

## Join the Women's Marches on Jan. 19 — For a feminism of the 99%



Carolyn Cole / Los Angeles Times

By KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

Donald Trump, the misogynist-in-chief, daily tweets out his hate-filled rhetoric, serving up women, immigrants, and people of color as red meat to his hungry base, always ready to blame the least powerful for capitalism's crimes.

In the meantime, Brett Kavanaugh, Trump's entitled, over-privileged Supreme Court nominee, likes beer and torture and "deserves" a life-time seat on the highest court in the land. Never mind his clear lack of judicial temperament, or the sexual assault allegations against him, because he got into Yale and studied hard!

People around the United States were captivated by the testimony of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford, as those old enough to remember were by that of Anita Hill 27 years earlier. But Hill's testimony didn't stop the selection of Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court, and Blasey Ford's testimony didn't keep the Senate Judiciary Committee, and later the full Senate, from confirming Brett Kavanaugh.

Many people, and especially women, are justifiably angry. At first, that anger propelled us into the streets. But it was quickly channeled to the voting

booth, where it fueled a historic level of voter participation in mid-term elections this past November.

The "wave" crashing into Washington this month is full of firsts. Yes, it is "blue" (meaning Democrat), but it also female; 102 women now serve in the House and 27 in the Senate. The most diverse Congress in history is now in place.

### We voted. Do we still need to march?

Many liberals, "progressives," and even radical feminists have expressed pride in the new politicians they helped elect. However, Marxist feminists are less inclined to be fooled by this rainbow-colored paint job on the same old institutions of the capitalist class. What accounts for the difference? It stems from differing perspectives about the roots of oppression and how we make change.

Liberal feminists generally fail to see the structural obstacles. They tend to accept the adage that hard work, dedication, and single-minded focus on the goal pays off.

They believe that the 2018 election was a validation for them because numbers don't lie—there are more women in positions of political power than ever before, including a return engagement for the only

(Above) The 2018 Women's Marches brought hundreds of thousands into the streets.

woman ever to serve as speaker of the House of Representatives.

"Progressive" feminists tout what they consider to be "feminine" values like caring and compassion, relationship building, and cooperation. They don't believe you have to be female to share these values, but they certainly see the 2018 election as empowering this value system to stand up to Trump's agenda of greed, hatred, and bigotry. Impeachment here we come!

Many radical feminists, on the other hand, see patriarchy as the root evil from which all that is rotten grows, and their solution often revolves around intersectional feminist identity politics. For radical feminists the new Congress, so full of hyphenated-identities, will see more clearly through the institutionalized chauvinism and legislate differently. There may still be plenty of old, rich, white, Protestant, straight men in positions of power, but new identities at the table mean new ideas can enter the conversation.

Accordingly, liberals, "progressives," and even radi-

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# Mumia Abu-Jamal wins major court victory

BY JEFF MACKLER

On Dec. 27, Philadelphia Superior Court Judge Leon Tucker ruled in favor of Mumia Abu-Jamal, holding that the actions of former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Judge Ronald Castille had demonstrated a “lack of impartiality” and “the appearance of bias.”

Tucker’s decision represents a major victory for Abu-Jamal, which opens the door to a new trial—or dismissal of the murder charges against him—after an appeal to the Pennsylvania courts.

Mumia was incarcerated in 1981 in a racist frame-up murder trial of police officer Daniel Faulkner and on death row for most of the past 37 years. He is a prize-winning journalist and the author of 10 books on various aspects of the freedom struggle.

Mumia’s latest book, “Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide, Manifest Destiny,” co-authored in 2017 with filmmaker Stephen Victoria (“Long Distance Revolutionary,” 2014) with a forward by Chris Hedges, is invaluable reading for revolutionary activists who seek the truth about capitalist imperialism’s centuries of horrors and the historic resistance against them.

Mumia’s freedom struggle has been supported by scores of trade unions across the U.S. and in Europe as well as by Amnesty International, the NAACP, the European Parliament, and numer-



ous city council resolutions from San Francisco to Detroit.

Tucker’s 27-page ruling was in two parts. He held in Part Two that, with regard to all of Mumia’s numerous denied Post Conviction Relief Act (PCRA) appeals between 1998 and 2014, Supreme Court Judge Ronald Castille’s actions in campaigning for the Pennsylvania governor to sign death-penalty warrants for all “convicted cop killers” and other biased acts had violated Mumia’s fundamental constitutional rights.

Castille had participated in Pennsyl-

(Above) Pam Africa of the International Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal speaks at a rally outside the office of Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner on Dec. 28.

vania Supreme Court decisions that denied all of Mumia’s appeals, including a request from Mumia’s attorneys that he recuse himself from deciding the case he had helped to prosecute and another decision in which the same Castille court refused to consider documented evidence submitted by court stenographer Terri Maurer

Carter that Mumia’s trial judge, Albert “the hanging judge” Sabo, had stated in his antechambers before entering the courtroom to adjudicate Mumia’s case, “Yeah, I’m going to help ‘em fry the nigger.”

Mumia Abu-Jamal’s decades-long sojourn through the racist U.S. “criminal justice system” is replete with what has become infamously known as “the Mumia exception,” that is, contorted applications of the “law” aimed at denying its applicability to the facts in Mumia’s case.

These include systematic exclusion of eyewitness testimony proving his innocence, intimidation of witnesses, falsification of exonerating ballistics findings, fabrication of testimony that Mumia admitted to the killing of police officer Daniel Faulkner, and Mumia’s physical exclusion from a majority of his trial proceedings. This is just to name a few of the legal atrocities attendant to his trial and subsequent proceedings.

Judge Tucker’s ruling opens the door for Mumia to appeal all of Castille’s decisions over a 17-years period and for renewed massive and united national and international campaigns in the streets to demand Mumia’s freedom now.

Tucker denied Part One of Mumia’s appeal, which pertained to whether or not Castille had been significantly or personally involved in Mumia’s prosecution, in order to qualify under the provisions of the *Williams v. Pennsylv-*

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## JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

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

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

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

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

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

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By MARTY GOODMAN

On Nov. 13, after long secret negotiations, two New York “progressive” Democrats, Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, jointly announced that Amazon will place one of two new corporate “headquarters” in New York City and the other in Arlington, Va.

Virtually kissing the feet of Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s CEO, whose personal wealth is \$166 billion, both Democrats have bestowed upon Amazon about \$3 billion in tax breaks and construction grants, which include even a nifty helipad for its owner.

Amazon is said to be worth a mind-boggling \$1 trillion. Bezos, the richest man in the United States, also owns the *Washington Post* newspaper, worth \$250 million and Whole Foods, purchased by Amazon for \$13.7 billion in 2017.

New York State offered \$1.525 billion and the city is giving \$1.28 billion to locate in Long Island City, in rapidly gentrifying Queens, a short train ride from Manhattan. *The Wall Street Journal* reports a “condo gold rush” in Queens.

Capitalist politicians of more than 238 cities had competed to secure the Amazon deal, offering an orgy of tax write-offs and concessions—to be paid for mostly by working people—totaling some \$200 billion. In a bait-and-switch operation, Amazon sought detailed demographics of those cities only for later use in target marketing, after pitting each city against the other. Negotiating blind, cities were made to sign non-disclosure agreements, thus seeking to suck out as much taxpayer cash and concessions as possible from billionaire-loving Republican and Democratic Party politicians.

For its part, Amazon promises 25,000 new jobs in New York City, with an average salary of \$150,000, far above the average salary of the nearby Queensbridge Houses, the largest housing project in the U.S., where the poverty rate is near 50% and the average income is below \$20,000. Amazon says it will spend \$5 million in training. Another 25,000 jobs are promised to Arlington.

#### Billions in bribes

The secretive deal circumvents New York’s city council and New York State legislative oversight, with land usage powers at the state level seen as the only, although unlikely, obstacle. Governor Cuomo claims, to the outraged disbelief of many observers, that the rewards from Amazon’s investment will cost New Yorkers “nothing,” despite billions in bribes. State Senator Michael Gianaris, who represents Western Queens, said, “The state and city should be embarrassed. They got taken, plain and simple.”

Amazon will circumvent the usual land review process overseen by the city council. The secretive deal makes use of a state General Project Plan, an approach used in other developments like the colossal giveaway to the Atlantic Yards developers in Brooklyn (see below).

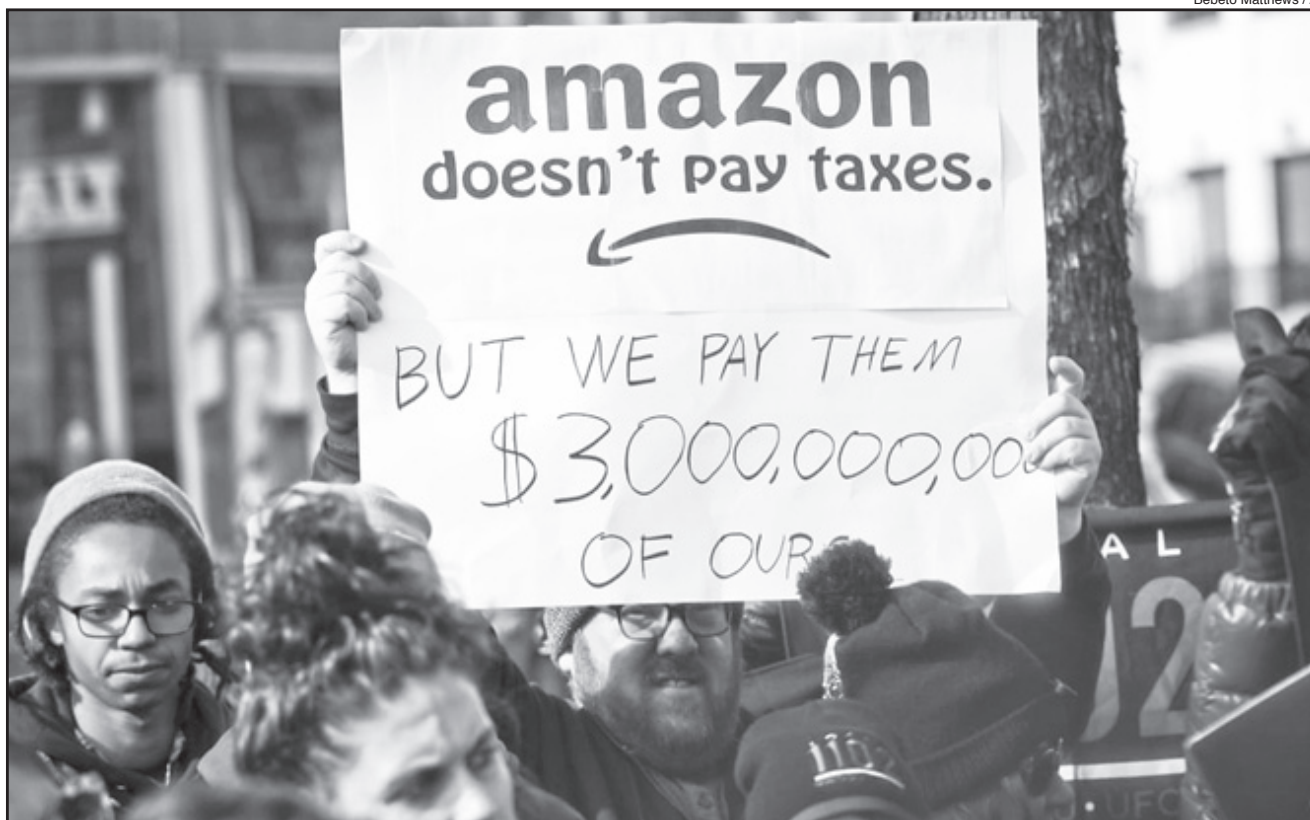
Raymond Normandeau, a resident of Queensbridge Houses since 1973, told the on-line *Gothamist*, “It’s pure bullshit. They’re never going to hire us for these jobs. Only a country bumpkin like de Blasio or Cuomo would believe this shit.”

Enrique Peña, a Queens College student, told an Amazon protest that Cuomo’s refusal to fund state public universities says, “We’re denying education funding to hardworking New Yorkers.” “So why,” he said, “are we giving a huge tax break to the wealthiest man on Earth?”

Taking on the corporate onslaught is a coalition of community groups and unions. Cathy Rojas, an organizer of a Dec. 16 rally against the Amazon deal, told the crowd, “Amazon’s presence will further drive up rents in Queens, which is already experiencing the country’s largest rent hike. It will lead to more racist harassment of local public housing residents and it will strengthen the power of anti-union corporations. Despite de Blasio’s campaign rhetoric, he’s helping New York City become a playground for the rich—and it’s time to stand up!”

Extensive investigation by *The New York Times* and others, reveals Amazon’s work culture as one that encourages employees to tear each other down, rat each other out to the boss—working long hours and being held to standards that Bezos brags are “unreasonably high.” Model workers are often described as

# New York Democrats shower Amazon with \$billions



Bebeto Matthews / AP

“athletes.” Its “purposeful Darwinism,” said one former Amazon human resources director.

The mindset of Amazon has also attracted the attention of immigrant rights activists for the sale of its facial recognition software, “Rekognition,” to ICE and police departments nationwide to aid in detention and deportation and to build a facial recognition database.

Amazon, in its never-ending drive for loot, is believed to be seeking to take advantage of a section of the \$1.5 trillion tax giveaway to the rich sponsored by Trump. The provision rewards investment in “Opportunity Zones” in the form of massive tax write-offs. The neighborhood in Long Island City is viewed as depressed and likely subject to write-offs for Amazon and other real-estate sharks, driving out working class residents and small businesses.

#### Mayor Bill de Blasio: “Progressive Democrat”

So craven was the role of Mayor de Blasio, a politician who has described himself as a “democratic socialist,” actually had orange lights turned on in October at the Empire State Building, One World Trade Center, the Bloomberg Tower and other midtown locations, in what his office called “Amazon Orange,” sparing no expense—or embarrassment—in luring Amazon.

Indeed, many observers have noted that New York City, also home to Google and Facebook, was the obvious favorite all along, the bribes being corporate gravy.

Running on a populist theme of a “Tale of Two Cities,” de Blasio took office in 2014, after taking in most of the local left. Immediately, de Blasio appointed as NYPD chief William Bratton, an architect of the widely condemned racist “stop and frisk” policy. De Blasio pushed five re-zoning schemes, mostly in non-white neighborhoods, most recently in the mostly Hispanic low-income Inwood section of northern Manhattan.

Enraged Hispanic activists and others blockaded streets and occupied a local politician’s office, branding de Blasio’s thinly veiled gentrification as “ethnic cleansing.” Even so, the re-zoning passed in a City Council vote with overwhelming Democratic Party support (see *Socialist Action*, September 2018).

Mirroring Governor Cuomo’s deep indebtedness to big real-estate interests is De Blasio’s love affair with developers who have destroyed much of the city’s available working-class housing. In the early 2000s, elected “public advocate” Bill de Blasio backed the Atlantic Yards giveaway in Brooklyn to powerful real-estate developer Bruce Ratner, a donor to de Blasio’s election campaign.

Ratner went on to build Brooklyn’s \$1 billion Barclays sport center, employing the state’s “eminent domain” powers despite sustained neighborhood protest. The cynical deal included promises of an overpriced “affordable housing” project of 2250 units,

(Above) Unions and community groups rally against Amazon outside a meeting of political representatives in Long Island City, N.Y.

with “only” 450 going to the better-off middle class. The “affordable housing” project, announced in 2003 and said to take 10 years to complete, is now to be finished in the 2030s.

On Nov. 30, Mayor de Blasio was in Burlington, Vt., to latch up with Senator Bernie Sander’s launching of a so-called “Progressive International.” The concluding panel, which included Bernie Sanders and Greek social democrat Yanis Varoufakis (but not de Blasio), made no mention of capitalism as the root cause of war, inequality, and climate change—injustices they claimed to challenge.

Socialist Action stands with the working people of Queens in their fight against Amazon. We join them in seeking to build mass opposition to the corporate raiders and their billionaire-loving buddies in the Republican and Democratic Party. ■

## ... Mumia

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nia ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016.

Mumia’s attorneys may appeal this decision in order to fight on both legal fronts.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia’s “liberal” district attorney, Larry Krasner, whose actions to date have largely conformed to the reactionary positions of the Fraternal Order of Police, may well appeal Tucker’s amazing and unexpected decision. This would inevitably lead to years of further litigation.

Mumia’s supporters are campaigning to tell Krasner: Do *not* appeal Judge Tucker’s decision granting new rights of appeal to Mumia Abu-Jamal.

On Jan. 5, over 100 people rallied in front of the D.A.’s office across from City Hall in Philadelphia, and then marched with great enthusiasm through the center of the city despite the chilly rain. Many passing motorists honked their horns in support. ■

Send protests to Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner! Tell him not to appeal Judge Tucker’s decision!

Phone: (215) 686-8000; E-mail: DACentral@phila.gov; Tweet: @philaDAO; Mail: Phila. DA Larry Krasner, Three South Penn Square, Philadelphia, PA 19107.



## ... For a feminism of the 99%

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cal feminists tend to be optimistic about the new Congress. They are marching in this year's Women's Marches to demonstrate their support for the newly elected women and to urge and empower them to enact sweeping policy changes.

In contrast, Marxist feminists recognize that politicians of the two capitalist parties serve as spokespeople for the ruling class. The politicians may look more like "us," but that should not fool us. Capitalist politicians represent the interests of the capitalist class. A capitalist politician in a dress, or even a hijab, is still a capitalist politician. It is the role they play and not the costume they wear that matters. So, Marxist feminists march not to support those in power but to demand a feminism of the 99%.

The objectives of Marxist feminism were explained in a recent interview in *International Viewpoint* with Cinzia Arruzza, an associated professor at the New School of Social Research in New York. Arruzza stated: "Feminism for the 99% is the anti-capitalist alternative to the liberal feminism that has become hegemonic in recent decades, due to the low level of struggles and mobilizations around the world. What we understand as liberal feminism is a feminism centered on liberties and formal equality, which seeks the elimination of gender inequality, but through means that are only accessible to elite women. We think, for example, of the type of feminism embodied by women like Hillary Clinton. Or, also, the kind of feminism that in Europe is becoming an ally of the states in supporting Islamophobic policies ..."

"To be clear, it is a type of feminism that pursues gender equality within a specific class, the privileged one, leaving behind the vast majority of women. Feminism for the 99% is an alternative to liberal feminism, since it is openly anti-capitalist and anti-racist: it does not separate formal equality and emancipation from the need to transform society and social relations in their totality, from the need to overcome the exploitation of labour, the plundering of nature, racism, war and imperialism."

### Mired in controversy

This year's Women's March has been embroiled in controversy. The 2017 March, coming the day after Donald Trump's inaugural and framed as a direct challenge to his explicit misogyny, was huge. Millions of women and their allies took to the streets of Washington, D.C., and in hundreds of other cities and towns across the country and around the world. It was a massive success, but very white and subject to criticism by women of color for its lack of inclusiveness.

In 2018, the message, "Women March to the Polls" signaled the clear intent by the behind-the-scenes, Democratic Party machine leadership to capture women's anger and channel it towards electoral ends. Marches were fewer and smaller, and still subject to criticism as "white, liberal feminist" dominated.

This year, having successfully channeled all that anger into getting more women (including many hy-

phenated-identity women) elected to office, the Women's March made a determined effort to look more like the women they claim to represent. But charges soon started to fly, centering on the issue of anti-Semitism, which came to the center of national discussion following the gun attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue last October.

Tamika Mallory, a Black woman activist for gun control and one face of the national Women's March leadership, has made no secret of the fact that the Nation of Islam stood beside her and supported her when no one else would, after the brutal murder of her son's father 17 years ago left her a Black, single, teen mother alone in the world. It should therefore be no surprise that Mallory was among the 15,000 who attended the Nation of Islam's annual "Saviour's Day" event last year.

According to some in the women's movement, Mallory's subsequent refusal to denounce Louis Farrakhan, the controversial leader of the Nation of Islam who has made poisonous statements against Jews, makes her guilty of anti-Semitism by association.

Likewise, Linda Sarsour, a Palestinian Muslim leader of the March and executive director of the Arab American Association of New York, is presumed guilty because she won't denounce Mallory. Sarsour is also under attack as an "anti-Semite" and a "jihadi terrorist" because of her active support for the rights of the Palestinian people against racist Zionism. A grouping of right-wingers, Zionists, and other commentators from Fox News to pop singer Courtney Love have joined the chorus against Sarsour, though a large number of prominent political activists who are Jewish have spoken out in her defense.

Of all the problems that plague the Women's March, however, the most debilitating by far is the orientation of central organizers to electoral politics and the Democratic Party. Clearly, a new sustained mass-action orientation is necessary. The fact that hundreds of thousands of people, from all walks of life, have joined the Women's marches the last two years shows the possibilities of building such a movement.

This year, Socialist Action urges participants in the Jan. 19 marches to join the contingents of supporters of International Women's Strike (IWS), which champions a program of working-class and internationalist demands as an integral part of the struggle for women's liberation. See their call for a feminism of the 99%, which a number of groups and individuals have signed, on the next page.

### A theory that can help guide us

Fortunately, the women's movement has theoretical tools that can guide our participation in struggles for political power and help us see past the myriad distractions. Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) is such a tool. While many radical feminists tend to believe that the root of women's oppression lies in biology, SRT uses historical materialist analysis to argue that this cannot be true.

In pre-class society, when social production was

organized communally and products shared equally, the social status of women and men reflected the indispensable roles each played in the subsistence productive process, and there was no material basis for the exploitation of one group over another.

Child-bearing cannot be the root of women's oppression because although women have always been the ones to bear children, they have *not always* been oppressed. The origin of women's oppression is intertwined with the transition from pre-class to class society. In these *specific* socioeconomic conditions, as the exploitation of human beings became profitable for a privileged few, women, because of their biological role in production, became valuable property.

SRT fills the gaps left in Marx's analysis (labor power creates all wealth, but the continuous *re-creating* of labor power is exogenous to the model of capital accumulation), creating a fuller, unified theory in the process, which explains women's oppression and provides guidance in the ongoing struggle for women's liberation. We oversimplify and summarize here by stating that the patriarchal family system operates in the service of the capitalist system—allowing the individual capitalist, the capitalist class as a whole, and the capitalist system itself to evade responsibility for, and the associated costs of, reproducing the labor power on which the capitalist system depends.

### Into action

Our task is to make visible all of the "work" that capitalism has assigned to the family, in which it is expected to perform invisibly, at little or no cost to the capitalists, extracting ever greater profits for the capitalist class at the expense of the rest of us. Accomplishing this provides numerous benefits for the ruling class:

First, the "family" that performs all this reproductive labor for free is an idealized notion of the capitalist imagination (think "Leave it to Beaver"). In this scenario, only wealthy, white, heterosexual, cis-gendered women really have the option to stay home and care for children, elders, and household, without compensation, and they mostly choose not to—opting instead to hire women of color or immigrant women to do such work for very poor compensation (and leaving their own families to do so).

But this mythical, idealized family also creates a normative standard, and the punishment for falling outside these norms is oppression. Women are caught in a double bind where their assigned role inside the patriarchal family is oppressive, while any attempt to break free of the assigned role targets them for oppression.

Second, as we see clearly in times of economic boom, when the state chooses to buttress the family in order to facilitate the availability of women outside the home in the "productive" economy, there is no innate logic to assigning families, instead of society as a whole, responsibility for the care of "unproductive" members of society.

Third, in times of economic crisis, when the ruling class needs to simultaneously drive women from the work force to reestablish the reserve labor pool, lowering wage levels and cut the growing costs of social services provided by the state transferring the economic burden and responsibility for these services back onto the individual family of the worker, they do so by launching an ideological offensive against the very concept of women's equality and independence.

The real world consequences include more sexual harassment and violence, less access to reproductive health services and choices, demonization of immigrants (a separate but connected reserve labor pool), fewer "support" services in schools (higher student to teacher ratios and the virtual disappearance of nurses and social workers), and larger work loads and lower pay for those who do "women's work" professionally—teachers, social workers, domestic workers, and health-care providers.

And finally, a SRT feminist, Marxist understanding of the nature of women's oppression helps us formulate transitional demands and choose our battles for maximum impact. We stand with the women of Ireland, Poland, and Argentina (and here at home), fighting for access to abortion and other reproductive health services and choices. We stand with the women of Puerto Rico, who are facing an increasing wave of gender violence, exacerbated by the ruthless Fiscal Control Board's bankrupting of their country.

We stand with the women of the caravans, desperate to escape the violence and starvation U.S. policies sow in their home lands. We demand "Let them in!" We stand with the nurses. We stand with the teachers. We stand with hotel workers. We stand for a feminism of the 99%. ■

# Solidarity with locked-out federal workers!

We present here a statement by the Young Workers Committee of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO. Socialist Action believes that this statement is an excellent contribution to a discussion in the labor movement of what to do next in the fight against Trump's government shutdown. One real strength of this statement is that it does not emphasize electoral action as the solution to Trumpism.

As we go to press in early January, some 800,000 federal workers are locked out, with 420,000 of them being forced to work without pay. A union leader told the Philadelphia *Inquirer* that members in federal government jobs have to choose whether to feed their "children or pay for gas to go to work."

"A month into this, we're going to see people start to get evicted and their cars start to be repossessed," said David Borer, general counsel for the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 750,000 federal employees.

Trump dismisses the impact on federal workers and accuses them of being Democrats. The government has advised locked-out workers to barter odd jobs, like yard work or carpentry, to landlords in exchange for rent.

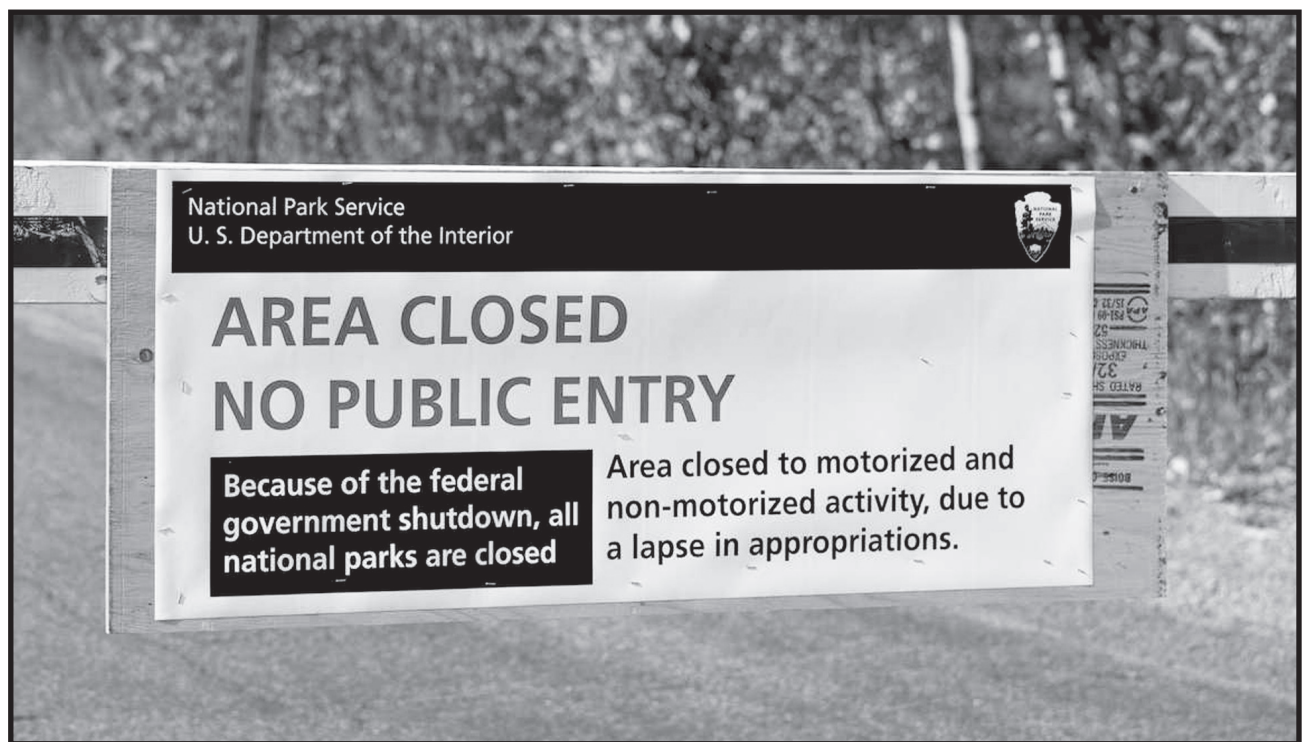
In the meantime, the lock-out has caused disruptions in government services. Reductions are pending in food stamps for 38 million low-income people. The Internal Revenue Service is not functioning, which threatens a delay for people who are expecting tax refunds. Air-traffic controllers, who are working without pay and without the help of auxiliary workers, are feeling increased stress; many have responded with sick-outs. Federal inspections for health and safety have been suspended, putting lives in jeopardy.

The unions must take action in solidarity with the locked-out federal workers. The AFL-CIO at the local, state, and national levels should immediately open union halls as centers for mutual aid, with meals and other support provided to workers and their families. This would include legal advice and taking action to stop foreclosures or evictions.

Another urgent step would be organizing a mass action to call for "Money for workers, not racist walls!" A Million Worker March on Martin Luther King Day, which mobilized hundreds of thousands of workers, would help shift the terms of debate in Washington, and the balance of class forces. The teacher strikes in the U.S. in 2018 and the yellow vest protests in France point to the potential for radically shifting the political situation through mass mobilizations independent of the bosses.

Such a mass-action approach would put labor at odds with their "friends" in the Democratic Party. The temptation among the union bureaucrats would be to moderate demands, or demobilize workers, to appease the Democrats. During the Wisconsin protests against Gov. Walker's union busting, union tops diverted the energy of the movement into a disastrous recall campaign.

The Democrats have not been friends to workers and oppressed people. From mass incarceration, to union busting and austerity, to imperialist war, Democrats can be counted on to support Wall Street first. A fighting Labor Party, based on the unions and organizations of the oppressed, would chart an independent course forward for working people. ■



## Money for workers, not the Wall!

The Young Workers Committee of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO stands in solidarity with the nearly one million federal government workers who are paying the price for Trump's government shutdown as he demands \$5 billion for a border wall with Mexico.

420,000 federal workers are being forced to work without pay, with another 380,000 currently laid off without pay, and with no guarantee that they will receive back pay when the shutdown ends. Most of these dedicated public servants are union sisters and brothers. Ernie Johnson, a furloughed federal employee, went to Twitter to say "If no backpay, I'll likely be evicted by Feb 1," using the trending hashtag #ShutDownStories.

Billionaire Trump has put hundreds of thousands of families in a financial bind to pay rent and bills, but ironically, under US law it would be unlawful for the same government workers to strike and shutdown the government for any reason. This is a sad illustration of the anti-worker laws championed by the likes of Trump and other employers that make the collec-

tive action of unionists difficult or unlawful. We support the inherent and fundamental right of federal government workers, and all working people, to go on strike. No worker should be forced to work without pay, or denied the right to strike.

Trump's demand for a border wall is a major piece of his anti-immigrant and anti-worker agenda, which includes the mass detention of children, raids and deportations, increased border militarization, and stoking of racist fears of immigrants and minorities. Trump's agenda works to undermine solidarity by pitting workers in the US against each other and against workers from other countries looking for employment and a better life.

The refugee caravans headed toward the US border are made up not of terrorists as Trump claims, but of working families that have been devastated by corporate policies like NAFTA. We stand with workers fleeing violence and poverty created by US foreign and economic policies, and therefore strongly oppose the border wall and border militarization targeted

towards these refugees.

We can make the world a better place by spending that \$5 billion not on a wall and border militarization, but on good union jobs and education programs that actually lift up working and oppressed people. This country has more than enough wealth to take in refugees and invest in wages, benefits, and resources for working people.

- We oppose Trump's attacks on workers, immigrants, and refugees.
- We support the right of federal workers to strike
- We demand Trump end the shutdown and pay all federal workers
- We call for five billion dollars to be allocated to programs that help working people, not to attack refugees looking for a better life.

We call on unions everywhere to pass similar statements in order to strengthen the fight against Trump's attacks and build a united, fighting worker's movement. "Working Class, Unite & Fight!" ■

— Young Workers Committee, Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO, YWC@MilwaukeeLabor.org

## For a feminism of the 99 percent!

The following statement was initiated by International Women's Strike.

We are calling for Feminism for the 99% contingents in the upcoming Women's Marches of January 19.

This past year has confirmed that corporate feminism, that is afraid to challenge the prerogatives of capitalism, has no solution to the crisis that women and LGBTQIA communities are facing globally.

In the US in particular, growing income and racial inequality, rising Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, renewed attacks on reproductive rights and on the unions, expose the feminism of Hillary Clinton and Sheryl Sandberg to be particularly grotesque. Their 'Lean In' feminism claims to fight the wage gap, but defends the system that creates low wages.

A Feminism for the 99% must win equal pay but also union scale wages for all. We must preserve and expand abortion access, including the repeal of the Hyde Amendment, but in the complete way that only universal health care can provide. For us, reproductive justice means not just free abortion on demand but access to public resources to raise our children

without the fear of mass incarceration, deportation or violence.

How can we build such a feminism? The process has already begun. The #metoo and #timesup movements have not just exposed the prevalence of sexual violence in women's lives, they have shown that we can fight back against this system that protects the perpetrators of that violence. Meanwhile, strikes in education, hotels, and health care, ranging from West Virginia, Washington State, Boston, Chicago to San Francisco, and many more, have highlighted the leading role women and people of color will play in rebuilding a fighting working class.

But while women have led the current strike wave, we understand that women's work is not limited to the formal sector alone. Women's labor in the home and in the community, done without pay and often without any social support, is crucial to capitalism's functioning. This is why a feminism for the 99% does not limit its demands to better wages alone.

We demand that the system overturn its priorities from profit making to making investments in childcare and medicare for all, in affordable housing and in a fully funded public education system. We demand

clean water that capitalism's racialized neglect denies us and clean air free from the system's greed for fossil fuels. Our feminism fights as hard for the health and future of our communities as we fight for the health and future of our planet.

We are aware that the system's violence is not contained within national borders alone but linked to US militarism abroad. Therefore our feminism is founded on solidarity with those forced behind bars and into detention centers within this country as well as with those facing the brutal effects of US imperialism from Central America to Palestine.

It is with these politics in mind that we are calling for anticapitalist, Feminism for the 99% contingents in the coming Women's Marches.

We are calling for you to march with us on January 19 and we are calling for you to build with us an internationalist and new class struggle feminism. ■

### Signatories

**Organizations:** International Women's Strike, Campus Antifascist Network, Freedom Socialist Party, International Socialist Organization, Radical Women, Socialist Action, Socialist Alternative, US Campaign for Palestinian Rights

**Individuals:** Linda Alcoff, Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhat-tacharya, Angela Davis, Zillah Eisenstein, Liza Featherstone, Nancy Fraser, Kshama Sawant, Barbara Smith, Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, Cornel West

# Challenges posed by the ‘Green New Deal’

Takver / flickr / cc via Common Dreams



By KAMRAN NAYERI

The fanfare about the UN Conference of Parties (COP) 24 in Katowice, located in a coal-mining region in Poland, that the diplomats from some 200 countries have “struck a deal after an all-night bargaining session” that may advance the fight against the unfolding catastrophic climate (*The New York Times*, Dec. 15, 2018) rings hollow if we recall that just 10 days earlier the same newspaper reported that two years after the Paris Agreement greenhouse gas emissions accelerated like a “speeding freight train” in 2018.

Two months earlier, on Sept. 9, the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, held a press conference in New York telling the world that if the world governments “do not change course by 2020, we risk missing the point where we can avoid runaway climate change.” Let’s remember that is only two years from now. Clearly, the world is facing a climate emergency, and so far none of the world’s major polluters are doing anything close to what is needed to avert the impending catastrophe.

The ecological and social crises the world faces today are actually two aspects of the crisis of the anthropocentric industrial capitalist civilization.

To resolve the crisis, humanity must chart a course towards an ecocentric socialist future. Thus, all attempts to reform the present day civilization to address various aspects of the ecosocial crisis are bound to fail if they are not part of an ongoing and deepening struggle waged by working people ourselves—armed with an action program and a strategy to build a self-organized and self-mobilized movement—to achieve an ecocentric socialist society.

The Sunrise Movement in the United States poses an important set of opportunities and challenges for the climate justice movement and its small ecosocialist component. While its stated purpose is to combat the climate crisis, the group has not absorbed a key political lesson apparent in the spontaneous Yellow Vests protests in France—the existing political parties are not to be trusted.

Thus, the Sunrise Movement supports the agenda of Democratic Party Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez: a Green New Deal to be forged by the formation of a Select Committee for a Green New

***The course proposed by Ocasio-Cortez and the Sunrise Movement suggests that working through the Democratic Party, and not building our own bottom-up, anti-capitalist organization, is the way to fight systemic climate change.***

Deal in the legislative session beginning this month. It has used lobbying, albeit through a protest at the halls of the U.S. Congress, to demand legislative action to stop the climate crisis.

Some climate justice groups and a few small labor groups, as well as two-dozen current and just-elected Democratic members of Congress, have signed onto Ocasio Cortez’s proposal.

This development is not surprising. The main groups in the labor and climate justice movements have been working through the Democratic Party all along and essentially have embraced a parliamentary and reformist approach to climate change policy.

Again unsurprisingly, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)—with its ranks swelled with thousands of new recruits, including former supporters of Bernie Sanders’ 2106 Democratic Party campaign—has decided to run candidates in the 2018 elections as Democrats. This follows the reformist tradition of the U.S. social democrats and Stalinists (mostly the Communist Party U.S.A.) since the 1930s. In their view, the task is not to overthrow U.S. capitalism but to reform it by “pushing” the Democratic Party “to the left.”

I need not remind the reader that this “strategy” has a decades-old track record of failure, as can be verified by the dissolution of all progressive movements in the United States that followed a similar course. Just consider the history of the labor, Black, and women’s liberation movements over the past several decades and how such once-powerful movements have been reduced to a shadow of their former selves, a price they paid for being in the Big Tent of the Democratic Party, attempting “to push it to the left” instead of building self-organized and self-mobilized anti-capitalist movements and a fighting labor party to pursue their respective demands.

Impervious to such lessons of the modern political history of the United States, Ted Franklin, a leader of System Change Not Climate Change (SCnCC) who is also a member of the East San Francisco Bay DSA, celebrates Ocasio Cortez’s reformist course. He writes:

“The quasi-magical arrival of Alexandria Ocasio Cortez on the political scene has given climate activists new hope that a program big enough to address the danger will become an actual subject of national debate in the time frame necessary to give us a fighting chance against climate catastrophe.

Her proposal for a Select Committee for a Green New Deal ... is gaining momentum as the highly energized progressive base of the Democratic Party confronts the triple obstacles of the Republican neofascist party, the neoliberal wing of the Democratic Party, and the establishment progressives who are now running to the left but still beholden to corporate interests” (Franklin, 2018).

As someone who has been an active member of the national SCnCC network for about three years, and came

to know and respect Franklin, his embrace of Ocasio Cortez’s reformist course comes as a surprise to me. To be clear, revolutionary (eco)socialists are not opposed to reforms. Thus, I have spoken in praise of the Oakland No Coal Coalition in which Franklin has played a leading part. But reforms can only be sustained if they are won by the organized and mobilized masses of the working people as a way to enhance our self-confidence and as a stepping stone towards other victories in the direction of an ecocentric socialist future.

The political course proposed by Ocasio Cortez, and following her the Sunrise Movement, and now Franklin, is the exact opposite. It mis-educates and confuses any radicalizing youth or working person by suggesting that working through the capitalist Democratic Party, not building our own bottom-up anti-capitalist organization, and eventually a revolutionary labor party based on our own transformed mass organizations, such as unions, is the way to fighting the systemic climate crisis.

Thus, while the defeat of the Democratic Party incumbent, Joe Crowley, by Ocasio Cortez in the Democratic Party primaries registered the movement of the electorate to the left, her decision to run as a Democrat and her subsequent course to campaign for reforming the Democratic Party is entirely damaging to the cause of working people to organize and mobilize independently of the American capitalism and its two-party system.

## **Reality vs. fantasy: the Select-Committee**

Franklin seems to pitch his political support for the Ocasio Cortez’s course on the premise that short of a mass movement of the working people fighting for a program to stop and reverse the climate crisis, the next best option is to work through the Democratic Party to get a national discussion on a Green New Deal to avert the crisis. So, let us consider his argument in some detail.

Like all others in the history of labor and socialist movements who have pursued shortcuts in revolutionary politics, sometimes with disastrous results, Franklin bends reality to fit his fantasy. To begin with, he assumes that because Ocasio Cortez has floated the idea of a Select Committee to forge a Green New Deal, both of these are already facts.

It should be noted in the first place that the likely Democratic Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, has already asked Florida Representative Kathy Castor to lead a “special committee on climate change” in the new Congress that will reinstate the same committee that was dissolved by the former Republican

(continued on page 7)

This is an abridged version of “Opportunities and Challenges Posed by the Gilets Jaunes (Yellow Vests) Protests and the Sunrise Movement,” originally published in *Our Place in the World: A Journal of Ecosocialism* on Jan. 1, 2019. For the full version, which includes references and hyperlinks to most sources, see <https://forhumanliberation.blogspot.com/2019/01/3135-opportunities-and-challenges-posed.html>.

## ... Green New Deal

(continued from page 6)

Speaker John Boehner. While both Pelosi and Castor have included references to “thousands of green jobs” they hope to create, they have set aside any mention of a Green New Deal, and it is not even clear if Ocasio Cortez would be assigned to Castor’s climate change committee.

In fact, Castor has already disputed the suggestions that representatives who have received financial contributions from the fossil fuel industry should be barred from serving on her committee, on the grounds that it would be unconstitutional because it would violate their First Amendment right to free speech, a fossil fuel industry legal argument.

Evan Weber, the political director of the Sunrise movement, responded to the announcement by saying: “Nancy Pelosi has the power to determine whether or not the Select Committee for a Green New Deal lives or dies. ... Sunrise Movement’s position is and will continue to be that it’s not over until she makes it clear that it’s over” (reported in *Other News: Voices Against the Tide*, January 2019). This is a sad statement of utter powerlessness of climate justice activists who place their hope in the Democratic Party.

### Reality vs. Fantasy: a timely national debate on climate change and a Green New Deal?

With Ocasio Cortez’s proposed Select Committee blocked by the Democratic Party leadership, it would seem the rest of Franklin’s rosy projections are also no more a possibility. But let me consider them as if they were, in fact, to materialize as Franklin hopes.

If we are to believe United Nations Secretary General António Guterres that the world’s governments will run out of time to stop the runaway climate catastrophe if they do not act by 2020, it should be abundantly clear that we are already out of time to act to stop the worst of the climate crisis.

Still, Franklin imagines not only that the Democratic Party will move swiftly to form Ocasio Cortez’s Select Committee but that this committee will hold speedy hearings and formulate a Green New Deal, and that this will ignite a national debate that presumably improves the final legislation, and a similar bill will pass the Republican-controlled Senate and will be signed by President Trump before we run out of time! That is in one year’s time!

Of course, Franklin forgets, and I do not wish to belabor the point, that the climate crisis can only be resolved on the world scale with the top polluters taking the lead. So even if this fantastic scenario plays out as Franklin imagines it, the crisis will become unstoppable if China and the European Union fail to follow. In fact, Franklin himself cites formidable obstacles to any speedy and effective legislation to become law by counting some of the obstacles, including “the neoliberal wing of the Democratic Party,” its “progressive establishment,” and the “neo-fascist” Republican Party. Yet, he still presents Ocasio Cortez’s proposal as a viable option!

The Green New Deal is neither new nor a radical idea. In fact, in all its varieties it is some form of Green Capitalism, which has been criticized by revolutionary ecosocialists, including in the System Change Not Climate Change network.

The neoliberal Democratic *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman first proposed it as a way to stop the climate crisis almost 11 years ago (*The Times*, Jan. 19, 2007, and April 15, 2007). Friedman is a big promoter of the magic of technology and capitalist markets, around which his idea of the Green New Deal was built, and he has influenced the climate justice movement. Earth Justice interviewed him about his Green New Deal, and the Green Party picked up the idea, adding on its own formulations.

And now Congresswoman Ocasio Cortez has made the idea “her own,” and some climate justice groups and small labor groups have supported the idea. Meanwhile, there has been no questioning of how and why the U.S. Congress, one of the three constitutional seats of power of U.S. capitalism, would somehow legislate a Green New Deal that would actually stop the crisis and the U.S. president would sign it into law without any resistance by the same economic, social, and political forces that have blocked a serious discussion of the crisis for decades without a massive mobilization of the working people!

There is nothing in Franklin’s essay that even hints at who could stop climate change—capitalist politicians or the U.S. and world’s working people.

### Climate change mitigation as big business

To understand the capitalist climate mitigation debate, we must understand the ongoing discussion in the capitalist policymaking circles about reforming capitalism to function more efficiently. Health-care policy debates provide an excellent recent example.



**The more forward-looking section of the U.S. capitalist class aims for rejuvenation of the economy, based on new industries including ‘green technology.’ That’s what the Green New Deal is all about.**

As a health policy scholar in the early 1990s, I had the opportunity to document and demonstrate in detail how the liberal and conservative health-care reform proposals were framed by concerns about the profitability crisis in the U.S. capitalist economy. Would the discussion on climate change in the U.S. Congress be any different?

Just as the Democratic and Republican policymakers refused to frame the health care reform debate in terms of health care as a *human right*, there is no reason to believe that their debate about the Green New Deal would be any differently framed—to put humanity and life on Earth at the center of policy-making deliberations instead of better oiling the capitalist profit-making machine.

Already, a long list of luminaries from both Democratic and Republican parties have spoken out in favor of some form of capitalist climate mitigation policy. Just last September, California’s Governor Brown held the Climate Summit that came on the heels of the May 24, 2017, “Climate Change is Big Business” conference in San Francisco, in which he was its invited keynote speaker.

On Dec. 13, 2018, John Kerry, another strategic thinker of U.S. capitalism, wrote an opinion piece for *The New York Times* complaining about the heat waves that are “stealing 153 billion hours of labor,” about how tropical infections are moving north, and about falling crop yields in more than two dozen countries: “By 2050 the Midwestern United States could see agricultural productivity drop to its lowest level in decades.” New York State’s right-of-center Democratic Governor Cuomo has called for a Green New Deal for New York.

It is also useful to place the original New Deal in its historical context. Contrary to the reformist fantasy that it was all thanks to the presidency of FDR, “the man of the people,” similar attempts in the 1920s and 1930s were undertaken by other leading capitalist rivals. The fascist Mussolini government embarked on a public works project to recast Rome in its historical glory by building statues and arenas to help whip up Italian nationalist fervor. Hitler built the autobahn system, and when he found it empty of cars, he ordered the design and mass production of Volkswagen Beetle (“people’s car”).

Churchill oversaw the reworking of the earlier welfare programs, such as unemployment insurance, to build the British welfare state. Needless to say, all the key capitalist rivals were also busy rearming themselves to the teeth.

Today’s world is similar in important ways. The American imperialist hegemony that grew out of the ashes of World War II is ending. By some accounts, China is already the largest capitalist economy in the world, with the most modern infrastructure and cutting-edge technology, and even in military terms has become the undisputed power in the Pacific.

The rise of Donald Trump is another sign of the slow decline of American imperialist power and its leadership crisis. Thus, his “make America great again” campaign, which appeals to the nostalgia of sections

(Above) In November, members of the Sunrise Movement, joined by newly elected Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, sat in at Rep. Pelosi’s office to demand a Green New Deal.

of U.S. ruling class and working people. His contentious relations with the U.S. key allies and his trade war moves similarly reflect a desire by the same laggard section of the U.S. elite to use raw American imperialist power to maintain its ebbing hegemony in world affairs—but to no avail.

The more forward-looking section of the U.S. capitalist class, mostly in the Democratic Party, aims for rejuvenation of the economy based on new products and new industries, which include “green technologies.” That is what the real Green New Deal is about, the kind that Friedman talks about. Even Paul Krugman, a smart liberal Democrat and Keynesian economist, has come out in favor of redesigning the U.S. economy as a mixed-economy: “You could imagine running a fairly efficient economy that is only 2/3 capitalist, 1/3 publicly owned—i.e., sort-of-kind-of socialist” (*The New York Times*, Dec. 22, 2018). Is there any doubt that at best they all are talking about Green Capitalism, not the kind of ecosocial transformation that is needed to stop and reverse the climate crisis?

From the perspective of averting the climate catastrophe, as well as the Sixth Extinction and the threat of nuclear war (the U.S. rulers, both Democrats, and Republicans, are already working on a multi-trillion-dollar nuclear rearmament; don’t fool yourself into thinking they would not use it!), and the entire host of ecosocial crisis the world faces, none of these capitalist policy wonks have anything close to a solution.

Neither does Congresswoman-elect Ocasio Cortez. Otherwise, she would have made that program her election campaign platform and would have educated the Sunrise Movement activists in that program and a working-class strategy to fight for such a program. Instead, she has decided to run as a Democrat and to spend her energy to push the Democratic Party to the left (whatever that means). And when the Democratic Party captured the majority in the midterm elections and Nancy Pelosi, who a year earlier told a student that the Democratic Party is the party of capitalism, became again the most likely candidate for the Speaker of the House, she simply set Ocasio Cortez to the side with a stroke of her pen.

A key difference between a liberal and a working-class revolutionary is this: The former sees power emanating from the “voter” while the latter sees it coming from the self-organized and self-mobilized working people.

Ocasio Cortez is a liberal, not a revolutionary. She has no program, strategy, or set of tactics informed by them to help mobilize independent working-class action to transcend the anthropocentric industrial capitalist civilization in the direction of an ecosocialist future. Franklin, on the other hand, considers himself to be a Marxist. Should he not tell the Sunrise Movement activists that to overcome the climate crisis we should not look up to the Democratic Party, the U.S. Congress, or any capitalist institution but to the power of working people ourselves?

Of course, I do not deny that humanity is staring at possible extinction if we cannot undertake a massive reversal within a very short time frame, a very unlikely outcome. But let me ask Franklin why humanity is in such a predicament if not for decades upon decades of reformist betrayal? Is it not time perhaps to confront liberalism and reformism in the labor, climate justice, and (eco)socialist movements? ■

# Trump's Syria exit provokes Washington panic

BY JEFF MACKLER

President Trump's unexpected Dec. 19 Twitter announcement ordering a 30-day timetable for the withdrawal of the 2000 U.S. troops in Syria and 7000 of the 14,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan provoked a bipartisan panic in Washington. Defense Secretary "Mad Dog" James Mattis, "the butcher of Fallujah," resigned in protest. He stated, according to *The New York Times*, that leaving Syria in 30 days would jeopardize the fight against the Islamic State, betray our Syrian Kurdish Arab allies on the ground, and cede the eastern part of the country to the Syrian government and its Russian and Iranian allies."

The former commander of American-led troops in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010, General Stanley McChrystal, warned that "Trump's approach to national security was reckless." Eight years earlier, the same McChrystal, working under the Obama administration, pilloried then Vice President Joseph Biden for publicly revealing that Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and other Gulf State monarchies had systematically provided weapons to and trained al-Qaida and other terrorist groups to invade Syria for the purpose of removing the Bashar Assad government. Biden apologized for his "indiscrete" statements but never repudiated their validity.

Brett McGurk, U.S. representative to the so-called global coalition fighting ISIS, also resigned from Trump's team, stating, "Fighters with ISIS were on the run, but not yet defeated as Trump had said."

Pressing the panic button to the hilt, *New York Times* reporter Vivian Lee opened her Dec. 26 article with: "Turkey is threatening to invade Syria to eradicate Kurdish fighters. Syrian forces are rolling toward territory the Americans will soon abandon. Israel is bombing Iran-backed militias deep inside Syria and Russia could soon move to crush the last vestige of the Syrian anti-government insurgency."

Joining the chorus of Trump naysayers was none other than former U.S. diplomat Richard N. Hass, today president of the ruling class's top think tank, the Council on Foreign Relations. Hass tweeted: "Israeli airstrikes in Syria, Saudi continuation of the war in Yemen, Turkey preparing to attack Syrian Kurds, Assad in power and ISIS anything but defeated, Iran expanding its regional reach, Russia the most influential external power: welcome to the post-American Middle East."

## Ruling-class policy making

The warmongering Democrats joined their Republican counterparts along with a host of generals, past and present, to signal Trump that in the United States presidents really don't make fundamental policy. This remains the exclusive prerogative of the capitalist multi-billionaire ruling-class elite, who own and control the nation's wealth, resources, dominate the government's central institutions, and engineer major policy decisions through their secret and private channels.

Within days of Trump's tweet, these forces, through their myriad connections, signaled that Trump notwithstanding, there would be no withdrawal in 30 days, if at all. While declining to name names, *The New York Times* postulated, "Some analysts said they believed Mr. Trump's orders would not even be carried out—at least not on the 30-day timetable he imposed for Syria. The Pentagon has *slow-walked his orders before*, and already there is talk of a more gradual withdrawal given the complications that would probably arise from a hasty pullout" [emphasis added].

Trump's extreme right-wing former top policy adviser, Stephen Bannon, chimed in, "The apparatus *slow-rolled* him until he just said enough and did it himself. Not pretty, but at least done."

But it was not really "done." In less than a week, Trump got the word. *The Times* headlined, "Trump to Allow Months for Troop Withdrawal in Syria, Officials Say." Their Dec. 31 article affirmed that "Mr. Trump confirmed on Twitter that troops would 'slowly' be withdrawn, but complained that he got little credit for the move after a fresh round of criticism from retired Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal and reports from the departing White House House chief of staff John F. Kelly, himself a retired Marine general, about the president's impulsive decision-making."

Trump tweeted, "If anybody but Donald Trump did what I did in Syria, which was an ISIS loaded mess when I became President, they would be a national hero. ISIS is mostly gone, we're slowly sending our troops back home to be with their families, while at the same time fighting ISIS remnants."

## Trump's real intentions

In truth, Trump has no intention of ending the U.S. war against Syria, an imperialist slaughter that has taken the lives of some 350,000 to 500,000 Syrians and led to the tragic exodus of almost half the population. Trump stated



(Left) U.S. troops in Syria.

means, including behind the scenes negotiations, have always been on the table.

In Afghanistan, for example, U.S. troop withdrawals have been accompanied by the sending of the largest privatized army in U.S. history—50,000 troops—to accomplish the same imperialist ends. In Nicaragua, it was the U.S.-organized and funded Contras, operating out of Honduras; in Cuba it was a U.S.-trained army in the Dominican Republic that invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. The blustering bully warmaker Donald Trump, whose military budget exceeds all others in world history, and who is fully aware that U.S. death squads, sanctions, drone wars, embargo wars, and never-ending real wars wreak death and destruction across the globe, was stupid enough to believe, for a moment at least, that he could tweet U.S. war policy on his own authority. No doubt he has now been convinced otherwise.

## Kurds open talks with Assad

A few days after Trump's 30-day pullout announcement, *The New York Times* headlined: "Syria's Kurds Feeling Betrayed by the U.S., Ask Assad Government for Protection." The article read, "American-backed Kurdish People's Protection Units, or Y.P.G., said the Syrian government, should send troops to the city of Manbij, near the Turkish border.

"The request amounted to a United States ally calling on an enemy of the United States to protect it from another American ally, Turkey."

To the horror of U.S. officials, the Y.P.G. invited President Assad to visit areas under their control and to discuss a resolution of Kurdish demands for a form of federated participation in Syria wherein Kurdish majority regions would be granted greater autonomy and local control.

This was not the first time that Kurds have called on the Syrian government for aid against Turkish onslaughts in areas in the northern border regions where Kurds predominate. In the recent past, whenever the joint forces of the Syrian Army and the Kurdish militias approached areas to defend Kurds who were under siege by Turkish forces, the U.S. backed the Turkish slaughter. U.S. forces have been repeatedly deployed against the Syrian Army when it sought to re-take regions held by ISIS in the northeast and by other U.S.-backed terrorist forces.

The Kurds, for their part, have always rejected participation in the U.S./NATO-orchestrated conferences in Riyadh, Geneva, and elsewhere when U.S. imperialism sought to unite its divergent coalition stooges for the purpose of partitioning Syria in accord with U.S. "interests."

Today, the Zionist colonial, settler state of Israel, backed to the hilt by the U.S., has, according to the Dec. 26 *New York Times*, "made clear it will not tolerate an increased threat from Syria, which the Israelis demonstrated on Tuesday [Dec. 25] with airstrikes near Damascus." Israel too, with U.S. support, occupies a portion of Syria that it conquered in the Golan Heights region in the 1967 war. Israel's periodic and numerous bombing attacks on Syria in support of various terrorist forces have been painfully ignored by the Syrian government to avoid providing a pretext for a full-scale Israeli attack.

Trump's tweeted withdrawal has proved to be a mere episode in the ongoing U.S. war and occupation of Syria. But it served well to reveal much of the truth about this eight-year savage assault on Syria's fundamental right to self-determination and the U.S.-led mass destruction of Syria itself

It also revealed that despite the abject failure of overall U.S. war policy in Syria, and its not too dissimilar failures in Afghanistan over the past 18 years, the imperialist beast presses on with impunity and with a cynicism stemming from a belief that there are still "benefits" to be gained, whether in the form of countless billions in profits to be registered by the military-industrial complex or in the cynical supposition that "victory" can or will eventually be achieved by reducing Syria to ashes and demoralizing its government to the point that it will, in time, accept virtually any settlement offered by its would-be conquerors. Such are the exigencies of the U.S. warmakers.

## U.S. out now!

In the U.S., challenging the U.S. war machine in Syria and the world over requires the construction of an independent, massive and united antiwar movement capable of mobilizing hundreds of thousands and more in the streets to unequivocally demand: U.S. Out Now! Self-determination for Syria and all oppressed peoples and nations! No to all U.S. wars at home and abroad!

The nationwide antiwar protests initiated by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) and joined by hundreds of antiwar and social justice organizations for a March 30 march and rally in Washington, D.C., and other cities is an excellent starting point. Contact UNAC at: un-peace@gmail.com. ■

as much during his Iran visit in late December, when he reported that the 2000 U.S. Special Forces troops—trained killers—would be moved across the border to neighboring Iraq.

He implied that the nearby U.S. base in Qatar would be on the ready to bomb Syria at his command, as it has innumerable times over the past years. He made no mention of the thousands of additional U.S. forces stationed on the U.S. flotilla offshore Syria in the Mediterranean Sea.

Nevertheless, the hoopla over Trump's announcement has revealed some truths that have usually been denied by all previous U.S. administrations as well as by significant portions of the U.S. left. Denials aside, for example, Joseph Biden's original statement that the Gulf State monarchies have been systematically arming, training, and directing al-Qaida and related terrorist groups to overthrow the Assad government has been fully confirmed today. Further, no one denies that the so-called Free Syrian Army, previously touted as representing "moderate rebels," is or has ever been anything other than the creation of the U.S./NATO and Turkey.

In the same vein, the so-called remaining al-Qaida/Nusra Front/Free Syrian Army imperialist "coalition" armed fighters in the northern province of Idlib, 30,000 or more, are the same U.S./NATO/Gulf State monarchy-financed and directed forces who exist today only at the discretion of and under the protection of U.S. imperialism. When Syrian Army troops in early October made some initial moves to re-take, or better, liberate Idlib from its imperialist-backed occupiers, they were warned by the top UN diplomats from the U.S., France, and Britain that the full force of world imperialism would be launched against them. "How dare the Syrians invade the land they were born in" was the united refrain of the world's superpowers!

Again echoing the real positions of the U.S. ruling class, *The Times* and its quoted sources repeat ad nauseam that a U.S. withdrawal would "cede the eastern part of the country to the Syrian government and its Russian and Iranian allies." Imagine that! The Syrian government would regain the 30 percent of Syria now controlled by U.S. imperialism!

And what would the Syrian government do with this regained region? All sources have concluded that the Syrians would use this oil rich and fertile land to rebuild, with Russian and Iranian assistance, their devastated nation! We should note here that over the past years when ISIS controlled the same oil resources, the complicit U.S. military consciously ignored the endless ISIS truck caravans that openly transported Syria's stolen oil to Turkey, where it was sold to finance ISIS operations.

It is also noteworthy in this regard that Trump has been criticized for his 2016 campaign advocacy that the U.S. leave Syria. Indeed, in a one-on-one campaign debate with Hillary Clinton, who argued that the U.S. was winning in Syria and should continue its war, Trump countered, briefly, and without references, that the U.S. had already lost the war in Syria. The fact that his campaign published a full-page ad in *The New York Times* featuring a long list of retired generals and other top military officers served to indicate that Trump was not without full knowledge of the facts on the ground that informed him that only forces the U.S. could muster in their efforts to remove the Assad government were those bought and paid for by the U.S. "coalition."

Today, the imperialist-promoted myth of an ongoing popular democratic insurgency against the Syrian government has been abandoned by virtually everyone. Yet, as in Vietnam, "knee deep in the big muddy, the big fool presses on." This is not the first time when ruling-class divisions over imperialist war policy have been brought to public attention. With regard to Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam and elsewhere, debates over whether to bomb the nation in question "back to the stone age," or to consider other options like imposing U.S. imperialist will by more subtle



By ANTI-CAPITALISM AND REVOLUTION  
A current in the French New Anti-capitalist Party

The birth of the “Yellow Jackets” movement is, after the 2016 strikes against the Labor Law reform, another symptom of a contained social anger that has finally blown up. The labor movement leadership, alongside those who spent their time arguing that it had no steam and we were overestimating the actual scale of the struggles, etc., were heavily mistaken.

When the State of Emergency was declared, people were almost saying that this was the darkest hour in this century. And the protest of the 2016 Labor Law reform arose, surprising almost everybody. After that defeat, we were promised once more a decline of struggles, and the idea of a “broad vanguard” was again ridiculed. Furthermore, the notion that a period of struggle and politicization had begun, with its highs and lows, was also ridiculed.

Then again, spring 2018 took almost everybody by surprise... and when railroad workers lost on their demands, the prophets of doom were back again, saying that the period was decidedly and unilaterally characterized by fallbacks, not by instability and explosiveness.

The “Yellow Jackets” belie these analyses. They are the expression of a more global situation: the accumulation of dispersed struggles, social anger, the ideological and electoral weight of the far right, the policy of collaboration of the official labor movement leadership under the guise of “social dialogue,” and far left apathy. They are not the beginning of a movement, but one aspect of a situation that has been developing since 2016 and the protests against the Labor Law reform.

A mobilization is not linear: it goes through highs and lows, and different sectors of our class mobilize at different moments and different paces. But the “Yellow Jackets” should above all be an alarm signal for the labor movement. The labor movement’s heavy deficiency has allowed other social forces to take initiatives and occupy the field of confrontation against Macron.

#### Macron, you’re going down!

The bourgeoisie thought they had found in Macron the ideal candidate to serve their interests and allow for an even bigger growth of the gains made since the 2009 crisis; the number of billionaires is still growing, while large-scale lay-off plans are multiplying. It ended up being a losing bet.

The president of the rich focuses the growing and multiform social anger on his person. His popularity scores crashed at record speed these past few months. He has trouble going out in public now, even briefly, without being heckled, be it on the Champs-Élysées or in a rural area like at le Puy-en-Velay.

Although he was elected only 18 months ago, getting Macron to step down is one of the loudest rallying cries in the demonstrations. Since last summer, as the proverb goes, the fish rots from the head. How long ago seems the time when all the “headliners” scrambled to be in the group photo with the winner of the 2017 presidential election: Hulot (minister of environment), Collomb (minister of the interior), Flessel (minister of sports), etc.

The Benalla case got the ball rolling, and then there were the Kohler and Nyssen cases. A year and a half after his election, Macron was hit by the usual symptoms of the bourgeois political leaders dedicated to the bosses’ interests: he was stained by politico-financial scandals and disavowed by the popular classes. His class contempt did the rest.

But Macron is above all a puppet serving the bosses and bankers. If the thread breaks, the bourgeoisie will find another person or another cabinet combination to make sure its policy is passed, which today means taking back everything workers have conquered in the past decades. The stakes are not so much to get Macron’s head on a spike but to stop the tidal wave crashing down on us.

#### No real battle plan

Nowhere is it written that this tidal wave cannot be stopped. The constant upheavals of our social camp shows this best. The mobilization of students and railroad workers, not even a year into Macron’s tenure, showed this last spring. The multitude of sectoral strikes, which happened with renewed vigor as soon as the summer was over, shows that far from the defeated stances, a significant number of workers decided not to be kept down.

What had revealed itself in the 2016 mobilization against the Labor Law reform is not extinct. This availability for struggle has been joined by exemplary “struggles. They are exemplary because of their duration—that is to say, because of the determination of those who are waging them: the Hauts-de-Seine postal workers, on strike since March 26, the health-care workers of the Pinel hospital in Amiens or of

## France: ‘A general strike is needed to fight Macron and his administration’



(Above) Sign on woman’s yellow vest reads, “Tax millionaires, not workers” at protest in Paris.

Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray’s hospital, who went on hunger strike to try and grab the ministry’s attention. Conflicts happen almost in a continuum in retail or luxury hotels, as in the Hyatt Palace in Paris, where the strikers face brutal repression from the bosses and the police.

In the education sector as well, dozens of schools have gone on strike for at least a day to protest cuts, to demand more funds and staff, or to keep staff who accompany handicapped children in school. The mobilization to register rejected students in Nanterre shows the possibilities of struggle in the universities against the consequences of the new “ParcourSup” selection process.

But the administration was able to maintain its heavy-duty counter-reform plan in spite of its unpopularity because, up until now, no unified block existed to face and stop it. Union leaderships made a clear choice: avoid disorder. The more that time passes, the more, to varying degrees, they take significant steps towards crisis co-management and away from the defense of the interests of youth and workers. All of them, with different levels of responsibility, collaborate in the same logic of denial of the level of conflict, either actively by putting forward a strategy of scattering the struggles, or by abstaining in giving any perspective to the existing struggles.

The amount of people at the Oct. 9 demonstrations showed that in spite of all of this “organized disorganization,” there is a willingness to struggle among workers, students, and retired workers. Inadequately prepared, without any—even far off-perspectives, and with union calls to action so void of content or, conversely, filled with too much content, that they encourage people to skip that day of demonstration to wait for “more serious” things, like the looming battle on pensions reform. However this day was far from a failure! No credit for the success can be given to its organizers. To many workers and activists, that day actually appeared as the only opportunity, for many months and maybe until 2019, all together, nationwide, to take to the streets.

#### Possible to bring the struggles together

In the end, the eruption of the “Yellow Jackets” movement decided otherwise: The possibility of a general strike is, in this beginning of December, a topic back on the table. The reversals of the situation are nothing to be surprised by if we think that we have indeed been for some years in a durable cycle of mobilization of our class, with its highs and lows, but with an important constant: the actuality of the strategical hypothesis of a general strike and of confrontation with the bourgeois state.

But at every step, we are confronted with quite variable parameters. The “cortège de tête,” a combative heterogeneous block taking the head of the demonstrations against the Labor Law reform, the “Nuit Debout” movement of square occupations and assemblies, were in their own time “new elements” in the situation. The “Yellow Jackets” movement compels us to debate our intervention in light of this “new element.” As a consequence, nuances, or even significant disagreements, arise in our organization and in the far left in general.

We cannot think of the “Yellow Jackets” movement as if it were a union—a movement with a bad leadership but one that we could bring back to the light by participating in it. It is not a coincidence that those who insisted that there was “no steam” were among the quickest to run after the “Yellow Jackets.”

Instead of wondering whether or not we should go

the “Yellow Jacket” demonstrations, we should ask ourselves—how can the mobilization of our social class, in particular taking the organized and combative sectors as a basis, impact the sectors that are attracted by the “Yellow Jackets?” By gathering forces and raising the issue of blocking the economy by using strike action, the workers’ movement can demonstrate its superiority as a social force compared to the “Yellow Jackets” mobilization.

To us, striking is not only a blockade of the economy, but also the possibility for workers to take control of their mobilization. That *independent* working-class mobilization is indeed what would enable a clarification of the demands, and chase away the reactionary elements that are trying to hijack the social anger. Without the independent mobilization of our class, we will not be able to form a social force significant enough to attract to us all the oppressed, stifled, broken down elements of this society.

We oppose the idea that we could change that state of affairs from within the “Yellow Jackets,” working within it side by side with some of our enemies and a social class that is not our own. Such a policy is based on the will to gain leadership of the “Yellow Jackets,” we believe this is mistaken.

We need to have an impact on the “Yellow Jackets,” but not as individuals or a group of individuals, even with the world’s best leaflet. It needs to be done as a social force, standing up for the necessity to organize to defend our interests as youth and workers, and refusing to hide our class colors. That is why we insist that there will be no shortcuts, that we need to intervene in our places of work and study, in our neighborhoods, and try to drive those circles to strike, highlighting demands that, without contradicting the « Yellow Jackets » demands, can be our class’s expression of that anger: raise wages and pensions, ban casual contracts, raise taxes on Total (the oil company) not the workers.

Attempts to block key sectors of the economy will also be needed. We will not gain back credibility in the eyes of those *déclassé* workers by throwing on yellow jackets but by demonstrating our ability to fight the state and the administration, with the tools of our class. Lastly, we have to keep on regrouping, regrouping and regrouping again combative sectors and activists.

How will we be able to influence the “Yellow Jackets,” who are further away from us, if we are not able to mobilize ourselves and our closest environment, and broadly address all of our class?

As we write these lines: Politicians on all sides are scrambling. Mélenchon is calling the opposition to unite around a vote of no confidence. Marine Le Pen, on her side, is calling for the dissolution of the National Assembly. As if, for all those years, we had not learned that nothing is ever to be expected from the bourgeois state’s institutions!

By contrast, the youth get it. Since Nov. 30, high school blockades have been happening all around the country against ParcourSup, against the new high school reform, against the shitty present and future that has been imposed on them. And they are met with unbelievable repression. A nationwide strike at all levels of education is urgently needed. Leaving high school students alone to fight for the demands of a whole sector, and alone to take the hit of state brutality, is unthinkable. ■

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

## Ottawa caters to Trump's campaign against China

By BARRY WEISLEDER

What does the arrest in Vancouver of Meng Wanzhou, a senior executive with China's tech giant Huawei, have to do with the "rule of law?" Precious little. What does it have to do with enforcing Washington's illegal trade embargo of Iran? A bit more.

Meng is accused of committing fraud as part of a scheme to violate United States trade sanctions against Iran. She was arrested when she passed through Vancouver on her way to Mexico. U.S. officials want Ottawa to extradite her. Awaiting a decision by a Canadian judge, Meng is out on \$10 million bail. The extradition procedure could take months, even years.

Meanwhile, China detained three Canadians, two of them (ex-diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor) on dubious charges of "engaging in activities that endanger the national security" of China. No less dubious is the American agenda. U.S. President Trump openly linked the fate of Meng to winning a better trade deal with Beijing.

Washington's efforts to punish Huawei for trading with Iran are in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 that calls on all countries to drop sanctions on Iran as part of the 2015 treaty aimed at limiting Iran from develop-

ing nuclear weapons—a treaty praised globally for reducing the risk of nuclear war.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau restored relations with Iran, and lifted economic sanctions in February 2016, overturning the policy of the previous Stephen Harper-led Conservative government. So, why knuckle under now to Trump's rogue policy? There is no obligation in law to extradite Meng. Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland is blowing smoke when she claims that Canada is upholding the rule of law. It is a political decision, not a strictly legal one. And the politics cleave to imperialist ambitions to control the oil fields of the Middle East and Iran, regardless the character of the government in Tehran.

Bottom line: Should Ottawa back Trump's bid to block Huawei from U.S. and other markets where it is making headway against American tech giants?

The answer is a resounding no. The working class has nothing to gain by backing any capitalist power against another. To that end, Labour, the NDP, and all workers' organizations should demand an end to Ottawa's catering to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, Asia, and beyond. The release of Meng will likely bring the detained Canadians home. It won't quell Trump's simmering trade war with China, but at least there would be one less state accomplice. ■

## Huawei and military power

By GARY PORTER

Huawei is the second-largest smartphone manufacturer in the world, recently passing Apple. The Chinese company sells over 10 per cent of the world's smartphones. Yet its devices are effectively banned from sale in the United States due to suspicion of Chinese state involvement in the running of the company, and ties to China's military that go right back to Huawei's inception.

Would you be safe buying a Huawei phone? The quality of its tech is certainly compelling. The Huawei P20 Pro, for example, is widely considered to be the best camera phone on the market. But U.S. consumers may never get to own one.

The Chinese military is an important Huawei customer. It serves as the company's political patron and R&D partner, according to Timothy Heath of the Rand Corporation. "Huawei continues to receive contracts from the Chinese military to develop dual use communications technologies. In particular, it is helping develop 5G networks with military applications in mind," Heath asserts.

Of course, exactly the same thing happens in the U.S. Telecom manufacturers collaborate with the U.S. military and spy agencies to enhance digital spying, military communications, command and control and cyber war applications. The U.S. is determined to maintain its hegemony, against this powerful and highly competent Chinese competitor.

To put it another way, the United States insists on being the one entity that spies on your entire life and does not want to share that capacity with powerful trade and military competitors like China.

Are Huawei devices safe from surveillance? Probably not. Are U.S. companies' devices safe from surveillance? Definitely not. So my next phone will be a Huawei P20 Pro. If I am going to be spied upon anyway, why not get the best phone? Helping American imperialism maintain technical dominance is just not in my interest. ■

## Angela Nagle's shoddy remedies for the 'migrant crisis.'

By IVAN DOLPHY

In late December, Angela Nagle, author of "Kill All Normies" and a supposedly left thinker, penned a piece for the conservative journal *American Affairs* entitled "The Left Case Against Open Borders." In her article she scores the "left" for employing the slogan "no human is illegal," charging that it is an implicit demand for "no borders or no sovereign states at all." Instead, she advocates the restriction of migration and the implementation of E-Verify-type registration measures, which in her eyes are a humane way to curb immigration.

The central logic of her argument is that big business uses cheap labor to undercut domestic labor and thus undermine the already embattled state of organized labor.

Despite its "leftist" tinge, Nagle's article mirrors the recent summit of Hillary Clinton, Matteo Renzi, and Tony Blair, neoliberalism's finest, who advocate the curbing of immigration in Europe in order to assuage the racist demands of swelling white nationalist movements in the EU. What they are really saying is: "In order to stop the far right, we must implement their policies," or if you prefer: "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

As a foundation for her diatribe, Nagle insists that the notion of open borders is a somewhat recent notion in left politics and that the embrace of such an idea makes "useful idiots" of us all on behalf of big business, which stands to capitalize on increased competition in the labor market.

Let's set aside the fact that granting full legal status to all immigrants would immediately change the condition that makes them so exploitable to capitalists in the first place. The truth is that there has always been a strong current of internationalism and workers' solidarity in left politics. There is no asterisk in the slogan "Workers of the World, Unite!"

Nagle is accurate, of course, in pointing out that "trade unions have often opposed mass migration." She goes on to mention that racism and xenophobia have been an issue with trade unions. In fact, it was a central point of contention in U.S. labor history between the more reactionary AFL and the more radical IWW, the latter of which recognized that the bosses profited from imported cheap labor but that the solu-



(Left) As caravan migrants wait at the U.S. border in December, Mexican police roust them from a make-shift tent city near Benito Juárez Stadium in Tijuana.

tion, rather than a craft-centric narrow-mindedness, was to "recognize that all workers belong to the international nation of wealth producers" and end competition by "owning the means of production."

In introducing her remedies for what she calls "the migrant crisis," Nagle uses a quotation from Karl Marx about how the English capitalists used cheap Irish labor as a wedge to divide workers. And she notes Marx's observation that English workers would help themselves by embracing the struggle of the Irish for their emancipation from British colonial domination.

Similarly, Nagle calls for the amelioration of the economic conditions that today's migrants face in their own countries, as a way to keep them home. But she ignores the fact that Marx said nowhere that part of the solution was to restrict the immigration of Irish workers—the sort of immigration policy that she advocates for the United States today.

Nagle goes on to implore the left to embrace E-verify, a policy that would place the onus on employers to verify the immigration status of all of their workers, and would punish businesses for noncompliance. Proponents of this policy claim that it's a humane way to encourage the self-deportation of undocumented people. Basically, their reasoning is that by creating more barriers between undocumented immigrants and jobs or services it would softly encourage them to leave or

not migrate in the first place.

This is a polite way of saying that the best way to make "undesirable" people leave is to choke them of resources, so that their lives become unlivable. How humane!

Nowhere in the article does Nagle outline what this would look like for the 11 million undocumented people already living and working in the United States. She only talks about her "solution" in the abstract, and that's because it looks horrifying in practice.

In reality, it would force many immigrant laborers into the black market, where they are even more desperate and exploitable. It would be to the delight of pimps, drug dealers, and human traffickers. It would uproot entire communities, and it would give ICE

even more technocratic tools to carry out their systematic atrocities. Call this anything but humane.

A more rational conclusion should recognize that immigrants must be embraced in labor organizing efforts within the United States, as they are made even more vulnerable by their marginal status and are therefore more easily radicalized. Immigrants fleeing hardship have fewer illusions about the uncaring nature of the capitalist state precisely because of their lived experience.

This can be witnessed first hand with the leading role that immigrant workers are playing in organizing efforts at hotels, fast-food restaurants, and meat-packing plants.

Free movement around the planet should be, as Frederick Douglass put it, an "indestructible" human right. Beneath her poorly constructed arguments lies an implicit prejudice: Her shoddy veneer of compassion belies the same foul chauvinism that plagued the Social Democratic tradition of the Second International, which she is now trying to reproduce in the awakening U.S. left.

Given that Nagle is now officially on the payroll of a rag that changed its name from *The Journal of American Greatness*, it poses the question of who the useful idiot to big business might be. ■

By ERNIE GOTTA and ERWIN FREED

STAMFORD, Conn. — The stakes were high for Sheraton hotel workers during their union election here on Dec. 13. Sheraton workers won a stunning but close victory, 69 yes votes to 32 no votes, in the face of a vicious anti-union campaign by the Davidson company, which manages the hotel.

For nearly four weeks, the company tried to harass and intimidate the workers out of the union. At the same time, they held daily anti-union captive-audience meetings, often lasting two to three hours—disguising them as factual informational meetings—to turn workers away from a future in which collective and democratic decision making would lead to better wages, retirement, and health care.

Stamford Sheraton workers filed for a union election on Nov. 19, 2018. Well over 70% of the workforce signed cards stating that they wanted the election. Since then, the Davidson company has been hosting multiple professional union busters from the infamous firm Cruz and Associates, the same people that Atrium management used to try to stop the workers at the Stamford Hilton from organizing last year.

The bosses are able to do this because between the filing and the election there is a three to five-week period in which the company is allowed to force workers to attend “captive audience” meetings where they tell them all sorts of lies, half-truths, and partial facts about the union. They call this “educating the workers.”

Support and solidarity for the workers has come from around the country. Workers at already unionized Davidson shops in different cities sent videos and pictures talking about why they need their union and urging Sheraton workers to stay strong against company intimidation and tricks. Locally, the Communication Workers of America Local 1298, The Stamford Professional Fire Fighter’s Association Local 786, and a contingent of university students from around the state and neighboring New York have gone into the shop to do solidarity delegations.

Health care is one of the main issues Sheraton workers bring up when discussing why they want the union. Mauricio, a bartender, says he’s received only one raise after 26 years on the job and simply can’t afford health care. The story is the same for many of his co-workers. Those who can afford the health coverage face high deductibles and extremely poor coverage.

Despite the vast majority of Sheraton Stamford workers’ living in Connecticut, most of the medical-care facilities that take their insurance are located across state lines in New York. The real outcome of the insurance offered by Davidson’s “world-class” management is that multiple workers have tens of

# Sheraton hotel workers win union election in Stamford, Conn.



(Left) Sheraton workers cry with joy as the winning vote total is announced.

The bosses saw the beginning of a fire and moved quickly to extinguish it. They offered the housekeepers, who were the largest and most pro-union department, raises to their \$8/hour salary that ranged between \$1 and \$3. The trick worked and the union lost the vote. The workers were not prepared.

In this more recent drive, Unite Here Local 217 rank-and-file leaders from the Hilton and Hyatt went over their own experiences dealing with the union-busting firm Cruze and Associates. All of the workers were told ahead of time the tricks of the bosses and were proved right again and again. Sometimes, managers and Cruze and Associates lawyers would say the exact phrase to the letter contained in Unite Here’s educational materials. This time, the workers were too prepared to be fooled.

The Sheraton marks the third area hotel to join Unite Here Local 217 in the last four years. Stamford is the largest hospitality market in the state due to the many large corporations with headquarters in its downtown. Combined occupancy in the five major hotels is regularly over 2000 people a night in a city with a population of 130,000, and a new hotel, a Residence Inn, opened this November.

This represents a break with what has become the orthodox way organizing drives are carried out. Usually they are heavy on staff and forego union elections, which involve weeks of attacks, intimidations, and promises from the company, in favor of simple card checks or other conciliatory agreements between the union bureaucracy and the companies. These models leave the workers largely outside of the organizing efforts and position the union as a service rather than a united workforce fighting for their rights.

In contrast, organizing efforts at the Hilton and the Sheraton have been led by rank-and-file workers. Both victories make a resounding argument to generalize the method far beyond Stamford’s borders. ■

thousands of dollars of medical debt, while others go without necessary medical treatments because they can not afford the coverage in the first place.

Joe Hutchinson, a front-desk agent at the hotel, told *Socialist Action*, “Joining the union is a no-brainer. Without the union there is no way of seriously addressing our coworkers needs and securing our future.”

Joe’s words ring true when viewed through the lens of recent history. Fifteen years ago, workers at this same property tried to organize a union but failed. Neither they nor the union organizers had made any real preparation for the tricks that the bosses play. After signing up an overwhelming majority of the shop, workers went public to call for a union election.

## ... Climate

(continued from page 12)

than using the money to efficiently and directly carry out the emergency transition?

The very title of the project, “Green New Deal,” suggests that this is the course imagined. Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, despite the mythology, was designed to prop up, not replace, the private banks and industrial enterprises that were responsible for the Great Depression. Very few incursions against capital ever took place and the aid to unemployed workers was actually quite stingy. (See: “The Real Deal on the ‘New Deal,’” *Socialist Action*, December 2005, <https://socialistaction.org/2005/12/03/the-real-deal-on-the-new-deal/>).

Trade Unionists for Energy Democracy has proven that public private partnerships have failed to achieve climate goals even in the energy industry. Only public ownership and democratic control of the entire energy system can begin to give us the power to transition quickly and completely enough. In truth, given that equally dramatic changes in agriculture, transportation, and most industry will be necessary to truly achieve carbon neutral emissions in the next twelve years, an unambiguous drive to push beyond the prerogatives of capital must be the orientation of the climate justice movement.

This points to the most fundamental weakness of the Ocasio-Cortez Green New Deal project. John Qua, an organizer with the Sunrise Movement, a youth group carrying out direct action in support of the Green New Deal, has explained clearly that current promotion of the GND and the mobilizations directed at getting legislators to sign on, are designed to lay the groundwork for the campaigns of progressive candidates in the 2020 elections.

The practical activity proposed by the Sunrise Movement to other climate activists is calling legislators. Later, these same activists will be asked to campaign for Democratic candidates. The whole project is designed to convince activists that their energy should be directed toward preparing for the coming elections. Dramatic social change on the scale required to save humanity and the planet however, has never come through electoral activity. The abolition of slavery and other dramatic social transformations have only come through mass independent mobilizations independent of the big business political parties.

That this will be true in the face of climate emergency should be clear by looking at the record of the Obama presidency. According to Carol Dansereau, author of “Climate and the Infernal Blue Wave” (Nov. 13, 2018), under the supposedly climate friendly Obama regime, government facilitated the biggest increase in oil production in U.S. history, dramatically expanded natural gas production, avidly promoted fracking, expanded pipeline construction by 20%, opened up more than 75% of U.S. potential oil resources offshore, allowed coal leases that are equivalent to 200 new coal-fired plants, and increased U.S. oil exports by 1000 percent.

The reforms of the Roosevelt New Deal that actually benefited working people, including the implementation of Social Security, were only put in place because millions of workers and farmers undertook militant action in industry, against landlords, and for social services and aid.

Today, we are not only faced with an impending economic downturn but with a serious threat to the planet and human life itself. The Democratic Party has never taken on private profiteers in the manner needed today. The only way forward is the construction of a massive movement—reliant only on ourselves.

We must use the power of labor, the power of community organization, and create new institutions in which the movement can strategize to defeat the most

powerful economic interests that have ever existed. Let’s take the discussion stimulated by the Green New Deal into these as yet uncharted waters now. ■

### The Gender Wage Gap – Still

**Women in Canada** still earn 31 per cent less than men annually. In fact, Canada ranks fiftieth out of 149 countries when it comes to wage equality for similar work. This is according to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report for 2018.

The Justin Trudeau Liberal government in Ottawa claims to be feminist—though *not so much for equal pay*. It winks at Canada Post management, which refuses to raise the largely female Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers to equality with their urban counterparts. It has blocked pay equity, even denied compensation for the agonizingly long-delayed payment of workers in the federal public service.

Just as bad, Trudeau and his bosom brethren in the corporate elite have no plan to institute or fund public, affordable, quality child-care services that would enable mothers to get back into the workforce. They refuse to boost family income and reduce child poverty by taxing the rich and relieving the burden on the working class. Ontario Conservative Premier Doug Ford is even worse by stalling implementation of legislation aimed at increasing wage transparency in the province—which he denounces as a “challenge” for business. The rulers’ policy on women goes beyond shameful. Besides, the rich have no shame—only profit goals. Theirs is a corporate agenda, part and parcel of a system that deserves to be eradicated. — B.W.

## Climate activists debate how to reach zero emissions in time

Loretta Florance / ABC



By CHRISTINE MARIE

In early December, the Global Carbon Project published statistics showing that global emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> rose 2% in 2018 to a record high. As Sean Sweeney and John Trent from Trade Unionists for Energy Democracy summarized in a Dec. 31 article, “When ‘Green’ Doesn’t ‘Grow,’” the market-focused approach to climate protection that governments around the world have been half-heartedly pursuing has left humanity in a situation in which there is no real decline of fossil fuel production and use.

Emissions will fail to peak—as science deems necessary—in 2020, and government subsidies to private investors to create renewables have produced far too little. The gap, Sweeney and Trent argue, between what science says must happen and what is actually happening grows wider every day.

A special 2018 report, “Global Warming by 1.5 °C” by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says that any hope of limiting warming to a level that might prevent catastrophic changes to our environment would require unprecedented shifts in land use, energy production, industrial output, building, transportation, and the organization of city life.

COP24, the most recent climate summit of global elites, which took place in Katowice, Poland, last month, agreed upon no measures truly capable of tackling this emergency. According to the climate justice lecturer Nadja Charaby, the U.S. and Russia, with the help of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, managed to prevent even a symbolic acknowledgement of the truths of the IPCC report.

In addition, the human rights plans developed at the previous Paris climate summit, planks that call for funding to the poorest nations, have become bar-

gaining chips in a lose-lose game.

The industrialized nations have pledged to begin contributing an inadequate \$100 billion a year to the economically victimized nations most severely impacted by climate change in 2020 but are delaying talks on a necessary increase in this kind of funding (“COP24: No Response to the Crisis,” Dec. 24, 2018).

With scientists producing almost daily reports on the unexpected speed at which glaciers are melting, species nearing extinction, the oceans acidifying, and feed-back loops kicking in, the clear refusal of global elites at Katowice to agree to stop fossil-fuel production and use has kicked into high gear the climate movement discussion about what to do next.

The introduction of an outline for governmental action by the new Democratic Congresswoman, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, has become a focal point for debates about what the movement should be fighting for. Her proposal, the so-called Green New Deal, has popularized the notion that the necessary emergency transition to the goal of 100% renewable energy by 2030 and a just transition for workers, can (1) only be successfully carried out by the federal government and (2) that public financing will be key to its success.

The mainstreaming of these key ideas, once only talked about in a small wing of the environmental movement, has stimulated and given confidence to new layers of activists. The movement discussion now includes critiquing the specific and limited GND proposal put out by Ocasio-Cortez.

First to challenge the ambiguity of the GND proposals to end fossil fuel production was Wenonah Hauter of Food & Water Watch. In “The Lessons from a Burning Paris,” she argued, “Any Green New Deal that includes carbon pricing isn’t green, isn’t new, and isn’t much of a deal.” Regressive carbon taxes or fee and

(Above) Climate protest in Melbourne, 2015.

dividend schemes don’t work; they only penalize the working class. The real path to getting rid of fossil fuels, she said, is simple. It means a moratorium on new fossil fuel extraction and infrastructure.

Activists from global climate justice groups, the Green Party, and the peace movement noted the failure of the GND to even mention the Pentagon, which is the single largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels and the largest single contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Wars for fossil fuel resources are soon to become intertwined with wars to keep climate refugees out of the richest nations. The billions flowing to the Pentagon are an obvious source for funding an emergency transition. Posing warming as a “security issue,” as does Ocasio-Cortez, opens the door for terrifying elite solutions to the economic disruptions and mass migrations that climate change is producing.

One of the goals in the GND that has sparked the most disapproval is “making ‘green’ technology, industry, expertise, products, and services a major export of the United States, with the aim of becoming the undisputed international leader in helping other countries transition to completely greenhouse gas neutral economies and bringing about a global Green New Deal.” That is, Ocasio-Cortez is proposing a solution in which U.S. corporations produce unspecified types of technology and make a profit selling them to the less developed world. This goal makes all the passages in the GND that are ambiguous about the means of achieving the transition look ominous. To what degree is the public financing in the GND going to go to give incentives to private industry rather

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