

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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SUGGESTED DONATION \$2

CAPITALISM HAS FAILED WORKING PEOPLE

SOCIALISTS FIGHT FOR JOBS,
HOUSING & HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

ALSO INSIDE

- | | |
|-----------------------|------|
| OCASIO-CORTEZ VICTORY | p. 3 |
| ANTI-LABOR ATTACKS | p. 4 |
| REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS | p. 5 |
| TAX AMAZON BETRAYAL | p. 6 |

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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

Joe Plummer Student Boston, MA



Like many Americans after the 2016 election, I became disillusioned with the Democratic Party and the political establishment. The way the DNC treated Bernie, coupled with Trump getting elected, put me in rage and despair.

I always considered myself interested in politics since high school. It wasn't until I started college that I became introduced to socialist politics. I realized that simple reforms were not enough to achieve real change. The entire system needed to be overhauled if those changes were to last. Most importantly, however, I learned the Democratic Party cannot be trusted for representing the interests of working people. After months of searching for ways to be active, I found Socialist Alternative. They provided me with

an opportunity to join the struggle against the injustice and corruption of capitalism. Every day I am learning more and gaining valuable experience in the struggle for fundamental, revolutionary change.

I am a socialist because our economic system can no longer support the well-being of the vast majority. The wealth and power of a tiny minority keep growing every year and try to deceive the entire population that everything is fine. But it's not, and change of massive proportions needs to happen.

To fight for an equal and just world is why I'm a socialist. ✦

Read More At SocialistAlternative.org

Mexican Elections

The election of Lopez Obrador (AMLO) on July 1 to the Mexican presidency and the victory of the MORENA party is a political earthquake. It is a huge blow to the Mexican political establishment, reflecting the massive desire of working people for real change including an end to state corruption, massive inequality and epidemic violence. While his populist promises to raise wages inspire hope, he has also made moves to reassure big business inside Mexico and internationally. We will be publishing the analysis of our Mexican sister organization in the Committee for a Workers International, Izquierda Revolucionaria.



SCOTUS Epic Decision

In a blow to working people before the Supreme Court's decision on Janus, the Epic Systems v. Lewis set back workplace rights. The ruling severely limits the right of employees to band together and sue their employers collectively. This is a serious blow to the tools working people have in fighting against sexual harassment and dangerous work environments but it can also spur workers to support union organizing drives.

New Terrain for Workers?

We review Kim Moody's excellent book about the evolution of the working class in the U.S. Detailed evidence shows that the working class retains massive social power and that the decline of American manufacturing is overblown. Particularly, the rise of the logistics industry has given workers in these industries the power to stop the economy.

Review: Sorry to Bother You

In a highly anticipated and award-winning movie, Boots Reilly of The Coup powerfully depicts working class life and the desire to organize workplaces. Read this review and go see the movie! ✦



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Ocasio-Cortez Stuns the Establishment

Now Build a Mass Movement for Socialist Change

NYC Socialist Alternative

In what can only be described as a political earthquake, left-wing insurgent Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez defeated incumbent and Queens Democratic Party boss Joe Crowley by 15 percent in the primary for New York's 14th Congressional District. Ocasio-Cortez is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and the national media coverage highlighted that this was a stunning victory for a "democratic socialist" as well as a stunning defeat for the political establishment.

Ocasio-Cortez organized for Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign in 2016, and in her own campaign she stood on a similar platform including Medicare for All, free higher education, getting corporate money out of politics, immigration reform, criminal justice reform (including ending private prisons), solidarity with Puerto Rico, and more. In the final weeks of her campaign, her prominent stand against Trump's hateful policy of separating refugee families and her support for the call to abolish ICE played a key role in propelling her to victory.

Crowley is the chairperson of the Queens Democratic Party and the fourth-strongest Democrat in the House. He was seen as a leading replacement for Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House if the Democrats retake the chamber in November.

Socialist Alternative is proud to have worked with the Ocasio-Cortez campaign to deal a heavy defeat to Crowley and his corrupt backers. This victory has inspired working people and will boost other insurgent candidates such as Cynthia Nixon (running against Governor 1% Andrew Cuomo), who endorsed Ocasio-Cortez.

This result sent a chill up the spine of every corporate Democrat across the country. But the establishment will look at this as a strong warning, and they have a variety of tools to push back. We need to urgently take steps to prepare left-wing and socialist forces to use this victory as a launching pad to not only deal more electoral blows to the establishment but also to



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at a Pride event in New York City.

build a vibrant and well-organized movement from below to win the demands that Ocasio-Cortez and Nixon have campaigned on.

Immediately Ocasio-Cortez and Nixon should call mass meetings across New York City to discuss how to step up the fight for Medicare for All, a federal \$15 minimum wage, free higher education, ending the criminalization of immigrants and abolishing ICE, as well as ending mass incarceration.

A National Stage

Ocasio-Cortez's stunning victory has thrust her into the national spotlight. Barring a sudden independent challenger in July, which is unlikely, she will almost certainly win the general election and enter Congress next year as a high-profile leader of a re-energized socialist left.

Establishment leaders of the Democratic Party like Nancy Pelosi have tried to play down the significance of her victory. But for millions of people around the U.S., her victory will create hopes that progressive change can be won and that the Democrats can be pushed further to the left.

Socialist Alternative has consistently argued that the sharp divisions between the base of the

Democratic Party and the dominant corporate wing of the leadership reflect the deep social crisis of capitalism, the loss of faith in its institutions, and the raging anger among working-class and young people against ever widening inequality. We believe the only way forward is a new party representing the interests of working people and the poor. We have consistently urged Bernie Sanders, as the most prominent left figure in the country, to help launch this party.

But we also recognize the reality that, despite the fury of Sanders supporters at the rigged Democratic primary, the dominant energy on the left at the present time is still toward reforming the Democrats. Ocasio-Cortez's victory in a primary, where she was outspent 10-to-1, will reinforce this.

Even within the framework of the Democratic Party far more could be done to wage a decisive political struggle against the corporate leadership. Sanders, Our Revolution, and Justice Democrats, who all supported Ocasio-Cortez, should have spent the past 18 months building and leading the movement in the streets against Trump and the right-wing agenda, and should have built a mass democratic membership organization. Sanders himself is better positioned than anyone

to call for the kind of active, sustained mass struggle from below which is needed. While Our Revolution has scored some victories in the primaries, the left could have sent far more anti-establishment, pro-worker candidates to Congress around a fighting program and with an organized force at their back.

A Left Opposition?

Ocasio-Cortez has said in interviews that she may start a new caucus in Congress. The formation of even a small group in Congress who reject corporate cash and fight for bold policies would undoubtedly be a welcome change in U.S. politics – if it actually happens. Millions would look to them to hold the leadership of the Democratic Party accountable. However, if Ocasio-Cortez and others are seriously prepared to fight for the interests of working people they will need a strategy to stand up to the fierce resistance from establishment leaders of the Republicans and the Democratic Party, along with big business.

The pressures of elected office are real. Congress is a hostile environment that can isolate genuine working-class representatives and surround them with lying, dirty politicians and hallway-roaming slimy

lobbyists.

To take on big business and the right wing as well as the corporate leadership of the Democratic Party, Ocasio-Cortez will need to rely on the movement of working people outside Congress. This is the approach Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative in Seattle have taken. When Sawant was first elected in 2013 to the Seattle City Council as an independent socialist in a campaign which focused on the call for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, not a single member of the council supported \$15. We helped launch 15 Now as an organization that anyone could join and the movement democratically decided to campaign for a ballot initiative if the city council didn't deliver. Within six months of Sawant taking office, Seattle became the first major city to set a pathway to \$15 an hour.

With a presumptive Congresswoman as their highest-profile member, DSA now has the potential to both mobilize nationwide support behind Ocasio-Cortez and other socialist candidates taking office – such as the three DSA members who recently won primaries for state office in Pennsylvania – and to build a broader movement to fight for a radical pro-working-class program.

One important way for a working-class representative to remain accountable to the people they represent is to only take the average workers' wage. A congressperson's salary is \$174,000, not including benefits such as health-care insurance. This puts public representatives far above most of the people they represent especially in an overwhelmingly working-class and immigrant area like New York's 14th Congressional District. This change in living standards means that public representatives don't feel the same pain as working people. For that reason, Socialist Alternative believes that every working-class representative must earn the average wage of the people they represent. The median income in New York Congressional District 14 is \$53,000. In order to

continued on p. 11

The Supreme Court *Janus* Decision

Escalation of Anti-Labor Attacks

Marty Harrison and Tom Crean

On Wednesday, June 27, the Supreme Court issued its long awaited decision in the case of *Janus v. AFSCME*. This ruling is a bold escalation in the ongoing campaign by the right to clear the U.S. workplace of all resistance and any fetter to its unrelenting drive to maximize profit and control.

Specifically, *Janus* extends “right to work” restrictions to public-sector unions nationally. That is, it prohibits these unions from assessing “fair share” or “agency” fees: a portion of union dues charged to workers who choose not to join the union but who are covered by the contract and must be defended by the union. These agency fees exist in only 20 states but these are also the states with the bulk of unionized public-sector workers in the U.S.

Mark Janus, a child-welfare worker for the state of Illinois, objected to paying his “fair share” fee because he opposed the union’s political positions. In 2010, the Court set the precedent that money is speech in the infamous *Citizens United* case. It has now ruled that being forced to pay his “agency fee” violated Mark Janus’ right to free speech.

Janus follows the Court’s other recent ruling in *Epic Systems vs. Lewis* which restricts the right of workers in the private sector to use class-action lawsuits against breaches of labor law by their employers. It also follows three Trump executive orders in May that makes it easier to fire federal workers and undermine the role of unions representing federal workers.

A big section of the ruling class supports the no-holds-barred attack on workers’ rights. However others, worrying about boiling working-class anger, are more cautious. Working people need to end the long decline of the labor movement and turn it back into the fighting force it once was and that we desperately need today.

Right to Work

“Right to work” originated in the Jim Crow South in the 1940s and ‘50s, as part of the fight to keep the South non-union. In recent decades, unions have been decimated in the private sector. Right-wing ideologues like the Koch brothers then turned their attention to the still union-dense public sector. Since 2012, they have successfully won right to work legislation in six states, including union strongholds like Michigan, Wisconsin, and Indiana. The laws are effective: for example, union membership fell by 38.5% between 2010 and 2016 in Wisconsin.



Labor should have organized mass mobilizations against Janus.

While it is very hard to predict what the full impact of *Janus* will be, one estimate is that the public sector unions will lose up to 10% of their national membership at least in the short term.

It is not just the right that seeks to take advantage of the *Janus* ruling. A number of public sector employers, particularly state universities, have been waiting for *Janus*, hoping it will help them turn the tide against strong demands for better pay and conditions from their workers.

No Serious Fightback

Janus will affect many unions including SEIU, AFT, NEA, and AFSCME. Though the Court’s inclination to rule against the unions was no secret and its decision anticipated for months, the unions failed to launch anything like an equal and opposite fightback.

We urged the labor movement to mobilize its members into the streets to fight the *Janus* threat. Instead, the leadership has focused on “internal organizing” to convince members to stay in the union. This is not wrong, but to convince members to continue paying dues, one needs to show how the union is actually fighting for their interests and *mobilize them into action*.

Some in the labor movement think *Janus* is a kick in the pants that the labor movement needs to get its act together. But this is to confuse issues. The first thing the unions, and especially their leaders, need to do is see *Janus* and the other recent attacks for the threat that they are. Then there needs to be a strategy for how to build unions’ strength under right-to-work conditions, not just hold on to existing members.

Teachers Show the Way

This is why the teachers’ revolts earlier this year are so important. This wave of struggle began in West Virginia and quickly spread to Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arizona, Colorado, and North Carolina. All of these states, except Colorado, are right-to-work and in all of them, again except Colorado, striking is illegal.

It is important to stress exactly how the teachers won the gains they did in these strikes. First of all, they put forward bold wage demands – for themselves, other school employees, and for public-sector workers generally. They demanded restoring funding to decimated school systems and taxing big business to pay for it. Second, they used their collective power, including mass mobilizations, the walkouts themselves, and threats to occupy state capitols. Third, they appealed to the wider working class and rebuilt the idea of solidarity. Finally, they did not rely on the existing, tired union leadership but developed new organizations of struggle, the beginnings of an alternative leadership and even the outlines of new unions. All of these elements are essential to any serious strategy for rebuilding the labor movement today.

The teachers have shown that *Janus* doesn’t have to be a death sentence. Their revolt is not over and could spread to other states later this year and in 2019. There are other signs of a brewing fightback in the working class including organizing drives at JetBlue and Delta, the victory in an organizing drive at Boeing in South Carolina, and the possibility of a threat at UPS this

summer.

No Time to Lose

These developments point to the potential for rebuilding a fighting labor movement – the best and most effective way to respond to the anti-labor attacks raining down from the right-wing Supreme Court and Trump administration.

But it should also be asked: where were the “friends of labor” in the leadership of the Democratic Party as the attacks on the unions piled up? Their almost complete silence should not be surprising given that the party establishment long ago stopped even pretending to represent the interests of working people.

The unions desperately need a new political strategy. Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign in 2016 showed that a candidate with a pro-working-class program could raise tens of millions without any corporate support. If, instead of funding corporate politicians, unions put their resources into supporting independent working-class candidates standing on a fighting program – including Medicare for All, a federal \$15 minimum wage, tuition free college, as well as massive investment in rebuilding our infrastructure and transitioning to renewable energy – this would be an enormous step forward.

The other reactionary decisions of the Supreme Court in recent weeks also underline the necessity of the labor movement standing proactively on the side of all the oppressed. The unions need to take the lead fighting against the criminalization of immigrants, against the assault on women’s reproductive rights, and against racism and sexism generally. The social power of the working class is vital to defeating the agenda of the right and to building a sustained mass movement that can drive out Trump.

The *Janus* ruling is clearly a major attack on the ability of working people in this country to organize against corporate domination in the workplace. It should be a wakeup call to activists of the need to fight for a new direction in union organizing drives, contract fights, and the unions’ political strategy. Turning things around will require forging a new leadership layer who can redevelop fighting traditions. The emerging new socialist movement in the U.S. has a key role to play in all this. The teachers revolt and other developments point toward a redevelopment of class struggle and are raising the sights of working people but there is no time to lose. ☺

Massive Victory for Reproductive Rights in Ireland



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

Keely Mullen

The past month and a half has seen titanic victories for the women's movement globally. The repeal of the 8th amendment in Ireland ending the ban on abortion on May 25 sent shockwaves across the world, and weeks later a bill to legalize abortion in Argentina came one step closer to winning! These victories were won not by a bankrupt political establishment, but by the determined movements led by young women who refused to settle for anything less than autonomy over their own bodies.

The repeal movement in Ireland has been an ongoing struggle for decades that was reignited in 2012 with the death of Savita Halappanavar who was denied a life-saving abortion. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets to protest this horrific death and demand change from the lethargic Irish establishment.

Our sister organization, the Socialist Party, played a critical role in this movement alongside other activists. With three elected members of the Dáil (the Irish parliament) and strong roots in the youth and labor movements, we built a determined socialist-feminist wing of the broader movement organized under the banner ROSA (for Reproductive rights, against Oppression, Sexism, and Austerity).

Death of Savita Halappanavar

The domination of the Catholic Church in Irish society has been on the wane for thirty years but the vote for marriage equality in 2015 and now the repeal of the 8th amendment represents a further and decisive shift. Young women and also young men are firmly demanding an end to institutionalized sexism in Irish society and want to go further in ending Catholic control of education and hospitals.

At the time of Savita Halappanavar's death an abortion could only be granted if a doctor determined that there was a "real and substantial" risk to the life (but not the health) of the mother. The vast majority of hospitals are Catholic run and provide no clear medical guidelines as to how to interpret the law. The midwife told Savita and her husband that they could not receive an abortion because Ireland was "a Catholic country." After developing severe sepsis, Savita died of a heart attack.

The mainstream pro-choice movement in Ireland responded by demanding legislation to clarify that an abortion should be granted when there is a risk to the life of the mother. The Socialist Party took a different position. Member of parliament Ruth Coppinger led the charge in demanding that what was



A ROSA demonstration in Ireland including Ruth Coppinger TD (holding sign).

truly needed was the immediate repeal of the 8th Amendment to be quickly followed by legislation that provides full abortion rights. These ideas were met with resounding support from young women who were enraged by Savita's death and the inadequate response from mainstream organizations and political parties.

ROSA – The Socialist Feminist Movement

Since 2014 ROSA, launched by the Socialist Party, engaged in a series of extremely high profile direct actions that created awareness around the use of abortion pills. These included an abortion pill train and buses that travelled around the country. Figures showed

that five people were taking abortion pills each day underlining that the abortion was a reality whether it was legal it or not. Historically the issue of abortion was "exported" in Southern Ireland as thousands made the expensive journey to Britain to avail of abortion services there. This high profile campaign around the use of abortion pills made clear that abortion up to 12 weeks was already an established fact for many women in Ireland and that a law that reflected anything less would be unworkable.

The Socialist Party's tremendous use of our parliamentary seats and our roots in working class communities positioned us to play a decisive role in this movement. As socialists we also linked our fight for abortion rights to the fight for

the right of working-class women and men to be able to have and raise children in a society free from poverty and inequality.

"Yes" Vote

On May 25, the Irish people voted on the referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment and the results were decisive. 66.4% voted in favor of repeal in a truly mammoth victory for not only women in Ireland but the entire global women's movement. Astoundingly, 90% of young women voted to repeal – a snapshot that demonstrates that the beating heart of this movement was young women who are ready to fight back. But it was working class areas that put this referendum over the top, as they had in the referendum on marriage equality in 2015, demonstrating that the working class is the most progressive force in society as Irish socialist James Connolly explained long ago. Now the fight for abortion rights continues in Northern Ireland where it is opposed both by Catholic and Protestant reactionaries.

The lessons from this victory – and the following victory in Argentina – will need to be learned by women and working class people all over the world to influence our struggles against sexism, oppression, and the rotten system of capitalism. ☘

Trump Threatens *Roe v. Wade*

Women's reproductive rights have been under systematic attack in the U.S., especially in Republican run states. Literally hundreds of restrictions on abortion rights have been passed by state governments in the past five years, and in many states abortion is increasingly inaccessible. The GOP has been using the abortion issue to mobilize the evangelical vote for years, with women – and especially poor women – paying the price.

This attack on reproductive rights is now set to escalate with the retirement of Supreme Court justice Anthony Kennedy. To be clear, Kennedy sided again and again with the right in attacking workers rights, voting rights and even restricting abortion rights. But he was

also the swing vote in the marriage equality decision and had limits in how far he would go in attacking women's rights.

However, it has been Trump's clear intent, as part of his unholy alliance with the Christian Right, to put another justice on the Supreme Court who would aim to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. This was the Supreme Court's decision in 1974 which made abortion legal across all 50 states and was a decisive gain of the mass women's movement of the '60s and '70s.

Any attempt to go down this path will lead to a massive reaction from women in the U.S. A new Quinnipiac poll shows that 63% of Americans want to keep *Roe v. Wade* while

only 31% want to overturn it.

Now there is a new women's movement being born in the U.S. and across the world which seeks to break down all structural barriers to women's equality. In the U.S. we have seen both the historic Women's Marches in 2017 and 2018 sparked by Trump's misogyny and the #MeToo revolt against sexual assault and harassment.

The experience of the successful movement to repeal anti-abortion laws in Ireland (see main article on this page) demonstrates the type of pressure that needs to be applied on the political establishment and the necessity of a radical women's movement that is politically independent of the establishment

and centered on the interests of working class women.

While Republicans have spearheaded the attacks, the Democrats' defensive approach to reproductive rights has failed to stem the decades-long assault. Our task is not just to defend *Roe v. Wade* but also to win back the ground we've lost and fight to extend reproductive rights.

The Irish struggle also demonstrates the indispensable role played by socialists who are not afraid to connect the struggle for women's rights to an overall vision of – and struggle for – a fundamentally different society. ☘

After the amaz



Kshama Sawant
Seattle City Councilmember

 @cmKshama

 facebook.com/cmKshama

In the wake of the Democratic Party's shameful betrayal over Seattle's Amazon Tax – a tax on big business to fund affordable housing – housing costs continue to soar off the charts with no solution in sight. Nearly half of all renters are now officially “rent burdened,” while one fifth spend more than half their income on housing.

As in other major cities around the U.S., the long established link between rising rents and homelessness continues to play out at an ever higher human cost, with 53 people already dying on the streets this year for no reason other than lack of shelter. Seattle now boasts the third worst homelessness crisis in the nation, and the number of homeless public school students went up 22% in just one year.

It was against this background that seven Seattle City Councilmembers voted on June 12 to repeal the tax, capitulating to big business pressure to overturn the ordinance just passed unanimously less than a month earlier. The Seattle Times' Daniel Beekman called it “a stunning reversal without parallel in Seattle's recent political history.”

Meanwhile, the wealth of the Emerald City's business elite continues to grow at breakneck speed. The irony of the world's richest billionaire, Jeff Bezos, bullying Seattle over a tax of 47 cents an hour (and in the wake of Trump's massive corporate tax cuts) was not lost on millions of working people here and around the country, nor was it likely meant to be. Amazon's glittering spheres in Seattle's upscale South Lake Union neighborhood, where our housing movement held multiple protests, are suggestive of our deeply unequal economic reality: the working people who make this city run are increasingly shut outside, looking in, at the glass house of wealth in Seattle.

We should be clear: this repeal will do absolutely nothing to address any of these ugly realities. While some councilmembers have spoken abstractly about a “Plan B” for affordable housing, none have so far laid out any progressive alternatives. And if Amazon and corporate politicians continue to have their way, we all know what the real “alternative” will be: continuation of the housing crisis and regressive taxation, where taxes and social responsibilities fall overwhelmingly on the backs of ordinary working people.

This capitulation makes things clearer than ever: standing up to big business will require building a political alternative. The progressive and socialist groups who have led Seattle's housing justice movement should unite for the 2019 elections to run independent left candidates against the four corporate-backed



Seattle City Councilmembers who led the council opposition to the tax, namely Harrell, Bagshaw, Juarez and Johnson. At the same time, the disappointing spectacle of left Democrats Herbold and O'Brien also bowing to Amazon's pressure shows that, to hold candidates accountable, we need to organize a new left alliance, completely independent of corporate cash and the Democratic Party, which has again failed to be a reliable voice for working people.

Working people and socialists in Seattle have the chance to set a national example in showing what is needed.

That potential was already shown in 2017, with the Seattle People's Party backing Nikita Oliver's race for mayor and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) backing Jon Grant for city council, both independent left candidates. Building on this, a 2019 left alliance could bring together the forces behind the Amazon Tax including Socialist Alternative, Housing for All and the Transit Riders Union, the DSA, the People's Party, left trade unions, and others. Linked with a serious movement-building strategy, a left alliance can give our movements a united political voice to challenge the corrupting power of Amazon and big business.

How Did We Get Here?

Seattle's housing crisis did not begin overnight, but has been decades in the making, long presided over by a Democratic establishment which has worked hand-in-glove with big developers. But the “just let the market work” model will never solve the crisis, because developers build to maximize profits, which means high-end units, not affordable housing.

In terms of city priorities, we were told that \$48 million annually was too much of a cross to bear, yet the city just approved a \$1.6 billion convention center project (largely a vanity project for the hotel industry).

Corporate and conservative opponents of the Amazon Tax said “look, the city is spending \$61 million a year and the homelessness crisis isn't solved.” This is voodoo math, lacking even a basic sense of the scale of the problem as shown by a recent study which estimated \$410 million annually was needed in King County. And this doesn't include the broader project of providing affordable housing for the working people currently being gentrified out of the city.

And in fact our movement was never calling for the majority of the money to be spent on temporary homeless services. We were calling for the building of permanently affordable, publicly owned housing, not only to address homelessness, but as a step toward a massive expansion of social housing to begin to provide working people a real alternative to the broken private housing market.

Washington has the most regressive tax system in the country, which also did not happen overnight, but is the result of years of Democratic Party capitulation to big business and Republican leaders.

Our movement's victory on the Amazon Tax stood out as a shining counterexample to decades of corporate tax cuts and attacks on public services.

As even the *Washington Post* noted, the takeaway of the present debacle is that Amazon threw its weight around and got what it wanted. Don't think for one moment that with this kind of encouragement Amazon executives will stop there.

An Unwinnable Fight?

Some city councilmembers explained capitulating on the Amazon Tax as regrettable but necessary because, in the words of Councilmember Lisa Herbold, the referendum launched by the so-called No Tax on Jobs campaign had “unlimited resources” and that defending the tax was “not a winnable battle



at this time.”

I point this out with all due respect to Councilmember Herbold, a sincere progressive who (to her credit) did support this tax from the beginning, including last fall when our People's Budget movement first put forward the demand to tax big business to build affordable housing.

But who said this fight was going to be easy?

It was predictable that big business would launch a referendum effort to overturn the tax – they also attempted this during the \$15 minimum wage struggle. From the beginning, Socialist Alternative and I predicted big business would fiercely oppose any such tax. Many of the progressive councilmembers and some community leaders seemed to believe opposition could be neutralized by making drastic concessions – like cutting the original demand of \$150 million in half – rather than defeating big business by building a fighting movement.

In the struggle for any serious reform, we should plan for determined big business opposition and setbacks along the way, because the interests of working people and the billionaire class are fundamentally at odds under capitalism. Which is why I'm a socialist.

But even if we assume a likely referendum defeat we need to recognize that serious

On Tax Betrayal

Time for a Left Alliance to Kick Out the Corporate Politicians



progress rarely takes place in a straight line. The victory on marriage equality was decades in the making and suffered many setbacks. The massive defeat represented by California Proposition 8 in 2008 became a rallying cry which invigorated a movement determined to finally win marriage equality, which it did several years later.

Last summer, Minneapolis became the first Midwest city to pass a \$15 minimum wage. But getting there involved major setbacks: first the narrow defeat of Ty Moore's 2013 socialist city council campaign which put \$15 on the map, then the killing of a ballot measure by the Minneapolis City Council. It was only with fighting tactics and a powerful grassroots campaign that we were finally able to pass \$15/hr last year during Ginger Jentzen's groundbreaking Socialist Alternative City Council campaign.

No one disputes that defeating a ballot initiative against the Amazon Tax was an uphill battle.. But I have no doubt that we could have built a serious citywide campaign to win over tens of thousands of people, and lead the way towards building the broader movement to tax Big Tech and Big Business nationally.

In spite of initial unfavorable polling in the city, we were off to an auspicious start. Millions of workers around the country had already

been inspired by our example, and efforts were springing up elsewhere. In spite of the repeal, the Google Tax being discussed in Silicon Valley is still going ahead onto the ballot this November. Now with their repeal vote, the seven Democrats in City Hall have sent a mixed or even discouraging message – just as Amazon executives want it.

In Seattle, Socialist Alternative was already preparing the launch of a massive defense campaign to defeat the referendum, and was in active discussions with other progressive groups to do just that.

We have no guarantees that if we fight we will win in any given instance. But the most discouraging and damaging thing of all is to accept defeat without even putting up a fight.

A Turning Point in Seattle Politics

We need to recognize that with this capitulation by the Democrats, working people have lost more than just a single battle. This has given enormous encouragement to big business as well as the right populist groups that have sprung up recently in Seattle, such as Speak Out Seattle and SAFE Seattle. Many members of these groups, with their anti-homeless, anti-poor

rhetoric and right wing arguments, were no doubt already encouraged by the ascendancy of Trump and right populism nationally, though certainly a section of their members also identify as Democrats. After the vote, they gathered together at a restaurant owned by former pro-corporate City Council candidate Sara Nelson to celebrate their victory and plan their next steps.

Tim Ceis, a general consultant to the “No Tax on Jobs Campaign,” confirmed this perspective with his comments recently reported in *The Atlantic*: “What do we want? A new city council.”

Next year will see the most polarized Seattle City Council election in many years, whether we like it or not, but we should be clear that we can't back down from this fight either. The result of capitulation by working people and the left is not peace, but further growth of the right and corporate politics.

A Tax on Jobs?

The Amazon Tax is the opposite of a tax on jobs or working people. It is a long overdue tax on wealthy businesses, specifically the biggest 3% of them in Seattle.

Would big business have cut wages or jobs or otherwise made workers pay for the (modest) Amazon Tax? That is not so easy for business or even sensible. First of all this tax was a drop in the bucket to Amazon, Starbucks and the rest, and they'd already saved far more money through Trump's corporate tax cuts last year than the tax would have cost them. Also, under this system big business pays wages the market forces them to pay – they would cut workers wages right now if they could. Amazon is in Seattle because there is a large pool of highly skilled workers, which they have used to their advantage to become the second wealthiest corporation in the world. They'll move jobs if and when it suits their bottom line, independent of modest taxes like this one.

The Boeing example shows that capitulation is no solution. Two of the biggest corporate handouts in U.S. history were given by Washington State to Boeing executives, but they've moved the jobs anyway.

That's why it is a losing strategy to cave to corporate bullying. Doing so only further fuels capitalism's race to the bottom, allowing big business to pit city against city, and worker against worker.

Mass Corporate Misinformation Campaign

An enormous amount of confusion about

the Amazon Tax was spread in the corporate media, while the so-called No Tax on Jobs campaign collected signatures on a highly dishonest basis. Among the many outright lies, signature gatherers said the tax was on employees not employers.

There can be no doubt the corporate media and referendum campaign succeeded in creating temporary confusion, as shown by a May 13 poll, with 54% of people surveyed opposing the tax.

But we also have to recognize that there is broad general support for taxing big business and the rich in the U.S. What we've seen in Seattle is a mass corporate misinformation campaign, which needed to be answered at the doors and on the streets by a grassroots movement.

An Alternative to Corporate Politics

Working people need to draw our own line in the sand. But to do so, we will need to build a stronger movement. We must use the coming months to prepare the launch of a broad progressive alliance to fight for affordable housing and replace the establishment politicians in Seattle City Hall.

We need a new mass party in the U.S. that will fight unambiguously for working people and the oppressed, and which accepts no corporate money. While the forces do not yet exist to launch such a party nationally, the progressive and socialist groups in Seattle are well positioned to offer a local model of what is needed. The time has come to begin building a left alliance in Seattle, linked to building the power of our social movements. If we get organized, the 2019 city elections offers us an opportunity to make an important breakthrough and begin a systematic struggle to wrest control of our city from the hands of big business, and to fight for a truly transformative policy agenda.

Lastly, we're not conceding anything on the Amazon Tax – we continue to demand the promised “Plan B” for affordable housing and homelessness services. In this fall's Seattle budget, we'll fight for a minimum of \$50 million annually, as a basic starting point, to be funded this year and going forward, until we can pass a larger and permanent big business tax. As before, the way to win is by building a powerful grassroots campaign. We'll be campaigning not only for a big business tax but also more broadly for a genuine “People's Budget.” The budget vote happens in the fall, but the fight starts now. ☘

“Notorious Slumlord” Withdraws Lawsuit

**Emerson Johnson and Whitney Hill
Statement of the Kshama
Solidarity Campaign**

Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, along with the growing housing justice movement, won an important victory June 4. Carl Haglund, a landlord and developer in Seattle, decided to withdraw his defamation suit against her and the City of Seattle.

It was clear from the beginning that Haglund’s defamation suit was motivated more by political than legal considerations. The real purpose was to retaliate against the successful efforts of his tenants, Sawant, and the wider housing justice movement after they scored important victories for renters’ rights.

Who is Carl Haglund?

While Seattle faces a growing housing crisis, Carl Haglund, a local developer and landlord, has become almost a caricature of a bad landlord by establishing an impressive record of habitually exploiting, intimidating, and harassing his tenants.

The lawsuit against Sawant arose from Haglund’s failed attempt at exploiting and intimidating two tenants. In 2015, Haglund tenants Osman Osman and Sahro Farah, from a Columbia City property known as the Charles Street apartments, bravely came forward to protest rent gauging and deplorable

conditions. Haglund was planning on raising the rent as much as 100 percent despite the fact that there were numerous tenants living with rats, roaches, and a lack of heat. City inspectors subsequently entered the building and cited Haglund for 225 code violations.

Osman and Farah decided to fight back. They reached out to Sawant’s office, who helped to organize the tenants for a public fightback against the rent hikes and code violations. After the media attention on the Charles Street apartments, Haglund personally came to the doors of Osman and Farah in an attempt to intimidate them.

In response to these events, tenants, Socialist Alternative, and members of the wider housing justice movement worked closely with Sawant and her colleague, Nick Licata, to propose a new law that bans increases in rent for buildings with numerous code violations. This law became known as the “Carl Haglund Law,” and the City Council voted unanimously in support of it. Subsequently, Haglund filed his lawsuit against Sawant and the city for referring to him as a “notorious slumlord.” Haglund claimed Sawant illegally used his name, defamed him, discriminated against him, and inflicted emotional distress upon him.

This lawsuit was never really about Haglund being defamed. We believe this lawsuit has been Haglund’s attempt to use the legal system to intimidate and quell the growing housing justice movement by attacking one of its most prominent voices. ☘

Boston: Tax the Big Universities, Fund Affordable Housing

There are 58 universities in the Greater Boston area, 57 of them being private. These private universities, despite being multi-billion dollar institutions, are technically non-profits and therefore pay nothing in property taxes while working-class Bostonians pay ours every year. Boston set up a program called PILOT, Payment in Lieu of Taxes, whereby they “ask” all the private universities that own \$15 million or more in property to make a voluntary payment of 25% of what their property taxes would be to give back to the city.

Although a nice idea, both recent and distant history shows us that politely asking corporate institutions to pay their fair share has never worked. It is only by getting organized to build movements that challenge corporate power that we can successfully beat back increasing inequality, and that includes

winning affordable housing for all.

Why Big Universities Should Pay

Big universities are some of the biggest landowners and landlords in Boston. Harvard, for example, owns 650 buildings and BU owns 274. Meanwhile, Harvard paid only 13% of what its property taxes should be, BU paid 19%, and Northeastern paid 6%.

Although technically nonprofits, many of these universities are run just like big corporations. Tuition often exceeds \$50,000 per year, putting them out of reach for most Bostonians. Harvard’s endowment is \$37 billion making it the richest university in the world and Northeastern’s president makes over \$3 million per year, a salary more reflective of a corporate CEO than a leader of a nonprofit.



Kshama Sawant Solidarity Campaign Launched!

Joshua Koritz

Nearly 200 people attended the launch of the Kshama Solidarity Campaign at Washington Hall in the heart of Seattle’s historically-black Central District on June 23. United in the fight against racism and police intimidation, the event brought people together to push back against the defamation lawsuit brought against socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant by the two Seattle police officers who gunned down Che Taylor in 2016 – a black man attempting to comply with orders when he was killed. They claim to be aggrieved when Kshama described the killing as a “brutal murder.” The clear intent of this lawsuit, reflecting the views of the right, is to silence Kshama and any public figure speaking against police killings. At the same time, the event also celebrated our victory in the Carl Haglund defamation case (see accompanying article).

“Two years ago Che Taylor was killed. One year ago Charleena Lyles was killed,” explained Eljeer Hawkins of Socialist Alternative at the rally. “How do we move from a hashtag to a movement that can win victories?” Hawkins continued. This sentiment was the building block for all the speakers who included Juan Bocanegra, a

Seattle latino activist, and Matt Remle an activist from the Lakota tribe. It was clear that the Black Lives Matter spirit is still quite alive and looking for ways to express itself. Hawkins’ answer began, “[we are] building on the basis that an injury to one is an injury to all!” As they try to silence a movement, we have to build a movement to fight them in the court of public opinion, not just through legal channels.

Lawsuits take money to pursue and there is speculation that the police suit is being funded by wealthy political interests. Ordinary people don’t just have the money lying around to pursue a potentially long and costly lawsuit. Due to the public pressure of this campaign, the City of Seattle has had no choice but to defend Kshama but reflecting the real views of the establishment, the Seattle Times is fond of printing attacks on Kshama as if it was her fault she was being sued!

Kshama explained in her speech to the rally: “We are fighting for the clarity that the billionaires are not on our side. The millions of people who struggle to pay rent are on our side.”

The Kshama Solidarity Campaign aims to mobilize people throughout Seattle and the nation to fight against police intimidation everywhere. At the launch itself, over \$12,000 was raised to help this organizing effort. ☘

The big universities are also a leading cause of gentrification in the city. They don’t have enough on-campus dorms and the dorms they do have are far too expensive. Students are forced to look off campus for housing and landlords use this to raise rents in our neighborhoods.

We Need Affordable Housing!

While the big universities and corporations like GE are getting away with paying hardly any taxes, ordinary Boston workers pay more than our fair share. And for what? Our public schools are underfunded and housing is unaffordable. We have the 4th highest median rent in the country for a one-bedroom apartment and more than half of Boston tenants are rent burdened, meaning they pay more than a third of their income in rent.

What we need is high-quality affordable

housing for all Boston residents. The money for publicly funded affordable housing exists but it’s being hoarded. The City Council should stand up to the big universities and require them to make a full 50% PILOT payment with no exemptions and direct this added \$170 million towards building high-quality, publicly owned affordable housing. While this new revenue gained from a mandatory PILOT will not solve the affordable housing crisis on its own, it can serve as a first step in the movement that needs to be waged by the working and young people of Boston to win an end to the housing crisis and affordable housing for all! ☘

This article is based on the text of a leaflet Boston SA is distributing at community meetings, rallies, and events across Boston to build the movement for affordable housing.

Teamsters Prepare to take on UPS

Anger Grows Among Rank and File as Hoffa Offers Concessions

Walter Lomas

On June 5, members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) employed at United Parcel Service (UPS) voted overwhelmingly to authorize their Bargaining Committee to call a strike should no deal be reached on their national contract this summer. With a YES vote of 93% in the package division and 90% in the freight division, rank-and-file Teamsters sent a clear message that they are willing to fight to protect and advance their working conditions. Contract proposals such as a lower tier of “hybrid” drivers, enforced 70-hour weeks, and insufficient pay increases for part-timers are fueling a rank-and-file anger that union leadership is unlikely to give vent to in an actual move to strike.

Organized UPS: A Hidden Powerhouse

The potential of such a strike cannot be understated. With 260,000 unionized workers, UPS is the largest organized private sector workplace in the U.S.. Moreover, UPS itself is a structurally critical component of the U.S. economy that is often overlooked. UPS transports up to 6% of US GDP, and 2%

of global GDP.

Current Leadership: The Teamsters' Greatest Obstacle

Under current IBT President James Hoffa's leadership, rank and file membership are left in a “Brownout,” with details of the negotiations kept secret.

Recently, it was revealed that concessions to UPS on the table included forced 70-hour work weeks for drivers, “hybrid drivers” who perform other tasks in addition to driving for lower pay, and Sunday deliveries. Incredibly, these come from the IBT's negotiating team, not UPS. Denis Taylor, the IBT negotiator for the 2018 contract, has been a lightning rod of resentment for the rank and file for such massive concessions, the secrecy of the negotiation, and his crackdown on members of the negotiating team that leak information or otherwise dissent from the conciliatory path.

While the creation of hybrid drivers is framed as a way of taking a



Teamsters rallying for a strong contract outside their UPS depot.

burden off of current drivers, the creation of a lower tier of driver opens the door to fully paid, fully protected driving jobs being phased out, just as the option of part time positions has been used to phase out a full-time workforce in areas like package handling.

The IBT business unionists, along with spokespeople for UPS, have weaponized the rise of Amazon and its atrociously maltreated workforce, using it as an argument that Teamsters must make concessions to keep UPS competitive. Yet UPS made \$4.9 billion in profits in 2017, and is on course to make record profits in 2018.

There is waning faith that the

IBT will actually call a strike, even if its members reject a contract proposal. Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a longstanding opposition group, has been making efforts to organize contract rallies, educate members, and otherwise push for a better contract and better strategy for winning it, but they face strong resistance from IBT leadership.

Show the World What Workers Can Do!

Socialists point to the IBT's immense potential power to embolden workers to demand what they feel they deserve rather than what their domesticated leaders

will allow. This includes \$15 an hour base pay for part timers, with their accumulated progression added on to this new floor. Rather than lower-tier hybrid drivers, workers want more full time, standard positions to take on increased volume, and allow drivers to limit themselves to an 8-hour day, to reclaim their non-work lives. Strict enforcement of weight limits, more full-time non-driver positions, lowered work paces should also be part of the union's demands..

Organizing around these demands will help workers to feel their own power and help to build towards collective action. We point to the heroic example of the 15 day 1997 UPS strike which was labor's biggest victory in decades. This well organized strike under the slogan “Part Time America Doesn't Work” forced the company to combine 20,000 part time positions into 10,000 full time positions as well as winning big wage and pension increases.

We must fight for the best contract possible, not as lasting solution, but to build the confidence of the working class, and inspire organizing efforts at Fedex and, most importantly, the emerging behemoth that is Amazon. ☺

Boeing Flightline Workers Win Union Victory in South Carolina

Andy Moxley

Almost 180 Boeing flightline workers scored a big victory in June, voting to organize into a union with the International Association of Machinists (IAM) at the company's plant in North Charleston, South Carolina. While only a small fraction of the plant's nearly 3,000-strong workforce, the union election win represents an important development for workers both at the plant and in the state.

South Carolina is the least unionized state in the U.S. with only 2.6% of workers belonging to a union. It is largely this fact that originally led Boeing to partially move its manufacturing base to the state less than a decade ago. Boeing has been aided by a right-wing political establishment which threatened

Boeing workers in the failed plant-wide elections in 2015 and 2017. Ten days prior to the recent vote, South Carolina Governor McMaster stated, “We aren't going to let out-of-state labor unions ruin the wonderful working environment in our state.”

The Boeing election stands in stark contrast to what has been a failure of the labor leadership to capitalize on its goal of “Organizing the South” adopted by the AFL-CIO at the 2013 National Convention. This was underlined previously not only by the election losses at Boeing but the high-profile defeats of UAW at a VW plant in Chattanooga in 2014 and last year at a Nissan factory in Mississippi.

But what has changed is the mood of confidence by workers in wake of the mass rebellion by teachers earlier this year, most recently in the bordering state of North Carolina. In

response to the immense corporate and political assault mounted on teachers and their unions in the last decades, teachers took mass militant action and showed the power of organized workers even in so-called “red states” that are deemed less friendly to labor.

In a shock to absolutely no one, Boeing has appealed the election results to the National Labor Relations Board with a Boeing lawyer stating “The determination of an appropriate bargaining unit here is of enormous consequence not just to Boeing and its teammates, but to the national economy as a whole.” It is clear that Boeing and other major corporations are not afraid of the results of this particular election. Rather they fear the momentum it could give to workers in similar super-exploited situations around the country where companies have sought to move previously to avoid unionization and

providing better conditions for their workers. Obviously, the recognition of the “micro-unit” in North Charleston immediately poses the question of trying to organize other “micro-units” throughout the plant as a step toward wholesale union representation for the wider workforce.

As in other union drives in the South, the recent repeal of the Amazon Tax in Seattle and the Supreme Court Janus decision, big business will pressure the politicians and the courts as much as possible to get a result favorable to them and not workers.. In order to prevent this, we have to continue to take mass, militant action like the teachers did earlier this year and build social movements that fight for a program that takes up the needs of the broader working class. ☺

France 1968 and the Historic Role of the Working Class

Patrick Ayers

This is the first of a two part series, the second of which will focus on the revolutionary potential of the American working class.

The greatest general strike in history happened in 1968. Over ten million French workers went on indefinite strike for several weeks between May and June. At the height of the movement, President Charles de Gaulle, who had built his image as a strong authoritarian leader, fled the country in despair over his failure to bring the movement to heel.

The legacy of these events is still important for a new generation. Earlier in 2018, France was once again gripped with mass strikes in opposition to French President Emmanuel Macron's proposals for neoliberal workplace reforms. Almost immediately, memories of the events in 1968 were recalled. In the U.S a new generation has become politically awakened by the crisis of capitalism and they too will look to the history of 1968 for inspiration in the struggles ahead.

Later this year, *Socialist Alternative* will be republishing the pamphlet *Month of Revolution* written about the events in France 1968 by Clare Doyle of the Committee for a Workers International. First published by the Militant Tendency in 1988 for workers in the Britain, we believe the lessons drawn out by the pamphlet will be of enormous interest to radicalized youth and workers today who are asking questions about how society can be changed.

"In the last week of May 1968," writes Doyle, "a rallying call to the working class to take political power into their hands would have tolled the death knell of capitalism on a world scale."

While there had been many revolutions and upheavals in neo-colonial and developing countries in the post World War II period,



A demonstration in Paris in May 1968. The banner reads: "Students, teachers, workers, in solidarity."

most left wing thinkers, both today and in 1968, have serious doubts that revolution led by the working class is possible in advanced capitalist countries.

But in France 1968 the working class was looking to what would have been a revolutionary solution – i.e. a "people's government" – and they had the support of a decisive majority of society. It was one of the most favorable situations ever for the working class to take power away from the corrupt capitalist class and reorganize society.

"The only 'force' needed in these circumstances was that of forceps applied at the correct moment," argues Doyle. "The general strike of ten million workers had done the lion's share of the job of transferring power from one class to another."

Why didn't this happen? Our explanation is the lack of a leadership prepared to carry through the struggle to the end.

Debates About What Was Possible

What is unique about the CWI's pamphlet is that it provides an explanation for what a revolutionary leadership would have done. This is important because as capitalist crisis deepens today, many of the questions from 1968 will arise anew. In fact,

with the socialist movement growing today in the U.S., the age old questions of reform and revolution have come to the surface again. Undoubtedly, what lessons we draw from France 1968 will impact the lessons we put forward to the movement today.

In the most recent issue of *Jacobin*, Jonah Birch contributes a lively and well-written piece on the events of France 1968. He writes "nowhere else in the Western world over the past century was such a threat to capitalism posed."

Yet he concludes: "However, that does not mean that revolution was on the agenda." Indeed, capitalism was not overthrown in France. The leaders of the French Communist Party (PCF) said a similar thing on June 8, 1968 in their newspaper:

"It is not enough that the main forces of the nation should be in movement – which was not the case – it is also necessary for them to be won to the ideas of a socialist revolution. But this was not the case for all the ten million workers on strike – even less so for the middle sections particularly the peasants."

The question is: what more was needed to win French workers to the idea of socialist revolution? Ten million workers were on indefinite strike!

Certainly if any party was in a position to lead the working class toward revolution in France in 1968 it was the French Communist Party. It was one of the largest workers parties in Europe and was the main organization that militant workers joined and it grew rapidly during the general strike. Birch criticizes

the PCF leaders, but by echoing their arguments, he lets them off the hook for failing to seize a historic opportunity.

While revolution was ruled out, "that doesn't mean a better outcome was impossible," says Birch. "What that might have looked like is up for debate." Birch doesn't offer answers himself to the question of how the policy of the leaders of the movement in France could have been better. He speculates that maybe some more reforms could have been won. But how? History shows that big reforms are only granted when there are real threats of a revolutionary movement. But even then, if capitalism is not actually overturned, reforms can be clawed back later.

The Role of Leadership

In reality the French workers were far more interested in carrying through a decisive struggle against the regime than the leaders of the PCF. An agreement negotiated by union leaders with close ties to the PCF was overwhelmingly rejected by workers at the end of May. The PCF leaders later disappeared and their absence paralyzed the movement. The government was able to then reassert itself and the PCF helped direct the movement off the streets and toward elections in which they lost more than 600,000 votes.

The PCF in reality was led by a reformist leadership who had no intention of preparing the masses of France for what would be needed to carry out a socialist transformation of society. However, it's utter nonsense to say, as the PCF did, that revolution was not possible because "all the ten million workers on strike" had not been "won to the ideas of a socialist revolution." Leon Trotsky answered such arguments in his classic article "The Class, The Party, and the Leadership" written after the defeat of the the revolutionary movement in the Spanish state in 1936-1937:

"The historical falsification consists in this, that the responsibility for the defeat of the Spanish masses is unloaded on the working masses and not those parties which paralyzed or simply crushed the revolutionary movement of the masses."

In Trotsky's introduction to his *History of the Russian Revolution*, he writes: "The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old régime. Only the guiding layers of a class have a political program, and even this still requires the test of events, and the approval of the masses."

Trotsky argues "[leaders and parties]

continued on p. 11



Workers at a Renault factory in Boulogne-Billancourt occupied their workplace and ran it democratically in May 1968.

France 1968 and the Historic Role of the Working Class

continued from p. 10

constitute not an independent, but nevertheless a very important, element in the process. Without a guiding organisation, the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam.”

Doyle writes about France 1968: “The French workers in their great mass wanted better conditions, big increases in wages, the eradication of slums, a decent education for their children, a massive boost in spending on social services, etc. At the same time they had instinctively understood that no matter what short term concessions were extracted from the capitalists, these would be snatched back unless a fundamental transformation of the situation was carried through.”

Doyle writes elsewhere, “The chief role of a revolutionary party in this situation is to imbue the masses with a sense of their own power, to make conscious what was already unconsciously at work in the minds of the masses. Unless a systematic and unswerving plan for the conquest of power is prepared and carried out in good season, an ebb will set in. The masses lose faith, begin to fall into indifference, and the forces of the counter-revolution begin to raise their heads.”

While there are no guarantees that France ‘68 would have resulted in a successful revolution, the point is that the objective situation was not the key limitation. At the height of the movement, the working class was well organized and prepared to struggle; they had the vast majority of people on their side and the ruling class was split and unable to contain the crisis. The missing element was a revolutionary leadership with real roots in the working class. This lesson is crucial to draw out for the new generation attracted to



socialist ideas today.

The Working Class and Revolution

As Marxists, we believe capitalism makes revolution possible and necessary. Furthermore, we believe it is the key historical task of the working class to provide the decisive leadership through its ability to shut down the economy and to organize and implement a program for transforming society.

This was posed in France. The heavy battalions of workers in France shut down the key industries of French capitalism and demonstrated how the organized working class was a powerful backbone for a revolutionary transformation of society.

Some on the left recognize the power of the working class, but assign it more of an auxiliary role. Through “mobilizations” the working class can give space to progressive

governments to carry out a gradual transformation of society, but in this view a revolutionary rupture is ruled out, at least in the advanced countries like France and the U.S. This is very much based on an illusion that the capitalist state is not an instrument of class rule by the capitalists, but something that the working class can use to bring about socialism.

The political conclusion of this perspective is that organizing around revolutionary ideas, program, and organization today is not needed. This is a key disagreement between Socialist Alternative and *Jacobin*.

In this regard, the debate over the meaning of France ‘68 foreshadows more important debates to come about the future of the socialist and working class movement. *Month of Revolution* is an important contribution to those debates today and should be read by all socialists in the U.S. ✪

Ocasio-Cortez

continued from p. 3

have the same living standards as her constituencies, we urge Ocasio-Cortez to take only the median income, excluding work-related expenses. The rest of the money should be donated back to the movement.

We Need an Organization

Ocasio-Cortez ran a strong campaign completely independent of corporate money and party resources. As shown with Bernie Sanders’ campaign for President in 2016, with Kshama Sawant’s campaigns in 2013 and 2015 for Seattle City Council, and again with Ocasio-Cortez for Congress, working-class and socialist candidates can get a strong result or even win, relying only on small donations from working people. This points toward an outline of an independent party of the working class.

In our view, a new party is both possible and necessary to defeat the capitalist establishment and the politicians they own. We disagree with those who say the Democratic Party can be transformed. As we previously wrote, “to actually turn the Democrats into a ‘people’s party’ would require creating democratic structures accountable to the membership, refusing corporate money, and actively building mass movements to fight for real change for working people and the oppressed. The corporate leadership uses any opportunity to demobilize genuine movements and would rather split or destroy the party than submit to such a fate. A far more realistic strategy is to begin now to sow the seeds for a new mass party of the working class, using campaigns such as Ocasio-Cortez’s as a the first step.”

Fight for Socialism

The opposition to progressive and socialist demands in the Democratic Party are only an expression of the class the corporate leadership represents – the billionaire class. Capitalism is in a serious crisis, shown by massive income disparity and lack of sustainability. With increasing military conflicts and wars, food insecurity, lack of clean water and air, housing crises, the environmental crisis, and increased attacks on labor, people of color, women, immigrants, and LGBTQ people, capitalism has proven itself incapable of providing even the most basic needs.

Socialist representatives should use their positions as a platform to call for mass struggles that go beyond what is acceptable to this system and point toward the need for a socialist society. Socialist Alternative calls for taking into public ownership the top 500 corporations and running them democratically by the workers and the public; for a democratic socialist plan for the economy based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people and the environment; and for a socialist U.S. and a socialist world. ✪

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE In Your Area

Socialist Alternative Editor Tom Crean

Editorial Board George Brown, Eljeer Hawkins, Joshua Koritz, Keely Mullen, Calvin Priest, Tony Wilsdon

✉ Editors@SocialistAlternative.org

NATIONAL

1027 Grand St,
Studio B2
Brooklyn, NY 11211
info@SocialistAlternative.org
facebook.com/SocialistAlternativeUSA
Twitter: @SocialistAlt

NEW ENGLAND

BOSTON, MA
(910) 639-3948
WORCESTER, MA
(617) 285-9346

MID-ATLANTIC

NEW YORK CITY
(347) 749-1236
PHILADELPHIA, PA
(267) 368-4564
PITTSBURGH, PA
(615) 310-5555
NEW JERSEY, WASHINGTON,
DC, and RICHMOND, VA
contact our national office

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(608) 620-3901
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BELLINGHAM, WA
(360) 510-7797

LOS ANGELES, CA
socialistalternative.la@gmail.com

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(360) 250-0943.
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(253) 355-4211
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(604) 738-1653
contact@socialistalternative.ca
www.socialistalternative.ca

QUÉBEC
info@AlternativeSocialiste.org
www.AlternativeSocialiste.org

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END TRUMP'S CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRANTS



ABOLISH ICE

Tony Wilsdon

Recent weeks have witnessed a massive reaction to Trump's incendiary "zero tolerance" policy which criminalizes anyone seeking to cross the Southern border, including asylum seekers. On June 30, there were protests in 700 cities and towns demanding that children who were separated from their families be reunited and also opposing Trump's new plan to hold families together in in detention facilities indefinitely with their parents as they await trial for the "crime" of fleeing poverty and violence. There are now also increasing calls to abolish ICE because of the reign of terror it has created in immigrant communities across the country.

As socialists, we totally oppose Trump's abhorrent policies and his vile and almost daily attacks on the humanity of immigrants. We do so not only for humanitarian reasons, but because these policies are aimed at dividing and weakening the struggle of working class people, whether immigrant or native born.

Increasing Repression

Under successive administrations – Republican and Democratic – U.S. immigration policy has increasingly been turned into an extension of the criminal justice and prison system. Immigrants are treated as criminals rather than their usual classification as refugees or asylum seekers. This has resulted in a sprawling inhuman detention system, much of which has been privatized, resulting in

huge profits being made out of incarcerating immigrants.

The establishment Democrats in Congress led the charge in denouncing Trump's policy of separating children. But this is deeply hypocritical given their complete failure to stand up for Dreamers earlier this year. They hope people will have forgotten that in 2014, during the previous wave of refugees fleeing Central America – including tens of thousands of children – the Obama administration detained thousands in very similar conditions. They also deported thousands of children back to Central America, many of them in danger of their lives.

Socialist Policies

We cannot rely on big business and capitalism to solve these problems. It is exactly the dog-eat-dog policies of capitalism – where whoever can use cheap labor or mechanization to bring to market the cheapest product rules – that has created this crisis. Our socialist approach starts from the needs of working people and points toward the need for a fundamental transformation of society.

We call for a public works program to rebuild the infrastructure, build affordable homes, and retool the economy based on green technology on the basis of living-wage jobs. We call for a Medicare-for-all public health care system, full funding of schools, and an expansion of community services to provide for the real needs of working-class families including free drug treatment available to all.

We call for an end to neoliberal policies that

We call for:

End the criminalization of refugees and immigrants.

- ✪ Stop the detention of refugees and end the deportations;
- ✪ Abolish ICE and stop the workplace raids;
- ✪ Legalization for all undocumented immigrants.

Unite to Fight the Root Causes of Anti-Immigrant Racism and Scapegoating.

- ✪ Tax the rich to fund education and affordable housing;
- ✪ For a federal \$15 minimum wage;
- ✪ Medicare for All;
- ✪ For a trillion-dollar public jobs program to rebuild the nation's infrastructure as part of a transition to a renewable energy economy;
- ✪ End the profit-driven capitalist system and the mass poverty it creates.

have plundered Mexico and Central America, forcing families to flee their homes. These policies have also devastated jobs in the U.S. In fact, as workers we have a common interest in boosting our living standards on both sides of the border. We call for mass movements that force the corporate politicians to act in our interests or risk being replaced. We call for an independent working-class challenge to both the Republican and Democratic Parties which are dominated by the interests of big corporations and banks.

Common Struggle

The struggle to defend living standards is intimately tied to the struggle for a society in the based on the interests of workers – a socialist society. The instrument to challenge the corporate right-wing policies of Trump is united working-class action. The program to achieve that is to fight for the needs of all

workers irrespective of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, or country of birth.

The criminalization of immigrants is not in the interests of workers on either side of the border. Workers scared of losing their jobs because of an impending ICE raid will keep their heads down on the job when bosses harass them or steal overtime pay.

A low-paid workforce fearful of asserting their rights is ideal for bosses who seek to drive down wages. The repressive ICE apparatus and the broader militarization of the police is a weapon that will be used against all workers who move into struggle

It has been mass outrage and the threat of mass protests that have forced Trump to reverse his position of separating children from parents at the border. We must use the momentum of the current anger at the outrageous treatment of children to challenge the whole policy of criminalization of immigrants. ✪