

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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SUGGESTED DONATION \$2

CAPITALISM IN CRISIS



FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST FUTURE

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, health care, 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.

Profiteers Plunder Philly Hospital: Working Class Fightback Needed

Read the full version of this article at SocialistAlternative.org

Marty Harrison

RN, Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) (personal capacity)

When you buy a hospital (how relatable!), you enter into an unwritten social contract to provide health care to the community the hospital serves. This contract was deceitfully signed by American Academic Health Services (AAHS) CEO Joel Freedman in 2017 when he bought Hahnemann University Hospital in Philadelphia for \$170 million. On June 26, 2019, he shredded that contract when he announced the hospital would close abruptly and filed for bankruptcy.

AAHS and Freedman refused to open the books, cooperate with city or state officials attempting to facilitate negotiations, or accept any offers to buy the hospital, even profitable ones. This all exposes the truth: Freedman's task was to clear the path for further Center City gentrification by destroying the venerated 177 year old hospital that stood on the site billionaire developers wanted for luxury condos, an upscale hotel, or even the elusive Center City casino. In reality, the crisis at Hahnemann is the logical conclusion of the for-profit health care system, consciously engineered by the gangster profiteers at the helm.

Profit Has No Place In Health Care

Hahnemann's closing and the potential for thousands of displaced patients constitutes a public health emergency. As one of Philadelphia's most accessible "safety net" hospitals, Hahnemann's Emergency Department treated between 40,000 and 60,000 patients per year. In fact, half of its patients are on Medicaid, two thirds are black or brown, and many are unable to get the treatment they need anywhere else in the city.

When Freedman announced the closure, PASNAP – the nurses' union at Hahnemann – launched a public campaign to keep the hospital open and operating safely. The union organized a series of daytime demonstrations at the hospital which brought out patients, physicians, community organizations, Democratic politicians, union members, and representatives from other unions as well as Bernie Sanders at one.

The governor and the mayor both rebuked Freedman sharply, but all their negotiations clearly had got us nowhere except to preoccupy the union leadership which should have taken the campaign public months ago at the first hint of the planned closure. Ultimately, pressure from the unions forced the governor and mayor to produce a \$15 million bandaid to facilitate an orderly wind-down, and potentially help to find a private buyer. Missing is one key fact: There is no for-profit basis that will keep Hahnemann alive.

Public Takeover Needed

The only possible long-term solution to



this public health emergency is a public takeover of Hahnemann via eminent domain. The executives complicit in the willful mismanagement must be removed and the largely-union workforce and their contracts retained. Further, Drexel University medical residents and fellows use Hahnemann as a teaching hospital. While the city may not be immediately equipped to run a hospital, it could employ Drexel's services to manage the hospital on a non-profit basis until it builds a capable team.

In this eleventh hour, it will take a mass movement, led by the unions, and disrupting business as usual to force the city to take such action.

The money to run Hahnemann is sitting in the pockets of the ultra-wealthy, and the fifteen Fortune 500 companies headquartered in the Philadelphia area. We need to tax the rich to raise the funds to run Hahnemann as our own. The fight for a public hospital faces a steep political battle without a reliable, unapologetic anti-corporate party which fully backs the needs of working people every time.

Over 500 people signed Socialist Alternative's petition demanding that the city boot the corporate mismanagers and wrest the hospital from their clutches, taxing the rich to fund its operation.

We stand in solidarity with the workers, patients, and students who depend on Hahnemann, and we are ready to fight alongside them to keep the hospital open and serving our communities. Ultimately we should not accept an economic system in which this turn of events is not only possible, but inevitable.

We Say:

- ✦ Keep Hahnemann University Hospital Open! For an immediate public takeover of the hospital via eminent domain.
- ✦ Drexel University to manage the hospital as a not-for-profit facility until the transition to a public city hospital can be completed. No cuts to the Drexel Medical School, its physician practices or residency programs and fellowships at Hahnemann.
- ✦ Tax Comcast and the other Fortune 500 companies in Philadelphia to fund Hahnemann's long-term public operation.
- ✦ Build a national union-driven campaign for Medicare for All as a first step towards a health care system designed to produce health instead of profit. ✦

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Puerto Rico Movement Forces Out Governor – Cancel the Debt!

Toiyah Shester

After more than a week of constant protests the Puerto Rican people finally forced Governor Ricardo Rosselló to resign on the night of July 24. The announcement came after hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans protested, closing down every exit on the main highway and halting the country in protest. “Ricky” appeared on Fox News shortly thereafter explaining that he would not be stepping down because he wanted to “finish what he had started.” He was asked who in his country supported him and could not answer. This was apparent when walking the streets of San Juan. Every street corner, every sign, every store front had the demand of the people: “Ricky Renuncia!”

The island is in the midst of a devastating 13-year recession that has seen hundreds of thousands leave Puerto Rico for the mainland. Hurricane Maria killed 4,645 people and hundreds of thousands continue to suffer from lack of basic necessities, including shelter – causing damage up to \$120 billion. The U.S. government’s unelected Fiscal Oversight Board – derisively referred to as “La Junta” – has continued the relentless cuts while privatizing energy, schools, and telecoms driving living standards into the dirt for millions. The statistics are shocking: more than 44% of workers and young people live in poverty.

Since the tragedy of Hurricane Maria, the island’s emergency money became the target of profiteering, mismanagement, and corruption. “Debt-relief” measures meant schools being sold off and the money being pocketed by crooked officials. At one protest a school girl held a sign that said “Violence is closing my school.”

The leaked text messages between Rosello and other officials that sparked the protests showed with shocking callousness the true nature of the elite. In hundreds of incriminating messages they joked about murdering the mayor of San Juan and made



Demonstrations in San Juan calling for Governor “Ricky” Rossello’s resignation.

homophobic comments and jokes about dead bodies piling up after Maria.

On Monday July 22, after the big “Parón,” the governor announced that he would not run for reelection, but that was not enough. The people wanted him out!

There were plans for an entire week of action: a march through the financial district of San Juan to protest La Junta to demand its elimination; a protest to block the largest shopping mall of the island whose owners personally asked Ricky to resign. The truck drivers union, which transports all island commerce, threatened to strike. And in the meantime, every day at the Fortaleza – the governor’s mansion – there were constant protests threatening to escalate even further.

Undoubtedly, all this pressure and the threat of further escalation with big economic repercussions has forced the governor to finally concede to the demands of the movement and resign. This was a victory of the Puerto Rican people!

The scale of protests, the amount of solidarity and unity displayed by ordinary

people of Puerto Rico during this struggle were something historic. There was complete understanding by people of all ages on the island that the only way to get rid of Ricky was to stay in the streets. Unions, students, clergy, and the LGBTQ community worked and coordinated daily actions across the country. There was no violence from the people.

“Ricky Renuncia, Y Lleva La Junta!”

On August 2, Pedro Pierluisi, was sworn in as the new governor of Puerto Rico. A student activist from the University of Puerto Rico told us, “He is an extreme right-wing capitalist that represents the private sector. He sucks.” To make matters worse, before taking office he was an attorney for La Junta.

The people of Puerto Rico have shown that mass action can take down corrupt politicians. But this can simply lead to even more corrupt politicians taking their place. It is time for the workers and youth of the island

to challenge the colonial regime, the financial oligarchy, and dictatorship of big business over people’s lives. U.S. capitalists are willing to impoverish the country to fill their pockets. Workers in the U.S. must stand with our Puerto Rican sisters and brothers to fight against colonialism and austerity which ultimately means to fight against capitalism.

The incredible mass struggle has shown the way to challenge any new attacks by big business and the Trump administration in Puerto Rico and across the mainland U.S. The ideas of socialism, struggle, and solidarity are re-awakening across North and Central America among working people and youth. These are the forces that workers and young people on the island can look to as allies to continue the struggle against La Junta and for a democratic and socialist Puerto Rico as part of a socialist federation of North America.

We Say:

- ✦ Organize mass solidarity protests on the mainland to support our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico!
- ✦ Abolish La Junta (the Fiscal Oversight Board). Cancel the debt. Decolonialize Puerto Rico!
- ✦ Full relief funding to rebuild homes, infrastructure, and restore services devastated by Hurricane Maria across the island.
- ✦ Reverse all the cuts; reopen schools. End privatization – return telecommunications and electric power to public ownership.
- ✦ Immediate elections; clear out the whole establishment; for workers’ candidates, completely independent of all corporate interests, to end corruption and fight for a clear program that defends the needs of working people and the poor, not the banks and big business – for a socialist and democratic Puerto Rico. ✦

Mass Shootings in El Paso and Dayton

Trump Fuels Violent White Nationalism

Editorial Board Statement

Two more mass shootings – this time in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio – have horrified ordinary people across the country.

The first was clearly a white nationalist terrorist act aimed at killing the maximum number of Mexican immigrants in a heavily-Latino border city. The motivation of the second is less clear, however it has been revealed that the shooter had a history of deeply held misogyny.

In the days following there has been an outpouring of grief and anger. There is a widespread feeling that President Trump

bears at least some responsibility for the rise in attacks by white nationalist terrorists. Indeed the statement by the perpetrator of the El Paso massacre explicitly supports Trump.

It is completely incongruous to have Trump denounce hate and white supremacy when he has been spewing hate for years especially against immigrants and most recently against Congresspeople of color and the communities they represent.

Of course, white nationalism and the far right were not created by Trump but his presidency has given them real encouragement. The question is what is to be done. The Democratic Party is focusing on gun control as a solution and the Republicans being in the pocket of the NRA. We agree with basic gun control measures but we also need a strategy to fight the

agenda of the right and the far right.

As we said in a recent article, “Defeating the far right will not be achieved by better police intelligence or liberal hand-wringing. It requires building a force that is serious about fighting for all working people, against racism, inequality, and capitalism which is the source of the hatred and division. Just as many who voted for Trump would have voted for Bernie if he had been on the ballot in November 2016, we can win back many people seduced by the racist right-wing conspiracy theories. But to truly isolate and defeat the reactionaries and fascists, people need a vision of the future worth fighting for. This is why the struggle against the far right is inseparable from the struggle for socialism.” ✦

Kamala Harris' Real Record

Erin Brightwell

Following the explosion in popularity of Bernie Sanders' candidacy and program during the 2016 Democratic primary, the Democratic Party establishment is on an all-out campaign for "anyone but Bernie" in 2020. With months to go before the first primary, Joe Biden has a big lead in the polls, but Kamala Harris stands out as a skilled debater who saw a 4% bump in her poll numbers after calling out Biden for praising segregationists and opposing busing to desegregate schools.

Harris, a current Senator and former California Attorney General, is a prime contender with a long history of advancing establishment interests. From protecting Wall Street bankers from prosecution during the foreclosure crisis to threatening California parents with prosecution for their children's truancy, Harris' attempts to seem like an anti-establishment fighter for equality are at odds with her real record.

In Kamala Harris' two terms as California's "top cop," to use her own words she amassed a record that was largely consistent with the ruling-class policy of promoting mass incarceration. Harris championed some minor criminal justice reform initiatives, but she didn't attempt any serious shift in policy.

With California's prison system under court order to reduce overcrowding, the attorney general's office under Harris opposed an early release program on the basis that releasing inmates early would deprive the state of incarcerated workers making slavery wages as low as \$2 a day to fight wildfires. Harris later disavowed the argument, but there was no broad effort on her part to reform the viciously racist system of mass incarceration in her time as the attorney general.

Harris got her start in politics when she was elected San Francisco District Attorney in 1997. One of her initiatives in San Francisco was a program designed to increase school attendance by threatening to arrest

and prosecute parents whose kids were truant. In a recent interview, Harris downplayed the program, claiming that she never intended to prosecute parents.

Harris was challenged on this record by Tulsi Gabbard in the latest Democratic Party debate and even mainstream media accepts that Harris had no substantive response. She chalked these criticisms up to herself being a "top tier candidate" and Tulsi Gabbard just trying to "make the stage for the next debate."

Since Kamala Harris was first elected attorney general in California, consciousness among working people has shifted to the left on many issues. Harris campaign materials show she's trying to relate to the new consciousness and she has just come out with her own Medicare-for-All plan which puts forward a compromise with big business. Rather than eliminate private insurers the way Bernie Sanders' plan would, her plan not only preserves, but expands, insurance companies' role in Medicare. Corporations are insatiable when it comes to profit. A hybrid public-private Medicare-for-All plan will leave the door open for attacks on the public system to make private insurance more and more attractive to those who can afford it.

A student-debt relief scheme that appeared on Harris' Twitter feed is laughably inadequate, impacting only Pell grant recipients who manage to run a successful business for three years in low-income communities. It will take a much more serious approach to win votes from most young working and middle-class people who are burdened by student loans.

How to Talk Left Without Moving

Harris, and the Democratic Party



establishment in general, have a problem. How do they relate to the millions of people who were politicized around Bernie's 2016 program, the 64% of Democratic voters who want Medicare-for-All that replaces private insurance, the 63% of Americans who want the Green New Deal, while simultaneously doing the bidding of their corporate donors?

Like many of the Democratic presidential candidates, Kamala Harris has announced that she'll reject corporate PAC money, but she has accepted substantial donations from corporate lobbyists, despite, at times, claiming that she would reject such money. 56% of the money Harris has received has come from big individual donors and Harris is leading the Democratic contenders in money raised from the Clinton network of "bundlers," or individuals who fundraise mainly among wealthy people. Harris has not sworn off the rich and super rich who have supported her in the past, and she's been busy

courting new corporate donors since well before she declared for the presidential race.

The Kamala Harris campaign accepts that it will be necessary to put forward policies that includes real reforms to the criminal justice system, health care, and higher education in order to become the Democratic party nominee. However, most of her plans are woefully inadequate, and considering her donor base and track record as an establishment figure, she can't be trusted to carry out major reforms to, for example, the multi-billion dollar health care industry. It will take much more than Harris' trademark verbal skills to unseat the powerful corporate interests who are responsible for the increasingly barbaric conditions of life for poor and working people in this country. Kamala Harris has given no indication that she will oppose the rule of the corporations, much less build the movement that will be necessary to put working people's needs first. ☘

Democratic Debates: A Win for Progressive Ideas, Establishment Pushes Back

Gabe Berry

In July, the Democratic Party had another two nights of debates between a crowded arena of 20 presidential candidates, including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Joe Biden, and Kamala Harris. In contrast to the June debate, instead of trying to occupy the left, many candidates defended status quo politics, calling for a return to "pragmatism" and the need for policies "grounded in reality." About the Green New Deal, John Hickenlooper said, "You might as well FedEx the election to Donald Trump." For most Americans, this means acquiescing to the wants of the pharmaceutical companies, big corporations, and the needs of the billionaires as opposed to the interests of working people.

On the first night, however, these attacks were swatted

away by the fiery Bernie Sanders and a powerful performance by Elizabeth Warren defending policies such as taxing the rich and fighting for a single-payer, Medicare-for-All plan. In a moment that has since gone viral, while Bernie Sanders was making the point that union members will be better off under a comprehensive Medicare-For-All plan, Tim Ryan interrupted him to say "You don't know that Bernie." Without missing a beat, Bernie fired back "I do know it, I wrote the damn bill."

The second night was primarily defined by Joe Biden digging his heels in to defend the Obama years and the status quo while other candidates like Kamala Harris and Julian Castro tried to occupy the progressive space. Joe Biden called Medicare for All "a bunch of malarkey," equating a tax increase to pay for it with a deductible out of your paycheck. As much as the second night was about

Biden defending the status quo, many commentators are acknowledging that the progressive wing, represented by Bernie and Warren, were the overall winners of the debates.

The debates featured CNN asking questions using right-wing talking points and giving lesser-known candidates opportunities to fire away at Bernie and Warren. The division within the Democratic Party is being further exposed as the left wing gathers momentum and the moderate wing pulls back.

A key question of this debate was what policies candidates are willing to fight for. The September debates will include far fewer candidates and no doubt continue the "attack the left" dynamics. As the primaries heat up, we will see the differences between the political establishment of all shades and Sanders sharpen on how to fight Trump and defend working people as a recession looms. ☘

Why You Should Join Socialist Alternative

Workers all over the country are facing extremely low wages, poor health care, housing that we can't afford, and child care costs we can't keep up with. Without our labor, no store, company, or organization could function – yet we are still the ones that wind up struggling every day while the bosses get richer. With Trump in office, the climate crisis, and growing levels of inequality – millions of people are growing tired of politics and business as usual. Socialist ideas are on the rise as ordinary people look to challenge capitalism.

Socialist Alternative is a Marxist organization that fights for every reform possible but recognizes that capitalism by its very nature must produce inequality, racism, and sexism. We see the multiracial working class as the key force for change. We argue for the establishment of a socialist system where key sectors of the economy are under the democratic control of working people and we can set society's priorities based on human need not profit.

In order to achieve fundamental change, Socialist Alternative believes it's critical to build and strengthen the collective power of the working class today and to unite all struggles of the oppressed into a common challenge to the corporate elite.

What Do We Do?

In 2014, Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant became the first socialist to win a city council position in Seattle in 100 years. Kshama has used her position to assist the struggles of working people, including leading the fight to win the nation's first \$15 an hour minimum wage, historic tenants rights laws, and a tax on Amazon to

fund affordable housing (though this was later repealed due to Amazon's bullying). This year, we're fighting to get Sawant reelected against the direct political and economic power of Jeff Bezos and Amazon executives who have made absolutely clear they want "anybody but Kshama."

As socialists, we participate in labor battles across the U.S. including the recent teachers strikes, most notably in Oakland, where we played an important role in building parent and community support for the strike. We have members in important positions in several unions across the country including nurses and bus drivers as well as members leading organizing drives in a number of workplaces across the country. This year in Massachusetts we played an important role in the inspirational 11-day strike of Stop & Shop workers. Socialist Alternative members worked in lock step with the workers to organize strong picket lines, stop delivery trucks, and hold "mega-pickets" with community support.

Socialist Alternative sees the fight against all forms of oppression as a critical component of the overall fight for the socialist transformation of society. After the 2018 nomination of predator Brett Kavanaugh to

the Supreme Court, we issued a call for demonstrations in a number of major cities. We went on to lead marches and protests against his appointment and gave speeches connecting this struggle to the need for overall system change.

How Do We Do It?

Our approach to building a democratic yet disciplined organization allows us to often play an outsized role in social struggle compared to our size. We seek to root ourselves in the day to day reality of the working class. We discuss with our neighbors, coworkers, classmates, etc., sharing our newspaper and getting a sense of what the key issues are that people are willing to fight back on.

We engage in extensive discussion on political and economic trends at both local and national level. We seek to bring the lessons of the history of the labor movement and social struggle to bear in the material we produce. Our goal is to help point the way forward to victory while in constant dialogue with ordinary people. Through proving the value of our ideas in action we seek to win more people to our ideas.

While we have full discussion within the organization, without action that

discussion is meaningless. Our discussions lead to decisions which are implemented in a united way. It's this process of discussing things out and then acting quickly that allowed us to organize successful "Mega Pickets" during the Stop & Shop strike which forced the company to keep a handful of stores shut during what is usually one of the most profitable days of the year, the day before Easter.

Why Do We Do It?

Socialist Alternative is an organization of workers from all over the country – linked to other socialist organizations around the world – who think we need a new system. A socialist system would guarantee high quality housing, health care for all, free universal childcare, and make decisions in society and in the workplace democratically.

Working people need our own political party to bring our movements and struggles together and give them the strongest expression on the streets, in the workplace, and on legislative bodies. We cannot rely on parties that are tied to and serve corporate money. We need a party of working people that has democratic debates about how best to win health care, education, and jobs for all.

We are fighting nationally against big business, the far-right, and capitalism – for a socialist alternative based on the democratic control and decision-making of the working class. We believe in the power of the working class to usher in a society that works for all working people, not for multi-billionaires.

If you agree with what Socialist Alternative stands for – join us! ☘



A march lead by Socialist Alternative in October of 2018 against the appointment of Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court

WHY I JOINED SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Tim Soder

Night Crew Chief, Stop & Shop
UFCW 1445

"I joined Socialist Alternative shortly after standing side by side with comrades on the picket lines of the Stop & Shop strike. During those eleven days we were on strike I felt for the first time like I had the power to change things. It wasn't my power alone though, collectively we the workers were able to wield our power to cripple Stop & Shop and make a difference in the company contract. More importantly though I felt like we had struck a blow to capitalism as a whole, a force that had seemed immutable to me my whole life."

Climate Catastrophe Need for a Planned E

Keely Mullen

The 20-warmest years on record occurred in the past 22 years and rising temperatures are just one symptom of the climate catastrophe we are now staring down. Eight percent of species are threatened with extinction. The state of Louisiana loses a football-field worth of land every 45 minutes due to rising sea levels. Wildfires are ravaging the Western U.S. and hurricanes have pummeled the Southeastern coast.

Humanity is at a crossroads. Report after report warns that unless decisive action is taken to reduce carbon emissions, we risk triggering a series of “tipping points” after which the effects on the environment cannot be reversed. A report from Columbia Engineering projects that the planet’s ability to absorb carbon dioxide could begin to decline in 2060. Our built-in safety net against excessive carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is eroding, dramatically accelerating the worst effects of climate change.

At risk with the worsening climate crisis is not just our comfort, but access to the earth’s collective resources, water, land, and clean air, as well as the mass displacement of millions of people who will become known as climate

refugees.

The effect of climate change on earth’s water cycle has been of particular concern to climate scientists. Rising temperatures have led to more water vapor being held in the atmosphere which has in turn made water availability very difficult to predict. This can lead to both more intense rainstorms and more severe droughts.

While tropical storms, hurricanes, and monsoonal rain storms are part of normal weather patterns in the U.S., the increased frequency and severity of these events means more intense flooding which poses a threat to our overall water quality. This is because flood water picks up sewage, pesticides, motor oil, industrial wastewater, and all sorts of contaminants and delivers them straight into our waterways. In 2014, Hurricane Sandy flooded 10 out of New York City’s 14 wastewater treatment plants causing them to release partially treated or untreated sewage into local waterways!

Responsibility Lies with Corporations

When Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth* came

out in 2006 it was groundbreaking, explaining in simple language the science behind global warming and the danger it posed to humanity. This movie opened up a real conversation given that for decades major corporations engaged in a determined campaign to hide the facts about climate change in order to prevent any disruption to their enormously profitable business. This sickening campaign of theirs has no doubt already led to the deaths of thousands.

Al Gore’s conclusion was that the key to slowing or reversing the effects of climate change rested on the shoulders of individuals and their consumer choices. Change your light bulbs, take shorter showers, get a hybrid car, don’t use plastic straws. While some of these changes to our daily consumption could have an impact, even if everyone in the U.S. followed every suggestion in *An Inconvenient Truth*, U.S. carbon emissions would only fall by 22%! Scientific consensus is that it needs to be reduced by 75% globally. This poses the question, who are the real drivers of the climate crisis and how do we take them on?

Reports have found that just 100 companies are responsible for 71% of global emissions since 1988, most of those being coal and oil-producing companies like Exxon, Shell, and BP.

It is not a coincidence or an accident that these corporations are the major drivers of global warming. It is inherent in the logic of capitalism that, in order to remain viable, companies have to maximize profit. This means looking for any corners that can be cut, any expenses that can be avoided, and any safety measures that can be bypassed.

The horrific Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010 emptied 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. It was confirmed by a White House commission, that in the lead up to the explosion, BP, Transocean, and Halliburton made a series of decisions in an effort to cut costs that ultimately caused the blow-out and the death of 11 workers. This White House commission itself confirmed

that this was likely to happen again due to “industry complacency.” In other words, this will likely happen again because the cost of cleaning up a disaster is nothing compared to the profits made by creating the disaster to begin with.

A variety of different policy initiatives have been proposed to address this crisis, most of which have fallen laughably short of what is needed. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Green New Deal (GND) goes the furthest, calling for a rapid transition to 100% renewable energy, an overhaul of transportation systems, and for progressive taxation. Winning the GND would represent a huge step forward in moving toward a sustainable society, but where it falls short is in actually dealing with the structural power of the energy sector. If the energy sector remains in private hands they will work overtime to undermine the GND which would effectively bring the value of their unexploited reserves, worth hundreds of billions, to zero. The conflicting goals of business leaders whose objective is to make a profit and the forces trying to implement the GND will make a rapid transition to renewable energy nearly impossible.

The Case for Public Ownership

It is certainly not ruled out that mass pressure could lead to steps that begin the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy even under capitalism. However, without bringing important sectors of the economy, beginning with the energy sector, into public ownership, that transition would be slow moving and largely disorganized. In order to do what is needed to radically change course and avoid the worst effects of climate change, we need to move onto war footing. This means a rapid and organized approach to take the energy sector into public ownership and re-tool it on a sustainable basis.

Carrying out a rapid transition away from fossil fuels – even with a publicly owned energy sector – would also require bringing other sectors of the economy into public ownership. Taking over important parts of the manufacturing sector would allow for rapid expansion of electric cars and public transport. Beyond that, we need the banks in public hands in order to assist ordinary people and small businesses in making the transition to energy efficient homes and shops. Such profound change points toward a complete reorganization of production on a socialist basis with a democratically planned economy.

Historically, capitalism unleashed human productivity on a massive scale. However, the defining features of capitalism – private ownership and the nation state – have now become a fetter to the further development of our



The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010 killed 11 workers, injured many more, and emptied 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

e and the Economy

economy and society. This is evident with the series of international agreements on the climate which have had very little effect because of the unwillingness of competing nation states to make concessions that would benefit their rivals.

Right now, all the major decisions about how to deploy society's resources are made by a select few extremely wealthy business leaders. The decisions are made on the basis of whatever will bring in the most money. This often means using completely inefficient methods to produce things. For example, when a car is being assembled, almost every single component part will travel to Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. over and over before the parts come together to form a car. The metal base of a steering wheel that's produced in the U.S. is sent to Mexico to get covered and stitched up before being sent back to the U.S. This is entirely so the company can find the cheapest supplies and labor to make their final product.

This is the logic of capitalism. A system where priorities are set in the name of profit, no matter the consequences to the planet or the people that inhabit it.

So the question is, what's the alternative? How can we organize society more efficiently and in the interests of people and the planet rather than profit?

Planned System Needed

We need a democratically planned economy where the top 500 companies are brought into public ownership and decisions about how a given industry is run are made by elected bodies of workers and consumers. The climate crisis may be the most existential crisis humanity faces but capitalism inevitably produces massive inequality, poverty and structural racism. To address all these questions requires a society where key economic decisions are democratically made by the masses of people.

Bringing a company into public ownership means taking both their material resources – factories, tools, distribution networks, technologies, infrastructure – and their existing financial reserves out of the hands of wealthy investors and into the hands of society as a whole. Once that critical step is taken, democratic councils can replace the capitalist bosses and facilitate the operation of that company or industry. These councils would need to reflect the expertise of the workers in that industry who are intimately familiar with how it operates, what it produces, and what can be improved. In order to prevent the development of a bureaucracy, anyone elected to a workers' council would make no more money than the average worker in that industry and would be subject to immediate recall.

These councils would not aim to maximize the profitability of their given industry, but rather to maximize the ability of that industry to meet the needs of society. This would lead to a substantial increase in the general standard of living of the vast majority of people because there would be no reason to keep wages down, workweeks unnecessarily long, or social services starved.

The transition to a planned economy may well start in one country, but in order for it to succeed it will need to spread internationally. We live in a world economy created by capitalism but to take full advantage of this requires global socialist planning. Under a democratically planned economy, international structures would need to be established to facilitate the maximum coordination of workers councils in different industries across borders.

As was detailed earlier, most major industries under capitalism are completely held back by the constant need to cut costs. Bosses will look for shortcuts in order to ensure they're getting the cheapest goods and labor. The task of democratically elected councils in overseeing workplaces and industries would be to identify where things can be made more efficient and more environmentally sustainable. For example, right now, the vast logistics and supply chain networks that exist at Amazon and Walmart are completely divorced from one another because they are in direct competition. When this competition is eliminated, these incredibly useful networks can be combined and re-tooled. The just-in-time model adopted by Amazon and other major retailers where a product can be ordered and delivered in a matter of days could be of tremendous use to society if separated from the profit motive. Walmart's vast enterprise is itself planned – with coordination at all levels of the supply chain. This lays the basis for a relatively painless transition to a cooperative, democratically planned enterprise.

So, how does all of this connect to the existential threat of climate change and how could a planned economy help?

Planning a Green Future

Capitalism produces significant innovations – however these are subordinated to what is profitable, not necessarily what is needed.

On the basis of a democratically-planned economy, innovation can be unleashed in the interests of ordinary people and the climate. We can invest in a genuine transformation of major industries on a sustainable basis. We can invest in the retraining of millions of workers in currently polluting industries and create millions of good-paying union jobs harnessing renewable energy through solar, wind, and

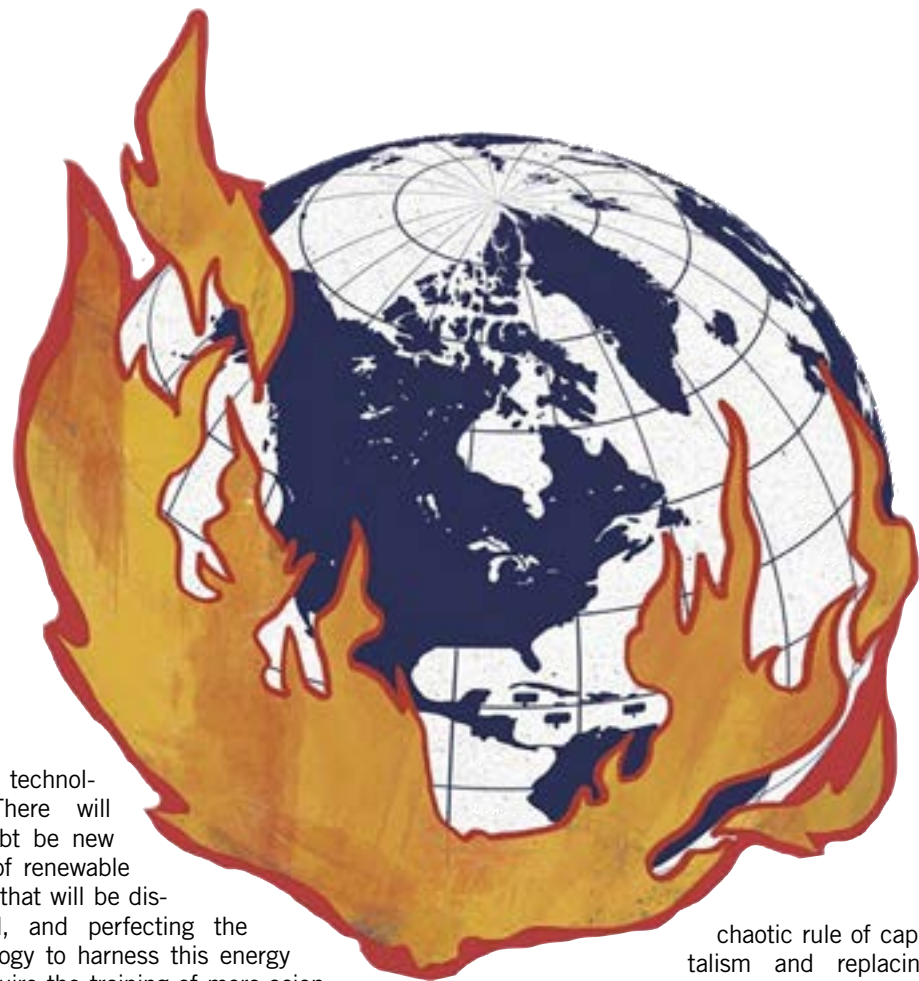
wave technology. There will no doubt be new forms of renewable energy that will be discovered, and perfecting the technology to harness this energy will require the training of more scientists and engineers as well as moving scientists currently working on weapons development to far more useful work.

In order to reverse some of the worst effects of the climate crisis, a global reforestation project would need to be taken up. Restocking forests by planting millions of native trees would dramatically reduce pollution in the air and would rebuild natural habitats and ecosystems that have been lost to deforestation. Alongside this there will need to be a significant reorganization of global agriculture to reduce the land given to cattle as well as the development of healthy meat alternatives.

Public transportation in most major cities is completely eroding. Meanwhile, Americans spend 19 full days a year stuck in traffic on their way to work. While people should have the choice to own and use their own vehicles, massively expanding public transit and making it entirely electric would allow many more people to travel faster and more easily than driving. Beyond local public transit, long-distance trains need to be expanded as well. High-speed electric trains could provide a cheaper and far less environmentally damaging alternative to air travel. Expanding sustainable public transportation would not only improve the standard of living for many people, it would also be a leap forward in transforming society on a green basis.

A society freed from the constraints of profit could take up a number of ground-breaking projects to change society: creating energy efficient housing designs with more effective insulation, researching direct air capture stations to clean and re-emit currently polluted air, and developing electrified roads to charge electric vehicles as they drive.

The solution to this crisis will not be handed down from on high, it will not be innovated by Elon Musk, it will not come as a result of simply voting every four years. Retooling society on a truly sustainable basis and ensuring a future for humanity rests on ending the anarchic and



chaotic rule of capitalism and replacing it with a truly democratic planned economy.

What Next?

Winning revolutionary change and transforming our society on a socialist basis will require mounting a historic challenge against the super rich who currently dominate our society. There are very exciting signs in the U.S. and internationally of the potential to develop that challenge. From the historic teachers strikes that have taken place in the past year and a half which could spread into other sectors, to the growing youth climate movement that now has plans for an international day of action on September 20.

It is the united and organized strength of working and young people that can usher in socialist change. A critical step in this process will be the building of our own mass political party with a clear socialist program and determined leadership. Since 2015 we've emphasized the role Bernie Sanders – and now Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – could play in that process by using their huge base of support for progressive, working-class politics and launching a new mass organization.

We need to continue building and strengthening the organizations of the working class in preparation for the decisive struggles ahead. This means building fighting unions in our workplaces that are well organized, truly democratic, have the active participation of all workers, and are willing to do whatever it takes to defend against attacks from our bosses. The unions need to link up with the vibrant social movements currently taking place against climate change, sexism and racism, and point the way forward on a working-class basis.

In order to take the leaps necessary to save the planet from the ruin of profit we need to fundamentally break with capitalism and fight for the socialist transformation of society on the basis of true innovation, cooperation, and equality. ☺

The Squad vs. Trump and Pelosi

Tom Crean

In the past couple weeks, President Trump has gone on a racist, red-baiting rampage against four congresswomen elected in 2018. The four women of color – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, and Ayanna Pressley – are now collectively known in the media as the “squad.” Among other things, Trump tweeted that they should “go back [to] the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came,” despite only one of them being born outside the U.S.

This is only the latest episode in Trump’s offensive against immigrants and overtly whipping up racism. During the 2016 campaign, he claimed that hordes of Mexican criminals and rapists were crossing the Southern border. Trump has also given direct encouragement to far-right white nationalists, most notoriously when he said there were “very fine people” among the neo-Nazis marching in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017.

But Trump was also attacking the congresswomen’s progressive politics by calling them “radical left” and “anti-American.” Other Republicans piled on, calling AOC and the others “communists” and “anti-Semites.”

It is not news that Trump directly seeks to stoke racial division in part to solidify his base. This helps Trump to cover up and distract from the various ways in which his policies serve the interests of the super rich who are screwing all sections of the working class.

But Trump and the Republicans deliberately exaggerate and distort the political positions of the squad and seek to use incendiary attacks to force the Democratic leadership to defend them. Trump wants to run his 2020 campaign around the idea that he is protecting the country from “radical socialism” and that the squad is the real face of the Democratic Party. As Trump himself put it: “The Dems were trying to distance themselves from the four ‘progressives,’ but now they are forced to embrace them. That means they are endorsing Socialism, hate of Israel and the USA! Not good for the Democrats!”

The Squad and the New Left

In fact, Trump’s attacks come in the middle of increasingly open divisions in the Democratic Party in the House of Representatives with Nancy Pelosi attacking the squad in early July, albeit in somewhat veiled terms: “All these people have their public whatever and their Twitter world. But they didn’t have any following. They’re four people and that’s how many votes they got.”

This was in the wake of a vote on a Democratic bill to fund operations at the border. The squad were the only Democrats to vote against it, saying in a joint statement that the bill “gives even more money to ICE and CBP and continues to support a fundamentally cruel and broken immigration system.”

In the end the Democrats agreed to an even worse bill from the Senate.

The squad has taken a clear and principled stand for closing the detention camps at the border and for disbanding ICE. More generally, they are for taking a more aggressive and confrontational stand against Trump and the right-wing agenda than the corporate leadership of the Democratic Party is prepared to do. AOC and Rashida Tlaib are members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) but all four received support from Justice Democrats in their campaigns last year. There are also differences among the squad on some issues as reflected in the recent vote on the bipartisan pro-Israeli government, anti-BDS bill where Pressley voted for and the other three voted against.

In many ways, AOC is the most decidedly left of the four, as well as having the biggest following. She boldly brought forward a proposal for legislation for a Green New Deal that aims at a rapid transition to an economy based on renewable energy and zero carbon emissions. What has possibly most irked Pelosi though is AOC’s support for the Justice Democrats’ call for progressive candidates to take on establishment Democrats in next year’s primaries.

What Is To Be Done?

Socialist Alternative, along with millions of ordinary people, stands in solidarity with AOC, Tlaib, Omar, and Pressley against the attacks of this dangerous reactionary president but also against the attacks of Pelosi and the Democratic establishment. The question, however, is how they should use their massive platform to develop and help lead the struggle against the right.

When Pelosi said the squad’s support is just based on twitter, AOC responded by saying “That public ‘whatever’ is called public sentiment. And wielding the power to shift it is how we actually achieve meaningful change in this country.” AOC is correct that a big section of the base of the Democratic Party has moved to the left in the past several years, particularly in the wake of Bernie Sanders’ transformative 2016 presidential campaign and the popularization of his pro-working-class program. There is massive support for Medicare for All and the Green New Deal. The shift to the left in the base led to the election of progressives nationally and at state and local level including a number of self-described socialists. It also led many presidential candidates to try to sound a bit like Bernie though the bulk of them are really fake progressives.

But we have to be clear that the pressure of “public opinion” by itself will not force the Democrats to change their nature as a party



Representatives Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Rashida Tlaib at a press conference.

dominated by corporate interests. Nor will it defeat the agenda of the right.

We need a mass movement centered on the social power of the working class to begin turning the tide against the right and to push back against xenophobia and racial division. This is the decisive element missing today. Mass protests by women and young people occurred early in the Trump administration on a regular basis but these did not have a clear strategy and direction and were ultimately subsumed by the push to defeat the Republicans electorally in 2018.

If the squad and Bernie Sanders had called for mass protests to shut down the camps at the border in June there would have been a huge response. But to make this the beginning of a sustained struggle such mobilizations would have to also take up a series of demands that address the needs of all working people. Fighting for quality jobs as part of a massive green-infrastructure program, affordable housing for all and tuition-free college is the way to undercut the “us versus them” zero-sum xenophobia that Trump espouses.

At the start of 2019, the real force that could push Trump back was revealed when air traffic controllers and flight attendants brought Trump’s “border wall” government shutdown to an end by threatening to shut the airports down. The Democratic leadership however has no interest in rousing the working class into action.

Trump in the White House of course makes the Democrats look like the lesser evil in the eyes of tens of millions. But the truth is that the Democrats, despite their rhetoric, are no friends of black people, immigrants or working people generally. This is the party that brought in mass incarceration on a full scale under Bill Clinton (with some help from

Joe Biden in the Senate). At local level the Democrats have presided over institutional segregation and racist policing for decades. Under President Obama, more immigrants were deported than under any previous administration. After the crash of ‘07-’08 the Democrats bailed out Wall Street while millions lost their jobs and homes. This is what helped to open the door to Trump.

It is completely understandable that millions of people are looking to push the Democrats further to the left and trying to remake it as a “people’s party.” But, as we have pointed out, this would mean ending all corporate donations, creating meaningful democratic structures, adopting a pro-working-class program that public officials were required to fight for and paying those officials the average income of the working-class people they represent. The pro-corporate leadership will split the party rather than accept this transformation.

Attention is of course increasingly turning to the presidential primary and the pressure of the base is being reflected there as well. We would urge the members of the squad to join Sanders in building the strongest possible challenge to corporate politics in 2020 up to and beyond the Democratic convention. Sanders should set up democratic structures to involve workers and young people as meaningful participants in his campaign and as a step towards setting up a new political party. Unfortunately, there are no signs that Bernie or AOC and the squad agree with this approach. That’s why it’s vital that left activists, especially socialists including those in DSA who understand the Democrats can’t be “reclaimed,” themselves begin building toward a new left party, especially if Bernie is again undemocratically blocked in the primary. ☘

Britain: Big Business' Bigot Boris Must Go!

Build for a Working-Class Campaign of Strike Action and Mass Demonstrations

**CWI reporters in
England & Wales**

The election of the Eton-educated, racist toff Boris Johnson as Tory leader and thus the new prime minister reflects the political crisis of British capitalism, but it also poses a fresh and urgent challenge to the workers' movement.

Despite his bumbling persona and his populist rhetoric, Johnson is an ideological representative of the super-rich. He campaigned on promises to cut taxes for the wealthy. This is an affront to those barely surviving thanks to Tory "welfare" reform, communities suffering the impact of cuts to services and the millions of workers struggling to make ends meet. He will continue and perhaps even sharpen his predecessors' attacks on the working class.

The central plank of Johnson's campaign was to take the UK out of the EU on October 31, no matter what. He and the Tory Little Englanders don't give a damn about working-class people. A hard Brexit under Johnson will mean not just the maintenance of the EU's anti-working-class policies but their acceleration.

Johnson stood for the Tory leadership on a platform of tax cuts for the rich. This against a backdrop of historically high inequality. One recent study suggests that inequality is as high today as it was at the start of World War Two. Meanwhile average pay for the bankers, who Johnson resolutely defended during his campaign, was £2 million per year as of March 2019.

Johnson has made spending promises like more police on the streets and £5,000 per school student but it remains to be seen how this would be achieved. The fallout from a

*Read the full version of this
article at SocialistAlternative.org*

no-deal Brexit as he envisions it would mean there would be nothing left to fund services. In reality, these promises are just a sop to working-class people who, after nine years of Tory government have had enough of austerity. They are unlikely to quell the anger that lurks not far beneath surface. Huge social explosions and upheavals are inherent in the current situation. Even the Tories are aware that one false move from Johnson could act as the trigger.

Johnson made defeating Corbyn a key battle cry in his campaign, reflecting the fear of the capitalist class of even Corbyn's modest, social democratic policies. Unfortunately, Corbyn is currently in a weak position, having made concession after concession on Brexit and around the largely manufactured anti-Semitism scandal to Labour's Blairite right, who would rather see the Tories remain in office than a government under his leadership.

Corbyn can win a future general election but, to do so, he and all socialists in the Labour Party must now go on the offensive. Corbyn's anti-austerity program in the 2017 general election enthused millions and should be built upon now. Immediately Labour must hold rallies in every town and city calling for a general election, and putting forward socialist policies. This can help build momentum toward a general election and prepare the ground for creating a movement to get rid of the Tories.

This should include campaigning around a clear, socialist program of nationalization, an end to austerity and measures to eliminate poverty through investment in socially



Boris Johnson Britain's new Prime Minister

useful jobs and services. Corbyn and those who back him should put forward a vision for a socialist Brexit, which would free his government from the shackles of the capitalist EU, its barriers to nationalization and state investment, while also avoiding hard borders and defending workers' rights, the environment and migrants.

To achieve this, Corbyn will have to also go on the offensive against the Blairites who are ensconced in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Democratize Labour from top to bottom, allowing the aspirations of the rank-and-file membership to be fully reflected in its upper echelons. Central to this is the question of mandatory reselection, giving local memberships the automatic right to remove sitting MPs who do not reflect their views from being candidates in the next election. This should be urgently implemented in preparation for the next election, to ensure Labour can present a clear and united message and to prevent the Blairites sabotaging a government under Corbyn's leadership.

Johnson sits atop a profoundly weak and divided Tory party, reflected in his "night of the long knives" cabinet reshuffle. The beginnings of mass opposition to him is already being demonstrated through youthful protests. The trade union and labor movement should launch an offensive to drive Johnson and his ilk from power, organizing coordinated strike action and mass demonstrations against austerity and poverty pay and demanding a general election. We've heard fine words from the leaders of the trade union movement over the past nine years but now is the time for them to act. If they are not prepared to do so, working class people should not wait to mobilize their potential power and strength in workplaces and communities.

Such a revolt of working-class people would lay the foundations for a movement that could end the misrule of the discredited Tories. It could also be the beginning of a movement that could fight for a socialist alternative to their austerity policies and the capitalist system they defend. ✪

Hong Kong Workers Strike Back!

George Martin Fell Brown

On August 5, Hong Kong was shaken by a general strike. 200,000 took part in seven strike rallies and disrupted business-as-usual. Striking airport workers disrupted more than 200 flights. Other strikers and protesters occupied malls and blocked roadways. It was the first political general strike in Hong Kong in 93 years. This marks a significant escalation of the democracy struggle in Hong Kong, and has important implications for struggles in mainland China and internationally.

The current phase of the Hong Kong democracy struggle was provoked by Carrie Lam, the Beijing-appointed chief executive of Hong Kong, proposing amendments to Hong Kong's extradition law. These amendments, if passed, would serve

to legalize the Chinese dictatorship's abductions of political dissidents, even those just transiting through Hong Kong's international airport. Lam was acting on behalf of the Chinese state and the big business establishment in both Hong Kong and mainland China.

The movement against the extradition law peaked on June 16 with a demonstration of two million people, the largest in the history of Hong Kong. After first trying to suppress the movement, Carrie Lam was eventually forced to back off and suspend the proposed amendments. This showed the power of the Hong Kong masses, but it wasn't enough. Without a full withdrawal of the amendments, Lam, or a future chief executive, could still bring them back once the movement had a chance to settle down.

What is significant about the current wave of protests is the role of strike action, something that was absent in June

and July. From the start, Socialist Action, Socialist Alternative's Hong Kong co-thinkers in the Committee for a Workers' International, were the only organization that had been campaigning for just such a political general strike, even at a time when other activists thought such a demand was unrealistic. However, there's more work to do.

The majority who went on strike are unorganized. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions supported the strike but didn't mobilize on a mass scale. Going forward, we need to mobilize the Hong Kong working class – organized and unorganized – into strike action on a mass scale. We need to build an organized struggle of the Hong Kong and mainland Chinese working class that can challenge the Chinese state's billionaire-run dictatorship and the capitalist and imperialist system it upholds. ✪

#RedForEd Ready To Heat Up the New School Year

Read the full version of this article at SocialistAlternative.org

Margaret Whittier-Ferguson
Somerville Teachers Association, Building Representative (personal capacity)

As educators gear up for the school year, we are seeing a continuation of the #RedForEd movement nationally with the possibility of walkouts by educators and school staff in Columbus, Ohio, and Chicago, Illinois if their respective districts don't fulfill their demands for improved working and learning conditions. Simultaneously, the corporate elite are gearing up with one goal in mind: to halt the expansion of working-class gains won by strike action, in fear that this relearning of the methods of working-class struggle will spread beyond school districts and into other public and private sectors.

The teachers revolt has sparked a broader resistance of working-class communities against the drive to privatize education which has not delivered on the promises made by its Republican and Democratic promoters. The corporate privatizers are more on the defensive today than at any point in the past twenty years. While, signs are pointing toward a continuation of the #RedForEd movement in the 2019-2020 school year and beyond the very success of the movement will provoke determined resistance from corporate interests. The war is far from over.

Educators (and the entirety of the labor movement) must draw lessons from the experience gained from previous teacher strikes in 2018-19 without taking a "copy-and-paste" approach. The corporate education reformers have learned from those strikes and we need to as well. While there have been local gains won by the #RedForEd movement, our education system is still under attack due to massive underfunding and privatization efforts. The

teachers revolt will have to adapt to safeguard gains and continue to fight for improved working and learning conditions.

West Virginia: Facing Threat of Privatization

In West Virginia educators walked out earlier this year against a bill that would have created charter schools for the first time in the state. The bill included sweeteners such as money for raises, more nurses, and more schools staff. The Republicans eventually won this battle by reintroducing and forcing the bill through in late June when school was out of session. This fight is not completely over and there is a strong possibility that further strikes will happen this fall.

West Virginia teachers' initial strike in 2018 ignited a national wave of teachers and education walk-outs and protests. A defeat for the teachers in West Virginia would be a blow to the entire labor movement.

Chicago: Teachers in Contract Negotiations

Before the West Virginia strike in 2018, the historic 2012 Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) strike inspired teachers across the country. Both the CTU, and SEIU local 73 (which represents support staff, security officers, and custodians in the public schools) are once again in negotiations with the Chicago Public School District for a fair contract that includes enforceable class size limits, no non-mandatory testing, and a moratorium on charter schools. Activists report the strong possibility of coordinated strike action in Chicago this fall.



Demonstration at WV Capitol in Charleston, June 2019

The CTU has led the unionization of some charter school educators in Chicago, including the first strike action in U.S. history of unionized charter school teachers in May. Those charter educators won historic gains including pay parity with public school teachers, more support staff for students, and sanctuary protection for a majority immigrant student population.

Need for Nationwide Day of Action

We have seen in places like West Virginia and Arizona that it is not because of the existing union leadership that victories have been won, but through new leaderships that have sprung up and taking on roles of organizing coworkers as well as communities. We are seeing educators and working class communities looking for alternative tactics and strategy, and it is critical that rank-and-file union members point to the history of working class struggle for examples of fighting strategy. This local rank-and-file momentum should be directed toward a national day of action to bolster and unite our locals fights for taxing the rich to fully fund our public education. ☺

Amazon Workers Walkout in Shakopee, MN

Read the full version of this article at SocialistAlternative.org

Adam Burch

Minnesota Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) member (personal capacity)

On July 15, the first day of Amazon's "Prime Week," workers at Amazon's MSP1 warehouse in Shakopee, MN planned a six-hour strike to demand safer working conditions and more secure jobs. Amazon's retail empire, owned by the world's richest man Jeff Bezos, depends on squeezing the most they can out of warehouse and delivery workers. Amazon workers around the world have started to fight back and the Shakopee workers have started to bring that struggle to the U.S.

In November 2018, Amazon met with a group of East African Shakopee workers who had been organizing against unrealistic productivity quotas and for space for prayer. This group

of workers is reported to be the first known group in the U.S. to get Amazon management to negotiate. Amazon of course denies this, instead calling it "community engagement" fearing that it will spread beyond Shakopee and embolden the MSP1 workers there to demand more.

During the walkout on July 15, workers and organizers emphasized again and again the grueling pace of work expected of them in the warehouse. The slogan that the workers have raised for over a year is, "We are humans, not robots." Management is always around or overhead to pressure workers to fill unrealistic quotas. This can of course lead to injuries.

Many have a legitimate fear of retaliation. One way Amazon has been punishing workers is to deduct the time they spent during a walkout from their quarterly leave allowance.

Socialist Alternative supported the December

walkout and participated in the rally. We were eager and excited to not just participate on July 15, but also to help build for it. During the walkout on July 15, we walked the picket line with the workers, successfully turning away a few delivery trucks! Socialist Alternative also produced a flyer to start conversations with those that we met there. We used our time to meet as many workers as we could.

The MSP1 workers that have participated in the walkouts showed incredible courage in the face of intimidation from Amazon. These workers will be the core of the force building for future actions. These workers should continue having organizing meetings to discuss the best way forward, and recruit others to join them. It's only through the mass organization of these workers with strong democratic structures that Amazon's brutal regime can be pushed back. ☺

In Brief

Kentucky Coal Miners Get Stuffed, Block Trains

Despite Trump's campaign promises to bring coal back, in the last year five major coal companies have closed. The latest, Blackjewel, was symbolically run and declared bankruptcy the day after sending out paychecks which promptly bounced for hundreds of workers.

In Harlan County, Kentucky, laid-off Blackjewel coal miners noticed the company moving coal and immediately occupied the track to prevent the company from doing so while leaving wages unpaid. These workers instinctively, without a union, moved to stop the functioning of the company – a move informed by necessity as well as the proud labor history of coal miners in the region.

UAW, Big 3 Auto-Makers Start Negotiations as Auto Industry Slumps

Formerly one of the most important industries in the country, American auto-makers are increasingly following the lead of Chinese manufacturers as car sales slump. In the midst of this the United Auto Workers (UAW) the once mighty union is negotiating a new contract with the Big 3 auto-makers.

The 2009 crisis massively depressed car sales and President Obama bailed out GM and Chrysler while encouraging workers to take pay cuts. Many UAW members saw their wages cut in half while many others had their jobs eliminated as auto-makers shuttered plants only to open them in Mexico, China, or the non-union South.

As the 2019 negotiations between the Big 3 and the UAW continue, threats from both sides abound. The Big 3 threaten to close more plants while UAW leaders raise the threat of strike action. With the current corruption scandal facing UAW leaders, rank-and-file auto workers will have to play a very active role in organizing to maintain what wages and benefits they have left. ☺

Seattle: Sawant Advances to Face Amazon-Backed Candidate

continued from p. 12

our re-election platform, strikes fear into the hearts of the big developers and real estate industry. Growing calls for a Green New Deal for Seattle are bitterly opposed by Puget Sound Energy, the largest polluter in the region. Big business wants a city council who will stand firm against these popular demands.”

Debate on Seattle's Left

A large majority of workers and self-described progressives don't want a city council dominated by big business. At the same time, a major debate is dividing the Seattle labor movement and progressive activists over how to address this threat.

Socialists have always argued that, under capitalism, businesses' competitive drive for profits inevitably deepens class inequality and divisions. When workers demand higher wages, or renters demand lower rents, that threatens the profit margins of capitalist class. Throughout history, every step forward for social justice has come when working people and oppressed communities recognize that the only path to better their lives is sharp struggle with the capitalist elite.

While this understanding has animated Socialist Alternative's approach to Seattle politics, most liberal politicians alongside many labor and non-profit leaders are completely opposed to this fighting strategy. In the primary, the more liberal wing of Seattle's establishment correctly feared Orion's open alliance with big business would repel many progressive-minded voters District 3 voters. Liberal Councilmembers Theresa Mosqueda and Lorena Gonzalez energetically backed Zachary DeWolf, who presented himself as a progressive.

DeWolf also picked up support “from the more conservative union leaders who were threatened by Kshama's support for rank-and-file opposition voices,” said Labor for Sawant organizer Ian Burns. “Among other disagreements, her vote against the illegal police union contract that rolled back police accountability pissed them off.”

Kshama is already endorsed by 15 unions and now, with the Chamber threatening to extend their domination of City Hall in November, “we expect rank-and-file pressure will lead to more unions endorsing us,” said Burns, “despite the hesitancy of some labor leaders to back an unapologetic socialist.”

Explaining the Labor Council's decision to endorse Zachary DeWolf over Sawant, Construction Trade Council Executive Secretary Monty Anderson said: “You're supposed to help facilitate business in the city, and we felt that [Kshama] was doing the opposite.”

In reality, the strategy of most liberal politicians and many NGO and labor leaders to find common ground with big business has always failed to deliver. Unless working people and



the left learn this hard lesson - in Seattle and nationally - we will not be able to push back big business and right-wing forces.

Unifying the Left and Labor Against Big Business

Amazon and the Chamber of Commerce now have a clear slate of corporate Democrats in all the general election races. They are prepared to spend millions in a centrally coordinated deluge of online ads, mailers, and a media strategy to re-shape the political debate in Seattle in their favor.

There is a crying need for an alliance of working-class and socialist candidates, or at least a common platform, that could offer a united challenge to big business in this election. It is not sufficient to simply oppose corporate influence, given the broad discontent with the failure of the current City Council to resolve the burning problems in our city. Big business is trying to tap into the anti-incumbent mood by cynically calling for “change” and blaming the so-called “activist wing” of the council for the political gridlock.

An alliance of left candidates calling for rent control, taxing big business to fund affordable housing, and a Green New Deal for Seattle - among other demands - could provide a clear working-class and socialist vision for transforming Seattle in the interests of the majority. Instead, most progressive and labor-backed candidates have made failed attempts to dodge a direct fight with Amazon and big business, hoping that taking a less combative approach than Sawant would spare them from corporate attacks.

When the Democratic Socialists of America and Socialist Alternative united earlier this year to host a “Socialists Into City Hall” rally, only the DSA-backed District 4 candidate Shaun Scott joined Kshama on the stage. Similarly, our appeals to other progressive candidates to work out a joint platform, or even a joint rally

or press conference to promote rent control, were not meaningfully taken up.

A Powerful Grassroots Campaign

The aggressive, naked attempt by Amazon and big business to bully and buy their way to political domination has shocked most people. In District 3 it has also helped inspire the largest grassroots city council campaign in modern Seattle history.

“Over 4,000 individual donors have pitched-in to Kshama's campaign to help us fight back,” said Eva Metz, the Finance Director for Sawant's campaign. “We're very proud to report that's three times as many donors as any of our competitors.”

Over 350 people volunteered for the campaign, “knocking on doors, hanging posters, making buttons, doing data entry, you name it,” said Matt Maley, a math teacher at Nova High School in the heart of District 3. “I was really proud that my union endorsed Kshama and a lot of teachers helped out.” Maley, who is also the Capital Hill branch organizer for Socialist Alternative, emphasized that “the back-bone of this campaign was Socialist Alternative members. “We've knocked over 90,000 doors since June 1!”

At the election night party, Kshama summed up what politically motivates the tireless determination of many Socialist Alternative members: “Mayor Jenny Durkan says we don't need more socialists in City Hall. We respond by proudly and unapologetically building the socialist movement. Most fundamentally, lets explain to people that capitalism is unable to solve the crises facing working people, whether it's the climate catastrophe or the housing crisis. We need to get organized to build the forces of socialism. I hope to see you all on the streets with us in the coming months. Let's tell Jeff Bezos we won't let him turn Seattle into a company town. When we fight, we win!” ☺

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Kshama Sawant to Face Off Against Amazon's Candidate

Big Business Candidates Get Through Seattle Primary in All Seven Council Races

**Ty Moore, Seattle
Socialist Alternative**

The initial results for Seattle's city council primary elections will greatly sharpen the class divisions in Seattle. Led by Amazon, big business in Seattle is waging a ferocious campaign to defeat every candidate who isn't firmly aligned with them. Through a record-breaking infusion of corporate PAC money, business-backed candidates made it through the primary in all seven of the council districts, set to face off against more progressive candidates in the November general election.

However, more than any other race, "The Chamber of Commerce's Eye of Sauron is laser-focused on District 3 and its quest to beat incumbent Kshama Sawant," as Seattle's influential weekly, *The Stranger*, put it. The Chamber has already spent \$245,000 on Egan Orion's behalf, who came in second in the August 6 primary to face off against Sawant in the general election. In total, corporate PACs have amassed a war chest totaling \$1.5 million and counting.

The Guardian quoted Sawant explaining: "This race and indeed all of the city's elections this year will be a referendum on one fundamental question: who gets to run Seattle? Big businesses like Amazon and real estate corporations, or working people?" (8/5/19).

In the six-way race for District 3, first night results – about 60% of ballots counted – have Kshama Sawant beating Chamber of Commerce candidate Egan Orion by nine points – 33% to 24% – with the other four

candidates all below 15%.

The District 3 results should be a wake-up call to working people and the left in Seattle. Winning over 50% for Kshama in November, and blocking Amazon-backed candidates in other races, will require a united, all-out fight against Seattle's business and political establishment.

Reporting on our election night party, KUOW commented: "Councilmember Sawant told her supporters that while the business community was unified during the primary, labor unions were somewhat divided... 'We need to work for unity of left candidates around a fighting strategy,' she said. 'To unite around a fight for rent control and social housing, unite around a movement for a Green New Deal, and unite against the corporate PACs.'"

We welcome the successes of Democratic Socialists of America candidate Shaun Scott in District 4, as well as progressive Tammy Morales in District 2. Morales won 45% despite red-baiting attacks from Mayor Durkan and big business. Scott took second place in the primary with 19%, and faces an uphill battle against Amazon-backed Alex Pederson who won 45% of the initial primary vote.

Primaries generally are skewed toward a higher percentage of wealthier and older voters, this election was no exception. The wealthy waterfront neighborhoods of District 3 saw the biggest turnouts, with far lower voter participation in Capital Hill and the Central District where renters, people of color, and lower income residents predominate.

Low voter turnout among working class, poor, and oppressed communities is a persistent problem built into the fabric of the U.S. political system, and is one of the reasons elections are not the most favorable terrain for working class and socialist politics. While voter participation in the November 5 general election will likely be higher, a huge effort will be needed to mobilize more working-class people to the polls to win in November.

Jeff Bezos "Is Getting His Revenge"

Fueled by the booming tech industry, over the last decade Seattle became the fastest growing city in the country. Rents are rising even faster. Seattle is now the most expensive rental market in the country outside of California. Working-class communities are being displaced and pushed out of the city. This is especially true in Kshama's District 3, where renters are a majority. Black people made up 73% of the Central District in 1970, but under the forces of gentrification the total number of black residents has fallen by two-thirds since then and the black share of the population is projected to dip below 10% in the Central District by 2025.

Seattle's rapid development and dramatic cost increases are ripping apart communities and have led to the largest per-capita homeless population in the country. The many tent encampments are a jarring contrast to the construction cranes and glittering new luxury apartment buildings dominating Seattle's landscape.

The Hill further explained: "An effort to pay for a response to the [housing] crisis with a tax on large businesses, a so-called 'head tax,' failed last year when the council reversed itself in the face of heated opposition from the business..." Kshama helped lead the fight to win the tax on Amazon and big business, and was one of just two "no" votes when Mayor Jenny Durkan engineered the shameful repeal. Mayor Durkan had only taken office six months earlier, after Amazon helped buy her the election with a \$350,000 PAC contribution.

"After the fight over the head tax, Amazon and other large corporations funneled hundreds of thousands of dollars into a political action committee run by the city's Chamber of Commerce, and a former council member has formed his own PAC aimed at boosting more business-friendly Democrats," *The Hill* continued. "Amazon founder Jeff Bezos... is getting his revenge."

The real motivation of big business is, as always, about protecting their profits. After nearly six years in office, big business is very familiar with Kshama's record of building successful movements to win major victories over their opposition, from the \$15 minimum wage to landmark renters rights legislation.

"Amazon fears that re-electing Kshama will breathe new life into a movement to tax them," explained campaign Political Director Calvin Priest. "The fight for rent control and a massive expansion of publicly-owned affordable housing, which is at the center of

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