

Stamford hotel workers vote 'yes' to join union



Socialist Action

By ERNIE GOTTA and WILLIAM LEWIS

STAMFORD, Conn.—On Monday, Dec. 4, workers at the Hilton hotel voted overwhelmingly in favor of forming a union. With 110 for and only five against, it was a great victory for workers' power and promises a better future for over 120 workers.

The workers decided to form their union with the help of UNITE HERE Local 217. For three weeks since the march for union recognition on Nov. 13, the workers of the Hilton have stayed on the offensive, with daily lunchtime delegations against the boss. They have gathered support from workers and student throughout the state, the country, and internationally, and have more than weathered the storm of management's anti-union campaign. And this was no amateur fight; management flew in union-busting lawyers like President Trump's anti-union specialists Cruz and Associates to try to squash the union drive.

In the final week alone, it's likely that Atrium Hospitality, the company that runs the Hilton Stamford, spent over \$1 million flying in union busting managers from around the country, comping meals, and putting them up in suites. Still, the workers countered every lie and promise and stayed strong in the face of threats.

Housekeepers, cooks, banquet servers, bellmen, maintenance workers, and front-desk associates were relentless in shutting down meeting after meeting that tried to intimidate and pull workers away from forming a union. In a final pathetic attempt to win the sympathy of their workers, Atrium sent letters to their homes apologizing for their behavior, and begging for a second chance. The workers immediately recognized this sad last attempt to trick them. All of management's efforts could not stop the workers from voting yes!

And so, on a cold Monday morning, dozens of Hilton workers gathered on the corner of Greenwich Avenue in Stamford, Conn., and walked silently together in all their marvelous solidarity to vote. From the size of the crowd at 6 a.m., the outcome was clear. At 5:30 p.m., all the votes were tallied, and the outcome was official.

The vote, though, is just the beginning. The struggle continues with the fight for a strong contract. But it can be assured that no longer will housekeepers clean nearly 40 rooms daily for \$11 an hour after decades of backbreaking work. Banquet staff without health insurance will have health care with company contributions after years of going without. Servers will not cut fingers helping the always understaffed

(Above) Ines, a housekeeper at the Hilton in Stamford, Conn., celebrates following the vote.

cooks prep food while all wash dishes to keep up with room service orders and a full restaurant.

Engineers will be properly trained and properly paid, and the front desk will not have to be everywhere at once just to keep the guests from leaving and never coming back. Bell workers will have the respect they deserve for carrying luggage and driving guests throughout Stamford for little more than tips. And instead of so many full-time workers working two or three jobs to afford to live, there is the opportunity to spend more time with family and enjoy life.

While workers celebrated their well-won victory and rested up before the next battle, we can expect that the owners of Atrium Hospitality, representing 12 brands with 49 hotel properties in 26 states, went to bed Monday night with the stark realization that Tuesday morning they would wake up to a new reality—they have been dealt a blow in Stamford by the might and militancy of the Hilton workers!

The authors: Ernie Gotta reports for Socialist Action; William Lewis reports for Left Voice.

For more on the hotel union drive, see page 4.

Venezuela crisis intensifies with default

By WAYNE DELUCA

Carlos García Rawlins / Reuters



Credit agency Standard & Poor has ruled Venezuela in default after the country missed \$237 million in scheduled bond payments. This comes amidst an economic crisis with official inflation around 4000% and price increases well over 1000%. President Nicolás Maduro's attempt to restructure is hindered by sanctions that stop U.S. banks from buying any of the resulting debt.

Maduro has undertaken a dramatic restructuring at state-owned oil firm PDVSA. General Manuel Quevedo now heads the firm, and more than 100 officials have been arrested on charges of corruption. Six executives at PDVSA's U.S.-based refinery corporation CITGO have been detained, among them several U.S. citizens.

Maduro called for a "new oil revolution" as PDVSA's output has declined from 2.4 million barrels per day (bpd) to 1.9 million bpd in the last year. Oil industry watchers have expressed fears that military control will lead to further drops in production. Oil is Venezuela's main export and source of hard currency for imports and debt payments.

There are constant shortages of basic goods. This has hit medicine particularly hard, as even antibiotics like penicillin are scarce. Birth control had previously been available for free as part of Venezuela's social programs; now it is only found on the black market at outrageous markups.

Maduro and his supporters blame their woes on economic warfare against Venezuela. While there is a measure of hoarding, most of the shortages come from the combination of price controls and currency controls. Imports have stopped because the combination would require goods to be sold for less than they originally cost. Corn production has dropped 50% since 2008, with farmers unable to obtain seed or sell their product at a profit.

Criminality is endemic in today's Venezuela. The country's murder rate is 91.8 homicides per 100,000 population—compared to five in the United States. The situation is so desperate that the armed forces can no longer drive at night because soldiers are frequently attacked for their weapons and money.

Maduro's popularity is extremely low, around 23% in recent polls, but over 61% of Venezuelans oppose sanctions. Luckily for the ruling PSUV (United Socialist Party), the political opposition has fractured. The MUD (Democratic Unity Roundtable) coalition was split over participation in October's regional elections, and PSUV won an unexpected 54% of votes.

Former governor Antonio Ledezma escaped house arrest and went to Spain by way of Colombia. Freddy Guevara of the Popular Will party asked the Chilean embassy for asylum. Democratic Action (AD), the largest party in MUD, acted independently of its partners and accepted several posts from the controversial National Constituent Assembly (ANC). Dialogue between the government and opposition is expected to contin-

ue later in December.

Maduro has been relying more heavily on the armed forces to maintain control. Handing PDVSA over to the military is the "jewel in the crown" of the alliance between the president and his generals. A new law prohibits social media postings that "promote fascism, intolerance or hate." In recent days, Human Rights Watch has reported systemic torture of anti-government protesters. Maduro's increasing authoritarianism follows the trend of populism in decline and raises frightening prospects for Venezuela's future.

The Venezuelan revolution had high hopes under Hugo Chávez, Maduro's predecessor, but it never went beyond using oil profits for social benefits. The economy remained capitalist, and Chávez leaned on the "Boliburguesía," millionaires around the oil industry who were sympathetic to his project. He also continued to faithfully make payments on Venezuela's foreign debt, a policy Maduro followed even as it depleted the country's cash reserves.

Chávez tried to have a revolution without following the example of the Russian and Cuban revolutions, nationalizing industry and land. This left capital in power over the Venezuelan economy. Oil profits were spent or sent abroad rather than invested in durable state industry and agriculture. This worked with high oil prices but led to economic crisis once they dropped. Organs of local democracy grew in good times, but the crisis has led to a dangerous turn to the military and repression.

A mass revolutionary socialist party committed to completing the Venezuelan revolution is the first step out of the crisis. It must organize the struggle against the economic crisis and replace the capitalist government with a workers state. Such a revolution could not be confined to Venezuela but would spread throughout Latin America and the world.

If Maduro's regime falls to the pro-capitalist opposition, it will be a disaster for the Venezuelan people. PDVSA would be privatized and revenge exacted on workers and the poor. But there is danger that if workers do not take control of the country, Maduro's regime, supported only by the military, will move further down the road of repression and authoritarianism. ■

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

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

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

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

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

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

- PROVIDENCE: ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM (401) 952-5385
- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET (971) 312-7369
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com, (202) 286-5493

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

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

Tax bills give huge benefits to the super-rich

By NICOLAS BRANNON

Massive tax cuts for the wealthy are moving forward in Congress, with the Senate passing its own version on Dec. 1. All that is left now is for the House and Senate to combine their two very similar bills and smooth out the minor differences. Once that is done, the plan will gift hundreds of billions more dollars to the wealthy every year.

The tax plan is designed to further enrich billionaires, Wall Street, corporate executives, stock owners, and even mere millionaires, while taking money away from the poor and working class, immigrants, and Medicare. Taxes on the wealthy and corporations are slashed across the board, while tax deductions used by working people will be eliminated or phased out.

In fact, the official analysis of the Senate bill shows that, by 2027, it will raise taxes for everyone making under \$75,000. That is because many deductions are eliminated right away and others eventually expire. For example, the bill would slightly raise the child tax credit for a few years, before eliminating it altogether. Another change would make all immigrants ineligible for the child tax credit.

The elimination of the personal exemption will lead to many families paying higher taxes right away, as an increase in the standard deduction won't make up the difference. Taxes for everyone else will go up in 2025, when the increased standard deduction also expires. Many other deductions, such as for medical expenses or student loan debt, will likely be eliminated in the final bill as well.

The tax plan uses many accounting gimmicks to mask the true costs of the tax cuts for the wealthy—for example, setting some tax breaks for the rich to expire, such as the estate tax cut, which would very likely be renewed. But even after all of the measures to make it look like the tax cut won't cost as much, there is one group whose tax cuts only go up and up: the 0.1 percent super-rich.

Those costs will be paid for by cutting programs and deductions that benefit poor and working-class people. For example, the projected increase in government deficits of \$1.5 trillion over 10 years will automatically trigger major annual cuts to Medicare to pay for it. That means that next year, \$25 billion will be taken from Medicare and given to the ruling class.

The elderly aren't the only ones whose health care will be cut by the law in order to give more money to the rich. The Senate tax bill makes changes to Obamacare that are intended to keep 13 million people from signing up for subsidized health insurance or Medicaid—increasing the number of Americans without health insurance to 41 million, and paying for \$338 billion worth of tax cuts for the rich.

The bill also continues the capitalist attack on the environment by opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska for oil and gas drilling, a longtime goal of oil companies.

Some of the tax plan's biggest giveaways to the rich are in corporate taxes. The corporate tax rate will be cut almost in half, from 35 percent to 20 percent, though what companies actually pay is often much less than that. They have endless loopholes, tax deductions, and ways of reclassifying or hiding their profits in order to pay the lowest taxes possible.

A recent study of Fortune 500 companies' taxes showed that one in 10 paid "less than nothing" in income tax over a five-year period, actually receiving tax credits, despite reporting profits into the tens of billions of dollars. The new House and Senate bills scrupulously maintain these loopholes and opportunities to cook the books—and they create new ones.



(Above) House Speaker Paul Ryan plugs tax bill.

Corporations also won't owe taxes on overseas profits anymore. If any American companies decide they'd like to repatriate some of the \$2.6 trillion in untaxed profits that they are holding overseas, the bill will allow them to do so at a considerably reduced tax rate. Otherwise, they can have their accountants move their windfall profits to a country with very low corporate taxes—or none at all—and very friendly policies.

Apple, for example, kept their overseas profits in Ireland, where in 2014 they paid a tax rate of 0.005%. After the European Union (EU) found this basically tax-free arrangement to be illegal and ordered Apple to pay \$14.5 billion in back taxes, Ireland appealed, saying Apple shouldn't have to pay anything. The recently released Paradise Papers show that the company has since decided to move its \$252 billion in overseas profits to the nearby island of Jersey, where they pay no taxes and EU tax laws don't apply.

The next big gift in the House and Senate tax bills go to the owners of companies whose income can be reclassified as personal income. These are the so-called "S corporations," whose income is not taxed as corporate income but instead "passed through" to shareholders and counted as personal income. They are often referred to as "small businesses," but in reality many of them are holding companies, hedge funds, and real estate companies. More than two-thirds of "pass-through" income goes to the top 1 percent, according to a 2015 study by economists at the Treasury Department and two major universities, not to "Mom and Pop" stores.

However, the "small business" label is used to justify low taxes on these companies. Under the new plan, income from this type of business would receive a huge tax cut. In the House version, it would have a maximum tax rate of 25 percent in the House bill—way below the current top rate, or 39.6 percent. The Senate plan has a tax deduction for the first 23 percent of pass-through income. Either way, the tax cut is enormous.

One person who would benefit is Donald Trump himself, who has more than 500 pass-through corporations. The Trump Organization, with \$9.5 billion in reported revenue in 2016, qualifies as a pass-through entity. On Trump's 2005 tax return—the most recent one available—he reported \$109 million of this kind of income. Both versions of the new plan would save him tens of millions of dollars in taxes, on this one portion of his income alone.

This is also one of the biggest loopholes in the new tax plan. Simple accounting maneuvers will allow the wealthy to switch their income from regular income to "pass-through" business income and save billions in taxes. This loophole is not accidental or due to "haste," as *The New York Times* described it. It is entirely intentional and just another way that this bill will cut taxes for the rich in ways that go far beyond the officially projected amounts.

In addition to what the bourgeoisie stands to gain from the business tax cuts, they will also get large cuts on their personal income. The House and Senate bills have different ways of giving the rich these tax cuts, but both bills mainly benefit people making more than \$500,000—right about where the 1 percent starts. And, of course, the higher you go, the bigger your tax cut gets. The 0.1 percent and up are the real beneficiaries.

The estate tax is slashed and possibly repealed, depending on how the House and Senate combine their versions. Either way, the amount of tax-exempt inheritance will immediately double from \$5 million to \$10 million per person, an amount that would only affect 0.1 percent of estates. Although, as Gary Cohn, Trump's chief economic advisor and former president of Goldman Sachs, said earlier this year, "only morons pay the estate tax," because there are so many way of getting around it.

Meanwhile, the bills raise taxes on the poor and the working class. Both bills eliminate all kinds of tax deductions used by working people, in order to offset some of the cost of the huge tax cuts for the extremely rich.

The bourgeoisie tells us that all of this will result in a better economy for everyone, with more jobs and higher wages. They're giving themselves huge tax cuts for our benefit, they say. At an event hosted by *The Wall Street Journal* with Gary Cohn, Trump's economic advisor, a journalist asked a roomful of CEOs how many would use the money from these tax cuts for hiring and expanding their businesses, rather than lining their pockets. Only a few raised their hands. "Why aren't the other hands up?" Cohn demanded. They forgot to lie.

American companies are already getting record profits, while wages are at a historic low and falling. Income inequality has never been higher, but every-

(continued on page 5)

By JOHN LESLIE

Police corruption is rife from Baltimore to Philadelphia

In mid-November, federal agents arrested a Philadelphia police officer, Eric Snell, for allegedly acting as middleman for a drug ring run by a Baltimore police firearms task force. Eight Baltimore cops stand accused of framing and extorting suspects, overtime fraud, and stealing money, cocaine, and heroin. The drugs were then resold on the streets of Philadelphia.

Baltimore prosecutors have been forced to drop charges against more than 100 defendants who were accused by these corrupt cops.

In Philadelphia, police corruption is nothing new. In 1995, scandal rocked the city

when 39th District cops were accused of framing suspects, violating civil rights, violence, and theft of money. In all, seven Philly cops were convicted. As many as 300 cases were overturned and about 100 people released from prison for being framed by corrupt cops.

A key witness for the government against the 39th District cops was long-time police informant Pamela Jenkins. She had previously testified against Mumia Abu-Jamal in his frame-up trial for killing Officer Daniel Faulkner but later recanted her testimony.

The 39th District scandal wasn't the end of police malfeasance in Philadelphia. In

May 2015, six Philly narcotics officers were found not guilty in a federal trial. They had been accused of faking and planting evidence, theft of drugs and money and of framing suspects. More than 1000 convictions have been thrown out in the wake of the drug squad case, with more than 200 remaining to be reviewed. This case will cost city taxpayers an estimated \$24 million in lawsuits by the victims of the cops.

But corruption continues. In April 2015, a 19-year veteran of the force, Christopher Hulmes, was arrested for perjury and making false reports. Former DA Seth Williams (who himself pled guilty to corruption and

bribery charges in 2017) let Hulmes get off with pre-trial intervention and the promise not to return to law enforcement. The DA's office stated that more than 500 cases involving Hulmes were under review.

Police corruption, civil rights violations, and violence against communities are all linked. We can't rely on liberal politicians for solutions. Police and the district attorney's office are part of the repressive arm of the state and serve to feed the regime of mass incarceration. Socialists call for police abolition and their replacement by democratic, community-based solutions.

Policing should be accountable to democratically elected community boards and not overseen by the district attorneys. ■



(Left) Delegation of Hilton workers states demands to hotel managers at start of union drive, Nov. 13.

Why housekeepers at the Hilton hotel need a union

By ERNIE GOTTA

STAMFORD, Conn.—Before Hilton hotel workers in Stamford voted for a union, they faced a serious attempt by the bosses to bust their campaign for union recognition. Following the practice of past union drives, the bosses made use of law firms that specialize in union busting.

Why pay millions of dollars to prevent a union from forming instead of giving their workers the respect

they deserve? Right now, hotels in Stamford, Conn., the second largest market in New England, are bringing in big profits for the owners. They can afford to pay their workers a living wage, but they're too greedy to concede a few bucks.

Housekeepers, consisting mostly of immigrant workers, represent a major portion of the hotel's labor force. They work their fingers to the bone and have little to show for it. Housekeepers are some of the most exploited sections of the hospitality industry.

The starting wage for non-union Hilton housekeepers in Stamford is roughly \$10 per hour. In Stamford, Hilton housekeepers must often clean over 30 rooms in an eight-hour shift.

Every day, hotel housekeepers across the country are punching in to work with little sleep after working two or three jobs. Most are immigrant workers and women. The racial and gender aspect of this struggle is important because there is a serious wage gap for women. The wage gap is even larger for women of color. Many are also quickly moving toward retirement age with no real safety net.

Some older housekeepers walk with a permanent limp from years of hard physical labor. If they do buy in to the company's health-care plan, they must pay extremely high costs. Some workers talk about bringing home paychecks with little money, no money, or even *owing* money to the company!

Rosemene, a housekeeper from Haiti, said during the worker delegation to the general manager on Monday, Nov. 13, "I have no time for my kids, no time for my family, no time for myself. I have to work three jobs."

Housekeepers are the backbone of the hospitality industry, yet they are often treated with disrespect and poor wages. A housekeeper who cleans 30 rooms a day, five days a week for a year, when the hotel sells the room on average for \$127.69 per night (the U.S. average; Stamford is likely a bit higher) brings in nearly \$1 million for the hotel owners in that year. The owners act like scam artists, paying out big dividends to their investors and pocketing profits while paying poverty wages, roughly \$22,000 a year, to their housekeepers.

Yrvanne, another Hilton housekeeper, said, "I need the union because conditions are worse than you can imagine. There's no respect, no good benefits, and after 30 years of hard work I'm still not making enough. The health care is a killer, and the bosses are always adding more work."

What do union housekeepers make? In union hotels like the Hilton in Hartford, Conn.—just 90 minutes from Stamford—the starting wage is over \$17 per hour, and that includes quality affordable health care. The bosses know that with the workers united and fighting for a good contract they'll take a hit in the profit margin. They can afford it but spare no expense to maintain their greedy drive for profits. ■

Students confront Hilton management

By CONNECTICUT STUDENTS

STAMFORD, Conn.—On Nov. 27, a delegation of students from across Connecticut arrived to tell management at the Hilton Hotel in Stamford that they stood in solidarity with the workers organizing a union. We had representatives from University of Connecticut, Central Connecticut State University, Connecticut College, and more to demand an end to management's intimidation campaign against the workers.

We walked through the shining face of capital that the hotel represents and marched right to the front desk. Once inside the lobby, our delegation could immediately see the balance of forces emerging in this struggle.

Most workers wore their white and red "Unite Here Local 217" buttons, while management sported their own large and ghoulishly purple "Vote NO" buttons with the company's logo at the bottom. It is one thing to read about class struggle and to feel it during a normal day's work, but at the Hilton, one can feel it breathing wherever one walks.

At the front desk, we got straight to the point. We immediately asked the woman sporting a big "Vote NO" pin to speak with Robert Langevin, the general manager. She seemed to immediately know something was up, but remained professional and placed the call. We waited as a worker went up to the second floor, where management peers down at the comings and goings and movements of the workers through a large and intimidating glass wall.

After 20 minutes or so, we were compelled to make our way back to the front desk to implore the first manager that "we had all driven over an hour to be



here, and couldn't we just have five minutes with Robert?"

During the time we had been waiting in the lobby, management had the chance to go over strategy. Now when we asked about Robert, another manager, Jacinta Carter Vice president of Human Resources, was ready to hear us out. She led us to the empty dining room and three more managers, including Robert, appeared. We all sat down across from each other, eight college students being stared down by four of the higher-ups from management. We wondered if any of these people were from the pool of 18 union-busting managers that the management company, Atrium, had flown in to crack down on the drive.

Once everyone was gathered round the table, our delegation dove right into voicing our support for the workers. One student, Evan from UConn, spoke to the lack of respect shown by management, the grueling work, the precarious hours, and the starvation wages offered at the hotel, conditions which were hammered

into all of our minds by talking to workers and seeing the videos and articles coming out of this struggle. Everyone pointed out that the workers deserve a union, that management must immediately stop their intimidation meetings, and that workers are sorely underpaid and overworked.

Finally, we allowed them to respond, and what they had to say was downright laughable. In response to our question "is \$11 a livable wage?" we were told "if you ask 100 people you will get 100 different answers." This in a city and county with one of the highest cost-of-living indexes in the world.

In response to our demand that workers stop being made to clean 40 rooms a day, we were told, "we abide by industry standards." When pressed on "who sets industry standards?" Robert Langevin answered "industry." We quickly retorted "no, the bosses!"

We pointed out, "Regardless of the number of rooms, having to work so hard that every day you come back from work

in excruciating pain is too much." To this stubborn fact, we were told that management feels aches and pains too, and that is just a part of the job.

The cabal of bosses all but admitted that they have been intimidating workers, going so far as to try to justify the practice. They said, "we need to educate the workers" on what it means (for management) that they unionize. According to them, sometimes this just needs to take place in a one-on-one setting and sometimes you just need multiple managers there to "translate." The managers, the workers, and students, all know that this is a time-worn tactic of intimidation, of the bosses flexing their muscles and trying to show their power.

We had been in this "meeting" for around 20 minutes when a group of workers with gleaming white pins began marching towards us. They flanked the management from behind and broke into their ranks to offer us sincere gratitude for coming to support them. We thanked them back for being so courageous and strong and broke out into a round of applause.

Joining together with the workers was a truly triumphant moment. They came out after five minutes or so of management's huffing and hawing, circling around outright, saying that they do not think people deserve to be paid enough to live.

Langevin, Jacinta, and their cronies were obviously deeply unsettled by the open defiance that the workers, all on the clock, showed in barging into our meeting. We decided to leave them shaken up, voiced one last time our unwavering support for the union, and made our way to the door, thrilled to bear witness to the incoherence and cowardice of the bosses.

After interacting with management and hearing their lies, the entire student delegation was convinced that the Hilton workers deserve a union now. ■

UConn students respond to alt-right speech on campus

By UCONN YOUTH FOR SOCIALIST ACTION

On Dec. 1, University of Connecticut (UConn) students organized a march and rally in response to their perception of the university administration's inadequate action in relation to a white nationalist speaker on campus four days earlier. That night, Nov. 28, the UConn College Republicans hosted alt-right spokesperson Lucian Wintrich. Around 150 students, faculty members, and people from as far as Massachusetts showed up to protest the event.

Wintrich was drowned out with chants such as "Go home, Nazi" for most of his hour-long talk, followed by a collective walk-out by the protesters. During the walk-out, a woman grabbed Wintrich's speech, after which he assaulted her, grabbing her from behind. In her words, "He went for my face."

The Dec. 1 action was attended by around 200 students. The demands made by the organizers and their supporters were focused on having the administration strengthen their policies on hate speech and to discipline the College Republicans. However, UConn's Youth for Socialist Action (YSA) chapter believes that these demands, if implemented, would increase the repressive abilities of the administration.

Following are major excerpts from the speech by the UConn YSA president, Evan, that he presented at the Dec. 1 rally.

I am here to talk about how to maintain mobilization following the event on Tuesday [Nov. 28] and the obvious energies that are showing themselves now. ...

The administration already has the power to silence people, and it does. Excellent scholars have been ostracized at this university for supporting Palestinian liberation, the cultural studies programs are always hanging on by a thread, and they have been stalling on having a real curriculum on Native American history for decades.

Our strategy cannot be to force the university to protect us; they are neither willing nor capable to do so. It would do good to remember what they did in response to the big Title IX violations and severely racist attacks a couple of years ago. They didn't do anything to affect the material conditions of racism or misogyny on campus, they didn't substantially increase community education efforts. The administration, to cover its own ass, increased the size of the administration. The expansion of administrative authority immediately marginalized the cultural centers. We cannot appeal to administration—we must protect ourselves.

The very last thing the administration needs is to have more power to silence people. All over the country, university administrations are using their power to stamp out the left and the groups of oppressed



people. As far as I know, no professor has ever been arrested for white supremacist ideas with the support of their university. On the other hand, professors are arrested and disciplined for supporting Palestine all of the time.

At CCSU, the students demanded the campus newspaper make new rules for censoring out hate speech. Those rules were then used to kick an editor off the paper for being a socialist, for writing about antiwar and anti racist activities, for belonging to the YSA.

I am forced to think of George Cicariello-Maher, a professor at Drexel and a leading scholar on Venezuela, recently put on academic leave due to right-wing pressure. Or Johnny Eric Williams, a Trinity professor who recently wrote a book on the racist ideology permeating modern genetic science, and was put on leave for a supposed "racist" post against white people on social media. Or even Linda Sarsour, who is regularly accused of anti-Semitism for her vocal support for Palestinian liberation.

If we ask for the university to punish organizations for bringing in speakers who use hate-speech, what will we say when the right comes after us for inviting someone who calls for Black reparations or real self-determination for Palestine? We should not forget that Malcolm X was labeled by many as a Black fascist.

So if we cannot appeal to the administration, what are we to do? We need our own organizations. Who has the most protection on this campus? Tenured professors. Why is that? Because they have the AAUP! Just like professors need to be organized, just like workers

need to be organized, students need our own organizations so we can defend ourselves against white supremacy, misogyny, transphobia, etc. ...

When a student group decides to bring a racist, misogynist, piece of trash speaker to campus, we can make them explain themselves—not to an external group like the school administration, but to us. When Sodexo inevitably tries to bust up the cafeteria workers' union here, the workers will need our help in fighting for a livable contract. We can help in any strike efforts or actions. We can spread pro-union propaganda. This could even be the basis for student workers to unionize.

What we should do, going forward, is to form united fronts of student groups. To maintain momentum and independence, we can stand together against racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and all forms of oppression.

The YSA will fight with you for united fronts that can mobilize, not 300, but 3000 and more for equity and justice. All of us must stay in constant dialogue, with the intention to hold big conferences before events like this one so students can collectively debate and discuss in person exactly what we are trying to accomplish. ...

We can mold ourselves to build unity in fighting to demolish the arguments of the alt-right in big teach-ins, where we put forward the perspectives of oppressed people, rather than organizing to give the university more repressive power.

Thank you for coming out. We will build, we will fight, and we will win. ■

U. Wisconsin-Superior students protest program cuts

By LUCAS ALAN DIETSCH
and ADAM RITSCHER

SUPERIOR, Wis.—On Oct. 31, Halloween, the administration of the University of Wisconsin-Superior (UWS) decided to give a trick instead of a treat to faculty and students. Without any warning before making the decision, the administration decided to cut (they use the word "suspend") many of its major and minor programs. At least 25 programs are affected, including political science, sociology, and theater as majors.

The initial reason that the administration gave for its action was that students have too many choices and therefore cannot finish their degree. The administration also claimed that there was low enrollment in many of the programs.

The last of the forums given by the administration to explain the cuts included 200 to 300 students, faculty, allies, and alumni voicing strong concerns about the decision. The opposition yelled, laughed, and clapped in standing ovations against the administration's answers.

Theater major Christopher Linder said the decision to suspend the programs doesn't fit with what a university's mission should be. "Imagine a hospital that only treats popular illnesses," he said. "Is education supposed to be business as usual?"

Chancellor Renee Wachter's comments

at the forum were akin to talking down to students and allies as if they were naughty children having a temper tantrum. But nothing that was said by the administration could soothe the frustration of having the futures of students abruptly destroyed.

Megan McGarvey, a digital cinema major, expressed the view of many students that they should have had a voice in the process. She told National Public Radio: "We spend thousands upon thousands of dollars. I'm going to be in debt at least until I'm in my mid-30s—and that's only if I can have a job right after I graduate. ... For the choices that we wanted and had here to be just cut without our acknowledgement, without our knowledge, I think it's just disrespectful to the students and the student body."

On Nov. 6, students organized a sit-in inside the student union. Participants wore black and had red squares (akin to the 2012 student Quebec uprising) pinned to their clothing. An on-line petition against the cuts was circulated; it gathered over 5000 signatures by Nov. 6. The next day included a protest in front of the administration building.

The next week, faculty organized a teach-in to discuss campus strategy, social movements, and college activism. The teach-in was well attended by many faculty, alumni, and students. The faculty senate has been discussing a vote of no

confidence in the chancellor. Many alumni donors are pulling their money out of the college.

On the evening of Dec. 2, two-dozen spirited students, faculty, alumni, and community members braved the cold to protest in front of the UWS Yellowjacket Union. The action was held outside the glitzy Chancellor's Ball fundraiser to show outrage at the program cuts. Protesters wore costumes to symbolically reclaim the Halloween that was ruined by the announced cuts. They handed

... Tax bills

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where the ruling class looks for more. Whether it's cutting retirees' pensions out from under them, raising the price of insulin 300 percent, or closing down schools and packing more kids into overcrowded classrooms, they squeeze a little bit more every time because capitalism demands profit at the expense of human life, and driving down the average quality of life of the workers increases profits.

As Marx wrote, the way capitalists see it, "a quick succession of unhealthy and short-lived generations

fundraiser attendees candy with the following message printed on them: "Thank you for supporting UWS students! Please ask Chancellor Wachter to reconsider the program suspensions at UWS. More choices for students, not fewer, are what makes UWS great."

The response from those attending the fundraiser was overwhelmingly supportive, demonstrating yet again how deeply opposed our community is to the gutting of the university. The action closed with a rousing chant of "We'll be back!" And rest assured, we will be—again and again—until these draconian cuts are consigned to the dustbin of history! ■

will keep the labor market as well supplied as a series of vigorous and long-lived generations." Only a socialist society, in which production is not based on profit but on human needs, can change this.

Capitalism will always seek to pull ever-greater profits out of the hides of the workers. It is the nature of the system. Only by having the means of production not in the hands of a tiny few—the 0.1 percent or less—but in the hands of the many, deciding democratically how to meet their needs, can we break capitalism's need for increasing impoverishment of workers in order to suck ever greater wealth upwards. ■

Trump's War on Science



Dominick Reuter / AFP / Getty Images

By CLIFF CONNER

Cliff Conner is currently writing a book entitled "The Tragedy of American Science."

How loathsome is the Trump administration? Let me count the ways. On second thought, let me not—it would take too long. But one important threat it poses to the United States and the world is to the integrity of American science. Earlier this year, on Earth Day, April 22, hundreds of thousands of people responded to that danger by participating in the March for Science in Washington, D.C., and 600 other cities and towns across the country. How has American science fared since then?

Many right-wing politicians and public intellectuals are torn between repugnance for Donald Trump's truculent ignorance and exuberance at the prospect that he can help them accomplish their goal of "dismantling the administrative state." Trump's first year in office helped advance their strategy of destroying public faith in "big government" by discrediting it. Not only are the Trump administration's various agencies and cabinet offices laughably incompetent and ethically compromised; the office of the presidency itself has forfeited all claim to the respect of intelligent citizens.

The offensive against "big government" is driven by billionaire donors who finance right-wing think tanks, political campaigns, and media outlets. Their single-minded goal is to reduce their taxes and roll back governmental regulation of their businesses, especially with regard to environmental and public health protection.

Their crusade against federal regulatory powers entails going to battle against empirical reality, rationality, knowledge, and expertise—in short, they have declared war against science.

The deregulation of corporate activities that have compromised the credibility of American science did not begin with Trump. Nor was it exclusively a Republican political project; the Carter, Clinton, and Obama administrations all likewise furthered the deregulation agenda.

It should not be forgotten that many of the environmental rules and regulations Trump's team has rescinded were only put in place by Obama in the closing days of his eight-year tenure as president. All they accomplished was to provide easy targets for Trump to knock over. The tawdry assemblage of antiscience

policy-makers appointed by Trump, however, amounts to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole process.

The Big Three: Pruitt, Perry, Zinke

If Trump is Commander-in-Chief of the war against science, its field commanders are those he has appointed to key scientific posts. A few examples, beginning with the Big Three of environmental and energy policy—Scott Pruitt, Rick Perry, and Ryan Zinke—make that clear:

- **SCOTT PRUITT** is the very model of an administrator appointed to undermine the agency he administers. Trump has on numerous occasions called for the elimination of the Environmental Protection Agency. Pruitt, as Attorney General of Oklahoma, had sued the EPA thirteen times, challenging regulations protecting air and water quality. In choosing Pruitt to lead the agency, Trump's motives were transparent.

As an opening gambit, Trump instructed Pruitt to rescind the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, which regulated CO₂ emissions from coal-burning power plants. Pruitt, an outspoken climate change denier with close ties to the fossil-fuel industries, was just the man for the job.

Pruitt systematically weakened the EPA's scientific capabilities by purging dozens of members of its scientific advisory committees. In May 2017 he dismissed five of the 18 members of its Board of Scientific Counsellors and suggested that he might replace them with representatives of the industries the EPA regulates—for "balance," of course. A spokesman for Pruitt declared, "We should have people on this board who understand the impact of regulations on the regulated community." In June the agency's 47-member Science Advisory Board was likewise vitiated.

- **RICK PERRY** publically proclaimed that he would dismantle the Department of Energy if he had the authority to do so. He made that declaration in 2012 while campaigning for a presidential nomination. In March 2017 he became the Trump administration's Secretary of Energy, making him head of the department he had vowed to eliminate.

When he accepted the position, he did not understand what it entailed. He thought, "he was taking on a role as a global ambassador for the American oil and gas industry." Only later was he made aware that as Secretary of Energy, "he would become the steward of a vast national security complex he knew almost nothing about, caring for the most fearsome weapons on the planet, the United States' nuclear arsenal" (*The*

New York Times, Jan. 18, 2017).

Among this buffoon's responsibilities with regard to the nuclear stockpile, he would be in charge of national laboratories that have been called the "crown jewels of government science." The two previous Secretaries of Energy had been legitimate scientists: Ernest J. Moniz, chairman of MIT's physics department, and Steven Chu, a Nobel laureate in physics.

Perry's record as a major political voice of climate change denial stems from his extensive connections to the fossil-fuels industries, from which as governor of Texas he took more than \$14.3 million in campaign donations. Big Oil and Big Gas were also the primary financial backers of his two presidential campaigns. At the time of his nomination, Perry was a member of the board of directors of Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the controversial Dakota Access Pipeline.

- **RYAN ZINKE** began his tenure as Secretary of the Interior by rolling back a federal regulation reducing the amount of methane that vents from natural gas wells. This was the opening shot in a campaign against what he called "job-killing regulation that is not based on sound science"—Orwellian doublespeak for the science-based rules that underpin federal climate policy.

He followed that up with an order to cancel a study of the health risks of an environmentally destructive coal-mining practice in which the tops of mountains are blown off. The study was being conducted by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. The cancellation was condemned by public-interest environmental groups but cheered by the National Mining Association.

Zinke proclaimed his intention to oversee "probably the greatest restructuring in the history of the Department of the Interior." His plan would reduce the DOI budget by \$1.6 billion and eliminate 4000 jobs in the department. It also included transferring leading scientists to positions where their climate-related research would not conflict with the denialist mantra. Among them were Virginia Burkett and Joel Clement.

Dr. Burkett was reassigned from a position in which she had contributed to a Nobel Peace Prize-winning report on climate change to an office under the control of Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, who, as a former lobbyist, had sued the DOI. Joel Clement, who had been the DOI's chief climate policy expert, was also reassigned, but he did not go quietly. Instead, he resigned and publicly challenged Zinke's attempt to silence and intimidate him, invoking the protections of the whistleblower law.

In his letter of resignation, Clement declared, "If the Trump administration continues to try to silence experts in science, health and other fields, many more Americans, and the natural ecosystems upon which they depend, will be put at risk."

Other hacks in the Trump administration

Pruitt, Perry, and Zinke top the list of industry hacks and global warming deniers appointed by Trump to positions of influence over science policy, but several more are worth noting:

- **KATHLEEN HARTNETT WHITE** was named head of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, making her Trump's senior advisor on environmental policy. She has no scientific credentials but was a "Distinguished Senior Fellow-in-Residence" at a crackpot libertarian think tank, the Texas Public Policy Foundation. She once characterized the scientific consensus on global warming as a "kind of paganism" for "secular elites," and denied that CO₂ is a pollutant, calling it "the gas of life on this planet." She has also called renewable energy "unreliable and parasitic."

- **WILLIAM WEHRUM**—a man who had spent his career challenging the EPA's clean air protections—has been chosen to head the EPA office in charge of ensuring clean air in the United States. As a lawyer and lobbyist representing polluting industries, Wehrum has sued the EPA at least 77 times on behalf of clients such as the American Petroleum Institute, the Gas Processors Association, and the American

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Chemistry Council.

It would be a major task to list all of the potential conflicts of interests the new director of the Office of Air and Radiation will face as he rules on matters involving his former clients. One timely example will have to suffice. One week before his Nov. 9 confirmation by the Senate, Wehrum was in federal court arguing against Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards protecting workers from airborne silica dust. In his oral arguments, he declared: "People are designed to deal with dust. People are in dusty environments all the time and it doesn't kill them."

• **MICHAEL DOURSON**, Trump's nominee to head the EPA's chemical safety office, would be an ideal poster boy for the corporatization of American science. *The New York Times* editorial board explained why his nomination should be opposed: "Mr. Dourson is a scientist for hire. A toxicologist and a professor at the University of Cincinnati, he has a long history of consulting for chemical companies and conducting studies paid for with industry money. He frequently decided that the compounds he was evaluating were safe at exposure levels that are far more dangerous to public health than levels recommended by the E.P.A., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other agencies. His nomination is enthusiastically endorsed by the chemical industry" (*The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2017).

The EPA triumvirate of Pruitt, Wehrum, and Dourson constitutes a clear and present danger to public health.

• **DR. SCOTT GOTTLIEB**, who became head of the Food and Drug Administration in May 2017, is yet another scientist-for-hire in charge of a science-based agency. Having made millions of dollars consulting for and investing in Big Pharma, he is now responsible for regulating that industry and overseeing the research into the safety of its products.

Gottlieb is a career wheeler-dealer in the drug and health-care industries, where he has held seats on numerous corporate boards. GlaxoSmithKline paid him \$87,153 as a consultant from January 2016 through February 2017, a period in which he received \$3 million in consulting and retainer fees. At the time of his nomination, he was CEO of a biotech company named Cell Biotherapy, a partner at a large venture capital firm, New Enterprise Associates, which speculates on medical research start-ups, and managing director of banking and brokerage firm T.R. Wilson & Co.

On top of all that, Gottlieb found time to ideologically justify his policies as a Resident Fellow at a venerable right-wing think tank, the American Enterprise Institute. In his writings, he has criticized the agency he now runs for being too worried about drug safety, complaining that FDA regulators "prioritize safety over speed" and demand research studies that "take too long and cost too much."

As FDA director, Gottlieb will be in a position to facilitate rushing highly profitable drugs to market. One way he aims to accomplish that is by cutting back critical Phase III drug safety testing, the clinical trials large enough to provide trustworthy results.

• **SAM CLOVIS** will not be the Department of Agriculture's top scientist after all. After accepting the nomination, he withdrew to avoid further scrutiny of his involvement with Russian agents on behalf of Trump's presidential campaign. But the fact that a right-wing talk radio host and Tea Party activist with no scientific credentials could even be considered as the chief scientist overseeing the country's food production, food safety, and nutrition shows the disdain with which the Trump administration regards science.

It also reveals its disregard for the law, because the position for which Clovis was nominated is legally required to be filled by someone chosen "from among distinguished scientists with specialized training or significant experience in agricultural research, education, and economics" (U.S. Congress, H.R.2419, §6971).

• **REBEKAH ADCOCK** heads a clandestine "deregulation team" at the Department of Agriculture. In February 2017, Trump ordered a number of federal agencies to set up such teams, but has resolutely refused to identify their members. Investigative reporters for *The New York Times* and *ProPublica*, however, were able to confirm that, as suspected, many of them are "former employees of industry-financed organizations that oppose environmental regulations" (*The New York Times*, Nov. 13, 2017).

Adcock herself was found to be among the worst of the conflict-of-interest offenders. From 2010 to April 2017, Adcock had been a lobbyist for the pesticide industry's main trade group, CropLife America, which represents agro-giants Syngenta and Monsan-



These anti-science officials work to transfer the wealth of the U.S. economy from the households of the many to the coffers of the few.

to, among others. By the end of April, she was a top official at the Department of Agriculture, and by May she was meeting behind closed doors with CropLife and Syngenta representatives. Their joint mission was to overturn science-based regulations previously imposed by the Department of Agriculture to protect farm families, farmworkers, and the public from the well-established dangers of pesticide use.

• **JIM BRIDENSTINE** has been nominated to be the top official at one of the premier scientific agencies of the United States, the National Aerospace and Space Administration. Although best known for space exploration, NASA has also played a major role in climate change research. The agency's budget request for 2018 projected \$1.8 billion for its Earth Science program.

NASA launches the satellites that measure changes in the Earth's climate and ocean temperatures. The data they gather are used by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other climate researchers all over the world. Although an estimated one-third of the American economy relies on such data, Trump has called for deep cuts in funding for climate research while demagogically dismissing global warming as a "hoax."

Unlike previous NASA directors, Bridenstine has no qualifications, educational or otherwise, as a scientist. As a member of the far-right congressional Freedom Caucus, however, he has sterling credentials as a climate change denier. Bridenstine is purely a political hatchet man selected to oversee the reduction of NASA's research mission.

• **BARRY LEE MYERS**, a wealthy businessman, has been chosen to run the country's number-one climate research agency, the aforementioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In addition to satellite climate data, the NOAA also oversees fisheries, marine sanctuaries, and endangered species. Its directors have traditionally had strong science backgrounds.

Myers' experience, however, has been corporate rather than scientific; he is CEO of AccuWeather, a for-profit weather forecasting company. That creates an obvious conflict of interest because the NOAA oversees the National Weather Service, which provides high-quality weather forecasts free of charge.

Myers has clashed with the federal agency in the past, complaining that it represents "unfair competition" to his company. He supported a bill sponsored by Senator Rick Santorum that would have barred the National Weather Service from offering a service "that is or could be provided by the private sector."

The unionized National Weather Service employees have vigorously protested Myers' appointment. A union rep charged Myers with wanting "to turn the Weather Service into a taxpayer-funded corporate subsidy of AccuWeather."

Myers, like many of Trump's choices, will oversee a shrinking agency. The White House's projected national budget for 2018 slashes NOAA's funding by

(Above) About 3000 people greeted Trump in Salt Lake City on Dec. 2 with a protest against the scaling back of two National Monuments. These and other targeted areas will be opened to grazing, mining, and other economic activities.

17%, with particular emphasis on reducing climate and ocean research.

• **BETSY DEVOS**, a libertarian opponent of public schools, was the Trump administration's ideal candidate for Secretary of Education. Her hostility to public education aligned perfectly with Trump's belittling of what he demagogically calls "failing government schools." In his book "Great Again, How To Fix Our Crippled America," he wrote: "A lot of people believe the department of education should just be eliminated. Get rid of it. If we don't eliminate it completely, we certainly need to cut its power and reach."

Although holding no qualifications in the field of education, DeVos is eminently qualified to fulfill Trump's expectations. Being in charge of the Department of Education gives her, among other things, a bully pulpit from which to further demoralize American science education.

For at least the past two decades, DeVos has campaigned for charter schools as alternatives to public schools, and for publicly funded voucher schemes to fund private schools. Success in those endeavors would result in federal taxpayer dollars supporting the anti-Darwinist and climate-change-denial curricula of religious academies.

The Secretary of Education and her family have furthered that agenda by donating millions of dollars to organizations like Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council, which promote creationism and intelligent design. The Family Research Council, it should be noted, has been designated an "anti-LGBT hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

DeVos and her husband funnel their philanthropy through their personal tax shelter, the Dick and Betsy DeVos Foundation, which gave Focus on the Family \$275,000 from 1999 to 2001. From 2001 to 2013 her parents' Elsa and Edgar Prince Foundation (of which Betsy was a vice president) gave Focus on the Family \$5.2 million and the Family Research Council \$6.2 million. Since the 1970s, the DeVos clan has donated at least \$200 million to extreme right-wing think tanks (like the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty) and political action groups (like the Foundation for Traditional Values) that seek to destroy public education and undermine the separation of church and state.

Science education in the United States was not in admirable shape before Trump took office. In 2015 rankings by country of student performance in mathematics and science, the United States placed 40th in math and 25th in science on the list of 72 countries. (Source: OECD.) With Betsy DeVos at the helm of the federal agency responsible for education policy, the future of American scientific education appears bleak indeed.

The preceding rogue's gallery depicts a cast of characters in positions of authority devoted to undermining the integrity of American science. Their purpose is Robin Hood's in reverse—to transfer the vast wealth of the American economy from the households of the many to the coffers of the few. Already the greatest heist in human history—a robbery of trillions upon trillions of dollars—its perpetrators are not yet satisfied. And they are still at large. ■

Relevance of the Russian Revolution Today



(Left) Leon Trotsky speaks to Red Army troops.

By JEFF MACKLER

This is the second part of a series of articles. Part I appeared in the October 2017 issue of *Socialist Action*.

The Oct. 25, 1917 (Nov. 7 in the new calendar) Russian Revolution remains the seminal event in modern human history, if for no other reason that it marked the first time a consciously-led revolutionary struggle brought to political, economic, military, and social power the vast majority of a nation's people—the working class and poor peasants. The rule of the “one percent,” (actually one thousandth of one percent or less) was abolished in one earthshaking blow. It was replaced by the institutionalized rule of workers, peasants and soldiers.

Organized on a local, regional, and national basis and having initiated and ratified the Oct. 25 revolutionary seizure of power from the capitalist Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky, this Soviet [council] Government was established on Day One as the official and only government of what would become the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.)

Contrary to its vilifiers around the world, it was this Soviet Government (not the revolutionary socialist Bolshevik Party) that ruled the new revolutionary workers' state that encompassed one-sixth of the earth's land surface. Its representatives were directly elected by soviets at every workplace and region, from the cities to the countryside to the military garrisons. Soviet delegates, paid the wages of skilled workers, were subject to immediate recall if they failed to carry out the mandate of their constituency.

This simple notion that the working people should govern their own lives through their own institutions, and in their own interests has been central to the ideology and practice of revolutionary socialism from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to the co-leaders of the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, and to every serious revolutionary socialist today.

The Stalinist perversion of this elementary conception—substituting the rule of a political party, not to mention the cult of a single individual, for the institutional rule of the working class—has been a boon to all seeking to discredit socialism as a minority dictatorship.

In my previous article on this subject (*Socialist Action*, October 2017) I reviewed some of the immediate and unprecedented decrees approved and implemented by this Soviet government, including granting the land to the peasantry, who were 90 percent of the population, granting the right of self-determination to Russia's conquered and colonized nations, ending Russia's participation in World War I, establishing workers' control of all basic industries, and implementing an unprecedented range of social measures. These ended the subjugation of women by socializing key nuclear family institutions, establishing free health care and education, abolishing all laws restricting and punishing gender preference, legalizing free abortion and the right to immediate divorce at the request of either partner, as well as opening up an amazing range of scientific, artistic, and cultural endeavors that astonished the world.

The Preface to Leon Trotsky's monumental “History of the Russian Revolution” succinctly captures the above: “The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history

of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny.” Unfortunately, many of these achievements were undermined, distorted, or reversed during the Stalinist reaction that followed within less than a decade after the October 1917 victory.

Ending Russia's participation in World War I

Flush with an excess of revolutionary optimism following the seizure of power, an almost immediate division emerged within the Bolshevik Party as well as within the Soviet Government over the critical question of how to meet the party's promise to end Russia's participation in World War I. A current inside the Bolshevik Party, the “Left Communists,” as well as other soviet parties, including the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, were incensed by the spurious imperialist accusation that the new Soviet Government was nothing less than an “agent of the German empire.”

In opposition to Lenin, who demanded the immediate signing of a peace accord with Germany and its allied Central Powers and the Ottoman Empire, they proposed that the Soviet Government transform the imperialist war into a revolutionary war, which they envisioned as virtually an immediate prelude to world revolution. A temporary compromise was reached based on Trotsky's proposal to proceed to the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk (now in Belarus, near the Polish border) based on the proposition, “neither war nor peace”—that is, that Russia would not sign a peace treaty but would not engage in any further military actions.

While Trotsky's brilliant delaying speeches at Brest-Litovsk were a model for socialist propaganda at that time, one German general negotiator aptly noted that the Russian Army was “a figment of the imagination.” The truth of this assertion was measured on the ground as Germany and its allied troops proceeded to march across Russia unimpeded. Russia's ill-equipped, war weary, demoralized, and until recently imperialist-led troops, who had been conscripted under Tsarism to fight for imperialist conquests and booty, were in no condition to be overnight transformed into a revolutionary fighting force for world revolution.

Within a few months, this reality became obvious to the great majority of the Soviet Government. Trotsky dropped his original delaying proposal, sided with Lenin, and thus established a majority in the soviet to sign the humiliating but absolutely necessary March 3, 1918, peace treaty at Brest Litovsk.

The imperialist world invades the USSR

The terms of this treaty gave Germany control of Finland, the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), and the Ukraine. Parts of the Caucasus region had to be ceded to the German-allied Ottoman Empire. “Shameful,” said Lenin of this “peace” treaty, but it was absolutely essential to fulfill the promise of his party to end the war. Fully one-third of Russia's population was now under German control, as was half its industry, 90 percent of its fuel production, and 55 percent of its grain and wheat production. The Soviet Government's signing of this treaty provided an historic example of real-life politics wherein revolutionary rhetoric was no match for the patient consolidation of a fragile revolution, beleaguered on every side.

Russia's wartime “allies” and “enemies” alike took

advantage of the Soviet Government's promise to its people that peace would be forthcoming. An article published in the May 2017 *International Courier* adequately describes the predation that both sides of the imperialist World War I had in store for the nascent workers' state:

“On April 3 [a month after Brest Litovsk], Japanese troops invaded in Vladivostok and occupied southern Siberia. The next day the Turks took Batumi, Georgia at the Black Sea and reached the Caucasus. The Romanians took Bessarabia. The fearsome Czechoslovak Legion, sponsored by France, revolted and joined the [Tsarist] White Guards in western Siberia and began a military campaign seizing the entire region. French troops occupied the southern Ukraine and the Crimea; and the British Army took Archangel on the banks of the North Dvina River, while Turkish units took the oil-field center at Baku. The White Army was created, commanded by the [former Czarist] Generals Nikolai Yudenich, Lavr Kornilov, Alexander Kolchak and Anton Denikin fighting on several fronts.”

We might add that the U.S. took its turn to send invasion troops to Russia's Siberia to defeat the world's first workers' state. In total 14 nations invaded, wreaking untold horrors. The *Courier* concludes: “In late 1918, the ... Soviet Republic was about the size of medieval Muscovy before the [year 1547] conquests of Ivan the Terrible. In Lenin's words it was ‘an oasis in a raging sea of imperialist banditry.’”

The Red Army and Soviet war strategy

But there is another side to this complex equation, the side that at least partially explains why the combined counterrevolutionary efforts of the world's imperialist powers failed to reverse the fundamental gains of October 1917. The day after the signing of the Brest Litovsk “peace” agreements, Trotsky was appointed by the Soviet Government to be president of the Supreme Council of War. A month later, he became People's Commissar of War and proceeded to construct and lead the Red Army.

Until that time the fighting forces under the direct control of the Soviet Government were essentially the Bolshevik-organized Red Guards, which had successfully defeated General Kornilov's effort to defeat the approaching October insurrection in Petrograd and Moscow. These forces numbered an estimated 7000 worker-soldiers, recruited from the ranks of the city's vanguard workers and soldiers.

Under Trotsky's leadership a highly professional, technologically equipped and disciplined Soviet Army, the Red Army, became an impressive fighting force numbering 5 million. From a near-enslaved army of poor peasants compelled by their autocratic masters to fight against their own interests, the Red Army was transformed into an unprecedented powerhouse that defeated the combined militaries of most of the imperialist world.

This carefully constructed army was consciously begun with a central core of seasoned worker-Bolsheviks, whose political training, experience, and loyalty to the revolution's highest aspirations were unmatched in history. With this core the Red Army was politically armed to not only inspire its broad ranks but to see the Soviet Government's future as inextricably tied to the world revolution. It became a political force on the battlefield, whose impact reverberated in capitals across Europe and beyond. Internationalist fighters from around the world joined its ranks.

While Trotsky's army used thousands of former Tsarist officers as its military commanders, in every instance each was accompanied by a Soviet political commissar, whose critical assignment was to educate and inspire the ranks with the revolution's highest ideals, not to mention to keep a sharp eye on the political loyalty of the officer core. This responsibility included, when necessary, making recommendations to the appropriate soviet body for an abusive or incompetent officers' immediate removal.

International support for Russian Revolution

In the course of the terrible years of the 1918-22 Civil War between the Red and White armies, the latter abetted by the armies of world imperialism, simultaneously fighting on 14 fronts, the Red Army emerged victorious.

While the world revolution that the Bolsheviks expected to come to their immediate aid did not materialize due to the crisis of leadership and betrayal of the reformist, chauvinist, pro-war “Socialist” International, in a real sense the revolutionary fervor and ideals imbued by the October Revolution in the world's working masses did become a critical factor in the revolution's survival.

The three revolutionary upheavals in Germany and Austria-Hungary between 1919 and 1923, including the

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Donald Trump to 60,000 Haitians: 'Get out!'

By MARTY GOODMAN

On Nov. 20, the Trump administration, after an election campaign based on anti-immigrant hate, ordered the expulsion of 60,000 Haitians living in the U.S. who arrived after the devastation of Haiti's 2010 earthquake, which killed over 200,000. Haitians who arrived by Jan. 2011 received Temporary Protective Status (TPS) under a 1990 law and were allowed to stay 18 months. Haitian TPS status was extended four times.

Directly affected will be some 30,000 children of Haitian TPS recipients, ripping families apart. TPS Haitians have until July 2019 to "prepare for departure" said the Department of Homeland Security. (TPS status of 5000 Nicaraguans expires in early January and 86,000 Hondurans in July 2018. Some 200,000 Salvadorans await a decision in January. TPS was granted after hurricane Mitch hit Central America in 1999.)

The anti-immigrant attacks come on the heels of Trump's racist Muslim ban and threats to deport 800,000 children of so-called "illegal" immigrants who received DACA status (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). All the while, Trump continues his vow to build a racist wall along the Mexican border. Socialists say, "No to deportations! Full citizenship rights for TPS immigrants! No to the wall! No one is illegal!"

In ending TPS status for Haitians, acting secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke asserted, "the extraordinary but temporary conditions caused by the earthquake of 2010 no longer exist"—a contemptible lie! TPS Haitians have until July 2019 to "prepare," says the administration.

The ruling-class bigots could hardly have been crueler. Since arriving, TPS Haitians have gotten jobs and raised families. As a result, TPS Haitians support 250,000 relatives in Haiti, says a study released in October by the Global Justice Clinic of the New York University Law School. If expelled, Haitians would be returning to a devastated country.

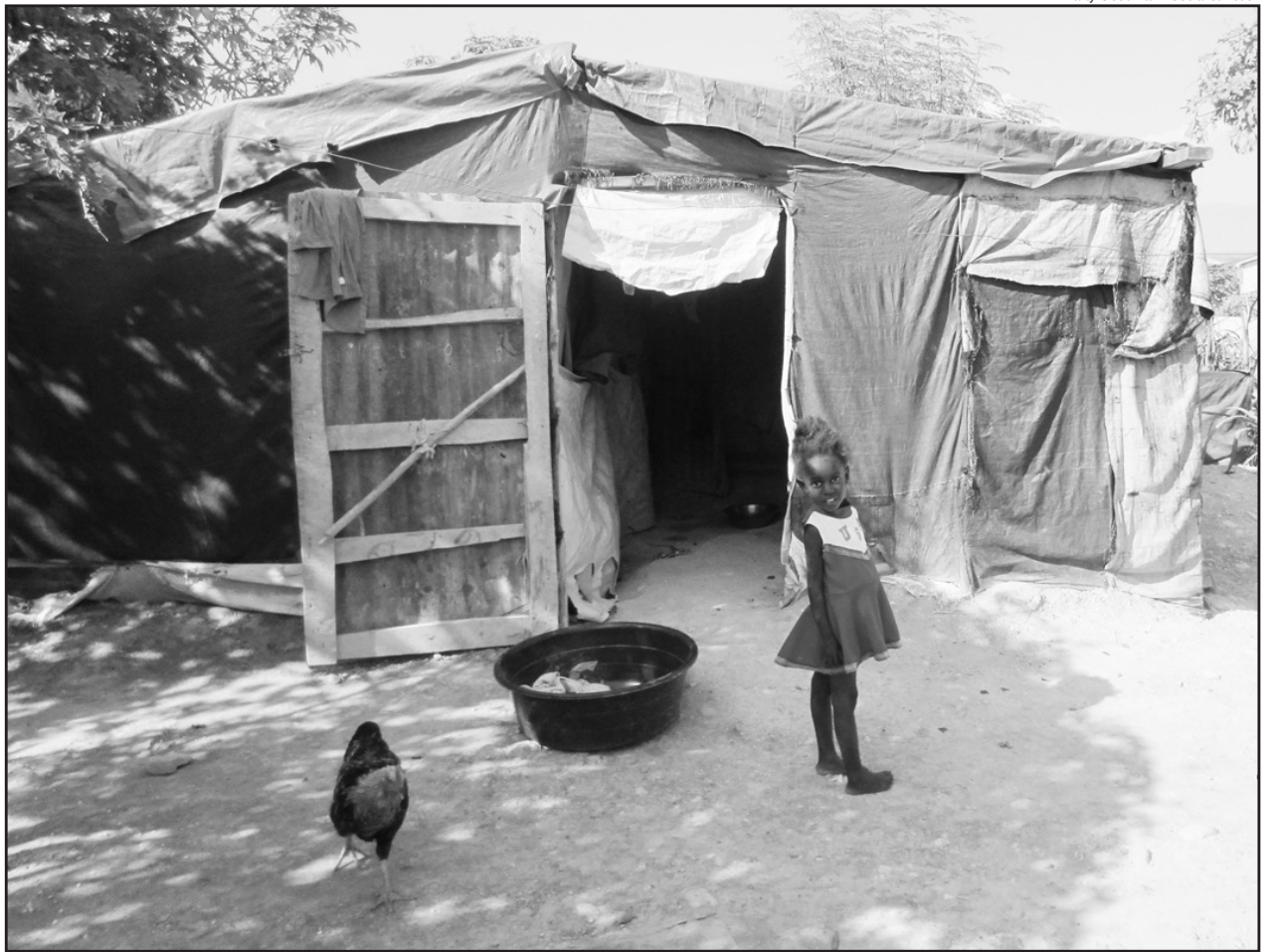
"I received a shock right now," said Gerald Michaud, 45, a Haitian who lives in Brooklyn, when he heard the bad news. He has been sending money to family and friends back home. Brooklyn radio host Ricot Dupuy told his listeners, "This pressure to send immigrants back home, ... the idea is to whiten America."

TPS advocate Steve Forester, immigration policy coordinator with the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), cites as reasons for TPS the earthquake, a post-earthquake cholera epidemic that has killed 10,000, and Matthew—a Category 4 hurricane that displaced 180,000 in 2016. Forester calls it, "Three sledge hammer blows, anyone of which would have qualified Haitians for TPS."

Marleine Bastien of Haitian women of Miami (FANM) put it this way last April as threats to TPS mounted: "If any country qualifies for TPS right now, it's Haiti. If the Trump administration goes through with this, it will be the most distressing, anti-family, anti-Black and racist decision any administration can take. People are still dying as a result of the imported cholera epidemic, and hurricane Matthew destroyed the southern peninsula, where we have people eating dirt and living in caves." FANM has organized several TPS protests in Miami and at Trump's home at Mar a Lago.

Miami's Ira Kurzban, a veteran Miami immigration rights attorney, ripped Trump's decision, "If you look at the TPS statutes it says the Attorney General must find if there's any earthquakes, flood, drought epidemic or other environmental disaster, and a foreign state is unable to handle it, and the foreign state has made a request [made Oct 4], then the Attorney General should grant it. Haiti fits every category and checks off every box with respect to why Haitians should get TPS. It's a continuation of the same history of discrimination."

In April, it was revealed that the Trump administration sought criminal records of TPS Haitians to disqualify



(Above) Tent dwelling in refugee camp in Haiti.

them for extending TPS and cut-off any TPS benefits they receive—but TPS Haitians do not receive any benefits! Nevertheless, so-called "crime" records are irrelevant in awarding TPS. In general, the supposedly out-of-control immigrant "crime" rate is actually lower than that in the rest of society.

Under the boot of U.S. imperialism, immigration policy toward Haitians has always been racist, including under Democrats and Republicans. Known in the 1980s as "the Black Boat People," Haitians were initially sent to a mass detention camp in Miami. The impoverished Haitians opposed U.S.-backed Haitian elites, unlike the mostly white, anti-communist Cuban exiles who were granted virtual automatic asylum.

Haiti today: Poverty, displacement, epidemics

Haiti is in no position to receive 60,000 new arrivals. Some 40,000 Haitians still live in dangerous, unsanitary post-earthquake camps; 2/3 of camp pregnancies were from rape; 1/3 of desperate camp women report trading sexual favors for basics like food and housing.

It is estimated that 2/3 of the capital's post-earthquake buildings are beyond repair, but re-inhabited. The earthquake, centered in Haiti's capital of Port au Prince, killed over 200,000 inhabitants, injured another 1.5 million, and left 2.3 million displaced in a country of 11 million.

Overall, Haiti's unemployment rate is about 40%, and 60% of Haitians live on less than \$2 a day. The country-wide minimum wage is less than \$5 a day, often ignored by bosses, particularly in textile plants that are usually subcontractors to U.S. or other international corporations. The Global Justice report concluded that "hunger and malnutrition" are even "worse" than when TPS was implemented.

A cholera epidemic broke out soon after the earthquake caused by the U.S./U.N. occupation's disregard for Haitian welfare. Studies revealed that the Nepalese contingent dumped faeces into a tributary of the Artibonite River, used by Haitians for drinking and bathing. The fast moving plague killed 10,000 and infected over 800,000, spiking again after Matthew, although now it is down from its peak. All along, the UN denied

responsibility, until about a year ago, greatly undermining public awareness and a swift response.

Nothing will change soon. President Jovenel Moise, a banana magnate, was elected in 2016 by less than a 20% turnout of voters. Moise is a proponent of the sweatshop economic model promoted by the U.S.-dominated World Bank, as was his predecessor, Michel Martelly. Since assuming office last Feb. 7, many large mobilizations have occurred demanding Moise's removal and an end to corruption.

Occupations by the U.S./UN have contributed mightily to the impunity of the corrupt Haitian regimes: first 1915-1934, then U.S./UN occupations in 1994, 2004, and 2010. President Obama sent in 20,000 troops to occupy post-earthquake Haiti to prevent food riots that never occurred, while delaying medical relief from several countries. The despised U.S./UN occupying forces finally withdrew in October, leaving an expanded police force and a reestablished Haitian military, notorious for brutality and corruption.

Making conditions even worse, tens of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian origin in the adjacent Dominican Republic have been expelled or fled the racist, sometimes violent, campaign against them encouraged by a court decision known as La Sentencia in 2013. Dominican lawmakers have cited U.S. immigration law to defend their racist onslaught against darker Dominicans, seen as Haitians. Little to nothing in aid is given to refugees from the D.R. by the Haitian government, many of whom have never lived in Haiti.

Trump's lies to Haitians are astonishing—even for Trump! On the campaign trail in 2016, Trump told a Haitian crowd, "I want to be your greatest champion." Haitian opportunists were able to rally support for Trump based on the widespread and well-deserved hatred of Hillary and Bill Clinton's role in Haiti.

Wikileaks revealed the Clintons' role in strong-arming Haitian authorities to boost the status of a friend of the old Duvalierist dictatorship clique, presidential candidate Michel Martelly, elected in 2011. Moreover, Bill

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... Russian Revolution

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formation of soviets in some key German cities, forced the abdication of the German Kaiser, effectively nullified the onerous provisions of Brest Litovsk, and led to the withdrawal of German and allied troops from Russia. So frightened was the German capitalist class with the return of the radicalized and often revolutionary-minded soldiers that they were initially banned from German cities where rebellious worker mobilizations vied for power.

Similarly, stunned by the revolt of Black Sea-based French sailors, France ceased its military operations in the Soviet South. Massive working-class mobilizations in England compelled the British government to withdraw

from the Soviet North. In the U.S., among the actions of the five-day 1919 General Strike in Seattle, involving 65,000 workers, was the longshore union's refusal to load U.S. arms destined for the White Armies fighting the Soviet Government. Indeed, the longshore workers physically challenged anyone who attempted to load ships bound for Russia.

Similar and massive working-class actions across Europe and beyond cautioned Europe's would-be Soviet occupiers to proceed with caution—indeed, to retreat from their intentions to divide up Russia for future occupation and colonization.

Thus, on every front the inspiration that the October Revolution provided to the world's working masses, consciously advanced by Soviet propagandists in every nation on earth, combined with the revolutionary zeal and self-sacrifice of the Soviet masses and their army to make the impossible a reality. Terribly crippled, near starva-

tion, plagued with war-induced famine coupled with an imperialist embargo and blockade, some 9.5 million Russians perished. But the revolution survived.

Among those who perished first were the central working-class cadre of Russia's Bolshevik Party, a generation of hundreds of thousands of youth in whom the revolution inspired the greatest dedication and sacrifice. This unavoidable imperialist-imposed catastrophe and resulting leadership void provided the future basis for the emergence of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In a future article we will discuss how this bureaucracy then replaced—or better, physically exterminated—virtually the entire Bolshevik Party Central Committee leadership team of the 1917 Revolution. But again, the conditions that led to Stalin's rise to power, as we shall see, were above all, the product of the world imperialist invasion as opposed to any inherent flaw in the ideology or practice of revolutionary socialism. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Ontario Federation of Labour opts for political action

By JULIUS ARSCOTT

The Ontario Federation of Labour convention, held in Toronto, Nov. 20 to 24, saw several large affiliates that had withheld dues for four years rejoin the House of Labour in Canada's most populous province. The dues strike by OPSEU, SEIU, and ONA, actuated by a factional battle between conservative union bureaucrats and the progressive past president of the OFL, Sid Ryan, crippled the federation, forcing it to sell its headquarters building. The right-wing coup replaced CUPE's Ryan with UNIFOR's Chris Buckley.

Many workplace and equity issues were discussed at the convention, but the OFL brass exerted every effort to keep "divisive" issues off the floor. Several resolutions submitted in support of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against the Israeli apartheid state, as well as for the eco-socialist LEAP Manifesto, were buried at the back of the resolutions book.

Convention guest speakers included former Ontario NDP leader Stephen Lewis, current ONDP leader Andrea Horwath, and Black Lives Matter activist Desmond Cole.

The legislation that broke the community college teachers' strike, passed in the Ontario legislature on the eve of the convention, hung over the proceedings like a foul cloak. The teachers' battle against precarious work and for workplace democracy evoked great admiration and support, tinged by bitterness at the outcome.

Outrageously, at a march of a few hundred of the 1100 delegates led by Buckley to Queens Park, there was no mention of the strikebreaking legislation—only praise for the labour law reform Bill 148.

Important gains in the form of better union organizing rules, and a rise to a \$15/hour minimum wage by 2019, cannot justify turning a blind eye to Liberal government strike breaking and the lasting blow it deals to collective bargaining.

Try as it did, the OFL leadership was unable to prevent a debate on a mo-

tion to endorse the union-based New Democratic Party in the next provincial election. The amendment to the official Action Plan carried, but was challenged the very next day.

The challenge, orchestrated by the pro-Liberal right wing, and ironically backed by supporters of the Communist Party, was soundly defeated, bucking the trend of so-called "strategic voting," a not so modern version of Samuel Gompers' "reward your friends, punish your enemies" brand of labour opportunism.

The weakening of the party of the unions only fostered illusions in the Liberal side of Bay Street, and served to reinforce the austerity agenda of the state. The role of socialists and labour militants within the NDP is not to be cheerleaders but to fight for the interests of the working class against capitalism and its labour lieutenants.

A CUPE rank and file activist, Barry Conway, ran for OFL president against Chris Buckley, on an stridently anti-austerity and anti-fascist platform. Conway gained a respectable 18% of the ballots cast despite the lack of an organized effort. It was a sign of a

growing rejection of status quo unionism in Ontario.

At a lunch break, the leftist Workers Action Movement hosted a well attended public forum titled "How to Fight Austerity—Lessons from the College Faculty Strike." Guest speakers came from the college academic division, as well as from UNIFOR and Latin America.

During the entire convention, Socialist Action sold dozens of copies of its press, and staffed a well stocked literature table, which attracted interested delegates from across the labour movement.

An emergency resolution, reaffirming organized labour's right to collectively bargain and strike, was passed on the last day of the convention. Mike Palecek, president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, said that labour should be prepared to defy anti-worker legislation and build the general strike that is needed to defeat the bosses' strikebreaking, austerity agenda. ■

Julius Arscott, a member of the Executive Board of the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union, was a delegate to the OFL Convention.

With hardly a peep from union tops — Liberals break Ontario college teachers' strike

By BARRY WEISLEDER

After 86 per cent of 12,000 Ontario community college teachers rejected management's last offer in a forced vote, the Liberal government of Kathleen Wynne broke their strike with a law pushed through the Ontario Legislature on Sunday, Nov. 19. Conservative MPPs welcomed it. Only the labour-based New Democratic Party opposed the strike-breaking law.

Sadly, the President of the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union,

Smokey Thomas, expressed relief that the strike was ended. He actually told the media that if he was in Wynne's position, he'd have done the same thing.

No section of the labour bureaucracy urged defiance of the blatant assault on the principle of free collective bargaining and the right to strike. There may be an OPSEU-initiated court challenge, but that will take years for a decision to be issued on the constitutionality of the law.

No union leaders called for mass job action to demand that the colleges'

management be forced, by an act of the legislature, or otherwise, to accept the teachers' requests for more full-time jobs (right now, 70 per cent of all the teaching positions are part-time), and for "academic freedom" to properly teach and grade their students.

The issues in dispute, which fomented months of negotiations and sparked a five-week strike, now go to arbitration. Meanwhile, students and teachers will have to shoulder an intense work load as the school year is extended by about four weeks. ■

High expectations confront new NDP gov't in British Columbia

By GARY PORTER

VICTORIA, B.C.—After only 120 days in office, the New Democratic Party government on Canada's west coast had to face delegates elected by the membership of the mass labour-based party at its provincial convention, Nov. 3-5. Expectations were high on the major issues affecting working people, indigenous communities, women, visible minorities, and the impoverished in British Columbia.

After 16 years of harsh Liberal Party rule, public services have been slashed, fees increased, the public infrastructure neglected, the environment ravaged, climate change ignored, labour rights attacked, and all restrictions on corporate campaign financing removed—resulting in a Wild West show of bought-and-sold politicians.

In the May 2017 election, the NDP won 44% of the vote, and the Green Party 16%. The parties won 41 and three seats respectively out of a total of 87. The two parties came to an agreement by which the NDP formed the government, with Green Party support on key issues.

Almost 800 delegates came from labour unions and riding (electoral) associations, the party youth wing and the women's rights standing committee. The delegation reflected the true face of B.C., where over 30% of the population consists of visible minorities, 6% are members of indigenous nations, and about 30% of the labour force is unionized. While professionals and some small business operators were present, big business was not in the convention hall.

The NDP premier, John Horgan, and several cabinet ministers reported on early actions of the government. The list included increasing welfare by \$100 monthly, increasing the amount recipients can earn before social assistance reductions occur, cutting provincial Medicare fees in half and promising to eliminate the fee completely over time, increasing the minimum wage (though it will take years to reach the goal of \$15/hour), and announcing its opposition to the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline designed to carry bitumen from the Alberta Tar Sands to the fragile Pacific

Coast—which would endanger the marine environment.

The premier announced he was "reviewing," rather than opposing, the massive Site C power dam project in north-east BC. The project is outrageously expensive, unnecessary and likely to serve primarily to power development of the tar sands in Alberta.

The NDP government could play a leadership role and counter-pose green public-energy projects, incorporating equity hiring policies for women, indigenous peoples and visible minorities in a new green energy sector. In fact, the NDP government faces a huge opportunity to get profit-oriented capitalist businesses out of energy production and distribution by simply expanding the scope of the government-owned electricity distributor BC Hydro, and by taking over private energy corporations and operating them solely to meet public need rather than private profit.

The NDP leadership, however, is not socialist. It is social democratic—committed to reforming capitalism, not replacing it. Even so, social democratic parties have undertaken ambitious nationalization programs.

The convention delegates participated energetically in convention floor debates, although a mere five hours was devoted to dealing with resolutions submitted by unions and local party associations.

Socialist Action supports the NDP Socialist Caucus, which is open to all NDP members. The SC advocates social ownership and democratic workers' control of the principal means of production, distribution, transportation, communication and finance. It advocates a dramatic reduction of work hours, with no loss of pay or benefits, to ensure that the working class obtains the benefits of automation. The SC calls for nationalization of polluters, the right to self-determination for indigenous peoples, and for swiftly putting an end to Canada's participation in imperialist military alliances such as NATO and NORAD.

SC speakers ripped the federal Justin Trudeau government's tolerance of the utterly unfair tariffs on B.C. lumber imposed by the Trump administration, proposing that

Canada cease buying U.S. war planes. The SC advocated an annual cost of living increase to keep pace with the minimum wage, and argued for free tuition for all post-secondary students.

These ideas won substantial support, but none were formally adopted. The reason is simple: amendments cannot be moved directly from the floor. Only motions of referral, with specific instructions to the resolutions committee, are accepted. Typically, referred motions never return to the floor due to the lack of adequate time for policy debate.

The convention did adopt resolutions for the reestablishment of a Human Rights Commission in B.C., measures to fully restore union collective bargaining rights, for proper funding of the infrastructure, for much improved public transport. The gathering called for halting the seizure of indigenous children by the child welfare system and instead demanded efforts to help indigenous families deal with the issues of drug addiction, poverty, and joblessness, and a plan to build 1700 affordable public residential rental units.

Party and candidate donations will be restricted to individuals only and to a maximum of \$1200 annually. Unfortunately, this puts an equal sign between unions and private for-profit corporations, which mis-educates workers, limits the political intervention of workers' organizations, while capitalists with enormous resources will always find a way around the rules. The NDP government pledges to introduce a system of proportional representation in B.C., and to increase training for child-care workers, expand child-care facilities and charge only \$10 daily per child. The convention demanded that the Trudeau federal government establish a framework to add pharma care and dental care to existing medical coverage for all.

When the convention endorsed the \$15/hour minimum wage, B.C. Federation of Labour President Irene Lanzinger said labour is patient, but not too patient—insisting that the measure be fully implemented before the end of 2018. The palpable tension between popular expectations and bureaucratic opportunism is a sign of things to come. ■

Social Democracy at the ballot box

DSA members win elections nationwide

By WAYNE DELUCA

On Nov. 7, at least 17 members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) won elections around the United States. Most notable was Lee Carter, who was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates, unseating Republican Majority Whip Jackson Miller. The rest mostly ran for town or city councils. All of the candidates ran either as Democrats or in non-partisan council races, and were part of a strong Democratic showing in the off-year election.

Carter's campaign was run on expanding Medicaid, a \$15 minimum wage, and limiting corporate influence in politics. Because he was vocal about running as a socialist, Carter was abandoned by the official Democratic Party and received no funding outside of his own fundraising. His program, moderate as it was, is far more radical than the majority of the city council candidates, who mostly ran on good-government principles.

In the wake of Bernie Sanders's primary campaign, the word "socialist" has become attractive to many young people. What matters is not the word, but the content behind it. Carter's full program could have been adopted by many liberals. For most of the city council winners, one would not have known they were socialists unless they said so.

The DSA has had many elected officials before, and has been linked to

members of Congress at different times. The latest crop is only noteworthy because DSA grew from 5000 to 30,000 dues-paying members following the Sanders campaign and the election of Donald Trump.

For revolutionary socialists, bourgeois elections are not the way we seek to change society. There is no parliamentary road to socialism. The state is a tool of the capitalist class to control workers and the oppressed, and taking hold of it without revolutionary measures will not change who runs society.

This lesson was demonstrated harshly in 2015, when Syriza took power in Greece and found itself the administrator of the same austerity it had run to oppose. Only a revolutionary overturn of the capitalist class will create a society run for human needs rather than private profits.

But we do see a positive role for socialist participation in elections. They provide an opening for socialists to spread their ideas and win over supporters who otherwise would not be tuned in to political events. When they win, socialists should use their office not to administer capitalism but as a bully pulpit to advocate for and organize the struggles of workers and the oppressed. We also see the need to offer a socialist choice against the two capitalist parties.

By running as Democrats, the DSA candidates blur this line. The official stance



(Above) Virginia DSAer Gary Carter.

of DSA is that its members should run as "open socialists," but they treat the Democrats as one option among many to do so. This is a mistake.

The value of running as a socialist lies precisely in the challenge to the hegemony of the two capitalist parties. James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, said in a 1958 speech: "The unconditional break away from capitalist politics and capitalist parties is the first act of socialist consciousness, and the first test of socialist seriousness and sincerity."

Cannon's point remains true today. The Democrats are a corrosive force that offers pragmatism and easy victories, but at the cost of making politics acceptable in capitalist democracy. The DSA's electoral successes are not a true barometer of the appeal of socialist ideas, but a reflection of a larger Democratic wave. Without a conscious break

from the Democrats there is no commitment to moving beyond the capitalist system.

In the era of Trump, there is an unprecedented opportunity to build a mass socialist movement that will challenge capital in the belly of the beast. There is an appetite for struggle against inequality, injustice, and oppression in all their forms. But such a movement faces a tide seeking to turn anti-Trump momentum into a mere get-out-the-vote effort for the capitalist, imperialist Democrats. Only by moving against this current can the left gain the needed clarity of vision and purpose to build a revolutionary party and win.

Taking the muddled road of the DSA leads right back into the Democratic Party trap that the left so badly needs to escape. ■

... Trump: 'Haitians get out!'

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Clinton's role as the U.S. and UN "earthquake relief" boss, during which \$13.4 billion in international aid was mis-spent or went missing in a grossly uncoordinated effort that reached and/or involved few Haitians, while lining the pockets of U.S. Beltway corporations and U.S. based non-governmental agencies (NGOs).

Any attack on immigrant workers, like that on TPS Haitians, is an attack on all workers. Immigrants are not to blame for the crimes of this sick capitalist system. Capitalism is in crisis, throwing unprecedented millions into poverty worldwide and forcing massive migration to escape exploitation, racism, war and climate change. Over 2.5 million immigrants were deported under Barack Obama, more than any other president, earning him the title of "Deporter-in-Chief."

TPS and DACA recipients, all immigrant workers, including Muslims, should unite in a common struggle against Trump's war on immigrants and the working class, especially oppressed communities, in this dangerous moment. A massive national immigrant march on Washington is long overdue! ■

The National TPS Coalition has been formed. Go to www.fanm.org; email communications@fanm.org; or call 305-756-8050.

Trudeau's defective apology to LGBT people

Arising out of the effective resistance to a police campaign of anti-queer harassment and arrests in Toronto's Marie Curtis Park, all contested charges have been dropped. This is the result of strong local community organizing in the area, a development that likely would not have been possible even in the recent past.

This suggests the growth of self-confidence and willingness to act in the public arena on the part of the local LGBT community and allies.

Another victory is Prime Minister Trudeau's apology for the decades-long vicious campaign by the RCMP and the military to eliminate gays and lesbians from the civil service and the armed forces.

Between the 1950s and the 1990s, the Canadian state conducted widespread spying against queer people, firing numerous people simply on the basis of their sexuality, tried to intimidate them into giving information on others, destroying careers and lives along the way. (There were suicides that resulted from this witch-hunt.)

While Trudeau's apology is fairly wide-ranging, it is also defective and lacks honesty. He attributes

this atrocity to "the thinking of the time." This was a deliberate and calculated policy orchestrated by the highest levels of the federal state. And the apology is the result of decades of protest organized by queer activists and their allies, not the implied generosity of the government.

Money has been allocated to compensate people grievously harmed by this campaign. But it is too late for many. And if compensation is handled the same way as it has been in the case of the atrocity of residential schools, people will wait a long time to see any money.

The promised expungement of criminal records involving consensual sex does NOT include convictions for violating the medieval bawdy house laws under which hundreds were arrested, as in the infamous Toronto bathhouse raids.

So, while the apology is a victory for queer communities, it is not an unqualified one, and major issues have not been addressed. Among these is the ongoing prohibition of gay men donating blood and the continuing criminalization of HIV. The struggle continues. — JOHN WILSON

... Zimbabwe

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tion"—cutting wages for public sector workers by 20%. Import controls staggered the informal vendors. This along with the bond notes triggered another wave of stay-aways by the unions and unrest from veterans.

International capital's goal is to turn Zimbabwe back into a disciplined loan-payer. China and Russia are major investors in diamond and platinum mines, and believe that Mnangagwa is likely to repeal the indigenization law. He has also signaled possible restitution for white farmers, which could lead to sanctions being lifted.

Former finance minister Ignatius Chombo has been charged with defrauding the national bank, in the first reprisal against G-40 supporters. Mnangagwa has indicated that he is against violent reprisals but it is not clear how much further he will move against the deposed faction.

As of this writing, Mnangagwa has promised a new democratic era but has not named a permanent cabinet or indicated whether scheduled elections will proceed next year. Opposition leaders including Tsvangirai and Mujuru have called for a broad transitional government.

Robert Mugabe was once an electrifying freedom fighter against an apartheid regime. A self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist, he nevertheless spent decades following the ruinous advice of imperialist creditors. His late turn to land reform and indigenization had modest results but came after decades marred by repression, corruption and kleptocracy. Mugabe's official portraits are being taken down and street signs with his name removed even while his birthday has been made a national holiday.

When Mugabe accepted the terms offered by imperialism rather than fighting toward the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, the fate of the national liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was sealed. It would never be allowed to be anything more than a neo-colonial state in the imperialist order. Zimbabwe, like

South Africa a decade later, overthrew an apartheid regime only to see a Black-led capitalist regime come to power, which favored white settlers at home and imperialist creditors abroad.

Many revolutionary efforts, such as those in Nicaragua and El Salvador in the 1970s and '80s, went down similar roads, and their leaders hold posts in capitalist governments doing the bidding of imperialist countries such as the United States. In contrast, the Cuban revolution overthrew capitalism; land was nationalized, health care and culture were revolutionized, and a workers' state was created that still stands as a bulwark against capital.

But no matter how we evaluate Mugabe, it was the ruinous austerity plans imposed by the IMF and World Bank that put Zimbabwe in its present economic state. Zimbabwe is still paying debts incurred by Smith's apartheid regime and has never recovered from the ESAP. Western institutions owe it the end of sanctions and the cancellation of all debt. Aid tied to transparent development programs would be the start of reparations for the damage done. ■

Mugabe steps down after military coup in Zimbabwe

By WAYNE DELUCA

On Nov. 14, the Zimbabwe Defense Forces took control of the capital city, Harare. A week later, Robert Mugabe—the only leader Zimbabwe has had since independence in 1980—resigned. On the 24th, Emmerson Mnangagwa, Mugabe's former right-hand man and until Nov. 6 the vice president, became the new president.

The coup was brewing for months. The military blocked the rise of Grace Mugabe, Robert's second wife, who placed herself at the head of the G-40 faction in the ruling ZANU-PF party. Based on the youth wing and masterminded by education minister Jonathan Moyo, G-40 looked to move away from the traditional base, veterans of the liberation war of the 1970s.

Mnangagwa served as Mugabe's enforcer and the head of ZANU-PF's business empire. He is called "Crocodile" for his ruthlessness and his faction, "Lacoste," is well represented in the officer corps and ZANU-PF's old guard. His removal came while General Constantino Chiwenga, head of the ZDF, was on a planned visit to China. The exiled vice president, who had been trained in Beijing and Nanjing during the 1960s, joined him there. When the general returned, forces loyal to Mugabe failed to arrest him, and the coup went ahead.

Although unpopular, Grace Mugabe worked to build her legend within the cult of personality around her husband. Her followers called her "Amayi" (Mother) and tried to turn a woman called "Gucci Grace" for her extravagant spending into a saintly figure. The armed forces never accepted her role and moved to keep her out of power.

Robert Mugabe's fall was greeted with jubilation from a country desperate for change. But Mnangagwa takes power in a deep economic crisis. The vast majority of Zimbabweans work in the informal sector, performing services or selling goods from South Africa at a high markup. He is expected to look to China and Russia for material backing and make amends with the West.

The liberation struggle and its aftermath

Robert Mugabe came to power in 1980 after a decade of war. African nationalists fought the apartheid state of Rhodesia—led by Ian Smith on behalf of a tiny white settler population. Mugabe led the China-backed ZANU-PF, which conducted most of the armed struggle. Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU, backed by the USSR, held out for reconciliation. The British, once colonizers, brokered the peace and ensured that the new government would not expropriate white farmers for a decade. ZANU-PF won overwhelming support in the new Zimbabwe.

Mugabe charmed the whites and the British and appeared to be an ideal partner. He worked with international lenders such as the IMF and World Bank, and followed their advice. This meant shifting away from industrialization and toward cash crop farming. But at the same time he lashed out at his African rivals. An uprising of a few hundred die-hards was the pretext to attack the Ndebele minority who were the base of ZAPU support. From 1983 to 1987 the Fifth Brigade, trained by North Koreans, engaged in a campaign of repression known as the Gukurahundi that killed thousands of civilians. Its scars remain fresh to this day.

In the 1990s, the IMF and World Bank forced a reform package known as ESAP (scornfully nicknamed "Economic Suffering for African People") on Zim-



bwe. At first Mugabe was a model student of austerity, even as it destroyed his nation's industrial base and made it a net importer of food.

Sharp class struggle led by the Zimbabwe Confederation of Trade Unions (ZCTU) erupted between 1996 and 1998, with mass stayaways shaking the economy. It was war veterans, protesting against rampant corruption in the fund for wounded soldiers, who forced Mugabe's hand. He borrowed heavily to create new pensions for veterans and made them a base of support.

At the same time, Mugabe led a deeply unpopular war effort, sending troops to back Laurent Kabila in the Congo. A number of deaths caused a major embarrassment, and Mugabe's armed forces attacked the journalists who exposed them. The war put Zimbabwe further in debt but Mugabe and his circle gained lucrative mining holdings in the Congo.

In 2000, Morgan Tsvangirai of the ZCTU led the formation of a new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). It was an overly broad union of businessmen, church leaders, trade unionists, and social activists. MDC retreated from the class struggle of the 1990s while Mugabe moved left. After losing a bid for a new constitution with expanded powers, he began a campaign of land reform, taking over most of the white-owned farms. In the short term this benefited ZANU-PF members and devastated the cash crop exports, deepening the economic crisis. As time has passed, Black tobacco farmers have formed a new middle class.

Mugabe also passed an indigenization law requiring all businesses to be 51% Black owned. This alienated friendly countries such as China, which had lucrative diamond mining interests. Soon afterward, Zimbabwe began to default on its debts and moved into a period of hyperinflation that would climax in 2008, when the government printed worthless \$100 trillion bills.

Rise and fall of the opposition

In 2002, Mugabe won re-election in a rigged vote, and the MDC continued to grow in popularity. Tsvan-

girai had a clear lead in the first round of voting in 2008. Forces loyal to Mugabe, organized in part by now-President Mnangagwa, went on a campaign of terror and violence against MDC supporters. Tsvangirai stepped out of the race, allowing Mugabe to win with no opposition.

South African President Thabo Mbeki brokered an accord between ZANU-PF and MDC that led to a united government. In the power-sharing regime, the MDC proved little better than ZANU-PF. Its ministers gave themselves and party leaders large bonuses and luxury cars while most of Zimbabwe struggled to get by. By the 2013 elections, the MDC's support had collapsed and ZANU-PF was the beneficiary.

Today the opposition is splintered. Tsvangirai, who is stricken with colon cancer, remains its face. Former finance minister Tendai Biti—who told workers that money doesn't grow on trees while handing out \$15,000 bonuses—leads the People's Democratic Party, an MDC splinter. An older splinter, MDC-N, is led by Welshman Ncube.

Joice Mujuru, a war hero known for shooting down a Rhodesian helicopter, leads the National People's Party. Mujuru was vice president and considered Mugabe's heir until Grace Mugabe engineered her ouster in 2014. None of the opposition has clean hands, and the MDC was revealed in the Wikileaks cables of 2011 to have Western backing.

The crisis faced today

Zimbabwe is desperately poor; 74% of people live on less than \$5.50 per day. Goods are exchanged on such a petty level that people buy a teaspoon of sugar or a squeeze of toothpaste from street hawkers. It uses the U.S. dollar as its currency and is strapped for cash. Some 70 percent of Zimbabweans do not have bank accounts, and have to pay 30% fees for cash from mobile pay services. Bond notes—IOWs for dollars—are likewise devalued by about 20-30% by money changers.

In 2016 the IMF called for an "internal devalua-

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