

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Issue #27 - October 2016

Occupy Wall Street
Five Year Anniversary
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This System



Has Failed the 99%



Build a Left Alternative to Fight the Right

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower student-teacher 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 towards fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ For rent control combined with massive public investment in affordable housing.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Break the power of Wall Street! For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ 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. Massive public investment in renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low fare, high-speed, and accessible transit.
- ✦ Democratic public ownership of the big energy companies, retooling them for socially necessary green production. A "Just Transition" for all workers in polluting industries with guaranteed re-training and new living-wage jobs.

Equal Rights for All

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

- ✦ Defend immigrant rights! Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ 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. At least 12 weeks of paid family leave for all. For universal, high quality, affordable and publicly run child care.
- ✦ Fight discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community, and all forms of homophobia and transphobia.

Money for Jobs and Education, Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, 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 environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and other 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 failed system. No to 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

Desta Waldu Security Guard Northeastern University Boston, MA

Coming to the U.S. thirteen years ago as an immigrant student from Ethiopia, I was excited to start a better life. But after I got here, I realized there are all kinds of social problems here, too. People work too hard for too little and can't get by, living unhealthy and unhappy lives. This also makes it hard for people to get involved in politics and social activism. I realized that, if people work full-time and have a hard time getting by, there is a problem. People's wages do not keep up with inflation, so people's incomes are becoming more and more inadequate.

I work at Northeastern University as a dorm security guard. After my first five years with no benefits and no raises, we realized we had to do something. I helped to organize the other security guards into our union, SEIU Local 615 32BJ. When we got the union it was really exciting, and we were all happy to finally talk about our problems with somebody other than our fellow workers. We all thought we were going to get raises in wages and benefits right away after we signed the union card, but it took us four years because of the snail-slow pace of the negotiations.

Thanks to the union, we are now all making over \$15 an hour. But SEIU could do a lot more if they weren't tied so closely to the Democratic Party, a party that I have learned is bought out by corporate cash through and

through. SEIU endorsed Hillary Clinton instead of Bernie Sanders in the primary without consulting the workers. But workers and unions shouldn't settle for the lesser of two evils. Socialist Alternative is fighting for a new party, a party of working people and their unions, of all races and religions and nationalities – a party of the 99% to challenge the corporate two-party system and capitalism itself.

I'm a socialist because I care about the future, not only for my own sake but for the sake of generations to come. People all over the world should be able to live in peace, not war. Our first priorities should be to fight against hunger and disease and for the well-being of our children and the environment. I believe the United States has the potential to do great things, but we have to use our resources the right way – and this is not possible when we have an economic system where profit is the primary motive. I believe that the ordinary working people of the world can run society democratically to make it work for all of us, and that's socialism. ✦



Seattle Wins Secure Scheduling!

Ben Peterson

On September 19, 2016, the Seattle labor movement wrested a landmark victory from big business, becoming just the second city after San Francisco to pass a "secure scheduling" ordinance. The bill applies to businesses that operate in Seattle and have more than 500 employees worldwide. It is a major step forward for ordinary working people. Labor should continue the fight to extend secure scheduling rights to all workers.

To enforce secure scheduling, the bill mandates 14 days' advance notice for regular shifts; a "good faith" estimate of available hours, including on-call expectations, at the time of hiring; additional "predictability pay" for shifts that are altered within the 14-day window; recognition of a worker's right to at least 10 hours of rest between shifts; and the posted offering

of additional hours and shifts to current employees for three full days before new workers are hired. Additionally, bosses aren't allowed to force employees to find replacement coverage when using protected leave.

It was the continued activity of the labor movement in Seattle that put the pressure on establishment politicians. Electing Socialist Alternative Councilmember Kshama Sawant has raised the sights of working people and created an atmosphere that has Seattle big business on their back foot. Specifically, Working Washington, UFCW, and other local unions and labor affiliates should be commended for this victory.

Seattle is proving that there is another way – that, when we have the will to fight, we can win. And workers are taking notice: Every victory that we win builds the confidence of workers in other cities to fight for their rights, too. ✦

"I've been a grocery worker for 16 years. My husband and I are both grocery workers and have always been given our schedules just two days prior to our workweek. ... With this law passing, I will be able to know what days I will be working to plan for child care, doctor's appointments, and finally will be able to attend school functions for my kids."
-Jeanette Randle, Seattle

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No to Racism and Corporate Politics

The Failure of Lesser Evilism

Patrick Ayers and
Ty Moore

As the presidential race enters the final lap, panic is setting in as Hillary Clinton fails to pull ahead of Donald Trump in the polls. In a widely circulated video, Clinton herself asks “why am I not 50 points ahead?” Even the mainstream media talking heads – including those who previously dismissed Bernie Sanders who consistently polled stronger against Trump – are recognizing the huge challenge of motivating working people to vote for an establishment, Wall Street candidate.

The truth is, a majority of those planning to vote for Clinton will be holding their noses as they cast their ballots on November 8, motivated by fear of Donald Trump rather than positive support for Hillary. A Pew Research Foundation poll found that 55% of voters say they are disgusted with the campaign, while only 15% are optimistic (*CNN*, 9/21/16). Even with the historic prospect of electing the first women president, less than half of all women approve of Clinton (*Washington Post*, 8/31/16).

Socialist Alternative completely understands and sympathizes with those who will vote Clinton to stop Trump. At the same time, we have warned that the main fuel powering Trump’s campaign is popular rage at the corporate corruption of the political establishment. Clinton’s corporate campaign is incapable of tapping into this mass desire for change. The failure of the left to offer an independent, anti-establishment challenge to Trump leaves the right-wing an open field to exploit the popular anger.

That’s why we strongly disagree with the self-defeating “lesser-evil strategy” put forward by union and progressive leaders. Even if Trump loses this election, the Democrats are paving the way for future, stronger Trumps. By spending millions to whip up support for corporate Democrats, by bending social movement priorities around the singular goal of electing the Democratic Party, and by clinging to the false hope of one day “reclaiming” the Democratic Party from



Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton at the first presidential debate.

big business domination, the left is essentially undermining its ability to defend people of color, women, immigrants, and working people generally from right-wing attacks.

Covering up for Clinton

In private, most union and progressive leaders will acknowledge the corporate character of the Democratic Party, and some will even agree that a new left party is needed. Yet the whole logic of backing Hillary – of turning out the vote among the angry, betrayed, and disillusioned base of the Democratic Party – compels these leaders to argue against political independence and instead actively cover up for Clinton’s criminally corporate record.

For example, Clinton’s website profiles SEIU president Mary Kay Henry saying “Hillary Clinton has proven she will fight, deliver, and win for working families. SEIU members...are part of a growing movement to build a better future for their families, and Hillary Clinton will support and stand with them.”

Bernie Sanders himself, who won mass support for exposing Clinton’s deep corporate corruption, is a living demonstration of the corrosive logic of lesser evilism. Since Bernie started heaping praises on Clinton in order to turn out the vote against Trump, his credibility has waned and attendance at his rallies has dramatically dropped off. Bernie’s once-enthusiastic base now feels confused and demoralized. The policy of covering up for the corporate character of the Democratic Party remains a central strategic failure of the unions and progressive leadership in America.

The Tea Party Experience

This strategy also paved the way for the Tea Party and their sweeping electoral victories in the 2010 elections for Congress and state legislatures. When Obama took power amid the 2008 financial crisis, his first act was to bail out the Wall Street banks. These banks showered him with campaign contributions as millions lost their homes. However the union and progressive

leaders were fearful of embarrassing the Democrats. They failed to mobilize the enormous anger at Wall Street into a left opposition movement, leaving Tea Party Republicans an open field.

Wherever the left fails to organize a bold, fighting, working-class challenge to corporate politics-as-usual, popular rage at the failures of capitalism will be channeled behind right-wing “anti-establishment” figures like Trump. The more the left ties itself to the Democratic Party, the more left leaders undermine their own credibility by covering up for big business politicians, the more political space they create for Trump’s brand of populist bigotry to flourish.

As Bernie Sanders demonstrated during the primaries, the most effective way to cut across support for Trump is to combine a full-throated denunciation of bigotry with a fighting, anti-establishment message to unite workers in common struggle against Wall Street and big business.

“Not the Year for a Protest Vote?”

Lecturing backers of Jill Stein’s Green Party presidential campaign, Bernie Sanders and others argue that “this is not the year for a protest vote.” This is the same mantra we hear every four years. It’s a cycle that never ends. When exactly is the right year? 2020? 2024? 2040? In truth, since entering Congress, Bernie has always backed Democrats for president and argued against supporting independent left challengers.

Socialist Alternative gathered over 125,000 signatures urging Bernie to run all the way through November and use his massive base of support to build a new party for the 99%. But now that Sanders endorsed Clinton, we are urging a vote for Stein in all fifty states to register the strongest possible protest vote against racism and corporate politics, and to help popularize the need for independent politics.

To those left leaders who say they agree that the Democratic Party is hopelessly corrupted by corporate cash, but propose a “strategic”

vote for Clinton “just this year,” we should ask: Why not at least urge a vote for Jill Stein in the majority of the country that are considered “safe states” like New York, where Clinton is up by 18%? Given the Electoral College system, the election will really be decided in a small number of swing states like Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania. If their concern is purely blocking Trump from entering the White House, then such an approach would allow them to achieve that, while helping to lay the groundwork for a broad-based left political alternative.

If the unions and the wider left organized a strong working class challenge to Clinton and Trump, they would be a far more effective at peeling away Trump’s soft supporters, those who are not hardened bigots, but rather working class people looking to “kick out the bums” overseeing our corrupt political establishment. The left’s failure to back a strong left alternative, even in “safe states” reveals that behind talk of “strategic” support for Clinton “this year,” there is no real strategy to break out of their dependence on the Democratic Party.

We fully understand why people will vote for Clinton in swing states to block Trump. But Socialist Alternative is campaigning for Jill Stein throughout the country as the best way, in this period of heightened political debate, to strengthen support for what’s really needed: political independence for our movements and a new party of the 99%.

Movements & the Democratic Party

Some voices on the left, like the Democratic Socialists of America, correctly point out that under Democrats our social movements have more room to grow into offensive struggles, whereas under Republicans we are forced onto the defensive. However, this idea is often linked to the illusion that by backing corporate Democrats we get “a seat at the table” and from there can pull politics leftward “from the inside.”

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Tulsa and Charlotte Reignite Black Lives Matter

Eljeer Hawkins and Andy Moxley

The recent killings of black men by the police in Oklahoma and North Carolina cannot be classified as anything but cold-blooded murder.

In Tulsa, Terence Crutcher was facing an everyday problem, a broken down car.

Keith Lamont Scott, a 43 year old disabled man, was reading a book in his car when he was shot and killed by Charlotte police serving a warrant to a different person in his apartment complex.

In Charlotte, righteous rage has led many frustrated black youth into direct battle with the police with police using tear gas and rubber bullets against the protesters. The governor responded by calling in the National Guard.

Even weeks away from the presidential election, Black Lives Matter is demonstrating its resiliency as a movement and the enormous impact it is having on American society.

Ferguson and Baltimore

Since the rebellion in Ferguson in 2014, over 40 bills have been introduced around the country to curb law enforcement terror and enhance police accountability to the

community. Yet, the racist police murders, mass incarceration, militarization of the police and rampant economic injustices continue.

Already, at least 193 black people have been killed by police in 2016 (*The Guardian*). On top of police violence, the black community faces disproportionate unemployment, poverty, a lack of access to social services and mass incarceration.

The crisis of capitalism in the U.S. has created a heightened class and racial polarization. The revolt in Charlotte is also due to the sharpening social divide in one of the fastest growing cities in the country with a gleaming downtown and a growing number of high paying jobs while black youth are left behind.

Organizing a Movement to Win Justice

Increasing numbers of youth of all races are supporting Black Lives Matter but the continued police violence places an urgency to centralize and coordinate our movement's actions, ideas, and message. A united working-class centered movement using the method of mass protests, non-violent civil disobedience, targeted boycotts, walk-outs and strikes, based on a program that puts

people's needs first, will be most effective in fighting back against racial and class oppression.

Union leaders should support Black Lives Matter in more than just words by mobilizing their members to attend protests. Labor should connect the fight against police violence to the struggle for good jobs, health care, education, and public services. In places like North Carolina, where the NAACP still has a mass base, it should help turn protests into mass demonstrations by mobilizing working class neighborhoods, churches, and the campuses, which they have shown is possible in the Moral Mondays campaign over the past few years.

2016 Elections

Both major presidential candidates, Clinton and Trump, have condemned the killings. Clinton has said she has no real solution while Trump has called for the national expansion of the disastrous, racist "stop-and-frisk" policy of the New York Police Department. We need a party of the 99% that will



Protests following Keith Lamont Scott's death in Charlotte, NC.

stand on a program that will put the millions of workers, youth and people of color first, instead of the millionaires. In order to eradicate the system of racial and class oppression, capitalism, we need a system change; only a socialist solution can begin to address the legacy of slavery, Jim and Jane Crow and capitalist violence in this country.

We Demand:

- ✪ Jail the Killer Cops!
- ✪ For democratically elected community oversight boards with full powers over the police, including department policies and procedures.
- ✪ Tax the rich! For a \$15 an hour minimum wage, massive jobs program and investment in public education, affordable housing and
- ✪ Build a nationally organized mass movement to coordinate actions and campaigns across the country ✪

Standing Rock: Movement Grows

Rob Darakjian

Since July of this year, an increasing number of Native tribes have come together to camp alongside the Missouri River, near Cannonball North Dakota, to stop the continued construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline project (DAPL).

The Standing Rock Sioux originally filed a lawsuit against the Army Corp of Engineers, asking for a preliminary injunction to stop construction of the pipeline. As stated on the Standing Rock Sioux's website: "First, the pipeline would pass under the Missouri River (at Lake Oahe) just a half a mile upstream of the Tribe's reservation boundary, where a spill would be culturally and economically catastrophic. Second, the pipeline would pass through areas of great cultural significance, such as sacred sites and burials that federal law seeks to protect" (standingrock.org).

The Dakota Access Pipeline, a 1,175 mile long oil pipeline would run through four states and potentially pollute the water supply of approximately 17 million people. In recent weeks, conflicts have escalated, and on September 8, North Dakota Governor

Jack Dalrymple activated the state's national guard in response to continued action against the construction.

Growing Solidarity

A contingent of four Socialist Alternative members from the Bay Area recently drove to the construction site. We delivered over \$1,600 worth of food and supplies we had raised at a neighborhood fundraiser in Oakland, to answer the needs of those organizers running the kitchen, and supply tents at the Sacred Stone campsite – one of several sites where approximately 3,000 people have gathered.

Speaking with the all volunteer staff at the kitchen and supply tents, we learned that contingents of caravans, like ourselves, continued to arrive almost daily from all parts of the country. The Standing Rock Sioux's call for material aid is being answered. Solidarity with the indigenous people in this fight is an indication of the increased support for direct opposition and struggle against big oil, and finance capital, which threaten to not just destroy the Standing Rock Sioux's

sacred sites, and land, but represent the larger forces of capitalism, driving us towards climate catastrophe.

We were warmly welcomed by both native and non-native people alike. Over the course of our brief stay, we spoke with several tribal elders; many of them made the broader connections between the fight against DAPL, and the banks, and system which set it in motion. As the indigenous peoples of the United States have suffered from U.S. and European colonialism for several hundred years, they stand out as one of the most constantly oppressed groups under capitalism.

A Fight that Must Be Won

The fierce determination of native people, environmentalists, and other movements who have combined at Standing Rock is already making an impact; Obama has been forced to instruct the Army Corps of Engineers to halt construction near the river, until they can re-evaluate the legality of the permits it previously issued for construction.

While this is a real victory, the ruling class' intention is not to halt the pipeline, but to halt

the convergence of people and to halt this protest against corporate America's destruction of lives and the planet in its greed for profit.

To defeat the pipeline once and for all will require a wide mobilization. As the pipeline protests have picked up momentum, progressive unions such as the Communication Workers of America, the National Nurses United, the United Electrical workers, and the Amalgamated Transit Union have come out in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux. Disgracefully, however, the AFL-CIO labor federation has come out in support of the pipeline, buckling to pressure from the construction unions.

Speaking with Socialist Alternative member Dakota Boyd during a native ceremony, one elder, a medicine man from Manitoba, summed up the feelings of so many. "In Iceland they are jailing the bankers. We need to think about that. There is a revolution happening all around the world." One day we will look back and mark the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline as a key event in the revolution against the continued use of fossil fuels. ✪

Seattle

Police Bunker Blocked! Build 1,000 Homes Instead



Kshama Sawant
Seattle City Councilmember

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Seattle's movement to block the \$160 million North Seattle Police Precinct scored a major victory as Seattle Mayor Ed Murray announced that plans would be put on hold. The announcement followed a wave of public outcry and protest against the prioritizing of an expensive new police building in the context of an ongoing epidemic of police harassment and violence in Seattle and nationally.

The Seattle Police Department (SPD) has itself become notorious for the overuse of force, including shootings and killings – much of it targeting people of color. The Department of Justice's 2011 consent decree legally mandated that the SPD bring about a fundamental shift in culture and practice, finding: "a pattern or practice of constitutional violations regarding the use of force that result from structural problems, as well as serious concerns about biased policing."

This department, which has continued to fall far short in its primary responsibilities, absorbs a third of the city budget's general fund while being the most opaque and unaccountable part of the budget.

Yet Seattle's Democratic political establishment decided their highest budget priority this year was a new police building for the eye-popping price tag of \$160 million. Had it proceeded, it would have become the most expensive police precinct in the nation. This month, along with community leaders, I visited the current North Precinct, which was slated for replacement. What I found is a building that, while not pristine, remains fully functional.

In pushing their plan, establishment politicians failed to anticipate the popular outrage that was to come. Hundreds of activists and social justice advocates, spearheaded by the Block the Bunker coalition, have attended City Hall meetings and confronted the mayor at public events, opposing what seemed to them a stunning misuse of public funds.

It was under this growing firestorm that the proposal was withdrawn. For the political establishment of a major city to have

backed down on a project of this scale is a testament to the strength of the movement. But we cannot be complacent, since the withdrawal is, so far, only a one-year postponement.

The best way to truly stop the new police precinct is to shift the money away from the already-bloated SPD budget to where it is most sorely needed. For many of the tens of thousands of Seattle's working families facing rapidly rising rents, it is clear where \$160 million would be well spent: on affordable housing. In the last year, Seattle rents have gone up more than three times the national rate, and this city is fast being stripped of its economic and racial diversity.

My office has determined that, with the \$160 million intended for the police precinct, we can build 1,000 rental units of affordable housing.

The mayor and members of the City Council have all made fine speeches expressing their commitment to racial and social justice. Last February, in his State of the City address, the mayor intoned, "We cannot allow [Seattle] to become a place affordable only to the affluent and the privileged."

I agree with these sentiments. But without real action, those words are empty rhetoric.

Elected officials have a political and moral obligation to do everything in their power to make the city affordable to the workers who make this city run. In the upcoming budget discussion at City Hall, I will move an amendment to the 2017 budget to use these funds to build affordable homes.

But my voice will only have an impact if we organize a strong enough movement to keep the bunker blocked and build affordable housing instead. ✪



socialist students
A STUDENT MOVEMENT FOR THE 99%
www.SocialistStudents.net
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Socialist Students Takes Off

Keely Mullen

Young people today are growing up in a system facing fundamental crisis. Our living conditions are deteriorating, and our planet is getting sicker and sicker. Our generation is both the most educated in history and also the most shackled with college loan debt, with little to no prospects of ever escaping it via the largely low-wage jobs open to us. As a result, young people across the country and the world have started looking for alternatives to the rotten exploitation of capitalism.

Seeing the growing interest in socialist ideas, student members of Socialist Alternative have launched an initiative called Socialist Students. We believe that the youth movement is only just beginning to heat up and that, in the coming years, students and young people will continue to be at the forefront of struggles against racism, mounting debt, low wages, and corporate destruction of the planet. But to fight back effectively, we need to be organized. We launched Socialist Students in order to reach the masses of young people who are newly entering struggle and looking for genuinely revolutionary ideas on how to fight back.

Great Response

The launch of Socialist Students began earlier this month with setting up literature tables at dozens of colleges and universities across the country. Through these tables, we were able to reach hundreds of students looking for a way to fight back against the endless horrors of capitalism. Many young people indicated that the reason they gravitated toward us was simply seeing the word "socialism." They were familiar with socialism, as they'd heard about it through Bernie Sanders and were curious what it meant. This confirms the unprecedented openness that exists to socialist ideas among young people right now, and throughout the two weeks of tabling, we sold over 800 copies of *Socialist Alternative* newspaper!

Unsurprisingly, many students also came over to the table seeking clarity on the presidential elections. In the primaries, young

people voted overwhelmingly for Bernie Sanders, and many of us are experiencing whiplash, having seen what was once an incredibly hopeful election turn into a nightmare battle between two wildly unpopular candidates. In conversations with students, we put forward our call for a vote for Jill Stein as a means of continuing the political revolution, and many students were excited by this idea.

Next Steps

Across the country, we are hosting public meetings on "The Case for Socialism" with a special guest speaker from Socialist Students in England and Wales. These meetings have led to important discussions among students about the increasingly grim state of capitalism and the global fight-back against this inequality. Examples that have been discussed include the rise of Bernie Sanders in the U.S., Jeremy Corbyn in the U.K., the youth movements in Brazil and South Africa, and many other developing battles worldwide. These meetings are getting a tremendous reception and are laying the ground for Socialist Students as an emerging national force on campuses like the University of Cincinnati, the University of Massachusetts-Boston, the University of Houston, and many others!

In the next few weeks, we will be hosting debates at schools across the country titled, "Who should progressives support in the general election – Hillary Clinton or Jill Stein?" In these debates, which will be between Socialist Students and student supporters of Hillary Clinton, we will make the case for the strongest possible left vote in 2016 and for building a new party of the 99%.

Socialist Students is positioned to be a real force at a number of schools across the country, and it provides an incredibly exciting opportunity for young people looking to get active in struggle. The youth movement is only just beginning and, with a truly revolutionary tendency within that movement, this generation can play a leading role in struggle in the next historical period. ✪

Five-Year Anniversary

Occupy Opens an



Emily McArthur

Eight years ago, Wall Street bet against American families and caused the Great Recession, an economic collapse on a scale that hadn't been seen in 80 years. Voters then elected Barack Obama, a self-proclaimed activist, promising to decrease the power of corporate lobbyists in Washington.

But Obama did not check the influence of Wall Street; he doubled down by bailing them out. Democrats, labor leaders, and so-called progressives provided left cover for Obama by failing to mount a fight-back against the bailouts. While the Democrats declared cutbacks were a necessary act of belt-tightening, unemployment rates surged and inequality widened. Even after the banks and their profits had been saved, average Americans were suffering – the foreclosure crisis hit its peak in 2009.

Fight-Back Begins

With no serious resistance from the labor movement to Obama's blank check bailout, the right-wing Tea Party movement gained traction, feeding on the mass anger of working

people. While framed as a grassroots movement, it was conspicuously backed by the Koch brothers, Fox News, and other big business interests.

The global economic crisis wasn't just opening up fault lines in American politics: in Tunisia and Egypt, explosive mass struggles emerged to topple well-entrenched dictators. The whole world watched as average citizens uploaded video footage to YouTube showing thousands of Egyptians facing down water cannons and teargas canisters in their demand for democratic rights.

When a wave of Tea-Party-backed candidates took office in 2010, working people felt the full impact of their billionaire-approved, conservative, anti-immigrant, anti-worker policies, and many took note of the monumental struggles in the Arab world and Southern Europe. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker sought to break public sector unions and slash public education, and tens of thousands of workers and young people fought back. Wisconsinites showed off "fight like an Egyptian" placards during an occupation of the State House, confirming that the working-class struggle is international.

Zuccotti Park Begins

As anger at the banks and the super-rich reached a boiling point, *Adbusters*, a left publication, made a clarion call: Make the bankers pay! Occupy Wall Street!

On September 17, 2011, about 1,000 protesters converged on Wall Street. Over the next few days, they would turn nearby Zuccotti Park

into a national flashpoint to push back against the power of the super-rich. The anger against the bailouts, about the looming cuts to the federal budget, and about billionaires' blatant influence over politicians – all were made succinct in the rallying cry "We are the 99%."

Billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the NYPD assumed that this would be a protest like any other: put on your riot gear and push these lefties out of the streets. But with even mainstream media increasingly reporting that the lion's share of financial gains since the 2008 recession had gone to the top 1%, the message of Occupy Wall Street gained resonance across the country.

Cell phone footage of police brutality against peaceful protesters quickly went viral and served to widen support for the movement. Occupy activists marched on Wall Street alongside airline pilots who were fighting for a better contract and postal workers who were facing major cutbacks, showing the potential for Occupy and the labor movement to link up. It didn't take long for copycat encampments to spring up in cities all over the country.

Occupy Spreads

From coast to coast, Occupiers tried out different ideas: In Boston, massive student marches overtook the city; in Minneapolis, activists confronted the foreclosure crisis with physical blockades of evictions; and in Oakland, a call for a general strike resulted in mass sick-outs by teachers and, with the support of longshore workers, a successful shutdown of the port. But as Occupy spread, the ruling elite carefully planned their next move. In mid-November, there was a coordinated crackdown on all the encampments after mayors of major cities held private conference calls with Obama and Homeland Security.

The enormous support for Occupy reflected a major shift to the left in society. It represented a major turning point in struggle by showing that our power comes from uniting against the 1%. In turn, Occupy's development helped further the radicalization, especially among young people. The energy and audacity of the people who participated in Occupy showed a desire to break with decades of cutbacks and attacks by big business. It represented a major turning point in struggle by showing that our power comes from uniting against the 1%. But because of the loss of traditions of struggle, and especially the weakness of the labor movement in the U.S., there were also major weaknesses in the movement.

Consciousness was starting from a historic low following the decades of neoliberal onslaught. Crucially, the movement lacked a clear set of demands, which meant that the intense energy and anger couldn't be directed at winning concrete victories. Articulating such



a program would have helped significantly widen the active base of the movement. Only a small percentage of those who supported the movement were actively involved. The encampments, which were the main feature of the action, grew isolated from many working people with families and long workweeks. Most importantly, Occupy lacked a plan to challenge the political establishment, which gave space for Democrats to feign sympathy to the movement.

200 Occupy Candidates

The urgent need was to take the mass support that existed for challenging inequality and the domination of the 1% and give it political expression. As the 2012 election season began to heat up, Socialist Alternative called for 200 Occupy candidates to run independently of the corporate-controlled parties and represent the young people, union members, activists, and homeowners flocking to the Occupy banner.

While Occupy, unfortunately, did not take up this call, the movement continued to spur bold action against the 1%. Immediately after the big-business charade of the 2012 elections were over, New York was again the epicenter of developments, as over 100 workers walked off their low-wage fast-food jobs demanding a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

Occupy's focus on inequality clearly helped lay the basis for the struggle to raise the minimum wage. And, like Occupy, the idea was taken up across the country as strikes and marches escalated the demand. This movement also sought to shine a light on how billion-dollar companies were profiting from giving their workers such low wages that they



Bernie Sanders brought the Occupy energy into the political arena.

an Era of Struggle



Zuccotti Park, New York City.

were forced to seek out food stamps and housing subsidies – essentially another taxpayer bailout of big business!

A New Wave of Social Struggle

As the fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage gained steam, a struggle broke out in a suburb of St. Louis. Ferguson, a predominantly black and low-income community, with underfunded schools and high rates of unemployment, trigger-happy cops and a history of racial profiling, became a rallying cry as black working-class communities across the country declared: “Black Lives Matter!”

Just as the names Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, and Citibank had been an indictment of how Washington’s policies prioritized the 1% over the 99%, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, and Renisha McBride became an indictment of a system that systematically murdered black and brown bodies. Two years on, polls show that a majority of young people of all races now support the Black Lives Matter movement.

Occupy helped set the stage for BLM, which has had a number of phases but, if anything, continues to gain strength two years on and in the end may well have a more profound effect on American society than Occupy itself. The Movement for Black Lives coalition of fifty groups recently produced a comprehensive program which, despite weaknesses, represents a political step forward from Occupy.

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Socialist Alternative and Occupy

Bryan Watson

When Occupy burst on the scene five years ago, it began a wave of social struggle – including the fight for \$15 and resistance to climate destruction, systemic racism, and sexism. Socialist Alternative has been there every step of the way, linking the day-to-day struggles to the need for fundamental system change. We have helped to lead major breakthroughs – particularly, the election of Kshama Sawant as Seattle’s first socialist city councilmember in 100 years. As a result, we have grown dramatically, both in membership and profile. The following only touches on some of the highlights of this work.

In September, 2011, Socialist Alternative immediately recognized the importance of Occupy. Wherever our members lived or worked, they got involved in local Occupy activism.

In Seattle, Socialist Alternative argued that Occupy should join the struggle against budget cuts to education and social services. When the political elite unleashed the police to break up the camp in Seattle, Socialist Alternative organized “the night of 500 tents,” moving the entire camp to the front lawn of Seattle Central Community College.

In Minneapolis, the struggle took on a different character. Occupy Homes focused on the scourge of foreclosures that were sweeping working-class communities, organizing neighborhood “eviction-free zones” and blockades. With the encouragement and involvement of Socialist Alternative, Occupy Homes demonstrated the potential of the Occupy movement to unite broader sections of society around issues that directly affected the lives of working-class people.

Everywhere, Socialist Alternative argued for the need to give independent political expression to the fight of the 99%. Most Occupy activists wanted to avoid electoral politics altogether, but in the run-up to Obama’s re-election in 2012, abstaining effectively meant ceding the ground to the corporate-dominated Democratic Party.

In 2012, Socialist Alternative argued for 200 Occupy candidates independent of the two parties of big business and not taking a dime from corporations. Few existing forces of the left answered the call, but Kshama Sawant of Socialist Alternative ran in Seattle for the Washington State House against

House Speaker Frank Chopp, chief architect of devastating budget cuts. Kshama won a remarkable 29% of the vote. The outcome showed the potential for independent working-class politics and exposed the deep reserves of dissatisfaction with the status quo.

The next year, three Socialist Alternative members ran for city council positions in Seattle, Minneapolis, and Boston. In Minneapolis, Ty Moore came within 230 votes of winning. But in Seattle, Kshama Sawant became the first socialist elected to Seattle City Council in 100 years. It was a stunning victory against a 16-year corporate Democratic Party incumbent on the basis of calling for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, rent control, and taxing the rich to fund transit and social programs.

Using the newly won city council seat as a platform, Socialist Alternative and Sawant immediately set up 15 Now, a grassroots campaign to coordinate the fight for \$15. Building on the spirit of Occupy, 15 Now created community action groups that empowered and involved people in workplaces, unions, and neighborhoods. In coalition with unions and community groups, Sawant, 15 Now, and Socialist Alternative helped Seattle become the first major city to win a \$15 minimum wage. The victory in Seattle gave confidence to working people nationwide and helped spark a movement that spread like a prairie fire across the country.

Even when movements ebbed, Socialist Alternative pushed forward. The battle for \$15 established emboldened public housing residents to fight back against rent hikes. A 2014 Seattle election campaign helped put rent control back on the agenda, a fight that continues today.

This activity laid the basis for Kshama Sawant’s re-election bid in 2015. Unlike Democratic Party campaigns, which rely on corporate money, Sawant ran a grassroots 99% campaign of relentless door-knocking and visibility. Focusing on housing, Sawant’s platform included a call for rent control, the



Kshama Sawant first ran in 2012 when Socialist Alternative called for “200 Occupy candidates.”

construction of affordable housing for working families through taxing developers and selling municipal bonds, a tenants bill of rights, and municipal broadband. The successful re-election campaign mobilized an army of 600 volunteers and smashed fundraising records by raising nearly \$500,000 without taking a dime from business or the super-rich.

Bernie Sanders’ campaign continued to push the door open for working people and youth. On a national scale, it showed the massive potential for a politics based on the interests of the 99%. Socialist Alternative formed #Movement4Bernie, staging protests and marches across the country to expose Hillary Clinton as a Wall Street candidate and call for a new party of the 99%. Movement4Bernie and Kshama Sawant initiated a petition calling on Bernie to continue running past the primaries as an independent: It gathered over 100,000 signatures. We now argue that Sanders supporters should continue the political revolution by supporting the strongest independent left candidate, Jill Stein.

Socialist Alternative helps to build all fights against injustice and for real gains for working people and the oppressed while pointing, at the same time, to the necessity of ending capitalism, the source of exploitation and oppression. Join Socialist Alternative in fighting for a world that puts human needs and those of the environment before corporate greed. Join Socialist Alternative in fighting for a socialist future! ☘

Gary Johnson Is Not the Third-Party Candidate You're Looking For

George Martin Fell Brown

With Hillary Clinton failing to provide a genuine voice for the 99% against Donald Trump's bigoted fake-populism, a left-wing third-party candidate like Jill Stein can act as an important pole of attraction for a section of workers and youth sick and tired of the status quo. But Stein isn't the only third-party challenger to Trump and Clinton. Gary Johnson, the former Republican governor of New Mexico, is running for president under the Libertarian Party. Johnson has been consistently outpolling Stein, and some polls even show Johnson beating Stein among former Bernie Sanders supporters.

Given his polling results, Johnson may appear to be the best bet for building a viable challenge to the two-party system. And Johnson has a number of progressive positions on certain isolated issues, such as support for the legalization of marijuana and opposition to government surveillance. But, as socialists, we have to be clear that Gary Johnson, and libertarian politics in general, are a dead end for anyone trying to build a voice for the 99%.

While Johnson may occasionally attack "crony capitalism," he is not

opposed to capitalism in general. In fact, his libertarian ideology outdoes both Clinton and Trump in his support for pure, unadulterated capitalism. He wants to abolish the minimum wage, privatize Social Security, and abolish all government regulations protecting civil rights, labor rights, and the environment.

When Johnson was governor of New Mexico, he consistently acted on behalf of big business. During that time, he annulled public employees' collective bargaining rights, freezing the wages of ten thousand workers. He implemented one of the country's strictest welfare reform programs. His two biggest campaigns were the building of private prisons and his attempt to privatize education through voucher programs.

The Johnson campaign is counting on you to look past all this. This was seen in an interview in *The New Yorker*, where Johnson appealed directly to disaffected Bernie Sanders supporters. To do this, he referenced an online political quiz he took on the website *ISideWith.com*: "I side with myself the most, and then, amazingly, I side with Bernie next closest. ... It's about everything but economics ... on legalizing marijuana, on



Gary Johnson speaks at FreedomFest.

'Let's stop dropping bombs,' crony capitalism.'

Libertarian appeals to the left often entail reducing politics to the level of an online quiz. As an ideology, libertarianism is said to be "left on social issues, right on economic issues." So, while it takes a hard-right approach to public services, workers' rights, and environmental regulations, it takes a progressive approach to issues like LGBTQ rights, drug policy, and civil liberties. If you view these social issues as isolated yes-or-no questions on an online political

quiz, you could mistakenly conclude that progressive workers and youth would have common ground with Johnson.

But, when you look at the issues in their wider social context, this common ground falls away. When Gary Johnson slashes New Mexico's funding for subsidized drugs for AIDS patients, it cuts across his progressive credentials on LGBTQ issues and drug policy. Johnson may oppose direct discrimination like racial profiling – but, when it comes to tackling institutional racism, you probably

shouldn't trust the man who made New Mexico the biggest center of private prisons.

This is why socialists advocate for not just independent politics, but independent *working-class* politics. We don't just want a new party, we want a new party of the 99%.

Gary Johnson's rise in popularity was not inevitable. When Bernie Sanders challenged Clinton in the Democratic primary, he tapped into a mood of anger at a corrupt political establishment. Had Sanders run as an independent all the way to November, he could have cut across any progressive illusions in Johnson. But by endorsing Clinton, the chief representative of that establishment, he left a vacuum in politics that Gary Johnson has partially been able to fill. Fortunately, Jill Stein has also been able to fill part of that vacuum, calling for a Green New Deal, a \$15 minimum wage, free college, and a single-payer health care system – which echoes Sanders' pro-working-class program. As a way to continue the political revolution against the billionaire class, Socialist Alternative calls for the strongest possible vote for Stein while arguing for taking steps to build a new party of the 99%. ✪

Sanders Stumps for Clinton

Pam Keeley

Bernie Sanders' historic presidential run proved decisively that a powerful electoral campaign can be built without corporate money, based squarely on the interests of the 99%. Hundreds of thousands of supporters turned out for Sanders' massive rallies, and many young people and working-class people became politically active for the first time.

Yet, since his endorsement of Hillary Clinton and her nomination at the Democratic National Convention, Sanders has gone from super-rallies to struggling to gather more than one or two hundred people to drum up enthusiasm for her Wall-Street-backed candidacy.

"Our Revolution," the organization launched to harness Bernie's volunteers and supporters into a nationwide political

movement, didn't get past the starting gate before the majority of its staff had quit. The exodus was sparked by the choice of Jeff Weaver, Sanders' former campaign manager, as director – with objections to his campaign leadership, relationship to the Democratic establishment, and his alleged desire to court wealthy donors. Instead of calling for the continuation of Bernie's political revolution against the billionaire class, Our Revolution echoes the Clinton campaign, asking supporters to "let me know you will stand with me to defeat Donald Trump."

While horrified by Trump, Sanders' supporters are not excited about Clinton or her pro-corporate policies and are turned off by Bernie's about-face. Tensions have continued to develop within the Democratic Party. In a number of primary races, the Democratic

Party establishment opted to endorse or run neoliberal candidates against Berniecrats. Clinton's campaign has shown little interest in trying to convince Sanders' supporters and, instead, boldly chases Republican voters and money. While most will hold their noses and vote for Clinton in the general election, increasingly, many former Sanders supporters are recognizing the futility of attempts to reform the Democratic Party.

At the same time, some Sanders activists have taken the "Bern" to new causes, such as the Standing Rock protests in defense of indigenous treaty rights and against the exacerbation of climate change. During his campaign, Bernie met with members of Native American tribes and highlighted the shameful relationship between the U.S. government and native people. And, while Sanders has

spoken out against the Dakota Access Pipeline, his support for the NO-DAPL movement is contradicted by his support for Clinton. Clinton's silence on the subject has been deafening – in spite of the historic importance of the movement, the urgency of the climate crisis, and even the brutal response against protesters and journalists, including arrest warrants and the use of attack dogs.

Trying to advance a political revolution against the billionaire class inside of a counterrevolutionary institution such as the Democratic Party is a failed strategy. Mass social movements are what change society. If we want to win what Bernie Sanders campaigned for, it's up to us to lead the way in building our own movements and our own political party – of, by, and for the 99%. ✪

Jeremy Corbyn Wins Landslide Victory

A Step Toward Transforming the British Labour Party

This is an edited statement of the Socialist Party of England & Wales, affiliated to the Committee for a Workers International, with which Socialist Alternative in the U.S. is in political solidarity.

Three months ago, 172 Members of Parliament (MPs) – three-quarters of the Parliamentary Labour Party – launched a coup against Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. They have been backed by all the forces of the capitalist establishment. Big business and the right-wing media have endlessly attacked Corbyn, while the Labour machine prevented many thousands of his supporters from voting.

All their efforts have come to nothing. Corbyn has been re-elected, on September 24, by a huge margin, with 61.8% of the vote – even wider than in his initial victory. Corbyn won clear majorities in every category: Labour Party members, affiliated supporters, and registered supporters.

The neoliberal followers of Tony Blair who took control of the party in the 1990s are reeling in the face of the mass anti-austerity surge in support of Jeremy Corbyn. This doesn't mean, however, that they are reconciled to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership or to the prospect of Labour becoming an anti-austerity party.

Because the stakes are so high, it is clear that this won't be the last attempt by the capitalist establishment to regain their formerly unchallenged control of the Labour Party. The issue of what needs to be done to consolidate Jeremy Corbyn's victory is the critical question facing socialists in Britain today.

No Compromise with the Right

As he approached his first leadership election victory this time last year, Jeremy Corbyn was sanguine about warnings of a Labour establishment counterrevolution. A *Guardian* journalist described him as "brushing aside suggestions that he would face an internal coup to depose him if he became Labour leader" (8/5/2015).

The course of the summer events shows that Jeremy Corbyn's position is still tenuous. At the July 12 meeting of Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC), if three votes had gone the other way on whether he was required to seek nominations from MPs before he appeared on the ballot paper, Owen Smith may well have been elected unopposed. Only the protests of thousands of Labour members and trade unionists averted a preemptive closing down of the opportunity to transform the Labour Party, which Jeremy Corbyn's leadership represents.

As it was, all regular party meetings



were cancelled by the NEC for the summer, a number of constituency parties were suspended – including the biggest local party unit – and the notorious "compliance unit" conducted what Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell rightly calls "a rigged purge of Jeremy Corbyn supporters."

Ultimately, the structures and power relations that were developed under Tony Blair's "New Labour" are still in place. Jeremy Corbyn's leadership is a bridgehead against the forces of capitalism within the Labour Party. But the task remains to take on the main bases of the right in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), the national party apparatus and, locally, the big majority of Labour's 7,000 councillors who are carrying out the Tories' austerity agenda.

Organization and Policy

A first step for Jeremy Corbyn after his victory should be to declare that he will re-establish a central role within the Labour Party for the trade unions, commensurate with their importance as the collective voice of millions of workers.

Trade union representation within the Labour Party provides a potential means for the working class to control its political representatives. It was this characteristic, above all, that defined the Labour Party in the past as a "capitalist workers' party." While the party had a leadership that reflected the policy of the capitalist class, it had a structure through which workers could move to challenge the leadership and threaten the capitalists' interests. The unions' rights must be restored.

Other measures are also needed to democratize the structures of the Labour Party, with

mandatory reselection of MPs a key demand. The 172 MPs who triggered the coup with their "no confidence" motion on 28 June should retain the Labour whip only if they agree to accept the renewed mandate for Corbyn and his anti-austerity, anti-war policies.

An ideological rearming is also necessary. In 1995, Tony Blair abolished Labour's historic commitment, in Clause Four, Part IV of the party's rules, to "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange." The replacement clause committed the party, instead to the dynamic "enterprise of the market," "the rigor of competition," and "a thriving private sector."

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell's economic policies represent an important break with the neoliberal nostrums embedded in Labour's Blairized Clause Four. Unfortunately, however, Corbynomics – ultimately, a form of Keynesianism – is no substitute for a clear program of democratic public ownership of the banks, financial institutions, and major companies under workers' control and management, the essential basis for socialism.

Reinstate the Socialists

This necessary discussion and clarification of policies and ideas is the reason why another vital demand in the period ahead will be the right for all socialists, including those previously expelled or excluded, to participate in the Labour Party – and to be organized within the party.

The leadership battle has revealed the morbid fear of the ruling class and their representatives within Labour precisely of "organized socialists." Above all for the right wing – exemplified in the attack on "Trotskyist



SocialistWorld.net

The Committee for a Workers International consists of parties, groups, and individuals in over 45 countries around the world.

It stands shoulder to shoulder with workers and young people around the world in struggle against the attacks of the bosses and for a fairer, better society.

The CWI has a long and proud tradition of fighting for a socialist alternative to this crisis-ridden capitalist system.

Capitalism is based on the control of a super-rich elite – big businesses and corporations – over the wealth of society. Their reckless management of the economy, in the pursuit of maximum profit at any cost, is the source of the major problems of mankind today, such as mass unemployment, poverty, hunger, war, and environmental destruction.

On the basis of a socialist society, where the economy is planned democratically, with the resources of the planet under the control of the majority, we could begin to solve these fundamental problems.

We completely reject the grotesque distortion of "socialism" that existed in the Stalinist regimes in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, where planned economies were presided over by privileged bureaucratic dictatorships.

The CWI fights for the formation of new mass parties that can give a political voice to workers and youth in struggle and galvanize the mass opposition to the bosses and their parties.

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

arm-twisters" by the deputy Labour leader Tom Watson – is the spectre of Militant, the predecessor of the Socialist Party.

The capitalists have their "tendencies" within Labour which they support both materially and ideologically, including through the weight of the establishment media. So, why should those who oppose capitalism not be allowed to organize, too?

The best way to achieve this, undercutting the capitalist media's manufactured fixation on "secret conspiracies," would be to allow socialist parties and organizations to openly affiliate to the Labour Party.

The transformation of the Labour Party into New Labour was not one act but a process consolidated over years. To reverse that transformation will not be accomplished by one act but will require a mass movement consciously aiming to overturn New Labour's legacy, politically and organizationally. Jeremy Corbyn's re-election is another big step on that road – but it must be built upon urgently. ✪

The Battle for \$15 Heats Up in Minneapolis

This summer, Minneapolis emerged as the national flashpoint in the fight for \$15. Big business and the political establishment faced off against a broad, energetic, multi-racial coalition. While the campaign to put \$15 on the ballot – initiated by Socialist Alternative – was blocked in a high-profile fight at the Minnesota Supreme Court, the campaign to force the City Council to pass \$15 emerged strengthened and poised for a major victory in the months ahead.

Chris Gray

The Twin Cities are home to 17 Fortune 500 companies – the highest concentration in the country – but they also have the worst racial inequities in the nation. A staggering 48% of black people in Minneapolis live in poverty, even as the economy booms. Yet, just a few months ago, a majority of the Minneapolis City Council, as well as Mayor Hodges, opposed raising the city's minimum wage – or any serious initiative to address deepening inequality.

After two years of efforts to push City Hall to act, 15 Now Minnesota launched a campaign to put \$15 an hour up for a popular vote in November. We built a broad coalition led by Socialist Alternative,



Minneapolis 15 Now gathers at a local church to go door-knocking.

Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (the strongest group in the Black community), and Centro de Trabajadores Unidos in Lucha (a prominent group based among immigrants and fast-food workers). In nine weeks, we gathered nearly 20,000 signatures to put \$15 on the ballot – thousands more than the official city requirements.

Big business knew that, if \$15 got on the ballot, it would pass overwhelmingly. Under pressure from business, the Democratic-Party-dominated city hall worked overtime to block a popular vote on \$15, even going so far as to appeal to the Republican-dominated Minnesota Supreme Court.

Although the Supreme Court sided with City Hall to deny voters the right to adopt \$15 an hour

through a charter amendment, we forced them to finally admit that the City Council has the legal authority to raise wages.

Most importantly, our grassroots campaign has already won the public debate. Polls show 68% of Minneapolis residents support our proposal for \$15 an hour, phased in for big business by 2020 and medium-small business by 2022, covering every worker. The same poll showed a stunning 83% of African Americans and 74% of women voters support our proposal – groups that are disproportionately affected by poverty wages.

To mobilize that support into power, we're launching a mass door-knocking campaign across Minneapolis. This will be an enormous volunteer-driven effort, funded by

working-class people.

October 15: Win \$15 Organizing Conference!

On October 15, Socialist Alternative and the broad coalition for \$15 are hosting a mass organizing conference to gather hundreds of workers and supporters together to discuss the strategy to win an ordinance for \$15. Here, low-wage workers can come together with their neighbors, community activists, union members, local small businesses, and members of the faith community to build an unstoppable grassroots campaign.

Out of the organizing conference, we aim to host community meetings in every Minneapolis ward to answer common questions about \$15 an hour, as well as building the independent movement of workers and supporters to win \$15.

November 29: National Day of Action for \$15

On November 29, fast-food and low-wage workers across the country are taking action to demand \$15 an hour and a union. Here in Minneapolis, we're working with a powerful coalition to organize the largest workers' rights demonstration in years. We're building a genuine

No Tip Penalty, No Exceptions, No Delays!

Everywhere \$15 has passed, big business makes the same old arguments to protect their profits. They will claim \$15 is too high, even though study after study shows the economic benefits in Minneapolis or elsewhere, to all but the richest few. They will claim they need more time, even though corporations are making record profits. They will claim tipped workers should be left out of a living wage, even though tipped workers are predominantly women who experience high levels of workplace harassment. They will claim \$15 will cause unemployment, even though study after study shows higher wages strengthen the economy.

While most workers know these big-business arguments are completely false, we can't underestimate their power, especially when amplified by the corporate media. A worker-led, community-based grassroots movement is the best way to counteract the inevitable pressure big-business will put on City Hall to water down \$15 an hour. ✪

participatory grassroots movement – which, throughout history, has been the tried and true method to challenge entrenched corporate power and big-business-backed politicians. ✪

Allina Union-Busting Provokes an Open-Ended Strike Nurses Strike in the Twin Cities!

Socialist Alternative Minnesota

As we go to press, negotiations are resuming.

Nurses at five Allina hospitals in and around the Twin Cities who are members of the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) have been in a contract battle with Allina since the beginning of 2016. Their contract expired on June 1, prompting nurses to go on a seven-day strike at the end of June. Still unable to reach an agreement with the employer, the MNA started a second strike – this time, an open-ended strike – that started on Labor Day, September 5. The nurses came to the table

asking for improvements in staffing and workplace safety. On the other side, Allina's focus is on taking away the nurses' MNA-specific health insurance plans – a goal of management for years. This would force nurses into lower-quality and more expensive corporate insurance plans. Historically, the MNA plans were the health care that all Allina employees had; however, the nurses were the only union with contract language in place that prohibited diminishment to the insurance plans during the course of the contract, thus leaving these plans in place only for nurses. Meanwhile, over the past decades, Allina whittled away the health insurance

benefits that other employees get.

Union-Busting

Initially, Allina claimed that the MNA plans needed to go due to the upcoming Cadillac Tax; however, Congress pushed off the start date to 2020, and signals from Washington suggest it may never be enacted. Allina then changed their line to claim it would save \$10 million by getting the nurses off the MNA plans. Compare this to the over \$20 million spent by Allina on the June seven-day strike alone.

It is clear that it's about more than insurance to Allina – it's about weakening the strength nurses have

in their workplace due to their organization. It's about union-busting.

All five hospitals have maintained their own strong picket lines. But the MNA is doing more than just maintaining strong picket lines; the nurses are engaging in a corporate campaign, conducting publicity and picketing actions at businesses owned by Allina's board of directors, and leafleting and door-knocking the neighborhoods they live in. These actions have been successful in driving a handful of board members to resign. The nurses also joined 15 Now Minneapolis in a joint action for raising the minimum wage that also made stops at businesses run by members of Allina's board of

directors.

Solidarity

Both labor and the broader community realize the significance of an MNA victory for the broader working class. Unions and community members are stepping up and giving large amounts to the MNA strike fund, and they continue to bring meals, snacks, etc. to the picket lines.

The struggle ahead will be difficult, as Allina has amassed a large war chest to take on the MNA. With solidarity from others, and many nurses having already found temporary jobs, nurses are prepared to stand strong! ✪

The Failure of Lesser Evilism

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What they ignore is how, today and throughout history, hitching our movements to the Democratic Party actually undermines the strength of our movements. In a society so deeply divided along class lines, no political party can serve two masters. Clinton and the Democrats may give lip service to supporting the interests of workers, people of color, women, and LGBTQ people, but in the final analysis they serve their big business backers. In the end, the promise of a “seat at the table” turns out to be a tool for big business to co-opt our movement leaders and to tamp down our demands and expectations.

This false strategy is what led most union leaders to scandalously back Hillary Clinton in the Democratic Party primary, even though Bernie Sanders could have won with solid labor backing. History is replete with examples of movement leaders amplifying the false promises of corporate Democrats, only to have their causes betrayed once the election is over. The hard lesson is this: no movement can navigate a path to serious victories without being crystal clear on who their friends and enemies are. The apparent logic of backing Democrats inevitably leads to confusion and betrayals.

Historically, what matters most in determining a movement's success is not whether a Democrat is president, but the size and fighting capacity of the movement itself. Compare the presidency of Republican Richard Nixon to that of Democrat Bill Clinton. Nixon was one of the most conservative Republicans of his time, but under his administration, movements won the end to the Vietnam war, abortion rights, the expansion of civil rights and poverty-reducing programs and environmental and



Bill and Hillary at Donald and Melania's wedding in 2005.

workplace regulations. Nixon was forced to grant significant concessions because there were millions of people in the streets and for fear that these movements would become even more radical.

Yet when Bill Clinton was elected in 1992 with the support of the AFL-CIO and most progressive leaders, there were no mass movements organized. Clinton delivered one of the most right wing agendas in living memory. Bill Clinton signed NAFTA, “ended welfare as we know it,” deregulated Wall Street, supported the anti-LGBTQ “Defense of Marriage Act,” and oversaw the curtailing of abortion rights and a doubling of the prison population.

A New Party is Needed

Bernie Sanders has popularized the idea that the U.S. should be more like European

countries that provide everyone with basic health care, free higher education, child-care, and paid family leave. However these gains were won in Europe in the mid-twentieth century because working people built their own mass socialist parties. They mobilized the independent power of the working class to demand change. Yet in the United States, the unions and progressives never succeeded in creating a mass independent party of our own and instead supported the Democrats, a liberal big business party.

We can't afford more elections with the right-wing as the only political force capturing the anger in U.S. society. It is urgent we begin building a powerful new party of the 99%, uniting all the social movements in society into a common political challenge to corporate politicians and the right. ✪

Five Years Since Occupy

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From Occupy to the Political Revolution

Bernie Sanders' call for a political revolution against the billionaire class channeled the emerging class consciousness implicit in Occupy's “the 99% vs the 1%.” Sanders' popularity spread rapidly among students, activists, and those long disenchanted with establishment candidates – the same base that supported Occupy. Bernie's message had wide support in sections of the white working class and increasingly among Latino and Black workers and youth. He used his platform not only to rail against Wall Street greed and the subservience of establishment candidates, but to call for mass movements in order to accomplish the agenda of the 99%. He also popularized democratic socialism to hundreds of thousands. Unfortunately, Bernie chose to accept the limitations of the corporate Democratic Party, a fatal mistake, but his campaign underscored the very real possibility of running a campaign without corporate cash and on the basis of the politics of Occupy.

Those who participated in and were inspired by Occupy are continuing to organize. The Standing Rock Protectors have cited Occupy as a wellspring of inspiration. Yet, even with the significant victories that grassroots movements have won over the past five years, the contradiction of massive inequality in a country of massive wealth that spurred them on have not been solved. Mass working class anger will continue to find outlets for struggle and 2017 will be another year of mounting fightback in the United States. With public opinion among young people continuing to shift in favor of socialism, these struggles are likely to take on a political character that seeks to challenge capitalism and its ruthless domination of our lives. ✪

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New Publication from Socialist Alternative

Marxism and the Fight for Black Freedom

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This pamphlet by Socialist Alternative looks at the role of Marxist ideas and socialist organizations in the black freedom movement from a critical perspective. It outlines a materialist view of the origins and development of racist ideology and structural racism. Finally it explains the Marxist view of the tasks confronting the movement today.

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Issue #27 - October 2016

We Need a Party of the 99%

Vote Jill Stein



Jill Stein at the Standing Rock #NoDAPL protests.

Editorial

The 2016 presidential election seems like a slow-motion train wreck. Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are the two most unpopular major party candidates in modern history; over 60% disapprove of Trump, while 56% disapprove of Clinton.

The choice between a bigoted billionaire and a corporate oligarch isn't much of a choice at all. Many people, while holding their noses, will understandably vote for Clinton to stop Trump. At the same time, there is a growing desire for an alternative to the rotten two-party system.

In one online NBC poll, 84% of people – more than 75,000 – said they wished Bernie Sanders was still in the race. His campaign gave a glimpse of the potential for millions of people to come together in a far-reaching “political revolution against the billionaire class.”

U.S. capitalism faces a historic crisis, and it will take powerful mass movements of workers and young people to fight back against the right wing and big business. Both parties stand in our way, and Bernie's campaign showed that a new party for the 99% is possible.

In this election, the best way to register your opposition to racism and corporate politics – and to support an alternative to this broken two-party system – is to vote for Jill Stein, the strongest independent left-wing presidential candidate.

Stopping Trump

We can't just “wait out the clock” until November to stop Trump. His campaign gives confidence to racists right now. We need peaceful mass demonstrations to confront Trump everywhere he goes, linked to building an ongoing movement against racism and inequality.

Polls have consistently shown that supermajorities disapprove of the hate-spewing billionaire. If the election were just a referendum on him, he would be trounced.

But this election distorts our ability to fight back. The Democrats' alternative to Trump is Clinton, the second-most unpopular candidate in modern history. Clinton's record of supporting free trade, the Iraq War, and Wall Street is all being exploited by Trump.

Clinton is the candidate of the establishment, which has its own reasons for wanting to stop Trump: He opposes U.S. foreign policy and free trade, and his victory would unleash social and political upheaval.

The same establishment opposed Bernie Sanders, who currently has an approval rating 14 points higher than Clinton. In the lead-up to the Democratic National Convention, he consistently outperformed Clinton against Trump in head-to-head polls.

Although Sanders was the stronger candidate against Trump, more important to the Democratic Party establishment was ensuring their loyal Wall Street candidate was the nominee.

Clinton, the Democratic Party, and the

corporate establishment had no problem with mass incarceration or racist policing until black people started fighting back. They didn't support same-sex marriage until it was politically damaging not to. Before Occupy Wall Street broke out, the Democrats were leading the charge for cuts to Social Security after bailing out the banks. It's mass movements that change society, not the Democratic Party.

Clinton is a perfect foil for the right-populists. If she manages to win the election, you can be assured the 1% expects something in return for the huge sums of cash they have given Clinton. This will provide more fuel for the development of right-populism and the next Trump.

We can't let Trump – or free market fundamentalist Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party – be the only anti-establishment voice in this election. We need to build support for a left-wing, working-class outlet for the huge anger in U.S. society.

Vote Stein

The presidential election is the time when the most people in the U.S. pay attention to politics. With widespread disillusionment about both candidates, millions of people will be asking critical questions about politics and searching for an alternative.

Jill Stein, unlike Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party, is campaigning

on a program of radical pro-working-class reforms. She stands for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, single-payer universal health care, free higher education and abolishing student debt, taxing the rich, and a rapid transition to renewable energy.

Stein is unlikely to win. But even one, two, or five million votes for Jill Stein would be a powerful protest and an important way for working people and young people, in the aftermath of Sanders' loss, to keep up the pressure from the left on the establishment.

This November, vote Jill Stein and help continue the political revolution. ✪

Join the Socialists

Trump's support shows that, as capitalism slides further into crisis, right populism can grow. The only way to cut across right populism is by building a powerful left anti-establishment movement to channel the growing anger behind a unifying working-class agenda. Socialist Alternative is the party that led the way in electing Kshama Sawant as a socialist to the Seattle City Council. We used her campaign to build the movement for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, and we won within six months.

We campaign for mass movements, a new party of the 99%, and socialist policies that go beyond the limits of this decaying capitalist system. There has never been a better time to join the socialist movement. Join Socialist Alternative today! ✪