

Trump escalates war on immigrant workers



By MARK UGOLINI

Trump's war on immigrant workers has moved into high gear as new orders unleash the full force of the U.S. government to greatly expand deportations, harassment, and provocative police actions in minority communities.

Under Barak Obama, deportations reached a record high 434,000 for the single year 2014. Known as the "Deporter-in-Chief," Obama, during his entire presidency, oversaw the deportation of over 2 million immigrant workers, more than any previous president.

However, fearful that the Democrats would lose support in the 2016 elections, Obama subsequently implemented guidelines that slightly limited deportations during his final two years in office; 2015 saw a 23 percent reduction from the 2014 record high.

Trump's new plans scrapped some second-term Obama guidelines and issued new ones that signal the dawn of an all-out offensive that could end in mass roundups. All new measures are designed to broaden and aggressively expedite deportations.

The Feb. 22 *New York Times* reported: "Documents released ... revealed the broad scope of the president's ambitions: to publicize crimes by undocumented immigrants; strip such immigrants of privacy protections; enlist local police officers as enforcers; erect new detention facilities; discourage asylum

seekers; and, ultimately, speed up deportations."

The Department of Homeland Security's new offensive would:

- Hire 15,000 new Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and agents
- Greatly expand lists of immigrants prioritized for deportation
- Speed up deportation hearings
- Greatly expand the capability of Immigration enforcers to bypass due process protections by allowing "expedited deportations," which totally bypass judicial review
- Establish "partnerships" with local police to assist in patrols, with full authority to make arrests
- Allow detainment of immigrants until brought before an immigration judge and throughout legal proceedings. Court backlogs currently delay hearings more than one year
- Allow for federal prosecution of parents of "paperless" minors who cross the border unaccompanied by a parent
- Allow enforcers to bypass personal privacy protections previously provided under past administrations

Consistent with practices of the Obama administration, Trump continues the racist branding of "paperless" immigrant workers as "criminals" who pose a threat to "public safety." The new orders vastly ex-

pand the definition of what Trump during his campaign called "criminal aliens," which "routinely victimize Americans," ignore the "rule of law, and pose a threat" to society.

Under new guidelines, virtually *all* immigrant workers without papers are subject to arrest, ICE/police harassment, and deportation at any time. The orders expand the list of immigrants targeted for deportations to include anyone either sentenced or accused of any crime.

Dreamers under threat

The only group not yet included is that of the Dreamers, 750,000 immigrants under protection of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Having come to this country as children, many have been issued work permits and are not included in Trump's new policies. But they remain under significant threat since Trump loudly touted termination of this program during his campaign, calling it "executive amnesty."

In addition, Dreamers are threatened by the new provision eliminating privacy protections, which enables enforcers to violate personal privacy of "paperless" immigrants and even those in possession of a green card. This means that any personal data previously provided to U.S. immigration agents could be

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Conference for full normalization of U.S.-Cuba relations

Marty Goodman / Socialist Action

A major conference on Cuba will take place March 25-26 at Fordham Law School in New York City. Below are major excerpts from the call for the conference, issued by the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Committee.

We are inviting organizations and individuals to help organize an inclusive, broad conference in New York City March 25-26, 2017 focused on U.S.-Cuban relations. The National Conference will be held at the Fordham Law School and will bring together longtime Cuba solidarity activists, opponents of continuing U.S. sanctions against Cuba, as well as representatives from many organizations and cities.

We invite you to participate in planning and organizing the National Conference, which will include highly educational and informative workshops, presentations, cultural performances, and films, with the political purpose of promoting an agreed action agenda for the real normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, and to expand activity around these ends across the United States.

The Electoral College triumph of Donald Trump, and the retention of a Republican majority in the U.S. House and Senate, underscores, more than ever, the need for an independent movement to advocate and fight for the full normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations.

During the election campaign Trump publicly pledged to reverse the modest Executive Orders easing ongoing U.S. anti-Cuba sanctions, implemented by President Obama. He has stopped short so far from supporting the termination



(Left) The grave of Fidel Castro in Santiago de Cuba.

of the July 2015 restoration of U.S.-Cuban diplomatic relations, a precondition for full normalization. ...

Following the Dec. 17, 2014, announcements by U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro, the United States and Cuba moved to the establishment of diplomatic relations. Despite President Obama using his executive powers, this relationship remains far from "normal."

Fully ending ongoing U.S. sanctions against Cuba will require a formal act of Congress. The notorious Helms-Burton legislation, signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996, took that right and ability out of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government.

In one of its last acts before the Nov. 8 election, the Obama White House directed the U.S. United Nations Mission to abstain in the annual vote in the UN

General Assembly to condemn, now unanimously 192-0, "the economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." For over 20 years the vote has registered near unanimous political isolation for Washington in the "international community."

Full normalization also requires returning the U.S.-occupied Guantanamo Bay Naval base on Cuban territory to Cuban sovereignty. It also requires ending U.S. overtly and covertly budgeted, subversive "regime change" programs. All of these ongoing policies represent the continuity of decades of Washington's gross violations of Cuban sovereignty.

In addition, Cuba has a sovereign right to give political asylum and legal protections under clear procedures to individuals determined to be fleeing

persecution and injustice. We support the repeal of the unequal and discriminatory Cuban Adjustment Act, which has been used as a political club against Cuba by successive U.S. administrations and is the major obstacle to stabilizing and resolving immigration issues between Washington and Havana. ...

This national gathering, March 25-26, will be an opportunity to bring activists together from across the United States to discuss and act on these questions back at their home base and local area.

The National Conference will have plenary sessions, dozens of workshops on Cuba and international themes, and proposals for action to demand full and real normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations. In addition to Conference sessions and workshops, we will also hold a major public event in a large space with prominent speakers, including from Cuba, cultural performers, and special video greetings.

This invitation to hold a conference registers a spirit of unity and a perspective to reach out broadly, across different points of view, to all who are opposed to the continuation of hostile US policies toward Cuba, the fundamental obstacle to normalized relations between the two governments.

We look forward to you coming to New York City in the spring of 2017! We must organize to change U.S. anti-Cuba policy!

— U.S.-Cuba Normalization Committee

JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

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

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

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

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

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Long live Standing Rock!

By MARTY GOODMAN

On his fifth day in office, President Donald Trump ordered the U.S. Army Core of engineers to restart digging the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) on sacred Sioux land, in violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. The camp, known as Standing Rock, was officially closed on Feb. 22 on order of North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum.

Chase Iron Eyes, a Standing Rock Sioux, described the militarized police and National Guard that descended on the camp as “a violence enforcer of the will of capital. The corporate state is here: an oil war in the heartland.”

The army of occupation arrived in Humvees and armored personnel carriers, pointing automatic rifles at peaceful water protectors, insuring capitalist profits with the installation of the hazard-prone fossil-fuel pipelines.

Said another camp resident, “This is Treaty land. This is our life. This is how we live as Native people and nothing has changed. It’s just gotten worse. They have bigger weapons to kill us with. And here we are, unarmed, facing an army in our own land.” Forty-one percent of Native Americans live in poverty; 24% are unemployed.

The governor blamed oncoming spring floods for the evacuation. However, Joye Braun of the Indigenous Environmental Network claims the flood warnings were a “false flag” since flood predictions were officially downgraded. Outraged, Braun insisted that the 1851 U.S. Treaty guarantees “free, prior, informed consent” as a constitutional right—a right violated at Standing Rock.

Many who were expelled from the camp sought refuge in nearby Native American camps. Teepees and structures at Standing Rock were set ablaze by water protectors who refused to allow the desecration of sacred objects and to deprive the enemy of a perceived victory. Some 50 water protectors that remained were arrested.

Standing Rock became the flashpoint for unprecedented mass mobilization of Native Americans, thousands of solidarity activists and a worldwide outcry against corporate greed, racism, and the bitter U.S. legacy of



genocide. Many activists came from the struggle against the XL Keystone Pipeline, stretching from Canada to the Gulf Coast, halted in 2015 but set to restart under Trump.

Since last August, some 700 “water protectors” have been arrested, shot with beanbags, tear-gassed, clubbed, sprayed with ice-cold water in freezing temperatures, and attacked by dogs unleashed by private security goons.

Trump is invested in DAPL funder Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) for up to \$1 million, although he has claimed to have dis-invested. Trump received campaign contributions from ETP head Kelsey Warren, including \$100,000 to the Trump victory fund.

Going forward, the ETP says oil will be flowing at Standing Rock sometime in March if legal challenges by Native Americans fail to halt this, the final link in the 1170-mile-long pipeline.

The groundwork for DAPL and other pipelines was facilitated by the Obama administration. When asked about Standing Rock in 2015, Obama said he would let the situation “play out,” despite ongoing brutality. Only after a mass mobilization of Native Americans and an early December solidarity mobilization of 3000 U.S. veterans at Standing Rock did Obama respond. Fearing an election year blowback if veterans were seen being beaten by cops on TV, Obama issued a Dec. 4 executive order to delay, not cancel, digging under Oahe Lake, a source of water for the Sioux and 18 million others.

On March 10, the Standing Rock and Native Nations will lead a march of activists in Washington, D.C. The protest is organized by the Native Nations Rise Planning Committee and will march from the Mall to the White House beginning at 10 a.m. ■

By BILL ONASCH

A Clean Win For Janitors—It took six years of strikes and demonstrations, but the tenacity of 600 Twin Cities janitors, nearly all people of color, many of them immigrants, has secured a first union contract. It was a tripartite struggle. These members of SEIU Local 26 actually clean Big Box retail stores like Target, Best Buy and Macy’s. But their paychecks come from janitorial service companies contracted by these high profile merchants.

The pressure on these retailers, who didn’t like being associated with the ruthless exploitation by their contractors, is what finally won a first agreement that can win even better future gains.

This concludes the Good News section of this month’s Briefing.

Fake News—I received a gushing e-mail from Jobs with Justice about a “breakthrough settlement” ending a 105-day strike at the Momentive Performance Materials chemical plant in Waterford, N.Y. I am always eager to find some upbeat labor stories, so I did some digging. I found a comprehensive description of the deal, brokered by Democrat (and Working Families Party) Governor Cuomo, in the Albany Times-Union, a paper often giving fair coverage to unions.

That paper’s honest reporting made clear that the breakthrough benefited only the hedge fund vulture owners determined to make Momentive more attractive for a “flip” to another buyer. The final deal was even more onerous than what the workers in two IUE-CWA locals had overwhelmingly rejected when they went on strike in November.

Retiree health insurance was eliminated and active worker benefits greatly reduced. A week of vacation time was lost. The signing bonus in lieu of a wage increase was further slashed from the pre-strike offer of \$3000 to \$1000. And the agreement did not guarantee reinstatement of 27 workers fired for “strike misconduct.”

Labor Briefing

I would never second-guess workers, most with families to support, who after going without pay for more than three months reluctantly decide it was time to go back to work with their union intact to fight again another day. Even then, the vote in the main local of production workers was no slam dunk—317-211 to accept the Governor’s deal.

I don’t know enough about the union’s strategy and tactics to rush to judgment of a “sell-out.” Sometimes the relationship of class forces confounds even ably led unions. There is no dishonor in losing a bravely fought battle. But those who try to spin a devastating defeat into a breakthrough victory deserve nothing but contempt.

The Decline of the Strike—In last month’s Briefing, we looked at the annual report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that showed another decline in union membership and density numbers. This month we’ll deal with the BLS report on strikes.

While there was actually a slight uptick in the number of strikes, strikers, and strike durations last year over 2015 numbers, it is unlikely this indicates a reversal of the decades-long decline in these stats. The big CWA-IBEW strike against Verizon is what swelled the 2016 figures.

However, there are some caveats to keep in mind in analyzing the downward trend. The BLS only counts strikes or lockouts of 1000 or more workers. The Momentive strike that began last year is one example of those too small to be counted.

A thousand was a more reasonable cut-off when these reports began in 1947. But private sector workplaces have been greatly reduced in size by technology and outsourcing. National contracts that once covered tens, even hundreds of thousands



(Above) Boeing worker in N. Charleston.

of workers are today rare, and the few remaining have shrunk drastically. Nor are short strikes by workers without a certified union—such as the Twin Cities janitors and thousands of fast-food workers—tallied.

But these factors, which also contributed to union membership loss, don’t fully account for the much steeper decline in strikes that have plummeted over the last few decades. From 1967-76 there were 3321 major strikes. For 1987-96 that number was down to 404. In the just concluded 2007-16, there were only 143.

The Labor Briefing format is inadequate for an in-depth analysis of the factors leading to this paucity of strikes—the traditional “ultimate” workers’ weapon in the class struggle in the workplace. It certainly involves a dominant trend of the mainstream union bureaucracy to seek “partnership” with the boss. This leads to peaceful surrender of hard won past achievements in wages and conditions—especially through odious tiered wages and benefits affecting only new hires, undermining solidarity.

IAM’s Debacle In N. Charleston—The class-collaborationist union bureaucracy that abhors strikes also poisons organizing efforts—dramatically illustrated last month in the dismal failure of the IAM’s drive to organize Boeing’s runaway plant in North Charleston, South Carolina.

The final vote was 2097-731. The IAM vote total showed they lost the support of more than 700 workers who had signed union authorization cards that led to the election.

Most early commentators speculated that the Machinist organizers had gone off half-cocked and didn’t do the necessary home visits and community outreach. That the election was premature is valid—but that decision was made several pay grades above the organizers on the scene.

All indications show that the field organizers used all the best practices. They were assisted by the small but militant local labor movement—especially the predominantly African-American Longshore and ATU transit Locals. They spent an allowed \$20,000 on television advertising.

Of course, as could be expected, the company, and the area Chamber of Commerce, spent a lot more money warning that unions would block economic growth. Boeing used their “captive audience” meetings with workers to not only slander the union that is a “partner” in Seattle and other places, but also exposing some inconvenient truths.

They revealed not only the rotten sell-out deals the International leaders had imposed at Harley-Davidson but also at Boeing in Seattle. There the top bureaucracy collaborated with Boeing and state politicians against the local union to force a contract reopener with enormous give-backs. Undoubtedly, many in South Carolina concluded they didn’t need a union to negotiate cuts in wages and benefits. ■

Mike Elk, Michael Schreiber, and Adam Shils contributed to this month’s Briefing. If you have a story for this column, please contact billonasch@kclabor.org.



Crackdown on Muslims: Trump makes Obama's program worse

By CELYNE CAMEN and KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

Trump's ban on Muslims, which tens of thousands protested at airports across the country, was the most recent escalation of an ongoing assault on the rights of Muslims and youth from Africa and the Middle East. This group has been targeted continuously at least since the beginning of the so-called "War on Terror."

In the fall of 2014, the Obama administration announced that a new program called "Countering Violent Extremism" (CVE) would be launched, with pilots in three cities—Minneapolis, Boston, and Los Angeles.

Minneapolis, not coincidentally, has the largest Somali immigrant population in North America. The Somali people have faced deep political and economic instability because of war and monumental environmental destruction and drought, forcing them to flee to the U.S., where they have been facing undue profiling, racism, and discrimination.

The Boston Marathon bombing in April of 2013, attributed to two Muslim brothers, made that city a second logical choice. Funds were filtered through the Massachusetts State Department of Health as "Peace Grants," the largest amount going to the Boston Police Foundation, an NGO that funds the police department. The rest went to groups that work with youth and the Somali immigrant community.

Although the administration gave no reason for its choice of Los Angeles, the region is home to one of the country's largest Muslim populations. According to a September 2014 *Los Angeles Times* article, Fatima Dadabhoi, senior civil rights attorney of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-LA), responded to the announcement by saying: "If it's going to lead to more profiling and surveil-

lance, that's clearly going to be problematic. Is it really a project to counter violent extremism, or is it really a project to counter violent extremism in the Muslim community?"

CVE is based on PREVENT, a "counter radicalization" program introduced in Britain in the wake of the 2005 London bombings. Based on misconceptions about how "radicalization" happens, PREVENT has pushed health professionals, including mental health workers, to violate professional ethics regarding privacy and confidentiality. It has undermined health, social service organizations, and educational institutions that have partnered with the program, making them ineffective in providing needed services.

It has also damaged communities' trust in agencies that have received funds or collaborated in the program due to law enforcement pressures to participate in surveillance of those they serve; deterred those in need from seeking treatment (many British Muslims are afraid to seek medical and mental health service for fear of being targeted); divided communities and engendered suspicion in mosques and community centers, denying the community the right to speak freely about political or social views for fear of being wrongly reported; and created good Muslim-bad Muslim scenarios, pitting neighbors and friends against each other.

The entire rationalization for the PREVENT program has been discredited. It is not possible to disentangle the alleged signs of "radicalization" from the personality traits displayed by the vast majority of youth. Nor has any connection been demonstrated between so-called radicalization and actual acts of violence. But this did not stop the Obama administration from importing the program.

The initiative works without apparent transparency—of-fering funding to nonprofit health and social service agen-

cies like schools, hospitals, health clinics, youth programs, and places of worship. It seems that in some instances the groups receiving funds may be unaware of the surveillance role they will be obligated to take, while in other cases the organizations are fronts in themselves.

One recipient of funding is Empower Peace, a program to bring young people in the Middle East in contact with American high school kids. Empower Peace is connected with the Rendon Group, a spin-doctor communications firm operating in at least 98 countries, often under U.S. auspices. Rendon has made millions off U.S. government contracts since 1991, when it was hired by the CIA to help "create the conditions for the removal of Hussein from power."

Before the Obama administration left office, the Department of Homeland Security announced a \$10 million round of grants, authorized by Congress in 2016 and set to be distributed in 2017. The announcement, coming one week before Trump's inauguration, shows that the program had already advanced well beyond the three pilot cities. For example, grants have been allocated to police departments in at least five cities. Muslim groups receiving money include the Muslim American Leadership Alliance and the Muslim Public Affairs Council Foundation, while several schools and universities also got funds.

We now have some details about how the Trump administration will continue these programs. Katharine Gorka, a Trump transition team member, told officials involved in DHS's CVE program that the Trump administration was likely to rename the program "Countering Violent Jihad or Countering Radical Islam."

Reuters reported on Feb. 2 that five people briefed on the matter said the program would change to "Countering Islamic Extremism" or "Countering Radical Islamic Extremism" and drop any pretense of targeting groups such as white supremacists. Some Republicans have been pushing for such a change. House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul recently called for the Trump administration to "repeal and replace" President Obama's "failed, politically correct" CVE program and instead "target the specific threat we face from radical Islamist terror."

The explicitness of the Trump administration is already having ripple effects. A *New York Times* article also dated Feb. 2 reported that both Ka Joog (in Minneapolis) and Leaders Advancing and Helping Communities (in Dearborn, Mich.) would not accept their half-million-dollar grants, while the Muslim Public Affairs Council was "waiting to see what changes will take place in the program before making a decision about keeping the money."

The morphing of counter-terrorism efforts, from those that employed neutral-sounding rhetoric while very specifically targeting Muslim communities to those that acknowledge directly what such efforts are really about, has forced groups like Ka Joog to withdraw what had been overwhelming support for CVE. And it has broader implications too.

The Trump administration is signaling an end to "good Muslim-bad Muslim" divisive rhetoric. Those who hid behind the pretense that CVE was actually meant to help the communities it targeted cannot pretend this is the case with Trump's version.

The new program will further institutionalize Islamophobia but will also trigger broader resistance. We must shut down these programs and purge them from our hospitals, clinics, workplaces, schools, and community groups. Those of us who are non-Muslims can stand up vocally for those individuals and groups who are wrongly labeled and punished as "extremists" and "terrorists," simply because of their religion, their skin color, or their political ideology. No to Islamophobia! Stand with the Muslim community! ■

... Attacks on Immigrants

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used against them in future immigration proceedings.

This provision threatens Dreamers especially, since all who applied for this status during the Obama years in order to avoid deportations were required to provide extensive personal background information on application forms. All personal information supplied by Dreamers to avoid deportation can now be used by the government to deport them.

Trump's immigration raids began in the first part of February. During just one week, ICE enforcers arrested over 680 immigrants in at least 11 states. Immigrants who had been earlier targeted by ICE were seized during neighborhood "sweeps" of streets and homes at all times of the day and night. Trump explained the raids by his bellicose declaration and lie that "gang members, drug dealers & others are being removed!" On Feb. 23, Trump referred to the deportation raids as "a military operation."

Protests erupted in response. On Feb. 13, more than 20,000 marched in Milwaukee, protesting raids and Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke, who is providing local police to act as federal immigration enforcers.

On Feb. 16, immigration rights activists took to the streets in at least 12 states, declaring "A Day Without Immigrants." These actions, billed as a "one-day strike," brought out over 5000 protesters in Chicago

and thousands more in other cities. In Alabama, 60 businesses closed down, and hundreds of restaurant workers walked off the job around the country. *USA Today* reported that high schools around the country had noted unusually high absenteeism, and one-third of high school students in Phoenix had skipped class.

NBC News reported that over 100 workers were fired for participating in the nationwide protests. Of these, 18 were strikers terminated by Bradley Coatings, a commercial painting company in Nashville, Tenn. Workers were warned they would be fired, but walked off the job anyway.

Bipartisan attacks

Both the Democratic and Republican parties favor deportation and other forms of regulating the flow of immigrants into the U.S. They differ only on what level of flow is necessary. Both capitalist parties benefit from the super-exploitation of immigrants, because nearly all U.S. industries, including Trump's luxury resorts, profit mightily from the cheap and sometimes slave labor these immigrants provide.

Trump and the Republicans are aggressively expanding the program of deportations conducted under the Democrats. Trump is utilizing Obama's method of targeting "undesirables" or "non-deserving" immigrants who may have been arrested, jailed, or charged in the U.S. The Republicans use a broader definition of "criminal," but both capitalist parties want to deport what they term "undesirables."

The false idea that a certain category of immigrant

deserves deportation needs to be roundly rejected. It divides the immigrant rights movement, which stands opposed to all deportations. It also provides political cover for politicians who spread the lie that large sections of the immigrant population are "criminals." Nothing can be farther from the truth.

Both capitalist parties promote the fiction that poor immigrants in search of a job and a better life can easily chose to enter the U.S. "legally." This cynically exploits the widely held misunderstanding behind the question, "Why don't they just get in line?" In fact, no line is available for the vast majority of the poor workers and farmers who are classified as "unauthorized" immigrants. The "regular channels" in U.S. immigration rules simply don't apply to them, and in most cases "legal" entry requires a U.S. employer to request specific workers.

Those who cross U.S. borders to work have no rights as citizens, can be deported at any time, and are forced to accept the lowest paying and most dangerous jobs. They are demonized and in constant fear of deportation and separation from their families, which makes them easy targets—prey to greedy employers out to manipulate and abuse them.

This super-exploitation provides another benefit to capitalist owners; it allows them to maintain sharp divisions in the working class, and drive down wages of the working class as a whole, pitting one section of workers against another. This is especially fostered by

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Netanyahu and the ‘two-state solution’

By MARK UGOLINI

CHICAGO—On Feb. 15 more than 200 Palestinians and their supporters converged on Trump Tower to protest the White House visit of Israel President Benjamin Netanyahu. Several buses from local mosques transported protesters, who held signs and shouted chants demanding: “Free Free Palestine!” “Justice is our Demand. No Peace on Stolen Land!” and “From Palestine to Mexico. Border Walls Have got to Go!”

Marching behind a banner, “Build Bridges Not Walls,” the protesters gave major attention to immigration rights. At the rally speakers expressed solidarity with all groups fighting the new wave of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attacks.

Vivian Khalaf, an Immigration Attorney from the Arab American Action Network, explained how Trump lies when he says a wall on the Mexican border is for “security” and “protection”:

“Donald Trump told Fox News the other day that ‘a wall protects. All you have to do is ask Israel.’ Really? ... We don’t need a wall [on the Mexico border]... The huge concrete wall built by the Israelis is inside the West Bank, ... it is not a ‘security wall,’ Mr. Trump! The purpose of this wall is to unilaterally annex the land on which the majority of Israel’s illegal settlements and outposts currently stand. This is a separation wall, Mr. Trump, an apartheid wall ... the likes of which we have never, ever seen before!”

The White House visit came at a time most advantageous to Netanyahu, who at home is plagued with multiple criminal corruption charges and harsh attacks from the far-right party. He hoped to bolster his sagging reputation by showcasing strong ties with the also embattled Republican Party administration.

One goal is to prod Trump to take aggressive measures against Iran, including sanctions and potential military actions to counter Iran’s missile program and steps taken to expand its influence. Netanyahu accuses Iran of “mischief” around the world, including its support for Houthi rebels in Yemen, the Assad regime in Syria, and Palestinian resistance in Gaza and the West Bank.

The White House discussions, however, focused primarily on the “stalled peace process.” At the joint press conference, Trump for the first time broke from decades-long U.S. policy promoting the so-called “two state solution.” Trump said: “I am looking at two states or one state, and I like the one that both parties like.”

Netanyahu again repeated his long-held opposition to Palestinian sovereignty, insisting that Israel must remain a Jewish-exclusive state, and retain “security [military] control of the entire area west of the Jordan River.” This ensures that Palestinians would forever remain under military rule, without basic rights.

The “two-state” formula, as originally conceived, allows for an independent, viable, and sovereign Palestinian state co-existing alongside Israel’s Jewish state. However, due to ongoing expansion of illegal settlements and Israeli military rule over the years, any state granted to Palestinians would not be sovereign or viable, and would likely bear striking resemblance to the Bantustans imposed on Blacks in apartheid South Africa.

Since it was proclaimed in 1948, Israel has protected its exclusive character and demographic majority via over 50 racist laws, codified by Israel’s Supreme Court. The discourse around the “two-state solution” has helped veil the racist and exclusionary nature of Israel’s Jewish state.

Liberal Zionists fear that waning relevance of the “two-state solution” brings the supremacist charac-



ter of the Jewish state into sharper focus. In the Feb. 15 *New York Times*, Thomas Friedman, a long-time “two-state” proponent, expressed growing concerns of many liberal Zionists that its demise unveils Israel’s true nature:

“As long as the two-state solution was on the table, the debate among Jews on Israel was ‘right versus left’ and ‘more security versus less security.’ ... But we could mostly all agree that for Israel to remain a Jewish democratic state, it had to securely separate from most of the 2.7 million West Bank Palestinians. ... But if Netanyahu’s weak leadership and the overreach of the settlers in his party end up erasing the two-state solution, the debate within the Jewish community will move from ‘left versus right’ to ‘right versus wrong.’”

Here Friedman ignores, almost as being inconsequential, the facts that more than two million Palestinians live under a barbaric siege and military rule in Gaza, and more than 6 million Palestinians remain in diaspora around the world, unable to return to their homeland.

However, Friedman’s words reveal how supporting a Palestinian state makes it much easier to justify the existence of the colonial state of Israel and Jewish supremacy. Without the ability to credibly argue for a Palestinian state, one must confront squarely the reality of Israel’s Zionist system of oppression and the racist subjugation of the Palestinian people.

A backdrop to Netanyahu’s visit is massive opposition within Israel to any recognition of Palestinians, and outright support for continued land theft and annexations. On Feb. 13 Netanyahu pushed the “Regularization Law” through the Knesset. This outrageous law sanctions expropriation of private Palestinian land illegally occupied by Jewish settlers in the West Bank. It is one example of Israeli legislation imposed on Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank, who have lived under military occupation since 1967— forbidden citizenship and all democratic rights, including the right to vote.

This racist law is the latest in a series of steps promoted by settler groups, and enacted by Israel since the election of Donald Trump. Soon after he took office, Israel announced plans to build over 6000 set-

tlar homes on Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

After expressing staunch support for illegal Israeli settlements during his election campaign, and after ignoring the initial series of settlement expansion announcements since his election, Trump on Feb. 2 said that settlements “may not be helpful.” But after the “Regularization Law” was passed on Feb. 13, the Trump administration signaled it would wait to see how Israel’s courts would interpret the law before it comments.

As an alternative to the “two-state” approach, Trump raised what some have referred to as an “outside-in” negotiating strategy, calling on Saudi Arabia and other Arab states friendly with Israel to help impose a solution on the Palestinians. This is a method previous administrations have attempted. One variant of this strategy is an agreement that allows outright annexation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem by Israel, with Palestinians directed to live under Jordanian rule.

Any future annexations will extend and deepen Israel’s apartheid rule over Palestinians. Since all Palestinians in occupied territories remain non-citizens, they are subject to military rule and denied all basic democratic rights.

History has shown that Palestinians will never accept a “solution” that leaves them living in squalor and poverty, without equal social or political rights, and without equal access to natural resources, housing, and other necessities of life.

The master-slave relationship must end before a truly just society can be built—a democratic and secular state throughout all of historic Palestine, which recognizes full and equal rights to all regardless of religion, race, or national origin.

Revolutionary Marxists believe that as an oppressed nationality Palestinians can never achieve true self-determination and full equality in the context of capitalism. We advocate the struggle for socialism, which must entail the overturn of Zionist colonialism led by the Palestinian and Israeli working classes united in struggle. The unity that is forged needs to be grounded in the resolute support by Jewish workers for Palestinian equal rights. ■

A useful book for Cuba solidarity activists

By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

“*The Economic War Against Cuba*,” by Salim Lamrani. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013). Paperback.

The U.S. embargo of Cuba is over 55 years old. “Embargo” in this case is a political euphemism used by the U.S. government to obscure the full extent of what it is doing. The Cubans use the more precise word blockade (bloqueo), but to speak plainly, this has been an economic war against Cuba and her people, waged by a powerful aggressor against a small, socialist country in the “backyard” of the United States.

French political scientist and journalist Salim Lamrani has written a concise summary of this U.S. war against Cuba. The heart of the book is a survey of the

economic sanctions against Cuba from Eisenhower to Obama, followed by chapters on the consequences for Cuba. To date, the economic war has cost Cuba over \$750 billion and hurt all aspects of Cuban life and economic development. Other short and useful chapters of the book demonstrate how the U.S. economic war violates international law and United Nations General Assembly resolutions.

The book has a fine, albeit brief, introduction by Wayne S. Smith, the former head of the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba and one of the leading Cuba experts in the United States, and a foreword by Paul Estrade, a French academic and noted expert on Hispanic-Caribbean history. In addition to the text by Lamrani, there is an appendix listing the UN General Assembly votes, an appendix containing declarations from various

countries from the 2011 UN vote, and a bibliography.

Perhaps the weakest part of the book is the first chapter, an abbreviated (only six pages) history of the Cuban Revolution. This history is meant to set the stage for the rest of the book but is too brief to accomplish its purpose. Activists likely to read this book will know enough of the history of the Cuban Revolution that they will recognize the author’s factual errors and be able to provide their own context for the remaining chapters.

An additional, somewhat annoying, flaw is that the book was not carefully copy-edited, and some dates and words are incorrect.

In spite of these flaws, Cuban solidarity activists will find this short book a useful tool. It provides a good summary of the U.S. economic war against Cuba and a good introduction to the international laws that the U.S. has violated as it carries out its 55-year-long economic war. ■

A watershed election for U.S. ruling class

By LYNN HENDERSON

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Below are major excerpts from Lynn Henderson's article. Readers can find the full text at www.socialistaction.org.

The 2016 presidential election concluded with the improbable election of real estate billionaire and reality show celebrity Donald Trump. In this historic 2016 election the dual parties of U.S. capitalism ended up presenting the American electorate with the choice between two individuals who were universally recognized as the most unpopular, distrusted candidates in the history of U.S. presidential politics. How did this happen? Was it just a fluke? Was it just the accidental luck of the draw?

A large army of professional media commentators, pundits, and political gurus continue to struggle mightily to explain the election and ponder its results. Initially, the best they could do was to comment that "people were angry." While true, this was hardly an adequate explanation. People have been angry for quite some time now. Continued anger alone is an insufficient explanation.

The American "middle-class" (a more accurate label would be "working class") have seen their standard of living and future prospects not only stagnate but steadily decline for well over three decades. Until recently, most hoped—and half convinced themselves that this situation was temporary—that there would be a reversal in this long downturn for the "middle class" and a return to more "normal" times.

This election cycle, however, was faced with a dramatic new shift in sentiment. *In the main, the "middle-class" concluded that the steady deterioration in their prospects was not temporary but permanent. Not the function of some recurring business cycle, which would eventually be reversed, but rather something much more sweeping and fundamental.*

And increasingly, they correctly concluded that the existing political parties and the entire body of politicians that make them up, not only had no solutions, but no desire or self-interest in challenging this. They also knew, of course, that not everybody was hurting. Under the joint leadership and policies of both these capitalist parties, the "one percent" has been doing fabulously well, even outstripping in concentrated wealth the fabled "one percent" of the notorious "Gilded Age." This then was the reality in which the nation's two party system approached the 2016 presidential elections.

Despite all this, in smug and blind confidence, these two parties then marched ahead with their original plans to present the U.S. electorate with the "democratic" privilege of choosing between another Bush and another Clinton as the nation's 45th president. Their arrogance stunned much of the American electorate and opened the door for the improbable candidacies of two "outsiders" with no real support in the official two-party system. One was the billionaire reality TV host Donald Trump, the other a self-proclaimed "socialist" Bernie Sanders. Their candidacies were universally written off with derision and ridicule by all the political experts and commentators.

Donald Trump became the official candidate of the Republican Party, and Bernie Sanders came within a hair's breadth of being the Democratic Party candidate despite an organized conspiracy by virtually the entire Democratic National Committee to secretly smear and sabotage his candidacy in favor of their anointed, Hillary Clinton.

The seemingly bizarre unfolding of the 2016 presidential election is not the product of some unfathomable accident or fluke. On one hand, much of the U.S.



middle-class/working class, for the first time, lost all confidence in the ability of either wing of America's two-party monopoly to address and reverse their long decline. In their desperate search for some alternative, we had the completely unforeseen emergence of the Trump and Sanders candidacies. But even more fundamentally, the election represents the confused, disruptive reaction of America's ruling elite to the painful ending of an almost century-long era of U.S. global domination.

The present two party system and its political actors have been thrown into complete disarray by this new reality. Whatever name they may have used in the past to describe it—"American Exceptionalism"—"Leader of the Free World"—they certainly never contemplated its demise. Despite their growing confusion and deepening internal dissent, the U.S. ruling elite are determined that the costs of this new reality will be borne not by them but by America's increasingly hard pressed middle class/working class.

U.S. middle-class and the American century

The mass U.S. middle class of today is a relatively recent development. It was primarily created through World War II and its aftermath. Prior to that, what was then called the middle class was a much smaller and narrower phenomenon consisting primarily of professionals, small businessmen, managers, etc.

The United States won WWII. It won WWII big. It won WWII not just against the Axis powers but against its own allies as well. With the exception of the United States, the entire capitalist world came out of WWII in a shambles. Europe's industrial plants were destroyed or in decay, its working classes were reduced, dispersed, and demoralized, its political structures in turmoil, and its national economies for the most part flat broke.

But the United States, on the other hand, came out of WWII immeasurably stronger in every way than when it entered the war. U.S. industrial capacity had dramatically expanded, incorporating all the new technologies in manufacturing, electronics, chemicals, etc., developed during the war. The U.S. working class was intact with better skills and education than prior to the war. The U.S. was politically, militarily and

financially the completely dominant capitalist nation in the world.

The war ushered in what *Time/Life* founder and publisher Henry Luce, triumphantly proclaimed as the coming "American Century." The usual laws of capitalist international competition were temporarily in suspension. The dollar, freed from any monetary gold backing, was enthroned as the reserve currency for the entire capitalist world replacing the pound sterling. This gave the dollar and U.S. capitalism a uniquely advantageous position—the exorbitant privilege of paying its foreign bills in its own currency, which it could just print. This status lasted for decades. But not for a century.

This utterly unique and yet predictably unsustainable hegemony provided U.S. capitalism with the opportunity for an extended period of prosperity and astoundingly large profits. Faced with a strong trade-union movement which had emerged out of the "Great Depression," U.S. capitalism concluded that its best course was to concede some wage concessions where necessary, rather than disrupt the immense profit opportunities available to them by avoidable class conflicts. For now there were bigger fish to fry.

But this new era provided for more than just a general rise in wages. To take maximum advantage of these unique opportunities

required a more skilled and educated workforce. For the first time, university and college education was made available and affordable to large sections of the working class through the GI Bill and other subsidies. Between 1944 and 1971 the U.S. government spent \$95 billion on the G.I. Bill. The general prosperity created in this era also sustained a new consumer economy, primarily benefiting but not entirely limited to the white working class. This was marked by increased home ownership, widespread automobile ownership, leisure time activities, etc.

Continued class struggle

While this unique period of prosperity allowed for some tactical concessions to America's middle-class/working class it did not mean the class struggle was suspended. U.S. capitalism also used the combination of post WWII prosperity and its long reactionary cold war with the Soviet Union to housebreak the American labor movement. Through red baiting, the Taft Hartley Act, and support for "right-to-work" legislation, they cleansed the labor movement of the class-struggle radicals who were central to revitalizing the union movement coming out of the 1930s.

They were able to reshape the trade-union leadership into a conservatized bureaucracy utterly tied to the capitalist two-party system, converting it into little more than an adjunct to the Democratic Party. Because the Democratic Party was never a working-class party, it never initiated unions. However, once unions were formed, the Democrats became quite good at absorbing them into their political machines.

To their immense advantage they also used their world hegemony to create a series of international institutions, which were utterly dominated and controlled by U.S. capitalism. Among these was the already mentioned reserve currency status of the U.S. dollar. Equally important was the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union.

With the inevitable reemergence of intense international capitalist competition, the hegemony of the "American Century" began to come to an end. How

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has U.S. capitalism responded to this new global reality? For one, in response to growing global competition in manufacturing, it shifted its profit-making focus. It concluded that the quickest, largest, and easiest profits were now to be made not in the making and selling of products, but in the so-called financial sector. Between 1973 and 1985, the U.S. financial sector accounted for about 16 percent of domestic corporate profits. In the 1990s, it ranged from 21 percent to 30 percent. In the recent decades, it soared to as high as 41 percent of all U.S. domestic corporate profits.

With the closing of this long post-WWII prosperity, U.S. capitalism also returned to the unavoidable necessity to cut wages and working conditions for the U.S. middle-class/working class. One typically revealing example as documented by Stephanie Coontz in her excellent article: "Why the White Working Class Ditched Clinton—between 1947 and 1979, real wages for an average meatpacking worker, adjusted for inflation, increased by around 80 percent, reaching almost \$40,000-per-year, a salary that could support a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. But between 1979 and 2012 the average meat packer's wage declined by nearly 30 percent, to about \$27,000.

Also the need to quickly upgrade the educational level of the domestic workforce was no longer required or "cost effective" for U.S. capitalism. Policies were put in place to return affordable college and university training to the province of the relatively wealthy.

As U.S. hegemony began to weaken, the international institutions it created and dominated since the close of WWII began to unravel. Despite U.S. capitalism's increasingly frantic attempts to shore them up, this unraveling has significantly impaired their former ability to direct and control events. Last June's "Brexit" vote by Britain, one of U.S. imperialism's most loyal and reliable postwar allies, to leave the European Union was almost as big a shock then as the November Trump election was later on. ...

Political damage inflicted by 2016 campaign

For the ruling elite of U.S. capitalism there has been no more essential and valuable political institution than its stable two party monopoly. This has been true for more than 150 years, ever since the smashing of the slavocracy in America's great Civil War. But even prior to the election popular confidence in both the Democratic and Republican parties were at all time historical lows. The election itself has now resulted in a further dramatic deterioration.

On one hand, the Republican Party is captured by an extreme right-wing, rogue billionaire, an open racist, who brags about his successful sexual assaults on women, banning individuals from entering the country on the basis of their religious affiliation, and among other things, promises to launch a global-wide trade war.

The ruling class itself sees Trump as a loose cannon, dangerous and unstable—the kind of president that in this threatening new era for U.S. capitalism, demonstrates every potential for making things dramatically worse. For the first time in history every major newspaper in the nation opposed his candidacy. Yet despite the overwhelming opposition within its ranks, the U.S. capitalist class was unable to stop his election!

On the other hand, decade after decade of "lesser evil" politics made it easy to shift its entire two-party monopoly further and further to the right. But this also has a downside for the U.S. capitalist class. The Democratic wing of their dual party system became less and less able to even demagogically present itself as a populist party posing to defend middle-class/working-class Americans from an ever more austerity-driven capitalism.

The term "populism" even becomes pejorative among liberal commentators and Democratic Party functionaries. The Hillary Clinton candidacy was the perfect reflection of this right-wing evolution. The "super" capitalist Trump successfully claims to speak for an increasingly desperate blue-collar working class as the "change" candidate—"Make America Great Again." Hillary spoke for the *status quo*—with her campaign theme of portraying America as "Still Great."

The unchecked and un-checkable rightward evolution of the Democratic Party is reflected not only in the candidate but its entire electoral strategy. Especially after Trump's capture of the Republican Party, the Democrats embraced a strategy built around a superficial turn to "diversity," while promoting their pro-business policies in an attempt to win votes in traditional Republican bases in the white suburbs.

New York's Wall Street Senator Charles Schumer, who more and more emerges as the chief political



The super-capitalist Trump successfully claimed to speak for the blue-collar working class, while Hillary Clinton spoke for the status quo.

strategist and spokesperson for the Democrats, predicted: "For every blue-collar Democrat we lose in western Pennsylvania, we will pick up two moderate Republicans in the suburbs in Philadelphia, and you can repeat that in Ohio and Illinois and Wisconsin."

In addition, no other potential Democratic Party candidate was more closely tied to the disastrous results of "lesser-evil" politics than Hillary Clinton. She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Clinton administration's 1994 \$30 billion crime bill that created dozens of new federal capital crimes, mandated life sentences for some three-time offenders, and authorized more than \$16 billion for state prison grants and the expansion of police forces.

In her full throated support of the legislation, as Michelle Alexander documented in "Why Hillary Clinton Doesn't Deserve the Black Vote," she used racially coded rhetoric to cast Black children as animals. "They are not just gangs of kids anymore," she said. "They are often the kinds of kids that are called 'super-predators.' No conscience, no empathy. We can talk about why they ended up that way, but first we have to bring them to heel." By the time Bill Clinton left office in 2001, the United States had the highest rate of incarceration in the world.

Hillary supported the Clinton administration welfare-reform legislation, which under the slogan of "ending welfare as we know it," shredded the federal safety net for poor families. The legislation also barred undocumented immigrants from licensed professions, and initially slashed overall public welfare funding by \$54 billion. As late as 2008 she continued to defend the legislation as a success. She also supported bank deregulation during the Clinton administration and the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act.

Her most famous political act was her vote as Senator for the Iraq war. As the disastrous results of that war became more and more obvious she attempted to take her distance from it by claiming she was deceived by faulty intelligence. However, this did not prevent her continued attraction for an aggressive policy of military-imposed regime change. She enthusiastically supported the Libya military adventure, with again disastrous results. She then became the most vocal proponent for a "no fly zone" in Syria, which like the "no fly zone" originally declared in Iraq, would have been nothing less than a conscious precursor to yet another regime-change war.

The 2016 election and the Trump presidency pose a dangerous threat to two opposite and opposing constituencies, on one side the U.S. capitalist class, on the other side America's middle-class/working class. For the U.S. capitalist class the immediate question becomes how best to spin the election to insulate their two-party system from the disastrous results and at the same time restore some level of confidence in the Democratic and Republican parties.

Their solution was the launching of a massive propaganda campaign absolving their two-party monopoly from any responsibility in the bizarre unfolding of the election and the dangerous Trump victory. The Trump success, they wish to assure us, is not because of any fundamental failings on the part of the Demo-

cratic and Republican parties or U.S. capitalism or even Trump's inept electoral opponent Hillary Clinton. Rather, we are to believe the Trump victory is the product of a diabolical, foreign conspiracy engineered by the evil Russians. The prominent, liberal, *New York Times* columnist, Paul Krugman, even seriously proclaims, in a word play on the 1962 conspiratorial and reactionary film *The Manchurian Candidate*, that Trump is the "Siberian" candidate.

During the campaign the organization *WikiLeaks* released a series of documents damaging to Hillary Clinton and the Democratic National Committee. Among these were speeches Clinton gave to Wall Street fund-raising groups, the text of which she repeatedly refused to make public. In one she tried to assure her Wall Street backers not to worry about statements she might have to make on the campaign trail because, as a politician, you: "need both a public and a private position." In another speech to wealthy campaign donors she wrote off working-class voters attracted to Trump's promise of change as "... the basket of deplorables. They're racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic—you name it."

DNC documents also released by *WikiLeaks* revealed that the committee staff through scheduling, secret smears, and other maneuvers had been engaged in a conspiracy to sabotage the Sanders campaign in favor of Clinton. As a result, Debbie Wasserman Schultz was forced to resign her position as chair of the DNC. A few weeks later, her replacement, Donna Brazile, also had to resign when other *WikiLeaks* documents showed she had secretly provided debate questions to the Clinton campaign prior to at least some of the Clinton-Sanders primary debates. *CNN* also had no choice but to fire Brazile from her lucrative and valuable position as a Democratic political commentator as her stunningly unethical activities were revealed.

No one challenges the authenticity and accuracy of these damning *WikiLeaks* documents. But the increasingly frantic campaign charging Russia with hijacking the U.S. election wants to pretend their authenticity is irrelevant. Pay no attention, they say, to Clinton's secret speeches, to the actions of Wasserman, Brazile, and others. Rather, focus on the claim that *WikiLeaks* obtained these documents from Russian hackers.

That said, *WikiLeaks* denies their source was Russia. U.S. intelligence officials back up the claim of a Russian source "with high confidence." *WikiLeaks* past record for veracity is excellent, for the U.S. intelligence community, not so much. It wasn't that long ago that U.S. intelligence guaranteed the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as a "slam dunk." In reality, the dispute over the *WikiLeaks* source is an irrelevant "red herring." The undisputed authenticity and accuracy of the *WikiLeaks* documents, and what they reveal, are not irrelevant.

The most cynical aspect of this entire campaign is the portrayal of the U.S. as an innocent victim of unprecedented foreign interference in the election. A Dec. 23, 2016, article in the *Washington Post* by Lindsey A. O'Rourke documents that since 1947 the U.S. has tried to change other nations' governments 72 times. Sixty-six times by covert actions, six by overt means. The article reports that 26 of the covert actions succeeded; apparently, all six of the overt actions were successful.

Often when U.S. intelligence services meddle in foreign elections it doesn't hack—it murders. In 1963 the CIA organized a *coup* against their supposed South Vietnam ally, President Ngo Dinh Diem, in which he was killed. In 1973 the CIA organized a *coup* against the democratically elected president of Chile, Salvador Allende, in which he was killed. In truth no

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Leon Trotsky's 1917 stay in New York City



By DAVID JONES

"Trotsky in New York 1917, A Radical on the Eve of Revolution," by Kenneth D. Ackerman. (Berkeley, Calif., Counterpoint 2016), \$30.

One hundred years ago, on Jan. 13, 1917, the small Spanish passenger vessel *SS (or Vapor Correo) Montserrat* (*Vapor* is Spanish for steamship, *Correo* for mail) arrived in the harbor of New York City after a 17-day voyage from Barcelona, Spain. According to official records, the passengers disembarked on Monday, Jan. 15. Most of the passengers—hundreds—were Spanish immigrants to the United States, traveling in steerage, the maritime equivalent to the basement.

Also on board was a Russian family traveling in first class, courtesy of the Spanish government. Leon Trotsky, his wife Natalia Sedova, and their two children sailed on the *SS Montserrat* because they were being unwillingly deported from Europe at the insistence of the Tsarist government.

Writing in 1930, Trotsky recalled his first reaction: "We are nearing New York. At three o'clock in the morning, everybody wakes up. We have stopped. It is dark. Cold. Wind. Rain. On land, a wet mountain of buildings. The New World!"

Leon Trotsky, of course, is a figure of continuing world-historic significance. It is commonly known that he spent a short time in New York City, but the only generally available account of his stay is one chapter in his 1930 autobiography, "My Life."

Historian Kenneth Ackerman has now researched and written the first book on Trotsky's experiences, "Trotsky in New York 1917, A Radical on the Eve of Revolution." From his account, it appears Trotsky was far too modest in the recounting of his 10-week visit to the city, where, as he said, he left "with the feeling of a man who has had only a peep into the foundry in which the fate of man is to be forged."

Trotsky was already a world famous figure when the *SS Montserrat* docked in January 1917. In 1905, the year of the first Russian Revolution, at age 26, he had been elected president of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers Delegates. ("Sankt Peterburg" was renamed "Petrograd" in 1914 so as to deflect attention from its original German name and the German birth of the Tsarina. Likewise, the British royal family renamed itself "Windsor" in lieu of its authentic Teutonic surname of "Saxe-Coburg-Hesse," prompting Kaiser Wilhelm's memorable quip that he was "looking forward to attending the next performance of 'The Merry Wives of Saxe-Coburg-Hesse.'")

The revolutionary struggle of the St. Petersburg workers, the arrest and suppression of the Soviet in December 1905, the trial of the leaders, and Trotsky's electrifying speech to the Tsarist court riveted the attention of the world. Trotsky continued to be a major international figure during the next 12 years as a political journalist and revolutionary activist.

His reception on his arrival in New York had the flavor of late 20th-century rock-star celebrity. The city was home to a million and a half residents of Jewish origin, mostly immigrants from the Tsar's dominions of Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia, including



(Left) Building at 77 St. Mark's Place housed the offices of *Novy Mir*, where Trotsky worked with other exiled Russian revolutionaries.

(Far left) Leon Trotsky in 1918.

(Bottom) Yiddish-language *N.Y. Forward* with Trotsky's photo.

Bukharin and Grigorii Chudnovsky.

"In early February, Trotsky addressed packed crowds at the Brooklyn Lyceum, Manhattan's Beethoven Hall, the Labor temple near Union Square and similar venues. His articles ran three or four times each week in *Novy Mir*. At least four appeared in Yiddish translation in the *Forward*, with others in German in the *New Yorker Volkzeitung* and the socialist *Die Zukunft* ("The Future") (p. 117). Trotsky also lectured in Philadelphia and other nearby cities, speaking in Russian and German.

And then, on March 3, over 10,000 workers at the giant Putilov Works in Petrograd went on strike, led by the Bolsheviks. On March 8, International Women's Day, they were joined by striking female textile workers. That night Eugene Debs spoke to a mass rally at New York's historic Cooper Union. He asked Trotsky to join him on the stage.

"Speaking for myself," Debs shouted, "I shall absolutely refuse to go to war for any capitalist government on this earth. I would ... rather be lined up against a wall and shot for treason to Wall Street than to live as a traitor to the working class" (p. 180). In Petrograd the strike wave continued to swell, and on March 15, the Tsar abdicated.

On March 20 New York socialists organized a giant rally at Madison Square Garden, with 10,000 (according to *The New York Times*) or 15,000 (*New York Call*), and thousands who couldn't get in assembled outside to celebrate the overthrow of Tsarist absolutism. Russian socialists in New York organized another meeting.

Ackerman does make a small mistake here. He reports that "James P. Cannon of Kansas City" spoke on the platform of the March 20 meeting at the Garden, citing *The New York Times*, March 21: "Joseph Kennon, former Socialist Candidate for United States Senate," and privately in response to my inquiry, citing the *New York Call*, March 21: "Joseph D. Cannon and many others prominent in Socialist and working-class activities," and obviously presuming that Jim Cannon's name had been misspelled or otherwise rendered incorrectly. Leaving other sources aside, such as Brian D. Palmer's 2007 biography of



many passionate socialists, and universally seething with hatred for the brutal and absolutist Romanov regime.

Ackerman relates that "bounding down the gangway to the pier, Trotsky found himself the center of attention." The front page of the daily German socialist newspaper *New Yorker Volkzeitung* headlined that morning: "Leon Trotzki Kommt Heute!" (Leon Trotsky Is Arriving Today!). All the English language dailies reported similarly: "Expelled from Four Lands" (*The New York Times*) and "With Bayonets Four Lands Expel Peace Advocate" (*New York Tribune*).

"The *New York Herald* touted Trotsky's four years in Russian prisons and his battle with long-arm Tsarist harassment even in France ... Another English-language (daily) paper, the (socialist) *New York Call*, described Trotsky as 'pursued with particular vindictiveness by authorities of the capitalist order,'" writes Ackerman. "Within two days at least six New York newspapers with more than half a million readers would announce Trotsky's arrival in the city."

And then there was the 200,000-circulation Yiddish-language socialist daily *Forverts* ("Forward"), which put Trotsky's photo on the front page. "The *Forward* in 1917 operated from a beautiful new ten-story building in Lower Manhattan ... displaying bas-relief portraits of Marx, Engels and Ferdinand La Salle" (page 151).

Trotsky immediately plunged into intense antiwar agitation, and began working on the staff of the Russian-language socialist daily *Novy Mir* (*New World*, with 8000 daily circulation) located at 77 St. Marks Place (extant), along with exiled Bolsheviks Nikolai

the early years of James P. Cannon, "Joseph D. Cannon" was a real person, verifiably the Socialist Party candidate for United States Senate from New York.

"All that week," Ackerman writes, "Trotsky carried the same message of incomplete revolution through a blizzard of newspaper columns and speeches. He appeared before audiences almost every night ... with thousands packing the halls" (p. 194).

On March 27, after the provisional Kerensky government had declared an amnesty for political exiles, Trotsky and his family and a few other Russians embarked from New York on the Norwegian vessel *Christianiafford*, seeking a prompt return to revolutionary Russia. They were illegally detained at Halifax, Canada, by British authorities for a month before they were released to continue their voyage.

Ackerman has done fine research in British archives for sources illuminating the machinations behind the detentions of Trotsky and his companions. But there is a rich account of all that in Trotsky's "History of the Russian Revolution," and in the interests of brevity, that account and the story of further events can be sought there.

Kenneth Ackerman is not a revolutionary socialist historian. Nonetheless, he has assembled an impressive amount of original research and cogent narration on Trotsky's seminal 10 weeks in New York.

The real strength of the book is the new window it opens on the bubbling caldron of socialist and antiwar agitation and action in New York in the early months of 1917, and the brief but central role Trotsky played in it as revolutionary journalist and agitator. ■

... A watershed election

(continued from page 7)

government has been involved in more actions to subvert foreign governments and their elections than the United States.

The Obama legacy

To restore some level of confidence, especially for the Democratic Party, we have also witnessed the launching of an over-the-top campaign to burnish Obama's lackluster, eight-year, presidential legacy. Typical of the tone is *New York Times* columnist David Leonhardt's claim that: "Obama leaves office as the most successful Democrat since Franklin Roosevelt."

On the index of income inequality, the Obama eight years saw essentially no reduction in the enormous gap between the one percent and the rest of society. In the eight years of the Obama administration, 95 percent of households have not seen their incomes regain 2007 levels. Income inequality in the United States continued to far exceed anything seen in other advanced nations.

In new data just released by the World Economic Forum, the United States ranked 23rd out of 30 advanced economies in wage and non-wage compensation, and it ranked last in social protection. And lately things have hardly gone in the right direction. On Jan. 27 the government reported that the economy grew by only 1.6 percent in 2016, a significant reduction from around 2.5 percent in both 2015 and 2014. Many of the white working class, who voted for Trump, voted for Obama in 2008 and 2012, some no doubt despite holding racist views. Obama ran as the "change" candidate who they hoped would provide some relief in their desperate economic and social situation. They got eight more years of the same.

But the most telling part of Obama's legacy is how much his administration has prepared the ground for Trump's reactionary, extreme right-wing program. Trump in his promise of mass deportations, inherited a well-oiled deportation infrastructure from the Obama administration, which has deported 2.5 million people—more than every single U.S. president of the 20th century combined. In the spring of 2014 the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the nation's largest Latino advocacy organization, which had previously supported Obama, could no longer remain silent. NCLR President Janet Murguía delivered a speech lambasting Obama's deportation policy: "We consider him the deportation president, or the Deporter-in-Chief."

In 2007, before taking office, Obama assured the public that he would oversee the nation's extensive surveillance program without "undermining our Constitution and our freedom." Once in office, however, the Obama White House failed to meaningfully scale back surveillance practices established by Obama's predecessor, including the unlawful bulk collection of Americans' domestic phone call records. Michael Hayden, the former director of the U.S. National Security Agency, praised Obama explaining that surveillance programs have "expanded" during Barack Obama's time in office and said the spy agency has more powers now than when he was in command under President Bush.

Expansion of dangerous surveillance rules continued right up to the end of the Obama administration. With mere days left before President-elect Trump took office, Obama finalized new rules to make it easier for the nation's intelligence agencies to share unfiltered information about innocent people.

The Trump administration certainly plans to build on the already expanded surveillance program he inherited from Obama. Trump also promises to dramatically increase bombing in the Middle East and expand it to target family members of those he concludes are terrorists. Obama did not begin the drone-killing program but he did greatly expand it and greatly loosened its rules. Under Obama's approach many aspects of his targeted killing policy are, to say the least, on dubious legal footing, which have set hugely dangerous precedents. ...

The Obama administration asked Americans to believe not only that it was empowered to kill an American in secret; but that after the fact courts should refrain from judging whether such killings violated the right to life of the target. Thanks to Obama's actions, Donald Trump is inaugurated into an office that presumes the authority to secretly order the extrajudicial killings of American citizens.

Trump will also be inaugurated into an office that construes its mandate to kill with drones broadly, encompassing strikes in countries with which America is not at war and targeting groups and individuals that had nothing to do with the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. In effect, Obama has construed the 2001 Authorization to Use Military Force so broadly that it's now hard to discern any meaningful limit. ...

How can we successfully fight Trumpism?

What is the political nature of Trumpism? Does it constitute a burgeoning fascist movement? The truly

massive and uncontested anti-Trump demonstrations in dozens of cities throughout the nation, the day following his inauguration gives the answer to that. Where were Trump's fascist "brownshirts?" The best Trumpism could do was a few dozen "Hell's Angels"-type motorcycle gangs that didn't even make themselves visible.

However, this does not mean that Trump is just another right-wing Republican in the mold of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, or George W. Bush. The election of Donald Trump as president of the United States is a deeply dangerous development that dramatically escalates the threat to America's middle-class/working class. It is a decisive shift, representing the growing failure of center-right and center-left parties not only here but in all the advanced capitalist countries. What makes it particularly dangerous for the U.S. middle-class/working class is the complete absence here of any mass working-class party that could present a fighting alternative....

In her penetrating article, "Why Hillary Clinton Doesn't Deserve the Black Vote," Michelle Alexander attempts a balanced evaluation of Senator Bernie Sanders and his call for a political revolution. Alexander concludes: "The biggest problem with Bernie, in the end, is that he's running as a Democrat. ... I hold little hope that a political revolution will occur within the Democratic Party without a sustained outside movement forcing truly transformational change. I am inclined to believe that it would be easier to build a new party than to save the Democratic Party from itself."

Alexander expresses considerable political wisdom here. It *would* be easier to build a new party, as difficult as that certainly would be, than to save the Democratic Party. All the evidence, especially the recent history, demonstrates there is no "saved" Democratic Party that can successfully fight Trump. It is the dual parties of capitalism, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party together, that have created the conditions that gave rise to Trump. It's not irrelevant that Trump, for his entire life, has supported and participated in both these parties.

This of course does not mean that the fight against Trump should wait on the creation of a new alternative political party. The fight against Trump has already gotten off to a pretty good start—the really massive anti-Trump demonstrations and the Women's Marches in the streets that took place immediately following his inauguration. And this is certainly only the beginning. Trump sells himself as a "man of action," and to bolster that image and his ego, he will quickly attack Black youth, immigration, the woman's movement, Muslims, the labor movement, Latinos, *Roe v. Wade*, the environmental movement, and anyone who challenges him. His administration will be one that constantly provokes and energizes more people into opposition.

The mass demonstrations following Trump's inauguration were not initiated by the Democratic Party; rather, they were initiated independently by a small group of women activists. Trump was obviously stunned by their size and breath, but you can also be sure the Democrat-



(Above) "Senator from Wall St." Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.)

ic Party leadership was more than a little apprehensive about its independent nature, remaining largely outside of their control. They recall the anti-Vietnam War movement, which despite their best efforts remained independent, successfully resisting being incorporated into the Democratic Party electoral machine.

This is the essential political debate that will take place as the anti-Trump movement evolves—the fight to keep it independent of the Democratic Party. New York Senator Charles Schumer, who is replacing a discredited Hillary Clinton as the principal spokesperson for the Democratic Party, is already pushing to channel the movement into Democratic electoral politics. It's well to remember Schumer's history and background. In his long political career he came to be known as "The Senator from Wall Street."

He raises millions and millions of dollars from the finance industry, both for himself and for other Democrats. In return, he voted to repeal the Glass-Steagall Act in 1999 and voted to bail out Wall Street in 2008. In between, he slashed fees paid by banks to the Securities and Exchange Commission to pay for regulatory enforcement, and eviscerated congressional efforts to crack down on rating agencies.

Schumer voted for the Patriot Act in 2001, and sponsored its predecessor, the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act of 1995. During a Senate hearing, Schumer explained that "it's easy to sit back in the armchair and say that torture can never be used. But when you're in the foxhole, it's a very different deal." Schumer also defended the New York Police Department's surveillance of Muslims across the region, which Trump has cited as a national model.

Returning to Michelle Alexander's perceptive quote, she describes what she believes would be necessary to accomplish a political revolution, "a sustained outside movement forcing truly transformational change." That is what the anti-Trump movement which began with the Women's March on Jan. 21, 2017, should aspire to become. A placard I saw being carried at the Washington March was prophetic, "FIGHT TRUMP—THE DEMS WON'T." ■

... Immigrants

(continued from page 4)

the racist scapegoating of Mexican workers.

Trump's orders, like those of his predecessors, are not intended to stop the flow of immigrant labor into this country, but merely to regulate it. Many U.S. industries profiting from exploitation of immigrant workers fear Trump's new orders will force their workers back to Mexico and require them to hire U.S. citizens at higher wages. They support a flow of "paperless" immigrants sufficient to allow their businesses to continue to profit.

Many liberals, including the reactionary labor union bureaucracy, readily join the crusade to scapegoat Mexican workers—or immigrants from other Latin American countries who are lumped into the category of "Mexicans." The privileged union bureaucrats, who have demonized immigrants for years, now buy into Trump's nationalistic "America First" and protectionist "Buy American" themes, promoting the rhetoric that these measures would help protect the jobs of native-born U.S. workers.

This approach is thoroughly racist, falsely painting the main problem as competition between U.S. and Mexican workers, and aids ruling-class efforts to divide working people from each other. Actually, our struggle is one with that of Mexican workers in demanding that our capitalist governments pro-

vide good jobs and union rights for all, regardless of which side of the border we happen to live on.

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

An effective working-class program gives special attention to the plight of immigrants. It demands an end to deportations, ICE raids, and all forms of harassment and racist scapegoating. It demands that immigrants receive full "legal protections" afforded to other citizens.

Marxists, as internationalists, call for *open borders*. Borders and immigration controls give employers power over migrants beyond what they can exert over native workers. The capitalists put forward the policy of "secure borders" as a way of whipping up national chauvinism, encouraging workers to oppose, mistrust, or ignore workers living elsewhere.

What do socialists answer? The First International of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels put it this way: "The poor have no country; in all lands they suffer from the same evils; and they therefore realize that the barriers put up by the powers that be, the more thoroughly to enslave the people, must fall."

NO to Deportations and Raids! Equal Rights for All Immigrants! Open the Borders! ■

Irish socialist portrayed in 'Jimmy's Hall'



By ANNE-MARIE MONTEBELLO

"Jimmy's Hall," a feature film by Ken Loach

The word *hall*, in this Franco-British-Irish film from 2014, is understood in French to mean *dance hall*. But it is much more than this. It is a meeting place, a place of learning, drawing, music, boxing, literature, and also of course a place to dance and celebrate in a country where popular music, of high quality, and the accompanying dances have played a major role up to this day.

Jimmy introduces the sounds and rhythms he discovered during his 10-year exile in the United States, particularly those of Black music. James Galton—Jimmy to his close friends—was forced to go into exile when confronted by local landowners and the police.

[In real life, Galton joined the Communist Party while living in New York, and later joined the (Stalinist) Revolutionary Workers Group in Ireland. After being deported, he rejoined the CP in New York, and died in 1945.—editors]

In 1932 Galton returns to his village in County

Leitrim, from where the English were evicted less than 20 years earlier. He decides to settle down and work the land, while staying with his elderly mother. We quickly realize that the villagers have not forgotten him and that they expect a lot of him—notably his authorization to repair the dance-hall premises they had built together and which are now falling to pieces.

The situation has not changed. Unemployment, landless farmers on very extensive property, eviction of sharecroppers unable to pay the outrageous rents they are charged, oppression by the Roman Catholic Church personified by a belligerent priest who dictates from the pulpit what is to be done or not done, and who singles out Jimmy, whom he would like to banish from the village.

In those years the Catholic Church had a monopoly on education—a privilege that was contested by the lessons offered by the Hall free of charge. The same causes produce the same effects—confrontation is near, all the more since in Belfast, in Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant workers have come together against their exploiters, inducing the greatest concerns among the employers, and the clergy is ob-

essed, not without reason, by the fear of communism.

The film could have been dry. Quite to the contrary, it is full of strength and energy, punctuated by sequences of dancing. The colour is beautiful, the landscapes are gentle, and the characters, without being fashion models, possess an aura that radiates. What we are talking about here are the villagers with their lovely, recognizable accent—not the landowners haunted by fear and hatred.

It should be noted the police who are chasing Jimmy, without abandoning their brutality, are ill at ease in these fights against people belonging to a world from which they come.

Ken Loach is known not to dissociate the political discourse from artistic expression, be it the light in which it was filmed or the camera employed. The point of view often advanced is that of the teenagers by whom Jimmy is surrounded, and in whom burns the desire to escape the oppression of money and morality. There's also a romantic scenario, both discreet and of a great emotional intensity. As in Irish ballads, when returning from exile, Jimmy has found his sweetheart already married and the mother of two children.

The screenwriter says he wanted to move beyond the idealized image of the activist. And the character portrayed by actor Barry Ward is anything but a caricature. Sensitive and fun-loving, he hesitates when his incredible skill as a speaker is solicited.

Political discussion is present on different levels: With the villagers, always threatened with repression and who wonder about the action they should take. With the prominent citizens, for the opposite reasons. And potentially with the clergy, where the reflections of a young priest disturb the old vicar, who nevertheless remains on the side of the landowners.

Debates take place between the two sides, but they could be better described as denunciations rather than as debates. Their aim is to convince their own partisans, more than their adversaries. The situation is indisputably that of class struggle.

Jimmy's Hall is not the first film Ken Loach dedicated to Ireland and its political and social fights. "The Wind that Shakes the Barley" (2006) was about the 1919-1921 war of independence and the civil war of 1922-1923 that followed. It earned him the Palme d'Or in Cannes. "Wind" scriptwriter Paul Laverty also wrote this latest film.

Ken Loach claims he likes documentaries. He produced here a beautiful cinematic achievement that both accounts for history, and gives it the tribute of fine fiction artistry. ■



... Women's worldwide strike

(continued from page 12)

Following year saw a 13-week strike of immigrant women garment workers against Triangle Shirtwaist and other sweatshops. The strike continued through the brutal winter and was known as the "Uprising of the 20,000."

Inspired by the struggles of the women garment workers in the United States, German socialist Clara Zetkin (seen in photo above) agitated for a day to mark working women's International solidarity.

In 1910, women from 17 countries attended the Second International Conference of Working Women, which designated International Working Women's Day in response to the mass strikes and demonstrations by women workers in the United States.

The following year, one million women throughout Europe marched in the streets to demand their rights on

International Working Women's Day, and in following years they protested the imperialist World War.

In 1917, Russian women textile workers went on strike on International Women's Day, demanding, "Peace, Land, and Bread." This sparked the struggle to overthrow the Tsar and the beginning of the Russian Revolution.

On March 8, International Women's Day, whether you walk off the job for the whole day, leave work early to protest wage inequality, attend a rally, march, picket or boycott, you are part of the actions happening around the globe.

This is an important continuation of the solidarity shown in 1910 when Clara Zetkin in Germany insisted on creating a day inspired by women workers struggling in the United States. ■

Women protest in Eastern Europe and China

In **Poland** last October, tens of thousands of women went on strike and participated in mass demonstrations throughout the country in protest of legislation that would have imposed a blanket ban on abortion, including in instances of rape and incest. As a result, the conservative government completely withdrew the legislation.

Marta Lempart, one of the organizers of that strike, was asked for a few words of advice for women in other countries: "Always protest where you live. Stay in your community, focus there, and you will always find people who will support you. There will also be people who hate you, but they will always hate you anyway. You do not have to care about that... do your own gathering and collect more people."

"Then you feel the power, even if you have five, or 10 or 50 people—you collected those people. I would also tell them to join in the International Women's Strike on March 8."

A major issue the women in **Russia** are facing is that new laws were passed that diminish domestic violence laws. Domestic violence will no longer be a crime. Beating up a relative once a year will be a misdemeanor, subject to administra-

tive law. As Yelena Mizulina, a Russian Parliament member, put it, "We don't want to put people in jail for two years and call them "criminals" for the rest of their lives for just slapping a woman in the face." A lot of women in Russia are still unaware of these changes; this will be a major issue for feminists in Russia this year.

Feminists in **China** are not actively organizing strikes on March 8. Even the mention of the International Strikes got a swift reaction from government censors.

The Feminist Voices organization shared an article about the women's strike in the U.S. from *New York Magazine*. The article was entitled, "On March 8, Women Will Go On Strike." The article was shared on Weibo, a China-based microblogging platform similar to Twitter. According to *The New York Times* the notice from Sina.com, the platform's host, read, "Hello, because content you recently posted violates national laws and regulations, your account will be banned for 30 days." Feminist Voices circulated this notice on another social media account.

They believe it was the March 8 strike article that prompted the censor since it was the only one of the group's Weibo posts to be censored recently. An unnamed Sina.com staffer told the group that the suspension was ordered by the Cyberspace Administration of the State Information Office.

— ANN MONTAGUE

By MITCHELL SHORE

In a memorial event for the death of a homeless person, more than 50 people gathered outside of Toronto Mayor John Tory's luxury condo on Feb. 19. Protesters demanded immediate action to stop the preventable death of homeless people. John Clarke of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, street nurse Cathy Crowe, and others delivered passionate speeches at the spot where people laid flowers and candles in remembrance.

A 28-year-old Indigenous man died in the previous week. He went to St. Felix Centre, one of the two 24-hour warming centers in Toronto, only to find that it was over-capacity when he arrived. He declined a referral to another location. Instead, he went to a nearby fast-food restaurant to warm up. A few hours later, he died in the washroom from what was likely a fentanyl overdose.

This death came only days after Mayor Tory was given a petition with over 3100 signatures pleading that Toronto needs more emergency shelters. The signatories urged him to open Moss Park and Fort York armories as a temporary solution.

The mayor also ignored multi-faith leaders, Social Planning Toronto, and 31 other agencies' appeal for compassion and their call for the provision of addi-

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

When it comes to the poor — No Lives Matter!

tional shelter immediately.

It is a sick irony that the homeless person died while Toronto city councillors debated a budget that is harmful to the city's most vulnerable. One item they voted on was a motion to increase funding to the shelter system by just over \$1 million, and to increase staffing by 10. Not surprisingly, it didn't pass. But how could we expect anything better from Mayor Tory's never ending neo-liberal austerity regime?

Over 800 homeless people in Toronto have died since the mid-1980s. This latest one was another to-

tally preventable death. It is a shameful example of what is wrong with the city's shelter and support systems.

Socialist Action demands immediate action to stop preventable deaths of homeless people:

- Mayor Tory: Open up the armories!
- Provide decent housing for all!
- Provide immediate support and resources for drug users!
- Stop the war on the poor! Tax rich property owners, land developers, giant corporations and banks! ■

The sell-out of Ontario's Public Service Workers

By Y. FIKRET KAYALI

In 2014, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) bosses first announced regressive changes to post-retirement benefits, such as vision care, medical prescriptions, and dental care. The unions objected to this. The employer stepped back, just a little. But the end result is still very bad—especially for future generations.

Under the new conditions, retirees will have partial or total coverage reductions for vision care, orthopaedic shoes, wheelchair and ambulance services, dentures, and private-duty nurs-

ing.

Workers hired after Dec. 31, 2016, will be eligible only for an inferior benefits plan when they retire. And those workers will have to pay 100 per cent of the premiums. The employer labels this vicious scheme the "Retiree Focused Plan." In reality, it's a two-tier system that sells out future generations.

"Our union did not fight this deal as much as they should have," said Julius Arcsott, an Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) activist and Socialist Action member. "OPSEU leadership did not include the restoration of post-retirement benefits in the last

negotiations for our collective agreement. This would have helped galvanize the membership to get a better deal all around, instead of the concessionary two-tier deal we got."

The two-tier system of wages and benefits is spreading like a plague in Canada, across public and private sectors alike. In some workplaces, there are even three-tier wage and benefit structures. This not only worsens generational inequalities; it undermines workers' solidarity.

Recently, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) successfully fought against two-tier wage and benefit plans.

They preserved the gains of previous generations of workers, for the future generations. OPS workers should follow postal workers' example. As CUPW president Mike Palecek says, there are only two rules in the labour movement:

Rule #1: You don't get anything unless you fight for it.

Rule #2: You don't get to keep anything unless you keep fighting. ■

Y. Fikret Kayali is a member of the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario (AMAPCEO) and a leading member of Socialist Action.

In memoriam: Harry Paine (1933-2016)

By ROSEMARY HNATIUK and MITCH PODOLAK

Harry Paine died peacefully on Dec. 30, 2016, at the lovely hospice attached to the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He retained his passion for life and politics to his last breath.

Harry was a revolutionary, agitator, propagandist, union militant, truck driver, strike leader, pro-choice advocate, anti-war activist, internationalist, festival and theatre organizer, harmonica player, folkie, carpenter, jack-of-all-trades, brilliant chef, teller of tales, champion of seniors, political commentator, optimist, and incurable romantic. Harry was the consummate working-class hero.

At the ripe age of 17, Henry Paine emigrated from England to Canada, landing in Toronto. There he immediately sought out left-wing political connections, joining the Socialist Education League, Canadian section of the Trotskyist Fourth International. Many will recall that Harry was part of the socialist movement in Toronto in the 1950s, '60s, '70s and '80s.

His political activity got him onto some unfortunate "lists." So, he cleverly started identifying himself as "Harry," instead of "Henry," and got a new lease on his activist life. Harry played an important role in the League for Socialist Action, the trade-union movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and in the Left Caucus of the New Democratic Party.

In 1962, the *Globe and Mail* published his picture on the front page. It identified him as the most powerful person in Ontario because of his critical role as the leader of a spontaneous



strike movement that paralyzed the Ontario economy for six weeks. He led nine wildcat strikes at Smith Transport with Local 938 Teamsters. One of them was in solidarity with a wildcat strike in Quebec that froze all inter-city transportation on Ontario's highways.

Because of his commitment to the Fourth International, Harry found himself spending time in New York City helping to build the headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party. He was part of a key link between radical socialists who maintained their commitment during the dark days of McCarthyism in the 1950s, up to the student and youth radicalization of the 1960s.

Harry was persuaded to leave Toronto for Winnipeg by Mitch Podolak, founder of the Winnipeg and other Folk Festivals. In the late 1980s, Harry was highly regarded for his community work, his promotion of initiatives that reflected his socialist commitments, and his contributions to the cultural and political left in the province.

Among his main claims to fame was his role as organizer and chief cook at the legendary back-stage kitchen of the Winnipeg Folk Festival. Later he became the technical producer and main contractor/carpenter of the West End Cultural Centre, conceptually and literally helping to build this important cultural institution.

Through his work in the NDP Wolsely Constituency Association in Winnipeg's famed "granola belt," he became a go-to guy for left-leaning NDP members and unaffiliated activists working on various progressive initiatives over the years.

After he "retired," Harry got even busier—as an advocate for seniors' rights. This work he came to organically. He experienced first-hand the discrimination and marginalization which is the fate of many low-income seniors.

If he wasn't zooming off on his bike to some NGO meeting, he was meeting with the Premier, or an NDP cabinet minister, to argue for an initiative they should be implementing, which they often then did implement.

After his pancreatic cancer diagnosis and partial recovery from related procedures in the Fall of 2016, Harry still felt inspired to join Socialist Action. On SA's monthly cross-country telephone conference calls, Harry was one of the most voluble and knowledgeable contributors.

In his last days, looking up from the laptop on his hospital tray, Harry quipped with characteristic dry humour and indefatigable optimism, "You know, I don't have time to die!" ■

In memoriam: David MacKay (1947-2017)

By JOHN WILSON

Sadly, we must report the death of David Mackay (formerly David Carrell) on Feb. 15 at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. He had been in a coma for some time.

Dave was a revolutionary socialist in his youth and all his adult life. In the late 1960s, he was an active member of the Young Socialists and the League for Socialist Action. During this period, he took part in the significant student protest movement at Simon Fraser University (SFU). He was one of the celebrated "SFU 114," students who were charged, convicted and faced fines at the insistence of the university administration.

Dave was probably best known for his decades of militant activism in the post office. He was fired five times by management for his efforts and fought successfully, with the backing of his union, CUPW, for reinstatement. Unfortunately, the sixth time around, the post office bosses got their way.

In the 1990s, Dave and his partner Danny lived in Toronto. Dave became an active member of Socialist Action. Some time after they returned to Vancouver, Danny tragically died by suicide. Many of his friends feel that Dave was never able to really get over this horrendous experience and the hole left in his life.

Some of us who knew Dave well realized that he had mental health problems, which he was never able to deal with, and which got worse with age. Danny's death added heavily to these difficulties.

Despite all this, Dave never gave up on the struggle for a socialist future, and his example in this respect strengthens us. Nor will we forget enjoying him as a great story teller; witty, knowledgeable and humorous. RIP, comrade. ■

Women strike around the world



By ANN MONTAGUE

International Women's Day, March 8, is set as the date for women's strikes around the world. This event comes on the heels of a series of strikes and mass demonstrations last year when women poured into the streets of Poland, Ireland, Turkey, Italy, Argentina, and Iceland.

This time, the call by the International Women's Strike Network has been answered by more than 30 countries around the world and on every continent. Women in each country are creating their own platforms and demands.

The majority of demands deal with issues ranging from violence against women and reproductive rights to social demands like the minimum wage, labor rights, equal pay, public services, and health care. Demands also oppose racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia. The forms that actions will take also vary by country and include strikes, direct action, mass marches, pickets, and boycotts. In Italy, women are organizing with radical trade unions for women-led workplace strikes.

The call for the International Women's Strike was issued last October. The women organizers were clear about the issues that are central to their demands and the power of women to win: "We, the women of the world, are fed up with violence addressed at us, physical, economic, verbal and moral. We will no longer tolerate it passively.

"We demand that our governments stop using misogynist insults and start taking real measures to solve numerous problems related to our safety, free access to medical care, including abortion, the establishment of severe penalties to be applied to our oppressors in cases of rape, domestic violence and every gender-based crime....

"As aware citizens, we the women of the world, know the world is going through a crisis phase, but we do not accept being victims of it."

The original statement was signed by women in 17

countries. That number has now greatly increased, as over 30 countries are planning women's strikes on March 8.

The impetus for the global strike looked back to the historic example of women who went on strike in Iceland in 1975. This inspired women in Poland, who organized a day-long strike on Oct. 3, 2016, to stop a law criminalizing abortion and miscarriage. The legislation was immediately withdrawn by the government.

In the same month, Korean women came out to protest several times against greater penalties for doctors who performed abortions. This was followed by women in Argentina, who went on strike and held massive rallies after the rape and murder of a 16-year-old girl. As protests continued around the world, the International Women's Strike chose March 8 to launch the largest global women's strike in history.

Striking in the United States

International Women's Strike, U.S. has been launched in solidarity with the International Women's Strike. On Feb. 6, eight prominent U.S. feminists wrote an article for *The Guardian* calling for strikes and demonstrations on March 8. They spoke of the need for a "feminism for the 99%" and waging a militant feminist struggle.

"In our view," the women wrote, "it is not enough to oppose Trump and his aggressively misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic and racist policies. We also need to target the neoliberal attack on social provision and labor rights. Women's conditions of life, especially those of women of color and of working, unemployed and migrant women, have steadily deteriorated over the last 30 years, thanks to financialization and corporate globalization."

They referenced the recent women's strikes in Poland, South Korea, and Ireland against abortion bans and in defense of reproductive rights, and marches in Latin America against male violence against women.

They stated that the first step in building a new feminist movement would be to help build an inter-

national strike against male violence and in defense of reproductive rights on March 8. The expansive platform they collaboratively developed covered: An End To Gendered Violence, Reproductive Justice For All, Labor Rights, Full Social Provisioning, and For An Anti-racist and Anti-imperialist Feminism. For the full platform, see womenstrikeus.org.

Currently, 24 cities across the United States are planning strikes and international solidarity events, and there are even more U.S. cities where women have begun meeting to plan events for March 8.

The strikes are inclusive of all women and all forms of work that women do: Women working in the formal labor market with or without labor rights, unions and the legal right to strike, and legal status; unemployed women; sex workers; women performing unpaid housework and care work; and students.

Actions might mean a strike for the day, a partial day strike, marches, rallies, or forums. It might also be a boycott or picket of a local misogynist business or individual. If women are not able to leave care and housework for the day to participate in actions, they can wear red and talk to others about what is happening globally and why they are in solidarity with women around the globe.

After the launching of the International Women's Strike, U.S., the main organizers of the Jan. 21 Women's March announced March 8 as "A Day Without Women," which would be rooted in calls for boycotts on that day. The two groups are in solidarity with each other and may organize some events together in some parts of the country.

International Women's Day: A proud history

International Women's Day is recognized in 25 countries as an official holiday, but the United States is not one of them. The history of the holiday goes back to 1908 when 15,000 women garment workers marched through New York City to demand shorter work hours, higher pay, and voting rights. The fol-

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