

Nationwide protests demand: Stop Kavanaugh!

Michael Candelori / NurPhoto / Getty Images



By ANN MONTAGUE

Outrage continues to spread throughout the United States over President Trump's nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. Kavanaugh, currently on the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, has been roundly criticized for his reactionary rulings against labor and protections for the environment, and scorned for his opinions and actions that denigrate women. Adding Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, replacing Justice Anthony Kennedy, would move the Court further to the right and drive its rulings to greater extremes.

Women and men began protesting the Kavanaugh nomination right after it was announced on July 9. The looming anger that *Roe v. Wade* could be overturned has energized women across the country to oppose his confirmation. Polls showed that Kavanaugh was the most unpopular Supreme Court nominee in history.

And then on Sept. 16, a bombshell fell when Christine Blasey Ford said that Brett Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her when she was 15 and he was 17.

Protest rallies took place in all 50 states as well as civil disobedience in the halls of the Senate office building. This created pressure on the Senate Judiciary Committee to allow Dr. Ford to be able to testify. Immediately, recollections came to the fore of Anita Hill testifying against Clarence Thomas in 1991.

But times have changed, and while women who were watching Hill's testimony still had a feeling of isolation, women this time experienced the collective support of millions.

As a result of the #MeToo movement, women have become empowered to tell their story, and also to listen to others. One woman told CNN, "I knew that if I watched Christine Ford testify it would trigger my own trauma, but I was determined to watch."

The nation was riveted to her testimony. Wherever you went, her wrenching and authentic testimony was being heard on the radio, television, or phone. The Capitol Police reported arresting 200 women protesting the Kavanaugh hearings. At the same time women across the country rallied and protested. Most of the signs said simply, "I believe her." One woman told a reporter, "This wasn't really organized,

(Above) Sept. 29 March to End Rape in Philadelphia.

I have never done this before, but people need to see our faces."

As the full Senate vote on Kavanaugh's nomination neared, protest demonstrations grew in size. On Oct. 4, thousands of protesters massed in Washington, D.C., as the FBI presented to the Senate the report of its investigations related to Ford's charge that Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her. The protesters stopped traffic as they marched toward the Supreme Court building and later to the Senate office building, where some entered the doors. Signs and chanted slogans included, "Sham process, sham court;" "Make integrity great again;" and "Women won't be quiet anymore." At least 100 were arrested.

Kavanaugh on women's rights

As the confirmation process played out, there were real concerns that the preponderance of right wingers on the Supreme Court will lead to the demise of

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Socialist Action candidate ruled off Connecticut ballot

By ERNIE GOTTA

With 56 nominating petitions still not returned by town clerks and numerous glaring errors in signature verification still not corrected, the Connecticut Secretary of State's office has sent a letter to Fred Linck, Socialist Action candidate for U.S. Senate, rejecting his application for ballot status.

The petitions still in the hands of town clerks could contain as many as 1680 uncounted signatures, and a cursory examination of a sample of counted signatures suggested that clerks had been illegally rejecting hundreds, if not thousands, of signatures.

With close to 6900 signatures verified, it is clear that there are easily enough valid signatures among the remaining uncounted or rejected signatures (around 4000) to bring the total above the 7500 needed for ballot status.

On Sept. 12, two campaign volunteers visited the Secretary of State's office. Their inspection of a sample of about one-tenth the submitted signatures (less than 1300) found that:

- 71 voters were ruled off by Hartford town clerks for being "unaffiliated"—not a legal reason to reject signatures for an independent candidate!
- 25 voters were ruled off in New Haven for being "inactive"—not a legal reason to reject signatures unless the date of birth is missing (these voters have included their birth-dates)
- 72 voters' signatures were ruled off in New London for being "illegible," when their information is quite legible.



John Leslie / Socialist Action

(Left) Attendees at a Sept. 22 Socialist Action forum in Philadelphia on "Socialists and the Elections," at which Fred Link was a panelist.

of Sept. 11, which was used to justify horrific wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and launch a campaign of terror on our Muslim brothers and sisters here in the U.S. and abroad

Fred Linck said earlier, "People in Connecticut have made it clear that they want a socialist on the ballot. Why? Because this campaign is about demanding free quality health care, education, and housing for workers and their families.

"Because it opposes the terror campaign waged against immigrant families and wars abroad to benefit the rich.

"Because this campaign stands with organized labor and working-class families against big business and government attacks."

Contact Secretary of State Denise Merrill to protest the exclusion of Linck from the ballot and to demand that all signatures be counted and that illegal rejection of signatures cease and be reversed.

Office of the Secretary of State: telephone (860) 509-6200. Select the option for elections, and then the option to call as a member of the public. Ask Denise Merrill on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SOTSMMerrill/>

Corrections made to the most obvious violations in Hartford and New Haven brought Linck to within 670 signatures from meeting the 7500 needed for ballot status. Similar violations in Bridgeport have still not been corrected.

"We have checked a sample of signatures rejected for belonging to 'unregistered voters' against the voters' roles, and found that about 20% do in fact belong to registered voters," said Linck. "At that rate, we should be able to find enough signatures in the remaining 4000 that were rejected to obtain ballot status, probably even without the 56 missing petitions."

"We think voters would be shocked

to learn how poorly their democratic rights are treated. Registrars of voters and town clerks have openly admitted to not knowing basic rules, to putting unqualified people in charge of verifying signatures, and to running only partial searches on voter names because full searches take longer."

Other "independent" candidates, like Oz Griebel, a former banker and Republican Party politician, obtained ballot status by wide margins after turning in fewer signatures than Linck.

Supporters of Fred gathered on the steps of the office of the Secretary of State to show their support for the candidate and commemorate the tragedy

JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

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

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

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

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

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

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Justice for Connecticut police victims!

By RUWAN MUNASINGHE

HARTFORD, Conn.—On Dec. 14, 2017, Hartford lost one of its greatest legends when 20-year-old Zoe Dowdell—also known as Gangstacious—was shot and killed by New Britain police. Caleb Tisdol and Noah Young (also known as “Skinny”), the others in the car, were convicted on various charges and are currently incarcerated.

All of us from the area have known about the police shooting for a long time. However, in late August, Will Tisdol, father of Caleb, was able to see the dashcam footage of what actually happened that night. What the footage shows is something far worse than what we imagined.

Zoe Dowdell was a lively young man. He grew up in Hartford and Bloomfield. He became very popular as a musician and dancer. His videos received hundreds of thousands of views and he became especially popular in Hartford. Perhaps the most lasting cultural impact of his legacy was popularizing a dance that originated in Hartford. His death was a huge loss for the community.

The New Britain police reported that Zoe, Noah, and Caleb were driving a stolen car that was related to a string of robberies and assault cases. According to the police, after they had tried to stop the vehicle, it tried to run into the police officers. That is when officers started shooting. Much of this story turned out to be outright cop lies.

When in late August, Caleb’s parents—who had been fighting a silent battle for months—were able to get their hands on the tapes from the police dash cam, they saw something that was incredibly sadistic: The police first rammed into the young men’s car in unmarked vehicles. Immediately afterwards, the police started shooting—five officers emptying their clips at the same time. As Mr. Tisdol puts it, the police looked untrained, like “fools tripping over themselves.”

According to the dash-cam footage, the car was standing still when the police were firing. And while the police were shooting, another police car rammed into the car again. Zoe had no chance. He was killed very quickly. The police (and the media) tried to make it seem that a stray bullet hit Zoe in the neck. It is true that bullets hit Zoe’s neck, but it is likely that Zoe was shot multiple times in other places, including the head. He was covered in blood when he died.

After the police stopped shooting, Caleb had both his hands up and yelled at the police, “Y’all can stop shooting now. You already killed him.” After he said this, the police started shooting again. They reloaded and shot some more. In all, the police probably shot over 50 times.

Caleb was 15 when this happened, but he has been charged as an adult. Noah is also being charged as an adult although he was 18 at the time. Both Noah and Caleb are still in jail. They were charged with possession of a firearm and narcotics. It has been 10 months.

Zoe’s family has never been given a report from the police on what happened to their son. The cops have demonstrated utter disrespect toward the families. As was discovered after Caleb’s parents saw the tapes, the police lied about many things regarding the night of Dec. 14.

Police injustices are widespread

Such police injustices are endemic in Connecticut. Eighteen people have been killed by police in car chases from 2016 to the present. To the best of our knowledge, no cop has ever been charged with murder in this state since at least the 1990s—definitely not within the tenure of Chief State’s Attorney Kevin T. Kane.

In particular, we are seeing a specific type of case of police brutality—car-related incidents. In Bridgeport, a 15-year-old Hispanic youth was shot dead by police after his car was suspected of being stolen. The car, and Jayson himself, could have easily been apprehended by a traffic stop. Instead, a gang police unit followed the car and confronted it on the street. Likewise across the state, there have been legally dubious actions by police regarding cars. In late September, there were two dangerous police chases that led to crashes.

All of these incidents stem largely from one man: Kevin Kane. He has approved the use of gang police



(Above) Zoe’s stepmother, Dee, holds a painting of him at Sept. 15 Justice for Zoe, Caleb, and Noah march in New Britain, Conn.



units and targeting youth of color. In the middle of 2017 he wrote an OpEd article that appeared in the Hartford Courant entitled “Emboldened Juveniles Endanger the Public.” In the article he talks about the need to crack down on inner city kids.

Kane laid out a bulleted list of parts of the criminal justice program that need to be altered in order allow for stronger punishments against youth. They are: Restrictions on post-arrest and pre-trial detention of juveniles; the lack of meaningful sanctions that juvenile courts can impose, including the closing of Juvenile Training School; changes that make it impossible to transfer serious juvenile cases to the adult court where there can be a serious response.

Kevin Kane is directly implicated and at fault for the death of Zoe (as well as the death of Jayson and other cases of police craziness). He is directly implicated in the jailing of Caleb and Noah. He is directly implicated in the charging of Caleb as an adult despite his being 15 years old. We are dealing with a problem that is systemic to the entire police system in the state of Connecticut and in this country. Nonetheless, there are various ‘pressure points’ where our growing movement can hurt the powers that be.

The case of Sgt. Barone

There have been many other police injustices and scandals in the past months. This summer, a long-time Hartford police officer, Sgt. Stephen Barone, was filmed talking to a group of Black and Brown kids whom he had stopped, he claimed, because they might have been trespassing. Despite the compliance and calm of the young people, officer Barone told them not to try to “fight or run” since he was “feeling a little trigger happy.”

The same officer was implicated in a previous incident, when he turned off the police car dash camera just before the cops hurt a civilian. He also led a unit of police during a chase in July that involved police

cars speeding the wrong way down Connecticut’s largest highway.

I attended the next city council meeting after the video of Barone went viral on the internet. It got quite rowdy. In the coming weeks things only got worse. The police officers’ union publicly called out city councilwoman Wildaliz after she had made a few mild comments about police accountability. It was made clear that any public official who made an effort to put pressure on killer cops would be met with harassment and intimidation.

Hartford city council has been debating on giving the HPD special equipment such as drones. There have also been debates on having a new civilian review board to check the police. On Sept. 19, a meeting took place for community members to voice their concerns about the police. Many people voiced their deep fears of the police—fears that have been reinforced after years of negative encounters with the Hartford Police.

Towards the end of the meeting, a man in a vest and tie who presented himself as a community member was found to be an undercover cop. The next week, at a full meeting with HPD and the citizens of Hartford, the same cop was present in full uniform—gun, handcuffs, and all the rest. This meeting was the most intense of all. It included a session where the public confronted the cops straight on.

Justice for Zoe, Noah, and Caleb!

In the meantime, on Sept. 15, over 100 people marched to the New Britain Police Department to demand justice for Zoe, Noah, and Caleb and the public release of the dashcam footage. Almost no media coverage has appeared on the case other than a negative article from the New Britain Herald, which portrayed the Zoe, Noah and Caleb as criminals. The police released a statement after the action: “The participants in today’s protest set a fine example for others to gather and express views and concerns in a peaceful manner.”

The movement for justice for Zoe, Noah, and Caleb is still in its embryonic stages. We face a lot of obstacles. Police harassment has certainly been one such obstacle, and so too is the issue of media misrepresentation and lack of reporting. A more nuanced problem is the task of bringing together people of different ages and backgrounds, and from different locations in Connecticut, to protest against a pressing issue that we all care about.

A coalition has recently come together of the affected families, myself, and various other groups, including (but not limited to) Socialist Action, local DSA chapters, CT CORE, Justice for Jayson, Black Lives Matter New Haven, CT IWW, ACLU, CT Self-Defense Brigade, CT Moral Mondays, UConn Youth for Socialist Action, Vote Fred “Mitch” Linck, and CT Poor People’s Campaign.

We have planned a march in New Britain on Oct. 24 at 5 p.m. We will continue to fight! ■



(Left) Sept. 29 March to End Rape Culture in Philadelphia.

... Kavanaugh

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Roe v. Wade and that ever tighter restrictions on the right of women to control their own bodies will be enacted. Many fear a resurrection of the era in which women were forced to go to illegal back-alley parlors to obtain abortions. But a renewed mass movement for women's rights and reproductive justice can make sure that never happens.

One of Kavanaugh's reactionary rulings on the issue occurred last year, when a 17-year-old undocumented immigrant was arrested crossing the U.S.-Mexico border and confined to a private detention center in Texas that has a contract with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). She was eight weeks pregnant and wanted to terminate the pregnancy. She had the money to pay for the procedure, transportation, and the approval of a Texas judge who stated that she was "mature and sufficiently well informed to make the decision to have an abortion." In Texas minors are required to receive the approval of a judge if they are seeking an abortion without parental consent.

Her only barrier was that the Trump administration would not allow her to leave the detention camp for her appointment. Government lawyers claimed that allowing her to attend her appointment would violate a decree issued a few months earlier that said detention centers could not take "any action to facilitate" an abortion without the specific permission of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Director, E. Scott Lloyd who is a Trump appointee and a militant anti-abortion activist. Many argue that he is not qualified or prepared for his current position as director of ORR. He claims there is "no constitutional right" for an immigrant minor to have an elective abortion while in federal custody.

ACLU lawyers sued the government on the girl's behalf and the case, *Garza v. Hagan*, ended up with a three-judge panel in the DC circuit court. One judge did not believe the girl had any constitutional rights because she was undocumented. The second judge said that she has constitutional rights that were being blocked by the government.

The third judge was Brett Kavanaugh, who presented a solution that trapped her in legal limbo for weeks as her pregnancy advanced towards the Texas 20-week cut-off for all legal abortions. The full circuit court eventually ruled with the ACLU, and the teenager was able to obtain her abortion when she was more than 15 weeks pregnant.

Kavanaugh on the unions

Approving Kavanaugh as a justice will augment the anti-labor majority on the Supreme Court. This year, in *Janus v. AFSCME*, the Court blocked all public employee unions from collecting fair-share payments from non-union workers. A similar ruling was made in the 2014 *Harris v. Quinn* decision, which eliminated "fair-share" payments for Illinois home-care workers—an attack on the rights of a workforce that is predominantly female. Union workers in the private sector have been watching the attacks on their sisters and brothers and wondering who will be next.

Documents that have been released to the public show that Kavanaugh's decisions from his time as a Bush-appointed judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals reflect a long history of anti-working-class decisions. This court regularly reviews suits challenging the decisions of Washington-based agencies, in which he regularly

wrote opinions attacking the National Labor Relations Board.

In 2008, in *Agri Processor Co., Inc. v. NLRB*, the majority of the appellate court ruled that undocumented workers have the same bargaining rights as their co-workers. But Kavanaugh dissented, stating that undocumented workers don't count as employees under the National Labor Relations Act. Undoubtedly, this issue will come up again.

He is a consistent opponent of collective bargaining rights and was involved in reversing a lower court decision and affirming the decision of the Department of Defense to negate the collective bargaining rights of workers.

One of Kavanaugh's court rulings served to help Donald Trump directly in smashing a unionization drive at one of his hotels. In 2012, Kavanaugh was one of three judges who voted unanimously to set aside a National Labor Relations Board order that would have allowed the United Auto Workers union to represent workers bargaining with the Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, N.J. The hotel has since closed down.

In his highest profile case, Kavanaugh opposed the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). In 2014, a case was brought against the SeaWorld theme park in Florida when a killer-whale trainer died during a live show in 2010. This was the second death at that location.

OSHA investigated and found that SeaWorld had willfully endangered its workers, though it imposed only a \$7000 fine. Kavanaugh disagreed, saying that the workers had agreed to put themselves in danger, and comparing their work to tiger taming or football.

He stated: "When should we as a society paternalistically decide that the participants in these sports and entertainment activities must be protected from themselves—that the risk of significant physical injury is simply too great even for eager and willing participants?"

Kavanaugh on environmental regulations

Kavanaugh has changed his position on the Environmental Protection Agency. In 2008, he wrote that the law is clear that it has the supreme authority. But four years later, he changed his mind and joined the majority opinion that struck down an EPA regulation seeking to place limits on sources of downwind pollution. "Congress did not authorize the EPA to simply adopt limits on emissions as EPA deems admissible," he wrote.

His position generally boiled down to the allegation that the EPA needed specific legislation from Congress to act, and could not rely on earlier regulations that were not specific to the case at hand.

This position can have a bearing on any review of the landmark *Massachusetts v. EPA* case, in which the Supreme Court affirmed in 2007 that greenhouse gases, the major factor in causing climate change, qualify as air pollutants, and that the EPA therefore has the authority to regulate them under the Clean Air Act.

Kavanaugh has expressed alarm over global warming, and has said that he thinks Congress should do something to mitigate it. But in the meantime, because of the "system of separation of powers," he does not believe that the EPA has the right on its own to act against it.

In his 12 years as a federal judge, Kavanaugh heard 26 cases involving the EPA. He issued an opinion in 18 of those cases. He sided against industry only twice and has never sided with a public interest group.

In almost every case, Kavanaugh seems to have found a way to side with industry. For instance, he dissented in the case of *Mingo Logan Coal Co. v. EPA*, which dealt

with the EPA denial of a permit to a mountain-top-removal coal-mining company that wanted to dump its waste into West Virginia waters. The EPA found it would destroy streams and wildlife habitat. Kavanaugh argued that the agency had not focused on the real costs of permit denial—the impact on stock prices that that could result from denying the permit.

Kavanaugh took a similar stance in oral arguments in the Washington, D.C., Circuit Court of Appeals concerning a 2016 Clean Power Plan case. He stated: "This is huge case ... it has huge economic and political significance ... it's fundamentally transforming an industry by telling existing units you in essence have to pay a penalty, a huge financial penalty in order to continue to exist, in order to shift from coal plants to solar and wind plants, at the same time the coal mining industry is in essence greatly harmed, as well."

Nature and purpose of the Supreme Court

Nothing could illustrate the essence of the Supreme Court more clearly than Brett Kavanaugh's testimony in regard to Ford's charges and his demeanor of arrogance and entitlement. In the Senate committee hearings, he lashed out wildly at his perceived accusers: "This whole two-week effort has been a calculated and orchestrated political hit fueled with apparent pent-up anger about President Trump and the 2016 election, fear that has been unfairly stoked about my judicial record, revenge on behalf of the Clintons, and millions of dollars in money from outside left-wing opposition groups."

Kavanaugh has an elite background that is similar to all those who sit on the Supreme Court. He attended Georgetown Preparatory School and then was admitted to Yale University, as had his paternal grandfather. He lied when he said he had no prior connections to Yale, where 25-30 percent of students are "Legacy Admissions." Kavanaugh now finds himself in excellent company, since every current Supreme Court Justice has attended Harvard or Yale.

The selection of Supreme Court justices is inherently undemocratic. The justices are not elected by voters but are appointed by a narrow body representing the two ruling capitalist parties (nominated by the president and approved by the Senate). In that task, the politicians—Republican or Democratic—generally opt for the appointment of justices who have proven themselves to be "conservative" in their legal careers. They want a Court that will lean on the side of "law and order," rather than ruling on behalf of radical or "unconventional" thought and action, or the expansion of free speech and workers' rights.

This is a lifetime appointment, the closest thing we have to a monarchy; the rulings of the Court cannot be appealed. The major function of the Court is to safeguard the legal foundations of capitalist rule. The bedrock of its decisions is supposedly the 18th-century U.S. Constitution, as amended and adjudicated over the last two centuries. But that is all subject to the majority interpretation of the nine sitting justices, who themselves tend to reflect the ideology of the more conservative wing of the U.S. capitalist class.

Street protests against Kavanaugh have involved thousands of women and men who have real fears of his reactionary agenda—and who don't want a sexual predator on the Supreme Court. But Trump has ignored the grassroots nature of these protests, and instead has regularly denounced the opposition to Kavanaugh's appointment as originating with the Democratic Party. He told the crowd at a rally in Johnson City, Tenn., "The Democrats only know how to obstruct, demolish and destroy, as we've seen in recent weeks. Democrats are willing to do anything and hurt anyone to get their way, like they're doing with Judge Kavanaugh."

Reports have surfaced of right-wing advocacy groups, like Heritage Action and the Judicial Crisis Network, spending millions to lobby Democratic Party politicians in so-called "red states" to support Kavanaugh's nomination. Their targets include Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who has appeared to be leaning in favor of Kavanaugh. A group of women, including some who identified themselves as sexual assault victims, occupied Manchin's campaign office to urge a rejection of Kavanaugh. After about 11 hours, at around 1 a.m. on Oct. 2, the campaign called in the police to remove the protesters, and nine women were arrested.

"Even before the sexual assault allegations came out and his judicial record was released, it was clear that [Kavanaugh] was anti-women and anti-union and anti-working class," one of the arrested women, Britt Huerta, told the *Huffington Post*. "If Joe Manchin were to vote 'yes,' it would really send a bad message to West Virginia women about their autonomy over their own bodies and their right to make their own decision." ■

By MARISELA TREVIN

After a day of nationwide protests on Monday [Sept. 24], Argentine workers participated in mass work stoppages on Tuesday. Many of the country's streets and avenues were practically deserted as public transportation workers and private-sector employees stayed home. It was perhaps the most forceful of the four national strikes that have been organized so far during the administration of President Mauricio Macri.

Left-wing unions and workers called for unified action, organizing picket lines under their own banners, even as Argentina's major union federations—the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the Argentine Workers' Central Union (CTA)—failed to do so. Instead, the union federation leaders held a press conference to demand an agreement with the government to halt the dramatic rise in unemployment.

"If there is no plan B, there will be no truce with the Argentine workers' movement," said Juan Carlos Schmid, of the dredge workers' union. Héctor Daer, of the sanitation workers' union, declared that "the CGT will lead the actions that it believes are necessary for the government to change its course."

But no new union actions were announced, and the union federation leaders did not explain how they plan to continue the struggle against Macri's austerity measures.

Since the last national strike on June 25, millions of working families have only seen their economic conditions worsen, as the country's annual inflation rate has soared to a staggering 42%. So far this year, the Argentine peso has been devalued by 100%. The economy shrank 4.2% in the last quarter, the unemployment rate is now at almost 10% and the worst is yet to come.

Yet President Macri, like the union federations, has shown no signs of changing course. While workers went on strike and took to the streets, Macri held a meeting at the United Nations headquarters with Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF, to negotiate a new loan agreement, after having secured a \$50 billion standby arrangement in June.

The first disbursement under the June deal has since evaporated, as the country faces a major currency crisis, increased macroeconomic instability and brutal austerity policies implemented by the national and provincial governments to meet the IMF's demands. This is a far cry from the promises Macri made at the beginning of his term, when he said he would immedi-

Argentine workers stage nationwide strike against austerity measures



BBC

ately end inflation, achieve zero poverty and produce a "shower of investments" in the country. The president has since changed his tune, no longer bragging Trump-style about having the "best team in the past 50 years." The trumpet blowing has been replaced by claims that "we're not a perfect team, but we have good intentions," or the hardly reassuring "things may be tough, but at least we're not Venezuela."

Meanwhile, in the midst of the administration's internal crisis, Luis Caputo, the president of the Central Bank, resigned on Tuesday, the same day of the national strike. His term lasted only three months, but during that time the price of the U.S. dollar increased by 34%, and interest rates rose to 60% in a trend that will only worsen the economic downturn.

The government has denied that Caputo's exit was a condition for closing a deal with the IMF, but it is well known that the outgoing official had expressed differences with the IMF over monetary policy. The administration has virtually handed the control of the coun-

try's economy to IMF authorities, and it now plans to reach an agreement with Peronist governors to pass a new budget that will only mean more austerity for working-class families.

The Argentine Left and Workers' Front (Frente de Izquierda y los Trabajadores) is waging difficult battles against unemployment and austerity, and it has denounced not only Macri's policies and IMF interference but also the complicity of Peronist governors and lawmakers, who have provided essential support to the administration's policies.

Against leaders of the opposition calling for change at the ballot boxes next year, the Left Front calls for mass assemblies in schools and workplaces throughout the country to prepare for a general strike with mobilizations to stop the administration's policies. The brutal attack against the Argentina's working class is happening now; the struggle against it must also take place now. ■

— From Left Voice

IWS: Walkout against patriarchy

**CANCEL KAVANAUGH!
WE ARE SURVIVORS, BELIEVE US.**

Socialist Action has endorsed the following call by International Women's Strike for Oct. 4 walkouts. Initial endorsing organizations besides the IWS include International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative, Worker's Voice/La Voz de los Trabajadores, Kanawha Valley DSA (West Virginia).

Join a National Walkout from all work, waged and unwaged, on Thursday, October 4 at 4:00 p.m. to protest the appointment of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

In the wake of Brett Kavanaugh's nomination and confirmation process to the Supreme Court of the United States, we have listened with distress to the women who have so bravely come forward to make public his assaults against them.

We have watched with mounting alarm the Senate hearing where Dr. Christine Blasey Ford shared her traumatic account of assault at the hands of Brett Kavanaugh and the dismissal of her suffering by those who are bent on moving forward with a lifetime appointment of Kavanaugh to the highest court in the land.

The outrageous response to Dr. Ford and other assault victims who have come forward have reminded us of our own assaults and brutalization and we have found solace and hope in the bravery of the survivors who have spoken up.

But the condescension and disrespect with which Dr. Ford and other survivors have been treated by politicians underscores for us what we have known all along: that the current political system, far from promoting the welfare of

women, tries actively to harm us.

This is not a "partisan" issue in the terms the Democrats and Republicans are framing it: as a struggle for power in the electoral arena. This is a universal issue as it regards hearing the voices of those who speak out against gender violence, investigating charges against abusers, and holding them accountable for their actions. Most importantly, the issue involves challenging and undoing the power structures that systematically keep most women at the bottom so they can be over-exploited, underpaid, easily abused, raped and deported. The system is designed such that their testimonies can never challenge the claims of innocence and "good name" of powerful men.

This is a critical issue for political equality and full freedom for women at a moment when women, youth, LGBTQ+ people, workers both waged and unwaged, all people of color and immigrant communities are saying, "Enough is enough!" This is a key issue for all of us in the U.S., and around the world, who are daily oppressed, humiliated and dismissed, whose suffering and pain often doesn't matter, all these millions of people who can relate to Dr. Ford's testimony, and have responded with narratives of solidarity.

This appointment must not happen. It jeopardizes the future of countless women, our reproductive rights, civil rights, and even the most basic sense of safety that all women, and people, ought to be entitled to.

On October 4 we call on all women, and those who believe our stories, to walk out of work, school and housework at 4:00 p.m. and show the world that since our labor runs the world, when we are denied dignity and safety, we can stop the world from running. ■

White nationalist attack in Louisville, Ky.

By BRONSON ROZIER

On the evening of Sept. 27, Louisville Democratic Socialists of America members were attacked by white nationalists at a public DSA social event at a restaurant. According to a member of the DSA, a group of neo-fascists verbally harassed DSA members and members of the restaurant's staff. They were then attacked with a substance believed to be pepper spray.

A statement put out by the organization said, "Nobody was seriously harmed, but it is clear that the far-right will become violent towards working people who resist their agenda. We will not be intimidated by these cowardly acts."

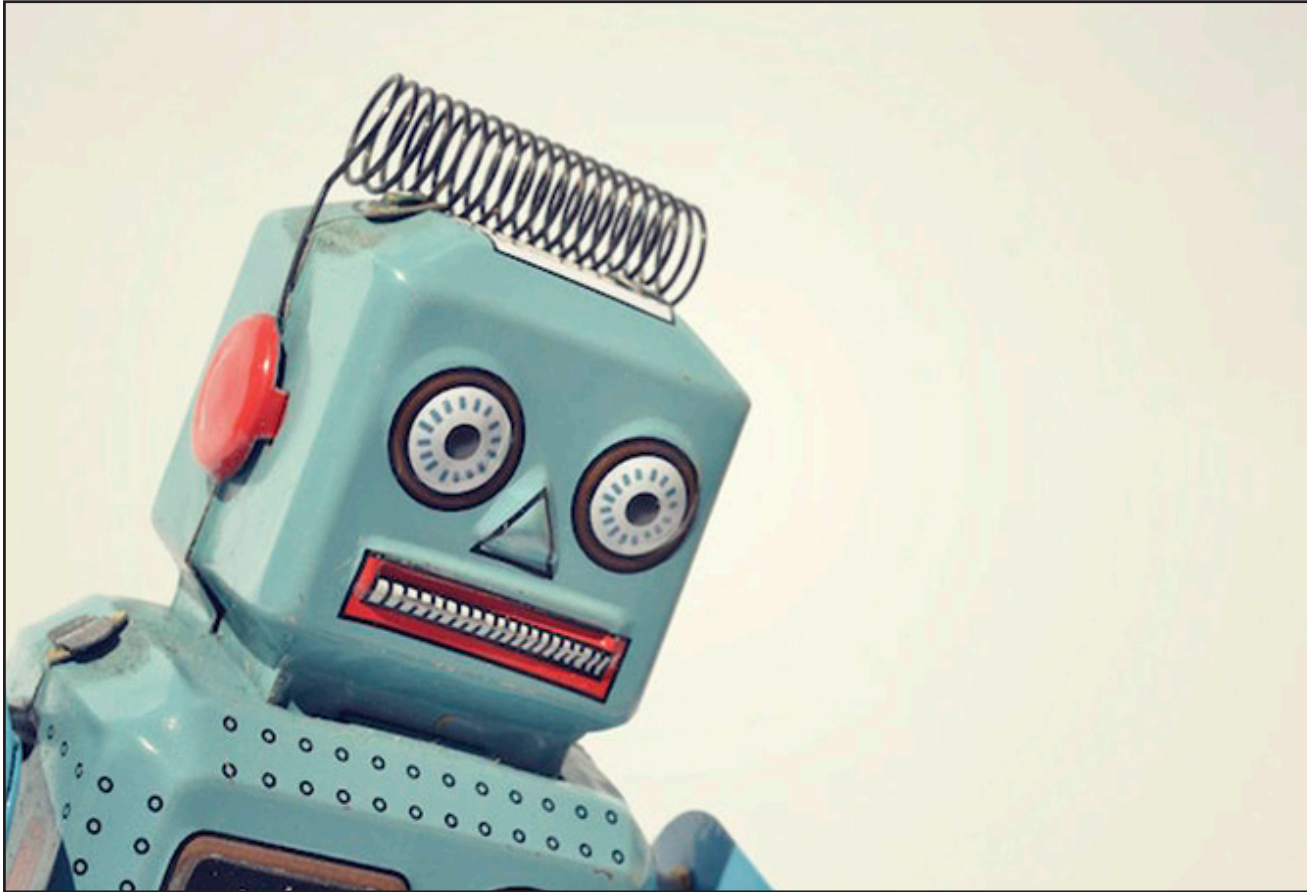
The white nationalists were wearing clothing with symbols associated with the Three Percenter militia, which participated in the Aug. 12, 2017, "Unite The Right" rally in Charlottesville, Va. Members also recognized them as part of the local Three Perceners group that harassed the Occupy ICE encampment in Louisville this summer.

The local antifa group ARA (Anti-Racist Action) posted on-line profiles of the attackers that also referenced the Proud Boys. These groups not only have been active at Charlottesville, but have also been active on the West Coast in Portland and at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge takeover by a group of the right-wing Bundy family ranchers.

In accordance with the usual operational norms of Louisville police, they did not take action against the Three Perceners other than to ask them to leave. The owner of the restaurant has suggested they may be pursuing a further complaint against the attackers.

The Louisville DSA plans to set up an internal security team to defend future events. Louisville Socialist Action has also suggested that the DSA consider reaching out to broader forces among the social justice and labor organizations. ■

ROBOTS: Boon or doom?



By ANDY BARNES

Humans are making rapid strides in robotics and artificial intelligence (AI). Both have the potential to reduce working hours, to make our lives better, and unlock new horizons for human society. But there are many potential problems, chief among them being unemployment and the use of AI to control human destiny in ways we do not want.

While the capitalist system has developed these technologies to their current state, it can never truly free human beings from work using robotics, nor allow AI to free, rather than enslave, the human species. If we want automation in mind and body to help us, we must exchange the profit motive for rational economic planning based on a democratic plan. I will explain why.

Capitalism and technology

Capitalists develop the productive forces, including robots and AI, to compete profitably with their peers. Under capitalism, they either must produce and sell their commodities at a lower cost to themselves than their peers, or develop an entirely new commodity. This is the capitalist's incentive to exploit labor in a more efficient way, resulting in more advanced production, new technologies, or better use of old technologies.

Capitalists must rely on labor to use technology, but over time they can cut costs by replacing laborers. For example, a single industrial forklift can perform the same amount of work with one worker that once took 20 workers to perform.

But this is a double-edged sword. As technology advances, commodity production is made cheaper and competition intensifies. Different competing capitalists are able to stay in competition only by providing ever-cheaper commodities at greater scales of production. This results in a slower growth of their profits, because in order to remain competitive they must sell more cheaply. With many capitalists producing more stuff than ever (by exploiting the worker's labor) and at prices that are super-low, the very basis of the capitalist system crumbles.

The super-abundance of products hampers their sale by market competition. This process is called the crisis of overproduction.

Old capital investments (held in old technology and plants) clog the whole profit-based system. Capitalists are no longer guaranteed abundant profits, and thus new investments are few and far between. It simply becomes too risky for the capitalist to invest in new technology or jobs since profit is their prime motivation. An economic crisis erupts soon after any large sector or sectors of the capitalist economy fail to grow profits by any substantial margin. The development of new innovations stalls.

This process can be seen many times in history from the Great Depression of the 1930s to the recent Great

The control of robots by the working class can give us more freedom in spare time and also in deciding how to use our commonly produced wealth.

Recession. Many local, small recessions across the world at different times also demonstrate this capacity for failure. There are workers, raw materials, and means, but economic activity stalls because those who command the system cannot make a profit.

In economic downturns, old technological investments are cheapened by depreciation, as well as the desperation of the selling capitalist. Labor is also cheaper, because many workers are desperate for their bread and butter. So new capitalist investments can be made with greater assurance of high profits. In the aftermath of World War II, the rise of U.S. capitalism to global dominance was in no small part due to the destruction of capital and laborers across the rest of the world.

This system is doubtlessly very wasteful of human potential, resulting in widespread suffering and inefficiency every few decades. Capitalist production changes the world, but the world itself becomes impeded by the capitalist process.

Technology and labor

As technology replaces human labor, it could mean less work and more free time, greater productivity, and new and better jobs. Yet under the competitive market system of capitalism, more productivity means lower wages for the same amount of work, more intense work for fewer laborers, or no work at all.

When the capitalist automates a production line, for example, and the work of 10 can be done by two, the capitalist continues to realize the value that was produced by those 10 workers but pays a fraction of the original labor cost, even counting the amortized cost of the investment in new technology.

From the capitalist's perspective, 10 workers are expensive. Just fire eight and pay the two remaining (who just witnessed the firing of eight of their co-workers) about the same. Instead of relieving the toil of 10 people by 80% for a workday of less than two hours with the same pay, the capitalist keeps the huge net reduction in labor costs and puts eight workers out on the street with nothing.

Additionally, periods of technological displacement

have resulted in much human suffering. Yes, there is a certain truth to the notion that technological development does create more jobs, since new industries (or branches of industry) offer new labor needs. But the interim between employment and re-employment, at least in a capitalist system, is not fun.

Under capitalism, all human needs are subordinated to the market. If you don't have the money, then you are going to starve (or otherwise be deprived of needs like housing, health care, etc). Furthermore, the unemployed part of the population serves as pressure on employed workers to accept lower standards of work and compensation.

Of course, providing for all basic needs in the modern age is not a question of "can we" but "will we," a question capitalism doesn't ask. Some workers have too many working hours, while others have none. Rather than liberating all workers from toil, all workers are forced to toil more, and more precariously. A society based on such contradictions is never fully stable.

With robots and AI having the potential to almost *completely* replace human labor, does any of this change? In principle, could the capitalists do away with the laborers? In reality, they cannot if only because there would then be no wages to buy the robot-created commodities.

Displacement or control?

Unemployment (or possibly widespread boredom) is not a necessary result of robots entering the workforce. It is a necessary result of robots entering a capitalist system.

The employee is disposable to the capitalists once they can get a machine to perform the same task either as well or better. The robot would require no wage. However, if workers controlled the robots, then the total time necessary to get the same job done could be reduced. This means all workers could accomplish the same task in less time, or use more time to do more work, as per *their choice*.

If all industries had a system of democratic planning based on fair compensation to displaced workers, useless jobs could be eliminated but employment still guaranteed. A workforce of 150,000 truck drivers can be replaced by automated vehicles *without* the truckers losing their bread and butter. The 150,000 extra construction vehicle operators could, for example, make use of idle equipment for whatever short-term community project, or widespread civil engineering, society deems best for its benefit. Then the working times of all, on many projects of communal worth, can be halved! That's more free time with the same pay.

The control of the robots by the working class can free all of us from the constraints of the jobs we are accustomed to, giving us more freedom both in spare time and also in deciding how to use our commonly produced wealth. This is the combination of socialism and automation.

AI and the internet: doom or fortune?

Recent scandals in regards to user data with Cambridge Analytica and Facebook are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to issues of on-line privacy, psychological manipulation, and the use of our on-line habits to target ads to us.

The scientific potential humans could gain from this data is immense. But great power requires great oversight. Data, if democratically controlled and *given with consent*, could offer ways to understand ourselves better rather than control us.

The collection of data is a class issue. Why on Earth do any of us believe for one second that it is OK for the capitalist to trawl a catalog of our habits for their benefit, yet have the complete right to privacy in their transactions, their meetings?

If the capitalist class persists in its desire to see and hear all that we do, the response from the working class must be: "Show us your books!" "Allow our eyes to fall on your secret activities!" The workplace must open up to mass democracy and the commonly produced data must be commonly controlled.

Behind the struggle for control of information is the

(continued on page 8)

ACT UP's struggle against power

By ANN MONTAGUE

The AIDS Holocaust took place from 1985-1995, and it saw the loss of many gay men who had spearheaded Stonewall and launched the gay liberation movement. But many continued with a new fight. Remembering that history will remind us of a time when gay men, together with lesbians and straight supporters, organized and led a militant struggle against some of the most powerful institutions of this nation.

In the early 1980s, young healthy gay men were dying and no one knew the cause of the epidemic. There was no treatment and certainly no cure. And no one cared. The government remained silent. It became the disease that dared not say its name—though sometimes labeled “the gay disease” in the media. The gay community was left to care for its own.

There was a community-based non-profit in New York City called Gay Men's Health Crisis. But it proved to be ineffectual, and in 1987, the group's founder, Larry Kramer, resigned from the board of directors. By that time, some 10,000 gay men in New York City had been diagnosed with AIDS, and half of them had died. Kramer said, “We have sat back and let ourselves be knocked off man by man without fighting back. ... This is more than denial; it is a death wish.”

Soon after that speech, “Silence=Death” signs appeared on walls and scaffolding all over Lower Manhattan. In a couple of weeks at the first meeting 300 people met to form ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power).

Larry Kramer described the structure of the new group as “democratic to a fault.” Greg Bordowitz, an early member, said, “This is how grassroots, democratic politics works. You convince people of the validity of your ideas. You have to go out there and convince people.” There were committees and a coordinating committee that brought ideas to the floor. But any motion could be brought to a vote at any time.

It was to be in-your-face activism. Facing deaths in the thousands and a criminally indifferent government policy, they turned their anger, fear, and grief into action. They were fighting an enemy that seemed unbeatable, and they made activism a vital part of the gay movement.

The organizing focus was on the health insurance industry, pharmaceutical companies, Wall Street, National Institutes Of Health (NIH), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Catholic Church. Their demands started with a greater access to experimental AIDS drugs and a coordinated national policy to fight AIDS. The main slogans were: Fight Back—Fight AIDS! Silence=Death! Drugs Into Bodies!

The first action of the newly formed organization took place on March 24, 1987, and it was at the center of financial power—Wall Street. There were 250 protesters, and 17 were arrested. To prepare the press for this action, a day earlier Larry Kramer had an opinion piece printed in *The New York Times*, entitled, “The FDA's Callous Response To AIDS.” He wrote that “the release of [the drug] AZT is just a sop to the gay community.” On March 24 one year later, there was another march, and more than 100 gay men were arrested.

Closing down the FDA

The next major action involved mixing in with crowds of people who were filing their tax returns. This was the beginning of ACT UP joining with the Silence=Death Project. It introduced what became the iconic symbol—a pink triangle on a black background.

The most successful action of the first two years was shutting down the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Rockville, Md., on Oct. 11, 1988. ACT UP joined other groups of gay men and lesbians and their supporters from around the country in building what was one of the largest U.S. demonstrations since the war in Vietnam. Many gay men had been active in that fight, and the slogan of the day echoed those mass demonstrations: “Hey, Hey, FDA. How many people have you killed today?”

Protesters blocked doors and walkways, and pasted posters on the walls of the building, chanting, “We'll never be silent again!” The roads that workers took to get to work were blocked, and police turned them around and sent them home. The activists raised a banner, “Federal Death Administration.” Police officers wearing surgical gloves and helmets rounded



up hundreds of protesters and put them in buses. But others blocked the buses for half an hour. This was all on the national news.

Demands included shortening the drug approval process, eliminating placebo drug trials, and compelling Medicaid and private insurance companies to pay for HIV-fighting drugs. This was the beginning of the national awareness of ACT UP and AIDS activism. They got their attention with the actions and then started the education component.

ACT UP members showed the press and the FDA that they had knowledge of every detail of the complex FDA approval process. Also, they prepared a well-organized campaign that showed the media how to communicate the treatment issues to the public. Before the siege of the FDA, they had prepared an FDA Action Handbook and conducted teach-ins for ACT UP activists so they would be prepared when they went on television and radio across the nation after their action at the FDA.

Afterwards, an ACT UP spokesperson talked of the success: “The success of the Seize Control Of The FDA can be best measured by what ensued in the year following the action. Government agencies dealing with AIDS, particularly the FDA and the NIH, began to listen to us in decision making, even to ask our input.”

On Sept. 14, 1989, there were two separate actions by ACT UP activists who were protesting the high price of the only approved drug at the time, AZT. Seven activists invaded the New York Stock Exchange and chained themselves to the VIP balcony. They had dropped fake \$100 bills onto the trading floor disrupting the opening bell for the first time in its history. They unfurled a banner directed at the stockbrokers, “Sell Wellcome.” This referred to the pharmaceutical sponsor of AZT, Burroughs Wellcome. The price had been set at \$10,000 per patient per year for the drug.

There was also a noon rally of over 400 people outside the Stock Exchange. The protesters attacked companies who were profiteering from the AIDS epidemic and set off hundreds of fog horns, which echoed through the narrow streets of lower Manhattan. Several days later Burroughs Wellcome lowered the price of AZT to \$6400.

Stop the Church

In New York City, Cardinal John Joseph O'Connor of the Roman Catholic Diocese took a public stand against safe sex education in the city's public schools, railing against condom distribution and against homosexuality—as well as opposing abortion. This led to the Stop the Church protest on Dec. 10, 1989, at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Over 5000 protesters were organized by ACT UP and Wham! (Women's Health Action and Mobilization).

The protesters rallied outside the cathedral as mass was being celebrated inside. About 20 protesters broke away and went inside and interrupted the service, chanting slogans and lying down in the aisles. The demonstration was condemned by Mayor Koch and Governor Cuomo.

Some activists questioned the tactic of entering the church. In retrospect, ACT UP activists said, “The St. Patrick's protest was seminal and changed the way

many saw the Catholic Church. It was no longer untouchable.”

Jim Hubbard, an ACT UP member and maker of the documentary “United In Anger,” said, “I wasn't clear about going inside the church, at the time. But now I think that the shock of going inside and confronting the Cardinal really worked. It brought ACT UP to national attention. It brought the crisis to a point where the government and the mainstream media really had to start dealing with it.”

Day Of Desperation

On Jan. 22, 1991, during “Operation Desert Storm,” gay men entered the studio of CBS Evening News at the beginning of the broadcast. They shouted, “AIDS Is News, Fight AIDS Not Arabs.” The same night ACT UP also protested at the studios of the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour. The next day, banners at Grand Central Station Terminal said, “Money For AIDS, Not For War” and “One AIDS Death Every 8 Minutes.”

ACT UP chapters were built around the country and internationally. The large San Francisco chapter was particularly active in building mass protests, “die-ins,” and marches. A demonstration was called outside the International AIDS Conference in San Francisco on June 22, 1990.

Many women took part in the action, which aimed to draw attention to the fact that AIDS was not just a men's disease; women were also affected. However, since the disease often manifested itself differently among women, the symptoms were not always recognized as coming from AIDS, which caused women to be denied the Social Security benefits that men had won. The protesters also highlighted the AIDS epidemic among people of color and intravenous drug users—issues that they felt had not been sufficiently addressed.

This movement revolutionized everything, from the way drugs are researched to the way doctors interact with patients. They catalyzed development of drugs that since 1996 have helped patients live a near normal lifespan. They redrew the blueprint for activism in a new media world. They were relentless in their struggle.

The gay men and lesbians in ACT UP had confidence that a militant movement of struggle was the way change would happen because they had seen it in the last 20 years. Many of them had spearheaded the Stonewall Uprising. Before that they had joined millions in the streets building an antiwar movement that became massive.

A large number of gays and lesbians who were at the Stonewall Inn Uprising were homeless youth who kept the protests going for five more nights. Eventually, the uprising morphed into stable organizations like the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance. This was the background of struggle that created ACT UP.

Mass struggle cannot arise out of academic theory with no background of solidarity or militancy. An LG-BTQ movement stuck in neoliberal thought will have to find a way out of the bubble. Solidarity does not result from merely learning to accept our diversity, but from the political recognition that our futures are tied together. ■

Moore plays Trump in 'Fahrenheit 11/9'



(Left) Michael Moore in a plug for his new film.

By LISA LUINENBURG

Michael Moore's new documentary film, "Fahrenheit 11/9" debuted in theaters across the country on Sept. 21. The title of the film is a reference to the date on which Trump was declared the winner of the U.S. presidential election in 2016. And indeed, the first part of the film opens with a recap of the 2016 presidential race between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Moore admits with pride that he campaigned for Clinton during the election. Later in the film, Moore briefly interviews Bernie Sanders and then shows him handing off the victory in the primary elections to Clinton. And although he does show that some of the primary election results were doctored to go in Clinton's favor, Moore fails to mention that this was the strategy of the Democratic Party all along—to rope those who are demanding major social changes, and those leaning in favor of a socialist society, back into the heart of the Democratic Party.

Moore does profile three mass social struggles during the film—the battle for clean and safe drinking water in Flint, Mich., the recent wave of teacher's strikes in West Virginia, and the school shootings in Parkland that sparked the mass school walkouts and protests against gun violence.

Although Socialist Action would differ with Moore's analysis of the gun control debates (see the article "Build a Movement Against the Violence of this System!" published in socialistaction.org in April) this section of the movie was, in my opinion, the best and

most moving.

Moore interviewed key organizers in each of these social struggles and clearly showed how Governor Rick Snyder and local corrupt government officials in Flint had betrayed the people of that town and poisoned thousands of children with lead, then covered up the test results. He even went so far as to show how President Obama had downplayed the demands of the people of the town, repeating the message that the water was safe to drink rather than addressing the actual causes of the contamination.

Although Moore does include some criticisms in his film of former Democratic presidents, such as Bill Clinton's slashing of the welfare system in the 1990s, there is no deeper analysis present. Moore mentions that over 100 million people in the U.S. didn't vote in the last presidential election, which is more people than voted for either of the two main candidates. But there is no discussion of how the two-party system is designed by the ruling class to keep the capitalist system in power.

In fact, during the entire movie, there is no mention of capitalism, socialism, or the class struggle today. While Moore does profile several candidates who come from out of the mainstream, such as Democratic Party candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—a member of Democratic Socialists of America—there is no mention of the candidates' political affiliations and little discussion of their platforms. There is no discussion of what an alternative to the two-party system, or to capitalism itself, might look like.

Throughout the film, Moore highlights instead that

it is Trump and his cronies in big business and the Republican Party, not the capitalist system, that is the root of the problems we are facing in the U.S. today. He goes so far as to make references to Trump's being a fascist, even showing a clip of Hitler speaking to a crowd, taped over with Trump's voice. He interviews several experts on fascism, implying that Trump is turning the U.S. into a fascist state and could easily become a dictator like so many others around the world. But is this true?

In our analysis, we would say that Trump is not a fascist but rather a tool of the ruling class who uses populist rhetoric and anti-immigrant scapegoating to appeal to those on the extreme right, or to layers of the white working class. Fascism is a tool that the ruling class uses to protect capitalism and crush the opposition when it is at risk of being overthrown by mass movements of the working class. As we know from history, if we were truly living under a fascist regime, socialists and other targeted groups would be persecuted and killed.

Although we live in trying times, and Trump's attacks on immigrants and other layers of the working class should not be minimized, we are not currently living under a fascist state (see Trotsky's pamphlet "Facism: What it is and How to Fight It" for a deeper analysis). Using the term "fascist" without a deeper understanding of what this term means obscures the real threats we face in the U.S. today.

Moore ends the film with the implication that we need more mass movements and protests in the street to fight against Trump's rule. And what is his solution for the impending threat of Trump's takeover of the U.S.? In a recent promotional e-mail for his new film, Moore states, "I'm convinced that once a non-voter sees this film, they won't be nonvoting this time around! ... I want to see a tsunami of Americans at the polls on November 6th! This movie is my effort to help make that happen."

Indeed, this is the main strategy of the Democratic Party today—to channel all the righteous rage of working-class people, like those in Flint or the teachers striking across the country, into a vote for another wing of the ruling class. And we will undoubtedly see this happening in a big way during this year's elections in November. But this obscures the real root of all the attacks the working class faces today—the capitalist system.

And in the end, it won't matter if we vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate in the next election. The results will be the same—ongoing imperialist wars across the globe, continued cuts to social programs, and deepening attacks against women, immigrants, LGBTQI people, and people of color. The only way to win a better world—a socialist society—is to build an independent party of the working class to fight for *our* interests, not the interest of the rich and powerful. ■

... Robots

(continued from page 6)

sheer power of AI. In the future, AI on a mass scale could augment the collective intelligence of humanity. But before we let this genie further out of the bottle, these things must be under the direct control of the workers. Only by the mass democracy of the internet can AI come to liberate, rather than enslave, humanity.

Imagine if AI were under the control of persons only interested in making a profit? *Real AI* (not a "non-player-character" in a video-game, which has very weak AI) would think far too fast for humans. The danger of AI is not its potential for malevolence, but rather its *effectiveness*.

The "paper clip machine" is the perfect analogy. This is a thought experiment about a machine that was programmed to do one task: make paper clips. But what if we gave this machine super-intelligence and the ability to evolve its methods of production? If we were not paying attention, it would not take long before humanity and the Earth were converted entirely into paper clips.

The danger would not be the evil of the machine, but rather the mistake of its creators. The machine would be *too good at making paper clips*.

In the same way, the introduction of AI to the algorithms that decide what we see on-line, and also pre-

dict our behavior for better marketing of products, is wildly dangerous. The only reason it is used like this is because we live under capitalism, not because it is the only way to use the technology.

It would be foolish and stupid to allow that kind of power to remain in the hands of persons interested only in the bottom line. The workers of the world deserve to control how this information comes to their screens and why.

AI and the internet show us the potential to use collective human and robot intelligence to solve our problems, enhance our scientific understandings, and make life better. We must not squander it. The sheer mass of data collected silently from our on-line activities has huge scientific potential, allowing us to better understand ourselves and our society, find ways to treat mental illness, devise games and practices that make us smarter or happier, and solve previously unsolvable mysteries.

AI, if smartly controlled, can be combined with human intelligence. Supercomputers can simulate natural environments of other planets, allowing us to make predictions about what life might be like there. AI can correlate data for us, showing us things we previously didn't see. Humans can judge for themselves how to use the new knowledge. Individuals, given free access to the internet as a human right can make use of supercomputers in personal or group projects.

All of this depends heavily on whether humans will take control of AI directly, or if AI will be fettered by

capitalism and human greed.

Our robot friends under socialism

The historical task of the capitalist was to develop the technology that we now possess. The time of their rule is over. The historical task of the worker is to seize the technology and put it to use directly helping humanity. The capitalist market—now largely in the hands of massive trusts, banks, and monopolies—is an obsolete social tool, and robots and humanity will only reach their full collective potential in a planned system for the common good.

Robots entering the workforce can be combined with the elimination of useless or outdated jobs and a guarantee of work to all persons, including a UBI in the intervals between work. This will reduce working times for all and free up most of our weeks for activities of our choosing.

AI and mass data collection can be controlled by the workers at any scale and applied to any problem. People must trust that they can access information without being watched! Access to any information is a human right in the age of socialism.

Privacy about what information we decide to see should also be a right. With full consent of data use, and full transparency of all activities of data science, human intelligence will explode by both increasing general knowledge and by mixing computational speed and precision with human flexibility and creativity. ■

Swedish elections reveal rightward drift

By KJELL OSTBERG

The outcome of the Swedish parliamentary election on 9 September confirms a general European trend: rising right-wing populism and a weakening Social Democracy. The traditional picture of Sweden as the home of a progressive social democratic welfare state has been fading away for several decades now.

Since at least the deep crisis of the Swedish economy in the early 1990s the Social Democratic party has accepted the general outlines of a neo-liberal economic policy, including deregulations and privatizations of the public sector. At the same time, the once so impressive party organization has been strongly weakened—the party has lost two-thirds of its members during the last two decades and the closely affiliated blue-collar trade-union confederation LO has lost 25 per cent during the last 10 years.

The party, which during the previous 85 years had been out of government for only nine, lost power to a right-wing government in 2006. During the following eight years, this government stepped up the pace in undermining the public sector through increasing privatizations and tax cuts.

When the Social Democrats came back to power in 2014 they did so in an extremely weakened position. The party, which for a long time used to get around 45% of the votes, just reached 3%. Together with its co-party in government, the Green Party, and with the parliamentary support of the Left Party, the government still was a minority government. And it had neither the ambition nor the power to fundamentally change the policy of the outgoing government. The most spectacular outcome of the 2014 election was the rise of the right populist Sweden Democrats. They succeeded in doubling their vote to 13%, which meant that none of the traditional political blocs were able to form a majority.

Unlike its twin parties in Denmark and Norway the Sweden Democrats has its roots in openly racist and pro-Nazi organisations. Since the late 1990s a new generation of young leaders has successfully managed to build an effective party organization, starting from some local strongholds in southern Sweden.

Xenophobia and anti-immigration have been the main ideological platform of the party and the main reason for being able to win voters. As it has increased its parliamentary influence, the party has made efforts to downplay the more openly racist rhetoric, expelling some of the most eager representatives. The party has also lately tried to stress the national-conservative features of the party, approaching similar currents in Poland and Hungary. Their economic and welfare policy is close to that of the Conservative Party.

For a long time there was a de facto agreement between the traditional parties in the parliament to try to isolate the Sweden Democrats and to abstain from negotiation with them. This was why the right-wing parties accepted the red-green coalition in 2014. The huge wave of refugees in 2014 and 2015—80,000 and 160,000 respectively came to Sweden—changed the political situation almost overnight.

Until October 2015 there was a broad consensus that the Swedes were prepared to “open their hearts”—to quote former Conservative Party leader Fredrik Reinfeldt. Initially, only Sweden Democrats



(Above) Stefan Löfven, Swedish prime minister and leader of the Social Democratic Party.

criticized the massive immigration. When the party started to grow and the shortcomings in the organization of the reception of refugees became obvious, most leading parties, including the Social Democracy, agreed to make an immediate stop and adjust Swedish immigration policy to the minimum criteria of the EU.

The change was not only a formal adaptation, it was accompanied by a rise in anti-immigrant sentiments, anti-Muslim agitation, and demands for tougher legislation directed towards what was claimed to be crimes related to immigrants coming also from the traditional parties, including the Social Democrats in government.

It is obvious that one reason for this change was the threat both Social Democrats and Conservatives felt from the Sweden Democrats. As could be foreseen from experiences from other countries the change of tactics did not work. The Sweden Democrats continued to grow at the expense of especially these two parties.

The outcome of the election confirms this conclusion. The Social Democrats fell to 28%, their lowest result since suffrage was won in 1921. The Conservatives lost even more, 3.5%. And the Sweden Democrats gained almost 5%, to 17.5%. In a European perspective this result is perhaps not staggering. Sweden is adjusting to an international trend. In a Swedish perspective, however, this is a new situation, and the outcome is a serious setback in several regards. Two should be mentioned here.

The first is the threat of a real influence from the Sweden Democrats over day-to-day governmental policy. There is at this moment a stalemate between the two traditional political blocs: who will be the next Prime Minister could be decided by the Sweden Democrats. The demarcation line that has existed until now between the traditional political parties

and the xenophobic right-wing populists does not exist anymore. It is obvious that the Conservatives are prepared to enter formal or informal negotiations with the Sweden Democrats to be able to form a right-wing government. The Danish experiences shows how disastrous the consequence could be from letting such parties set the agenda.

The other setback is related to the left and the working class. It is true that the Left Party—former Communists—made substantial gains – from 5.7 to 7.9% and above all were able to make an impressive election campaign among young people. However, the left has never been as weak as today, only around 35%. And a majority of the working class is not voting left any more. Thirty years ago, 80% of the working class voted Social Democrats (and another 10% Communists). In 2014 still 50% of the members in LO voted Social Democrats. In 2018 only 37% voted for them (and another 10% for the Left Party).

It is obvious that the main reason why the Social Democrats have lost their stronghold inside the working class is that they have abdicated from what used to be their main strength: the defence of a welfare state built on equality and solidarity. Nothing indicates that they have learned that lesson.

The main aim of the party leadership is to solve the present situation by trying to form a coalition with bourgeois parties, which would mean a further weakening of the welfare state and more attacks on the rights of the working class. ■

Kjell Östberg is a long-standing member of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International (since 1968). He is now Professor in History at Södertörns University in Stockholm.

By LISA LUINENBURG

Ireland will offer free abortions

In a stunning victory for women, Ireland officially removed its nearly total ban on abortions in late September. The change was a result of a referendum on May 25 of this year, in which 66.4% of voters (to 33.6% against) overwhelmingly voted for a repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution, which banned abortions in nearly all cases throughout the country.

Although those in favor of the repeal were from both urban and rural areas, they were mostly younger, with people over 65 being the only group to reject the repeal.

Abortions have been illegal in Ireland for a long time, mostly under the strong influence of the Catholic Church. However, the Eighth Amendment was put into place through a public referendum in 1983, in a bid to solidify the coun-

try's anti-abortion position after the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortions in the U.S. in the 1970s. The restrictive amendment forced many women in Ireland (those who could afford it, that is) to travel abroad to gain access to abortions. In 2016 alone, 3265 Irish women traveled to the U.K. to have an abortion.

Since the 1990s, the Catholic Church's social and political hold has been loosening, as Ireland has passed laws granting easier access to divorce, contraception, and same-sex marriage.

Gail McElroy, a professor of politics at Trinity College in Dublin, told *The New York Times* after the May 25 referendum, “It is the final nail in the coffin for them. They're no longer the pillar of society, and their hopes of re-establishing themselves are gone.”

Simon Harris, the Health Minister in Ireland, recently announced that the plan is for abortion services in Ireland to be free.

Harris explained to a reporter, “I've said from the start that I don't want cost to be a barrier, because if cost is a barrier, you get into a situation where one of two things could happen: you see private clinics develop—we don't want that to happen in Ireland, we want this to be part of an integrated public health service—and secondly, you can see people having to continue to travel.”

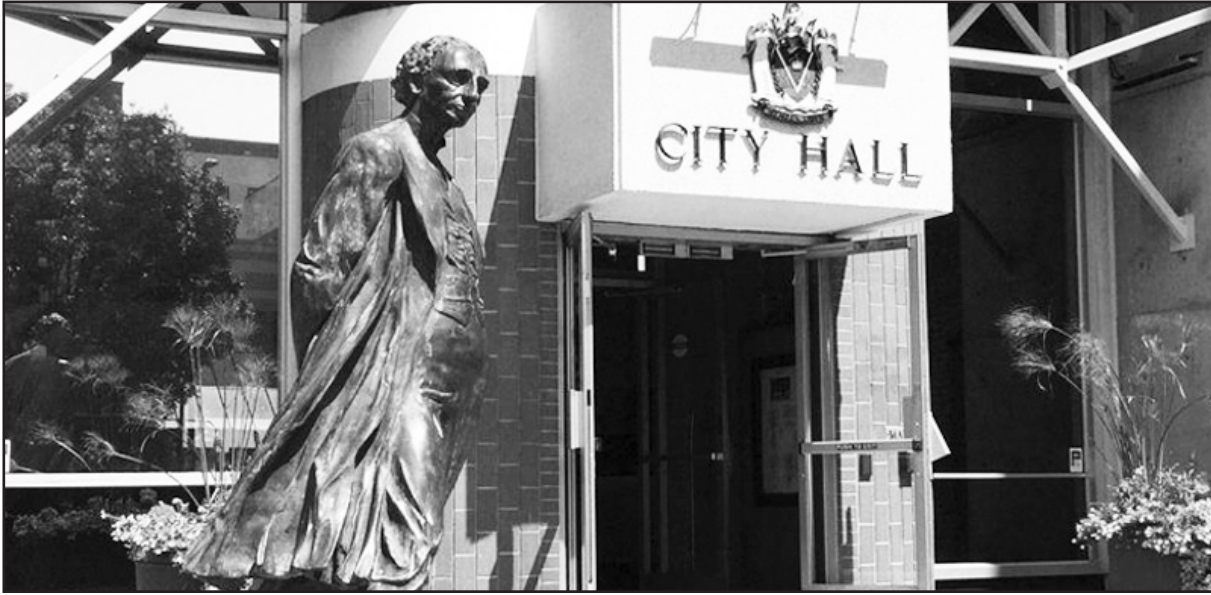
The next phase of the process will be for Harris to submit a new law governing abortion to the Irish lawmakers, which could go into effect by next year. The legislative phase always presents the risk of concessions that have been won by the

working class to be watered down, so it will be important for the Irish people to continue to pressure for free access to abortions.

NPR reporter Debbie Elliot cited draft legislation earlier in the year, which would allow elective abortions up to 12 weeks and limited access up to the 23rd week of pregnancy, a far cry from a similar law in Britain, which allows abortion up to 24 weeks of pregnancy. And the restriction on abortions unless the mother's life is at risk remains in effect in Northern Ireland.

Nonetheless, the repeal of the abortion ban in Ireland represents a major step forward for women in Ireland and everywhere else who continue to struggle for their right to control and limit their own reproductive processes. ■

John A. Macdonald: Five frightening facts



By BARRY WEISLEDER

The mayor and city council in Victoria, British Columbia, voted to remove a statue of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, from the entrance to their city hall. Indigenous people and anti-racists celebrated. Conservatives, however, are upset, labelling the move "erasing history."

But what is history? Is it only by and for the ruling elite? The rise of Idle No More, Black Lives Matter, and a growing working-class self-awareness are forcing recognition of the ugly past, and demand the inclusion of facts that promote a freer future, shorn of illusions in the Canadian state.

On the 200th birthday of Sir John A. Macdonald, Jan. 11, 2015, CBC personality Shelagh Rogers shared her thoughts on-line. Rogers writes:

In the spirit of educational awareness in ways not taught in school, here are some buried frightening facts about the first PM, #SirJAM.

1) During the American Civil War (1861 to 1865), Montreal served as refuge to Confederates—Southern Americans who wanted to keep slavery and secede from the United States union. The Southern slavers found a friend in John A. Macdonald.

From historian Stanley Ryerson, author of "Unequal Union", we learn of the political sympathies towards the southern Confederacy of John A. Macdonald. Macdonald was the hired advocate for an organization of vigilantes committed to "peace" through support for the South. One of these Copperhead conspirators, a man named Headley [...], set fire to a dozen large hotels in November of 1864, hoping to create panic in the North and divert military efforts. In his memoirs, Headley writes:

"At the suggestion of Col. Thompson (the chief Confederate Commissioner) it was deemed advisable that we retain Hon. John Macdonald as counsel in the event of a requisition, as he is friendly to our cause and was regarded as a very eminent lawyer. One evening ... we rode in a sleigh to the residence of Mr. Macdonald in the suburbs of Toronto. He greeted us

cordially and we discussed our case fully until a late hour. The arrangement was made and a retainer fee was paid the following day. But it happened that the time never arrived when his services were required" (Ryerson, 1983: 334-35).

Macdonald was not shy about his wish for the pro-slavery side to win the Civil War. When speaking at a banquet, Macdonald made a point of lauding "the gallant defence that is being made by the Southern Republic" (Ryerson, 1983: 335).

For John A. Macdonald, Canada was to be the country that restored a pure Aryan race to its past glory."

2) John A. Macdonald may have named Canada a "confederation" in deference to the Southern Confederates with whom he sympathized. According to research by Professor A. Bakan of Queen's University: "Stanley Ryerson notes that even the unusual designation of the new Canadian state as a 'Confederation' may be suggestive of sympathy with the Southern states in the U.S. Civil War. The term itself, he maintains, is a misnomer. The 'confederacy' refers a union of states which delegate authority to a central government of limited sovereignty; while a federal government indicates a state that is fully sovereign, and the constituent bodies have limited authority.

"Ryerson cites W.P.M. Kennedy's 'The Constitution of Canada,' where it is suggested that in the debates in 1865 leading to Canada's confederation, the terms 'federation' and 'confederation' were deliberately used without clear definition. The aim of the advocates was to confuse and camouflage the contentious issue, and in so doing, ensure consent" (Ryerson, 1983: 443).

Regarding the invention of "confederation" as a term applied to the Canadian federal dominion state, Ryerson muses: "[W]as it derived from a politician's instinct to steal something from the Opposition or from the well-known Tory sympathy with the Southern Confederacy?" (1983: 371).

The founding party of the Canadian state was a strong ally of the most racist section of the global elite of the day. (Mayers, 2003).

3) John A. Macdonald was a Sinophobe, according to Timothy J. Stanley's research.

In 1885, PM Macdonald told the House of Commons that, if the Chinese were not excluded from Canada, "the Aryan character of the future of British America should be destroyed." This was the precise moment in the histories of Canada and the British dominions when Macdonald personally introduced race as a defining legal principle of the state.

Macdonald justified taking the vote away from anyone "of Mongolian or Chinese race" in the Electoral Franchise Act—he called it "my greatest achievement."

4) John A. Macdonald was way more racist than his contemporaries.

For John A. Macdonald, Canada was to be the country that restored a pure Aryan race to its past glory. Lest it be thought that Macdonald was merely expressing the prejudices of the age, it should be noted that his were among the most extreme views of his era. According to Timothy J. Stanley's research, he was the only politician in the parliamentary debates to refer to Canada as "Aryan" and to justify legalized racism on the basis not of alleged cultural practices but on the grounds that "Chinese" and "Aryans" were separate species.

5) John A. Macdonald's policies of forced starvation helped clear First Nations from the prairies in order to build the railway, according to James Daschuk of University of Regina. An excerpt from his book, "Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation and the Loss of Aboriginal Life":

"For years, government officials withheld food from aboriginal people until they moved to their appointed reserves, forcing them to trade freedom for rations. Once on reserves, food placed in ration houses was withheld for so long that much of it rotted while the people it was intended to feed fell into a decades-long cycle of malnutrition, suppressed immunity and sickness from tuberculosis and other diseases. Thousands died."

Not mentioned above is the Pacific Railway Scandal of 1872. MacDonald and 150 members of his Conservative government were famously bribed by Sir Hugh Allen, head of the railway syndicate. Unstated is MacDonald's role in the hanging of Louis Riel, the Metis rebel leader. Or how MacDonald first gained public office by buying votes with liquor. Or that he frequently neglected his duties due to his chronic alcoholism.

Sir John A. was an architect of the genocidal Residential School system that stole thousands of Indigenous children from their families, leading many to appalling physical and sexual abuse, malnutrition and death. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario is asking that MacDonald's name be removed from schools.

Does this racist, corrupt drunkard deserve to be honoured as a "founding father"? Or should he be exposed for his genocidal policies, and revealed for his unwavering service to the corporate elite? No, please do not destroy the statues of John A. They belong in museums, adorned by plaques that tell the whole sordid story of the founding of the Canadian colonial settler state. ■

... Hurricane

(continued from page 12)

hog farms, while the population of the region is much denser than in those Midwestern states.

Reconstruction Needed

Only a democratic reconstruction of the economy, under the control of working people, can address the threat posed by extreme weather, irresponsible waste disposal, and factory farming. We have to radically restructure how we generate energy and raise our food to put an end to these environmental disasters.

A public works program on the level of the post-World War II "Marshall Plan" is necessary to remediate the coal ash and hog waste problems. A national health-care system is necessary to address the problems in communities experiencing exposure to these toxic industries.

As sea levels rise and weather gets more extreme, coastal areas are endangered. Major investment in infrastructure is necessary to safeguard and retrofit coastal communities. Programs to assist in the reloca-



tion of endangered populations are necessary.

An emergency plan must be put into effect to limit the catastrophic effects of climate change. The United States should lead the world in an effort to create a economy that values conservation and is based on 100 percent renewable fuels. This will require nationalizing the energy industry under workers control, and retraining workers involved with fossil fuels for

new jobs at top union wages.

The capitalist class has proven itself incapable and unwilling to address the dangers that come from climate change. Their willingness to sacrifice both nature and humanity on the altar of profits shows clearly that the social system run by their parasitic class needs to be replaced by a revolutionary system run by and for working people. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

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Ontario court upholds Ford's attack on Toronto Council

Shows fragility of civil rights under capitalism

By GARY PORTER

On Sept. 19, the Ontario Court of Appeal stayed the lower court's ruling that Premier Doug Ford's Bill 5 was a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The reporting justice said: "The application judge was understandably motivated by the fact that the timing of Bill 5 changed the rules for the election mid-campaign, which he perceived as being unfair to candidates and voters. However, unfairness alone does not establish a Charter breach."

Others say it is a clear violation of Section 15 (1) of the Charter. Only the court decides.

Premier Ford's move is designed to permanently weaken downtown Toronto's representation. Residents in the suburbs tend to be richer and more conservative. Downtown Toronto is more the opposite. Ford's move was made without any consultation with Toronto residents.

Ford is motivated by revenge for the actions of Toronto Council, which sharply curtailed the powers of his drug-addicted, irrational brother Rob Ford as mayor, and for the defeat Doug suffered in the 2014 mayoral election. This dovetails with the class interests of big business.

According to the representation ratio imposed on Toronto by Bill 5, Hamilton would have a city council of six members, and strongly Tory Muskoka Region, the lake district north of Toronto, would qualify for no council at all.

Ford is the scion of a rich family, a spoiled brat, a high school drop out and a former drug dealer. Such is the choice of the Ontario elite. He brooks no inter-

ference. When the lower court ruled Bill 5 was a violation of the Charter, Ford immediately announced he would invoke Section 33 of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the notorious "notwithstanding clause."

The clause states that a province, or the federal government, may override the charter simply by inserting a clause in any Act stating it is their intention to do so. In effect, the clause allows the abrogation of Charter Rights whenever any tin-pot premier decides his whim takes priority over the rights of the people, or the findings of a court. The latest ruling of the Court of Appeal means Ford does not have to use Section 33, at least not yet.

This savage attack on basic rights is not new in Canada. Between the 1870s and 1996, under federal law, at least 150,000 indigenous children, as young as four years, were seized from their homes on reservations and placed in residential schools to "take the Indian out of the child." Many were underfed, over-worked, raped, and abused. They could not see their parents or speak their native language. At least 6000 died. The trauma continues to this day.

Remember Pierre Trudeau's invocation of the War Measures Act (WMA) in October 1970: civil rights were terminated by an order of the Governor General in Council, essentially by a decision of the federal cabinet.

The excuse for this wild overreaction was the kidnapping and killing of a politician and the kidnapping of a British diplomat by the tiny Front de Liberation du Quebec. The FLQ failed. It was never a serious threat to bourgeois rule. But Pierre Trudeau, father of the current prime minister, seized the opportunity to demonstrate the viciousness of the capitalist state when challenged.

The WMA had earlier been used to



(Above) Earlier attacks on basic rights: Beginning in the 1870s, at least 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their homes and placed in schools to "take the Indian out of the child."

authorize the internment of Japanese Canadians in 1941 after the war with Japan began.

The War Measures Act was replaced in 1985 by the Emergency Act, owing to the fear of many, even in the ruling class, that the WMA allowed for dictatorial powers with no parliamentary oversight or review, and no compensation plan for confiscations of property, or for government taking control of production.

More recently, in 2015, the hard-right government of Stephen Harper passed Bill C 51, the Anti-terrorism Act. This act broadened the authority of Canadian government agencies to share information about individuals with no concern for privacy. It is equivalent to the sweeping powers granted to the United States National Security Agency to monitor the activities of all global netizens, allegedly "in the name of national security."

The Canadian arm of Amnesty International condemned the anti-terrorism bill, warning that it could be used to target environmental activists and aboriginal protesters, or any dissenters. The majority of Canadians oppose the bill, placing their privacy and rights above such invasive "security" measures.

The NDP and the Green Party voted against the Anti-terrorism Act and called for its repeal. Justin Trudeau's Liberals voted for the Act, but promised to amend it.

Finally, in the Spring of 2017, the Liberals introduced Bill 39. C-39 provides a new list of ways in which CSIS is allowed to disrupt a threat, including deleting communications, fabricating information, making or interrupting financial transactions, interfering with travel, or impersonating another person. Those new powers will be able to "limit a right or freedom" guaranteed by the constitution, but only if a judge is satisfied that it is a reasonable limit.

Does this mean we have no rights? Certainly not. We have the rights won by mass demonstrations, strikes, and united-front campaigns. But our rights do not reside in words on paper, or in the courts. Our rights rely on our willingness to defend them when the rights of anyone are under attack.

A good example is the campaign by the Workers' Action Movement (WAM)—a new body of left-wing union activists—which is rallying unions, NDP district associations, and community groups to ask that the Ontario Federation of Labour convene a special convention to decide on a plan of action to defeat the tyranny of Doug Ford and his Ontario Conservative regime. ■

Greens surpass NDP in New Brunswick cliff-hanger election

By CHRIS WANAMAKER

It is no exaggeration to say that most Canadians, including New Brunswickers, are amazed at the results of the Sept. 24 election in the Atlantic coast province. Both the left liberal Green Party and the right-wing, anti-French language People's Alliance Party made historic breakthroughs, each winning three seats. One or both parties may hold the balance of power in the first New Brunswick election not to result in a majority government since 1920!

The incumbent Liberals won 21 seats, and the Conservative opposition captured 22, albeit with a smaller share of the overall vote. The New Democratic Party came a dismal fifth. The NDP's Jennifer McKenzie was the only party leader not to win a seat in the legislature, earning just 14.7 per cent of the vote in Saint John Harbour.

It may be that some folks voted Green, instead of NDP, because the former stressed the need for fiscal and ecological balance sheets to be calculated together, rather than separately, maintaining that past governments have "only paid attention to the financial accounts."

The Greens, a small business party, said that it would seek to reduce debt in both areas. They pledged to remove the property tax exemption for crude oil storage tanks, most of which are owned by the gigantic Irving corporation.



(Left) Former New Brunswick leader Dominic Cardy joined the Tories and red-baited the NDP on his way out.

The NDP also proposed tax and environmental reform, such as reversing the Liberal Brian Gallant government's decision to cut taxes for the top 1% of income earners, adopting a 16% corporate tax rate, and ending special tax treatment for some industries. However, the NDP did not tie economic and environmental proposals together, and did not mention the oil industry.

Prior to the election, the influential New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice endorsed the pledges of both parties to reduce poverty, against the austerity

agenda of the Liberals, the Progressive Conservatives, and the People's Alliance. However, the Common Front press release endorsed the Green platform more times than that of the NDP because of the Greens' more specific commitments to improve the province's social assistance program, especially for people with disabilities.

The Common Front also praised the Greens for being the first party to release its entire platform, in contrast to the later release of the NDP platform, and the Liberals' practice of releasing theirs one piece at a time.

The NDP in New Brunswick has weaker ties to the labour movement than elsewhere in Canada, and has yet to bury the legacy of its former provincial leader, Dominic Cardy, a proponent of the Energy East pipeline, who joined the Conservative Party and red-baited the NDP on his way out the door. ■

Christopher (Chris) Wanamaker is a member of Socialist Action and the NDP Socialist Caucus in Saint John, New Brunswick.

N. Carolina suffers environmental damage in wake of hurricane

Gray Whitely / Sun Journal / AP



By JOHN LESLIE

Hurricane Florence hit the Carolina coast on Sept. 14 with major flooding, leaving hundreds stranded, more than 500,000 without power, and at least 45 dead. Many residents of the region had not anticipated the extent of the flooding from the slow-moving storm, and hundreds required emergency evacuation.

Florence had risen to the level of a Category 4 as it approached landfall, but was quickly downgraded to a Category 1 as it hit the coast, inundating parts of North and South Carolina with as much as 40 inches of rain. It was the worst rainstorm to hit the East Coast of the United States in recorded history.

The intensity and strength of Florence is, in part, due to climate change. As the Atlantic Ocean warms, hurricanes have increased in their frequency and intensity.

The journal *Science* concluded, from a study of 2017 tropical storms and hurricanes, including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, that “the increase in 2017 major hurricanes was not primarily caused by La Niña conditions in the Pacific Ocean, but mainly by pronounced warm sea surface conditions in the tropical North Atlantic.” The study noted that they anticipate an increase in the number of hurricanes as surface temperatures rise.

Additionally, as sea levels rise, coastal communities will be adversely affected. In 2012, the North Carolina state legislature banned the use of a study on sea level change, which predicted a rise in sea level on the North Carolina coastline of 39 inches by 2100, until after 2016.

A subsequent study predicted a six-inch in sea level over a 30-year period. Many waterfront communities already experience street flooding at high tide, something that was unheard of in earlier years.

Many of North Carolina’s fragile barrier islands have been over-developed by powerful real estate interests, hastening erosion, and damaging the ability of these islands to protect the mainland from ocean

surges during hurricanes.

Toxic sludge

The destruction from Florence making landfall extends beyond wind and flood damage to communities. Flooding has endangered waterways and fisheries, as pollutants make their way into rivers and streams. A coal ash containment dam at Duke Energy’s L.V. Sutton plant, outside of Wilmington, N.C., breached during flooding, releasing a slick of coal waste into the Cape Fear River. The coal ash landfill at the Sutton plant holds more than 400,000 cubic yards of the contaminant, which contains mercury, arsenic, and lead as well as other toxic substances.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “without proper management, these contaminants can pollute waterways, groundwater, drinking water, and the air.” The sludge can settle to the bottom of a lake or river and remain there for years. In the aftermath of the storm, Duke Energy security personnel blocked public access to the area around Sutton Lake, citing safety concerns.

Days earlier, another Duke Energy coal ash landfill had released an estimated 2000 cubic yards of coal ash sludge into the Cape Fear River. Additionally, environmentalists reported that a coal ash landfill at Goldsboro, N.C., was under water during flooding and releasing waste into the Neuse River. This is a threat to both commercial and recreational fishing in the region.

Animal waste

In addition to the coal ash spills, waste from factory farming operations threatens waterways. An estimated 5500 pigs and 3.4 million chickens were killed in post-Florence flooding. North Carolina, the second-largest pork producer in the U.S., has more than 4000 open-air hog-waste “lagoons.” These are ponds filled with a mix of water and hog manure and urine—plus the remains of animal carcasses, blood, and chemicals from pesticides. These waste pits receive more than 9.5 million tons of waste annually from more than 9 million hogs.

(Above) A resident of New Bern, N.C., surveys the damage from Hurricane Florence.

At least 13 of these hog lagoons have leaked into surrounding areas during flooding. At least two of these waste pits have sustained structural damage. This exposes communities to E.coli, salmonella, and antibiotic-resistant MRSA.

Despite claims to the contrary, waste-polluted water may also leach into groundwater, affecting people dependent on wells for drinking water. Additionally, release of nitrogen-rich manure into waterways encourages algae growth, robbing the water of oxygen and contributing to the death of fish and other wildlife.

Following Hurricane Matthew, in 2016, there were increased levels of bacteria in waterways for months afterwards. Similar effects were seen with Hurricane Floyd in 1999, when 2 million chickens and 110,000 hogs were killed, but virtually nothing was done to alleviate the problem.

Corporate factory-farm polluters, like Smithfield, operate without supervision by the EPA or compliance with the Clean Water Act, thanks to a 2011 U.S. District Court decision in favor of a number of associations that represent big agri-business. Currently, there are no treatment requirements at the federal level for disposing of animal waste.

Pollution from factory hog-farming operations appear to have an effect on human health, with life expectancy lower in southeastern North Carolina than other regions of the state. A study in the *North Carolina Journal of Medicine* notes increased infant mortality, anemia, kidney disease, and low birth weight associated with areas near hog farms. This is true for both higher and lower income groups, but availability of health care for poor people is limited.

The study points out that the number of farms in southeastern North Carolina is higher than other states (Minnesota and Iowa) with large numbers of

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