

UN talks neglect actions to avoid climate catastrophe

By CHRISTINE FRANK

Another two weeks of international climate talks were held last month, and it's the same old story. The United Nations' 19th Conference of the Parties (COP 19) failed to take concrete action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent catastrophic climate change. After nearly 20 years of pointless deliberations, the world is no closer to a solution to the global warming caused by fossil-fuel combustion.

The Polish government hosted the event at Warsaw's national sports stadium, terming it a "Coal and Climate Summit" at which the coal industry played a prominent role, promoting the myth of "clean coal" and continued subsidies for the filthiest of fossil fuels.

Poland has significant coal deposits and is committed to not only mining and burning it well into the future but fracking extreme shale gas as well, making it clear that it's going to be business as usual and to hell with the fate of the planet. This is the case even though 89% of the Polish people favor increasing renewable energy, according to a Greenpeace poll. The presence of the coal industry angered the NGOs, which staged a walkout of 800 delegates in protest as thousands demonstrated outside the stadium.

This ludicrous farce was played out in the wake of the strongest and deadliest storm on record in the Pacific, Super Typhoon Haiyan, which had struck the Philippines. Yeb Sano, that devastated country's chief climate negotiator, launched a hunger strike, pledging not to eat until a meaningful outcome was reached in Warsaw. He did not have much luck. Despite the wake-up call Haiyan presented to the delegates, they were still asleep at the wheel even though carbon emissions continue to climb at a record pace.

Recently, big polluters such as Australia, Canada, Japan, and the United States have scrapped their pledges to reduce emissions. In addition, no one has put money in the kitty for the Green Climate Fund, for which \$100 billion was to be raised by 2020 to aid poor countries in coping with the effects of extreme weather and adapting to climate change with clean technologies. This justifiably raises the crucial issue of climate justice for those parts of the world most heavily suffering from the effects of the accumulated emissions of countries that



Alik Keplicz / AP

launched the Industrial Revolution.

On the other hand, the five large developing nations with raging economies—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (members of the BRICS grouping)—produce carbon emissions on a par with industrialized nations; yet, they demand to be left off the hook in reducing emissions. And several oil-rich and coal-rich nations in the Global

South are of a like mind, maintaining that the historical responsibility lies with those lands first to industrialize.

The major issue, however, is that the world needs to leave *all* hydrocarbons in the ground across the board and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero from *all* sources as soon as possible through crash programs of renewable energy if there is to be any chance of

(Above) Climate justice activists march in Warsaw on Nov. 16, at start of UN conference.

averting an ecological cataclysm. These great undertakings can be funded by re-utilizing the war budgets of the rich nations.

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Socialist wins Seattle city council seat

By ANN MONTAGUE



On Nov. 16, eleven days after election night, the first socialist to be elected to the Seattle City Council held her victory rally. The rally was at the headquarters of SEIU 775NW. This fact alone is significant since SEIU endorsed her opponent. By the time Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant (*photo on left*) spoke that evening, the crowd was avid to hear her, and she spoke for half an hour. She started by saying that she would be speaking that long because "when you are challenging the status quo, you cannot speak in sound bytes. It takes time."

Sawant talked mostly about the fight for the \$15 an hour minimum wage and reminded everyone that voting is only the first step. She then warned that there would be attempts to use slander to divide the movement. They will tell us to have a "reasonable" discussion and try to water down our demands. She emphasized, "We need to stay strong,

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Crackdown on New York's city colleges

By MARTY GOODMAN

Marty Goodman / Socialist Action

Without warning, war was declared on the mainly working-class students at City College of New York (CCNY), when early Sunday morning, Oct. 20, the CCNY administration shut down the Guillermo Morales/Assata Shakur Center, a hub of student activism since 1989. Morales, a Puerto Rican independence fighter, and Shakur, a former member of the Black Liberation Army now living in Cuba, were former CCNY students.

The attack coincides with a militarization drive on New York City campuses. The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) was reintroduced last spring at CCNY for the first time since it had been booted off campus in 1971 after militant protests by mostly Black and Puerto Rican students. ROTC has also been introduced at York College, Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, and the College of Staten Island.

The war drive was intensified by an invitation from City University of New York (CUNY) to former General David Petraeus to teach a course at Macaulay Honors College in Manhattan. Petraeus was a top commander in Iraq and headed President Obama's war on Afghanistan. He later accepted the post of CIA director but resigned last year after a so-called sex scandal. A March 6, 2013, article in the British *Guardian* linked Petraeus and his top aides to torture in Iraq.

Petraeus' CUNY course is entitled "Are We on the Threshold of the North American Decade?" Petraeus was offered an outrageous \$200,000 to teach the three-hour course once a week. Protests forced him to back down and accept \$1 instead. Student and faculty protesters have demanded that Petraeus get off campus, not because of his ideas, but because he is a war criminal.

Thus far, some eight students and supporters have been arrested, some brutalized, in angry but peaceful protests against the loss of the Center and militarization. Two of the protesters were arrested by NYPD at a Morales/Shakur rally and suspended from school on charges of inciting to riot and "endangering" the school. They face a year in jail.

Protests against Petraeus are being led by the Ad Hoc Committee Against the Militarization of CUNY, a coalition of campus-based organizations. Sharmin Hossain, a student activist in the Ad Hoc committee, put it this way to *Socialist Action*, "CUNY is going through heavy changes that are happening without the consent of students. The administration is taking a lot of actions to not only limit free speech but also to impose ROTC on public campuses to continue recruiting young people of color in New York City, while bringing in David Petraeus, a war criminal and ex-CIA director."

Hossain continued, "There was a Sept. 17 private gala fundraiser for Petraeus outside the Macaulay Honors College, where Petraeus was honored and speaking. Over 150 protesters rallied and picketed outside Ma-



(Left) A student speaks at a CCNY rally against the militarization of their campus.

Students have received support from the Professional Staff Congressional Congress (PSC) union, which represents about 25,000 faculty and staff. The PSC is engaged in a fight against "Pathways," a teaching program that emphasizes test scores over actual learning. In a poll of the membership, 92% of the PSC rejected Pathways.

The Morales/Shakur Center at CCNY was used by some 30 student organizations. It was established in 1989 during the occupation of 13 campus buildings statewide and a massive march on Wall Street to protest a \$200 tuition hike, a struggle won by students. In October, the Center was renamed the "Career Center."

Recently, CCNY also established the Colin Powell Center, named after the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the 1991 Gulf War and the 1989 U.S. military attack on Panama. Powell infamously presented to the United Nations the Bush administration's fake "evidence" of Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq.

In 1969, African American and Puerto Rican students occupied CCNY's South Campus and won "open admissions," a policy that allowed anyone with a New York City High School diploma the right to attend CCNY for free. In 1975, amidst a phony "budget crisis" engineered by the banks with the help of Democratic Party politicians, tuition was reintroduced. Since 1991, CCNY tuition has increased 300%, resulting in a drop in the enrollment of African American students from 31.2% in 2001 to 14.4% in 2010.

The attacks on the historically activist CCNY campus, located in Harlem, represent a major blow to public education and the entire working class, especially the African American, Hispanic, and immigrant communities. In addition, there has been an illegal NYPD infiltration program of Muslim organizations on campus. But the struggle continues. A Nov. 25 protest outside the Board of Trustees drew 150-200 angry protesters. There were no arrests. On Dec. 2 there was a protest against Petraeus, who was honored at a New York Historical Society gala, which has also honored war criminal Henry Kissinger in the past. Tables went for up to \$100,000.

Capitalism is in crisis and would like to smash all centers of organized resistance to policies of endless war, racism and poverty. The struggle against the ruling-class agenda at CCNY/CUNY will be a long one, one that needs mass support. Labor and community groups need to join the fight.

We say, "Re-open the Morales/Shakur Center! Open admissions at all CUNY campuses! Petraeus/ROTC off campus! Abolish the Board of Trustees! Drop all charges against protesters!" ■

caulay. Police were very violent and repressive and continued to barricade protesters. Police violently attacked and brutalized six student leaders. The police decided to beat them although they were not resisting arrest or blocking roads. They were not violent. This was a peaceful protest, and police attacked without notice. Protesters now face criminal charges."

The Morales/Shakur Center was a resource for many student organizations with anti-imperialist and anti-racist politics. That status has now been revoked, which has angered many students. Hossain said, "They are meeting the needs of top notch capitalist bureaucrats and not the needs of working people of color." The hearing date for all eight protesters is 9:30 a.m., Jan. 19, at 100 Center Street in Lower Manhattan. Ominously, students and professors will likely face a new CUNY "expressive conduct" policy, which, in effect, will ban most political activity on campus. Activists say the proposed policy is expected to be passed by the CUNY Board of Trustees behind closed doors over the holidays.

Hossain noted, "The administration wants students to believe that any form of direct non-violent action is a criminal act. The [expressive conduct] policy would bar faculty from peaceful protests, limit free speech, and limit the ability to flyer and congregate in groups of more than 10. Groups planning to protest must notify the administration. We have seen the policy draft, and it restricts First Amendment free speech.

"We have videos of cops attacking and punching student leaders one a time. The police show so much ruthlessness towards students. CCNY has backed the police attacks."

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Superb vote for Minneapolis socialist

By DAVID JONES

Socialist Alternative candidate Ty Moore and his supporters ran a spectacularly successful 2013 campaign for Minneapolis City Council, coming in second within a field of six in the first round of a ranked voting system. He received 42% of the vote, only 229 votes short of his only significant opponent, Alondra Cano, who squeaked into office with 47%, both running for an open seat.

Cano was the official choice of the city's Democratic Party, doing business in Minnesota since 1944 as the Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) party. Cano was also endorsed by the Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* and the Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council. Moore, however, was endorsed by the 30,000-member state council of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), overwhelmingly composed of immigrants, mainly from Latin America and East Africa, as well as a large number of African American workers.

Moore, 36 years old and a former city bus driver, foregrounded his campaign with the demand for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, as did his comrade Kshama Sawant in Seattle. Also in the forefront of Moore's socialist campaign were demands to stop home foreclosures and evictions, defend immigrant rights, and block giveaways to corporate interests like the city's \$678 million donation to New Jersey billionaire Ziggy Wilf for a new football stadium.

Moore's campaign literature called for ending "our city's reliance on coal, nuclear, and gas energy. Lower utility prices and rapidly transition to a renewable energy grid by taking the for-profit utilities, Xcel and Centerpoint, into public ownership under democratic control."

His energetic and enthusiastic young supporters blanketed the ward with lawn signs urging a socialist vote for "People over Profits," and went door to door with the same messages.

Moore's long record as a committed fighter for community and human rights, especially in the immigrant rights and anti-foreclosure struggles, won him broad support from activists in the ward. Some 20 Latino activists signed a statement of support for Moore after he was attacked for running against Cano, a woman of Mexican origin. He was officially endorsed by Socialist Action, the Green Party, Occupy Homes MN, and Democratic Socialists of America, as well as SEIU.

In the month before the election, Socialist Action organized a packed public forum supporting Moore's campaign, at which historians Peter Rachleff and Dave Riehle spoke about the history of socialist workers in Minneapolis who were elected to office in the last century. Veteran trade unionist Bud Schulte gave a fund appeal, which raised some \$2500.

The elections in Seattle and Minneapolis gave spectacular and inspiring expression to the findings of a recent Pew Research Center poll, in which 49% of people in the 18-29 age bracket said they have a positive view of socialism and only 43 percent reported



(Above) Ty Moore.

a negative view. Somehow, the generations-old inoculation against socialism by the master class has been overcome by a new virus, at least in these two cities.

Until now, with very few exceptions, no socialist candidate for public office since World War II had gotten over 1 or 2% of the vote in any election in this country. And it is clear the outcome is no fluke.

In many ways the Seattle and Minneapolis results are "apples and oranges." In Seattle, Sawant won in a citywide election in which all the intermediate classes voted alongside the working class. Minneapolis' 9th Ward, on the other hand, is a working-class district with the largest population of Latinos in the city. Broadly speaking, it is about 1/3 African American, 1/3 Latino, and 1/3 white.

About 35% of the eligible voters participated in the

election. It is impossible to get a statistical estimate of who voted by ethnicity or race, not to mention those residents whose status barred them from voting. Of the eight precincts in the ward, Moore carried four, but it would take a house by house analysis to figure out precisely why.

Nonetheless, it is plain and unmistakable that history was made in Seattle and Minneapolis in November 2013. Socialist Alternative made a bold initiative, based fundamentally on the historic perspectives and experiences of American Trotskyism. And this time the masses were ready to listen. The task of the socialist movement is to study this marvelous experience and go forth and do likewise. ■

... Climate talks short on action

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Going into overtime, conference participants finally agreed to a faint-hearted system of pledging emissions cuts. The U.S. chief negotiator, Todd Stern, placed his greatest hope in "peer pressure." In other words, the pledges are to be voluntary, with no binding commitments, as usual. With the Obama administration held firmly in the back pocket of the Energy Giants, this comes as no surprise.

There was also general support for a new treaty mechanism to deal with the human costs of ex-

treme weather, but nothing definite was decided upon. There are other meetings scheduled in Lima, Peru, next year and in Paris in 2015, where representatives are expected to replace the now defunct Kyoto Protocol, but they will very likely only continue to stall on taking significant action.

One should not hold one's breath in anticipation of real results. Instead, the world needs a powerful mass movement that demands "System Change, Not Climate Change" to bring down the fossil-fuel based capitalist economy and the rotten ruling class, which profits from environmental destruction. ■

... Socialist wins Seattle election

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the power is in our hands."

Rita Shaw, a supporter of Socialist Action who was at the rally, said that there were around 500 people in the hall, and it was standing room only. But more interesting than the numbers were the labor representatives who spoke despite the fact that they had supported her opponent. This included King County Labor Council Executive Director David Freiboth and a representative from SEIU 775NW. Shaw thought the most important thing about the night was Sawant's emphasis on building broad coalitions all over the city to start talking about winning the \$15 an hour minimum wage.

Two nights earlier, Sawant's opponent, Democrat Richard Conlin, who had held the City Council office for 16 years, conceded the election. Sawant was behind on election night but was confident that the later votes, which tend to be from independents and non-voters, would put her over the top. As of this writing, votes are still being counted, and she has received 93,168 votes, which amounts to 50.63 percent of the total.

Her grassroots campaign was rooted in the movement for the \$15 minimum wage and a millionaires' tax to fund public transit and rent control. Sawant teaches economics at Seattle Central Community College and was an organizer for Occupy Seattle. She was arrested during foreclosure fights and supported the mass movement against coal trains and the building of the Gateway

Pacific Terminal. She has pledged to give most of her \$120,000 city council salary to social movements in the Seattle area.

Sawant is a member of AFT Local 1719, and they endorsed her along with CWA local 37083, APWU of Greater Seattle, IBEW Local 46, and AFSCME/WFSE Local 1488. A majority of the King County Labor Council voted to endorse her, but two-thirds was required for an official endorsement.

A statement election night from Socialist Alternative stated, "U.S. capitalism is in a deep economic and social crisis. The political establishment is discredited, and their system of government appears broken. Deep anger is growing against inequality, racism, sexism and homophobia. Environmental destruction is worsening.

"The situation is crying out for an alternative. We urgently need a party of working people, connected to social movements, fighting unions, community organizations, Greens and socialists. As a concrete step to get there, we should form coalitions throughout the country with the potential to come together on a national level to run 100 independent working-class candidates in the 2014 mid-term elections. The unions who supported the Moore and Sawant campaigns and many others should run full slates of independent working-class candidates in the mid-term, state, and local elections."

One of the things that grabbed the attention of workers was this campaign's relentless attacks on the Democratic Party, which her opponent Richard Conlin personified.

In my union workers have been so disgusted by Democratic governors who are throwing huge tax breaks at corporations and then crying that their states are going broke that they found Sawant's criticisms of the Democratic Party to be quite enticing. As a result, we sent a letter to all the SEIU locals in Washington State encouraging them to endorse the Sawant campaign. Now the workers will continue to watch closely Sawant's activities in elected office.

The day after the victory party, Sawant sent out an e-mail to all her supporters, saying, "This is our fight, all of us." She called on all her supporters to stand in solidarity with Boeing machinists at their rally that afternoon. She pointed out the Democratic-controlled state legislature had recently called a Special Session to offer Boeing \$8 billion more in tax breaks while demanding draconian cuts in wages and benefits.

At the rally she spoke about the Boeing CEO's threatening to leave Seattle. "The only response we can have if Boeing executives do not agree to keep the plant here is for the machinists to say: the machines are here, the workers are here; we will do the job, we don't need the executives. The executives don't do the work, the machinists do. We can re-tool the machines to produce mass transit like buses."

Socialist Action hails the victory of Kshama Sawant, along with Socialist Alternative candidate Ty Moore in Minneapolis. Although there are political differences among socialist groups, which can be discussed in the course of our common work, this election must be recognized as an important victory for the entire socialist movement. ■



Counter-revolution takes hold in Egypt

As we go to press, the reincarnated Hosni Mubarak Egyptian military dictatorship, minus Mubarak, has extended repression beyond its initial banning and slaughter of 6000 Muslim Brotherhood leaders and ranks. A new law promulgated on Nov. 24 by the figurehead president, Adly Mansour, appointed by July 3 coup leader General Abdul-Fattah al-Sisi, bans overnight sit-ins and all protests over 10 people that have not been pre-approved by authorities. The law bans protests at places of worship, traditionally used by Muslim groups after prayer meetings.

The law also restricts political campaign meetings—an indication that the scheduled January vote on a new constitution, proposed by the military's appointees, will be rammed through with no debate. To make clear that the ban was to be enforced, a Nov. 24 rally of leading human rights activists was harassed and beaten by Cairo police.

A new Socialist Action pamphlet by Jeff Mackler, "Revolution and Counter-revolution in Egypt: Lessons of the Arab Spring," analyzes the new situation in that country from the point of view of revolutionary socialism. Following is the introduction to the pamphlet:

Almost three years after the historic Jan. 25, 2011, mobilizations that led to the toppling of the U.S.-backed 30-year dictatorship of President Hosni Mubarak, the once overflowing streets leading to Cairo's famed Tahrir Square are barricaded on orders from the now high-flying new military dictator, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Posturing as the nation's savior in the tradition of radical nationalist Gamel Abdel Nasser in 1954, General Sisi, (formerly Defense Minister and personal friend of overthrown President Mohammad Morsi) and his bloodlust cohorts have systematically murdered some 5000 to 6000 Muslim Brotherhood members, according to MB leaders. All but a handful of

the top and middle-ranking MB leaders are dead or imprisoned.

The barbed wire enclosed Tahrir Square is jammed with tanks, armored personnel carriers, and other military paraphernalia. This former site and symbol of mass resistance to military dictatorship has been intentionally transformed into the symbol of rule by brute force. It serves as a dire warning to any who would again return to demand bread, justice, and freedom.

No one is excluded from the ongoing broad and deep repression in Egypt today. Defenders of the MB are ostracized, beaten, and imprisoned—if not murdered outright. Simultaneously, almost all secular opponents of Morsi, including many of Egypt's liberal and intellectual "democrats" and major sections of the purported left, cheer on the military and hail the MB repression. Egyptian society is tragically divided. Hatred and cries for vengeance, if not for the extermination of Islamists like rats, toxically spew from virtually the entire media.

With few exceptions the streets have been abandoned by protesters, except for the beleaguered ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, who risk their lives when they cautiously take to the streets to demand the return of their leader, President Mohammad Morsi, who was ousted by a military coup and imprisoned, and then slated to face spurious charges of murder on Nov. 4. A defiant Morsi did appear in court that day and loudly proclaimed that he was the democratically elected president and that the court had no legitimacy. The disoriented judge immediately adjourned the kangaroo court proceedings, obviously to seek instructions from his military superiors.

The Egyptian Revolution has been decisively defeated, perhaps for years to come. The counter-revolution, which top U.S. government officials claim will provide "a second chance" at democracy, is triumphant. This Socialist Action booklet recounts the key events, turning points, and critical political lessons to be drawn by revo-

lutionary socialists and all others who would challenge capitalist rule.

Egypt, among the most important and strategically located nations in the Middle East, was a living laboratory that tested the conflicting and contending ideologies that today seek basic social change in Egypt and around the world.

On balance, as the three essays assert, the revolutionary mass mobilizations that forced Mubarak's resignation and demanded economic reform, democracy, and justice were essentially without any organized leadership or institutional forms other than small groups of radicalizing youth and students, intellectuals, and democratic-minded reformists of every stripe. With few exceptions all believed that their objectives could be achieved through new elections and the goodwill of whoever won.

There was a single exception. The Muslim Brotherhood, while sometimes persecuted and in part operating on the fringes of "legality," maintained over decades a mosque-based infrastructure and the loyalty of some 10 million members. While they were latecomers to the Tahrir mobilizations, their election apparatus far surpassed all others. And, they were joined in the June 2012 Morsi election campaign by a "front" of some five "socialist" organizations, including the tiny Revolutionary Socialist group, that sought to portray Morsi and his Freedom and Justice Party as a democratic alternative to the candidate of the military. Indeed, Morsi was characterized by this "left" election front as the "right wing of the Egyptian Revolution."

This designation carried with it the strong implication that the "first stage" of this Egyptian "revolution" was to be radical democratic in nature and would function within the confines of Morsi's capitalist state while seeking to reform it in a revolutionary direction sometime in the unstated future.

This Socialist Action booklet explains in detail why this "two-stage" conception of revolution is fundamentally flawed and indeed can only lead to defeat and tragedy—the terrible reality in Egypt today. "In truth," Jeff Mackler states in one article, "the fight for democracy, for majority rule, for the rule of the great majority against the elite capitalist plunderers, is inseparable from the fight for socialism."

The democratic and socialist revolutions are in reality one and the same. The achievement of both requires a break with the minority capitalist state power in all its manifestations and the re-construction of society on a profoundly new and revolutionary basis. This includes the abolition of private property in the means of production and the establishment of a collective society run by the vast majority through their own organizations and in the interest of advancing the needs of the many as opposed to the profits of the corporate few."

Egypt's evolution since 2011, and indeed the developments in all nations of the Middle East and the Maghreb, where the mass forces of what became known as the Arab Spring courageously mobilized against repressive dictatorships, holds vital lessons for the future.

All demonstrate in bold relief that the political crisis of our times does not reside in the inability of the working masses the world over to rise up against their oppressors in the tens and hundreds of millions despite the possibilities of brutal repression. Rather, the crisis is marked more than ever by the absence of a deeply rooted revolutionary socialist leadership prepared to challenge the capitalist order for power and establish a new society based on the institutionalized rule of the vast majority. The construction of this leadership in every nation is the key task facing all revolutionaries today. ■

Nurses and techs strike in New London, Conn.

By ERNIE GOTTA

NEW LONDON, Conn.— Nurses and technicians are locked out of Lawrence and Memorial (L&M) Hospital following a four-day strike action. The lockout is the latest in a long list of dirty deals dealt by L&M owners.

The nurses and technicians, represented by two bargaining units in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), voted overwhelmingly on Nov. 14 to authorize the strike, which began Wednesday, Nov. 27, as workers walked off the job. A representative from the AFT said, "This is the first time in 30 years that we [AFT] have gone on strike in Connecticut."

The strike vote was called because L&M bosses had refused to bargain in good faith and committed unfair labor practices. This included moving work from the main hospital campus to other non-union sites in New London, laying

off nurses and techs, and hiring medical assistants who work for less pay and are less skilled.

A lab tech commented, "They're undermining the union. Experience is important, and the L&M management was chipping away at that every day. Now some 200 scabs are inside doing our jobs and providing an even worse quality of service." Unionized workers in every sector of the economy are familiar with these tactics as business owners seek to increase profits by cutting corners at every turn.

The lock-out was called the day after a Nov. 29 rally had taken place in support of the strikers, which gathered nearly 1000 participants from the community, other unions, and local politicians. Workers were thrilled with the level of solidarity. A board at the rally listing all the different union locals in attendance at the rally quickly filled up as workers shouted out

their affiliations. One RN said excitedly, "Even a Teamster truck refused to bring supplies across the picket line!" "We are L&M!" chanted the crowd.

The initial enthusiasm has remained, as the nurses and techs are determined to win this strike. L&M owners have tried to undermine the union by running full-page advertisements in the local paper with outright lies about nurses' salaries as well as misrepresenting the character of the union's strike action.

This is a strike about unfair labor practices, and not wages or benefits. A statement posted on the AFT website reads, "We want a resolution, not a lockout," said L&M Hospital registered nurse and AFT Local 5049 President Lisa D'Abrosca. "The corporation is reacting in a reckless and irresponsible way to our lawful efforts to hold them accountable."

However, the L&M workers are equally determined to fight back and will need

to remain so as the economic crisis of capitalism continues its assault on the jobs, wages, and basic standard of living for workers everywhere. A for-profit health-care system spells disaster for both workers in the industry and those seeking care.

Socialist Action handed out hundreds of flyers to enthusiastic L&M workers, inviting them to attend a forum on Dec. 15, 1:30 p.m., at the public library in Hartford, titled "Patients before Profits." Margaret Flowers, a national board adviser of Physicians for a National Health Plan, will be one of several speakers at the forum. See: <https://www.facebook.com/events/479640938815831>.

The Hartford forum will discuss the stark reality of the Affordable Care Act of 2013 (ObamaCare), as well as putting forward the idea that workers can build a movement to win a single-payer, universal health-care system for all. In the meantime, Socialist Action encourages its readers to join the L&M nurses and techs on the picket line. ■

By ANN MONTAGUE

\$15 minimum wage wins SeaTac vote

Workers won a big victory this month in the little Washington town of SeaTac with the passing Referendum 1 and its signature issue to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The measure got 50.6% (77 votes).

The town is named for the airport located between Seattle and Tacoma. Most of the people who live in this diverse community are dependent on jobs in and around the airport. It is estimated that 6300 workers at 72 airport-related businesses in and around SeaTac will directly benefit from passage of the referendum.

The Teamsters have been trying for 13 years to organize baggage handlers and other non-union airport workers. The obstacles they had faced seemed insurmountable. They were constantly blocked by anti-union laws and regulations and the targeting of union activists. Every time they had an organizing campaign that looked successful, the rank-and-file leaders were fired or intimidated.

Airports are under the Railway Labor Act, which means unionists they are required to organize a certain number of airports at the same time—in this case, including Hawaii. A few years ago, they decided to go directly to the community with a workers' rights referendum. They joined together with HERE, which was organizing the large hotels and restaurants near the airport, and SEIU, which was working to organize Seattle fast-food workers.

The current minimum wage in Washington is \$9.19, which is the highest in the country. The new minimum wage will be indexed to inflation. The referendum states that the new minimum wage will take effect on Jan. 1.

While most of the publicity has been around raising the minimum wage, there is much more to the SeaTac Referendum. It also provides for a minimum of 6.5 days of sick leave a year and specifies that all tips go directly to the workers instead of being confiscated by managers. In addition, it states that there part-timers must be given more work hours before other part-time workers are hired. And it includes 90-day job protection for workers whenever there is a change in contractors.



(Above) Seattle-Tacoma airport workers hold banner reading, "UNION!" at rally demanding recognition of SEIU Local 6.

The week that I volunteered in the campaign, there was a giant multi-union blitz for a push to get out the vote for Referendum 1. Rank and file and staff from all three unions arrived from as far away as Minnesota, believing that a victory in SeaTac would be an impetus to struggles across the country. Some union workers at SeaTac also took leave to be able to work on the campaign.

Abdirahman Abdullah, an employee of the airport's Hertz rental car location, took a leave of absence from his job to campaign in support of the measure. "The workers at the airport work hard but don't get what they deserve," Abdullah said. "They're juggling two or three jobs just to pay the bills, let alone to save money. This initiative ... it's going to improve their lives."

The working class in SeaTac is very culturally diverse, as is the workforce in and around the airport. When I went into the Ethiopian Cultural Center, I saw that it was clearly an organizing hub where community meetings were held and all the latest information about the campaign was posted.

Teamster Local 117 had worked with workers in struggle at the Hertz rental car company a few years ago when 34 Somali and Muslim workers were suddenly suspended for praying on the job. It had been agreed previously that they could take mini-breaks

no health benefits, vacation, or sick leave. This history of struggle helped bring together labor, faith-based organizations, the Somali Services Coalition, and the Ethiopian Cultural Center to fight for Referendum 1.

The opponents of Referendum 1 have threatened to demand a recount and will take the measure to the courts to try to get it nullified. From the beginning, Alaska Airlines and the employer associations for restaurants, hotels, and rental car companies opposed the referendum. They tried to keep it off the ballot but were unsuccessful. Then, the oil tycoon, ultra-rightist Koch brothers joined them in trying to defeat the measure.

But the victors are taking this win as a mandate and moving forward to expand the \$15 minimum wage to Seattle. Fast-food workers and their allies announced that on Dec. 5 there will be an all-day march from SeaTac to the Seattle City Hall. "We are taking the movement from its victory in SeaTac all the way to City Hall, and for people who cannot make the march there will be rallies in SeaTac and Seattle as well as along the march."

Despite the threats to take the measure to court, these workers are not deterred from pursuing their mandate from the SeaTac vote. ■

Growing protests of racist 'Redskins' football logo

By ADAM RITSCHER

MINNEAPOLIS—On Nov. 7 over 800 people turned out to protest the racist name of the Washington Redskins football team. The protest was held just before the Washington team was scheduled to play the Minnesota Vikings at the Metrodome in Minneapolis. The event was organized by the American Indian Movement, the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media, Idle No More, and other activist organizations.

The protest began at the American Indian Center in the heart of Minneapolis's Native American community. From there, protesters marched to the Metrodome. One of the most popular chants that echoed through the streets during the march was, "Hey hey, ho ho, little red Sambo's got to go!"

Throughout the event, signs and speakers stressed how offensive and inappropriate the Washington Redskins name is. The American Indian Movement offered up this analogy: "Imagine a Protestant sports team that chose years ago to adopt a Catholic name that was a degrading slur against the Catholic people. Imagine the Protestant team had no Catholic players or owners or heritage.

"In fact, imagine the Protestants actually massacred Catholic people throughout history and enslaved them until recently.

"Then, imagine the Protestant team's mascot was a caricature of the beloved Pope, complete with head-dress and robes and staff. Imagine the fans incited

at every game to chant their versions of sacred Catholic music and song, to use sacred Catholic artifacts in jest, to dress in ridiculous versions of sacred religious cloth, all in front of Catholic fans.

"Imagine the Protestant team put their own manufactured image of the Pope on their helmets and uniforms, to celebrate the vulgar and demeaning name of the team at every game.

"Imagine the Catholic people asking year after year for the Protestant Team to stop this outrage, but they would not stop. And finally, to complete this analogy, imagine all newspapers and sports broadcasters and internet sites and clothing manufacturers and advertisers and all commentators choosing to carry all of this desecration of Catholic people and culture to Catholic children and their parents, knowing full well that it was horrible for Catholics to experience, and absolutely damaging to the self concept of their children."

This isn't the first time that protests have been held in the Twin Cities to protest racist names of sports teams. For example, there was a protest against the Atlanta Braves when they played the Minnesota Twins in the 1991 World Series. There was also a



protest at the 1992 Super Bowl when the Redskins played the Buffalo Bills in Minneapolis.

Recently, the movement against racist sports team names has been gathering momentum. Similar though smaller protests have taken place in other cities where the Washington team played, such as Green Bay and Denver. Even a number of elected officials, such as Minnesota Governor Dayton and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, have felt compelled to come out and declare that "Redskins" is a racist name.

The credit for this growing anti-racist sentiment belongs to the activists who have labored for decades around this issue. We salute the organizers of the Nov. 7 protest, and pledge our support to the ongoing movement against the racism in American society of which racist sports team names are just the tip of the iceberg. ■

Grenada: A big revolution in a small country



(Left) Invading U.S. Marines arrest Grenada's defenders in October 1983.

BY JEFF MACKLER

Thirty years ago, on Oct. 25, 1983, almost 8000 U.S. Rangers invaded the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada to make doubly sure that the revolution of March 13, 1979, four and a half years earlier, would not rise again. This vital and exemplary revolution in a Black, English-speaking country of 100,000 nevertheless posed a serious threat to U.S. imperialism. This was not because of the size or military power of this tiny nation that measured some 21 by 11 miles but because of the politics and socialist orientation of its leadership.

In truth, however, the revolution had ended in blood a week earlier. At that time, a Stalinist "leader" of Grenada's governing party, the New Jewel Movement (NJM), and its People's Revolutionary Government (PRG), Bernard Coard, ordered a handful of Grenadian soldiers led by Hudson Austin to gun down Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, several other members of Grenada's central leadership, and some dozen supporters who were part of a demonstration of tens of thousands demanding Coard's removal.

The subtitle of this article, "A 30-year personal retrospective," is included because by a combination of circumstances I had become intimately familiar, as a sometimes close observer to be sure, with the events surrounding the revolution's internal disputes and tragic demise.

Within days of the impending U.S. invasion, and after initiating a San Francisco demonstration of 5000 to warn against it, I resigned from the then most influential and largest Trotskyist party in the U.S., the Socialist Workers Party, where my political loyalties had resided for almost two decades. The SWP's break from its revolutionary heritage had begun several years earlier, compelling me along with several hundred other comrades to form a short-lived internal opposition. However, we were denied a fundamental right that, since its formation a half-century earlier, had been central to the SWP's traditions and rich democratic history—the right to present contending ideas to the ranks for thorough discussion, debate, and decision. By 1983 at least half of this opposition of some 200 comrades, including several of the SWP's founding members, has been bureaucratically expelled.

The SWP's initial stance on the murder of Maurice Bishop was kept from the membership by the party's uncertain leadership. A week after Bishop's murder, when Cuban President Fidel Castro denounced Bishop's murder and skewed Bernard Coard as a Stalinist betrayer, the SWP reversed course and eventually published a long tract, joining in Castro's powerful repudiation. But the SWP's actions before Castro spoke

A 30-year personal retrospective

revealed a tragic flaw in the politics and orientation of this once exemplary revolutionary party.

I resigned a few days after the U.S. invasion, to be among the founders of Socialist Action, but not before observing close up—and against the wishes of the SWP leadership—the tragic events surrounding Grenada's internal travail and disintegration.

The origins of Grenada's March 13, 1979, revolution are not well known. The 13th of March, an unlucky day in the minds of the superstitious, was chosen by Grenada's president for a trip to New York City to attend a conference whose agenda focused on flying saucers, the occult, and extra-terrestrial communication. Knighted in 1974 by Great Britain's queen as Sir Mathew Eric Gairy, he had demons that extended to literally banning the construction of *left* turn lanes on the few roads that surrounded this volcanic mountain nation. With half of its people unemployed and living in poverty, and 70 percent of its women workforce unemployed, Grenada's sneering critics had long derided it as "the armpit of the Caribbean."

Before Gairy's departure, he left word for his notorious secret death squad, the Mongoose Gang, to assassinate the young 34-year-old revolutionary, Maurice Bishop, and his comrades, whose New Jewel (Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation) Movement and its allied parties had in fact won the previous Grenadian election only to have the results voided at Gairy's diktat.

But secrets are hard to keep in a small nation like Grenada. A few friends informed Bishop and his comrades of Gairy's assassination directive. These young revolutionaries, whose choices were limited indeed—most obviously, to flee the island or hide—hastily planned a response that had more than a few stunning, if not unexpected results. Their plan began on March 13 at 4:30 a.m. with an armed assault by Bishop and a relatively small group of supporters on Grenada's True Blue military barracks, where almost all of Grenada's tiny army lay asleep. Some 20-50 activists participated, most having had no prior military experience. Gairy's troops quickly surrendered, taking but a handful of casualties.

Grenada's sole radio station, instantly renamed Radio Free Grenada, was captured at 10:30 that morning. Bishop delivered his famous address, "A Bright

New Dawn," which included a call to action, stating, "I am now calling upon the working people, the youth, workers, farmers, fishermen, middle-class people, and women to join our armed revolutionary forces at central positions in your communities and to give them any assistance which they may call for."

The call was initially disregarded by Grenada's cautious populace for fear that it might be the work of dictator Gairy, seeking to entice unwary Bishop supporters into the streets where they would be met with arrest, if not execution. It was not until the inspired NJM leaders played Bob Marley's revolutionary music, banned under Gairy, that the masses realized that, indeed, this was to be a "bright new dawn" for the Grenadian people.

Bishop's followers, perhaps 200 activists at most but accompanied by massive community support across the island, successfully seized control of all local police stations. Bishop's address to the nation explained a truth that few doubted. "The criminal dictator, Eric Gairy," he stated, "apparently sensing that the end was near, yesterday fled the country, leaving orders for all opposition forces, including especially the peoples' leaders, to be massacred.

"Before these orders could be followed, the Peoples' Revolutionary Army was able to seize power. The people's government will now be seeking Gairy's extradition so that he may be put on trial to face charges, including the gross charges, the serious charges, of murder, fraud and the trampling of the democratic rights of our people."

Bishop's statement made clear the revolution's objectives: "People of Grenada, this revolution is for work, for food, for decent housing and health services, and for a bright future for our children and great grand-children.

"The benefits of the revolution will be given to everyone regardless of political opinion or which political party they support.

"Let us all unite as one. All police stations are again reminded to surrender their arms to the people's revolutionary forces."

"Maurice's boys," as they were popularly called, in consort with the Grenadian people, had indeed, taken power. With but a handful of deaths, Grenada was deemed "the peaceful revolution" by its friends everywhere.

The newly-founded People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) soon afterwards sought financial aid from the U.S. and other capitalist nations to meet its promises to the Grenadian people. Aid was denied by the Carter and Reagan administrations, who, seeking to isolate this poor former English colony of Black slaves, pressed other countries to follow suit. The call of Black Power that began in the U.S. had swept the Caribbean and around the world. In Grenada, revolutionary Blacks had achieved power and set out to be an example to the world of what could be achieved by oppressed people, even in an isolated poor nation, under constant threat and virtually embargoed by U.S. imperialism.

A Nov. 19, 1979, *Nation* magazine interview with Bishop made the new government's intentions and political origins clear. Said Bishop, "We have always stressed, underlined and emphasized that we are socialist and manifestly so. What we have also said is that the way in which people should define what we mean by socialism is to look at our manifesto, study our programmes and policies [over the past] six and a half years, see what struggles we have defended, see whose interests we have fought for, and from that you can tell see what we are."

With the solidarity and support of revolutionary-minded volunteers from many nations, and especially from Cuba, which several PRG leaders had visited, Grenadians set out to be an example to the world. This was at a time when capitalist economies were stagnant, and the conditions of working people, and oppressed nationalities especially, were under siege.

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Cuba provided a fleet of more than a dozen state of the art fishing boats, transforming Grenada's 5000-odd tiny and dangerous dingy-like boats into a more efficient operation while cutting down on waste and the need to import food. Previously, much of the caught fish were dried on tin roofs, only to rot when Grenada's tropical rain ruined much of the catch. Refrigeration facilities were similarly improved by Cuba, which allowed for the preservation of fish, as well as fruits and vegetables. A program to increase the availability of electricity was set into motion on an island where the great majority had none.

Again with the help of the Cubans, medical and dental care became free to all, with the number of doctors, although still far from meeting the needs of the people, dramatically increasing in a few years. Prior to the revolution there was only one dental clinic serving the entire island.

In four short years, unemployment was reduced from 49 percent to 14.2 percent. Virtually free loans for construction materials to repair dilapidated housing, the sad living norm for most Grenadians, were provided, while a broad range of infrastructure improvements were undertaken. Roads had barely existed in Grenada; there were only some 48 miles in total before the revolution. A new series of roads were built to aid local farmers in bringing their crops to market. Pipe-borne water, which the great majority had had no previous access to, was significantly expanded, and rusted pipes were repaired.

With help of the Cubans, agriculture was diversified, especially since Grenada, the world largest nutmeg producer, was dependent for income on three export crops—nutmeg, cocoa, and bananas.

Thirty percent of the population was excluded from taxation while the few wealthy hotel owners saw their taxes, which they had barely paid due to an almost total lack of an accounting system regarding hotel revenues, significantly increased. Women's equality, including equal pay for equal work, was enshrined in Grenadian law, along with extended and paid maternity leave. The law strictly banned all sexual exploitation of women in return for employment.

All of these critical gains notwithstanding, almost everyone understood that Grenada, essentially a huge mountain with poor soil conditions and surrounded by a single road, was currently incapable of putting into effect more dramatic and long lasting improvements. The PRG leadership moved to resolve this dilemma by embarking on the construction of a major international airport, able to provide access to the world's modern airplanes. With significant loans from Canada and the allocation of vast human resources, again from revolutionary Cuba, Grenadian and Cuban workers began construction on this project aimed at promoting tourism as the major source of income in the years to come. Grenada's antiquated Pearl Airport was capable of landing only small turboprop planes with a capacity of some 30-50 people.

Perhaps the most controversial debate inside the PRG was the very nature of the system of governance to be established. Early on, the revolution, especially at Bishop's prodding, established a system of what was called participatory democracy, wherein workers' and farmers' councils, parish councils, and zonal councils met to discuss the revolution's priorities and how they could best be achieved.

While these groups initially met with great enthusiasm and were well attended, in time attendance declined when the participants came to understand that there was a qualitative difference between the *participation* of the masses, including their right to criticize and recommend important changes, and their right to *decide*. While the leaders of these councils were often elected and subject to immediate recall, their role remained advisory. Key decisions remained in the hands of the revolution's main leaders, organized in a Central Committee of some dozen individuals.

Bishop was known to advocate increased decision-making power to the local councils. Coard defended maintaining the power and authority of the Central Committee. The size of the organized core of the New Jewel Movement was likely quite small, at best in the hundreds. Even here, however, the NJM rarely, if ever, met as a decision-making body.

I first noted tensions in the PRG when I visited to attend the Nov. 23-25, 1981, First International Conference in Solidarity with Grenada and to deliver a relatively large amount of supplies to support their literacy campaign. Our Bay Area committee was fortunate to link up with a San Francisco GreenPeace group sailing a sizeable ship toward Grenada and agreeable to cramming its hold with tons of supplies. This was for the "welfare of the Grenadians," they explained, "as well as to provide needed ballast for the ship to insure its safe voyage."

I was quite surprised to meet Bishop during this conference when he asked for a meeting to discuss



With the support of revolutionary volunteers from many nations — especially Cuba — Grenadians set out to be a beacon to the world.

Maurice Bishop (left) with Fidel Castro.

a conflict we were experiencing in the Bay Area with the recently formed U.S.-Grenada Friendship Society. Our Grenada Solidarity Committee, formed two years earlier, had established close ties with Grenada's UN Consul General, Joseph Kanute Burke, who we toured through the Bay Area twice during that time. Yet we were shunned by the Communist Party-initiated U.S.-Grenada Friendship Society as being illegitimate. Through Burke, this had come to the attention of Bishop, who expressed concern that I was not scheduled to address the conference.

Bishop was quite familiar with the Socialist Workers Party. When he resided in Brooklyn, N.Y., where more than 80,000 Grenadian nationals lived, he was an occasional speaker at SWP-sponsored Militant Labor Forums. When the SWP's 1980 U.S. Presidential candidate, Andrew Pulley, visited Grenada in 1981, he received a surprise visit from Bishop, who humorously asked, "Hey Andrew, what are you doing on my island?" Bishop, driving an old VW Bug, proceeded to give Pulley a personal tour.

During the conference Bishop learned that it was a representative of the U.S. Communist Party that sought to prevent me from greeting the conference. His response was to send his closest ally, Minister of Agriculture George Louison, to resolve this matter in a three-way meeting. Louison sternly explained to the CPer that Grenada valued our work and operated on the principle of non-exclusion. I would speak as the U.S. representative, he insisted, as he urged future collaboration between all Grenada's supporters.

Bishop's June 5, 1983, visit to New York has been cited by some as a possible source of the divisions that would be revealed some three months later. Some uninformed "left critics" noted that Bishop advocated in his talk improved relations with the United States, including U.S. recognition of a Grenadian ambassador. The "critics" implied that Bishop was "soft" on imperialism. Yet Bishop advocated no more than the Cubans, who had been denied formal recognition for decades.

But in explaining the functioning of Grenada's participatory democracy, Bishop did employ some formulations that could be taken as important, if not critical, insights into a sharpening controversy inside the PRG. Bishop stated: "And for the people in general, there have been organs of popular democracy that have been built—zonal councils, parish councils, worker-parish councils, farmer councils—where the people come together from month to month. The usual agenda will be a report on programs taking place in the village.

"Then there will be a report, usually by some senior member of the bureaucracy. It might be the manager of the Central Water Commission. Or it might be the manager of the telephone company or the electricity company. Or it might be the chief sanitary inspector, or the senior price-control inspector.

"And this senior bureaucrat has to go there and report to the people on his area of work, and then be

submitted to a question-and-answer session. And after that, one of the top leaders in our country, one of us will also attend those meetings, and ourselves give a report, and usually there is question-and-answer-time at the end of that also.

"In this way, our people from day to day and week to week, are participating in helping to run the affairs of their country.

And this is not just an abstract matter of principle. It has also brought practical, concrete benefits to our people."

Bishop's references here to "senior members of the bureaucracy" and "this senior bureaucrat" may not have been accidental, especially in light of his experience in the Central Committee, where a twisted version of "democratic centralism" prevailed—that is, a bureaucratically enforced muzzle banning criticism of "majority" decisions without recourse to democratic discussion and debate in the party's ranks, not to mention among the increasingly organized masses in the emerging and varied councils.

In truth, there were no "ranks" of the PGR or the NJM that met to decide anything. Power was vested in the hands of a tiny few—the Central Committee. As I have noted, a few months later, Bishop was arrested because he sought to challenge this Coard-led bureaucracy, based on the rule of perhaps a dozen or so leaders. Vesting real power in the various councils that had been established was not on Coard's agenda.

Although no formal records exist of its decisions, the debates in the tiny Central Committee were "resolved" in Coard's favor, and Bishop, while retaining the *title* of prime minister, saw his authority much diminished. He was soon afterwards sent to Czechoslovakia on a trade mission and returned to Grenada via Cuba. Upon his return he was reported to have informed the Central Committee of his intention to challenge its orientation, whereupon he was immediately placed under "house arrest," incarcerated, and placed under armed guard in his own house at Mount Wheldale, literally across the road from Coard's dwelling.

When news of Bishop's arrest reached his closest associates, Minister of Agriculture George Louison, accompanied by Bishop's press secretary, Don Rojas, quickly organized a mass march to Bishop's home to free the island's most well-known and popular leader—"Bish," as he was called by friends everywhere.

The march to liberate Bishop and its arrival at his home was observed first hand by a member of our San Francisco Bay Area Grenada Solidarity Committee, whom we had sent to assist with Grenada's literacy program. This mass mobilization rapidly grew until tens of thousands participated. Bishop was freed with zero resistance and immediately proceeded to lead the marchers to Fort Rupert, Grenada's military headquarters in the capital city, St. Georges, and Coard's likely location.

Bishop led the angry marchers onto this ancient stonewalled fort's patio, whereupon he and his associates were gunned down at the orders of Coard's appointed "General," Hudson Austin. Three ministers were murdered outright—including Bishop and his companion and Minister of Education Jacqueline Creft—and two leading trade unionists. As Coard's tiny death squad fired on the crowd, killing perhaps a

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Northern Lights

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Toronto Mayor Rob Ford — Cracked but still on track

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Too much ink already has been spilled to expose the antics of Toronto's crack smoking, drunk driving, serial lying, gangster-linked mayor. The butt of late-night comedy TV, Rob Ford is merely the unvarnished version of the establishment hardware.

But behind the ongoing Rob Ford soap opera are a few noteworthy points:

The bourgeoisie in Canada's biggest city is far from infallible. They committed a whopping error of judgement. By backing Ford, as some high rollers did, to channel popular resentment against the liberal-social democratic David Miller City Hall regime, and for failing to stop Ford (despite his well known fatal flaws) prior to the 2010 municipal election, the corporate elite got much more instability than they bargained for.

When embarrassed and beset by the eccentric, belligerent and obstinate Ford brothers (suburban city councillors Doug and Rob), the city fathers didn't stand on ceremony. They wielded, twisted and re-purposed the rules to strip Rob Ford of his mayoral powers to appoint and initiate. But be very certain of this: in the event that Toronto ever elects a socialist mayor, the agents of Capital will use the same select punitive procedures to hobble an insurgent left. Ergo the need to base a Labour City Hall on mobilized workers outside the stately edifice.

Unaffected, and perhaps abetted by the tantrums, abject apologies and whoozy spectacles of distraction, are the policies that keep the burden of funding Toronto's crumbling infrastructure on cash-strapped workers, seniors, and the poor, while minimizing the taxation of the super-rich. While the business media declared war on the Fords, there is no business war being waged against poverty, homelessness, traffic gridlock, inadequate childcare, and environmental



degradation. The only war we see is on workers, like garbage collectors, bus drivers, and rec centre staff. If City Hall pushed progressive change at the speed pipelines will move hazardous bitumen through Canada's most densely populated urban corridor, a new day would truly be dawning. The question is why leaders of the unions and the NDP, and all the so-called "progressives" currently on Toronto city council, have not seized on the Ford debacle to trash the corporate agenda and set the stage for transformative action on inequality and urban decay?

Of course, that would require a break with higher user fees and putting a halt to pandering to big business as practiced by the David Miller/Joe Pantalone regime. Instead, Toronto's labour leadership is taking workers down the primrose path of liberal, middle class politics towards the October 2014 municipal

election.

Rather than host a convention of labour activists and members of the labour-based New Democratic Party across Toronto and York Region to adopt policies and to select candidates to fight for a Labour City Hall, we witness a relapse to the tactics that utterly failed in 2010.

The "Municipal Political Action Conference," sponsored by Toronto and York Region Labour Council on Nov. 16, was "designed for everyone who plans to get involved in the 2014 Municipal/School Board elections." That meant it didn't matter what one's policies what one's links to big business parties, like the Liberal Party, might be. Ignored is the reality that the Liberals share responsibility for cutbacks, privatizing public services, giving tax breaks to the rich, and curtailing the right to strike.

Quite revealing was the fact that the conference "Guest Speaker" was Jeremy Bird, former national field director for the 2012 re-election campaign of President Barack Obama. Bird, readers will recall, was the target of a high-profile protest that forced him to cut short his speech at the NDP federal convention in Montreal in April 2013. It is shameful, and sadly indicative, that Toronto and York Region Labour Council officials would invite this "field director" for the pro-austerity, pro-big business bail-out, drone-wars regime in Washington.

The lessons of the failed David Miller mayorship, and the feckless 2010 "labour" municipal campaign, are glaring. The situation cries out for a political alternative.

Instead of a multi-class, liberal smorgasbord of candidates and policies, labour needs an election team that demands: a free and greatly expanded rapid transit system, reversal of the cutbacks and privatizations, the mass construction of quality social housing to curb homelessness and poverty, a big expansion of quality childcare, and much greater support for the arts, parkland, and community sports facilities. To fund this agenda it is necessary to heavily tax the big land developers, property speculators, big businesses, the banks, religious institutions, and the rich.

The corporate elite is scrambling to find their "unity" candidate for mayor. Perhaps it will be former provincial Conservative leader John Tory, or a right wing city councillor like Denzil Minnan-Wong or Karen Stintz.

So now is the time for the left to seize the opportunity. Ford's fall from grace, and the momentary disarray of the right wing on city council is just the occasion to convene a real Labour Political Action Conference aimed at choosing policies and candidates to fight for, and to win a Workers' Government at Toronto City Hall in 2014. ■

Heinz to close Leamington ketchup plant — Nationalize it under workers' control!

By JULIUS ARSCOTT

The H.J. Heinz Company, the largest employer in Leamington, Ontario, plans to shut the doors on its century-old food processing plant in June 2014. The plant, which is Heinz's second largest facility in the world, manufactures processed foods. It employs 740 full-time positions and up to 500 seasonal positions, all members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 459.

The closure will also impact local farmers who have grown tomatoes for generations in southwestern Ontario. It is one of Canada's warmest areas, with one of the longest growing seasons, known locally as the "Sun Parlor." The facility was originally built in the area also due to the sandy soil and light rains that provide excellent conditions for growing field tomatoes.

The plan to close the Heinz plant coincides with closures in South Carolina and Indiana, reducing the workforce by 1350 positions. This move follows the axing of 600 office jobs last summer after a \$28 billion takeover by Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway Inc. and the hedge fund 3G Capital, a Brazilian investment firm. Heinz claims that sales in its North American division dropped by 1.4 per cent, or \$46 million (U.S.), to \$3.2 billion in the last fiscal year.

The company claims that it has too much manufacturing capacity to meet the demand for ketchup, sauces, baby food, and other products. Production will

be shifted to their lower wage facility in Ohio, which will add 250 positions and invest \$28 million to expand the plant.

Heinz has contracts with more than 40 area farms to buy 40 per cent of Ontario's 500,000-tonne tomato crop. Now farmers are asking for compensation from Heinz for the cancellation of their contracts and for work they have already put into next year's crops.

The farmers who were under contract to supply Heinz with tomatoes are left trying to find a new crop to plant in the spring, and some way to replace the business that has kept their farms busy and profitable for generations. The closure will have a major negative impact on an entire region.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne claims that the Ontario government "did everything we could" to prevent closure of the plant. The Liberal leader has offered \$200,000 to, as she says, "help" the community of Leamington identify and pursue new opportunities for growth. This pittance of \$160 per full-time, part-time, and seasonal position has understandably enraged workers who depend on these jobs.

The hands-off approach of the Bay Street parties is no surprise. NDP MPP Taras Natyshak (Essex) criticized the government for not heeding warnings of the closure months in advance and pointed out the hypocrisy of the ruling Liberals, saying, "Your Liberal government keeps talking about local food ... but stands idly by as processing facilities

shut their doors and devastate communities." Wynne's response was to attack the NDP for attempting to "control the private sector," something that she said she would not do.

The NDP should be calling for the government to force Heinz to compensate the farmers for all costs to date and honour their contracts. The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association is on record since 2010 (when other processing companies were failing) with its demand that the government create a Farm Financial Protection Program (similar to that for beef farmers) for horticulture producers. Such legislation should be introduced immediately to protect all farmers from corporate failures.

Tim Hudak, leader of the Provincial Progressive Conservative Party, claimed that the plant closed due to high corporate taxes—a cruel joke considering that Ontario has some of the lowest corporate tax rates in North America.

On Nov. 26 the Ontario Federation of Labour Convention adopted a resolution with no teeth, submitted by the UFCW Canada National Council. It calls on the provincial government "to take whatever action is necessary to support continued production at the facility." A delegate who spoke to this issue urged the labour body to look at social struggles in Argentina and Bolivia that advanced the idea of workers' control of closed plants, supported by government financial aid, as examples of what should be done in Leamington. ■

A leader of the UFCW stated, "Today's announcement is another example of a transnational private equity firm swooping into a Canadian community and sucking up the hard-earned value of an operation that was built by generations of hard-working Canadian and their families."

Paul Meinema, president of the UFCW Canada National Council, said, "This latest closure is another strong example of why our federal government desperately needs to review and reform existing foreign investment legislation, and to introduce a new approach that finally puts Canadians and the well-being of their communities first."

However, efforts to protect jobs and benefits for workers need to take a class approach. Canadian nationalism benefits only the bosses. It deflects attention away from the real problem, capitalism. The maximization of private profits, a driving force of the global capitalist system, is the culprit in this drama.

The corporate attack on the workers and farmers in Leamington will devastate the region's economy, a region already reeling from closures in the manufacturing sector in nearby Windsor, Ontario (just across the river from Detroit). Workers and farmers have power if they unite. In this case, workers in Leamington should occupy the factory, take control of the machinery, and operate the equipment for food processing—a socially useful function.

Only through public ownership and democratic control of the food industry can workers and farmers continue their vital work and sustainably provide a variety of locally grown and locally processed foods to a vast region. ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

“12 Years a Slave” is a disturbing film based on Solomon Northup’s 1853 memoir. The author was a free Black man from upper New York, who enjoyed a life in many ways commensurate with whites. Like many other Black men and women, however, he was tricked, drugged, kidnapped, and sent to the South—a slave.

Black British director Steve McQueen’s film illustrates what happened to these unfortunate people. They, Northup among them, are rounded up like cattle, stripped naked, and hosed down. Wearing rough homespun shirts and pants, they’re loaded onto flatbed wagons, covered with canvas, and hauled south, where they are sold to brokers (ruthless Paul Giamatti), who auction them off to plantation owners.

Unlike Tarantino’s over-the-top, grisly, yet sometimes humorous, film, “Django Unchained,” “12 Years” is somber and harrowing from the moment of Northup’s capture. A mother’s children are yanked from her arms. Slaves live cramped in a dark room in a house within sight of the Master’s mansion. “Genteel” folk sip juleps on the veranda and glance at their slaves, toiling in cotton or sugar fields.

McQueen has said that he believes Alfred Woodard’s character in the film, as a wealthy ex-slave who is married to a slaver, is shocking because most people don’t realize that Black people owned slaves, or on the other hand, that some of them actually bought their relatives back.

Michael Fassbender plays an evil, insane plantation owner, obsessed by a young Black female slave. In the most

The picture of slavery: disturbing but true



harrowing scene, we witness her being beaten almost to death for having left the plantation to obtain a bar of soap. Ejiro’s Northup comes off as relatively passive—yet heroic. In one scene, he is betrayed, beaten, and hung all day with his toes barely touching the ground as other slaves go about their work, not daring to glance his way.

To this day, many people are familiar with Harriet Beecher Stowe’s book “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”—which the white author had largely based on the published narrative of an escaped slave. McQueen made an interesting comment on TV per-

sonality Tavis Smiley’s show. He said that when “12 Years” came out in 1853, it sold 27,000 copies, which was a lot for those days. But “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” published in 1852, quickly overtook it in sales—selling 300,000 copies in a year. Northup’s memoir was quickly forgotten.

McQueen, in the same interview, said that he felt that the factual horror of slavery had never been fully captured on film and never told from an African American point of view. He wanted to hold the camera up, point it, and say, “Look at this, look at this.” He went on to explain that people were kept in servitude through the

methods depicted in his film: Fear, beatings, lynching, threats, and rape. He felt that he had to dwell on such harrowing scenes. “We have to tell the truth, otherwise, there’s no point.”

He stressed, “This is neither Black American history nor white American history. This is about the history of America. Three-hundred years of slavery was the longest time an industry has survived in the United States.”

The general public has never heard of Solomon Northup, although it is a relatively well-known slave narrative to historians and scholars. Still, almost everyone knows Anne Frank. McQueen is optimistic in believing that it’s possible that Northup’s book could be required in schools in America and in Europe. He wants it to become as much a part of the world’s consciousness as is Anne Frank’s memoir.

McQueen stated that he feels there are a lot of Americans who say, “Get over this. You now have an African American president. We don’t need to be going back into revisiting what McQueen wants us to wrestle with. We’re past that now.”

He counters with: Would anyone ask a Jew to get over the Holocaust? He feels it should be very much in our minds, so it won’t happen again. “We feel the effects of slavery every day, and we need to deal with it. It’s just a case that the evidence is out there, and in our prisons and mental health, and it’s just a case of doing something about it, that’s all.” ■

NDP leader attacks First Nations, activists

By JOHANES BUXTON

In a shameful move, the labour-based New Democratic Party in New Brunswick republished an aggressively titled op-ed article on its website, “Don’t Negotiate Till Threats End!” The article was taken down and replaced by a similarly problematic editorial, “Reality Check: The Law is the Law,” written by the party leader in the province, Dominic Cardy.

The articles chastised activists who joined a highway blockade with members of the Elsipogtog First Nation, trying to stop exploratory drilling on their lands. To Cardy’s credit, he recognized the problem of relying on the government to safeguard the environment, asking, “Why should we expect them to have the courage to use the law [against the shale gas industry]?”

But in the next paragraph, he put on his

policeman’s hat and gave the reader a stern tautological legal lesson: “Any blockade ... must end ... because the law is the law. [Activists] have an equal responsibility to stand up against law breaking and vandalism.”

Cardy attempted to resolve the cognitive dissonance of respecting the “rule of law that can’t be trusted” by revealing his actual plan to stop shale gas: an NDP government led by him. The environment is to be saved by electing him as premier, or not at all.

Aside from opposing shale gas mining, it is difficult to see how a government under his leadership would differ substantially from the current regime. Cardy is a proponent of the right-wing “Third Way” movement within the Socialist International. He took the lead in pushing for a reduced role for labour in the federal NDP, and he admires the imperialist war criminal Tony Blair.

Cardy’s diatribe is especially disappointing because it betrays the party’s own history. Participants in the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, which brought the city to a grinding halt, didn’t follow Cardy’s “the law is the law” attitude when they suffered savage attack by the police and were thrown in prison.

One of those arrested participants, J.S. Woodsworth, later went on to become the first leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, predecessor of the modern-day NDP.

This identity crisis is not new for the party. But it is accelerating at an alarming rate. As capitalism descends deeper into crisis, its contradictions, which are its inherent features, are underscored by statements like this. At a time when workers and a growing underclass are losing more and more at the expense of big business, the platform and

actions of the labour bureaucrats and ruling-class politicians who purport to represent the workers’ interests are getting more and more watered down and lacklustre.

The demands of workers can be advanced only when workers themselves raise them. In building unions, activists have created institutions capable of fighting for their interests, but the task of leading that fight cannot be successfully delegated. Left to its own devices, the labour bureaucracy develops petty interests of its own, putting its jobs and privileges above all else.

The NDP can be a vehicle for change and a voice for radical populist movements like Idle No More and the campaign against environmental degradation—but not by trusting politicians to take care of business. The task of achieving basic change can be fulfilled only by applying continuous pressure from the bottom up—by the people whose lives are directly affected by the plunder of global capital. We need a radical labour movement driven by and for workers! ■

... Revolution in Grenada

(continued from page 7)

dozen or more, others leaped to safety from the fort’s great walls, suffering serious injuries or death. The wounded and injured were treated by medical teams that included members of the Swedish section of the Fourth International.

The Grenadian Revolution ended that day. The U.S. invasion that followed a few days later was met with virtually no resistance except for the several hundred Cuban airport workers. Breaking a formal agreement that had been hurriedly negotiated between the Cuban government and the Reagan administration, affirming that the Cubans would not resist the invasion and would act only in self defense, the Rangers nevertheless opened fire on the Cubans, who alone courageously resisted as well as they could the massive power of the imperialist forces.

Several hundred Cubans were arrested and jailed but soon afterward released to return home. There was virtually zero resistance from Grenada’s armed forces or militias. Fearing mass hatred for his action in imprisoning Bishop, Coard invoked martial law and enforced strict curfews. Weapons were locked tight in Grenada’s armories. The island was “conquered” by the invaders in a matter of hours as Grenada’s humiliated and demoralized masses were rendered helpless and disarmed.

All the pretexts employed by the Reagan administra-

tion and the capitalist media were soon repudiated. There were many—all lies. Grenada was said to be threatening the lives of some 700 U.S. medical students on the island; Grenada was said to be constructing a military base for Soviet use on its new airport; Grenada was said to be detaining political prisoners; Reagan officials even implied that Cuba had orchestrated the coup and was behind the murder of Bishop and his comrades. And finally, the U.S. claimed to have been invited to invade by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

These lies were broadcast around the world without regard to veracity. The invasion was repudiated almost everywhere, including by an overwhelming vote of the UN General Assembly. Cuban President Fidel Castro condemned the coup. Coard and his associates were labeled Stalinists and traitors to the revolution. An official day of mourning was organized in Cuba to commemorate Bishop’s achievements. Cables from Cuba threatened to cut off all aid to the Coard regime.

Before this Cuban condemnation and immediately after Bishop’s murder, the SWP leadership stood publicly mute. But it soon became clear that central party leaders were more than prepared to side with “the Central Committee majority.” Following Bishop’s arrest I had been in daily contact with Consul General Joseph Kanute Burke, who in turn was in daily contact with Bishop’s mother, who had been allowed to visit her son to bring him food.

Burke reported that “the boys” were talking, and that a resolution was possible in his view. History

demonstrates that this never came to pass. The SWP demanded that I cease all contact with Burke and Grenada. They went further; the Oakland/Berkeley party organizer insisted that I unilaterally cancel the planned demonstration set for the San Francisco Federal Building the following day, a decision that had been unanimously taken by the ranks of the Grenada Solidarity Committee, with 100 activists present!

“Do you know” the party organizer asked me, “that Bishop was in the minority of the Central Committee?” I responded, “I am in the minority of the SWP. Do you intend to murder me?” Ignoring this, the organizer demanded that I tell her what I would say about Bishop’s assassination. “I will oppose it,” I replied, adding, “We do not resolve internal disputes by murder.” The veneer of civility, not to mention comradely discussions, disappeared forever in that exchange. I spent the next several hours preparing the final details for the protest and resigned from the SWP the next day.

In my view, two parties had died that terrible day, both having irrevocably lost their revolutionary integrity. The degeneration of both had been long in the making. The history of the SWP’s degeneration has yet to be written. The few attempts to date miss the mark entirely.

Grenada’s Revolution set out to be an example to the world as to what Black Power and the fight for socialism could mean. Its heroic figure, Maurice Bishop, will not be forgotten. We honor his memory in this 30th year marking his brutal murder at the hands of a Stalinist thug. ■



Feminist Rebellion Today

By CHRISTINE MARIE

The following presentation was given by Christine Marie, representing Socialist Action at a Nov. 10 forum in Philadelphia called **Feminist Rebellion Today**. The other panelists were Preeti Pathak, Co-Chair of Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment (PAVE), a new group that uses education and action to shatter the silence of sexual violence; Rebecca Katherine Hirsch from Permanent Wave, a network of feminist artists and activists; and Nuala Cabral, co-founder of FAAN Mail, a media literacy and activist project formed by women of color in Philadelphia.

I want to thank Socialist Action of Philadelphia for inviting me to participate on this wonderful panel of activists and leaders from the movement against sexual violence. By all accounts the Sept. 28 demonstration here in Philly was a more than successful part of the growing movement against rape culture—the movement against sexual violence, rape, street harassment, and every other attack on our ability to function fully and productively in this society, to function unimpeded by any kind of subordination by gender.

I am an admirer of the role that PAVE has played in bringing the issue of sexual violence on campuses to the attention of the whole nation. I was delighted to view the videos of FANN's educational forays onto the street around sexual harassment. In short, I am very happy to be part of this discussion with those leading on the ground here in Philadelphia today.

I want to focus my remarks on two aspects of the issue of violence and the way that it relates to the whole fight for an end to gender oppression. First, I want to talk about the context in which sexual violence is on the rise, here and globally. Secondly, I want to address the elephant in the room: what is the root cause of gender oppression and what does that mean about the fight to end it once and for all?

I want to situate my remarks by referring to three news items/publications from this year: (1) This week's NPR story about the fight of female farm workers fighting rape on the job. (2) The death in April of over 1000 sisters in a garment factory in Bangladesh. (3) The publication of Beth Ritchie's new book, "Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America Prison Nation."

I choose these three events to highlight the deliberate and systematic character of sexual violence in a capitalist world, its relationship to the global austerity drive against working people as a whole, and the way that an acknowledgement of this relationship problematizes one of the strategies behind current efforts to tackle sexual violence. My hope is that my presentation will encourage all of us to nurture our most radical hopes. My goal is to stimulate all of us to raise our political goals to a place that is truly commensurate with the degree of oppression that women and gender non-conforming people really face under this system.

What is the system really like for women? Let's take a look at my chosen recent events:

First, the NPR broadcast this week told the stories of Guadalupe Chavez, singlehandedly raising three kids, who was denied her paycheck of \$245 unless she submitted to the sexual advances of the grower's

supervisor, and Maricruz Ladino, who was raped by a farm supervisor with the power to hire and promote employees—or fire, blacklist, and deport her if she protested.

Such employer power, enforced by the threat of sexual violence and terror is part of the way that growers prevent workers from organizing and fighting back against the most horrific conditions, conditions that include pesticide poisoning, other severe occupational diseases, and a dramatically shortened lifespan. Sexual violence, viewed as a social phenomenon, is a tool of the powerful against the subordinate and used to maintain those hierarchies.

My second example is the Bangladesh garment fire. In April, we all remember, over 1000 women were killed in a garment factory fire in Bangladesh. What we might not have focused on at the time was how the bosses used patriarchy and sexual violence to prevent those workers from organizing against the dangers before their deaths. But we can do that now.

Research by feminists and Marxists explain a lot about the way that gender subordination and sexual violence contributed to those deaths. First, all these women ended up in that factory because neoliberal reforms have transformed the countryside, forcing them to leave villages to earn the dowries that their families can no longer afford. This system of marriage was not some hoary hangover from a backward past but, as Peter Custers and others document, a patriarchal system that urban corporate elites enforce because it fills their sweatshops.

Once in the factories, these young women face a system of sexual violence that is used to weaken their ability to organize and that thwarts any genuine independence that could flow from work outside the home.

In 2003, Lourdes Pantaleon published a groundbreaking study of women workers in export processing zones in the Dominican Republic and found that 40 percent endured sexual harassment from bosses eager to keep a workforce quiescent. In a 2008 survey of female Export Processing Zone workers in Kenya, 90% reported that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment on the job or been forced to provide sexual favors in order to get hired and stay hired. And this kind of exploitation is not a small part of the effort of the ruling rich to generate profit.

Here is how the *Economist* business magazine described the economic role of these women in 2006: "The increase in female employment has also accounted for a big chunk of global growth in recent decades. GDP growth can come from three sources: employing more people; using more capital per worker; or an increase in the productivity of labour and capital due to new technology, say. Since 1970 women have filled two new jobs for every one taken by a man. Back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest that the employment of extra women has not only added more to GDP than new jobs for men but has also chipped in more than either capital investment or increased productivity. Carve up the world's economic growth a different way and another surprising conclusion emerges: over the past decade or so, the increased employment of women in developed economies has contributed much more to global growth than China has.

So the big point here is that we make a mistake if we

begin our analysis of the problem of sexual violence by looking at it as a problem primarily caused by individual criminal, sick, or socially challenged men. Certainly, all of our efforts at mass education about rape culture, zero tolerance for sexual violence on campus, and the promotion of bystander intervention are important and necessary and should not be minimized in any way. This is just to say that sexual violence is much, much more than that. It is one of many tools of repression used in capitalist society to keep women subordinate and vulnerable economically in a way that benefits the elites.

We should begin to think about sexual violence and all the structures and regimes of this society that facilitate it as something other than residual backwardness and start to think of it in a way more akin to the way that we think of other tools used to divide and weaken the working class, such as mass deportation or mass incarceration.

The topic of mass incarceration leads me to my third telling incident, the publication of Beth Ritchie's extraordinary new book: "Arrested Justice: Black women, Sexual violence, and the Prison Nation." In "Arrested Justice," Ritchie sets out to describe the way that the movement against violence against women, as it was reshaped in the neoliberal 1990s, has ill-served poor African American women.

One of her sample cases is that of a community organizer named Mrs. B, who upon

failing to move out of Chicago public housing targeted for destruction and gentrification in time to suit the powers that be, became the victim of repeated rapes by a group of young policemen assigned 24-7 to regulate life in the project. Mrs. B. was vulnerable to the state because she lived in a neighborhood consciously depopulated by the banks and developers. Despite repeated efforts to get help from rape crisis centers and social services, the fact that she was asking them to confront rape by agents of the state that funded them, meant that they could not fit her victimization into their system. After years of struggle, Mrs. B. finally found an advocate and won a settlement from the Chicago Police Department, but she lives each day fearful of retaliation by the cops, the social service system, or some other arm of the Chicago governmental apparatus.

So those are my three examples. I am telling you these stories to make the point that outside of the violence in the home, in nuclear family units of one kind or another, from domestic partners or lovers—and, of course, the home remains the main site of violence against women—violence on the job and from agents of the state is a central issue for working women and poor women.

Violence comes in the nuclear family, in the workplace, in prison, and from agents of the state. It is this material reality—the enforcement of gender subordination to keep the system running—that fuels rape culture, that makes rape culture fundamentally acceptable, and that keeps rape culture deeply woven into our lives. Gender-based violence flows from a system that is maintained by our economic subordination.

Why is gender violence and rape culture on the rise today? I contend that the rise of rape culture cannot be separated from the fact that the corporate powers in this world are facing the most serious crisis of their system since 1929. Socialists believe that the employers are determined to recover the level of profitability they need by any means necessary.

At the moment, they are hoarding trillions of dollars that they refuse to invest in industries globally. Instead of providing jobs, they are sitting on those trillions until they can invest them in a manner that will give them a rate of return close to that of the 1950s. When they do invest, they invest in ways that yield primarily low-wage jobs of the kind justified ideologically by the myth that they are for young people just entering the job market or women who are partnered with someone making the real household wage. The whole pattern of current investment relies on our impoverishment.

Secondly, the corporate elites are demanding that governments here and all over the world dramatically cut social spending of any kind. Marxists call this cutting the social wage. In the U.S. they just cut \$85 billion under "sequestration." They are getting ready to cut more. If you drive down the social wage—that is if you get rid of government pre-school programs, and health care for poor children, and cut social security for the seniors, and so on and so on—who takes up the slack? Well, women, of course, and it is work for which they are not paid.

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If you privatize water in Bolivia to lower the social wage, who has to add an hour of unpaid labor to their day to carry it from a greater distance? Women. If you lower the social wage by making it more difficult for old people to get into a hospital, who finds more hours in the day to nurse them at home? Women. When women are forced to do unpaid labor in the home, they are vulnerable to having to take low-paid, part-time, and temporary jobs in the public sphere. When women feel forced to work on low-paying jobs, the bosses can use it to drive down the wages of the whole working class. Women's subordination is not a fluke of the system. This is the way that capitalism uses gender differentiation to keep the system afloat.

Marxists refer to this crazy Catch 22 for women as the relationship between social reproduction and production. We argue that the capitalist system created a new kind of production, based on the horrific logic that corporate profits can only rise as our wages and standard of living go down. And along with that system of production goes a special kind of social reproduction.

In the capitalist system of social reproduction, the feeding, clothing, educating, nursing, and emotional caring for the majority of society—children, the elderly, all working people in fact, is thrown onto individual working-class households in a manner to reinforce elite capitalist rule.

Sometimes the powers that be push women to stay in the home, as they did in the 1950s. Sometimes they make it impossible for a home to survive without two wages, as they began to do in the 1970s, and they privatize some domestic functions such as laundry and fast food. They are flexible. But always, our work arrangements and domestic arrangements—on the broad social plane, of course—are manipulated to increase profit and profitability for the capitalist class. And to enforce these profitable arrangements, they work hard to normalize and stabilize sexualities and gender identities that work with the system.

When you get down to the basics, all the highly profitable cultural degradations that we are enduring at the moment are designed to make it seem natural for women to be at the bottom of the heap. It is not a conspiracy per se. It is just that our subordination by the elites gives the green light to media portrayals and sexism in the culture at large.

The reality of our subordination and disparagement on the job, in the community, on the campus, and in the political arena, grows sexism in return. The introduction of anti-abortion laws in the majority of states blasts the message that women are too childlike, too irresponsible, or too evil to control our own bodies. Forcing poor women to get drug testing before applying for the meager benefits still available to help them raise their children signals that they are unfit mothers.

Federal think-tank pronouncements that blame poverty on non-gendering-conforming households in the Black community pathologize alternatives to the nuclear family. Predatory lending and the resultant foreclosures send the message that Black women cannot manage wealth. Throwing African American and Latino women into prison at the today's rate—a rise of 747%—says that they are criminals actually unworthy of any of society's wealth. Throwing people out of hospitals too early, with the expectation that women at home will take up the slack, transmits the notion that we are "naturally" of the disposition to replace the social wage with our compassionate and altruistic natures. Sexism is reinforced at every turn in this system.

The way out of this madness is creating a social order in which the wellbeing of children, the elderly, and, indeed, all working people is the responsibility of society as a whole. The way out of this madness is the creation of a social order in which the wealth we produce in the 40, 50, or 60 hours a week that we work, can go toward the social welfare of all. To create a movement that can win such a society, we have to break down the divisions among working people on sexual and gender lines. That means putting the demands not only for equal pay but for affirmative action for jobs from which we have been excluded, for full reproductive justice, for "Medicare for all," and most, importantly for 24-hour child care, at the center of our fight.

In our current system, the gap between the hours worked by women in low-wage jobs and the hours of child care available condemns working women to victimization. Infant care can now cost more than sending a child to college. The gap between the hours a child is in school and most parents' work schedules is around 25 hours a week. This condemns women and those responsible for domestic labor to unending victimization. There is simply no way to eliminate the economic subordination of women and the victimization of all working class family units than demanding

SA's 30th anniversary!



Socialist Action newspaper first went to press 30 years ago—in December 1983. Since then, we have not missed a month of printing. The vintage photograph above was taken in the old Socialist Action offices and bookstore in San Francisco. In the foreground is Gerry Foley, long-time SA foreign affairs editor, who died in 2012. In the background is Socialist Action Editor Michael Schreiber.

As we enter our 31st year of publishing, we continue to depend on our loyal base of supporters, and always welcome new readers to the socialist press. If you would like to become a regular subscriber, please mail the sub blank on page 2 — or pay by credit card at www.socialistaction.com.

a program of full quality childcare.

This type of demand challenges the most basic workings of the capitalist system. But it also speaks directly to the fight to end violence against women. Such violence will not end without creating the conditions in which society as a whole takes responsibility for relieving the double and triple burden facing working women by making such child care available, and by curtailing the economic disparities that force women into dangerous liaisons, that force women to stay in abusive relationships, that force women into abusive employment situations, and to endure sexual victimization by bosses. There is no other way.

The movement against violence against women has gone through a number of mutations. During the deep social radicalization of the 1960s and 1970s, the rape and domestic violence movements relied on activist-volunteers who were acutely aware of the miserable reality of welfare state intervention, cop violence, employer abuse, and a discriminatory criminal justice system factored into the story. The movement that put tens of thousands of women and their allies in the streets was based on a radical vision in which all the instruments that maintained patriarchy, racism, and class society would be dismantled.

Sadly, that radicalization waned and U.S. capitalism began to experience new international competition and a falling rate of profit. Those who politically serve the corporations unleashed a concerted attack on working people, dubbed "neoliberal reform."

It was not all the use of the stick, however. It also involved the use of the carrot. In response to the mass sentiment for women's equality and safety, the Democratic and Republican parties agreed to give support

to a system of institutions devoted to ameliorating violence against women. On the one hand, this led to the funding of some things we desperately need. But it came at a great cost because institutional aid to women suffering violence was interwoven into a general strengthening of the truly criminal "criminal justice system." The Violence Against Women Act, whose provisions tie non-profits and social service agencies deeply into a project that puts a gleam on the most pernicious criminal justice system in the world, is a case in point. For those of you who would like to look at this history more closely, I suggest again Beth Ritchie's book, which dissects the politics of this process with precision.

I want to conclude with the idea, then, that today's movement against sexual violence can go one of two ways. It can begin to create the kind of broad, mass, militant movement of millions of women and non-conforming gender victims that is necessary to take on the capitalist offensive against women and working people. This in my mind is the only kind of movement that can win real concessions, all the while building up our independent power for a future assault on the system itself.

Or, we can succumb to the funds and logic of winning our safety through collaboration with the criminal justice system that is implementing the New Jim Crow, the New Jane Crow, the union-busting, the surveillance of activists, and so on. I think that viewed this way, the answer should be clear. I hope to join you in the streets soon to put the nation on notice that our tolerance for rape culture is at an end and that our eyes are on the prize of an end to patriarchy and the current system that sustains it. ■

... Common Core

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school was slated to go to Steve Perry, principle of Capital Preparatory Magnet School, one of the nation's most outspoken union bashers. Perry subscribes to the "no excuses" philosophy that is so prominent amongst the corporate reformers—all the challenges that children living in poverty face are discounted. Students are expected to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, make the cut or face being pushed out.

Last year, Perry created his own charter school management company, which lists him as the president and sole officer. This sweetheart deal would have also given Perry's private company control of the magnet school where he is now serving as principal, meaning his company would receive upwards of \$15 million per year in state

funding for operating the two schools.

The next Board of Education meeting was standing room only, with over 200 in attendance. Outraged parents blasted Perry for his arrogance and bullying tactics. They criticized the board's lack of transparency, and the whole model of school choice that pits parents against parents.

Later, in a closed-door session, the plan was defeated in a 5-4 vote. The following day Perry posted on his Twitter account, "*The only way to lose a fight is to stop fighting. All this did was piss me off. It's so on. Strap up, there will be head injuries.*" Several people, including the chair of the Board of Education, are now calling for an investigation into Perry's behavior.

The movement to defend public education is growing, and each new victory demonstrates that the unity of parents, teachers, and all those opposed to corporate hegemony is more powerful than the deep pockets of the 1%. ■

Teachers, parents, students protest Common Core testing



Paul Buckowski / Times Union



By T.J. BLACKMORE

On Nov. 13 some 800 parents and teachers crowded into the Mineola High School auditorium in Garden City Park, N.Y., to voice their concern to Commissioner John King Jr. over the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The CCSS are national standards in math and English language arts for K-12 students that have been adopted in 45 states and the District of Columbia. They were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers in a secretive process, with practically no input from classroom teachers. Bill Gates was one of the principle supporters of this initiative and has contributed \$191 million to the development and marketing of the standards.

States were coerced into agreeing to the standards in order to be eligible for a portion of the 4.35 billion dollars in federal funds under Obama's Race to the Top education plan.

States must fully implement the CCSS and the high stakes tests that accompany them by the 2014-15 school year. An entire generation of students is being treated as guinea pigs, as the standards have never been field-tested.

Teachers are upset by the rushed rollout because they have not had sufficient time to receive training and prepare lesson plans. The Baltimore County Teachers Association filed a grievance on behalf of their 8700 members, claiming the new standards are making them work hours far beyond their normal day. American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten has criticized the rollout of the CCSS, but in the end she has not wavered in her support for the standards themselves.

Observations about the CCSS from teachers and parents are disturbing and lead many to conclude that the standards are actually harming children. Reports of children crying, vomiting, and one student banging his head on his desk in frustration during the new Common Core tests all point to the toxic stress that studies show is detrimental to the development of areas of the brain necessary for learning.

According to the American Association of Pediatrics, adults should work to limit children's exposure to continuously stressful situations. But the new CCSS assessments are only adding to an already extreme regiment of testing.

In Pittsburgh students are required to take 33 tests in fourth grade alone. The schedule in Bridgeport, Conn., calls for six weeks of district-mandated tests, another week of state-required tests in science, and the final 12 weeks of school for the new Common

The stakes for children are high, but the movement to defend public education is winning significant victories.

Core tests. Some districts go so far as to administer standardized tests to kindergarteners, first and second graders. In October, 90% of parents of children in these grades boycotted testing at Castle Bridge School in New York City.

A major criticism from experts in early childhood education is that the new standards are developmentally inappropriate for the early grades. Dr. Marcy Guddemi, head of the Gesell Institute of Child Development, asserts that combining an age-inappropriate curriculum with standardized testing for children under eight amounts to child abuse.

After administering the new tests in New York, eight principals drafted a letter to parents articulating 11 points of concern about the tests. In a matter of weeks, 530 other principals and 3000 parents signed in support. The discontent over CCSS has now spread to 17 states that are rethinking, delaying, or considering opting out from the new standards, including Louisiana and Massachusetts. Louisiana has been a stronghold for the corporate reform agenda, and Massachusetts is a state that many others look to emulate as it consistently receives top rankings for its public schools.

CCSS is another step in expanding a lucrative new market in K-12 education. Just as handing over public schools to charter school operators means funneling massive amounts of taxpayer dollars to private companies, CCSS only furthers this process.

Bill Gates said that Common Core "will unleash a powerful market of people providing services for better teaching. For the first time, there will be a large, uniform base of customers looking at using products that can help every kid learn, and every teacher get better." Giant corporate publishing companies like Pearson stand to make enormous profits on their product line of lesson plans, test-prep materials, and the actual tests themselves.

New York has already spent over \$28 million on curriculum development, a task that in the past would cost a District around \$1000 per grade level. Another expense to schools is the technology infrastructure needed to administer the computer based tests. The Pioneer Institute estimates full implementation of the

Protests in Albany, N.Y. (left) and in Florida (right).

CCSS will cost \$16 billion.

The corporate reformers not only aim to boost profits from the CCSS, they also will try to use lower test scores to label schools as failing and turn them into charter schools. Ultimately the CCSS serve the corporate elite well because they seek to avoid the real cause of the education gap—poverty.

The wealthy 1% has no solution to an economic crisis that has led to a surge in the number of children living in poverty. About 48% of public school students are now eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. A 2012 National Employment Law Project report revealed that three out of five jobs created during the so-called economic "recovery" have been low-wage jobs, while only one in five jobs lost during the recession were low wage. The education reform agenda of the corporate elite is really aimed at creating a compliant workforce to fill the increasing number of poverty-wage jobs.

Public higher education is also facing severe attacks, which will leave high school graduates with few options other than choosing between a career at Walmart or McDonald's. But they will be more fortunate than the students labeled as "failing" according to the new standards, who will increasingly drop out or be pushed out and funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline.

The stakes for children are high, but the movement to defend public education is winning significant victories. In Hartford, Conn., two proposals to hand over public schools to private charter school operators were defeated. After Superintendent Kishimoto labeled Clark Elementary School as "failing" and disclosed her plan to convert the school to an Achievement First Charter School, parents, teachers, and community members organized a rally and press conference. Their voices were loud enough to cause the mayor to side with them, and the plan was soon abandoned without ever going to a vote.

Achievement First is the largest charter school management company in the state. It was co-founded by Stefan Pryor, who is now serving as the state's Commissioner of Education. Recently, Achievement First Hartford Academy came under fire when a report was issued showing that 11.7% of kindergarteners and first-graders were suspended last year an average of 5.4 times each. That is a rate nine times higher than in Hartford public schools.

Days after this victory, Kishimoto targeted another public school, SAND Elementary School. This time the

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