

President Obama's lame duck quackery



By BILL ONASCH

The ritual of President Obama's annual State of the Union address to Congress (SOTU), required by law and custom, comes without any mandate for action. It has evolved into Reality TV viewed by tens of millions—but with less lasting impact than the style decrees of Fashion Police.

It is one component of a Rubik's Cube puzzle known as Separation of Powers created by the all-white male property-owning Founding Fathers. When neither consensus nor compromise can be reached on major disputes with or within the American ruling class, it provides the fail-safe of gridlock.

Only once have these checks and balances, praised in our high school civics classes, completely broken down. When the then new Republican Party, perceived to be anti-slavery, elected Abraham Lincoln as president in 1860, most of the slave states refused to accept the vote and seceded from the USA. That split, of course, was soundly crushed in a bloody Civil War that did lead to the abolition of slavery—and the end of power sharing between the old vanquished slave-owner class and the newly triumphant capitalist class.

There have been numerous periods of gridlock over the years, but the present one since the Tea Party-driven Republican rout of the president's party in the 2010 House elections is the longest and most bitter in living memory. Fueled by the deep pockets of maverick billionaires such as the notorious Koch family—whose founding father was a charter member of the ultra-right John



Birch Society—they built a motley base of disgruntled strip-mall capitalists, gun fanatics, science-bashing climate change deniers, and Christian extremists eager to fight Darwin, birth control and same-sex marriage.

Taking advantage of the massive abstinence of disillusioned Obama supporters, they won control of many state governments as well as the House. Last November, they tightened their stranglehold on Capitol Hill by winning a nine-seat majority in the Senate.

The mainstream of the boss and banker class has strong reservations about this transformation of their traditional favorite twin of the two parties they employ to run the government. They are more pragmatic than ideological, favoring stable government rather than constant confrontational stunts that fail to take care of business. With no serious challenge in sight from their mortal enemy—the working-class majority—most of the uber-rich prefer seduction to rape, fraud over strong-arm robbery.

All in all, they have done quite well on Obama's watch, and they are aware that that this perfidious "friend" of labor was able to do things for them during the Great Recession that might have

stirred up worker resistance if McCain or Romney had been at the helm.

There was some speculation among the chattering classes about GOP leaders trying to clean up their mean-spirited, loony image in time to convince patrons and public they are fit to govern before next year's presidential election. But there was precious little evidence of such a daunting makeover before SOTU.

And the very next day after the president's speech, they committed a stunning breach of protocol. Without even consulting the White House, the Republican Speaker of the House invited the head of a foreign government to explain to Congress the dangerous flaws in U.S. government foreign policy and military strategy.

They undoubtedly hoped to not only further tarnish the hated Lame Duck in the White House; they also seek to boost the prospects of their Zionist sister party in the March Israeli elections.

As Lisa Goldman noted on the *Al-jazeera America* site, "the sight of their prime minister giving a speech in perfect English to applauding American legislators—the last time Netanyahu spoke on Capitol Hill, he received 29

standing ovations—could be just the thing to sway voters on the fence."

And in lieu of honorarium, there are also moves to cut off the pittance of aid to the victims of war crimes in Gaza—carried out by the government led by their guest speaker.

While the ruling-class mainstream is certainly pro-Zionist—as is the president—using foreign leaders to dis the commander in chief in the halls of Congress is just not done. The rehab to break the addiction of mindless partisan aggression has so far failed.

Obama: "We're beyond the crisis"

GOP focus on abuse of executive authority as well as scandals real and contrived has given the president a free pass on vulnerable issues—such as war, civil liberties, the economy, and climate change—affecting those who work for a living.

With polling data and focus groups as inspiration, the Lame Duck flew in to what he does best—campaign stops across the country before and after SOTU. He hopes to frame public debate—not to influence Congress, but to trail blaze for a worthy successor in

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The entire system is racist!

By MARTY GOODMAN

Tony Savino / Socialist Action

The election of Barack Obama was supposed to be the dawn of a new day for African Americans. But that was a lie. As the racist murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner have proven to a new generation, the entire system is racist.

Police violence, economic inequality, the lack of decent jobs, and de-facto school segregation are ravaging Black, Hispanic, and immigrant communities. Statistics show that there are more African Americans in prison today than there were slaves in the Deep South—even with a Black president in the White House!

The protests in Ferguson, Mo., led by Black youth, were out of the control of white and Black establishment (capitalist) politicians. It was a Democratic Party governor, Jay Nixon, who sent in military equipment supplied by Democrat Barack Obama to racist police departments throughout the United States. Ferguson cops clubbed, arrested, and tear gassed protesters, as well as reporters.

The on-line video of a pack of white NYPD cops sitting on and choking Eric Garner to death disgusted hundreds of millions around the world. Mass protests, “die-ins,” and highway occupations, led by a new generation of Black youth, many of them women, riveted the country and the entire world. They demanded that things must change. Stop the murder of our Black youth!

Obama and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio have promised police cameras as part of their “solution.” But videos of the NYPD in Garner’s case, or of the police beating and near death of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1991, didn’t prevent later police violence or cops from getting off without punishment (years after the assault on King, two L.A. cops went to jail).

The grand jury system, weighted in favor of racist cops, is not likely to end anytime soon. There were 16 eyewitnesses who told a grand jury that they saw Michael Brown with his hands up, yet their testimony had no effect on the jury’s verdict. Said Lynne Stewart, a crusading attorney and former political prisoner, the



grand jury system “should be abolished.”

Socialist Action celebrates the emergence of a new, powerful Black-led movement. Because it has stayed independent of the two parties of the wealthy 1% and has stayed in the streets, this movement has the potential of becoming a giant force for change. But to do that, the movement needs to grow even bigger and stronger.

The construction of large Black-led, multi-ethnic, action-oriented coalitions around principled demands is needed to bring our forces together for the greatest impact on the struggle against police brutality.

Socialist Action sees police brutality as the product of 400 years of the racist, capitalist system. We say that the entire capitalist system, which thrives on big-

otry, war, and the exploitation of all working people, has got to go.

Capitalism is a system of greed and division run by a tiny wealthy elite, which is mostly white. This top 1% profits from racism. Police brutality reinforces this barbaric system. In contrast, socialism is the democratic rule of society by the vast majority, in the interests of working people, and not the greedy few.

Socialist Action has no trust in the two major U.S. parties, and we proudly say so. We refused to back Barack Obama for president and told the truth about the Democratic Party’s sabotage of civil rights movements. We did not support Democrat Bill de Blasio for New York City mayor, despite his campaign promises calculated to hoodwink voters, especially Black voters, concerning his so-called police “reforms.”

However, we *do* support continuing to build mass movements in the streets as the most effective way forward in the fight against racist cops. Ultimately, we need to take our struggle all the way with a socialist revolution. Building a revolutionary party is urgent. We need a party of dedicated, diverse, and experienced working-class activists with deep roots in the struggles of exploited and oppressed people throughout the country.

Equally important is learning from the great events and leaders of the past. Socialist Action, a national organization in the United States, is proud to stand in the tradition of the world’s great revolutionary fighters—like Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Malcolm X. Malcolm X taught us all that both the Republican and the Democratic parties were traps for the Black community.

Socialist Action is now preparing a pamphlet consisting of articles that appeared in this newspaper in December 2014 and January 2015. The authors are activists in the struggle against racist police violence and frame-ups. The pamphlet will be published this month (working title: “Black Lives Matter”) and can be ordered for \$4 (including postage) from P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.

None of us can change the world alone. We need to work together. If you are excited by the prospects of building a serious and effective movement for radical change, then please get in touch with Socialist Action. See contact information on this page. ■

Socialist Action: Where we stand

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers’ party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

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

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women,

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

Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers’ movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution, instead of seeking to merely reform or work within the system. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers’ government, and the fight for socialism.

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By KEITH LESLIE

The results of the national election in Greece, which produced a government led by the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), hit European capitalism like a sledge hammer. With Western European nations facing the prospect of tumbling into recession, SYRIZA's demand for a "significant moratorium" on debt payments was the last thing they wanted to hear. Sixty percent of Greece's 323 billion euro debt is held by the European Union (EU).

The new SYRIZA prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, began discussions with EU officials, calling on them to draw back from their insistence on austerity measures, which have drastically reduced jobs and living standards.

The Jan. 25 election victory seemed a plausible scenario for at least a year, following SYRIZA's first-place finish in the May 2014 European elections. But the scale of its current victory is quite impressive: SYRIZA received more than 2.2 million votes (36.3% of the total, up 9.4% from the June 2012 elections) and 149 of 300 seats in the Greek parliament; two short of a majority.

The former governing party and main right-wing party in Greece, New Democracy (ND), placed second, receiving 27.8% of the vote; a drop of 1.9% from the last elections. The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn (GD) party placed third with 6.3%, down 0.6%—still a disturbing result, given that its leadership and half of its MPs were in prison during the campaign. The River (To Potami), a relatively new party which, similar to the Five Star Movement in Italy, has very vague and unclear liberal politics centered on a popular figure, placed fourth with 6.1%.

The Greek Communist Party (KKE), a long-standing Stalinist party, placed fifth with 5.5% of the vote, up 1%. Independent Greeks (ANEL), a right-wing populist party, which split from New Democracy over ND's support for austerity programs, placed sixth with 4.8%, down 2.7%. The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), the old ruling social democratic party, dropped to 4.7%, a decline of 7.6%.

All other parties placed under the 3% threshold for entry into parliament. Of note in these parties, the Movement of Democratic Socialists (KIDISO), a split from PASOK led by its former leader, George Papanandreu, received 2.5%; Democratic Left (DIMAR), a rightward split from SYRIZA that had participated in the previous coalition government with ND and PASOK, declined to 0.5%, dropping 5.7%; and ANTARSYA, a coalition of far-left parties in which the Greek section of the Fourth International, OKDE-Spartakos, participates, received 0.64%, up 0.31%.

For ANTARSYA, the gain of nearly 19,000 votes from the June 2012 election (20,416) to 2015 (39,455) was significant, although it remains well below its May 2012 total of 75,416. Turnout was 63.9%, up 1.4% from the June 2012 elections (though still significantly lower than the average in Greek elections since 1974, about 76.3%).

Since SYRIZA fell two seats short of a majority, it required support in order to form a government. The KKE, notorious for its sectarianism, had already ruled out a coalition with SYRIZA in advance of the election, stating that it would vote for bills "friendly to the people" but without backing a SYRIZA government. As such, SYRIZA turned to two other parties, Independent Greeks (ANEL) and To Potami. To Potami initially supported forming a coalition with SYRIZA, but balked at the participation of ANEL, which they described as unacceptably "anti-Europe."

SYRIZA thus turned to the right-wing ANEL alone. The two parties announced the formation of a coalition less than a day after the elections. Alexis Tsipras, the head of SYRIZA, was made prime minister while Panos Kammenos, the leader of the Independent Greeks, became minister of defense. In a TV interview on Jan. 26, Kammenos described "red lines" that ANEL would demand as part of a coalition, which SYRIZA is reported as having accepted—support for their Greek nationalist position on the Macedonia naming dispute, disputes with Turkey about Thrace and other issues, and support for Greek Cypriots.

The coalition with ANEL is certainly a very troubling development, given the history of the party. ANEL split with New Democracy in 2012 to oppose the austerity measures being imposed by the ND government, and ANEL has taken a stance against the harsh conditions placed on Greece by the "Troika" of the European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund. The party, however, is strongly nationalist and anti-immigrant, demanding the deportation of undocumented immigrants and for a maximum cap of 2.5% of the country's population for immigrants. It has close ties with the Greek

Greek election shakes Europe's economies

Maximilien Nguyen



Orthodox Church, is pro-NATO, and homophobic; and its leader Kammenos has made anti-Semitic comments—accusing Greek Jews of paying less in taxes than Orthodox Greeks.

It is yet to be seen how this coalition will resolve these contradictions—for example, whether the government will try to ignore or downplay them in favor of a focus on negotiations with Europe over austerity—or how stable this coalition will prove. Some commentators have suggested that SYRIZA might seek a new coalition with To Potami after negotiations with the European Union.

Socialist Action opposes all electoral and governmental coalitions with bourgeois parties. Throughout history, such blocs between workers parties and those of the capitalists have resulted in heavy concessions being imposed upon the workers movement. But this coalition is particularly disturbing given the reactionary nature of the Independent Greeks.

How did SYRIZA manage to become the largest party in Greece from a coalition that had gained only 4.6% of the vote in 2009? The answer lies within two phenomena: the devastating impact of austerity on Greece, and the strength of a number of social movements and fights against the austerity governments.

Since 2009, Greece has implemented seven major austerity packages, in addition to smaller cuts made as part of other bills. These packages have included pay freezes and severe pay cuts for public employees, hundreds of thousands of job cuts for public employees, a four-year raise to the minimum retirement age, very large pension cuts, a cut of 22 percent to the minimum wage, large tax increases—particularly on consumption taxes—mass privatization of publicly owned companies, and severe cuts to social services.

The impact of these programs on Greece has been devastating, with unemployment rising from less than 10 percent in 2009 to a high of 28 percent in late 2013, and it has remained over 25%. The youth unemployment rate has consistently been about double the total rate, remaining above 50% today.

A Nov. 14, 2014, article by Matt O'Brien in the *Washington Post*, "Greece's recession is over, but its depression will be the worst in history," noted that by European Commission predictions, the Greek economy would not reach its 2007 level again until 2022.

This calamitous development has been met with significant and often fierce resistance from sections of the Greek working class. These struggles include protests against the mass firing of cleaning workers for government ministries (the new government has promised to rehire them), the fight against the closure of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), and a fight against the Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold's establishment of the Skouries gold mine in northern Greece.

There have also been a number of general strikes in Greece during the last six years, including one on Nov. 27, 2014. These movements have energized Greek workers and radicals and have provided the

basis for SYRIZA's meteoric rise and the collapse of the discredited pro-austerity social democratic party, PASOK.

What are the likely outcomes of this election? If one listened to the fear-mongering predictions of European bankers, they might predict that Greece is on the verge of a default—its helm seized by wild, radical revolutionaries. In point of fact, SYRIZA's leadership is reformist; Tsipras has several times pledged to avoid a Greek exit from the Eurozone. Rather, SYRIZA is demanding changes to the terms of European financial support for Greece.

While SYRIZA initially demanded a partial write-down of Greece's debt, the new finance minister has suggested as an alternative the swap of European Central Bank-held Greek bonds for new support. Disturbingly, he also claimed that the new government would pursue a budgetary surplus, even if it required reversing some of SYRIZA's campaign promises.

The current setup for European support expires at the end of February, at which point Greece will seek billions in additional euros, although this deadline could be pushed back by European Central Bank action, such as the purchase of Greek bonds. So far, European financial leaders have declared their unwillingness to accept such a proposal, particularly as it could lead to similar demands by other EU members such as Ireland and Portugal.

On Feb. 4, the European Central Bank announced it would no longer allow Greek banks to use government bonds as collateral for loans, in essence requiring them to borrow from the more expensive Emergency Liquidity Assistance program, which itself requires the assistance that is due to expire. This move will accelerate the withdrawals from Greek banks that have been ongoing since December, and put the new government under even more pressure to reach a deal before the end of February.

One immediate step taken by the new government was to halt privatization plans that had been agreed to by the previous government, including the selling off of the port of Piraeus, the Public Power Corporation of Greece (the largest utility company in Greece), and Hellenic Petroleum, among other companies.

It is clear that these elections must not be seen as an end to the struggle. Hopefully, the election of SYRIZA will lead to a break from austerity and a step forward, but the danger is strong that the new government will give up significant concessions to EU and Greek capitalism. Moreover, SYRIZA has bound itself to the reactionary nationalist, anti-immigrant, and homophobic policies of its coalition partner, ANEL.

Unless SYRIZA repudiates ANEL and carries out a clear, principled program in the interests of the Greek working class, demoralization and setbacks are a distinct possibility. Thus, there remains a great deal of work ahead for working-class activists. A sustained victory for Greek and European workers can only come on the basis of continued mobilizations in their workplaces and in the streets. ■



(Left) Protester in contingent of Indigenous people at New York climate march on Sept. 21, 2014.

The facts on climate change demand a radical solution

BY EVAN ENGERING

"This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate", by Naomi Klein, 566 pages, Knopf Canada, September, 2014.

The latest book of Naomi Klein, the influential Toronto-based journalist, author, and activist, may live up to its ambitious title, "This Changes Everything." In it, Klein turns her thorough, eye-opening brand of investigative journalism to the topic of climate change. The book is a surprising achievement for a mainstream author. Her call for a new grassroots movement to rise up and defeat neoliberalism and halt climate change has been publicized on television and in bookstores across Canada and around the world.

Klein provides an insightful synopsis of the environmental movement. She shows how many of the grassroots protest organizers of the 1970s morphed into a layer of institutionalized green bureaucrats. She exposes how these people and groups traded off their willingness to confront exploitative industries for the power and prestige associated with the business class, claiming that they would reform it from the inside. This took the form of measly pro-market mechanisms, like the trade in carbon credits.

She explains how we got to where we are today in environmental politics, particularly with the rise of

anti-scientific climate change denial in the United States. Klein's investigation into climate politics reveals the necessity of systemic economic change. She shares alarming anecdotes. One involves the Nature Conservancy's stating that it had no choice but to allow drilling for oil in its own nature reserves.

She exposes the myth of environmental salvation delivered by green corporations and billionaire philanthropists. A prominent example is Richard Branson. His Virgin airlines releases tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, notwithstanding his empty promise to shift to renewable energy. Her revelations highlight how futile it is to try to fight climate change without fighting the capitalist establishment that created it.

Klein also illustrates how dire the struggle for climate justice is for the Global South. She shows how rising sea levels are reaching crisis levels for those living on coastlines and islands, where poverty and environmental strife combine to create a crushing burden on the victims of First World consumerism and wasteful overproduction of useless things.

She also reveals the global injustice that developing countries face in terms of economic goals. After centuries of exploitation by imperialism, many of them want to enjoy the high level of industrial sophistication of the dominant countries, but face pressure not to industrialize in the same unsustainable way.

In this way, even the environmental movement (in

its current inadequacy) perpetuates the inequality of the global divide between rich and poor countries. The rulers of the rich countries refuse to fund the sustainable development of the latter, even after robbing them for their own development for so long.

There are victims of climate injustice in North America too. Klein talks about the struggles indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States against resource extraction companies and the national governments that serve them. The destruction of their lands, such as by the infamous Alberta tar sands development, underscores the continuity of centuries of white colonialist oppression of First Nations people.

Most importantly, Klein presents the compelling argument that the fight for climate justice will be won not by supporting "greener" industries or tougher legislation, but by social movements led by the disenfranchised, including indigenous groups, poor and racialized communities, and especially the Global South.

Klein describes meeting activists who have taken direct action against extraction companies in the "Blockadia", anti-fracking, and other social movements. She emphasizes the necessity of linking all these struggles together in a unified movement against neo-liberalism and climate change.

In the end, unfortunately, Klein does not present a vision of the future post-climate-change society. The crux of her argument, that climate change can be defeated only by an all-encompassing movement from the disempowered, is not incorrect. The problem lies in what kind of programme and leadership this movement requires, what it should aim for, and how it will succeed.

Part of crafting a solution is properly identifying the root of the problem. Even though capitalism is singled out in the title, it is disappointing to find it hyphenated throughout the book: free market-capitalism, unregulated-capitalism, etc. This is a common reflex of reformists—to give this rotten economic system an escape clause: call for an end to the current era of capitalism in order to return to the illusory "good ol' days" capitalism.

Thus, despite all the evidence condemning the capitalist system and its propensity to plunder the environment for private gain, Klein stops short of bringing the reader to the logical conclusion: a new mode of production is needed to stave off catastrophe and to build a better world. Instead of advocating a revolutionary perspective, she dismisses it with a caricature—a "violent vanguardist revolution" that nobody wants.

She points to the abolition of slavery as an example of when a massive, morally repugnant system was dismantled, while leaving the capitalist mode of production intact. But, as the American Civil War demonstrated, the ruling class rarely surrenders its "right" to exploit without a fight. The subtitle of Klein's book, "Capitalism vs. the Climate," alludes to a fight. Klein seems to forget, though, that this is a final match. There can be only one winner. ■

... Obama

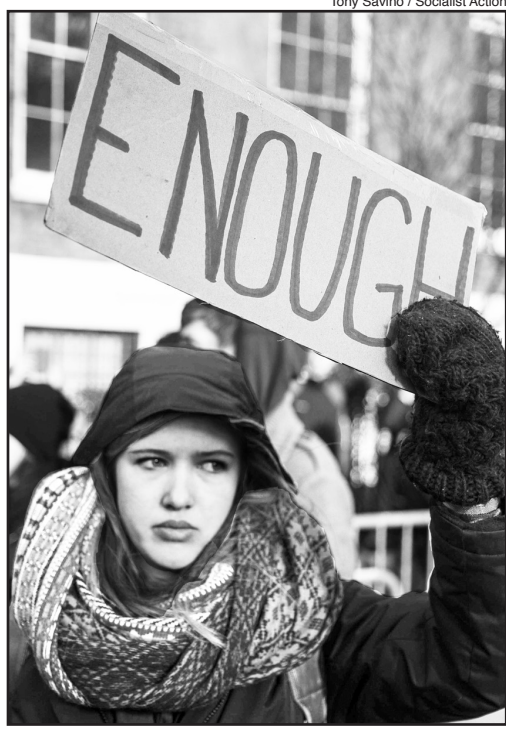
(continued from page 1)

November 2016.

In his SOTU, the president sounded a bit like Reagan proclaiming "it's morning in America again," as he asserted that we have moved beyond the "shadow of crisis." He hailed the Labor Department report showing that more jobs were created in 2014 than in any other year of this century. The statistics cited are accurate, and undoubtedly the job situation has improved over the depths of the Great Recession. But this partial picture ignores serious lingering problems.

Even *The Wall Street Journal* observed that the report was "marred by softer wages and a rise in workforce dropouts." There are still nearly 18 million workers who want full-time jobs but can't find one. And that doesn't include millions more who have simply given up looking for work and are no longer being tracked. It was only these "dropouts" that have brought the official unemployment rate to 5.6 percent—down from the Recession peak of 10 percent.

For the second time in 2014, average wages actually declined in December. The average worker wage is lower today than when Obama took office. The president acknowledged the growth in inequality during "recovery." Choosing not to jaw



bone about his \$10.10 minimum wage proposal, he instead advocated boosting taxes on both wealth and income of the rich while giving tax breaks to the "middle class."

Such help for what has been his party's historic base includes modest tax write-offs for child care and what has been exaggerated as "free" community college education. These proposals have been cheered at the pep rallies on the road—

but are dead on arrival in Congress.

The president did reach out to the Republicans in one area sure to get bipartisan support and likely action—so-called Fast Track approval for negotiating further global economic pacts. This was the one topic the president's most loyal of all supporters—the bureaucracy atop our unions—had to criticize.

With characteristic bluntness, Larry Hanley, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union, said, "The progressive plans proposed by President Obama in his State of the Union will do nothing to help the poor or the middle class if 'fast track' legislation and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal are passed by Congress. ... 'Fast track' is just another name for the corrupt and undemocratic process that has been used to ram destructive trade deals through Congress; deals that have led to a systematic elimination of good jobs, have devastated our communities, and degraded our standard of living for the last 30 years."

And what about the over-arching crisis for not just the United States but our entire planet—climate change? The president devoted four brief paragraphs to the greatest challenge humanity has yet faced. He took some pot shots at global-warming deniers and said, "The Pentagon says that climate change poses immediate risks to our national security. We

should act like it."

But the only "action" mentioned was the joint statement with the Chinese government made during an intermission in trade negotiations that he puffed up as a "historic announcement"—a scam we analyzed in some detail in a November *Socialist Action* article.

A socialist response to SOTU

The only socialist currently holding elected office in the United States is Seattle city council member Kshama Sawant. While having some political differences with her Socialist Alternative party, Socialist Action endorsed her election campaign and has been supportive of her role in minimum-wage movement victories that have meant substantial raises for tens of thousands of low-wage workers in her city.

On the night of SOTU she gave a perceptive video and written response to the president that was picked up on the *Common Dreams* site. She concluded, "We need to build our own political voice, a mass political party for working people. ... We must work to build independent movements of working-class people ... to challenge the domination of the 1%. Solidarity!"

Recalling the idiom of my Sixties youth—right on, sister Kshama! While respecting our own nuanced differences, socialists will play a vital role in reviving working-class unity in action. ■

Oregon rally demands \$15 minimum wage

By ANN MONTAGUE

SALEM, Ore.—Hundreds of Oregonians came to Salem on Jan. 24 to rally and march for the demand of a statewide \$15 minimum wage. Organized by labor and community groups, the event not only showcased how the movement has expanded outside of Portland to the rest of the state but also the growing passion to end poverty wages. Buses came from Portland and vans arrived from southern Oregon.

While most unions in Oregon endorsed the march, the Oregon School Employee Association (OSEA) and Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Del Noroeste (PCUN) turned out the most rank and file. WalMart strikers from Klamath Falls, who are currently being harassed on the job, also spoke at the rally.

The first speaker was Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO; he clearly was inspired by the crowd to give an uncharacteristic red-meat speech. He called out the labor commissioner for promoting a bill for \$12, and not \$15, and railed on the Democratic governor and his leaders of the House and Senate, all of whom have opposed raising the minimum wage.

But the rally was really to support low-wage workers like the food service worker at the Portland Zoo, the school bus driver, and the home care worker who spoke to the rally about the dignity of her work and ended by saying, “\$13 is not a living wage, \$14 is not a living wage; \$15 comes close, but we are worth more.”

After the rally, people took to the streets for a short march. About 150 marchers stayed for a meeting, with breakouts by geographic region to plan next steps.

In the meantime, more studies are being discussed in the press about the effects that a \$15 minimum wage would have on Oregon communities. The University of Oregon Labor Education And Research Center just released its 2014 Oregon Workforce Report, entitled, “The High Cost Of Low Wages In Oregon.” It states that over 400,000 Oregonians are employed in low-wage work. The part of the report that is getting the most media exposure revealed that the state pays



Mark Colman

\$1.75 billion a year in safety net assistance to these low-wage workers and their families, in effect subsidizing employers.

Also, Lake Research Partners conducted a poll of likely Oregon voters and found that 54% support increasing the current minimum wage of \$9.25 an hour to \$15 an hour and adjusting for inflation annually.

The major argument that the governor and other Democrats use to oppose raising the minimum wage to \$15 is what they call the “Benefit Cliff.” They claim the higher wage will cause workers to lose public benefits; thus, raising wages would only hurt workers.

The head of the Oregon Center For Public Policy (OCPP) came out with a blistering attack on this policy, pointing out that a \$15 increase would mean real gains for workers. “Over half a million workers will see bigger paychecks—extra money that will help their families get ahead.” He also tore apart the cry

that workers would lose child-care subsidies, stating that the program is so under-funded now that hardly any workers receive the benefit. He called for raising the minimum wage to \$15 and increasing funding to the child-care assistance program.

The goals of the statewide action were to bring together 15 Now chapters to plan the next steps of the campaign, raise the visibility of the movement, and bring in new layers of activists. Soon after the rally, 15 Now received the endorsements of the United Steelworkers of Oregon and USW local 8378, as well as the Lane County Central Labor Council (Eugene/Springfield) and the University of Oregon Student Labor Action Project (SLAP).

In Portland, 15 Now was invited to do a workshop for the upcoming Community Summit of several hundred community activists and Neighborhood Association members. ■

Reject Wagner’s poverty wage ‘compromise’

By 15 NOW

PHILADELPHIA—Across the United States a surging movement of the working class is fighting for at least a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Fast-food and WalMart workers are organizing and striking for a \$15/hour wage, alongside mass demonstrations like the Martin Luther King Day of Action, Resistance and Empowerment on Jan. 19. During this historic march, 7000 people took the streets of Philadelphia, calling for racial justice, education funding, a \$15/hour minimum wage, and union rights.

Americans overwhelmingly support this call for dramatically higher wages: a recent poll by the National Employment Law Center found 63% of Americans support a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Here in Philadelphia, economists broadly recognize the need for a minimum wage of at least \$17/hour for all Philadelphia workers, just so a

parent can afford a two-bedroom apartment in the city. For companies in Philadelphia, a \$15 an hour minimum wage is a bargain.

Even Tea Party Republican State Senator Scott Wagner can no longer deny the power of this movement. Senator Wagner recently introduced a weak tea bill to phase in a laughable increase in the state minimum wage to \$8.75 over three years, while locking in a substandard \$7.25 “training wage,” and only a small increase in the tipped minimum wage (which should be totally eliminated). Senator Wagner’s bill also fails to clarify the power of municipalities to raise wages on a local basis.

This bill is a naked attempt to cut across the public debate on raising the wage and divide the forces fighting for an increase by offering a “reasonable” compromise. But for working-class families in Pennsylvania, Wagner’s “poverty preservation” bill is way too little, and way too late. The terms of this

poverty wage bill are an outright insult to workers who have been organizing for \$15 an hour and a union, taking risks at their workplace, confronting abuse managers and organizing their coworkers for mass strikes in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

All organizations fighting to raise the minimum wage in Pennsylvania need to come together to oppose this rotten bill. Senator Wagner acknowledges the inevitability of a minimum wage hike and wants to lock in poverty wages in Pennsylvania for as long as possible.

We initiated our campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour based on what working-class families need for basic economic security, not on what we thought was a “reasonable” compromise. It is up to those opposed to raising the wage to propose “compromise” language. We do not bargain with ourselves.

We know one thing for certain: this sena-

tor and other politicians who continue to support poverty wages clearly represent the interests of the wealthiest 1%. At a time when corporations make record profits and CEOs make upwards of \$10,000 per hour, we must unite to fight for what working-class people need. We can no longer accept the unprecedented levels of income inequality in our nation.

The fight for the \$15 an hour minimum wage marches forward in Philadelphia and across Pennsylvania. Senator Wagner’s bill shows that business interests see the glare of pitchforks on the horizon. The polls will continue to tell what we already know—the movement for \$15 is coming. And we will not be stopped. ■

In other news, the Philadelphia city council has agreed to conduct an open hearing on the need to raise the minimum wage in the city. The hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. on March 4. Philadelphia’s 15 Now organization is working to mobilize fast-food workers and others to testify at the hearing.

By ADAM RITSCHER

U. Wisconsin-Superior outsources janitor jobs

SUPERIOR, Wis.—Jan. 11 was the last day of work for 27 janitors and grounds keepers at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. They lost their jobs after a dramatic nine-month battle with university administrators.

Like many colleges across the state, the University of Wisconsin-Superior is facing a major budget crisis. This is largely due to massive cuts to higher education funding by the Republican Governor Scot Walker, and his Democratic predecessor, Jim Doyle. But the budget crisis was also caused by the construction of a slew of new buildings over the last several years, including an expensive new student center, despite opposition from students.

UWS administrators choose to try to balance their budget on the backs of the lowest paid, and most vulnerable workers on campus. In the spring of 2014 they announced that they were going to explore outsourcing the university’s entire custodian and grounds-keeping department to the lowest bidder. This was despite the fact that the overworked janitors only made \$11-\$14/hour to begin with.

Workers and community members immediately sprang into action to demand that the college reverse course. Spearheaded by AFSCME, which represents the janitors; the AFT, which represents the faculty; and members of Socialist Action, a broad coalition was organized.

A mass letter-writing campaign was launched, followed by a petition drive in which several thousand people signed in support of the threatened janitors. Supporters reached out to local officials and community organizations, and were able to get the city council of Superior and the Douglas County Board, together with numerous union locals and other groups, to pass resolutions against the proposed outsourcing of jobs.

Numerous pickets and other actions were also held. A contingent of janitors and their families marched in the Superior July 4 parade, where they received a standing ovation. On July 26, over 250 workers from the community and across the state converged on the UWS campus for a march and rally.

And finally, in December, a last ditch protest was held at the UWS chancellor’s annual formal fundraising ball. While attendees walked in in tuxedos and fancy dresses, the janitors and their allies chanted and held collection buckets, before later crashing the party itself and singing labor songs.

But in the end, despite the overwhelming outpouring of community support, the university went ahead and fired the 27 threatened workers, and brought in an out-of-state

company to take over—which is hiring workers at \$9 an hour with no benefits.

Adding insult to injury, the very same administrators who insisted that they had to cut the janitors’ jobs to save money, gave themselves 12% raises! To give you a sense of proportion, each administrator’s raise is equal to the entire annual salary of a laid-off janitor!

The fear is that what happened to the UWS janitors is just the beginning, and that this was just the first campus of a system-wide drive to privatize campus custodial departments across the state. It’s also not likely to be the end of the cuts at UWS either.

Already, an announcement has been made by administrators that various majors are being cut, and further staff cuts are in the works. Because of this, the community coalition that came together to try and save the janitors’ jobs has announced that it will stay together to fight further cuts and to insist that administrators and the state re-adjust their budget priorities.

There is enough money to not only fully fund higher education but to expand it and make it free for all. But to do that, we need to tax the rich, and put a stop once and for all on these outrageous attacks on working people! ■

Charlie Hebdo: Imperialism's new 9/11?

Laurent Cipriani / AP



(Left) Anti-Muslim graffiti on the walls of a mosque in France.

BY JEFF MACKLER

The French government has ordered a mobilization of police. The objective is to create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion.

The Jan. 7 Paris bombings and shootings, which killed 17 journalists and others, afforded French and allied capitalist heads of state—some 50 presidents and prime ministers plus top U.S. officials, all complicit with mass murder—the opportunity for an unprecedented show of unity under the call of “I am *Charlie Hebdo*.” We note the hypocrisy of the perpetrators of war and systematic violence coming together to pose as defenders of “free speech, liberty, fraternity, and democratic rights.” Virtually all have led in suppressing, if not murdering, opposition currents in their own nations and everywhere on earth where their troops engage in the ruthless murder of oppressed people.

A recent article by Parisian journalist George Kazolias, subtitled, “The Wages of Intolerance,” captured the grotesque hypocrisy of those who led the Sunday, Jan. 11 government-sponsored and media-promoted Paris spectacle of 1.6 million people. “Then there were the world leaders,” Kazolias writes, “Ukrainian Prime Minister, Arsenily Yatsenyuk, who has neo-Nazi in his government and has done nothing to bring to justice the fascists and their police accomplices who murdered 48 ethnic Russians in Odessa last May.

“There was Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban, who has taken numerous measures to muzzle the opposition press, earning the scorn of Reporters without Borders, which ranks his country 64th in press freedom.” Orban has also earned international criticism for encouraging persecution of the Roma people and for his party’s anti-Jewish stance.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose government slaughtered over 2000 Palestinians last year in its invasion of Gaza, also marched in Paris. While in France, Netanyahu called on French Jews to migrate to Zionist Israel for their “protection.” What hypocrisy! Kazolias, in his article, recalls that noted Israeli historian Shlomo Sand has written, “I am aware of living in one of the most racist societies in the Western world.”

Beating the war drums loudly, the president of the Council of Jewish Institutions in France, Roger Cukierman, declared the attacks in Paris to be the beginning of “World War Three” and likened them to what is happening in “Syria and Gaza.” Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy went further, proclaiming, “War has been declared on France.” *Le Figaro’s* editorial writer, Ivan Rioufol, joined the chorus with “France is at war. Perhaps at civil war tomorrow. Its enemy is radical Islam, political Islam, Jihadi Islam.”

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu joined in the arm-in-arm display of ruling-class solidarity.

There was no mention of his government’s decades of trampling on freedom of expression, not to mention its ongoing subjugation and war against Turkey’s oppressed Kurdish masses, including during recent months when the Turkish government gleefully stood aside watching the Islamic State try to wipe the canton of Kobanê and its Kurdish workers off the face of the earth.

Although President Obama did not attend the rally, Jane Hartley, U.S. ambassador to France, was present. A day earlier, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder attended a “security summit meeting” that brought together top intelligence and law enforcement officials from Europe and North America to discuss how to implement measures to stop terrorism. Holder announced that the White House would convene a Feb. 18 international forum “to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from radicalizing, recruiting, or inspiring individuals or groups in the United States and abroad to commit acts of violence.”

But voices of dissent spoke loud and clear in the U.S. and around the world. “We are NOT *Charlie Hebdo*!” read the Jan. 15 statement adopted by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC).“

“Neither do we condone the bombings and murder of journalists at their headquarters, however much we are repulsed by their racist, chauvinist and hateful Islamophobic caricatures of oppressed people. Neither do we condone the subsequent murders at the Paris Kosher supermarket,” the UNAC statement continued.

“Yes,” the UNAC statement stressed, “...we are for free speech, freedom of expression and democratic rights for all, including the Muslim and antiwar activists who were banned by the French government from street protests in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, or the Muslim women who are banned from wearing the veil. We are for freedom of expression and the right to exist of Muslim Americans, 700,000 of whom have been investigated or interrogated in the U.S. for being Muslim, or the 1.5 million Latino immigrants in the U.S. who are imprisoned, detained and deported,

or the entire world’s people who are victims of the all-pervasive high-tech surveillance of everyone’s personal means of communication by the U.S., France, and all other so-called democratic nations.”

Using the Jan. 7 bombing of the offices of the racist, Islamophobic satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* as a pretext for deepening the concerted and worldwide assault on democratic rights and to justify new wars of conquest, world imperialism has declared yet another “war on terror.” This one includes openly sending U.S. and allied troops to areas of the world, such as Africa, where they have generally operated in a covert manner in the past. The world’s real terrorists believe that *Charlie Hebdo* can be used to legitimize, in the name of fighting terrorism, their plans for theft and conquest.

The French aircraft carrier *Charles De Gaulle* was assigned a week later to head for Iraq to join U.S. fighter planes in bombing that nation to smithereens. The French National Assembly is all but certain to renew its previously “limited” commitment to join the U.S. bombing in Iraq and Syria.

Three thousand French troops have been deployed in Africa to “counter extremist groups in Chad and Mauritania.” Thousands more are stationed in other former French colonies like Mali, where in the name of fighting terrorism they organize to install dictators posing as democrats to protect their “interests,” and murder all who oppose the essential re-colonization of the African continent now in progress.

The now thundered rationalizations to combat terrorism are dutifully employed to demonize all who resist—the same rationales, minus that of the “white man’s burden to civilize savages,” used in previous centuries to justify colonization, plunder, and enslavement.

A massive mobilization of French police was ordered by President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Marcel Valls. Ten thousand French troops were deployed across the country to “guard vulnerable sites deemed at risk.” Jewish schools and synagogues were placed high on the list. The objective is to manufacture a terrifying atmosphere of fear, suspicion, and recrimination. Electronic surveillance has been ramped up to “curb jihadist recruitment in prisons and other crucibles of radicalization.”

“The French response,” according to *The New York Times*, “played into an emerging debate across Europe that pits support for civil liberties against the demands of security officials, who site the attack as evidence of an urgent need to introduce stronger powers to monitor suspects.”

A month earlier, France witnessed a wave of criticism of U.S. mass surveillance of its citizens and of the all-pervasive horrors that were revealed in Diane Feinstein’s \$40 million, 6000-page Senate Intelligence Committee report documenting widespread CIA “illegal” detention and torture. France was among the several nations who condemned as “draconian” the post-9/11 U.S. reactionary measures like the Patriot Act that included deep incursions into basic civil liberties. Today, that rhetoric has vanished. The near instant transformation was achieved using the combined powers of the French state.

Attacks on French Muslims

We have heard of no measures taken to protect the beleaguered Muslim communities—the “banlieues” that surround Paris, largely populated by impoverished African and Middle Eastern immigrants—where unemployment ranks highest in the nation and social services rank lowest. Unemployment among Muslim youth approaches 40 percent. Close to half of the residents of Muslim communities lack a high

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(Above) Imperialist heads of state and their allies lead Jan. 11 march in Paris.

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school diploma. As in the U.S., police harassment and profiling—stop and frisk, French style—are taken for granted.

There has been little mention of the 50 recorded post-*Charlie Hebdo* fire bombings or of the racist graffiti-tagged and bullet-ridden mosques; such atrocities meant to terrorize the Muslim population are ongoing and proceed with impunity. France's Central Council of Muslims reported 21 shootings that targeted Muslim buildings.

There is little mention of the fact that 60 percent of French prisons are crammed with Muslims or that Muslim women are repeatedly attacked by Islamophobic bigots who tear off their veils (nijab) or even their hijab (traditional clothing). The report of an Islamophobic monster tearing off the veil of a pregnant 21-year-old Muslim woman went largely unnoticed, including the fact that she was thrown to the ground and repeatedly kicked in the stomach, only to lose her unborn child a few hours later in a local hospital. The French police report noted in the diminutive that she was "kicked in the side"! No one has been arrested for this murder! There are no nationwide searches for the racist gunmen and bombers!

There have been some voices of sanity and compassion in the midst of this government-promoted warmongering, hate, and hysteria, as when a French association representing 120 mayors issued a statement warning that Muslim communities were "on edge" in the face of the terror launched against them. The statement pointed to the need to address "economic, social, and educational shortfalls" with regard to France's most impoverished, segregated, and oppressed communities.

French revolutionary socialists, like those who are in the Anti-Capitalist and Revolution current of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), have strongly condemned the racist hysteria. Yet under present conditions a massive and united counter-mobilization has proved impossible to organize.

The "liberal-minded" *New York Times* opines that "nearly everyone agreed the fallout from the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in France—including a heightened security response by its allies—is a distraction from a larger problem: a sense of increasing economic and social marginalization that many cited as a root cause of young people drifting toward extremism."

The Times neglected to add that the endless imperialist slaughter and wars against Muslim nations around the world are bound to produce not only massive opposition among the oppressed but also rare acts of terror by desperate individuals who envision no other means to avenge imperialism's systematic slaughtering of millions and its reduction of whole nations to starvation.

Long ago, Leon Trotsky sharply counterposed individual acts of terrorism by tiny groups and individuals outraged by imperialism's never-ending wars, torture, and racist rationalizations to the necessity of collective and united struggles against the capitalist system itself.

He wrote, "To learn to see all the crimes against humanity, all the indignities to which the human body and spirit are subjected, as the twisted outgrowths and expressions of the existing social system, in order to direct all our energies into a collective struggle against this system—that is the direction in which

Voices of dissent spoke loud and clear. 'We are NOT Charlie Hebdo,' read the statement adopted by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC).

the burning desire for revenge can find its highest moral satisfaction."

Tragically, in the absence of collective struggles against the system led by conscious mass revolutionary parties deeply rooted in all the struggles of the oppressed and aimed at challenging capitalist rule, the imperialist war makers will continue to prevail—through conquest and occupation or through the ruination of entire peoples. Under these circumstances, isolated and individual acts of terror will inevitably continue and be used to further fan the flames of hate. As in France, imperialist usurpers will use them to justify their mass terror—that is, unending wars as well as the imposition of blanket restrictions on civil liberties for all those who dare to speak out.

We need not search for evidence of the latter. "French Rein in Speech Backing Terror: Recent Law Allows For Rapid Trials and Stiff Prison Sentences," reads a Jan. 16 *New York Times* headline. Some 100 people are already under investigation for "making or posting comments that support or try to justify terrorism." Two examples were cited by *The Times*; in one, a 28-year-old man of Tunisian background was sentenced to six months in prison for shouting support for the gunmen involved in the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings while passing a police station. Another, a drunk driver who hit another car and injured the driver, was sentenced to four years when, under police detention, he praised the same gunmen.

French prosecutors were urged by Minister of Justice Christiane Taubira to fully utilize a November 2015 law to fight and prosecute "words or acts of hatred with utmost vigor." The zeal with which law enforcement has undertaken this mission was shown in Nantes, when a 14-year-old girl was jailed on charges of "apology for terrorism" for uttering the words "bring out the Kalashnikovs" when a bus conductor asked her for her ticket.

One can only wonder whether the words of *Charlie Hebdo* journalists, or the words of the multitude of journalists from publications throughout France, not to mention the words of the neo-fascist supporters of Marine Le Pen's National Front, will be subjected to the same scrutiny. Bigots, including those of the liberal or libertarian *Charlie Hebdo* type as well as their right-wing counterparts, rarely mobilize to defend "free speech" other than their own.

Here we note that there was far less than unanimity in Francois Holland's "Socialist Party" with regard to inviting Marine Le Pen to participate in the Paris demonstration. Le Pen's vitriolic hate-mongering Islamophobic tirades against immigrants were largely indistinguishable from Holland's. She used the rebuff to complain that her "mainstream" views were being purposefully excluded. More than a handful agreed, including *The New York Times* reporter covering the issue, who speculated that her exclusion was perhaps

a "political" move aimed at not boosting Le Pen's poll ratings as a future presidential candidate.

The flagging presidential poll numbers of Hollande's Socialist Party were undoubtedly a factor. Le Pen's National Front, which received the largest vote of all parties in the last French general elections to the European Parliament, 27 percent, today ranks first at 30 percent with regard to a future presidential candidacy.

In Germany, where neo-fascist groups are similarly on the rise, thousands mobilized in anti-immigrant rallies in the city of Dresden in the eastern state of Saxony following the Paris mobilization. But they were effectively countered in Dresden by 35,000 who demonstrated soon afterward in solidarity with Germany's immigrant communities, the largest in Europe. They sought to block the racist protest route of Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against Islamization of the West), Germany's neo-fascist political grouping.

In Munich 20,000 protesters mobilized to block a Pegida rally. Similarly, 30,000 mobilized in Leipzig in a pro-immigrant demonstration to counter an Islamophobic call to the streets. A few hundred participated in the latter.

Civil-liberties crackdowns in the U.S.

The history of capitalist government bans on free speech—not to mention its restrictions of freedom of association, free press, and the right to assemble to redress grievances—is pitiful. In the U.S. in recent years a wave of reprisals has been meted out against college professors, including termination, for their public statements opposing Israel's persecution of Palestinians.

Students who assemble to protest the massacre of Palestinians and who organize on campus to support BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against apartheid Israel see their organizations disbanded across the country.

During the McCarthy era witch hunt of the 1950s, and long afterward, government-invoked "national security" was employed to persecute and imprison radicals of every kind, especially members of the Communist Party (CP) and Socialist Workers Party (SWP). In 1941, the central leadership of the SWP was jailed for 18 months under the notorious Smith Act for their socialist ideas alone. A few years later, the Smith Act and other reactionary laws were used against the CP, with wholesale arrests and imprisonment—again for ideas alone. The "evidence" against the prisoners cited activities such as displaying the works of Karl Marx in their public bookstores.

The witch hunt included legally sanctioned and government-enforced mass expulsion of socialists from trade unions and jobs. Loyalty oaths were mandatory in several cities for everyone teaching in public schools. Travel restrictions, blacklisting in the entertainment and media industries, and a multitude of other fundamental infringements of democratic rights were the rule and remained so for decades.

Almost all of these horrors were codified in law or decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, including the infamous decision handed down by Felix Frankfurter, wherein the individual liberty "guaranteed" by the

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British government betrayed its hero

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH
and JOE AUCIELLO

The Imitation Game, a film biography directed by Morten Tyldum, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightly.

Director Morten Tyldum has crafted an excellent fictionalized film biography, “The Imitation Game,” based on the book, “Alan Turing: The Enigma,” by Andrew Hodges. The film portrays Turing as an intelligent though troubled man, whose complex hand-built machine—a precursor to today’s computer—broke the Nazi enigma code, and is thought to have shortened the war by two years.

The film is set mostly at Bletchley Park, Britain’s government code and cipher school, hidden behind iron gates bearing the misleading plaque, “Radio Manufacturing.” Commander Denniston (the talented, ubiquitous, British actor Charles Dance) heads it up.

Based on his reputation as a mathematical genius, Turing (played by Benedict Cumberbatch, who is up for an Academy Award) is interviewed by Denniston to join a team of mathematicians in the Hut, an outbuilding where they work to break the code. These initial scenes depict Turing as a serious, cerebral, non-sense man who doesn’t realize he is disrespectful

when he lets people know that he believes them to be incompetent ignoramuses. He understands neither irony nor sarcasm.

The Germans change the code every day to a mind-boggling 159 million, million, million, million settings, forcing Turing and his frustrated team to restart their calculations. He figures that working out the code manually as they had been doing would take an astonishing 20 million years. Instead, he will build a machine to break Germany’s enigma, he tells them.

A harbinger of the Cold War anti-Communist hysteria weaves throughout the film as a parallel plot involving the suspicion that Turing is a Russian spy, radicalized by the Soviets at Cambridge. In a flash forward to the early 1950s, he reports that his apartment was broken into and things were messed up, but nothing was missing. Still the police believe Turing is hiding something, and they are determined to find it.

Turing hires Joan Clarke (a believable Kiera Knightly) because she solved his crossword puzzle under the allotted time of six minutes. Since Clarke was a woman, no one believed that she could solve it. Once hired, and thought to be a secretary, she is initially denied entrance to the Hut. Even then, she is relegated to bunk with the female administrators and secretaries in another building.

Turing and Clarke enjoy a copacetic relationship.

However, social pressures regarding a single woman working so closely with a man decide that Turing and Clarke must get engaged. Joan has no problem with his homosexuality; he will neither be the perfect husband nor she the perfect wife. Regardless, the engagement soon ends.

It’s believed that breaking the code saved millions of lives. But it couldn’t save Turing’s. After the war, he continued to work in cryptographic consultancy for the Government Communications Headquarters until his conviction for “gross indecency”—the same law that brought down Oscar Wilde—and his security clearance was revoked. After almost a year of probation and public humiliation, and undergoing “chemical castration,” which affected him physically and mentally, Turing allegedly committed suicide in 1954 (some suspected he was murdered). He was forty-one.

The British government, ever alert to treason, ultimately committed its own act of betrayal. When Alan Turing was arrested for the then crime of homosexuality (“He’s a pouf!” one detective exclaims to another), senior government officials might have intervened on his behalf, but they did not. The nation that Turing helped to protect could have protected him. The man who kept secrets for his government was betrayed by a government that refused to keep his secret.

Yet, at the same time, the British government was quite willing to shield a real traitor—one of their own. The Duke of Windsor (King Edward VIII, prior to his abdication in 1936 and marriage to Mrs. Wallis Simpson) was a partisan of the Nazi regime before and during World War II and an admirer of Hitler.

The Duke aided the Axis cause in a number of ways. Prior to the war, Edward told an Italian diplomat that the Allies had broken the Italian intelligence codes. After war was declared, when Luftwaffe bombs fell on London, the Duke passed strategically significant military and political information to the German High Command and continued to the best of his ability to aid the Nazi cause.

The British and American governments were well aware of the Duke’s treasonous activities but merely shunted him aside. As punishment, in the 1940s, he was appointed governor of the Bahamas, and ultimately retired to a quiet life in Paris, where he died in 1972, fondly remembered throughout the world as the man who gave up the British crown for true love.

Alan Turing, who had been arrested on charges of “gross indecency” and hounded to his death, had long since been forgotten. Only in recent years have many posthumous honors been awarded Turing for his “fantastic contribution to the war effort.” ■

Judges question NYPD spying on N.J. Muslims

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

PHILADELPHIA—Federal judges in a Jan. 13 appeals court hearing indicated that they are favorable to the premises of a suit against the New York City Police Department (NYPD) for its surveillance of Muslims in New Jersey.

The suit, *Hassan v. City of New York*, had been dismissed by a federal district court in February 2014.

A challenge to this decision was then brought to the U.S. Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, and argued by attorneys from Muslim Advocates and the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR).

The 11 plaintiffs in the case include a coalition of New Jersey mosques, Rutgers University students, the former principal of a school for Muslim girls, and an Army veteran of the Iraq War—all of whom have stated that the New York City police spied on them solely on account of their religious affiliation.

Since the beginning of its heightened surveillance program in 2002, the NYPD has spied on at least 20 mosques, 14 restaurants, 11 retail stores, two grade schools, and two Muslim Student Associations in New Jersey alone. The department has employed people to infiltrate these locations, in addition to gathering

video and photographic “evidence.” Internal NYPD documents, including a list of 28 “ancestries of interest,” demonstrated that the police targeted people on the basis of their ethnic background and Muslim faith.

The lower court had rejected the suit last year on the grounds that “the police could not have monitored New Jersey for Muslim terrorist activities without monitoring the Muslim community itself,” as Judge William J. Martini wrote in the decision.

The appellants rejected this reasoning. “By creating a Muslim exception to the bedrock principles of equality and religious freedom, the lower court opinion signals that Muslims are to be second-class citizens,” said CCR Legal Director Baher Azmy, who argued the case in the Philadelphia appeals court. “The Constitution prohibits singling out an entire

faith for discriminatory policing, simply because a handful of totally unrelated adherents committed criminal acts. Painful historical lessons remind us that courts should not sanction such overt discrimination by law enforcement, even in times of fear.”

Statements by the appeals court judges on Jan. 13 indicate that they understand these concerns. Judge Julio Fuentes, one of the three judges hearing the appeal, said that he would not wish to attend a mosque if it were under police surveillance. Judge Thomas Ambro stated that, in his opinion, under the NYPD’s criteria for spying, “you’re not just following those who are persons of interest. You’re following everyone.”

According to the CCR, it could take several months for the judges to rule on whether the case should be sent back to district court. ■

... Charlie Hebdo

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U.S. Constitution was “balanced” against the “national security” interests of the U.S., with disastrous results for the former.

The most heinous of all these laws were subsequently ruled unconstitutional, but only with the rise of a massive civil rights and antiwar Vietnam movement, which rendered them impossible to enforce lest they further enrage mass sentiment opposing any government bans on free speech, free association, and freedom to assemble.

Today, the invocation of “national security” is once again used for deep incursions into democratic and human rights. The wholesale surveillance of the entire citizenry—as revealed by Edward Snowden—as well as torture and detention, and even selected murder of American citizens through drone attacks

in other countries, are routinely justified by U.S. government officials while the courts grant their rubber stamp of approval.

Socialists have always been ardent defenders of free speech and all other democratic rights won in struggle against government efforts to restrict them. We know full well that so-called hate-crime legislation will inevitably be employed to restrict the rights of radicals and socialists to freely organize and protest.

We have no illusions that the bigots organized across the United States in groups like the Ku Klux Klan, not to mention racist Tea Party fanatics or racist police and elected officials, will be punished. Indeed, capitalism intentionally keeps these rabid organizations in reserve—albeit on a short leash and on the margins of society—until they are needed to stoke the flames of murder, hate, and repression.

When that time arrives, the hate groups will be joined by the full force of capitalism’s increasingly militarized police and other repressive forces. Armed

with the “legal” weapons that are today being systematically put into place, U.S. capitalism must resort to repression of a magnitude never before seen in this country as its only “solution” to the rise of mass working-class resistance. We expect that such resistance will arise since U.S. capitalism, which is enveloped by crisis, has no alternative to its present course of steadily imposing austerity measures against workers and all oppressed people.

Only the united and conscious mobilization of the hundreds of millions of capitalism’s victims, in the U.S. and worldwide, can pose a serious alternative—an alternative aimed at ending the system’s inherent need to oppress and exploit in the interests of the ruling-class “one percent.”

The rule of the 99 percent—in which the working class in all its manifestations, in all its nationalities and racial groupings, rules democratically and through its own institutions—can open the door to a bright new society, a socialist world. ■

Women's history as a guide for activists

BY CHRISTINE MARIE

Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, The State & Revolution: Soviet Family Policy & Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *La mujer, el estado y la revolución* (Buenos Aires: Pan y rosas and Ediciones IPS, 2012).

On Oct. 10, the Marxist scholar Wendy Z. Goldman published a piece in *Counterpunch* entitled "The Takeover of the R.R. Donnelly Factory: Behind Every Worker is a Family." The article was about her recent visit to Buenos Aires, Argentina. She had been invited to speak about her book, "Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936." It is an academic book, published by Cambridge University Press, but Goldman was not in Argentina on a publisher's academic book tour.

She was there because the book had been translated and recently distributed by Pan y Rosas, an Argentinean socialist women's organization that is affiliated with one of the revolutionary socialist political parties there. The book—first written in 1993—is a detailed accounting of the effort of the Bolshevik party in the first years of the Russian revolution to socialize household work, as well as a look at two moments of dramatic retreat from that revolutionary perspective, once under the NEP in the 1920s and again in the 1930s, when Stalinism's hold on the nation was complete.

The audience of 700 people had students and faculty, but also workers from many factories in the area who were influenced by the Bread and Roses group.

Goldman tells the story of one of the women who spoke in the discussion period. She was an older domestic worker who had spent her life cleaning the houses of the rich. She said, "The Bolsheviks talked about the socialization of household labor. Today only women do this work. And if a woman is wealthy enough, she pays another woman like me to do it."

This woman was one of many who were studying the Bolsheviks' approach to the liberation of women by reading the translation of this weighty book. A Pan y Rosas organizer told Wendy Goldman that some of the women workers who were in the audience had broken into tears when they first heard about the revolutionary socialist vision for transforming daily life and human relationships that the Russians had tried to carry out just after World War I.

Donnelley Women's Commission

The centerpiece of Goldman's trip was a visit to a plant, the R. R. Donnelley print shop, which had recently been taken over by a democratically elected body called the Workers Assembly, and by the Women's Commission. About 400 workers lost their jobs last summer when the owners in the United States abruptly decided to close the facilities. About half the workers kept the operation going despite getting no pay. The workers and their families had been studying Goldman's book, and formal discussions about its lessons were being carried out in the Women's Commission.

From afar, the work of the Women's Commission sounds a lot like the Daughters of Mother Jones, who were active in the Pittston Coal Strike, or the women's support group of the Austin, Minn., P-9 strike at Hormel, two historic labor strikes in the United States in the 1980s. That is, they do solidarity work and take care of the families of those who are in need due to the struggle.

To enable themselves to take on this political role, the R. R. Donnelley Women's Commission built a child-care center in the worker-occupied plant. Unlike their North American counterparts, however, they are studying the Bolsheviks and the most dramatic and serious attempt to liberate women that the working class has ever undertaken.

Russian Revolution opened new possibilities

So what's in this book that has the women of the vanguard of the Argentinian working class breaking into tears at the very thought? What was the Bolshevik strategy for women's liberation? In a nutshell, the Bolsheviks widely believed that under socialism, the family, like the state, would "wither away."

In Wendy Goldman's words, they believed that "the state, an institution needed only for one minority class to suppress another more numerous class, would lose its function in inverse proportion to the development of a fully democratic and egalitarian society built on an abundance of use values that meet the most basic human needs. The family economic unit, an institu-



The tasks of the household, the Bolsheviks believed, could be shifted to the public sphere and performed by well-paid workers.

tion that relieved the capitalists of any responsibility for the care and maintenance of children and the working class, would become the choice of fewer and fewer as socialized alternatives to its functions replaced dog eat dog ethos of capitalist society."

Socialists have long pointed out that capitalism throws each individual working-class household into competition with the other for jobs, scarce resources, education, and health care. In this setup, the capitalist class is rewarded with millions of individual wasteful units of consumption, and women and children are left dangerously isolated and prey to violence and coercion. The fact that women may live in a home with a male breadwinner is used to justify denying them a livable wage.

Capitalism, the Bolsheviks understood, has zero incentive to provide alternatives to the private family household as an economic unit.

The Bolshevik vision

The Bolsheviks envisioned, instead, a society in which communal dining halls, day care centers, and public laundries would replace the unpaid labor of women in the home. They hoped that freed up from isolation in the home or double duty, women could achieve equality with men, and that romantic love and respect could replace legal and economic dependence as the basis for relations between the sexes.

The tasks of the household, the Bolsheviks believed, could be shifted to the public sphere and performed by well-paid workers. Parents, regardless of their marital status, could call on help from the state for the care for children. Goldman places their views in the context of hundreds of years of utopian hopes and experimentation.

Lenin was deeply involved in the discussions of how to go forward to socialize housework, which he described as the most savage and arduous work a woman can do, that degrades a woman, "forcing upon her ... stultifying drudgery."

Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollantai spoke of the family's horrible waste of resources and said that the people's economy would have branches in which cleaning and washing would sit alongside metallurgy and machine production.

Trotsky said that as soon as "washing was done by a public laundry, catering by a public restaurant, and sewing by a public workshop, the bond between husband and wife would be freed from everything external. Affection and attraction would be the sole criteria for relationships and marriage."

There were differences among these leaders, and they had no access to today's science on child-parent bonding, sexuality, and so forth, but they were united in their willingness to try to free women from all social relations based on private capitalist production.

Unlike small utopian communities dependent on producing for the capitalist market in exchange for just being left alone, the Russian revolutionary government, the Bolsheviks understood, had the poten-

(Above) Rally outside the Donnelley printing plant in Buenos Aires. Women's Commission banner is in background. Workers took over the plant after the U.S. owners had shut it down.

tial to use all the powers of the state to make alternatives quickly available to millions.

When the Russian capitalists, aided by world imperialism, went to war against the revolution, the Bolsheviks were forced to move quickly and they began to organize production and society on a war footing. In this period, there was a crash program to build communal dining halls, childcare centers, public laundries, and so on.

For a brief moment, many Bolshevik women thought that they could see the future unfolding in an uncomplicated manner. In 1918, Inessa Armand, who was the head of Zhenotdel, the Women's Department of the Bolshevik party, said to a conference of women workers in a burst of revolutionary optimism, "The bourgeois order is being abolished. Separate households are harmful survivals that only delay and hinder new forms of distribution!"

Armand's dream that the oppression of women in Russia was soon to be completely eradicated was crushed by the imperialist assault.

New Economic Policy and bureaucratization

Although the Bolsheviks won the civil war, the legacy of that brutal conflict and of World War I left the country in dire economic straits. The economic crisis forced the revolutionary government to pull back from war communism measures and to institute the New Economic Policy (NEP). In addition to bringing massive layoffs and a return to discrimination against female workers in industry, there was also an immediate drop in the allocation of resources to women and children's institutions and to day care.

In this context, revolutionary measures designed to facilitate easy divorce, once a means to women's freedom, contributed to the abandonment of women and children on a massive scale.

The economic disaster also contributed to the rise of a counterrevolutionary bureaucratic caste (led by Joseph Stalin) that did not have the commitment of the old Bolsheviks to women's liberation and that, over time, attempted to reinforce the traditional family unit as a bulwark of their undemocratic rule.

Lessons for revolutionary socialists today

The lessons that the Women's Commission of R. R. Donnelley, and all revolutionary socialists since the time of the Russian Revolution have drawn is that while *only* a socialist revolution can free up the resources necessary for working women's emancipation, the revolution can merely be a prerequisite and not a guarantee. Women's liberation will only be fully won when our revolution is shielded from imperialist intervention, buttressed by international solidarity and cooperation, embraced as the arena of struggle by independent women's organizations, and led by leaderships who accept the centrality of those organizations.

Wendy Z. Goldman's book, which lays out in incredible detail the victories and defeats experienced by Soviet women, will contribute to educating and creating that kind of leadership for the working class worldwide. ■

The struggle to desegregate Boston's public schools



(Left) Jan. 8, 1975: Buses arrive at South Boston High School
(Below) Feb. 11, 1975: Whites kick Black student (on ground) outside Hyde Park High School.

By JOE AUCIELLO

BOSTON—This academic year marks the 40th anniversary of the struggle to desegregate the Boston Public Schools. No celebrations have been held to mark the event; there is no commemoration and little public commentary. Local television stations are making no use of the ample film footage they possess and are broadcasting no special programs of this important chapter in Boston's history.

Discreet silence, with a few exceptions, has been maintained throughout the city. The ruling elite favor forgetfulness of their shameful past.

However, those who fought for civil rights and racial equality then, and the generation that is inspired to take up new challenges today, have every reason to remember or learn the history of previous struggles, even when the results were not successful.

With a 1954 Supreme Court order to integrate public schools throughout the United States, racial equality in Boston had been delayed and denied. In 1974 U. S. District Court Judge Arthur Garrity released his decision, finding "that the evidence established that the school authorities had knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation ... and had intentionally brought about or maintained a dual school system" that was "unconstitutionally segregated."

Further, the racist policies of the school committee operated "to the detriment of black pupils who generally were receiving an education unequal to that being given white pupils."

No one could honestly dispute the facts or find them surprising. As Black community activist Mel King wrote, "Judge Garrity was faced with overwhelming evidence. The School Committee had kept excellent records of its policies. ... In effect, the Judge had no choice but to respond to history" ("Chain of Change," 1981, pp. 158-159). A federal appeals court would later uphold Garrity's decision.

Despite its liberal reputation, Boston had long been divided racially and ethnically by neighborhoods, and the public schools mirrored that segregation. For example, South Boston High School, known as "Southie," had a 100% white pupil enrollment at the time of Garrity's order. Needless to say, no minority faculty members were employed there.

Schools within the proportionally small Black community were the worst in the city, underfunded, overcrowded, and generally neglected. These schools



also received the least qualified and least capable teachers. More than a decade of appeals by Black parents to the school committee, city council, and state legislature had resulted in no real improvement.

For all that Boston politicians spoke of their love of neighborhoods, the school committee was elected on a city-wide and not a neighborhood or district basis. This policy was a deliberate and legal means to preserve an all-white (and all Democratic Party) school committee. It ensured that Boston's Black community, then only 10 percent of the population and confined primarily to an area known as Roxbury, would not be able to elect a minority candidate. Nor were any minority school administrators ever appointed by these school committees.

Finally, by order of Judge Arthur Garrity, the Boston public schools began to carry out a desegregation plan that, in its first phase, would bus 20,000 of the city's 93,000 pupils. Black students were sent from their neighborhoods to South Boston, a predominantly white, Irish area, to begin the creation of a racially integrated school system in the city. Students from "Southie" were likewise sent into the Black community of Roxbury. It was this order that gave rise to the noxious phrase "forced busing." Black students replied, more accurately: "It's not the bus, it's us."

The victory in court was the conclusion of a years-long effort for fundamental civil rights for the beleaguered Black community in Boston, but it was certainly not the end of the battle. Vigorous and brave action by Black parents, students, and their allies in the

courts, streets, and classrooms resulted in a temporary triumph.

In early 1975, pro-busing forces consisting of hundreds of activists from around the country and dozens of student groups organized a national conference in Boston that founded the National Student Coalition Against Racism (NSCAR). With the NAACP, a major demonstration in favor of busing was called for the following spring that succeeded in drawing approximately 15,000.

In addition to demonstrations, NSCAR organized teach-ins, public debates, and forums, including campaigns to educate against the death penalty. Its press releases promptly countered the lies and distortions of the anti-busing organizations and their spokespeople.

NSCAR campus chapters were set up in high schools and colleges throughout the United States. Members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were instrumental in all of these efforts and provided many staff members for day-to-day work. SWP militants were also elected to leadership positions within NSCAR, where they helped to build a broad and united organization.

NSCAR provided factual material to educate about the nature of the struggle. One of NSCAR's resolutions stated: "The real issue in the school desegregation battle is not busing—the means to get better schools—but the democratic right of Blacks to get the equal education now denied them."

Yet, over time, the white majority found a way to re-assert its power. Unable to block the federal order that bused students throughout the city to achieve racial balance, unable to roll

back the buses themselves, whites in Boston turned from legal challenges to mob violence and ultimately to the abandonment of the public schools, leaving them much smaller and more segregated than they were before the desegregation order was implemented. By 1988, overall student numbers had fallen to 57,000, of which only 15% were white. The Boston public schools were once again re-segregated.

Last fall, former Boston Mayor Ray Flynn recalled those years in an article titled: "40 years later, busing ruling still misguided" (*Boston Herald*, Sept. 3, 2014). When buses began rolling to South Boston in 1974, Flynn was the state representative of "Southie" and a leading opponent of "forced busing."

Flynn was never the biggest bigot in Boston; his political forte was a more refined, a more respectable racism. His customary tone was not angry but aggrieved, in sorrow for the good white people of Southie and all the trials they had to endure. Unlike the more charismatic near-criminals in city politics, Flynn was the somewhat slow-witted but reasonable reactionary. His was the ideal public face of prejudice. It's a role he continues today.

In this article Flynn recalls what he refers to as "an ugly time." Flynn indignantly states: "Not only did the federal court decision by Judge W. Arthur Garrity remove city government control over our schools, it denied parents a voice in where their children could attend school."

Flynn continues, "The injustice to parents was ignored by 'elites' during this horrendously flawed and insensitive process... I knew many of these parents. They were fine, decent and concerned mothers and fathers who were not racists or haters as they were sometimes described in the media."

This article is a cover-up for what was indeed an ugly time; it whitewashes white racism in a veneer of phony populism, falsely pitting elites versus parents, that is, white parents. Black people in Boston never had a public voice. The article itself is a misguided effort to mis-educate readers too young to know what really occurred in Boston 40 years ago.

Flynn mentions racism only once in his article, and then only to deny that it existed. He won't acknowledge that racism was the driving force that united white opposition to busing and to the desegregation order. A phrase like "our schools" was often heard in the 1970s, but it never referred to the entire city. "Our schools" was a code word for "white schools" that would remain white by forcibly excluding Blacks and other minorities.

School Committee member and mayoral candidate Louise Day Hicks, a champion of Boston bigotry, famously said, "A racially imbalanced school is not educationally harmful." Never mind that the Supreme Court had ruled to the contrary 20 years before.

It is sheer nonsense and brazenly deceitful to say that white parents were simply decent people who were denied their rights. The only right they lost was the right to deny equal treatment to Black citizens of Boston. It is simply not credible to deny the dominating presence of white racists and haters. Minority students were the targets

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Coal mining in Poland has ground to a halt. Strike and protest action in the entire industry was scheduled to begin on Feb. 2. This follows a decision by the Inter-Union Protest and Strike Committee of the Silesian-Zaglembian region to wage a sympathy strike with miners from Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa—the largest metallurgical coal producer in the European Union.

The workers are protesting plans to scrap some social benefits, as well as the dismissal of union leaders, according to a statement on the union's website.

Over 2000 miners of the Silesian coal basin (southern Poland) went on strike in January—with tactics including sit-ins and hunger strikes—in response to the governmental decision to close down four mines at the state-owned company Kompania Weglowa. This is the EU's largest coal-mining group overall, with a production capacity of 34 million tons of coal. It consists of 14 mines and employs

Polish miners on strike

over 50,000 workers, accounting for half of all workers in the country's mining sector.

The strike started with a walk-out on Jan. 7. After several days, Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz reached a "restructuring" deal with the unions at Kompania Weglowa, but the strike continued to spread to other mining companies.

Portions of a Facebook report by "Lewica," dated Jan. 15, follow:

"Currently, miners working in the pits owned by other big mining groups (Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa and Katowicki Holding Węglowy) are joining the strike, while Silesian municipalities are petitioning the national government in defense of workplaces essential to the social well-being of the region.

"Right now, all 14 sites are on strike,

with miners protesting underground. Other forms of protests include hunger strikes and railway blockades. Over 10,000 people, both miners and ordinary citizens, protested in Bytom on Tuesday.

"The city is struggling to save the last of its mines. The unemployment rate in Bytom is reaching 21%, as a result of the 1990s "restructuring" of the coal sector.

"Leaders of the miners' unions declared that if an agreement is not reached with the unionists by Jan. 20, miners would be joined on strike by workers from the railway, energy, and postal sectors. ... The opinion polls show that the miners' strike is backed by 68.5% of Poles.

"The closure of the four mines [at Kompania Weglowa] will result in the loss of 5000 jobs in the region where the coal industry is the largest employer, with a

decisive influence on the local economy...

"It seems quite obvious that the governmental proposal [to close four mines] is a method of paving a way to the privatization of mines in Brzeszcze, Bytom, Ruda Śląska, and Gliwice. Universal Energy, a company owned by one of the wealthiest Polish businessmen, Krzysztof Domarecki, has already made an offer to buy three out of four pits that are to be closed. Another Polish millionaire, Jan Kulczyk, is making great profits importing coal from Russia through a transshipment terminal in Braniewo, a bordertown near Kaliningrad Oblast.

"Basically, it is the UK's 1984 all over again. Silesia is one of the last remaining embers of resistance, and the mining industry is probably the most unionized trade sector in Poland. We call for support with Polish miners who keep fighting for their lives and the well-being of their communities that are threatened by the government plans." ■

... Boston

(continued from page 10)

from the first day of school. Angry white mobs did not throw rocks and bottles at the yellow paint of the school buses; they were aiming for the Black skin of the students huddled fearfully inside.

Violence was so intense that on the opening days of school in 1974, only a small number of Black students actually dared to board the buses and attend school. At South Boston High, white mobs shouted "Niggers, go home!" and threw bottles and rocks. Several students were injured. A metal detector was installed by the school's doors, and the state police were assigned inside the schools to ensure student safety.

In fact, liberal white officials were also not safe. Judge Garrity received so many credible death threats that federal marshals were assigned as protection around his suburban home. In an anti-busing demonstration of several thousand held on City Plaza before the start of the 1974 school year, a figure of Garrity was burned in effigy.

Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy faced crowds so hostile and aggressive that he was physically attacked in public. Kennedy appeared at the City Plaza demonstration, where he had not been invited, and tried to speak from the platform. Rally organizers belligerently refused and prevented him from approaching the microphone. Leaving the podium exposed him to the angry crowd, who turned on him viciously. Senator Kennedy fled into the John F. Kennedy Building for safety. In his autobiography, "True Compass," the senator recalls that, confronted by "a full-fledged mob," he "turned resolutely and strode toward the doors" (p. 349).

(Left) 1975: Racist slogans during busing struggle in Charlestown, Mass.

While Kennedy continued verbally to support the court order for desegregation, in practice he submitted to the white mobs—his electoral base—and stopped speaking out in favor of busing. This position actually placed Kennedy to the left of the presidential candidates in 1976, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, who took anti-busing stands.

In a predominantly Roman Catholic Boston, the Church learned something from these organized outbursts of bigotry and remained silent, playing no positive role whatsoever, other than issuing some mild statements against violence. Unofficially, some Catholic priests joined with anti-busing demonstrators and gave them the semblance of Church blessings.

Commentators typically dismiss the Boston desegregation struggle as a foolish, ill-conceived adventure in social engineering that was doomed from the start. The possibility of failure was quite real, especially in a city where the minority community was too small and isolated to wield any political clout.

But today's popular wisdom glosses over the difficult reality. Boston's Black community confronted a stark choice: fight for racial equality and improved educational opportunity for its children, or acquiesce to on-going discrimination and disadvantage for decades to come.

The Boston desegregation effort finally did not succeed. White families who had boycotted the public schools ultimately abandoned them, with many whites transferring to parochial schools or leaving the city entirely. A school system that was 68% white in 1970 became 14% white in 2012. An integrated school system could not exist when



most of the students were racial and ethnic minorities. The Boston School Committee officially ended the desegregation program in 1999.

Nonetheless, the cause of desegregation and the fight for it were worthy and essential ones. The culture and practices of white racism that ruled Boston had to be exposed and challenged; the tradition of "separate but equal" had to be broken. That much was accomplished.

Much more remains to be done, not only in Boston. In a country where re-segregation has re-emerged in every major city, the struggle for racial equality has been losing ground.

If Black lives matter, then education matters. Black families have received the worst quality education in America and have received the fewest educational opportunities. Black people are several times overrepresented in prison compared to their percentage in the general population. While there

may well be more Blacks in college than in jail, too many minority students are shunted to community college and underrepresented in competitive colleges.

The kind of movement that has taken to the streets against police brutality and social neglect shows the power of collective action needed to demand quality education for the most needy in America. The struggle for desegregation and education substantive education, part of the on-going struggle for civil rights, is far from finished.

Remembering the Boston desegregation battle 40 years later means to recall, especially, the young Black students who demanded change, despite the powerful forces arrayed against them. They boarded buses knowing they would step off into hostile crowds hurling epithets, stones, and bottles. Any decent and honest account of that era must acknowledge these Black youth as heroes who can inspire young people in their own struggle today. ■

... Malcolm

(continued from page 12)

completed without comment or complaint but with a pasted-on smile and a show of gratitude.

Church demanded you follow doctrine or else bear the consequence of unimaginable suffering for all of eternity. The Army told you to follow orders and be prepared to kill "gooks" on command. Politicians said the government deserved your unswerving loyalty and trust. The president told the "silent majority" to pledge allegiance.

Good Americans listened and obeyed. In his memoir, Professor Mark Edmundson vividly recalls a scene from his adolescence about learning the right lessons: "My father and I were alone, watching television, the eleven o'clock news. ... War and protests were on the box. We were silent through the combat footage. ... Then came the other kids. The Harvard

types made their way onto the shadow screen ... with their posters and NVA flags and their chants....

"My father went apoplectic. He fell into a fury. His face turned blood red. He snorted from out his great misshapen nose. They were spoiled brats. Lazy! Morons! He cried out: 'Get back home. Get home and do what you're told. Do what YOU ARE TOLD!'

"That last *Do what you are told*, was a standing disciplinary slogan in our house. We heard it often" (Edmundson, *Teacher*, pp. 225-226).

It's also a scene that must have been played out all across the country as parents tried to raise "good kids." The rules were not complicated. Keep your head down, follow orders, go along to get along, and, above all, do what you are told and ask no questions. That was the pathway to success in America.

In 2015, if the powers that be had their way, life would be pretty much the same. Obedience without question is still the watchword. The government still de-

mands unswerving loyalty and trust, trimming civil rights, spying on you for your own good. Wars are launched as lies smooth the way, and when the first lie is exposed another lie takes its place. No weapons of mass destruction in Saddam's arsenal? Okay, then, we're bringing freedom to the grateful Iraqi people, and don't look at the dead bodies piling up.

Once again, by act of Congress, the army is recruiting in public schools where standardized tests can make or break your life. Answer the right way, maybe you go to college. Answer wrong, well, have you thought about enlisting, son? The message that youth are least likely to hear is the imperative to "think for yourself."

But the people in charge don't always have their way—not completely, not all the time. What is different today, compared to 50 years ago, is that more youth speak up, ask questions, and are willing to fight for their beliefs. Whether they know it or not, they are living in the spirit of Malcolm X.

In the 1960s some young radicals of the

New Left took the writings of Mao Tse-Tung and turned them into simplistic slogans suitable for all occasions. Malcolm X, a creative, restless thinker whose work was unfinished, does not deserve such a fate. His speeches can't be reduced to a set of sound bytes. References to Malcolm's words serve better as a starting point than a conclusion.

Malcolm is not a Black plaster saint, nor is he a relic of the civil rights era. He remains a catalyst and an inspiration whose message is to continue the struggle for equality and freedom.

Malcolm X has not faded into the past for a simple reason: he is needed today. Fortunately, young people still want to learn; they still search for meaning in the world, and still need teachers. They can hardly do better than discover the words and example of Malcolm X, who said, first, "think for yourself." ■

A version of this article first appeared in the May 2005 issue of Socialist Action. It has been updated for the current issue.

Malcolm X's message to young people today

By JOE AUCIELLO

Malcolm X, born May 19, 1925, would have been 90 years old this year had he not been assassinated 50 years ago. Now, decades later, safely buried, Malcolm X has become respectable. This transformation has been some years in the making, but there can be little doubt of the result.

The U.S. government, which spied and kept files on Malcolm, and which encouraged his death, if not worse, has already placed his image on a postal stamp. Schools, streets, and boulevards have been named after him.

The trend to assimilate has been noted by contemporary historians. Taylor Branch, in the second volume of his Martin Luther King biography (*At Canaan's Edge*), refers to the "legions of young whites who made him [Malcolm] a crossover icon." Despite its flaws, the most recent and thorough biography, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, by Manning Marable, rightly refers to a "metamorphosis" which presents Malcolm as "a multicultural American icon." The *New York Times* review of the biography adds to the new myth-making, claiming that towards the end of his life, Malcolm would "embrace of a kind of internationalist humanism" — a phrase that could reasonably be applied as well to the Dalai Lama.

With his sharp edges smoothed over, his political views drained of their militancy, his religion ignored, Malcolm X has been offered up as a dreamer, a worthy companion to the Martin Luther King of the 1963 March on Washington.

Such was the tone and spirit of a *Boston Globe* editorial, "Malcolm's Message" (Feb. 26, 2005). The *Globe* quoted from Malcolm's Feb. 14, 1965, speech in Detroit, "Don't let the power structure maneuver you into a time-wasting battle with others when you could be involved in something that's constructive and getting a real job done."

The editorial concluded, "These challenges live on: to get a real job—working not merely for pay but for a greater common good—so that as Malcolm gazes out of photographs, it is easier to gaze back."

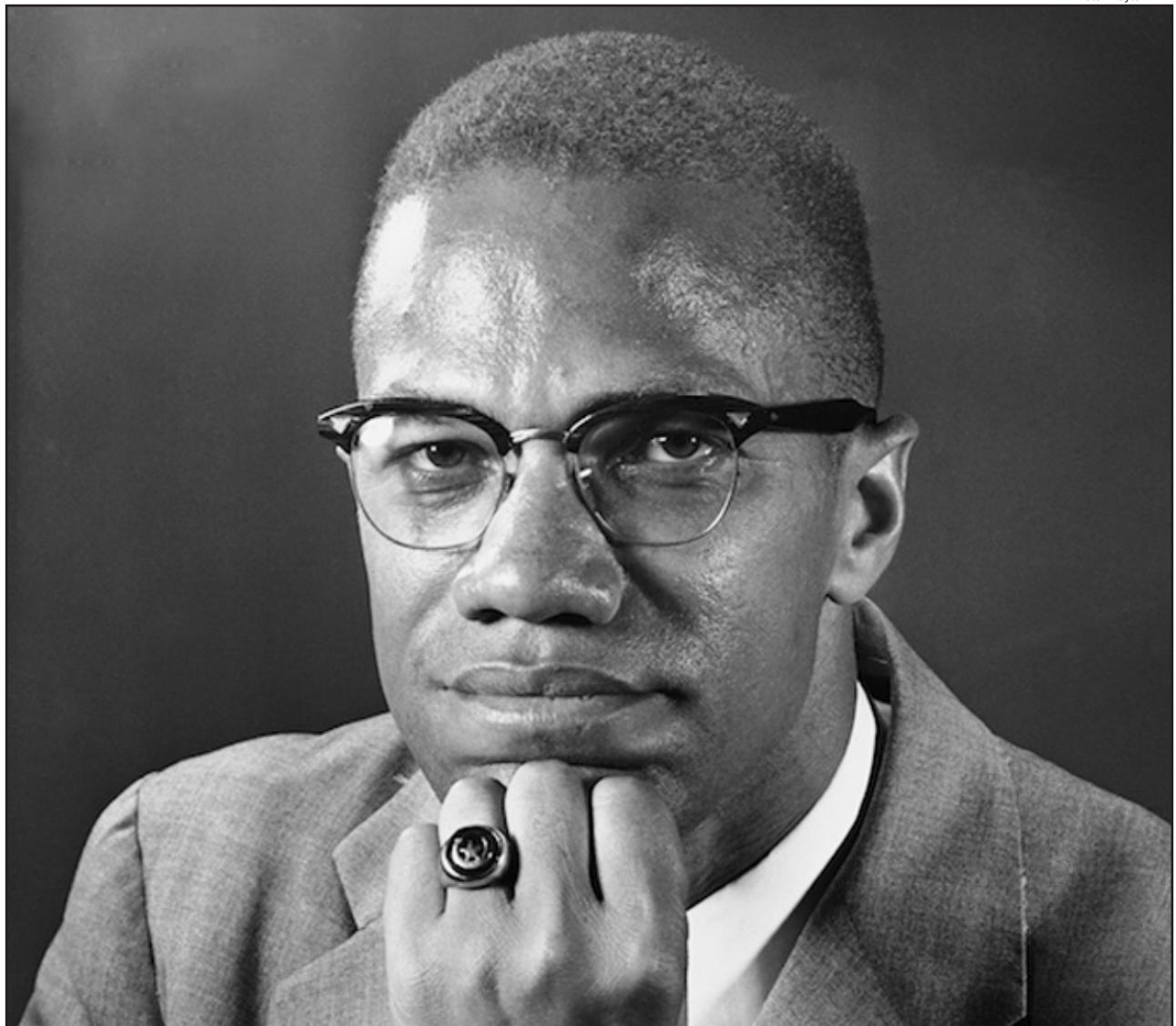
Is that really Malcolm's message—bring home a paycheck and maybe volunteer some time in a community service project? From the *Boston Globe* editorial, it was impossible to know what the controversy over Malcolm X had been all about or why anyone thought it necessary to silence him with gun blasts to the chest.

Malcolm X claimed that the media most often portrayed him falsely, and judging from this recent editorial, the passing years have not improved things much. In ways large and small, the distortions continue. For instance, the lines from Malcolm quoted above are not, as the *Boston Globe* would have it, the kind of advice a high school guidance counselor would offer but were instead part of his explanation for avoiding dead-end arguments with the Nation of Islam.

Malcolm wanted to build religious and political organizations that would advance the Black struggle for unity and liberation. Freed, by then, from the limitations of the organization he had once represented so well, the NOI, he was able to speak his own mind, and he did, despite ever-increasing danger. Distorting Malcolm's ideas also includes deletions.

Consider what the editorial entitled "Malcolm's Message" omitted from Malcolm's message. In his talk that day, Malcolm praised the African revolution and its ability to inspire an African-American revolution in the United States, "an even greater threat" to "the international power structure," which he condemned as "imperialism."

In words that you will not likely find reprinted in your daily newspaper, Malcolm said, "This is a society whose government doesn't hesitate to inflict the most brutal form of punishment and oppression upon



Victor Boyton / AP

Malcolm has not faded into the past for a simple reason: He is needed today. To young people he says, think for yourselves.

dark-skinned people all over the world."

Was he, in making this judgment, also making a prediction of his own murder one short week later? It may never be possible to answer for certain. Questions about Malcolm X's life and death and the meaning of his work continue to generate questioning and controversy. Yet, all commentators, including his worst detractors, agree on his importance as a thinker and leader.

To understand his importance, all one need do is actually read Malcolm, and read with an open mind. The *Autobiography* is the essential starting point, and *The Final Speeches: February 1965* is a good follow-up. The most perceptive interpretation is still one of the first ever published: *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, written by George Breitman.

But why read Malcolm X at all? A great deal has changed for the better in the 50 years since he was gunned down. Blacks not only vote but are elected to office in large numbers. The Democratic Party's Barack Obama is president. Isn't it time to say, then, that the progress of decades has diminished the urgency of Malcolm's message?

Malcolm himself answered that question in a speech reprinted in the pamphlet, "Malcolm X Talks to Young People." Here is what Malcolm said: "One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself. Then you can come to

an intelligent decision for yourself.

"If you form the habit of going by what you hear others say about someone, or going by what others think about someone, instead of searching that thing out for yourself and seeing for yourself, you will be walking west when you think you're going east, and you will be walking east when you think you're going west. This generation, especially of our people, has a burden, more so than any other time in history. The most important thing we can learn to do today is think for ourselves."

His point may seem too obvious at first, a platitude, even, but he reached this conclusion as the result of painful personal experience. It was an insight he stressed in the last months of his life because the lesson that he learned was the starting point not only for himself but for any person who wanted to understand the world and act to change it. These words, spoken in December 1964, may no longer be shocking, but they are still relevant, meaningful, and necessary for today.

But in 1964 this message must have been electrifying for the young people in the audience. Who would ever have heard anyone speak this way? No social institution, no adult with whom most youth came in contact, ever said to think for yourself. Quite the contrary!

With rare exception, the people and social institutions teenagers encountered insisted on deference and conformity. Asking too many questions would just get you in trouble. Adults could forgive, even accept, youthful hijinks, but not the implicit defiance of a sober question. For teenagers, it was safer to drink than to think.

Parents were to be obeyed simply "because I said so." School told you to line up in the corridor, raise your hand to go to a bathroom, and fill in the blank on quizzes and tests. A job consisted of mindless tasks

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