

Bernie Sanders' demise: What are the lessons?



By JEFF MACKLER

U.S. primary election math pundits, as well as virtually the entire corporate media, insist, and with good reason, that Bernie Sanders has lost the Democratic Party presidential primary election contest. Indeed, following his nearly 13-point California primary loss to Hillary Clinton on June 7—and his losses the same day in four of the six states on this second “Super Tuesday”—few believe that Sanders’ insistence that carrying his fight to the July 25-28 Democratic Party Convention in Philadelphia will serve any end other than to “negotiate” some token “concessions” from corporate America that will be sufficient to placate Sanders’ supporters and reorient them to voting for Clinton.

A June 6 Associated Press report, no doubt disconcerting to Sanders’ supporters, consciously jumped the gun in declaring that Clinton was already “the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee for president.” AP based its report on its own polling of the 619 “superdelegates,” appointed by the Democratic Party hierarchy, 571 of whom presumably told AP pollsters that they were committed to Clinton.

Even before the June 7 California primary results became known late the next morning, Clinton proclaimed her victory as being the first time in the nation’s history when a major party had chosen a woman as its presidential nominee.

No corporate media outlet in the country bothered to advance the Sanders-promoted leap of faith

that he might yet sway Clinton’s “superdelegates” to change their minds on the grounds that most polls indicate that he would do far better against Trump than would Clinton in the November general election.

Indeed, these lifelong hardened Democratic Party machine politicians were Clinton’s and corporate America’s pre-election insurance policy that she would prevail.

Sanders indicated his allegiance to Clinton and the Democratic Party during his parting June 7 Santa Monica, Calif., speech, stating, “We will not allow right-wing Republicans to control our country. We will not allow Donald Trump to be president of the United States.”

Sanders’ Democratic Party candidacy has sparked a wide-ranging discussion and debate in the U.S. socialist movement, and in broader circles, that reveals an extraordinary level of confusion and disarray. Most of the U.S. socialist left believes that the Sanders campaign represents some sort of “political revolution” that merits support—in one form or another. We shall review this almost bewildering situation shortly.

To be sure, the Sanders phenomenon is simultaneously a bold recognition on the part of the U.S. ruling class at its highest levels that the Sanders campaign amounted to a plus rather than a minus with regard to maintaining the credibility of the rigged U.S. electoral system.

Nearly half of all qualified voters in the United States are not registered to vote. The vast majority

of non-voters are Black, Latino, youth, and the poor more generally, many of whom are consciously excluded due to reactionary legislation or are disillusioned with the entire electoral charade. Of the registered voters, only half actually cast their votes. Thus, no more than 12-13 percent of the electorate actually “determine” who will be president—that is, which of the two multi-billionaire-backed corporate candidates will occupy the nation’s top post and do their bidding. The working class, the 99 percent, have no horse in the race!

It is not the math with regard to the fact that Clinton still needs most of her “superdelegates” to win an outright majority at the July convention that motivates Sanders to “fight on.” Rather, it is Sanders’ conscious effort to lend credence to the Democrats as a viable instrument for social change at a time when this credibility is at an all-time low that keeps him in the game. “I think we are perpetuating the political revolution by significantly increasing the level of political activity that we’re seeing in this country. I think it is good for the United States of America and good for the Democratic Party to have a vigorous debate, to engage people in the political process” (emphasis added), Sanders told a National Public Radio interview last month.

Sanders insists that even if he loses the convention nomination (or perhaps declares for Clinton beforehand) he will fight for his delegates to have substan-

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Low-wage workers demand \$15 & a union

By WILLIAM WOOD

CHICAGO—Despite a torrential downpour and thunderstorms, more than 2000 low-wage workers and supporters marched up 22nd St. in Oak Brook, Ill., to the McDonald's national headquarters on May 25 to demand a \$15 minimum wage and union rights. The company's annual shareholders' meeting was held there the following day.

Earlier, several hundred low-wage workers and supporters rallied outside Chicago's Rock N' Roll McDonald's restaurant to kick off two days of protests. Many participants were striking McDonald's workers.

This is the third straight year that a major Fight for \$15 demonstration was held at a McDonald's shareholders meeting. As they did last year, anticipating a large crowd of militant protesters, McDonald's executives shut down the entire Oak Brook campus, telling employees to stay home for the day.

The action was organized by Fight for \$15 groups around the country, and supported by Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Many workers came from the Chicago area, while buses brought others from cities around the country, including Milwaukee, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Memphis, Little Rock, Ark., and Columbus, Ohio.

Tyree Johnson, 48, a Chicago McDonald's worker and Fight for \$15 organizer, explained: "I'm living in poverty after 24 years." He earned \$4.25 when he took his job in 1992 and now makes only \$10 an hour doing the same work he was assigned when he started.

Another participant was Shaun Goodwin, 38, from Little Rock, Ark. Goodwin, a McDonald's worker for two years and making \$8.50 per hour, told labor news website Progress Illinois: "We're trying to get \$15 and a union. Fifteen dollars is a livable wage." Noting that a \$15 minimum wage equals roughly \$31,000 per year, which happens to be the average cost of keeping a federal inmate in prison for one year, he asked: "You're saying I'm more valuable to the country incarcerated than I am working?"

Many low-wage workers from outside the fast-food industry attended the protest, and other supporters included contingents from SEIU, the United Steelworkers Union,



the Chicago Teachers Union, American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, and Black Lives Matter.

Antoinette Brown, 62, a janitor from St. Louis, works full time at minimum wage. She told the *Chicago Tribune*: "We really need to make more money. ... My husband is disabled, and it's hard to make it between his check and mine. ... It shouldn't be harder now when I'm 62."

Despite the nasty weather, hundreds of low-wage workers continued their protest and camped out overnight in a "tent city" outside McDonald's headquarters. They held another rally there the following day as corporate executives and shareholders gathered for their annual meeting.

In response to pressure from past protests, McDonald's made a slight change to its salary structure prior to its 2015 annual meeting, increasing wages for restaurant workers about \$1. But this change only applies to "company-owned" (non-franchise) restaurants. Ninety percent of McDonald's stores are franchise-owned, so the vast majority of its employees did not benefit from even this token wage increase.

McDonald's has claimed that they are not responsible for salaries of franchise-owned stores. However, the National Labor Relations Board has ruled otherwise, saying the cor-

porate headquarters does have liability. A court case is pending on this issue, which may have an impact on unionization efforts and wage negotiations.

Eater.com, reporting on the discussion inside the shareholders' meeting, said there was "much back-and-forth between shareholders arguing in favor of—and against—minimum wage increases." Sriram Madhusoodanan, an activist with Corporate Accountability International, told the shareholders that McDonald's "bankrolls the National Restaurant Association—the largest anti-worker lobby in the country" and "spends billions, all while miring workers in poverty."

On the other hand, Justin Danhof, General Counsel for the National Center for Public Policy Research, representing one of its executives who is a McDonald's shareholder, said McDonald's shouldn't support "individuals and organizations that would tax and regulate McDonald's out of existence." Eater.com reported: "Danhof argued that the company 'crowed about increasing wages' at a shareholder meeting last year, but the [wage] increase [given in 2015] did nothing to deter protesters. ... 'Look—the barbarians are back at the gate demanding more. They saw it as a sign of weakness which they could exploit.'" It's clear that Fight for \$15 organizing and mass protests are bringing pressure to bear on McDonald's. Also, the movement has won some gains this year with statewide decisions to increase the minimum wage in New York and California. However, these decisions raise wages very gradually over multiple years, and include various opt-out provisions that could nullify future wage increases. What's necessary is an unequivocal call for \$15 Now! Certainly, much more needs to be done to build a movement that can win. In addition to fast-food workers, the movement needs to continue to expand efforts nationally to draw in the wide range of other low-wage workers, including home-care and health-care workers, service industry workers, factory workers, airport ramp workers, logistics and warehouse workers, laborers, and a host of others. This involves uniting forces within the U.S. labor movement in an aggressive drive to unionize unorganized workers across a number of industries. ■

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

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

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

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

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

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VERIZON GETS A SHOCK

By BILL ONASCH

Strikes are the most basic and common expressions of clashes between workers and employers. Cartoonists often illustrate these fights as heavyweight boxers slugging it out in the ring. But within this metaphor there are few knockouts. Winners and losers are usually determined on points for the best punches and most adept footwork. In this century, most decisions—with occasional important exceptions—have gone to the boss.

The boss class has some inherent advantages in these conflicts during “normal” times. Especially in the private sector, they own the workplace and their property rights are vigorously enforced by courts—backed by armed police, sometimes even military forces.

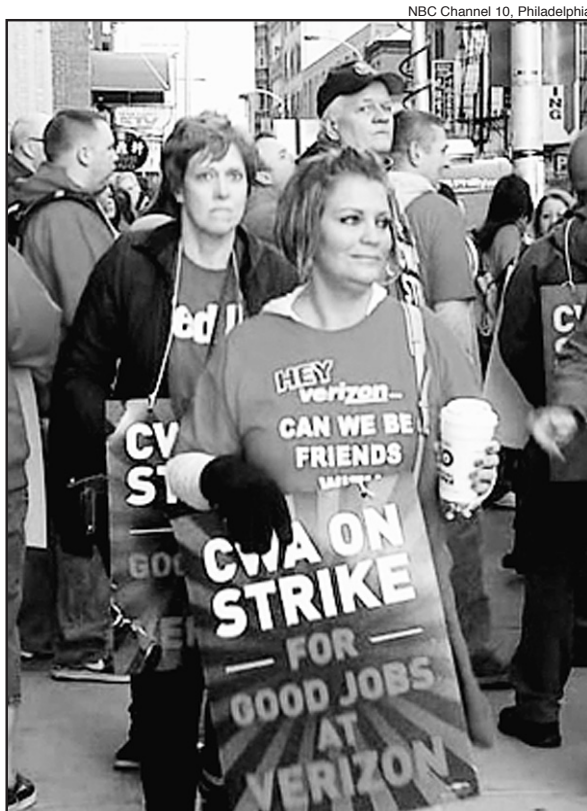
They have the legal right during “economic” strikes to permanently replace strikers with strikebreakers. Many of the most effective strike actions—such as mass picketing to block access to their workplace, secondary boycotts of other companies doing business with the struck employer, and “hot cargo” embargoes enforced by rail and truck workers refusing to move goods usually produced by strikers—are illegal under the Taft-Hartley Act, which covers most private sector workers.

Many public sector, agricultural, and domestic service workers have no legal rights at all to collective bargaining. Major industrial corporations today have alternative sources of production to reduce a strike’s impact on their “bottom line.” These formidable challenges have succeeded in reducing the numbers and length of strikes in the United States over the last few decades—and especially during this century.

But some modest or partial strike victories in recent years—Temple University Hospital nurses, Chicago teachers, oil workers national agreement, Kohler—have inspired a few unions to continue this tactic even as all the pundits tell them that their shrinking unions are now irrelevant and strikes are futile.

The Borg-like so-called “management” of Verizon apparently believed its own ruling-class propaganda. After months of unproductive “bargaining,” it presented an outrageous “last, best, and final” offer to the Communications Workers of America, and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, representing 39,000 workers in Verizon’s landline sector in Eastern states ranging from New England to Virginia.

The Verizon bosses might have expected that the workers would capitulate. The last strike had to be wound up after only two weeks—with little to show for the effort. Labor experts retained by Verizon undoubtedly counseled them that historically unions have been reluctant to call major strikes during a presidential election year. The bureaucracy that sits



atop most American unions does not want to embarrass their Democrat “friends.” In fact, its top priority over the next five months is hustling votes for the Donkeys. Verizon’s hubris essentially challenged the unions to “bring it on.”

Though not a hormonal response to a bully’s trash talk, the Verizon workers did indeed bring it on. First of all, they remembered what the company tried to ignore—the boss had been paying them because they needed their work. The landlines can’t be moved to Mexico and there aren’t enough qualified white shirts to keep up with installations, repairs, or even the call centers for long. And efforts to employ “temporary replacements” fell far short of expectations.

The striking unions demonstrated their numbers and determination from Day One, with rallies of thousands in the major cities served by the landlines. And their goals of saving and expanding good jobs were well received by the working-class public.

The unions also recognized the vulnerability of the Verizon “brand” in the highly competitive national wireless market. CWA, along with Jobs with Justice, and other union and community allies conducted informational pickets at Verizon wireless retail stores across the country.

The unions didn’t exactly try to shield their Democrat friends from a boisterous strike. CWA is a strong backer of Bernie Sanders while the IBEW is for Hillary Clinton. Both candidates were obligated to make

well publicized, though token, visits to the picket lines.

About halfway into the six-week strike, articles started appearing in papers such as *The Wall Street Journal* reporting that Verizon was taking a hard hit from the strike. To both mend some fences with unions and to give Verizon a dignified path to ending the strike, the Obama administration intervened. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez—who has been mentioned as a possible running mate with Hillary Clinton—personally brokered mediation talks that led to the settlement.

The deal was not completely free of union concessions. Before the strike, the unions had agreed to additional “cost-sharing” of health insurance. And other concessions might be hidden in the implementation of the new contract, as is the case with so many other settlements negotiated today under unfavorable conditions. But virtually all of the apparent takeaways in the company’s “final offer” were dropped, and some substantial gains for the workers were won. These include:

- Instead of more outsourcing of call center jobs, 1300 new jobs will be added.
- Instead of a cap on pensions, there will be three one-percent increases in defined benefits.
- A modest number of both retail store workers and technicians in the wireless division are now included in the contract for the first time.
- Some contracting-out initiatives will be reversed, leading to a 25 percent increase in union pole jobs in New York City.
- There will be \$1250 signing bonuses and a guarantee of at least \$700 annual profit-sharing.
- A 3 percent raise in wages takes effect immediately, and there will be three more 2.5 percent increases over the life of the four-year contract.

What do the ringside judges think of this bout? The bosses’ media, other union officials, and socialist commentators all seem to join in a unanimous decision that the striking unions appear to have won on points.

But the war at Verizon will continue. The company will intensify their efforts to spin off the landline division to concentrate on the more profitable wireless sector. And they will likely bitterly resist union efforts to expand the beachhead they now have in wireless through further organizing. But the bosses will now have to deal with more seasoned and self-confident unions.

Of course, strikes are not always appropriate in every situation. But Verizon is a fresh example that well-prepared strikes can still be effective in beating back boss attacks and can even win gains in pay and conditions. It is the attempts by too many unions to seek “partnership” with the employers, and granting concessions to “save jobs,” that are futile. ■

LABOR BRIEFING

By BILL ONASCH

• **Nurses may strike over own health care.** On June 6, nurses for five Allina hospitals in Minnesota “overwhelmingly” voted to reject a proposed three-year contract that would have eliminated union-backed health insurance and switched the nurses to a corporate plan. The union estimates the move would cost their members thousands of dollars in new out-of-pocket expenses.

About 800 off-duty Allina Health Care RNs, members of the Minnesota Nurses Association, conducted an informational picket on May 18, alerting the public of a possible strike. Allina owns Abbott Northwestern Hospital/Phillips Eye Institute in Minneapolis, Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids, United Hospital in St. Paul, and Unity Hospital in Fridley.

Close to 4900 nurses are represented by MNA at those hospitals, but the contract also affects nurses at Allina facilities from New Ulm to Owatonna to Buffalo, Minn., for a total of 5800. The MNA is a National Nurses United affiliate.

• **More voice for low-wage workers.** In an unusual move, the Service Employees International Union has invited Fast

Food workers who have been battling for “15 Dollars an Hour and a Union” to become SEIU members even though the union doesn’t yet have certified bargaining rights for any of them. These new members will not be required to pay dues until they have secured union contracts. SEIU has been a major backer of these struggles—and those of many other low-wage workers. This organizational innovation is promoted as a way for the workers to have greater participation in planning strategy and tactics.

• **Back to the future.** Also of note at SEIU’s recent convention was a unanimously adopted resolution supporting Canadian-style single-payer health care in the U.S. and Puerto Rico—a reform supported by Socialist Action as a transition to fully socialized medicine. That had long been the union’s position until it was arbitrarily reversed by previous SEIU president Andy Stern, who attacked single-payer in his zealous support of Obama’s Abominable Care Act. This reaffirmation is particularly interesting because while single-payer has been a key plank in Bernie Sanders’ quest for the Democratic presidential nomination, SEIU backs Hillary Clinton—who dis-



(Left) Minnesota nurses on picket line alert public of possible strike action.

Park Blocks the right to join a labor union. ... PSU’s union will be affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and the American Association of University Professors.” And the *Ithaca Voice* announced, “Cornell bucked a trend among private universities on Wednesday by signing an agreement that would allow its roughly 2,300 graduate students to hold an election to form a collective bargaining union.”

• **Remedial walking.** Along with public-sector employees, and domestic-service workers, farm labor has always been specifically excluded from federal labor law in the United States.

They also lack minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Only a handful of states have (poorly enforced) agricultural labor laws. Last month, dozens of farm workers and supporters began a 200-mile walk from Long Island, culminating in a big rally in Albany, demanding that the New York legislature pass a Farm Worker Bill of Rights. ■

misses it as pie-in-the-sky.

• **Grads organize.** Unionization efforts among post-grad teaching and research assistants at both public and private campuses continue to show progress. The Portland *Oregonian* reports, “Oregon’s Employment Relations Board certified Portland State University’s PSU’s Graduate Employees Union this week, granting 800 administrative, teaching and research assistants on the



Nabisco workers protest layoffs and downsizing

By MARK UGOLINI

A spirited and determined group of about 150 current and former Nabisco bakery workers and their supporters demonstrated on May 18 at Mondelez International's annual shareholder meeting in Lincolnshire, Ill. Workers protested the company's decision to lay off 600 of the 1200 workers at its South-west side Chicago plant.

Mondelez International is the parent company of Nabisco, which makes snack foods including Oreo cookies and Ritz crackers. They have recently opened a modern plant in Salinas, Mexico, where they have invested \$130 million, and plan to transfer some of the Chicago Nabisco plant's production there. In 2015, Mondelez posted over \$30 billion in revenue.

The protest was organized by the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) and its Chicago Local 300, which represents most of the workers at the Chicago plant.

BCTGM workers from locals in Cleveland; Atlanta,

Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Battle Creek, Mich., participated, as well as supporters from the Chicago Teachers Union, UAW local 551, Fight for \$15, and Jobs for Justice.

Prior to a rally, I spoke with BCTGM Local 300 President Edward Burpo, who described what the union is facing: "277 received their notification of pink slip on Jan. 19. They were let go on March 23. Another 43 have received their notification of pink slip and they are designated to be let go on May 27." He told me that the union expects another round of layoffs prior to Labor Day, and by the end of the year a total of 600 bakery workers will have lost their jobs.

"They are downsizing the plant itself," Burpo said, "At the end of July we should be downsized from 17 lines to six, and the equipment is already being taken out."

Workers at the protest were demanding that Mondelez shareholders reverse the decision of CEO Irene Rosenfeld and reinstate the laid-off workers. A delegation of union members went inside the shareholders meeting to present their case.

Reporting on the shareholders meeting, the *Chica-*

go Tribune said that for the first time since the layoffs were announced, Rosenfeld fielded questions from laid-off workers. Many of the questions pertained to the company's massive profits and Rosenfeld's obscenely high compensation.

At the rally outside Jethro Head, International Vice-President of BCTGM-Midwest told the crowd: "We are here this morning to identify the core of corporate greed. ... In essence we are here to indict Mondelez-Nabisco [CEO] Irene Rosenfeld for corporate gluttony, an obsessive and outrageous feeding at America's economic trough. Today, Irene Rosenfeld will receive another \$20 million payday. That means she will have been paid \$185 million in the last nine years. That ain't all, my sisters and brothers. In her back pocket she's got another \$35 million pension."

I spoke briefly with 51-year-old Rodney Beasley, one of the laid-off workers hoping his job and those of his co-workers would be reinstated. Beasley worked eight years for Nabisco, and prior to that, 23 years with Nabisco's sister company, Entenmann's Bakery. He told me: "They [the union] are doing whatever they can to keep our jobs. Right now they are currently in negotiations with the company ... on the contract and to get as many of us back to work as possible. ... That's our hope and our prayer."

Apparently, Rosenfeld has already dashed these hopes. The *Chicago Tribune* reported on her comments during the shareholders meeting: "Rosenfeld emphasized that the jobs were cut and not coming back."

Unfortunately, some speakers and some signs and banners at the rally conveyed a nationalistic "America First" and protectionist "Buy American" tone. Said Jethro Head, reflecting the view of the International union leadership: "Let's send a message across the country—Do Not Buy Mexican-made Nabisco Products!" He then led the crowd in chanting, "Mexico Hell No!" Many in the crowd did not participate in this chant.

The problem with this approach is that it appeals to American chauvinism, and paints Mexican workers as the enemy of working people in this country. It poses the issue as one of competition between Mexican and U.S. workers, and aids ruling-class efforts to divide working people from each other.

In fact, our struggle is one with Mexican workers in demanding that our capitalist governments provide good jobs for all and union rights regardless of which side of the boarder we happen to live on. Revolutionary socialists are internationalists, working to build solidarity among workers everywhere.

To fight against unemployment and for good paying jobs, we demand government-funded public-works programs. These can rebuild badly needed infrastructure, build things we need—like housing and schools—and put millions of unemployed back to work at union wages.

This program includes immigrant workers as well. Part of the struggle is to demand an end to deportations and all forms of scapegoating of immigrant workers, and to extend to them "legal protections" afforded to other citizens. ■

Chicago Teachers Union considers strike

By MARK UGOLINI

Although a 30-day "cooling-off period" is now expired, and a teachers strike is allowed per state law, the May 4 Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) House of Delegates meeting did not set a strike date. The delegates discussed a new aspect of their campaign to press Chicago's City Council and Mayor to provide funding necessary to operate public schools.

The CTU also announced that if Democratic Party Mayor Rahm Emanuel's appointed school board decides to unilaterally cancel a 7 percent pension benefit, as school board officials threatened last February, an emergency House of Delegates meeting would be called to provide the required 10-day notice and set a strike date.

The CTU membership has already authorized a strike. If one is called, the union will decide whether the strike will occur before the end of the current school year (June 21), or at the start of the fall term in September.

CTU has been without a contract since June 30, 2015, when the contract reached after the seven-day strike of September 2012 expired. Talks between Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and CTU have been

ongoing for the past 18 months.

On April 16, a fact finder, Steven Bierig, recommended that the parties reconsider an old CPS contract offer that had already been unanimously rejected by the CTU bargaining team. On the same day the CTU formally rejected the proposal, making it a "dead letter" and thus starting a 30-day countdown to a possible strike.

The House of Delegates gave union officers authority to immediately reject the fact-finding report if its conclusions offered "no substantial breakthrough in terms of class-size limits, reasonable economics, or the closure of devastating loopholes."

A CTU press release explains: "The previously-rejected contract proposal made by CPS on January 29 would result in teachers taking home less in earnings at the end of the proposed four-year contract than they earn today." The proposal would also phase out over two years a 7 percent CPS pension contribution, and limit salary "steps and lanes" increases. Both of these have been features of teacher contracts over many years, and remain key issues for the teachers.

Prior to the May 4 House of Delegates meeting, the CTU released details of a \$502 million CPS "revenue recovery

package," calling on Emanuel and the city council to act on its recommendations.

"We have identified half a billion dollars that can triage the bleeding at CPS," said CTU Vice President Jesse Sharkey. "We are asking the mayor and aldermen to implement what we believe is a solid package of financial emergency supports to ensure our district does not go belly up ... our revenue recovery package is necessary right now to stave off mass layoffs, school closings and more furloughs that will wreak havoc on our students and classrooms. Over the next few weeks we'll be lobbying every city council member to support this plan."

In a CTU press release the union proposes the state government enact a progressive tax structure, a Millionaire's Tax, and a financial transaction tax. Locally, the union proposes that the mayor and city council "consider a number of local revenue options, which the City of Chicago city council could approve."

This \$502 million package would reinstate a Corporate Employer "Head Tax"; and initiate a Personal Property Lease Tax, a Ride Sharing Tax on services like UBER and LYFT, a Hotel Accommodations Tax, a Vehicle Fuel Tax, and a Commercial Property Tax Assessment.

It would also allocate surplus funds from Tax Increment Financing (TIF) accounts. TIF financing is a tool used by the city of Chicago to promote business investment. Currently, TIF accounts, funded from local property taxes, have an estimated surplus of up to \$350 million.

The attack on the CTU is clearly part of a broader, statewide bipartisan assault on union rights, public education, and social services. The CTU is in the crosshairs of both a Republican governor's "Turn-around Agenda" and a Democratic Party mayor's drive to privatize schools and seriously weaken unions.

The April 1 Day of Action and one-Day CTU strike was a powerful expression of solidarity of Chicago teachers and their supporters around the city and throughout the county. More than 50 unions, community groups, and student organizations participated in the day of protests, and nearly 20,000 teachers and supporters took to the streets in a late-afternoon mass demonstration to stand up for teachers and defend all those targeted by this statewide, bipartisan austerity offensive.

The path forward involves building on this success, deepening solidarity among

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Entrapped Somali youth on trial

By KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

The local capitalist media dubbed it, “Minnesota’s Terror Trial.” Guled Ali Omar, Mohamed Abdihamid Farah, and Abdirahman Yasin Daud were allegedly part of a massive plot to travel to Syria in order to join ISIS (“ISIL”). The “conspiracy” was said to involve at least 10 young Somali men, all residents of the Twin Cities. One of these men, Abdi Nur, was charged in absentia, having made it to Syria in late May of 2014. His presence loomed large over Judge Michael Davis’ courtroom in downtown Minneapolis.

Intending to join a “designated foreign terrorist organization” is considered “providing material support” and carries a possible 15-year jail sentence. An even more serious charge, conspiracy to murder outside the United States, was later added, requiring the prosecution to prove the young men actually intended to kill for ISIL. This charge carries a possible life sentence.

The arrests started in February 2015 and continued throughout the year. All the young men have been in custody since being arrested. Six of the nine in jail succumbed to the enormous pressure that the threat of life in prison exerts and pleaded guilty to lesser charges before the trial started.

To those who know them, and those who are familiar with the workings of this country’s injustice system, it is clear that these young men were entrapped. At well-attended weekly support rallies throughout the trial, family and community members joined social justice activists in denouncing this baseless prosecution.

Omar, Farah, and Daud are the most recent victims of the U.S. War on Terror, victims of a capitalist media bent on sensationalist demonization, victims of the insidious Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program, victims of a system riddled with bias, and victims of U.S. Attorney Andrew Luger’s political ambitions. They are victims who never hurt a soul, who have never been in trouble with the law before, and who might spend the rest of their lives in jail.

The trial in the case of United States versus Farah, Daud and Omar lasted four weeks (from the first day of jury selection on May 9, to the rendering of the verdict on June 3) and garnered substantial national and international attention as the largest “ISIL related” prosecution to go to trial. Much of the attention was highly sensationalized by the profit-driven media, while many of those reporting were not even present for the trial itself.

Most of our readers will know by now that the defendants were found guilty on virtually all of the 10 counts charged. They were found guilty of conspiracy to murder outside the United States, which carries a possible life sentence. There was a single “not guilty” verdict—on the charge of perjury against Daud. Sentencing will likely occur in July, although no date has been set as we go to press.

“Mainstream” media consumers cannot be faulted for only knowing the government’s side of the story. The media did report that the jury was “all white” but failed to mention that jurors were largely drawn from outside the Twin Cities and were middle aged, with virtually no travel outside the United States and limited experience with people from other races, cultures, or ethnicities.

The entire jury pool of 101 people had only three Blacks and only one “age” peer of the defendants. None of them made it onto the jury itself.

It is also worth noting that the so-called “justice” system requires jurors who are almost entirely uninformed about the issues of the day. This is supposed to create “blank slates” who will render verdicts based solely on the evidence presented in the courtroom and the law as explained to them by the judge. But the charges in this case were entirely politically motivated. The young men were charged for caring about the plight of their fellow Muslims on the other side of the globe and discussing what could be done.

A jury of their peers would not be uninformed and disconnected but deeply engaged, political people. The right to be tried by a jury of your peers simply did not apply in this case.

What did the prosecution write on these “blank slates”? They presented an expert who was paid \$415 an hour (probably more than \$15,000 for close to 40 hours of work including testimony at trial) to teach the jury about Syria and religious extremist groups, especially ISIL. Interestingly, after the prosecution questioned this expert for more than a day and a half, the second defense lawyer had his questioning interrupted by the judge who said: “This witness has been



on the stand for a long time. This is all just historical background. Let’s wrap this up rather quickly.”

When the defense did finish up quite quickly, mostly inserting that the conflict is complicated, that many from the West who wanted to fight Assad and provide humanitarian assistance to Muslim victims would be drawn in by ISIL’s slick marketing, that he was neither fluent in Arabic or an expert on Islam, the judge interposed again asking the expert his own questions—about what happened in Kobane, about the seeming failure of the U.S. vetting of opposition groups, etc.

The prosecution’s goal throughout was to smear the defendants by supposed association. From their opening argument power point (every slide on a black “ISIL” flag backdrop), to an abundance of “exhibits” creating the impression of a thorough investigation but actually proving nothing, to numerous shocking ISIL videos depicting gruesome killings of their captured enemies, the prosecution succeeded in insinuating that defendants halfway around the world are somehow responsible for ISIL’s behavior.

A manager from Minnesota Pro Paintball testified because the prosecution alleged the young men played paintball several times as “training” to prepare for their mission. The defense could only poke holes after the fact, which they repeatedly did.

The star witnesses for the prosecution were, of course, the two cooperating defendants and especially the paid informant / collaborator. All three had a history of lying under oath (to grand juries and prosecutors even after they were supposedly cooperating) and seemed clearly to have altered their stories in the service of what the prosecution needed to make their specific case against these defendants. Testimony that seemed well-rehearsed and polished on direct examination seemed to crumble under the weight of defense questioning.

Abdirahman Bashir went from being the most obvious ISIL recruit to the most effective FBI collaborator. It was Bashir who had four cousins fighting in Syria. He was the one with all the contacts. He says he had a change of heart when his cousins died in Syria, but his true conversion came when he was hired on by the FBI. In December 2014 he was unemployed. His prior best job paid him \$12 an hour. Early in January 2015 he officially began to work for the government. They paid him \$4000 in cash every month. They bought him a car, hotel rooms, meals, and paid assorted other expenses for a total of over \$119,000 in compensation. It was the best job he could ever hope to have; he now hopes for a career in law enforcement.

Bashir taped conversations with his former friends. He controlled the “on/off” switch on the recording device. He provided the translation (the conversation is often inaudible and frequently in Somali, with occasional words or phrases in Arabic) and transcription. The product of his efforts is the hours and hours of audio “evidence,” selected excerpts of which were played in court.

Bashir and his “colleagues” at the FBI created a plot to purchase fake passports, facilitating travel that

(Photo, from left to right) Ayan Farah (mother of Mohamed Farah), Farhiyo Mohamed (mother of Abdirahman Daud), Fadumo Hussein (mother of Guled Omar), and Sadik Warfa of Global Somali Diaspora, addressing the press one day after court.

would generally be impossible. When obstacles appeared, Bashir and the FBI overcame them. When defendants appeared unwilling, Bashir bullied them. Together this all amounts to entrapment.

The two cooperating defendants were the “book-ends” on the trial. Cooperators must “provide substantial assistance” to the prosecution if they hope to have their potential sentences (held over their heads throughout) reduced by the judge. The most important role they played was enabling the prosecution to bring numerous, horrific ISIL videos into evidence.

By testifying that they watched and discussed these videos with the defendants, extremely prejudicial evidence was admitted over repeated defense objections. The impact of these videos cannot be overstated. And the impact is irreversible.

The defense thoroughly impeached these witnesses, showing them to be self-interested liars. But the jury saw the videos.

In the end it didn’t matter that none of these young men committed the violent acts depicted in video after video. It didn’t matter that they never committed any violent acts at all. It didn’t even matter whether or not they had actually seen the videos and how they actually felt about their content. It isn’t even guilt by association. It is guilt by fear and innuendo. And it might be enough to send these young men to prison for the rest of their lives. ■

HEARING FOR RASMEA

Palestine activist Rasmae Odeh was convicted of a politically motivated immigration violation in 2014, and sentenced last year to 18 months in prison and deportation.

Her defense scored a victory in February when the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals sent her case back to trial judge Gershwin Drain, saying he had wrongfully barred the critical testimony of a torture expert.

Rasmae was not allowed to tell the entire story of her arrest and forced confession in Palestine in 1969, when she endured over three weeks of vicious sexual, physical, and psychological torture at the hands of the Israeli military.

Judge Drain scheduled the status hearing to take place in chambers on June 13 in Detroit. The defense committee plans a rally in front of the courthouse. ■

Workers Party's failure sets stage for coup in Brazil

Ueslei Marcelino / Reuters



(Left) Impeached President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff.

By TATIANA COZZARELLI and
LEANDRO LANFREDI

The following article is reprinted from *Left Voice*, a journal initiated by the Trotskyist Faction-Fourth International, which is associated with the PTS (Socialist Workers Party) in Argentina.

In mid-April, Brazil's House of Representatives voted in favor of President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment. What took place was a barbaric scene, with countless speeches by reactionary politicians who dedicated their vote to God, family, and the police. Right-wing political leaders also spoke out against the president, accusing her not only of corruption, but also of creating a "communist dictatorship" in the country.

It is clear that the push for impeachment has nothing to do with the formal charges of budget mismanagement brought against Dilma; in fact, this was hardly mentioned. Instead, it is an attempt to break with Brazil's constitution and disregard the outcome of an election. It is a coup orchestrated by a corrupt right wing to seize political power from the Workers' Party (PT).

More than likely, the Senate will ratify the impeachment and oust Dilma, who will likely be succeeded by Michel Temer, her vice-president from the PMDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party). [Temer became president on May 12.—editors] This will secure the success of a right-wing coup.

The coup was planned and executed by reactionary political parties, the Chamber of Commerce and oligarchical mass media. Globo, the largest TV and news channel in Brazil, has actively supported right-wing measures throughout the process. From 1964 to 1985, it served as a propaganda tool for the military dictatorship. Despite its subsequent apology for supporting the dictatorship, today it continues its reactionary role. Globo anchors promoted the pro-impeachment demonstrations and called for the population to participate. These protests got round-the-clock coverage, while the struggles of workers and left forces got little airtime.

The coup was led by the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), a right-wing party that previously backed the PT and had the Vice Presidency under Dilma. It was also supported by the PT's right-wing neoliberal opposition, the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB). The impeachment was facilitated by Brazil's judicial system through orchestrated, selective attacks against the PT while ignoring charges against other parties involved in the Petrobras scan-

Lula used to say, 'All sides are winning,' yet this concealed the underlying contradictions. The working class was merely scraping by while the wealthy were profiting.

dal, the largest corruption scandal in Brazil's history.

How did the coup come about and how did the once-popular PT lose the reigns of power? It is necessary to answer these questions before examining the deep political and economic crisis the country is facing. The coup will not resolve this underlying crisis. On the contrary, growing tensions and conflicts are likely to emerge. At this historic moment, the situation in Brazil poses a tremendous challenge for revolutionary socialists.

The failure of class conciliation

The PT emerged out of working-class struggle. In the early 1980s, metalworker strikes in Sao Paulo marked the end of the dictatorship's complete control over workers and labor. Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva, then president of the steelworkers' union, became a major figure in the labor movement during these strikes. He went on to create the Workers' Party as well as the CUT (national labor confederation), creating a division between the PT's political party and their labor organization, in other words, between the political superstructure and labor's economic struggles.

Although the PT was built on workers' support, it has employed a politics of class-conciliation. The PT's 13 years in the presidency have been marked by minor social welfare measures that assisted people in extreme poverty. In the process, millions of precarious jobs were generated. PT measures broadened the consumer market and provided larger sections of the population with access to credit, giving the illusion of more prosperity than there actually was.

It is not uncommon for Brazilians to say that President Lula eliminated starvation, or for poor people to say that thanks to the Workers' Party, they can buy meat to eat with their rice. The PT years greatly expanded access to a university education.

At the same time, however, the education system was highly privatized; large government loans were handed over to corporate executives. Free public uni-

versity education has limited spaces and students are selected based on a highly competitive standardized test. Therefore, most spots are taken by students from wealthy families who can afford test prep classes and quality private schools, making free public education inaccessible to the vast majority of Brazil's working class.

During the Lula years, everything seemed in order: he used to say, "All sides are winning," yet this concealed the underlying contradictions. The working class was scraping by, while the wealthy were profiting. The measures that alleviated the conditions of the working class were minimal compared to the massive profits raked in by the banks, commodity industries and industries in general.

Of the 10 million jobs created during Lula's two terms, over 90 percent paid less than 1,500 reais per month (about \$450 USD). Furthermore, the PT implemented pension reforms that obligated public employees work more years before retirement. Even prior to taking executive office, the PT held local and statewide positions and operated like any other neoliberal party, privatizing industries and betraying strikes.

The PT's tenuous class-conciliation pact was also challenged by the left. Resisting austerity measures (i.e., fare hikes) and fueled by a generalized discontent with political and economic conditions, the masses, the left, youth, and workers took to the streets and challenged the whole political class in the momentous protests of June 2013—late in President Dilma's first term.

As the economic crisis deepened, the PT could no longer maintain the social pact that it represented. There had emerged a crisis characterized by growing budget deficits, a gigantic corruption scandal involving one of the most prominent corporations, and a decrease in the price of commodities.

From December 2015 to April, over one million workers joined the ranks of the unemployed; the unemployment rate jumped from 6 percent to over 10 percent in less than two years. The crisis has made it impossible for all sides to "win" or even maintain the illusion that they are winning. The PT has made clear that they will implement cuts and austerity measures, forcing workers to pay for the economic crisis.

Aggravating this harsh economic U-turn from prosperity to crisis, a political reversal has also taken place: from the PT's dominant political position to Dilma's ongoing impeachment. Dilma Rousseff was re-elected in October 2014 while campaigning on an anti-austerity platform. However, once in office she implemented harsh austerity. She even cut down many of the education reforms that the PT implemented—in one case, cutting the available seats in the technical college program by half.

Social discontent from these policies has caused Dilma's approval rating to plummet to the lowest levels in decades (roughly 10 percent). The well-off middle class, not as affected by the economic situation as the poor, began to mobilize a year ago. Protests were organized by the PSDB, right-wing opposition of the PT, which refused to accept the election results. Propelled by the mass media and widespread indignation over corruption practices, enormous crowds demanded Dilma's removal. They praised the judiciary heroes cooked up by the media and railed against the left. Some even praised the military dictatorship.

In the process, the PT's allies defected. Above all, they were pressured by powerful business lobbies

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and perceived a situation in which the media, the judiciary powers, and sectors of the middle class supported Dilma's impeachment. All the right-wing and center parties that once supported the government joined the opposition and pushed for impeachment trials. Most importantly, Michel Temer's PMDB began to call for impeachment.

It is notable that the impeachment was orchestrated by the PT's political allies. In the past, these right-wing figures were not opposed or criticized by the PT government, which used this alliance of convenience to gain the presidency. The PT dug its own grave by allying with these forces to maintain power. Its strategy of class conciliation has proven an utter and complete failure, with its former right-wing allies spearheading impeachment efforts and the working class nowhere to be seen.

PT refuses to mobilize workers against coup

The division between the PT's political party and its labor organization, CUT, was maintained during the impeachment proceedings. In the past, the Brazilian working class has engaged in strikes and work stoppages against cutoffs and other measures taken by the bosses or the government. The CUT engaged in these struggles only when given great pressure by its base to organize an action. Likewise, the CUT did not put up a real fight against the current right wing coup, largely because the PT did not want them to.

The CUT called for inoffensive rallies that were more spectacle than struggle. This is particularly egregious when one considers that the CUT has approximately 25 million workers in its ranks, within strategic sectors of the economy, including metal, oil, and banking sector workers. Yet CUT did not call for a single strike, assembly or picket—working-class methods of struggle to challenge the impeachment.

Why would the PT, a party that emerged from the great metal-worker strikes of the '80s refrain from employing all of the weapons in its arsenal to fight the coup? Why wouldn't the party use the same methods that brought it into existence? The answer is because the PT is implementing budget cuts and privatization, attacking workers and making them pay for the economic crisis. If the PT were to unleash the power of the working class to fight against the impeachment, who is to say that they won't fight against the PT and their austerity measures next?

CUT opened the way for the coup by its lack of resistance, showing more fear of working-class radicalization than of the right-wing coup. Instead of employing the CUT to fight against the impeachment, Lula attempted to form more coalitions by unsuccessfully trying to buy off right-wing representatives.

Despite the PT's dismal mobilizations, many Brazilians opposed the impeachment. A substantial portion of the coup's opposition did not support Dilma's government, but rather, demanded democracy and were against the right wing. Many correctly understood that the coup would bring to power a more aggressive, unelected austerity government.

The challenges facing Temer

The most likely scenario is that Vice President Temer will become president and enact a series of new cuts. Last November, Temer and the PMDB published a document called the "Bridge to the Future," which outlined strict austerity measures, such as reforming labor laws, dismantling workers' rights, raising the retirement age, and privatizing public health and education.

The big media corporations in the country demand that the upcoming government implement such a program right away and "shock" the nation in 10 days, much like Argentina's neoliberal Mauricio Macri. Forecasting difficulties, they advise him to implement the measures by presidential decree—authoritarian measures for an unelected President Temer.

Yet Temer potentially faces various obstacles that will weaken his presidency. First, the working class could finally become a protagonist by fighting against austerity measures. Although the CUT did not mobilize to keep Dilma in power, the union may be forced to mobilize against the cuts due to growing workers' discontent. Also, the international media has not expressed support for the impeachment, further weakening the strength of a possible Temer government.

Furthermore, Temer has been implicated in the Petrobras corruption probe and investigations into election finance practices. Both issues could bring about a new impeachment process and the cancellation of his presidency by Brazil's Electoral Court, which would give way to new presidential elections. However, at this moment, that situation doesn't seem to be plausible. Brazil's elite wants a strong government as quickly as possible in order to implement



(Above) Protesters lampoon Dilma Rousseff and Luiz Ignacio da Silva (Lula), former president and founder of the Workers Party (PT).

austerity measures.

With midterm elections coming up next year, Temer is in a difficult position. His support from the bourgeoisie is based on his ability to implement austerity measures, but these measures could prove detrimental to PMDB's popularity in the midterm elections.

Another challenge for the Temer government is a floundering economy that austerity measures cannot fix. What is more likely is that there will be further economic recession, possibly deepening into an economic depression. Based on economic forecasts, by the end of 2016 the country's GDP will have fallen 9 percent since 2014.

One thing is certain: there is growing resistance against austerity measures. Students have occupied nearly 100 schools in Rio de Janeiro in support of teachers who have been on a month-long strike demanding increased wages and denouncing constant delays in pension distributions. Throughout the country, university students are fighting against cuts to the education budget, and voting to strike and mobilize against the presidential impeachment. These actions point a way towards fighting the impeachment without supporting the PT government and its cuts.

The defeat of the PT is not synonymous with the defeat of Brazil's working class. The worsening economic situation and Temer's anticipated austerity measures will be a major test for Latin America's largest working class.

Drawing revolutionary lessons

It is clear to socialists that Lula and his successor Dilma are responsible for the privatization of Brazil's oil, increased unemployment, billions in cuts to education and health care, and for the growth of the reactionary figures who led the coup. The left must fight these cuts. Yet opposing the PT and its austerity program does not mean supporting a right-wing coup. While this seems to be an obvious difference, many Brazilian socialists have fallen into this logic.

The most important group to the left of the PT, the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), closed ranks with the PT and used their parliamentary leaders to denounce the coup. Yet like the PT, they demanded absolutely no action from the labor unions.

However, within the PSOL, other sectors acted differently. The PSOL's ex-presidential candidate Luciana Genro, who received nearly 1.5 million votes in 2014, demanded general elections in the crucial days leading up to the impeachment. Only on the eve of the vote in the House of Representatives did Genro finally release a statement against the impeachment. Her silence contributed to the absence of mobilizations and promoted the illusion that general elections could be an advance for the working class at this juncture.

The call for general elections, now echoed by *The Economist*, was supported by another ex-presidential contender, Marina Silva. Silva's presidential bid was strongly financed by Brazil's largest bank and Brazil's most-read newspaper, *Folha de São Paulo*. Sectors of the right are on the same boat, calling for new elections ever since Dilma was elected.

The Unified Socialist Workers' Party (PSTU), another left party in Brazil, which has a stronger working-class presence than PSOL, took an even more disastrous position. The PSTU's main slogan was "out with all of them," and it called for "general elections" via a hypothetical general strike. The PSTU's hypothesis of general strike has no basis in reality: there is no movement towards a strike and workers are not the subjects bringing about President Dilma's ouster, or anyone else for that matter.

Those who are yelling, "Out with all," are in fact yelling, "Out with Dilma." The PSTU's call helps conceal

the right-wing nature of the coup. Certainly "out with all of them" would be progressive if it came from a workers' uprising against all of those in the government. But the reactionary nature of the coup was demonstrated through the vote in Congress—with speeches dedicated to God and military dictatorship—if it wasn't already clear. However, the PSTU did not speak out against the right and instead echoed them by calling for the immediate ousting of Dilma.

The toppling of government by the working class is one thing; the toppling of government by corrupt reactionaries is another thing entirely.

The essential lesson in Brazil is that one cannot characterize a movement solely by what happens, but rather, by who is the primary subject. Certainly, if the working class were to mobilize and oust the governing party due to its cuts and betrayals, it would signal a major advance in a revolutionary process. However, a victory by the right while the working class passively watches is far from revolutionary, or even progressive.

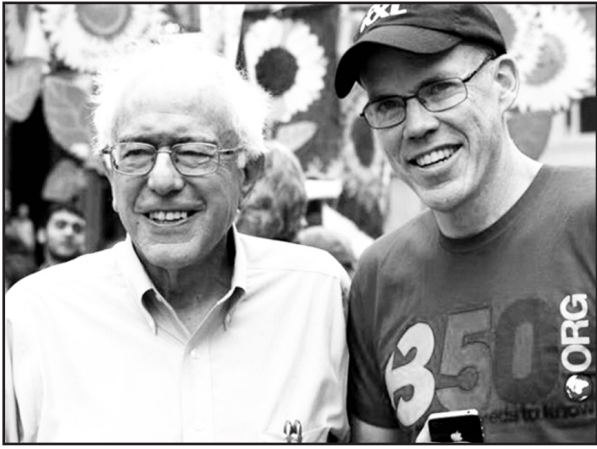
On overcrowded buses, in workplaces, at neighborhood bars, everyone is discussing the impeachment. *Esquerda Diario*, the most-read left digital news in Brazil, releases articles every day that reach thousands with the call to create a movement against the impeachment that is independent of the PT. The Revolutionary Workers' Movement (MRT), the political party behind *Esquerda Diario*, has been pushing for a real plan to fight against the cuts and the impeachment. While the PT seeks to contain struggles, it is time for workers and students to knock down all the barriers created by the PT and the CUT to defend our democratic rights.

The only solution to the putrid regime we live in is a socialist revolution. However, we are not in a revolutionary period. There are many who wish to defend democracy against the coup, want to end corruption and get rid of a regime that opens the door to proto-fascist representatives in parliament. Therefore, mass worker mobilizations against the coup and against the PT cuts should culminate in a Constitutional Assembly to implement radical democratic measures. Such measures should include instituting the direct election and revocability of all government officials, from the currently state-appointed court justices to the representatives in Congress. Each politician and judge should receive no more than the salary of a school-teacher.

A Constitutional Assembly should address unemployment by prohibiting companies from firing workers. The assembly should also suspend the payment of the public debt that consumes 43 percent of the national budget, while public necessities like education and health care suffer aggressive cuts.

The submission of labor and student unions to the PT and its conciliatory strategy undermines the struggle of youth and workers against unemployment, budget cuts and the coup. This political surrender inhibits workers and students from building radical solutions to the grave situation Brazilians face.

But this chapter is not over. In the upcoming months in Brazil, these lessons are fundamental. They will be used address the growing grievances and offer a clear strategic position: fight the right-wing, oppose austerity and overcome the PT, which serves as an obstacle to a militant and revolutionary working class—a class that must be organized not in a corrupt pro-business party but in a revolutionary party to put an end to capitalism. ■



... Sanders' demise

(continued from page 1)

tial convention representation on the Democratic Party's "Platform Committee," where party leaders supposedly hammer out a program with a real-world shelf life of a matter of days. Sanders' appointment of liberal professor and civil rights activist Cornell West and leading climate-crisis activist and founder of 350.org Bill McKibben to this committee are but the first of many "concessions" in the offing for Sanders' shepherding services.

Sanders, his protestations to the contrary, has been a welcome *addition* to the periodically orchestrated "lesser evil" sham employed by ruling-class leaders and their ever calculating and sophisticated think tanks. They know full well that capitalist elections are essential to promoting the myth of democracy and to orienting social movements into safe electoral channels.

Well before Sanders proclaimed his "democratic socialism," several national polls indicated that socialism was on the minds of millions. A 2016 poll indicated that 49 percent of youth 30 years old and under preferred socialism over capitalism, up from 46 percent three years earlier. The Black population as a whole, according to this same Pew Poll, registered a 55 percent preference for socialism.

It is in this growing anti-capitalist context that Sanders, "political revolution" rhetoric in hand, has consciously stepped forward to lend legitimacy to the Democratic Party, the nation's infamous "graveyard of social movements."

Hillary Clinton and her advisers equally understand the political shell game and makeover schemes. One of capitalism's most heinous pro-corporate warmongers and racist apologists has been momentarily transformed, presto change-o, into a feminist, humanist, anti-racist, and environmentally concerned politician! No doubt Donald Trump's team will attempt a similar reconfiguration, as evidenced by the racist bigot's scripted and teleprompter-presented performance on June 7, when he noted, "We're going to take care of our Afro-American people that have been mistreated for so long."

Political discontent rising in U.S. population

In the coming weeks and months, we will all "feel the fizzle" when Sanders, as repeatedly promised, stumps the nation, undoubtedly at times with Hillary at his side, hustling votes on her behalf to rescue the nation from the "greater evil"—Donald Trump. Sanders already received his first call on June 7 from President Obama, presumably suggesting that he accede to the "presumptive victor," Clinton.

The June 9 face-to-face encounter with Sanders' oft-proclaimed friend Obama (the "great deporter" and overseer of the present seven U.S. imperialist wars) was undoubtedly arranged to privately negotiate the terms of his surrender.

Until June 9, Obama had declined to side with either candidate, knowing full well that a premature tilt against Sanders would further distance potential voters from Clinton, whose "unfavorable" ratings have risen to near historic highs as congressional approval ratings have sunk to historic lows—11 percent.

Meanwhile, liberal media pundits like the MSNBC crew are openly suggesting that intelligent Democrats quickly find a way to coax Sanders into the Clinton fold, even suggesting that the crooked "superdelegate" scenario be dropped entirely (in future elections of course), and that Sanders be given near control over the party's window-dressing platform committee.

"What do Sanders' supporters do?" asked MSNBC. "While Sanders will likely endorse Clinton eventually, his supporters are another matter. Many are independent voters without strong ties to the Democratic Party, so they may continue fighting Clinton no matter what Sanders does."

MSNBC continued, "Sanders' task now, if he wants to help Clinton, will be to do so while avoiding being labeled a tool of the establishment by his own sup-



porters."

Step one in the current two-stage largely orchestrated "lesser-evil" electoral game has been Sanders' shepherding the growing number of people with anti-capitalist sentiments back into the Democratic Party. Step two will now focus on Sanders' efforts to do the same with those who have been drawn into his orbit but who may well decide to quit the electoral shell game in disgust—currently the Clinton-Obama team's worst nightmare. "Be nice to Bernie" is their present scripted message.

The fact that capitalism's higher ups felt compelled to lend an air of legitimacy to Sanders' fake socialism is an indication of the questioning nature of our times and the deep discontent that is percolating in the consciousness of working people.

A *New York Times*/CBS poll last November indicated that some 56 percent of registered Democrats who were questioned said they felt positive about socialism as a governing philosophy. Twenty-nine percent had a negative view. This, in itself, goes a long way in explaining why Clinton, and in fact, most Republican Party candidates, largely refrained from the red-baiting tirades that have been the usual stock-in-trade of capitalist politics. Attacking Sanders as a socialist might well have the effect of advancing his credibility, not to mention that of socialism!

In time, when the inevitable and broad-ranging working-class fightback takes shape in forms truly independent of and *against* the twin parties of capital and its liberal "third-party" middle-class-based variants like the Green Party, working people will find genuine political avenues and mass organizations of struggle to express their disgust at capitalist austerity and social regression. This combination of renewed and massive mobilizations in the streets, in reinvigorated and democratically led union fightbacks, and in anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and pro-environment struggles will undoubtedly find an expression in the political arena.

The desire for political "independence" of the two major parties, however vague this term might be in the minds of millions at the present time, is gaining ground in the United States. A full 43 percent of the electorate, according to a recent Gallop Poll, is registered as Independent, with Democratic Party registration at 32 percent, and Republican Party registered voters at 23 percent.

U.S. left collapses before Sanders

There is no doubt that Sanders' "political revolution" and "anti-establishment" rhetoric, not to mention his self-proclaimed "democratic socialism," has spiked interest in the current primary contests as well as in socialist ideas more generally. Again, this is the consciously orchestrated aim of the Sanders project; the U.S. ruling class and its pundits are more than capable of appealing to the best instincts and highest aspirations of working people for a better life for all in order to once again lure them into their life-extinguishing anaconda-like institutional clutches.

Tragically, many of those who claim to know better—those who seriously consider themselves socialists—have been active partisans, if not enthusiastic advocates, of today's ruling-class-promoted Bernie Sanders brand of lesser-evilism.

Among these socialists, and perhaps the most prominent Sanders supporter in the primary contests, is Kshama Sawant, and her Socialist Alternative party. Sawant is a two-time winner in recent Seattle city-council election contests, where she ran as an open

Two prominent Sanders supporters:

(Above) Black activist and scholar Cornell West.

(Left) Climate activist and 350.org founder Bill McKibben, shown with Bernie Sanders.

socialist and against the Democratic Party machine.

Socialist Action hailed Socialist Alternative's Seattle campaigns, and the associated Socialist Alternative city council run by Ty Moore in Minneapolis. Socialist Action enthusiastically participated in these campaigns, contributed financially, organized public fund-raising forums, went door to door, and otherwise widely publicized this inspiring socialist effort.

This is not to say that we were not aware that Socialist Alternative originally sought, unsuccessfully, to organize these campaigns as joint efforts with the pro-capitalist Green Party. But Green Party leaders rejected those overtures, leaving Socialist Alternative with a critical decision as to how to proceed. To their credit, they took the high road in working-class politics and ran as socialists, but their penchant for the middle-class Green Party was never far from their perspectives.

Today, that road, leading to independent socialist working-class politics against the Democratic Party, has been abandoned, with Socialist Alternative and Sawant actually campaigning for Sanders in all the Democratic Party primary contests.

In an article published in the May 4 issue of *Counter-Punch*, Sawant gives an explanation for phase two of their electoral strategy. She writes: "To endorse Hillary, even with a more progressive platform, would be the *opposite* of political revolution and would abandon all the vital energy and momentum we have built over this historic past year. We simply can't afford to make this mistake. That's why I have launched a petition calling on Bernie Sanders to run all the way to November as an independent, and to use his campaign as a launch pad for a new political party of the 99%."

Sawant immediately continues: "If Bernie's only concern is that running independently could open the door to a President Trump, then why could he not at least campaign in the 40+ states where it's generally clear the Democratic or Republican candidate will win? Even in this way, while not putting his name on the ballot in the 5-10 closely contested 'swing states,' he could still run an historic campaign *if linked to building a new party*" (emphasis in original).

But Sawant's "new party" in this case is, again, the middle-class, pro-capitalist Green Party, which has regularly urged its supporters to vote Democrat in "swing states" or simply declined to seek ballot status in these "contested states." Sawant's petition calls on Sanders to run on the same ticket as the Green Party's presumptive presidential candidate, Jill Stein—perhaps to replace Stein on the ballot with Sanders.

Here it is important to remind readers that the terms "independent" and "third party" are not always clear. There are several "third parties" today, ranging from extreme right-wing expressions of capitalist politics like the Libertarians and the Constitutional Party to liberal, reformist Democratic Party-oriented outfits like the Working Families Party, to the pro-capitalist Green Party.

In the case of the Green Party, let me remind readers that Green presidential candidate Ralph Nader achieved ballot status in six states via heinous agreements with Patrick Buchanan's incipient fascist Re-

(continued on page 9)

United Airlines workers picket stockholders' meeting

By WILLIAM WOOD

CHICAGO—About 250 unionized airline maintenance technicians and flight attendants protested outside the United Airlines annual shareholders' meeting on June 8 in downtown Chicago.

Workers came from Chicago and other cities around the country, including New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, Orlando, Fla., and Newark, N.J., to demand a long-overdue contract.

Union members and supporters set up a picket line at the Wacker Drive entrance of Willis Tower, home of United's national headquarters, and chanted slogans including "No Contract, No Peace!" "Delay, Delay, Delay Is Not OK!" and "They Got Theirs, We Want Ours!" a reference to United's recent record profits.

The United Brotherhood of Teamsters, representing maintenance technicians, and the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA), CWA, AFL-CIO, representing flight attendants, were the primary organizers of the protest. A union press release said its purpose was "to warn investors and customers of turbulence ahead."

Prior to the picket line I spoke with Mark DesAngles, business agent for Teamster Local 986 at San Francisco International Airport. Before taking his union position, DesAngles worked for 25 years as an airline technician for United.

"We are here to tell United Airlines that we are not at all satisfied with the progress of negotiations," said



DesAngles. "We've been negotiating for over three years now and we want United to fulfill its promise. ... Now that they are very profitable we expect them to give us a fair contract, and they have not done that so far."

AFA-organized flight attendants are also negotiating and in mediation, and in a similar situation as the Teamsters. "We are supporting each other," said DesAngles.

United has reached separate contract agreements with other unions representing a little over half of its employees, including pilots, dispatchers, and security officers.

Wages, retirement, and health care are all hot topics

in the negotiations. Technicians at United lost their pensions during company bankruptcy reorganization, and now are making efforts to win them back in a new contract. Also, United has been consistently pushing for workers to pay a high percentage of their own health care costs.

Said DesAngles: "In the short term, we are involved in mediation with United Airlines. ... The negotiating committee is meeting with the mediation board, and United Airlines is supposed to be present; and what we've said is we want United to get serious about the negotiations. We feel what they've been doing is essentially drawing lines in the sand and not really having constructive dialog. So we need them to get to the table and go to work."

"Members are really frustrated with that process, and we're saying No More!"

He said that when United had a downturn in profitability, "we lost our pension, we gave up a lot of wages, we made a lot of concessions to keep the company afloat, and the promise was when the company became profitable they would take care of us, and that's not happening"

When asked about future plans, DeAngles said, "We are demonstrating here today, and we are demonstrating on-going across the [United Airlines] system as much as we can—a national picket at least once a month. And we will continue to do so until we get a contract." ■

N.Y. assault on Palestine solidarity & free speech

As part of a major multi-country assault designed to outlaw advocacy of boycotts of Israel, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo on June 5 signed "Executive Order No. 157", instructing state agencies to divest from companies and institutions that participate in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. In the tradition of McCarthyism, the order directs state agencies to blacklist "institutions and companies" that support boycott activity in defense of Palestinian rights.

At Manhattan's exclusive Harvard Club, flanked by other politicians and Israel state lobbyists Cuomo said: "If you boycott against Israel, New York will boycott you."

Palestine Legal, a legal resource for Palestine solidarity activists, quickly responded: "[the Order] is a blatantly unconstitutional attack on freedom of speech. ... It is unprecedented for a state to create a list of entities that support or engage in a First Amendment protected political activity, and deny them financial benefits because of it. Boycotts are a constitutionally protected form of speech, association and assembly, and have a long history of being used successfully to address injustice and demand political change."

This outrageous executive order is a frontal attack on BDS, Palestine solidarity activists, and the democratic rights of all working people. A massive and immediate outpouring of opposition to this unconstitutional order is necessary.

All supporters of Palestinian self-determination and Equal Rights, and all defenders of democratic rights need to stand up and loudly demand its immediate repeal.



Puerto Ricans protest U.S. debt terms

Puerto Rican activists protest PROMESA, the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act, a bill just passed by the U. S. House of Representatives that would abrogate the island's control over its spending in return for support for restructuring the debt. Puerto Rico owes \$72 billion and will miss its next \$2 billion payment to bondholders in July. According to the bill, a federal board would have the right to veto decisions by elected Puerto Rican officials. It also allows the governor to reduce the minimum wage for young people and to sell Puerto Rican assets.

Photo courtesy of the Movimiento Independista Nacional Hostianos at <http://minhpuertorico.org/index.php/noticias/55-noticias/5048-2016-06-03-12-50-48>.

... Sanders' demise

(continued from page 8)

form Party. Nader ran on the Reform Party's ballot line in return for making reactionary statements limiting the right of women to abortion and restricting immigrants from entering the country. (See Nader's June 21, 2004, interview with Patrick Buchanan in the *American Conservative*.)

None of these "third parties" are independent of and against the fundamental capitalist politics of the Democrats and Republicans. Or, to be precise, none seek to organize the working class to replace the capitalist system with a socialist one—in which the private ownership and control of the nation's banks, corporations, and wealth is ended, and the vast majority, the 99 percent, act to reorganize society for the common good. None are based on, financed, and controlled by working-class organizations like trade unions or other democratic mass working-class organizations.

None, as a matter of class principle, reject voting for

capitalist parties. Indeed, in local elections, as well as national, Greens routinely endorse "progressive" Democrats, and in races where the Republican is a bit too overtly reactionary, "not so progressive Democrats."

Asking Bernie Sanders, a lifelong capitalist politician with a 98 percent Democratic Party voting record, to run as a candidate independent of and against the party he has assiduously supported for his entire career is like asking the proverbial leopard to change its spots.

Today, much of the socialist left has made this choice; some, like the Communist Party and Democratic Socialists of America, have habitually supported Democrats for many decades. The CP today supports Clinton, while the DSA supports Sanders—that is, until Sanders drops out.

Solidarity and the International Socialist Organization call on Sanders to run for the presidency as an "independent" or as the Green Party candidate. The Workers International League also speaks favorably of an "independent" campaign by Sanders.

The Workers World Party and the Party for Social-

ism and Liberation, both of which have called for votes for left-sounding Democrats in the past, including Jesse Jackson, are fielding their own presidential candidates this time around, but nevertheless have called for Democratic Party primary votes for Sanders.

Keenly aware of the rapidly growing interest in socialist ideas generated by capitalism's deepening crises and sparked by the Sanders campaign, Socialist Action branches across the country have sponsored a series of well-attended public debates where most of the above socialist organizations, as well as representatives from the Labor for Bernie campaign, shared the platform for fruitful exchanges.

While the "lesser evil" syndrome was undoubtedly at work in the presentations of these socialist groups, we were heartened to see that the Marxist-grounded revolutionary socialist ideas of Socialist Action were well received and that our proud party, a consistent participant and advocate of independent, mass-action, united-front mobilizations against all aspects of capitalist racism and plunder, won new members to the cause of socialist revolution. ■

Jasmine Abdullah: A new age of political prisoners

By MOSES GARVEY

A great man named Mumia Abu Jamal once said, “Do you see law and order? There is nothing but disorder, and instead of law there is an illusion of security. It is an illusion because it is built on a long history of injustices.”

Nowhere could that be truer these days than in Pasadena, Calif., where Jasmine Abdullah (Richards), 29, a Black Lives Matter organizer, has been convicted of a felony so rare that she has become the first African American to be convicted of it.

On June 7, the judge sentenced Abdulla to 90 days in the county jail, minus 18 days for time already served, and three years probation. Several hundred BLM supporters packed the courthouse during the sentencing, and nearly 82,000 signatures have been collected on a petition on Abdullah’s behalf.

The charge against Abdullah is known as “felony lynching,” and it falls under California Penal Code 405a. The law was first passed in the 1930s in response to protests against vigilante violence—at a time when racist white mobs routinely escaped punishment for murdering Black people by lynching. According to California law, the word “lynching” means “to remove someone from the custody of a peace officer by means of a riot.” But the facts of Jasmine Abdullah’s case shows that there was no “riot.” Rioting requires the use of violence, disturbing the peace, threatening to use force, etc.

According to a “Democracy Now!” interview with Abdullah’s lawyer, Nana Gyamfi, on June 2, “the allegations are that when the police were attempting to arrest a person, who was not related to the demonstra-



tion and the peace march that Jasmine was having, ... she made some effort to get that person out of police custody.”

The police were responding to a 9/11 call regarding a woman having a conflict with a restaurant owner. There is video footage of this incident available to watch on Pasadenanow.com. In the video, you can see Black Lives Matter organizers peacefully demonstrating to ensure that the young woman, who was described in the video as being “petite,” wasn’t assaulted

or brutalized in the course of her arrest. One woman said repeatedly that the police refused to take her statement even though she had witnessed the entire event.

These individuals were doing nothing illegal. They were fulfilling their duty as men and women of the community who want to ensure that other community members are not harmed by police.

The Pasadena Police Department has a record of violence. One victim was Kendrec McDade, who was gunned down by Pasadena cops on March 24, 2012. He was 19, unarmed, and had NO criminal record.

Jasmine Abdullah founded the Pasadena Chapter of Black Lives Matter in January 2015. Since then, she has made it her personal mission to organize and demonstrate on behalf of McDade and other Black youths who were murdered by the Pasadena Police Department.

Gyamfi says, “This is clearly a political persecution, cooked up by the Pasadena District Attorney’s Office, the Pasadena Police Department, and the Pasadena City Attorney’s Office in what we are referring to as the attempted lynching of Jasmine Richards.”

Professor Melina Abdullah of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles calls this conviction “disgusting and ironic. ... The real lynching that’s carried out is done in the same way it was carried out in the late 19th century, early 20th century.” It seems in this so-called, “less racist” society we live in, there’s no shortage of young Black political prisoners. ■

Film

‘Miles Ahead’



By JOE AUCIELLO

“*Miles Ahead*,” directed by Don Cheadle. Written by Don Cheadle and Steven Baigelman, with Don Cheadle, Emayatzy Corinealdi, and Ewan McGregor.

From the catalogue of trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, one could construct a plausible history of jazz. The same cannot be said of Miles Davis. Yet, who would dispute the considered judgment that, of the two, Davis is the greater artist?

While Marsalis in his recordings and performances has commented expertly on jazz history, Davis has *made* jazz history—and not just once. In fact, he altered the shape of this distinctly American music several times in successive decades, with “Birth of the Cool,” (78 rpm singles, 1949), “Kind of Blue,” (1959) and “Bitches Brew” (1969) marking only a sample of his creative peaks.

Jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, himself no stranger to critical and commercial success during a five decade career, begins his autobiography with an episode from his years playing in the Miles Davis Quintet. One night on stage, with the band driving itself at a furious pace, Hancock blunders into a terrible, musical mistake: a chord so badly placed—“hanging out there like a piece of rotten fruit”—that it will ruin the entire performance. But something happens.

As Hancock explains, “Miles pauses for a fraction of a second, and then he plays some notes that somehow, miraculously, make my chord sound right. In that moment I believe my mouth actually fell open. ... And then Miles just took off from there, unleashing a solo

that took the song in a new direction. The crowd went crazy.”

Such scenes of creativity—an essential reason for making the film in the first place—may not be missing from the movie, but they play too small a part. The setting, in terms of Miles’ career, is largely the five-year period in the 1970s when he did not record or perform, and expanded, with almost stream-of-consciousness flashbacks, to more creative periods in the studio or on stage.

This creative decision to key in on the private side of the man could have been fruitful. Davis was not only a dynamic musician but also an outsized personality—flamboyant, haughty, self-centered, cruel, extravagant, and more. He was Black and proud before James Brown sang the phrase. The emotionally turbulent and troubling episodes from Miles’s life, especially with his dancer-wife Fran, could have resulted in the movie being titled “Sketches of Pain.”

The artistic problem in the film is actor/director Don Cheadle’s decision to depict Miles as a gangster, apparently following the dubious logic that a creative artist is a rebel who is a nonconformist who is therefore a near-criminal. Since this image of Miles is less than well founded, an outlandish script needs to be devised to show the artist as outlaw.

So, the plot—which revolves around Davis’s efforts to retrieve the tape of a lost recording—is simply nonsense. It’s merely a string on which to hang a number of scenes that show a portrait of the artist as a wild man, a drug-fueled genius/lunatic. The desperate and bizarre effort to recover the tape of a lost recording session leads to tough-guy scenes, shoot-outs, and

clownish car-chases—everything that should have been flushed out of the script. Unhappily, the idea is too well established that a Black musician is barely a step away from being a criminal.

The facts are strongly to the contrary. Miles Davis never needed a six-gun to yank money out of Columbia Records—he had a fountain pen. Better still, he had an enviable contract, which allowed him a full advance on royalties for his next album. That is, before he delivered an album, before he recorded even one tune, he could and did receive a sizable check.

This rather generous arrangement—getting paid before working—casts some doubt of Davis’s grouching about his lot as a “slave” to Columbia Records. In his autobiography Davis does acknowledge the obvious and says it was the company who had a right to complain about the deal. Of course, once Davis collected his advance and spent it lavishly—thus, quickly—he did owe the company a record album whether he felt like going into the studio or not.

Compiling a list of factual inconsistencies is no way to see a film. The viewer who will be least inclined to enjoy this movie of Miles Davis will be the fan who most enjoys the music of Miles Davis. The jazz enthusiast, familiar at least with the broad strokes of the life, will be the first to note the numerous departures from it, the hyper-fictionalizing—or flagrant distortions, take your pick—in the service of what is intended to be an essentially sound artistic truth.

Political conflicts enter this film through the confrontations with and adaptations to white racism. The infamous police beating of Davis in 1959, on the sidewalk outside of a jazz club where he was performing, is a fully developed and effective scene. Ostensibly, Davis was arrested for disorderly conduct and assaulting a police officer; the real reason, as the film shows, had everything to do with a cop’s decision that a Black man in a suit, casually smoking a cigarette after putting a white woman into a cab, was being too “uppity” for his own good. Davis took several stitches in the head that night, courtesy of a cop’s nightstick.

Racism is also evident in the decisions about casting and the subsequent telling of the entire story. Cheadle has pointed out in several interviews that a white “name” actor had to be featured for the movie to be funded. Ewan McGregor, looking curiously like Kurt Cobain, plays a largely invented character whose effort to interview Davis and to coax him out of retirement makes up a large part of what is wrong in the film’s plot.

By the time this review is printed, “Miles Ahead” will have disappeared into that limbo of lost media, the gap between movie theater and cable/DVD release. The second chance to see it will be an opportunity worth taking—for the music, naturally, and for the performance of Don Cheadle.

Never mind that as a story, maybe even as a film, “Miles Ahead” has miles to go. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Socialism 2016 — Sparks and convergences

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Speakers from five countries converged on the University of Toronto, May 20-21, for "Socialism 2016 - Crisis and Change." The eleventh annual international educational conference sponsored by Socialist Action (Canada) featured panel discussions on Is Russia Imperialist? The nature of the conflict in Ukraine and Syria; Robots, Part-time and Precarious Employment; Is the Working Class Disappearing?; Climate Justice, After COP21; Another Great Recession, and the Stakes for Humanity; and Corbyn, Sanders and the Revival of "Socialism."

The latter topic, with panelists Jeff Mackler, national secretary, Socialist Action (U.S.); Xavier Chiarelli, Nouveau Parti Anti-capitaliste in France; Cheri DiNovo, New Democratic Party MPP, Parkdale-High Park; and this writer, drew close to 50 people. Nearly 70 attend one or more sessions during the weekend.

In the economics debate, sparks flew in a clash be-



(Above) Leon Trotsky in Mexico. A documentary film about Trotsky, "The Most Dangerous Man in the World," is in production. See www.trotskyproject.org for more information.

tween Keynesianism and Marxism. Agreement that another recession is coming soon gave way to a dispute over whether government spending and tighter regulation of banks, or expropriation of capital and democratic planning, are required to solve the underlying causes.

On the subject of climate justice, Angela Bischoff,

staff member of the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, made a strong case against nuclear power and in favour of renewable energy. Jaime Gonzales, a leader of the Socialist Unity League-LUS in Mexico, criticized the weak carbon-emissions reduction measures that emerged from the Paris COP21 conference, and focussed on the growing incidence of wild fires, including the devastating blazes that forced the evacuation of Fort McMurray, Alberta.

In the opening session, Vancouver-based socialist writer Roger Annis, who travelled recently to Russia, Crimea, and Ukraine, provided insights into the Washington-orchestrated NATO offensive to dominate Eastern Europe, economically and militarily, right up to the Russian border. As SA-USA leader Jeff Mackler explained, the false designation of Russia and China as imperialist states is a convenient cover to excuse Western aggression. It promotes passivity, including on the radical left, towards the regime-change wars fostered by the West in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and beyond.

Between sessions a special appeal for a new film now in production, "The Most Dangerous Man in the World," netted \$400. Forty years in the making, this documentary by Lindy Laub and David Weiss features eyewitnesses who bring to life Leon Trotsky's dramatic story of revolution, betrayal, and exile, in footage never before seen on screen.

On May 22, members and supporters of Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste gathered in Convention to hear reports on the Fourth International, updates on important class battles against austerity then unfolding in France, and local organizing experiences across the Canadian state. They celebrated brand new and re-activated members in Edmonton, Winnipeg, and St. John's.

After adopting a plan of action, including efforts to step up the fight for the environment and socialism in unions and the labour-based NDP, members elected a team to lead the organization forward, and then adjourned, buoyed by a rousing chorus of the Internationale.

On to Socialism (May) 2017, the year of the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution! ■

Cancel military equipment deal with Saudi Arabia

Peace and human rights organizations renewed their call on the Trudeau government to rescind export permits for the sale of Canadian-made, light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, perhaps the most repressive regime on Earth.

In an open letter in April to the PM, Amnesty International, Project Ploughshares, and the Rideau Institute decried the \$15 billion arms deal, saying it breaks both the spirit and the letter of Canada's export controls and international laws.

Prime Minister Trudeau has maintained that cancelling the deal, brokered by the previous Conservative government in 2014, would harm Canada's trade reputation and cost jobs at home. Once again, it seems, private profit trumps human rights.

But what do you think Ottawa would say if a Canadian corporation tried to sell or donate weapons to Palestine, Iran, Venezuela, or Cuba?

Offshore tax shelters get surge of cash

Canadian corporations and individuals increased four-fold the amount of money they transferred into tax havens last year. They poured almost \$40 billion into the tropical islands and European jurisdictions that hide funds from Canadian taxes, new statistics show.

According to Dennis Howlett, executive director of Canadians for Tax Fairness, citing foreign direct investment numbers from Statistics Canada, the total amount of wealth held in the 10 most popular tax havens now sits at \$270 billion.

In 2015, \$13 billion went to the Cayman Islands, \$9 billion to Barbados, and nearly \$8 billion to the

Bahamas. Money sent to Switzerland jumped up by 58 per cent over the previous year.

The recent Panama Papers investigations, conducted by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, exposed the shady world of offshore tax havens. Scores of reports have shown how illicit money mingles with cash kept out of the reach of tax collectors in a network of shell companies that hide their owners' true identities.

"Tightening corporate taxes is something the [Trudeau] government hasn't shown that it's willing to do," Howlett said. Better to run a huge deficit than to tax the rich, evidently. ■

... Climate

(continued from page 12)

given a place on the Platform Committee of the Democratic Party, and other 350 leaders proudly proclaimed themselves as Sanders delegates.

The impact of these announcements, coming as they did on the heels of modest actions that were designed more as spectacle than experience, arguably makes the climate justice movement look smaller, less independent, and less powerful than at any time since the 2014 mass march in New York City.

The whole movement needs to find a way to come up with a balance sheet on the spring actions. We need to figure out how to consolidate the gains that were made and also to correct the mistakes that left too many on the sidelines—or worse, led part of the movement to subordinate a much needed mass mobilization against the failure of the Paris climate talks to politicking inside the Democratic Party.

Fortunately, the anger that has been building all year due to the criminal inaction of the world's governments last December and the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure by the Obama administration, will find some expression at the July 24 March for a Clean Energy Revolution that will be held in Phila-

delphia on the day before the Democratic National Convention opens.

Noting that Democratic Party leaders have failed to take seriously the measures needed to prevent climate catastrophe, the organizers ask everyone to join a march through the streets of Philadelphia to demand a ban on fracking, a halt to the reckless expansion of gas and oil pipelines, the export of liquefied natural gas and crude oil, nuclear power, and reliance on dirty energy sources such as biomass and incineration.

In addition, the demonstration will call for swift action to invest in solar, wind, and other clean energy power sources and energy efficiency measures across the United States so that we can transition quickly to a 100% renewable energy economy.

To build the kind of movement that we need, the organizers emphasize their support for a just transition for workers who are employed by the fossil-fuel industry, and policies to ensure that the new renewable energy economy is publicly managed, provides good clean union jobs, and benefits communities across the country.

Between now and July 24, local climate action groups can use the national endorsement drive to reach out in their areas, broaden their base, and find those for whom the Philadelphia march will be an empowering first step into the movement. ■

... Chicago Teachers

(continued from page 4)

other powerful Chicago unions, and soliciting their active support. This means continuing to mobilize independently, and in opposition to the Rauner/Emanuel austerity program. The capitalist Democratic and Republican party politicians in City Hall and Springfield are in the service of big-business interests and cannot be relied on to deliver the solutions needed. It is only the powerful force of mass action and independent struggle that will force concessions, partial gains, and future victories.

A theme of the April 1 Day of Action was "Broke On Purpose," a recognition that this "budget crisis" was manufactured by Rauner and his vacation friend Rahm Emanuel, who are primarily interested in promoting their pro-big-business agenda. They are joined at the hip in their quest to weaken and break Illinois unions and cater to the profit lust of large corporations and their billionaire friends, like Illinois' richest man, hedge-fund

tycoon Ken Griffin. As just one example of many, Griffin has been rewarded with millions in tax breaks in real estate and other business transactions with the city.

The issue is not one of promoting budget "fairness" or "shared sacrifice." For working people, the budgets of capitalist governments have never been fair—and never will be. It's always the working class that pays, and when a periodic "crisis" emerges, the working class is always called on to pay more.

We support a Workers Budget that puts people before profits. If state and local budgets need to be balanced, balance them on the backs of Ken Griffin and his billionaire friends, their big corporations, their tax-advantaged hedge funds, and their tax-free off-shore accounts. We don't advocate another dime of tax money being lifted from the pockets of the working people of this state, who daily are compelled to endure the devastating reality of economic injustice. ■

Climate movement tests 'Break Free' strategy

By CHRISTINE MARIE

On May 2, the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry posted a news story that was picked up by all the major wire services and outlets that disseminate popular scientific news. The article, entitled "Climate-Exodus Expected in the Middle East," summarized a report written by the Institute scholar Dr. Johannes Lelieveld.

Lelieveld found that even if the rise of atmospheric temperature were held to 2 degrees Celsius, a shift far below what most scientists believe is likely given the failure of the major industrial powers to take action to reduce atmospheric warming, temperatures in large currently habitable parts of the Middle East and Northern Africa, a region home to 500 million people, will soon become so inhospitable to human life that populations will be forced to flee.

In this already dry and hot area, temperatures are expected to rise more than two times faster than the planet as a whole. By 2050, that would bring more than 80 days a year when the temperature would stay at 114 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and fall not lower than 86 degrees at night. By 2100, assuming that nations began to reduce carbon emissions by the year 2040, the estimated daytime figure for these MENA regions is 122 degrees for around a third of the year, exacerbating conditions where the lack of water and sandstorms would likely end the ability of humans and many animals to live on this land.

Just about two weeks later, on May 21, the wire services reported that temperatures in parts of India had already reached the level where people were warned that to go outside could be fatal. In Rajasthan, where a drought made cooling with water difficult, the temperature reached a record 123.8 degrees Fahrenheit. Because of limited access to scarce cooling water, during the heat wave 1500 died from heatstroke, buffalo quit producing the expected yield of milk, and hundreds of thousands of lives were threatened by the impact on crops.

As we go to press, the on-line *Daily Times* of Pakistan is carrying video of men digging trenches in anticipation of the number of graves they expect to use as a heat wave approaches. On May 1, temperatures in Mohenjodaro reached 129.2 degrees Fahrenheit and, thus, heat-induced deaths in the coming hot month of Ramazan are expected to surpass the tens of hundreds last year.

The impact of the capitalist disruption of the planet's carbon cycle, as manifested in South Asia and other parts of the global South this spring, is the horrific context in which climate justice activists mobilized around the world from May 7-14 in a campaign called "Break Free From Fossil Fuels."

Altogether, around 30,000 activists mobilized, often in acts of civil disobedience and in visually arresting ways, at sites critical to the extreme extraction of oil, gas, and coal on six continents. There is no doubt that the campaign, strongly identified with the non-profit 350.org., succeeded in making palpable for millions of on-line viewers both the murderous toll and the growing resistance to the fossil-fuel economy by ordinary people in countries under the thumb of imperialism.

In Batangas City, Philippines, another country recently hit by drought and killing heat waves, 8000 marched to stop the firing up of 28 new coal plants. In Jakarta, Indonesia, 3000 marched on the presiden-



In Philadelphia on July 24, anger that has been building due to the inaction of world governments to tackle the climate emergency, will find expression at the March for a Clean Energy Revolution.

(Above) Break Free climate protest in Johannesburg, South Africa.

tial palace and the Japanese embassy to protest toxic pollution from coal plants. In Nigeria, activists recognized the devastation of Oloibiri—the site of the first, now abandoned, oil well in the Niger delta—by pollution and exploitation, and carried forward the historic fight to clean up the toxic waste left behind.

Video posted from Constitutional Hill, South Africa, a country also suffering from drought and agricultural crisis, brought alive a march linking the demands for the right to bread and freedom from hunger, against food profiteering, and for food sovereignty. Concerts, mass meetings, and protests marked the week in Brazil and Ecuador.

One of the larger series of civil disobedience actions took place in Germany at the Vattenfall coal mine in Lusatia and involved over 4000 activists. In Newcastle, Australia, several thousand activists occupied a coal port for a day.

The actions in the United States and Canada, at least initially organized as arrestable actions at a limited number of sites, were modest in size but succeeded in strengthening alliances between long-time environmentalists and front-line, indigenous, and urban communities. In Albany, N.Y., for example, the activities were anchored by Black residents and leaders of the community at the Ezra Prentiss Homes, a housing complex where many have been sickened by the toxic fumes of the oil trains parked around the clock at the site.

In Whiting, Ind., an action highlighted the leadership of indigenous communities. In Los Angeles, the focus on urban oil drilling resulted in a march in which Latino activists made visible the environmental racism at work and the community resistance to

neighborhood drilling that is being built. About 250 took part in a May 7 protest outside a refinery in Philadelphia that is responsible for most of the city's air pollution. In a number of locations, youthful activists took leadership for mobilizing and coalition building for the first time.

In light of the rapidly escalating crisis on a global scale, however, the Break Free From Fossil Fuels campaign concept was woefully inadequate. The theory seemed to be that the spectacle of 20 coordinated displays of civil disobedience, or "moral witnessing," as the website called it, at sites of extreme extraction around the globe could be a trigger action that swelled the confidence of the majority that this fight could be won. There was a lot of confidence among a layer of activists that video and social media documentation of thousands "stepping it up" to risk arrest would increase the size of the movement.

Instead, the actions were much smaller than what was naturally expected in the wake of the 2014 Peoples Climate March, when 400,000 marched in New York City. In 2015, large mass actions in the Twin Cities and Toronto, involved 5000 and 10,000 people respectively and focused on linking climate action with jobs and economic equality. At the same time, hundreds of new chapters of 350.org and other climate networks were formed around North America.

These actions and new groups seemed to herald the growth of a huge mass movement that would transcend the isolation of the current climate movement, often led by a handful of non-profit organizations, and create an organizing base for thousands of newly radicalized people.

Sadly, the Break Free campaign, which was planned mainly by top leaders after months of indecision and delay, were hardly suited to unleash the creativity and real life connections of the majority of newly organized people or to demonstrate the potential breadth of the movement.

In addition, no sooner was the May week of global action completed, than 350 leaders began advertising their participation in the leadership bodies of the Democratic National Convention. Bill McKibben was

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