

Tensions flare as caravan arrives at U.S. border

Bruce Lesnick / Socialist Action



By LISA LUINENBURG

As numbers of Central American migrants began to arrive at the U.S. border, support efforts were taking place in cities across the United States. In Minneapolis, hundreds of people demonstrated in frigid weather on Nov. 30 to express solidarity with the caravans. Other groups are working on sending supplies. Three semi trucks filled with supplies left Chicago at the end of November, en route to the border area.

On Nov. 11, the first group of Central American refugees reached Tijuana, on the U.S.-Mexico border. The group, made up of about 80 LGBTQI people, had broken off from the main caravan group due to harassment they had experienced from other migrants in the main caravan group.

"We were discriminated against, even in the caravan," said Erick Dubon, 23, from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, who has been traveling with his boyfriend, Pedro Nehemias, 22, as reported in the *Washington Post*. "People wouldn't let us into trucks, they made us get in the back of the line for showers, they would

call us ugly names."

Although the LGBTQI migrants are particularly vulnerable to harassment, anti-immigrant protests broke out on the Mexican side of the border as more migrants arrived in Tijuana. Sources such as *The Guardian* and the Mexican newspaper *El Universal* have reported over the last few weeks on the small, but vitriolic anti-immigrant movement in Tijuana.

Some protesters threw rocks and hurled insults at a group of migrants sleeping on the beach. At another protest, 400 anti-immigrant demonstrators outnumbered the 50 people who marched with open arms to welcome the migrants. The protests seem to be divided along class lines, with those from wealthier districts making up the majority of the xenophobic upsurge, both in the streets and online.

Similarly in the U.S., in places like Chicago, sections of the Mexican community are demonstrating against the migrant caravans, reflecting the negative impact of the anti-immigrant rhetoric spouted by Trump and the mainstream media.

By the end of the month, the number of migrants

(Above) Mural painted on the U.S. side of the border wall with Tijuana, Mexico.

streaming into Tijuana reached around 6000. But they had added their names to a list of 3000 people in Tijuana who were already waiting to apply for asylum in the United States. Despite the hopes of many Central American migrants who are fleeing extreme violence and poverty in their own countries to build a better life in the U.S., applying for asylum is a very difficult and lengthy process.

As reported by *The New Yorker*, migrants themselves have now taken over the process of managing the lengthy list of people waiting for their turn to apply for asylum. The reason is that the Department of Homeland Security limits the number of people who can apply for asylum in the U.S. on any given day, usually allowing in between 30-90 people. As entry to the United States has been increasingly restricted by the Trump administration over the last year, getting

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GM shareholders get boost and workers get the boot

“Nothing being closed in Mexico & China. The U.S. saved General Motors, and this is the THANKS we get,” Trump wrote. But the Donald misses the point. Just like him, GM does what makes the most profit. It is moving to production of autonomous EV vehicles.

GM has a plan for the estimated \$6 billion to be gleaned annually from the plant closures. The all-electric, fully automatic, no-steering-wheel, no-pedals version of The Bolt is supposed to be on public highways by 2019.

However, what the world really needs is non-polluting mass transportation—buses, street cars, trains, and ships. Left to private, profit-motivated companies, the massive waste embodied in private cars will continue. GM makes more money that way.

The only way to get the efficient public transportation systems we need is to nationalize the vehicle business and retool the existing hi-tech, modern plants. That way workers can be retrained, not scrapped. Workers know everything about building cars. They can manage the factories. The owners’ skill is in siphoning off profits and spiriting them away to low tax havens. We simply do not need that skill. Let’s throw the bosses on the scrap heap.

GM, over its history, has a long, very shabby anti-social record. It has been a leader in some pretty bad causes. They include the fight against regulations to enforce auto safety for consumers, the battle against safety for its employees, and the drive against environmental safety for the human race. GM led the resistance to greater fuel efficiency laws aimed at reducing greenhouse gasses emitted from engine exhaust pipes.

Generations ago, GM led a consortium that bought streetcar lines, ripped out the tracks, set up bus systems, and sold them. It also bought the rights to an electric car and stifled it decades ago. GM, quite simply, is a capitalist corporation that operates exclusively for private profit. It has committed crime after crime to that end.

Under capitalism, the doctrine of individual “liberty” asserts the absolute right of capitalists to make “free” decisions about their property, entirely in their own interests—even when it throws thousands out of work, leaves children without support, and causes the collapse of whole communities. Their liberty is simply imposed on workers and their families without their consent.

What about our “liberty” as workers? Up to Nov.

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The Canada Press

By GARY PORTER

(Above) Workers at GM’s Oshawa, Ontario, plant at a meeting with UNIFOR President Jerry Dias.

On Nov. 29, analysts making 12-month price forecasts for General Motors Co. projected \$45.16 per share—an increase of almost 23 per cent over the current \$36.76. This is great holiday news, if you are shareholder. That includes the GM directors who receive 60 per cent of their compensation in stock options. It is critical, according to business schools, to tie the interests of your directors to the interests of the shareholder owners. But the interests of the workers are not considered so tenderly.

The joyous forecast coincides with announced plans by the auto giant to halt production at five factories

in North America and cut about 14,000 jobs in the company’s most significant restructuring since its bankruptcy and taxpayer bailout in 2008 by Stephen Harper and Barack Obama.

GM warned last summer that the trade war instigated by President Donald Trump could force job cuts in the United States. Trump was irate with GM, tweeting that he was “very disappointed” with the company and CEO Mary Barra for plans to idle plants in Ohio, Michigan, and Maryland.

GM layoffs could cost 40,000 jobs

BY JEFF MACKLER

For public consumption only, General Motors’ billionaire executives flew on public airlines to Washington, D.C., in 2009, leaving their private jets behind. Bleeding \$1 billion in monthly losses, and threatening bankruptcy, this corporation—once the world’s largest—eased its way to the government troughs, with their kept media and the United Automakers Workers (UAW) bureaucrats in tow, touting the necessity in those “tough times” of “worker-boss cooperation.”

There they met with Steven Rattner, counselor to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and other top government officials who exist to do the bidding of the ruling-class elite. Rattner then headed President Obama’s White House Auto Task Force. Today, he brags in a Nov. 29 *New York Times* op-ed piece that he “negotiated” the \$50 billion GM bailout that further eroded decades of UAW concessionary contracts, imposing even more heinous provisions on workers—slashing wages and restricting or reducing pension protection, health care, and other union gains that in previous decades were considered sacrosanct.

With GM’s profits “robust,” according to Rattner, the behemoth has announced plans to lay off 14,000 workers in some five plants in the U.S. and Canada over the next two years. Estimates of total jobs to be lost, including closure of GM’s associated complex of non-union parts suppliers, are projected at 40,000. GM’s Lordstown plant, near Warren, Ohio, which makes the Chevy Cruze, had pre-

viously eliminated its second shift. It’s slated for closure in March 2019.

No “worker-boss” cooperation schemes found their way into Rattner’s unqualified defense of GM. Although he joined the Democrats in scoring Trump’s trade and tariff policies, while essentially agreeing with those policies, his fundamental solutions never veered from his view that declining capitalism in the United States, faced with ever-deepening competition around the world, had no alternatives other than to extract another pound of flesh from U.S. workers—and workers around the world.

Like most big-time auto manufacturers, GM constantly shifts production to low-wage, low-tax, and barely corporate-regulated countries, from Mexico to China. GM has repeatedly abandoned operations in the U.S. and Europe. Most recently, it announced that its new Chevy Blazer would be produced in Mexico.

In contrast to its 2009 poor-mouthing, GM’s \$581 million purchase of Cruise Automation not long ago saw it turn a profit in increased valuation of \$14 billion in the single transaction. Meanwhile, nearly 10 years after its government gift/bailout, it has yet to repay \$11 billion that remains of the \$50 billion it owed to the government.

Indeed, if there were public access to the actual 2009 bailout terms, it would likely reveal the usual fine print loopholes, wherein GM, as well as the myriad of other failing corporations and banks at that time, would pay back significantly less than the trillions of dollars they received. Promises to invest these bailout

funds in new job-creating industries, of course, never materialized as the elites turned instead to frenzied stock-market speculation, driving paper prices to historic highs in today’s casino capitalism. Indeed, GM’s most recent massive layoff announcement was followed by a similar market surge.

Today, we must add to the list of government gifts to GM, its share of the bipartisan \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts aimed at boosting corporate balance sheets. In all these matters one fact remains constant. What is granted to the rich is taken from the vast majority of working people.

GM proudly announced that its projected plant closures would save the company \$6 billion, a figure that they calculated would be achieved by shifting production to meet the “public’s demand” for larger SUVs as a result, they insist, of today’s low fuel costs. At \$50 per barrel on world markets, this halving of fuel costs over the past decade has been matched at local gas pumps, where monopoly prices prevail. GM also blamed President Trump’s steel tariffs, which officials claim cost GM another billion dollars.

Need we add to the profit equation GM’s receipt of government “incentives” to produce electric cars, which it barely does? A little more than one percent of the 17.1 million cars produced in the U.S. last year were electric.

GM’s defenders, including Rattner, add to their justification “unexpected” factors that they claim affect auto sales, from the “threat” of electric cars to the onset of ride-sharing apps that they claim will “discourage vehicle sales.”

They add to these fake arguments the more substantial and overriding need to remain competitive on world markets by deploying robots and related technological advances that substitute machines for human labor.

What can socialist, labor, environmental, and human rights activists surmise from these horrors? Here some inescapable conclusions:

- Capitalism operates by its very nature to extract profits from working people regardless of the cost to human beings or the environment.

- The automobile industry is bound in a death grip to the doomsday fossil fuel industry. At a time when indisputable evidence that continued reliance on fossil fuels threatens the future of all humanity, the U.S. has *increased* its fossil fuel output while simultaneously pressing for the production of ever more polluting vehicles that depend on it.

- Capitalism has zero interest in seriously considering any scientifically and socially viable alternatives, whether they are in the construction of a massive system of free public transportation to largely replace automobiles or the massive and nationwide introduction of a clean and sustainable system of energy production. Such projects, at the initiative of an aroused and fighting working class that challenges capitalism’s core prerogatives—including the private ownership of the fossil fuel industry—would provide jobs for all in the millions at top union wages.

Capitalism cannot be reformed. It must be challenged and defeated. This is the job of a mass revolutionary party deeply integrated in all working-class struggles. Socialist Action aspires to build this party. Join us! ■

Stamford hotel workers launch union drive

By ERNIE GOTTA

STAMFORD, Conn.—On Nov. 19, workers at the Sheraton Hotel here launched a public campaign to form a union. Over 100 workers celebrated their new union with embraces and cheers that filled the courtyard of the St. John's Episcopal Church as they gathered before making their way to the hotel. Clergy, local politicians, and trade unionists joined in support of the Sheraton workers.

The action showed strength and solidarity in the face of a day-to-day reality that includes terrible health care, low wages, heavy workloads, and not an ounce of respect from management. Several workers, including Quincy, a front desk agent, noted that three of their coworkers had strokes or heart attacks this year because of stress and working too many hours.

The lack of respect was clearly demonstrated as General Manager Thomas Carlos ran and hid from the delegation of workers as it entered the building. He further demonstrated his cowardice by unleashing a wave of captive audience meetings that often cornered housekeepers in rooms alone, in an attempt to intimidate them from joining the union. Union-busting lawyers from the notorious firm of Cruz and Associates are currently trying to grind down the resolve of Sheraton workers by holding daily meetings for groups of workers



Ignacio Laguarda / Hearst Connecticut Media

that last up to three hours.

In spite of the management's onslaught, Sheraton workers will vote to join the union on Dec. 13. This vote will be the culmination of months of worker-to-worker organizing led by the Hyatt Greenwich and Hilton Stamford workers. A whopping 80% of the Sheraton workers signed up on union cards four days before the public launch.

This was no easy feat when considering that Stamford is one of the wealthiest areas in the country. The capitalist class in "Connecticut's Gold Coast" dominates the economic and political landscape. Davidson, the company that

(Above) Sheraton housekeepers lead march to the hotel on Nov. 19.

manages the Sheraton, is worth nearly \$5 billion and daily services the major corporate players that have their headquarters in Stamford. Yet a group of brave and determined workers are set on carving out a space to take back some of the wealth that was created on their backs.

Sheraton workers are looking to join their union sisters and brothers across the state who have been winning better wages, health care, and pensions in serious contract fights. Two hotels

organized by Unite Here Local 217 have won good contracts in 2018. In recent weeks the Hartford Hilton and New Haven Omni settled contracts with gains for the workers that include a \$20 per hour starting wage for housekeepers in Hartford by the end of the two-year contract. A vigorous and militant rank-and-file campaign that mobilized workers in every department of the hotels won their demands.

At the Hilton in Stamford, workers won the union vote 110-5 on Dec. 4, 2017, but the struggle for a first contract continues.

Solidarity from NEMA members

Hotel workers were flooded with support the first week in November as the New England Museum Association (NEMA) released a statement that it would not renew its contract with the Hilton Stamford until a fair labor agreement was reached.

Leading up to their conference in Stamford, NEMA members held a vigorous debate on Twitter, using the hashtag #NEMA2018. Many presenters refused to cross the picket line. Others canceled their hotel rooms.

NEMA presenter @RaineyTisdale tweeted, "I cancelled my @Hiltonstamford reservation and I'm talking with my co-presenters about alternative venues for our sessions. One of my first museum jobs was at the AFL-CIO's mu-

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JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

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

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

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

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

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

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EDITOR MICHAEL SCHREIBER CANADA EDITOR: BARRY WEISLEDER

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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

- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET (971) 312-7369
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com, (202) 286-5493

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
socialistactioncanada@gmail.com
(647) 986-1917
<http://www.socialistaction.ca/>



(Left) A singer entertains refugee children at the border as U.S. solidarity activists look on.

cal system and a criminal oligarchy running the country, peasants and the working class have been faced with the decision of “fight or flight.” Other Central American countries, such as Guatemala and El Salvador, which many of the migrants in the current caravans call home, share similar histories of U.S. imperialist invasion.

Detention system run for profit

Once the refugees fleeing poverty and violence in actually arrive in the U.S., they are forced into the U.S. detention system, a growing network that profits from the imprisonment of immigrants, even children. According to the group Detention Watch, as the U.S. prison system expanded in the 1980s and 1990s, thousands of refugees arriving from Cuba and Haiti were swept into U.S. detention centers. Detention Watch states on its website, “In 1996, the U.S. enacted legislation that dramatically expanded the use of detention. The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) expanded mandatory detention. The 1996 laws also rendered any non-U.S. citizen, including legal permanent residents, vulnerable to detention and deportation.”

Under Obama and now Trump, the implementation of a detention bed quota and the expansion of deportation programs such as 287(g) and Secure Communities has caused the average daily population of detained immigrants to skyrocket from approximately 5000 per day in 1994 to over 39,000 in 2017. The U.S. government now captures and detains up to 400,000 immigrants a year at a cost of \$2.6 billion.

Over 73% of immigrants are held in private detention facilities run by for-profit corporations like The GEO Group, Inc. and CoreCivic (formerly known as Corrections Corporation of America), which receive \$134 per day from the government for adult detention and \$319 per day for family detention (statistics from detentionwatch.org).

According to a recent article in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, the U.S. government is putting the health and safety of about 2300 migrant children being held in a remote desert detention camp in Tornillo, Texas, at risk by waiving the requirement for FBI fingerprint background checks for caregivers working with the children. The children, ages 13-17, are mostly from Central America and have recently arrived in the U.S. seeking to reunite with family members. Many of the children are being held for months in the detention center while waiting for their host families to pass an extremely rigorous screening process. This only adds to the trauma that many of the children have already experienced in their home countries and on their journey to the U.S.

“The few times they let me call my mom I would tell her that one day I would be free, but really I felt like I would be there for the rest of my life,” a 17-year-old from Honduras who was held at Tornillo earlier this year told AP. “I feel so bad for the kids who are still there. What if they have to spend Christmas there? They need a hug, and nobody is allowed to hug there.” And yet, despite the high mental health needs of the children in the camp, BCFS, the non-profit agency running the camp, only staffs one mental health therapist for every 50 children (the federal policy mandates one mental health provider for every 12 children).

As reported in the *Star Tribune*, “For each night that a child spends at Tornillo, taxpayers spend up to \$1,200 to pay to direct care workers, cooks, cleaners, teachers and emergency services workers, according to information staff at two congressional offices said they were provided on a recent visit. That’s well above the \$775 officials have disclosed, close to five times more than a typical youth migrant shelter costs.” The high costs at the Tornillo detention camp reflect the fact that everything—water, food, staff, and detainees—must be trucked in and out of the remote site.

Meanwhile, the 6000 caravan refugees currently residing in camps at that U.S.-Mexico border in Tijuana must also endure squalid conditions as they wait their turn in the ever-growing line of migrants hoping to apply for refugee status in the U.S. A group of about 15 hunger strikers at the border are demanding faster, more efficient, and more respectful handling of asylum claims.

Many have been staying in tents at the Benito Juarez Stadium. Socialist Action members participating in aid efforts at the border report that cops went tent to tent in the stadium, telling families they must move to a larger camp, Barretal—a 40-minute drive from the border, in an isolated area with no access to shops and

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... Migrants at U.S.-Mexico border

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on the ledger is now the only way asylum seekers can legally cross into San Diego.

Although President Trump’s recent attempts to block asylum claims were quickly struck down by a federal judge, things have only gotten worse along the border. According to the *Washington Post*, “U.S. immigration statistics show roughly 80 percent of Central Americans pass a perfunctory ‘credible fear’ interview after reaching the United States, but fewer than 10 percent are ultimately granted asylum by a judge. The backlog of cases in U.S. immigration courts has ballooned past 750,000, giving many asylum seekers who do not qualify a chance to remain in the country for several years while waiting to see a judge. ... Last month, the number of people taken into U.S. custody along the Mexican border or who attempted to enter without authorization topped 60,000, the highest of Trump’s presidency.”

To make matters worse, the *Washington Post* also recently reported on a deal between the Trump administration and Mexico’s new populist president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who ascended to office on Dec. 1. Called “Remain in Mexico,” the plan will require asylum seekers to stay in Mexico while waiting for their asylum claims to be processed in the U.S. “The medium and long-term solution is that people don’t migrate,” said Olga Sánchez Cordero, Mexico’s incoming interior minister. “Mexico has open arms and everything, but imagine one caravan after another after another. That would also be a problem for us.”

The new deal will break with the long-standing practice of “catch and release” and has many human rights groups worried that migrants will be forced to cross the border at more dangerous points, or to stay in unsafe areas on the Mexican side of the border, many of which are controlled by drug cartels.

Frustrations boiled over on Nov. 25, as dozens of migrants, including women and children, rushed the border in an attempt to break through. U.S. Border Patrol agents quickly retaliated with tear gas. In video posted online, an activist with the group Pueblos Sin Fronteras personally recounted pulling a five-year-old girl out of a cloud of stinging tear gas.

After the incident, *El Universal* reported that the Mexican government had announced it would immediately deport any Central American migrants who participated in what it called “a violent attempt” to illegally break through to the United States through the entry point known as El Chaparral. They also announced that they would reinforce the border by sending additional Federal Police agents to the area.

History of U.S. border violence

Many have expressed shock and outrage that the U.S. government would dare to use such military tactics against a group that included women and children, but in reality this incident was just the latest in a gradual build up of militarization along the U.S.-Mexico border. The border was first created in 1848 following the U.S.-Mexico war, when the land Trump wants to protect as the “border zone” was stolen from Mexico by the United States. However, border enforcement in

its current form didn’t begin until the 1990s.

Just as NAFTA was beginning to make headlines in 1993, the U.S. Border Patrol was developing plans to effectively seal the urban ports of El Paso-Ciudad Juarez and San Diego-Tijuana (through Operations Hold the Line and Gatekeeper, respectively). The resulting sections of border walls and increases in the number of Border Patrol agents in these and other urban areas had the devastating effect of pushing migration into the most dangerous sections of the U.S.-Mexico border. The consequences have been tragic: since 1994, around 10,000 undocumented immigrants have lost their lives attempting to cross into the United States (as estimated by the group Border Angels).

The Trump administration has only escalated the militarization process along in the border since taking office early in 2016. Trump ran his presidential campaign on xenophobic rhetoric that labeled Mexican immigrants as “rapists” and “murderers,” and a promise to build a wall along the entire border at a cost of billions of dollars (which he claimed he would force Mexico to pay for).

In late October, Trump deployed almost 6000 active-duty U.S. Army troops to the border area to join about 2000 National Guard troops already stationed there. Trump was following in the footsteps of Presidents George W. Bush and Barak Obama, who also sent the National Guard to the border. The troops have spent most of the past month stringing concertina wire along the border in a bid to prevent migrants from physically crossing into the U.S.

On Nov. 30, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security formally asked the Pentagon to extend the military deployment through the end of January. Trump’s inflammatory rhetoric has also fueled the efforts of right-wing vigilantes such as the Minute Men to patrol the border.

U.S. intervention in Central America

The U.S. military created many of the political and economic crises in the Central American countries that the most recent wave of migrants is fleeing from. The U.S. invaded Honduras (and other Central American countries) numerous times, dividing the region into a jumble of Banana Republics, dominated by the United Fruit Company. The widely despised Nicaraguan Contras were launched from Honduras in the 1980s under the Reagan administration.

A string of U.S.-backed military coups, corporate plundering, and neoliberal economic policies (such as Honduras’s entry into CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement), has undermined democracy in the region and created vacuums of power that have allowed the rise of drug cartels and paramilitary alliances.

Honduras is now considered one of the deadliest countries in the world. All of this culminated in the U.S.-orchestrated overthrow of democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya in 2009, striking him down for attempting even the mildest of reforms. The coup was carried out by the Honduran military under the direction of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the U.S. Congress. Meanwhile, with a destroyed politi-

By MARTY GOODMAN

Beginning Nov. 18 and for some six days, rebellion gripped Haiti. The Haitian masses jammed the streets, shutting down schools, transportation and businesses, some lighting bonfires of rubber tires at street corners or torching symbols of authority and corruption. At least 11 were killed, mostly by police, and 34 were injured. One cop died during the protests. A new force, likely paramilitary, was seen wielding M-60 machine guns, a weapon that can fire armor piercing bullets.

The trigger for the protests was the rip-off of close to \$3.8 billion in Venezuelan aid given to Haiti in the form of a discounted gas program known as PetroCaribe, as revealed in a study by the Haitian Senate.

Protesters chanted, "Where did the PetroCaribe money go?" and "Moïse must go!"—referring to Jovenel Moïse, Haiti's corrupt, pro-U.S. president. Thus far, the Moïse regime, which was elected with only 600,000 votes amidst charges of fraud, has refused to step down or investigate the theft of PetroCaribe funds. Moïse, whose finances were already under investigation for money laundering upon taking office, is suspected of being implicated in the PetroCaribe scandal, along with his network of crooked friends and business partners.

The Organization of American States (OAS), as perpetual servants of U.S. policy, issued a statement lashing out at protesters, while in solemn tones calling for "dialogue." For now, at least, dialogue is rejected by the opposition. According to oppositionist Me André Michel, "There is only one option. Jovenel Moïse is a political corpse that must be brought to the cemetery. It's over for him. We cannot do anything with him anymore. He must leave without delay to avoid chaos."

Nov. 18 was the 215th anniversary of the Haitian slave victory over French colonialism at the Battle of Vertières, led by Haitian revolutionary hero Jean-Jacques Dessalines. This year, out of fear of being greeted by unruly protests, the president broke with the tradition of going to Cap Haitien to observe the anniversary and went instead to Port au Prince, the capital, for a low-profile observance.

The disappeared PetroCaribe billions could have gone toward creating desperately needed jobs to build schools, hospitals, and decent housing for Haitians, who must live on an average of less than \$3.15 a day in a country with an unemployment rate of about 40%.

In a panic, Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant announced

Haiti seethes with anger!



creation of an estimated 50,000 temporary jobs until the end of the year. For the "opposition's" part, Haitian Senator Evaliere Beauplan, a member of the Democratic and Popular Sector, met with at least one Trump representative on Nov. 21 to discuss the crisis—i.e., to misdirect and deceive the Haitian masses. Beauplan was an author of the Haitian Senate study on the PetroCaribe scandal.

More than two centuries of U.S. imperialism have kept Haiti a neo-colony that has nurtured its corrupt elite. Today, Haiti is occupied by the UN Mission to Support Justice in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), about 1200 armed UN police officers who occupy key positions and advise or dictate armed intervention. The U.S.-dominated UN is the final authority in Haiti, not Haitians, and can deploy 10,000 troops at any time.

The protests were called by coalitions of opposition forces, including some 50 political parties; among them were former supporters of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. But none have called for an end to U.S. occupation and domination.

Berthany Dupont, editor of *Haiti Liberté*, a weekly, told *Socialist Action* that while the paper supports the protest demands, it strongly rejects what Dupont called the

opposition's "bourgeois parties" refusal to call for the U.S./UN to get out of Haiti, without which, he said, "we're going back to the same thing."

The November mobilizations are the third mass outpouring since last July 6-8, when the Haitian masses poured into the streets to resist President Moïse's order to virtually double gas prices at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the gangster-like enforcement arm of the U.S.-dominated World Bank, in exchange for a \$96 million loan to Haiti." In July, Haitians blocked roads, burned tires, discharged guns, and wrecked some 80 stores, including torching three super-markets owned by Reginald Boulos, president of the national chamber of commerce and industry of Haiti. As many as 20 people were killed and over 50 arrested. Haitians have called the World Bank/IMF plans "the death plan."

On Oct. 17, tens of thousands took to the streets across Haiti in huge protests. Some observers say it was even bigger than Nov. 18. It was a holiday for workers because it marks the day when revolutionary leader Dessalines was killed in 1806. Of the 10 departments in the country, only Nippes did not see large marches. At least eight were killed Oct. 17 by Haitian cops.

Following an Oct. 31 funeral for six of those killed Oct. 17, held in a church in the Bel-Air slum in Port au Prince, a march was organized and grew into a protest against the PetroCaribe corruption. During the march, one man was shot dead and at least eight others were injured.

The desperation and mobilization of the Haitian masses is at an acute stage. The leadership of middle-class and ruling class forces will offer no solution to the misery in Haiti. A complete transformation of Haitian society is needed, that is, the elimination of imperialism and capitalism. Hope lies with the forces seeking revolutionary change. ■

... Migrants at border

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supplies. In an effort to clear out Benito Juarez, police blocked food donations from coming in, while denying people the ability to leave the camp to get food. They also removed electric lights and bathrooms from the old camp site.

Solidarity actions

But all is not lost. While the forces of U.S. imperialism amass along the border with Mexico, an explosion of organizing efforts has taken off not just along the border but across the United States. Groups like Cosecha, which issued a call for 15,000 people to come to the U.S.-Mexico border in support of the immigrants, are currently organizing volunteers to offer support in whatever way they can, including donations of food and clothing and legal counsel. Faith-based organizations and other groups have also been sending aid.

Local actions and organizing efforts have taken place in solidarity with the caravan refugees. Groups such as Minnesota Caravan Solidarity have projected a message of welcome to the migrants approaching the U.S. "Immigrants are welcome here!" shouted protesters at a recent rally in downtown Minneapolis. The crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border has provided activists with an important opening to organize new united-front-type coalitions to come together in an immigrant rights movement that has been largely fractured and lacking in a national leadership for many years.

Many of the groups organizing around these issues have been divided over the ideas of organizing direct aid for the migrants versus organizing local and national mass actions. *Socialist Action* does not deny the need for direct support to the migrants now living in desperate and squalid conditions on the Mexican side of the border. But we also recognize that it is critical to organize mass actions to highlight the role of U.S. imperialism in the current crises in Central America and to defend immigrants and refugees against the attacks of the U.S. government aimed at controlling the immigrant-fueled U.S. economy and keeping immigrants too afraid to fight back.

We should look back to mass movements such as the Chicano Movement of the 1960s for inspiration. Despite widespread police brutality against it, the movement fought for a broad range of demands, from restoration of land grants, to farm workers' rights, to



Marty Goodman / Socialist Action

enhanced education, to voting and political rights and reclamation of Mexican-American cultural history.

In recent years, we have seen massive protests erupting around critical issues. Examples include the huge rallies and marches in 2006, when millions of people spilled into the streets to protest the reactionary Sensenbrenner bill, or this year's protests of hundreds of thousands around the U.S. against the Trump administration's heinous separation of migrants from their children at the border.

Although many of these protests have lacked a national cohesiveness and sustainability, they demonstrate the power of the immigrant rights movement to challenge the U.S. government when its most vulnerable members are under threat. Many migrants from Mexico and Central America have backgrounds of labor organizing in their own countries. They have lived with the consequences of U.S. imperialist military and economic intervention.

(Above) Migrants in Tijuana receive donated food.

We know from history that the ruling class will not give up its power without a fight, and the Democrats and Republicans have equally supported and enhanced the racist immigration system that operates in the United States. Neither party offers a solution to the crisis currently occurring at the border.

The migrant caravans offer a new opportunity to organize mass movements among the U.S. working class, unifying broad layers of working people, immigrants, refugees, and labor, faith-based and community organizations in solidarity with our sisters and brothers from Central America. This is the only way we will be able to end the economic and political crisis pushing people to migrate to the U.S. and the system that exploits them when they arrive here.

Solidarity with the Migrant Caravans! Open the Borders! ¡Ningun Ser Humano es Ilegal! ■

Socialist Action National Convention registers gains



By THE EDITORS

Following a three-month pre-convention discussion period that saw members submitting some 70 written contributions, Socialist Action's elected delegates, along with members, supporters, and international guests, assembled in Minneapolis, Oct. 12-14, for the party's 18th national convention.

The convention opened with a critical evaluation of the Fourth International (FI), in which Socialist Action fraternally participates alongside a small minority of parties that have challenged the long-term and ongoing political and organizational degeneration of this formerly revolutionary world party that traced its origins to the politics of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the principles pioneered by Lenin and Trotsky.

Our delegation at the FI's February 2018 World Congress aimed at re-orienting the FI to its historic rejection of coalition capitalist ("popular front") politics and imperialist wars, unconditional support to the right of oppressed nations and peoples to self-determination, and the construction of disciplined revolutionary parties on the Leninist model aimed at the construction of a world socialist order. Today, most of these founding programmatic principles have been abandoned. FI sections largely shun the construction of Leninist parties in favor of participation in "more influential" reformist "broad parties" with an electoralist orientation.

In opposition to this trend, Socialist Action has aligned with a small number of opposition formations inside the FI while maintaining relations with various expelled currents and others outside the FI that are open to discussions and collaboration.

The major text adopted at the Minneapolis convention was the Draft Political Resolution, aimed at analyzing and engaging Socialist Action in the fightback challenges to the ever-deepening world capitalist crisis and its effects on working-class life in the U.S. Here we present a summary of this resolution; for the full text see socialistaction.org.

Draft Political Resolution: A summary

In his analysis of President Donald Trump's excoriating traditional U.S. trading partners at the recent Group of Seven (G 7) meeting in Quebec, Marxist economist Michael Roberts noted:

"What all these Trumpist antics [threats of trade tariffs, etc.] revealed is that the period of the Great Moderation and globalization, from the 1980s to 2007,

'Trump's twisted politics have a rational core. They advance what he perceives as policies to protect weakened U.S. capitalism from competitors abroad while advancing its interests against workers at home.'

when all major capitalist states worked together to benefit capital in all countries (to varying degrees) is over. The Great Recession of 2007-8 and the ensuing Long Depression since 2009 has changed the economic picture. In a stagnating world capitalist economy, where productivity growth is low, world trade growth has subsided and the profitability of capital has not recovered, cooperation has been replaced by increasingly vicious competition—the thieves have fallen out."

Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement and from the nearly worthless COP 21 Paris climate accords, his ultra-reactionary racist immigration policies—separating detained and imprisoned parents from their children—his praise for the Supreme Court's approval of the "constitutional" right of a baker to refuse to prepare a wedding cake for an LGBTIQI couple, his proposal to his National Security Council to increase the U.S. nuclear weapons stock "100 fold," and his most recent order to establish a sixth arm of the Pentagon to militarily "defend" U.S. "interests" in outer space—to mention a few of his crude affirmations—combine to demonstrate that on virtually every front his twisted politics have a rational core. They advance what he perceives as policies to protect a weakened U.S. capitalism from its competitors abroad, while advancing its interests against U.S. workers at home.

Global capitalist competition is a completely unavoidable aspect of the system of private profit. As competition results in new innovation, and automation temporarily increases the rate of profit for the innovator, these gains are offset again by the rapid adoption of new technology by competitors, resulting in the fall of profit rates.

In their desperate struggle to fight the falling rate of profit, capitalists try to reduce costs by attacking trade unions and workers' gains on the job and generally cutting social benefits such as education, medical care, and pension allocations. Refusing to accept responsibility for the massive environmental damage caused by cutthroat capitalist competition and transferring production to low-wage, unregulated areas both within and outside their own countries are likewise inherent in the system.

Yes, Donald Trump is a "moron" in the "unsavvy" political sense only. The moron term was first coined by his former and fired Secretary of State and former Exxon Mobile CEO, Ross Tillerson, when Trump proposed to the National Security Council a hundred-fold increase of nuclear weapons. Yes, Trump is a billionaire businessman—an overtly racist, sexist, anti-immigrant, climate crisis denying, detention center/concentration camp crusading, homophobic, Islamophobic, warmongering, imperialist beast. But there were nearly zero objections when a bipartisan Congress gifted \$1.5 trillion in tax relief to the corporations and banks of the ruling rich, a fact that in and of itself enabled bourgeois economic analysts to post and predict some figures that

indicated a modest but one-time uptick in otherwise stagnant GDP figures.

Similarly, there were few, if any, objections when Congress boosted annual military spending by an unprecedented \$80 billion, an amount exceeding even Trump's initial request. We note here in passing that the \$80 billion *increase* exceeds Russia's total annual military budget of \$50 billion, as compared to the U.S.'s budgeted \$1 trillion for overall war purposes! On June 21, 2018, the U.S. Senate, by a vote of 85-15, approved this military budget.

China: A new imperialist power

U.S. threats against China are a classic example of fundamental imperialist contradictions and new rivalries. China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 was conditioned on its respecting foreign corporations' intellectual property rights—that is, agreeing not to compete by transforming its primitive factories via state-of-the-art technologies, which the U.S. today insists are protected by U.S. patents ("inviolable" intellectual property rights). As a result, for close to two decades and until recently, the level of Chinese labor productivity lagged far behind most capitalist nations. But this is rapidly changing. With regard to an increasing number of key commodities traded on world markets, China's productivity levels are rapidly rising—closing the technology gap and thus posing a threat to U.S. corporate interests.

Trump's list of proposed tariffs on Chinese imports includes 1102 categories of goods—concentrated in high-tech industries like nuclear reactors, aircraft engine parts, ball bearings, motorcycles, and industrial and agricultural machinery. These are precisely the categories in which China has employed the advanced robotics and production technologies that Trump claims were "stolen" by Chinese corporations.

In the minds of U.S. capitalists, China was to be permanently relegated to using inferior technologies while providing the world's cheapest and largest labor pool. Further, U.S. corporations hoped to unilaterally exploit the emerging mass Chinese market, where perhaps some 300 million or more of China's population of 1.4 billion people are able to purchase U.S.-manufactured commodities. Needless to say, the Chinese ruling class, as it introduced competitive technologies, had no intention of being banned from the markets in its own country. Obviously, neither China nor the European Union nations—nor any

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other “self-respecting” big capitalist entrepreneurs—intend to remain permanent second-rate players.

Socialist Action’s convention approved a new text entitled “China: A New Imperialist Power.” China, built on a foundation of monopoly capitalism, is a major capital exporter that fundamentally exploits workers at home and across the world. Its economy exhibits highly uneven development, with advanced and highly productive regions alongside impoverished and underdeveloped ones. Its military is increasingly advanced and is deployed to support the interests of Chinese capitalism worldwide. China is a major player in most theaters across the world today and is continually seeking to expand its already significant influence globally.

Socialist Action also adopted the position that Russia is an imperialist nation, but with considerably less weight than China in the world economy and in many other respects.

Rise of reactionary currents worldwide

Today, we see a deepening worldwide political polarization, often with the emergence of openly racist, anti-immigrant, right “populist,” or neo-fascist movements—as in India, Japan, and Europe. Trump, Macron, and May seek similar economic and social objectives, but with sometimes more restrained rhetoric. All of these heinous developments have their origins in a crisis-ridden world capitalism wherein sections of the ruling elites aim to deflect blame for the overall system’s failures onto immigrants, oppressed nationalities, women, the LGBTQI community, religious groups, or other sections of society or nations that they choose to scapegoat and demonize for their own divide-and-rule objectives.

The Trump presidency

Any significant explanation of Donald Trump’s election to the U.S. presidency must include mention of the widespread rejection of the Washington, D.C./Wall Street associations of Democrat Hillary Clinton. Many workers and sections of the middle class turned to Trump, who postured in his electoral campaign as an anti-establishment “populist.” His rallies aimed at mobilizing the racism and xenophobia deeply promoted by U.S. capitalist institutions.

At the same time, wide discontent over the Democrats’ eight years of broadly imposed austerity, multi-trillion-dollar bank and corporate bailouts, unprecedented mortgage foreclosures, mass deportations, endless wars, massive expansion of the racist prison-industrial complex, police violence and murder, off-shore drilling, pipeline extension, fracking and other elements of environmental destruction—to name a few of the measures implemented to advance overall capitalist interests—helped to inflate support to Bernie Sanders’ candidacy in the Democratic Party primaries, and later resulted in many abstentions in the general election.

On the other side of the international equation, we see the emergence of important working-class formations and mass mobilizations aimed at resisting austerity and other encroachments, especially affecting young people. Spain/Catalonia, France/against Macron’s new Labor Code, Britain/Corbyn, South Africa/NUMSA, Haiti/rebellions against IMF austerity, the U.S./anti-Trump post-election mobilizations for women, immigrants, opposition to global warming, Poland and Ireland/mass pro-abortion rights mobilization are but a few examples. In the absence of clear alternatives led by deeply rooted socialist currents aiming at a definitive break with capitalist austerity and politics, we are witnessing the limited rise of initial efforts to find a path forward.

Statewide teacher strikes

The gap between the frustration and anger against austerity measures and the still low level of fight-back efforts could potentially close rapidly. The eruption, seemingly out of the blue, of statewide teacher strikes—the “Red State Rebellions” in West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona, Oklahoma, and North Carolina—may well have been the heat lightning to spark qualitatively broader and effective examples of resistance, portending a fundamental change in the present negative relationship of forces.

The teachers’ strikes provide lessons to workers everywhere. They include the critical importance of union democracy, defiance of bureaucratic sellout union misleaders, solidarity with and fighting for demands to advance the well-being of all public employees, exposure of capitalist austerity measures that transferred public state funds to the private sector, establishing organic connections with and championing broad community class interests, lengthy and



coordinated statewide strikes, and more.

On the negative side of the balance sheet, the strike actions proved to be significantly limited by the subsequent decision, encouraged by the NEA and AFT tops, to run some 400 teachers as Democratic Party candidates in the 2018 elections. This decision had the effect of subordinating any further unleashing of teacher power to the reformist electoral arena.

Rush to 2018 and 2020 elections

The absence of clear working-class or trade-union-based alternatives in the electoral arena, coupled with the still low level of independent organization of broad social movements in the context of the Trump administration’s reactionary policies, will no doubt result in a concerted rush of the reformists of every stripe to the Democratic Party. We saw this in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential elections—with the Sanders campaign, along with the Greens as well as the diehard “lesser-evil” Clinton supporters, absorbing much of the reformist left.

Socialist Action’s decision to run our own candidate for the presidency, even as an extremely modest propaganda effort, stood us in good stead with regard to the education of our ranks along with radicalizing layers who were beginning to learn the lessons of independent working-class politics in the electoral arena.

With regard to all the vital social movements that fight racism, sexism, environmental catastrophe, and LGBTQI and gender discrimination, we should fully expect a concerted ruling-class effort, led by the Democratic Party, to channel them into a coordinated effort to “re-capture the Senate and House from Donald Trump and the Republicans.” The upcoming election cycles will undoubtedly see the Democratic Party, with their associated reformist allies from every quarter in tow, posing the “Dump Trump” refrain as the only way to save the nation from catastrophe. To accomplish this, the Democrats’ “big tent” strategy is to politically present themselves not as a leftist alternative to the Republicans but rather as “moderates” or “centrists” (in the capitalist meaning of these terms) so as to win voters across the political spectrum—that is, as close to the right as possible.

Our response to this moment of relative calm, this gap that is punctuated by periodic huge protests against the myriad forms of social injustice, requires patience and always *wholehearted participation* aimed at meeting the best activists and introducing our independent methods of struggle in preparation for the time when teacher/Red State-type actions again become the order of the day, but this time around offering the potential of more definitive breaks with previously sacred capitalist institutions.

The Ocasio-Cortez primary victory

Here we note another important example of the receptivity to socialist ideas. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s congressional primary victory in the Bronx and Queens boroughs of New York City temporarily shook the Democratic Party hierarchy. They learned too late that their machine-dominated apparatus and six-term Democratic Party incumbent were insufficient to defeat a young Latina of 28 years who campaigned on a broad-ranging platform of progressive and radical demands, coupled with her open association with a Bernie Sanders’ version of democratic socialism and open membership in the Democratic Socialists of America, as well as a host of new Democratic Party front groups collecting funds for “progressive” Democrats.

We need not review in detail our historic opposition

to any capitalist candidate or party. As we are fond of saying, “If Lenin ran on the Bolshevik program as a Democrat, we would not support him!”

Sadly, much of the “left” today remains once again mired in “lesser evil” illusions that capitalism’s historic “graveyard of social movements,” the Democratic Party, can in any way be converted into an instrument of working people.

Despite her misguided association with the Democratic Party, however, we see Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign as confirmation that socialist ideas are increasingly finding a receptive ear among broad layers of the population.

The plight of the youth

A Dec. 14, 2017, *Huffington Post* article describes the plight of the estimated 75 million people in the United States who fall into the category of millennials—those born between 1982 and 2004. “What is different about us as individuals compared to previous generations is minor,” the author, Michael Hobbes, states. “What is different about the world around us is profound. Salaries have stagnated and entire sectors have cratered. At the same time, the cost of every prerequisite of a secure existence—education, housing, and health care—has inflated into the stratosphere. From job security to the social safety net, all the structures that insulate us from ruin are eroding. ... Add it all up and it’s no surprise that we’re the first generation in modern history to end up poorer than our parents.”

Recent data from *The New York Times* demonstrates that “among Americans under 30, unions’ approval rating is a stratospheric 76 percent.” *The Times* asserts: “Gallup and the Pew polls show public support for unions at its highest level in years: 61 percent at Gallup; 60 percent at Pew.”

This data begins to create an accurate gauge of the anger, frustration, and hatred of the austerity measures imposed by capital against workers. The past decline in support for unions, we have always asserted, could be largely attributed to the class-collaborationist bureaucracy’s policies and never to the efforts of working people to improve their lives by collectively organizing.

Union power derives fundamentally from the will of workers to fight, and *never* from the capacity of unions to fund their struggles from member dues. In this context, the anti-union U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Janus vs. AFSCME*, in which the court ruled on June 28, 2018, that union agreements to have employers deduct agency fees from employee paychecks and forward the money to the unions are “unconstitutional” is far from a definitive defeat.

The struggle for Black liberation

Two years after the promising rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, the deep anger and hatred of the assaults launched by “the system” continues, along with a concerted fightback. However, the struggle for Black liberation exhibits a tilt to Democratic Party electoral politics that is similar to what we have seen in a broad range of social movements.

In the face of ever-mounting attacks on every aspect of Black, Latinx, and Native American lives, there are no clear currents that seek to organize a break with capitalist politics. And this is in the face of hard facts demonstrating that the horrors of state and police violence, of the deepening imposition of degrading poverty and a generalized deterioration in the quality of life continue unabated. At the same time, the recep-

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tivity of Black and oppressed communities, especially young people, to socialist and related radical ideas is undeniable, as is the opportunity to win the best fighters to our party today.

Environmental destruction and climate crisis

The United Nations climate data in October 2018 put the onset of permanent, irreversible, and catastrophic damage at some 12 years away! This data is reported against the background of a U.S. government administration of climate deniers. “Environmental Protection Agency” top officials systematically gut regulations that place some limits on corporate environmental degradation projects that threaten human health and safety—if not the viability of life on earth as we know it.

In that context, the vast panoply of environmental organizations are turning to the elections, presenting a limited set of demands that are consciously designed to complement, not oppose, the nearly worthless positions of the Democratic Party. We will continue our participation in the environmental movement, regardless of its reformist leadership, looking for every opportunity to advance a program that challenges the private for-profit core of the fossil-fuel energy complex, with the objective of winning the most serious forces, and, in time, the broad movement, to an independent mass-action orientation.

At present, the movement against climate change lacks focus and direction. But as we have seen with regard to the massive national mobilizations against the Dakota Access Pipeline project and the inspiring solidarity with Standing Rock Native American fighters who paved the way in this struggle, the potential for qualitatively broader struggles on ever-increasing fronts is not far off. We note with enthusiasm the fact that leading groups like 350.org have increasingly incorporated a strong defense of immigrants and opposition to environmental racism as key planks in their platforms. We must also take advantage of the sophisticated discussion about the unfolding of disaster capitalism in Puerto Rico to drive home the need for eco-socialist solutions.

We will continue to press for making “Nationalize the energy industry, under workers’ and community control!” a central organizing, transitional demand. With this demand, the climate change movement can be strengthened in multiple ways—by identifying the key obstacles in its path, by embracing its natural allies and unmasking its adversaries, by providing a strategy around which a fighting movement can coalesce, and by focusing its collective strength to strike a real blow at the very heart of the problem.

This, along with critical demands for a just transition at top union wages for all displaced workers, will help the movement close the gap between the union bureaucracy’s view of jobs at any cost and the goal of a clear fight for a sustainable fossil-fuel-free energy system that all workers can see as a viable and necessary alternative to the present disastrous course.

Women’s liberation

Immediately following Trump’s inauguration, five million women and their allies mobilized in Washington, D.C., and in cities across the country in perhaps the largest such mobilization ever. They mobilized to make clear to everyone that they rejected every aspect of Trump’s sexist rants and broad-ranging attacks on women’s rights.

In the very act of mobilizing, the essentially self-

appointed and largely media-approved handful of middle-class leaders saw that in order to bring out the maximum numbers possible they had to broaden their appeal to include demands for the LGBTQI community, immigrants, and oppressed national minorities. All the issues were fused in a way that all understood that to seriously defend women’s rights any serious effort also had to defend everyone’s rights.

While the numbers were astounding, the turnout was in large part promoted by the Democratic Party and the corporate media with the early-on objective of turning all social movements into mainstream and electoral reformism—that is, bourgeois channels.

The January 2017 mobilizations were followed by huge mobilizations everywhere on a wide range of issues, most encouraged by the corporate media and facilitated by local police departments and city governments. Most featured as speakers a range of Democratic Party officials or others who sought future office by catching the wave of anti-Trump sentiment.

In a matter of a few months, however, the corporate media spigot was shut down tight and the mobilizations were largely brought to a halt as preparations began to refurbish the credibility of tarnished Democratic Party institutions and align its components to electoral “Dump Trump” perspectives and actions.

The emergence of the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment is likewise an expression of a growing understanding that like racism, sexism, and sexual abuse are ingrained in capitalist culture and society, which marks women as inferior. When the hundreds of celebrity signers of a recent *New York Times* full-page advertisement acknowledged that they took inspiration from a communication they received from farmworker women representing thousands of agricultural workers who had experienced the same sexual violence, degradation, and abuse, no one dared to respond that these were “rare and exceptional” instances of sexual harassment.

The abortion referendum victory in Ireland and the vote to decriminalize abortion in the lower house in Argentina, both won with unprecedented mass mobilizations and mass campaigning, reflect an incredible step forward for the global women’s movement. Both struggles were built on the pioneering fight to defend abortion rights in Poland. All are powerful examples of women’s and their allies’ ongoing capacity to extract critical gains even from nations where right-wing governments and parties or otherwise reactionary forces like the Catholic Church exercise major influence.

In the U.S. the ongoing attacks at every level on abortion rights continue to erode previous gains. Once again, we point to the tactics that have proven their effectiveness in winning the most essential of women’s rights. United-front-type mass mobilizations of increasing magnitude and breadth make clear to all that women’s lives will not be subjected to the reactionary views of religious bigots and the state powers that they often influence or control.

(The Socialist Action convention approved the formation of a women’s fraction to prepare a comprehensive resolution on women’s liberation, inclusive of trans women, which will provide the basis for an internal literary discussion open to all members.)

Rise of LGBTQI movement

The past several years have witnessed important gains for the still persecuted LGBTQI community, especially in the beginnings of a cultural shift that has won recognition of the fact that human beings’ gender identity is expressed in a variety of forms. The increasing inclusion of LGBTQI leaders and the issue of gender equality more generally into the overall move-

ment for women’s equality, as we saw in the January 2017 national mobilizations, is an indication of the growing strength of this important movement, as is the still-limited but important gains regarding gender identity, choice access to public bathrooms, and a range of legislative gains barring discrimination.

But despite these gains, 2016 was the deadliest year for physical attacks against lesbians, gay men, and transgender women, according to the U.S. Justice Department—while granting that data for hate crimes against LGBTQI persons remain the most underreported of any category. Out of 6121 hate crime cases reported, 1076 were based on violence against lesbians and gay men, and 124 were based on gender identity. This represents an 11 percent increase.

Fight for \$15 and a union now!

We have previously noted and enthusiastically supported the important mobilizations for increasing minimum wages to \$15 per hour and the often associated demand for a union now. “Living wage” figures in cities across the country estimate that a worker earning between \$15 and \$23 hourly can barely make ends meet, depending on the cost of living. Increases in the minimum hourly wage have been registered in several cities, usually as a result of city or state legislation or ballot referenda. In most cases, the top-level wage of \$15 per hour is to be phased in over the course of several years.

Unfortunately, the union bureaucracy has often conspired with city governments to limit minimum wage struggles, and worse still, to refrain nationally from any coordinated and united strike actions that take workers’ struggles into the streets to forcibly extract living wage scales. Strikes, for these hidebound bureaucrats, are “no longer effective.”

Fascism and how to fight it

Socialist Action’s new pamphlet, “How to Defeat Neo-Fascists, Racists and the Extreme Right,” authored by SA comrades who have been involved in the significant mobilizations when neo-fascists announced that they were coming to town, expresses our basic political and organization orientation. In Berkeley and Boston, a handful of these heinous types were met by 7000 and as many as 40,000 counter-demonstrators respectively. The mobilization was organized by united-front-type coalitions whose effectiveness was in direct proportion to their massive numbers.

Here’s what we wrote in our new pamphlet: “Virulent racist and neo-fascist groups feed off the misery and economic uncertainty of the 99 percent that are the hallmarks of capitalism in crisis.

“Militarists, chauvinists, racists, and neo-fascists blame all of societies’ ills on ‘the other’—some presumed ‘inferior’ country, culture, race, or ethnic minority that threatens the rest of us. The rightists carry water for the [wealthy] one percent by obfuscating the real source of the problems we face, by undermining solidarity, and by sowing divisions among the victims of the current economic and political onslaught amidst attacks raining down on us from our common oppressors.

“Typically, the ruling rich keep the fascist threat on the back burner so long as the democratic charade they use to control the majority proves effective. At present, racists and neo-fascists are able to mobilize only small groups of adherents. However, we know from history that as a last resort, when the veneer of democracy can no longer hold opposition to their system in check, the robber barons will throw their weight behind the fascist movement in order to obliterate unions, left political parties, and other fighting organizations of the working class.

“To defeat the right, a two-pronged strategy is required: We must harness the power of working people, in massive numbers, to stand up to the racist and neo-fascist threats. We must offer a comprehensive, convincing counter narrative that explains the current crisis and how to extricate ourselves from it.”

Immigration rights

Since the unprecedented massive immigrant rights mobilizations of 2006, effectively a nationwide strike against the proposed passage of the reactionary Republican-sponsored Sensenbrenner Bill, the movement for immigrant rights has expanded its scope and power. The historic 2006 strike mobilization was overwhelmingly supported by the vast majority of the nation’s 12 million undocumented workers.

Today, the struggle encompasses mobilizations for DACA (the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), TPS (Temporary Protected Status), immigration rights for Muslims, and now, for the elementary right of immigrant children to not be brutally separated from their parents when they enter the U.S.

A portion of a Dec. 18, 2017, article in *Working Class Perspectives* outlines the stakes involved in this critical struggle: Created by Congress in the Immigration

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Act of 1990, TPS was meant for people from countries going through environmental disaster and other extraordinary and temporary conditions or confronting armed conflict. Currently, the program is administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"In the past two months, TPS has come under attack from the Trump Administration. In November 2017, DHS terminated the program for Haiti, and four months later it extended that terrible decision to TPS-protected immigrants from Nicaragua and Honduras. Starting January 2019, an estimated 50,000 Haitians, 57,000 Hondurans, and 2,550 Nicaraguans with TPS status will become undocumented."

Following in the footsteps of the "great deporter," Barack Obama, with some 2.5 million deportees to his credit, the Trump administration seeks to impose the next wave of punitive deportations in the name of saving jobs for U.S. workers, as well as other lies and racist rationalizations. From our viewpoint we begin and end with the perspective of championing the interests of *all workers* and uniting them in common struggle against the boss class.

Amnesty Now for All of the 12 Million Workers Without Papers! No Human Being Is Illegal! Abolish ICE! Abajo Con Las Fronteras! No to the Monstrous Separation of Parents and Children! [Editor's note: This was written before the commencement of the Honduran caravan and Trump's military threat to stop those thousands of migrants from legally entering the U.S. to seek asylum.]

North Korea: "Denuclearization" negotiations

President Trump's grandstanding negotiations with North Korea should not put anyone fearful of nuclear war at ease. For Socialist Action the starting point in

explaining our views is our historic demand for the total and unconditional disarmament of the imperialist military U.S. nuclear behemoth.

The U.S. boasts a nuclear arsenal of some 5000 weapons capable of delivery from virtually anywhere in the world. Its 1100 military bases in some 100 nations fuel a domestic arms market unprecedented in world history. In contrast, no other nation has more than a handful of military bases outside its borders. North Korea, with perhaps 5-10 nuclear weapons, has none. It is not far-fetched to predict that if North Korea discarded its nuclear weapons and related missile delivery systems, it would be invaded by the imperialist U.S., no matter what treaties might be negotiated at a particular time.

Socialist Action rejects the decades-long demonization of the leaders of North Korea. As with all such corporate media promoted efforts, the demonization serves the imperialist purpose of justifying U.S. intervention and war. We say this regardless of our views on the capitalist leaders of North Korea or any other capitalist state—regardless of our view that any and all such leaders can only be effectively removed as a product of the organization and mass mobilization of the working masses themselves in the course of socialist revolution.

Latin America's "pink revolutions"

With the coming to political power of the governments of Lula/Brazil, Morales/Bolivia, Kirchner/Argentina, Ortega/Nicaragua, Correa/Ecuador and Chavez-Maduro/Venezuela, none of these reformist or social democratic leaders and regimes, their rhetoric notwithstanding, contemplated a revolutionary break with capitalism. Whatever differences distinguished one from the others regarding the implementation of sometimes substantial reforms were subordinate to the fact that in all cases the essential social structures and institutions of the capitalist state remained largely intact.

Unlike the Cuban Revolution of 1959, which culminated in 1961 when the Fidel Castro leadership nationalized bourgeois property "down to the nails in the heels of their boots," none of these "revolutions" challenged capitalist property rights. Thus, whatever measures were implemented to temporarily alleviate the terrible conditions endured by the masses for many decades were incapable of securing permanent advances, as compared to Cuba's revolution that ended capitalist rule.

Our analysis of the inherent limitations of the "pink tide" capitalist governments and our advocacy of the absolute necessity for the construction of a working-class opposition led by a revolutionary socialist party have been a major Socialist Action contribution to the education of vanguard forces in the U.S. and abroad.

In Nicaragua, where tens of thousands have mobilized against the pension and related austerity measures proposed by the Daniel Ortega-led capitalist government, the lessons of the failed "pink tide revolutions" are painfully relevant. (For background, see Socialist Action's three books: "Nicaragua: Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution," "Dynamics of the Nicaraguan Revolution," and "Nicaragua: The Untold Story of the U.S. Secret War.")

Despite our criticisms of the "pink tide" governments, Socialist Action remains resolutely opposed to U.S. imperialism's interventions in Latin America. We adhere to the principle of unconditional support to the right of self-determination of poor and oppressed nations. In the U.S. this has always been best expressed in the demands, "U.S. Hands Off!" or "U.S. Out Now!"

The U.S. antiwar movement

Socialist Action advances the need for an independent, democratic, mass action, united antiwar movement. Our work in the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), the leading antiwar coalition in the U.S.,

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... Wildfire

(continued from page 12)

as 1.16°C over the past hundred years, dating back to a time when modern-industrial global capitalism contributed less greenhouse gases than it does today. Higher average temperatures have altered weather patterns throughout the state, leading to longer droughts, less precipitation, and consequently drier and more flammable vegetation and forests.

California will certainly continue to be a major contributor to global emissions, owing in no small part to Governor Brown. In addition to expanding offshore oil drilling in alliance with the Democratic governors of Oregon and Washington, Brown's office approved nearly 22,000 permits for oil and gas exploration issued in mostly low-income communities of color. California is currently the country's 2nd largest emitter of greenhouse gases, accounting for over 12% of the total.

But California's carbon load, well-head expansion, and massive fires are merely symptomatic of a global capitalist economy that depends on burning fossil fuels, the major contributor to CO₂ emissions. Over the past 100 years, atmospheric CO₂ has gone from 307ppm to 410 ppm, leading to global temperature increases of 1.17°C (2.1°F). (Temperatures measured between 1880 and 1920 are widely accepted as the "preindustrial" baseline).

Globally, climate change has led to the increased number, intensity, and duration of extreme weather events. This year alone, there have been unprecedented forest fires in the Arctic Circle, a deadly conflagration in Greece, massive flooding in Japan, while intense heat caused dehydration that has led to a deadly epidemic of kidney disease in El Salvador. We have seen bigger, wetter, and slower moving hurricanes, global freshwater shortages, and the increased likelihood of crop failures. Climate change is also increasingly affecting global migration, pointing to new challenges and possibilities as activists grapple with these related issues.

Forests, the lungs of the planet, lock away between ¼ and 1/3 of global greenhouse gas emissions, and they are under threat more than ever. In Brazil, for example, newly elected extreme right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro promises to expand mining, agriculture, and pasture further and more rapidly into the Amazon in order to boost economic growth.

In Borneo, widespread deforestation and the resultant release of massive amounts of carbon is actually the result of U.S.-led changes in environmental laws



that promoted growing highly profitable palm oil as a less carbon intensive alternative to fossil fuels. A recent story in *The New York Times Magazine* explains the extent of it: "NASA researchers say the accelerated destruction of Borneo's forests contributed to the largest single-year global increase in carbon emissions in two millennia, an explosion that transformed Indonesia into the world's fourth-largest source of such emissions."

"Instead of creating a clever technocratic fix to reduce American's carbon footprint, lawmakers had lit the fuse on a powerful carbon bomb that, as the forests were cleared and burned, produced more carbon than the entire continent of Europe."

Other technocratic fixes (geoengineering) are in development, including releasing millions of tons of sulfuric dioxide into the atmosphere to dim the sun. There are also technologies to suck carbon out of the atmosphere and store it underground. These untested so-called solutions threaten to alter delicate and complex planetary systems, with unknown and possibly catastrophic consequences. But capitalists are already seeking ways to commodify and profit from them, which means that they are likely to be amplified as climate change solutions.

For Republican Rep. Randy Weber of Texas, chairman of the Energy Subcommittee of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, "The future is bright for geoengineering." And pivotal ruling-class figures like Bill Gates are investing in these technologies.

Over the past 28 years, world leaders have deliberated at periodic conferences over ways to solve the climate crisis, but have failed to enact a single mandate, in large part because they are politically

incapable of thinking outside core capitalist principles of continuous economic growth, accumulation, and therefore, profit.

According to the IPCC, only 12 years remain to "limit" climate change catastrophe, let alone avert it completely. Trump has been widely criticized, and rightly so, for pulling the U.S., the greatest contributor to global carbon emissions over the past 150 years, out of the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement.

But even if every country met their target carbon reduction goals, global temperatures would increase by at least 3 degrees Celsius by 2100 compared to preindustrial levels, making certain a dooms-day climate scenario. And this would be the outcome of the most ambitious climate accord to date!

In an ironic twist, the Trump administration, which denies climate change, issued a major scientific report from 13 federal agencies, the "Fourth National Climate Assessment," while the Camp Fire still raged on Nov. 23. The findings of the 1700-page document have received wide media coverage, although Trump, true to form, stated, "I don't believe it."

The FNCA report detailed the far-reaching effects climate change could have on the country, including massive crop failures; larger, more intense, and increasingly frequent forest fires; and infrastructure collapse across the South, all of which could lead to an economic toll that is double the losses of the 2008 Great Recession. Poorer communities would be hit the hardest, according to the report, keeping with the fact that climate change affects the most those who contribute to it the least.

The IPCC and FNCA reports are clear about the danger of inaction regarding climate change, but neither point to the kind of unprecedented systemic change necessary to limit, let alone reverse, an impending climate catastrophe.

Climate change is already affecting billions of people, and the energy industry is primarily responsible for the crisis at hand. Solutions that fail to address the fact that 100 fossil fuel and coal companies and state enterprises contribute to 71% of carbon emissions will mean irreversibly dire consequences for the planet. The entire energy industry must be transformed to become carbon-neutral, and this is only possible under a system of democratic workers' control as part of broader world anti-capitalist mobilization whose aim is to build an environmentally sustainable society. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

By BARRY WEISLEDER

At the threshold of winter, class conflict is heating up the Pan-Canadian landscape. Parliament rendered rotating strikes by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers illegal on Nov. 27. Nonetheless, on Dec. 1, thousands of members of allied unions and social movements picketed and blockaded postal facilities in over a dozen cities. For 10 hours no trucks entered or left the giant Gateway mail processing plant in Mississauga, which handles two-thirds of Canada's mail.

So far, unions have pledged over \$5 million to CUPW for its constitutional challenge to Justin Trudeau's strikebreaking law, and potentially for costs related to future protests. The possibility of more disruptive mass pickets, even a cross-country wildcat strike by postal workers, looms. Meanwhile, the one-day walkout by GM workers in Oshawa did not quell the anger of auto workers, their families, and employees in related industries at the prospect of a massive plant closure within a year.

Rumours of shutdowns in the food sector in southern Ontario stoke fears of huge job losses and de-industrialization woes. Add to this the brutal attacks on labour and low-wage workers by the arch-Conservative Doug Ford provincial government and it is

evident that the elements for a major class confrontation seem to be accumulating.

On Nov. 28, about 100 people answered the call of the Workers' Action Movement to protest at the doorstep of the Liberal Finance Minister's constituency office in Toronto Centre. Speaking for Socialist Action, which helped to organize the event, I made the following remarks:

"Welcome to Class War Canada! Justin Trudeau, Doug Ford, General Motors, the Big Banks and Big Oil are stepping up their war on us all. For too long the working class has been fighting with our hands tied. This must change now.

"Today, we are at Bill Morneau's office on Parliament Street. How fitting! Parliament is the place where capitalist politicians pay lip service to civil rights, and where they trample those rights, like the right to strike and the right to free collective bargaining, at will.

"How can you tell when a bourgeois politician is lying? When his lips are moving.

The Liberals lied about the crisis in the post office. The crisis is about understaffing, forced overtime, and gender pay inequality; it's not about rotating strikes that brought these issues to public attention.

"They lied about Management's willingness to negotiate. When the industry got a \$10.7 billion bailout from Ottawa, the government and GM lied when they promised that GM would continue to produce vehicles in Oshawa through 2020. They lied about how the big banks and the rich would be forced to pay more taxes. The big five banks record billions in profit, while continuing to gouge their customers. Recently, Ottawa gave \$16 billion in tax breaks to big business.

"They lie about protecting the environment and honouring Indigenous people's rights, while they spend billions to buy a leaky, 50-year-old Trans Mountain pipeline. They allow for-profit medical firms to implant untested devices in people that caused 1400 deaths in Canada since 2008. That is

the price for putting profits before people.

"Sisters and brothers, the real disease is the profit system. The main culprit is corporate capitalism. That is what should be buried today, not the right to strike.

"We are here to support postal workers, not to tell them what to do. But if they decide to defy an unjust law, we pledge to support them 100 per cent. If they boycott overtime, occupy plants and depots, and ask us to cross-picket postal facilities, we will support them 100 per cent.

"When auto workers remind us that they built GM, that their labour created a century of fabulous profits, we say they deserve good jobs and benefits. They, and we all, deserve a transportation industry with a green energy future. How? There is only one way to harness the resources needed to make that happen: Nationalize GM, without compensation, under workers' control!

"In Class War Canada it's time to unchain the power of the working class. It's time to turn our unions into weapons of class war, in the interests of the majority, both the organized and the not-yet-organized. It's time for an emergency convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour to decide on a plan to remove Thug Ford and his P.C. pirates at Queen's Park. If we don't show leadership in the fight against the attacks on the poor, on women, on immigrants, on racialized minorities, on Indigenous people, then the racists and fascists will attract many of the angry and frustrated who are victims of decaying, crisis-wracked capitalism.

"I urge everyone here to join the Workers' Action Movement, to join Socialist Action, to fight for a Workers' Government, and to settle for nothing less than a socialist revolution." ■

... GM layoffs

(continued from page 2)

27, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers conducted rotating strikes against Canada Post, a Crown Corporation, opposing management-imposed speed-up, compulsory overtime, and pay discrimination against rural, mostly female mail carriers.

The Liberal government of Justin Trudeau and the "opposition" Conservative Party worked smoothly together to violate the workers' "liberty" to withdraw their labour, their right to free collective bargaining, including the right to strike, and ordered the workers to end their job actions or face stiff fines.

Bosses can impoverish thousands of workers, but workers can't even slow down the mail, including the packages shipped by brutally low-wage employers like Amazon. Only the labour-based New Democratic Party spoke loudly against the move. NDP MPs walked out of the House of Commons in protest. So much for workers' "liberty."

The Conservative government in Ontario, Canada's most populous province, under Premier Doug Ford, a hard right-winger and scion of a rich family, has moved quickly since June 7 when it was elected. His Progressive Conservative Party attained 61% of the

seats, with only 40.5% of the votes cast, in the first-past-the-post electoral system. The voter turnout was only 58 per cent.

Ford has stripped many rights and statutory benefits from Ontario workers, cancelled the planned increase to a \$15/hour minimum wage, cut welfare increases and made disability benefits harder to obtain. Under his slogan "Ontario is Open for Business," he is forcing workers to labour under deteriorating wages, benefits, and working conditions, fostering a level of desperation most convenient for the Walmart and Amazon tycoons.

Ford seems to think he has every right to destroy the hard-won gains of workers. But he says he can do nothing about the GM plant closures and accuses federal politicians and union leaders of peddling false hope to the workers.

UNIFOR, Canada's largest private sector union with 315,000 members, represents about 25,000 auto-workers including the 2500 in the GM Oshawa plant. Jerry Dias, UNIFOR president, demands that Trump and Trudeau impose a 40 per cent tariff on GM cars made in Mexico. His line is to support his Canadian members by imposing cuts on the lower paid Mexican workers. A spokesman for Trudeau said Dias' proposal was not discussed with Trump.

Dias also says he may urge a mass autoworker walk-

out from all Canadian and U.S. plants, but a United Auto Workers union spokesman in the U.S. says his union has no such plans.

Actually, a walkout is an excellent idea. But the American labour brass is even more ossified than its Canadian counterpart. The UAW still supports the capitalist Democratic Party instead of setting up an independent labour-based political party like the NDP, which the Canadian union bureaucrats dominate (although Dias and UNIFOR have backed the Liberal Party of late, with bitter results).

Dias' proposals simply have no weight unless he gets the backing of the workers themselves. The leaders of UNIFOR like to parade as the workers' saviours. This highly paid, privileged layer of union bureaucrats can make a big noise; however, they bargained away hard-won worker gains like equal pay and good pensions. They accept the so-called rights of the owners to do as they please and fear the power of a mobilized union rank and file.

In the end, it is only the mobilized rank and file that can force action by GM and the capitalist politicians. Mobilizing the mass power of the auto workers and of other unions in solidarity can bring home the point that workers together can stop production, choke profits, and force boss concessions—instead of making concessions themselves. ■

... Hotels

(continued from page 3)

seum, and it taught me the importance of labor movements." After some NEMA presenters moved their panel sessions to the union hall, the hotel lost tens of thousands of dollars in revenue.

On Nov. 7, Yrvonne Lecont, a Hilton housekeeper, and Donald Jean-Marie, a rank-and-file member of Local 217, and bellmen at the Hyatt Greenwich addressed an auditorium filled with NEMA conference goers. They received thunderous applause during the keynote address. On Nov. 8, a delegation of museum curators, with workers by their side, confronted hotel bosses directly and demanded that the hotel sign a contract to improve the wages, health care, and working conditions.

Reading through management responses to conference guest reviews on Trip-Advisor.com, it is easy to see the impact of solidarity from the conference. For example, DenizB660, manager at the Hilton Stamford Hotel wrote, "You are one

of many members of your group who believe false Union rhetoric and would not listen to any attempts by management to present the facts. Closed, biased minds prevent true understanding of circumstances to which you have no knowledge whatsoever. Most of what you have stated here is false and ultimately hurts the people you claim to care for."

If management responds to hotel guests in this hostile way, imagine how they treat their workers! This type of pressure on management will go a long way toward winning demands at the bargaining table. We ask all of our readers in the Connecticut and New York area to keep an eye out for upcoming picket lines and actions in Stamford. Hilton Stamford workers deserve a great contract now!

The struggle in Stamford can also be understood in the context of union hotel workers across the country that were striking against an all-out offensive of hotel owners to crush the standard of living won through decades of struggle.

Nearly all hotels in Chicago went out on strike. After three weeks, hotel bosses were ready to come to the table and give

workers guaranteed health care during the winter months when layoffs are a reality of the industry. Similarly, unionized Marriott workers from Boston to Hawaii have been out on strike for weeks. Workers want their wages to reflect living conditions in cities where they live and work.

It is not uncommon in the hotel industry for housekeepers, servers, cooks, front-desk agents, and drivers to work more than one job. Yet the *Boston Globe* reports, "Marriott is the largest and wealthiest hotel company in the world. The company earned \$22.9 billion dollars in revenue in 2017 and has a net worth of \$46.8 billion dollars almost twice that of its nearest competitor, Hilton."

Hotel workers know how much the Marriott profits from their labor. On average each housekeeper making \$25 per hour in a union hotel makes the company \$1 million per year. These workers service the multinational billion-dollar companies that house their traveling execs. Still, workers are forced to seek additional employment to make rent. The picket lines were filled with signs reading, "One Job Should be Enough!"

These Marriott contract fights are high profile, as athletes and celebrities are confronted with the question of crossing the picket line. In Boston, the New York Yankees were widely derided by union supporters for flagrantly crossing the picket line. Meanwhile, the rapper and member of the Wu-Tang Clan, Method Man, refused to cross the line and was praised for his solidarity.

In Boston the strike lasted six weeks until the company gave into pressure during negotiations. In San Francisco the strike lasted nine weeks, and the result was a \$4 increase per hour in pay as well as concrete ways to address sexual harassment.

While the strike wave has died down for now, hotel workers—like the teachers in West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona and elsewhere—have shown that the strike is still a powerful tool to win demands from the bosses.

The new organizing efforts in Stamford have their finger on the pulse of a growing working-class consciousness and confidence that will give way to all types of openings to develop politically and independently of the capitalist class. ■

By JEFF MACKLER

In addition to our steady work in promoting and organizing united front-type mass mobilizations against the ongoing U.S. imperialist-orchestrated war on Syria and our participation to this end in the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), Socialist Action has written extensively to help politically orient the often fractious U.S. antiwar forces on this critical issue. Here we focus on the fundamental political positions that have guided our work. These were debated, codified, and adopted at our 2016 national convention in Kansas City and reaffirmed at our October 2018 national convention in Minneapolis. The bulleted points below reflect the political line approved by majority vote:

- With regard to Syria, Egypt, Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Iran and Palestine, we have opposed every aspect of U.S. imperialist intervention, demanding in all cases, “U.S. Out Now!”

- In this context we have unconditionally supported the right of all poor and oppressed nations to self-determination, that is, to be free from all forms U.S. imperialist intervention—from sanctions, embargos, special operation/CIA secret wars, privatized army wars and drone wars, to direct or indirect wars using U.S. troops in concert with NATO and the U.S. reactionary Gulf State monarchies.

- With regard to Syria, our unconditional support to self-determination includes Syria’s right to seek allies and support from Russia, Iran and the Lebanese-based fighters of Hezbollah.

- While we extend no political support to the capitalist Bashar Assad government in Syria, or to any other capitalist government on earth, we remain unconditionally opposed to all imperialist efforts to remove them. The job of challenging capitalism in Syria is the sole responsibility of the Syrian people. The future construction of a mass revolutionary party in Syria remains a prerequisite to socialist revolution there and in any other nation. Any such party aspiring to lead the Syrian masses must stand in total opposition to U.S. and allied imperialist intervention. The defeat of U.S. imperialism in Syria, we hold, is a prerequisite to the future struggles of the Syrian working masses against their bourgeois leaders.

- We reject any notion that Russia’s intervention is to consciously advance Syria’s future independence. But we nevertheless reject any demand that Russia withdraw from Syria. While noting that Russia today has its own reasons to oppose a U.S. conquest of Syria, including Russia’s legitimate concern regarding its increasing encirclement by U.S./NATO troops and missiles and U.S. sanctions against Russia for its actions in the Ukraine opposing the U.S.-backed fascist-led coup, our opposition to Russia’s capitalist government is unqualified. We are for the organization of the Russian workers for the overthrow of Putin and Russian capitalism.

- Today, in 2018, some 2000 U.S. troops occupy an estimated 30 percent of Syria, including regions in north-eastern Syria that are rich in oil and agricultural resources. They are supported by additional tens of thousands of U.S. troops stationed on the nearby U.S. air base in Qatar and by a massive array of offshore U.S. warships in the Mediterranean. Further, parts of Syria, as in the northern Turkish border region of Idlib province, still remain under the control of ISIS, Al Qaida, and the Turkish-armed and controlled Free Syrian Army. Estimates of these forces range from 60,000 to 100,000 armed troops protected by threats of direct U.S. and/or NATO intervention should Syrian forces threaten to remove them. We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all these forces.

- U.S.-backed forces in Syria operate in consort with and/or alongside the jihadist forces of Al Qaida and

Socialist Action convention: Syria’s right to self-determination



(Above) Refugees from the war in Syria.

ISIS, which it periodically arms, finances, defends, and deploys to advance its regime change objectives. Similarly, the U.S. and its allies organize, finance, and arm and train the so-called Free Syrian Army with the objective of imperialist-led regime change in Syria.

The convention also approved several texts affirming the above orientation. Here we present, in edited and condensed form, key aspects of these texts. For ease of reading, we have largely omitted quotation marks since the quoted portions below largely originate from the various lengthy texts that together constitute our adopted positions.

Socialist Action is not neutral

There is a terrible war in Syria today. Socialist Action is not neutral in this war! We are for the unconditional military defeat of U.S. imperialism and its allies. We are for the military victory of the Syrian government against this U.S. imperialist intervention! If we had forces in Syria today they would not be demanding the withdrawal of the forces that the Syrian government has invited in to help thwart the U.S. war machine. If we had guns or missiles, etc. in Syria, they would be aimed at the U.S. imperialist invaders! This stance is not new to us. It is precisely the same stance that our Trotskyist movement has adopted with regard to every imperialist intervention against poor and oppressed nations for the past 100 years and longer. There are zero exceptions!

Yes, for sure, Socialist Action does not and never has supported the capitalist Bashar Assad government, or any other capitalist government on earth—as with our position on Nicaragua, in which we are not supporters of the capitalist Daniel Ortega government. But we are not neutral in Syria or Nicaragua. For Socialist Action, it matters in the extreme who seeks to overthrow the Assad and Ortega governments.

Syria’s right to seek Russian support

When our internal debate began in 2015, at the time that Syria asked for Russian and Iranian support, U.S.-armed, backed, and promoted reactionary forces occu-

pled some two-thirds to three-quarters of the Syria nation. From the outskirts of Damascus these U.S.-backed forces fired missiles on Syria’s capital. Few believed that the Assad government would last more than a few weeks.

Had Russian forces not intervened at that moment, Damascus, if not all of Syria, would have been under the control of these U.S.-backed reactionary forces, often armed and financed, with U.S./NATO complicity, by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf State monarchies and Turkey. Today, beleaguered Syria, partially occupied for decades by the Zionist settler state of Israel, is also repeatedly subjected to the devastation inflicted by Israeli air power.

The vast majority of the horrors inflicted on Syria, including the displacement of half the population, the destruction of large portions of the nation’s infrastructure and some 350,000 to 500,000 dead are the result of the U.S.-led war and intervention.

The U.S. government is directly engaged in some seven overt wars today, with the Syrian war central to its strategic objective of extending its control over the Middle East’s vast oil reserves, pipeline routes and overall economic-military “interests.” Roughly \$1 trillion annually is expended for a U.S. military machine that rains death and destruction around the world.

Revolutionary origins of self-determination

Socialist Action’s stance on Syria draws heavily on the writings and theories of Lenin and Trotsky on the national question—again, on the right of oppressed nations to self-determination, even if the leaders of these oppressed nations accepted aid from other imperialist nations and even if their leaders were corrupt dictators or “butchers,” as was the case with the Chiang Kai-shek government in China following the 1931-37 Japanese imperialist invasion. In the modern era, the same holds for the dictator, President Bashar Assad, or Muammar Gadhafi in Libya, or Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

These principles were incorporated in the programmatic documents of the first four World Congresses of the Communist International. The Trotskyist movement, the genuine continuator of Leninism, has never abandoned this position. We noted early on that soon after the initial Arab Spring mobilizations—which we fully supported—against the Assad government’s repressive policies in Syria in 2011, U.S. imperialism intervened, along with its NATO, Saudi, and other Gulf State allies to convert a promising internal civil conflict to an overt U.S. imperialist-orchestrated regime-change war of death and destruction.

Thus, we reject any characterization of the Syrian events today as a civil war between the Assad government and some combination of so-called independent forces striving for democratic and human rights, or any other such progressive goals. We hold that there are no indigenous forces in Syria today that operate independently of U.S. imperialism and its reactionary allied forces.

This view has been more than substantiated by the recent Trump revelations that the U.S. had been heavily engaged in a covert war against Syria for at least four years, with billions of dollars funneled to various imperialist-backed reactionary forces in the region.

No to the U.S.-orchestrated war against Syria! U.S. out now! Self-determination for Syria! ■

... Convention

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has focused on united-front principles.

Our recent effort has been to join in initiating and helping to lead the April 14-15, 2018, weekend of coordinated national mobilizations centered on the demand to “End All U.S. Wars at Home and Abroad.” The call for actions was aimed at measuring the movement’s capacity to galvanize the broad opposition to the deepening U.S. government wars at home against working people and the inseparable U.S. wars abroad—from the Middle East to Africa, Latin America, and beyond.

While April 15 was a valiant effort to re-ignite the antiwar movement, the modest turnout, with no citywide protests exceeding 1000 participants, informed us that the antiwar movement, despite massive sentiment against all U.S. wars, as with most social movements, remains relatively dormant.

The convention approved general goals for Socialist Action’s national fund and subscription drives and established work fractions to facilitate the party’s participation in the trade unions and the antiwar, women’s liberation, LGBTQI, transgender, climate, and immigrant rights movements.

A session was devoted to a debate on Syria and related issues. At its conclusion, delegates voted to reaffirm Socialist Action’s previously adopted views (see article on this page).

Notwithstanding our small forces, Socialist Action’s contributions to the building and strengthening of a broad range of social and political struggles are impressive. It is clear that the present period of intensifying attacks on working people has produced growing numbers who are more open to socialist ideas than in a long while. Our close attention to winning significant numbers of the most conscious of these activists to our socialist banner will prove invaluable as new opportunities emerge to engage working people in effective actions to improve their lives and advance the interests of all humanity. ■

California legislation bails out utility that sparked fires



By MARC ROME

In October, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that the effects of climate change are already happening, making natural events like wildfires more intense. A month later, the Camp Fire, fueled by Diablo winds and drought conditions, incinerated Paradise, Calif., killing 88 people with nearly 800 unaccounted for. More than 16,000 structures, mostly homes, were destroyed, forcing at least 52,000 to evacuate and leaving tens of thousands of people homeless throughout the 150,000 acre burn zone in Butte County.

It is the deadliest fire in the state's history and it was nearly as destructive as the previous 10 record-setting California fires combined.

As the fires raged in Paradise, an area covering hundreds of miles was an ominous and forbidding landscape full of smoke-darkened skies that affected millions with hazardous air for nearly two weeks. Air quality indexes measured from upwards of 400 in Sacramento and 238 in San Francisco (below 50 is considered "good"). Smoke plumes were detected as far away as Philadelphia.

Factoring in the Woolsey fire in southern California, which left three dead and upwards of 2000 homes and structures destroyed or damaged, nearly 150,000 people have been displaced, leading to a humanitarian and housing crisis in a state where affordable housing is already extremely difficult to find for working people and the poor.

Ed Mayer, executive director of Butte County's housing agency, said, "Big picture, we have 6000, possibly 7000 households who have been displaced and who realistically don't stand a chance of finding housing again in Butte County. I don't even know if

these households can be absorbed in California."

Victims have filed lawsuits against Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) for its suspected responsibility in starting the Camp Fire. The AP reported, "PG&E told state regulators that it experienced a problem on a transmission line in the area of the fire just before the blaze erupted. In its filing Thursday [Nov. 8] with the state Public Utilities Commission, it said it had detected an outage on an electrical transmission line. It said a subsequent aerial inspection detected damage to a transmission tower on the line."

PG&E's practice of cutting labor costs (which boosts profits) led to poor maintenance of its electrical grid, and, according to state fire investigators, caused 17 of 21 wildfires in 2017, including the 2017 Tubbs Fire in Sonoma County, which killed 24 and destroyed over 5300 homes. A series of lawsuits have also been filed against Southern California Edison alleging that the Woolsey fire began due to poor maintenance of their equipment near the flashpoint.

To shield three California utility monopolies—Pacific Gas and Electric, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas and Electric—from financial ruin, Governor Brown recently signed SB 901 to pass off the utilities' liabilities to rate payers for fires attributed to equipment owned by these billion-dollar corporations. PG&E alone is facing \$15 billion in liabilities for the 2017 fires, and SB901 allows them to issue bonds paid for by increasing fees for rate-payers. Their liabilities may be as high as \$30 billion if it's determined that the utility is responsible for the Camp Fire, which could lead to PG&E's collapse without another state government bailout.

SB 901 was proposed by Brown and passed the State Assembly and Senate with virtually no resistance from Democratic Party legislators (nine Democrats opposed it in total). There is no comparable

(Above) Ruins from the fire in Malibu, Calif.

bailout legislation for the victims of the most destructive fire in the U.S. in a century.

Capitulation to corporate-power-in-crisis by the liberal wing of the capitalist political system is often the rule, not the exception, whether in California or Washington, D.C. Democratic Governor Gray Davis bailed out PG&E after they filed for bankruptcy in 2001, and rate payers footed the bill while Wall Street traders made billions. When tens of millions were laid off and 52 million homeowners were foreclosed upon following the 2008 Great Recession, the Obama administration presided over the bipartisan bailout of the financial institutions that caused the economic collapse. They were gifted as much as \$30 trillion.

After multi-billion-dollar corporations and banks are exposed for their direct role in widespread unemployment, homelessness, death, destruction, and environmental pollution, it would seem inconceivable that they would be given financial gifts by governments at the expense of millions of people, the very victims of these same corporate powers. This is capitalism operating as designed; social, political, and economic control resides with the ultra-rich few who benefit at the expense of the many.

The role of climate change

California's climate—largely arid or semi-arid, including large desert areas—is historically prone to wildfires. Strong wind systems, known as Diablo and Santa Ana winds, are also a contributing factor, which hasten evaporation, fan flames, and send embers alight to spread fires further and more quickly.

Temperatures in the state have increased as much

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