

## Greeks vote NO to austerity



The class struggle has sharply intensified in Greece since June 27, when Greek Prime Minister and Syriza Party leader Alexis Tsipras called on the people to vote NO in a referendum against blackmail and humiliation by Greece's capitalist creditors. A massive united front, which included most sectors of the workers movement, mobilized for the NO vote.

The giant NO rally on the evening of July 3 brought an estimated 150,000 onto Syntagma Square in Athens, filling the area in front of the parliament building and adjacent streets. The NO rally was reported to have been six times larger than the YES rally held simultaneously at a stadium in Athens.

Two days later, on Sunday, July 5, nearly 62% voted NO, and only about 38% voted YES. Most significantly, in working-class districts the vote was 80-to-90% NO, while in upper-class districts it was 80-to-90% YES.

The referendum was a clear outcry by the Greek working class for an end to the austerity, unemployment, and dismantling of social services that they have faced. However, the major European leaders and capitalists appear determined to continue to punish Greece and impose a decisive political defeat upon the workers. In order to effectively fight back, workers in Greece must deepen their mobilization and take steps to bring the economy under working-class control.

In this issue of *Socialist Action*, we print two articles by OKDE-Spartakos, our sister party and the Greek section of the Fourth International, which help to point the way forward. — THE EDITORS

By OKDE-SPARTACOS

The "NO" answer in the 5th of July's referendum was a painful slap against the traditional parties of capital, the bourgeoisie, the systemic media. In the short period before the referendum, this disputatious alliance had extorted and terrorized the people, using all means available: Via television, through newspapers, in the workplaces. They only managed to make fools of themselves and to increase the class hate [of the working class against them] even more.

The referendum turned into a pure class fight, regardless of Syriza's intentions. The working class voted NO and rejected the settlement massively, despite the historical betrayal of the General Working Union's bureaucracy, which sided openly with the "YES" and with the capitalists.

The bourgeoisie fought hard in favor of YES, even those parts of it which weren't hostile to Syriza. The majority of the middle class, having almost nothing to

(Above) A rally in central Athens for a NO vote in the referendum.

lose anymore, formed into line with the working class and voted NO. Contrary to those who called for national unity and amity, it became clear to everyone that two, totally different "societies" exist in the country—the exploiters and the exploited. The escalation of the class consciousness of a large part of the working class creates a vast amount of fear for those who are afraid of a clear expression of the class and choose national unity as their main slogan, in order to promote complacency and social peace.

Those who tried to avoid a clear stand in this class fight naturally found themselves on the fringes. Especially the Communist Party, promoting the nullity refrain [i.e., the party called for voters to abstain] in the referendum, served the working class poorly and, as was the case with its position in December

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(Left) Los Angeles activists celebrate their obtaining a raise in the city's minimum wage.

## \$15 wage movement makes gains

By ANN MONTAGUE

June was a good month for the fight for a \$15 minimum wage. On June 13, Los Angeles, the second largest city in the country, saw the mayor sign the bill passed by the city council that raised the minimum wage from \$9 to \$15 over the next five years. This will keep the city ahead of the statewide minimum wage, which was raised to \$10 in 2016.

The California State Assembly is now considering raising it to \$13 in 2017. Last November, the people of San Francisco voted to increase the minimum wage to \$15 by 2018. And not to be outdone, a nearby city, Emeryville, raised its minimum wage to \$16 by 2019. On June 2, its city council unanimously passed the ordinance, which will be adjusted annually for inflation.

In the meantime, state officials in Arizona agreed to

comply with a court decision that cities have the right to raise their own minimum wages. "The state threw in the towel, and they gave us fees to boot," said attorney Shawn Aiken, who along with attorney Mik Jordahl represented the Flagstaff Living Wage Coalition.

The Flagstaff coalition had sued the state in April over a law that prohibits cities from raising the minimum wage. Group members argued that the cost of living in Flagstaff is nearly impossible to afford on the state's current minimum wage of \$8.05 an hour.

Attorney General Mark Brnovich agreed to a Maricopa County Superior Court judgment stating that the 2013 law limiting minimum-wage increases conflicts with Proposition 202, a measure Arizona voters approved in 2006 allowing cities to regulate wages and benefits. The wages cannot be lower than the state's minimum wage.

June has not only seen raises on the West Coast but

also in the heartland of Missouri. In St. Louis, the mayor is proposing to phase in \$15 by 2020 from \$7.65, which is the current state minimum wage. He is under pressure since a preemption law will take effect in Missouri on Aug. 28. This law will prevent cities from being able to raise their minimum wage higher than that of the state.

The Kansas City mayor has also talked about a \$15 minimum wage. The state minimum wage is particularly abusive for tipped workers, who are only paid one half of the minimum wage, \$3.82 an hour.

Also in June, the New York State Wage Board held hearings on the effect of the current minimum wage on fast-food workers. The hearings were held in Buffalo, Albany, Garden City, and Manhattan. Fast-food workers, clergy, and labor groups have been testifying for \$15. The current state minimum wage is \$8.75 an hour.

The New York Labor Commissioner can raise wages of individual occupations without legislative approval. The Restaurant Association in New York opposes any raise in the minimum wage but realizes they cannot compete with the well-organized workers' movement and its allies, which they refer to as a "dog and pony show."

"It seems as though this is just a formality, that this is going to get pushed through," said Jay Holland, a spokesperson for the Restaurant Association. "The business community feels like it's being ignored."

Some states and cities with strong movements for \$15 are currently not moving forward to increase the minimum wage through legislative or court channels. But they have an accessible ballot measure system. The states of Washington and Oregon have seen initiatives in this direction.

Tacoma, Wash., is in close proximity to two cities with a \$15 minimum wage. SeaTac was the first victorious ballot measure, and Seattle was the first city to pass a \$15 minimum wage measure. But the Tacoma mayor is saying \$15 is too high and would be too much of a "shock to the economy."

Meanwhile, 15 Now's initiative to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in Tacoma has qualified to be on the November 2015 ballot. It would apply to all business-

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## Socialist Action: Where we stand

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

Tony Savino / Socialist Action

**March against police brutality, racial justice, and economic inequality!**  
**Saturday, July 25, 12 noon**  
**Begins at Lincoln Monument,**  
**Springfield Ave. & W. Market St.,**  
**Newark, N.J.**

By LAWRENCE HAMM

*Lawrence Hamm is chairman of the People's Organization for Progress in Newark, N.J.*

Police brutality is an ongoing, growing and deadly problem in the United States of America.

It includes the unwarranted and unjustified killing of unarmed people, the use of excessive force, the violation of peoples' constitutional rights, racist and discriminatory practices, criminal activity, corruption and misconduct, increased militarization of police forces, and the failure of the criminal justice system to hold police accountable.

Police brutality is not an isolated problem. It is a historical problem with roots that are deep in the social fabric of this country. It must be seen within the broader context of racial and economic injustice and inequality.

While the victims of police brutality come from all racial groups in society, the vast majority come from African American, Latino, Native American and other communities of color. They are overwhelmingly poor and working class. Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Abdul Kamal, Kashad Ashford, and Rekia Boyd are among the recent victims.

Police brutality has been and continues to be the cause of social unrest in the country. Throughout contemporary U.S. history incidents of police brutality have sparked explosive episodes of civil rebellion and unrest, with the most recent being that of Ferguson,



son, Missouri.

The failure of the criminal justice system to hold police officers accountable is causing a political crisis as more people discover that police brutality goes unpunished. Police kill unarmed civilians and are not even charged.

One grand jury after another fails to indict police officers. The cases of Michael Brown and Eric Garner being the most recent examples. This is perpetuating a growing belief that the criminal justice system is racist and illegitimate.

Police brutality is a serious and longstanding problem. For decades attempts have been made to reform the police. These efforts have only been successful when tremendous sustained political and social pres-

sure have been brought to bear upon the appropriate government institutions.

For these reasons the People's Organization For Progress (POP) has called a Million People's March Against Police Brutality, Racial Injustice, and Economic Inequality. We will march to demand an end to police brutality and justice for all of its victims, police reform, and an end to the problems of racial injustice and economic inequality which lead to police brutality. This is a huge project, and we are going to need all the support we can get to make it happen.

The Million People's March will take place Saturday, July 25, starting 12 noon at the Lincoln Monument in Newark. For information call the People's Organization for Progress (POP) at (973) 801-0001. ■

## Mumia speaks on Charleston

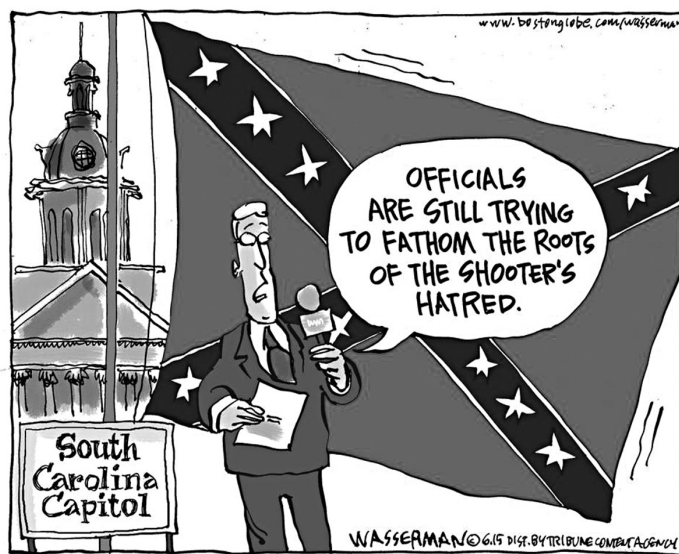
By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

A young white man, barely at the age of his majority, walks into Charleston's most storied Black church and, before he leaves, a new history is written.

Attending the Wednesday night Bible study, he sits for nearly an hour, but his mind isn't on the life of Jesus or his disciples. It's on murder, mass murder. When the door shuts behind him, nine Black souls, elders mostly, had been slain, Bibles in hand.

The man, or boy more than man really, hadn't come to learn about religion, for he had a belief, white supremacy, or the profound hatred of Black people.

White supremacy is the mother's milk of Charleston, of South Carolina, of the South, of America. For



surely as slavery funded and built America, the underlying principle was the devaluation, exploitation, and oppression of Black life. It's the only thing that

makes the church massacre in Charleston even remotely intelligible.

Nine Black people were sacrificed to the blind idol of white supremacy for the same reason that thousands of Black men and women were lynched on American elms and pines: as sacrifices to an idea, to perpetuate a system of economic injustice.

Dylan Roof, the 21 year old accused of this massacre, had no friends to speak of, no place to stay other than an associate's couch, no job, and a tenuous relationship with his parents. Isolated, alienated, alone in the world, his sole remaining possession was his whiteness, the only thing that gave his existence meaning. That was the energy that fueled the massacre in Charleston, South Carolina.

It now sits like an incubus in the American soul, seething hatred and fear, waiting for more Black lives to consume.

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By GLEN FORD

*These are the remarks of Glen Ford, executive editor of Black Agenda Report, who spoke at a news conference in Plainfield, N.J., to help build the July 25 Million Person March in Newark.*

I know that everybody here, because you care about justice enough to be here, probably saw the movie "Selma." And of course, Selma was the great moment, in 1965, that pushed the country over the hill in terms of getting the Voting Rights Act.

Now, there are many folks who think that that was all that Black folks needed—to get the vote—that the movement was over, that there was no need for Black Power, there was no need for an end to income inequality. There was no need to agitate for the

kind of country that doesn't participate in wars 24 and 7 all year long!

Some people thought that all we needed was the vote, and all we needed to do was get some congressmen and mayors and city council people elected—and maybe a president one day! To get folks into corporations, and get more generals appointed in the military—and everything would be fine. Black folks would just be regular citizens of the United States.

But they were wrong. Because the folks that we were agitating up until 1965 did not change after '65. They had allowed us some demands like the right to vote and public accommodations and such—but it was very grudgingly. And they said that if

we were not going to stay in our place, then they were going to create a place for us. And that place was the prisons.

Their response to the civil rights movement, to the Black Power movement, to the general movement for economic justice was the mass Black incarceration state. So we go from 1970, when there were only about 250,000 people in the federal and state prisons of the country, to a high point just a little while ago of 2.4 million. We go from a situation in the mid-1960s, when 70 percent of the prison inmates in the country were white, to a situation in which 70 percent of the prison inmates are Black or Brown.

This is pay back for our movement. And

many of our elected officials and our dignitaries—our rich folks, the folks who many of us would like to look up to and wish we could dress like—many of these folk think that we don't need a movement, as if they are oblivious to the fact that one of eight prison inmates in the world is an African American.

There are more Black and Brown people in U.S. prisons than in the entire prison system of China, when China has four and a half as many people than we have.

What does that mean? If you go by the raw numbers, the United States is the biggest police state in the world. ...

So we need to be going to Newark, just like folks from all over the country are going to Newark, to not just speak about the conditions in Plainfield but the conditions of our people all over. Thank you. ■

## 'Biggest police state in the world'



## Same-sex marriage victory: Equal rights struggle goes on

By ANN MONTAGUE and ANNETTE GAGNE

On June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a sweeping and historic decision that grants gay and lesbian couples the legal right to marry. The ruling invalidates discriminatory laws in Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee that had been upheld by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. It requires all 50 states to allow same-sex couples to marry.

This victory for the LGBT community comes on the strength of its decades of work against homophobic stereotypes and unjust laws in the struggle for equal treatment. The Court's 5-4 opinion holds that state marriage bans violate the "due process" and "equal protection" provisions of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

"Today's decision has been 50 years in the making and will stand with *Brown v. Board of Education* as one of the landmark civil rights moments of our time," said Anthony D. Romero, ACLU executive director.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision sparked instant victory celebrations, as well as reminders from the LGBTQ community that the road to freedom is long and this decision is just the beginning. "The court now holds that same-sex couples may exercise the fundamental right to marry. No longer may this liberty be denied to them," Justice Anthony Kennedy declared in the majority opinion.

### The LGBT movement

How did our rights to the "due process" and "equal protection" guarantees of the 14th Amendment become a reality? Some will credit the lawyers, the Supreme Court justices, and the politicians. But it was the movement of the last 47 years of rebellion and picketing and marching—and most of all, committing the revolutionary act of coming out—that should be credited with this victory.

This Court decision might seem totally rational and just a long time coming to those outside the LGBT

community. But for those of us who have been inside the decades of struggle and ongoing work combating the homophobic attitudes in our society, it was an amazing victory and a well-deserved celebration. It illustrated the fact that we did not need to continue a strategy of fighting state by state but that we could win victories for all 50 states.

While the ink was hardly dry on the decision, most activists were thinking, "married one day and fired from your job the next," but it was important to savor the triumph. All the rainbow lights and flags everywhere were a catharsis and a reminder that people can take on embedded institutional injustice and win. It also propels us forward.

This decision is not just about the act of marriage itself but all the financial benefits that this capitalist society grants based on the social institution of marriage. It was always interesting in the state campaigns for marriage equality that the NGOs insisted in saying, "shouldn't everyone be able to get married?" while the LGBT union activist's message was, "why shouldn't your coworker receive the same rights and benefits that you have?"

Gay liberation took a great leap at 1:20 a.m. on Saturday, June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in New York City. It was a common police raid of a gay bar where the police routinely harassed bar patrons including physically inspecting trans and drag customers as well as lesbians wearing pants. The legend goes that a cop hit a lesbian in the head with a billy club and handcuffed her, and she turned to the crowd and screamed, "why don't you do something?" as she was thrown in the police van.

However it started, the importance of the event was not at the beginning but in the fact that the crowds grew every night for five nights as they fought the police. The gatherings included the most marginalized members of society—large numbers of homeless youth, people of color, and drag queens—who were driven by outrage over endless police harassment,

and they sparked the modern LGBT movement.

For an in-depth account of the entire five days and nights, see "Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution" by David Carter. Out of the rebellion on the East Coast sprang activist organizations across the country, including the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance.

In 1987, a new generation of activists formed, calling themselves ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), which was driven primarily by gay men and their lesbian allies with the motto, "Silence = Death." They brought militant activism to Wall Street and the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, and shut down the Food and Drug Administration. Their struggle saved lives.

### The state-by-state strategy

For the last decade, struggles state by state have taken place to fight against homophobic ballot measures and in some states to pass anti-discrimination legislation to protect the LGBT community.

The national organizations participating in these campaigns were all Inside-the-Beltway lobbying organizations that had achieved nothing. There was no massive outpouring of the community until February 2004, when the mayor of San Francisco directed city-county clerks to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. An issue that was not high on most activists' lists took center stage and galvanized the community.

Once again, the organizations reverted to a state-by-state strategy. They ignored the clear constitutional precedent in the 1987 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Loving v. Virginia*, which stated that state bans on interracial marriage were unconstitutional and that "the right to marry cannot be infringed by the state." Specifically, the Court said these bans on interracial marriage violated the "due process" and "equal protection" provisions of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. Still, the large national LGBT organizations opposed a national strategy that would boldly assert the constitutional right to marriage equality.

These organizations have strong ties to the Democratic Party, which wants nothing to distract from their electoral campaigns. The Human Rights Campaign appointed Democratic fundraiser and Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein as its national corporate spokesman for same-sex marriage in 2012.

Just four years ago, as part of the last presidential election, Barack Obama made clear his opposition to marriage equality through his White House Communications Director, Dan Pfeiffer, who told activists at the Net Roots Nation Conference, "The president has never favored same-sex marriage. He is against it."

The same month, Obama was asked during a White House News Conference about New York's becoming the latest state to legalize same-sex marriage. He replied, "I think it's important for us to work through these issues because each community is going to be different, each state is going to be different." This was the position of all Democratic leaders: Go get it one by one until you have 50 states!

### Going forward

As we move forward to end all LGBT employment discrimination, the same message will be sent by the Democrats to just go state by state. There are still many battles to be fought, and the state-by-state strategy is no longer required because all 50 states are covered by the 14th amendment of the Constitution. There are still 28 states where the LGBT community has no job protection.

We need federal-level protection against workplace discrimination and housing discrimination for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. Too often transgendered people have been left out of state civil rights legislation.

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By ELENA ZELEDON

## Guatemala joins the rebellion

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica—Since April, the people of Guatemala have been engaged in a mass protest demanding the removal of the corrupt government of President Perez Molina. Each Saturday, the streets of the principal cities have been jammed with protesters, up to 65,000 in Guatemala City alone, each demonstration seeming to build off the last. An estimated 1,500,000 have taken part in these protests, nearly 10% of the population of 15.8 million.

Guatemala is now the latest of three countries in the region in open rebellion against a series of corrupt and murderous regimes. It joins Mexico and Honduras in the list of countries where political instability has exploded into mass action.

The trigger in the case of Guatemala has been a string of corruption cases exposed

through the arrests of dozens of officials charged with a seemingly unending litany of corrupt practices involving everything from bribery and kickbacks in the awarding of contracts to outright embezzlement from the national social security system.

The political fallout has been devastating for the country's oligarchs. Starting with the forced resignation of the vice president, and four Cabinet members including the interior minister (a very close confidant of the president), dozens of officials associated with the regime have been dragged before the courts with each new revelation further delegitimizing the political structures of the post-1996 pact ending the previous dictatorship.

The demands from the mass movement are far more than the removal of the cur-

rent regime. Despite the fact that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has scheduled elections for September, and the minions of U.S. imperialism in the Organization of American States are pleading for calm and order, so "that nothing disrupts the integrity of the process," the social actors in Guatemala are demanding not just a change of regime but a change of system.

Central to their struggle is the convening of a National Constituent Assembly, where the corrupt present structures would be replaced with a new constitution, guaranteeing a political role for the indigenous peoples' organizations, for women, youth, and the poor and working masses of the country. This demand runs headlong into the aims of imperialism and its ruling-class puppets—a vicious

and fascistic ruling class responsible for the deaths and disappearance of a documented 200,000 persons in the decades of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s who, above all else, require an executive system of domination which can maintain the relations of exploitation and misery.

North American socialists have a special responsibility to the peoples of Latin America. The building of a continental solidarity movement with those fighting the economic and political/military wars of North American imperialism, the building of bridges to those in struggle is needed.

The creation of a new "Organization for Latin American Solidarity," involving the organized antiwar movement in North America, can be one concrete step in forging the links necessary to give material meaning to the great motto of solidarity: an injury to one is an injury to all!

# Court blocks Texas abortion clinic crackdown

By STEFANIE LEVI

The struggle for women's right to choose gained an important, if temporary, victory in the state of Texas. On June 29, in a five to four vote, the U. S. Supreme Court blocked HB2, a portion of Texas' new abortion laws that would have forced the July 1 closure of many of the state's abortion clinics. Justices Ginsburg, Kagan, Sotomayor, Breyer, and Kennedy granted the application for an emergency stay in the case of *Whole Women's Health, et al v. Cole, Commissioner, and Texas DHS, et al*.

This action puts on hold a June 9 ruling from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals that had previously upheld Texas' new abortion laws as "not being unconstitutionally burdensome on women." This will allow a number of clinics to remain open, including Whole Women's Health, in Austin, whose owners filed the lawsuit with the Supreme Court [SCOTUS].

In its statement on the decision, NARAL Pro-Choice America pointed out: "In early June, the politically charged 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals upheld provisions of an anti-abortion law passed in 2013, HB2. The law has already forced more than half of Texas' [40] abortion clinics to close and would leave the state with fewer than 10 abortion clinics had the Supreme Court not intervened."

"[The decision] only postpones a public health disaster," said NARAL Pro-Choice Executive Director Heather Busby. "Health care should not depend on your zip code or your bank balance. We can celebrate this decision today, but the reality is that Texans' health and safety are still in jeopardy."

The statistical impact of the justices' ruling was succinctly voiced by Susan Hays, legislative counsel for NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, "If the Court had not issued this order today, we would have more than 60,000 Texas women trying to fit through nine clinic doors per year." Hays also said the stay will ensure low-income women and those living in rural areas can access clinics closer to home.

"We're relieved that the High Court has, once again, prevented anti-choice politicians from pushing safe and affordable abortion care entirely out of reach for Texas women, said Amy Hagstrom Miller, chief executive of Whole Women's Health, one of the plaintiffs in the case.

The ever-morphing strategies of the religious right and politicians whose aim is to completely overturn women's constitutional right to safe abortion, as ruled by SCOTUS in 1973 in *Roe v. Wade*, are evident in Texas' HB2 and in a plethora of other states' anti-abortion legislation. Severely circumscribing the entire social milieu necessary for women to receive accurate medical information about abortion procedures and to have a safe, timely abortion has been the modus operandi of anti-abortion proponents for five decades.

HB2 would have banned all abortions except in the case of rape or incest with a minor. It required doctors performing abortions to have admitting privileges with a hospital located within 30 miles of the clinic, and stated that clinics must contain the same equipment as ambulatory surgery centers. Moreover, clinics were required to administer abortion-inducing medications in the presence of a doctor, a stipulation that would have forced many patients to travel long distances.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals' June 9 ruling was a clear example of how legal precedent is set in the apparently never-ending war on women's right to choose abortion. The three Fifth Circuit judges who wrote the opinion pointed to the 1992 Supreme Court



(Above) Pro-choice activists face anti-abortion proponents in Austin, Texas, in January 2015.

ruling in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which upheld Pennsylvania's 24-hour waiting period for any woman seeking an abortion. The SCOTUS justices found that such restrictions were constitutional unless they proved to be an "undue burden" for women seeking abortions.

The Fifth Circuit judges followed many other state courts in their interpretation of the "undue burden" clause in order to uphold increasingly restrictive abortion laws. The appellate judges noted that the High Court had acknowledged in *Casey* that Pennsylvania's 24-hour waiting period would be "particularly burdensome" for poor rural women and would have "the effect of increasing the cost and risk of delay of abortions," but the Court had not considered such factors to be an "undue burden."

In recent anti-abortion legislation, the religious or political authors and proponents often couch the control over women's reproductive rights in terms of "concern for the health and welfare of the mother and fetus." This is particularly appealing to those looking to build careers in the religious sector and those hell-bent on promoting their own political trajectories. But this manipulation comes at the cost of the quality of women's and children's lives—if not life itself!

The constant battles on multiple fronts for every woman in the U. S. to have the right to safe and legal abortion as protected under *Roe v. Wade* is a reminder of the roots of those same struggles here and elsewhere on our planet—in particular under capitalist regimes.

Dianne Feeley, in *Against the Current*, reviewing Leslie Reagan's book, "When Abortion Was A Crime," points out that for white women in the early days of European settlement on this continent, and later, also for slave women in what is now the United States, abortion was not a crime. According to "both Common Law and popular belief ... prior to quickening, a woman had a right to abort the fetus and restore her menstruation cycle." It was precisely with the advent of the American Medical Association in 1857 that the formal campaign to make abortion illegal was initiated.

Just a couple of years before *Roe v. Wade* was passed, in her book "Woman's Estate," Juliet Mitchell told us: "Degrees of availability of contraception and abor-

tion differ in the various countries. In all of them its distribution and safety is random and haphazard. In none of them is it considered the automatic right of every woman. In all of them it is the privilege of the rich (white middle class) or the abuse of the poor (e.g. the use of Puerto Ricans as guinea pigs in testing birth control devices).

"Even the most liberal laws on abortion, as in Scandinavia, England and New York, force the woman to provide 'reasons' which are equivalent to self-denigration (physical or financial difficulties are rarely as acceptable as confession of psychological ineptitude). All this in industrial countries urging (for the rest of the world?) population control: countries extolling individualism and its correlate—a high degree of personal attention for the young child.

"All these countries exhibit an essential imbalance of production and consumption. Women as housewives are seen as the main agents of consumption. The ethic of consumption (spending money) is counterposed divisively to that of production (creating wealth)—the province of the husband. Appealed to as consumers, women are also the chief agents of that appeal: used aesthetically and sexually they sell themselves to themselves. Used in these advertisements they also lure men into the temptation of 'luxury' spending.

"Woman's fundamental job as provider of food, health and welfare comes to seem an extravagance and so does she along with it. Her responsibility for the most basic needs of people is converted into a leisure-time activity and she a play-thing (if she is young enough) that accompanies such work."

At the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, class, and geography, women in the U.S. (and in other countries) must rise together in organized struggle to take control over our biology, which includes all of our reproductive rights. This means we will have to use defensive and offensive strategies to combat the confrontations and setbacks thrown our way through regressive and progressive reformists and by the radical right-wing anti-abortionists, just to keep our little bit of ground as we advance. ■

## ... \$15 wage

(continued from page 2)

es making gross revenues of \$300,000 or more. There would be no phase in and no exceptions according to the number of workers.

In Oregon, where Democrats control the state legislature, there are three bills on the table: \$12, \$13.50, and \$15—none of which are making progress. The speaker of the House decided, as the session was almost over, to present a \$13 bill so "there can be a conversation" about the minimum wage. It was clear that this was meant to stop the conversation about \$15 that has been ongoing throughout Oregon. It is doubtful that the Democrats will pass any measure to raise the minimum wage.

On June 30, 15 Now Oregon held a press conference on the Capitol steps and marched to the Secretary of State's office to submit the initial petitions to qualify for a \$15 ballot measure in 2016.

It is important to remember that no wage increases took place because local governing bodies were suddenly concerned about poverty wages in their jurisdictions. Merely four years ago, any talk of a \$15 minimum wage was ridiculed throughout the nation by virtually all political entities.

Raises for low-wage workers are being achieved only because a national workers' movement demanding a living wage has come onto the scene. We should never forget the courage of the first New York City fast-food workers who walked off the job and demanded a \$15 wage and a union. We now see the power of a movement that has spread from fast food to all low-wage workers.

Fast-food workers themselves know what they have started—as was apparent on June 6 when worker activists gathered for their second national convention. Some 1300 fast-food workers came from around the country to Detroit's Cobo Center.

Most of the line cooks and cashiers are new to the labor movement, but they have more experience orga-

nizing strikes than most rank-and-file union members. Their enthusiasm easily matches that of any union rally.

In the main hall, workers and allies stomped in unison and yelled, "We work, we sweat, put \$15 on our check!" The ballroom was hung with banners from Arizona, Little Rock, St. Louis, Memphis, Boston and Miami. It is clear that the workers are still striving for what they demanded in the first fast-food strikes in 2012—\$15 per hour and a union.

The second day of the conference started with a video feed of Democratic Party presidential candidate Hillary Clinton bringing greetings and words of encouragement. Clinton claimed that she wanted to be the workers' champion. The following day, however, the Clinton campaign issued a "clarification" stating that she does not support the demand for a \$15 minimum wage.

Meanwhile, the lead article on the SEIU website showing Clinton speaking to fast food workers quickly disappeared. The workers themselves seemed to know that they were their own best champions. ■

# The TPPA: Capitalism at its predatory best



(Left) Mike Moreu's cartoon "Heights" won Judges' Prize in "having fun with TPPA" competition sponsored by ourfuture2 and other New Zealand groups in 2012.

BY JEFF MACKLER

President Obama was granted "Fast Track" authority by Congress on June 24, thus clearing the way to rapid passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA).

The TPPA has been 10 years in the making, including the last six under the aegis of the Obama administration. The agreement, written in secret by some 600 top corporate advisers, will encompass 40 percent of world trade. It is slated to be signed by 12 Pacific-rim countries—United States, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.

Despite the Obama administration's earlier well-orchestrated "failure" to secure Fast Track approval in Congress, Fast Track and the TPPA were quickly resurrected in behind-the-scenes maneuvers, including a bipartisan agreement to separately include the previously disputed Trade Adjustment Assistance program (TAA). The latter includes, at the request of the AFL-CIO, provisions for a government-funded program for some of the thousands of U.S. workers expected to lose their jobs as U.S. corporations offshore production to low-wage and virtual slave-labor nations like Vietnam and China.

The Republicans, joined by their "progressive" Democratic Party cohorts, traded support for this token program when the Obama administration agreed to include in a separate "non-controversial" African trade bill some multi-billion-dollar boons to U.S. oil corporations in exchange for the TAA bone to American labor.

Fast Track grants the president the authority to amend the TPPA at will, with take it or leave it additions or deletions that cannot be altered, negotiated, or filibustered in the halls of Congress. That is, the basic terms of the TPPA have been essentially approved by ruling-class corporate negotiators from all 12 nations. When the corporate elite needs to tweak this or that point, Congress can only vote yes or no.

Fast Track or not, however, big-time trade agreements and other such megadeals, as with the multi-trillion-dollar bailouts immediately following the economic meltdown of 2008, are always negotiated behind the scenes before being entered into the record as law, with the fine print rarely open to public scrutiny.

Fast Track is simply capitalism's way to make highly

lucrative deals quickly, always at the expense of the working class. To be sure, the general TPPA package is nothing less than the product of broad-ranging arrangements between the competing wings of the super-rich and their corporate representatives here and around the world.

In essence, TPPA, like the earlier North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), includes hundreds of thousands of secret provisions—each one aimed at fostering or guaranteeing the profits of one or another U.S. corporate entity at the expense of its international competitors.

As the only world superpower, the U.S. always leverages its economic might at the expense of other nations. Either they comply or they are threatened with being excluded from the world economy through the myriad of devices open almost exclusively to the United States, including control over vast banking and credit markets and the world's only reserve currency, the U.S. dollar—today printed with abandon and backed by nothing.

Like NAFTA, TPPA has little or nothing to do with "free trade." It is aimed at promoting the interests of the U.S. corporations that are world-class state-of-the-art competitors (free trade for these monopoly giants), while safeguarding the interests of those sectors of U.S. capitalism that are technologically inferior and therefore less capable of competing in the international marketplace. In these latter instances, U.S. trade and related policies are the opposite of free trade. They are strictly protectionist; they impose restrictions in innumerable forms, including tariffs, against more competitive commodities produced abroad.

Little or nothing was known about TPPA until WikiLeaks in 2013 published some of the basic sections in an eye-opening exposé that shockingly revealed its predatory nature.

The TPPA is touted as an extension and strengthening of NAFTA, the Clinton administration's gift to corporate America. Like NAFTA, which was limited to the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, the TPPA's congressional approval is based on the president's securing the votes of most Republicans plus sufficient numbers of Democrats to ram it through.

Like Bill Clinton, Obama considers his legislation central to his "legacy" to corporate America. Unlike his legacy-burnishing but fake maneuvers to pose as a kind-hearted liberal when "the great deporter" used

his executive powers to temporarily diminish the horrendous deportation provisions of current immigrant law, Obama is dead serious about the TPPA. This measure is nothing less than U.S. capitalism's grand manifesto—an earthshaking and massive conglomeration of largely U.S.-imposed agreements in every critical field of corporate endeavor. All are aimed at protecting and privileging the U.S. elite at the expense of other nations and the broad working class.

The TPPA is a "trade" agreement with only five of its 29 sections dealing with trade! What's left are sections imposing a massive curtailment of government regulation of environmental policies, the establishment of new "intellectual property rights" (that is, extending copyrights and patents to prevent others from using key products such as life-saving pharmaceuticals), the imposition of restrictions on internet freedom, and innumerable other measures to strengthen corporate prerogatives.

The patent restrictions, for example, will preserve and extend Big Pharma's monopoly on critical drugs, preventing competitors from manufacturing generic forms for sale at lower prices. Preservation of the power of these monopolies

will guarantee price increases. "Buy Local" campaigns will be banned or restricted in the name of "restraint of trade." Noam Chomsky aptly noted, "It's not about trade at all, it's about investor rights."

TPPA includes, as with NAFTA, an Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) section allowing foreign corporations to sue national governments before extra-judicial three-member international arbitration tribunals composed of corporate attorneys rotating as judges one day and corporate advocates the next.

NAFTA's ISDS sections, virtually unchanged in the TPPA, give these corporate-appointed "arbitrators" the power "... to issue non-appealable judgments on claims against domestic laws that corporate claimants believe violate their right to do business. If corporations win, they are entitled to financial rewards based upon their projected future profits, payable in taxpayer's money."

Linda Nordquist, quoted immediately above and writing for the Pittsburgh-based newsletter of the Thomas Merton Center, cites some appropriate examples of ISDS decisions under NAFTA in which the sovereignty of nation states is subordinated to global corporations in the name of "free trade."

Nordquist writes, "2012 *Chevron v. Ecuador* (Amazonian oil pollution): Chevron seeks to evade payment of a multi-billion-dollar court ruling against the company for widespread pollution of the Amazon rainforest. Ecuadorian courts found that Chevron dumped billions of gallons of toxic water and dug hundreds of open-air oil sludge pits in Ecuador's Amazon, poisoning the communities of some 30,000 Amazon residents, including the entire populations of six indigenous groups (one of which is now extinct.) \$9.5 billion desperately needed to provide cleanup and healthcare to afflicted indigenous communities.

"The tribunal in this case ordered Ecuador's government to violate its own Constitution and block enforcement of a ruling upheld on appeal in its independent court system. Pending. To date, several issues decided in Chevron's favor.

"2015 *Bilcon v. Canada* (environmental protection): investor win (seeking \$300 million.) Corporation sought to expand basalt quarry in Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia. Government rejected on basis of environmental impact report stating blasting and increased shipping would be hazardous to endangered whales and

(continued on page 9)

# Greece: Class struggle has no intervals

By OKDE-SPARTACOS

OKDE-Spartacos is the Greek section of the Fourth International. Below is a statement published by the organization in mid-June (before the referendum) concerning the negotiations between the Greek government and international creditors.

1) All hopes that the working class can get rid of austerity by voting and electing a “government of the left” collapsed very soon. Syriza won the election and formed a government. Not a government of the left, of course, but a collaboration government along with the extreme right nationalist party Independent Greeks (ANEL) and with various social democrats.

However, Syriza is the primary determinant of the governmental policy. And this government of “national salvation” (this is the term for class collaboration in the language of politics), after some bravado, entered an endless game of negotiating with creditors, with the troika, with imperialist institutions, and with capitalists both in Greece and Europe.

2) There are conflicts in this negotiation between the government and the Troika (IMF, ECB, and EU). However, none of the two sides represent the real interests of working people, the unemployed, the oppressed, and the poor.

3) Definitely, the cadres of capitalists and the political leaders of the EU have no intention to loosen the rate of applying austerity; neither do they intend to permit the slightest hope that one can escape this cage.

The established Greek bourgeois parties, New Democracy and PASOK (alongside them the newly born POTAMI), have every reason to defend the brutal austerity and the terrorizing authoritarianism that their own governments have imposed. They gather out of the parliament to demand that Greece stay in the euro-zone and to ask for further cuts and for the abolition of unionism.

The nazis of the Golden Dawn are waiting for their golden chance, to hypocritically denounce the submission of Syriza to the creditors, in order to apply the most cannibalistic version of capitalism, which is fascism.

4) On the other hand, the Syriza-ANEL government aims at a softer version of austerity, being backed by some parts of capital who realize that they have already exceeded the limits of social tolerance, as well as of the capitalist economy itself—which cannot survive without any demand for goods, i.e. wages nobody can buy anything with.

However, the government does not try to repeal any already imposed measures, by no means. On the contrary, their own proposals to the troika include further attacks against working people: a reform of the pension system that will mean cuts in pensions and raises in age limits for getting retired, raises in basic goods consumption taxes, privatization of harbors and airports, etc.

5) Nevertheless, it is not just Syriza’s submissiveness to the creditors that it is to blame, as fair as the indignation is about their capitulation after the election. The new austerity pact to come is the inevitable outcome of a political logic that rejects a rupture with the interests of bank owners and industrialists, with the rules of the capitalist game and with the institutions of the state, which is made for the shake of the bosses.

The magical recipe that Syriza (as well as other left



forces) is seeking in order to reconcile the interests of the capital with the needs of the workers, so that we, “our country,” can get out of the crisis all together, is simply non-existent. Our interests are incompatible with the interests of capitalists and with the “realism” of their economy. It is either them or us.

6) Therefore, there is no technical way, no good negotiation or clever handling that can get us out of the crisis. Neither do we want capitalism, this savage system of oppression and exploitation, to get out of its crisis. We want working people, the unemployed, and the oppressed to get out of the crisis of their lives. And this can’t be achieved but by confronting the institutions, domestic, European or international. It can’t be achieved but by confronting private property over banks, factories, and big enterprises, where thousands of people work for the profit of a handful of bosses.

7) Any agreement with the troika must be prevented, no matter what “realism” dictates. And the only way to do this is through our own mass mobilization. Through the strikes that are being planned against the new agreement. Through the massive demonstrations that are already fighting back against the provocation of the reactionary neoliberal gatherings.

We have to walk on the path of strikes, occupations, massive demonstrations, assemblies in our neighborhoods, schools or workplaces. Working men and women, foreign and domestic, along with the unemployed and the youth, we must all fight for our right to decide on our own and to rule ourselves.

The lesson given may be bitter, but it is also valuable: no electoral expectation and no government, in the framework of the system, will save us. It is only ourselves, though the unity of our action and through the workers’ independence, we that we will achieve everything.

- No new austerity measures, no new agreement, no negotiations

- Reduction of working hours, along with raises in wages and pensions

- Stop paying off the debt and fully cancel it
- Expropriation of banks and big enterprises, with no compensation for capitalists, and operation under workers control
- Self-management of closing factories and enterprises
- Disengagement from the euro and the EU, for an anticapitalist internationalist perspective
- For the self-organization, the government and the power of the working people

The next few days should find us in the streets, so as to confront the reactionary, pro-capitalist gatherings like “We stay in Europe,” and also so as to ensure that there is real rupture [with the EU], and that the referendum will not be just a negotiating maneuver of Tsipras and the leadership of SYRIZA. ...

Our NO to the proposals of the troika is in no way a vote of confidence to the government of SYRIZA-ANEL. Besides, their own proposals, the text of the 47 pages and the amendments made afterwards, are also totally unacceptable and represent a new memorandum, maybe a little bit more mild, but including new cuts and privatizations. We will say NO to these proposals as well, with our struggles.

On Sunday, July 5 we vote NO.

NO: so as to open the rift, and not to begin a new round of negotiations

NO: in the streets and not only in the ballot

NO: to this and to every agreement

NO: overall to the euro-zone, the EU and the IMF, and not just to their proposals

NO: to the Troika, but also to any other administrator of the same system.

— OKDE-Spartacos

Excerpts from June 28 statement

## ... Greek referendum rejects austerity

(continued from page 1)

of 2008, once again adapted to middle-brow fears and to the bourgeoisie.

This class struggle wasn’t just limited to the vote. This fight actualized in the streets, in the working places, inside the universities, in the neighborhoods. Without the huge demonstrations and marches, the fear would have prevailed and the outcome of the election would have probably been different.

The anti-capitalist left and the revolutionary organizations played the lead role in the NO movement and put pressure on Syriza not to sign the agreement initially. Especially ANTARSYA [a coalition of socialist groups], despite partial mistakes, became the strongest feature

of the most dynamic and decisive part of the movement. The anti-capitalistic left is a social and political reality in the streets and in the working places. Syriza has no right to think that this movement and this NO is its property.

The confidence this NO victory gives us should not become complacency. The next day should be a day of even harder battles. Without any doubt, Syriza will return to the negotiation table in order to discuss austerity measures regarding the workers, with the hope that the institutions will be lenient. Also, without any doubt too, the bourgeoisies of Greece and Europe, along with the bureaucrats of EU, will try to take revenge. We should not let the NO be defeated,

nor be “stolen,” nor degenerate into a mere negotiation paper.

The class front, which struggled in favor of NO, should reject any new agreement and any new measures. It must demand salary increases and collective working contracts. It must impose a break with the IMF and the EU. It must demand nationalization of the banks and big corporations, under workers’ control, as the only solution against the banks’ extortions and the bosses’ sabotage.

It must disarm the police, which even under the Syriza government, protected the YES demonstrations and suppressed the NO demonstrations. It must completely crack the nazis of Golden

Dawn, which is trying to exploit a part of the NO movement, a NO that they supported with false pretenses, for political survival purposes. We do not have the slightest illusion that the Syriza-ANEL government will pursue such measures. We are confident that the power of the workers can achieve them.

The working class showed indeed its power against the alliance of the main parties of capital, against the bosses’ terrorism, the bureaucracy and the mechanisms of the “deep” state. With massive and tenacious struggles and long-term strikes, we must enlarge the gap that has opened inside the stability of the system and never let it close again.

In this battle, the role of a strong anti-capitalist left, independent of reformism and the government, is crucial. ■

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

## Trudeau trying and lying to catch up in polls

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Though the Oct. 19 Canadian federal election is still three months away, the changing pattern of public opinion is forcing the major parties to shift gears. According to a major late-June poll, the labour-based NDP has the support of 35 per cent and is extending its lead. The governing Conservatives have fallen to 28 per cent, and the Liberal Party is down to 29 per cent.

It's no surprise that both big business parties are increasingly directing their fire at the NDP. But the Liberals, under their leader Justin Trudeau, are turning to very traditional tactics—stealing and lying.

By advocating electoral reform that might include proportional representa-

tion, easier and wider access to information, and a return of the long-form census, by letting government scientists talk to the media, making it easier for university students and Canadians living abroad to vote, and stopping Canada Post from ending door to door mail delivery, the Liberals are simply copying NDP policies.

They also promise to restore some social spending that Tory Prime Minister Stephen Harper cut.

But can the Liberals be trusted?

Remember the Liberal Red Book in the 1993 election campaign. P.M. Jean Chretien, and his successor Paul Martin, shredded the document and broke nearly every promise they made. Martin infamously cut 40 per cent of federal transfer monies to the provinces.

Today, Trudeau pledges to retain (with minor reforms) the appointed and highly corrupt Senate, to build more pipelines, and to support “free” trade deals that kill good full-time jobs.

Trudeau Liberals favour tax cuts to the private sector to spur the economy. They sent Canadian soldiers to Iraq. They voted for Bill C-51, the so-called Anti-Terrorism Law. So it seems unlikely that Trudeau can get very far with his claim that he represents “real change.”

NDP Leader Tom Mulcair, on the other hand, champions change in the form of a \$15 per day national child-care programme, raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour, increasing Canada Pension Plan benefits, and giving the cities a new deal for mass public transit—and he demands abolition of the Senate.

The party also calls for removing Canadian forces from Iraq and Syria, and restoring home mail delivery. Such progressive policies helped the NDP to a shocking win in the Alberta provincial election. They can carry the labour-based party to government in Ottawa.

Mulcair would be wise to resist pressure from the business class to downplay differences with the Conservative Party, leaving that role to the Liber-

als. But it is up to the ranks of labour and the party membership to push the NDP towards bigger and bolder change-seeking—like demanding national pharmacare, no new pipelines, expropriation of Big Oil and Gas to finance a rapid shift to green energy, and the implementation of steeply progressive taxation to give relief to workers, farmers, and small business, and to make the rich pay.

The business media constantly remind us that the NDP is a working-class party linked to the unions. So, why not make the most of it? Fan the flames of discontent with capitalist rule.

And what if the Oct. 19 federal election results in the NDP being in first place, but no party with a majority of seats?

Socialists urge the NDP to stand firm, form a minority government, and implement policies in the interest of the working class and the vast majority. If the capitalist parties choose to vote against progressive measures and force an early election, make them bear the consequences.

Rule out any notion of a coalition with the Liberals, the Bloc Quebecois, or the Green Party. Despite its many shortcomings, the NDP represents the possibility of a course of action independent of the bosses' parties, and that must be amplified—not compromised. ■

## Behind the worldwide exodus

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Unprecedented numbers of people are desperate to migrate. Stories fill the media about the many who drown in the Mediterranean or die in deserts in a failed bid to escape horrible conditions. Stunning figures released on June 18 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees quantify the extent of the global exodus.

By the end of 2014, 59.5 million people, half of them children, have been driven from their homes by war and persecution. Nearly 14 million were newly displaced last year, the highest number recorded in the agency's 50-year history. That included 11 million people who were forced to re-locate within the borders of their own countries.

Why is this happening? The largest source of displacement is the war in Syria. Conflicts in Yemen, Burundi, Libya, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Palestine also continue to generate refugees, and keep them in limbo for years.

The toxic ingredient that these situations have in common is imperialist intervention. The global rich and powerful try to impose regimes that are more compliant with the Western corporate agenda. Or they back colonial settler states that police regions where that agenda meets sustained resistance. In short, the world's ruling rich act to seize and exploit



(Above) Socialist Action banner in July 5 Toronto March for Jobs, Justice, and the Climate.

valuable commodities, especially energy and mineral resources in Third World countries.

The refugee agency hastens to add that the nearly 60 million displaced persons include only those who say they have fled conflict and oppression—not poverty or lack of economic opportunity. But

people migrate for a host of reasons, including hunger, gang violence, and the havoc wreaked by climate change. And that brings us back to the system that profits most from the burning of fossil fuels, and the governments that serve that mode of production.

Where are the hordes of refugees going? Not to the European Union, the United States, Canada, or Australia, where conservative politicians complain the loudest. Most of the displaced wind up in the world's less developed countries. Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan host the largest numbers. Ethiopia and Kenya take many more refugees than do, for example, Britain and France.

But right-wing, anti-immigrant movements in the West lead the hatred parade. Capitalist mainstream parties blame the victims, pass authoritarian laws at home, and pursue militarism abroad—actions that are sure to cause more forced mass migrations.

The UN, climate scientists, even the Pope in Rome point to the symptoms of the crisis enveloping the world. However, a cure requires nothing less than removing the cause—capitalism.

A good start would be the dismantling of Fortress North America, the hyper-security, militarized apparatus that Canada and the United States have erected against travellers and immigrants. The answer to imperialist intervention everywhere should be “open borders,” no one is illegal, and the provision of genuine aid to the underdeveloped world, with no strings attached. ■

## The fight against austerity in Quebec

By ROBBIE MAHOOD

MONTREAL—Since it was elected with a majority in 2014, the Quebec Liberal government of Philippe Couillard has embarked on an aggressive austerity drive aimed at liquidating the social gains remaining from the class and national insurgency of the 1960s and '70s.

Slashing budgets, opening up contracts to raid the pension plans of municipal employees, imposing new or higher user fees for public services, increasing the workload of teachers and nurses, eliminating programmes to safeguard health and the environment or provide assistance for vulnerable citizens—the government has cut a wide swath, targeting even privileged groups such as doctors.

This spring, anti-austerity mobilization showed promise—spearheaded by a student strike—but it could not be sustained. Expectations are now focussed on the renewal of the public-sector contracts this fall.

The Common Front of public-sector unions represents some 400,000 workers whose contracts will expire in October. The government insists on a two-year wage freeze and three more years of increases tied to inflation. But everyone knows that more is at stake than a fight over wages. A defeat for the Liberals would place its entire austerity agenda in jeopardy. Even a sustained struggle by the Common Front could bolster the morale of the forces opposing the government.

The Liberals hold many cards in their hands. They exude an air of self-confidence and absolute conviction. Aided by a pliant media, they will try to portray government employees as lazy and pampered. Polls indicate support for the government and its austerity policies, at least for the moment. Couillard and his cronies can also rely on stepped up repression—including, if required, a special law aimed at forcing striking employees back to work.

In the anti-austerity camp there is uneven consciousness and lack of strategic unity. The militant wing of the student movement, and many of the popular organizations that dot the Quebec political landscape, have absorbed the lesson of the 2012 “printemps d'érable” that only a general or “social” strike can defeat neoliberal governments.

In contrast, the bureaucratic union leaderships are trying to revive the class compromise of 50 years ago. Their plea to negotiate in good faith falls on deaf ears.

Undoubtedly, many union activists see the need for a radical re-orientation, in which the unions champion the demands of other sections of society, make common cause with them, and recognize the intransigence of the bosses.

Nevertheless, at the big union mobilizations, the last of which was in November 2014, the placards urging a return to collective bargaining were dominant, reflecting the strategic orientation of the

union apparatus.

Missing is a cross-union tendency ready to fight for a revitalized labour movement by advancing a class-struggle program that rejects the concertationist line of the union brass. At present, there is no political leadership in Quebec capable of spearheading such a tendency.

Although disposed in theory towards the perspective of a social strike against austerity, Quebec Solidaire (QS), lacks the base and the political will to build an opposition in the unions. While ensuring a presence at all the big anti-austerity mobilizations, QS does not provide leadership. Its role is reduced to being the (hoped for) beneficiary at the ballot box of the radicalizing dynamic in the movement.

With these caveats in mind, it is wise not to have exaggerated hopes. Nevertheless, the looming confrontation in the fall, may bring surprises.

Quebec has a history of struggles becoming quickly generalized across the society. At the least, there will be lessons for future struggles that this bankrupt social system is sure to produce. ■



By MARTY GOODMAN

# Racist attacks on Muslims in Myanmar

The military regime and fascist monks within the Buddhist clergy in Myanmar (Burma) have been waging an ethnic war against the Rohingya, a mostly Black Muslim minority living in the southwest of the country. Violence against the Rohingya erupted in 2012, leaving villages torched, up to 300 dead, and 140,000 fleeing their homes in terror. It was the worst example of ethnic cleansing in the region in decades. Cops merely watched the spiraling violence.

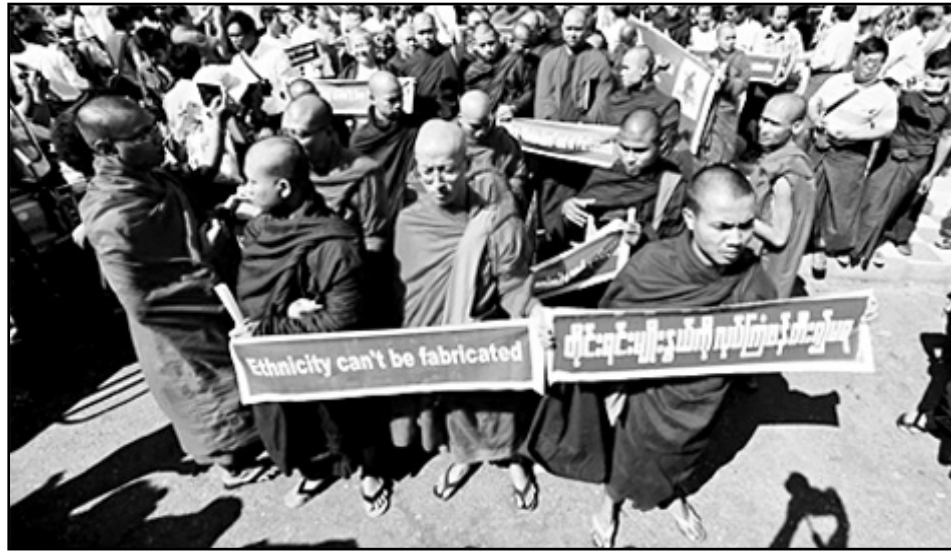
The attacks began with the rape of a woman in the mostly Buddhist Rakhine state, where most Rohingya live. The rape was blamed on Rohingya men (likely false), which set-off racist terror. As a result, there are some 300,000 internally displaced persons in Myanmar, a nation of 53 million. The UN says 130,000 Rohingya fled by boat since 2012 to destinations such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Some 25,000 left between January and March alone.

The journey into exile is often in filthy, overcrowded boats operated by smugglers. Many end up in slave labor camps, drowned at sea, beaten, starved, dehydrated, simply abandoned, or tossed overboard to avoid a smuggler's arrest. Refugees are even executed when impoverished families are unable to pay ransoms demanded by ruthless operators.

Up to 8000 have been stranded at sea at a time. Mass graves have been found in Rohingya, with bodies either drowned or physically brutalized.

Veteran Asia observer Walden Bello wrote that "violent labor trafficking and ethnic cleansing [form] the dark underbelly of Southeast Asia's 'tiger economies.'"

In addition, migrants face racist immigration policies. Of late, Australia's anti-immigrant Prime Minister Tony Abbott has been accused by the press of giving bribes to smugglers to not land refugees. If true, as seems likely, Australia is guilty of ignoring the 1951



(Left) Buddhist monks protest UN resolution to grant full citizenship rights to Rohingya.

Convention on the Status of Refugees, which Australia signed.

There are 1.1 million Rohingya living in Myanmar, and they are 30% of the Rakhine state inhabitants. Myanmar has eight large ethnic groups; 90% are Buddhists, only 5% are Muslim, the rest Christian and Hindu.

After Burmese independence in 1948, the post-colonial government included many minorities, including Rohingya. However, a 1982 law passed by the military dictatorship, which had been in power since 1962, rendered the Rohingya "stateless." Yet, the Rohingya have been in Myanmar for centuries!

Temporary cards allowed some Rohingya limited voting rights in 2008 and 2010. In 2010, Rohingya voting was conditioned on their voting for the military, with the promise of citizenship. Rohingya voting rights were stripped away again last February in the wake of the 2012 events.

The military refuses to use the term "Rohingya," preferring to portray them as job-stealing migrants from Bangladesh, thus dividing workers with racism. Rohingya describe round-ups of Muslim youth to perform forced labor

for the Army.

Although some monks have spoken out against racism, reactionary monks spew filth. Said racist leader Ashin Wirathu, a Buddhist monk, "Muslims are like African carp. They breed quickly and they are very violent and they eat their own kind ... the national religion needs to be protected." Wirsthu likened Muslims to "mad dogs" and "cannibals."

These fascist forces organized the "969 campaign," which seeks to ban inter-faith marriages and urges Buddhists not to do business with Muslims.

Human rights advocate Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Prize winner who spent over 20 years under house arrest—and the daughter of Aung San, a founder of the defunct Burmese Communist Party—surprised some by not calling for an end to anti-Rohingya racism. She said that she "didn't know" if they could be citizens and meekly urged the military to handle the situation "carefully."

Finally, after much criticism, her National League for Democracy (NLD) issued a statement calling for citizenship rights, but it was not issued in her name, a ploy to hold on to racist votes.

Suu Kyi has declared herself an NLD candidate for president this fall. The NLD is a capitalist party, and she would be expected to win. But it is disqualified because her deceased husband was British.

Her NLD is expected to do well in parliamentary races—if they happen.

In September 2012, after a wave of racist riots had reached its peak, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was present at a hypocritical signing ceremony which lifted U.S. sanctions on the dictatorship. Her distinguished guest? President Thein Sein, dictator of Myanmar.

Since Obama's and Clinton's photo-ops in Myanmar, the dictatorship received about \$375 million in (supposedly) non-military U.S. aid through fiscal 2014. The domestic aid will help the military elite afford its outsized military budget. Inequality, after all, requires repression. About 26% of the country lives in poverty; 32% of children under five suffer malnutrition, 53% in the Rakhine state.

Obama finally called for an end to discrimination in Myanmar, but the real goal of imperialism goes beyond paying lip service to human rights—the U.S. is looking toward outflanking China. Chinese interests, along with Japanese funds, are building a \$2.5 billion petroleum line from riot-torn Rakhine to Yunnan, China. Rakhine land is also being grabbed to create a "free trade" zone to operate on starvation wages.

Capitalism in Myanmar has got to go. A genuine revolutionary party would seek to unite and defend all ethnic peoples against racist violence and ultimately overthrow capitalism, the real source of poverty and racism! ■

## ... Capitalism

(continued from page 6)

salmon; negative effects on tourism and community values.

"Dissent by third lawyer-judge criticized the decision as challenging the right of government to implement environmental safeguards reflecting community concerns. Further it would have a 'chilling effect on future environmental policies as governments face possible punishing financial awards.' He noted, the ruling was a 'significant intrusion into domestic jurisdiction,' giving more power to NAFTA than the Canadian legal system."

Nordquist properly concludes, "Obama's TPPA elevates corporations from personhood to nationhood." In truth, it's always been that way.

### Labor bureaucrats put aside token opposition

A sideshow to the carefully orchestrated ruling-class squabble over TPPA was the subservient role of the AFL-CIO and its president, Richard Trumka. A June 14, 2015, front-page *New York Times* headline read, "Labor's Might Seen in Failure of Trade Deal." *The Times* credited labor's powerful lobbying of "progressive Democrats" for the initial congressional defeat of Fast Track approval. *Business Day* chimed in to tout labor's power with the headline, "Labor's Might Seen in Failure of Trade Deal as Unions Allied to Thwart It." Of course, only the naïve believed that TPPA would be derailed by the tragically impotent AFL-CIO.

Since March, AFL-CIO lobbyists bragged that union members had held 650 events opposing the TPPA; 160,000 phone calls were made to members of Congress, along with some 20,000 letters sent. The federation also produced digital ads, which have received more than 30 million views, aimed at several dozen members of Congress.

"We are very grateful for all the activists, families, community leaders and elected officials who worked so tirelessly for transparency and worker rights in international trade deals," said Richard Trumka. "This was truly democracy in action." But the "democracy" and praise for "labor's power" ended abruptly a week later.

Originally, Trumka and Co., along with an extremely

broad range of environmental and social justice organizations, had pledged total opposition to the TPPA, even if TAA provisions were included. But when the chips were down, a week later Trumka and his fast track opposition team reversed course and agreed to sign onto Obama's agenda—providing *only* that a TAA provision for some labor compensation for lost jobs was included, one way or another.

With barely a shrug, Trumka's team of hardened class-collaborationist bureaucrats, tied to the Democrats hand and foot, jumped ship, leaving its former environmental (anti-climate crisis/global warming) and social justice allies in the lurch and once again identifying labor's future "fortunes" with the welfare of the U.S. capitalist state and its plundering corporate institutions.

Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, a longtime ferocious TPPA and NAFTA advocate, happily engaged in the week-long game of posing as "labor's friend," as did virtually all "progressive Democrats." As with the Democrats' granting Trumka two minutes speaking time at the last Democratic Party national convention, at a time when virtually no one was present in the convention hall, the Democrats organized to promote "labor's cause" for a few days before cutting yet another secret deal behind their backs.

The TPPA is the modern-day expression of the needs

of a world capitalism in deep crisis. The ruling rich have no solutions other than at the expense of their corporate competitors and the broad working class of every nation.

Today's labor movement stands at a low ebb, with its bureaucratic mis-leaders incapable of offering even the most minimal of challenges to capitalist austerity. That the AFL-CIO tops focused on organizing member phone calls and letter writing to its claimed Democratic Party allies, as opposed to exercising its class power at the point of production, is a testament to its bankruptcy.

A new and fighting labor leadership that operates in the class-struggle instead of class-collaborationist mode, and organizes in the political arena independently of all capitalist parties, is an absolute necessity.

Today, the gap is glaring between the pent-up anger and hatred of working people toward the deepening capitalist-imposed austerity and the development of a conscious fightback. But in time, the insults to labor's dignity and quality of life will fuel unprecedented struggles that will challenge capitalist rule in all its forms.

The precondition for the success of these struggles will depend on revolutionaries' sinking deep roots in the coming struggles and building a mass working-class socialist party capable of ending capitalist's inherent horrors once and for all. ■

## ... Marriage

(continued from page 4)

Transgender activists have become more visible and are raising their own demands. One example has been Jennifer Gutierrez, the brave trans Latina who interrupted the meeting of predominately white male Democratic Party partisans who were attending a meeting with President Obama. She made her point that transgender immigrants of color are routinely detained in dangerous conditions, brutalized, and sent back to their countries of origin without regard for their safety.

Ben Power, the executive director and curator of Northampton's Sexual Minorities Archive, addressed the marriage form he would like to have, "For myself, what would be ideal is if my marriage form said 'Partner' and 'Partner' where we fill in our names and that I could check a box for my gender that said 'Transgender Man.'"

With the Supreme Court Marriage Equality victory behind us, the LGBT community should move forward with a national strategy.

The last LGBT march on Washington was in 2009, and one of the most memorable speakers was a young gay Black man from Mississippi who said simply, "As long as we use a state-by-state strategy, there will always be holes in the map of equality." ■



(Left) July 1 protest outside the Dominican consulate in Times Square, New York City.

# Dominican government expels 'stateless' Haitians

By MARTY GOODMAN

In a clear attempt at ethnic cleansing, hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent have been rendered stateless under Dominican law. A series of racist court rulings on immigration in 2004, 2010, and 2013 paved the way for a dragnet based on race that might result in mass expulsions.

A 2013 Constitutional Court ruling (TC 0168-13), commonly referred to as "la sentencia," declares that those who migrated to the DR—that is, mostly Haitians—going all the way back to 1929, are deemed "in transit," making their Dominican-born children "illegal migrants" under the law. The government has begun a "regularization program," but only a fraction of the affected persons have applied, and still fewer have managed to obtain the documents.

The rulings are a violation of Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning the right to nationhood.

## THE 1937 MASSACRE

It's known as "anti-Haitianismo," meaning a hostility to all that is Black in the Dominican Republic. It was developed by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, a U.S.-trained military officer under a U.S. occupation (1916-1924). Anti-Haitianismo remains the *de facto* state ideology.

Trujillo, an admirer of Adolph Hitler, sought to stop the "Ethiopianization" of the mostly mulatto population, despite the fact that most Dominicans would be considered Black in the U.S. and the Haitian lineage of Trujillo's own parents.

In October 1937, Trujillo told the congregation at his church, "I found that Dominicans would be happier if we got rid of Haitians. I will fix that. Yesterday, 300 Haitians were killed ... this must continue." Throughout that night, 12,000 to 25,000 Haitians were hacked to death with machetes and knives by Dominican soldiers and farmers under their command near the aptly named Massacre River. Over a five-day period, up to 40,000 were killed.

An agreement of \$750,000 indemnity was brokered by the U.S., Cuban, and Mexican governments. Trujillo's contribution was reduced to \$500,000 and delivered to Haitian authorities in Port-au-Prince. The Trujillo agent dispersed \$25,000 in tens and twenties to politicians as goodwill. It is not known how much, if anything, went to the families of murdered Haitians. For some 30,000 victims, that would have amounted to \$16.60 per family—if it had ever been received. In 1939, Trujillo established the "Trujillo Peace Prize." ■

It is estimated that there are approximately 500,000 Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic. Many thousands of possible deportees have never been to Haiti, speak only Spanish—not the native Kreyol—and don't know anyone there. Those to be expelled to neighboring Haiti will cross into the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, still reeling from the January 2010 earthquake, which killed some 200,000 Haitians and left 1.5 million homeless.

Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origin often cannot obtain the necessary documents, such as birth certificates (particularly in rural areas) and are often simply denied them by racist officials. The lack of proof of citizenship has been used to deprive Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origin of the right to vote, obtain an education, get married, declare children, or seek medical care. Thousands of Union of Cane Workers members, who are mostly Haitian, are protesting to receive pensions, despite years doing back-breaking work and living in shantytown squalor.

Since the June 17 deadline to obtain documents has passed, officials vow to enforce expulsion rulings. While Dominican authorities deny that there will be mass deportations, it has been speculated that repatriations may begin after Aug. 1 at the end of a 45-day grace period for applicants. Reportedly, thousands have already crossed into Haiti "voluntarily" to avoid police or racist violence, but no firm numbers exist.

The decisions have been accompanied by an increase in racist violence. In February, a Haitian shoeshine worker, Henry Claude Jean, 35, (nicknamed "Tulile"), was hung, KKK style, in a public park in Santiago, the nation's second most populous city. No one has been prosecuted. Ongoing mob attacks on dark-skinned individuals living in the DR have been captured on video. Nighttime police raids and vigilante justice have terrified many, who are afraid to go outside.

A Ms. Mesilus told *The New York Times* that she was picked up and deported to Haiti even though she had begun the registration process: "I was thrown back here because I was not carrying my document to prove I was already trying to register. They didn't even give me the chance to explain what was happening."

The deportations and violence have sparked mass protests by thousands in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and internationally, including several demonstrations in New York, Miami, Washington, DC, San Francisco, Montreal, Philadelphia, and Boston. New York's "Black Lives Matter in the Dominican Republic" and "We Are All Dominicans" (both on Facebook) have been organizing protests, as well as other groups and individuals.

At a July 1 protest at the Dominican Consulate in Times Square, Dominican activist Angela Perez said, "Even though they are not Dominican citizens, they were born in Dominican territory (and) they are being discriminated against because of their descent." Dominican activist Emanuel Pardiña led the mostly

young Dominican crowd in chanting, "Dominican government, shame on you! You uphold racist rule!" and "From Charleston to the DR, Black lives matter!"

## U.S. racism toward Haitians

Although the Obama administration mildly chided Dominican expulsion policies, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden last year praised the racist decisions as a "bold step" and "a path to citizenship." In this case, the U.S. certainly practiced what it preaches. Racist deportations from the U.S. totaled over 2 million during the Obama administration, more than under any other president.

The racist Dominican ruling class can draw inspiration from U.S. immigration policy toward Haitians. During the 1980s, Haitian refugees fleeing the U.S.-backed Jean-Claude Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti were regularly "interdicted" (stopped) in international waters—a violation of international asylum law—and returned on U.S. ships into the clutches of a brutal dictatorship. If they reached South Florida, many were sent to the Krome detention center outside Miami for up to two years before being released or returned to Haiti. Less than 1% received political asylum in the U.S.

In stark contrast, the mostly white, anti-Castro exiles and Eastern Bloc Europeans were given blanket amnesty and quickly released into the community. Democratic President Bill Clinton, who denounced Republican policy toward Haitians as racist in campaign speeches, quickly resumed the interdiction policies as president—but on a grander scale!

## Imperialism and the Dominican Republic

"The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally," said U.S. President William Taft in 1912.

The Dominican Republic is a staunch anti-communist U.S. ally and pursues an economic austerity model developed by the U.S.-dominated World Bank. U.S. corporations dominate in trades where super-exploited Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent work. Migrant labor to the DR was initially spurred by Haitian farmers displaced by U.S. corporations during the first U.S. Marine occupation (1915-1934).

Sectors employing mainly Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origin today include the growing tourism industry, construction, and sugar plantations—although less in sugar than in the past. Human rights organizations have condemned sugar plantations, known as bateyes, as "modern-day slavery."

For decades, corrupt officials on both sides of the Haiti/DR border made crooked deals for cheap labor to cut cane, mostly at U.S.-owned sugar plantations like former giant Gulf + Western, which in the 1980s controlled 40% of DR sugar production. Declining sugar prices and downturns in the economy were used by the ruling class to launch racist scapegoating for the mass expulsion of Haitian migrants, such as in 1991 and 1999.

U.S. imperialism militarily occupied the DR between 1916-1924 under Democratic President Woodrow Wilson, seizing control of its banks and grooming Dominican military officers such as dictators Rafael Trujillo his right-hand man, Joaquin Balaguer. The U.S. invaded the DR again in 1965 to crush a nationalist rebellion. Later, Dominican territory was used as a staging area for CIA-backed Haitian paramilitary forces that crossed into Haiti and overthrew democratically elected governments in 1991 and 2004, leading to bloody massacres.

Today, the DR receives U.S. military aid and equipment—\$8.6 million worth in 2012. The corrupt Dominican army plays a central role in deportations. It has mobilized 200 trucks and set up so-called processing centers on the border with Haiti.

On the other side of the border, billions in international private and governmental recovery aid to post-earthquake Haiti have been scandalously unused or squandered, amidst a feeding frenzy of private charities and Washington beltway corporations. Joblessness remains rampant, about 50% in the urban centers. Little has been organized to receive immigrants in Haiti by the corrupt U.S.-installed Haitian President Michel Martelly. The tense, unstable situation may in turn be used to reinforce the despised U.S./UN military occupation, particularly given upcoming national elections in Haiti.

The Dominican Republic reflects a capitalist world in crisis, spewing out its own proto-fascist, racist ideology. What is desperately needed (and shamefully missing) in the DR is a united workers' struggle, one that is first and foremost anti-racist and willing to mobilize against all forms of attacks on Haitian workers and Dominicans of Haitian origin. The old slogan of the "Communist Manifesto," "Workers of the world unite!" is as apt a battle cry as ever! ■

# FILM: *Mad Max Fury Road*

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

I liked “Mad Max Fury Road” much more than I thought I would. Critics seemed to focus on only the action, of which there was scads—relentless, spectacular, and loud. Cirque du Soleil gone gritty: Men clinging to the tops of swaying poles attached to souped-up speeding cars while blasting with automatic weapons.

However, throughout, messages are evident concerning the exploitation of women and children and climate change. There’s no water in this world of the near future except for that which is controlled by the ruling entity—a warlord—white-haired, masked Immortan Joe (played with menacing evil by Hugh Keays-Byrne, who relishes every move).

Joe runs the Citadel and has enslaved the people. He demands worship. Followers of his ideology believe that when they die for him, they will be martyrs.

One of his minions, Nux, played by Nicholas Hoult, is selected as a favorite by being “chromed,” i.e., mouth sprayed with a silver liquid or powder. He later defects and signs on with Max (Tom Ford) and Imperator Furiosa (a kick-ass Charlize Theron).

Furiosa’s green-blue eyes appear capable of penetrating an armored truck. She wears a prosthetic left arm and hand; pants, boots, tank top, and hair cropped to her skull. Her war paint? Axle grease smeared across her forehead. Beautiful!

The Citadel consists of mountainous red rock, on top of which plant life grows, the only green for hundreds

of miles. Max (the same character from the three original films) is seen in an opening shot eating a two-headed lizard he’d stomped on. After being captured for trespassing, Max is used as a blood bank for Nux.

There’s little if any exposition in this film, yet it is cohesive and linear, and satisfies many levels of expectations both visceral and intellectual and comes to a believable conclusion. One need not see the preceding Mad Max films; *Fury Road* stands on its own.

We learn that Imperator Furiosa is rescuing Joe’s breeder slaves, flimsily-dressed women from Joe’s harem (one of whom is pregnant) in the body of an empty oil tanker, which she’s hooked up to her heavily armored vehicle. Her destination is a home she hasn’t seen for over a decade, which she recalls as being green, with waterfalls.

There’s an early scene of thousands of ragged, filthy, desiccated men, women, and children swarming at the foot of a cliff, holding up containers. Joe appears, high above; he shouts an order to open the sluices. His slaves (hairless and startlingly white men and children) turn massive wooden gear wheels by literally walking on the circumference. The people trample one another to catch water as it gushes from huge pipes in the cliff face, nearly sweeping them away. Suddenly, the water stops. People go mad.

Aging and dying, Joe wears a suit of armor made of Plexiglas you can see through but don’t want to—as Lenny Bruce once observed about nylon dresses—and a metal-framed grotesque half-mask over the lower part of his face. A bellows is attached to the back of the armor, pumping air, so he can breathe.

Cinematographer John Seale shot some gorgeous scenes to relieve the gruesomeness and horror of others, as well as some that are eerily, hauntingly, beautiful: e.g., when Furiosa’s rig approaches a muddy



swamp, shadowy, ragged, cloaked figures appear on stilts, slowly crossing the expanse.

As she nears her goal, dirt-bikers—older women (surprise!), the Vuvalinis—leap down immense sand dunes and stop her (the film was made in the Namibian desert in Africa). They turn out to be from Furiosa’s former home and remember her as a child.

There’s bad news, though—Furiosa had been traveling in the wrong direction. The dash back the way they came is even more harrowing, with Joe and his Chrome buddies once more on their tail. Joe’s sex slaves evolve into fighters as well. Furiosa, near death and having lost her prosthetic arm and hand, but not her grit, prevails, with Max’s help. The folded length of plastic tubing on his shoulder came in handy after all.

In a blockbuster summer movie season, rife with costumed, comic-book, male superheroes, Imperator Furiosa is a woman warrior not unlike Katniss Everdeen in “*The Hunger Games*” or Shailene Woodley in “*Divergent*.” There are no heroes here, only liberators. “*Mad Max Fury Road*” is, as *The New Yorker’s* A. O. Scott wrote, “about revolution.” ■

## Jill Stein calls for a ‘Green New Deal’

By JOE AUCIELLO

As Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign gains increasing public support and respectful media attention, physician and Green Party activist Dr. Jill Stein has announced her own candidacy for president. Speaking on “*Democracy Now*” on June 26, Stein, the Green Party candidate in 2012, vowed to run on a “Power to the People” platform that would sharply oppose the policies of the leading Democratic and Republican contenders.

As in the past presidential election, Stein is proposing a “Green New Deal,” a comprehensive program of social and political reform. Her platform emphasizes a national shift in resources from fossil fuels to renewable energy by 2030 and a jobs-creation program to make such change possible. Stein favors cancelling student college debts today and providing free college education tomorrow. The Green Party candidate also supports the \$15 minimum wage and single-payer health care.

Stein’s reference to a “Green New Deal,” is an obvious allusion to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Democratic Party “New Deal,” which was aimed at saving capitalism in the face of the emerging labor-based mass struggles of the 1930s. In truth, past Green Party presidential campaigns centered on offering reforms of capitalism on the one hand while not acting as “spoilers” for the Democrats’ chances in contests where the outcome was expect-

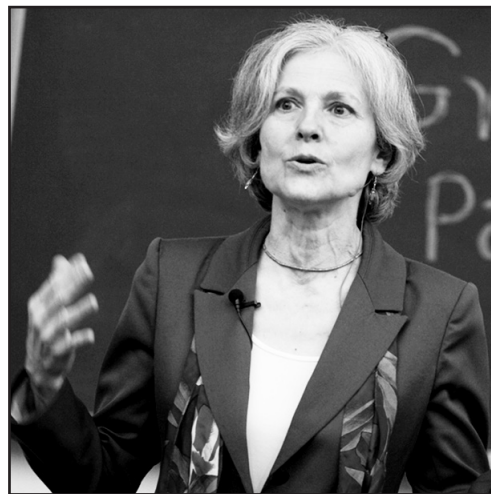
ed to be close. That is, “Vote Green!” only in states where it won’t usher in a Republican.

Stein concedes that her program shares “many similarities” with the campaign of Sanders, the “leftist” candidate in the Democratic Party primaries, though there are differences in regard to foreign relations. Stein forthrightly denounces the prime minister of Israel as “a war criminal” and, unlike Sanders, would not sell weapons to the Israeli regime. Such distinctions aside, however, the overall likeness to the Sanders program is very much to the point.

The Green Party strategy anticipates that after the power of Wall Street ensures a Hillary Clinton victory in the primaries, Bernie Sanders will shepherd his flock into the Clinton campaign. Disappointed followers of Sanders, so this logic goes, will then become the enthusiastic supporters of Jill Stein. Further, her campaign would hope to turn these sympathizers into a new generation of Green Party recruits—that is, a grouping still in search of an electoral, as opposed to class-struggle, formula to attract voters to the project of reforming capitalism.

In the parched political desert that is America’s electoral landscape, the Stein campaign would appear to present a small but refreshing oasis. Instead, it is a mirage!

This can be seen in Stein’s statement on



“*Democracy Now*” that her platform is “focused on reforming the financial system—not only breaking up the big banks but actually establishing public banks” as well as “nationalizing the Fed” (the Federal Reserve System). To speak of reform of a financial system based on the rule of the corporate capitalist elite (the “one percent”), rather than abolishing it, tells us that her program, no matter how “radical” it might sound, amounts to acceptance of the system in its fundamentals.

The Greens proudly state that their campaign does not accept corporate funding, yet their campaign does accept the rule of corporate power. Stein’s campaign platform differs little from that of the “successful” reformist Green Parties around the world that regularly partici-

pate in coalition capitalist governments and support their anti-labor policies.

Indeed, the Green Party in the U.S. is not much more than an electoral association of reformers with no roots in working-class organizations or mass social struggles. The Greens have no perspectives of rebuilding today’s trade unions into fighting working class-based institutions that operate in the economic and political arena independently of and against the twin parties of U.S. capitalism.

“Their government is not our government!” Stein exclaims. But if this idea is more than an applause line, a mere rhetorical flourish, then it means not only a change in party—a Green Party victory in place of a Democrat or Republican Party victory—it means building the kind of organizations capable of leading a challenge for power.

Yes, their government is not our government because it is a tool for the capitalist class to ensure its wealth and privilege, to guarantee, as far as possible, the continued existence of their rule and our exploitation.

The way forward goes far beyond the Green Party’s platform of “New Deal” reformism. It begins with a class break from all capitalist and pro-capitalist parties, the Green Party included. The road ahead will likely include the formation of a Labor Party, based on fighting unions in alliance with all the oppressed. Obtaining a real and lasting victory for working people in the United States will also require the construction of a mass revolutionary socialist party aimed at the abolition of capitalism. ■

## ... Sanders

(continued from page 12)

National Antiwar Coalition conference would eagerly welcome new supporters.

Whether it is 15 Now, Black Lives Matter, local campaigns against nuclear power plants, struggles for environmental issues, women’s rights, and more, important causes need the time, energy, and money that is being poured into the Sanders for President Campaign.

The biggest flaw with Bernie Sanders is not his failure to condemn capitalism as a system and call for its overturn. It may even be asking too much to expect Sanders to fight for the structural reform of capitalism, to demand the nationalization of basic industries,

as the British Labor Party did after World War II, in a platform that won a national election. The Sanders team will say the times are not right for such bold measures, that it is enough if Bernie only wants to soften some of the system’s worst excesses.

But the time has come—in fact, the time is long overdue—to show a new generation of activists just what the Democratic Party is and why it is necessary to move past it. Bernie Sanders fails to take that decisive step. His campaign by its very nature misleads activists by asserting that the Democratic Party is a fit instrument for the kind of social change that is needed to transform America.

A socialist who truly merits the term “independent” once said, “Capitalism rules and exploits the working people through its control of the government. ... And capitalism controls the government through the medium of its class political parties. ... *The unconditional*

*break away from capitalist politics and capitalist parties is the first act of socialist consciousness, and the first test of socialist seriousness and sincerity*” (James P. Cannon, “Speeches for Socialism,” pp. 339-340, emphasis added).

Sanders has been compared to a “sheep-dog” who herds people into the Democratic Party. A better analogy might be drawn from the world of sports. In the preparation for a championship bout, boxers hire sparring partners to help them train and get into shape for the real match. That opponent is there to fight but not fight too much. Though putting on a lively show before losing, the sparring partner should not cause the real boxer any serious injury, much less draw blood.

This type of dynamic is underway now in the Democratic Party primaries. Bernie Sanders is primarily a sparring partner for Hillary Clinton. ■

## Is Bernie Sanders a real voice of dissent?

By JOE AUCIELLO

*"... the oppositional criticism is nothing more than a safety valve for mass dissatisfaction, a condition of the stability of the social structure." — Leon Trotsky in his preface to "The History of the Russian Revolution."*

In early June, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton told a conference organized by Service Employees International Union members that she backed the \$15-an-hour national minimum wage campaign. She praised the union activists and supporters "for marching in the streets to get a living wage" and added, "I want to be your champion. I want to fight with you every day."

She didn't really mean it, of course. Within 24 hours her campaign issued a clarification explaining that in general Clinton favors higher wages for low-income workers, but she does not specifically endorse the demand for a \$15 hourly minimum. So, union members and activists heard their hoped-for message; big business and Democratic Party officials heard the more honest message.

Clinton's cautious centrism permits her only a flirtation with leftist causes, thereby yielding the left-of-center space to another candidate. Thus, the stage is set for the entrance of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, whose campaign website boldly asks: "Ready to Start a Political Revolution?"

Sanders certainly intends to become the voice of "oppositional criticism" in the 2016 election. Thus far, the efforts of this sometime "socialist," the independent in the Senate who typically votes with the Democrats, have been more successful than those of former Democratic governors Martin O'Malley of Maryland and Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island.

Sanders has been drawing increasingly large crowds in the primary states for his campaign events, and in those states his poll levels are sharply rising. Clearly, Sanders is saying something *different*—which energizes Democratic and independent voters. The promise of radical change resonates with many whose lives have seen little benefit during the tepid years of the Obama administration.

At this stage in the primaries, the Sanders platform gives a public hearing to many progressive ideas. Most notably, the Sanders campaign directs a spotlight on the obscene levels of income inequality in America. Sanders speaks out for a national, single-payer health care system and pledges to pursue efforts to create sustainable energy to reduce global warming.

He would remove tuition fees from state colleges and universities. He supports the \$15 minimum wage, argues for breaking up the mega-banks, and promotes a jobs package that would put people to work by rebuilding the highways and bridges that are deteriorating throughout America. These are reforms that, if enacted, would benefit the lives of millions. No wonder Sanders' poll numbers have risen dramatically.

Still, Bernie Sanders is hardly an unknown. Given his "socialist-light" political history and voting record, which is virtually indistinguishable from that of a typical liberal Democrat and includes support to funding Israel and the war in Afghanistan, it is fair to ask: Is Sanders really the voice of dissent? Is he really the figure who can galvanize the poor, the working class, women, racial minorities, and youth to lead the political fightback that is so sorely needed?

Though audiences at rallies may be stirred by soaring speeches, high-flown words accomplish little.



**The Sanders campaign misleads by asserting that the Democratic Party is a fit instrument to obtain social change.**

What's more, a geyser of popular rhetoric tends to erupt every four years around election time.

A socialist writer has noted that while the Democrats proclaim themselves "as champions of the poor, their 'soak the rich' rhetoric is largely a misrepresentation. They and their Republican counterparts use such rhetoric only to appeal to voters. Both parties, over the last decade in particular, have rushed to find tax breaks for the rich and lower the real income of working people. Today even two-income families are having a difficult time paying for basic necessities."

This observation was made 25 years ago. The article, written by Hayden Perry, was entitled: "Congress approves new budget: Higher taxes and fewer services," which certainly has a present-day ring to it. Though it was published in the November 1990 issue of *Socialist Action*, it could be reprinted today with little change.

Bernie Sanders is this year's model of the token "leftist" who will make oppositional criticism as a safety valve for mass dissatisfaction. His commitment to his causes appears real enough, but it goes no further than the margins of the Democratic Party. Those margins cannot and have never sustained a popular movement that would give real meaning to democracy.

Some 15 years ago, Ralph Nader launched his bid as the Green Party candidate for the president of the United States. Although *Socialist Action* gave no support to the Green Party's electoral campaigns, which only proposed reforms to capitalism, Nader at least argued with a boldness and insight thoroughly lacking in Bernie Sanders today. In his 2000 announcement speech, Nader said that the foundation of his efforts would be "to focus on active citizenship, to create fresh political movements that will displace

the control of the Democratic and Republican parties, two apparently distinct political entities that feed at the same corporate trough. They are in fact simply the two heads of one political duopoly, the DemRep Party."

How did Bernie Sanders, the socialist who asks if we are ready for revolution, respond to the Nader campaign? In his political memoir, Nader explains: "Bernie had told me that while he sympathized and agreed with our pro-democracy agenda, he could not come out officially for us. The reason was that his modus vivendi with the House Democrats would be ruptured and he would lose much of his influence, including a possible subcommittee chair" ("Crashing the Party," pp. 125-126). Nader was discreet enough not to inquire about the actual results of Sanders' supposed influence.

Little has changed. The fix is still in. The Democratic National Committee has essentially offered Sanders a simple deal in words approximately like these: "We'll let you speak out and give you a place in the six Democratic primary debates if you affirm your place as a Democrat. You get to say whatever you want in the state primaries as long as you support whoever we want in the national election."

It is not a very good deal, but it is the only one on offer, and though Sanders will haggle, pushing for more debates, he will accept what he is given. It's what Bernie does. In fact, Sanders has built a career as the fighting socialist who takes a dive for the Democrats.

Sanders does not lead and does not intend to. He follows. His vision of the future is restricted to what has been made popular in the recent past. The ideas Sanders offers, the program of his campaign, go no further than the demands raised by the significant social struggles of the last several years: the Occupy movement and the environmental movement, especially.

The lesson for activists working for Sanders is quite clear: Do better work and be more effective by building social protest movements at the grassroots and national levels. The opportunities are many and varied. The Ferguson National Response Network is a good source of information for protest actions taking place in cities all across the United States. The approximately 100 organizations that attended the United

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