

Socialist Action launches 2020 presidential campaign

By NICK BAKER

"The U.S. ruling-class multi-billionaire elite have two parties, the Democrats and Republicans—the twin parties of war, racism, poverty, and environmental destruction," said Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action's 2020 candidate for the U.S. presidency. "We need a party of our own—a mass working-class party based on an independent, reinvigorated, democratic, fighting trade-union movement allied in struggles in the social, political, and economic arenas with the organizations of the oppressed and exploited."

Mackler's remarks were addressed to the April 13, 2019, Socialist Action National Committee plenum that voted to launch a presidential and vice presidential campaign aimed at promoting the development of a mass labor party and fighting independent social movements to challenge U.S. capitalism's broad-based offensive against every aspect of working-class life and—in the face of a near-term climate catastrophe that threatens the future of life on earth—the legitimacy of the capitalist system.

Mackler, Socialist Action's National Secretary, was approved by the party's plenum for the presidential spot along with National Committee member Heather Bradford as the vice presidential running mate.

Mackler was also the Socialist Action candidate for the U.S. presidency in 2016. He is a veteran opponent of U.S. imperialist wars and interventions and a leading environmental and social justice activist. From the Vietnam era to the present, he has been a central organizer of national and regional mobilizations against U.S. wars. Most recently, he was a founder and leader of the San Francisco Bay Area-based End the Wars Coalition, which mobilized in February and March 2019 against the present U.S. imperialist regime-change coup efforts against the government of Venezuela.

Mackler is a founder and Administrative Committee member of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), the united-front mass-action coalition that initiated the recent March 30-31 bi-coastal "U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!, No to NATO!, No to All U.S. Wars Against Working People at Home and Abroad" protests in Washington, D.C. and Oakland, Calif. He has been an initiator and organizer of the periodic protests against the U.S./NATO imperialist-orchestrated regime-change war against Syria over the past eight years.

A founder of the Northern California Climate Mobilization, Mackler played a major role in organizing the Bay Area climate change protests, including the 2015 West Coast mobilization of 10,000 on the eve of the feckless UN-sponsored Paris Climate conference.

A former teacher union leader, Mackler was the organizer and longtime elected officer of the AFT and CTA locals in Hayward, Calif. He served as the president of the Alameda County Council of the AFT and as

Venezuela: U.S. coup makers fail



By JEFF MACKLER

"Nobody said regime change was going to be easy," read the first line on the front-page *New York Times* article of May 2 entitled, "Pressure Rises After Failure In Venezuela." The article, billed as "news analysis," continues, "President Trump's top advisers woke up Tuesday [April 30] believing that a rebellion in the Venezuelan military

that day would galvanize a popular uprising and topple a leader they have described as a reviled despot who must be replaced. But at day's end, President Maduro was still in power and Mr. Trump's advisers were left to blame Cuba, Russia and three influential Venezuelan officials, who failed to switch sides, for frustrating their plans."

In the old days, and even recently, U.S. CIA-orchestrated coups were

(Above) Venezuelans rally in defense of the government.

clandestine matters, wherein secretly trained troops were organized, armed, and financed by U.S. imperialism and sent in to remove any government that the U.S. ruling elite deemed a threat to their economic and/or geopolitical in-

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a delegate for 11 years to the Central Labor Council of Alameda County. He is the director of the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal in Northern California, which organized on April 6 a Berkeley rally of 400 activists to support Abu-Jamal's renewed fight for justice and freedom. Author of some 25 books and pamphlets on labor struggles, U.S. imperialist wars, social history, politics, civil liberties, economics and environmental issues, Mackler is a regular contributor to *Socialist Action* newspaper and other national and international publications.

VP candidate Heather Bradford

Heather Bradford, a member of Socialist Action's National Committee, will be the party's vice presidential candidate. Bradford is the organizer of Socialist Action's branch in Duluth, Minn., and Superior, Wis., in the Lake Superior region. Bradford works full

time as a women's advocate at a domestic violence shelter and part time at an abortion clinic and as a substitute public school teacher. She is the secretary of AFSCME Local 3558, a delegate to the Duluth Central Labor body, and a union steward.

She is a founder of the Feminist Justice League, a Duluth-based feminist organization formed in response to the anti-abortion "40 Days for Life" group and an active member of H.O.T.D.I.S.H. Militia, an abortion fundraising group. Bradford has been a long-time activist and participant in the LGBT, environmental, and antiwar movements.

Democrats offer 21 millionaire candidates

Today, the Democratic Party is running no less than 21 multi-millionaire candidates for president in a

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Pa. toxic waste plant defeated — for now



By JOHN LESLIE

On the evening of April 30, a contentious meeting of the Falls Township Board of Supervisors denied the site plan application for the Israeli-based Elcon Recycling to build a 32-acre toxic waste “treatment” plant in lower Bucks County, Pa.

Hundreds of area residents turned out to oppose construction of the toxic facility. Dozens spoke against the plant during the public comment period, citing cancer risks, the danger posed to area drinking water,

the dangers of transporting toxic waste by truck on local roads, and air pollution. Lower Bucks already has an “F” air-quality rating. The plant’s emissions, which would include lead, carbon, and particulate matter, would only worsen the situation. A small contingent of Building Trades workers with signs demanding construction of the plant and the creation of jobs left before the public comment period.

It’s not over, of course. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is still considering the technical application submitted by Elcon.

If the DEP decides in Elcon’s favor, the company could submit a new proposal to the Township or appeal the Township’s decision in court. Township supervisors cited critical errors of fact in the site plan proposal as the reasons for the vote to deny.

The proposed facility would boil toxic chemical and pharmaceutical waste to remove the water from it, reducing the materials to a toxic sludge. The resulting waste, which could contain elements such as lead, cadmium, and mercury, would be disposed of or stored elsewhere. An estimated 20 trucks per day would transport liquid waste to the facility. Elcon has promised not to transport toxic waste by barge or rail, despite the fact that a rail spur comes to the property and the location of the plant is near the Delaware River. The company projected that as much as 210,000 tons of waste would be processed annually.

As we reported in last month’s *Socialist Action*, “Ten percent of the U.S. population lives within 100 miles of this plant. Proximity of the proposed facility to the river is a concern because 17 million people get their drinking water from the Delaware. If a spill were to occur, water supplies could be threatened for weeks. Any release of hazardous materials into the river would threaten recreational boating and fishing.”

The fight against toxic capitalism is part of the broader struggle to combat climate change. Saving life on this planet will require a mass movement of workers and oppressed people standing up to big corporations and their political acolytes in both capitalist parties. It’s clear that powerful corporate and political interests want the Elcon facility built. After all, under capitalism profits come before the interests of people and planet. If Elcon makes another try, and we expect they will, defeating them will require going beyond lobbying and court battles and into the streets. ■

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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A victory for Mumia Abu-Jamal — Philadelphia DA withdraws his appeal

By JEFF MACKLER

The sensational news on April 17 that Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner withdrew his appeal of Superior Court Judge Leon Tucker's granting of new appeal rights to Mumia Abu-Jamal represents a major breakthrough in Mumia's 37-year freedom struggle. Krasner's decision opens the door wide to re-building a broad and decisive movement in the U.S. and internationally to win a demand that has reverberated across the world, "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!"

Despite its limitations in not applying the core decision inherent in Judge Tucker's ruling to the myriad of other similarly situated victims of the criminal injustice system, the simple fact that Mumia's appeal rights have been reinstated can only aid the fight for others in the future. Judge Tucker affirmed and definitively reaffirmed—and Krasner was forced to agree—that "judicial bias" and an "absence of impartiality" were central to key decisions that denied Mumia his basic constitutional rights. These are the precise arguments that our Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal in Northern California and the broad national movement for Mumia's freedom have pressed forward since our formation nearly three decades ago.

Tucker's sharp rebuttal to Krasner's original rejection of his ruling, a rebuttal that he was not legally obligated to undertake, shattered Krasner's argument in his original March 26 decision to appeal Tucker's ruling. Tucker demonstrated that former Philadelphia District Attorney Ronald Castille, who subsequently became a Pennsylvania Supreme Court judge and refused to recuse himself from adjudicating Mumia's case, gave the appearance of bias not only because of his prior role as District Attorney but also because the "appearance of impartiality" must be present.

Castille's pro-death penalty statements, his ties to the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), and his lobbying for speedy death penalties in capital cases involving the murder of police officers, when Mumia was among his chief targets, all combined to reveal his bias. Hence, Tucker ruled that [Mumia's] "appeal has established by a preponderance of the new evidence that there was an unconstitutional potential for bias." Mumia's claims, he ruled, "should be reviewed in the interest of justice."

Now that Tucker's decision has been accepted by the DA's office, Mumia's legal team, led by Judith Ritter, will prepare to review and re-open the previously rejected appeals filed before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court between 1995 and 2012. Ritter is Professor of Law and Director of the Criminal Defense Clinic at Delaware Law School, Widener University, in Wilmington, Del. The appeals are expected to be presented to this court in a timely manner.

Among the constitutional violations that Ritter and Mumia's associated attorneys will likely argue, and Krasner as District Attorney will oppose, include racial bias in the jury to such an extent that it produced an inherently biased jury and therefore an unfair trial (the *Batson* claim); ineffective assistance of counsel; witness intimidation; falsification of evi-



Sal Mastriano / Socialist Action

dence; and exclusion of evidence of innocence.

Additional issues that become part of Mumia's appeal include a spuriously alleged Mumia hospital murder confession presented by two police officers some three months after they allegedly heard it, phony ballistics evidence, lying and disappeared witnesses, failure to conduct gun powder residue tests, cat-scan tests on the trajectory of the bullets fired into Mumia's body that demonstrated police lies about the murder scene, and a mountain of other material pointing to Mumia's innocence that has previously been rejected for appeal consideration.

One startling and significant aspect of Mumia's appeal will be the racist bias in the conduct of Judge Albert "the hanging judge" Sabo, who presided over both the 1982 trial plus the post-conviction review hearings in 1995-1996.

An award-winning court stenographer, Terri Maurer Carter, testified that she heard Sabo, a member of the Fraternal Order of Police, say in his court anteroom chambers prior to entering the court to judge Mumia, "Yeah, and I'm going to help 'em fry the n---r." The Pennsylvania chapter of the American Bar Association once observed, "No one can get a fair trial in Sabo's court."

If Mumia wins just one of his arguments, he will have taken a major stride toward a new trial wherein he can present the repressed evidence of his innocence and expose the police and prosecution's systematic frame up.

Notwithstanding our utmost optimism for bringing Mumia home, we cannot refrain from expressing our all abiding concern that the exigencies, contortions, and inherent class and race bias of capitalism's legal system will inevitably be brought to bear. A truly

(Above) April 18 march for Mumia in Philadelphia.

deep and massive movement in this case remains essential to expose the lie to Mumia's conviction and make the political and social price of his continued frame-up incarceration by the powers that be too high to pay.

Krasner's decision undoubtedly was influenced by our movement's collective actions repudiating his adverse initial ruling, including his dis-invitation from a speaking engagement at Yale University Law School, where he hoped to pose as a progressive defender of human rights. No doubt Krasner has been subjected to immense pressure from the FOP and other such organizations and political figures that have long sought Mumia's execution. His decision has the effect of eliminating years of legal challenges through the various court bodies just to secure the right that Judge Tucker initially granted.

Judge Tucker's decision and Krasner's appeal withdrawal represent an historic win for Mumia that will redound across the globe. As always, any legal victory in the racist criminal justice system is never secure unless the full weight of a fighting massive, united, and dedicated social struggle takes the lead in winning new and ever broadening forces.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent, framed political prisoner, whose freedom struggle has taught a new generation that the U.S. presides over a racist, classist mass incarceration, school to prison scenario social system that imprisons the largest number and percentage of its population than any other nation on earth. A victory for Mumia—that is, winning his freedom and bringing him home—will represent a victory for all humanity. ■

Berkeley: An Evening for Justice and Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal

By JEFF MACKLER

Two months in the planning, the April 6 public forum at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley represented a profound contribution to renewing the justice and freedom struggle of the innocent and framed for murder political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal.

A capacity-filling multi-racial and multi-generational crowd of 400 people, including a broad range of political activists from many social movements, youth, students, old timers, and newcomers, packed the church to hear prominent and inspiring speakers in the freedom movement, including:

- Ula Taylor, chair, UC Berkeley's De-

partment of African American Studies

- Stephen Bingham, past president, San Francisco Bay Area National Lawyers Guild

- Alice Walker, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist

- Angela Davis, civil and human rights activist, scholar, and founder of Critical Resistance

- Judith Ritter, Mumia's lead attorney

- Pam Africa, founder, leader, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal

- Jeff Mackler, director, Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

At one point in the rally Pam Africa asked the audience to rise and display hundreds of signs reading "Krasner:

Drop the Appeal!"

Eleven days later, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner announced that his office was indeed rescinding its appeal of Judge Leon Tucker's Dec. 27 ruling that grants Mumia the right to re-open his appeals.

Africa has told this writer that the Berkeley event, coupled with the decision of Yale Law School students to dis-invite Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner from a conference there last month, as well as a myriad of other coordinated protests and petitions, had the effect of compelling Krasner, who continues to oppose Mumia's freedom, to "do the right thing."

An awe-inspiring spirit of solidarity and enthusiasm for renewing the strug-

gle to win Mumia's freedom prevailed throughout the meeting, with the audience rising at least a dozen times with standing ovations to mark profoundly unifying and penetrating remarks of one speaker after the other.

April 6 evidenced a classic united-front-type mobilization, with almost everyone present contributing to building it in one form or another, especially in the social media. Friends brought friends and helped to spread the word far and wide. Campus Black Student Unions, Cuba solidarity networks, death penalty activists, antiwar coalitions, churches, the UC Berkeley African American Studies Department, Middle East Children's Al-

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After 11-day strike in New England — Stop & Shop workers win gains



By ERWIN FREED and ERNIE GOTTA

The UFCW's historic 11-day strike that involved over 31,000 Stop and Shop workers and covered all stores in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts came to an end on April 21. As covered at socialistaction.org (April 11), the demand of the union was to maintain all wage, benefit, and work standards codified in the expiring contract.

Stop and Shop and its parent company were pushing for an increase in employee health-care contributions, a move away from pensions, and the creation of off-site meat-packing facilities. The last item would threaten the continued existence of union meat-departments in Stop and Shop stores. From walking the picket lines at many locations, *Socialist Action* reporters got the picture that the meat department is often a solid defender of rights on the shop-floor, with a disproportionate number of stewards and union activists.

Ultimately, the strike cost the company \$110 million in revenue, about \$10 million a day for each day of the strike. Negotiations came to a common agreement between union and company representatives, and the terms of a new contract were all ratified between April 21s and May 1 by the five locals.

In general, the workers won the majority of the ben-

May 1 rally in Stamford, Conn., hosted by Unite Here Local 217 and UFCW Locals 371 and 919.

efits they fought for, including pay increases, holiday pay for new hires, and guaranteed 20-hour minimum workweeks for part-timers. At the same time, new part-timers do not get time-and-a-half pay on Sundays for the first three years of their employment. They will also have much lower pension benefits, dropping from \$225 to \$100 per month for those hired after contract ratification.

The contract negotiations were conducted almost, if not completely, behind closed doors. There was virtually no consultation between the union leadership and the rank and file on demands, and the membership was not kept informed about the ongoing developments in negotiations, even during the strike. Many members went in to the ratification votes without even seeing a bullet-point sheet of what they would be voting on, much less the actual proposed contract language.

These decisions on the part of the UFCW leadership made the strike weaker than it had to be. It is true that trade-union consciousness—the understanding of union workers that they must solidarize with each other and be active trade unionists to win economic and political gains—has been historically low

since the Reagan/Clinton neoliberal onslaught against organized labor. However, class consciousness is gained through struggle. Leading up to the strike, the most educated rank-and-filers could have been tasked with educating their co-workers about what exactly was at stake in negotiations.

Better yet, the demands themselves could have been decided by committees of delegates elected from the shop floor with full discussion on each point. These committees could bring back the proposed demands to their co-workers to be voted up or down, instead of having the decisions of what demands were worth fighting for rest on the individual union representative. The negotiations themselves could be open-door and live-streamed in part or whole to the membership.

Through a democratic negotiation process that both emphasizes broad rank-and-file participation and at the same time cultivates shop-floor leadership from the most militant and respected workers, the whole strike would be in a better position from the beginning. Stop and Shop workers would be more inspired to reach out to their friends, family, and community members for organizational support.

Thinking about how to carry out a strike ahead of time might lead to ideas that were proposed but were too late to be accomplished during the actual event. Things like setting up car-pools or even coordinating with the bus drivers' unions to give rides to people that depend on the Stop and Shop for their food could easily have been done. Alongside the videos put out by the UFCW locals and labor solidarity groups there could have been a flurry of resolutions, op-eds, and solidarity statements from all the trade unions, community organizations, and campus groups not just in New England but internationally.

With the 2019 Stop and Shop strike now behind us, there are now 31,000 workers who have been directly involved with a major and mostly successful strike. There are also thousands more workers who have gone through the experience with them, engaging in all sorts of solidarity activities. Now is the time to begin to tear down entrenched divisions in the labor movement. The Stop and Shop Strikes, teachers strikes, and other actions in the recent strike wave are teaching us that inter-union and community-union solidarity, as well as organs of real rank-and-file control in the unions, are key to rebuilding a fighting labor movement.

In Stamford, Conn., a small but important first step was made on May 1. The rank-and-file organizing committee of Unite Here Local 217 along with Local 217's executive board co-sponsored a May Day Rally with UFCW Locals 371 and 919. The latter voted on sponsorship at the contract ratification meeting. Speakers from six different union locals discussed their struggles and the fundamental necessity of workers coming together to support each other's fights.

UFCW Locals 371 and 919, ATU Local 443, Unite Here! Local 217, SEIU Local 2001, and Rene from the AFL-CIO Western Labor Federation all pledged to support each other's struggles and build labor solidarity throughout Connecticut. ■

Berkeley: An evening for Mumia Abu-Jamal

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liance, Palestinians, and environmental organizations, as well as several socialist groups, joined to make this event a huge advance for Mumia's freedom struggle. Local left-oriented radio stations joined the building effort, with Mumia supporters appearing on five occasions. The two-hour rally was videoed by three groups.

A total of \$6500 was collected at the door, during the fund pitch and via some advance contributions. St. John's Presbyterian Church waived the \$1500 rental fee. Professional artists largely waived their fees for designing the flyer accompanying this page. The proceeds of the evening went to the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, via its founder-leader, Pam Africa.

Over 100 attendees signed the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal mailing list. Literature tables from several social movements crammed the large antechamber leading to the spacious St. John's Presbyterian Church main cathedral.



(Left) Pam Africa, founder of the International Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Action for its decades-long dedication to his freedom and its leadership role in the antiwar/anti-imperialist movements. He also credited Socialist Action for its central role in winning a reprieve and freedom for Lynne Stewart, the magnificent attorney who was a government frame-up victim on charges of "conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism." Stewart served as lead counsel for the "blind sheik" and Egyptian cleric, Omar Abdel Rahman, who was similarly a frame-up victim of the government's "war on terrorism."

A 20-foot banner, "Mumia Abu-Jamal Voice of Freedom, Free Mumia Abu-Jamal," was prominently displayed across the stage.

April 6 was truly a movement effort that came at the right time and with the right cast of speakers, activists, and promoters. The key political lessons attendant

to Mumia's renewed efforts were hammered away by all speakers, each in their own style and in their own manner. They insisted that Mumia's case, riddled with manufactured "evidence," racist judges, lying police testimony, intimidation of key witnesses testifying to Mumia's innocence, exclusion of Black jurors, etc., is no exception but rather a profoundly revealing example of the racist, classist, and corrupt nature of the U.S. criminal injustice system.

The U.S. leads the world in incarcerating the largest number and percentage of its population, the majority Black, Latinx, and Native American. It stands first in the world in the number of people on death row, slated for execution. All agreed that this racist, school-to-prison for profit mass incarceration abomination must be challenged and abolished. A united and massive movement to do so is on the order of the day.

The "Evening for Justice and Freedom" meeting served to re-open Mumia's case and to introduce his struggle to a new generation of activists, who look for ongoing leadership to the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, after its almost three decades of struggle on Mumia's behalf in Northern California. ■

Bronx NYPD settles with Copwatch

By MARTY GOODMAN

NEW YORK—Jose Lasalle of the Bronx’s Copwatch Patrol Unit (CPU) was awarded a \$925,000 settlement with the NYPD on two lawsuits he filed. Cops were caught with their pants down because Lasalle had audio and video to prove his case against the Bronx’s PSA 7 police station. Lasalle had recorded cops discussing how to frame him with a felony charge.

Jose was awarded \$860,000 for the case against PSA 7 and \$65,000 for a second case involving an arrest by 46th Precinct officers.

The award was “unprecedented” for this kind of police misconduct, Lasalle said in an interview with *Socialist Action*. Lasalle founded the CPU in 2011 in response to rampant police racism, false arrest and bullying.

Lasalle told *Socialist Action*, “I’m still in shock that I was able to beat them like that. [We’ll] keep on pushing forward. This is traumatizing for them.” Jose added that the evidence was so overwhelming that the NYPD settled rather than put the arresting cops and the top NYPD brass on the witness stand.

“When you’re filming police and documenting police activity in communities of color and putting it out there so other people can see, they see that as a threat, and they want to eliminate that threat,” LaSalle said at an April 3 press conference. “This is a dark stain on the NYPD and it reaches to very high levels up the chain,” LaSalle’s lawyer Jeffrey Emdin told the press.

It started on Aug. 5, 2016, when Lasalle was falsely arrested twice in one day. His crime? Legally videoing and audio recording cops who were harassing a Bronx resident.

He was arrested himself after refusing to leave the scene while observing an arrest, which is legal to do as long as it is done without interfering with a police action. Later, at the local police station, PSA 7, about 30 officers whooped, “It’s a party, it’s a party” when they saw the well-known Lasalle enter in cuffs. Another voice asked in his audio, “Now for him, filming is a crime, right?”

Cops discussed framing him on possession of a scanner that could transmit and receive on police frequencies. “You’re a felon. You’re going down tonight, my man,” snickered one of the cops—but all caught on Jose’s recorder. He answered, “No, it’s my walkie-talkie.” Finally, they backed down by lowering the charge to disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor.

After being released, Jose went to a diner with activist friends, but, as a Copwatch video revealed, he was re-arrested by several cops after refusing to surrender his phone information.

Key to the case was Jose’s possession of a cell phone that must be activated by a password. When activated with the wrong password, it makes an audio recording, takes a photo of the user, and employs GPS to track the phone’s location. Cops tried to activate it to get at Jose’s information, a violation of his rights without a warrant. Somehow cops had gotten wind



(Above) Jose Lasalle displays his walkie-talkie to April 3 press conference. The cops had charged that the device was an illegal police scanner.

of the password activation, but did not have the correct password. The GPS revealed that the attempted access was at the police station. Instead of “going down,” as one obnoxious cop threatened, Lasalle gave the NYPD a well-deserved whipping.

Lasalle formed the CPU in response to an encounter in Harlem his stepson Alvin had with racist cops in 2011, which he recorded, taking his cue from his activist dad. While walking in Harlem the stepson was approached by cops, who called him “a fucking mutt” and “Dude, I’m going to break your fucking arm.”

“Progressive” Mayor Bill de Blasio

Throughout his administration, Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio let killer cops, past and present, off the hook.

After the racist murder of African American Eric Gardner for allegedly selling loose cigarettes on Staten Island in 2014, which ignited nationwide fury, the self-proclaimed “democratic socialist” Mayor Bill de Blasio has refused to condemn the cops, caught on video for the world to see. Other racist murders under de Blasio’s watch included Akai Gurley, killed in the stairwell of a Brooklyn NYCHA building in 2014. In 2018, a mentally ill man in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, named Saheed Vassell, was threatening residents with a metal pipe. Officers shot and killed him, provoking protest.

In 2013, de Blasio campaigned to reform (but not end) Stop and Frisk (S&F), labeling it as racist. Upon winning the election with large support from the Black community, De Blasio immediately appointed

Bill Bratton as the city’s top cop. Bratton was considered the architect of S&F policy and served under former Mayors Rudy Giuliani’s and Michael Bloomberg’s “law and order” administrations.

A major part of the policy is “broken windows,” which targets minor “offences,” a policy de Blasio continues to support, but condemned as essentially racist by activists. According to a 2011 New York ACLU report, 685,724 NYPD stops by police were recorded. Of these, 88% of the detainees were found innocent; 53% were Black, 34% Latino. Long the object of mobilization by anti-racist police brutality activists, in 2013, a federal judge determined that stop-and-frisk was discriminatory and unconstitutional.

Although pot busts, a large component of street arrests, have been relaxed in the city, 86 percent of those arrested in 2017 were Black or Latino—about the same percentage as before de Blasio took office—despite the fact that whites and nonwhites use marijuana at roughly equal rates. “The culture of the NYPD is really intractable,” said Johanna Miller, the New York Civil Liberties Union’s advocacy director.

Though the Copwatch settlement was an important victory, it can be only temporary. The police are the armed guard of a racist and unequal capitalist society. There cannot be a “just” police department until capitalism is replaced by socialism. ■

Police shootings bring protests to Connecticut’s streets

By MITCH LINCK

NEW HAVEN, Conn.—On the morning of April 16, police received a 911 call from a store attendant about an attempted robbery. Police from Hamden and Yale approached a vehicle that matched the description, and exited their police cars with calls for the driver to get out of the car. When the driver did leave the car the police opened fire. They fired several rounds into the vehicle, wounding the passenger.

The officers took the driver, Paul Witherspoon III, into custody but no charges were filed. The passenger, Stephanie Washington, was injured but the injuries were “not life threatening.”

Protests broke out in New Haven, where the shooting took place, even though the police officer who opened fire was from Hamden. The protests spanned several days, bringing in Black Lives Matter New Haven as well as the Yale student community. Protesters shut down the streets for four nights in a row, calling for the release of police footage of the incident.

On April 20, officers in Wethersfield attempted to pull over a vehicle for having plates that did not match those issued for the vehicle. A chase ensued and the

police fired into the vehicle, killing the driver, Anthony Jose “Chulo” Vega Cruz, who died from his wounds. Again, protesters took to the streets and outside the local police station, demanding that the officers involved be fired and that they release all the police footage.

The state’s attorney’s office did release the footage of both situations. The organizers of the protests believe that the action in the streets is what led to both of the videos being released—but state officials deny it. The videos in both instances show sickening similarities in police forces that do not try to de-escalate situations, and that are all too quick to pull the trigger on young people of color. There was no reason to use lethal force in either scenario. They show a lack of training, a complete disregard for bystanders, and officers who are all too comfortable with being judge, jury, and executioner.

Socialist Action stands in solidarity with these victims of racialized police brutality. We believe that the institution of policing, which grew from slave patrols, must be dismantled and abolished. Communities need to be in control of their own streets and not run by thugs with badges.

These officers from Hamden and Yale should be charged with assault and attempted murder. The officer from Wethersfield should be charged with murder.

We stand in solidarity with the protesters, who through their power on the streets are saying loud and clear that Black Lives Matter and that Connecticut will not stay silent while police brutality happens in our state. ■

**Stop and Shop Workers Speak!
The April Strike & What Comes Next**

Sat., May 18, 1 p.m.

**Elmwood Community Center,
1106 New Britain Ave.
West Hartford, Conn.**

**Sponsored by Socialist Action
Facebook.com/SocialistActionCT
(860) 662-6098**

America's Forever War

Joe Raedle / Getty Images



(Left) U.S. soldiers in “Second Gulf War.” Many veterans suffer from chemical exposure.

By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

“America’s War for the Greater Middle East,” by Andrew J. Bacevich. (New York: Random House) 2016.

In Joe Haldeman’s award-winning 1974 science fiction novel “The Forever War,” elite United Nations troops fight an alien enemy that they don’t understand for reasons that are obscure. Haldeman based the novel on his own experience as an infantry soldier in Vietnam. Recently, U.S. troops and officers have started to use the phrase “forever war” to refer to the U.S.’s seemingly endless wars in the Middle East. As military historian Andrew Bacevich, a graduate of West Point and former army officer who served in Vietnam, argues in his sweeping history of U.S. intervention in the region this is not a metaphor: The U.S. has been fighting a single and continuous war in the region since 1980.

As in Vietnam, the U.S. got in slowly but intentionally. And like Vietnam, Bacevich maintains, the U.S. does not understand what it is doing and, consequently, is losing the war. Two imperialist powers dominated the region for much of the 19th and 20th centuries—France and Britain. France’s influence waned first, followed by Britain’s. Britain decided to effectively abandon the region east of Suez in 1968 (p. 13). The U.S. and the USSR had already moved to fill the void, but after 1968, these efforts increased.

The U.S. was bogged down in Vietnam and faced significant unrest in Latin America at this time. Nixon and Kissinger articulated the Nixon Doctrine of heavily arming regional partners to help maintain U.S. interests. These partners were Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, whose dictator had been installed via a CIA coup in 1953. Then came the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the Nixon Doctrine collapsed. President Carter, abandoning his earlier push for renewable energy and energy independence, responded with the Carter Doctrine (pp. 28-29) proclaiming the right and responsibility of the U.S. to intervene in the broader Persian Gulf region to defend “our” vital interests to control the oil.

The Carter Doctrine was expansive, aimed at both external agents who might want to intervene such as the USSR, and internal agents: the governments and people of the region who opposed U.S. dominance. The intellectual author of the Carter Doctrine was a young defense department official who was destined to play a key role for the next several decades, Paul Wolfowitz. Wolfowitz authored a study published in June 1979 later called the Limited Contingency Study

(pp. 16-17). It argued that the greater Middle East had to be a key U.S. military priority.

Coming at the end of the Carter presidency, the Carter Doctrine had limited effects at first. The most notable change was the organization of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, intended as a tool for quick and small-scale interventions in the region. Within a year, this temporary hodge-podge of military units grew and morphed into the U.S. Central Command, or CENTCOM, joining the four other commands, Europe, Latin America (SOUTHCOM), the Pacific (which included parts of Asia), and the Atlantic. Each of these commands represented an area of U.S. imperialist domination.

The 1980s under Reagan saw a continuation of the Carter Doctrine. CENTCOM and the CIA carried out a number of campaigns. The longest lasting of these campaigns, carried out by the CIA, was Operation Cyclone, the arming of Afghan rebels from 1980 to 1989 against the USSR. The other protracted intervention was the military aid given to both Iran and Iraq in their war, which lasted from 1980, when Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in an effort to seize an important oil producing region, to 1988. The U.S. covertly supported both sides.

Covert support for Iran led to the Iran Contra Affair. Bacevich refers to the Iraq-Iran War as the First Persian Gulf War, a useful way of conceptualizing the war and labeling it in light of subsequent events in the region. In addition to these two large-scale interventions, the U.S. also intervened in Lebanon from 1982 to 1984 and attacked Libya in 1981.

If the Iranian Revolution was the real start of the U.S.’s war for the Greater Middle East, the fall of the Soviet Union was the next crucial turning point in that war. Without a counterweight to U.S. power in the region, President Bush Sr. felt free to act. The opportunity came on Aug. 2 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Responding immediately, President George H.W. Bush ordered a massive military buildup in the region.

From that point onward, Bacevich notes, “U.S. military engagement in the Greater Middle East became permanent and sustained, rather than occasional and episodic” (p. 112). He refers to this war as the Second Persian Gulf War, which he characterizes as a medium-size conflict, by modern standards, fought for clear objectives. While the U.S. seemingly won the war, it in fact created more problems than it solved as the U.S. Empire waded further into the “Big Muddy.”

The Second Persian Gulf War was the start of the second period of the forever war. This second period included a decade-long economic embargo against

Iraq, with intermittent air strikes and a northern and southern “no-fly” zone in which the U.S. destroyed any and all Iraqi aircraft. The second period also included an extended intervention in the Balkans, an area Bacevich characterizes as part of the Middle East in Europe (this area also includes Turkey), because of the Muslim inhabitants, and military intervention in Somalia under the pretext of humanitarian intervention. This middle period is described in great detail in Part II of Bacevich’s history.

By the time the reader has completed the first two parts of the book, a clear pattern emerges. The U.S. uses a combination of missile and air strikes against its enemies, along with the use of special forces or military contractors (a euphemism for mercenaries) whenever possible but with U.S. ground troops if necessary. The presence of the U.S. military is permanent and, whatever the imperial alibis the U.S. concocts for propaganda purposes, designed to ensure U.S. hegemony in the region and over its resources. While these military interventions are often tactically successful, in terms of killing people and destroying an area’s infrastructure, they are strategically and politically failures.

Following the Iranian Revolution and the fall of the USSR, the next crucial turning point in the war was the terrorist attacks against the imperial homeland on 9/11. This ushered in the third period of the forever war, commencing with the invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq, labeled the Third and Fourth Persian Gulf Wars, respectively.

Bacevich provides a fascinating detailed account of these invasions, showing how each apparent success is followed by further political failures. Every time the U.S. tries to withdraw, it gets sucked back in. He also traces the spread of the war into parts of Africa (and the newly organized Africa Command of AFRICOM) and describes the attacks on Libya that killed Gadhafi and resulted in further chaos in the region.

“America’s War for the Greater Middle East” is a valuable analysis and reference for all antiwar activists. To me, Bacevich’s conclusions are clear: The U.S. seeks to dominate the region militarily for geopolitical reasons related to the control of oil and shipping lanes; the various interventions are part of a single large-scale war, the longest the U.S. has ever waged; the war has been fought by six presidents (seven if we include Carter) and has the support of both parties, the military industrial complex, and the foreign policy elite; and finally, the U.S. is losing this war and will continue to lose.

In politics, the most pressing question is, as Lenin wrote, “What is to be done?” Bacevich has an answer. In the July 16/23, 2018, special issue of *The Nation*, he wrote, “For anyone disturbed by the militaristic trajectory of US policy, the political challenge of the moment is to harness the energy of those 63 million pissed-off Americans [here he is referring to Trump voters]—even a fraction of them would suffice—and thereby forge a broad coalition favoring a less bellicose approach to policy” (p. 16).

While we can disagree with the author about who would make up a broad mass movement against the ongoing war in the Greater Middle East, I think we can all agree that a mass antiwar movement is the only thing capable of stopping the forever war.

Ultimately, Bacevich’s book left me with important questions to ponder. If Afghanistan was once the graveyard of empires, will the Greater Middle East be the graveyard of the U.S. Empire? With the economic decline of the U.S. and the economic rise of China, will the Middle East and its oil be the “prize” that the two empires struggle over? Or will China take advantage of the war in the Greater Middle East in the same way the U.S. used the Soviet war in Afghanistan, to bankrupt a competing power?

And finally, what is the way forward for revolutionary socialists given the forever war of the United States and the increasing inter-imperialist struggles around the planet for resources against a backdrop of the devastation wrought by global warming? Read Bacevich’s “America’s War for the Greater Middle East.” Use it. Ponder its implications. ■

A manifesto of the new global feminism

By CHRISTINE MARIE

Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser, *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* (London and New York: Verso, 2019), 85 pp.

Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser have a mission. They are collaborating to bring the lessons of a new global feminist uprising to the United States. Their latest effort is an 85-page manifesto that lays out the anti-capitalist alternative to the liberal feminism of the corporate and political elite.

The path of struggle they advocate in 11 theses and a postface comes from an analysis of the recent and effective mobilizations of women, cis and trans, immigrant and indigenous, unionized and unorganized, waged and unwaged in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, as well as Spain, Italy, Ireland, and Poland. Their goal is to chart an anti-capitalist feminism that rejects both the neoliberal feminism of the elites that “celebrates diversity for its own sake,” as well as a “class reductionist left that conceives of the working class as an empty, homogenous abstraction.”

Based on the last three years of organizing experiences that have led to March 8 women’s strikes in 55 countries around the world, they ask us to imagine a future in which we refuse to allow capitalism to “weaponize our differences” and, instead, fight for a unity in action that recognizes and refuses to trivialize the issues that divide the oppressed and exploited. That is, they argue for a feminism of the 99% that is “always in formation, always open to transformation and contestation, and always establishing itself anew through solidarity” (p. 85).

Thesis 1 argues that a new feminist wave is “reinventing” the strike. After decades of retreat by the trade-union officialdoms and social democratic parties around the world, feminist-initiated calls for days of general strike of waged and unwaged labor, strikes and mass mobilizations that target both production in factories and transport centers, *as well as* the work of social reproduction that takes place in schools, hospitals, nurseries social service centers, and in the homes of the working classes, and, thus, take up anti-austerity demands that will benefit the whole working class. In a sense, they begin to model the kind of political strikes that the whole working class needs to employ to combat the capitalist crisis in all its manifestations.

Theses 2 and 3 together suggest that the current global capitalist crisis has demonstrated the extreme bankruptcy of liberal feminism and the need for something far different. Liberal feminism, based in a professional and managerial demographic and in alliance with corporate funders and mainstream political parties, has proven to be quite compatible with policies leading to growing inequality, ever-increasing imperialist war, and the capitalist-based existential threat to the planet as a whole.

Equality under the law is an inadequate principle when the law also structures and maintains private capitalists’ right to drive down wages, hours, and benefits, and cut social services to the bone. In the global South, where we find movements that we should emulate, the women’s upsurge has *targeted* the neoliberal austerity drives, the degradation of work, and the ecocide associated with the demands of the imperialist bankers and military planners. With this strategy, they have brought other sectors into motion alongside them.

Theses 4 and 5 theorize that given the nature of the current global capitalist crisis, in which dysfunction in the sphere of social reproduction is most extreme, it is quite reasonable to expect that females of the working classes will be pushed into effective action in advance of other sectors. Gender oppression today is based on the fact that capitalism subordinates social reproduction—the making, shaping, and nurturing of people in the family, the schools, and so on that is mostly left to women—to the needs of production for profit.

In the current economic moment, when the business class cannot solve the problem of the falling rate of profit, the pressures they impose on social reproduction in all its expressions will result in a social explosion in which women play a central role. And since social reproductive work under capitalism is organized to maintain the elite rule, it is structured to reinforce materially deepened divisions based on national origin, racialization, sexualities, the policing of gender norms, and degrees of ableness. A feminism of the 99% must create a space in which legitimate but contending demands can be explored and sorted, and out



They argue for a feminism that is ‘always in formation, open to transformation ... and establishing itself anew through solidarity.’

(Above) Women march in Manila on International Women’s Day in 2017.

of which action unified around the needs of the most oppressed in the class can be mounted.

Gender violence and sexual liberation are the themes of theses 6 and 7. The manifesto is firmly against a carceral feminism that ignores the role of the capitalist criminal justice system in racial and national oppression, the control of the social movement, and the maintenance of class disempowerment. Instead, the authors argue that gender violence under capitalism is not only a phenomenon of the private sphere but also of the public sphere. And that violence in both spheres is shaped by many elite choices regarding how to manage social reproduction in their interest.

Such management also poses obstacles to sexual liberation. Obstacles emanate from the far and populist right, who use the disarray and misery caused by the capitalist attacks on the social services and wages that sustain the nuclear family to advocate for retrogressive legislation on reproduction, sexuality, and gender nonconformity. They also are posed by sexual liberalism, which posits individual freedom of identity but refuses to challenge the basic capitalist norms that limits expressions of sexuality and gender to those that fit within or easily alongside the structures of the family and the market and imperialism.

“We fight,” the authors state, “to liberate sexuality not only from procreation and normative family norms, but also from the restrictions of gender, class, and race, and from the deformations of statism and consumerism” (p. 39).

No contemporary work on social reproduction could avoid arguing that the new feminism must be ecosocialist. Thesis 9 illuminates the impact of the current climate crisis on women. Women make up 80% of the world’s climate refugees. As the majority of the world’s farmers, they play an outsized role in the effort to cope with drought, pollution, and the legacy of industrial farming on the land.

All over the world, women lead the fights against extreme extractivism, protection of water supplies, and for sustainable farming. That women of the global South suffer the earliest effects of warming is due to environmental racism and imperialist aggression.

At key moments in the history of feminism under capitalism, the movement has shamefully and shortsightedly resisted the demands of women in the oppressed nations of the world and instead supported, openly or tacitly, the foreign policy of the bosses, filling roles domestically and internationally in the “development” agencies of the dominant global powers. Similarly,

liberal feminism has refused to accept the degree to which racism, ethno-nationalism, and imperialism shaped the experience of misogyny for the majority of women of this world. Thesis 8 postulates that a feminism of the 99% must be thoroughly antiracist and internationalist.

The feminism we need, they conclude in theses 10 and 11, is a feminism that seeks the overthrow of the capitalist economic system. Necessary to the construction of a fighting force capable of this task is a recognition that the working class is embodied in ways that have led to special experiences of oppression, be they racialized, gendered, gender nonconforming, or differently abled.

Revolutionary socialists can name the anti-capitalist economic form that will not subordinate social reproduction and production to private profit. It is socialism. And the path to it most certainly involves the application of the 11 theses of the manifesto. This wonderful short text is the perfect introduction to the basic Marxist view regarding capitalism’s oppression of women and a summary of what the last three years of the International Women’s Strike have taught us. ■

TORONTO — MAY 31 - JUNE 1

Socialism 2019: Fight Imperialism! An International Educational Conference

• Friday, May 31, 7 p.m.: Why Zionists are in a Panic

Ghadeer Elghafri, Palestinian-Canadian Poet,
Dimitri Lascaris, lawyer, 2015 Green Party candidate in London West, just overcame an anti-SLAPP motion in his defamation lawsuit against B’nai B’rith.

Karen Rodman, director, Just Peace Advocates.
Barry Weisleder, federal secretary, Socialist Action (Canada)

• Saturday, June 1, 12 noon: The Winnipeg General Strike, 100 Years On.

Bryan Palmer, Labour historian, author
Gary Porter, Socialist Action (Victoria, B.C.)

• 4 p.m. From Yellow Vests to Workers’ Revolt

Aurelien Gavois, New Anti-capitalist Party, France.
Jeff Mackler, National Sec., Socialist Action (U.S.)
Nour Alideeb, former chair, Canadian Federation of Students.
Sid Ryan, past president, Ontario Federation of Labour

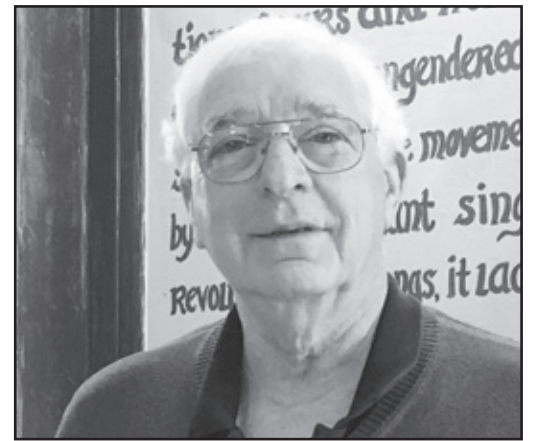
• 7 p.m. Fight Imperialism! Hands Off Venezuela, Cuba, Central America

Maria Paez, Victor Louis Riel, Bolivarian Circle in Toronto.
Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action, USA.
Bob Lyons, Socialist Action/LAS, based in Costa Rica.
Yves Engler, Montreal-based activist and author

Tickets: \$15 in advance for weekend; \$20 at door for the weekend; \$5 per session or PWYC. Contact: www.socialistaction.ca, (647) 986-1917

Co-sponsored by Socialist Action / Ligue pour l’Action socialiste (Canadian state), Socialist Action (U.S.), Left Voice (U.S.), OKDE (Greece), and New Anti-Capitalist Party (France).

Woodsworth Res., U of Toronto,
321 Bloor St. W. at St. George, room 20.



Jeff Mackler (left & above) was interviewed by Berkeley radio station KPFA on May Day.

all their institutions of power. Socialism, as opposed to its adulterated conception put forward by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, is truly a revolutionary project as well as a necessity.

Their rhetoric notwithstanding, Cortez and Sanders and all other DSA Democrats showed their stripes in the 2018 midterm elections by uniting behind each and every Democrat on the ballot, from the party's racist "blue dog" conservatives to its recent crop of "progressives." All Democrats' loyalty, not to mention their funding, is to the capitalist system and to the maintenance of the power of the tiny elite who own and control the vast majority of society's wealth and corporate entities.

The real socialist revolution in the U.S., and everywhere else in the world, will usher in for the first time in human history a society in which the vast majority who create the nation's and the world's wealth will democratically rule in their own name, through their own institutions, and in their own interests, as opposed to the private-profit corporate anti-human interests of the present ruling elite.

Fraud of elections in capitalist America

Capitalist elections are in the exclusive purview of the billionaire rich. Their twin parties—the Republicans and the Democrats—and their local, state, and national electoral and judicial institutions devise, interpret, and enforce their exclusionary election laws. Their corporate propaganda media effectively exclude coverage of all views but their own.

At best, and at great cost, socialists are able to achieve "legal" ballot status in just a handful of states—and even then, no matter the seriousness of our campaign efforts, we are consciously excluded from coverage. How could it be otherwise when the nation's corporate media are owned and controlled by the exact same ruling-class forces that select the candidates to be their representatives in the first place?

Mackler summed up what is at stake in the 2020 elections: "We see a mounting discontent bubbling up in broad sectors of the population—and especially among youth, working people, and oppressed nationalities. Last year's 'red state' teachers' strikes were a stunning example. Rank-and-file teachers broke all the previously accepted polite rules of collective bargaining. They defied their union officials and struck statewide. In several cases they struck until their demands were won and their demands were unprecedented. They insisted in West Virginia, for example, that the legislature's budget cuts that had gutted major portions of funding for public education and social services over the past 10 years be immediately reversed."

"Further, they insisted that these same funds, that had been granted in tax cuts and other benefits to the corporate elite over the same period, be returned to the gutted social programs, not only in public education but with regard to the generalized cuts imposed on all public employees. In this single act they won the hearts, minds, and solidarity of working people across the state. They effectively demanded, 'Tax the rich, not working people.' Their success set a winning example for future struggles everywhere."

Today's two-party charade, the central device that this country's rulers use at election time, is once again gearing up to divert the mounting youth and generalized working-class anger into safe channels.

"The axis of our election campaign," Heather Bradford told this writer, "and the key reason we are running, is to use the opportunity to educate working people to the simple fact that capitalism cannot be reformed. It has to be abolished at the hands of the vast majority of this country's working people, organized in their own working-class institutions, independent of and against the ruling elite and its parties. That's the only path forward for fundamental change." ■

... Presidential campaign

(continued from page 1)

classic primary contest to decide which representative of their wing of the ruling rich will be anointed titular head of state. All are wedded to the prerogatives of U.S. imperialism's profit-first, racist, sexist, homophobic system, minus or plus a few promised modifications should they become capitalism's top dog.

As with the 2018 mid-term elections, when the sound and fury subsides and when their "left, right, or centrist" rhetorical flourishes are spent, all will unite behind the primary winner—as Bernie Sanders did in 2016. As usual, they will pose their former Democratic Party primary rival, now cohort, as the indispensable "lesser evil" alternative to the Republicans' racist, warmongering, Islamophobic bigot, Donald Trump. This scenario differs little from all past corporate media-orchestrated multi-million-dollar election charades.

Today, however, an important new ingredient has made itself known in U.S. politics. Driven by the long-term and ever-deepening crisis in U.S. capitalism, unprecedented millions of working people and youth have come to understand that the evils they have long recognized—racism, poverty, endless wars, environmental destruction, unpayable debt, home foreclosures, massive, but statistically hidden unemployment, attacks on pensions, Social Security and trade union rights to name a few—are no accident that can be explained by reference to which capitalist party or candidate is in power, but rather, inherent aspects of the profit-first imperatives of capitalism itself.

The ruling elite and their think tanks often know well before we do that their across-the-board austerity measures, their ingrained racist school-to-prison pipeline, their unprecedented mass incarceration of the oppressed, their for-profit, near-slave-labor prison-industrial complex, and their wanton and judicially 'justified' police murders across the country have served to bring into question in the minds of millions the very legitimacy of capitalism itself.

Majority of youth prefer socialism

When poll after poll tells us, as with the recent *New York Times*, Gallop, and Pew poll results, that a growing majority of all youth under 30 and a 56 percent majority across the age spectrum of the Black community prefer socialism over capitalism, something new is afoot in this country.

Democratic Party House Speaker Nancy Pelosi felt compelled to state that the Democrats were not for socialism. President Trump was less restrained. Shouting out that the U.S. would "never be socialist," he all but stated that his loyal police and military would be his final guarantors in such an eventuality, a barely disguised allusion to Jack London's 1908 "Iron Heel" dystopian novel in which a local oligarch portends the coming of fascism to the U.S.

In recent years, the percentage of Democrats who



Vice presidential candidate Heather Bradford.

prefer capitalism over socialism as the more humane system has shrunk to a low point of 23 percent. Registered Independents, at 43 percent, are the top voting bloc; registered Democrats stand at 32 percent and Republicans at 23 percent.

Socialist Action has no illusions that it will win the 2020 elections. But it does seek to win the hearts and minds of millions who are looking for a political alternative to a system that offers them nothing but grief and pain.

Elections in capitalist America are the billionaire's game. Working people have no horse in this race. We have no billionaire or millionaire candidates or corporate funders, or corporate media behind us. We don't count the votes. We don't control any aspect of the rigged electoral charade. But socialist election campaigns can win in another sense—in the end, a decisive sense. We can use the occasion when interest in politics is at a high point, to advance the struggles of the 99 percent, of the vast majority who today struggle against the inherent evils of capitalism.

Socialist Action is a party of and for every struggle that aims to organize capitalist's victims independently of and against the policies of the ruling rich. We are among the best builders of the freedom struggle on every front possible. We strive to be part of and help lead the independent, democratic, mass-action united-front mobilizations and all others aimed at increasing working-class power, self-organization, consciousness, confidence, cohesion, and unity.

Revolutionary politics or capitalist reform?

We aim to be an integral part of organizing the vast majority against the wealthy one percent—not only against the one percent in the abstract, but against

Duluth activists counter the far right: ‘Say no to hate’

By LUCAS ALAN DIETSCHKE
and ADA RITSCHER

The Twin Ports of Superior, Wis., and Duluth, Minn., have had to confront several incidents by white nationalist groups in recent years. In one notable event, in 2012, one of the groups had a public event at Duluth City Hall, which was protected by the police when some counter-protesters threw snowballs.

In April of this year, the Patriot Front taped flyers to light poles in Duluth and at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. The flyers contained a crude red-baiting message, “Better Red Than Dead.”

The right-wing slogan of “Better Dead Than Red” was commonly used during the McCarthy witch-hunt period of the 1950s, suggesting that nuclear war would be preferable to communism. The period saw thousands of communists and socialists fired from their jobs, blacklisted, and harassed. Hundreds had to flee the country, and dozens were sent to prison on absurd charges.

Socialist Action (SA) responded to the Patriot Front provocation by writing up a statement and posting it on the Northern Worker blog, together with a photo



of the right-wing flyer.

The first action against this was called by indige-

nous people, and members of Showing up for Racial Justice, Catholic Worker, and the Democratic Farmer Labor Party. Socialist Action joined the coalition that was formed out of their initial meeting.

A picket line was organized on April 23 in response to the Patriot Front’s “Better Dead Than Red” flier. It was organized by Lake Superior Socialist Action and endorsed by Twin Ports DSA, Anonymous, Anti-Colonial Land Defense, Occupy Duluth, Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing, Save the Kids, For the People-TP, and the Duluth NAACP. A member of SA told the local media that this attack affects everyone and affirmed, “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

We reject these reactionary attempts to divide working people. Groups like the Patriotic Front, while posing as part of the working class, push a poisonous, divisive message of racism, bigotry, and red-baiting. Their ideology is the antithesis of the progressive values and tradition of solidarity that the working-class movement was built on. We call for public mass-action counter-mobilizations against them.

We ignore the organizing efforts of reactionary groups like this at our own risk. Say no to racism, bigotry, and red-baiting!

By LUCAS ALAN DIETSCHKE

April 26, 2019 marked the one-year anniversary of the day that the Husky Refinery, in Superior, Wis., exploded and caught fire. For nine hours, toxic fumes blew 30 miles to the south. Eleven workers were injured but soon recovered. Most of this city along the shore of Lake Superior had to be evacuated.

Husky is an oil and gas corporation headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, and a tripartite player with Enbridge and TransCanada. Its Superior refinery takes in tar sands from Alberta and, as one of the projects, turns the oil into asphalt. To make asphalt, Husky uses a deadly chemical called hydrogen fluoride (HF). The burning asphalt on April 26 was merely a few feet from the tanks of this deadly substance.

If the fire had released the HF, Superior and much of the surrounding area might have resembled Chernobyl, Ukraine—where the nuclear disaster took place on the same date 32 years

earlier.

Without having yet learned the details about the damage, Superior’s Democratic Mayor Jim Paine said that the air was unpolluted after the fire had been put out. Right away, however, community members began to express their fears about the quality of the water, air, and soil.

Since the explosion, there has not been much opposition to Husky and their use of HF. However, to mark the anniversary, a small coterie of activists, in which Socialist Action was involved, organized a community forum that was endorsed by Nukewatch, Anti-colonial Land Defense, Nookomis aadoodowin (Grandmother’s Table), Occupy Twin Ports, Twin Ports Action Alliance, Superior Refinery Disaster Info, Sierra Club Duluth Clean Energy Team, and Northwoods 350.

The event was attended by a small but

Protests on anniversary of Husky chemical explosion



dedicated group of concerned community members who resolved to continue the fight against Husky.

The next day, on April 27, coalescing with the Green New Deal summit in Duluth, an anti-Husky rally was organized by Northwoods 350 and Honor the Earth. The event was supported by Lake Superior Socialist Action, DSA, MPIRG, and many other groups that built the previous day’s event.

The event had 40-50 people and included Winnoa LaDuke and speakers from DSA, Socialist Action, and the Anti-Colonial Land Defense. A member of Socialist Action was interviewed by the local media. Many SA signs were abundant amongst the crowd.

Then the rally was transported to the Husky Refinery for a photo op and for environmental activists to discuss the continued dangers of the refinery, HF, and to organize for further action. Local security and Superior police observed the rally closely. No to Hydrogen Fluoride in Superior! ■

Venezuela: U.S. coup makers fail

(continued from page 1)

terests. The 1962 U.S.-sponsored coup/invasion of Cuba as well as the U.S. 10-year “Contra” war against Nicaragua were prime examples.

The 1953 U.S. coup to remove the government of Iran was similarly disguised, with U.S. operatives dressed in Middle Eastern garb entering the presidential palace to oust Iran’s president, Muhammad Mossadegh. In Syria too, U.S.-trained and financed jihadist forces began their dirty work early on to remove the Bashar Assad government in an ongoing war that has taken the lives of an estimated 500,000 Syrians.

Students of history will undoubtedly add to the list literally hundreds of similar U.S.-orchestrated regime change efforts across Latin America, Asia, Africa, and indeed, across the globe. Europe too is not immune; witness the U.S.-backed fascist-led coup in Ukraine in 2014.

Blatant intervention, with no restraints

But today, the imperial coup makers are out in the open, boasting their intentions around the globe. In Venezuela, their propagandists named three top Venezuelan military officers who they claimed had defected to the side of the U.S.-appointed “president,” Juan Guaido. Their U.S.-briefed corporate media friends in Venezuela and around the world were similarly primed with the scoop from Trump’s top officials, to wit, that Guaido’s supporters had captured a military base in Caracas and had mobilized to free an imprisoned Guaido supporter, who had been a leader of the previous U.S.-backed coup in 2002.

The programmed scenario was put to the test on the morning of April 30, with some eager corpo-

rate media pundits getting their “facts” a bit wrong. There was no Guaido takeover of any military base, but rather a photo-op scene replete with a group of heavily armed soldiers, touted as Venezuelans, surrounding Guaido’s truck outside of the claimed captured military base. Guaido’s call for a mass uprising failed to materialize.

His alleged military success in freeing his 2002 coup-making buddy, under house arrest with but a few guards present, failed to seriously demonstrate his claimed military prowess.

By day’s end, the facts were clear. Venezuela’s armed forces, including its army and armed militias, today some two million people, remained intact. The three named top officials who were said to have deserted, publicly stated otherwise and Guaido’s call for mass rebellion to oust the Maduro government fizzled to small groups of protesters in a few middle and upper class neighborhoods of Venezuela’s wealthy.

Meanwhile, May Day in Venezuela saw the largest pro-government mobilizations in years. Incredibly, President Trump blamed his coup’s failure on the Cubans and Russians. With regard to Cuba, he pledged a tightened embargo/blockade aimed at strangling Cuba’s economy. Additional sanctions against Russia were said to be in the making. Russia’s crime was in providing food and medical supplies to Venezuela.

On May 1, according to *The New York Times* (May 4, 2019), U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov to “warn him that his country’s intervention in Venezuela was ‘destabilizing’ for that country and for the U.S.-Russian relationship.” National Security adviser John Bolton added, “This is our hemisphere—it’s not where the Russians ought to be intervening.”

Today we are witness to a U.S. imperialism that recognizes no restraints against the brutal exercise of its vast economic and military power. Trump officials have warned all Latin American nations, and indeed all nations around the world, that to defy its massive sanctions against Venezuela would be met with major U.S. retaliation.

Big business media is complicit

A recent report by the news media watch organization FAIR (Fairness And Accuracy in Reporting) noted that almost all major U.S. media have aped the government-promoted drum-beat regime-change mantra daily spewed forth by the Trump administration and the Democratic Party.

In contrast, every delegation of antiwar and social justice activists who have recently visited Venezuela presents a diametrically opposed view. They give a view of a Venezuelan society deeply impacted by the monstrous U.S. sanctions and embargo on the one hand, but where the vast majority stand firmly opposed to any U.S. war against Venezuela and against all those who would bring it on, including Juan Guaido, whose power and influence over the basic institutions of Venezuelan society—U.S. and CIA daily disinformation aside—is zero.

As with the U.S.-orchestrated war against Syria, Socialist Action unconditionally supports Venezuela’s right to self-determination, including its right to seek aid from Cuba and Russia.

Today, a small group of U.S. antiwar activists are dramatically and legally supporting this right. They have entered and now occupy the Venezuelan embassy offices in Washington, D.C., with the formal support of the Venezuelan government. As we go to press, they are threatened with eviction by Guaido thugs, who have smashed the embassy windows and are threatening the occupants with violence while U.S. officials stand by without interference.

U.S. Hands Off Venezuela! ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Fight imperialism and austerity — Build a workers' opposition!

May Day Address

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Federal Secretary, Socialist Action (Canada)

May Day is OUR day. "Labour Day" treats Labour like a commodity. May 1 honours workers as a class, as a conscious, fighting movement. We are a living, creative force with the power to change the world. On May Day, even in the pouring rain in downtown Toronto, we celebrated our achievements, and we renewed our struggle for socialism, feminism and workers' power.

What do we see in the news? Public services are under relentless attack. Job security is vanishing. Wages are frozen. Pensions are being shifted to the stock market. The rulers have wads of money for oil pipelines, but not for clean water in Indigenous communities. They have resources aplenty for war in Syria and Mali, to attempt to overthrow the government of Venezuela, but not to feed the hungry. The rich have funds to rebuild Notre Dame Cathedral, but not to house the homeless. Workers have no choice but to fight.

We are inspired by the ongoing struggle of the Yellow Vest movement in France and by recent victories of teachers across the USA. We honour the campaign to raise the minimum wage, and the actions of young workers fighting for job security and decent pay. We admire Swedish 15-year old Greta Thunberg, who started a worldwide school strike for climate justice. We were thrilled to see over 100,000 Ontario students walk out of their classes on April 4, and over 20,000 people rally at Queen's Park on April 6 to demand No Cuts to Education.

We are inspired by Idle No More, by Black Lives Matter, by Ontario community college workers, and by New Brunswick home care nurses. When militant leadership emerges, people respond. Workers rise up to fight the bosses. So, we say it's time that working people reject labour concessions. Let's remove those union officials who keep the capitalist system going. It's time to break the chains that bind us to a system that offers nothing but repression, war, environmental disaster and untold suffering. In the words of Solidarity Forever, let's "bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old."

Our theme tonight, and at our upcoming conference, is "Fight Imperialism." Imperialism is a system, not just a particular policy or government. It is a ruthless machine that devours nature and humanity, for the sake of profit. It widens the gap between North and South. It deepens the scourge of racism, sexism and the displacement of impoverished millions. It is a wounded beast, prone to lash out in its death agony. That is why we must confront the greater danger it poses by stepping up our anti-imperialism and international solidarity.

When the Zionist state annexes the Golan Heights, threatens to annex the West Bank, and kills peaceful protesters at the Gaza border by the hundreds, our response must be swift and massive. SA is the initiator of the Day of Action for BDS and Palestine on May 18 all across the country. There is a new majority in Canada for Palestinian rights and against Israeli war



Socialist Action at Gateway picket line in December.

crimes. Let's make it visible on May 18.

When Justin Trudeau and Chrystia Freeland target democratic Venezuela, and back the regimes of fraud and repression in Central and South America, we must shout louder "Hands Off Venezuela!" Here in University-Rosedale, let's target the war-monger Freeland for defeat on Oct. 21.

Welcome to class war Canada. The peaceable kingdom is no more. Another global recession approaches. The bourgeoisie is on the offensive, and the stakes are much higher than in the 1980s and 1990s. Ontario Premier Doug Ford's reckless and brutal austerity agenda takes aim at social services that are much weaker than those of 20 years ago. So, the impact of the current cuts is far more serious.

Joined by reactionary provincial premiers in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and now in Alberta, Ford's destructive work follows a decade of sluggish economic recovery, with a looming global downturn. Doug Ford, who will never be accused of being too smart for his own good, is part of an international current, a right wing that is attracting a mood of anger and a rejection of the neoliberal centre. The line between his brand of mainstream conservatism and far right racism is rather hazy. He says he is part of a "blue tide." It holds power in seven Canadian provinces and may soon take federal office. This development is linked to such monsters as Trump, Netanyahu, Bolsonaro, and Orban. The urgency of a mass, militant working-class response to this challenge cannot be stressed enough.

We should also note the changed political situation in the federal parliamentary arena. The Justin Trudeau Liberal government has lost much of its popularity, particularly in Ontario. A litany of broken promises, a deteriorating trade position, an obsession with pipeline construction, and the gross SNC Lavalin scandal signal its decline.

The labour-based NDP has yet to recover from its sound defeat at the hands of the Trudeau Liberals who outflanked Tom Mulcair to the left in the 2015 federal election. Sadly, there was no Jeremy Corbyn-like candidate for the NDP federal leadership. That helped Jagmeet Singh parlay his large social media following into a victory that reproduced the very problem that led to the party's electoral setback.

Yes, the Liberal rose is wilted. Trudeau bowed to ruling class dictates on every front—climate change,

electoral reform, child care, pharma care, Bill C-51, imperial intervention abroad, and austerity at home. Canada's climate is warming at twice the rate of the world average. The world is teetering on the brink of climate catastrophe and nuclear holocaust. We should deepen popular discontent with the Trudeau government. This is not only to prepare the ground for a renewal of struggles, but also to inoculate against any notion of lesser-evilmism, to stop any resort to a Liberal-NDP alliance to block Andrew Scheer's Tories.

The fight to win anti-austerity and eco-socialist policies takes place on many fronts, including in the unions and the NDP. Inside the workers' movement we face agents of the bourgeoisie. We face the labour lieutenants of capital, the union and NDP bureaucrats who collaborate with the bosses, vote for cuts and military spending, condone sanctions against Venezuela and Cuba, and prop up the capitalist system.

Look at how the Alberta NDP government stabbed the B.C. NDP government in the back over a dirty oil pipeline. And look at the ignominious results for Rachel Notley's team. The bureaucrats put their personal careers ahead of the interests of the working class as a whole. They undermine the political independence of workers at every step, except when we force them to do otherwise. Pro-business bureaucrats must be replaced by classconscious workers. Workers will develop class-consciousness only in the fight against the bosses, and in the fight against the agents of the bosses inside the workers' movement.

That is why Socialist Action is engaged in struggles inside the mass working-class organizations. You won't find many groups that call themselves socialist doing that. Most stand on the sidelines, talking to themselves. For Socialist Action, building a disciplined working-class party inside our class is the heart of our strategy for revolutionary change. So, we fight for socialist policies and we run candidates for executive office in unions and the NDP.

I'm a retired teacher and my partner is a retired postal worker. The highest rate of injuries plague postal workers. Canada Post pays rural delivery workers, most of whom are female, less than urban staff. It rejected the union's demand for conversion to electric vehicles. When the union began rotating strikes, Justin Trudeau ordered an end to the job action. Socialist Action helped to organize solidarity pickets that shut some major plants. That's when the ranks of labour should have been unleashed on the lying Liberals.

When GM in Oshawa, which got billions from Ottawa in the past, announced it will close the plants, that's when the UNIFOR brass should have spurred auto workers to occupy the line and demand expropriation of GM. Instead of a chauvinist boycott of Mexican-built cars, the union should project a different vision: Seize control of the wealth created by the sweat and blood of the working class, and build the green energy vehicles of the future!

Clearly, there is no market solution for the problems that plague humanity. Only socialist solutions will do.

And now that Thug Ford is cutting health services, increasing class size, slashing legal aid, and dumping environmental protection, what should we do? Isn't it clear? It's time for escalating job actions. We must respond to every attack. Leave no sector of workers behind. Push aside the bureaucrats. Scatter the spineless politicians. It's time to Dump Thug Ford with a General Strike!

In honour of May Day, I want you to raise your hand, right now, and join me in making this pledge: We will build a class-struggle left wing that will shatter bureaucratic control of the unions and the NDP. We will fight imperialism. We will keep Chrystia Freeland's bloody Hands Off Venezuela. We will Boycott Israeli Apartheid. We will campaign to expropriate the natural resource pirates. There will be No Reconciliation Without Restitution to Indigenous people. Fight to win! The enemy is capitalism. Our banner is the world socialist revolution! ■

Bill 66, Ford's latest assault

By KURT YOUNG

Since it came to government, Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative Party has been in a mad rush to ram through as much legislation as possible. Ford claims a mandate from the 2018 Ontario election, in which the Tories won 76 of 124 seats but received only 40.5% of the votes cast. Their new laws are an attack on the poor and working-class people of Ontario. Nothing exemplifies that better than the proposed Bill 66.

The many schedules of Bill 66 are replete with attacks on workers' rights. Schedule 1 removes the right of ornamental horticultural workers to form a union by adding that industry to the Agricultural Employees Protection Act. Schedule 9 states that collective agreements pertaining to construction workers will no longer

be binding on public institutions, like school boards or hospitals. The bill removes protections against excessive hours of work and unpaid overtime. It makes it harder for workers to learn about their rights on the job.

Bill 66 attacks public oversight. In Schedule 8 all references to public consultation within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act have been removed, save for one, which leaves the power to call public hearings with regard to Long-term Care facilities solely in the hands of an appointed bureaucrat. In Schedule 4 all references to sub-meters, a device used to monitor the power usage of individual units in an apartment complex, have been removed. Potentially, that removes apartment units from the purview of the Energy Board.

As egregious as are the above provisions, the Conservatives outdo themselves by attacking public safety.

Schedule 2 of the bill repeals the entirety of the Pawnbrokers' Act, removing the need for pawnbrokers to be licensed and removing legal guidelines when potentially dealing with stolen goods. Schedule 5 repeals the Toxic Reduction Act, and Schedule 7 eliminates Ontario's requirement for labeling upholstered and stuffed articles which will leave Ontarians ignorant of potentially harmful materials contained in the pillows, sofas and stuffed toys that consumers buy for their children. These are only a handful of the harmful provisions in Bill 66.

The Conservative government and Bill 66 should be opposed at every instance. But a big problem is the antiquated first-past-the-post electoral system that enables a party to gain the majority of the seats without receiving the majority of the votes. When we take to the streets to stop the Ford agenda, we should also demand proportional representation so that no government can exercise absolute legislative control against the will of the majority of the people. ■

... Algeria, Sudan

(continued from page 12)

The solutions to the problems of the Sudanese masses can't be solved in a capitalist framework but must be addressed by a workers' government.

Algeria: Bouteflika falls, what next?

On April 2, Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned after 20 years in power following weeks of mass protests, involving millions of workers and youth, and a powerful general strike. Initially, the protest movement erupted against Bouteflika's seeking an additional term as president, but it quickly grew to take up other political and social demands. The interim government is composed of allies of Bouteflika.

In a press conference on April 1, the head of the army, General Ahmed Gaid Salah, announced that the army supports "the demands of the people" and vowed to "protect Algerians ..." as millions flowed into the streets to celebrate the downfall of Bouteflika. This does not represent any progressive role for the army, but rather the calculation of the military leaders of the strength of the movement and their desire to continue to serve as vassals of French imperialism.

The mass movement has not stopped, but has shifted to demands for the downfall of the regime. Teachers have played a leading role in the struggle, demanding improved educational funding and better working conditions alongside a transition to democracy.

A statement of the Socialist Workers Party (PST) read: "Workers, young people, women and the popular masses as a whole have just snatched, after more than 40 days of strikes and unprecedented mass demonstrations, a precious and historic first victory by forcing the departure on 2 April 2019 of Bouteflika—the embodiment of an oligarchic, authoritarian, quasi-monarchical liberal regime subject to the interests of imperialist foreign powers."

The unemployment rate is high, at more than 11%, with a youth unemployment rate of 29%. The Algerian state has been reliant on oil revenues to finance government operations and programs. The low price of crude oil has resulted in a demand by imperialist interests to impose austerity measures on the Algerian working class and poor.

Some of the opposition have raised the demand for a constituent assembly, including the Workers Party (PT), a "mass" party under the leadership of the Lambertist Trotskyist current. In recent years, unfortunately, the PT has acted as left cover for the Bouteflika regime.

Continue and deepen the uprisings!

The Alliance of Middle Eastern Socialists stated, "In both countries [Algeria and Sudan], the overthrow of individual figureheads of the regime is understood to be far from enough. The call is to continue and deepen the uprisings until fundamental political and socioeconomic changes are made in favor of the popular classes, completely replacing the old regimes and their rulers.

"The Sudanese and Algerian protesters have learned from their past revolutionary struggles and from the neighboring counter-revolutionary regimes that only

through popular resistance, mass participation, and self-organization will they be able to achieve radical change and democratic and socio-economic rights.

"Various dictatorial regimes, regional and imperialist powers have witnessed the developments of these latest popular uprisings with fear, viewing them as a threat to their own interests and powers. In response, they have expressed their support to the Sudanese and Algerian heads of the army and encouraged them to retain control. Alongside these calls, these regional and international actors have warned directly or indirectly against the continuation and deepening of the revolutionary process."

In neo-colonial countries and imperialist ones as well, struggles against neoliberal austerity measures are at center stage. To the discredit of the reformist and neo-reformist parties in Europe and elsewhere, their role has too often been to enforce cuts and privatization in service of big business. For example, in Brazil, the Workers Party (PT) disgraced itself by cutting social security and attacking working-class people. The failure of the left to effectively defend against cutbacks has opened space for the rise of an electoralist populist far right in Western Europe, former workers' states, and in Latin America as the so-called Pink Tide receded.

In both Sudan and Algeria, the road ahead means fighting for the complete overthrow of the existing state structures and their replacement with popular democracy based on institutions accountable to the masses. Movements that lack structures and accountability of leaders are vulnerable to state repression, co-optation, and disorientation.

The political independence of the working class



(Above) On April 30, New York City activists joined international demonstrations in solidarity with French postal workers, who have been on strike for over a year against President Macron's austerity policies. Postal worker Gaël Quirante was framed and fired for his union activities.

and the construction of mass revolutionary socialist parties is another urgent task. In any mass explosion against austerity and dictatorship, the leading role of the most advanced fighters is essential to ensure the demands of the mass movement are met. Solidarity from international labor and socialist movements is essential to keeping the imperialist powers from intervening against these revolutionary movements. ■

Leon Trotsky and Permanent Revolution

The years following World War II saw an explosion of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles, as countries broke free of the grip of empire. In certain cases (China, Vietnam, Cuba), these movements overturned capitalism. In other countries anti-capitalist and socialist slogans were at the center of the demands of national liberation movements. Time and again, the USSR or China sacrificed internationalism to their attempts to make a deal with imperialism.

The petty bourgeois leaderships of national liberation movements often took, and held, power based on promises to settle accounts with imperialism. In almost all cases, however, their promises of democracy, land reform, and economic development were sold out to the IMF and World Bank in the form of structural adjustment programs as the leaders enriched themselves.

What was missing was the independent self-activity of the working class, fighting to push past the immediate goals of the "national democratic" revolutions to take up the tasks of a socialist revolution.

The lack of a revolutionary socialist party in the

context of these revolutions was a decisive factor.

In Russia, prior to the October Revolution, most Russian socialists had accepted that the character of the coming revolution would be that of a "bourgeois democratic" revolution. It was generally thought that a socialist revolution would come as a distinct stage resulting from a period of capitalist development.

Following the defeated 1905 Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky first devised his theory of Permanent Revolution. Trotsky later generalized the theory to other countries while challenging the Stalinist line on the Chinese Revolution.

Trotsky held in this thesis that the bourgeoisie in semi-colonial countries was incapable of decisively breaking with imperialism in order to complete the democratic revolution. The realization of the democratic revolution had to be accomplished by a working-class government, which would aim beyond simply achieving democratic demands but would take up the tasks of the socialist revolution. Trotsky opposed alliances in which the working class is subordinated to petty bourgeois or bourgeois nationalist forces. ■

Ontario building trades workers fight for decent wages & hours

By LUKE RADOCH

Across Ontario, unionized building trades workers are on strike or have voted to strike if an acceptable collective agreement is not soon reached. Current contracts terminate on May 1, though if progress is made in negotiations an extension on "good faith" may be implemented. This year there seems to be very little good faith between the contractors/owners and the unions.

Currently on strike is LIUNA's Local 183 framers (5000 members). Negotiations fell apart after the final proposals were turned down by a vote, due mostly to a low wage increase that does not reflect inflation, higher living costs, and the growing complexity of the work. The strike began April 28.

The trades that are poised to strike next are those of The Ontario Sheet Metal and Roofers Conference. The Mechanical Contractors' Association of Ontario wishes to increase the OSMRC workers' workweek from four nine-hour days (36 hours) to five eight-hour days, a total of 40 hours, with "make up" days on Saturdays for straight time pay, as opposed to all hours worked on

Saturdays paid at double the regular wage.

The offered wage increase, which is spread out over the three-year term of the contract, is \$3.50, which is about a 1% increase each year.

The MCAO also pushed for "reduced seniority protection on lay-off," for full hiring rights, to change the journeyman/apprentice ratio to 1:1, and also the removal of provisions requiring union labels to be used in Local 30's area as well as any union labels on material fabricated and installed by Local 30 workers. This contract has been voted down by the workers, a strike would take place May 6, though a lock out by the MCAO and builders/owners is likely.

The Carpenters District Council of Ontario also experienced a stalemate in negotiations. Local 27, representing about 7500 workers, came to the brink of a strike due to a low wage offer. Sadly, some members of the CDC in Local 27 said they would go to work regardless of a strike—an attitude that definitely hinders the effectiveness of a strike and undermines workers' solidarity.

Local 27 eventually chose to accept an inferior new collective agreement, and avoid-

ed a strike. But with so many other trades going on strike many of the carpenters may not be able to do much work due to the absence of the other trades in the construction industry. Still, with greater solidarity between the unions, what could be achieved would be truly amazing.

One more organization set to strike, to which I belong, is the United Association of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA).

Negotiations between the UA and the MCAO unfolded in much the same way as with the sheet metal union (OSMRC), and involved most of the same contentious proposed changes. The UA was so disgusted with what the MCAO demanded that it refused to show it to its members in the ICI sector, (which this report is concerning itself with, as the high-rise and low-rise sectors accepted their new contracts). So, the contractors took it upon themselves to send it to their unionized employees via e-mail and went so far as to describe the "benefits" of the deal and why it should be ratified.

Not only did the UA Local 46 reject this

offer but the sentiment to strike extends provincially to include all 10 unions. Toronto's Local 46 has about 3000 members, and there are about that many more members spread out among the other union locals.

The proposed collective agreement was voted upon on April 25 and was rejected by over 99% by EVERY UA local in Ontario! Like the OSMRC, we will most likely have one final vote to accept or reject a revised collective agreement. A provincial strike is very likely.

As of May 1, there has not been enough reduction of differences between the MCAO and the UA to reach a tentative agreement. The decision to strike may be implemented by the UA at any moment, as could a lock-out. Unfortunately, the negotiation process is turning ugly. Either the MCAO has succeeded in driving a wedge between the UA and its members, or the UA is bending to the MCAO. Our union leaders now say there will be no strike until the end of May, as the MCAO leaders go to Barcelona for a yearly "meeting." Perhaps the members need to take action to remind UA leaders whom they represent. ■

Protests shake regimes in Sudan and Algeria



By STEVE XAVIER

Mass protests leading to the downfall of long-term rulers in Sudan and Algeria have evoked memories of the Arab Spring protests eight years ago. That wave of protests began in Tunisia with the December 2010 self-immolation suicide of a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi. The Tunisian government of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown on Jan. 14, 2011. Following the fall of Ben Ali, mass protests threatened regimes in Oman, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, and Morocco, resulting in state repression. Libya and Yemen were convulsed by civil wars.

Beginning on Jan. 2, 2011, Egypt's Tahrir Square protests grew to tens of thousands, bringing the Egyptian working class and youth into motion. On Feb. 11, Hosni Mubarak resigned and handed power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces of Egypt. Subsequent elections brought the candidate of the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Morsi, to power with the support of some elements of the revolution that had brought down Mubarak. The Muslim Brotherhood had played little role in the 2011 mobilizations.

Morsi's rule, marked by popular opposition to his attempts to impose an Islamic constitution, was ended by a military coup led by Defense Minister Abdel El-Sisi. El-Sisi was subsequently elected president in May of 2014 in a rigged election. El-Sisi's regime has done nothing to bring reforms or democracy to the Egyptian people and has brutally repressed unions and popular movements.

The state structure that maintains El-Sisi in power is essentially the same as the regime that had maintained Mubarak in power. The situation in Egypt makes clear for other countries in the region that without the independent organization and mobilization of the working class and its allies to push further and to take power, social conditions will continue to deteriorate for working people and poor farmers.

Sudan: "Revolution is the People's Choice!"

For four months, the workers, farmers, urban poor, and youth of Sudan have mobilized, demanding,

"Freedom, Peace, and Justice!" and saying, "Revolution is the People's Choice!" Women have played a particularly important leadership role in the protest movement and are demanding an end to the oppression of women. Sudan's suppressed trade unions have asserted themselves, calling strikes on March 5 and 13. Teachers have also played a key role in anti-regime mobilizations. Teachers' strikes fighting against non-payment of wages preceded the mass upsurge.

The protest movement was sparked by the announcement of sharp increases in the price of fuel and bread. Sudan suffers from high unemployment, hyperinflation (122%), drought, and food and fuel shortages; about 80% of the population subsists on \$1 a day. Child malnutrition is rampant affecting 2.5 million children. The secession of South Sudan, in 2011, deprived Sudan of much of its oil and other mineral wealth.

During the mass protests, elements of the army moved to protect protesters from riot police, threatening a split in the repressive machinery of the state. State repression has been severe, with at least 100 dead and thousands arrested. A state of emergency declared on Feb. 22 imposed curfews, shut down access to the internet and social media, and closed schools and universities. After the state of emergency was declared, protesters occupied the area outside of military headquarters, demanding the ouster of al-Bashir.

On April 11, 2019, the dictator, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, who had ruled for 30 years, was brought down after months of unrest. Al-Bashir had presided over a reactionary Islamist regime known for the repression of women and oppressed nationalities. It soon became clear that the military, which had overthrown al-Bashir, was intent on merely changing the outer face of the regime while maintaining the same structures that had maintained al-Bashir in power.

The newly installed president, General Awad Ibn Auf, lasted less than 48 hours in the face of mass protests. As this is being written, the military continues to maneuver for power.

(Above) Student protesters in the center of Algiers on March 6.

The reaction of the masses has been swift and clear; they want a transition to democracy and the fall of the entire regime. One protester was quoted as saying: "It's not just Bashir stepping down. It's also about the whole regime going down and everything that came with it and 30 years of oppression. So what we want is a transition to a democracy. We want a civilian government and hand over of the authority and power to the people."

China has huge investments in Sudan. Chinese, Russian, U.S. and European imperialisms are all trying to gain advantage in the new political situation on the ground. Russian politicians condemned the "unconstitutional" coup that removed al-Bashir. Russian private military contractors have been in Sudan as advisors to the military during the unrest.

An article in the *Financial Times* describes the situation in the capital: "Though the uprising owes much to 21st century technology, with the convening power of smartphones and hashtags, there is a retro-revolutionary feel to a movement that has both a secular and a syndicalist tinge. One cannot know for sure what Russia felt like in 1917 as the tsar was being toppled, or France in 1871 in the heady, idealistic days of the short lived Paris Commune. But it must have felt something like Khartoum in April 2019."

"Each day, tens of thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands, of people pour in from all corners of the pancake-flat city to stand in the dust and the heat before the gates of the military compound." *Financial Times*, "Sudan's protests feel like a trip back to revolutionary Russia."

What is required going forward is the fight to build independent unions, mass organizations of workers, women and youth, and a revolutionary socialist party. The continued mobilization of the masses is crucial to making sure the demands of the mass movement are met.

(continued on page 11)

