

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Issue #22 - April 2016



## Chicago Teachers Stand Up to the Billionaires' Agenda

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# Stop Trump

## Build a

# Left Political Alternative



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# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ No budget cuts to education and social services! Full funding for all community needs. A major increase in taxes on the rich and big business, not working people. The federal government should bail out states to prevent cuts and layoffs.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, health care, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour, adjusted annually for cost of living increases, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Cancel student debt. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower teacher-student ratios. Stop the focus on high stakes testing and the drive to privatize public education.
- ✦ Free, high quality health care for all. Replace the failed for-profit insurance companies with a publicly funded single-payer system as a step toward fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ Stop home foreclosures and evictions. For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ A minimum guaranteed weekly income of \$600/week for the unemployed, disabled, stay-at-home parents, the elderly, and others unable to work.
- ✦ Repeal all anti-union laws like Taft-Hartley. For democratic unions run by the rank-and-file to fight for better pay, working conditions, and social services. Full-time union officials should be regularly elected and receive the average wage of those they represent.
- ✦ No more layoffs! Take bankrupt and failing companies into public ownership and retool them for socially necessary green production.
- ✦ Shorten the workweek with no loss in pay and benefits; share out the work with the unemployed and create new jobs.

## Environmental Sustainability

- ✦ Fight climate change. Organize mass protests and civil disobedience to block the Keystone XL oil pipeline, coal export terminals, and fracking. Massive public investment in renewable energy and efficiency technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low-fare, high-speed, accessible transit.
- ✦ Public ownership of the big energy companies. All workers in polluting industries should be guaranteed retraining and new living-wage jobs in socially useful green production.

## Equal Rights for All

- ✦ Fight discrimination based on race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, and all other forms of prejudice. Equal pay for equal work.

- ✦ Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ Build a mass movement against police brutality and the institutional racism of the criminal justice system. Invest in rehabilitation, job training, and living-wage jobs, not prisons! Abolish the death penalty. Black Lives Matter.
- ✦ Fight sexual harassment, violence against women, and all forms of sexism.
- ✦ Defend a woman's right to choose whether and when to have children. For a publicly funded, single-payer health care system with free reproductive services, including all forms of birth control and safe, accessible abortions. Comprehensive sex education. Paid maternity and paternity leave. Fully subsidized, high-quality child care.
- ✦ Equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, including same-sex marriage.

## Money for Jobs and Education. Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, the NDAA, and all other attacks on democratic rights.

## Break with the Two Parties of Big Business

- ✦ For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people, and activists from workplace, environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and social movement organizations should stop funding and supporting the Democratic and Republican Parties and instead organize independent left-wing, anti-corporate candidates and coalitions as a first step toward building a workers' party.

## Socialism and Internationalism

- ✦ Capitalism produces poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, and war. We need an international struggle against this system.
- ✦ Repeal corporate "free trade" agreements, which mean job losses and a race to the bottom for workers and the environment.
- ✦ Solidarity with the struggles of workers and oppressed peoples internationally: An injury to one is an injury to all.
- ✦ Take into public ownership the top 500 corporations and banks that dominate the U.S. economy. Run them under the democratic management of elected representatives of the workers and the broader public. Compensation to be paid on the basis of proven need to small investors, not millionaires.
- ✦ A democratic socialist plan for the economy based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people and the environment. For a socialist United States and a socialist world. ✦

# WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

## Zach Shrewsbury Security Guard Seattle, WA



I first discovered I was a socialist when I was in the Marine Corps deployed to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, on the fence line. I remember seeing the Cuban soldier across the field from me through my binoculars, and he seemed just the same as I and my friends were. Exhausted, hot, and wondering why he was there. Then it dawned on me ... that soldier, the so-called enemy is just like me.

I went on to discover and research about socialism after that moment and by watching the Occupy Wall Street protests. I became disgusted by the fact that people have to pay thousands of dollars when they get sick; I was angry at the fact that all my friends were graduating college with \$40,000 in debt. I was sickened at the fact that women are still fighting to be equal in today's society when it's so obvious they should be. I was

enraged that African Americans and Latinos and Muslims were all being demonized by the media. I became a socialist to fight against all the injustice and inequality in this country and the world. I sacrifice for all people so we can all live a life where no one goes hungry or thirsty. A life where sick people are provided for. A life where we are all equals regardless of race, gender, or creed. As Eugene V. Debs said, "I have no country to fight for; my country is the earth, and I am a citizen of the world."

Comrades, remember to never give up our fight! Never give ground! Solidarity forever! ✦

## Socialist Alternative At Seattle Sanders Rallies

In the week leading up to the Washington state caucuses on March 27, Bernie Sanders held two rallies in Seattle. Over 800 copies of *Socialist Alternative* were sold to people heading into these two events, showing the interest of Sanders' supporters in the ideas of socialism and in the call to build a new party of the 99% that featured on the cover of the March issue.

On March 20, we talked to thousands of people outside Key Arena. We argued that Bernie, even if he loses the nomination, should run all the way to November as an independent and not let the political revolution become co-opted by the corporate campaign of Hillary Clinton. Many were understandably concerned that an independent left candidate would take votes away from the Democrats and help Trump, assuming he is the Republican nominee. However, nearly everyone we talked to agreed that a third party was necessary, and they were deeply frustrated with the Democratic Party establishment and its attempts to hamper Bernie's campaign. Nearly two hundred people signed up to learn more about Socialist Alternative.

Six days later, at Safeco Field, thousands packed the baseball stadium and heard Seattle socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant speak before Bernie.



photo credit: Alex Garland

Kshama's speech called for "taking [giant corporations] into public ownership." At first, the reaction to this call was disjointed and somewhat hesitant. Given a moment to digest the idea, the crowd reacted with strong applause for a demand that goes significantly beyond Bernie's current program.

Our experience selling papers and the response to Kshama's speech are a graphic illustration of how the Sanders campaign has politicized and radicalized millions, particularly young people. It further shows the huge opening for independent left politics and for building a socialist political force. We will continue to engage in these discussions with Sanders supporters in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, and other states where primaries are to be held in coming weeks. ✦

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## The Political Revolution Continues

## Bernie: Time to Plan The Jailbreak

Stephan Kimmerle

As we go to press, despite Hillary Clinton's big delegate lead, the political revolution is alive and fighting back. Sanders won Washington state, Alaska, and Hawaii in a landslide. In all the remaining states that have not yet voted, millennials and other "Sandernistas" are eager to raise their voice for \$15 an hour nationwide, for Medicare for all, and for tuition-free education.

At the same time, the debate has started about what to do if Sanders falls further behind and can't win the nomination. Even after the impressive successes on March 26, he needs to win 57 percent of all the remaining pledged delegates from all the upcoming states just to draw even with Clinton, not counting any super-delegates – who are 490 to 27 against Bernie. While there are upcoming primaries where Sanders is poised to do well, polls in a number of others, including New York, show significant obstacles for Sanders. Sanders himself responded to this growing question in an March 23 interview on *The Young Turks*.

In this interview, Bernie Sanders laid out the need to build movements and run candidates beyond his own presidential bid to achieve the "political revolution." However, he also outlined a strategy to push Hillary Clinton to the left, should he lose the Democratic Party primaries. Many Bernie supporters understood his comments as putting conditions on Clinton for his endorsement for her should he lose – and many see this as positive. However, this plan will not take the political revolution forward. If Sanders loses in this Wall Street-dominated party, Bernie needs to run till November as an independent or with the Green Party's Jill Stein. Bernie's supporters cannot allow this movement to become imprisoned within the narrow confines of the Democratic Party.

***The DNC might allow you, for a time, to attend their cocktail party, but this is a party paid for – and, therefore, controlled – by Wall Street and big business.***



A Sanders rally in Vancouver, Washington.

### “If we don't win ...”

“If we don't win,” Sanders stated in the interview, “what [is] the Democratic establishment going to do for us? Are they going to welcome into the Democratic Party the working class of this country and young people, or is it going to be a party of the upper middle class and the cocktail crowd and the heavy campaign contributors?”

Unfortunately, the experience of the Bernie Sanders campaign reveals the answer: The DNC might allow you, for a time, to attend their cocktail party, but this is a party paid for – and, therefore, controlled by, Wall Street and big business.

Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative argued long before Bernie announced his candidacy that he should run independently. But when he decided to run in the Democratic primaries, Kshama and Socialist Alternative did not stand at the sidelines. When he unapologetically described himself as a “democratic socialist” and began campaigning on a pro-working-class agenda within the framework of a pro-corporate, anti-worker party, we campaigned to

build support for Bernie's program. Of course, we have disagreements with Bernie, including important aspects of his foreign policy. But we energetically campaigned to take Bernie's platform to the broadest audience. We became part of the growing upheaval under the slogan of a “political revolution against the billionaire class.” We launched #Movement4Bernie and engaged actively in Labor for Bernie in order to participate in discussions with the most serious Bernie supporters.

What has been the experience so far? On the positive side, tens of millions have been inspired by a bold call to take political power out of the hands of the corporate elite, their politicians, and the establishment media.

On the other side, the Democratic Party primaries have proved hostile territory for such a call. The primaries are run through the structures of that party, which is controlled by its establishment – as evidenced by the unelected super-delegates. If this process continues without a major upheaval on a scale that we have not yet seen, the political revolutionaries will lose that battle.

### “Revitalize the Democratic Party”

“If I can't make it – and we want to try as hard as we can till the last vote is cast,” argues Bernie

Sanders in the interview, “we want to completely revitalize the Democratic Party and make it a party of the people rather than just one of large campaign contributors.”

He said he would call on Clinton, if she is the nominee, to support single-payer health care, a \$15 minimum wage, massive investment in rebuilding infrastructure, free college, and a tax on Wall Street speculation – that is, more or less his whole program.

For people who remember Sanders' previous promise to endorse Clinton should he lose, this can sound more positive, as it puts up real demands on her. Some people have begun to hope that Sanders could now potentially not endorse Hillary.

Sanders has, indeed, shifted to the left in the course of this campaign; he has turned his fire increasingly forcefully against the establishment and its ties to corporate interests. This is a big part of his massive appeal.

But what is the logic of Sanders' current position, taken to its conclusion? Can the Democratic Party establishment accept his full program? It is certainly true that Hillary and the establishment want Sanders on board for the general election and for him to bring his base, especially among young people. The primaries have exposed her weaknesses and the shallowness of the support for the establishment.

We have pointed out before that the Democratic establishment – reflecting the interests of the top one percent – cannot accept Sanders' full program of radical reforms even just as a list of “promises.” It would give too much encouragement to the working class to fight for real change. Of course, this does not mean that the Democrats can't shift their rhetoric a few degrees to the left, as Hillary already has. But does that mean that, when push comes to shove, they will deliver on primary promises?

However, the way Sanders raised these points in the interview suggests that, if he fails to win the nomination, his strategy would be to try to push her to the left and reform the Democratic Party.

Cenk Uygur pressed Sanders on this point. If Clinton makes this or that promise, would Bernie really believe her? In answering, Sanders referred to Tom Donahue, lobbyist of the Chamber of Commerce, who said, “Don't worry what she [Clinton] said in the campaign, she's just trying to match Bernie Sanders. If she's elected, I think she'll be okay on the TPP,” the neo-liberal free-trade agreement she pushed as secretary of state and is now suddenly opposed to.

Seeing the contradiction in his position, Sanders added: “What we need is to create a movement which holds elected officials accountable and not let them flip on the issues.”

Without movements, without the energy of masses of people flooding into the political arena, nothing will be changed. But without an organizational and political backbone, these movements will be co-opted and sold out. This has happened many times in the past.

Again, what is the logic of Sanders' plan to “revitalize” the Democratic Party? To do this, we would need independent movements and independent organization. To successfully defeat the Democratic Party establishment, the movement would need to develop organization and leadership to focus their struggle and combat the corporate cash of corporate Democrats. This organization would need to be

continued on p. 11

Interview with Kshama Sawant

# What Is Democratic Socialism?

Bernie Sanders Popularizes Socialism to Millions

Kshama Sawant,  
Seattle City  
Councilmember



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*Bernie Sanders has popularized the idea of democratic socialism to an audience of millions. His program for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, free higher education, and single-payer health care speaks to the interests of working-class people. But his vision of socialism is of a reformed and regulated capitalism. We, on the other hand, believe the lives of ordinary people here and around the world cannot be decisively changed for the better without a fundamental transformation that gets beyond capitalism. We spoke with Kshama Sawant, recently re-elected Seattle socialist councilmember.*

**How important is it that Bernie Sanders has called himself a democratic socialist?**

Whether or not you agree with Bernie Sanders' version of socialism, it is enormously significant that, for the first time in U.S. history, a presidential candidate who calls himself a socialist has had an actual shot at winning the presidential election. And, to his credit, he has not backed down from the label. He has shown that socialism is no longer the barrier that it used to be during the Cold War. In fact, his campaign has demonstrated that there is incredible interest in socialism, particularly among young people. This is a sea change.

**How would you define democratic socialism?**

Socialism is a society where the resources are used democratically to provide a better life for all, based on ending the dictatorship of big business over the economy and politics. Today, we live in a world of incredible wealth and technology, alongside the most

horrendous conditions of poverty, war, and environmental crisis. This is the result of capitalism, a system based on prioritizing profits, not human need – where the wealth is concentrated in the hands of a capitalist elite.

**Is this what Bernie Sanders means by socialism?**

What Bernie Sanders is calling for is incredibly important: things like a \$15 an hour minimum wage, single-payer health care, taxing the rich, and free education. The radical reforms he has popularized are a key part of any socialist program today. But Bernie's socialism is limited to redistributing wealth through expanding the public sector within the framework of a capitalist society. For us, socialism is a fundamentally different social system where the world's resources are not controlled by a greedy, undemocratic oligarchy. It is not the same as the capitalist welfare states that have existed in some European countries where significant social gains were won by working people, gains that are now under systematic attack from the capitalist elite.

**Bernie also says that corporations have too much power. How is that different?**

Bernie's plan for universal health care points in the right direction. The for-profit health insurance industry is the main obstacle to delivering high-quality, universal health care for all. It should be replaced with a single-payer system, a public program that guarantees everyone coverage.

In comparison, what Bernie says on Wall Street banks is different. He says that the biggest banks that dominate the economy should be broken up into smaller banks. This

would be far more radical than Hillary Clinton's proposals to regulate Wall Street.

However, breaking them up would only be temporary on the basis of capitalism, which is based on ruthless exploitation and competition and leads inevitably to the development of mega-monopolies. Like the health care industry, the banks should be taken out of the hands of the 1% and brought under democratic public ownership. Why should a tiny oligarchy have such power over our economy? How democratic is that?

**How can working people really have democratic control over the banks and key parts of the economy?**

As Bernie said in one of the early debates: "Congress doesn't regulate Wall Street. Wall Street regulates Congress." I completely agree with that. While we still live in a capitalist society, we of course will fight for whatever reforms help make life better for working people. But the underlying issue is the system of capitalism itself and, under this system, the best means for regulating or checking their power is not relying on a government which represents the interests of the rich but for millions of working people to become politically active in workplaces and communities through building unions and our own political party.

To break the power of the big corporations, we would propose that the biggest 500 corporations that dominate the rigged economy and political system should be taken into public ownership and run democratically. We propose radically extending democracy into the economy and workplaces, to involve working people in decisions over how resources are used that affect all of us. On this basis, we could develop a democratically planned economy designed to meet the needs of all, not just the 1%.

**Bernie Sanders has praised the "socialism" of FDR's New Deal and LBJ's Great Society. Why do you think these kinds of programs aren't enough today?**

Let me say two things about that. First, when the New Deal programs were passed in the mid-1930s, millions of workers were joining unions, striking, and occupying factories to fight for a better life. It was this radical labor movement that forced the establishment to make concessions. The programs that came to be known as the New Deal were not simply handed down by the benevolence of FDR and the Democrats. They were fought for. And, in the 1960s, it was the similar. You had incredible movements against Jim Crow, poverty, and the Vietnam War in the 1960s.

The second thing is that there is a different historical context today. There is a myth that

the New Deal programs on their own pulled the U.S. out of the Great Depression and created the conditions for the economic boom after World War II. As an economist, I can tell you, that is not true. In reality, it was World War II that launched the boom: the massive war mobilization, the horrifying destruction and death caused by it, and then the reconstruction in its aftermath. The U.S. was the only advanced capitalist country that was not bombed during the war. For a whole historic period after the war, U.S. capitalism was the strongest in the world and could afford to concede rising living standards. But that period is over.

Today, capitalism faces a deep structural crisis. We've seen the weakest economic recovery since World War II, as well as massive levels of inequality and debt. We have a rotting infrastructure that is literally poisoning children in Flint, Newark, and elsewhere.

It's not just an economic crisis that capitalism has created. We also face an environmental catastrophe created by a handful of gigantic fossil fuel corporations. There is plenty of work to do. But big business isn't investing in rebuilding a green economy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Instead, they put their money into a gigantic financial casino and, when that led to catastrophe in 2008-09, they made us pay for it.

Big oil, Wall Street, and big business as a whole – they stand in the way of the kinds of change needed. They are against the radical reforms Bernie is popularizing. We can win Bernie's program, but only through mass struggle. We won \$15 an hour in Seattle by activating working people and building a movement independent of big business and the Democratic Party.

However, there are limits to reforming a system that is dominated by these massive and rapacious corporations. On the basis of capitalism, reforms like the minimum wage are only temporary. Big business has many tools to make us pay for the crisis of their system. Again, a permanent and sustainable solution to all the problems facing working people is possible by taking the biggest companies into democratic ownership and reorganizing the economy on a democratically planned basis. Under such a system, we could democratically decide how to allocate resources. We could rapidly transition from fossil fuels, develop massive jobs programs to rebuild the country's rotting infrastructure, and begin to build a whole new world based on meeting the needs of the majority – not the profits of a few. ☘



Kshama Sawant protests Hillary Clinton at a campaign stop in Rainier Beach, Seattle.

New Phase of Struggle Against Billionaires' Agenda

# Chicago Teachers' Political Strike

Steve Edwards and Nick Wozniak

Chicago teachers are taking a stand to defend public education against the billionaires' agenda. On April 1, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), after nine months without a contract, will launch a one-day citywide strike to demand the funding that public education needs.

Rather than simply replicating its 2012 nine-day strike, which pushed back but did not defeat many of the education definer's demands, CTU is now involving other unions and community groups in a one-day political strike whose sharpest demand is to tax the richest 5% of Illinoisians up to \$6 billion to pay for educational and social needs. Although this demand doesn't mention the biggest prize – a transaction tax on the La Salle Street futures and commodities exchanges, which could raise billions – the demand that is being made puts the cost of the crisis where it belongs: on the super-rich. The union also calls for action against banks that have cheated city and state governments through toxic swaps, and against the TIF funding racket that allows the Mayor and City Council to give rich developers millions that were meant for schools.

## Rahm Blunders

The Emanuel administration began the academic year – and negotiations – with a plan to lay off 1,500 employees, targeting special education workers for layoff at a rate ten times that of other groups. This sabotaged the entire system, as schools were forced to cram special needs students into regular classrooms. Then, after months of bargaining, the Board of Education stuck on its demand for teachers to pick up the whole of their pension payments: a 7% pay cut. The schools' pension funding crisis was created by the Board's past failures to actually make these payments.

In February, the Board made a contract offer that addressed some of the union's demands, but the union rejected it because of language that was unenforceable or could be overruled by existing law. Key issues were class and case-load sizes, the 7% pension payment, layoffs, a cap on new charter schools, a moratorium on school closings, and reductions in standardized testing and punitive teacher evaluations.

The Board responded to the union's "no" vote by publicly threatening to



The Chicago Teachers Union went on strike in 2012 and shook Chicago politics.

immediately end the 7% pension payments. Although later put on hold, this illegal threat, along with the Board's existing refusal to pay contractually mandated "step and lane" pay increases, created a legal basis for immediate strike action without going through mediation, which would have delayed strike action until almost the end of the school year.

## CTU Shows Leadership

The union has boldly used the Board's overreach as a way to challenge the power of the Mayor, the Governor, the legislature and their big-business backers.

This boldness comes from years of internal organizing to democratize the union, while building community alliances to fight against school closures and standardized testing. Despite three years of harassment and retaliation for the 2012 strike, including the closure of 50 schools – involving huge layoffs – in 2013, as well as the illness of its President Karen Lewis – who polls showed beating Mayor Rahm Emanuel if she had been able to run in the 2015 elections – the CTU has come back fighting and continues to break new ground in building community support.

For example, the union voted to support Black Lives Matter activists in the #RahmResign protests that began last year after Mayor Emanuel concealed the police murder of Laquan McDonald. Although still controversial within the union, this has elevated the CTU's position as a defender of black and

working-class people against the racist justice system and trigger-happy cops.

The April 1 strike continues the CTU's track record of building working-class, grassroots power. The union is calling for day-long pickets at all 600+ schools, solidarity walkouts, and a mass rally downtown to disrupt the evening rush. In a move, unprecedented in recent labor struggles, the Fight for \$15 declared a simultaneous sympathy strike, while SEIU health care, college, and university unions, community groups, and the city's subway train operators' union are all supporting the day of action. Many are planning solidarity actions that will converge on the downtown rush-hour rally.

April 1 is unmistakably a political strike, legalized by the overreach of the Board when it unilaterally canceled raises. If it forced the City to return to the bargaining table with an enforceable contract, this would be a real victory, boosting the confidence of workers throughout the region. A victory for the CTU and its allies against the billionaires' agenda would put it in position to galvanize all of the ongoing struggles in Chicago and the region into a fighting, ongoing movement with national implications – groundwork for a broader fight-back at the state and national level.

This would also pose the question of launching a new political force of the 99% in Chicago, with the CTU playing a key role, which could truly challenge the domination of the 1% in the years ahead. ☺

## Texas and the Supreme Court Threaten National Reproductive Rights



Sonia Chien

By June, the Supreme Court will rule on *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, a case that could have disastrous implications for reproductive rights across the country. In 2013, Texas passed House Bill 2, severely limiting Texas women's access to abortion facilities. This bill has closed more than half the clinics in Texas: down from 41 to 18.

The legal arguments center on whether or not these changes can be characterized as "undue burden," which was defined by the Supreme Court in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* as health regulations that can have "the purpose or effect of presenting a substantial obstacle to a woman seeking an abortion." HB 2 forces longer waiting periods for treatment, prohibits abortion past 20 weeks post-insemination and, with a later amendment, requires all clinics to have mandatory ambulatory surgical center (ASC) certification.

Earlier this March, the Supreme Court heard arguments in the *Whole Woman's Health* case. According to a *U.S. News & World Report* article: "If the Supreme Court rules against *Whole Woman's Health*, Texas will be left with as few as nine abortion clinics" (1/11/2016). In the wake of Justice Antonin Scalia's death, *Whole Woman's Health* said goodbye to an opponent; however, if all of the remaining justices vote according to their party, the vote will be split 4-4, bringing the decision back to the Fifth Circuit, the body that upheld the restrictions in the first place.

Texas' HB 2 law is representative of an overarching national War on Women. In 1982, there were 2,900 active abortion clinics in the United States. As of 2015, there were 739, with the number continuing to decrease. NARAL Pro-Choice America reports that sixteen states have piggybacked on Texas' recent restrictions. Among the most extreme, Indiana's bill would force mothers to pay for the funerals of miscarriages. Without concerted action, these types of restrictions will continue to be implemented all across the country.

The primary cause of the 1973 passing of *Roe v. Wade* was the militant political activism that dominated the public sphere at the time. Advancements in civil rights have always been fought for and achieved by mass movements of the working class, not by the intent of state and federal bodies. It is essential that we join together as the working class to build an independent political alternative to the two parties. A unified movement that fights capitalism's oppression of women with a single-payer health care system and safe access to abortion is the only way to ensure reproductive rights for all. ☺

# Trump Upends Republican Es

## BUILD A MASS MOVEMENT

### RACISM AND BIGOTRY



Ty Moore and Jesse Lessinger

Stopping Trump means building a left political alternative that can unite working people in a common struggle against the corporate establishment.

We can't wait for November. Once seen as a bad joke, his campaign now represents a huge danger to working people. The Republican party cannot wash their hands of Trump. For decades, they've used coded racism, sexism, and nationalist rhetoric to whip up electoral support. Trump's unfiltered bigotry is a Frankenstein's monster of their own creation.

But what makes Trump so dangerous is his populist anti-establishment message, appealing to those who are fed up with corrupt corporate politics. He redirects white workers' and middle class anger at unemployment, poverty, and social decay toward nationalist, racist, and authoritarian solutions. He promises to "make America great again." In reality, Trump's divisive politics weaken working people's capacity for collective struggle.

### Mass Protests Linked to a Left Alternative

Over decades, the corporate-backed Democratic Party has failed to offer an alternative for working people, to defend women's rights, or to protect immigrants against racism. Their capitulation to Wall Street creates fertile ground for right-wing populists like Trump and Cruz to pose as the anti-establishment alternative.

The Democratic Party's turn to neoliberal policies 30 years ago left them closer to the Republicans on many economic issues. For example, both parties supported the NAFTA trade deal, which contributed directly to deindustrialization and job losses. In reality, despite worker-friendly rhetoric and the ongoing support of most trade union leaders, the Democrats have offered only a less vicious version of the same anti-working-class agenda as the Republicans.

In 2008, the Democrats took control of both houses of Congress as well as the White House. What followed was a massive bailout of the banks and millions of people losing their homes through foreclosure. This opened the door to the Tea Party, the demoralization of large parts of the Democratic base, and the Republican victory in the mid-term elections of 2010.

We need a powerful mass movement against this right-wing threat. The starting point is coordinated mass protests all across the country, uniting working people, students, immigrant rights organizations, the Black Lives Matter movement, unions, and everyone else terrified by the rise of Trump.

Already, Trump campaign events have been met with bold protests, facing down violent threats from him and some of his supporters. Last week, leaders of over twenty prominent progressive organizations and trade unions, including MoveOn.org and SEIU, signed onto a letter calling "for a massive nonviolent mobilization of working people, students, immigrants ... to stand up to Trump's bullying and bigotry," alongside a major voter registration drive to

*The 2016 presidential election has seen the ominous rise of right populism particularly in the form of Donald Trump's campaign. Progressive workers, youth, women and people of color are rightly concerned: how can we defeat the right-wing threat? In these articles we analyze the situation and point to past and current examples for how to defeat the right.*

The Republican establishment has utterly lost control of their party's primary process. For months, they watched and hoped that Trump – whose hate and demagoguery are the logical products of the party's toxic politics going back to Richard Nixon's "Southern strategy" in 1968 – would self-destruct by finally saying something so outrageous that his supporters would turn against him, or that a more non-Trump alternative would clearly emerge.

In the wake of Super Tuesday, it became evident that this "wait and see" approach had failed and that Trump was not only the frontrunner but on course to winning the Republican nomination outright. This set off a completely panicked reaction, as sections of the establishment moved to block his path.

All of this activity has given one other candidate at least a theoretical path to beat Trump: Ted Cruz, who is barely more acceptable to the party's leaders.

There is increasingly fevered speculation about a "brokered" Republican convention.

There is even talk of running a conservative candidate against Trump if he wins the nomination.

The corporate elite see Trump as an unreliable egomaniac who would damage U.S. prestige abroad and provoke serious unrest at home. Trump has also departed from the orthodox neoliberal script of the Republicans by opposing trade deals and suggesting that he would be prepared to punish companies that move jobs abroad. While Trump defends capitalism, this is an example of a populist position he has taken to win white working-class support that goes against the overwhelming consensus of the ruling elite.

But from the point of view of the working class, the real threat is the virulent xenophobia pushed by Trump – calling Mexican immigrants "rapists" and saying there should be a ban on all Muslims entering the country. The response he has received from a section of the white working class shows that, while there is an overall shift to the left in the U.S., the deep polarization in society can also lead part of the population to temporarily embrace right-wing ideas. Dividing workers along racial lines or pitting native-born workers against immigrants only serves the interests of the corporate elite.

We should make no mistake: the threat is real. The question is, what strategy is needed to stop Trump's appeal to racism and bigotry? ✪

defeat Trump in November. Socialist Alternative supports this initiative. However, a central question is, will these organizations turn anti-Trump protests into pro-Clinton rallies? Or will they offer an authentic anti-establishment alternative to undercut Trump's support?

### Clinton Will Only Broaden Trump's Support

While Clinton's establishment and Wall Street ties make her a perfect target for Trump's right-populist attacks, Bernie Sanders' message of a political revolution against the billionaire class has the ability to cut across much of Trump's support. There is a significant reservoir of of nationalism, racism, and sexism Trump is tapping into, but the real fuel propelling his campaign is the deep anger among mainly white middle- and working-class people who have seen the devastation caused by the economic crisis and are enraged at the corporate corruption of politics.

Bernie's call for living wage jobs, free education, free health care, and investment in our

schools and our communities can unite working people around an anti-establishment alternative. That's why Bernie should continue running through November as an independent if he is blocked in the Democratic primary by the huge weight of the party establishment, the corporate media, and Wall Street super PACs united to defeat Sanders' political revolution.

Some argue that this could "spoil" and help Trump win. Yet there are 40-45 "safe" states which will be clearly won by the Democratic or Republican candidates and there is no reason Bernie could not campaign all out in these states until November.

The alternative to this strategy – allowing Clinton, a national symbol of the corrupt corporate establishment, to stand as the only challenge to Trump – means widening the space for right-wing populism. If no left alternative is offered in the general election, Trump would use Clinton as a lightning rod and have a virtual monopoly over the broadening anti-establishment revolt.

On the other hand, a strong result of a Sanders campaign running all the way through to November would not only cut across Trump's

# Establishment MENT AGAINST OTRY

## Is Trump a Fascist?

Trump's rallies have taken on an extremely ugly character, with violence or threats of violence encouraged by Trump against anyone who would dare to protest, no matter how mildly. His campaign has also given encouragement and cover to the extreme right and fascists to come out of their holes and assert themselves, like those who shot and injured Black Lives Matter activists last November in Minneapolis.

There is a lot of talk, encouraged by sections of the liberal media, that Trump himself is a fascist. Historically, fascists mobilized mass movements of the middle class, the unemployed, and sections of workers with the aim of completely overthrowing democratic institutions, physically smashing the labor movement and the left, and targeting racial and ethnic minorities. Fascist movements that took power, like those led by Hitler and Mussolini, received the support of key sections of the ruling class, who saw this as necessary to save their system from revolutionary upheaval led by radical socialist parties in the context of economic and social devastation.

The American ruling class today does not see any need to go in this direction. But in conditions of profound crisis, fascist and neo-Nazi organizations can gain a base, like Golden Dawn has in Greece. There are also

a number of far-right parties in Europe, like the National Front in France led by Marine Le Pen, which have sought to shed their neo-Nazi past and link their racist, anti-immigrant agenda to right-populist themes that seek to appeal to working-class voters. In all these cases, the space is opened up for the far right to grow, to the degree that the labor movement and the left do not put forward a clear alternative to the crisis created by capitalism.

Trump's politics have much in common with those of Le Pen – although, unlike her, he does not represent a fully fledged far-right party. But the Trump phenomenon does not resemble the organized, paramilitary, neo-Nazi Golden Dawn. When corporate publications like the *New York Daily News* compare Trump to Hitler or Mussolini, the goal is primarily to mobilize women, black people, Latinos, and young people behind the Democratic Party. And we should not be fooled into thinking that many of the leading Republicans opposing Trump, including Cruz, are somehow less reactionary. This is not in any way to minimize the threat posed by Trump's right populism. But we need to accurately characterize the threat in order to know how the labor movement and the left should respond. ✪



On May Day, 2006, millions of immigrants went on strike and helped defeat HR4437.

## How the Right and Racism Have Been Pushed Back Before

Tom Crean

The building of a real left political challenge to mobilize working people against the divisive lies of the right must be linked to the building of a mass movement in the streets. This is something the corporate Democratic leadership, which calls to “stop Trump,” will never do.

There are many examples of mass movements in the past that pushed back the right and helped win real gains for workers, immigrants, black people, women, LGBTQ people – indeed, all those targeted by right populism. The industrial trade unions like the United Auto Workers were built in the 1930s through mass struggle that faced down racists and fascists and led to real gains for working people, such as the 40-hour workweek and Social Security. The right, at least in the North, was pushed back for a whole period. Twenty years later, it was the mass mobilizations of the Civil Rights Movement, with the support of sections of the labor movement, that brought down the white supremacist Jim Crow regime in the South.

### Mass Movement of Immigrants

Ten years ago, the mass movement of immigrant workers held out enormous promise to rebuild a fighting multiracial labor

movement in the U.S. In late 2005, the Sensenbrenner Bill, passed by the House of Representatives, threatened to unleash mass deportations of undocumented workers on a scale previously unseen. In response, immigrants came onto the streets in their hundreds of thousands – and, ultimately, their millions. In many cities, including in the deep South, these were literally the largest mass demonstrations ever seen. This movement culminated on May Day 2006, the “Day Without Immigrants,” when millions of immigrant workers withdrew their labor and took to the streets again. The port of Los Angeles was shut down by immigrant truck drivers going off the job.

For a period, this movement succeeded in pushing back the threat from the right and also had an effect in pushing back anti-immigrant attitudes. Unfortunately, this movement, while receiving significant passive support from sections of the native-born working class, remained isolated. It did not succeed in winning an active majority to the position of ending the threat of deportations and giving citizenship rights to all workers on the basis of a common struggle against the corporate elite for well-paid jobs for all.

### From Wisconsin to BLM

More recently, in Wisconsin the mass

movement of workers and young people who pushed back against Scott Walker's drive to destroy public sector unions in 2011 temporarily checked the right, including the Tea Party. But what was needed was to take this struggle to a higher level, beginning with a one-day general strike against Walker. This idea, which Socialist Alternative argued for, resonated with workers but was cut across by conservative union leaders and the Democratic Party.

And now there is the Black Lives Matter movement, which has lifted the veil on police killings and forced a debate on institutional racism, which is resonating in the presidential race itself. BLM activists, alongside Bernie Sanders supporters, trade unionists, and others, have been to the forefront of the protests at Trump's rallies.

These examples all point to the type of movement we need to build to push back against the renewed threat of right populism. Trump and the right can be defeated – but only through a united movement led by the working class. We need to urgently organize meetings around the country to discuss how to build the movement on the streets as well as a left political alternative against the right, a party of the 99%. ✪

support in 2016 but would also cut across the threat that a strong Trump campaign would boost the confidence for all kinds of right-populist and racist candidates to stand in future elections.

### Fight for Socialism

Instead, an independent Sanders campaign running all the way through November could prepare the ground for many more independent, left, anti-corporate candidacies in the near future. We need the revolt against Wall Street to expand from Bernie's election campaign into an organized, ongoing movement of millions that fights for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, free education, Medicare for all, to end mass incarceration, and to defend workers' and immigrants' rights.

The real roots of Trump's right-wing populism are found in the crisis of capitalism itself and the complete failure of both parties to address it. We need a new party of the 99% to provide a political alternative and unite people across race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and nationality into a common struggle against the domination of corporate America over our lives. We must fight for a new society based on democratic socialism as the answer to the corruption, massive inequality, racism, and exploitation of capitalism. ✪

# Who Can We Trust With the Environment?

Toiya Shester

Today on my New England street, I watched the snow float down from the sky and collect five inches or so. School was delayed for two hours while the salt trucks were sent out to make the streets safe for children. Yet, just six hours later, they were coming home from school with short sleeves, carrying their jackets all without a single snow pile in sight. This is our new reality: extreme weather from day to day, and now even hour to hour.

If looking out the window and watching the thermometer don't say enough, the fact that 2015 was the hottest year on record – in 136 years of reporting – should hit it home. With the ice from Greenland and Antarctica melting faster and faster, that will mean displacement for millions of Americans within the next few decades due to rising sea levels and intense climate changes.

## Hillary vs. Bernie

Now, finally, climate change is being discussed – and not just by environmental activists, but by the future potential rulers of the “free-world,” the presidential candidates. Of course, this doesn't include the Republicans, who are still denying reality. Hillary Clinton speaks like any good Wall Street candidate would, with vague and substanceless rhetoric – like the Paris climate talks – and an intense focus on legalities and what the government has the “ability” to do. Bernie Sanders, on the other hand, says that, if elected, he would cut emissions by 80% by taxing polluters and investing in green energy, all the while creating ten million jobs.

Clinton, as with all her positions, never takes a stand when it matters. We saw this with how long it took her to say the phrase “Black Lives Matter.” We saw this with her recent change to support gay marriage. And we see it on the environment. Hillary was in favor of Keystone XL until she couldn't be. Her big business ties make it impossible for her to implement policies that could potentially save the planet.

## Not Me, Us

While we need to build an alternative to corporate politicians and their inaction on climate change, this must be linked to building grassroots



Record snowfalls shut down Boston in the winter of 2014-2015.

movements because it ultimately takes serious struggle to win change – like the one that just defeated the Keystone XL pipeline, for instance.

There is clearly a real difference between the policies of the Republicans and Democrats on the environment. But this can be exaggerated. Obama opened large amounts of federal land to oil drilling, while Bush exempted fracking from the Clean Water Act. And who's surprised? At the end of the day, Big Oil funds both parties.

The fight to stop climate change is ultimately a fight between those that benefit from the climate-change-causing status quo – the billionaire class – and those of us who are suffering from the status quo – workers and youth

## Take the Power

“Planet before profit” is a common slogan in the environmental movement. Many activists fight for corporations to be regulated to use environmentally sustainable business practices. But, the example of TransCanada – which, at this very moment, is suing the government for \$15 billion for their “unrealized profits” they “lost” due to the stopping of the Keystone XL pipeline – shows that, not only will fossil fuel corporations fight tooth and nail against any regulation, they will also use their massive resources to attack even when they are seemingly defeated.

But there is a better solution. If we took over big energy companies and put them under democratic worker control instead of private ownership, we, the working class, could run the companies in a way that actually puts “people over profit.” We could use the

capital of these companies to begin to build and install solar panels and wind turbines on a massive scale to power society. We could create a jobs program to build green infrastructure that would employ millions of young people at union wages and train workers transitioning out of “dirty energy” industries without cutting their standard of living. We could democratically decide which technologies we would research and invest in and set our own regulations that could not be undermined by private interests.

Capitalism, though, is incapable of this, for it is the drive to exploit and make as much profit as possible that defines this system and forces it to poison the earth. And so we must fight to build a movement that will change the way we run our economy and power our planet toward socialism. Only socialism, a democratically run, planned economy, focused on meeting human and environmental need, can stop global destruction. Workers do not want to destroy the planet. If we had the power to decide our fate, we could pass on a sustainable world for our children's grandchildren to enjoy. ✪

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## Lead Poisoning in Crumbling Cities

Time for a Massive Jobs Program



Keely Mullen

The horrific conditions in Flint, Michigan have brought to national attention a much deeper crisis of capitalism: the crisis of deteriorating infrastructure. In 2014, one-fifth of all children tested in Detroit showed positive for lead poisoning.

The problems facing poor families in Flint are not exclusive to that city. They are experienced by poor and working people across the country. Nearly 24 million homes in the United States have crumbling lead paint on their walls. And now, 17,000 children in Newark, New Jersey will be tested for lead poisoning after elevated lead levels were found in the drinking water at close to half of the schools in the city.

Lead poisoning directly contributes to severe brain damage, in some cases leading to behavioral problems, low IQs, poor performance in school, and difficulty learning. Due to the ferocity with which the lead industry has fought regulation, it was not until 2008 that lead in paint was reduced to a tolerable level. The lead industry, with the help of their purchased politicians, has carried out the collective poisoning of hundreds of thousands of American children. The crisis in Flint, and now in New Jersey, indicates that lead is no longer restricted to crumbling paint and dust, but it has made its way into our water supply, largely as a result of deteriorating pipes and collapsing infrastructure.

## Rebuild Infrastructure and Create Million of Jobs

This should serve as a massive cry for infrastructural investment. Many American roads, waterways, bridges, and grids are in a state of decay. We saw this demonstrated in 2007 with the collapse of the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge in Minneapolis that killed 13 and injured 145. From methane leaks in our gas distribution pipelines to lead poisoning in our waterways, we need a massive overhaul of American infrastructure – which would lead to the creation of millions of jobs. Bernie Sanders has called for \$1 trillion to be spent over five years on infrastructural investment, which would create 13 million good-paying jobs. This would be a great start.

American infrastructural investment has failed to keep pace with either the needs of the American people or the rapid technological advancements of the past two decades. When profit stands between the needs of people and our capacity to meet those needs, we wind up with crises like the ones we are seeing in Flint and Newark. In order to live in a world that meets the needs and capacities of all people, we need an economy that is democratically planned by those who actually make the economy run: the workers, not a handful of billionaires. ✪



## Ireland

# Government Routed as New Left Rises

Danny Byrne

Ireland's Fine Gael/Labour Party coalition government was routed in general elections on 26 February. A deep class anger at the government's austerity, especially at the Labour Party's betrayal of working people, saw voters inflict a humiliating defeat on both parties. The Labour Party crumbled down to seven seats, winning only 6.6% of first-preference votes. That compares to 37 seats, 19.4%, in 2011. Although Fine Gael managed to hold on as the largest party in the Dáil (parliament), it lost 26 seats, from 76 to 50, dropping to 25.5%. The political panorama has been totally transformed and fragmented, with a new socialist left rising to prominence.

The government parties waged a disastrous election campaign. Despite polls consistently showing no clear alternative government on the cards, support for Fine Gael and Labour declined steadily as polling day approached. Threats of stability or chaos did nothing to dent the resolve to drive for a change. The anti-establishment mood which exists in working-class Ireland was hard and strong enough to turf the government out, even in the face of blackmail and scaremongering. It signals a deep political crisis for Irish capitalism, along the lines of what is developing in Spain and Greece. The tried and tested parties of capitalist rule are in crisis and can no longer simply alternate in power to ensure "stability" for the market system.

In Ireland, this has been expressed historically in the domination of two right-wing conservative parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, alongside the ex-social-democratic Labour Party. These parties routinely occupied around 90% of the electoral space. This time, however, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael got less than 50% between them and Labour was nearly decimated. The remaining support is greatly fragmented, with 30% voting for various independents and smaller parties, and just under 14% for Sinn Féin, a nationalist party seen by many as anti-establishment.

Though it increased its percentage vote and number of seats – from 14 to 23 – Sinn Féin delivered well below expectations. Hounded by the establishment press and parties over



The Anti-Austerity Alliance marches against water charges.

historical and security issues, Sinn Féin made a concerted effort to prove its "responsible" credentials. While posturing as a left-wing alternative, it confined its election programme to the "fiscal space" allowed by restrictive EU/Troika rules, effectively ruling out the real change needed by working people. It also courted establishment parties as potential coalition partners, refusing to rule out coalition with Fianna Fáil.

On the key issue of water charges, which has kicked off a mass movement of nonpayment over recent years, Sinn Féin was exposed and outstripped by the genuine left, especially by the Anti-Austerity Alliance (AAA), in which the Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland) participates. The most conscious workers and youth tended to favour those who had built and led the movement over those offering only weak, parliamentary resistance to it. Election results and gains for the AAA and Socialist Party in key constituencies illustrate this.

The current capitalist crisis is leading to the demise of the Labour Party, which has become a vicious tool of the bosses and markets. It is also throwing up a new left in which revolutionary socialists play a key role. The AAA, in alliance with the People Before Profit group (PBP), mounted the most serious nationwide left challenge in the history of the state. The AAA-PBP won 3.9% of first-preference votes, despite not standing in almost a third of constituencies – an excellent result for a new fighting socialist initiative.

The Anti-Austerity Alliance successfully defended the seats of Socialist Party members Ruth Coppinger

(Dublin West) and Paul Murphy (Dublin South-West), and made an impressive breakthrough with the election of another Socialist Party member, Mick Barry, in Cork North-Central. It also came within 270 votes of taking a seat in Limerick city, with Cian Prendiville, which would have been the shock of the election. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) with which Socialist Alternative is in political solidarity. The People Before Profit group also won three seats, which means that a block of six TDs (representatives in parliament) will have a valuable platform to assist workers' struggle against whatever austerity government is formed.

A Fine Gael/Fianna Fáil coalition would be disastrous for working-class people in Ireland and would require a redoubling of mass movements. The Socialist Party and Anti-Austerity Alliance will turn their attention toward the building of such movements, to ensure the abolition of water charges, and to demand a real recovery in health services, education, housing, and living standards.

This struggle must extend its aims beyond the capitalists' and EU/Troika's "fiscal space" to demand the reorientation of the economy toward the needs of ordinary people, rather than the profits of a few. Only the socialist policies of democratic public ownership of the key sectors of the economy can bring this about. Support for these policies can grow rapidly with the assistance of the new fighting socialist left which is rising to replace the Labour sellouts. ✪

## International News in Brief

For more in-depth coverage, see *SocialistWorld.net*, website of the Committee for a Workers International.

**SocialistWorld.net**



### After the Brussels Terror Attack

The world was in shock at the March 22 terrorist attacks in Zaventem airport and Maelbeek metro station in Brussels. The perpetrators are likely members or sympathizers of the Islamic State. This summer, Belgium will start participating in military interventions in Syria. The victims, in both cases, are the workers, the poor, and the young, both in Belgium and in the Middle East. The LSP/PSL (CWI in Belgium) calls on the workers' movement to mobilize against terrorism, racism, and government attempts to restrict strikes, demonstrations, and political opposition.

### European Union Forms Alliance with Turkey to Close Borders

The European Union is now closing the doors to refugees. Those who make it to Greece will be deported back to Turkey. Despite the increasingly dictatorial regime in Ankara, European Council President Donald Tusk declared that Turkey is a "safe" country for refugees. Amnesty International says that support for Turkey is absurd. This crisis and the recent decisions again expose the real role of the EU. The refugee crisis is a failure of capitalism. The alternative is the struggle for the right to asylum, against the capitalist EU, and for democratic socialism.

### Will There Be a General Strike in France?

It has been several months since the balance of forces between the classes has been hardened in France. The "socialist" Hollande-Valls government is trying to destroy the social gains in the labor code regarding employee protection. But a growing part of the population firmly objects. One by one, the local workplace unions called for strikes on March 9. The resulting protests saw nearly half a million people on the streets. The potential for a general strike against the government is posed for the spring. The coming weeks are going to be heated, and events can be expected to accelerate.

### Brazil Rocked by Deep Crisis

Brazil is being rocked by a deep political and economic crisis that has brought Dilma Rousseff's PT ("Workers" Party) government to the brink of collapse. Corruption scandals have led to the imprisonment of dozens of politicians and businessmen. Dilma has tried to find a way out of the crisis by moving to the right, and 2013 saw an upsurge of strikes, occupations, and protests against the government's neoliberal policies. But the situation has become complicated, with the corporate media rallying for Dilma's impeachment and pro-government groups fearing a "coup d'état." LSR (CWI in Brazil) argues for trade unions and social movements to build a left front in the coming struggles. ✪

Boston Public Schools

# Student Walkout Pushes Back Education Cuts

Grace Riascos

More than 3,000 Boston Public Schools students walked out of class on March 7 and marched to the Massachusetts State House to protest against the projected \$40 million budget cuts to the Boston Public Schools district.

Entirely organized and led by students, this militant action was a key statement in the struggle against the persistent attacks to public education in the city, and it was able to successfully shake the political establishment at its core. Three days after the walkout, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, agreed to restore \$6 million back to the system, proposing an updated version of the budget with increased funding. However, despite students' inspirational actions, this new budget still failed to fully cover the district's needs, making it clear that, in order to win the struggle, the city will have to see a much larger collective action from students, parents, teachers, and workers from the community.

These attacks on our schools come at the same time as both the city and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are giving massive financial incentives to corporations like General Electric, to which they are granting more than \$150 million in corporate handouts. Mayor Walsh has said that convincing GE to relocate in Boston is like "winning the Powerball," stating that it will bring "positive activity to the economy." Yet he forgets to mention that these financial giveaways include up to \$20 million in tax breaks, a situation that will continue to perpetuate income inequality in the city and institutional racism in its educational system.

## The Threat of Charter Schools

In addition to budget cuts, the district faces the threat of legislation and a ballot question in November to lift the cap on charter schools. This is happening while the state continues to cut education assistance toward the city, failing to fully reimburse Boston for the



Boston Public Schools (BPS) students protest budget cuts in front of the State Capitol.

state aid it loses to charter schools. Charter schools are not accountable to their communities. This is yet another attack from state officials seeking to privatize our youth's education and weaken teachers unions.

## Our Approach

After four public meetings and

hundreds of students, parents, and teachers testifying against the cuts, the unelected Boston Public Schools committee voted yes on the cuts, showing us once again that we cannot solely rely on these government agencies to create real change. Unlike the Seattle teachers who went on strike last year and made gains, and Chicago

teachers who are going on a one-day political strike on April 1 (see page 5), the Boston Teachers Union found itself unprepared to take significant action against the budget cuts. This is at least partly the result of a failure to make serious plans to mobilize the wider working-class community.

Members of Socialist Alternative participated in the student walkout and were present at the public meetings, where they talked to the community about building a mass movement that is able to effectively put pressure on the establishment.

Socialist Alternative calls for a tax on the billionaires to fund our schools, an end to high-stakes testing, no new charter schools, an elected and fully accountable School Committee, and for a political voice of the 99% that allows students, parents, and teachers to run candidates against any politicians that support budget cuts and other attacks on working people and youth. ☘

## Seattle Protesters Demand Police Accountability The Shooting of Che Taylor

Rachel Lovitz

Che Taylor, a 46-year-old father, was fatally shot by Seattle police officers on February 21 while appearing to comply with the officers' commands to put his hands up and get down on the ground.

The shooting occurred against the background of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) findings against the Seattle Police Department (SPD) that identified a pattern of excessive and unnecessary force used by officers, especially toward people of color. The DOJ's report revealed that SPD officers systematically escalate situations when arresting people for minor offenses. Fifty percent of the cases where police used excessive force involved people of color - in a city that is 70% white.

## Protests – No License to Kill

Four days following Taylor's death, nearly 100 protesters rallied outside SPD

headquarters and marched across downtown, chanting "Black Lives Matter," demanding justice, police accountability, and an investigation of the officers involved.

Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant joined the demonstration, calling on Police Chief Kathleen O'Toole to come to a public hearing in front of the City Council. Sawant sent public requests to the heads of both City Council committees empowered to hold such a hearing, Councilmembers Bruce Harrell and Lorena González, but both declined to take the initiative.

While a closed-door investigation takes place, the corporate media and political establishment liberally refer to Taylor's criminal past to implicitly justify the killing – in spite of the ambiguity of the video footage of the incident. Shortly after the shooting, Mayor Ed Murray announced that Taylor's death appeared to be justified, although an investigation was needed. Seattle NAACP President Gerald Hankerson has slammed the police and local media for repeatedly

referring to Taylor as an armed felon without concrete evidence that he had a gun. Further, allegations exist that the weapon that eventually turned up was planted by the police.

## How Can We Achieve #JusticeForChe?

Socialist Alternative calls for a full investigation of Che Taylor's death. If the City Council won't agree to hold a hearing, then the public should demand one. Black Lives Matter activists and members of the community should come together to demand a hearing and real police accountability, not just perfunctory reforms.

While the DOJ has sung the praises of the SPD reform project, activists and community groups have broadly criticized the reforms as superficial.

A democratically elected community oversight board has become one of the key demands of Black Lives Matter. Such boards would need full powers, including the power

to subpoena police officers, and would be an essential starting point to begin holding police accountable.

## Learning from Chicago

In December, thousands took to the streets in Chicago, blocking intersections and the interstate, calling for Democratic "Mayor 1%" Rahm Emanuel to step down for covering up a video of a police murder of a black teenager during his re-election campaign. These protests put massive pressure on Emanuel.

Winning greater police accountability will require building our movement and standing up to the political establishment – both the Democrats and the Republicans – for being complicit in a system that perpetuates abuse of police powers. As in Chicago, we must expose the Democratic Party in Seattle for what it is: a force that will dig in its nails at every turn to protect establishment interests – not the interests of working people. ☘

# Workers' Lives

## Just Let Us Do Our Jobs

A New York City Teacher

Teaching is the best job in the world. The clichés are true: Educating a young person is infinitely rewarding.

Well, wouldn't it be nice if the majority of the teaching profession involved ... well ... teaching? Don't misunderstand; the time in which one actually teaches or plans a lesson is wonderful, but so much of the time is dedicated to such nonsense as test preparation, paperwork, and exercises that have nothing to do with teaching nor supporting the growth of young people. And, lest one publicly object to this absurdity, the fear of losing your job is constant. Principals in most schools have wide-ranging power to threaten and harass teachers. The tenure system that exists to protect teachers' jobs and integrity is rapidly being stripped away by politicians who are looking for ways to pay teachers less.

Let's begin with standardized tests. Exorbitant amounts of time are dedicated to preparing for tests that heavily favor white middle-class students, tests which must be passed in order to graduate. A teacher might want to teach a current event and give a student some social awareness. Or expose them to poetry or music or art that they wouldn't know about otherwise. Or encourage them to discuss a controversial social or political issue. "How will that get them to pass state tests?" your principal will ask. The school will be ranked and receive funding based on those test scores. I have spent months – months – teaching essays that students will write once in their lives. All of my colleagues have done the same. It is a tremendously alienating experience. In some places, standardized testing itself



takes up almost a quarter of the school year, beginning as early as kindergarten. Even an adult isn't comfortable sitting still for around six hours. Imagine the discomfort of a kindergartner. Now imagine watching a child you care deeply about being forced to sit still that long – by you.

Tests also make up a significant amount of recently implemented teacher evaluation systems upon which their salary and employment rests. Politicians push the idea that bad teachers are ruining education. No data support this, but the narrative is profitable: break teachers and you can crush their salaries and pensions. Teachers live in a world of people who know nothing about education making decisions about what teachers must do on a daily basis. Then we are evaluated on such nonsense.

Evaluation systems vary from place

to place, but virtually all of them involve students' scores on standardized tests as about half. I have no control over whether a student studies. It'd be the equivalent of a doctor being fired when their patients refuse to take medicine. The other half comes down to classroom observations. And if the principal has it out for the teacher? Many of my colleagues have been targeted by their principals and got undeservedly low ratings. Further, the way in which final ratings are calculated is so convoluted that even math teachers at my school have said they don't understand it in the slightest.

In this world, teaching isn't teaching. It's an attempt to stay above water by pleasing a boss while doing things you know are hurtful to the very children you got into the profession to help. ☘

# Bernie: Time to Plan The Jailbreak

continued from p. 3

strong enough to challenge the corporate leaders and representatives. In other words, we would essentially need to build an independent party. If we need a "party within a party" to challenge and defeat the Democratic Party leadership and structures, why misdirect this energy into the Democratic Party in the first place?

At the end of the day, the Democrats can't be a party of the corporate elite and a party of the 99%. We believe the time has come to build a party of the 99% independent of both corporate parties. Kshama Sawant's election and re-election as a socialist councilmember in Seattle shows the way.

**"We need – win or lose for me – a political revolution."**

When the Democrats make clear that they won't adopt the program of Sanders' political revolution, what will he do? In the interview, Sanders correctly emphasized: "We need – win or lose for me – a political revolution which starts electing people who are accountable to the working families in this country."

We say: let's get organized. Let's build the movements and the independent structures to do so. Let's not spend more energy within the dead-end framework of the Democratic Party but build a party based on working-class people.

So far, Bernie Sanders' campaign has juggled the contradiction of running for a pro-working-class program in a Wall-Street-dominated party. Until now, the dominant feature within that contradiction has been an uprising of a new generation against the corporate politicians. A new generation is searching for a political alternative. If Sanders' campaign moves from fighting to win to focusing on pushing Clinton to the left, it would, unfortunately, turn into a cover for the Democratic Party machine. The dominant feature would change from encouraging revolt to co-opting and channeling millions of his energetic supporters into the corporate campaign of Clinton. It would also demoralize many of the best people.

Socialist Alternative has outlined how Bernie could run all through November without ignoring the fears about Trump and the huge pressure to rally behind Clinton (see "Sanders Needs to Run as an Independent" at [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org)).

As it becomes more and more clear that Bernie Sanders is very unlikely to have any chance at the Democratic Party convention, with all its undemocratic procedures, we need to discuss this plan B. Bernie Sanders and his supporters need to develop a strategy to unleash the movement from the constraints of this Wall Street party. The Democratic Party was built to be a prison controlled by corporate powers to serve their interests. An independent party of, by, and for the 99% is needed. We need to organize the jailbreak. ☘

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# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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## Rebuild a Mass Student Movement! A Young People's Political Revolution

Meghan Brophy & Ty Moore

We are witnessing the rebirth of a mass student movement in America. One-in-ten first-year college students expect to attend a protest this year, the highest in U.S. history according to UCLA study. Among black students, the number was one in six.

"The protests on college campuses as well as communities in Ferguson, Baltimore and elsewhere really resonated," said Kevin Eagan, director of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at UCLA, "about the largest study of college students in the U.S., now in its 50th year. The survey also showed young people moving rapidly to the left on virtually every issue facing the nation.

And this was before Bernie Sanders' call for a political revolution further radicalized the rising generation. In the primary battle with Clinton, young people are supporting Sanders by unprecedented margins, tapping into broad-based anger at the rule of the 1%.

The situation is ripe for a powerful, ongoing mass student movement, but that will mean students getting organized. Socialist Alternative has already begun playing a big role in this process, both through mobilizing young people around the #March4Bernie

events, through the #MillionStudentMarch last November, and by developing a growing core of student leaders active in Socialist Alternative branches.

### #MillionStudentMarch

Socialist Alternative student leaders initiated the first #MillionStudentMarch last November. Demonstrations took place on 115 campuses across the country, with 15,000 students marching. On April 13, the Million Student March and Socialist Alternative is doing it again, this time linking up in solidarity with the wider movement building behind Bernie Sanders' political revolution against the billionaire establishment and the right-wing threat of Donald Trump. We are also working with the Black Liberation Collective, a national organization of students fighting against racism, to build this day of action.

That's why Socialist Alternative is calling on students to unite on April 13 to link up the fight against Trump's racism, sexism, and bigotry with a positive struggle around the following demands:

### Tuition-Free Public College

Access to higher education for students in

the United States is under attack. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board at public colleges and universities rose 40 percent from 2002 to 2012. Meanwhile, budget cuts have reduced the federal Pell Grant Program by nearly \$5 billion per year. More than nine million students rely on Pell Grants to complete college, including more than half of Latino and Black undergraduates.

### Cancellation of All Student Debt

By fighting to cancel all student debt, we want to challenge the rampant inequality and institutionalized racism in higher education. The average graduate in the Class of 2015 has over \$35,000 in debt. More than 40 million Americans share a total of \$1.2 trillion in student debt, and most of that debt burden - 58 percent - is carried by the poorest 25 percent of Americans.

### A \$15 an Hour Minimum Wage for Campus Workers

While top administrators take home six and seven figure salaries, many campus

workers are paid poverty wages and are forced to rely on public assistance. Cafeteria workers, janitors, and even many adjunct professors typically face low wages and long hours. Nearly half of minimum wage workers are people of color. In answer, the fight for \$15 is spreading onto college campuses across the country. Students and workers are fighting alongside each other because we both face the same enemies and because students understand that a college degree provides no assurances of a living wage!

### A Political Alternative

It's critical for students to join the fight for \$15, the Black Lives Matter movement, and other struggles taking place both on and off of our campuses. We need to unite our movements to fight against this whole exploitative, racist, and sexist system of capitalism. If the political system limits our choices in November to Trump and Clinton, we need to show that another, movement-based, political alternative exists. Socialists have an absolutely vital role to play in pulling together these struggles, uniting students with the wider movements of workers and oppressed, and providing a strategy to win. Join us. 🌟