes that themselves were products of a dramatic transformation of property relations and the status of women in Europe. Silvia Federici, author of "Caliban and the Witch," describes the way that the enclosures of communal land and the devaluation of peasant women's "home work" were accompanied by a devastating reduction in women's rights. From the 15th to the 17th century, Federici claims, women were stripped of their right to perform abortions, as well as their right to professions such as midwives and medical practitioners, and rape stopped being a punishable crime.

By the end of this social transformation, women had lost significant social power. The transition from feudalism to capitalism sharpened, rather than decreased, the use of patriarchal principles to organize society.

Women under capitalism

Capitalism is a system that runs on profit making and the continuous production of commodities. If the system stopped facilitating the production of all of the commodities we consume, the economy would collapse. In addition to boosting the production of commodities, the capitalist system must reproduce the class conditions that make profit possible. In part, this means the reproduction of a class of workers who must labor for wages because we do not own any

(Above) To make up for the World War II labor shortage, women in North America were recruited into the factories, but pushed out after the war.

means to produce commodities ourselves.

To keep the working class producing, workers must replace themselves with children, and these children must be raised, educated into the workforce, and maintained as part of the workforce. Each worker has to find or create social mechanisms to help deal with occupational illnesses, the stress and physical wear and tear of work, and to tend to them when they are old or disabled.

Marxist-feminist Cinzia Arruzza, in her paper, "Functionalist, Determinist, Reductionist: Social Reproduction Feminism and its Critics," described some of the conditions of work under capitalism. One of the main features of wage labor, she states, is to keep the worker in a condition of "dispossession." This is done through paying the worker less than the amount they produce in sales for the boss, but also by appropriating their skills into machinery. Thus, the worker is "not just reproducing herself as a generic human being with needs and desires; she is also reproducing herself ... as a member of a specific class characterized by dispossession and exploitation."

Ideally, capitalists would always keep workers working, while providing meager wages to cover costs of living. However, we need some amount of time to rest, eat, and take care of ourselves and our families. We can call the labor used in maintaining living conditions, *necessary labor*. In capitalism, the bulk of necessary labor is done by women, but can also be done by men, children, or even service workers.

Capitalists want to continue to increase profitability, and thus there is an incentive to reduce necessary labor by employing those doing domestic labor. Yet, it must allow for necessary labor; otherwise, the labor supply would ultimately be reduced, or even decimated. This is a contradiction. Necessary labor should be reduced to increase profitability, but it should also be increased to increase labor supply and create the condition of dispossession for the worker. During World War II when women were critical to production in the United States, the elites rushed to set up child-care centers, but after the war used all the means at their disposal to push women out of full-time work.

The World War II experience shows that social reproduction can be arranged in many ways. Within the last 100 years, domestic life for working people has generally been the result of women's unpaid labor, but occasionally, portions have been taken up by the state, and most recently, relatively privatized. These variations are not unusual, and change has been a permanent feature of the capitalist mode of produc-

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Mariela Castro and Cuba's LGBT revolution

By ANN MONTAGUE

"Mariela Castro's March: Cuba's LGBT Revolution," directed by Jon Albert and Sual Landau. Cuban producer Roberto Chile. An HBO Documentary Production.

This just released film follows Mariela Castro and Cuban LGBT activists as they travel through rural towns to engage with Cubans about the upcoming International Day Against Homophobia on May 17, 1990.

They travel to the region of Matanzas, the small towns of San Pablo de Yao and Ciego de Avila, and a farm in the Sierra Maestra mountains. There are also more recent interviews with lesbians, gay men, and transgender Cubans and their families throughout the island. The film begins and ends with the 2013 Day Against Homophobia marches, which illustrates how far the movement has come.

In the beginning, the film explains that Mariela Castro is the daughter of Raul Castro and the niece of Fidel Castro. But it fails to mention the more important fact that she is very much the daughter of Vilma Espin, who was a Cuban revolutionary, feminist, and president of the Federation of Cuban Women from 1960 until her death in 2007. Mariela likes to say that she is a Castro by accident of birth. When she is asked about marriage equality for Cuba, she says that when her father tells her she is going too fast, she reminds him that her mother supported gay marriage in the 1980s.

Mariela is the director of CENESEX (Cuban Center For Sex Education), which she describes as "running outreach programs to the community to change minds and fight prejudice. We



also offer classes and health services."

The film does not pull any punches about the shameful history of Cuba's revolutionary government's treatment of LGBT persons. "Public displays of homosexuality, performance of homosexual acts, association with homosexuals" were forbidden for decades. In addition, thousands of gay men were sent to forced labor camps, which were euphemistically called "Military Units To Aid Production" (UMAP).

The film interviews one gay man who describes his experience and films a support group of survivors of the camps who talk about their encounters with Mariela Castro and say they deserve an apology. She apologizes and says, "We must remember so that it will

never happen again."

A lot of the stories are universal experiences of family rejection, acceptance, and mere tolerance. What makes the film compelling is the Cuban context. The factory workers who accept their co-worker, the factory manager who discriminates against a lesbian worker, the first Cuban to experience female to male sex reassignment surgery with Mariela Castro at his bedside, LGBT baseball games, and lesbian farmers living openly in the Sierra Maestra mountains, where the revolution began.

Mariela Castro is an elected member of Cuba's Parliament (Asamblea del Poder Popular). There is interesting footage of her testifying for the inclusion of transgender rights in Cuba's

Labor Code. When it was not included, she votes "no." She says, "I cannot support humiliation and suffering and the denial of human rights."

The film ends at the Karl Marx Theatre in Havana, where the first Gala Against Homophobia and Transphobia is being televised. Mariela says with a smile, "This is the first year that the festivities are being televised. Change takes time. We will continue fighting."

This documentary is definitely worth seeing for LGBT people, but also anyone interested in the changes happening in Cuba. While the focus is on the LGBT experience in Cuba, it also gives us a close look at a Cuban leader and activist whom U.S. officials have rarely allowed to visit the United States. ■

... Which way for women in 2017?

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vious orientation of backers of the march to encourage women to see their future tied to the victory of Democratic Party candidates in the 2017 mid-term elections is, by any historical measure, an unreliable path forward.

Changing course and learning from history

If we cannot rely on the anti-Trump Democratic Party to mount an uncompromising defense and expansion of women's rights, what hope can we have? In truth, the political situation for women and the prospects for change was much more dire when the first major abortion victories were won almost a half-century ago.

The efforts to legalize abortion in the United States took off in the mid-1960s in a country that was deeply conservative on gender and everything else. The political climate had been darkened by the McCarthyite witchhunt of the 1950s. Yet, public opinion was shifted and mass pressure was built for a radical overturn of the existing restrictions on abortion. This was not ac-

complished by barely perceptible incremental change inside the Democratic Party, but by radical and militant propaganda events, well-publicized tribunals in which working women told their stories and publicly identified with the movement, and repeated mass actions of thousands of mostly young women whose politics were, in the majority, far to the left of the electoral machines.

These activities were, at their most effective, decided upon and implemented out of mass meetings and large, democratic conferences that were independent of the Democratic Party. Women could join a local group, set their political agenda, decide the actions needed, and collaborate in large national gatherings to call national demonstrations without having their agenda limited by the pragmatism and cynicism of parliamentarianism.

Within a few years, this activity created a massive groundswell of support for women's right to control their own bodies and a Supreme Court decision that amounted to legalization. In the 1980s, women of the left organized a broad, independent, and effective physi-

cal and political defense of clinics targeted by the right.

These are the kind of movements we need to build coming out of the March on Washington. They need to be movements that we control from the bottom and whose parameters are set by what the majority of working women need, not by a strategy for the mid-terms in which are needs are secondary.

Women of the socialist movement were some of the anchors of those movements then, and they will be the first today to devote themselves to building a movement independent of the big business parties and focused on moving towards mobilizing the vast majority of working women around all the things that we really need: full reproductive justice, affordable 24-7 child care, universal health care, a dismantling of the racist criminal justice system and ICE, and union-scale wages on which one can support a family with dignity.

Throughout the building of such an independent movement, we must also construct a socialist political party. Without the fundamental change to a socialist society based on human needs, instead of one based on the misery and inequality of the profit system, our full liberation will always be out of reach. ■

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tion. Education, for example, was the private responsibility of families. Once, cooking and cleaning were assigned to children. But whatever the setup, under capitalism, women have remained subordinate.

The shift of some necessary labor from inside the home to outside has not produced women's liberation. Rather than women performing all the necessary labor at home, working women pay a substantial amount of their wages to privatized firms. In these firms, because of their seemingly "natural" place in the home, women can be paid deliberately meager wages. Because the economy is set up so that all family members need to work, women are forced to become part of a low-wage workforce that the employers can use to drive down the wages of all.

Because capitalism cannot allow for women to be completely liberated from the necessary labor of social reproduction, they continue to maintain a discriminatory wage system. Overall, women function as what socialists call a "reserve army of labor," buffeted

to and fro as the capitalists negotiate competition and the swings of the business cycle.

As long as society is organized to maximize the production of profit rather than to fulfill human needs, full women's liberation and an end to gender discrimination are impossible. To end this kind of oppression once and for all, we must base the organization of human society on the needs of the majority and make all the elements of social reproduction—nurturing, education, health, child care, elder care, and all that is needed for a satisfying life—the responsibility of society as a whole. This kind of system is called socialism.

How do we get there?

Overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with a socialist system that puts human needs before profits is a gigantic task that can only be accomplished when the majority of the working people in the country are convinced of its necessity. That majority will have tremendous power at its disposal, and if unified and politically engaged, can use its position in production, transportation, and communications to put them-

selves at the head of a government capable of reorganizing everything.

History (i.e., the 1917 Russian Revolution) tells us that this kind of reorganization can provide the material basis for a radical transformation of the status of women. Once they have freed themselves of the burden of filling the coffers of Wall Street, Exxon, and the Pentagon, working people could immediately use the surplus from production to provide each other 24-7 child care and elder care, universal health care, full reproductive justice, enriching public education, food sovereignty, mitigation of environmental threats, and housing and mass transportation for all.

A new women's movement, visible through massive marches like the one on Jan. 21, independent of the corporate parties, and committed to strengthening and interacting with the movements of labor, immigrant rights, and for Black Lives, must shape the agenda of that majority so that the material potential will become social reality. The most direct way to become part of the process is to join a socialist group. Socialist Action welcomes your participation. ■

Veterans confront a system that ignores them



By MITCH USMC05-09
Deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, in 2006

Veterans are tired. They are tired of a system that no longer listens to them, tired of longer deployments, tired of a medical system that takes days or months to respond. I have buried more friends to drug overdoses, drunk driving, and suicide than during my deployment to Iraq.

In 2012 military suicides surpassed military combat deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan. We hear stories about how even after Congress made a law to stop the military from kicking out members with mental health issues, the Army discharged more than 22,000 soldiers suffering from TBI or PTSD. We see veterans stripped of their GI Bill benefits, stripped of their rights to use the VA, and unable to find a job if they were deprived of an honorable discharge.

Most members of Congress give speeches and implore the American population to support the troops, but nothing changes. I see my brothers and sisters suffering from a high unemployment rate, high rates of suicide, and homelessness. Those who stay in the military are emotionally and physically stretched thin with constant deployments to war zones.

The United States has been directly at war in the Middle East for almost 16 years. Yet, less than three quarters of one percent of the U.S. population has served in those wars. Washington's war-making has fallen on the shoulders of so few. So, we come home to a country that does not understand us and has almost no reference for where we have been and what we have done.

We hear platitudes from the residents of our hometowns thanking us for our service, but those residents understand almost nothing about what our service

entailed. We are marched out and honored at every major sporting event, but if you would have a conversation with the majority of the fans that are there, you would discover that they have no idea what they are honoring.

We are isolated and revered, meant to be put on a shelf and then taken down when America needs to be reminded of how great it is.

We also see no end to these wars. The last "progressive" president ran on ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but launched military operations in Yemen and Libya, and upped the drone assassinations in Pakistan. His right-wing opponents preach that we should have boots on the ground in Syria and in Africa.

It is no wonder that we see the military and veterans flock to known "anti-war" candidates, people like Ron Paul. There was fervor for Ron Paul in 2008; I do not think most veterans understood his economic policy at all. What appealed to them was the promise of no more foreign intervention and getting the government out of your bedroom.

Of course, none of these Democratic and Republican party politicians plan to actually bring the troops home. Nor have any of them truly taken up our most basic needs. Everyone knows on some level that politicians are liars and celebrate us only when it is convenient to make a point.

But because we remain disconnected from and unheard by the majority of the American population, because we continue to see ourselves used as propaganda and see our epidemics of suicide and addiction ignored, many veterans embraced Trump.

Trump came along and said one thing that brought much of the veteran community to his side. He went on stage and said, directly, "Veterans are getting screwed."

Veterans live day in and day out in a society that does not recognize just how terrible our situation is. So all it took for many to back Trump was that one loudly proclaimed and very true statement.

There has been a lot of good discussion about why many blue-collar workers in the rust belt were convinced to vote for the billionaire Trump, but less about why so many veterans did. I believe that it comes down to not having a strong voice on the left encouraging veterans to fight for a better future.

The collective spirit that is so central to the labor and socialist movements is intrinsically important to veterans too. The socialist movement should be a natural political home for those who signed up for a collective mission for justice but discovered too late that the wars were not about justice, least of all for them.

During and after World War II and the Vietnam War, radicalizing veterans became central to the leadership of the civil rights, antiwar, and Chicano and Black liberation movements. Many grew to become leaders of the socialist movement, as well. What voice do we socialists use today to show veterans that our movement cares about their struggles, can make life better for them, and would stop the "nation-building" and imperialism that is ruining so many lives?

I believe that socialists must introduce veterans to our ideals of working-class democracy, justice, and equality. The movement can show veterans that there is a way to stop the pain and trauma they associate with Washington's "nation-building" projects.

There are more choices than military intervention or isolationism. Socialists can introduce the idea of real internationalism, where we build global solidarity based on common struggles against the war-makers in every capitalist capital and every corporate boardroom around the world. We can tell the history that proves that a workers' movement can create a society that can really bring peace and prosperity to their lives.

The military taught us how integral it is for each member to do their job so the mission can be accomplished as a whole. It should be an easy task for veterans to understand how they can contribute to mass actions of millions of workers and strikes at the point of production and transport hubs, actions that could shut down the system, forcing our demands to be met. The response of a group of veterans to the needs of the water protectors at Standing Rock shows that this kind of thinking is in the air.

Now is the moment for socialists to turn to the discussion in earnest. Many weary veterans responded to Trump's one true statement about their treatment, but we have so many more truths to share. We understand the economic draft. We know that one should not have to put oneself in harm's way just to avoid unemployment and discrimination due to low income.

Socialists refuse to champion a society that trades lousy military benefits for lifetimes of traumatic brain injury, PTSD, and early onset arthritis. Socialists oppose wars fought for the rich against the interests of working people at abroad and at home.

Socialists are for setting up a society in which the major decisions about war, peace, jobs, health care, housing, and education are made by working people themselves. Veterans need to hear this. They have also seen a lot and have a huge contribution to make to the struggle for this new world. ■

By JEFF MACKLER

At meetings initiated by the newly formed Hands Off Syria Coalition (HOSC), independent Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett reported on her several trips to Syria, including most recently to Aleppo in late November. Bartlett toured the U.S. in mid-December addressing packed meetings in New York City and other East Coast venues as well as standing-room-only public forums in Oakland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

More than 600 activists attended her meetings, which included lengthy question and answer periods. Her slide show and video presentation debunked the U.S. corporate media's characterization of the events in Syria as a civil war between democratic-minded Syrian "rebels" and the government of President Bashar Assad. Instead, Bartlett, while noting the legitimacy of the early mass protests for democracy in 2011, asserted that this brief movement had long ago given way to a U.S.-backed, NATO and Gulf State

Eva Bartlett speaks on Syria



Roger Harris

Bartlett's forum in Oakland (from left): Paul Larudee, Syria Solidarity Coalition; Eva Bartlett; Jeff Macker, UNAC; Rick Sterling, Veterans for Peace.

the initiative of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) and the U.S. Peace Council.

Security and transportation for Bartlett's most recent visit to Aleppo was provided by the Syrian government and included interviews with President Assad. Bartlett was joined on this tour by journalists from several countries, including the *New York Times* Bureau Chief based in Lebanon, Anne Barnard. Bartlett traveled on the same bus

with Barnard, and both noted the massive destruction in Western Aleppo wrought by so-called rebels based in Eastern Aleppo and backed by the U.S.

While Barnard's reportage over the past years has frequently called attention to the fact that the main fighting forces in Syria seeking the Assad government's removal are trained, financed, and abetted by the U.S. and its sponsored "coalition" allies, *The Times* coverage most often relegates this defining information to brief references buried beneath the official CIA assertions that the Syrian government is guilty of war crimes.

See *Socialist Action*, November 2016, for Barnard's and other *Times* reports on the central role of the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front and its essential domination of the fighting forces in Eastern Aleppo. For example, the Aug. 25, 2016, *New York Times* reported, "The jihadists' prominent role in the Aleppo offensive showed that they remain militarily in-

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By KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

To respond to the incoming Trump administration—overflowing with Islamophobes—will require a strategy for challenging Islamophobia on several levels. The first thing to note, however, is that Islamophobia, defined as the irrational fear and hatred of Muslims, is not technically the correct term for the oppression that Muslims are increasingly confronting.

It is really *institutionalized* white, pro-Christian supremacy, plus capitalism's divide-and-rule strategy, that most impact Muslims—particularly Muslim immigrants of color from the Middle East and Africa. Anti-Muslim discrimination has been growing in the U.S. and throughout the capitalist world since the War on Terror began more than 16 years ago.

Prejudice is individual, while oppression is institutionalized. Simply educating people to discard their prejudices on a personal level (as NGOs and faith groups using the “know your Muslim neighbor” approach often attempt to do) leaves the institutionalized oppression untouched.

The anti-Muslim propaganda industry

We can appreciate the efforts of well-intentioned Muslims to patiently answer any questions about their religion. But they are no match for the well-funded, broad-reaching anti-Muslim propaganda industry. In August 2011 the Center for American Progress (CAP) released a report entitled, “Fear, Inc. The roots of the Islamophobia Network in America,” which identifies and exposes a tightly linked network to coordinate the spread of misinformation and hateful propaganda about Islam and Muslims.

They followed it up with an interactive website (see <https://IslamophobiaNetwork.com>), which makes visible the insidious \$57 million (in the first decade following 9/11) web of eight top funders, the organizations they funded, the six “experts” producing the majority of the misinformation, the echo chamber amplifying the lies, the validators (non-Muslim individuals usually of Middle Eastern descent who claim inside knowledge and serve to validate the lies), and the activists and their “grassroots” organizations that provide the muscle for the network.

The religious right, right-wing media, and politicians complete the network and promote its agenda nationally. A 2016 report by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Center for Race and Gender (CRG) at UC Berkeley says 33 organizations received more than \$205 million between 2008 and 2013, a substantial increase over the CAP numbers.

But it is not just the far right. The entire capitalist media constantly reinforces Islamophobic messages. Eating sambusas while learning about Islam one evening cannot possibly inoculate us against narratives laced with Islamophobia that bombard us continuously. Individual assaults on Muslims—from school bullying and offensive graffiti to harassment and violent attacks (which frequently target female Muslims, who are generally more visible)—have clearly been on the increase throughout the election campaign season and since the election of Donald Trump because individuals with prejudices are *encouraged* to act by powerful people using inflammatory rhetoric that is magnified by repetition in the sensationalist capitalist media.

We must be prepared to defend those under attack, recalling always that “an injury to one, is an injury to all.”

The “War on Terror”

The most important prejudice underlying Islamophobia, at least for the last two decades, is the one that equates Islam with terrorism. The United States is now in the second decade of its so-called “Global War on Terrorism.” The more that Islam is equated with terrorism, the more the War on Terror becomes a War on Muslims, around the world and at home.

The War on Terror starts with a systematic devaluing of Muslim lives. This is not a side effect; it is an essential component. In order to wage largely indiscriminate war on so many predominantly Muslim countries, with high levels of “civilian” casualties as an expected and accepted outcome of the military methods, Muslim lives must be viewed as inconsequential.

The world reacts in horror when “terrorist” groups like ISIS or al-Qaeda hit targets in predominantly white, European areas—demanding that Muslims everywhere disavow such actions or risk being viewed as complicit—but the overwhelming majority of the victims of ISIS/al-Qaeda attacks are Muslims. Devaluing Muslim lives allows us to ignore inconvenient Muslim deaths.

This systemic devaluation took a leap forward in May 2012 when we learned that the Obama administration was reducing the number of “civilian” casualties from drone strikes, not by reducing the number of strikes but by *redefining* every military-age male in a “strike zone” as a “combatant.”

Say no to discrimination against Muslims!



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

The Orwellian logic says that if the U.S. killed you in the War on Terror; you were a terrorist—end of story. On the home front, those who protest the killing of “civilians” (how dare they continue to use that word?) are labeled terrorist sympathizers, and then the boundary between sympathizer and actual terrorist starts to melt away.

Journalist Trevor Aaronson notes in his 2013 book, “The Terror Factory: Inside the FBI’s Manufactured War on Terrorism,” that the government allocates \$3 billion annually to the FBI to prevent the next 9/11—more than the Bureau receives to combat organized crime and almost 40% of the \$7.8 billion annual FBI budget. Aaronson adds that “a generalized Islamophobia pervades all levels of the Bureau. In recent years, FBI counterterrorism training has made no distinction between the Al Qaeda terrorist network—whose members are religious radicals—and Islam in general. FBI counterterrorism training documents in circulation in 2011 described Mohammed as a ‘cult leader’ and labeled charity among Muslims as a ‘funding mechanism for combat.’ The more devout a Muslim was, according to FBI training literature, the more likely he was to be violent.”

When “Islamophobia pervades all levels of the Bureau,” it is being institutionalized. Prejudice becomes policy and we get programs like “Countering Violent Extremism” (CVE), a joint effort of the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Justice, which began in 2014 with pilots in Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Boston.

From the website of the Massachusetts ACLU we learn: “CVE is a law enforcement model that originated in the United Kingdom, premised on the discredited idea that harboring certain political or religious views is an indicator of future violence. Historically, CVE efforts have targeted specific communities, seeking people who might display so-called ‘vulnerabilities’ to ideological or political ‘radicalization.’”

“In contrast to proven counter-terrorism strategies that focus on violent threats or behaviors, the CVE model asks parents, teachers, religious leaders, health and social services professionals, and law enforcement personnel to track and report to the government people engaged in protected First Amendment political speech and thoughts in ways that violate civil liberties without making communities safer.”

And of course the “ask” is backed up with funding. Social, educational, and law-enforcement services that residents of other communities receive unconditionally, reach impoverished Somali residents of Minneapolis only through programs designed to surveil and criminalize them.

The *Intercept* reported in February 2016 that a policy paper entitled, “Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods & Strategies,” originally released in 2011 by the Air Force Research Laboratory, was reissued in January 2016 with a preface claiming that

President Obama’s summit on countering extremism (February 2015) meant “the wisdom contained in this paper collection is more relevant than ever.”

And what is that “wisdom”? The paper contains a chapter, “setting forth controversial and unsubstantiated theories of radicalization, including the idea that support for militant groups is driven by ‘sexual deprivation’ and that headscarves worn by Muslim women represent a form of ‘passive terrorism.’” Theories in official government reports become policies institutionalizing Islamophobia.

“Good Muslim, bad Muslim”

We conclude by noting that when prejudices are successfully institutionalized, it is no longer necessary for the people in power to embrace the underlying bigotry. With institutions doing the oppressing for them, individuals can declare themselves without prejudice.

On the campaign trail, Hillary Clinton appeared less Islamophobic than Donald Trump, who proposed banning Muslim immigrants from entering the U.S. and forcing all Muslims in the U.S. to register. But is a “good Muslim, bad Muslim” narrative really less dangerous than “all Muslims are bad” rhetoric? The former narrative allows for the possibility that *some* Muslims

are not terrorists, but then requires that loyalty be demonstrated by endorsing government anti-terror programs and helping police agencies root out “terrorists.”

In other words, to be a “good Muslim” you must accept and help reinforce profoundly Islamophobic prejudices. The “all Muslims are bad” narrative embraced by Trump until now might have to be discarded. Not because of the dangerous mob violence such rhetoric can incite, but because it has the side effect of *uniting* all Muslims and their allies in resistance. We already see broad coalitions forming to resist Trump that never would have emerged to counter Clinton.

The “good Muslim, bad Muslim” narrative will likely return because it is very effective at promoting the divide-and-conquer strategy that the tiny capitalist class has always used to stay in power.

If “Resist Trump” coalitions are to transform into mass movements capable of meaningful change, we must not be fooled into thinking a return to Obama-era narratives is a victory. We must stand against all policies and programs that institutionalize Islamophobia. We say no to marginalizing and criminalizing Muslims. Solidarity with Muslims and all oppressed people! ■

(continued from page 8)

dispensable to the wider rebel movement and increased their popularity at a time when many Syrians [unnamed] criticize the United States for not doing more to protect Syrian civilians.”

And further from the July 14, 2016, *Times*, “The Nusra Front has been one of the most effective anti-Assad forces and because of that United States-backed rebel groups often coordinate their activities with its units.”

Bartlett’s interviews and live footage demonstrate major support to the Syrian government, a fact confirmed by the independent ORB polling agency, which found in May 2014 that the Syrian government and President Assad had more support among the Syrian people than the combined total of all its opposition.

To date, more than 2000 organizations and individuals around the world have signed the HOSC petition demanding U.S. Out Now! and Syrian self-determination (see UNACpeace.org).

Bartlett’s tour was especially well received in Oakland and San Francisco, where over \$3000 was raised to help defray her travel expenses. The Bay Area tour was also sponsored by UNAC and the Syria Solidarity Committee. This writer, representing UNAC, opened the meetings in Oakland and San Francisco to explain the basic political principles that form the basis of the HOSC. ■

Mumia wins court victory for prison medical care

By JEFF MACKLER

“It’s a Knock Out Punch,” says Mumia. “We did something that’s never been done before,” says Pam Africa, chair of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

On Jan. 3, U.S. District Court Judge Robert Mariani granted the motion filed by innocent political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal for a preliminary injunction ordering the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) to have Mumia examined by a prison doctor within 14 days to determine one issue—whether the administration of the life-saving anti-viral Hepatitis C medication, sofosbuvir, would do harm to Mumia.

This formality is then to be followed within seven days by the administration of the very medication that Mumia has been fighting for since he filed his first lawsuit demanding treatment in May 2015.

The judge’s order affirmed that Mumia has Hepatitis C, a life-threatening liver disease, and needs immediate treatment. The denial of such treatment, wrote Mariani, represents a violation of Mumia’s rights under the U.S. Constitution’s Eighth Amendment prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment. The judge’s order overturned a lower court decision on the same matter. Judge Mariani’s rulings were the first in U.S. history in which a state’s medical protocols for prisoner treatment have been overruled.

Mumia Abu-Jamal was represented jointly by Bret Grote of the Abolitionist Law Center and independent attorney Robert Boyle. While the judge’s decision applies only to Mumia, Boyle noted that it is bound to effect the class-action lawsuits filed by the Abolitionist Law Center now in progress, wherein some 9000 other Pennsylvania prisoners with Hepatitis C have sought the same relief.

Boyle added that the DOC has 30 days to appeal Judge Mariani’s decision. Should Mariani refuse to grant a DOC request for a stay of his order for the purpose of filing an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, the DOC may then proceed directly to the Third Circuit.

Boyle cautioned via a Jan. 4 conference call presentation to some 30 key national Mumia activists that while “the law is on our side,” and notwithstanding the ongoing



and dangerous progression of Mumia’s illness, past history has demonstrated that, in Mumia’s case at least, the law is sometimes violated with impunity. This was a reference to the infamous “Mumia exception,” wherein U.S. courts for decades have routinely departed from standard legal principles and practices to thwart Mumia’s fundamental legal rights.

A mountain of evidence of Mumia’s innocence on the charges of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in 1981 has been repeatedly excluded from the record by a racist criminal “justice” system intent on punishing one of the nation’s most outspoken and courageous fighters for the rights of all humanity.

Indeed, Mumia’s first 1982 trial was presided over by the infamous “hanging” Judge Albert Sabo, who in his antechambers prior to entering the courtroom, in the presence of another judge and a court reporter, stated, “Yeah, and I’m going to help ’em fry the n****r.”

Nevertheless, optimistic as always, Mumia recorded a statement of thanks to his supporters that declared Judge Mariani’s decision to be a “knock-out punch” won by all his supporters.

The DOC’s formal defense of its refusal to administer the life-saving medication to Mumia included the cruel and inhuman argument that should Mumia prevail, the total cost of his treatment along with the treatment of some 9000 other Pennsylvania prisoners with the same Hep C virus would be an estimated \$800 million. Indeed, if the Third Circuit rules in Mumia’s favor, the “cost” could be even higher since the court’s jurisdiction includes New Jersey and Delaware as well as Pennsylvania.

Mumia’s victory perhaps inadvertently exposed one of the nation’s most corrupt and profitable industries, the pharmaceutical business. With regard to the 2013 discovery of sofosbuvir, for example, the medicine that is estimated to have close to a 95 percent cure rate for Hep C patients, the wholesale acquisition cost to a hospital for the standard 12-week course of treatment for single patient is \$84,000, while the estimated production cost is \$68 to \$136.

If there ever was an example of a degenerate social system, that of the United States and its health-care institutions, who argue in court that \$68 is too high a price to pay for a human life, would stand out in bold relief.

Nevertheless, Judge Mariani rejected Pennsylvania’s financial cost arguments. His decision also provided substantial reasons why a possible DOC request for a stay of his order would be inappropriate, indicating that Hep C prisoners are in a state of constant deterioration that requires prompt treatment as opposed to a steady medical state in which a delay would not impact their fundamental condition.

Attorney Robert Boyle, who successfully fought for and won the release of political prisoner Lynne Stewart three years ago, expressed concern that Mumia’s supporters continue their mobilizations aimed at winning broad support for Mumia’s immediate treatment and for his freedom in future litigation.

Boyle pointed to new legal avenues now open to Mumia to seek a new trial based on a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that challenged a death-penalty verdict based on the fact that a state district attorney participated in a prisoner’s prosecution and later, after being promoted to the position of state Supreme Court justice, sat in deliberations regarding the prisoner’s appeal. Ironically, this U.S. Supreme Court decision concerned Judge Ronald Castillo, who was both Mumia’s prosecutor and later his judge.

If the medical protocol precedent set by Judge Mariani is upheld, the result could be enormously beneficial to Hep C patients throughout the nation’s racist prison-industrial complex, which ranks first in the world in the number and percentage of its population in prison and/or under the jurisdiction of the criminal “justice” system.

Mumia’s supporters are urged to call the phone numbers below and to contact the DOC via e-mail to demand that Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel and the state of Pennsylvania do not appeal Judge Mariani’s decision and do not further delay administration of the life-saving antiviral medical treatment to Mumia.

John Wetzel’s office: (717) 728-2573; DOC office: (717) 728-4109; e-mail: racpadosecretary@pa.gov.

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Jeff Mackler is the director of the Northern California-based Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal. He can be reached at jmackler@lmi.net

LABOR BRIEFING

By BILL ONASCH

Good News, Bad News From SEIU—In recent years, this paper has often had good news to report about the two-million member Service Employees International Union. They have played an exemplary role in championing long neglected low-wage workers.

The Fight for \$15 and a Union has become the most important and inspiring class struggle effort in the USA. Beginning with Fast Food workers, it has come to embrace airport service workers, home-care employees, adjunct professors, and child-care workers. They have carried out one-day strikes along with marches, rallies, and civil disobedience actions that have attracted wide solidarity by other unions and working-class communities.

These efforts have now won union recognition, and some first contracts, for thousands of workers. The Faculty Forward “partner” of SEIU has won recognition for adjunct faculty on 20 campuses. Recently, SEIU Local 32BJ negotiated a first contract covering 8000 baggage handlers, airport security officers, wheelchair attendants, skycaps, cabin cleaners, and terminal cleaners at JFK and LaGuardia airports in New York and Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey.

While this contract was a victory it is also an example of the complexity of such bargaining. Wage rates had already been set in negotiations that began nearly five years ago with the Port Authority of New York-New Jersey, which manages the three airports. It was designed to work in lock-step with the fight for boosting state minimum wages in stages to \$15. That was accomplished in New York and was passed by the New Jersey legislature. But New Jersey Governor Christy refused to sign it and instructed his appointees to the Port Authority to insist

that Newark workers be subject to New Jersey laws. As it stands now, the raises for Newark Airport workers will lag considerably behind those east of the Hudson River. That fight continues.

In coalitions with others, SEIU has been in the forefront of winning increases in state and local minimum wage laws boosting pay for millions. A year-end report from the National Employment Law Project stated, “When combined with increases approved in recent years, on New Year’s Day 2017, workers in at least 41 states, cities and counties will receive raises—followed later in 2017 by raises for workers in another 21 states and cities.”

Even the boss-backed American Enterprise Institute acknowledges these advances in the minimum wage are the biggest component of the minuscule national increase in wages.

Of course, these new minimums are uneven. Even the \$15 goal is five dollars less than the average blue-collar wage. But it’s more than double the current federal minimum, and full-time at \$15 can provide a modest living rather than poverty. And if the \$15 is included in a union contract there can be a path to further improvement.

But it’s not just low-wage workers who have money problems, and that’s where the bad news from SEIU comes in. A Dec. 28 article in the London *Guardian* about an internal union memo they had obtained was titled “SEIU, one of the largest US unions, plans 30% budget cuts in wake of Trump win.”

The union’s concerns are not paranoid. While the Obama administration was certainly no faithful friend of labor, Trump’s nominee for Labor Secretary is a Fast Food CEO, with a personal interest in smashing the Fight for 15 as well as being a class enemy of all unions. There is also a serious threat of the new Congress’ enacting a national “Right to Work Law” banning union shop contracts, which would result in some lost dues revenue.

SEIU was undoubtedly already feeling a financial

squeeze. SEIU in Texas had to file for bankruptcy after an employer won a judgment of \$7.8 million in a lawsuit arising from a Justice for Janitors strike in Houston. And it’s estimated that the union has spent \$25 million over the course of the Fight for 15 campaign.

The \$25 million was well spent. But the hundreds of millions of dollars collectively spent by unions, and union PACs—including SEIU—on the last election was waste bordering on malfeasance. Nearly all went to Democrats who are not only faux “friends” but are such inveterate and inventive losers that they failed to win an election while receiving the most votes!

Some of those funds should have gone to sustain and expand organizing successes like Fight for 15—while the rest could have been used to finance the launch of a party of our own—a labor party.

Trump Concedes Victory to Union—The President Elect, as co-owner of Trump Hotels, had refused to recognize a 2015 union representation election victory by Hotel and Culinary Workers at Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas and objected to a union election at a new D.C. Hotel. Normally, such disputes would go through a series of findings by the National Labor Relations Board. Since Trump will be appointing new NLRB members, the union threatened to send some dark clouds over his inauguration with legal actions against conflict of interest. Recognition—and a contract—was quickly agreed to in Vegas, and the election will be held in Washington, where the union is confident of another victory.

Child Abandonment—Texas was one of the first states to pass a law requiring teenagers to have parental consent before consulting a health-care professional about birth control. Now there is legislation pending in the state’s legislature requiring parental approval before anyone under age 18 could join a union.

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

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Conditions are ripe for a socialist leader of the labour-based New Democratic Party of Canada. Officially, the contest began in July to replace federal leader Tom Mulcair. Mulcair lost a confidence vote of delegates at the NDP convention in April 2016 following his “no deficit” economic austerity campaign that cost the party one million votes and 60 per cent of its federal seats in October 2015.

So far, no candidates have registered to run for Leader. The vote by members is set to occur in October 2017.

Early in the fall of 2016, an array of labour and NDP leftists launched an attractive, poignant public website. Its purpose is to promote a socialist platform for the NDP, and to urge former Ontario Federation of Labour President Sid Ryan to run for NDP Leader.

The website www.sidryanforndp.ca closely reflects the views of Ryan, although it is not authorized by him. Visits to the site number over 10,000. In addition to policy statements on 17 key issues, the display is replete with quotes and videos that demonstrate, beyond any doubt, that should Ryan decide to toss his hat into the ring, he would stand firmly and proudly on that platform.

NDP Members of Parliament rumoured to be candidates, Charlie Angus, Niki Ashton, and Peter Julian, plus Ontario MPP Jagmeet Singh, have shied away from making known their views on major policy issues. In stark contrast is Sid Ryan, lifelong socialist, five-time candidate for the NDP provincially and federally, and an avid admirer of socialist leader of the

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Canada's Jeremy Corbyn: Sid Ryan



(Above) Sid Ryan.

British Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn twice defeated the Tony Blair-led, right-wing Labour establishment.

The NDP, under now-interim leader Mulcair, currently languishes at 13 per cent in opinion polls. But the public appetite for a socialist alternative is evident in massive support for climate justice measures, for indigenous people's resistance to pipeline construction, boycott of Israeli apartheid, opposition to the privatization of Hydro One in Ontario, hostility to international corporate trade deals like the TPP and CETA, to price-gouging by big Telecoms and big Pharma, and to weapons sales to repressive regimes like Saudi Arabia.

A candidate for NDP Leader who articulates these views, who projects a political battle for good jobs, steeply progressive taxation, a Social Investment Bank, public ownership and economic democracy will draw thousands to the party, and potentially will draw millions into the fight for a government in the interest of the working class.

To join this effort, go to www.sidryanforndp.ca. Endorse the platform. Volunteer to help the cause in any way you can. ■

CRTC ruling: internet access is a social right

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The Canadian Radio and Television Commission ruled on Dec. 23 that high-speed internet is now a basic service—as essential to our lives as the telephone. From now on, all Canadians must have access to reliable, world-class mobile and residential internet services.

This is Big Telecom's worst nightmare. The CRTC just ordered them to extend full service to every part of the country. This is a shake-up in the world of internet, a big departure from the status quo.

Rogers Communications Inc., BCE Inc., and Telus Corp. are not accustomed to being told what to do. They are used to enjoying huge profits, and to using their economic clout to crush competition. The Big Three incumbent wireless providers cashed in by muscling out new entrants, like Wind and Mobilicity, by charging prohibitively high rates to use their infrastructure, the Canadian Competition Bureau charged.

Patrick Hughes, senior economist with the independent enforcement agency, said the out-sized returns the incumbent carriers are making from their wireless divisions are evidence that the market is distorted. If new entrants that rely on the incumbents' towers and networks have to pay exorbitant costs to use that infrastructure, that cost will get passed on to consumers, he said.

There's no doubt Big Telecom is already scrambling to overturn the latest win for working-class consumers. As surely as night follows day, there will be court

challenges, intense lobbying, and temper tantrums. Meanwhile, here's what the CRTC ruling means:

- Universal access to mobile and residential Internet.
- Packages with unlimited data.
- Funding support for rural and remote communities.
- World-class Internet speeds. 50 up. 10 down.
- Minimum quality guarantees for your internet.

Now, before you pop a champagne cork, there is still a major problem to be addressed: lack of access to high-speed internet for low-income people. According to Statistics Canada, only 58 per cent of Canadian households with annual incomes of \$30,000 or less have home internet access, compared to 98 per cent of households with annual incomes of \$120,000 or more. Can the telecoms afford to reduce rates?

Award-winning journalist Peter Nowak, in a November 2013 article titled “The Country Most Gouged By Telecom Companies? Canada,” wrote: “With a margin of 45.9 per cent, Canadian carriers come in at the high end of the most profitable list. They're seven per cent more profitable than their American and European counterparts and five per cent more than the developed world.”

Even more interesting is the fact that Canadian carriers had the third-highest year-over-year growth in margins. Combined with ARPU growth, it's clear that business is good in Canada. Incumbent carriers may have experienced a temporary hiccup thanks to new

entrants such as Wind and Mobilicity, but things are obviously getting back to normal.

It's hard, if not impossible, to look at these key metrics and come to any conclusion other than Canadian wireless carriers are some of the most profitable around based on unmatched monthly revenues, which are coming directly out of consumers' pockets.”

It took two years of campaigning, nearly 50,000 people speaking out, multiple policy submissions to the CRTC, and scores of media appearances to persuade the CRTC to impose the new conditions on the telecommunications giants.

But it begs the question: if internet and telephone service are a social right, and if the industry is an oligopoly in Canada, and if the dominant players operate in a systematically anti-social manner, gouging their internet and cable TV customers, why not just nationalize the Big Telecoms?

Why not direct the industry to serve the interests of the vast majority, under the control of its workers and the communities they serve, and plough the profits back into vital public services? ■

In Memoriam: Harry Paine 1933-2016

A lifelong revolutionary socialist, culinary expert and folk music devotee, Harry Paine, who only a few months ago joined Socialist Action in Winnipeg, lost his struggle with pancreatic cancer on Dec. 30, 2016. See obituary in the next edition of *Socialist Action*.

Hunger strike in Wisconsin prisons

By LUCAS ALAN DIETSCH

As of December, Cesar DeLeon is the only confirmed one out of an initial seven prisoners on a hunger strike that started in Wisconsin in June 2016.

Visitors have said he is delirious, underweight, and suffering hunger pains, as well as displaying signs of physical abuse. In letters, DeLeon has also reported on physical abuse he receives from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. He has been in non-compliance with guards who place him in handcuffs and force-feed him through the nose and into the throat.

Samizdat Socialist Prisoners Project (SSPP) and Ex-Prisoners Organizing (EXPO) talked with DeLeon's sister about his complaints. DeLeon wrote in a letter, “Look, I'm a strong cat. I'm going to keep pushing forth even if I have to ride alone. But I do need yall support. So long as yall make me face of this hunger strike, this movement will continue to move forth because I'll not break.”

On June 10, in the tradition of no-holds-barred prisoner rebellion, seven prisoners at the maximum se-

curity facilities of Green Bay, Waupun, and Columbia Correctional Institutions went on hunger strike. All of them fought against solitary confinement, inadequate medical treatment, and restriction of communication.

The “Dying to Live” Hunger Strike brought many groups out in solidarity against solitary confinement, including the Industrial Workers of the World Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), Ex-Prisoners Organizing, and Samizdat: Socialist Prisoners Project.

Solidarity rallies in Madison and in Milwaukee, phone zaps, and letter-writing campaigns were some of the main expressions of solidarity. Solidarity banners for the strikers appeared at rallies as far away as in Portland, Ore.

SSPP sent books, letters, and radical literature to the strikers. Due to the high concentration of lead in many prisons, caravans also tried to deliver bottled water to Fox Lake, Green Bay, and Waupun Correctional Institutions.

The August 2016 issue of *Socialist Action* describes

the August solidarity rally at Waupun, where Cesar DeLeon and others have struggled.

More action coincided with the Sept. 9 start of the country's largest prison strike, on the anniversary of Attica Rebellion.

For over a month, thousands of prisoners around the United States took part in strikes—including hunger strikes—in order to demand economic justice and an end to institutional racism and denial of their civil rights (see our October 2016 issue).

In Wisconsin, from the beginning, the Department of Corrections has been reluctant to release details on the strike. But IWOC did a great job of connecting to striking prisoners. And DeLeon sent inspiring letters to help to keep supporters abreast of the facts. The WIDOC initially tried to defuse the situation by moving some of the strikers to different facilities.

On the anniversary of the Attica rebellion in September, a poetry slam attended by formerly incarcerated persons told of the struggles of solitary confinement, talked about letters from DeLeon, and read poetry. A total of 40 people, mainly radical youth, attended.

Subsequent rallies outside the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility gathered crowds of about 30 to 40 protesters. ■

Which way forward for women in 2017?



By CHRISTINE MARIE

Hundreds of thousands are joining the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21. On the same day, at least 200 sister marches are taking place in cities and towns all over the United States.

The outpouring, which reportedly began as two social media posts in response to the defeat of Hillary Clinton by a grossly misogynist Republican Party candidate famous for joking about sexually assaulting women, has grown in less than two months into a massive and historic event, endorsed by the major women's rights organizations. The chairs of the coordinating body include three prominent women of color from non-profit organizations involved in fighting racism, police brutality, and surveillance.

Women from all walks of life, many of whom have never marched in a feminist demonstration, are getting on buses and trains to make their mark on the Trump inauguration spectacle and to flex their political muscles in anticipation of what will likely be the most concerted assault on reproductive justice and the lives of working women since the 1980s.

The new administration's agenda

The Trump administration that is being assembled has given every indication it will carry out a serious, perhaps devastating, attack on reproductive justice and the wages and welfare of low-income families. An assault is planned on abortion rights; the accessibility of contraception; overall health care; education; working conditions and standard of living of low-wage women; the few remaining social safety nets for children; and the movements for Black lives, immigrant lives, and Muslim lives, all of which are anchored by women.

Trump and the anti-woman right wing that has the majority in Congress promise to immediately defund Planned Parenthood. The right-wing establishment is expected to quickly try to prohibit the non-profit from receiving any federal insurance payments, including Medicaid. Since the use of Medicaid funds for abor-

tion services was prohibited in 1976, the new blocking of Medicaid and similar payments would translate into the cutoff of the most basic gynecological and reproductive health service to some 1.5 million low-income people.

At the same time, quick action to undo parts of the already horribly inadequate Affordable Care Act may eliminate the alternative funding source for this kind of care for 55 million women, men, and young people.

Trump also pledged to quickly pass a national ban on abortion after 20 weeks. The 20-week ban, already enacted in 16 states, is particularly mean-spirited as it impacts women around the time that most fetal abnormalities become apparent. It is also a restriction on abortion that disproportionately affects low-income women, who, in order to take advantage of increasingly scarce facilities, often need time to raise funds, find transportation, arrange time off of work, and so on.

And while Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, and other organizations have sometimes successfully fought the rush of reactionary state legislative measures driven through by new Republican majorities in the courts, the likelihood of a federal measure, and the growing limitations on access, are already resulting in deadly DIY abortions and victimization flowing from new efforts to criminalize women who fail to bring pregnancies to term.

Democratic Party: ally or foe?

The defunding of Planned Parenthood, the end of Affordable Care Act subsidies for contraception, and a federal ban on abortion after 20 weeks are just the tip of the iceberg of the Republican majority's sexist wish list—which begins with the prize of overturning *Roe v. Wade*. But, of course, the undermining of that 1973 decision legalizing abortion began the day after it was first ruled. Both Democratic and Republican Congresses and presidents have continued to weaken it ever since.

While there is, today, a well-publicized legislative effort to overturn the Hyde Amendment, which de-

(Above) Last year 7 million women in Poland took to the streets, and thousands walked out of work. As a result, the right-wing government withdrew legislation attacking women's reproductive rights.

nied poor women funding for abortion, this divisive amendment only stayed on the books for 40 years because successive Democratic majorities refused to junk it.

It must also be said that the erosion of national support for reproductive justice to its current 69% has been the product not only of the treachery of mainstream politicians on both sides of the aisle but of the decision of mainstream women's rights and reproductive justice groups to keep the struggle on the tiny playing field offered by Democratic and Republican Party politics.

Should these groups have relied on the party that initiated the racist 1996 "welfare reform" and dismantled the major safety net for low-income women and their children to defend abortion rights? Was it rational to look to the Democratic Party, whose criminal justice "reform" destroyed communities of color with the tools of the mass incarceration and surveillance state? Whose full-throated support for barbaric U.S. military interventions led to astonishing levels of rape, death, and other victimizations of the women and children of Afghanistan and Iraq?

Did it make sense to continue to let the Democratic Party set the agenda for our defense when they basically threw women under the bus in the implementation of Obamacare?

Julia Felsenthal, who profiled several of the major leaders of the Women's March on Washington for a July 10, 2017, article for *Vogue*, concluded that their commitment to a large intersectional progressive movement "could offer a blueprint to the flailing Democratic Party." If we are to face the doubling down on women of the most reactionary wing of the big business parties, this unspoken but seemingly ob-

(continued on page 7)