

Which way forward for the climate movement?



By CHRISTINE MARIE

At the Paris climate talks in December 2015, the world's governments—dominated by those who contribute most egregiously to global warming—acknowledged the need to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels but refused to commit in a meaningful way to the necessary reductions in the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Major U.S. climate action groups laid the groundwork carefully in the period leading up to the talks, working hard to prepare the ranks of the movement for the near-inevitable failure to mandate the drastic and immediate changes in energy production and conservation that are necessary to stave off catastrophic environmental degradation.

Back on Sept. 26, the national group 350.org, for example, launched a campaign perspective called the "Road Through Paris" at a major Brooklyn Academy of Music event that presented the Paris talks as just a stop on the journey toward a major spring escalation of climate movement activity. During this live-streamed event, Naomi Klein and Bill McKibben pro-

jected the kind of movement that would be necessary to force governments and corporations to keep fossil fuels in the ground and maintain human solidarity in the face of the climate disasters that are already unfolding.

Such a movement, it was emphasized, needed to see the fight for a livable climate, and the fight for economic and racial equality, as so deeply intertwined that in some sense, the climate movement would become a "movement of movements." The challenge before us, they argued, was so immense and unprecedented that the only realistic perspective for change lay in the creation of a movement so broad and powerful that the slogan that rang through the canyons of New York at the September 2014 People's Climate March—"To Change Everything It Takes Everyone"—would become an accurate prescription for our work.

It takes everyone

Two months out from the Paris talks, and despite all the preparation to avoid to a slump, the U.S. movement is lacking dates for the kind of national united action that could build on past movement successes

(Above) Close to 40,000 protested on Feb. 17, 2013, in Washington, DC, against fracking and the Keystone XL pipeline.

like the Peoples Climate March, which put nearly half a million people into the streets. In that effort, and subsequent regional actions like the Toronto "Jobs, Justice, Climate" march of June 2015, organizers demonstrated that unprecedented numbers of people, including front-line communities, unionists, immigrant workers, and mainstream faith communities were ready to engage in protest.

These actions demonstrated that armed with the perspective that it "takes everyone," the day when the movement in the United States could literally put a million people in the streets to demand an end to the predatory and life-threatening fossil fuel economy is at hand.

Such a movement, necessarily built from the bottom up by the assembling of local, regional, and national coalitions around demands hammered out in meet-

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Planned Parenthood cleared of charges from fake video



By ANN MONTAGUE

Jan. 22 marked the 43rd anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision, which ruled that abortion is a fundamental right under the U.S. Constitution. Rallies in cities around the country reflected the fact that the right to abortion continues to be under attack through state restrictions, continual anti-abortion rhetoric, and specific attacks on Planned Parenthood.

This past year, those attacks included not only continual harassment of Planned Parenthood clinics but a gunman entering the clinic in Colorado

Springs, Col., and killing three and wounding nine people. In addition, in July, an anti-abortion organization, Center for Medical Progress (CMP), made allegations that a Planned Parenthood clinic in Houston had attempted to illegally profit from selling fetal tissue. This resulted in cries from politicians to defund Planned Parenthood.

In a surprising turn of events, three days after the nationwide rallies to support *Roe v. Wade*, a grand jury in Harris County, Texas, cleared the Houston Planned Parenthood clinic of all the charges. Moreover, it indicted the top leaders of the CMP organization who had prompted the investigation in the

first place.

CMP founder David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt were both charged with using fake driver's licenses, and Daleiden was charged with violating the Texas law prohibiting the purchase and sale of human organs, the same law that he accused Planned Parenthood of breaking. He had sent an e-mail to Planned Parenthood seeking to buy fetal tissue.

Planned Parenthood and their Houston lawyer Josh Schaffer used an unconventional strategy. Instead of taking on a defensive posture, they cooperated fully with the investigators. They volunteered documents, encouraged prosecutors to interview employees, and gave them free rein of their facility.

Texas officials had demanded a criminal investigation after the anti-abortion activists had posted videos on line that they claimed showed clinic employees discussing the sale of aborted fetal tissue. Planned Parenthood initiated an outside study, which resulted in discovering the videos were deceptively edited.

The Planned Parenthood statement about the indictments was clear: "These anti-abortion extremists spent three years creating a fake company, creating fake identities, lying, and breaking the law, and when they couldn't find any improper or illegal activity, they made it up."

This is an important victory on the long road to protecting a woman's right to abortion. The next struggle involves the U.S. Supreme Court.

In June the U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to make a decision on *Health v. Cole*, which according to the Center For Reproductive Rights is designed to shut down more than 75% of all women's health clinics that provide abortion services in the state of Texas. *Roe v. Wade* was won because feminists demanded an end to back-alley abortions and the right to safe and legal abortion. We will need a strong, visible movement to fight yet another attempt at chipping away at that right. ■

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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Flint: A Tale of two Cities

By BRUCE LESNICK

It [is] too much the way of [mainstream politicians] to talk of this terrible [crisis] as if it were the only harvest ever known under the skies that had not been sown—as if nothing had ever been done, or omitted to be done, that had led to it—as if observers of the wretched millions ... and of the misused and perverted resources that should have made them prosperous, had not seen it inevitably coming, years before and had not in plain words recorded what they saw.

— Charles Dickens, “A Tale of Two Cities”

Working people in Flint, Mich., are suffering mightily from the poisoning of the city’s water supply that resulted from callous decisions by government officials—from the unelected emergency city manager, on up to the governor and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. All of these officials acted in the name of austerity and cutting costs. But as is so often the case, the tragedy in Flint is not merely the result of individual bad actors but flows from an economic system that pits the wealthy few at the top against the vast majority who work for a living.

Despite the fact that global wealth and U.S. labor productivity per capita have both been increasing exponentially for more than a generation, the small unelected handful of financiers and industrialists that own and control our economic and political systems—the so-called one percent—have been promoting the narrative that times are hard and we must all tighten our belts. By “all” they mean everyone *except* those “indispensable” titans of capital who are currently calling the shots.

But in reality, the wealth created for *each man, woman and child* in the U.S. (as measured by GDP per capita) increased from \$13,933 in 1981 to \$54,629 in 2014 (in constant 2015 dollars.) That’s an increase of 292 percent! For Tunisia, the increase in the same period was 244 percent; for Greece it was 300 percent. Similar gains can be cited for other countries (source: World Bank). Collectively, the planet is awash in wealth.

Nevertheless, the false narrative of scarcity has been used to justify austerity in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, France, elsewhere across Europe, and all throughout the U.S. And now we have Flint.

Between 2006 and 2013, overall revenue to the state of Michigan decreased by 25%. Since 2006,



(Above) Protesting Flint residents display a jar of brown-colored tap water.

Democratic and Republican officials have appropriated \$6.2 billion in local sales tax and other revenue to cover state budget shortfalls. This has been done despite a law requiring those funds to be shared with municipalities. The result was predictable: city after city across the state—from Pontiac, to Lansing, to Detroit and Flint—has had to cope with calamitous budget deficits.

What caused the decline in revenue? In part, it was due to corporate tax giveaways approved by the previous Democratic governor. But the biggest factor in the budget squeeze has been the decline of the auto industry. From a peak of 1.5 million United Auto Workers union members in Detroit in 1978, the number crashed to 400,000 in 2013 as corporate execs moved production south or overseas in search of cheaper, nonunion labor.

Then there was the auto industry bailout. In 2009, the federal government loaned \$29.4 billion to GM and Chrysler on the condition that the UAW agreed to allow delays in payments to the union health fund for retirees, reduce payments to laid-off workers and deepen the two-tier wage program enabling new hires to be paid less for the same work. Later, GM would receive another \$36 billion as it entered bankruptcy. At its peak in 2003, the U.S. auto industry

employed 1.1 million workers. By 2006, 43% of those jobs had been eliminated.

Flint, with long ties to the auto industry, has felt the squeeze. Of the 80,000 Flint autoworkers in the 1970s, only 5000 remain.

A Michigan state law passed in 2011 allowed for the appointment of “emergency managers” to preside over cities deemed insolvent. Once appointed, the emergency manager rules supreme. Elected officials—including the mayor, city council and school board—can do nothing without the manager’s approval. In April 2014, the bureaucrat that was imposed on the city of Flint switched the city’s water supply from the Detroit system to the Flint River, hoping to save a few bucks. What resulted was a massive epidemic of lead poisoning, due to the different chemistry in the Flint River and a long history of using the waterway as an industrial waste dump.

A September study by the Hurley Medical Center in Flint confirmed that the proportion of Flint children with elevated lead levels has nearly doubled since the water source was switched. The tap water drawn

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NYC restaurant workers win victory

By MARTY GOODMAN

NEW YORK—Braving union-busting layoffs and retribution, workers at Brod Kitchen (formerly Hot and Crusty), located on 63rd St. in the wealthy Upper East Side of Manhattan, are fighting to save their union and their jobs.

On Jan. 14, the Hot and Crusty Workers Association, a mostly Hispanic immigrant workforce of 19, entered into negotiations for a new contract. The management of the renamed Brod Kitchen told union reps that Brod would shut its doors the next day, giving lack of funds as the excuse. Later, the layoff threat was extended to 30 days.

A spirited solidarity rally of up to 200 unionists and activists was held Jan. 29 at Brod’s new non-union Greenwich Village location. A day later, the uptown Brod laid off union President Mahoma Lopez and union activist Marcelino Cano. A second rally on short notice attracted dozens. Then a third worker, Layla Mejilla was fired.

The new downtown Brod location is across the street from the New York University campus, a high-rent area. While the Village café is not formally



owned by Hugo Uys, the South African TV chef who owns the 63rd St. location, the uptown workers report that employees have been sent to work there and that an interchange of management personnel exists.

Moreover, Brod is spreading lies against the union by posting a claim in its Village location window that the union is “stealing our jobs.” Signers of the so-called appeal of Brod workers includes the Brod restaurant supervisor! Brod is using the non-union restaurant as a club to bust the union.

The Hot and Crusty Workers Association was born in 2013 as the result of a

55-day struggle to stop layoffs and win a pace-setting contract for restaurant workers, especially immigrant workers. The workers were organized by the Laundry Workers Center (LWC), an independent, democratically run organization (www.lwcu.org).

Their inspiring fight was captured in the award-winning film, “The Hand that Feeds,” by Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick (<http://thehandthatfeedsfilm.com>).

New York City’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which operates the historic Grand Central Station, has approved a proposal for a high-end res-

taurant operated by restaurateur Claus Meyer. According to the MTA, Meyer is working with a group of investors represented by Brod Kitchen owner Hugo Uys, who orchestrated the deal. It is set to open in 2016. Is Brod Kitchen too broke to give workers a contract? Hardly!

Recently, immigrant workers won another unionizing victory at B&H, a camera and electronics superstore on 34th St. in Manhattan. B&H warehouse workers, mostly immigrant Hispanics, faced racism, abusive conditions, and long workweeks. On Nov. 4, by a vote of 200 to 88, B&H warehouse workers won unionization with the United Steel Workers, in another hard-won organizing effort spearheaded by the LWC.

Like the Hot and Crusty struggle, B&H solidarity was built with rallies that include the mobilization of the workers themselves, a departure from union rallies organized by bureaucrats.

The struggle against union busting at Brod Kitchen needs support from New York City unions, community, and student groups. So far, transit workers, teachers, domestic workers and campus workers have joined the picket lines. But, unions need to mobilize the ranks. As a speaker from Domestic Workers United said at the end of the picket on Jan. 28, “My struggle is their struggle. Their struggle is my struggle.”

Keep the pressure on! Rehire the fired union workers! Contract now! Union-busting is disgusting! ■



LABOR BRIEFING

By BILL ONASCH

Two Wins For UE—The United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers registered two important victories from the National Labor Relations Board over the past month. The first was an award of two weeks' back pay to 270 workers at bankrupt Republic Windows in Chicago. This caps a seven-year struggle that began with a sit-down strike that drew international attention in December 2008.

After Bank of America cut off the line of credit of the owner—who later went to jail for fraud—he gave the workers only three days notice of a permanent plant closing and filed for bankruptcy. This violated the 60-day notification requirements of the WARN Act. Demanding the bank accept responsibility for the shut down the workers occupied their plant to prevent the equipment going elsewhere. The Cook County Sheriff refused to evict the strikers and the UE organized protests at Bank of America branches around the country.

Soon BoA agreed to pay \$1.75 million to cover the notification violations but refused to pay already earned vacation, or negotiate a broader severance agreement, as specified in the UE contract. Although workers seldom are able to salvage anything during bankruptcy UE filed charges with the NLRB over this refusal to bargain. They also helped get Federal stimulus money for a new owner to take over the plant. The second owner also failed but the workers then took it over as a worker-owned co-op—New Era Windows—in 2013 and it appears to be viable.

As expected, the wheels of justice moved slowly through the NLRB and bankruptcy court. But in the end the Labor Board succeeded in getting another \$290,000. The Republic Windows workers were not made whole—but the combination of a courageous stand by the ranks, and tenacious pursuit by an adversarial union, did win more than two \$2 million and a worker-run plant that has kept some of them working.

The second victory came in a NLRB case in which charges had been filed *against* the union. As previously reported in “Labor Briefing,” an unofficial arm of the Israeli government masquerading as a “human rights” organization retained American shysters to claim UE was conducting an illegal boycott of Israel because of a resolution adopted at the most recent UE convention. They not only filed a complaint with the NLRB; they also publicly called on General Electric to disassociate themselves from this “attack on Jews” by abrogating their national contract with UE. A similar attack succeeded in getting the International Executive Board of the UAW to nullify a pro-Palestinian stand by a faculty union in California.

Like the UAW teachers, UE national convention delegates voted to endorse the international campaign in solidarity with persecuted Palestinians that includes calls for boycott, divestment, and sanctions aimed at institutions of the oppressive Zionist regime. It is similar to the long BDS campaign that contributed to the end of apartheid in South Africa. This movement around Palestine has won wide support from organized labor throughout Europe, South Africa, and

Canada, but UE was the first national union in the USA to formally endorse.

The UE's answer to the Labor Board charge was that the resolution was not part of a collective-bargaining tactic of secondary boycott but First Amendment-protected expression of opinion and call for action. The board agreed.

UE General President Peter Knowlton said, “The NLRB's decision is a victory for the growing BDS movement across the U.S., which faces increasing political attempts to silence and intimidate critics of the Israeli government. As Americans who have a constitutional right to criticize our own government, we certainly have a right to criticize and, if we choose, boycott a foreign government that is heavily subsidized by U.S. taxpayers.”

More details of both victories can be found on the UE website at: ueunion.org/ue-news-updates

Thanks to the Boss—A story entitled “Why More Nurses Are Unionizing in Phila.” in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* corroborates an article of faith for veteran union organizers: it's not the unions that convince workers they need to be organized—the bosses do that. While wages and benefits are, of course, always important, fair treatment and working conditions are usually paramount. That seems particularly true for nurses who are dedicated to care for patients in a commodity health-care industry often run with less compassion than factories.

The *Inquirer* article was sparked by two big recent organizing victories—and a likely third in early February—by the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals. My attention was first drawn to the PASNAP during an exemplary 28-day strike victory they won in 2010 at Temple University Hospital. One of many take-back demands by the employer was a “gag rule” that would have prevented members from publicly complaining about patient care conditions. Temple spent millions on bringing in professional strikebreakers, but the union mobilized impressive solidarity from Temple University students, other unions, and community groups. Instead of take-backs, at the end of the day the union won solid gains across the board.

One of the recent union-organizing wins was at Hahnemann, where the union had suffered a bitter election defeat in 2009. A nurse there told the *Inquirer* she had opposed that earlier union effort, believing that professionals had no need for collective bargaining. But deteriorating conditions on her job, and palpable union achievements at other hospitals, turned her around. She's now a union activist.

This trend is not unique to Philadelphia. Unions of health care professionals are not only growing around the country—they have become among the most militant and effective forces in the labor movement.

Sick Teachers In Detroit—They're not getting sick from the water like their colleagues in Flint may be. They are sick and tired of literally crumbling schools, often rat-infested, that are the venue for overcrowded

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The RCMP spied on my father

By ROBBIE MAHOOD

MONTREAL— On Oct. 30, 2015, revelations of Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) spying on my father, Ed Mahood, almost 60 years ago, recently came to light courtesy of a phone call from an Ottawa journalist to my sister. A small group of journalists in Ottawa are reviewing the heavily edited RCMP intelligence reports from that era that are being released as the statute of limitations runs out on these hitherto secret files.

My father's name crops up in connection with the campaign of extensive surveillance and disruption that Canada's secret police waged against “communists” in the years after World War II. He is described as a “chronic troublemaker” who was one of an estimated 27,000 “communist subversives” in Canada.

His attendance at a supper organized for the Rev. James Endicott in Saskatoon in 1957, and in organizing meetings is mentioned. Endicott was indeed a member of the Communist Party (later expelled for his Maoist sympathies at the time of the Sino-Soviet split). My father was never a CP member, remaining in the much larger and more militant left wing of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and later in the New Democratic Party (NDP) until well into

the sixties. But he did lend his name and organizing energies to CP activities from time to time.

In 1959, Ed applied for an overseas job with the United Nations, as was customary then among left social democrats with professional skills. The posting was to be to Sierra Leone. RCMP intelligence conspired with the then-Conservative MP for Saskatoon, Henry Jones, and the federal Conservative External Affairs Minister, Howard Green, to veto my father's appointment.

Although we were children then, my sister and I remember well that our father was turned down for the job—without realizing, at the time, the secret conspiracy of police and politicians that underlay the refusal.

Ed subsequently applied for a UN post in the Palestinian West Bank (then part of Jordan) which involved organizing teacher training for Palestinian refugees under the United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNWRA) mandate. And he was accepted for this post in 1960.

Why this second application was approved is unclear. Among UNWRA's personnel were a large number of expatriate European social democrats. It is possible that then Tory Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, nixed a second attempt at sabotage. Diefenbaker was known for his

renegade views on the terms of Canadian participation in NATO and NORAD, which eventually cost him the confidence of the Canadian bourgeoisie and his job.

The news that the RCMP spied on my father, and together with politicians conspired to deny him a job is not surprising. But it is disturbing nonetheless. A few points should be noted:

1) My father was lucky. Many others had their careers destroyed after being fingered by the RCMP, or the attempts to disrupt their lives were more serious. I am thinking of the RCMP campaign to disrupt the League for Socialist Action, and in particular police efforts to destroy the credibility of some its talented leadership such as the young John Riddell.

2) An extensive secret police apparatus, with licence to conduct immoral and illegal acts, is a permanent feature of capitalist states. Of course, the technical apparatus to conduct spying and wreak mayhem in the left is much more developed today, but it is no different in kind than in previous periods.

My parents' generation lived through the McCarthyite years in which my father, along with thousands of others were targeted. But heavy repression using spying and disruption was also directed at the labour and socialist movements after the First World War and during the 1930s. In

the 1960s and 1970s, the RCMP directed its attention to a new generation of radicals.

3) The Quebec nationalist movement was to suffer disproportionate disruption and persecution as federalist ruling circles became obsessed with the threat of Quebec independence. The so-called FLQ Crisis of October 1970 gave Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau the opening to impose the War Measures Act—justified by the Big Lie of an “apprehended insurrection.” Four hundred and fifty pro-independence and socialist activists were arrested overnight and imprisoned. Those taken in pre-dawn raids were culled from RCMP intelligence lists. Later the RCMP engaged in theft and arson to disrupt the activities of the Parti Quebecois. A top PQ Cabinet Minister was revealed to be an RCMP “mole”.

4) So be forewarned. Obviously, we should not allow an atmosphere of paranoia and hyper-vigilance to impair the functioning of socialist organizations. But we need to be aware of the interest and capacity of the capitalist state to spy on, and if possible disrupt the life of left-wing militants and their organizations.

When these secret state operations come to light, and when we face repressive legislation like the Anti-Terrorism Law C-51, we should challenge them openly through a vigorous defence of our hard-won political rights and civil liberties. ■

By MARTY GOODMAN

Weeks of massive protests against election fraud in Haiti and calling for the ouster of the pro-U.S. Haitian President Michel Martelly forced the dictator to finally step down on Feb. 7. The Haitian constitution prohibits a succeeding five-year term, and Feb. 7 was the date for his term to end.

Feb. 7, 2016, marked the 30th anniversary of the fall of the U.S.-backed dictator, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, who was toppled by a nationwide rebellion. Popular anger fueled the anti-Martelly rallies, which at times reached 100,000 or more. Many were protesting on behalf of a particular losing candidate. “Martelly believes the country is for himself and his family. We want him to go!” said Dorval, 40, an unemployed protester. Nationwide, unemployment is about 70%.

As president, Martelly ignored mandated parliamentary elections and ruled by decree for four years. Facing the end of his term, Martelly called for new elections for parliament and a president in October. A joint report by the National Lawyers Guild and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, declared on Nov. 24, “Haiti’s Oct. 25, 2015 presidential and legislative elections fell far short of minimum standards for a fair election.”

Although they admitted election violence, Washington and the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States (OAS) nevertheless deemed the election acceptable. A run-off election scheduled for Dec. 27 was rescheduled for Jan. 24, and finally cancelled following weeks of massive protests.

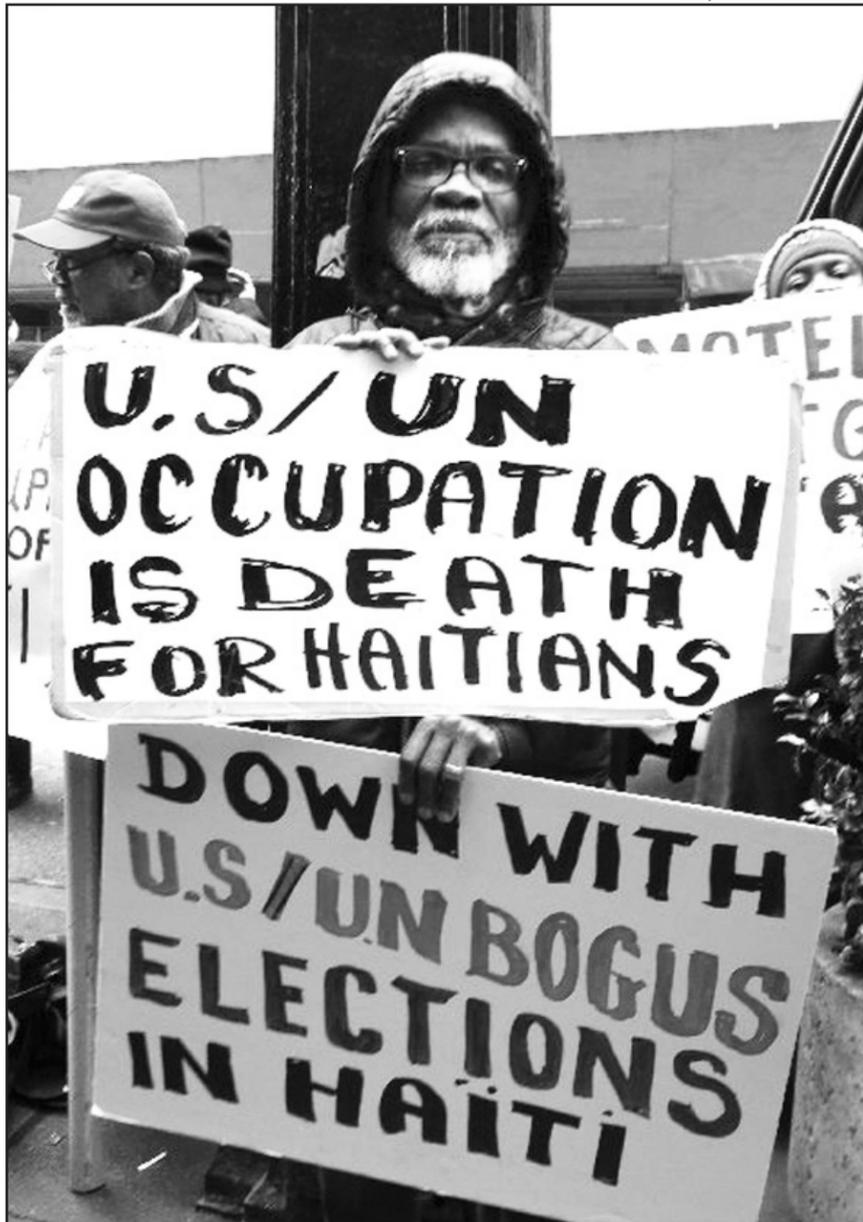
The demonstrations included a demand to end the hated U.S.-led United Nations military occupation of Haiti. U.S. imperialism militarily occupied Haiti 1915-1934, and was later joined by the United Nations, as its puppet, in the occupations of 1994, 2004, and 2010, after a massive earthquake. A cholera epidemic was introduced to Haiti by the disregard of health standards by UN forces, scientific studies showed. So far, some 9000 Haitians have died from this curable disease. The UN has denied all responsibility.

Fraud and coup treaty

Martelly’s chosen successor, banana exporter Jovenel Moise, placed first in the initial round of October voting. There were 54 presidential candidates! Running in Martelly’s PHTK Party, official results gave him 32.8%. His nearest challenger, Jude Celestin, a friend of former Aristide protégé and president, Rene Preval, received 25.3%. Facing

Haitian dictator resigns as the people face election trap

Marty Goodman / Socialist Action



a scheduled Dec. 27 presidential run-off, Celestin opted out, declaring, “The election was a fraud” and added, “I want to go to an election, not a selection.”

Since many expected wholesale fraud, October’s voter participation was a mere 23%. Some 916,000 election observers for political parties were given ballots and voted multiple times, many engaging in a black-market in observer ballots. One legislative candidate, Gerald Jean, actually produced receipts for bribes he paid election officials. With

only one candidate running, Jovenel Moise, and massive protests, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) cancelled the runoff election of Jan. 24.

Guy Philippe, a leader of a CIA-backed mercenary group that deposed Haiti’s elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, called for counter-protests and would not recognize any transitional government, unless it was representative of the provinces. Denouncing protesters as “anarchists,” Philippe declared, “We are ready for war. We will divide the country.”

On Feb. 5, anti-Martelly protesters were attacked by uniformed goons from the disbanded Haitian army, formally dissolved by Aristide in 1995. Encouraged by Martelly’s vow to reinstate the bloodthirsty killers, some 100 menacingly paraded in Port au Prince. Even so, a former army captain, Neroce R. Ciceron, was beaten to death by anti-government protesters in Port-au-Prince.

The Feb. 7 exit of Martelly was part of a deal cut with the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States (OAS), under the watchful eye of the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Spain, and the European Union.

The agreement calls for Prime Minister Evans Paul, a long-time political chameleon, to run the country until a provisional president is chosen by parliament by Feb. 11.

The interim president will oversee the selection of a consensus prime minister, whose job will be to organize a legislative and presidential runoff vote on April 24. A new president will be sworn in on May 14.

Elections are no solution

Martelly, a popular rap-singer and a friend of Duvalier-era thugs, became synonymous with corruption, cronyism, and repression. Martelly once declared, with a beaming Bill and Hillary Clinton at his side during a ribbon cutting ceremony at a sweatshop park in the North, “Haiti is open for business!” Some 2000 pages of Wikileaks documents partially revealed the role of U.S. imperialism in Haiti, particularly by the Clintons, in keeping down the \$5-a-day minimum wage and strong-arming the CEP to bump up Martelly’s position in the 2010 election, leading to his eventual victory.

Some candidates, as well as protesters, denounced the US/OAS-brokered deal. They pointed to decisions to be carried out by parliament members who are, as one veteran Haitian activist in New York called them, “drug dealers and rapists.” What will truly change Haiti is a revolutionary struggle waged by the working class and peasants, not sham elections under capitalism and occupation. It is up to us to give solidarity to the Haitian struggle right here in the belly of the beast! ■

Connecticut budget cuts

By ERNIE GOTTA

Public workers in Connecticut are facing a major attack by Democratic Governor Dan Malloy. The so-called “friend of labor” is looking to slash the state budget by over \$500 million and he is being applauded by both Democrats and Republicans. Close to 2000 state jobs will be slashed. Cuts of 5.75% will be made to social services, including health care for the poorest children in the state, decreased funding for cremation of indigent people, and loss of funding for children in need of dental care.

Governor Malloy is also asking SEBAC (State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition) to reopen a benefits contract negotiated in 2011 and not open again until 2022. The 2011 contract was already filled with givebacks from state employee wages, health care, pensions and benefits. Malloy’s announcement to reopen negotiations seeks to deepen the cuts to pensions and health care.

Statements were released by SEBAC-member unions asking why state workers must shoulder the burden of budget cuts. Xavier Gordon, a career development specialist for the Department of Labor, was quoted in the

Connecticut Mirror as stating, “Political wisdom says politicians won’t have the guts to ask the rich to pay their taxes during an election year.”

Lori Pelletier, president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, said, “We cannot capitulate to those who would balance this budget on the backs of nurses, paraprofessionals, correctional officers, and teachers.” Although Connecticut is one of the richest states, the top 1% (\$3 million+ income) skate by paying a disproportionately low amount in taxes.

In a state with the largest income gap, war spending (over \$18 million in Connecticut taxpayer dollars) and corporate tax subsidies have created a false crisis that Democrats and Republicans say need to be solved collectively.

For example, collective solutions have included pushing state universities toward a corporate model where tenure and basic guarantees of academic freedom will be eliminated. Students and Professors at Central Connecticut State University have organized meetings, forums, and protests to raise awareness, but ultimately it will rely on the union leadership to release a strong statement in opposition to these proposed draconian measures. ■

... LABOR

(continued from page 4)

classrooms. Conditions have got worse under “emergency management” appointed by the same governor who replaced elected officials in Flint. Teacher strikes are illegal in Michigan, so many took the sick-out tactic of protest. On some poor health days, 85 of Detroit’s 100 schools had to be closed.

In late January a judge was appointed to hold hearings about teacher job actions and the state legislature started rumbling about more punitive anti-worker legislation. *Al Jazeera America* reported, “The governor and the school district’s emergency manager should be put on trial, not teachers, according to Detroit teacher Steve Conn. Teachers are upset over pay, class sizes, building conditions, and Gov. Rick Snyder’s plan to overhaul the district.”

And In the Land of Sky Blue Waters—As usual, a lot has been happening in the Twin Cities. The Minnesota Nurses Association negotiated an early wage reopener for 6000 hospital members that preserved current health and pension benefits. Tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct faculty at the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota have filed for an election to authorize SEIU Local 284 to represent them. And 4000 SEIU janitors whose contract expired Dec. 31 have authorized a strike. ■

If you have a story appropriate for *Labor Briefing*, please contact billon-asch@kclabor.org and mention *Labor Briefing* in the subject.



Socialist Action sponsors presidential election debates

By GEORGE BRYAN

Two Socialist Action-sponsored public forums entitled “Debating the 2016 Presidential Election and the Key Issues of our Time” attracted a total of 250 Bay Area political activists in Oakland and San Francisco over the weekend of Feb. 4-5.

Bernie Sanders’ campaign in the Democratic Party presidential primaries has seized the attention of radicalizing youth across the country as well as that of working people who hold the Wall Street capitalist establishment in contempt. Sanders’ claim that he is a “socialist” has proved to be no serious impediment to capturing the imagination of millions who believe in social equality and despise the government’s ceaseless pandering to the banks and corporate plunderers.

Sanders’ victory over Hillary Clinton in the New Hampshire primary (60% to 38%), as well as his virtual tie in Iowa, reflect the hope of many Americans that he is capable of standing up to the forces of capitalist austerity.

The two Socialist Action debates provided a unique opportunity for speakers and their parties

to present their views on the Democratic Party and on working-class alternatives to capitalist politics, including the Sanders campaign.

Black Agenda Report Executive Editor Glen Ford joined the panel. His remarks appear here in full. The debaters representing the Bernie Sanders campaign were Tom Gallagher, San Francisco president of Progressive Democrats of America and former member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and Peter Olney, retired ILWU organizing director and leader of the Labor for Bernie campaign.

Marsha Feinland, vice chair of the California-based Peace and Freedom Party and four-time candidate for the U.S. Senate, spoke for her ballot-certified party. Laura Wells represented the Green Party’s Jill Stein for President campaign. Gloria La Riva, an organizer of the ANSWER Coalition and the presidential candidate for the Party for Socialism and Liberation, also participated.

Jeff Mackler, National Secretary of Socialist Action moderated the debate and was a debate participant, stressing opposition to all capitalist parties and the need for labor-based independent

working-class politics as well as the necessity of united-front-type mass mobilizations to advance the cause of the oppressed and exploited.

On these pages we print excerpts or extended remarks of most of the above speakers. Technical difficulties, time, and space limitations compelled Socialist Action to in some cases provide only brief excerpts from some of them. In some instances, written texts were simply unavailable. Wherever possible we have provided links to the full remarks of all speakers or their websites.

Sixteen different organizations set up literature tables during the two debates. Socialist Action’s popular literature table sold several hundred dollars of its popular pamphlet series as well as 16 subscriptions to this newspaper. Three activists asked to join Socialist Action and two dozen signed up for future Socialist Action forums and classes.

(Top photo) Gloria La Riva, presidential candidate of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, speaks in Oakland on Feb. 4. Seated at left is Jeff Mackler, National Secretary of Socialist Action.

‘Feel the Bern!’

By PETER OLNEY

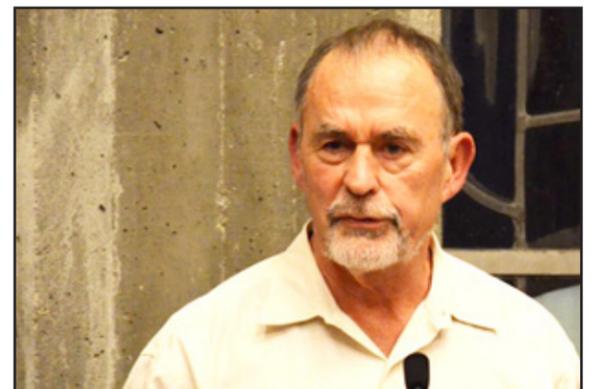
Peter Olney and Tom Gallagher both spoke on behalf of the Bernie Sanders Campaign. Gallagher’s remarks were unavailable for this edition; his writings can be found at TomGallagherwrites.com. Excerpts from Olney’s presentation appear below:

Nowhere has there been a more profound effect than in the Labor for Bernie initiative and the debate within labor. Yes, the usual suspects SEIU, AFSCME, most of the building trades have lined up with Hillary without any profound debate or discussion in the ranks. There’s a sense of inevitability and a fear of retribution! However, the debate rages, and three significant national unions have endorsed Bernie—NNU, CWA and APWU—and over 40 locals. ...

On the power of the Sanders candidacy within the Democratic primary: He has taken the Primary Route and so should we. It’s Bernie, and the fact that he has labeled himself a socialist is great for our cause. ...

He is espousing views that unions espouse 364 days a year—economic inequality, rapacious Wall Street pillagers of the economy—but then on election day they advise their members to vote the “lesser of two evils,” not an irrational choice given that elections have consequences for labor and labor law, the environment, and peace.

Bernie’s run within the Democratic Party primaries



(Left) Tom Gallagher. (Right) Peter Olney.

puts him on Main Street, in the debates, and he is not a spoiler. We go all out for Bernie win or lose and then we settle for whoever emerges from the process as our candidate against the racist, xenophobic candidate of the GOP!

But we are trapped, you say, voting forever for a candidate of a corporate party. It was Tony Mazzochi [former head of the Oil and Atomic Workers union] who said: Business has two parties, we need our own—a Labor Party. True enough, but politics is the art of getting from A to B.

This is the challenge for the legions of labor for Bernie supporters and the challenge we must discuss and confront, not whether to support Bernie in the primaries—that is a must—but how to take the energy and organization coming out of the campaign to create a permanent and ongoing organization and movement.

To that end, discussions are underfoot to cement a permanent alliance of the national unions that have endorsed Bernie and the locals that endorsed him to stay together past the primaries, the convention, the general election and even the White House to continue to carry out a political strategy that takes the primary route in federal, state, and local elections. That engages in non-partisan elections at the most basic level, and that unites with other forces in the communities of color, immigrant communities, and with other political formations like Working Families Party and Move On to build an alternative political pole, and maybe one day a Socialist Party in this country.

After all, who wants to die a Democrat!
FEEL THE BERN!

Will Sanders challenge the billionaires?

BY JEFF MACKLER

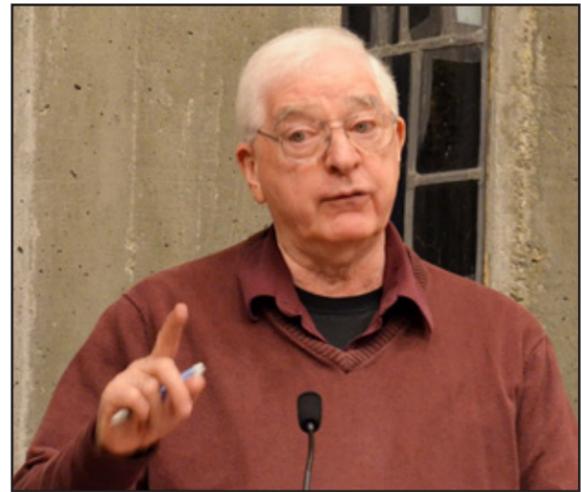
“Wall Street’s Think Tank: The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)” is my friend Larry Shoup’s latest book (2015) describing in great detail this ruling-class institution and its multi-billionaire corporate, banking and intellectual membership. It was founded in 1912 by the world’s richest man, David Rockefeller of the Chase Manhattan Bank fortune. Shoup lists virtually all the U.S. ruling class’s multi-billionaire families. This elite .01 percent, or perhaps .001 percent, make virtually all decisions in the U.S. regarding critical economic and political questions.

Not surprisingly, Shoup demonstrates that the U.S. ruling class is bipartisan, with both Democrats and Republicans partaking in the decision-making institutions that formulate ruling-class policy. Indeed, a few years ago *The New York Times* famously noted that President Bill Clinton, a CFR member along with Hill-

ary, was “the best representative corporate America ever had.” Both Clinton and President Obama, to name but two examples, received more funds from Wall Street and corporate America for their campaigns than their Republican Party opponents.

To really understand what we’re debating tonight, I ask you to, at least for the moment, suspend your imagination and have a look at life in capitalist America through two different lenses. Lens number one is created for us by the corporate media. We have a democratic choice, we are told, Bernie or Hillary? Or Bernie v. Trump? Or Hillary v. Trump? or Hillary v. Cruz, or Rubio, or Jeb Bush or some other reactionary Republican.

The “rebel” Bernie stands for a “political revolution” against the billionaire class, against Wall Street, against the one percent. He is against “most” imperialist wars, although our Sanders debaters tonight honestly state that Bernie is somewhat “weak on for-



eign policy issues.” But Bernie is against racism and poverty, for women’s rights, for LGBT rights, for free public college tuition, for single-payer health care, and against the environmental destruction associated with global warming. He is for taxing the billionaire class. “Unprecedented,” we are told.

Are we for or against these intelligent, well-spoken, progressive, sane and caring Democratic Party human beings or are we for the racist bigot, warmongering misogynist, Islamophobic, anti-immigrant billionaire moron, Donald Trump, or his ilk? Isn’t Hillary the prime recipient of corporate capitalist America’s financial largess? Isn’t Bernie the only candidate whose funds come in relatively tiny amounts from working people?

All of the above is the projected image of Bernie Sanders looking at politics through the lens of the world created for us by the corporate media and its pundits. For you movie buffs, you might recall the Jim Carrey film called “The Truman Show.” Carrey plays the part of a working man living on an island where, unbeknownst to Carrey’s character, Truman, the entire population of his fake community are Hollywood actors. Truman is the only person on the island, who, has no idea that his entire life, including his wife and friends, bosses, and hundreds more are actors, scripted by a Hollywood-type director, who molds Truman’s life, including his phobias and values, and broadcasts it 24 hours daily on a television show.

To a significant degree, don’t we all live in a “Truman

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For socialism

The presentation by Gloria La Riva, presidential candidate of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, was not available as we went to press. The following statement is from her campaign website: www.votepl.org.

“Capitalism is a corrupt, bankrupt system that is destroying the environment while the super-rich accrue obscene wealth,” stated Gloria La Riva. “The capitalist bankers torched the economy and the federal government bailed them out with our money. What an outrage! Today the criminal bankers are richer than ever while millions of working people have been plunged into poverty.

A socialist system shatters this destructive model. Socialism means that the wealth of society, all of which was created by the labor of working people, would be used to create a sustainable environment while providing every person with a decent job or an income for those who can’t work, free education and affordable housing.

Socialism means making health care truly affordable by making it free for all people. The military-industrial complex and the Pentagon war machine, votepl.org with its 1,000 bases around the world, are not for ‘defense’ but for Wall Street’s global empire. It should be dismantled. Massive military production is a complete waste and should be converted to useful civilian production.” ■



Blacks and the Democratic Party



By GLEN FORD

Glen Ford is an executive editor of *Black Agenda Report*. His presentation to Socialist Action’s Feb. 5 and 6 forums was closely based on a recent BAR article, which is excerpted here with permission of the author.

Blacks in the South will probably not vote for Bernie Sanders, although they most resemble the “Scandinavian social democrats” of Sanders’ dreams. However, Black voters don’t express their politics through the ballot. Rather, Blacks are drawn into the jaws of the Democratic Party, not by ideological affinity, but *in search of protection from the Republicans.* It is the politics of fear.

Bernie Sanders has succeeded in stalling the Clinton juggernaut in Iowa, and is expecting a resounding victory next week in New Hampshire. However, the euphoria will fade as his supporters confront the likelihood that their quest to transform the Democratic Party “from below” will be derailed in the South by Blacks, who are the decisive bloc, or outright majorities, in the region’s Democratic primaries, and who make up about a quarter of the Party’s support, nationwide.

It is a great paradox that the Sanders campaign

will almost certainly be rejected by the very voters whose fundamental political leanings are most closely aligned with the “Scandinavian social democratic” model on which Sanders has based his career.

Black voting behavior over the past two generations all but guarantees they will back the national Democratic candidate they perceive as most likely to defeat the Republicans—the “White Man’s Party.” White supremacy and the rule of capital in the U.S. are buttressed, electorally, by two pillars: (1) the bifurcation of the major party system into a White Man’s Party, whose organizing principle is white supremacy, and another party that is somewhat more inclusive of Blacks and other “minorities,” and (2) control of both parties by capital.

For Blacks, the Democratic Party is a trap within a trap. If the overarching, perceived necessity is to block the Republican/White Man’s Party at every electoral juncture, then Blacks see no option but to huddle under the Democratic tent, despite the fact that it is, like the Republicans, a Rich Man’s Party.

It is a politics of fear, born of generations of raw terror at the hands of the White Man’s Party. The modern Democratic Party, like the post-Civil War Republican Party, is not a haven, but an enclosure, which Blacks fear to exit. At root, Black participation in the Democratic Party is not a matter of free allegiance, but the perception that there is no other effective means to hold back the barbarians of the White Man’s Party.

In practice, it is institutionalized group panic, a stampede every four years. Blacks are drawn into the jaws of the Democratic Party, not by ideological affinity, but *in search of protection from the Republicans.* This is an entirely different dynamic than an alignment based on thoughtful examination of political platforms. ...

Under these stilted circumstances, the Democratic candidate’s actual political positions become *near-irrelevant* to the Black primary voter, compared to the candidate’s perceived ability to win a national election.

When the voter is seeking protection from what is seen as the greater, more racist evil, rather than searching for a candidate and party that takes posi-

tions more aligned with the Black political world view, independent politics goes out the window. Indeed, independent, leftist electoral campaigns can be viewed as a going AWOL from the fight, or worse, collaborating with the Republican enemy.

Blacks voted for Jesse Jackson in his 1984 and ‘88 primary campaigns, but he opted out of an independent run for president, preferring to remain in the role of “power broker” within the Democratic enclosure. It’s not likely that Black voters would have supported Jackson in an independent race, anyway.

When Ted Kennedy challenged Jimmy Carter from the Left, in 1980, his effort collapsed largely from lack of support from Black elected officials, who stuck with the Georgia peanut farmer even after he had shown himself to be a deeply conservative politician (a founding “neoliberal”) whose austerity policies opened the door to Ronald Reagan.

The Black Radical Tradition is real and enduring, but it is not expressed through participation in the Democratic Party. Rather, entrapment in the Democratic Party enclosure (within the larger Rich Man’s duopoly) grotesquely warps Black political behavior. This distortion profoundly diminishes the prospects for progressive electoral activity in the United States.

It is true that the Democrats would collapse were it not for the Black core of the party. It is also probable that that would be a good thing. What is certain is that the Democratic Party oozes out of every orifice of Black civic society like a stinking pus, sapping the self-determinist vitality of the people and transforming every Black social structure and project into a Democratic Party asset.

The task of Black activists and their allies is to ensure that our first and last hope—movement politics—once again becomes central to the struggle, so that we can, as Dr. Cornel West puts it, “break the back of fear.” This will require the most intense internal struggle among Black Americans to break the chains that bind us to that vector of fear, the Democratic Party. ■

BAR executive editor Glen Ford can be contacted at GlenFord@BlackAgendaReport.com.

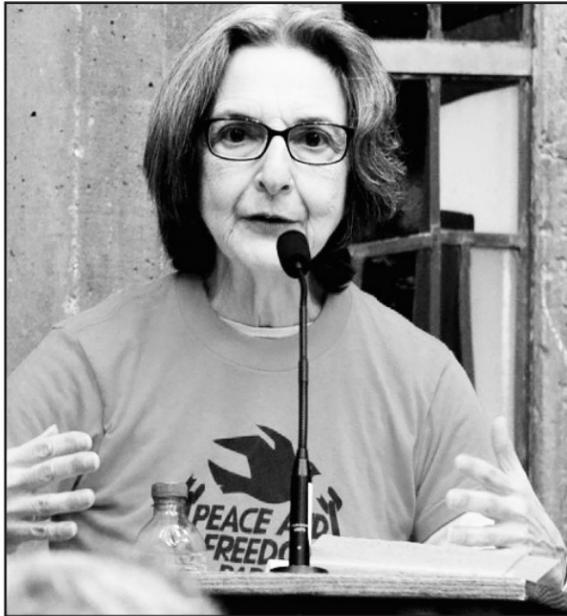
Defeat the two-party system

By MARSHA FEINLAND

I was invited here to speak for the Peace and Freedom Party candidate for president. There are four candidates seeking the presidential nomination of The Peace and Freedom Party: Gloria LaRiva of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, who is one of the panelists; Lynn Kahn, an independent, who is in the audience; Monica Moorehead of the Workers' World Party; and Jill Stein, of the Green Party. I am not representing any particular candidate. I speak as a member of the Peace and Freedom Party, which is the only party on the ballot in California that advocates for socialism. ...

Every four years, trade unionists and other usually dependable class-struggle fighters devote their energy to supporting and working for a Democratic Party presidential candidate. They act on their fear of the increasingly grotesque Republican Party. The Republican Party becomes the force that dominates the political landscape as the "leaders" of the working class call any effort to build a working-class party "unrealistic," and support for the Democrats "imperative." So we end up on the never-ending see-saw of one capitalist party or the other in charge.

The only way to defeat the Republicans is to defeat the two-party system. What about the "good" Democrats? The ones in Congress who support the Conyers health care bill (a Medicare-for-All bill originally introduced by Ron Dellums), and the Progressive bud-



get, an impressive document that provides everything a good welfare state should. Can't we take over the Democratic Party and make it our party?

No. While the "good" Democrats keep working-class and well meaning people voting for them, their policy documents never go anywhere. The dominant forces in the party prevail. Here is a short list of what their

achievements: They didn't filibuster Bush's Supreme Court appointments; They didn't contest the 2000 elections; They bailed out the banks and let the homeowners get foreclosed on; They do not significantly tax the rich; They will not give us a decent health care system; They are dismantling our public schools (note that liberal Democrats George Miller and Ted Kennedy helped author the No Child Left Behind Act); They promote extraordinary police and surveillance powers; And they perpetuate the war machine.

The Democratic Party is a ruthless enforcer, destroying its own when necessary! In 1934, Upton Sinclair, a socialist, won the Democratic Party primary for governor of California. His program was called End Poverty in California, and EPIC clubs sprang up all over the state. But the Democratic Party establishment, from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Hollywood and the press, refused to endorse Sinclair and ensured a Republican victory. There is no reason to believe that the Democratic Party is now ready to take on the socialist mantle.

It is easy to feel hopeless and demoralized. The task of building an independent party of the working class seems daunting. But we can look at some emerging movements for encouragement. Significant portions of Occupy, the living wage campaign, the environmental movement, anti-eviction defenders, and the struggle against police violence and mass incarceration all are taking on an anti-capitalist stance.

We need to join the growing movements. We need to connect our political theory with the real struggles on the ground. We need to put aside sectarianism and work together. We can build a workers' party. We can and we have to. ■



By LAURA WELLS

It is fitting that I am representing Jill Stein [and the Green Party]. Many people have come up to me and said, "I know who you are! You're Jill Stein!" No, but thank you. Jill and I have something in common. We were both arrested outside debates for offices for which we were candidates, presidential and gubernatorial.

The specific charge against me in 2010 when I ran for governor was a crime I was absolutely committing—guilty as charged: "trespassing at a private party." Jill Stein is working to make it a "public party." Her campaigns in 2012 and already in 2016 have helped to smash a chink in the armor of the private parties, and helped make debates and elections more public.

The big question about the 2016 election is the following: "What are the supporters of Bernie Sanders going to do when the Democratic Party does not nominate him?"

What will Sanders' supporters do when he endorses Hillary Clinton?

The institution of the Democratic Party has very different values from the people who register as Democrats and who vote for Democrats, and that institution has all the power it needs to push Bernie to the side. They instituted super-delegates who will not be on Bernie's side, and they have big media. ...

So, what are Bernie Sanders' supporters going to do when he endorses the Democratic nominee, likely Hillary? She is the embodiment of all the lousy domestic values Bernie has been attacking so effectively. ... People power means we can organize in solidarity and take to the streets. People power also means we can vote, and change our voter registrations. Yes, voting is important. That's why they change laws and elections to create more hurdles and restrictions for voters and for independent political parties. ...

Here is my recommendation if you are feeling the Bern. ... AFTER THE PRIMARY, change your voter registration to an independent party, like the Green Party or Peace and Freedom. ... A majority of people want strong parties outside of the Democratic-Republican Party. Here's how third parties get strong: you vote for them, and you register in them.

IN NOVEMBER, VOTE, but do not write in Bernie Sanders! He is not a movement, he is an individual. We can use as building blocks what Bernie has brought to the table, like injecting the term "socialism" back into our national dialogue. What this country needs now are or-

ganizations, including political parties that serve as the electoral arm of the social movements, that take no corporate money, and that are not controlled by the 1%. ...

You may see the small parties as imperfect, but to blame third parties for their weakness is like blaming poor people for their poverty. Yes, we're imperfect and make mistakes, but it's the system that makes people poor and independent political parties weak. People power makes us strong, and breaks up the two-party system that has given control of our government to the 1% and their corporations.

IN NOVEMBER, DO NOT VOTE DEMOCRAT. Glen Ford's description of Obama as the more "effective evil" rather than the "lesser evil" is right on point. Sometimes it takes a Democrat to accomplish a conservative agenda, like bailing out Wall Street, and implementing trade agreements like NAFTA and the TPP/Trans-Pacific Partnership. ...

Already in 2016 Jill Stein's campaign is ahead of the game on multiple fronts. Many people who had put their hearts and souls into Obama's 2008 campaign are working with her to see how much headway the electoral arm of the movement can make this year.

In summary, 2016 is a great year to work together to use all the power we have. Let's not give our money to the 1% and their corporations—as much as we can avoid it! And let's not give them our voter registrations and our votes. ■

... Challenge?

(continued from page 7)

Show" world, where what we see, learn, and come to believe, and even value, is manufactured for us by a ruling class that controls most of society's institutions—from the media to the educational system, to the puppet politicians. Isn't it true that capitalism runs an almost year-round election cycle in which we are told that everything can change if we simply vote the bad guys out and the good guys in?

In contrast, let's have a look at the real world, again, the world where "liberal" Democrats Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, receive the greatest portion of all corporate campaign money. The "progressive" Democrat Obama, the first Black president, deported more immigrants, two million, than any president before him. "The Great Deporter!"

Obama has seven wars to his credit, either ongoing or begun under his administration—Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen Africa's re-colonization wars, drone wars around the world, covert wars, death squad wars, and privatized army wars. Bernie supported most of these horrors except Iraq. That war was a "mistake," he insists. "There were no weapons of mass destruction." Yes, friends, the Iraq War was a

so-called mistake wherein the U.S. government murdered 1.5 million people, mostly civilians! But was it indeed a mistake, or is imperialist war inherent in U.S. capitalism's genes?

Bernie Sanders voted for each and every military appropriations bill at some \$1 trillion a clip annually. He backed the racist, Zionist Israeli slaughter in Palestine and its near dismemberment today from his first day in Congress. Bernie Sanders' lifetime voting record has been 98 percent Democrat!

A few weeks ago, Bernie Sanders met with President Obama, in effect seeking his support, or at best "neutrality" in his presidential bid. He stated that he agreed with Obama's purported military policy of trying to "avoid placing U.S. troops on the ground in the Middle East." Sanders failed to indicate any objection to the 1100 U.S. military bases around the world or the additional 1000 bases at home, or the fact that half of the troops in Afghanistan today are non-governmental, privatized death-squad troops like those that operate globally in covert wars, as is the case today in Syria, and in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

Bernie Sanders' calls to tax the billionaire class and for a "political revolution" are aimed at capturing the powerful anti-establishment sentiment that permeates society as Congressional approval ratings have

sunk to all-time lows in the range of 12-14 percent. In truth, banks and corporations, who in essence write the tax codes, avoid most taxes outright. If there ever was an example of the role of government with regard to capitalist profits, it was Obama's unprecedented bailout gift of \$32 trillion to the very corporations whose policies came close to bankrupting the nation. And working people paid for these corporate bailouts! The world's richest corporation, Apple Computer, pays virtually no taxes!

Bernie's token tax proposals amount to sheer bluster, as does his notion that he will lead a "political revolution" to transform the U.S. financial system. *And transform it on the basis of keeping the system of private property and worker exploitation intact!* One might ask whether Sanders intends to begin his political revolution by eliminating the one-trillion-dollar annual war budget that funds the military-industrial complex, or the National Security Administration's trillions for surveillance operations, or the \$89 billion monthly at near zero interest rates—the "economic stimulus" or "quantitative easing" program—that until just a few months ago was gifted to Wall Street banks and corporate America, who turned around to invest these government billions in the nation's casino capitalism financial markets. Sanders is silent on

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(continued from page 3)

from the river also contains illegal levels of cancer-causing trihalomethanes and other toxins, and is implicated in the spread of Legionnaires Disease.

A massive effort will now be needed to restore clean running water to Flint residents and to deal with the long-term health effects from the poison brew people have been forced to use for drinking, cooking, and bathing for over a year.

No auto executives or members of the ruling rich were harmed in the making of this story. The Michigan localities that have suffered the most are majority working class and Black. The population of Flint is over 56% African American. Forty-one percent of city residents live in poverty, and the real unemployment rate for Michigan is over 11 percent. In this conflict so far, it is working people who have taken all the blows. But it wasn't always that way.

Given Flint's iconic history, it's more than a little ironic that the current crisis has its roots in the greed of the auto industry giants and their political plenipotentiaries. A generation ago, another battle was fought in Flint between the auto barons and the working-class majority. In that fight, which began in December of 1936, the balance of power was decidedly different.

The United Auto Workers union (UAW) was founded in 1935 in the wake of a militant labor upsurge that began sweeping the country the year before. Key battles in Minneapolis (truck drivers), Toledo (Electric Auto-Lite), San Francisco (general strike), Akron (rubber workers), and Huntsville, Birmingham, and throughout the South (textile workers) set the tone. But the big automakers had yet to be breached.

In the 1930s, as now, there were competing ideologies for how the working people could best fight for their rights. The most conscious, radical workers saw the bosses, their government, and the major political parties as members of the same team, against which the 99% had to wage an uncompromising fight. But the leaders of the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) saw things differently. As Art Preis described in "Labor's Giant Step":

The CIO leaders were class collaborationist to the bone. They sought "peaceful coexistence" between predatory capital and exploited labor—between robber and robbed. They believed they could persuade the employers that unions are a "benefit" to the capitalists themselves and thereby secure gains for the workers by the simple means of "reasonable discussion" across the conference table. ... Fortunately for the success of the CIO, the concepts of the top CIO leaders did not always prevail. The strident notes of the class struggle broke through the "class harmony" chorus and set the dominant tone during the decisive days of the rise of the CIO. The bridge to victory proved to be not the conference board, nor the inside track to Roosevelt in the White House, but the picket line—above all, that "inside picket line," the sit-down.

An ongoing organizing drive in the Flint auto plants was met with stonehearted resistance by General Motors. The straw that broke the camel's back came on Dec. 30, 1936, when management provocatively transferred some union supporters. Workers at Flint Fisher Body Plant 2 responded by sitting down and refusing to leave the factory. Later that night, workers saw managers attempting to remove critical machinery from Fisher Body Plant 1. The workers at Plant 1 put a stop to that by sitting down as well. The shutting down of these two plants brought GM's auto production to a screeching halt.

The strike spread to 15 other GM plants, from Detroit to Kansas City. Finally, the crucial motor assem-

... Flint: A Tale of two Cities



(Above) Children of Flint sit-down strikers on International Women's Day, 1937.

bly operation at Chevrolet Plant number 4 in Flint was occupied. Ultimately, 93% of GM's production workers joined the fight. Preis explains:

Victory or defeat for the GM workers depended on a simple strategy: keeping their buttocks firmly planked on \$50 million worth of GM property until they got a signed contract. GM's strategy was to get the workers out of the plants by hook or crook so that the police, deputies and National Guard could disperse them by force and violence.

The bosses hit the strikers with injunctions, but the sheriff charged with delivering the first of these was laughed out of the plant. The company attempted to recruit scabs to retake the plants, but soon gave that up. Management cut the heat to Fisher Body Plant 2, and police attempted to prevent deliveries of food and supplies to the strikers. Outside, picketers stormed the police blockade. A battle ensued; police guns were answered by bolts and bottles hurled by the workers. Eventually, the strikers aimed a freezing stream from a fire hose at the cops, successfully turning them back. When the dust settled, 24 strikers were injured; 14 had been shot.

Politicians, from the Democratic governor to President Roosevelt, sided with GM. The governor positioned 1500 National Guard troops to be ready to retake the plants by force. Meanwhile, fellow unionists poured into Flint from Toledo, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Lansing, and elsewhere, and formed a cordon of solidarity around Fisher Body Plant 1.

GM threatened to turn the heat off again, but the strikers threatened to expose the plants firefighting equipment to the cold, freezing the gear and thus invalidating GM's insurance coverage. Management was livid and demanded that the governor give the order to retake the plants. Governor Murphy passed the buck and tried to pressure CIO President John L. Lewis to reign in the strikers. Lewis explained, truthfully, that he hadn't started the strike and he couldn't stop it.

In the end, GM surrendered. The strikers had demonstrated sufficient determination and ingenuity for GM to realize its plants would be destroyed if they tried to remove the workers by force. The first UAW contract with GM was signed on Feb. 11, 1937.

The working people of Flint won that monumental battle in 1937, but the corporate titans have never given up on the overall war. This is the critical context

for the Flint crisis of today. The forces seeking to victimize working people in Flint now are the same ones that confronted autoworkers in Flint three quarters of a century ago. Those seeking to fight against austerity and mount an effective response to the current water crisis can learn much from that pivotal chapter in history.

Today, as in the 1930s, it's crucial to understand who is on our side and whom we're up against. At the second convention of the UAW in 1936, the body unanimously called for the formation of a labor party. It's no coincidence that the workers who successfully fought back the GM colossus understood that the Democratic and Republican parties were both in the boss's hip pocket. This realization was essential for navigating the rough terrain as the struggle unfolded.

But by the late 1940s, those who preached class collaboration and relying on the Democrats as "friends of labor" had gained the upper hand. Socialists and other radicals who, like the Flint sit-down strikers, recognized the major political parties for the big business appendages they truly are were driven out of the labor movement and isolated. Unions like the UAW turned their back on the lessons of the Flint sit-down strike.

As a consequence, the UAW is a mere shadow of its former self, reduced in numbers and diminished in power. Throughout its steady decline, UAW leaders have held fast to their class-collaborationist outlook. The results of this approach can be seen in scattered, broken pieces all around us, including in Flint.

Today, Democratic and Republican party politicians shed crocodile tears, expressing the utmost regret for the calamity that has befallen Flint. But their concern rings hollow. These are the heirs of the politicians who mobilized the press, the police, and the National Guard to side with GM and the other corporate behemoths in the labor upsurge of the 1930s. These are the political parties that have been running our country for generations, with the result being what we see in Flint and all around us.

Witnessing the suffering of the residents of Flint, it is no exaggeration to say the Democratic and Republican parties, along with the system they uphold, represent a deathtrap for working people.

But there is a way out. There are steps we can take to avoid future disasters like the one now unfolding in Flint. This path serendipitously addresses many of the other problems we face—from endless war, inequality and exploitation, to racism, unemployment, and environmental destruction. This road has just one rule: human needs must come before profits.

And there is but one way to get there: by recognizing that only working people—the vast majority of the population and the producers of all of society's wealth—have the power to build a just and rational world. For that power to be realized, we must organize collectively and independently of our foes at the top of the economic pyramid, refusing to be taken in by their lieutenants in the Democratic and Republican parties.

While no fight is ever an exact blueprint for another, the guiding principles of solidarity and independent political action, demonstrated in abundance by the heroic Flint sit-down strikers, remain essential tools for the struggles of today. ■

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these matters.

All the evils of today—racism and ever-rising police murder, massive incarceration of the oppressed, poverty, sexism, union-busting, never-ending wars, homophobia, anti-immigrant prejudice, skyrocketing college tuition, environmental destruction, and more—are no accident to be explained by the faults of this or that president or elected official, but rather the overt manifestations of a crisis-ridden capitalist society.

What is needed today is not a change at the top or a political revolution or even a token billionaire tax, but rather a social revolution that ends the rule and control and ownership of the tiny monopoly finance capital billionaire ruling class over virtually everything including us.

I am compelled to note that tonight's pro-Sanders speakers, Tom and Peter, have been explicit. If Bernie loses the Democratic Party primary contest Bernie will support Hillary's candidacy. No matter their "lesser evil" rationale, this simple fact tells us once again that Sanders' effort devolves into once again channeling today's deep discontent at the insults to our lives that a failing capitalism is compelled to impose, back into the billionaire Wall Street system itself. For revolutionary socialist parties like Socialist Action, the road forward excludes choosing between capitalism's latest lesser-evil offerings.

I believe that our democratic, open and honest debate will help to advance future collaboration in the streets and narrow the political gap that currently divides us on key critical questions. ■

... Threat to public worker unions



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union. This dues check-off system originally arose in the private sector during World War II. In return for a “no-strike pledge,” the Franklin Roosevelt administration offered the “patriotic” union bureaucrats a “deal” in which union dues would be automatically collected by the bosses and turned over to the unions, as opposed to the previous practice of union stewards collecting dues directly from the ranks.

The government used the deal to essentially freeze the existing Depression-era wage levels for the war’s duration—and longer; it hoped—while corporate war profiteers amassed incredible profits. Revolutionaries, while properly not opposing dues check-off, warned at that time that the long-term consequence would be an ever-widening gap between the union ranks and leadership and a corresponding separation of the ranks from democratic control of their unions.

Today, that separation exists in the extreme. In the private sector, unionization rates have declined from a 1955 high of 35-36 percent to today’s low of 6.7 percent—similar to that of the late 1920s. Union democracy in the pitiful and disassociated union conglomerates that remain barely exists, if at all. Petty-bourgeois bureaucratic parasites sit on top of most unions, essentially separated and insulated from the ranks in a myriad of ways, ever negotiating mergers among their shriveled unions to insure their stupendous salaries and privileges.

Mired in the Democratic Party

Today’s unions are tied hand and foot to the Democratic Party. In recent years, they have recorded the fewest number of strikes in the modern era and are largely reduced to begging for pathetic and rarely delivered crumbs or promises from lying capitalist politicians. Tens of millions of dollars from union members’ dues are expended in this always rigged and fruitless game of capitalist lesser-evil politics. The ideas that strikes and inter-union solidarity are key to labor’s future—and that working people sorely need an independent democratic and fighting labor party, operating in alliance with all of society’s oppressed—are alien to today’s labor “leader” fakers.

Capitalism is mired in the deepest economic crisis since the 1929-era Great Depression. Nevertheless, the ruling rich believe that even in the system’s advanced state of degeneration, today’s unions remain an obstacle to capitalism’s compulsion to extract and transfer every possible dollar of public-service expenditures from working people and the poor to the one percent, or better, the .001 percent—the elite group of multi-billionaires who own and control the vast portion of the nation’s property and wealth.

Capitalist privatization of the public sector has already taken its toll, with city and state governments across the country selling off previously publicly funded social services to private corporations. The growing privatization and massive expansion of the prison-industrial complex is but one glaring example. The de-funding and terrible decline of public education and the associated school-to-jail scenario plays out in the nation’s poor and oppressed communities, with more funds expended for prisons than schools and with the latter increasingly subjected to privatization through corrupt charter-school schemes based on the lie that the private sector is more interested and capable of providing quality education than the consciously de-funded public schools.

Union officials’ inadequate response

Tragically, to date, not a single public-sector union—SEIU, AFSCME, NEA, AFT, CWA, etc.—has uttered a

word stating or implying that should the Supreme Court’s nine judges, appointed for life to oversee capitalism’s interests, make the collection of union dues illegal, they will act to defy the Court and all other government institutions that seek to enforce their anti-union dictates. Not one of the labor organizations has offered to mobilize union power in alliance with their natural allies among the poor and oppressed to effectively void any Court decision. Tragically again, the AFL-CIO has stood virtually mute in the face of an expected decision that may well reduce the ranks of labor to an even more pitiful level than the present modern-era law.

Frightened union officials have essentially accepted the “inevitability” of a negative *Friedrichs* decision and, at best, suggested that perhaps the damage to union funding might be mitigated by union staffers working harder and more closely with the ranks to collect dues. Others have suggested that perhaps their “friends” in the Democratic Party will advance legislation akin to the private sector’s National Labor Relations Act, wherein the mandatory payment of union dues (closed or agency shop) remains legal. A tiny handful has hesitatingly murmured that unions should consider the possibility of strike action somewhere down the line.

Recent experience has demonstrated that when unions lose the right to collect dues, union membership dramatically declines—a strong indication of the ongoing and deep alienation of the ranks from the union tops. In the case of the 60-hour 2005 New York City transit strike led by TWU Local 100, when the reactionary and punishing Taylor Law was imposed and union check-off ended, an estimated 30-40 percent of union members refused to pay union dues.

Similar figures have been reported in Wisconsin in the years following Governor Scott Walker’s 2011 signing of the infamous Act 10, which crippled the public-sector unions. Union membership declined by nearly 40% in the three years following the retrograde new law. Wisconsin’s Act 10 not only banned dues collection but prohibited public-sector unions from negotiating over benefits or working conditions; it imposed a ban on negotiating pay increases beyond cost-of-living adjustments; it increased employee health-care and pension costs, and required public-sector unions to win a new union recognition election every year by securing a majority of the entire bargaining unit!

So onerous were the provisions of Act 10 that many Wisconsin unions gave up collective bargaining efforts entirely. To lessen or minimize the impact of the seemingly inevitable negative *Friedrichs* decision, a number of pathetic union pundits have characterized Act 10 as “*Friedrichs* on steroids,” as if to say that “things could be worse”—a wacked-out mindset in which *Friedrichs* is labeled in advance as perhaps a “lesser evil.”

Others, including the CTA and its legal staff and associated “constitutional experts,” have spent their time presenting refined and well-honed technical arguments as to the interpretation of the Constitution’s First Amendment provisions, including the meaning of “freedom of speech” itself.

Here their arguments aim at legally rebutting the central *Friedrichs* argument that the mandatory payment of union dues or an agency fee violates their basic free speech rights in that the CTA often takes political or economic positions on issues with which *Friedrichs* and Company disagree. “One cannot be forced to join or pay dues to an organization with which one disagrees,” so the *Friedrichs* argument goes.

The notion that the U.S. Supreme Court may come to

its senses and uphold what has been the law for more than a half century, including the CTA’s defense of the U.S. Constitution and the First Amendment, seems far fetched in an era when the First Amendment has been shredded beyond recognition.

A prime example is that of U.S. court’s across the country ruling that massive government surveillance on virtually the entire population is justified based on the present “need” to subordinate First Amendment rights to the “national security” interests of the government. Here we have a capitalist legal system that formally denies the entire population its Constitutional rights to free speech, association, and privacy on the one hand, while threatening to uphold the “free-speech” rights of 10 reactionary California teachers as opposed to the rights of nine million public employees!

Socialist Action readers are likely well aware that union rights, including the right of unions to exist at all and operate as representatives of workers, has never been taken for granted in U.S. courts or in those of any other capitalist state. Indeed, before the historic trade-union upsurge of the 1930s, unions were banned and considered a form of “coercion,” contrary to the “ideals of the American Revolution.” Similarly unions were deemed by U.S. courts to be in violation of the “right to contract” in that they “prevented workers from forming individual contracts with their employers.”

The 1871 Sherman Anti-Trust Act deemed that unions were a form of “restraint of trade or commerce.” Using Sherman, the boss class issued an injunction against the famous nationwide rail strike led by renown socialist and labor leader Eugene Debs. Debs was imprisoned, and the strike was crushed.

New York State’s Taylor Law includes provisions to fine striking public employees one and a half days’ pay for every day on strike (“overtime in reverse”), as well as provisions for massive fines against striking public employee unions and imprisonment of union leaders. The routine use of employer-requested court injunctions to stop strikes remains the norm today.

In truth, the history of “labor law,” as with “constitutional law,” is a history of the class struggle and its associated relationship of class forces. When labor is strong and united, and when it consistently and repeatedly exercises its rights in defiance of each and every capitalist encroachment, it more often than not follows that the “law” is bent or broken entirely in accord with labor’s power in the streets, at the point of production and in its reflection in the hearts and minds of working people. Labor’s moral power, won in mass struggles and usually at great cost and sacrifice in defense of the oppressed and exploited, is the real source of its strength, as opposed to union staffers being more receptive to the individual needs of the membership—however important the latter is.

Today’s highly bureaucratized and increasingly corrupt labor mis-leadership—virtually always subservient to the Democratic Party—is a major obstacle to the return of American trade unions to the democratic and fighting working-class organizations that they were in the past and can be once again. Today’s top bureaucrats often pull down salaries and give themselves expense accounts akin to their corporate counterparts.

They rarely cease pontificating about the obsolescence of strikes and cross-union solidarity. In place of fighting the boss class they engage in internecine warfare via endless raids and other operations to weaken unions they seek to absorb.

Labor retains the power to fight back

However, that labor retains the power of massive mobilization is unquestioned. The initial response to Wisconsin Governor Walker’s legislative smashing of union rights was followed by 100,000 workers mobilizing in the state capitol and literally occupying the seat of government power. But after a week of sustained mobilization, the top union brass ended the occupation and shifted to the electoral arena in a failed effort to recall the governor.

This shift from workers power in the streets to the corporate-dominated, media-controlled electoral arena spelled the death knell to a once promising struggle. If the affected unions, in alliance with the whole labor movement, had gone on to close down the entire state—as opposed to the unions’ financing an electoral effort, in alliance with the anti-union Democrats no less—the outcome might have represented a historic defeat for the union busters. Instead, the union tops orchestrated a historic defeat for all working people.

Similarly, labor’s acquiescence to *Friedrichs*, signaled by its abject failure to even consider the massive mo-

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... Climate

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ings that can involve increasing numbers of representatives and activists from many different milieus, is, historically, the kind of operation that creates political spaces habitable by those taking their first steps into climate action. They are the kind of actions that have the most potential to bring new social layers, more powerful social layers, into motion.

Once a date is set for a common set of mass actions six months or so in advance, the promise of unity, and, thus, numbers that can demonstrate majority support for emergency measures, can inspire activists in every region of the country to go deeper and deeper into uncharted organizing territory, feeling some urgency to appear before union meetings, churches, neighborhood groups, school groups. A predictable multi-year calendar of dates for united mass actions can structure and regularize these pushes outward to broaden the movement, to unleash the power of the newly engaged, renew the pool of activists, and accelerate the development of new leaders. So why isn't there a call for a big spring mass action?

Is "direct action" a substitute for mass action?

In part, the major climate action organizations in the United States are not convinced that a regular calendar of united mass actions are central to movement-building in the manner described above. The general attitude seems to be "been there, done that."

The People's Climate March, whose organizers unfortunately eschewed the process of struggling over demands in deference to pro-Democratic Party institutional sponsors, is rightly but one-sidedly remembered as lacking political teeth. Instead of thinking about alternative ways to organize mass demonstrations that can continue the process of broadening the movement while at the same time insisting on its independence from the Democratic Party and on a democratic process that guarantees the selection of appropriate demands, many organizations are turning back to NVDA alone for the coming period.

A united-front mass action around clear and principled demands regarding fossil fuels and renewable energy does not have to devolve into a "big tent" absent real politics. On the contrary, the U.S. antiwar movement of the Vietnam and Iraq eras, the women's liberation movement of the 1970s, and many other broad historic movements for social change demonstrate the viability of this strategy.

Yet, 350, for example, has set its sights on mobilizing not the million or more that one might expect after the experience of the People's Climate March, but only "tens of thousands of people around the world" in actions that "disrupt" the fossil fuel industry's power (see BreakFree2016.org). Organizers are focusing all of their resources and energy on direct actions in which a relatively small number of activists would participate—several thousand each at about ten major global sites of extraction, including several in the United States. One of the models for the Break Free of Fossil Fuels effort is the August 2015 "occupation" of an RWE lignite coal mine in western Germany by 1500 protesters.

The strength of these actions, projected for the week of May 7-15, is that there will be concerted, press-worthy spectacles, coordinated internationally, that highlight some of the most important greenhouse-gas-producing industrial sites in the world and their impact, especially on the peoples of the global South. Organizers argue that the civil disobedience will "reflect the scale and urgency of this crisis in a way that governments can no longer ignore."

Activists advocating this singular focus for the spring also are convinced that the sight of 10,000 individuals willingly engaging in action that makes them subject to arrest will inspire greater engagement in the climate movement.

While it may be true that these theatrical and com-



(Above) September 2014 climate protest in Buenos Aires, as millions demonstrated worldwide.

elling direct actions will create some new activism in the United States, it is not true that witnessing the arrests of "good people" will naturally lead to growing and broadening the movement in the places where social power is the greatest. Neither is it necessarily seen as more threatening—and more likely to produce concessions—by the powers that be. Why is this so?

Movements force concessions from governments when they are perceived by the elites as potentially threatening to the stability of the social order. The definition of social order in capitalist society is the ability to make profits over the long term and to maintain a monopoly on political power via mainstream political parties controlled by big business. "Direct action" protests, in contrast, are generally aimed at changing the minds or policies of legislators, and the capitalist parties they serve, via displays of personal individual sacrifice, including spending a few days in jail or paying a fine.

The very logic of appealing to legislators, rather than threatening them with signs of a growing and mass rejection of their authority on energy matters, is flawed. Neither do activist arrests necessarily inspire others to get more active and committed. The manner in which the spectacle of civil disobedience affects potential activists is very much shaped by class and race and very specific historic experience.

Working-class struggle in history

Looking at history, civil disobedience actions have been singularly ineffectual in mobilizing large numbers of working people, including the ranks of organized labor, to engage in political protest. For many rank-and-file workers, civil disobedience is associated with their union mis-leaderships' failure to organize genuine fightbacks against the bosses and austerity measures. It has become commonplace for AFL-CIO officials, who have repeatedly refused to try to mobilize labor's collective power against companies demanding concessions or state governments gutting collective bargaining, to take the staff out for civil-disobedience actions and arrest as a photo opportunity.

For working-class militants who yearn to see their potential power unleashed, CD or NVDA, do not necessarily suggest a new political seriousness or an escalation of the struggle. For many in the African American community, the spectacle of mostly white, middle-class activists acting as if a symbolic arrest is particularly meaningful is just an irony of the racism of a system that keeps one in three young Black men—to great impact on their standard of living—in the criminal justice system at all times.

For immigrant workers, many of who are climate refugees without papers and for whom arrest will

likely lead to a deportation that might mean the loss of their children or spouse, the most effective moment of struggle was their 2006 collective action of millions in a day of action that they called a "strike." The question that climate activists must grapple with today is how to build a movement that masses of working people and the oppressed layers of society can claim as their own.

If we are to build the "movement of movements," or a movement that links the struggle to reduce global warming with the effort to get economic justice for those most vulnerable to the predatory fossil-fuel-driven capitalist economy, we must become sensitive to the history and logic of traditionally working-class forms of struggle, forms that are rooted in collective power, unity in action, and the avoidance of unnecessary risk until the moment when the base seems strong enough to prevail.

Generally, in the current period, the main task naturally centers on building huge demonstrations in the streets. Much later, after broad layers of the working class become deeply involved in protest, they might employ more decisive tactics, such as long-term strikes and plant occupations—which workers used to great effectiveness in organizing the industrial unions in the 1930s.

It is important that activists enter the spring protest season with eyes wide open and in a consciously analytical frame of mind, so that when it is over we can soberly evaluate the entire experience as a movement.

March for a clean energy revolution

One opportunity to make progress toward a greater understanding of the power and necessity of broad, politically independent, mass actions will be the July 24 March for a Clean Energy Revolution called by the Americans Against Fracking coalition. The march will take place in Philadelphia a day before the opening of the Democratic National Convention. The march is expected to mobilize thousands of protesters from East Coast communities, including Pennsylvanians whose lives have been disrupted by the fracking of the Marcellus Shale gas fields. It will demand a ban on fracking and other extreme fossil fuel extraction, a halt to the expansion of fracked gas pipelines and power plants, a ban on the export of liquefied natural gas, and a quick and just transition to a 100% renewable energy economy.

Activists who use this call to demonstrate the importance of mass action to broadening and growing the movement will also be making a contribution to the strategic discussion to come. ■

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bilization of its ranks, must be considered yet another terrible defeat.

This writer can offer no magical solutions to counter the immediate threat posed by an expected pro-Friedrichs Supreme Court decision. It is only necessary to note that today, given the increasingly rabid anti-worker attacks of a crisis-ridden U.S. capitalism, any important labor victory requires a level of unity, solidarity, dedication, and leadership never previously witnessed. A failing capitalism has no alternative other than to take yet another pound of flesh from the workers' movement and, indeed, from all other social struggles that fight for justice and freedom.

A revived labor movement can do no less than bring onto the field of battle the full force of its minions and

its natural allies and all the oppressed and exploited and champion their causes. In the course of doing so, its still significant power, exercised on behalf of all capitalism's victims, will inevitably win it the moral and organizational authority to become a central player in the historic battles in the years and decades ahead.

The forces to accomplish such a bold project will come in part from within the existing labor movement and will be led by a fighting class-struggle left wing, aimed at mobilizing the ranks to challenge the bosses and simultaneously oust the present bureaucratic mis-leadership that stands in the way.

At the same time, there is no doubt that—given the simple fact that almost 90 percent of working people today have no union whatsoever—the future mass struggles, as in the past, will emerge when bold lead-

ers, deeply rooted in working-class life, find a way to "organize the unorganized" while providing the political, organizational, and moral authority to win decisive victories. Inevitably, we should expect a powerful and necessary cross-fertilization between the future fighting forces both inside and outside the present union framework.

In the meantime, every inch forward, every body mobilized in struggles large and small, leads in the direction of a liberated working class. Every step backward, as is today's hurried course of the backward and privileged few who sap workers strength and divide its ranks, ensures yet another defeat. The best fighters today will find their way to the revolutionary politics and actions that prepare the ground for the inevitable future fight-back. Join Socialist Action! ■

Friedrichs: Threat to public-worker unions



BY JEFF MACKLER

Under capitalist law what was legal yesterday, indeed for the past 40 years, can become instantly illegal today. Such will likely be the outcome with regard to the lawsuit that guts public-employee union rights, which was filed by Los Angeles school teacher Rebecca Friedrichs and nine other California teachers. *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association (CTA)* is being waged with the help of several right-wing legal think-tank organizations that are in the business of advancing reactionary issues in the courts under the cloak of defending constitutional rights.

On Jan. 11, the U.S. Supreme Court during oral arguments in the case signaled its intention to deliver a body blow to public-employee unionism nationwide. The CTA today represents 375,000 school employees in California. But 9 million other unionized public employees, 36 percent of all public workers in the country, will be dramatically affected if the Supreme Court's expected May decision voids the right of unions to collect dues from all workers represented by union negotiated collective bargaining contracts.

During the hearing, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito indicated that he had the votes to overturn the court's "historic" 1977 *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* decision that affirmed the right of public employee unions to collect an agency fee equivalent to union dues from all workers covered by union contracts.

The *Abood* teachers unsuccessfully argued in 1977 that they "were unwilling to pay Union dues, that they opposed collective bargaining in the public sector, that the Union was engaged in various political and

other ideological activities that they did not approve and that were not collective bargaining activities." They demanded that "the agency shop clause in the union contract be declared invalid under state law and under the United States Constitution as a deprivation of their freedom of association protected by the First and Fourteenth amendment."

The justifying language employed by the Supreme Court in the *Abood* decision, the abiding necessity of "stable employer-union relations" (or "class peace," if you please) was an expression of the relationship of class forces at that time as opposed to government largess toward unions. The 1960s and '70s saw some 2000 militant and successful public-employee strikes, which more than doubled, if not tripled or quadrupled, teacher salaries over this period and otherwise improved both the quality of public education and the well-being of public workers, providing important and significantly expanding social services.

Public employees—previously serving as the "weak sister" of their private sector counterparts—used militant, repeated, and sometimes coordinated statewide strike actions to advance their cause and improve, often with important community support, public education. They inspired an entire generation with the credo that democratic, fighting, and socially conscious unions were critical to advancing the quality of life and the public good.

In the later 1970s, Michigan teachers alone engaged in more than 300 strikes in a single year. These decades saw an entire generation—millions of people—infused with the radicalism engendered by the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, entering a dramatically expanding public-service sector.

(Above) Teachers demonstrate in front of the Supreme Court building for a strong union.

At the same time, the Vietnam and civil rights era saw a tripling of funds going to public education and social services. With the U.S. emerging from World War II as the pre-eminent world power, with its "enemies" and "allies" alike devastated by an imperialist horror that took the lives of 80 million people, American capitalism had virtually no competition for world markets. Untouched by the ravages of war, U.S. capitalism, whose basic infrastructure was untouched and massively expanded, experienced an explosive growth cycle that lasted well into the 1970s. Monies flowing into public education and social services tripled. It was truly an era in which both "guns and butter," plus or minus some minor economic fluctuations, were the norm.

The previously largely non-union public sector experienced an unprecedented burst of unionization, in part fueled by a radicalized generation of youth getting their first jobs and a period in which political and economic concessions granted by a prosperous and internationally dominant and unchallenged U.S. capitalism became the new norm.

History and consequences of dues check-off

The ready recognition and granting of impressive contracts to public employees were accompanied by a dues-collecting system known as check-off, wherein federal, state, county, and municipal agencies regularly collected union dues from employees and turned the funds over to the official bargaining agent—the

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