

Harvey hits Houston

A glimpse of future climate disasters?



By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

As we go to press, Hurricane Irma has brought catastrophic damage to Caribbean nations, with wind gusts of 220 miles an hour. Evacuations are taking place in coastal areas of Florida and Georgia, which face being submerged by surging water.

In the meantime, the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast is carrying out a grim and costly cleanup from Tropical Storm Harvey. The destruction is staggering—particularly in Houston, the nation's fourth largest city and its major center for oil and chemical refining.

Houston was the victim of two major factors that increased the intensity of the storm and made it especially lethal—climate change and unchecked sprawl. The storm left in its wake air, ground, and water pollution that can have lasting effect on human health.

The *Houston Chronicle* headlined: "Epic flooding shows no mercy," as the downpour continued for five days. Rain gauges showed that as much as 52 inches had fallen—the heaviest rain total to have fallen in any tropical cyclone in the continental United States since records began in 1950.

As the storm shifted to the east, much of the city was left underwater, with higher sections reduced to soggy islands. Over 200,000 houses were damaged in the region and 13,500 completely destroyed—with much of the damage in poorer and working-class neighborhoods where people lack flood insurance. At our press time, at least 60 have been confirmed dead within the entire area of the storm.

The Rev. James Caldwell, a community advocate who lives and grew up in the Black community of Houston's Fifth Ward, spoke to *The Texas Tribune*: "This is the first time that I'm aware of in years that this area actually flooded into homes. It floods—the streets turn into rivers, and all that — but the homes themselves are generally safe. This time, it hit homes."

Brian Gage, an advisor for the Houston Housing Authority, told *The Texas Tribune* that hundreds of families have been displaced from city-owned public housing complexes that were flooded. "Rebuilding will be a long and painful process for people with so few resources."

Government first-responders were supplemented by legions of civilian volunteers who carried thou-

sands of people to safety. Three truck drivers gained media attention for driving 200 miles to the Houston area, where they rescued over 1000 people. Several hundred members of the Cajun Navy (Louisiana "bad asses who save lives," who first got together because of government inaction following Katrina) and many others used boats, canoes, and hand-to-hand human chains to pull victims out of the oil and sewage-laced floodwaters.

Chemical explosion; oil tanks toppled

Generally, the region around Houston produces 4.5 million barrels of refined petroleum products per day—25 percent of the nation's total. Fracked oil and gas from around the country are piped to the region for processing, and the products are then exported around the world. Oil prices rose worldwide as at least a dozen Texas refineries halted their operations.

Well over 3400 oil and chemical storage tanks line the sides of the Houston Ship Channel, presenting a constant danger in heavy storms. But no design standards exist in Texas to protect the tanks from storm

(continued on page 8)

Thousands of fans boycott NFL in solidarity with Colin Kaepernick

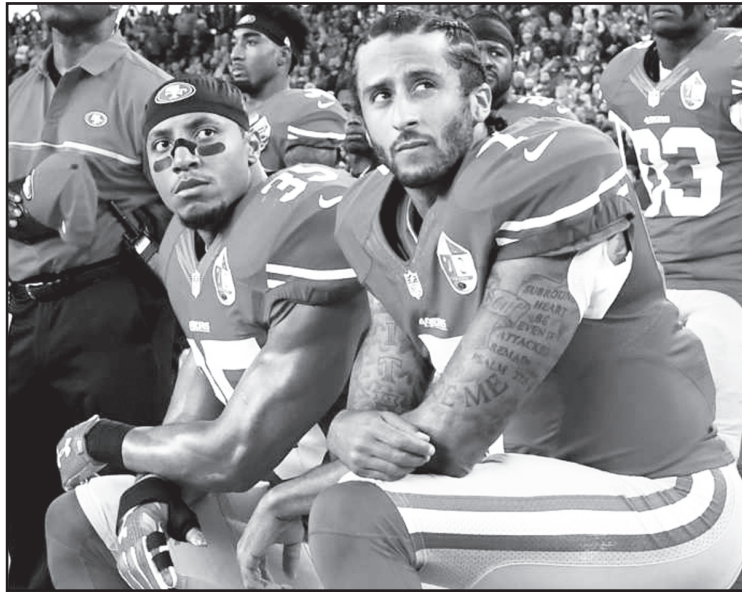
By ERNIE GOTTA

Thousands of people are pledging to boycott the NFL this year under the banner #NoKaepernickNoNFL. Not since Mohammed Ali has a professional athlete had such a political impact on American culture. Despite overwhelming support for the embattled player, owners of every football team have blacklisted the activist/athlete for his public opposition to oppression of the Black community. NFL owners are deliberately signing quarterbacks with lower ratings to avoid hiring Colin Kaepernick.

Almost a year after Kaepernick's refusal to stand for the National Anthem, his protest is still making headlines. On Aug. 30, Aaron Rodgers, one of the best quarterbacks in the league, announced to the press that Kaepernick was being blackballed for his protest. On Aug. 24, over 1000 people gathered outside NFL headquarters to support Kaepernick. Earlier in August, 100 mostly Black police officers, from New York City's notoriously brutal police department known for its racist "stop and frisk" policies, broke ranks to hold a press-conference supporting Colin Kaepernick.

Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett and other players are continuing Kaepernick's protest by taking a knee during the National Anthem and asking white players to join them. Thirteen players on the Cleveland Browns huddled together taking a knee in solidarity with Kaepernick during a preseason game.

NFL owners recognize the danger in his protest. They want gladiators, they want their players to be seen and not heard. What's next? Will players start questioning the effects of concussions on post-career



brain damage? The suicide of Junior Seau, one of the great defensive linebackers, who played with an incomparable passion, brought Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) a degenerative disease brought on by repeated concussions, to the mainstream consciousness. It's not a far leap in logic to say that NFL players fighting for social justice will also demand better safety conditions on the job. That's just one example where there is potential to cut into the owners' profits.

To halt the wild popularity of Kaepernick's influence the owners brought out big names from football's recent past—retired stars Michael Vick, Ray Lewis, and Tiki Barber—to give Kaepernick suggestions on how he might return to the NFL. They said, "Cut your hair,"

"Honor the flag," "Get away from that nonsense." Kaepernick has maintained his principles despite a rush of abuse. In response, he fired back, "I'm going to continue to stand with the people that are being oppressed."

Kaepernick's example poses a threat because it also undermines the militaristic and patriotic spectacles created during major sporting events. These spectacles are an important part of legitimizing U.S. wars and occupations abroad. The Department of Defense has spent millions of taxpayer dollars on paid patriotic displays. It's easy money for the owners.

Kaepernick is in the company of greats like Jackie Robinson, Mohammed Ali, John Carlos, and Mohamed Abdul Rauf. All were famous athletes who protested during the National Anthem to show their solidarity with those suffering under the repressive might of the U.S. capitalist class.

When Kaepernick started his protest during "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 2016, it sparked a season of solidarity among young athletes. Every day, news stories broke about high school soccer, football, volleyball, and basketball ball teams following Kaepernick's lead. Kaepernick has since continued to be active, holding "Know Your Rights" workshops for youth of color and donating \$700K in seven months to organizations fighting for social justice.

He's inspiring a young generation of athletes to open their eyes to more than what they see on the field. Most importantly, he is setting an example by taking a principled stand for social justice above lucrative contracts and endorsement deals. Give Kaepernick a fair chance on the field and take him off the blacklist for his political beliefs! ■

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!

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: Sept. 7, 2017
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor.



For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 268-9429, socialistaction@lmi.net

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: socialistactionnews@yahoo.com
Website: www.socialistaction.org

WHERE TO FIND US

- BUFFALO, NY: wmysocialist@google.com
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, chisocialistaction@yahoo.com
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: adamritscher@yahoo.com. www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com
- KANSAS CITY: kcsa@workernet.org (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE, KY: redlotus51@yahoo.com, (502) 451-2193
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, socialistaction@visi.com
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: (267) 989-9035 organizer.philly@gmail.com
Facebook: Red Philly

- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 gary1917@aol.com
- PROVIDENCE: ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM (401) 952-5385
- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com,

Socialist Action

Subscribe now!

— \$10 / six months — \$20 / 12 months — \$37 / two years

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

— I want to join the Socialist Action Newspaper Supporters Club.
I enclose an extra contribution of: — \$100 — \$200 — Other

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action newspaper, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.
Or subscribe on-line with a credit card at www.socialistaction.org.

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
526 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ont. M6G 3R4, (416) 535-8779
<http://socialistaction.ca/>

Support grows for Guatemalan immigrant

By MARTY GOODMAN

"Go out of the shadows. Go out and fight." — Amanda Morales-Guerra.

Amanda Morales-Guerra, a Guatemalan immigrant living in New York City, faces deportation and separation from her three children, but she is not alone. Amanda has found sanctuary for herself and her three children within the Holyrood Church in the largely Hispanic Washington Heights community in upper Manhattan.

A week after a request for a stay of deportation was granted for 90 days, subject to review, she was told on Aug. 21 that the stay was denied. But Amanda, Holyrood church, and the New Sanctuary Movement vowed to keep on fighting.

In the first hundred days of the racist Trump administration, ICE has arrested over 41,000 immigrants, a 38% increase over last year. An Amnesty International study found that Trump's measures aimed at "tackling immigration" violate international law.

Amanda Morales-Guerra, 33, fled Guatemala in 2004 after threats to her life in that violence-torn country. Amanda made her way to Long Island, N.Y., where she has worked and paid taxes for years. In 2012, she was a passenger in a car accident and ordered to report to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regularly, which she did. She received deportation orders on Aug. 3 and was told to report on Aug. 17, with a non-stop ticket to Guatemala. Instead, she went to Holyrood Church with her three children Dulce, 10, Daniela, 7, and David, 2, who have never been to Guatemala and are American citizens.

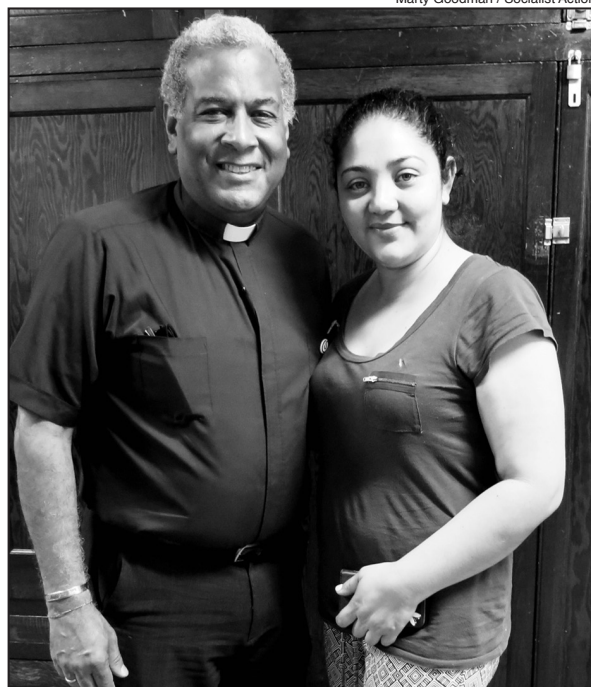
Father Luis Barrios of Holyrood Church and the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York said, "It's not a religious issue, it's a human rights issue; it's about dignity." He added, "We are putting together a legal campaign" for Amanda.

In an interview with *Socialist Action*, using a translator, Amanda said that in Guatemala there is, "a lot of crime, and I was afraid of being kidnapped. I was threatened by the gangs. I'm very grateful for the parish but I miss my liberty, getting the kids to school, the normal things mothers do. The kids were afraid because I was crying all the time. I do all this for my kids. If I go back with them to Guatemala there will not be a good future for them."

Amanda added, "Guatemalans feel threatened because they think Donald Trump doesn't want people from Central America and Latin Americans in the U.S. They should not hide. They should not keep silent. Go to a church or any other solution. Go out of the shadows. Go out and fight!"

The first of many planned community prayers/rallies was held for Amanda and her family outside the church on Aug. 28, attended by over 100 activists, religious leaders, and politicians. As a backdrop, a large banner hung high above the church entrance with Amanda's name on it.

Speaking with *Socialist Action*, Holyrood's Father Barrios cautioned immigrant rights supporters: "Do not be confused. Obama was doing the same, but not openly. So was Bush and Clinton—but not openly. [Trump] is not bringing anything new. He's going to



(Left) Amanda Morales-Guerra stands with Father Luis Barrios of Holyrood Church in New York.

implement what was approved by Obama and Bush. They're all the same." Indeed, President Obama deported over 2 million immigrants, more than any previous president, earning him the nickname "Deporter in Chief" among immigration rights advocates.

Barrios said Amanda's children had seen a pediatrician and psychologist who determined the children suffered from post-traumatic stress. They were "not sleeping" and saying, "they're going to take away our mother." Barrios explained that ICE says that hospitals, churches, and schools are "sensitive areas" and have yet to come inside Holyrood. "But," warns Barrios, "we've seen videos of ICE going into churches and schools."

Concerning the setback for Amanda, Barrios said, "We learned from activist training that delayed justice is not justice. We knew that from the beginning. We want the authorities to know that we're not giving up."

Washington dominates Guatemala

Guatemala has long been under the thumb of Washington and U.S. corporations. The CIA organized a military coup in 1954 against an elected mildly reform government that Washington labeled "communist" after it challenged the absolute dominance of the U.S.-based United Fruit Company. Subsequently, U.S.-backed governments, supplied with U.S. arms—including napalm—and U.S. military personnel, led to decades of mass slaughter of the Guatemalan poor, particularly the Native people.

Today, Guatemala is a haven for companies seeking sweatshop labor—in particular, giant U.S. agricultural and textile corporations. Guatemalan society is rife with corrupt

politicians, a brutal army and police. Poverty, drugs, gang warfare, rape, and extortion are rampant.

According to Amnesty International, Guatemalan women are murdered with impunity. Between 2012 and 2010, less than 4 percent of nearly 1900 homicide cases resulted in convictions.

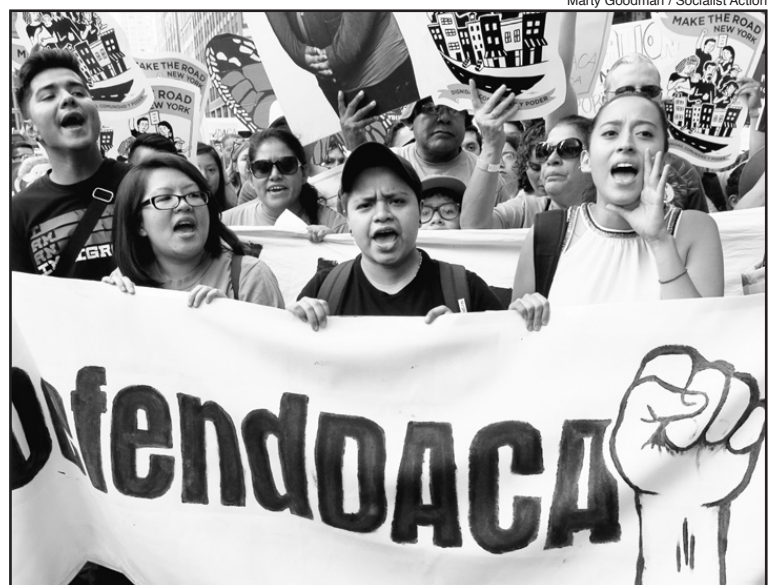
Father Barrios emphasized the social and political reasons for Guatemalan immigration as a "combination of U.S. policy and the rich people who surrendered to the U.S. They throw people out as human surplus in a capitalist society." Barrios called it, "structural violence," due to an incredibly unequal distribution of resources.

Barrios added, "It was a CIA military coup in 1954 that overthrew the Guatemalan government because 'our interests' were being affected by a progressive government. In the 1950s, the whole transformation of the social, political economy in Latin America started in Guatemala." In Guatemala today, "The biggest organized crime is coming from the military, mostly trained at the [U.S.] School of the Americas."

It is urgent that the immigrant rights movement extend its reach into the unions, as well as throughout the oppressed communities. The historic immigrant workers strike and protest of two million in 2006 showed us the way forward to beat back Trump.

Capitalism in crisis is to blame for attempting to divide working people with racist lies against immigrants. Neither capitalist party will truly defend immigrant rights. Solidarity with Amanda Morales-Guerra! No to the Wall and racist deportations!

For updates on Amanda's case, see www.Facebook.com/HolyroodSCruz/ or Facebook: New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City.



Thousands protested around the U.S. (above in New York City) against the Trump's administration's decision to "wind down" the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Congress would have six months to consider alternative employment, educational, and residency protections for the nearly 800,000 young immigrants ("Dreamers") who are affected.

By MARK BRUNT

Are N. Korean leaders crazy?

Much has been made—and quite astutely—of connections between the current lead-up to a potential war with North Korea and the events before the Iraq War: the collusion of mainstream media with a president that earlier they had largely disliked; massive fear-mongering about their weapons; and a narrative about the brutality of the regime.

Yet the image of Kim Jong Un and his administration that is crafted by American propaganda is also reminiscent of the image created of Japan during World War II. It is an Orientalist depiction of a supposedly irrational people—a racist conception that the U.S. is now using to justify yet another potential war.

The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were, and continue to be, justified by the claim that Japan would have never surrendered otherwise. Indeed, there is a principle in the code of Bushido, a major element of Japanese culture, that precludes surrender. And yet, was

this actually a principle the Japanese government would have followed?

Winston Churchill explicitly said, "We shall never surrender!" But his statement was treated as a rhetorical rallying cry. Surely, as a rational actor, Churchill did have a breaking point. The Nazis never reached that point, but we perceive Churchill—a white European—as essentially acting in the best interest of his country, calling for resistance even in the face of long odds against a powerful enemy, not as a madman from a warrior culture, incapable of seeing the reality of his situation beyond a code of honor from the Middle Ages. The Japanese, however, were portrayed as bound by this code and unable to reason past it.

The same racist attitude is now being applied to the administration in North Korea. A careful look at history can demonstrate North Korea as a rational actor. And, to be clear, we do not mean "rational" in the

sense that it is respectable or to be admired; the current ruling regime of North Korea is hardly admirable. To be "rational" means to be capable of political calculations in pursuit of a goal, the first of which is self-preservation.

The country suffered a brutal occupation by Japan, which it freed itself from, only to suffer a bombing campaign from the U.S. that killed well over a million people. This, of course, was the same U.S. involved in a list of regime changes so long it might have made the British Empire blush.

We can only assume that North Korea is rationally afraid of the United States. It is, therefore, a rational act to obtain weapons of deterrence, the most powerful being nuclear weapons. We oppose nuclear proliferation, but if the U.S. has an arsenal that could annihilate the world in the blink of an eye, and a history of aggression, it is not hard to see why other countries—especially those on America's bad side—would

seek to arm themselves.

If we treat North Korea as a rational actor, it is hard to imagine Kim Jong Un striking first, knowing how deeply out-gunned he is. But, remember, Kim Jong Un is not portrayed as rational but "crazy," like the Japanese in World War II. He isn't driven by self-preservation, but a fire-eyed hatred to destroy. After all, don't all North Korean school children grow up being taught to hate the United States?

In order to promote fear of North Korea, the U.S. propaganda machine must make a first strike by North Korea seem plausible, and to do so, they must present Kim as irrational. Isn't it convenient that the old narratives of irrational Asians are so prevalent? (Other American enemies do not get depicted as such. Putin, for instance, is depicted as conniving, deceptive, and frightening—but rational.)

Socialist Action is in opposition to all imperialist war, including any potential strike on North Korea. No such act is necessary for the well-being of the American (or any country's) working class.



UAW to contest election loss at Nissan plant

By BILL ONASCH

The United Auto Workers' organizing drive at the giant Nissan plant in Canton, Miss., once showed promise of becoming the biggest union victory in the Deep South since the United Food & Commercial Workers won bargaining rights—and a contract—at Smithfield's huge hog plant in Tar Heel, N.C., in 2008. A win at Nissan would have been the first at a Japanese auto company "transplant" in the U.S.

The 4.7 million square foot facility, with annual capacity for assembling 450,000 vehicles, opened 14 years ago and utilizes a workforce of up to 6400 during production peaks. However, this includes hundreds of managers and professionals and more than 2000 contract workers provided by Kelly Services and not directly employed by Nissan. The bargaining unit established by the National Labor Relations Board included about 3500 regular Nissan production and ancillary employees.

According to Nissan, 46 percent of management is "minority;" 62 percent of the workforce is "diverse." But multiple sources report that about 80 percent of those who were eligible to vote are African American. Historically, Black workers, North and South, have proven to be more receptive to unionization than their white coworkers. But every campaign is unique and demographics alone don't determine the outcome.

Organizers have long realized that unions don't organize workers—bosses do. Treatment issues usually mean more than dissatisfaction with wages. The Nissan workers are not working for poverty wages like those in Tar Heel once were, or the fast-food workers fighting for "15 and a Union" are today. Their relatively high pay for Mississippi, where unions are rare, make those jobs sought after. But treatment is another matter.

As early as 2005, tiny groups started clandestine meetings to discuss the need for a union and decided to contact the UAW. Proceeding cautiously, by 2010 a reliable ongoing organizing committee representing most departments had been established.

As Nissan came to realize they faced a real threat, they began to implement standard measures of spreading fear and intimidation. In early 2015, citing concerns over labor relations guidelines of the multinational Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the State Department offered to mediate the disputes in Canton—promptly rejected by the company. Later that year, the NLRB issued complaints against Nissan and Kelly for illegally threatening to close the plant if an "outside" union got in. That complaint is still outstanding and the union has since filed several additional charges.

UAW seeks community allies

After the NLRB involvement, the field organizers were directed by Detroit to reach out for allies in the community and sympathetic mass organizations. They did a good job in pulling together a broad coalition called the Mississippi Alliance for Fairness at Nissan, which included other unions and civil rights, church, student, and environmental groups. They carried out civil disobedience actions that convinced Nissan to reinstate a fired UAW worker in the plant.

This past March, the Alliance organized a 5000-strong march and rally in Canton that brought in

workers from around the country—and Nissan workers from Brazil—to show solidarity. The rally also featured prominent speakers such as Bernie Sanders and Danny Glover.

Such actions are vital to winning, whether it be initial organizing campaigns or struggles by established unions. But the very success of the Alliance appears to have led the top UAW leaders to rush a premature bid for an election. The UAW turned in authorization cards for a small majority of Nissan workers. A cardinal rule of successful organizing is to expect that some support will be lost in a vicious company campaign, and you will likely need at least 70 percent on board from the beginning. Only *after* filing did the UAW flood Canton with organizers to make crucial home visits that should have been done months in advance.

It didn't help that the election came soon after the well publicized defeat of a Machinists (IAM) attempt to organize a Boeing plant in South Carolina. And just days before the vote, a rare scandal involving collusion between a Fiat-Chrysler manager and a UAW official in Detroit to embezzle funds from a joint training center was making headlines.

The United States has the most repressive labor laws of any industrialized "democracy." These make it difficult for even the best-led organizing drives to succeed. Winning only guarantees the right to bargain with the employer. Many never succeed in getting a first contract. Failure to win a contract within the first year can lead to a new election to decertify the union.

While many good things were done right at Nissan, the end game chosen by the Solidarity House bureaucracy certainly can't be called well led. But that won't come as a shock to those familiar with the evolution of what was once America's most influential union.

In competition with other unions, the United Auto Workers has long had thousands of members in the aircraft and farm equipment industries. More recently, they have organized university grad students. I pay dues to UAW Local 1981—the National Writers Union.

But the union's bread and butter has always been the most important manufacturing industry in the world's biggest economy—auto. The UAW was forged in the 1930s as part of the CIO's turbulent organization of mass-production industries that had been largely ignored by AFL craft unions.

This was a time of mass unemployment and success depended on winning sympathy—and often active support—from the jobless. An early turning point in auto industry organizing was the 1934 Toledo Auto-Lite strike, initiated and largely led by socialists in the Lucas County Unemployed League. Unionism during that period took on the character of a broad social movement that could advance the interests of all workers.

Often attacked by police and the National Guard, the workers used bold tactics to compel employer recognition and negotiations—like sit-down strike occupations of the workplace and mass picketing to block plant gates. Those tactics were later outlawed by the Supreme Court and the Taft-Hartley Act. In the 70 years since Taft-Hartley was enacted, labor's perfidious Democrat "friends" have done nothing to change that repression of our most effective worker power.

From militancy to concession bargaining

The UAW's one-time domination in their industry

made them arguably the most important U.S. union, a pace-setter in collective bargaining that created the semi-mythical "middle class." At their peak, the UAW had 1.5 million members—the lion's share in auto. Now they have a little more than 400,000.

Today, coming off record sales in the U.S. market, there are only about 900,000 remaining American jobs directly related to the auto industry. There are a number of factors for these dwindling numbers—technology, imported vehicles, and offshoring being the biggest.

From World War II to the late Sixties, the Big Three automakers—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—were the dominant domestic producers of cars and light trucks, and there were very few imports. The UAW had national contracts covering all of their plants.

A one-time socialist, Walter Reuther was elected president by an Administration Caucus that continues to rule the UAW to this day. With a wage formula of three percent annual productivity raises plus cost-of-living adjustments secured, the union concentrated on expanding "fringe benefits" eventually

winning such measures as good pensions with "thirty-and-out" early retirement; comprehensive health insurance including families and retirees; and supplementary unemployment benefits to maintain 90 percent of pay during lay-offs.

Beginning in the mid-Sixties, Japanese imports began to fill a niche long neglected by the Big Three—smaller, more fuel-efficient cars. Belated initial attempts by American companies to compete in this market were plagued by design, quality, and safety problems.

Soon, major Japanese companies like Toyota, Honda, Mazda, and Datsun (later rebranded Nissan) started offering a full line of cars and light trucks. And they began opening so-called "transplants" to build them in the U.S. and Canada. More recently, Korean-based Hyundai/Kia have opened U.S. operations and have become major players. German-owned Benz, BMW, and Volkswagen also now build in the USA.

While these "foreign" companies were all unionized in their home countries, they were determined to remain "union free" in North America. With the sole exception of a small group of maintenance workers at VW's Chattanooga factory, the UAW has not organized any of the transplants since VW's short-lived plant producing Rabbits in Pennsylvania in the late Seventies.

The UAW's early strategy was to defend the Big Three both by promoting Buy American and adopting a Partnership approach to make these global giants "competitive." This included new working conditions emulating so-called "Japanese" quality production—actually borrowed from 1920s methods at General Electric.

Soon, UAW plants started competing *with each other* to keep jobs—so-called "whip-sawing." GM and Ford spun off their parts divisions from the national contracts. And when NAFTA was launched in 1994, the union's American "partners" began a massive transfer of both parts and assembly work to Mexico. This led to General Motors' having more workers in Mexico than in the United States.

That only accelerated the UAW's concession bargaining—leading to debilitating historic give-backs in the 2007 Big Three national contracts. To relieve the companies "retiree burden," the union agreed to accept a final lump sum contribution to establish a retiree insurance trust to be managed by the UAW. Current active workers kept their wage and pension benefits, *but all new hires would be paid at half the "legacy" wage and would be enrolled in a much inferior retirement plan.*

Hardly more than a year later, the new Obama administration dictated further give-backs and plant closings in "managed bankruptcies" at GM and Chrysler. Italian-based Fiat acquired ownership of Chrysler.

All this certainly made the Big Three more competitive—at the expense of Big Three workers. The same give-backs also made the UAW very noncompetitive in trying to organize the transplants. For eight years, the starting pay for Big Three UAW members was less than what new hires got at foreign-owned rivals like Nissan.

"Partnership" is an enfeebling, ultimately fatal disease for unions. The only cure is a return to the class-struggle perspective that won the CIO battles establishing once mighty unions like the UAW. ■

Puerto Rican activists fight coal ash dumping

INTERVIEW BY ERNIE GOTTA

Puerto Rico has suffered for generations under the direct and indirect rule by the United States. The wealth of the island has been stripped by corporate interests while farmers and workers on the island have struggled with political, economic, and environmental degradation.

Activists both at home and in the diaspora are leading a massive struggle against austerity and environmental destruction. Alexis Diaz, a Puerto Rican activist living in Connecticut, discusses the fight against the dumping of toxic coal ash in the poorest regions of the island.

Ernie Gotta: What is coal ash and why are people protesting the dumping of coal ash in Puerto Rico?

Alexis Diaz: Coal ash is the waste material left after coal is burned. Coal ash contains arsenic, lead, mercury, and other heavy metals—many of which are toxic. This is having a negative effect on people's health and the environment. There have been reported increases in cancer, asthma, and other respiratory illnesses in the areas most affected by the coal ash. Residents complain of ash literally showing up at the front door and in their homes from the wind.

EG: Who is most affected by the coal ash?

AD: The people most affected are those living in and around the areas where the coal ash is being dumped, primarily in the municipalities of Guayama, Peñuelas, and Salinas on the southern coast. These are historically some of the poorest areas of Puerto Rico, which have been subjected to exploitation and natural resource extraction. This is also a region with a high concentration of Black communities. This is a textbook example of environmental racism.

EG: Why did Applied Energy Systems (AES) choose Puerto Rico?

AD: It is not a coincidence that they are doing this in poor, historically marginalized areas of Puerto Rico. Not only are they operating in a colony but in the most marginalized areas within the colony. They can commit these injustices in a cloak of invisibility. They are importing toxic garbage from coal operations in Virginia and using these communities as the dump. There are also a variety of tax exemptions that corporations benefit from when operating in Puerto Rico.

EG: In July the governor of Puerto Rico signed an "anti-dumping" law. Have the companies stopped dumping?

AD: The governor passed a law banning the dumping of coal ash. However, the dumping has continued. It is essentially dumping by another name—the ash



Adriana De Jesús Salamá / Diálogo

being repurposed. While he has claimed that this is not ash, it clearly is. Activists and scientists/researchers continue to call the administration out on their faulty logic and repressive tactics. It may be technically "refined-processed" but it still contains the same toxic material. It is a way to circumvent criticism and any EPA regulations that may provide legal barriers to dumping. Commercial use is being encouraged by using this waste to develop materials for construction such as concrete.

EG: Can you describe how the movement in Puerto Rico is fighting back?

AD: There have been encampments set up in Peñuelas and Guayama in attempts to block the dumping and transport of coal ash. It has been led by residents of these communities, with people from all over Puerto Rico joining them. However, there has been extreme repression by militarized law enforcement. Hundreds of police have escorted these trucks, forcing them through the encampments that are trying to block them. It really is a display of who the police are protecting and serving.

EG: What demands are you raising?

AD: AES must completely stop the dumping and transport of coal ash or coal combustion residuals, return the coal ash to their source to be disposed of as safely as possible, and pay reparations to the people in these communities that have been impacted.

EG: How does this fight connect to the struggle against the fiscal control board?

AD: This fight is directly connected to the larger struggle to decolonize Puerto Rico. The colonial fiscal control board is an instrument of creditors and banks to implement draconian austerity measures.

Puerto Rico is essentially up for sale to corporate vultures on every level—including environmental. The colonial government is relaxing what little environmental regulations are left. This is happening while EPA regulations and protections are being done away with at the federal level. Natural resources are up for sale at a time of widespread privatization and wholly undemocratic governing.

EG: How do Puerto Ricans in the diaspora respond to this issue?

AD: Educating each other is critical because there is little news coverage on Puerto Rico, let alone on this injustice. News is being spread via word of mouth and social media. Puerto Ricans and our allies need to recognize there is collective power in the U.S. There are over 5 million Puerto Ricans in the U.S. compared to just over 3 million in Puerto Rico. A great deal of the people left on the island are the elderly, the very young, and the very poor, and are subject to increased repression and draconian measures in a time of historic crisis. It is vital that the diaspora mobilize efforts to confront these crises and support those back home in Puerto Rico.

EG: Recently, you presented and got a resolution on coal ash passed during a general assembly of 350 Connecticut. What are you hoping comes from passing this resolution?

AD: I am grateful for the resolution passed at the general assembly of 350 CT, and I hope that it brings more attention to the issue and the overall issue of colonialism in Puerto Rico. Anyone who believes in 100% renewable energy should be appalled at what is taking place. It is important that we garner solidarity and support in the United States and internationally.

EG: How can people get involved?

AD: There are grassroots efforts in these very communities to switch to alternate, renewable forms of energy. Specifically, in regards to solar power—studies have shown that today there is the capacity for Puerto Rico's electrical demand to be supplied solely off solar power. Let's keep in mind that electricity costs in PR are double, and some cases triple, what they are in the Northeast United States. Community-led initiatives are finding ways to wean off the archaic utility grid and building structures that benefit their community rather than corporate interests.

As for how people can get involved, visiting Puerto Rico is always an option. These communities need all the support they can get. Stateside, there are a variety of organizations and community groups (such as Defend Puerto Rico and Comité Boricua en la Diaspora, to name a few) that are raising awareness and mobilizing efforts in regard to the coal ash dumping and many other issues revolving around Puerto Rico. ■

Labor Briefing

By BILL ONASCH

A vote to reject—In recent years the threat of a veto by a Democratic governor stalled right-wing plans to pass a so-called "Right-to-Work" law in Missouri, as was passed in several other new states. That last obstacle was breached when the 2016 elections not only gave the Republicans a veto-proof majority in the legislature—they got a Trumpite governor to boot.

To their credit, the Missouri labor movement didn't accept the Open Shop with good grace. They skillfully used a section of the state constitution to delay implementation of the law until a voter referendum next year. This required a petition signed by 100,000 registered voters before the Aug. 28 effective date of the legislation. The unions turned in 310,000 notarized signatures, to be on the safe side.

This will be the second time that RtW will be on the ballot in Missouri. If today's unions use the lessons of the 1978 defeat of the Open Shop they should get the same results. A future article in this paper will review that labor victory.

Trans-Atlantic Labor Day—The once common Labor Day parades and picnics have grown fewer every year. But strikes by fast-food workers demanding 15 Dollars and a Union were scheduled in 300 locations across the USA this Labor Day.

They were backed by support demonstrations by Faculty Forward, an arm of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) organizing low wage adjunct college professors, as well as other unions, worker centers and local coalitions. And for the first time, they were joined in solidarity by MacDonald's workers in Britain fighting for 10£ and a Union.

Fed up with Mickey Mouse unionism—About half of the 9000 members of Orlando-based Teamsters Local 385 are employed at Disney World. Starting wages there are only \$10 an hour for jobs such as greeters roaming the area dressed like Mickey Mouse. The local, along with five other unions representing 70,000 Disney workers, will soon be opening contract negotiations. But the ranks have many complaints about the local officers. The union's Independent Review Board is investigating possible corruption, and for the first time in many years an opposition slate is challenging the Old Guard in leadership elections.

Services may be withdrawn—At our deadline, two SEIU Locals representing San Diego and Riverside Counties in Southern California had set strike deadlines after each employer threatened to impose "final offer" new contracts. Thousands of workers in each county rallied as leaders submitted the strike notices to their respective bosses. Local 221 bargains for 10,000 San Diego workers; there



Socialist Action

(Left) On Labor Day, 350 Connecticut helped on the Fight for 15 picket line.

are 7000 in the Riverside Local 721. Their ranks include nurses, librarians, appraisers, social workers, and clerical staff.

are 7000 in the Riverside Local 721. Their ranks include nurses, librarians, appraisers, social workers, and clerical staff.

"Free speech" for free riders—Earlier this year a short-handed Supreme Court deadlocked on a California suit contrived by the boss-funded National Right to Work Committee known as *Friedrichs*. They had argued that requiring public-sector workers declining to join the union to pay a service fee to cover contract negotiation and enforcement expenses, which also benefit those not paying union dues, was a denial of their free speech rights.

Now that the confirmation of right-wing Neil Gorsuch seems to assure a solid all male, anti-labor SCOTUS majority, the NRWC is back for another bite of the same apple—this time for a free rider wannabe in Illinois.

Blimp not included—A new five-year Steelworkers master contract covering

Goodyear plants in Akron, Topeka, Danville, Virginia, Gadsden, Alabama, and Fayetteville, N.C., was ratified by big margins. News reports did not include any details.

Better late than never—On Aug. 19, more than 200,000 U.S. Postal Service workers covered by the terms of the National Association of Letter Carriers contract finally received a 1.2 percent retroactive raise, effective November 2016, and two backdated annual cost-of-living adjustments of \$21 and \$333 lump sums. They will receive a third COLA effective Sept. 2 worth \$270. The Obama administration had held back this money until a new contract was ratified. That finally happened on Aug. 7—approved by a 94% vote. Over the life of the agreement, which runs until September 2019, there will be only one more raise of 1.3 percent along with four additional COLAs. USPS is allowed to reduce their contribution to health insurance 3% during the contract. Postal worker strikes are illegal.

Headed the right direction—A Labor Day *Gallup* poll shows: "In the U.S., 61% of adults say they approve of labor unions, the highest percentage since the 65% approval recorded in 2003. The current labor union approval is up five percentage points from last year and is 13 points above the all-time low found in 2009." ■

If you have a story suitable for Labor Briefing please contact billonasch@kclabor.org

Recalling the Greensboro massacre



By JOHN LESLIE

On Nov. 3, 1979, Ku Klux Klan members and neo-Nazis of the American Nazi Party (ANP) attacked an anti-Klan march in Greensboro, N.C., that was organized by the Communist Workers Party (CWP). Five members of the CWP were murdered and 10 others were wounded with the collusion of federal and local law enforcement.

Workers' Viewpoint Organization (WVO), which changed its name to the Communist Workers Party just days before the massacre, had been organizing in the North Carolina textile industry. Members had taken jobs in textile mills and worked to build multiracial union struggles. Their work in the mills had earned them the hostility of the textile bosses, local cops, and union bureaucrats.

In this period, the KKK was reasserting itself after being dormant for years. The CWP took part in a confrontation with the Klan in June of 1979 at China Grove, N.C., where the KKK was holding a meeting. Protesters at China Grove took up the chant of "Death to the Klan!"

The CWP prioritized anti-Klan organizing, seeing opposition to the KKK as an obligation for communists. Party activists and their allies planned an anti-Klan conference that was to be preceded by a march through Greensboro's low-income housing projects. The CWP leaflets, emblazoned with the slogan "Death to the Klan," exhorted the Klan and Nazis to come to Greensboro, stating, "you are nothing but a bunch of racist cowards. ... We challenge you to attend our November 3rd rally." (1)

March permits issued by the police stipulated that demonstrators not carry any guns, despite the fact that open carry was legal in North Carolina. Violation would result in revocation of the march permit.

Police and federal informant Edward Dawson, a convicted felon and long-time Klansman, was urged by his Greensboro police handler to attend meetings where the Klan response to the march was taking place. Dawson spoke at a KKK meeting, where he urged armed action against communists.

Additionally, the American Nazi Party in North Carolina had been infiltrated by an Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) agent, Bernard Butkovich, who posed as an over-the-road trucker. Butkovich also encouraged the Nazis to go to Greensboro armed. However, he reported no discussion of an armed attack to his superiors.

In the weeks before the march, a United Racist Front



was declared in a press conference by neo-Nazi leader Harold Covington and KKK Grand Dragon Virgil Griffin. At one gathering, Covington declared, "Piece by piece, bit by bit, we white people are going to take back this country." (2)

On Nov. 3, as marchers started to gather outside of Greensboro's Morningside Projects, a column of Klan and Nazi supporters in nine cars started to approach the parade route. Just before the fascists arrived, police officers were ordered by the dispatcher to clear the area, leaving the area unprotected. At approximately 11 a.m., the tactical unit responsible for protecting the rally was ordered to go to lunch. A Greensboro police detective had provided Dawson with a copy of the permit that detailed the parade route. Dawson rode in the lead car of the caravan, which was followed by detectives in an unmarked car.

CWP member Paul Bermanzohn recalled later, "Where are the cops?" Sandi asked me. ... We had a tense but consistent relationship with the police. They usually gathered in a swarm around us at least an hour before a march." (3)

As the KKK arrived on the scene, people started yelling. Dawson leaned out of his truck window and shouted at Bermanzohn, "You asked for the Klan, you got it, you commie son of a bitch!" (4)

After a brief scuffle between marchers and fascists, the Klan and Nazis opened fire with rifles and shotguns, killing CWP members Cesar Cauce, Bill Sampson, Jim Waller, and Sandi Smith. Ten people were wounded. CWP member Mike Nathan died of his wounds in the hospital. Only a couple of CWP supporters were armed with handguns and a shotgun. The shootings were caught on film by the four different news crews that were on the scene to cover the demonstration.

Two subsequent trials revealed the extent of police and federal collusion with the fascists. In particular the role of Dawson, who was both a federal and local police informant, shows the role of police. At the urging of the police, Dawson had disrupted meetings of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), a Maoist grouping that had an intense rivalry with the CWP. There had been clashes between CWP and RCP supporters. The FBI, ATF, and local cops were intent on disrupting leftist political activity in North Carolina.

In the first criminal trial, six fascists were prosecuted by the state, five of them charged with murder. An all-white jury acquitted all of the fascists. In a federal civil rights trial, all nine defendants were acquitted by an all-white jury despite eyewitness testimony and film of the massacre captured by news crews. Neither Dawson or Butkovich were called to testify in the first criminal trial.

(Left: 1979) The aftermath of the massacre.

(Right: 2017) Ku Klux Klan rallies at Gettysburg Battlefield National Park.

In court, the fascists claimed self-defense and played on the anti-communist prejudices of jurors. The ACLU refused to defend the CWP, citing the violence and arrests. Six CWP members and supporters were held on felony riot charges. For this reason, CWP members were uncooperative with the prosecution in the trials of the KKK and Nazis. They strongly believed that cooperation would help convict their comrades. The attitude of the prosecutor didn't help when he stated that most people thought that the communists got what they deserved. (5)

The Carter administration's Justice Department found no wrongdoing by police in the incident, but questions remain about why police were withdrawn from the neighborhood right before the shootings and why the tactical squad was sent to lunch at 11 a.m. Politicians closed ranks in defense of the behavior of the police.

Marty Arthur (Nathan) said later: "Believe it or not, the Klan and Nazi killers walked away free from all three trials [two criminal, one civil]. They were never punished, never spent one day in prison. How can the justice system acquit murderers who four TV videotapes show firing into a crowd and killing five people?" (6) The civil trial, which concluded in 1985, found the Greensboro police department, as well as the Klan and Nazis, liable for wrongful deaths; the CWP protesters were awarded \$400,000.

Progressive activists in the region and nationally wanted to build a mass political response to the killings. A mass march was called for Feb. 2, 1980, by an ad hoc coalition calling itself the February 2nd Mobilization Committee. The CWP was reluctant to work with other leftists or broader forces in the aftermath of the murders. CWP leader Jerry Tung had predicted a five-year period of struggle leading to revolution. This perspective of revolution on the immediate horizon required sacrifice and confrontation with the agents of the state and the far right.

Strategy and tactics in the fight against fascism and the far right must be considered carefully. Activists should never underestimate the possibility of cooperation between rightists and the cops. The courts and capitalist politicians cannot be relied on to protect us. Revolutionaries doing anti-fascist work should avoid isolation from broader social forces by building united front counter-mobilizations.

The use of defensive slogans, rather than offensive slogans, is called for. James P. Cannon, a founder and

(continued on page 9)

Our internationalism and theirs

By BARRY WEISLEDER

In this crazy, increasingly unequal and toxic world, there are two kinds of political collaboration—that of the capitalist class, and that of the working class.

The bosses have their North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. They have their European Union. They have their World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and many so-called “free” trade agreements. For the capitalist rulers, those are tools used to maximize profit, to suppress workers’ resistance, and to rob nature.

As part of the international working class, we have unions, social justice movements, and most importantly, revolutionary socialist parties. The highest expression of working-class solidarity is the revolutionary workers’ International, of which I will say more later.

One of the biggest obstacles to a better world is the illusion that there is no alternative to the present global system of exploitation and oppression. But the truth is, the world capitalist system is increasingly unstable. It is wracked by economic crisis and environmental catastrophe. Millions of refugees are fleeing famine and wars caused by the profit system.

And yet the corporate media fosters the illusion that a few young capitalist politicians can fix everything. They try to distract us with stories about Emanuel Macron’s love life, or Justin Trudeau’s hair, or not-so-young Angela Merkel’s liberal values. They contrast those personalities to Donald Trump, although they all serve the same money God.

In Canada, and beyond, politicians and the business media are promoting a big fallacy. It is Trudeau’s claim that Washington is retreating from its role as world cop. He says it’s up to France, Germany and Canada to fill the security vacuum.

Need I remind you that the U.S. has 800 military bases in 70 countries around the world? How many bases has Trump closed? None. Not even the one on land stolen from Cuba, the prison torture camp at Guantanamo.

Oh yes, France has 10 military bases. Britain has seven. Canada has troops based in Iraq, in Latvia, in Ukraine, in Africa, and is again sending hundreds to Afghanistan; it has police in Haiti, and war ships in the Persian Gulf as well as in the Mediterranean Sea. But those forces cannot match, let alone substitute for the power of the American Empire. The fact is that the Empire is retreating from nowhere.

The Pentagon and Wall Street continue to work with the right wing in Venezuela to try to overthrow the Maduro government. They continue to embargo revolutionary Cuba, and aim to tighten travel rules that were loosened a little by Obama. They cheer as Trump hit Syria with 59 cruise missiles, and when he exploded the “mother of all bombs” in Afghanistan. They applaud as he surrounds China with warships, and threatens North Korea with nuclear weapons.

Trump cemented his ties with the misogynist regime in Saudi Arabia, and he embraced the Zionist apartheid state, in person. Both of those clients of U.S. hegemony give direct and indirect support to Daesh/Isis/Isil.

The only change is in diplomacy. I know that diplomacy seems like an odd term to apply to the chief resident of the White House. President Trump demands that his imperialist allies pay more of the freight. But Justin Trudeau professes to be a feminist. He promises an “independent” Canadian foreign policy. Yet he just capitulated to Trump. He did so by increasing the budget for the Canadian military by 70%, the largest increase in its history.

Trudeau, Macron, and Merkel can have breakfast with Barack Obama, they can wear nice suits, and they may profess liberal democratic values. But in the same breath they help corporations defy environmental regulations, they put the squeeze on Greece and other countries coerced into debt by powerful exporting economies, and they drop bombs on Libya, Mali, Kurdistan—on any people who stand in the way of “progress”—I mean “profits.”

They have nothing good to say about British Labour



(Above) Protest against education cuts in Chile in 2015.

Our internationalism grows out of the aspirations of the working class. It merges with the actions of millions who take matters into their own hands.

Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who showed that socialist ideas are again on the political agenda. He showed that socialism is the alternative to capitalist austerity and barbarism. Corbyn is no revolutionary, but capitalism will not accept his reforms without a fight.

An affirmation of humanity

Our internationalism is much more than opposition to personal greed. Our internationalism is an affirmation of humanity. It is a testament to the beauty of the human imagination when liberated from the shackles of commodity fetishism. It is about the triumph of majority over minority rule. It is about smashing bourgeois state power and replacing it with a planned economy under workers’ self-management.

Our internationalism grows out of the aspirations of the working class. It merges with the actions of millions who take matters into their own hands. Like the Communards of Paris did in 1871. Like the workers and peasants of Russia did 100 years ago when they smashed Tsarism, seized the factories, and distributed the farmland. Like the workers and farmers of Cuba did 58 years ago when they destroyed the Batista dictatorship and expropriated foreign and domestic capital.

Today, dissatisfaction with growing inequality and with the political establishment is sweeping the world. The existing mass discontent has left-wing and right-wing variants, called populism. That distorted designation reflects

the crisis of proletarian leadership. It also reflects the crisis of bourgeois ideology. Big holes appear in the fabric of liberalism and social democracy. That situation creates an opening for the radical left.

In Canada, small and fragile gains are being made. Campaigns to raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour and to obtain certain labour law reforms are succeeding. Struggles to stop oil and gas pipeline construction enjoy majority support. The indigenous people’s movement Idle No More forced a public enquiry into missing and murdered native women and girls. Black Lives Matter has put killer cops on trial.

And who can forget the massive Quebec students’ strike of 2012 that stopped a big increase in university fees? Today, talk of free education, a transition to green energy, along with moves to tax the rich and to increase income for the poor, are dominant topics in the current race for leader of the labour-based New Democratic Party of Canada. Socialist Action plays a leading role in the NDP Socialist Caucus, and SA is

building class struggle groups in the unions.

This is the 50th year since the death of Che Guevara, one of the greatest revolutionaries of all time. He was murdered by the CIA. He was abandoned to his fate by the Communist Party of Bolivia. Che taught us that “the revolution will be socialist, or it will be a caricature of revolution.” Those who say such “old slogans” have no relevance need only look at the escalating crisis in Venezuela. Only a socialist revolution can resolve it in a way that is favourable to the vast majority.

Build the Fourth International

The Fourth International (F.I.) was founded in 1938. Victor Serge called that time “Midnight of the Century,” amidst the horrors of Nazi fascism and Stalinist barbarism. The stated purpose of the Fourth International was to unite the global working-class vanguard, to ensure the creative continuity of revolutionary Marxism, to provide a clear and sharp alternative to reformism at all levels.

For about 50 years, as a small but principled world party, the F.I. campaigned to defend the Algerian revolution, to defend the Cuban revolution. Together, we built a global movement to stop the U.S. war in South East Asia, to advance the idea (as Che said) “Create two, three, many Vietnams,” to defend the Prague Spring, to champion the French uprising of May-June 1968, to demand freedom for Hugo Blanco, to fight for free abortion on demand, for gay liberation, and against nuclear power.

Unfortunately, the main leaders of the Fourth International have gone off course in recent decades, abandoning the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties. For that reason, a number of organizations within and around the F.I. are reaching out to revolutionary socialists who share our principles of working-class political independence, workers’ democracy, and opposition to imperialist war, especially against the war-makers in our own backyard. We hope that the statement of our political current, now available in six languages, will enjoy substantial support at the F.I. World Congress next February in Belgium.

Of one thing, we can be certain. A revolutionary workers’ International is indispensable to the survival of civilization. Human survival is threatened by climate change causing famines, floods, and the mass dislocation of peoples. On the rise are genocidal wars, and the scourge of authoritarianism and fascism. Prospects are grim without a new, class-struggle working-class leadership in the decisive countries.

Such a leadership will not fall from the sky. It will not arise spontaneously. It will be born in struggle. It will arise from the clash of contending political tendencies. It will be tested, again and again, for its clarity, determination and heroism. That is the challenge we face, to build such a party on a world scale. Ensemble vaincrons!

This is an edited version of remarks made by the author to an educational conference of Anti-capitaliste et Revolution, a political tendency within the Nouveau Parti Anti-capitaliste, which encompasses supporters of the Fourth International in France.





David J. Phillip / AP

... Harvey hits Houston

(continued from page 1)

surges. A surge of water from Harvey toppled two tanks in South Texas, spilling almost 30,000 gallons of raw crude oil. A pipeline ruptured east of Houston, releasing hydrogen chloride, a gas that “can cause serious or permanent injury” if inhaled, according to a federal safety guide.

In the first week after Harvey receded from the Houston area, refineries and chemical plants reported more than 2700 tons of extra air pollution due to damage from the storm and the effects of shutting down the facilities. Over 300,000 people live in neighborhoods that are in particular danger from the effects of an oil or chemical spill, according to a study cited by the *Texas Tribune*. The communities that are closest to the oil and chemical facilities are generally those of poorer people of color.

The danger of chemical pollution was highlighted early on the morning of Aug. 31 when the Arkema chemical plant in Crosby, Texas, exploded, triggering a fire. Floodwaters had knocked out the refrigeration units at the facility, and Arkema officials had warned that it was virtually “inevitable” that the organic peroxide stored there would explode if it got too hot.

When Richard Rennard, president of Arkema, was asked by the media what else he might have done to avoid the risk of burning chemicals at his plant, he shrugged his shoulders. The *Houston Chronicle* identified the plant as a potential source of danger in 2016, but nothing was done to correct the problems.

ExxonMobil acknowledged on Aug. 29 that Harvey had damaged two of its refineries, releasing hazardous pollutants into the atmosphere. That followed numerous complaints on Twitter of an “unbearable” chemical smell over Houston.

Both ExxonMobile and Chevron Phillips indicated that additional chemicals would be emitted because of the shutdown of their plants. Luke Metzger, director of the group Environment Texas, explained in the *Texas Tribune*, “Most of the unauthorized emissions come from the process of shutting down, and then starting up, the various units of the plant, when pollution control devices can’t be operated properly and there’s lots of flaring.”

“This pollution will hurt public health in Houston,” affirmed Bakeyah Nelson, executive director of Air Alliance Houston. “When petrochemical plants prepare for storms, they release thousands of pounds of pollutants into the air. ... It is a stark reminder of the dangers of living near industry.”

In addition, Harris County, home to Houston, contains more than a dozen Superfund sites, plus other sites listed by the state as being highly toxic. Now the sites have been inundated by water, potentially spreading the contaminants over a wide area. On Sept. 2, the Environmental Protection Agency said that it had reviewed aerial imagery confirming that 13 of the 41 Superfund sites in Texas were flooded by Harvey and were “experiencing possible damage” due to the storm. Earlier, the AP surveyed seven Superfund sites around Houston, and all had been swallowed by floodwaters—sometimes several feet deep.

The effects of climate change

Harvey was the third crippling storm that Houston has experienced in the last three years. And it is only 16 years since tropical storm Allison—until now the second deadliest in U.S. history—concentrated its force on the Houston area.

“The exact same storm that comes along today has more rain associated with it than it would have 50 or 100 years ago,” climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe told *The Texas Tribune* last year. The reason has to do with climate change.

The warm ocean temperatures associated with climate change are making storms stronger and wetter. Warm water means more evaporation, so there

is more water vapor for a passing storm to pick up. And rising sea levels due to climate change are worsening the effects of a tidal surge during a storm. Since 1960, the level of water in the Gulf has risen over a foot

along the Texas coast.

Michael E. Mann, distinguished professor of atmospheric science at Pennsylvania State University, wrote in the *Guardian*, “While we cannot say climate change ‘caused’ Hurricane Harvey, we can say it is that it exacerbated several characteristics of the storm in a way that greatly increased the risk of damage and loss of life.”

Mann wrote, “Harvey was able to feed upon warmer waters deeper within the Gulf when it intensified at near record pace as it neared the coast.” Another potential link to climate change, he said, is how the storm stalled near the coast, allowing it to increase flooding and damage in a pattern “associated with a greatly expanded subtropical high pressure system over much of the U.S. at the moment, with the jet stream pushed well to the north.”

The water in the Gulf of Mexico registered 85 degrees on the day that Harvey struck land. Greater Houston, because it sits next to the Gulf and is very flat, is especially vulnerable to the more frequent and intense rainstorms affected by climate change. Moreover, according to a Texas A&M study, Houston is the worst city in the United States for recurrences of flooding.

Sprawl intensified the flooding

Buoyed by oil money, Houston has become a paradise for big capitalist developers. Unchecked sprawl has greatly increased in recent years, allowing former pastures and wetlands that once soaked up floodwaters to be smothered by buildings, roads, and parking lots. In the years since Hurricane Allison, about 167,000 additional acres were developed in Harris County, mainly to the west of Houston; a lot of the new construction was in floodplains.

But county officials shrugged off any plans to reduce the dangers by protecting green space and strengthening building regulations. A few years ago, the city tried to ban buildings in the most flood-prone areas. But developers sued, and the city council voted to weaken the policy. When the city attempted to set aside a section of pastureland in its western suburbs to serve as an emergency drainage reservoir, they were again defeated; houses were built there instead.

Houston’s top flood-control officials insisted that the monster storms that have hit the city in recent years were “freak occurrences,” and that the region’s dams and spillways would be adequate to contain any storms that they might ordinarily expect.

A year ago, the outgoing head of the flood-control district, Mike Talbot, told *The Texas Tribune* and ProPublica that he spurned any notion that covering the land with concrete would make flooding worse. The claim that “these magic sponges out in the prairie would have absorbed all that water is absurd,” he said. Talbot said that his committee had no plans to study the effects of climate change on Harris County. He criticized scientists and environmentalists for being “anti-development.”

The local authorities’ inability to take steps to mitigate storm disasters has been made worse by federal policies under Trump. The Trump-appointed Environmental Protection Agency leadership denied the information brought forward by scientists that Harvey’s force had a link to worldwide climate change, calling it “an attempt to politicize an ongoing tragedy.”

On Aug. 15, days before Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas coast, Trump signed an executive order that revoked an Obama-era rule requiring projects built in coastal floodplains that receive federal aid to account for the impact of sea-level rise. Trump trumpeted that the order was part of his efforts to rid corporations and industry of what he sees as burdensome and unnecessary regulations. In June, the EPA, bowing to pressure from the oil and chemical industries, decided to delay until February 2019 a series of cru-

cial proposed updates to its Chemical Disaster Rule.

And Republicans in the House have been looking to cut \$876 million from federal disaster relief funds—a sum that would pay for half of the down payment on Trump’s promised wall on the Mexican border.

It is expected that after Harvey, however, the GOP will probably back away from cuts in disaster relief, at least for a while, viewing them as politically inexpedient.

A glimpse of the future?

The disaster in Houston provides a glimpse of the fate of many other U.S. coastal cities if nothing is done to avoid the worst effects of climate change. A large portion of the U.S. shoreline is at risk from weather-related catastrophes—which are sure to get worse as the planet warms.

Many scientists predict that warming oceans and glacier and polar ice melt will cause a sea level rise of from four to six feet—or even more—by the end of the century. If the ocean rises six feet, almost 300 U.S. cities will lose half of their houses, according to the real estate company Zillow. One in eight houses in Florida will be underwater; a third of the houses in Miami will be at risk. It is likely that the damage caused by large hurricanes under those circumstances would greatly dwarf what we have seen recently with Harvey, Katrina, and Sandy.

The danger of storm pollution from oil and chemicals is hardly unique to the Houston area. About 177 million Americans live in the worst-case scenario zones for a chemical disaster. According to the Center for Effective Government, at least one in three children in the U.S. attend a school within the vulnerability zone of a hazardous chemical facility.

The problem, of course, is worldwide. Climate catastrophes have killed thousands in Africa and Southeast Asia. Local officials in Sierra Leone’s capital, Freetown, reported that the death toll from floods and mudslides triggered by overnight rainfall on Aug. 14 had passed 1000. In the meantime, deaths from floods amid unusually severe monsoon rains in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh have surpassed 1200. The United Nations said that 41 million people in those three countries were affected by the floods.

This year’s climate-related disasters, now including Hurricane Irma, signal the catastrophe that the planet faces, and demonstrate that it is necessary to immediately shake loose from the stranglehold of capitalism’s oil-based economy.

It would be counterproductive, even criminal, for the federal government to hand over any more “disaster relief” funds to the oil companies to repair their facilities that were damaged by Harvey. Instead, Big Oil should be nationalized and the industry rebuilt with a huge network of renewable energy projects along the Gulf Coast and nationwide. That will take a massive mobilization of people and resources on a scale rivaling that of the mobilization during World War II.

Now that its oil industry has been crippled, Houston can once more become the leader in generating power—wind power. The Texas Gulf Coast has good resources for wind energy, exceeding the average annual wind speeds (6.5 meters per second) that are generally considered suitable. Houston can also point the way forward by instituting a massive public works project to restore the land, undo the damage caused by unrestrained capitalist development, and prepare the area for rising sea levels and extreme weather. Houston can take steps to allow the prairies, wetlands, ponds, and bayous to perform their earlier function in absorbing the rains to avoid major flooding.

Unfortunately, as people search for victims and begin to repair the damage of Hurricane Harvey, we can expect that the corporations will sweep in with profit-making schemes to “rebuild” the area and further entrench their interests. It’s been done before.

Following the destruction caused by Sandy in 2012, Naomi Klein wrote an article in *The Guardian* warning of “America’s disaster capitalists,” who had now embarked on a “cash grab” within the stricken area. She showed, for example, how bosses had urged public officials to allow private industry to spearhead the rebuilding, to ignore union contracts, and even to create new “free-trade” zones to stimulate the influx of capital. Similarly, Hurricane Katrina spawned attempts by the capitalists to further privatize public services and the schools in Louisiana.

But at some point, working people will say, “Enough!” The thousands of civilian volunteers who saved lives during the worst days of Harvey demonstrated how working people will respond vigorously and resourcefully in a crisis when they see few other options.

In time, the working class will refuse to be chewed up by big business or to stand aside for a government that will not respond to their demands. The workers will come to the realization that the capitalist system as a whole must be dismantled, and replaced with a new society aimed at protecting the planet and fulfilling human needs. ■

Workers struggle in the ex-USSR despite repression

By ANN MONTAGUE

On the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, many people are rereading the history of the revolution that brought forth the very first worker's state in history. Since 1991, however, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics no longer exists. The former USSR has splintered into 15 independent capitalist states. The Russian Federation is now the largest capitalist country in the world in area, occupying one-seventh of the earth's surface, with a population in January 2017 of 146,428,420.

While Russia and President Vladimir Putin have been continually in the U.S. news media since Trump won the White House, there is very little information about working-class struggles throughout the Russian Federation today. The left should not be caught up in the Democrats' excuses for their loss of the election or the Republicans' fear of Trump's relationship with Russian oligarchs. We must not ignore the struggles of the working classes of the Russian Federation and the former Soviet republics, which deserve our solidarity.

In the U.S. the top 10 percent of the population earns about 47% of the total income. In Russia, similarly, the top 10 percent income share is 45% of the total, while they control a staggering 86% of the country's wealth. "Russia and the U.S. are probably the two most unequal countries in the world," according to Gabriel Zucman, economist at the University of California at Berkeley and author of a recent study on the subject. "Those are the two leaders when it comes to extreme income and wealth inequality."

Zucman points out that the Soviet government was able to drastically reduce income inequality. The top 1 percent's share of income fell from 18 percent in 1905 to 4 percent after 1922.

Now, however, President Vladimir Putin has become one of the world's richest men, as control over natural resources has been transferred from public lands to government loyalists, giving a small group of oligarchs control over gas, oil, and timber—the major sector's of the Russian economy. Zucman's study shows that offshore wealth is about 75 percent of the national income of Russia. The privatization has been called by some "controlled looting."

Strikes are repressed

The massive income inequality means that a great many Russian workers struggle to survive. Observers estimate that half their income is spent on food. But there have been few strikes, as workers in Russia experience increasing repression.

Mark Galeotti, with the Institute of International Relations in Prague, recalls that a member of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) told a reporter, "My job is to make sure that no Lech Walesa emerges in my oblast (province)." This was a reference to the Polish worker (and later politician) who led protests and strikes against the government in 1970 at the Gdansk Shipyard in Poland.

Strikes in Russia are generally very short wildcat actions. Most trade unions are state controlled, and independent unions are the target of attacks.

A short but widespread series of wildcat strikes took place in April 2015, mainly to protest cutbacks and unpaid back wages. Teachers and construction workers in Siberia, metal workers in the Ural Mountains region, and autoworkers in St. Petersburg took part. In response to the pressure, Putin personally intervened to see that the workers got paid. Since then, strikes have been sporadic. Hundreds of construction workers, for example, have staged strikes in recent months to protest abusive working conditions at work sites for the 2018 World Cup.

Repression against the labor movement is also widespread in other countries that formerly were part of



(Above) Workers assemble at the Sedin Machine-Toll plant in Krasnodar, Russia, in November 2016. Police blocked the workers' internet site after they used it to organize a protest meeting to demand back wages.

the USSR. In Belarus, in August, there was a major attack on the Independent Union of the Radio-Electronics industry (IURI) and the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of the Republic (CTUB). Police broke into their offices and removed computers. They arrested Gennadii Fedynich, the president of IURI, and Alexander Yaroshnyuk, head of CTUB.

These trade unions led large protests earlier in the year against the "Tax on Parasites" after the government had announced a new tax on the poor and the unemployed. Several thousand protesters marched on Minsk, and riot police and water cannons were deployed. Anyone with a sign was subject to being arrested, and when relatives showed up to demand their release, they were arrested as well.

In Kazakhstan, attacks on unions escalated this year against over 400 trade-union organizations. In August, Larisa Kharkova, head of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Kazakhstan, was sentenced to a four-year suspended sentence, a five-year ban on trade union activities and 100 hours of public work. Her crime officially was "misuse of power," but the trial was actually for her public support for a hunger strike of 700 oil workers in Mangystau in January. In May, the leader of the oil workers' protest, Amina Yeleusinova, was sentenced to two years in prison. LabourStart has launched an international campaign demanding an end to anti-union repression in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Mass actions throughout Russia

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) reported from Russia that illegal mass protests, called Anti-Corruption Marches, took place in March in around 100 cities that started in the far east in Vladivostok and moved across Russia, including 6000 in cities in Siberia and 2000 in the Volga region. Protesters showed up in small cities where they were not expected in the north, and there were even protests in Simferopol and Sevastopol, Crimea's two major cities.

The largest actions were in St. Petersburg, where 15,000 poured into the Winter Palace courtyard and then marched down the Nevskii Prospect. Police reports showed that 130 were arrested. In Moscow 15,000 filled Tverskoi Prospect and marched towards the Kremlin; over 1000 were arrested. This included reporters and photographers, including Alec Luhn, a British *Guardian* reporter. Luhn reported that 136 of

the 800 detained were under 18 years old.

Five years ago, the Anti-Corruption Marches were first called by opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and centered only in Moscow. The issues of the march this year went beyond anti-corruption to demanding a national minimum wage and issues like education and health care. While Navalny is described as a pro-capitalist neoliberal, he has been attacked by other opposition neoliberal groups for including issues of workers' rights. Now that the demonstrations have expanded outside Moscow, Navalny says that he will be making direct appeals to the working class with further economic demands.

The election will be next year. The leader of Crimea stated that the best thing for Russia would be a tsar. He quickly corrected himself and said that Putin would be the "best tsar."

Recent reports are that the Kremlin will not allow Navalny to be a candidate in the election. He clearly is not a working-class leader, but the growing turnout for mass action throughout the whole country is an encouraging development within Russia, where the most common protest that is sometimes allowed is what is called a single person picket. ■

In August, Ali Feruz was sentenced in Russia to be deported to Uzbekistan. He had returned to Uzbekistan to study and while there reported on the authoritarian nature of the then Karimov regime. He was detained and tortured for two days. He then returned to Russia and asked for asylum.

Feruz is a gay journalist, writing for *Novaya Gazeta*, which has played a major role in exposing the brutal attacks on the LGBTQ community in Chechnya. His colleague Lena Kostyuchenko told Buzzfeed News: "It is better to die than to go back to Uzbekistan. He is in the shadow of death." — A.M.

Read more about the repression of LGBTQ people in Russia at www.socialistaction.org.

... Greensboro

(continued from page 6)

early leader of the Socialist Workers Party, argued, "... defensive formulations are an indispensable medium for teaching the masses, who will not be convinced by theory but only by their own experience and propaganda related thereto. This experience of the masses proceeds in the main along the line of defensive actions. That is why defensive formulations are most easily comprehensible and represent the best approach of the revolutionary Marxists to the masses. Finally, it is a tactical and legal consideration of no small importance in a bourgeois-democratic country that defensive formulas partially disarm the class en-

emy; or in any case, make their attacks more difficult and costly. Why should such advantages be thrown away?" (7)

After Greensboro, the state and media tried to paint the CWP as the aggressor, using their rhetoric against them. The "violence on both sides" argument we have seen after the Charlottesville fascist mobilization was used decades ago against the CWP.

Immediately after the murder of Heather Heyer last month, the whole establishment, from Mitt Romney to Nancy Pelosi, became "anti-fascists." Now, despite the evidence that rightists came to Charlottesville with violent intentions, the media and liberals seem intent to blame violence on anti-fascists or "antifa."

It's noteworthy that the cops in Charlottesville seemed oblivious to acts of violence that were committed by fascists. One example took place when a

person, now identified as a KKK member, pulled a handgun and discharged it in the direction of counter-protesters right in front of a group of cops. The current witch hunt against "antifa" is designed to divert attention from the racist far right and to place an equal sign between the left and right. ■

1. *Love and Revolution: a political memoir*, Signe Waller, p 293
2. *Through Survivors' Eyes- From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre*, by Sally Avery Bermanzohn, p. 194
3. *Through Survivors' Eyes- From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre*, by Sally Avery Bermanzohn, p. 213
4. *Through Survivors' Eyes- From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre*, by Sally Avery Bermanzohn, p. 214
5. *Codename GREENKIL*, Elizabeth Wheaton, p 194
6. *Through Survivors' Eyes- From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre*, by Sally Avery Bermanzohn, p. 265
7. *Socialism on Trial*, by James P. Cannon

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

NDP Socialist Caucus urges critical support for Niki Ashton

The New Democratic Party Socialist Caucus strives for a socialist Canada in a socialist world. For nearly 20 years it has uniquely and successfully advanced this goal inside North America's only mass, labour-based political party. From convincing the NDP to fight for public pharma care, for public dental care and free post-secondary education, to getting Canadian troops out of Afghanistan, the Socialist Caucus has led the way.

From opposing pipeline construction to promoting public ownership of the energy industry; from demanding an end to public funding of religious schools to trying to keep socialism in the party constitution, the SC has been on the progressive cutting-edge. Its candidates consistently win 10 to 40 per cent support when they run for provincial and federal party executive positions, and always do so on a clear, principled socialist platform.

The SC was instrumental in initiating the leadership review in 2016 that toppled "balanced budget no-matter-what" Tom Mulcair. It helped to win endorsement at the NDP federal convention for a cross-country discussion of the Leap Manifesto.

From this perspective, the SC embarked with others in September 2016 to draft Sid Ryan for NDP federal leader. The joint effort produced a 17-point anti-capitalist platform that continues to influence the leadership race. Unfortunately, Ryan decided for personal reasons not to run. To date, no candidate has embraced most of the socialist policies set forth in the Draft Sid platform, nor even adopted the range of anti-capitalist measures advanced by Jeremy Corbyn in the British Labour Party.

No campaign, so far, has created an open, bold, militant movement of the kind



that brought 200,000 new members into the BLP.

Presently, four registered candidates (following the exit of Peter Julian) are in the race, which is now in the home stretch. One candidate has emerged to the left of the others. Manitoba MP Niki Ashton describes herself as a "progressive feminist"—in place of the term "socialist feminist" she invoked earlier. Her lead slogan is "When they privatize, we nationalize."

While advancing a very commendable proposal for the creation of a postal bank, and a set of infrastructural public works, Ashton does not target any current corporations for nationalization. That stance makes it impossible for her to lead the rapid green energy transition so urgently needed to end carbon energy dependency.

To her credit, she was quick to attack the Justin Trudeau government's pledge to increase military spending by 70%. And she stood firmly with Montreal supporters of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli jails. Unfortunately, Niki does not demand Canada Out of NATO (which was the policy under Tommy Douglas). Nor does she support Boycott, Divestment and

Sanctions against the apartheid Zionist state. She rightly decries the insidious trend towards precarious work, but does not champion legislation to re-distribute available jobs, especially to young workers, via shorter hours without any loss of pay or benefits.

Notably, Ashton is the only candidate who calls for meaningful democratic reform of the internal workings of the NDP, pledging, for example, that under her leadership no member will be blocked from obtaining an NDP nomination and then running for MP who expresses support for Palestinian rights.

She talks about being the only candidate for "fundamental change." But she has not even begun to build an explicitly radical left caucus or structured socialist movement within the party. In fact, Niki's campaign is headed by people not particularly known for their roots in militant social justice movements, class struggle or socialism.

Socialists are an integral part of the working-class movement. That includes unions and the labour-based NDP. We are not indifferent to any process that impacts on the capacity of workers to fight for emancipation from capitalist rule. This class partisan outlook of ours applies full force to the NDP leadership race.

So, here are the stakes. Not only is Ashton visibly to the left. Two of the candidates, Charlie Angus and Jagmeet Singh, are markedly to the right, demonstrated by their reluctance to oppose pipeline projects and to drop post-secondary school fees. They boast of endorsements from party establishment figures, including MPs and MPPs who, frankly, are a big part of the problem. Their approach closely resembles the internally undemocratic regime, and the fiscally conservative stance of the failed Tom Mulcair leadership. They deserve to be defeated decisively.

One other candidate, MP Guy Caron, the single-minded proponent of Basic Income, occupies the mushy middle of the quartet.

He merits consideration as an alternative to a right-wing front runner if Ashton proves unable to make it to the final ballot count in the one-member-one-vote election that culminates in October 2017.

Based on the above factors, the Socialist Caucus urges critical support for Niki

Ashton. Unlike other tendencies and individuals on the NDP left, and some leftists outside the working-class organizations, who have given her uncritical, blanket support, the Socialist Caucus takes a more objective, long-range view of the struggle for a Workers' Agenda and the socialist transformation of society. Frankly, radical change will not be accomplished by any one of the four candidates, nor by social democracy as an institution.

To win, socialism will require a movement of millions fighting to implement a programme to eradicate the capitalist system of exploitation, oppression, and environmental catastrophe. Nothing less than the expropriation of big business and the establishment of a planned economy under workers' control will fit the bill. If war, hunger and disease are to disappear, and if civilization is to survive, nothing less will do. Such a movement will be based on new mass workers' organizations thrown up by the class struggle, which will converge with tendencies that emanate from the traditional bodies of the working class.

Regardless who becomes NDP leader in October 2017, the necessity of strengthening a militant, class-struggle left wing in the unions and the NDP will be greater than ever. Its central political task will be to push Niki Ashton supporters to the left, to fight for socialist policies, and for much greater democracy inside the party—or to confront the more openly pro-capitalist policies of her elected male counterpart.

In the best of circumstances, Niki Ashton would have already embraced the 17-point Draft Sid platform. She would have opened up her campaign to the Socialist Caucus and to other grassroots radical activists, inside and outside the party, with an invitation to participate as partners. That didn't happen in Niki Ashton's 2012 leadership bid. But it is precisely the way to build an un-stoppable movement for socialism in the NDP and Canada today.

That is what the Socialist Caucus advocates. To that end, we urge working people and allies to join the NDP. We ask all New Democrats to vote for Niki Ashton for leader, and to keep pushing her to the left.

For more information, and to get involved, contact the NDP Socialist Caucus at www.ndpsocialists.ca. Telephone: 647-986-1917. ■

Foreign Affairs Critic marches in step with U.S. Empire

By YVES ENGLER

Excerpts re-printed from his website

Does the NDP consistently support a foreign policy that benefits ordinary people around the world? Or does the social democratic party often simply fall in line with whatever the American Empire demands?

Hélène Laverdière certainly seems to support the U.S.-led geopolitical order. While the NDP foreign critic has called for stronger arms control measures and regulations on Canada's international mining industry, she's aligned with the Empire on issues ranging from Venezuela to Palestine, Ukraine to Syria.

Echoing Washington and Ottawa, Laverdière recently attacked the Venezuelan government. "On the heels of Sunday's illegitimate constituent assembly vote, it's more important than ever for Canada to work with our allies and through multilateral groups like the OAS to secure a lasting resolution to the crisis," she told the CBC.

But, the constituent assembly vote wasn't "illegitimate." Venezuela's current constitution empowers the president to call a constituent assembly to draft a new one. If the population endorses the revised constitution in a referendum, the president—and all other governmental bodies—are legally required to follow the new constitutional framework.

Additionally, calling on Ottawa to "work with our allies" through the OAS may sound reasonable, but in practice it means backing Trudeau's efforts to weaken Venezuela through that body. Previously, Laverdière promoted that Washington-led policy. ...

Laverdière has also cozied up to pro-Israel groups. Last year she spoke to the notorious anti-Palestinian lobby organization American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Socialist Caucus calls out NDP Foreign Affairs Critic

The NDP Socialist Caucus demands the resignation of the NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Helene Laverdiere, MP Laurier-Sainte Marie, from her Critic position.

For months, Ms. Laverdiere has publicly expressed policy positions that are quite reactionary. In many cases, she has taken positions that violate NDP policies and principles. The latest is her effort, parallel to that of the Justin Trudeau Liberal government and that of the Donald Trump White House, to isolate, starve, and remove the popular elected government of Venezuela.

For that reason, amply demonstrated by the article below, written by respected Canadian foreign policy

critic Yves Engler, the NDP Socialist Caucus calls for the immediate replacement of Ms. Laverdiere as NDP Foreign Affairs Critic.

The present NDP leadership race is no reason for the party membership to be silent on this matter. To the contrary, we encourage all NDP and affiliated union members to speak up, and we ask all four candidates to indicate where they stand on the pronouncements of Ms. Laverdiere, who happens to be a declared supporter of leadership candidate Jagmeet Singh.

For more information contact Barry Weisleder, chair, NDP Socialist Caucus at: 647-986-1917. ■

Months after AIPAC paid for her to speak at their conference in Washington, Laverdière visited Israel with Canada's governor general, even participating in a ceremony put on by the explicitly racist Jewish National Fund. ...

Laverdière supports deploying troops to the Russian border and repeatedly called for more sanctions on that country. She said the plan to send military trainers to the Ukraine sounds good "in principle" and only called for a debate in Parliament about sending 450 Canadians to head up a 1000-strong NATO force in Latvia.

Since 2014 Laverdière has repeatedly called for stronger sanctions on Russia. In 2014 Laverdière told the Ottawa Citizen that "for sanctions to work, it's not about the number of people but it's about actually sanctioning the right people. They have to be comprehensive. And they have to target mainly the people who are very close to Putin. Our sanctions, the Canadian sanctions, still fail to do that."

In May Laverdière applauded a bill modeled after the U.S. Magnitsky Act that will further strain relations be-

tween Ottawa and Moscow by sanctioning Russian officials. "Several countries have adopted similar legislation and we are encouraged that the Liberals are finally taking this important step to support the Global Magnitsky movement," she said.

In another region where the U.S. and Russia were in conflict Laverdière aligned with the Washington-Riyadh position: ... Early in the Syrian conflict Laverdière condemned the Harper government for failing to take stronger action against Assad. She urged Harper to raise the Syrian conflict with China, recall Canada's ambassador to Syria, and complained that energy giant Suncor was exempted from sanctions, calling on Canada to "put our money where our mouth is." ...

On a number of issues the former Canadian diplomat has aligned with the U.S. Empire. Whoever takes charge of the NDP in October should think about whether Laverdière is the right person to keep Canadian foreign policy decision makers accountable. ■

Bay Area mobilizations counter neo-fascists

David Bacon / Capitalandmain.com

By JEFF MACKLER

The organization of massive united-front-type counter-mobilizations to challenge the planned Aug. 26-27 neo-fascist demonstrations in the San Francisco/Berkeley Bay Area proved to be key to exposing these alt-right currents for the tiny groups of isolated and pathetic reactionaries that they are.

In Berkeley, on Sunday, Aug. 27, the newly formed Bay Area Against Hate coalition of more than 70 organizations drew 5000 to 7000 protesters for a rally at the University of California Berkeley, followed by a march to Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park. These actions aimed at countering a scheduled, but then cancelled, neo-Nazi “No to Marxism in America” event.

Endorsers of this disciplined, well-monitored and carefully planned counter-protest included the Alameda County Central Labor Council; the Berkeley and Peralta Federation of Teachers; several SEIU and AF-SCME locals; the UAW/Graduate Student Union; several faith-based groups; socialist organizations; and a host of community organizations.

Pre-rally monitor training and security sessions, with some 200 activists participating, were organized to ensure a disciplined, peaceful, and secure event that would maximize participation while minimizing possible disruption from both police and potential right-wing attacks.

The cancelled Aug. 26 “Patriot Prayer” rally in San Francisco’s Crissy Field had been granted a permit by the National Park Service, but its organizers thought better of using it in face of an impending labor-community counter-mobilization that promised to expose the handful of ultra-rightists as virtually irrelevant. In announcing their cancellation, the demoralized and demobilized ultra-reactionaries informed the media that they would hold a press conference instead at Alamo Square.

The following day, they said, they would join their co-thinkers in Berkeley for a rally from which “both fascists and Marxists” would be banned—a hyperbolic statement typical of these self-proclaimed “god-fearing Christian ‘free speech’ advocates.” On less than a day’s notice, 1000 counter-protesters, led by a contingent of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, whose Local 10 voted to close down the Oakland Port to organize ILWU members to challenge the threatened fascist rally, arrived at Alamo Square. Again, few, if any, ultra-rightists appeared.

In Berkeley the police, mayor, and campus administrators mobilized heavily armed police contingents from virtually all the state university campuses to surround MLK Civic Center Park to protect the would-be neo-Nazi rally. At the same time, they denied permits for the counter-protesters to rally and march, and barricaded the West Campus Lawn assembly site to try to minimize participation and egress. As city officials warned the public to steer clear of the area, Berkeley police blocked off march routes and cordoned off MLK Park itself.

But the sheer size and discipline of the anti-fascist mobilization dwarfed the police presence and forced city and police officials to open up previously closed streets. Rally speakers repeatedly stressed the need for united and disciplined mass counter-mobilizations of working people and their allies, as opposed to small-scale con-



frontations, as the key to challenging what most agreed are today still extremely limited fascist and alt-right gatherings.

Several socialist speakers took the occasion of the fascists’ proclaimed “Anti-Marxism” rally to present their own views of Marxism and of socialism as a humane and future society that would strive to guarantee full democratic rights for all—free from capitalist wars, racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-immigrant prejudice, and the degradation of the human spirit.

A separate anti-fascist march of 1000 to 2000 people also proceeded to MLK Civic Center Park. It was organized by several Bay Area organizations including SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice), Arab Resource Organizing Committee, Community Ready Corps, and activists from the Anti Police Terrorism Project (AFTP). A black attired and masked antifa group joined in.

While police initially prevented both marches from entering the MLK Civic Center Park, the absence of fascists inside and the huge presence of the counter-mobilizations outside led city officials to order the police to abandon their barricades.

A handful of neo-fascists who remained pepper-sprayed the approaching counter-protesters, but were quickly dispersed by march security teams. A couple of harmless smoke bombs set off in the course of this brief scattering of the fascist thugs provided the unfortunate visual effect that was inevitably employed by the corporate media to slander the mass counter-mobilization as the product of violent extremists of the left.

The *Washington Post*, whose reporters were absent from the scene, blared, “Black Clad Antifa Members Attack Peaceful Right Wing Demonstrators in Berkeley.” The *San Francisco Chronicle* similarly headlined,

“Masked Anarchists Violently Rout Right Wing Demonstrators.” Mention of the 7000 peaceful Berkeley protesters, who accounted for the nation’s second largest united anti-fascist mobilization after Boston’s 40,000 a week earlier, was strikingly absent.

Rally Against Hate organizers met a few days later to evaluate the Sunday events and to discuss possible future mobilizations, perhaps against the UC Berkeley administration’s late September so-called Free Speech Week, where contemplated invitees are the *Breitbart News* former senior editor, Milo Yiannopoulos, and perhaps other far-right figures like Ann Coulter and former Trump senior political adviser Stephen Bannon.

The unanimous assessment of the Aug. 27 march and rally organizers was that their efforts represented an important victory for the rising movement against fascism and white supremacy. This victory rested in the broad united-front effort that democratically engaged labor, student, community, faith-based groups, and anti-racist organizations. It also reflected the resulting increase in confidence of the participants that they, not the tiny assemblage of fascist thugs, represented the vast majority and the best aspirations for humanity’s future.

The mass counter-protests also had the undeniable effect of demoralizing and demobilizing the fascist forces as well as exposing those public officials who sought to place an equal sign between the violent and reactionary intentions of the fascists and those who mobilized to oppose them. The fact that the corporate media slandered and violence-baited their efforts was noted with regret but was more than mitigated by the fact that participants grew in understanding that neither the corporate media nor the police, city and state officials are to be trusted. ■

... Boston protest

(continued from page 12)

the report on the Bay Area protests above).

Unease over Trump in ruling circles

The fact that the fascists have met resistance around the country has reinforced the understanding by the major sector of the U.S. ruling class that now is not the time to lift its mask of “tolerance” and “democracy.” Accordingly, a host of politicians and corporate CEOs have seized the opportunity to stress their abhorrence of racism, their anger over the events in Charlottesville, and their horror over the resurgence of overt fascist groupings—although not long ago they were happy enough to work with the fascists in the Ukraine.

And many of them have wept over the fact that Trump, by speaking his mind, has not displayed what they consider to be a “proper” sensitivity to these issues. This is one more indication, according to some politicians—including Republicans—that the impetuous Trump is proving to be a liability, both domestically and in foreign policy, and that he must be reined in.

This was revealed by Stephen Bannon, who after stepping down as Trump’s top advisor, announced that he would return to a position at the alt-right *Breitbart News* in order to “cover for

Trump.” “I just think his ability to get anything done—particularly the bigger things, like the Wall, the bigger, broader things that we fought for—it’s just going to be that much harder,” Bannon said of Trump, in an interview with the *Weekly Standard*.

And what will be the effect of the remaining White House advisers on Trump? “I think they’re going to try to moderate him,” Bannon said. “I think he’ll sign a clean debt ceiling; I think you’ll see all this stuff. His natural tendency—and I think you saw it this week on Charlottesville—his actual default position is the position of his base, the position that got him elected. I think you’re going to see a lot of constraints on that. I think it’ll be much more conventional.”

But whether Trump can be reined in or not will hardly matter in the long term. As the crisis of world capitalism deepens, the ruling class will seek a change in tactics. At that time, reactionary policies such as the ones that Trump espouses will not go far enough to suit the needs of the capitalists. They will then perceive the “horror” of fascism as their only hope, and they will feel obliged to unleash fascist thugs in order to decisively crush the labor movement and its allies.

Now is the time to act! A mobilization of organized labor, as well as all people of social conscience, is necessary to give notice that “Fascism Has No Home Here.” ■

What is fascism?

Fascism is a symptom of capitalism in its terminal decay. The tactics of fascists were described by Malik Miah in the August 1975 *International Socialist Review*: “Fascists try to turn the anger of all those threatened with ruin by the capitalist crisis against the oppressed racial minorities and organized labor. In this country, the approach of fascist organizations in the 1930s and 1940s was to claim to be the representatives of the ‘little man’ against both the big capitalists and the ‘communists,’ directing their fire especially at Blacks, Jews and ‘big labor.’”

“In his book ‘Fascism and Big Business,’ Daniel Guerin points out that ‘fascism’s game is to call itself anti-capitalist without seriously attacking capitalism.’”

The major social base of fascism is the discontented petty bourgeoisie (“middle class”). In the struggle for power, fascism uses anti-capitalist slogans, but their paymasters are the ruling class. They use the petty bourgeoisie as what Trotsky called a “battering ram” against the working class. The regime of fascism is, in the final analysis, the government of finance capital. Having masked their intent under anti-capitalist rhetoric, the Nazis quickly subordinated all of German society to the needs of the capitalist class.

We seek to mobilize the largest possible counter-mobilizations of workers and the oppressed against these thugs. We take to heart the IWW slogan, “an injury to one is an injury to all.” ■

Boston showed how mass action can defeat fascists

Michael Dwyer / AP



By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

In the days following the Aug. 11-12 white-supremacist "Unite the Right" conclave in Charlottesville, which ended with the murder of Heather Heyer, anti-racist and anti-fascist protests erupted in hundreds of cities and towns across the United States. About 3000 marched in Philadelphia on Aug. 16, and 1000 rallied in Portland, Ore., two days later.

The largest counter-mobilization took place on Aug. 19, when tens of thousands of demonstrators filled Boston Common and marched through the streets to say, "No Nazis, no KKK, no fascists in the USA!" The huge outpouring of protesters dwarfed a simultaneous rally of right-wingers in Boston Common. The *Boston Herald* reported that upwards of 30,000 joined the counter-protest, and police officials said that 40,000 were there.

One counter-protester told *Yahoo News*: "I'm here because I stand against hate; I stand against bigotry; I stand against ignorance. A fire is being lit on that side [of the racists], and we need to squash it—we need to squash it soon. We need to show them how small a segment of our society they really are."

The right-wing organizers had predicted that several hundred would attend their so-called "Free Speech" rally in Boston. And although the organizers avowed that their event had nothing to do with racism, they encouraged the participation of outspoken racists and other leading figures from the far right.

Thomas Robb, national director of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, assured the media that KKK members from Massachusetts would be there. But in the end, the Klansmen never showed up.

Also scheduled to speak were Joe Biggs, a former writer on the *Infowars* conspiracy website, and Kyle Chapman, former director of the New Zealand National Front, a white-supremacist party. Chapman is facing charges of attacking anti-Trump demon-

strators with a lead-filled stick in Berkeley, Calif., in March. However, it does not appear that either man attended the Boston event.

News reports said that few more than 20 people participated in the right-wing event. The participants were forced to pack up early, without any of the scheduled major speakers having addressed the rally. As police escorted the right-wingers into police vans to make their getaway, the counter-protesters sang, "Hey, hey, goodbye!" It was an important victory for the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement.

Far right energized by Trump election

Following the election of Trump to the presidency, white supremacists and fascist forces felt that they had a fresh wind in their sails. The KKK's official newspaper, *The Crusader*, and David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the Klan, had endorsed Trump's candidacy and were outspoken in their support once he was in office.

The Trump campaign caps that read, "Make America Great Again" served as a kind of uniform for many of the rightist marchers in Charlottesville. No doubt the wearers were emboldened by Trump's stance against Muslims and other immigrants, and more recent declarations such as his ban on transgender people in the armed forces, his call for police to "rough up" people that they apprehend, and his speech in Poland on increased militarization in order to uphold the values of "Western civilization." Racist violence and other acts of bigotry, such as the desecration of mosques and synagogues, have increased since Trump's election.

Trump's remarks following the terrorism in Charlottesville, in which he insisted on placing blame for the violence on "all sides," further lifted the spirits of the racists, fascists, and the "alt-right." But the huge outpouring of protesters around the country, and especially in Boston, showed that mass counter-mobilizations are the surest way to deflate and deflect these

(Above) Tens of thousands of protesters surrounded far-right meeting in the bandstand on Boston Common.

reactionary forces. It gave evidence that tremendous numbers of people are determined to join the fight against racist intolerance and the ultra-right.

Moreover, Boston showed that truly massive counter-protests are effective in helping to avoid the sort of violence that took place in Charlottesville. The huge demonstration of people who declared, "Hate has no home in Boston," was able to scare away the Klan and other violence-prone thugs who had hoped to attend the rightist rally.

White supremacists planned at least nine rallies nationwide for the weekend of Aug. 19-20 alone. But in virtually every case, protesters came out in even greater numbers to counter the racist events.

Some of the rightists' rallies, as in Dallas, were called ostensibly to denounce plans to dismantle the statues celebrating the slave-holding Confederacy, which were set up throughout the South during the days of Jim Crow segregation. The Dallas anti-racist counter-mobilization drew over 2000 participants, who chanted, "This is not Charlottesville!"

Hundreds marched to Martin Luther King's tomb in Atlanta on Aug. 19 in a protest against white supremacy organized by a new coalition of civil and human rights groups, Georgia Resists. Also on Aug. 19, at least 4000 protested a right-wing event in Vancouver, B.C. The right-wingers, some of whom carried Confederate flags, said that they were opposing Islam and the Canadian government's immigration policies.

Right-wingers planned events in San Francisco and Berkeley on the weekend of Aug. 26-27. But both events were called off after broad coalitions, with the backing of key sectors of the labor movement, were formed to organize large counter-mobilizations (see

(continued on page 11)

