

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

ISSUE #37 - OCTOBER 2017
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NOT ONE MORE DEPORTATION

DEFEND DREAMERS & DRIVE OUT TRUMP

ALSO INSIDE

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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. ✦

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

STILL INSPIRING SOCIALISTS 100 YEARS LATER

100 years ago, the October Revolution, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, opened a new chapter in history. By overthrowing capitalism, Russia leapt forward in terms of social and economic equality - legalizing marriage equality, granting universal suffrage, and democratically organizing the economy. The Russian Revolution inspired socialist revolts in its wake internationally.

When workers in factories formed committees and sent deputies to the local and citywide councils called soviets in Russian, they were also reorganizing production and distribution. By discussing and deciding priorities democratically in the workplace committees and soviets, Russian society was arranged for the needs of the Russian working people, instead of their previous focus - the imperialist war and the profits of the big banks.



The Petrograd Soviet meeting in August 1917.

Today, interest in democratic socialism continues to grow. As the wealth gap grows, international tensions increase, and traditional establishment parties the world over are wracked by crisis because they have no answer to the social devastation caused by capitalism. More and more, working people are seeing that their interests and corporate interests are diametric opposites - when one wins, the other loses.

Bernie Sanders' political revolution and Jeremy Corbyn's campaign in Britain have inspired young people to investigate the ideas of socialism. At the same time, people are rightfully repelled by the distortions of genuine socialist ideas represented by Stalinism. This dictatorship was not the logical conclusion of the upheaval in 1917 in Russia, but the opposite: the counter-revolution taking away workers' democracy and power while still leaving capitalism abolished.

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Socialist Alternative and the Committee for a Workers International look to the Russian Revolution as one of the most important events in human history and a tremendous example to learn from.

Throughout 2017, Socialist Alternative published an article each issue about the Russian Revolution, and this will climax in a four-page insert in the November issue. By the modern calendar, the culmination of the 1917 revolutions in Russia happened in early November, but it is often referred to as the October revolution. ✦

Through the years that followed 1917, the ideas of the Russian Revolution were twisted by Joseph Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy. However the writings of Vladimir Lenin, the main political leader of the Bolshevik party, remain relevant for challenging the rule of profit. We carry a long explanation of Lenin's ideas on our website:

READ MORE ABOUT THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION!



The legacy of the Russian Revolution is an important topic of discussion for anyone who fights against inequality and injustice. Read our recent article and response to Jacobin Editor Baskhar Sunkara on our website:

"FINLAND STATION" AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM TODAY by Alan Jones
At SocialistAlternative.org

To commemorate the centenary of the revolution, the CWI launched 1917revolution.org as a resource for analysis of the events. This includes a fantastic brief history of 1917:

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE YEAR 1917 by Clare Doyle
At 1917Revolution.org

In the years that followed 1917, the ideas of the Russian Revolution were twisted by Joseph Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy. However the writings of Vladimir Lenin, the main political leader of the Bolshevik party, remain relevant for challenging the rule of profit. We carry a long explanation of Lenin's ideas on our website:

THE REAL LENIN by Per Ake Westerlund
At SocialistAlternative.org

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No Rotten Deals with Trump

Build a Mass Movement to Defend Dreamers and All Immigrants

Teddy Shibabaw

After months of promising Dreamers that they had nothing to worry about and that he had a “big heart,” Trump sent out arch-reactionary AG Jeff Sessions on September 5 to announce the repeal of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

This is a vicious attack on the immigrant population as a whole, targeting young people who came to the U.S. at an early age and who voluntarily gave their information to the government in exchange for removing the threat of deportation. This places some 800,000 Dreamers in grave danger in six months when the cancellation of the program is supposed to go into effect. This danger is not only that of deportation, but also that hundreds of thousands stand to lose their jobs, healthcare coverage, and ability to get student loans. Already no additional new applicants to the program will be accepted and no renewals will be allowed after October 5.

DACA was a progressive measure brought in by Obama because of the total deadlock on immigration reform in Congress, failing to pass the widely supported DREAM Act. However, we should never forget that Obama himself was dubbed Deporter-in-Chief by immigrant rights organizations, as he still holds the record for the highest levels of deportations in presidential history, more than all previous administrations combined. DACA itself was a concession to a militant protest and direct action movement led by fearless undocumented youth and their supporters.

What Is Trump Doing?

On the one hand, Trump presents himself as still sympathetic to the plight of Dreamers and suggests that he might be willing to sign legislation securing their right to stay. But talking points distributed by the administration said that DACA recipients should prepare to “self-deport.” This is historically the language of the far right. This is not the action of someone who thinks DACA recipients are “great kids” or of someone who has a “great love” for Dreamers.

Trump’s attack on DACA follows his defense of white supremacists in Charlottesville and his pardoning of Joe Arpaio, the notorious Arizona sheriff convicted of illegally racially profiling, humiliating and torturing immigrant detainees. But facing increasing political isolation in Washington and blowback from important sections of the ruling class, Trump is clearly worried that he may have gone too far with DACA. This may partially explain why



On September 8, immigrant rights activists successfully interrupted Nancy Pelosi’s press conference in San Francisco and shouted “All of us or none of us,” demanding that all 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. be protected.

he is suddenly making deals with the Democratic leadership on raising the debt ceiling, hurricane relief funding and DACA legislation.

Trump and Democrats “Make a Deal”

Trump has set a six month clock ticking by proclaiming it’s now Congress’ job to actually make DACA permanent before rescinding takes effect on March 6 but linking this to money for “border security.”

In the middle of September, as part of Trump’s “bipartisan” turn, he announced a deal with Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, the Democrats’ leaders in Congress, along precisely these lines. There have been few details released since, although the Democrats insist it won’t include money for a “wall.” Along with many Dreamer activists we are completely opposed to rotten deals with Trump that include the further militarization of the border with Mexico, already one of the most militarized in the world.

It is also highly dubious whether Trump’s support for such a deal will remain constant given the fervent opposition of the most reactionary section of his base to anything that smacks of “amnesty” for any group of immigrants. Recently Steve Bannon’s website Breitbart said that Trump has “caved” on DACA, labeling him “amnesty Don.”

For the same reason it is very difficult to believe that the Republican dominated House will be in a hurry to take up the issue which

Bannon predicts could open up “civil war” in the Republican Party.

This leads to the conclusion that without sustained, coordinated and escalating mass protest and direct action, neither Congress nor Trump will act to legalize DACA.

Build Mass Resistance

There is enormous scope to build that kind of movement as the vast majority of the U.S. population favors continuation of DACA. As the *Washington Post* notes “At the end of last year, Pew Research asked Americans if those who immigrated illegally as children should be allowed to stay in the country. Nearly three-quarters said they should, with a third saying that such a policy was ‘very important.’ The overall figure includes 82 percent of Democrats and 60 percent of Republicans.”

Corporate America also favors DACA for its own reasons because it wants to regularize the position of undocumented workers while leaving the bulk of them as super-exploited, second class citizens. Sessions and the hard right falsely claim that DACA “denied jobs to hundreds of thousands of Americans by allowing those same jobs to go to illegal aliens”. However, the ruling class does seek to use immigrant labor to help drive down wage levels overall. We seek to raise the living standards of the whole working class by rebuilding the labor movement as a fighting force. Immigrant workers will be a decisive force in rebuilding labor. For the same reason, in

addition to it being the most humane position, we are in favor of citizenship rights for all undocumented workers.

The threat of mass resistance played a key role in stopping the so called Muslim Ban and Trump’s threat to deport millions in the first six months of his administration. These resistance networks must be reactivated and developed further on campuses, in workplaces and in communities. Already, there have been significant protests, student walk-outs and civil disobedience in multiple cities.

Every fighter for immigrant rights understands that defeating Trump and Sessions will require far bigger and more extensive mobilizations. Our inspiration should be the mass movement of immigrant workers that defeated the racist Sensenbrenner bill in 2006. But this time there will be far greater unity of immigrants and the native born as this vicious administration is bringing millions to see the need for unity. Defeating Trump’s attack on DACA will be another step in the wider fight to drive him from office and defeat the right.

Immediately, we need the large immigrant rights organizations, unions, progressive leaders like Sanders and the entire left need to set a date for a national day of action to bring out hundreds of thousands into the streets to make it clear that the consequence of ending DACA and deporting Dreamers will be massive social unrest. Workplace actions, up to and including strikes as well as mass blockades and occupations should be a part of strategic and tactical escalation.

These mobilizations, while focusing on the immediate question of DACA, should also raise broader demands for immigrant rights and against the whole racist, xenophobic agenda of the right.

- ✦ No rotten deals with Trump! Make DACA permanent
- ✦ End the threat of deportations for all undocumented workers and their families.
- ✦ For real sanctuary cities – no cooperation with ICE plus living wages, free college for all residents, housing justice, healthcare and services for all.
- ✦ Ban “broken windows” policing and the profiling of immigrant populations
- ✦ Unconditional, immediate legalization for all undocumented immigrants including citizenship rights.
- ✦ A united fight led by the labor movement for good jobs and decent housing for all.
- ✦ Unite the fight for immigrant rights to all the other struggles against the right into a mighty force to bring down Trump. ✦

Ginger Jentzen Fights for Affordable Housing in Minneapolis



Ginger Jentzen is Not For Sale

Eva Metz

In Minneapolis, and around the country, working people need political representatives who are not for sale to big business. Raising over \$100,000 with a median donation of just \$20, Ginger's campaign, like Bernie Sanders', shows it's possible to run a powerful campaign based solely on grassroots donations, entirely free from corporate cash.

Meanwhile, big money is flooding into Minneapolis' elections. Two of Ginger's DFL (Democratic Party in Minnesota) opponents, Steve Fletcher and Tim Bildsoe, both have said point-blank that they will accept money from big developers. These are the same developers who exploit Minneapolis' unaffordable housing crisis, building luxury condos and apartments priced out of reach of working people. Millionaire developers like Steve Minn have even set up their own independent PAC to influence the elections in their favor.

City establishment kingmakers Sam and Sylvia Kaplan, who have donated over \$400,000 to pro-corporate Democratic Party campaigns and are fiercely opposing Berniercats, were among the hosts of a recent lucrative fundraiser for Steve Fletcher. It has become increasingly clear that the DFL establishment is hell bent on trying to defeat insurgent left campaigns, and particularly the socialist candidate who led the way on the \$15 minimum wage.

Time and time again, politicians make progressive promises. But at the end of the day they cannot serve two bosses, big business and working people. We need independent candidates who refuse corporate contributions, as part of the project of building a new political party that's not for sale. We need a fighter for working people in Minneapolis City Hall.

Don't let big money buy this election. Please chip in to Ginger Jentzen's campaign at www.GingerJentzen.org/donate. ☘

Kelly Bellin

Minneapolis is facing a growing housing crisis. Every day, more working people and people of color are displaced by skyrocketing rents. Big developers are building condos all over Ward 3, where Ginger Jentzen is running for City Council, yet these new high-end units are affordable only to a few. A recent study found that there is not one neighborhood in the city affordable to a median income black family.

Meanwhile, an out-of-touch political establishment in Minneapolis City Hall carries out profit-driven housing policies, where developers get rich and working people get left behind.

Housing has become a central theme in the election this year, and developers are spending big and fighting to keep their firm grip over city politics. It is no coincidence that Ginger is the only Ward 3 candidate who refuses to accept money from developers and also the only candidate who supports the kind of bold policies needed to push back against rising housing costs.

Rent Control

Minneapolis needs rent control. While no silver bullet, rent control is one of the most effective ways to stop skyrocketing rents.

Our campaign is also fighting for stronger protections for renters and

full enforcement of existing tenant rights. Tenants should have six months advance notice of a major rent increase, rather than the 30 days currently legally required. Security deposits and move-in fees should be capped at no more than one month's rent.

Notorious slumlords like Stephen Frenz exploit the lack of affordable housing and renter protections, raking in massive profits with substandard housing by banking on the fact that tenants can't find an alternative.

A recent *City Pages* article named rent control as the next fight for the city of Minneapolis. While the article points out that not a single sitting City Council member clearly supports rent control, it highlights: "Not surprisingly, Socialist Alternative's Ward 3 candidate Ginger Jentzen is Minneapolis' foremost voice on the issue."

The myth perpetuated by big developers, who typically dominate local elections, is that rent control reduces the quality and quantity of available housing. Unfortunately each of Ginger's opponents in Ward 3 have echoed these scare tactics, with DFL establishment candidate Steve Fletcher instead advocating to "incentivize landlords." But incentivizing landlords and developers is not working - it is precisely these "let the market decide" policies which are relentlessly driving up housing costs alongside real estate profits.

Tax Big Developers and the Rich

The city establishment claims that the key to housing affordability is to give for-profit big developers the tax breaks and loopholes to build more. Yet of the 5,600 rental units planned for the metro area in 2016, only 1/10 were slated to be affordable. Status quo politics have failed working people in Minneapolis.

We must tax developers and the rich, not working-class people, to fund affordable housing. Minneapolis should make developers pay "linkage fees" to fund high quality, city-owned affordable housing. Our campaign points to the work of Councilmember Kshama Sawant in Seattle, who, in coalition with several grassroots organizations, helped win a tax on the rich that amounts to \$140 million annually.

The struggle for affordable housing in Minneapolis needs a voice in City Hall. We need elected officials who will use their elected office to fight unambiguously for working people, rather than to "make life easier for developers," as Steve Fletcher has pledged to do.

The establishment says that taxing the rich can't be done. Yet they also said that a \$15 minimum wage was illegal, too high, and impossible. Ginger Jentzen and Socialist Alternative built a movement that took on some of the most powerful corporations in the state, and we won. We can do the same in the fight for affordable housing. ☘

Seattle Affordable Housing Movement Gathers Momentum

Kailyn Nicholson

That Seattle is in the midst of a housing crisis is indisputable. The latest one-night count of the city's homeless population found 11,643 people living on the streets. Of those, around 5,000 became homeless in the past year, which is unsurprising given new data that links rent increases to growth in homelessness.

Seattle is the 22nd largest city in the U.S., but it has the third-largest homeless population and the fastest rising rents of anywhere in the country. It's impossible to drive through the city without glimpsing a homeless encampment the size of small village in an empty lot or under a freeway overpass.

Despite an officially declared "housing state of emergency" by former Mayor Murray over a year ago, the city establishment has

utterly failed to respond to the housing crisis in a meaningful way. In fact, instead of investing in building more housing to meet the obvious urgent need, the city has wasted millions of dollars on more than 600 "sweeps" of homeless encampments, which brutally chase homeless communities from one part of the city to another while doing nothing to address the underlying issue.

Pressure Building

Seattle's democratic establishment has consistently dragged its feet on taking any steps to alleviate the housing crisis, only passing any legislation when forced to do so by pressure from below. As a result, numerous grassroots housing justice organizations and socialist city councilmember Kshama Sawant are organizing coalitions to fight for a series

of bold demands. These include: replacing the wasteful and ineffective "sweeps" with a serious investment in affordable housing funded by taxing big business; rent control; and economic eviction relocation assistance. Councilmember Sawant plans to introduce amendments to the city's 2018 budget to these ends providing clear, winnable objectives for the growing grassroots movement to throw its weight behind this fall.

If the Democrats on the council block these measures, which is likely, housing advocates should consider launching a ballot initiative in 2018 that would create a massive affordable housing program - 1,000 new units per year - funded by raising taxes on the biggest corporations in the city. The movement-building groundwork is already in progress, though it will still be a massively uphill fight against the landlord and developer lobbies and their

supporters in state and local government.

Importance of Independent Candidates

While left Democrats can be forced under pressure to adopt progressive positions on social and economic issues, they also face constant pressure from their party's leadership to block any measures that would negatively impact the bottom-line of the corporations that fund their campaigns. This clearly illustrates why it is so crucial to have candidates run for office independent of the Democratic Party and of the corporate and developer cash that funds it. In this year's mayoral, Nikkita Oliver's independent campaign was unfortunately edged out in the

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November 16: One Year's Enough



The first year of Trump's presidency has been a disaster. He's failed the people who elected him and he's threatened the lives of millions with his vicious health care bills, his efforts to repeal DACA and to deport millions, his denial of the rights of transgender Americans, and his continued attacks on poor people and workers. We've protested, we've occupied, and we've sat-in. Now, we believe it's time to escalate the resistance and build a force capable of driving Trump and his entire administration out of office and fight for a better world!

The first step in showing that young people have had enough of the Trump administration is building a coordinated day of action against his bigoted, billionaire agenda. This day of action, called One Year's Enough, will take place on November 16. It is being organized by Socialist Students and Millennials for Revolution in order to mark one year since Trump's election.

The demands of the day of action are:
1. No racist deportations. End racist policing!
2. Medicare for all. Free reproductive care!
3. Free public college. Cancellation of all student debt!

If you want to organize a demonstration on your campus or in your city, go to OneYearIsEnough.com and declare an action!

In order to drive Trump out of office, we need a coordinated mass movement, and this day of action is just one step in that process. We need to connect the struggle against Trump's racist immigration policies, the fight for Medicare for All, and the movement against racism, sexism, and transphobia to the call to drive Trump out of office and to build the fight for a better world. Join us on November 16 to say "One year's enough!" ☘

Students Speak Out

"In the first few weeks of school we got word that the Westboro Baptist Church would be holding a specifically transphobic demonstration on campus. We coordinated with other campus and city organizations to put together a large, carefully marshalled counter demonstration as a show of force to the far right who wants to organize on our campus." Cole W. (University of Cincinnati)



"At Northeastern University we hosted a meeting on Capitalism vs. Socialism and talked about why we think capitalism requires all sorts of oppression and worsening inequality. The room was packed and students were excited to find out that there was a socialist organization on campus that they could get involved with." Andrea M. (Northeastern University)



"BMCC Socialist Students has been working with the Dream Team in planning actions around DACA repeal with a citywide network of student organizers and activists. Now more than ever, students seem ready to take action and fight back." Juliet D. (Borough Manhattan Community College)



Socialist Students In Action

Keely Mullen

The 2017-2018 school year has begun, and students across the country are demonstrating that this year will be a year of action.

After it was announced that Trump planned to repeal DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), high school students in Denver, CO walked out of class and into the streets to demand that their friends and classmates be protected from the threat of deportation. A week or so later, high school students in Berkeley, CA did the same. They walked out of class and linked arms, forming a human chain around their high school chanting "No ban! No wall! Education for all!" Toward the end of September, high school students in Kansas staged a sit-in to demand that their school administration take action against students who had been spreading anti-trans hate speech. High school and college students are showing that our generation will not tolerate attacks on our classmates and friends, and that we are prepared to fight back.

Socialist Students started off the semester with meetings on campuses across the country around the theme "Capitalism vs. Socialism." We discussed key questions like: "can you have capitalism without racism?" and "which system can end global warming?" Following these meetings, Socialist Students groups are working alongside others to mobilize to protect Dreamers on campus, organizing demonstrations against the far right, and planning for a national day of action in November to protest one year since Trump's election. ☘

Seattle Affordable Housing

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primaries by two democrats. However, the housing movement does have a strong ally in independent socialist City Council candidate Jon Grant (see box). The labor movement in Seattle, a natural ally of the housing justice movement, has bent to pressure from the Democratic establishment to endorse Grant's opponent, whose position on housing issues is much weaker. This is unfortunate because the success of the housing justice movement, in Seattle and nationally, is intrinsically linked to the growth of independent politics.

If Seattle's housing movement continues to develop into an organized force with socialist demands, it could serve as an example for housing activists nationwide. ☘

Vote Jon Grant

An Independent Fighter for Affordable Housing for Seattle City Council

Over the past few years, Seattle has led the way nationally in the fight for progressive change in the interests of working people. Since 2013, Kshama Sawant, a Socialist Alternative member and elected councilmember, has consistently used her position to involve and empower working people and youth through building movements. This fall, she could be joined on the City Council by a second independent socialist – Jon Grant.

With a long record of fighting for affordable housing and tenants' rights, Jon Grant is basing his campaign

around the demand to tax big business to build 5,000 units of affordable housing - enough to house the more than 11,000 people experiencing homelessness in Seattle.

Grant recently joined the Democratic Socialists of America and he refuses all developer and corporate donations and pledges to donate a portion of his City Council salary back to building movements. Now he faces an opponent who is backed by a who's who of the Democratic Party establishment.

We need to build a movement that demands housing to meet the needs of



the people, not the corporate developers. Grant's opponent believes that she can serve both these masters, an idea long proven to be impossible. Electing Jon Grant will put another activist who is not beholden to developers on the council. Vote Jon Grant. ☘

THE CHALLENGE FACING THE LEFT

Building a Real

Tom Crean

While special counsel Mueller's 17 prosecutors widen their investigation into the affairs of Trump and his associates, the ground is being laid for a new phase of social and political struggle in the U.S. After a lull in protests over the summer, a series of issues are galvanizing young people and sections of the working class into action. The potential exists to bring mass pressure to bear to push back the agenda of the right and to decisively undermine the odious Trump regime in the coming period. But there is also the real danger of the emergence of a more serious far right political force if the left does not build a mass movement on a clear program addressing the needs of working people and all the oppressed.

Struggle Reenergized

Trump's declaration in early August that the white supremacists in Charlottesville included "some very fine people," in addition to the killing of an anti-fascist protester, re-mobilized anti-racist protesters into the streets. 40,000 marched in Boston, showing how to shut down the alt-right who give cover to neo-Nazis. But it also led to a section of corporate America – which had been willing, up to this point, to look the other way at Trump's racism and misogyny because they supported his agenda of deregulation and tax cuts – to take a step away from him.

The calamitous impact of Hurricane Harvey allowed Trump to pose as "presidential" although even then he seemed utterly incapable of displaying genuine empathy for other

human beings. But barely avoiding another all out Katrina-type disaster – due to the Obama era reorganizing of FEMA – is the extremely low bar that Trump seemed to cling to. Meanwhile, working people in Houston, Southern Florida, and now Puerto Rico face massive ongoing fallout that capitalism makes far worse. But on another level the relentless hurricane season will sharpen the debate around climate change and undermine the climate change deniers whom Trump coddles.

Trump's sabre rattling with North Korea and now his threat delivered at the UN General Assembly to wipe out the country entirely are making people across the world extremely nervous. The ruling class is also nervous about the bumbling Trump at the helm in the middle of this crisis. Further escalation could see the beginnings of an anti-war movement for the first time since the early stages of the Iraq War.

Trump then decided to attack NFL players who had "taken the knee" during the national anthem against police brutality and in solidarity with Colin Kaepernick in a typical but particularly inept move to deflect attention from other problems. This has spectacularly backfired with one of the most significant anti-racist protests by athletes in decades.

But from the point of view of galvanizing opposition, Trump's decision to rescind Obama's DACA program with a six month stay until March 6, 2018 is by far the most important development. This threatens 800,000 Dreamers with deportation but also with loss of jobs, health care, and the ability to attend college. Trump and Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer say they have a deal to regularize the position of Dreamers in



40,000 people march in Boston against the alt-right in August.

exchange for "border security" measures. But, as Steve Bannon has pointed out, pushing this through Congress could lead to "civil war" in the Republican Party. If, as is very likely, no legislation is passed in the short term and this issue drags on, it could lead to some of the biggest mobilizations yet against the reactionary Republican agenda and the despicable regime in the White House.

Right Populism in Power

Trump's election campaign was based on right populism, which included attacking the establishment of the Republican Party and the establishment as a whole in the name of the "forgotten men and women." Trump famously promised to bring the jobs back and to provide health insurance for "everybody." This was a complete con job as Trump immediately made clear upon winning the election by stuffing his cabinet full of billionaires and then backing up one savage plan after another to take health care away from millions of poor and disabled people.

The Republicans insisted on the obstinate pursuit of the destruction of Medicaid – which is potentially politically disastrous for them – because it is a massive transfer of wealth to the wealthiest which lays the basis for even more tax cuts for the rich. While Trumpcare appears to be finally dead (for now), we can expect the underlying agenda of attacking "entitlements" to continue through the budget process and the Republicans' so-called "tax

reform" agenda.

And while Trumpcare exposed Trump and the Republicans as vicious enemies of working people generally, the full exposure of Trump's economic claims has been put off because the economy remains superficially buoyant. But a looming new downturn in the world economy points to the end of the "recovery." More fundamentally, what hasn't changed is the profound social crisis affecting large sections of the working class, the stark inequality and the lack of any way forward offered by capitalism which is driving the polarization and crises within and between both corporate parties.

In office, Trump's relationship with the Republican leadership in Congress has deteriorated further as they have failed to deliver any decisive legislative victories. The repeated failure to pass Trumpcare is especially stark. With a couple Republican Senators openly questioning his fitness to rule, including Jeff Flake and Bob Corker, Trump began to lash out and threaten to "primary" those who defy him.

As we have pointed out, this is why Trump has doubled down on his alliance with the Christian right, anti-immigrant forces and the NRA – the traditional far right. So far, these forces feel that Trump's presidency provides a vehicle for their agenda and they are key to keeping the Republican Party base behind him while he wages war against the leadership.

Things have reached the point where, "Republicans fear that Mr. Trump has relinquished his role as leader of the party, instead



The Socialist Alternative contingent in the anti-alt-right protest in Boston.

Mass Movement

Sanders Launches Medicare for All Bill

Marty Harrison

In mid September Bernie Sanders launched his long-promised improved Medicare for All plan, a first for the Senate and an historic step forward in the fight for genuine universal health care. Medicare for All, one version of a single payer health care system, removes the insurance companies from the equation and the government becomes the “single payer” for everyone’s health care.

Sanders himself points out what a huge effect Medicare for All will have on the lives of ordinary people: “Americans should not hesitate about going to the doctor because they do not have enough money. They should not worry that a hospital stay will bankrupt them or leave them deeply in debt. They should be able to go to the doctor they want, not just one in a particular network. They should not have to spend huge amounts of time filling out complicated forms and arguing with insurance companies as to whether or not they have the coverage they expected.”

But he also points to the huge resistance that will come from corporate interests: “The reason that our health care system is so outrageously expensive is that it is not designed to provide quality care to all in a cost-effective way, but to provide huge profits to the medical-industrial complex.”

Immediately and predictably Sanders proposal was attacked in the corporate media. But a majority of Americans and super majorities of young people and those identifying as Democrats want improved Medicare for All.

Democrats and Medicare for All

It is remarkable that the bill has 16 Democratic co-sponsors, including the most prominent 2020 presidential hopefuls and others up for re-election in 2018. Also for the first time, 60% of the House Democratic caucus has signed on to John Conyers’ HB 676 Medicare for All bill. Significantly, neither Nancy Pelosi nor Chuck Schumer, the leaders of the Democratic Party in the House and Senate, respectively, support either bill. The question now for these Democrats is what they are going to do to build a real movement for Medicare for All.

While some, particularly in the House, may genuinely support this step, many of these new champions of single-player health care echoed Hillary Clinton’s haughty dismissal of Sanders’ position just a year ago. Their newfound moral compass reflects the massive pressure from the base of the party.



But they are playing with fire. Most of them intend to stoke the flames of improved Medicare for All during their election campaigns and quickly douse them once elected.

Some have already admitted their support Medicare for All is only “aspirational” (Al Franken’s words) while for others the real goal is just the insertion of a “public option” into the current system. The public option, which means adding a government plan to the state insurance exchanges, is included in the bill as a step in the four year transition to a full single-payer system. These Democrats like Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, are really saying they want to use the enthusiasm for Medicare for All to achieve reformed Obamacare and leave the insurance companies in place (*NY Times*, September 15)

Statewide initiatives for single-payer plans in New York and California marshaled overwhelming voter support this year, only to be blocked by Democratic Party leaders. The Democratic Party neither led the charge to defeat any version of Trumpcare, nor the campaigns for single-payer at the state level. It was the work of grassroots activists, with the nurses’ unions leading the way, that brought these campaigns as far as they went. Activists have been emboldened by their successes and by Sanders’ bill and will expand their campaigns in both states in the next legislative sessions.

The Way Forward

What would it take to win improved Medicare for All? Bernie Sanders and the labor movement should launch a national campaign including meetings in unionized workplace and rallies in every major city and town. The nurses’ unions and locals of other unions like ATU, CWA, SEIU and the

Teamsters have brought resources, leadership, commitment and creativity to the battles for single payer healthcare, punching far above their weight. But where are the big dogs of the labor movement? In the same way that Bernie’s primary campaign popularized the single payer solution as it went from city to city and town to town, a robust union drive for improved Medicare for All would demonstrate the power and utility of unions to millions of people.

In addition, to put maximum pressure on the political establishment, the movement should run credible independent candidates in 2018 committed to universal health care against particular corporate Democrats who oppose Medicare for All. Then use those electoral campaigns to reinforce the movement for single-payer and to build a new political party. A party funded by the working class and its organizations, not the corporations.

Like the Canadian example, when faced with a serious challenge by a new party free from corporate influence and funding, the US ruling class could attempt to cut off its development by implementing single payer health care, hoping to take the wind out of its sails.

Single-payer health care will be a vital and monumental first step on the path towards universal health care in the US. The fierce opposition of the hospital, pharmaceutical and medical device corporations to our basic demands for health security will expose the need to take these assets into democratic public ownership to fund a just transition for workers in the industry, free education for all health professionals and direct care for everyone. ✪

assuming the mantle of his own political movement” (*NY Times*, 9/9/2017).

Paranoia Runs Deep

The Trump White House is increasingly consumed by the highly aggressive Mueller probe which is clearly going beyond the question of Russia’s alleged interference in the 2016 elections and his associates’ Russian links to Trump’s own dealings with Russian businessmen and politicians over a much longer period of time, Trump’s firing of FBI director Comey has been identified as a possible case for obstruction of justice.

Inside the White House things have reached the point where it is reported that leading administration officials have all retained lawyers and are very careful what they say to each other in case one of them is wearing a wire, having turned “state’s evidence” for Mueller.

Trump’s fear of what could be coming from Mueller – who is said to dislike investigations that drag on for years – is clearly playing a role in his political zig zags. It definitely informs Trump’s constant playing to the most reactionary sections of his base and mobilizing them against the Republican leadership so they will be given a clear picture of what happens if they try to abandon him. But it is also playing a role in his recent dealings with the Democratic leadership in Congress over hurricane relief, the debt ceiling, and DACA.

Furthermore, post Charlottesville, Trump can see more clearly that the ruling class has definite limits to its patience. His attack on DACA also does not play well in the corporate establishment who want “immigration reform” in their own interests.

Working with consummate corporate politicians like Schumer and Pelosi and acting “bipartisan” helps give him some political cover. But it is very doubtful that this will be a sustained direction for Trump as it can lead to defections in his core base. Right-wing demagogue Ann Coulter recently said Trump should be impeached after he declared he would support legislation giving Dreamers the right to stay.

Crisis of the Democratic Party

The Democrats clearly feel that with Trump mired in crisis they have the wind in their sails heading towards the 2018 midterm elections. This, rather than defeating the agenda of the right or bringing down Trump, is their focus. But they also have serious problems as polls continue to show that while their popularity is somewhat higher than the Congressional Republicans it is still below that of Trump!

continued on p. 5

Trump Provokes Escalation of Athletes' Fight Against Racism

NFL: "Choose Your Side Sunday"

Jordan Quinn

"Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a (expletive) off the field right now. Out. He's fired. He's fired!'" said President Donald Trump at a rally in Alabama. These comments provoked a firestorm of protests including entire teams kneeling and some refusing to leave the locker room for the national anthem.

In the popular consciousness, it all started with Colin Kaepernick's protest in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter banner by kneeling for the national anthem. Since then, a debate has ensued even among otherwise apolitical sports fans on the role of athletes in political protest, racism in the U.S., and racism in sports in particular.

While the ongoing #TakeAKnee protest by NFL players escalated in response to Donald Trump, at the start of the season only a few

players were continuing Kaepernick's protests, Michael Bennett being the most outspoken. But Sunday, September 24 was a turning point in the protest. More players protested during the anthem in one day than the entirety of last season. Even many owners were forced to lock arms with players (including Shad Khan and Jerry Jones who each donated \$1 million to Trump's inaugural committee) and issued statements condemning Trump's comments as "divisive."

Mixing Sports and Politics

The Week 3 protests on Sunday are a positive step forward, showing that athletes are not immune to

shifting political conditions and owners are not immune to political pressure. Of course, this unity in the league is completely hollow and temporary. What was the response of

these same owners to Colin Kaepernick who began kneeling last

"This is choose your side Sunday. It really is. And which side are you on?"
- Hall of Famer Charles Woodson.



The Buffalo Bills take a knee during the national anthem on September 24, 2017.

season? Or on the numerous occasions Trump said sexist, racist, and xenophobic comments in the past? Which side are they on during contract negotiations with the NFLPA? The big question coming out of Sunday is this: will the owners continue to stand with their players in protest or will they shut it down to get back to business as usual?

In the long run, the owners will take any side or position to protect their profits. Already, there are right-wing calls to boycott the

NFL and those who both donated to Trump and knelt with players will take sides.

The players' protests will bolster the Black Lives Matter movement which threatens racist capitalism's stability in an increasingly unstable social and economic situation in the world and U.S. The athlete's role of "sticking to sports" has been enforced for so long because it is in the interests of not just the particular franchises they play for but the whole of sports and the entire

capitalist system. Defiant players who protest police brutality, for example, can gain confidence to actively fight the owners for greater concessions on issues like on player safety. But of greater significance is their ability to use their popular platforms to embolden movements existing outside of the stadiums and arenas.

Fans and athletes cannot and should not allow themselves to be silenced on important political issues. They should stand up and help build movements against racism, sexism, and homophobia, to name a few. We stand with athletes like Michael Bennett, Colin Kaepernick, and all those who joined in the protests on Sunday and have courageously used their positions to highlight the plight of oppressed people and stand with movements like Black Lives Matter against racist police violence and discrimination. The greatest way to support activist players like Bennett and Kaepernick is to build a mass movement that includes their efforts in the fight for racial justice and ending law enforcement terror.✊

Reports from Houston after Harvey

Climate Change Hits Poor People First

Stephan Kimmerle

"Climate Change hits poor people first," states Crystal Dávila, "that's why it's not talked about in an urgent manner". The 24-year-old high school teacher's home was flooded by Hurricane Harvey. Six inches of water damaged almost all her furniture, books are beyond repair, drywall need to be replaced and the floor is damaged. "It feels like starting from scratch," summarizes Crystal, a member of Socialist Alternative in Houston. Many of her neighbors had to rip out their walls, cupboards, and throw out most of their possessions. "But you also see so many cars here now, so many people coming to help," emphasises Crystal, and with some humor within the challenging situation she adds, "even a lot of BBQs developing out of it."

The calls for help went out over social media and working people responded with generosity. At Crystal's high school, people could get food, diapers, toys and clothes - donations dropped

off in solidarity.

However the challenges facing those hit hardest are rising, says Crystal: "Poor people now struggle, still with one foot in the mud, to pay the rent, to pay the bills, to repair their cars. And a lot of the people here in Pasadena, [on the south-eastern side of Houston,] had to live from paycheck to paycheck already before. I have not heard of anyone getting financial help yet, not from insurance companies, not from the government."

As affected working people come together, "I think those communities should now decide how to use the resources to rebuild Houston, how to rebuild their communities. The decision should be taken democratically, not based on the maximum profit for developers," argues Crystal.

Landlords Take Advantage

At the same time, renters face landlords who try to take advantage of the aftermath of

the flooding. "Friends of mine are looking for a new apartment, but the prices just skyrocketed after Harvey," reports Crystal.

"We need emergency rent control as an immediate tool to fight back against the greed of developers and landlords," argues Brian Harrison, branch organizer of Socialist Alternative in Houston.

Some landlords try to use the opportunity to kick out renters and redevelop the area. Even the city seems involved in some of those practices. Brian, a life-long Houstonian, outlines the example of a 14-story affordable housing tower, where many elderly people live, many on housing assistance. "After Harvey, people got the notice saying they had five days to leave their homes. Five days! The shock alone could have killed people."

Socialist Alternative reached out to the residents. "There is zero transparency about what really is damaged in the building. But there is great concern that developers are viewing this as an opportunity to tear down affordable

housing and build highly lucrative new buildings there," explains the 36 year old. "First of all we demand full transparency. In addition, the city has to give and keep clear promises that the renters, most of them seniors, get moving assistance and an offer for at least similar, if not better, affordable housing. Socialist Alternative will keep campaigning to defend the renters," promises Brian.

"We Help Each Other"

"The whole last period was so depressing, from Trump getting elected to Harvey hitting Houston," says Crystal. "But you can also look at the other side: People are not inherently greedy, we help each other, we are able to form a community. We can form this kind of society where we care about people not profits." We must end our conversation on a tone of "radical hope." ✊

Dangerous Nuclear Stand-Off Between U.S. and North Korea



Read more on international news at SocialistWorld.net, website of the Committee for a Workers' International.

If the U.S. were "forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea," blasted president Donald Trump in his first speech to the United Nations. Niall Mulholland, member of the International Secretariat of the Committee for a Workers' International analyses the situation.

Many people in the region and across the world are understandably fearful that the aggressive actions of the U.S. and North Korea's arms program could lead to armed conflict, by design or "accident," or even nuclear war. The thought of an armed exchange that would affect the whole planet – a "nuclear winter" – costing untold lives and environmental destruction, horrifies millions.

Appalling as North Korea's weapon program is, it is nothing compared to the 7,000 nuclear warheads the U.S. superpower possesses. And the U.S. is the only country to have ever used nuclear weapons. While Trump condemns North Korea's threat to "world peace," it is the U.S. imperialist superpower that has unleashed over 6,000 bombs in several countries, so far, in 2017, killing thousands of innocent poor civilians.

The North Korean regime's bomb and missile testing certainly compounds the risk of conflict but

the main culprit for creating this dangerous situation in north east Asia lies with the aggressive, reckless Trump administration.

Grotesque Form of Stalinism

The North Korea regime is a particularly grotesque form of Stalinism but its development has been strongly influenced by the decades-long military threat from U.S. imperialism. As World War II drew to a close the U.S. feared that Soviet soldiers along with tens of thousands of Korean guerrilla fighters under the leadership of the Korean Communist Party would take all Korea under control. American State Department planners chose the 38th parallel to divide Korea and 25,000 U.S. troops entered southern Korea to establish a brutal military government. Full scale war broke out on June 25, 1950.

The war and decades of U.S. military threat resulted in North Korea becoming an increasingly isolated, monolithic form of Stalinism. Kim Jong-un is a hereditary leader of a regime notorious for its xenophobia, cult of personality and bogus *Juche* (self-sufficiency) ideology. The totalitarian regime holds hundreds of thousands of political prisoners in labor camps.

Reactionary South Korea



Trump speaking at the UN.

regimes and the continued military threat gave the Stalinist regime room to justify its rule. The U.S., with "operational control" of the Korean army, stood by as two right wing military coups took place in South Korea, in 1961 and 1980.

Volatile Situation

The situation remains volatile and dangerous, involving two unpredictable leaders, Kim Jong-Un and Donald Trump. Misjudged "tactical" military actions and skirmishes or "accidental" incidents can spiral into wider, devastating conflict.

Contradictory statements from the White House reflect not only the unstable character of the Trump presidency but the intense debates

and divisions taking place within U.S. ruling circles. Sections of the U.S. establishment counsel more aggressive action. In a gung-ho editorial, the Wall Street Journal called for the deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea. It went on to callously call for mass starvation to be used as a weapon against Pyongyang: "withholding food aid to bring down a government would normally be unethical, but North Korea is an exceptional case" (*WSJ*, 9/5/2017).

Potential of Mass Antiwar Protest

Armed conflict on the Korean peninsula would provoke huge antiwar and anti-imperialist protests across the world, even revolutionary

movements - not least in the U.S. where the Trump administration is already deeply loathed by big parts of the American population. Protests took place in South Korea against the instalment of new U.S. missiles. The South Korean working class has a proud record of mass struggles against militarisation, and mass movements overthrew previous military dictatorships.

In the long run, the U.S. will most likely have to face the prospect of entering negotiations with North Korea and reaching some sort of deal to try to "contain" nuclear-armed North Korea. However the only way to ensure long term peace and stability in the region is for the development of strong international working class opposition to the aggression of the Trump administration, against militarisation of the Korean peninsula and for the scrapping of all nuclear arms worldwide.

Linked to this, is the struggle to fundamentally change society - run for people's needs not profits - by the working class across the Korean peninsula, the region and the U.S. The unification of Korea on a genuine socialist basis, and the creation of a voluntary and equal socialist federation in the region, would see an end to class exploitation and wars. ☺

A longer version of this article can be found on SocialistAlternative.org.

Fighting for Democratic Rights and Socialism in Catalonia

As we go to press, the outcome of the developments around the Catalan referendum on independence planned for October 1 are not yet clear. The Spanish state is trying to use brutal force to crush the attempt to let the people of Catalonia have their say about their own future. You will find updates on the evolving situation on SocialistAlternative.org and SocialistWorld.net. We print here parts of a statement by *Esquerra Revolucionària (Catalonia)*, part of the Committee for a Workers' International in the region, with whom we are in political solidarity.

On September 20, in an operation reminiscent of the days of the Franco dictatorship, members of the Civil Guard arrested 14 officials of the Catalan government responsible for the organization of the referendum on the first of October ("1-O"). This attack on democratic rights and freedoms is unprecedented in the recent period in Spain. The right-wing and the State deny that the people of Catalonia have

a right to decide and make Catalonia a nation. The position of the government, the state and its supporters, is nothing more than the continuation of crushing militarily, on a number of occasions, the democratic national aspirations of Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia. This Francoist offensive has been answered in the streets bravely and determinedly by the Catalan population. This protest is set to grow day by day.

If we want to defeat the authoritarian assault perpetrated by the central government we urgently need the whole of the left to be involved in that struggle, the social movements and labor. This can be achieved by calling immediately a great general strike of 24 hours that will paralyse the economic and social life of Catalonia.

A general strike in Catalonia must be accompanied by an appeal for the mobilization of the working class and the youth of the rest

of the Spanish State in support of the Catalan people and their democratic rights linked to a programme against austerity and social cuts. A mobilisation of this character is the way to more effectively confront and defeat the governing, conservative People's Party (PP) and its nationalist policies, and win the right of Catalonia to govern itself.

To unify the vast majority of the population in Catalonia, headed by the powerful Catalan working class, we need a programme that links inseparably the struggle for self-determination and the struggle against capitalism. In the hands of the Catalan capitalist class, a true social and national liberation of Catalonia is impossible. By building a sustained campaign of mass mobilization along these lines, the working class and left (especially Podemos and the CUP – Catalan pro-independence left) can challenge the right-wing PdeCAT-led Catalan government

for leadership of the mass movement for national and democratic rights.

Esquerra Revolucionària calls on all workers and young people in Catalonia to fight for 1-O, against this authoritarian coup of the PP and the state, to fight for the right to decide and be able to vote, and for a Catalan Socialist Republic that ends cuts, which creates millions of jobs, with workplace rights and decent wages, which puts an end to the house evictions, and to nationalize banks and corporations to put wealth at the service of the needs of the majority.

A Catalan Socialist Republic would generate overwhelming sympathy among workers in the rest of the Spanish state (which have the same enemy – the capitalists – and suffer the same attacks) and in all other countries of Europe, opening a path to social transformation and the liberation of all oppressed peoples. ☺

Twin Cities, Minnesota

Interview: Ryan Timlin for President of ATU Local 1005

Ryan Timlin, a member of Socialist Alternative and longtime labor activist, is running for president of Amalgamated Transit Workers (ATU) Local 1005, representing bus drivers in Minneapolis.

Following is an interview with Ryan about his candidacy, the local's upcoming contract battle, and his strategy for rebuilding a fighting union.

What made you decide to run for president of your local?

We need a fighting union that can win victories for our members and our communities. For the past three years, I've proven my dedication and willingness to defend our members as union rep for Nicollet Garage drivers and dispatchers. I'm now ready to bring that same level of commitment to the entire membership. But more than just defense, my presidency will also emphasize the need for going on the offensive around the contract and other issues. That's why I launched and – along with the other candidates on this slate – have begun building the ATU 1005 Action Team as a way to educate and activate more rank-and-file members around our current contract fight, with the aim of laying a basis for future united actions.

How will you run your campaign differently from previous campaigns in your local?

This is a grassroots campaign working to rebuild a fighting union that is 100% accountable to and rooted in its rank and file. As president of the local, I'll only accept



Ryan Timlin has a long history of activism with his ATU local.

the average wage of workers in the local, and donate the rest to social justice movements. This union has a fighting history and we need to bring it back. When we go into battle, whether over a contract or other issues, we will be building maximum rank-and-file participation and democracy and fighting to win.

What is it like to be a Minneapolis bus driver? What are the main complaints you hear from your coworkers?

Well, it's a hard job – things are hard for most working class people. But it's also an important job, and I think we all know that and we're proud of our work and our union. But we're also facing increased verbal and

physical assaults, it's physically taxing work, we can't count on wage increases or our breaks, and we're losing too much on our health benefits.

What is your vision for how to address those complaints and win real change?

We need to push Metro to invest in a safer working environment. And you know it's going to take organizing, it'll take a fightback. They need to introduce left side doors for bus drivers and work with community organizations to train all staff in de-escalation methods. And we need to stop these relentless attacks on our health benefits. Metro Transit needs to pay more of the insurance premium, not less.

Beyond our struggle for a fair contract and workplace, we also find ourselves living in a society dominated by billionaires and corporations. Like Bernie Sanders, I consider myself a socialist and see the need to build a movement of the 99% – the regular working people – against this billionaire class. Trade unions have a key role to play in this struggle,

but must unite with other unions and social movements to achieve real gains. I've been active in the victorious 15 Now struggle, protests against police brutality, Bernie Sanders' political revolution, union solidarity campaigns, etc. ATU 1005 has the potential to be seen as a real fighting force for all working people in the Twin Cities area. Our leadership must seek ways to build more relationships with progressive social movements that challenge the status quo, rather than simply donate to countless run-of-the-mill political candidates.

You have a contract battle coming up. What are the main issues?

With the Super Bowl coming to Minneapolis, we have leverage to fight for a good contract. The company will try to delay to avoid the threat of a strike around the Super Bowl. We should build escalating actions to mobilize members to put pressure on the Met Council to negotiate. Candidates on this slate have built the Action Team to begin educating and mobilizing our members. We should do everything in our power to prevent concessions on health care, mechanics tools or other issues. We can build rider / driver partnerships by demanding expanded affordable public transit in opposition to the Met Council's ongoing cuts to bus routes. We need to reach out to other unions, community groups, and riders in our contract campaign and be prepared to strike to defend our living standards, the labor movement and all working people. ☘

Seattle Union Cement Truck Drivers Show the Power of a Strike

Joshua Koritz and Logan Swan, Seattle

Seattle's labor movement got a shot in the arm in early August, as 300 members of Teamsters Local 174's Sand and Gravel division were pushed to struggle for a better contract. This section of the 7,200-member Local 174 represents the concrete truck drivers from five companies, which supply all the cement for Seattle's building boom of apartments, hotels, offices, and corporate headquarters.

Unfortunately, the companies refused to negotiate and were unwilling to discuss key issues of concern which included wage increases, health care funding, pension contributions, and language to prevent union busting tactics the employers had been using, threatening the workers' livelihoods. The employers' ridiculously low counter-proposals prompted two emergency union meetings which doubled as one day strikes

as they were held on workdays.

The first one-day stoppage was not enough to bring the bosses to the table. A week later, the Teamsters struck the largest of the five companies, CalPortland. The pickets were running 24 hours a day, with the rank and file from many building trades unions, as well as longshoremen, teachers, garbage collectors, grocery store clerks and Socialist Alternative activists turning out in support.

After a week of picketing, the Teamsters held another meeting to discuss expanding the strike to the other companies and bringing the money-making bonanza of the developers to a screeching halt. The employers caved overnight and a contract was voted in by the members that addresses wage increases, health care, pension contributions, and ending the union busting maneuvers employed by the companies.



Two Socialist Alternative members at the cement drivers' picket lines.

There is Power in a Union

The cement drivers' strike showed how any trade in the building industry currently has the potential to use the strike weapon to win concessions. But after decades of decline, why stop at survival? As one of the striking drivers said, "I don't want to work sixty hours

a week just to pay the bills."

How can working people change this situation? The Teamsters were in the position to win, and they were able to get a far better contract than the pittance on offer from their bosses. They could have brought every driver into this struggle. They could have appealed to the leaderships and rank and files of other unions, and more broadly to Seattle's working class to get involved. The cement drivers were only beginning to feel their power and could have held out for more.

And what more could have been won? Enough to afford a home in the city we build, enough to tell the boss, "forty hours is enough, I'm going home to see my family," enough to send a bold message to workers across the country, that this is how we win, this is how we revive the labor movement.

By working together and building solidarity, construction workers and their unions can play a leading role in the struggle for a livable Seattle. ☘

A Challenge for the Left

continued from p. 7

During the summer, Schumer and Pelosi announced their “better deal” economic policy which was meant to address the party’s complete inability to put forward a message that connects with the reality faced by working people. This fell flat and what was particularly striking was their failure to include Medicare for All which is wildly popular in the base of the party. As we have repeatedly said from the day Trump was inaugurated, people don’t just want to a party that votes against the attacks coming from this administration. They want a party that fights for real change that will substantially improve people’s lives along the lines advocated by Bernie Sanders in the 2016 primary, including a \$15 minimum wage, tuition free college, massive investment in rebuilding our infrastructure and renewable energy, and an end to mass incarceration.

The launch of Sanders Medicare for All bill is of huge significance and absolutely taps into the desire of the base for a party that fights for radical reform. The fact that 16 Democratic Senators co-signed it reflects the massive pressure from below but, as we explain in the accompanying article, no one should expect that the Democratic Party will actually fight for this. Pelosi and Schumer, who set the agenda for their party, are conspicuously absent from the endorsers. But if the Democrats fail to take this up seriously it will only stoke further opposition in the party.

The Democrats are also taking a real risk by playing footsy with Trump. A large section of their base correctly wants no rotten deals with this racist, misogynist, anti-worker administration. On September 18, Dreamer activists protested at Nancy Pelosi’s press conference demanding that legislation protecting DACA not be done at the expense of making the southern border even more deadly for migrants.

At every point the party’s corporate leadership will look for any alternative to mobilizing ordinary people. But without a serious and determined mass struggle the right cannot be

defeated and Trump will not be brought down. Millions support the idea of transforming the Democrats into a “people’s party.” But as we have argued this will not happen unless the Democrats stop taking corporate money, like Sanders did last year, and adopt a program that speaks to the needs of working people, while creating the grassroots democratic structures necessary to hold their public representatives accountable. The corporate leadership of the party will fight this to the death.

This is why we need a new party based on the interests of working people, the poor and all the oppressed. A new party launched by serious forces can galvanize working people generally and also critically degrade Trump’s base and win more socially conservative sections of the white working class away from the seduction of right populism and nativism.

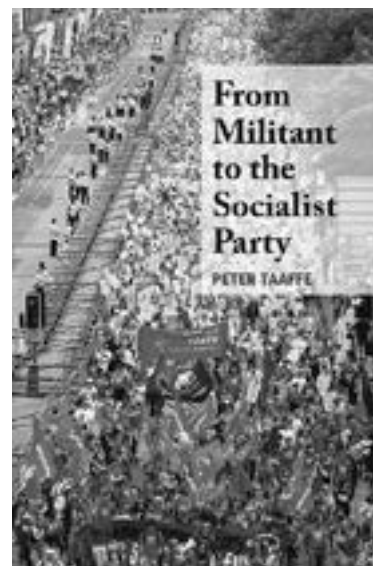
The hunger for a political revolution against the billionaires will continue to drive polarization within the Democratic Party and could lead to sharp battles in the primaries next year. This is a major factor in laying the basis for a new party but it will also require the forces of the left to seize opportunities as Sanders failed to do last year when, after the rigged primary, he did not continue his campaign for president as an independent. This left only the thoroughly corporate Clinton standing in Trump’s way.

If we fail to build a real and sustained mass movement and a new political force this will open the door further to right populism in the medium term even if the Democrats manage to win control of the House in 2018. This includes the real possibility of a far right party emerging with a mass base that we can see clearly outlined in Trump’s campaign and presidency. This is a very serious danger and requires a sense of urgency from the still limited forces of the real left in this country about the tasks in front of us.

How Do We Bring Trump Down?

As we move toward the one-year anniversary of Trump’s election, millions want to know how and when Trump will go? While 40% of the population support impeachment the reality is that the Republicans will not, at this stage, let this be discussed in the House and the Democrats (with some exceptions) are strongly opposed to going down this path. The basic unspoken position of the Democratic leadership is that the process of removing Trump in this way would further damage the credibility of the political institutions

New publication from LeftBooks.org



This important book covers developments in England from the New Labour takeover to the first rumblings of the world economic crisis of 2007-08. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes, capitalism’s representatives proclaimed “the end of history.” But the struggles of workers and young people continued. *From Militant to the Socialist Party* charts the fightback, and highlights the lessons of these movements for today.

From Militant to the Socialist Party

by Peter Taaffe
£15

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of American capitalism which they resolutely defend.

Some activists on the left also understandably raise that bringing down Trump would simply mean his replacement by Vice President Mike Pence, a hard right ideologue. But the circumstances of Trump’s demise would be a further escalation of political crisis combined with a sustained mass movement in the streets. In this situation, Trump’s resignation or removal would be an enormous victory which would embolden the struggle against the right and for offensive victories. A Pence presidency would be crippled from the start.

We must remember the lessons of history. In the late 1960s, Lyndon Johnson was effectively brought down by the escalating mass movement against the war in Vietnam. Johnson was forced to admit this on TV in his “I will not run” speech announcing he would not seek a second term. Nixon was of course brought down by Watergate but the ground was again laid by the anti-war movement, including within the army, and by escalating class struggle and the ongoing black freedom and women’s liberation movements. It actually never came to a vote in Congress and Nixon resigned after the establishment made it clear he had to go.

These examples show that impeachment is not the only way to bring down a president and that what is key is a mass movement. Socialists favor bringing maximum pressure to bear to drive out Trump, including forcing the Democrats to introduce bills of impeachment. But as in the 60s and 70s it is the atrocities being committed or threatened by the right that are galvanizing people into action. We need to point the way forward to bring all the strands of discontent and revolt into one massive movement of resistance. Within this the role of the organized labor movement, despite being in long retreat, is critical. The social power of America’s multiracial working class is the key force for changing this society and ultimately bringing an end to decaying capitalism which will endlessly breed Trumps. ☺



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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Andy Moxley

In Minneapolis, Socialist Alternative member Ginger Jentzen's City Council campaign is shaking the political establishment to its core. Running on a strong socialist platform, Ginger is fighting for bold policies like rent control and taxes on big developers and millionaires to fund affordable housing and social programs. The campaign is a way to build a powerful grassroots movement of the 99% to push back against the corporate agenda in City Hall.

Against a background of a city that has one of the largest levels of economic and racial inequality in the nation, Ginger's bold campaign is receiving a strong echo from workers and young people. In early August, when the first financial reports were released for the election, it was shown that Ginger had raised over three times as much as her Democratic establishment-backed opponent. Not only that, but she had done it as the only candidate in either the Mayoral or City

Council elections pledging not to take a dime in corporate cash. Truly a campaign that is NOT FOR SALE.

Make Life Easier for Developers?

This stands in stark contrast to the Democratic-establishment backed opponent Steve Fletcher, who, despite much progressive rhetoric, has said he'll take money from big developers – stating in a September forum hosted by the Chamber of Commerce that he wishes to “make life easier for the developers” in Minneapolis. He further said he didn't understand why developers were being singled out. The truth behind this statement is that the city political establishment doesn't want them singled out.

Though Minneapolis has not yet reached the peak housing and unaffordability crisis levels of cities like New York or San Francisco, gentrification has accelerated and housing prices have been skyrocketing over

the last several years. Like many other big cities, Minneapolis has long been dominated by the establishment of the Democratic Party, known as the DFL (Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party) in Minnesota. The DFL establishment has carried out a “business-as-usual” agenda based on large handouts to corporations while shifting the economic and social burden onto the backs of working people.

The Twin Cities are home to 17 Fortune 500 companies making massive profits, yet Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges' newly proposed 2018 budget contains regressive tax increases on working-class and poor homeowners. And, despite progressive talk about supporting the successful fight for a \$15 minimum wage led by Socialist Alternative and Ginger Jentzen earlier this year, the Mayor's budget proposal would only create one full-time position with responsibility to enforce the new wage for 71,000 workers across the city. Given that American workers lose \$50 billion to wage theft each year – over three times as much as the value of all property crimes – the proposal is nothing but lip service to the needs of working people.

The Minneapolis political establishment has long failed to address deep systemic problems with police brutality in the city where Jamar Clark and Philando Castile found no justice. Ginger is calling for a democratically elected community oversight board, with full powers over the police, including the right to subpoena officers.

In her 2013 campaign, Hodges called herself a “progressive,” as Ginger's DFL opponent Steve Fletcher does now. However, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Unless Fletcher decisively breaks with the DFL establishment and refuses to take

corporate cash, he cannot truly be expected to stand up to the pressures of elected office.

A Real Voice for Working People

Ginger has already stood up to these interests and not faltered. As leader of the 15 Now campaign, Ginger helped build an independent grassroots movement of workers, unions and community groups to make Minneapolis the first midwestern city to win a \$15 minimum wage. She did this in spite of opposition of big business and the city establishment.

Ginger is a true fighter for the interests of working people and many of the most progressive labor and political groups have endorsed her, including the Communication Workers of America MN State Council, Minnesota Nurses Association, Our Revolution Twin Cities, and the Democratic Socialists of America.

Electing a second independent socialist to a city council in a major city, after Kshama Sawant's successful election and reelection campaigns in Seattle, would not only be a victory for working people in Minneapolis, but would be an important beacon across the country for working class politics. It would show that what Socialist Alternative has done in Seattle since 2013 is not an isolated incident but the music of the future. Electing Ginger can embolden workers and young people across the country to join us in the project of continuing the political revolution and building a new party of the 99%. ✪

**Read more about
Ginger's campaign on p.4**

