

Protesters demand: Abolish ICE!



By JOHN LESLIE

Abolish ICE! Stop the raids! Reunite families! No Wall! Those are some of the central demands shouted by thousands who have taken to the streets to protest Trump's "zero tolerance" immigration policies. Occupy ICE encampments of protesters have been set up outside ICE headquarters and other government facilities around the country.

On June 30, in over 750 cities in the United States and abroad, demonstrators defied dangerously hot temperatures to denounce the Trump administration's practice of separating immigrant families and imprisoning their children. Over 30,000 participated in the Families Belong Together march in Washington, D.C. Another 30,000 in New York City marched over the Brooklyn Bridge, and tens of thousands more marched in other cities.

Many protesters expressed outrage at the claims that Trump employs to justify the crackdown at the

border. He raises the specter of violent gangs like MS-13 infiltrating into the country, and calls refugees animals, criminals, and rapists—comparing them to household vermin by saying that the U.S. faces an "infestation" of immigrants.

Easily verified facts refute the lie that immigrants and people asking for refuge are criminals. Trump's claims are aimed at energizing his base and sowing fear in immigrant communities, while he stokes the white nationalist idea that the very existence of the United States is in danger from an alleged immigrant "invasion."

As the outcry and mobilizations grew over the last month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions tried to demonstrate the correctness of the policy by quoting a Bible passage formerly used to justify slavery. This caused some religious leaders to criticize Sessions' attempt to drape the administration in Biblical authority. Homeland Security chief Kirstjen Nielsen also defended the policy to a law enforcement group.

(Above) Protesters at the Occupy Ice camp in New York City.

In comments to the press, Trump admitted that the child separation policy is a "negotiating tool" to get an immigration bill and \$25 billion in funding for his border wall. The factually challenged Trump continued to insist that the child separation policy was due to a law put in place by the Democrats. In truth, his "zero tolerance" policy changed the "offense" of crossing the border without official permission from a civil to a criminal matter, which, according to the Justice Department, required that children be separated from parents.

In his presidential campaign, Trump beat the drums of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment. As president, he has followed through by taking steps to stigmatize migrants and the foreign born. Early in his administration he tried to institute a Muslim ban

(continued on page 5)

Hilton hotel workers won't back down!

By ERNIE GOTTA

Hospitality workers from Local 217 Unite Here are hitting the picket lines across Connecticut this summer in solidarity with their co-workers waging contract fights at hotels in Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford.

At a time when most unions are making concessions to the bosses, Local 217 has drawn a line in the sand. They are not only defending good contracts like a victory at CCSU this past spring, but also organizing new workplaces to grow the labor movement in Connecticut and build a class-struggle left wing to take on the bosses.

In Stamford, Local 217 has waged a dynamic struggle to organize the Hilton Hotel. *Socialist Action* carried extensive coverage of the rank-and-file organizing drive that resulted in a victory, 110 in favor and 5 opposed. Today, the workers at the Stamford Hilton need the solidarity of the broader labor movement, students, and activists everywhere as they fight for a good contract.

The hotel corporation Atrium has dragged its feet in negotiations. Atrium is trying to short change workers whom they have exploited for years through poverty wages and poor health benefits. Following a 40-hour week plus two other jobs, Hilton housekeeper Rosemene, like other Atrium workers, has taken home negative paychecks after health insurance is taken out.

Two months ago, the Hilton workers



(Above) Fred Linck, the Socialist Action candidate for U.S. Senate from Connecticut, joins the picket line.

called for a boycott of their own hotel until a fair contract is reached. Rank-and-file militants from the Hilton are driving the boycott forward by sending delegations of workers to companies and groups that have contracts or upcoming events with the hotel.

Clifford, a Stamford Hilton front desk agent and lounge attendant leading the boycott effort, said, "We've had enough. We're tired of working without a good contract. If we don't get justice in the form of good wages, health care, and pensions, then the hotel will have no peace. We know we can win. We won't stop."

At a recent talk at Local 217 union hall in Stamford, Socialist Action's U.S. Senate candidate Fred Linck said, "The union drive at the Stamford Hilton pro-

vides us with essential lessons on how the union movement will be rebuilt—lessons about the necessity and power of shop floor militancy and rank-and-file leadership. The success of this drive and of its members to win a good contract will help show the way to workers who are already now searching for the way to fight for a better life."

Fred's campaign is calling on workers and students across Connecticut to stand in solidarity with the Hilton workers.

A picket line was set up outside the Stamford Hilton on July 8. Banging pots and pans and carrying a giant boycott

banner, workers demanded that guests take their business elsewhere. Jews for Racial and Economic Justice and the Jewish Labor Committee joined the picket line to call on the many Kosher groups that frequent the Hilton hotel to join the boycott.

Confidence is building as the boycott gains momentum. In the union hall workers take responsibility for organizing this effort by making phone calls and sharing their stories with businesses, church groups, and community organizations that hold conferences, meetings, and religious ceremonies at the hotel. A flyer on a table in the hall reads, "Real salsa dancers don't trample Latino workers."

In the leaflet, a quote from Ines, a Hilton housekeeper, reads: "We are asking guests not to use our hotel because we need to be able to pay our rent, health care for our children, and live with some dignity. CT Salsa Congress has refused to listen. Please don't trample on us by crossing our boycott."

Recently, the United Methodist Church in Connecticut has agreed to honor the boycott and cancel future events until the workers have a good contract. Also, the Ironworkers union in New York has agreed to help out on the picket lines.

We ask our readers to support the boycott of the Stamford Hilton Hotel, and more importantly, join the workers on the picket line. You can search for Local 217 on Facebook to find details about upcoming actions. ■

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: **JULY 9, 2018**

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

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



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

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: socialistactionnews@yahoo.com Website: www.socialistaction.org

Socialist Action Special half-priced offer!

— \$5 for six months. — \$10 for 12 months. Offer ends July 31.

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

I want to *join* Socialist Action! Please contact me.

I enclose an extra contribution of: \$100 \$200 Other

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

WHERE TO FIND US

- BUFFALO, NY: wmysocialist@google.com
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, chisocialistaction@yahoo.com
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: adamritscher@yahoo.com, www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com
- KANSAS CITY: kcsa@workernet.org (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE, KY: redlotus51@yahoo.com, (502) 451-2193
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, socialistaction@visi.com
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: (267) 989-9035 organizer.philly@gmail.com
Facebook: Red Philly

- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET (971) 312-7369
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com, (202) 286-5493

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
socialistactioncanada@gmail.com
(647) 986-1917
<http://www.socialistaction.ca/>

Janus v. AFSCME & the future of unions

Jeff Haynes / Reuters



By ANN MONTAGUE

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the 1977 decision in *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*. That decision said that making non-union members pay for the union's political activities violated the First Amendment, but that it was constitutional to require non-members to help pay for a union's collective bargaining and contract administration costs. The ruling added that this would ensure "labor peace."

Now, in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case, the Supreme Court has ruled by a 5 to 4 margin that non-members should not be required to pay "agency fees" or "fair share." Doing so, the Court majority agreed, would violate those workers' rights to free speech and free association.

In effect, the decision applies to an estimated five million non-union workers in state and local governments where they benefit from union contracts. Public-sector workers in all 50 states are now "right to work."

The *Janus* decision is clearly an attack that will reach further than the courts. It is a key step in the long-term campaign by the ruling class to hobble the unions and to divide workers from each other at local worksites. This was clear with the right-wing mobilization within four hours of the court decision by organizations funded by corporations and right-

wing foundations. These groupings sent hundreds of thousands of e-mails and postcards to public workers around the country, and even visited workers at home, in an effort to convince them to drop from union membership.

U.S. capitalism's anti-labor drive also achieved a court victory a month earlier with the ruling in *Epic Systems v. Lewis*—an attack on private-sector workers. That decision restricts the right of workers to join together in class-action lawsuits against labor law violations by their employer.

The *Janus* case went to the Supreme Court after Illinois Governor Mark Rauner, a Republican, had filed a 2015 lawsuit challenging the fees. When a lower court dismissed Rauner from the case on grounds that he lacked standing, the amended lawsuit was filed on behalf of Mark Janus, a public-sector worker in Illinois, against AFSCME Council 31. Janus maintained that since he is a government employee, all collective bargaining decisions are inherently political, and that the First Amendment protects him from having to support such political expression unwillingly.

Janus's legal fight was supported by the right-wing and anti-union National Right To Work Legal Defense Foundation and the Liberty Justice Center.

President Trump tweeted after the Court's decision, "Big loss for the coffers of the Democrats!" Actually, the coffers for Democratic Party politicians are still bulging, while the *Janus* case steals funds

that are used for collective bargaining, filing grievances, and other measures used to enforce contracts for union members.

An organizing model in "right to work" states

Unions have been organizing successfully in "right to work" states, but for large unions with a top-down governing structure, it will be a challenge to move to an effective organizing model. Many SEIU organizers who have been successful in "right to work" states like Arizona and Florida have insisted on creating a structure to empower local work sites. Members, they say, must be free to make decisions where they work.

One organizer pointed out, "The Executive Board or Board of Directors are too remote from the worksite. With 'right to work' there needs to be new models. This includes taking power from the Board and giving it to worksites." This is a good beginning to advance union democracy and power.

Union growth and victories derive principally from the exercise of strong working-class power. This requires a confident and democratically engaged rank-and-file, with a militant leadership that can unite the union and its allies.

While dues check-off and agency fees may facilitate the funding of organizing and grievance procedures, these financial measures are completely subordinate

(continued on page 10)

Duluth workers win safety and sick time

By ADAM RITSCHER

DULUTH, Minn.—On May 29, by a vote of 7 to 1, the Duluth city council passed an "Earned Safe and Sick Time" ordinance. The new law mandates that all business owners in the city give their workers time off when they are sick or need time for other pressing personal matters. The law was passed after a long and hard-fought battle, spearheaded by a coalition of union and community activists.

Frustrated by stagnant wages and the rising cost of living, working people across the country are demanding change. Yet our country's "leaders" continue to concern themselves with nothing but the enrichment of the wealthy elites.

Out of desperation, some activists are turning to local initiatives, like municipal minimum-wage laws, earned safe and sick time mandates, and other similar projects. However, wherever these local initiatives have been attempted, they have been met by fierce opposition, including some states' passing laws banning the right of

municipalities to even take up these kinds of issues.

Such was the case in Duluth. Activists were able to mobilize an impressive amount of community support in support of the demand for the Earned Safe and Sick Time mandate. This mobilization compelled the city council to set up a task force to hold public hearings on the matter, and make a recommendation. At these hearings several dozen low-wage workers testified about having to come in sick or lose out on pay—often with heart-breaking consequences.

When the task force ended up proposing the city pass an ordinance allowing workers to earn one hour of paid time off for every 30 hours worked, the city's business community had an allergic reaction. Opposition was in particular spearheaded by a number of prominent businesses like Grandma's Restaurants and St. Luke's Hospital. Initially, despite the obvious falsehood of it, they claimed that almost all Duluth businesses already had earned safe and sick time. They later retreated to the

odd claim that it would be too complicated to keep track of the hours worked.

After neither of these flimsy ploys gained any traction, the business elite resigned themselves to the law's being passed, and instead focused their efforts on pleading with the city council to make it as weak as possible.

In this, unfortunately, the Democratic Party-dominated city council was all too eager to comply. It is claimed that this is the most progressive collection of city councilors the city has ever had. But if that is the case, it says something quite unflattering about what "progressive" means in the Democratic Party. Despite the overwhelming popular support for the task force's proposals, the council voted again and again to whittle away at them. In doing so they dragged out the process for several months.

They voted to exempt businesses based on seasonal workers, as well as those with less than five workers. Given Duluth's tourism-based economy, tragically, this eliminated a large number of workers. However, the biggest setback was the slashing of the

number of hours a worker has to work before getting one hour of paid sick time. The council voted first to water it down from 30 to 1, to 40 to 1. Then, they voted to cut it to 50 to 1.

This proposal was defeated after workers filled the council chamber on the day of the vote. However, at the following council meeting, a small coterie of well-dressed business owners appeared to ask the councilors to reconsider. Determined to seize defeat from the jaws of victory, the council accepted their request, and voted by a large majority to re-vote on the 50 to 1 proposed formula, which this time passed. It was in this watered-down form that they finally voted to enact the Earned Safe and Sick Time ordinance.

The end result is, nevertheless, a gain for working people in Duluth. Thousands of workers will now finally have at least limited access to paid time off to deal with health and family emergencies. But this could have been, and should have been, a much bigger win. The city council's capitulation is inexcusable. We salute the hundreds of workers and activists who fought for this, and we will remember the unfortunate actions of the city councilors. ■



(Left) Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

New York DSA member wins Democratic primary

By STEVE XAVIER

The results of the primary election result in New York's 14th Congressional District, which includes parts of the Bronx and Queens, stunned the Democratic Party machine. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a former Bernie Sanders campaign worker and member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), defeated 10-term Congressman Joe Crowley. Crowley, who outspent Ocasio-Cortez by 18-1, had seemed poised to challenge Nancy Pelosi for leadership of Congressional Democrats.

Ocasio-Cortez ran a grassroots campaign that was endorsed by liberal organizations and individuals like MoveOn, Justice Democrats, gubernatorial candidate Cynthia Nixon, and the DSA. The Ocasio-Cortez campaign relied heavily on the volunteer efforts of DSA members.

The fact that Ocasio-Cortez spent merely about \$128,000 in her campaign and refused to take corporate money demonstrates that grassroots campaigns can win. However, if trapped in the confines of a bourgeois party, like the Democratic Party, any campaign will be limited in its effectiveness.

During the campaign, Ocasio-Cortez called for ICE abolition, Medicare for all, and a federal jobs guarantee. Ocasio-Cortez also criticized Israeli actions in Gaza during the Great Return March. She made a trip to the U.S.-Mexico border to see conditions facing refugees trying to seek asylum in the United States. Crowley, under pressure from Ocasio-Cortez, called ICE a "fascist" organization, but stopped short of calling for abolition of the agency.

Rightists responded to the victory of Ocasio-Cortez

with crude red-baiting. The reactionary *Washington Times* called her victory an "affront" to the Founding Fathers and a "slap in the face to America." To drive their point home, the editors also called Ocasio-Cortez "by socialist nature an enemy of the American way of life." Fox News talking head Sean Hannity declared that the "Democratic Party is falling apart!" He called Ocasio-Cortez's political views "scary."

Party tops circle the wagons

What does this electoral victory mean? First, it points to fissures in the ranks of the Democratic Party, although that has been denied by long-time party leaders. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi insisted that Ocasio-Cortez's victory did not mean that the Democratic Party is moving to the left or that it faces widespread challenges by younger or somewhat more progressive candidates. She assured the public that socialism is not "ascendant" in the other party of Wall Street.

Last year, during an appearance on CNN, Pelosi made it clear that the Democrats are a capitalist party.

Indeed, the party has demonstrated repeatedly that it is the party of neoliberal austerity, support for imperialist adventures overseas, and defense of the status quo. In the face of union busting and the erosion of civil rights and women's reproductive rights, the Democrats offer *at best* a sympathetic nod.

Time and again, the Democrats have demonstrated which side they are on, despite their claims to be the party of "regular folks" and the "middle class." During the 2016 primary contest, the party hierarchy pulled out all its stops to sidetrack the campaign of the social democratic Senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders.

St. Louis candidate accepts cop union endorsement

A Democratic Party candidate for Missouri state representative, Cydney John Johnson, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), accepted the endorsement of the St. Louis Police Officers Association (POA). In a Twitter post, Johnson said the endorsement "humbled" him. Johnson is a former co-chair of the St. Louis DSA local. Johnson abruptly quit the DSA, when the local threatened to pull their endorsement of his candidacy because of the cop union endorsement.

The POA made headlines just a few years ago for supporting the killer of Michael Brown in nearby Ferguson, Mo. It was also in the news for the assault on a Black woman protester by the union head, and for demanding that members of the Rams football team be punished for protesting in solidarity with Ferguson. In 2014 it was reported that the cop union in St. Louis maintained segregated locals for cops—one for whites and the other for Black officers.

Rather than accepting the endorsement of a cop union, a socialist candidate should vehemently decline it and use the opportunity to explain in clear terms the destructive role of the criminal injustice system in Black communities. It's a reflection of the all-inclusive character of the DSA that there is no organizational control of campaigns of candidates who are members. The dangers of opportunism in

these situations is very real.

This incident brings to mind the incident last year when police union organizer Danny Fetonte was elected to the DSA National Political Committee. Fetonte's election to the group's governing body sparked outrage in the ranks of the DSA. Many DSA members had protested against police brutality and witnessed the defense of violent killer cops by these organizations.

Fetonte's defense of the cop unions as being part of the social justice movement displayed both deception and lack of understanding about the role of the cops, courts, and prisons in society.

Socialists reject the notion that cops are part of the working class. Police unions play a disruptive and reactionary role in the labor movement. Police, the courts, district attorneys, and the prison system are all part of the repressive machinery of the capitalist state. Their major role is to violently suppress the labor movement and organizations of oppressed people when they fight for their rights.

Like the rest of the capitalist state machinery, these repressive organizations have to be abolished through the actions of the working class and oppressed. Socialists must fight for the oppressed without compromise. Accepting endorsements from cops isn't acceptable.

— STEVE XAVIER

Sanders supporters comprise many of the disaffected Democrats who joined the ranks of the reformist DSA in the wake of Trump's election.

Similarly, DSA reported a spike in new members after Ocasio-Cortez's victory and the Janus decision, with more than 1100 people signing up on-line on the day after the election. The win caused a huge rise in interest in socialist ideas, as the news media reported the upset of a sitting Congress member by a "democratic socialist." Merriam-Webster reported a 1500% increase in searches for the definition of democratic socialism.

But there remains a fundamental disagreement about how to define socialism. For many "democratic socialists," socialism is a slightly more radical sounding of New Deal liberalism. Their socialism, they believe, can be achieved through work inside the Democratic Party to reform the existing system.

Marxists disagree with this watered-down vision of socialism. We see socialism as the democratic ownership and control of the economy and society by the working class and its allies.

Elections are a useful tool for socialists to address a broader audience, but *real* socialism cannot be won by electoral means—if for no other reason than the fact that the capitalist class manages the elections through restrictive ballot laws, controls the major media, and lavishes funds on their chosen candidates. Moreover, the capitalists have no intention of relinquishing power to the will of the majority; they have never failed to use either fraud or brute force when necessary to maintain their rule.

Socialism can only be achieved through the organization of the working class and oppressed into a massive revolutionary movement that is independent of the capitalist parties.

"Reform" the Democrats?

Participation in the Democratic Party by socialists is an error that can only reinforce illusions in bourgeois solutions to the problems facing working people. Time and again, the Democrats have demonstrated that they are "the graveyard of social movements" by either co-opting the leaderships of movements or, failing that, smashing them with repression.

Ocasio-Cortez, although she is a fierce critic of the current Democratic Party, believes that the party can be changed. In a recent interview with Glenn Greenwald, Ocasio-Cortez conceded that the Democrats are "not doing a very good job" fighting Trump, and "if the main priority is fighting this administration, then we need to address the systemic problems which kind of resulted in his rise in the first place. ... As long as the Democratic Party continues to work with special interests, lobbyist groups, and corporations to really perpetuate economic marginalization of Americans, as well as social and racial marginalization, then we're not going to get anywhere."

She concluded, "There's no way we can get through this without changing the Democratic Party."

However, socialist and progressive activists tried to reform the Democrats for decades. The DSA was founded on the notion that the Democratic Party could be realigned—but this vision was proven to be a mirage. Although activists tried again and again to reform the party, the party moved to the right.

The fundamental truth that all socialists have to grasp is that the Democratic Party serves the interests of the rich. As an institution, it is resistant to change and will do what is necessary to preserve its status as a party of Wall Street.

The Democratic Party's role in smothering working-class militancy can be seen in the alliance of the trade-union bureaucracy with the party. For example, during the Wisconsin labor upsurge a few years ago in response to Gov. Scott Walker's union busting, labor tops and the Democrats diverted the movement into a campaign to recall Walker, sapping all of the energy out of a growing mass mobilization. In contrast, the recent teacher strikes were victorious because of their defiance of union bureaucrats and politicians who posed as allies.

The Occupy Movement of 2011 revealed how the Democratic Party oscillates between the carrot and the stick in its relations with social movements. On the one hand, Democratic Party operatives tried to make inroads into the occupations, at times even dominating the stage at protest rallies, in order to divert the participants into supporting electoral campaigns. On the other hand, the movement was physically broken up by cops called in by Democratic mayors.

Participation in the Democratic Party, rather than in an independent campaign, will mean pressure on even the most principled candidate to moderate their positions in the interests of "electability." This process may have already begun with Ocasio-Cortez's backing away from her earlier more radical-sounding rhetoric

(continued on page 9)

... Immigration

(continued from page 1)

through an Executive Order spurring huge mobilizations at airports across the United States. On June 26, a slightly watered-down directive, banning people from five Muslim countries plus Venezuela from entering the U.S., was upheld by the Supreme Court.

Trump also took measures in recent months to revoke the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) of Haitians, Salvadorans, Sudanese, Nicaraguans, and Hondurans—a move that affects tens of thousands of vulnerable refugees.

Private prison companies, which also contribute huge amounts to the campaigns of members of Congress, stand to reap millions in profits from the mass incarceration of immigrants. Reports of companies' being paid more than \$700 per detainee are examples of the outrageous practice of profiting from the misery of the oppressed. Facilities lack adequate numbers of social workers, and there have been reports of guards physically, emotionally, and sexually abusing detained children.

Crisis? What crisis?

The pro-business conservative publication, *Forbes* (June 25, 2018), cast doubt on Trump's claims of an immigration crisis. The magazine noted that the number of undocumented people apprehended at the border is only 11% higher than in the previous fiscal year, which, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, was at the "lowest level of illegal cross-border migration on record, as measured by apprehensions along the border and inadmissible encounters at U.S. ports of entry."

As images of children in cages went viral, large numbers of people mobilized against the Trump policy, holding vigils and demonstrations. In Portland, Ore., Occupy ICE PDX has blockaded the ICE facility. At least 80 tents have been erected and protesters have maintained the blockade. On June 28, DHS police cleared a path to allow about 20 ICE employees to leave the building. As this is written, there are blockades or occupations of ICE facilities in about a dozen cities—including Portland, Tacoma, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Detroit. In Portland and Detroit, the proto-fascist Proud Boys tried to instigate confrontations with protesters.

One occupier in Portland, a young carpenter who identified himself as "A," spoke to the *Guardian* newspaper: "I can sympathize so much with these children. I'm a working-class person. I am surrounded by people who have fled here for their safety. They come here seeking safety and asylum, and they get violence."

The Philadelphia encampment began outside the ICE offices on July 1 and gained reinforcements the following day following an "Abolish ICE" march of close to 500 people organized by half a dozen socialist groups. Other demands included shuttering the federal family detention center in Berks County, Pa., and ending the procedure that gives ICE access to police arrest records in Philadelphia—which is supposedly a "sanctuary city."

Three days later, Philadelphia cops smashed into the encampment, destroying tents, food, and personal possessions and making arrests. After the brutal attack, the protesters voted to move their encampment to the side of City Hall, planning to occupy the space until their demands are met.

The demand to abolish ICE has even caught on as campaign talking points for some Democratic Party politicians. Generally, however, these Democrats merely seek a return to the relatively less confrontational policing of the border that existed in the past. The pretense that only "felons and not families" were being deported suited them fine during the Obama administration. So-called left or "progressive" Democrats, like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the candidate in New York's 14th District, still insist on the necessity of strong immigration laws and border security. Moreover, Bernie Sanders, in an appearance on CNN, declined to support ICE abolition at all.

Executive order

Under popular pressure, Trump, after repeated claims that he could do nothing to alleviate the situation, suddenly reversed course with a poorly thought-out Executive Order, which will reunite some children with their parents. The Executive Order will incarcerate families together without any clearly defined legal process. Under the order, more detention facilities will be erected, and Army bases and prisons around the country will also be used for incarceration.

In the meantime, workplace raids are accelerating. Early in 2018, ICE signaled that they intended a 400% increase in workplace raids this year.

The decree attempts to modify the *Flores* decision, which protects immigrant children from being jailed more than 20 days through extra-constitutional



(Above) Occupy ICE protesters confront the police in Portland.



(Left) Occupiers outside City Hall in Philadelphia.

means. It's unclear that all of the children will be reunited with their loved ones because of the shoddy record keeping of the agencies involved. The genealogical DNA service, *23andme*, has offered DNA testing kits to help match children and parents.

On June 24, Trump advocated violating the due process rights of the undocumented by deporting them without judges or hearings. The legal rights of immigrants are already tenuous with the use of mass trials under a program called Operation Streamline. Under Operation Streamline, as many as 75 immigrants at a time are subjected to a process in which they are given two minutes to consult a lawyer before appearing in a kangaroo court.

Deportation system built by Bush and Obama

While Trump's zero-tolerance policy is new, it rests on an immigration system that was already weighted against refugees and the undocumented. In the aftermath of the 9-11 terror attack, federal agencies were reconfigured and immigration laws made more draconian. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was split into three new agencies—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)—under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security. Homeland Security Chief Tom Ridge put forward an aggressive plan to round up and deport the undocumented.

After taking office, Obama increased the budgets of immigration enforcement agencies by 300 percent, expanded the Bush-era Secure Communities program, expanded Operation Streamline, and pushed for local police participation in immigration enforcement. It was Obama, rather than Bush, who became known as the "Deporter-in-Chief." Much to the chagrin of liberal apologists, Obama deported more than 2 million immigrants during his tenure.

Migration fueled by U.S. policy

The source of migration from Mexico and Central America is in U.S. foreign policy going back many decades. U.S. imperialism ruthlessly smashed the Central American revolutions of the 1980s with death squads and massive military aid. Even when U.S. law forbade military aid to Guatemala because of human rights abuses, the Israelis stepped in as a proxy for the United States. Trade policy, military coups, and support for repressive regimes are the center of U.S. policy towards its southern neighbors.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted on June 24 the levels of violence in Central America that are driving desperate people to seek refuge in the United States. El Salvador, for example, has a murder rate of 99.7 per 100,000, "higher than all countries suffering armed conflicts, except for Syria." It is estimated that almost 300,000 Salvadorans have been displaced by violence. Similarly, high numbers of Guatemalans and Hondurans have fled repressive conditions, "akin to war zones," in their countries.

The Trump claim that MS-13 members are being sent to the U.S. is a fabrication. The spread of the gang

to Central America is a result of the immigration policies of the U.S. government, which deported to El Salvador many immigrant youth who were deemed to be criminals. Once they had arrived in El Salvador, many of these youth, jobless and without local roots, banded together as self-protection against existing gangs.

Trump's racist rhetoric tries to tie Democrats, like Nancy Pelosi and others, to MS-13, claims echoed by his propaganda arm, Fox News. Far from being the sophisticated criminal enterprise alluded to by Trump and his spokespersons, MS-13 is considered by criminologists to have nowhere near the sophistication or levels of centralization that more well-established drug cartels possess.

Fight back!

Building a fightback against immigrant bashing and xenophobia will require the broadest popular mobilizations, including the ranks of organized labor. Labor, religious, and civil rights organizations should take the lead in building a national March on Washington to put a million people in the streets. Learning from the example of past movements against war and for civil rights, local and national coalitions can be built to advance the struggle in solidarity with immigrant workers and families.

The examples of the women's marches and the mass outpouring against Trump's Muslim ban last year demonstrate the potential power of mass action. The recent teacher strikes also point to the road forward.

Movimiento COSECHA, an immigrant rights organization is calling a national conference of immigrant communities in September, with the aim of organizing mass actions modeled on the May 1, 2006, immigrant mobilization that took on the character of a one-day general strike.

Pointing to the example of the recent teacher strikes, COSECHA organizer Catalina Adorno wrote, "One day is not enough. In order to win permanent protection, dignity, and respect, we must not only go on strike, but we need to be able to sustain the strike. As the teachers demonstrated, to win they had to hold their ground and refuse to go to work until their demands were met. That is what the immigrant community needs to do when we go on strike, and we have to do it in large numbers across the country—just like the teachers."

The Janus decision, the attacks on immigrants, the epidemic of police murder of Black people, and the ramped-up offensive against women's rights and the gains made by LGBTQ people mean that our struggles must be united in struggle. Solidarity is urgent in the days and years ahead.

Ultimately, this movement cannot depend on the courts or capitalist politicians to make change. Every bit of progress won by workers and oppressed peoples in the past was won in the streets. It's encouraging that thousands have mobilized already. It's urgent that the movement keep the pressure up and not buy into attempts to divert it into electoralism.

We have to continue the fight for papers for all, for the demolition of repressive agencies like the CBP and ICE, an end to workplace raids, and to stop the construction of the racist border wall. Smash ICE and the Border Patrol (CBP)! Unite the struggles of workers and the oppressed! Reunite families now! Stop the raids! Stop Trump's Muslim ban! Demilitarize the border! No Wall, no way! ■

Advertising or capitalist propaganda?



By ANDY BARNES

The more pervasive and unchallenged propaganda is, the more effective it becomes. As a salesman by trade, I handle a lot of promotional materials for the products we sell at my workplace (booklets and product samples). These range from decking, to fasteners, all the way to kitchen faucets. I have a front-row seat to the construction industry's view of itself. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on one example: door slabs.

In one of our slots is a thick booklet from the creators of Masonite® Doors. The front cover features a woman walking through a door and beaming. The slab itself is prominently displayed in all its cleanliness, beauty, and *glory*. On the next page, we see the image of a father joyfully watching his two daughters run off to soccer practice. He is standing in a doorway with a wood-grain texture Masonite® Door. The front of the house is pristine, clearly amplified by the gorgeous door.

After a few pages touting the long list of benefits (one of the slogans we are taught to memorize at my workplace: “lead the customer to the benefits!”), we have a photograph of a family enjoying a meal in the dining room, all facing the camera and laughing! Spotless kitchen, gourmet meal—and behind them, a perfect door. That Oxford Style Masonite® Door behind them sure helped bring joy to this family!

The message is clear: “Buy our product, and you will find joy.” This message rings everywhere in capitalist society. You cannot escape. It calls to us on the roads, sings to us during our broadcasts, and is even present on the pump handles at gas stations.

As a social system, capitalism has been running the longest, most successful propaganda campaign in human history. In our time, we refer to this as “advertising.” Necessarily, capitalist propaganda goes beyond advertising into the news media, TV shows, and from public officials themselves (who are often capitalists or former capitalists). But the vast bulk of this propaganda, and the heart of its focus, lies in advertising.

Advertising is the all-pervasive and unchallenged propaganda of our time. It has fulfilled its task well, for most workers do not see it as propaganda.

What makes it propaganda?

Properly understood, propaganda is a widely applied message, meant to frame a particular narrative (what is the story of our time?) and push an agenda (what should we do in our time?). Propaganda is inherently biased.

Governments have used propaganda to push narratives and agendas, this is undeniable. But they do not have a monopoly on propaganda. Example: FOX, CNN, Breitbart, etc. These are outlets that push through narratives with particular policy aims. These are not

Advertisements provide a deep layer of illusion that hides the real source of workers' struggles behind a wall of gloss and glamour.

governments, though they often have close ties with government officials. Controlled or funded by capitalist institutions and individuals, they frame all issues on capital's terms (pro-market, pro-business, etc.).

These outlets are controlled by the owners of economic property in the interest of protecting that property from the many. They have an agenda (often attempts to get the working class to fight itself, or to justify the newest war) and will use narratives to push that agenda (often using racism, i.e. “immigrants cause all problems,” or painting a non-cooperative sovereign state as inherently irrational).

Ads as propaganda

If we understand propaganda in this way, then we can see that the endless barrage of advertisements we experience *incessantly* is the propaganda of a ruling capitalist class against a ruled working class. The narrative? “Our product(s) are amazing!” The agenda? To promote their commodity: “Buy this thing and be happy/cool/upgraded.”

This is all in the service of the private profit of the owners of corporations. If the stockholder, CEO, or business owner can get millions of people to obediently go to work and then take their money to the mall, then they make moolah like kings. The capitalist system of commodity production, and profit for a few, sustains itself.

Advertisements provide a deep layer of illusion that hides the real source of workers' struggles behind a wall of gloss and glamour. It pretends that the workers can solve their problems by consuming a product.

This layer is buttressed by a web of media organizations, owned by capitalists, who report the news on current events in a way that reflects positively on the entire for-profit system, as well as calling on “experts” favorable to capital's interests.

An advertisement not only has the intent of opening your wallet, but it also has the unspoken effect of singing the praises of a system ruled by property owners, though actually run by the mass of working people. Work hard, consume, and don't question the boss! Such is the mantra ever repeated from the capitalist class to the working class, in an endless bar-

rage of noise from every screen and on every surface in every store. And on the wall at my own workplace.

They don't have to say it outright, but it is implied. You can't, after all, get that new razor blade or video game without first selling your labor to a capitalist.

The absurd waste of advertising

One 30-second Superbowl ad can cost millions of dollars. Somehow, though, caring for our sick is too much of a financial burden in the United States. Behold the efficiency of the free market—where countless hours of labor, watts of electricity, pounds of steel, and land space is devoted to reminding highway drivers that Sheetz has over 100 drink flavors.

Moreover, advertisements take up the resource of time. Millions of hours of your time, fellow workers, are gone. Where did it go? Into every commercial break and YouTube ad. Hours and hours—gone! That was part of our free time, the time supposedly meant for R'nR, but is used instead to tell us to *buy more things*.

At my own workplace the waste is just silly. Every year we get updated catalogs of product lines for doors from two different brands. Generally speaking, the old ones are either kept in storage and collect dust, or they get thrown in the garbage. We also get multiple samples of trim and composite decking. What are we to do with the old ones?

Furthermore, we have multiple product lines with two or more companies competing to sell *essentially the same product* (Trex vs. Moisture Shield, GAF vs Owens Corning, etc.) Each makes its own promotional materials and has entire departments of workers dedicated to these projects. That is money, man-hours, time, ink, and fuel for transportation of the materials.

It should be remembered that the thousands of workers who toil on, draw, animate, print, mail, and construct these advertisements across the globe are also exploited for their labor, just like every other worker (given a wage that sustains them, while the capitalist retains the fruits of their extra work as profit—what Karl Marx called “surplus-value”).

The insanity of it all is that we as a species have the productive powers to make everything we need to live healthy and free lives with a minimum of work required. Instead workers are pitted against each other in the needless delivery of crap, as part and parcel of the capitalist process of commodity production, as well as a culture that encourages workers to see others as the enemy (the sales guy at Lowe's is competing against the sales woman at Home Depot; the delivery driver for 84 Lumber must get to the job on time to stay competitive with the driver from Lezzer Lumber). So much human effort is absolutely wasted in this needless competition.

Clicks in the service of profit

Advertising gets weirder when capitalists use big data, and marketing, in the age of the internet. George Orwell's “Big Brother,” it turns out, is just Google's marketing department.

Information technology corporations like Google, Facebook, and Amazon use algorithms and immense amounts of collected data about your browsing and “liking” habits, and will then use this information to target ads specifically catered to you. Thanks to Facebook and other websites, they know your name and they probably also know what you like and don't like.

The business model is this: the selling of an audience to advertisers, i.e. a capitalist (Mark Zuckerberg) providing a service to other capitalists (Ubisoft, Toyota, etc) in the form of workers who will, after a long, tired day of working, want to sit back and scroll on their feed. In other words, willing eyes.

Such services are also rendered to political representatives and their opponents in elections. This sniper propaganda has been very profitable for the likes of Zuckerberg, who also happens to be one of the eight men who, collectively, control the same wealth as the 3.5 billion poorest of us. Keep this in mind when recalling that the U.S. Congress voted to allow internet service providers to sell your browsing information to the highest bidder. It should make

(continued on page 7)

Cecil Taylor: Jazz revolutionary, 1929-2018

By MARTY GOODMAN

"Technique is a weapon to do whatever must be done."— Cecil Taylor

"Conquistador" was the first Cecil Taylor jazz album that I ever heard. It astonished me, and the title piece nailed me to the wall with its dangerous, urban sound. Taylor's sideman, Jimmy Lyons, blew amazing sax riffs; the coolest, hippest, New York tough style music that I'd had ever heard. And it still sounds that way 50 years later!

Cecil Taylor passed away on April 6 of this year at age 89. He was still playing in his maniacal way when I saw him solo about 10 years ago, stopping short to read one of his amazing poems and then continuing to play.

Cecil Taylor's assault on jazz tradition and Euro-centric culture was as explosive and game-changing in jazz as the "action painting" of Jackson Pollock on the 1950s art scene. Taylor, like Pollock, smashed the language of art when it was no longer sufficient and invented a new one. Taylor was a wholesale assault on the Western musical tradition. It was bluesy, it was abstract and it was angry. Taylor was a Black artist stuck in a Cold War cultural wasteland called America, where jazz music—all music—was in the hands of mostly white businessmen.

Epithets such as "anti-jazz" were hurled at what was called then jazz's "new thing," i.e. the avant-garde. The harshest critics were largely white producers and critics, but even established artists like trumpet icon Miles Davis put him down.

Club dates came slowly in Taylor's early days. Even though in 1962 he received *Downbeat's* "new star" award, he was unable to get work for most of the 60s. He claims he lived on welfare for at least five years during that time. The impact of other, innovative, but strikingly different musicians, like the more popular pianist Thelonius Monk, helped widen the door, but just a bit.

By the early 60s, Taylor's music became more and more abstract. The recordings from those years were jewels, which document Taylor's evolution toward more and more experimentation: *Jazz Advance* (1956), *Looking Ahead* (1958), *The World of Cecil Taylor* (1960), *Cell Walk for Celeste* (1961), and *Nefertiti the Beautiful Has Come* (1962). Those albums introduced new avant-garde heroes—soprano saxman Steve Lacy, tenor sax player Archie Shepp, bassist Buell Neidlinger, who sadly passed away in March, drummer Sonny Murray and alto sax man, Jimmy Lyons (died 1986).

However, Taylor's landmark albums, *Unit Structures* (May 1966) and *Conquistador* (October 1966), broke all "rules" of musical order, although, for those who listened, a deeper structure lay inside. The albums challenged mainstream jazz to its foundations.

With those historic albums behind, Taylor slowly gained an audience as revolutionary thought and new forms of popular music became a mass phenomenon. Jazz musicians reflected the insurrectionary mood, heavily influenced by the new Black consciousness and the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the Black Panther Party. It was arguably the music's most fertile period.

Other radical Black stylists—Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp, and John Coltrane—were also affected by 1960s Black nationalism. It was reflected in their music, sometimes overtly politically (Shepp wrote the play, "The Communist"), but mostly not. Yet, their angry discordant musical voices were a cry for justice.

Cecil Taylor himself was not an overtly political man and no activist. But New York poet Steve Delachinsky, Cecil's friend of 30 years, pointed in a phone conversation with me, "He certainly was anti-capitalist" and



I TRY TO IMITATE ON THE PIANO THE LEAPS IN SPACE A DANCER MAKES
CECIL TAYLOR

the way Cecil outlined it, then that's cool with Cecil. That's the main thing I learned with Cecil, the music has to come from within and not from any charts."

Taylor's fearless explorations revealed awesome improvising abilities and a lightning fast mind, like with jazz giant Charlie Parker (1920-1955). "When I play the piano I feel like my fingers are dancers on the keys," said Taylor. In fact,

hated politicians." Steve added, "He was the most eccentric regular guy you could talk to."

Rebels like Cecil Taylor shattered old notions of order. Twentieth-century modernist classical composers like Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, and Bartok who broke down barriers of structure and tonality, but here was a musician who took breaking down barriers to a new level—in fact, he demolished them!

In 1952, he entered the New England Music Conservatory and said this about Western classical forms, "Everything I've lived, I am. I am not afraid of European influences. The point is to use them—as Ellington did—as part of my life as an American Negro" (liner notes, *Looking Ahead*). In A.B. Spellman's 1966 classic "Black Music," Taylor says, "I never would have thought of playing the piano without thinking it out along Ellington's lines, and that's the base."

Yet, no one challenged "acceptable" music with the ferocity Taylor put into each performance. Even when playing solo, his sets could last an hour or more. He broke more than one piano in the process, pounding keys, sometimes using his forearm or elbow. But for those who listened, Taylor's music revealed an inner structure, tone clusters, even echoes of old-timey blues and the musical structures of jazz giant and Taylor hero, Duke Ellington.

Cecil put it this way, "There is no music without order—music comes from a man's innards. But that order is not necessarily to any single criterion of what order should be as imposed from the outside. Whether that criterion is the song form or what some critic thinks jazz should be. This is not a question, the, of "freedom" as opposed to "non-freedom," but rather it is a question of recognizing different ideas and expressions of order."

Said Jimmy Lyons, Cecil's longtime alto sax frontman, whose expressive intensity seamlessly complemented Taylor, "If you take (music) another way than

Taylor collaborated with Japanese butoh dancer Min Tanaka and dancers Mikhail Baryshnikov and Heather Watts on a short ballet in 1979.

Taylor received artistic awards, which included money, a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1973, a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1991—which enabled him to purchase his home in Brooklyn—and the Kyoto Prize in 2013.

In 2016, the Whitney Museum of American Art presented "*Open Plan: Cecil Taylor*," a dedication to his work. It was a five-part exhibition with videos, audio, scores, photographs, and poetry with live performances by over twenty of Taylor's musical collaborators, as well as dancers, playwrights, poets, filmmakers and writers. (see videos at whitney.org/Exhibitions/OpenPlanCecilTaylor).

It's hard to grasp Cecil Taylor's impact. Rooted deep in African-based musical forms (and feelings) Taylor tasted what the European classical tradition had to offer but did not slam the door on the Western tradition. His favorite Western composers were giants of modern classical music—Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and others.

In an assessment of Taylor's work from the classic "Four Lives in the Bebop Business" (1966), poet and critic A. B. Spellman wrote, "There is only one musician who has, by general agreement even among those who have disliked his music, been able to incorporate all that he wants to take from classical and modern Western composition into his own distinctly individual kind of blues without in the least compromising those blues, and that is Cecil Taylor, a kind of Bartok in reverse."

Cecil Taylor once said of his music, "This music is the face of a drum." Cecil's piano, a giant drum—the foundational instrument of African American music—woke jazz up. ■

(continued from page 6)

people question whom the U.S. government really serves.

"Big Brother" as we have come to know it, exists because the internet was created under a capitalist system. Necessarily, as it grows, the for-profit, class-dominated system will shape it just like any new government, agency, or colony will be shaped by it. It will be used by the ruling capitalist class for their purposes.

What would happen under socialism?

For starters, the tens of thousands of workers who are trained to be predators of their fellow human beings at the behest of capitalists (i.e., salesmen and marketers like myself) could find something better

to do with their time. The amount of labor that could be saved by the elimination of advertising in our daily lives would go a long way towards reducing working times in all other industries, by the rational redistribution of work based on human need, not profitability.

Furthermore, your bandwidth would be freed. I can guarantee you that with a planned internet that provides the service to citizens as a right-to-information, your internet speeds will explode. No more NSA collecting porn data. No more double-click monitoring your Google searches for advertising. No more animated ads for crappy games you don't want.

The barrage of advertisements that envelop our lives, from dawn to dusk, are a symptom of a larger

problem: an economic system in which a tiny few who own massive property have unilateral control of investment decisions and their employees. In market warfare with each other, they not only waste human potential, but push out what they consider the story of our time: "Buy something, and sate your desires." All for the benefit of who happens to own productive property.

We can express ourselves differently and more deeply. We can fill our world and our minds with thoughts that ultimately matter to our existence as fragile human beings, rather than the existence of capital. Let us construct a new narrative—not one that pushes commodities but one that upholds human existence as worth living on its own terms. ■

Working people have no stakes in a trade war



(Left) Trump and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the June G-7 meeting.

A joint statement by Socialist Action (U.S.) and Socialist Action/Ligue pour l'action socialiste (Canada).

The recent imposition of a 25% tariff on steel imports to the United States and a 10% tariff on aluminum from Canada, Mexico, and the European Union follow the earlier imposition of these tariffs on the rest of the world, and even earlier tariffs on solar panels and washing machines aimed at China and South Korea—all by the U.S. Donald Trump administration.

Trump has also threatened to place heavy tariffs on automobiles and parts imported from abroad, and on numerous industrial and technological products from China. He has also re-imposed economic sanctions on Iran, and put new sanctions on Russia.

Understanding Trump's intentions is no easy matter. He seems motivated more by sheer bravado than rational thought. Trump's rhetoric often appears to be aimed at playing to his base rather than reflecting any meaningful thoughts about the future. "Make America Great Again" and "America First" are the shibboleths that appeal to his populist supporters.

At the same time, these notions do speak to the interests of a section of the U.S. capitalist class that is falling behind in global capitalist competition. They are supported by a layer of trade-union leaders who hanker for a return of smokestack America with its millions of well-paid manufacturing jobs. These bureaucrats seek to tie the future of U.S. workers to the "success" of their "own" capitalist corporations and their twin parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, as opposed to furthering the independent organization of workers to challenge the root cause of the problem—the fundamental, for-profit-only operations of the capitalist system.

The United States no longer has the only powerful economy in the world. As global competition relentlessly heats up, and the rate of profit tends to fall, the methods of past times don't work. For many years after World War II, years of American economic hegemony, free trade was the battering ram to force open foreign markets to cheaper U.S. goods. This was likewise the policy of the U.K. during the height of the British Empire, before World War I. In general, capitalist nations operating with the highest, or most advanced levels of technology tend to be "free-traders" while their weaker competitors are "protectionists."

Trump's repeated reference to "many jobs, good jobs" appears to mean the re-creation of jobs that have largely disappeared in the United States, such as coal mining, steel making, and auto manufacturing jobs. Most of these have been lost to automation in auto and steel plants. The U.S. makes about as much steel now as in 1960, but with 20% of the previous labor force. Car manufacturing automation is similar.

Underground coal mining is foul, lung-destroying work that hopefully will never return. But the jobs have disappeared only because they are less profitable in the U.S. and worldwide, and not out of any concern on the part of the coal magnates for the health of the miners. Unfortunately, the labor bureaucracy, tied to capitalism hand and foot, prefers to advocate for capitalism's most polluting jobs rather than challenge the entire deadly energy system in a fight for a just transition that would guarantee all fossil-fuel workers new jobs at union wages in a 100 percent sustainable and nationalized energy system.

Working people have no interest in trade wars. We

simply end up bearing the cost.

The United States produces just below 60% of the steel it uses, while importing the rest from 85 other countries. Canada provides 17% of the imports. Other sources of steel to the U.S. include Brazil 14%, South Korea 10%, Mexico 9%, Russia 8%, Germany 4%, and China 2%. If foreign steel and aluminum become much more expensive as a result of the tariffs, U.S. manufacturers who use such materials will no doubt respond in order to protect their profits. Their options include striving even harder to keep wages low, passing on the price rises to consumers, or even closing down U.S.-based manufacturing plants.

Of course, Canadian, Mexican, and European capitalists have all responded with tariffs on American goods. In this way, too, U.S. workers lose jobs. But workers in Canada, Mexico, and Europe will likely face similar problems—higher prices and the loss of more jobs than tariffs can possibly create.

Global capitalist competition is a completely unavoidable aspect of the system of private profit. As competition results in new innovation, and automation increases the rate of profit for the innovator temporarily, these gains are offset again by the rapid adoption of the new technology by competitors and the resulting fall of profit rates.

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

In decades past, the volatile world capitalist system sought to mitigate its inherent contradictions through organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO). In this context, the leading representatives of the world's most important corporations hammered out comprehensive agreements that sought to meet the needs of all the ever-competing capitalists. Needless to say, the stronger capitalists, like the ruling rich in the United States, always had the upper hand be-

cause the U.S. market was the largest in the world.

Nevertheless, each sector of capital understood that one or another competitor had an edge in specific commodities that were traded on the world market. Their objective was to balance their various needs with deals. A modicum of French wine was allowed into the United States, for example, while a certain amount of U.S. products were allowed into France under reciprocal conditions.

NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was in truth, despite its name, a mass of literally thousands of separate negotiated agreements between the ruling elite of Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. These included all kinds of protectionist measures for weaker U.S. corporations, and the same for those in Mexico and Canada.

In the face of intensified cutthroat competition between capitalist powers, the old rules of the game are incapable of resolving the growing contradictions of the system. Trump sounded the alarm for the wing of the U.S. capitalist class whose interests he sees himself as representing.

Ignoring the delicate or fragile balance that has been hitherto established by his predecessors, he proposes to upset the world capitalist system's apple cart to advance the interests of his favored elites.

When Trump gifted \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts to the entire ruling class, there were no complaints. But when Trump departed from measures that benefit the broad sectors of the ruling rich, he faced serious opposition internally, not to mention the potentially wounded lesser capitalist nations. Hence Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau, as well as France's Macron and Germany's Merkel, cried foul and collectively threatened to retaliate.

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

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

Reliance on any of these representatives of the world's elite to advance the interests of working people is sheer folly. Breaking with their corporate parties in the political arena is the beginning of a serious challenge to capitalist prerogatives. But only the abolition of the capitalist system itself at the hands of the vast majority of working people can ensure a permanent end to capitalism's endless trade wars and its real wars that plague all humanity. ■

... Mexico election

(continued from page 12)

the north, which with the Trump government has hampered negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement and put huge tariffs on foreign trade.

Surely, the government that will take office next December will announce a series of plans; but judging by the proposals presented by MORENA and AMLO himself during the electoral campaign, there is no structured strategy to deal with the acute challenges that threaten the country—and much less to address the complicated international situation.

All of this means that, except for limited measures that serve to project an image of concern for the poor, the incoming government will remain on

track in the policies dictated by the great capitalist interests, both national and foreign.

This harsh reality is going to be revealed to the majority of the population as the new government takes its course. And revolutionary socialists will be ready to fight alongside the dispossessed and the oppressed, to forge from today the anti-capitalist strategy—democratic strategy and independent—that is necessary to achieve the triumph of the workers of Mexico.

This revolutionary and socialist strategy will reclaim the best traditions of struggle of our people and unite it with the international emancipatory and libertarian struggle of the peoples of Latin America and of the whole world. ■

* "Paris is worth a mass." The apocryphal statement is attributed to King Henry IV of France in 1593. Henry was a Huguenot; the statement indicated that he wouldn't mind converting to Catholicism if by doing so he could attain power over the country.

By MARTY GOODMAN

French strikes continue

A showdown between capital and labor in France over the privatization of the national railroad will extend into the summer and possibly beyond. France's nationalized railroad, SNCF, is a source of pride for most French people—and in particular, for rail workers, who recognize the landmark rights they've won by striking over many decades. The SNCF employs 148,000 workers.

Phillippe Martinez, head of the CGT (General Confederation of Labor), which contains the largest rail union, said, "They've decided to break the Code du Travail [the massive French labor rights code]. There will be fewer rights for workers."

This has been France's longest rail strike in 30 years. It was originally scheduled to end on June 28, but as we go to press, more strikes are scheduled for July 6 and 7, the beginning of vacations in France. Unions have promised unspecified actions over the summer and perhaps into the fall. The strikes were responsible for extensive disruptions for the 4.5 million daily SNCF commuters. By June, strike losses to country's railroad were estimated at \$400 million.

The battle has been likened to the epic struggle between British mineworkers and the arch-conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1984. In France, it's being fought out with four rail workers' unions; the largest by far is the CGT, dominated by the once powerful French Communist Party [other rail unions are the CFDT, SUD and UNSA]. On the other side of the barricades is the ambitious neo-liberal President Emmanuel Macron, a former banker and millionaire, who has been dubbed "the president of the rich."

Privatizing transportation

Macron is at the leading edge of capitalist attacks on French workers, student rights, and health care. He seeks to privatize SCNF, which employs 148,000 workers, and replace it with a new "private" public rail partnership, all the while hacking away at the rights of rail workers, such as lifetime job security (heaven forbid!), pay, and pensions.

The European Union (EU) of imperialist countries, of which France is a member, is mandating "competitive," i.e. for-profit capitalism, in all EU transportation systems by 2020. The CGT (General Confederation of Labor) has correctly call Macron's moves privatization, although Macron has denied it. A study of privatized transportation in Sweden, for example, revealed fare hikes and a reduction in service.

In negotiations with unions, French Premier Edouard Philippe has promised no layoffs in the transition—but not for future workers, it appears. Bottom line, the government is refusing to back off of its privatization plans and will continue the corporate rape of workers' rights. Overall, Macron says he will cut 120,000 public worker jobs by the end of his term in 2022.

Also on the chopping block are about 1 million survivor pensions, overwhelmingly widowed women, who face cuts by Macron. Women's pensions are already only 40% that of men, due on average to a shorter work history, pregnancy, part-time work, etc.

Macron's neo-liberal bill, which include changes to labor law and tax breaks for the rich, was passed in the National Assembly on April 17 and adopted on June 5 in the Senate. Macron signed it into law on June 20. By that time Macron had already imposed measures to taxi retirees more, cut some hospital jobs, and a new university admissions system that makes it more difficult for impoverished students to attend a university—which has sparked student protest. French law provides admission to universities for all those who complete high school.

The country's budget deficit has stayed within the European Union's neo-liberal, anti-worker parameters for the first time in a decade, after government cuts of some 60 billion euros. However, a commitment was made to unions that the state would take on 35 billion euros (1 euro=\$1.15 U.S.) of the 46 billion euro SNCF debt, if unions agree with "the reform," coincidentally making private investment in SNCF more attractive to possible buyers.

Meanwhile, Macron partnered with Trump in imperialist attacks in Syria, along with Britain. Macron will beef-up French imperialism with an extra 100 billion euros in military spending, money that could go to public services like the SNCF, pensions, education, or to resolve the 8.9% unemployment rate.

This drive for profits and defunding social services for working people are part of a worldwide "crisis capitalism," which has not yet fully recovered from the 2008 depression and is scrambling for profits at the expense of the working class of every nation by hook or crook.

Angry workers in health, education, and local gov-



(Above) Striking rail workers listen to union representatives at railway station in Lille, France.

ernment are among those who have walked off the job. However, according to the British *Socialist Worker*, "Although they mobilized strongly on March 22, the lack of momentum was noticeable for the new inter-union strike day on May 22, being obviously weaker than the massive day of action two months earlier, when railway workers participated in the demonstrations."

"The very broad union front of state employees was based on unions like the CFDT and FO (Workers Force), which, at the national level, have explicitly refused to converge their struggles, in particular between railway workers and state employees, even though these workers are subjected to similar attacks. As of yet, no sector of the national state employees has organized combative pressure to go beyond the off-again, on-again strike calendar, and the national union confederations have not helped to mobilize."

Already, the more conservative CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labour) rail union, led by Social Democrats, has cut a deal with Macron and has, so far, ruled out striking alongside the CGT. The federation has stated, pathetically, that such a convergence was "not the CFDT's cup of tea." Only once, in April, did the CFDT strike in unison with the CGT and other unions.

The strikes have been carried out on a basis of two-days on and three-days off. However, the revolutionary left and the rail union SUD (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy) have criticized this strategy, likening it to the failed strategy of the mostly pro-Syriza union bureaucrats in Greece, whose one day, two-day strikes have mired workers, and Greek society, in misery.

The Stalinist-led CGT leadership, infamous for its sell-out of the historic May 1968 strike 50 years ago, has carefully left room for extended negotiations with Macron. By scheduling strikes in advance, the French ruling class can plan and adjust to disruptions. In addition, on-and-off striking, with little result, exhausts striking workers, as now seems apparent, especially after the passage of the Macron-backed legislation. Lastly, the strategy deprived workers of their right at union meetings to extend the strike to an open ended walk-out, which still stands as the best chance of dealing a knockout blow to the French ruling class.

Many sectors react to Macron

Airline worker strikes, which include pilots, air traffic controllers (ATC) and ground crews, have also disrupted French transportation massively, and it continues as of this writing (July 7). Only Air France unions struck alongside the SNCF unions during April; they demanded wage increases, to regain the 6 percent of income lost since 2012 due to a wage freeze.

Budget airline Ryanair says it was forced to cancel some 1100 flights in May, due in large measure to Air Traffic Control employee shortages. ATC militancy is high. A record for strikes was set in 2017, with 41 days affected. Air France estimates its strike losses at 25 million euros per day.

French student protests continue against admissions "reforms." On April 13, Paris riot police removed 200 students seeking to occupy the Sorbonne university. The same day, strikes closed down the Eiffel Tower and two-thirds of French trains!

Minister of the Interior Gérard Collomb allowed violent police attacks on students. On March 22 students were attacked after they had occupied a college audi-

torium in Montpellier, where a school dean allowed a group of masked men—armed with bats, tasers, and reinforced punching gloves—to beat them up and evict them. Several students were hospitalized.

The University of Nanterre reacted to repeated student protests by calling in the cops. The notoriously brutal CRS riot police burst into an assembly of students and staff and arrested seven people. There have been police interventions in Nantes, Bordeaux, Paris, Lille, Caen, Dijon, Grenoble, and Strasbourg universities, and probably more. A third of the country's universities were blockaded or occupied during the months of April and May.

Macron, who dismissed student protesters as "professional agitators," was answered by the New Anti-Capitalist Party: "The government does not understand that police and military interventions show millions of young people and employees the true face of its policy: that of total aggression against the working classes. It is time for everyone to move against Macron and his world."

A May 5 protest in Paris dubbed the "Party at Macron's" resulted in the convergence of left political forces, including Jean-Luc Melechon's France Insoumise, the New Anti-Capitalist Party and many others. In a show of unity and solidarity, some 100,000 attended.

Desperately needed is the unity of labor itself. But most of all, labor and the oppressed need a class-struggle, anti-capitalist vision to take down Macron's attacks and capitalism with him. Labor needs to shut the system down until the job gets done!

Whatever the future holds for the French working class, the class struggle in the U.S. will be impacted, for better or worse. U.S. labor must stand in solidarity with French workers. Workers of the world, unite! ■

... DSA / Democrats

(continued from page 4)

on immigration. Appearing on National Public Radio, Ocasio-Cortez, when pressed on the Trump accusation that the Democrats want "open borders," expressed her support for border security.

Many DSA members want to fight this system, and we will be in the streets side by side with them in the fight for workers' rights and to defend immigrants, women, LGBTQ people, and oppressed nationalities from reactionary attacks. But at the same time, we argue that the political independence of working-class and oppressed people is crucial to winning their struggles and in building for a socialist future.

The road forward cannot be through the swamp of Democratic Party politics. We need a clean break with ruling-class parties. Now, more than in any recent period, the opportunity to build a new mass working-class party is before us. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

IT'S WAR!



(Left) Doug Ford, newly elected premier of Ontario.

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The June 7 election of the Doug Ford-led Progressive Conservative Party to government in Ontario means an escalation of the class war against working people, visible minorities, and impoverished social layers.

The former right-wing Toronto city councillor and brother of deceased Mayor Rob Ford cloaked his fiercely anti-labour agenda in populist rhetoric pitched against “the establishment, the downtown elites.” This allowed Doug Ford to channel mass discontent with 15 years of Liberal government cutbacks and corruption.

Premier Kathleen Wynne tried to save the furniture from the fire with a late shift to the left (e.g. increasing the minimum hourly wage, promising more spending to improve health services). But her Liberal Party lost half its voters and is now reduced to a rump of seven seats in the Ontario Legislature, one shy of official party status.

The labour-based New Democratic Party, running on a mildly left-reform platform, surged to 33.6 per cent and nearly doubled its seat total to 40. Several of its best policies (re-nationalize Hydro One, free university, drug and dental care, raise taxes on the rich, build social housing and public transit) came straight from the NDP Socialist Caucus playbook.

Andrea Horwath was over-the-top ec-

static at becoming Leader of the Official Opposition, pledging to hold Ford “to account.” But this won’t do. The Tory agenda today is much more aggressive than that of right-wing Premier Mike Harris in the mid-1990s. The horror show must be confronted and stopped by mass protest in the streets and workplaces, not by reliance on polite parliamentary criticism.

NDP and union leaders should be challenged to *lead the fight outside the Legislature*. In fact, the labour tops should have mobilized the ranks to campaign for the NDP, to counter the threat of the rampant anti-worker agenda of Ford and his conservative hate mongers. A serious effort to expose Ford’s populist propaganda might well have won the election for the NDP. Instead, many labour officials sat on their asses; some even urged strategic voting, which meant a vote for the Liberal Party. Unforgivable.

This shows why union leaders should be paid no more than the average wage of their union collective agreement. Privileges and fat expense accounts be gone! Replace the conservative bureaucrats with rank-and-file militants and turn the unions into instruments of class struggle.

Still, one thing is very clear: Doug Ford’s victory does not signal a unilateral shift to the right. The election rather reflects a polarization to both the left and the right. The highly disproportionate first-past-the-post electoral system perpetuates capitalist rule by usually delivering a majority of seats to parties that gain a minority of votes.

On June 7, the Conservatives captured 61 per cent of the seats (76 in total) with only 40.5 per cent of the votes cast. In other words, nearly 60 per cent of those who cast ballots supported parties ostensibly to the left of the Tories. That includes the Green Party, which won 4.6 per cent and (for the first time in Ontario) one seat. Taking into account a voter turnout of 58 per cent (up from 51 per cent in 2014), it is evident that *only about a quarter of the*

Resolution for an emergency convention of the OFL!

For a Mass Action plan to stop the Doug Ford/PC gov’t agenda!

Below is a resolution that unions, NDP electoral district associations, social justice movements and all working class organizations can discuss and adopt.

Why now? If working-class organizations go on record now in favour of mass action opposition to the Ford/Conservative agenda in Ontario, and for a democratic united front of resistance to capitalist austerity, it will help to prepare and coordinate the next phase of struggle.

Do you agree that this can be a useful tool in our tool kit—to connect with rank-and-file workers, fighters against oppression of every kind, and social justice movements?

Be it resolved that [fill in your union, NDP association and/or community organization] request that the Ontario Federation of Labour hold an emergency convention to adopt an action plan to confront and defeat the Doug Ford-Progressive Conservative government agenda.

Be it further resolved that [your union, etc.] commits to respond with mass protests, including rallies, demonstrations and job actions, up to and including sectoral and general strikes,

against Doug Ford—PC government attacks on public services, civil liberties, equity seeking groups, unions and non-organized workers in this province. We believe that all unions and social justice partners, in anticipation of serious cuts to jobs and services, should go on immediate strike alert and build a broad, democratic united front of resistance. ■

For information, call: 647-986-1917, e-mail: socialistactioncanada@gmail.com.

electorate backed Ford Nation.

But Ford says he has a mandate to implement his policies, swiftly. What are they? He will probably begin by breaking the strike of teaching assistants at York University, CUPE Local 3903, and then repeal Bill 148, the labour law reforms that include a \$15/hour minimum wage set for 2019. Next will be a tax cut of 20 per cent that will most benefit the rich. His tax credit for child care costs will not create more spaces, raise or enforce standards, or boost pay for low wage workers.

No steps to build social housing, and no significant increase in health care funding are in store. On transportation, Ford pledged to take ownership of Toronto’s subway system, which could be the fast track to privatization—while bus service remains woefully inadequate.

Jobs? The \$6 billion Ford says he will find in “efficiencies” translates to firing thousands of teachers, health workers and others in the public sector. Scores of schools and hospitals will be shuttered. Cuts in services will be staggering and bloody, impacting most harshly on the impoverished. Welfare rates will be rolled back and frozen.

Will hydro bills shrink by 12 per cent as promised? Not likely, as the private investors in Hydro One, sold off by Wynne’s Liberals, demand profit dividends. Most workers won’t miss the demise of the regressive cap-and-trade taxes, a license to pollute, but there is no climate justice plan in its stead.

Hostile to indigenous people’s needs, Ford boasted he’d personally drive the bulldozer to exploit rapidly the Ring of Fire resources in Northern Ontario, with

or without local consent.

On education, the Tories promised to repeal the new sex-ed curriculum but earmarked no new funds to repair crumbling school infrastructure.

Surprisingly, Ford never presented a fully costed platform. Economists estimate that the changes he promised, including tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, will create a \$20 billion budgetary hole. The shortfall is sure to come out of the hide of the working class.

Many workers who voted for Ford expect him to put money in their pocket and deliver \$1 beer. Imagine the disillusionment, indeed the raw anger, that will be felt when they realize they’re less well off.

As Karl Marx observed over 150 years ago, “Hitherto, the philosophers have interpreted the world. The point, however, is to change it.” Today, the task is not to wait for unfocused anger at Ford to swell; it is to fan the flames of discontent, build a broad, democratic, united front against capitalist austerity. It is to provide leadership in the struggle for a Workers’ Agenda.

The municipal elections in October offer an opportunity for the left to unite and confront the Ford agenda with a socialist platform. In any case, the road to effective action at all levels will entail replacing the leaders of the mainstream workers’ organizations with radical grassroots activists.

The class war is escalating. There is no denying it. The point is to wage it and to win it through mass protests, up to and including sectoral and general strikes with the aim of replacing the Ford regime with a Workers’ Government. ■

... Janus & the unions

(continued from page 3)

to the construction of unions in which membership growth and financial contributions reflect the workers’ overall confidence in the union’s cause. Taking solid measures to build fighting, class-struggle unions that are fully democratic and responsive to the ranks will be an effective answer to the *Janus* decision.

In the middle of the deliberations of the *Janus* case, there was an upsurge of militancy in traditionally “right to work” states. The strikes started with teachers in West Virginia in March and moved to Kentucky, Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma and North Carolina. All of these states have laws banning strikes. One teacher said, “What are they going to do, arrest 15,000 of us?”

The teachers were striking not only for their contract but to demand that the legislatures fund public schools. In some states the union tried to get them to

return to work, but the teachers refused until they got what they needed in writing from the legislature.

There are many lessons the labor movement can learn from these strikes. No strike is “illegal” if you have enough solidarity to say, as the teachers did, “Come and get us.” They achieved more from the state legislature in a couple of days than in years of sitting down and “telling their stories” to disinterested legislators. They certainly got their attention. As with all strikes, theirs ended when the bosses just wanted everything to be normal again—i.e., “labor peace.”

How did we win union rights?

The Wagner Act of 1935 is often credited with giving basic rights to some private-sector workers to organize unions and engage in collective bargaining. But those rights were not simply handed over to workers from President Roosevelt’s allegedly “sympathetic” Democratic Party administration. They were granted only because workers had *already* been organizing and fighting for their rights.

Two years before the Wagner Act was signed, several major labor struggles erupted, and general strikes

took place in Minneapolis and San Francisco in 1934. A massive strike wave got underway, which resulted in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), in which tens of thousands of workers were newly organized.

When President Roosevelt signed the Wagner Act, he explained that it was to be a new compact between labor and the bosses for “labor peace,” which of course was the goal of U.S. capitalists then as today.

The teachers showed us a moment in which independent working-class organizations displayed their power in the political arena. The teachers refused to be hijacked by the Democratic and Republican politicians in the state legislatures. Building on the teachers’ example, U.S. workers need to exercise political power with their own independent party. A labor party, representing a fighting labor movement, could leave the twin parties of capitalist war, racism, and economic plunder in the dust. A labor party, working with its allies among all oppressed people, would be an historic and permanent gain for the cause of the working class in our country. ■

Thousands resist pollution from copper smelting plant in India

By RUAN MUNASINGHE

On May 22, thousands of protesters in the town and district of Thoothukudi (also known by its British name, Tuticorin), in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, expressed anguish as victims of pollution from the area's copper smelter. Police and paramilitary fired into the crowd, killing 13 and injuring many more. What happened on May 22 was a piece of a larger story; neither the pollution nor the protests were new.

People in Tuticorin are resisting because of a copper plant operated by an Indian unit (called Sterilite) of Vedanta, a mining company based in London. The unit is the seventh-largest smelter in the world and is unique for being located in such a densely populated area. The area is also located near the ecologically sensitive Gulf of Mannar. Protesters say the plant is hazardous to the environment as well as to the health and safety of local people.

The plant has a long history of scandals regarding pollution and safety. In 1996, the National Trust for Clean Environment, a Chennai-based group, challenged the court ruling allowing the factory to begin operation. In 1998, two years after the plant opened, the Madras High Court gave an interim order to close the plant. Production stopped for one month. However, after agreeing to curb pollution the plant charges were dropped. In 2010, the Madras High Court again ordered the plant to be shut down due to high levels of pollution. The case went to the Supreme Court, where in 2013 it was decided that the company only needed to pay Rs. 100 crore [about \$16 million] in penalties, and that operations at the plant could continue.

Specific abuses cited by the High Court (and more importantly, by protesters) include fluoride, cadmium, chrome, lead, arsenic and copper seeping into groundwater—which is used for drinking, for growing food and providing fish that people eat and sell. This has been confirmed by groundwater samples taken in 2005. Just as dangerous is the air pollution: sulphur dioxide and particulate matter.

Residents call the town the “pollution capital” for the noxious fumes from the chemical industries. Villagers have complained of throat irritation, breathing difficulties, and abnormal pain during menstruation for women. They allege that the plant is the direct cause of breathing disorders (especially asthma), skin diseases, heart problems, and cancer.

According to a study by Chennai Solidarity Group, an environmental non-profit organization, 13.9% of the people within a 5 kilometer radius of the plant (covering more than 80,000 people in total) have respiratory



diseases. The study also reported higher ENT (ear, nose and throat related disease) morbidity (16.6%) than in control areas or the state of Tamil Nadu as a whole. The plant also has the potential to be a source of phosphate pollution, which could cause ecologically harmful eutrophication in water bodies.

In March 2013, people of Tuticorin awoke to irritated eyes, burning throats, and breathing troubles after a toxic sulfur-dioxide gas leak. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board cited sulfur-dioxide levels of more than double the prescribed limit in a closure order. The plant denied the accusations and the closure never went into effect. Some protesters also point out that the plant is located 14 kilometers away from the Gulf of Mannar, despite a condition that the plant has to be at least 25 kilometers away from the Gulf.

For the past 22 years there has been an ongoing pattern between the people of the surrounding area and the Sterilite plant: the company decides to expand, the people revamp protests, and the plant temporarily shuts down due to “environmental violations” as determined by the government and the court system. The plant has shut down a total of five times prior to recent incidents in May of 2018.

Despite the heavy costs of the resistance, the movement has achieved quite a lot in halting expansion of the plant—as when the company attempted to build a discharge pipe through a residential area and emptying into the ocean. The movement is very diverse and has exhibited the immense potential of solidarity among oppressed peoples within third world commu-

nities. The Anti-Sterilite protests have involved fisherman, mothers, children, NGOs, politicians (particularly in the Communist Party of India), religious groups, organized labor, and even celebrities.

Beginning in February of this year, 500 people declared a hunger strike and indefinite protests against an announcement from Sterilite that the plant would expand and production would increase by 50%. On Feb. 12, the first day of the protests, 270 people were arrested.

Protests swelled on the hundredth day, May 22—but police opened fire on the nearly 20,000 protesters, killing 13. The exact number injured on that day is unknown—although certainly over 100. Video later showed a police officer saying, “at least one should die.” As video and commentary flooded social media, authorities blocked the internet in the area. A close study of some of the visuals and the claims of relatives of the dead showed police firing was mostly from powerful weapons at close range.

The next day, May 23, protests broke out in London over the massacre. The angry protesters demanded that Vedanta be delisted from the London Stock Exchange and that an inquiry be made into the environmental and human rights violations. There was also a strong sense of solidarity with those who were recently massacred in Gaza.

It has since been announced that the Sterilite Copper Smelter would halt expansion. There has been no action on the movement's demand to permanently shut down the facility. ■

Water emergency in Oregon — A product of climate change

By ANN MONTAGUE

SALEM, ORE—People in Oregon are usually proud of their natural resources. All school children know that in 1966 Governor Tom McCall, with public pressure behind him, took on the real estate barons, and all Oregon beaches were legally declared public property with unfettered access for all.

So those of us living in Marion County (which includes Salem, the state capital, and 10 other communities) were surprised on May 29 to receive an alert: “Water emergency for the Salem area.” People were warned not to ingest tap water and to drink only bottled water; boiling or using a filter would not make it safe.

While the warnings were aimed at children under six, those with compromised immune systems or with kidney or liver conditions, women who are pregnant or breast feeding, and the elderly and people with pets, most everyone seemed to think that caution is the best policy.

After the first two days, we were told we could resume drinking tap water, but the next day, they said that the warning would resume for two weeks. Currently, it is indefinite as to when people can once again digest water from the tap. After the first couple of days, the governor sent the National Guard to distribute water to about 10 locations. This has continued with military precision; as long as people have containers, they can fill up five gallons at a time for 24 hours a day.

Many people who attended informational meetings about the water alert identified the causes as climate change and a 30-year-old filter system. The water is contaminated as a result of toxins (cyanotoxins) from algae blooms in Detroit Lake, which is our water source. These toxins are a result of a longer period of hot weather than Oregon has had in the past. Generally, Oregonians say that it doesn't start to warm up until after July 4th, but May of this year was the hottest and driest since 1892.

This explains the growth of toxins, but the other questions people want answered is “why do we have a 30-year-old filter system and why do we send water samples for testing to Ohio instead of locally?” The simple answer is that the Salem city council and the Marion County Commissioners did not want to spend the money to upgrade the water system. After being without city water for over a month, however, the city finally ordered a new testing system. They are also testing a system of powdered activated carbon to remove the toxins.

The clearest statement about the situation came from Rebecca Hillwig, natural resource specialist with the Oregon Health Authority: “I think it is fair to say that factors associated with global warming—hotter and drier conditions and a rapid snow melt could definitely increase conditions that cause algae blooms. ... It is fair to say we have potential for more of these issues in the future.” ■

Husky fire stokes fears in Superior

By LUCAS ALAN DIETSCH

SUPERIOR, Wis.—On April 26, around 10 a.m., on the same day as the anniversary of the explosion at Chernobyl, the Husky Refinery here exploded and caught fire. For nine hours, toxic fumes blew 30 miles to the south. Eleven workers were injured but soon recovered. Most of this city along the shore of Lake Superior had to be evacuated.

Without having yet learned the details about the damage, Superior's Democratic Mayor Jim Paine said that the air was unpolluted after the fire was put out. Right away, however, community members began to express their fears about the quality of the water, air, and soil.

Husky is an oil and gas corporation headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, and a tripartite player with Enbridge and TransCanada. Its Superior refinery takes in tar sands from Alberta and, as one of the projects, turns the oil into asphalt. To make asphalt, Husky uses a deadly chemical called hydrogen fluoride (HF). The burning asphalt on April 26 was merely a few feet from the tanks of this deadly substance. If the fire had released the HF, Superior and much of the surrounding area might resemble Chernobyl.

The Douglas County hazardous materials response plan reads: “A worst-

case-scenario release from this facility would cover a radius that would encompass the entire populated area of the city of Superior and much of Duluth. The number of people affected would vary by season and current weather conditions but would range in the thousands any time of year.”

Hydrogen fluoride is also an additive used in gasoline refining. About 50 refineries around the country employ the substance—a potential danger to millions of people. In high concentrations, the fumes burn the skin and lungs.

To present a business-as-usual facade, Husky held a public forum, which was vigorously opposed by activists seeking answers. And so, activists with local groups and Socialist Action organized an alternative forum, which featured local environmentalists as speakers. About 100 people attended.

In response to growing fears, Husky held a Q and A at a local middle school within sight of the oil refinery towers. But instead of answering community concerns with facts, Husky supplied catered food, Husky paraphernalia, and plenty of misinformation. Community activists are demanding that HF be removed from Superior. They want more transparency about the fire, and new green alternatives to the Husky Refinery. This is Superior, not Huskyville! ■

Where is Mexico heading with Lopez Obrador?



By LIGA DE UNIDAD SOCIALISTA, PARTIDO OBRERO SOCIALISTA, and LA GOTA

Two days after the elections in which he had tied a sweeping victory with more than 50 percent of the total vote, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) announced that he will back the government of Enrique Peña Nieto during the transition period prior to the rise of the new government. This declaration culminated months of negotiations and agreements that allowed election day, July 1, to unfold relatively free of any upsets.

The strident accusations and attacks against AMLO (“a danger for Mexico”) by businessmen, politicians, and journalists have been left far behind. The confidence and reassurance of the generality of the businessmen before the imminent triumph of López Obrador was expressed in that, two days before the elections, the Mexican Stock Exchange closed with a rise of 0.33 percent, and the peso advanced 1% in its value against the U.S. dollar. The prominent businessman Alfonso Romo, who has been appointed head of the next government’s Office of the President, knew very well what he was saying when he stated that “there are very few businessmen who fear López Obrador” and that “it is ridiculous to be afraid of expropriations if AMLO wins.”

Those who still have the illusion that López Obrador will lead a great process to push back neoliberalism in Mexico have not paid attention to what his leadership has been repeating for years, and very clearly, as he did in his statement, “I will not change the economy” (*El Universal*, April 13, 2012), during his previous presidential campaign—a statement he has never denied since.

However, there has certainly been a change in the public image of the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA)—the party that AMLO founded and directs—due to the presence and radical tone of the leftist intellectuals who belong to the party. Surely, the above is being justified with the famous phrase that “Paris is worth a mass.”* We’ll see what they tell us later; but for the moment the only possible in-

terpretation is that these intellectuals have stepped aside to facilitate the negotiations and agreements reached by AMLO and Romo with the government of Peña Nieto and with the business groups.

As things stand, however, there is no doubt that the huge popular discontent against the Peña Nieto government and the disenchantment with the vast majority of politicians made its way irrepressibly with the vote of over 50% for the candidacy of AMLO. The population, and especially the sectors that have suffered from inequality and injustice, have felt its strength.

Their protest by voting has severely damaged the PRI and the PAN, and left the PRD moribund. What we might call the “party system” has suffered a defeat that will require a profound reconfiguration—which will imply not only changes in the platforms and in the image of the parties that we have just mentioned but the emergence of new organizations.

Paradoxically, MORENA will have to face the greatest challenges. Not only does it have a very weak structure, but the influx of leaders and members of other parties without more identification and cohesion than their support for the caudillo who has won the presidency of the republic means that it will be very difficult for him to control the enormous variety of interests that have lodged in its heart. Inevitably, the president of the republic will more often play the role of referee in disputes between the contending parties.

To mention the case of one conflict that can be explosive: the teachers who voted for AMLO, most of whom are organized, are anxiously waiting for the rise of the new government to mean the end of the “educational reform” imposed by the government of Peña Nieto. How much will they be granted? Surely the powerful entrepreneurs, who hold the economic power in Mexico, will not agree with the demands of the teachers, and will do everything possible to hinder them, or to block them altogether. In other words, it is a conflict between the interests of opposing social classes, and any conciliatory attempt will only result in short-term solutions.

(Above) Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) arrives at a MORENA campaign rally in 2017.

We can say the same thing of so many other unresolved conflicts, in which that 50 percent of the voters who voted for AMLO represent interests that are opposed to those of the capitalists who have chosen not to hinder the arrival of the caudillo to the presidency. Likewise, there is the opposition of very important sectors of the population to the “energy reform,” as shown by the outbreaks of dissatisfaction with increases in the price of gasoline; and there is also the conflict over the concessions granted to mining companies, as well as the new issue of concessions for the use of water resources.

And it is not going to be enough for the new government to launch scholarship or support programs for the less favored social sectors. The mentioned conflicts will deepen.

Social conflicts are also present around the right of women to abort an unwanted pregnancy, in safe conditions and under the best possible medical care. This demand is totally absent from MORENA’s program and proposals, but it is being raised by an increasing number of women. And what about the rights of homosexual communities, and of other people oppressed by their orientation or sexual preferences (LGBTQ+). The demands of these communities were absent during the electoral campaign.

The contrast between the overwhelming joy displayed by millions of Mexicans and Mexicans who voted for AMLO and the concern expressed at the same time when everyone realizes that “now begins the difficult” is evident. And they are quite correct. Mexico is going through a crisis in public safety, and it suffers from very serious vulnerabilities and challenges in terms of economy (a colossal growth of the public debt), of the environment, of major social problems derived from the deep crisis in which the country is bogged down. That is not to mention the tremendous pressures of the powerful neighbor to

(continued on page 8)

