

Women and Immigration p.13



SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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Issue #2 - Nov-Dec 2013

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KSHAMA SAWANT IN SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL



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RUN WORKING-CLASS CANDIDATES AGAINST THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Fighting for the 99%

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

Environmental Sustainability

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

Equal Rights for All

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

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

Money for Jobs and Education, Not War

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

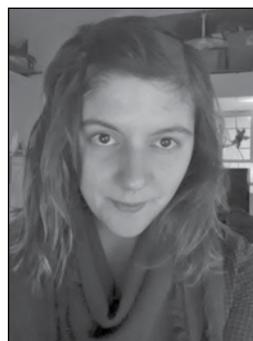
Break with the Two Parties of Big Business

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

Socialism and Internationalism

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

WHY I AM A SOCIALIST



Cheyenne Gracia
Student and Service Worker
Massachusetts

I am a socialist because I am a feminist. Despite the rhetoric of a "post-feminist" society, my own personal and academic explorations illuminated that the oppression of women is alive and well. Women are paid less overall than men, our reproductive rights are constantly under threat – see recent anti-choice

attacks in Texas and North Carolina – our bodies are objectified in the media, and in our day-to-day lives. The list of offenses goes on and on.

As a feminist, I also recognized that there is truth in the saying, "An injury to one is an injury to all." As long as oppression exists in any form, we will never truly be free from it. I knew that I could no longer support an economic system that so obviously and unapologetically creates massive disparity between people.

I was immediately drawn to socialist ideas because I recognized that any real change must be forged through mass organization. Ultimately, I became a member of Socialist Alternative because their program is committed to education and accountability for all its members. I was also extremely excited by the local election campaigns that have been running across the United States. My family has always been involved in local politics, and I felt it was a great way to introduce people to what socialism truly is.

I believe that a revolt against capitalism is inevitable but that it cannot be successful if we have a quarantined left that refuses to engage with people outside their "comfort zone." Socialist Alternative has demonstrated that they will work tirelessly to instigate change despite a system designed to defeat them. It is inspiring and exciting to be a part of this organization. ✦

Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline

STOP THE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE
SIGN THE PLEDGE
TO BLOCK THE CONSTRUCTION

In August 2011, 1,253 peaceful and dignified people were arrested after over two weeks at President Obama's front door. Another 12,000 encircled the White House demanding President Obama reject the Keystone XL pipeline. This protest, strengthened by the Occupy Wall Street protests and rallies, effectively delayed presidential approval of the project. However, the project has not been taken off the table; instead, it was temporarily shunted for further environmental review, and the southern portion was "welcomed" by the White House.

That period of review is now coming to an end. A number of environmental groups are organizing mass disobedience if Obama moves to approve it. Over 75,000 people have signed a pledge of civil disobedience if the pipeline is approved. Join the struggle. Defeat the Pipeline. Organize a protest in your school or your community. ✦

http://act.credoaction.com/sign/kxl_pledge



SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Socialist Alternative is a national organization fighting in our workplaces, communities, and campuses against the exploitation and injustices people face every day. We are union activists fighting for workers' rights and militant, democratic labor unions; we are a diverse organization combatting racism, students organizing against sweatshops and war, ordinary people demanding full legalization for all undocumented workers, women and men fighting sexism and homophobia.

We campaign for the building of a mass workers' party to represent the interests of workers, youth, and the environment against the two parties of big business. We see the global capitalist system as the root cause of terrorism, war, poverty, discrimination, and environmental destruction. As capitalism moves deeper into crisis and recession, a new generation of workers and youth must join together to take the top 500 corporations into public ownership. We believe the dictatorships that existed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were perversions of what socialism is really about. We are for democratic socialism where people will have control over their daily lives.

Socialist Alternative is in political solidarity with the Committee for a Workers International, a worldwide socialist organization in 35 countries, on every continent. Join us! ✦

How a Socialist Candidate Won an Election in Seattle

Clay Showalter

As *Socialist Alternative* goes to print, Kshama Sawant is set to make history, becoming the first open socialist elected to a major city council in many decades. This likely victory will send shock waves through both the establishment and the left by showing how much of an impact socialist ideas can make. While Sawant is at present in the lead, and the trend is in her favor, there are thousands of votes still to count. There could also be a recount or court battles by the Seattle establishment to dispute our dramatic success. Please follow vote-sawant.org and socialistalterative.org for updates. The article below describes how the campaign made this all possible.

In the August primary election for Seattle City Council, Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant won a stunning 35% of the vote in a three-way race against two Democratic Party candidates. This was the best showing for a socialist in decades, and our campaign picked up tremendous momentum as we entered the final stretch of the general election. The final weekend of the election season, we held "100 Rallies for Sawant," supported by a growing coalition of labor activists, Greens, immigrant community leaders, and socialists.

Our Demands

Kshama Sawant's campaign translated a socialist program to the immediate pressing concerns of Seattle workers and youth. We put forward three main demands and connected them to the need to build a working-class political alternative while holding our socialist banner high. The three key demands were a \$15 an hour minimum wage, a rent control ordinance to make housing affordable, and a tax on millionaires to fund transit, education, and other public services. This message gained a tremendous echo.

Our demands resonated so well that we completely shifted the debate. "The election isn't for 10 days," wrote *Seattle Times* columnist Danny Westneat in late October, "but we can already declare the big winner in Seattle. It's the socialist. . . [W]hat's most notable about Seattle politics this year is that nearly [Sawant's] entire agenda has, over the course of the campaign, been embraced by *both* candidates for mayor," (10/26/2013).

Both mayoral candidates vaguely said they support a \$15/hour minimum wage. Other parts of our platform, like rent control and taxing the super-rich to fund mass transit and education, have been the continual focus of debates in all the city races. In August, the *Seattle Times* dismissed



PHOTO BY ALEX GARLAND

the Sawant campaign as "too hard left" for Seattle. But now they acknowledge the resounding impact of our campaign!

Surge in Support

In October, Sawant was featured twice on the front cover of Seattle's second-largest newspaper. Our active volunteer base surged to more than 300 people, with dozens of high-schoolers and immigrant workers getting involved. Six unions have endorsed us, and *Seattle Weekly* labeled Sawant as "Seattle's Best Politician of 2013."

Support came from musicians such as Tom Morello from Rage Against the Machine and Serj Tarkian, formerly of System of a Down. The local hip-hop community rallied around Sawant with a successful fundraiser with the best-known local performers participating. Obafemi Martens, a local and Nigerian soccer star, prominently endorsed the campaign. The Seattle Somali community as well as disaffected basketball fans were also campaign supporters.

Seattle has been controlled by Democrats for decades, and there was no Republican challenger in this race. Without any of the pressures of "lesser-evilism," this openly socialist campaign has become a pole of attraction for many people disillusioned with the Democratic Party.

Cheryl Bersch, a lifelong activist and a volunteer with the campaign, shared this message with us when she joined our organization:

"I've been a Democrat and a member of other activist groups such as the National Organization for Women for 47 years. Paid my dues in many, many protests, letter-writing to representatives, and money, money, money only to watch the Democratic Party move further and further to the right. I have recently found the answer: it's the system itself. The problem is Capitalism."

Divisions among the Democrats

The real opening for socialist politics is exemplified by the way our campaign has strained ties between long-time allies and the Democratic Party. For example, the county-wide labor council, which has consistently endorsed our opponent, voted 28-21 in favor of a dual endorsement for Sawant.

Unfortunately, this did not reach the two-thirds majority needed for an official endorsement. Dozens of top labor and environmental leaders have told us privately that they are supporting Sawant even though the organizations they lead have endorsed our opponent.

Groups like Labor for Kshama Sawant and Small Business for Kshama Sawant worked hard to break the unconditional support that the Democratic Party often receives from these constituents. But the most striking example of strained relationships - and political confusion - is the formation of Democrats for Sawant. We accept the support of Democratic Party voters and activists, but we are clear about our socialist ideas and the need for independent working-class politics while we refuse to take a single dime in corporate donations. This patient approach combined with a positive alternative can effectively break the base of the Democrats away from the party's corporate masters.

We have popularized socialist ideas, further exposed the Democrats as beholden to big business, helped build local movements from below, and demonstrated the huge potential for independent politics in local races. We hope this victory inspires others to run independent left challenges all across the country in 2014 and 2015, as an important step toward the formation of a new, genuine political alternative for the millions, not the millionaires.

Help Socialist Alternative Grow

Socialist Alternative ran two viable campaigns for City Council in major cities without taking a single dime in corporate donations. This shows the potential for socialist ideas to gain a foothold even in the corporate-dominated electoral system. This was only made possible because working people and youth made strong commitments with time and finances to these campaigns.

Our campaigns scared the ruling elites. Big banks, the real estate industry and Democratic Party machines spent thousands to slander us and to try to keep socialists out of office. Ty Moore and Kshama Sawant's campaigns are not the end. We need you to dig deep to help begin the process of building a mass socialist movement that can revitalize unions and make steps to a new independent party of the 99%.

Kshama Sawant's likely victory shows that big business politicians can be defeated if we have organized socialist forces at the center of strong working-class coalitions. In order to fight back against the corporate attacks on us, our campaign in Seattle was forced into debt. Please become a regular "sustainer" for our organization, paying a monthly donation to help us get out of debt and take advantage of the huge opportunities to build Socialist Alternative.

Every winter, Socialist Alternative appeals to fellow activists, union members, co-workers, friends and family to support our important and necessary work through donations. We usually raise tens of thousands of dollars. This year, with the possibilities of new branches throughout the country, with increased media attention, with the debt we took on fighting the establishment, we need you to dig deep more than ever. Thank you. ✪

Become a Monthly Supporter of Socialist Alternative

<https://www.wepay.com/donations/sa-sustainers>



Make a Donation to VoteSawant.org

<https://votesawant.nation-builder.com/donate>



How to Win the Fight for a \$15/Hour Minimum Wage and a Union

Tony Wilsdon

The ongoing battle for '\$15-an-hour and a union' has captured the imagination of millions of low-paid workers a service industry that now employs 19 million people. Millions more are angry at how these massively profitable companies (Walmart made \$15.7 billion in profit last year) rely on their workers claiming public subsidies to survive.

In particular, the \$15-an-hour demand has resonated with a wide layer of workers who embrace this demand as a solution to their low-wage lives. Dynamic small strikes and rallies have propelled this movement forward. Black Friday will see a new chapter in this struggle. But how can the fight against low pay succeed?

While these actions have shamed the corporations and put their actions in the public spotlight, they have not yet forced any real concessions. In fact, once the heat is off they have shown their teeth. In Arkansas, Walmart recently disciplined 70 workers, including 20 firings, for their participation in an extended strike in June. While this provoked 80 workers to walk off the job on October 18th, this will send a chilling message that these companies are not interested in playing ball. (http://www.salon.com/2013/10/18/breaking_wal_mart_workers_on_strike_in_florida/)

Taking the Movement Forward

Clearly, we need to continue and escalate one-day actions, with selected strikes and dynamic outreach to the wider public. Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has played a key role in building these initiatives in the fast food industry, and they should be complimented for taking it.

While these dynamic public actions,



Socialist Alternative members in Madison, WI at a strike picket line of low-wage workers.

including and one-day strikes by the most determined workers, have propelled the campaign into the public spotlight, they are not sufficient in themselves to force these fast food and retail giants to concede major concessions. Companies will follow Walmart's example by firing activists who manage to build a base of support in their stores.

This poses the need to dig in and organize workers on the ground into dynamic unions that can then respond to corporate retaliations by being able to effectively shut down the stores. Much of this work will need to be underground organizing outside of the eyes of the company, so strong organizing groups with sufficient support among the workforce can be forged which can withstand company retaliation. This applies both to 'Our Walmart' launched by UFCW and the low-paid organizing campaigns initiated by SEIU. Building links between worker activists in different stores will be essential to building the kind of coordinated actions needed in the coming months and years ahead.

This kind of dynamic unionism demands a different kind of organizing and structures than is the model of most labor unions in the AFL-CIO and Change to Win. These unions have long since broken from the dynamic methods of struggle and membership participation that were necessary to win the major battles of the past. Instead, most modern unions have adopted a top-down model, where the members do not participate in the active life of the unions, where business agents, not active worker committees, are the basic organizing force in the workplace. The membership are seen as bodies to be brought into action when needed. For example, SEIU's organizing model is based on top-down mobilizing of paid-staffers and select union activists. The majority of SEIU

has mega-locals that often do not have even hold monthly membership meetings.

While strategies like those adopted by SEIU might be may be 'efficient' for creating dynamic actions, they fail to develop a powerful and conscious membership. And, that is key to winning the kind of major struggles that will be necessary to defeat McDonalds, Target, etc.

Building Fighting Democratic Unions

We should be under no illusion that these corporations will give any major concession without workers organizing a major struggle. Charity doesn't come into it! Only by stopping the flow of profits have companies been forced to give major concessions. Only workers withdrawing their labor through collective action can hurt the companies sufficiently to force them to give the concessions we need. Our present actions and strategy must be aimed at building towards that power. The recent teacher strike in Chicago gives a glimpse of the power of workers when mobilized into a vibrant strike.

Only by workers developing confidence in their own ability to stand up to management through collective action can a powerful struggle succeed. That's why we call for powerful rank and file committees to be the core of these new organizing campaigns and for all important decisions to be made by workers themselves.

Only dynamic membership-driven actions will allow workers to gain the kind of experience and confidence to defeat the myriad of obstacles the company try to erect to defeat this organizing effort. This will include the need to organize effective strikes and defend the picket lines struggle including intervention of the courts and police to support the

company. This needs to be defeated by further mobilization of the broader working class in defense of the picket lines.

Building Independent Political Movements

Building strong dynamic unions is essential. But to succeed this must be linked to building a broader working class political movement. Occupy Wall Street gave a glimpse of the power of a broader social movement. The success of the public initiative for a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Sea Tac, WA demonstrates how the public will rally around such a demand, and needs to be replicated in other cities. Also important was the success of Kshama Sawant's city council campaign in Seattle. Not only did she win, but by building her campaign around a demand for \$15-an-hour she spoke to low-paid workers across the city, many of whom got involved in the campaign, she and forced the \$15-an-hour demand onto the political debate in Seattle.

The \$15-a-hour demand can inspire and mobilize wide section of workers, most of whom are customers at fast food and retail stores. However, to mount a successful campaign we need to break from the present practice of looking to Democrats as our allies. Despite comments by certain liberal Democrats, the Democratic Party as whole does not support a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Look at the complete inaction by Obama on this issue.

There is a real danger of the \$15-an hour demand will start to be downplayed, or even submerged, as labor unions looks to embrace corporate Democratic Party candidates in the build-up to the 2014 elections. Every effort needs to be made to defend the \$15-an-hour demand, and keep the movement from being neutered into becoming a support group for Democratic Party politicians.

2014 should be a year of massive growth of the \$15 an hour movement. But this can only be done by organizing dynamic unions in the workplaces, keeping the \$15 an hour banner high and organizing dynamic actions and campaigns. The success of the Sea Tac \$15-an-hour initiative should be spread to other cities. The success of Ty Moore and Kshama Sawant's independent electoral challenges in winning public support for the 99% and uniting worker struggles should be repeated in cities across the county.

This all poses the broader goal of building a new political party of workers and the poor. Such a party will be decisive in coordinating the struggles of low-pay workers and other struggles of the 99% into an unstoppable force to win gains for workers and to expose and defeat the power of the big corporations and capitalism. ✪

A Socialist Alternative Publication

Manifesto of the Fast-Food Worker



by Brent Gaspaire
and Tony Wilsdon

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Interview with Fast-Food Worker Activist in Seattle

Socialist Alternative member Adam interviews a prominent fast food worker-activist Carlos Hernandez, who has become a leader in the struggle of low paid workers in Seattle.

Adam: Thank you, Carlos, for speaking with us. The fast food workers struggle has been receiving quite a bit of attention recently. Why are fast food workers upset? What are your demands?

Carlos: The working conditions are very bad. Workers are left completely unprotected. They don't have the opportunity to live a dignified life, to pay the bills, to be able to provide for their families. The majority of workers are always paid the minimum. They aren't paid overtime. It's really sad. There's a lot of wage theft. This happens in the majority of restaurants, but people don't know it's illegal and unfortunately people have to buy the necessities of life and they don't have a way out.

Adam: What are the demands of fast food workers laboring in these conditions?

Carlos: One of the first things is health care, because most people don't have it, and if they do have it it's very expensive. So people want health care. There should be more regulation of working conditions, on the employers, in order to be sure that working conditions are okay. One of the most popular demands is for \$15 per hour. The biggest companies have the ability to pay \$15, which would then give workers the capacity to improve their lives and go to school, because they wouldn't have to work two or three jobs.

We are the ones that make this industry move. We are the ones who open the restaurants, attend to the customers, clean, and make the food. But the bosses don't care about all this. They don't care about



Carlos Hernandez outside of the Subway where he organized his fellow workers to go on strike.

our wages. They just care about making money. When someone gets sick, they're out. Right now less than one percent of fast food places have unions. It's very important that we have them in the fast food industry.

Adam: How have the fast food companies responded?

Carlos: The employers are responding exactly as we expected them to. What they care about is how much money they make, their profits. They're doing whatever they can to make this fail. They have the power of money, unfortunately. A lot of workers are afraid because they have to pay for necessities. They have families and they don't want to lose their jobs. Intimidation is a very powerful weapon. They can shut people up. So right now they are using intimidation a lot. In my case, I have been fired twice from my job for trying to improve conditions. If nobody tries to change things, then nothing is going to change.

Adam: Tell us more about that.

Carlos: After I went to my first strike and started talking to other workers about their rights, they started segregating me from other workers, Spanish-speaking workers especially. I'm a good worker so it was difficult for them to fire me. They knew that if they fired me people would be all over them. So they looked for a legal way to fire me. They fired me for giving a cookie to a kid. Unfortunately, there are no regulations and they are able to do that. They were always monitoring me with the camera

waiting for me to do something "bad". At the time I felt really sad, because whenever somebody does something against injustice it always carries with it those kinds of consequences. Society teaches you to ignore injustice, because otherwise you will face consequences. And you have your family which you have to help. I am a student. I have a family in Honduras. I have to help them.

Adam: Talk about the immigrant experience in the struggle?

Carlos: They play a very important role. The majority are people who need work and are afraid of being sent back to their country. So it's really easy to exploit them and for the employer to make them work in poor conditions, to not give them respect.

Immigrants feel like they don't have a voice and like they have to accept whatever they get. For the employer, they are like objects - cheap labor, cheap workers. So it's easy to exploit them. There are a lot of Latinos. They're the ones who move the fast food restaurants in this country.

Adam: How can the struggle move forward?

Carlos: It's not so easy but it's also not impossible. There are a lot of people putting their hearts into this struggle so things can change for the majority who are fathers or mothers working in this country. The goal is to win better working conditions, win a wage that allows us to provide for our family and have a more dignified life. It's really important for the people, the communities, the churches, and the

politicians to be aware of the conditions, and the exploitation that's occurring. In that respect, I think we are succeeding, and people are becoming more and more aware.

Another of the goals is to get organized so we can win better conditions and win \$15 per hour. The majority of fast food workers depend on the government to survive, with food stamps or childcare. That's another one of the goals, for workers to be able to survive on their own, but the companies don't want that. They just want to keep earning more and more thanks to the exploitation of their workers.

Adam: You've supported Kshama Sawant's campaign with a lot of enthusiasm. Could you explain why?

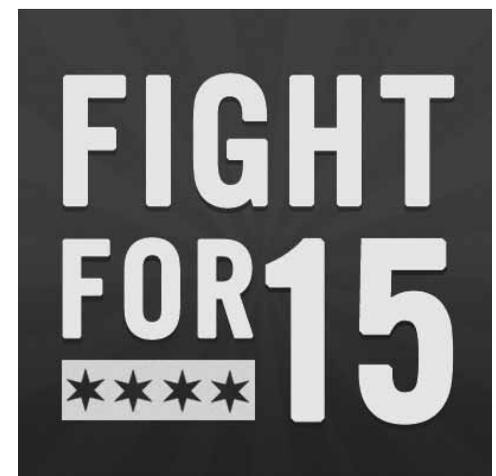
Carlos: As a worker and student I think we need politicians who have had the same experiences and faced the same obstacles as us. Especially poor people who don't have the resources, like minorities, there are very few people who represent us, who speak out in support of change. The majority in this country are poor, workers who barely survive and many are people of color. Their voice isn't heard.

It's really important that there are leaders and people like Kshama who want to struggle for these people and who want a change in society. At almost every picket I see somebody who represents Kshama and I think we need people who are aware of things like her, who want to help the poor population, those who are most needy, most likely to suffer injustice, minorities.

We don't have representatives who struggle on our behalf. There are representatives, but representatives for those who have the most. We need people who represent the working class, the people below, the minorities, those who need help.

Adam: Thank you Carlos for talking with us. We wish the best for you and fast food workers in their struggle.

Check out socialistalternative.org for a longer version of this interview. ✪



Millions Are Looking for a Left Alternative

De Blasio Campaign in New York Creates Huge Expectations

Tom Crean

There is increasing revulsion among ordinary people in the U.S. against the political establishment. This came to a boil during the government shutdown in October. The anger is particularly directed at the Republicans, but there has also been widespread disillusionment with Obama and the Democrats. At the state level, Democrats like Mayor Rahm Emmanuel in Chicago have proven themselves to be just as dangerous to the interests of ordinary people as the Republicans.

After five years of austerity and attacks on the rights of working people, millions are looking for a left alternative. This is why the candidates of Socialist Alternative in Minneapolis and Seattle have received such enthusiastic support. But this anger is also fueling support for populist Democrats who appear to be taking on the establishment, especially where there is no credible left alternative to the two parties of big business.

A very important example of this process is occurring in New York, where Bill de Blasio is poised to become the next mayor of New York City, the first Democrat to hold the position in 20 years. Since 2002, Michael Bloomberg has ruled the city as the direct representative of Wall Street. Bloomberg is truly one of their own; his personal wealth has grown from \$5 billion to \$27 billion during his time in office.

A Tale of Two Cities

De Blasio's campaign emerged dramatically from a crowded primary field to overtake Bloomberg's presumed successor, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, who promised to continue his corporate-friendly policies. De Blasio's main theme was "A tale of two cities," and he talked explicitly about the vast inequality between rich and poor in the city. Government statistics have shown that almost half (46%) the population of New York City, the richest city in the world, is either "poor" or "near poor." Much-needed hospitals are being shut down, and despite twelve years of corporate "education reform" the



schools, especially in poor neighborhoods, are getting worse - not better. Meanwhile, police violence, surveillance, and racist "stop and frisk" tactics have become a way of life for black and Latino youth.

The shift in popular consciousness in the city was seen in the widespread support for Occupy Wall Street two years ago. Nor will ordinary New Yorkers soon forget how the elite moved heaven and earth to turn the lights back on in the financial district in Lower Manhattan after the Sandy superstorm in 2012, while thousands of working and poor people were left to rot in darkened buildings where the water wouldn't reach above the lower floors.

De Blasio has promised to raise taxes on the rich to pay for universal pre-K, to massively curtail stop and frisk, and to stop favoring charter schools over public schools. In a distorted way, he has articulated the anger of the working class against Bloomberg and the rich elite.

A Tale of Two de Blasios

There is widespread hope that

de Blasio represents the beginning of a new era in the city. But we must be clear that, rhetoric aside, de Blasio is not a radical. He served in the second Clinton administration in the 1990s and was Hillary Clinton's campaign manager during her race for the U.S. Senate in 2000. In a recent fundraiser for the well-heeled, de Blasio described himself as "a progressive activist, fiscal conservative."

We sympathize with the reasons why people have hope in de Blasio, especially in the absence of a credible alternative to the left of the Democratic Party. There are clear differences between him and his Republican opponent, Joe Lhota, on a range of issues. But when push comes to shove, de Blasio in office will side with the 1% against the 99%. He will move to impose cuts and attacks on the living standards of working people and the poor rather than make the elite 1% shoulder the burden of the crisis that their policies have caused.

He is supported by a section of the establishment, including financiers and real estate developers,

many of whom think that a shift in political tactics is needed in order to avoid an explosion of anger from below along the lines we saw with Occupy Wall Street, or more recently in Turkey and Brazil. However, rattled by the experience with OWS, other sections of the establishment are warning that de Blasio's rhetoric amounts to "class warfare" and that workers may take these promises at face value. They fear his populist message could open the door to mass struggle against Wall Street and the rich in this, the financial and cultural capital of the country.

The Need for a Real Alternative

At the moment, de Blasio is the most prominent example of the populist phenomenon on the left wing of the Democratic Party. But he is not the only one. Another Democrat whose popularity has soared in the current environment is Elizabeth Warren, the new Democratic Senator from Massachusetts who is perceived as the

party's biggest critic of Wall Street.

It is understandable why many will look to figures like de Blasio and Warren as a vehicle to push for a progressive agenda. However, previous experience shows this support will be used to repair the Democrats' tarnished brand and to herd people back into the fold. This has been the role of "left" Democrats in the past.

It is also striking that, despite semi-radical rhetoric, populists like de Blasio generally make very modest proposals. For example, while de Blasio had a great deal to say about income inequality in his campaign, he does not support a \$15 minimum wage - or even a substantial increase - a very popular demand raised by the fast-food workers campaign and which would concretely contribute to the lowering of inequality.

And even the modest demands raised by the populists will be mostly unachievable without social struggle. For example, even de Blasio's call for a slight increase in taxation on the rich to pay for universal pre-K will require mobilizing ordinary people since the Democratic governor has made clear he opposes any tax increase! When asked to explain how this hurdle will be overcome, de Blasio is evasive. Social struggle is not part of what any wing of the Democratic Party argues for. It is only socialists and other genuine left activists who clearly argue that winning office is only meaningful in order to assist and give voice to a wider struggle for fundamental change.

Ultimately, the Democrats are every bit as committed as the Republicans to the maintenance of the capitalist system, which is the source of the vast inequality and rising misery in our society. This party simply can't be reformed into a progressive force. Working people and the poor and all those fighting oppression need to start running pro-worker, anti-corporate independent candidates as part of forming a new, genuine party of the left which will represent the interests of the 99%. The 1% have two parties; we need one of our own!

Ty Moore Campaign

In Minneapolis, Socialist Comes Within 230 Votes of Victory

Ginger Jentzen, Field Organizer with Ty Moore for City Council

The Socialist Alternative campaigns of Kshama Sawant and Ty Moore stood out nationally as “the two most high profile and exciting candidacies” of left independents in 2013, according to Bard Professor John Halle in CounterPunch.org (11/7/2013).

With bold demands to raise up working-class communities and a clear socialist profile, Ty Moore’s campaign in Minneapolis built a powerful coalition of labor and community organizations, including the SEIU MN State Council, Occupy Homes, the Green Party, immigrant rights organizers, and neighborhood leaders. In a six-way race using ranked-choice voting, Moore lost by only 229 votes, with 42% of the total votes against 47% for the Democratic Party candidate.

“I’ve organized a lot of election campaigns,” said Brian Elliott, Executive Director of the SEIU MN State Council. “The team around Ty’s campaign put together something amazing, a model of how to build a volunteer-driven grassroots challenge to big business politics.” Since August, the campaign mobilized over 150 volunteers, culminating in a final Get Out the Vote effort of 70 volunteers per day, who knocked on 24,000 doors over the last four days leading up to the election.

The dynamic grassroots coalition supporting Ty Moore campaigned for a \$15/hour minimum wage, a moratorium on foreclosures, taxing the rich to fund basic services, and an end to corporate welfare projects.

In a public letter published in the three main Spanish language papers, twenty prominent Latino community leaders signed a letter supporting Ty Moore, pointing out that “he is the only candidate with a platform to advance immigrant rights at a city level,” including a moratorium on deportations and voting rights for all residents in city elections, regardless of immigration status. Latino support for Moore was especially significant because the Democratic Party candidate, Alondra Cano, campaigned heavily on her immigrant background.

Our main opponent, the Democratic Party candidate, moved sharply to the left in response to the echo our message received in Ward 9. At the same time, she appealed for support from the political establishment. In his analysis of Socialist Alternative’s campaigns, Prof. Halle reflected on this exact contradiction, writing that “strong Third Party challenges



Ty Moore and volunteers for the campaign get ready to go knock on doors in the neighborhood.

have shown, as did Occupy Wall Street two years ago, that they can force a shift in the political agenda, requiring Democrats to get on board or expose themselves as the servants of capital which their business model requires them to be.”

The Ty Moore campaign’s strong showing indicates the huge potential for a socialist to win a seat in a corporate-dominated election process on a platform of demands around working-class issues. Initial coverage of the results has elevated the national conversation around future initiatives to channel the post-Occupy, anti-party mood into strong third-party challenges to corporate politics.

Corporate PAC Money in Ward 9

The Democratic Party establishment dismissed our campaign until the final weeks, when they recognized we might win and mobilized heavily to defeat us. In particular, backed by Occupy Homes, our campaign was widely linked to the struggle against foreclosures and police evictions.

In a direct attack, sheriffs executed a 5 a.m. election day raid on Jaymie Kelly, a lifetime Ward 9 resident whose high-profile struggle against eviction was a central feature of our campaign. Sheriffs responded in less than 24 hours after posting the writ to evict Kelly, a very public supporter, in a politically motivated attempt to send a message of intimidation and to disrupt our election day efforts to get out the vote.

The fear our campaign registered in the establishment was seen when the National Association of Realtors (NAR), a major corporate PAC with close ties to Wall Street,

sent two mailers and conducted robo-calls to every resident in Ward 9. NAR spent an estimated \$12,000 in support of Moore’s opponent, who didn’t distance herself from the corporate interference. The intervention of NAR into our local elections indicates that Ty Moore’s candidacy, in demanding that the city use every tool at its disposal to alleviate the foreclosure crisis, was seen as a threat to the industry’s future profits.

NAR is a major corporate lobby which spent \$64 million in 2012 to influence and skew elections. NAR supports candidates from both corporate parties, including Ted Cruz and Michele Bachmann. Across the country, NAR has fought efforts to stop foreclosures, most recently in a crusade against the city of Richmond, CA. The Green mayor of Richmond is using eminent domain to buy up underwater mortgages and reduce homeowners’ principal to fair market value.

NAR and the big banks swiftly responded with a lawsuit and a major public relations campaign to defeat the Richmond plan and to discourage other cities from using eminent domain as a solution to fight back. The lawsuit is just another of the myriad examples of Wall Street’s tactics used to avoid responsibility for the effects of the economic crisis.

The Democratic Party Machine Reacts

The mayor and top leaders in the legislature organized fundraisers for Cano. Voters received robo-calls from Senator Al Franken. Keith Ellison, chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and other party leaders held a rally on the eve of

the election. And yet, the Ty Moore campaign raised \$55,000, out-fundraising Alondra Cano three to one in the final two months, in a swell of donations from community supporters. This was achieved while refusing any corporate donations. But the combined weight of the Democratic Party machine and the NAR intervention mobilized the dwindling Democratic Party base and secured Cano a narrow majority on election day.

“We are confident that a simple poll at the doorsteps of Ward 9 would have given us a solid majority,” said Kelly Bellin, Socialist Alternative member and manager for the Ty Moore campaign. “We talked to nearly 5,000 registered voters in Ward 9. Our supporters outnumbered our opponents’ by a two to one margin. We pushed Ward 9 turnout up to 33%, higher than the citywide average. Unfortunately, we were not able to decisively break through the demoralization that most working-class people feel toward official politics, which for so long has only delivered disappointment and betrayals. In the end, the wealthier base of the Democrats showed up and we didn’t bring out enough fresh voters to win this thing.”

However, getting as close as we did to winning the seat in Minneapolis, along with the victory of Kshama Sawant in Seattle, will send shock waves through the political elite and serve as a baseline achievement in the struggle to build a new party for the working class. The support we won will enable us to ramp up struggles on the issues identified by the Moore campaign and to expand our campaign to build an independent political movement to represent the 99% in Minneapolis. ✪

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by Tony Wilsdon

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ELECTION VICTORIES FOR SOCIALISTS

Seize the Opportunity Independent Working-Class



Bryan Koulouris

Two Socialist Alternative candidates sent historic shock waves through the U.S. left on Tuesday, November 5th. Both candidates, Kshama Sawant in Seattle and Ty Moore in Minneapolis, mounted the strongest election campaigns by open socialists in a major U.S. city in many decades.

Ty Moore got 43% of the vote as an open socialist for City Council in Ward 9 of Minneapolis. Kshama Sawant can actually win a seat in Seattle's Council, getting possibly over 100,000 votes. We need your help to win! (See article about Seattle on page 4 for details).

Regardless of the final count, the votes for these firebrand socialist candidates illustrate clearly the vacuum in U.S. politics and the anger at the corporate-controlled establishment.

Rooted in the Great Recession and the shallow economic recovery, there is a tremendous distrust of the political elites. The government shutdown also stoked a popular rage that allowed the socialist campaigns to strike a real chord with ordinary people. During the government shutdown, the approval rating for Congress slumped to a historic low of 5%. In a Gallup poll, a record-high 60% said that a new party was needed in the U.S., and a record low of only 26% said the two parties were doing an adequate job.

Many people in the U.S. often feel discouraged and demoralized by the rigged pro-corporate electoral system. However, these campaigns demonstrated beyond a shadow of the doubt that independent candidates and ordinary working-class people can challenge the establishment without taking a dime of corporate money!

Socialist Alternative's campaigns showed clearly that it is possible for ordinary people

and young people to organize together and fight to change the world. Socialist Alternative wants to build on this momentum, and is appealing to people to donate and get involved with Socialist Alternative to help us build future campaigns of the 99% like the "Fight for a \$15/hour minimum wage and a union" and the struggle to tax the super-rich to pay for a green jobs program and mass transit.

As cuts to popular government programs like Social Security are likely coming, possibly in the next few months, both corporate parties will probably see their support further undermined. Going into the 2014 mid-term elections, these socialist campaigns have shown the huge opening for independent working-class politics. Coalitions of fighting union leaders, socialists, Greens and civil rights groups should be built in every city across the country to organize movements and mount independent candidates.

These election results, along with the Arab spring, the Wisconsin labor uprising, and the Occupy movement, have made possible what seemed impossible. They are ushering in a whole new process in society. Not only are these electoral campaigns leading to the growth of a new vibrant socialist movement in the United States, but they will also serve as a model that will contribute to the eventual inevitable rise of a new party that will fight the richest 1% – a mass party of working people.

Socialist Ideas on the Rise

Many people on the left argue that socialist ideas cannot gain mass support in this country; these campaigns show that they're dead wrong. Pew Research Center Polls show over and over that a majority of young people and people of color now prefer "socialism" to "capitalism." Obviously, this consciousness is confused, but

it illustrates that people are fed up with growing inequality, the unbearable rises in the cost of living, and capitalism itself.

Sawant and Moore's opponents barely bothered to resort to "red-baiting" against socialist ideas. Instead, incumbent Richard Conlin in Seattle used thinly-veiled anti-immigrant and sexist arguments against Sawant while Alondra Cano in Minneapolis shied away from negative campaigning, preferring to rely on her support in the real estate industry and the political establishment.

Socialist ideas are clearly back on the agenda, and Socialist Alternative is uniquely positioned to help build a new socialist movement. Socialists need to be the most effective fighters for the needs of ordinary working-class people such as a \$15 an hour minimum wage and a tax on the super-rich to fund jobs and services. Socialist Alternative has stood out on the left for our ability to connect with politicized workers with understandable language. At the same time, we honestly explain that reforms in our society can only be sustained if power is taken out of the hands of big business and a new socialist system based on democratic public ownership of the top 500 corporations is established.

Building Movements

In Seattle, Sawant's campaign helped put the "Fight for 15" - strikes and protests of low-wage workers for a \$15/hour minimum wage - at the center of political debate. Socialist Alternative energetically built this movement, aiding victimized striking workers and countering arguments against raising the minimum wage. When labor organizations placed an initiative on the ballot to raise the minimum wage to \$15 in the suburb of SeaTac, the Kshama

Sawant campaign energetically supported this movement, contributing to the ballot initiative's historic success (the vote is too close to call as we go to print).

Ty Moore's campaign in Ward 9 of Minneapolis was built alongside important high-profile housing justice campaigns led by Occupy Homes Minnesota. Moore and Socialist Alternative helped co-found this organization which successfully defended many homeowners from being evicted by big banks and the police. The center of Occupy Homes's "Foreclosure and Eviction-Free Zone" was in Ward 9, a diverse, working-class community, and both Occupy Homes and the Moore campaign mutually reinforced each other.

Eventually, both mayoral candidates, who hadn't mentioned the minimum wage at the beginning of their campaigns, came out vaguely in support of a \$15/hour minimum wage. Sawant's success at shifting the political debate prompted the Seattle Times, the largest newspaper in Seattle, to say before the election that "the winner of Seattle's election is already the socialist Kshama Sawant."

The Labor Movement

These independent working-class electoral campaigns have important lessons for the labor movement, which is facing a serious crisis. Unions are under attack from big business, and the Tea Party Republicans are trying to destroy labor rights altogether. However, Democratic politicians are often the ones proposing cuts, privatization and other attacks on unions, too. In this situation, the labor movement needs to regain its fighting traditions and run more of its own independent working-class candidates.

Instead, labor leaders often back Democrats either out of fear of Republicans, habit,

Opportunities for Working-Class Politics!



or the fact that many labor leaders live lives of luxury that have more in common with politicians than their own members. However, the Moore and Sawant campaigns demonstrate that workers are increasingly fed up with politics as usual, and labor support can be gained by credible independent campaigns with concrete demands. Moore obtained the active support of SEIU State Council in Minnesota which played an instrumental role in the campaign. Meanwhile, Sawant won endorsements from six union locals, and a majority of the King County Labor Council voted in favor of endorsing Sawant (narrowly missing the super-majority necessary for an endorsement).

In the coming months and years, union members will face continual attacks on their rights and living conditions. In the course of these fights, we'll need to use protests, pickets, strikes and direct action to defend ourselves. Workers will have to struggle to win democratic control of their unions and elect leaders who are actually willing to resist the corporate onslaught. These battles will show the need for workers to have their own independent political representation, and the Moore and Sawant campaigns show that unions can run very successful independent candidates, which should be a step towards forming a new party of the 99%.

Next Steps

Many people who supported Moore and Sawant are building independent left campaigns, but they aren't ready yet to fully break from the Democratic Party. Socialist Alternative will continue to argue within social justice movements and coalitions that the Democrats are fundamentally a party of big business, and that working-class people shouldn't give any

support to them - even candidates on their "left wing."

We urgently need a party of working people, connected to social movements, fighting unions, community organizations, Greens and socialists. As a concrete step to get there, we should form coalitions throughout the country with the potential to come together on a national level to run 100 independent working-class candidates in the 2014 mid-term elections. The unions who supported the Moore and Sawant campaigns and many others should run full slates of independent working-class candidates in the mid-term, state, and local elections.

U.S. capitalism is in a deep economic and social crisis. The political establishment is discredited, and their system of government appears broken. Deep anger is growing against inequality, racism, sexism and homophobia. Environmental destruction is worsening. The situation is crying out for an alternative.

If socialists, Greens and union leaders don't capitalize on this opening, then the right wing will. For instance, a Libertarian candidate for Virginia governor won over 145,000 votes in this election. Even worse, reports show that openly racist far-right groups are growing.

This is an urgent situation. We need to actively build the socialist movement along with broader coalitions of the 99% to challenge the agenda of big business. The incredible election results of Ty Moore and the possible victory of Kshama Sawant are shining examples of the way forward.

Join Socialist Alternative today!

Donate to Socialist Alternative. We do not accept corporate money; so we need your support!

Checks payable to Socialist Alternative can be mailed to Socialist Alternative, PO Box 150457, Brooklyn, NY 11215. ✪

Join SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Capitalism is in crisis here and internationally. Mass unemployment and institutionalized racism continue while we face the brink of further environmental devastation. The political establishment is more and more out-of-touch and discredited. This system offers no way out, but there is hope—millions are looking for a fundamental change, and Socialist Alternative is getting a better response for our ideas than ever before.

Ty Moore, a Socialist Alternative member, got 43% of the vote for City Council in Ward 9 of Minneapolis. Kshama Sawant is on track to WIN a City Council seat in Seattle as we go to print! Socialist Alternative, with small forces and resources, has put up a political challenge to corporate politics and shown the way forward for the labor movement, young people, immigrant rights struggles and the fight against racism. Help us build the struggles against the injustices of capitalism. Please follow the link below and consider joining Socialist Alternative today!

As an organized force, we don't just comment on the openings to fight against

the corporate establishment. We take action, building socialist campaigns for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, housing justice, green jobs and democratic public ownership of the top corporations and big banks. We raise consciousness, build movements and got around 100,000 votes for socialist policies.

Our organization is uniquely positioned to challenge the two parties of big business from the left. We are a group of activists who educate ourselves in the history of the working class movement. We are in solidarity with a vibrant worldwide group of socialist activists in the Committee for a Workers International. We have roots in social movements as well as an electoral strategy. Also, we put forward a concrete program and bold vision for a world free from corporate domination.

In order to build more movements like the "Fight for 15 and a union" or "Occupy Homes", in order to run more candidates like Ty Moore and Kshama Sawant, in order to build more branches throughout the country, we need you to join Socialist Alternative today. ✪

<http://socialistalternative.org/join/>



The Politics of Hacktivism

NSA and Internet Activism

George Martin Fell Brown

“Hacktivists” are in the news: from Edward Snowden’s dramatic escape from the U.S. to the trial of Chelsea Manning, from WikiLeaks to Anonymous. GEORGE MARTIN FELL BROWN reviews two recent books which attempt to analyze the rise of this virtual movement.

The world of computer hacking, once the domain of science fiction novels, has become increasingly prominent throughout society. WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, and Chelsea Manning have become household names. After being adopted by the online activist group Anonymous, the Guy Fawkes mask has become a symbol of struggle, seen in protests around the world. The recent scandal surrounding National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance and the attacks on whistleblower Edward Snowden have brought the subject of hacking further into the public eye.

In *This Machine Kills Secrets*, Andy Greenberg looks at the broad history of political hacking, or hacktivism, from its roots in the cypherpunk movement of the 1980s and 1990s to current incarnations like WikiLeaks. In *We Are Anonymous*, Parmy Olson takes a more focused look at the development of Anonymous, and especially at the rise and fall of the Anonymous splinter group LulzSec. Both books, written prior to the NSA surveillance scandal, are immensely readable and draw from extensive interviews to create a vivid picture of the hacktivist movement.

Olson and Greenberg are both writers for the business magazine *Forbes*. Neither could be considered left-wing, let alone socialist. Nonetheless, both authors provide valuable journalistic accounts. As such, both books are useful in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the hacktivist scene as well as the place of hacking in broader social struggles.

Greenberg presents his book as a history of the “ideal of the anonymous leaker.” He portrays cryptography and anonymizing software as a great equalizer, giving anyone the ability to challenge power. He documents the cypherpunk movement, inspired by the libertarian activist Tim May and his 1988 *Crypto-Anarchist Manifesto*. Greenberg credits the cypherpunks with developing the cryptography which led to WikiLeaks and, in particular, Chelsea Manning’s Cablegate leaks, the biggest leaks in world history. He argues:



Edward Snowden continues to provide revelations about the extent of NSA spying.



“Cutting the data trail to a leak’s source was the crucial trick that emboldened ever-greater disclosures from whistle-blowers leading up to the Cablegate blowout.”

The early cypherpunks were not populists, however. May is revealed to be a right-wing, racist, Silicon Valley billionaire. Although his manifesto was written in the literary style of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, his political views came from the ultra-free-market novelist-philosopher, Ayn Rand.

WikiLeaks

Julian Assange came out of the cypherpunk movement but took it in a more genuinely populist direction. Through WikiLeaks, he has made common cause with many left-wing activists in the antiwar movement. Nonetheless, Assange identifies as a “free-market libertarian,” and his ideology is centered on vague challenges to “secretive, unjust systems” in favour of “open, just systems.”

In the time since the days of the early cypherpunks, working people have gained greater access to the internet, influencing the character of hacktivism. Most of the Anonymous hackers Olson interviews come from working-class backgrounds, and Anonymous and WikiLeaks have targeted big corporations like Amazon, PayPal, and Bank of America, alongside government institutions. At the same time, there has been a rise in cybercriminals, professional hackers who work for governments and corporations, and independent right-wing hacktivists.

While most of the contemporary hacktivists are vast improvements on the likes of May, the hacker milieu remains a bastion of political confusion, reflecting broader conditions. The rise of neoliberalism, the move to the right of the trade union leadership and other working-class organizations, and the collapse of Stalinism have all fed into a driving back of socialist ideas and class consciousness. The reawakening resistance has

taken many confused forms, of which the hacktivist movement is an example.

Anonymous made its first appearance in 2008 with the launch of a campaign against the Church of Scientology, a religious sect notorious for using intellectual property laws to crack down on its critics. What began as a prank soon developed into a political movement. They did not just launch hacker attacks on the church, they also held coordinated international protests against it. Similar tactics of hacking mixed with public demonstrations were employed on a larger scale in 2010 once the U.S. and British governments started cracking down on WikiLeaks. This was key to establishing Anonymous as a broad political movement.

The year 2011 was one of global revolt, and Anonymous activists aligned themselves with the mass movements that were spreading across the globe. During the Arab Spring, Anonymous launched digital attacks against the Tunisian and Egyptian governments. During the mass trade-union-led movement in Wisconsin, USA, they launched an attack on Koch Industries, the multinational corporation whose owners became notorious for funding the Republicans’ anti-union campaign. When the Occupy movement started, Anonymous did IT work for the various encampments and helped publicize instances of police brutality against the movement. While the cypherpunks and even WikiLeaks relied on lone individuals leaking data, Anonymous based itself on mass hacking.

A Leaderless Movement?

The biggest strength in Olson’s book is in revealing the reality behind the self-proclaimed leaderless movement. Organization and leadership became increasingly necessary as protest campaigns developed, but due to Anonymous’ anti-leader, anti-structure ideology, this was often carried out behind

closed doors by unelected and unaccountable leaders.

The differences between Anonymous’ ideology and reality are made clear in the “marblecake” controversy. During the 2008 anti-Scientology protests, decisions were nominally made on public internet relay chat (IRC) channels. However, the main channel became too full of messages to effectively coordinate anything and the real organizing was done by a small clique operating in another channel, called marblecake. This was specifically developed as a secret channel.

The marblecake channel was completely secret and unaccountable to the rest of the movement. Eventually, however, other Anonymous activists discovered it and denounced the clique. After that, Anonymous dissolved into infighting for two years, before the arrests of Assange and Manning revived the movement.

The marblecake incident highlights the limits of Anonymous’ claims to be a leaderless movement. Leadership is an organic part of any movement and cannot be willed out of existence; to try and do so merely results in the leadership taking informal, undemocratic, and unaccountable forms. The marblecake channel was only one example of this dynamic. The claims of “mass hacking” are also much exaggerated. Many people did participate in Anonymous hacking campaigns, but Olson reveals that a large number of the computers involved were infected by viruses and controlled remotely by a few tech-savvy activists.

Some of Anonymous’ most high-profile attacks were carried out by a small group of hackers, who later formed the spinoff group LulzSec. LulzSec went after many of the same targets as Anonymous but operated as a tightly knit group closed to the public. While they asked the public for suggestions on whom to hack, all decisions were made by the seven hackers who made up the group – with no accountability. One of the hackers in LulzSec, Hector “Sabu” Monsegur, was arrested and agreed to be an FBI informant. This eventually led to the arrest of all of the remaining members of LulzSec.

Despite the desires of many hacktivists, absence of structures does not prevent the formation of leadership. It does, however, prevent the democratic accountability necessary for a healthy social movement. Many activists have concerns about some of Anonymous’ operations, from the security of its free hacking software to the homophobic and racist comments that have appeared in its public statements, to the question of how to respond to the sexual assault charges against Assange.

These are all serious concerns that require genuine democratic discussion, but under

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The Politics of Hacktivism

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Anonymous' "leaderless" structure, anyone who attempts to raise these concerns is instantly bombarded with abuse. Socialists recognize that leadership and structures are necessary and argue these should be democratically accountable and organized to suit the goals and interests of the movement.

Challenging Capitalism

A common slogan among Internet activists is, "Information wants to be free," but overwhelming evidence suggests that information has no strong opinions regarding freedom. Anonymizing software like Tor is used by undercover police as well as whistle-blowers. Code-breaking software can reveal corporate crimes to the public or it can reveal organizers of union drives to their bosses. Distributed denial of service (DDoS) campaigns to disrupt online services, such as websites, can be launched against businesses or governments, or they can be launched against left-wing activist groups. Digital technology can offer valuable tools for activists but, on the basis of capitalism, the digital playing field will remain structurally tilted in favor of the capitalists. Hacking can be disruptive, but it does not have the same impact as strikes, sit-downs, and occupations. The state and the capitalist ruling class have enormous powers at their disposal to disrupt, persecute, and defeat hacking efforts. Reliance on hacking is not a viable strategy for decisively defeating these powers. This is clearly illustrated by the financial problems currently plaguing WikiLeaks, detailed by Greenberg. In the wake of the 2010 mega-leaks and the ensuing government crackdown, financial institutions like PayPal and MasterCard blocked donations to the site, and Amazon stopped hosting the leaks.

When Anonymous launched its DDoS attacks against these institutions, it was supposed to bring them to their knees. But the scale of the attacks was trifling in comparison to the corporations' vast wealth. The corporations were only mildly inconvenienced. WikiLeaks, however, is being starved of funding and is struggling to survive.

Hacktivism and Mass Action

In arguing for the democratizing power of encryption technology, Greenberg contrasts Chelsea Manning with the famous pre-Internet whistle-blower Daniel Ellsberg, who released the Pentagon Papers in 1971. While Ellsberg put himself at great risk photocopying the papers by hand in public, Manning was able to discreetly download his files onto a fake Lady Gaga CD and send them to WikiLeaks safely, with mathematically secure encryption software.

This begs the question: Why is Manning, with modern encryption software and "mathematically perfect anonymity" at his disposal, in prison, while Ellsberg is a free man?

Ultimately, Manning was not done in by faulty encryption, but by fellow hacker Adrian Lamo, to whom Manning confessed his secrets. Greenberg points out: "If not for his ill-fated conversation

with Adrian Lamo, Manning's high-tech leak would likely have gone unpunished."

Both books are littered with similar cases to Manning's. Olson and Greenberg describe the lengths to which hackers go to avoid being caught. But personal slip-ups inevitably render all that work obsolete.

More significantly, however, unlike Manning, Ellsberg operated at a time of intense radicalization in American politics. The Pentagon Papers were leaked against the backdrop of mass movements of labor, the civil rights and women's liberation movements, and especially the movement against the Vietnam War. Socialist and revolutionary ideas were a powerful force among huge sections of working people around the world, including the U.S. These radicalizing mass movements made the prosecution of Ellsberg politically impossible. In contrast, Manning's mega-leaks appeared as the Iraq and Afghanistan antiwar movements were in decline.

Many hacktivists, such as Manning and Snowden, have been quite heroic in fighting the state and the ruling establishment. But a hacker working on behalf of the oppressed, even with the best of intentions, cannot alone overthrow society.

The basis of a new, socialist world must arise from the self-emancipation of the working class and the oppressed, through mass collective action. There is nothing wrong per se with the actions of Manning, Anonymous, and others, and they can be useful auxiliary tactics within the framework of a strategy of building mass movements. But it is a fundamental mistake to see them as a substitute for the oppressed organizing themselves, engaging in collective struggle, and consciously breaking their chains.

Anonymity, online and offline, can be very important under certain circumstances. In addition to whistle-blowers, activists operating under repressive regimes may need to hide their identities to carry out political work. Anonymity can also be necessary, for example, to avoid being fired while initiating a union drive.

Digital activism, anonymous whistleblowing, and encryption software can serve a purpose for activists and socialists. Ultimately, however, the anti-establishment and rebellious spirit of genuine hacktivists can only be effectively harnessed if they are part of a struggle to build mass movements of collective action by the working class that begin to embrace a socialist outlook. ⚙

We Are Anonymous: Inside the Hacker World of LulzSec, Anonymous and the Global Cyber Insurgency

By Parmy Olson
Published by Little, Brown and Company (2012), \$26.99.

This Machine Kills Secrets: How WikiLeaks, Cypherpunks, and Hacktivists Aim to Free the World's Information

By Andy Greenberg
Published by Dutton Adult (2012), \$27.95.

Obamacare: We Deserve Better Fight for Medicare for All



Marty Harrison

A smooth rollout of the federal on-line health exchange – a key element of Obama's signature legislative victory, the Affordable Care Act – had the potential to be a much needed triumph for the president. Instead, problems with the website snowballed into the "debacle" described by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in her testimony before an irate Congress.

Now Obama's promise, "If you like your plan, you can keep it," is blowing up in his face, as 10 million individual policyholders and small firms, (*The Wall Street Journal*, 10/31/13) are expected to receive cancellation notices because their plans don't meet the new standards. The insurance companies don't want the expense involved in servicing these obsolete plans or providing services to customers who live in areas considered insufficiently profitable.

The insurance companies don't want the expense involved in servicing these obsolete plans or providing services to customers who live in areas considered insufficiently profitable.

About half of all states have taken advantage of the Supreme Court ruling allowing them to opt out of the Medicaid expansion provisions of the act. Obamacare subsidizes coverage for those with incomes 100%-400% of the federal poverty line, but not for those below it because they were to be covered by Medicaid expansion. Five

million people could end up being too poor to qualify for subsidized care but too well off to qualify for Medicaid.

The authors of the Affordable Care Act went to great lengths to maintain the existence and profits of the biggest insurance, pharmaceutical, hospital, and medical device corporations, to shift work away from governmental agencies and unionized public sector workers to private nonprofits. Together, these features added layer upon layer of complexity and expense. The largest of the 55 contracts awarded for Healthcare.gov went to CGI Federal and topped out at \$94 million.

From day one, Congress and the president ruled out the simplest, cheapest and best of the available options: Medicare for All. It was never even discussed. Medicare provides coverage for senior citizens, and had it been expanded to Americans of all ages, no new wheels would have been invented. Billing systems, networks of qualified providers, reimbursement levels, diagnostic codes, and all the other essential elements are already in place in every state. Administrative costs are far below those of private insurance companies, so more money goes to providing – rather than denying – care.

Socialist Alternative supports Medicare for All, as a first step toward fully socialized medicine.

A longer version of this article will appear on SocialistAlternative.org. ⚙

Strikes in Rio de Janeiro

Workers' Struggle Intensifies in Brazil

Mariana Cristina, LSR (CWI in Brazil), Rio de Janeiro

This article originally appeared on socialistworld.net in late October. Socialistworld.net is the website of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI).

After the massive mobilizations that took place all over Brazil in June, the struggles did not cease. Besides land occupations in the countryside and the student and youth mobilizations and struggles in the cities for free transport, the unions convened, in July and August, two unified national actions of 24 hours including work stoppages, strikes, and the blocking of major highways.

Various workers have also carried out all-out strikes over wages and working conditions. The main strikes were among postal workers, the banks at national level, education professionals in several states, and many other sectors.

Right now (in October), the oil workers, in their fight against the privatization of the oil field in Libras, are engaged in the most important national strike in this sector since the Cardoso government sent the army to repress the refineries occupied by the workers in the great strike of 1995.

Amid all these struggles, the main mobilization of the working class in Brazil is in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Here the education workers have been on strike for more than two months. They have been directly confronting the governor and the mayor of the city, in massive demonstrations and with tremendous popular support. It is the biggest strike in the education sector in the last 20 years. More than 80 % of the sector is paralyzed.

In state schools, among the main demands are for the right of teachers to work in only one school, a reduction in the number of students per class, a wage increase of 19% to compensate for lost wages, the guarantee of one-third of the workload being allocated for extracurricular activities, the election of directors, the end of meritocracy, and other demands.

In the case of Rio, the trade union of education workers, SEPE, demands the reopening of negotiations with the municipal government and the repeal of the Career Plan approved by the city council.

In this struggle, education workers who are members LSR (CWI in Brazil) have initiated and led the union activists' collective "Luta Educadora." This won a majority in the workers' assemblies against the proposal to end the strike advocated by the board of the union on numerous occasions.

Although today this union is led by the left, there is a strong bureaucracy within



An assembly of teachers during their October strike.

it. These are the same people and political groups who have run the organization for 20 years, and they are in reality very detached from the rank and file.

The councilors of the city of Rio approved a career plan that does not correspond to the interests of the education professionals. This was despite thousands of people protesting against it outside of the council offices. The police, in trying to disperse the protesters and ensure that the session of the council chamber was not interrupted, used a constant and abundant flood of tear gas. But minutes after the effect of the gas would decrease, the workers would return and resist all day in front of the chamber until the end of the session.

The struggle of the teachers caught the ruling class by surprise. Since the strike began, the participation and the support among the general population have increased massively. Recent surveys indicated that 86% of the population agrees with the strike in education. Actions have become more constant and massive, bringing more than 20,000 onto the streets every week - reaching 50,000 on October 7. The repressive reaction from the police, aimed at criminalizing protesters and dispersing the struggle, has only intensified the solidarity and strength of the movement.

On October 15, officially "teachers' day," over one hundred thousand people - youth and workers from various categories - were united in favor of education, taking over Rio Branco avenue from beginning to end.

The pressure of the strike and the popular solidarity has pushed the judiciary to take a stand against the cuts in the wages

of striking teachers. The court also overturned the revocation of the license of the union SEPE, which had been initiated by the government.

Criminalization of Social Movements

On the protest of October 15, police repression was once again carried out in the streets of the center of Rio de Janeiro. The police dismantled the camp which had been permanently in front of the city council for weeks. Around 200 people were arrested, randomly chosen to serve as examples. They were illegally taken to neighborhoods distant from the center and trapped in different locations, making access to them by lawyers more difficult. All were framed through a newly created law to combat organized crime. The new law, passed in September in the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro, toughens punishment for protesters and provides much higher penalties for "crimes" such as the use of masks in street protests.

A member of the Collective "Estudante em Construção" built by youth activists from LSR, Bruno Liberato, was arrested on that day and only released 24 hours later.

Several search warrants and arrests were issued against activists. The houses of several activists were searched and several computers were seized. This policy of criminalization of social movements and the criminalization of poverty is an old policy pursued by the governor, Sergio Cabral. We also saw this in the case of an assistant bricklayer, Amarildo, tortured and murdered by 13 policemen in a so-called "Pacification

Police Unit" in the poor and working-class area of Rocinha.

Cabral Out!

Cabral was one of the governors elected with the highest votes in the country in the last election - he was re-elected with 66% of the vote - but now he is the governor with the lowest approval rating - on only 12%. He has been exposed by favoring big businesses and entrepreneurs such as Eike Batista, by his abuses of power such as the use of a public helicopter to carry his family. He is also known for violent and authoritarian excesses, through the criminalization of poverty, and the scrapping of public education and health.

All these attacks on the population made by the government headed by Cabral also served as a trigger for the June struggles. These extended into July, August, and up until now. He has been pushed up against the wall and forced to reverse some of his previous policies.

The city council of Rio was occupied for weeks by protesters to demand the actual functioning of a parliamentary commission of inquiry on public transport. Demonstrations demanding the ousting of Cabral were organized on a daily basis, including "Occupy Cabral" - an encampment outside his house.

The political crisis facing the Cabral government and the military police is worsening, especially after the increased crackdown on protesters. The governor's response to the struggles has been to repress in order to intimidate, and to prevent the youth from organizing. Increasingly heavy police weaponry, hundreds of young people being tried for "conspiracy", persecution and sequestration of leaders - a clear stance of criminalizing social movements.

The Struggle Continues!

The struggles that took place during the Confederations Cup of 2013, and the days of struggle initiated in June, are an anticipation of what will occur during the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. These mega-events will accentuate the contradictions between the illusions of a "great and prosperous Brazil" and the reality of the precarious quality of life of the working class and the poor.

This contradiction brings the potential for further struggles. The repression of demonstrations during the World Cup will be even greater. What we are seeing today in Rio de Janeiro will be extended to the whole country in the coming months and years. ✪

Left Out of the Immigration Debate

Immigrant Women Suffer Poverty and Discrimination

Genevieve Morse

Women in the U.S. are not strangers to economic exploitation, gender discrimination, or violence. This is especially true for immigrant women in the U.S. Undocumented immigrant women are subjected to both gender discrimination and prejudice based on their ethnicity or country of birth. Undocumented women regularly work under sweatshop conditions. Living on poverty wages or risking life and limb working to feed their families is the tip of the iceberg.

In October, 2013, *ColorLines* published a report indicating that immigrant women represent over half of undocumented immigrants in the U.S., and they are the most vulnerable to any bill or congressional decision. "51 percent of immigrants in the U.S. are women, and three-fourths are women and children," Jayapal told *ColorLines*, and yet "the debate on immigration for so long has not been defined as a problem for women and children. We're used to seeing a bunch of pictures of immigrants in which men climb the border wall, which is just a small percentage of all the ways people get here," (10/14/2013).

Women in this situation are under constant threat and fear of deportation. Without documents or citizenship, they are concentrated in the service sector or in child care. Most are



Women protest for immigration reform in Washington, D.C.

paid under the table, and with inconsistent work histories they cannot even attempt to move up in employment. These factors need to be considered in legislation dealing with proof of residency.

Physical and Mental Abuse

Currently there are no laws protecting undocumented women from sexual, physical, or mental abuse in the U.S. According to the

women's rights organization *Breakthrough*, immigrant women are three to six times more likely to suffer domestic violence than native-born women. Between 34 and 49 percent of women who are not citizens suffer domestic and gender violence, a risk that rises to 60 percent in those who are married and up to 77 percent for women who depend on their spouses to maintain legal status.

It is hard to get clear statistics on these issues. Violence against undocumented

women often goes unreported because of the fear of deportation. Women often end up in detention centers because they were victims of abuse. In the North Georgia Detention Center, more than half of women interviewed for a study conducted by Azadeh Shahshahani were victims of domestic violence.

Detention centers are one of the most disgusting forms of inhumane treatment. In a 2008 case, Juana Villegas, who was nine months pregnant at the time, was arrested during a traffic stop. Authorities found she was here illegally and held her with no due process. While giving birth she was shackled to her hospital bed. Shortly after Ms. Villegas gave birth, she was separated from her infant, returned to jail, and not allowed to breast pump as needed, causing an infection, (*NY Times*, 10/17/13). This is only one example of the type of horrific treatment women suffer in these prisons.

Shut Out of Immigration Reform

There is a widespread myth that the new immigration reform bill would solve fundamental problems for all undocumented immigrants. This bill includes multiple layers of

Women and Immigration

Continued on p. 14

Venezuela: A Deepening Crisis

A longer version of this article first appeared on *socialistworld.net*, the website of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI). The article is by **Johan Rivas**, a member of *Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI Venezuela)*. *Socialist Alternative* is the U.S. organization in political solidarity with the CWI.

The CWI is a worldwide group with activists in over 40 countries throughout the world, spread over every inhabitable continent. From South Africa to Greece, from Brazil to Pakistan, CWI organizations are often at the forefront of struggles for workers' rights, democracy, and fundamental change. The CWI organizes for a socialist transformation of society on a world scale.

The Venezuelan economy faces runaway inflation, speculation, and severe food shortages. At the same time, capitalist forces are increasingly emboldened by the growing divisions in the government.

The void at the top of the Venezuelan

government since the death of Hugo Chávez, along with the deepening global economic crisis and the limits of the government's reforms, have combined to expose the weaknesses and contradictions of the so-called "Bolivarian Revolution." This has opened up a new stage with a deepening of the class struggle.

At the same time, the absence of a conscious organization of the working class and poor in opposition to capitalism, corruption, and bureaucratization has allowed right-wing forces to go on a new political and economic offensive with the perspective of regaining political control.

Since the death of Chávez in March, the contradictions within Chavismo have become sharpened, leading to disputes and divisions between civil and military sectors for control of the ruling Partido Socialista Unida de Venezuela (PSUV) and the government. This has led to a political crisis in the PSUV, which is

reflected in the selection of candidates for the municipal elections due on December 8.

The imposition of candidates from above, ignoring the PSUV rank and file and community leaders, has provoked splits. In some regions, the discontented base of the PSUV, calling themselves "rebel Chavismo," have stood independent candidates, going over the heads of party leaders. Diosdado Cabello, vice president of the PSUV and president of the parliament, denounced those who do not "respect" party decisions as traitors and counterrevolutionaries, stating that no candidate outside the PSUV could represent the legacy of Chávez.

Over the last 14 years, the government has left intact the main economic power strongholds of the capitalists, who continue to maintain and increase profits. Seventy percent of GDP remains in the hands of 1% of the population. Last year, 97% of the money income of the central bank came from the

PDVSA company. So the top 1% contributes less than 3%! Of this money, 60% was spent on imports, mostly food and manufactured goods, mostly going to the private sector. Therefore, this parasitic class gets most of the oil money and most of the GDP.

The absence of an organization from below of the workers and poor, able to play a key role, means that the process will remain weak and limited to democratic and populist reforms within the capitalist system. This is the main factor explaining how a process which became such a strong reference for those struggling against capitalism all over the world has been unable to break decisively with the system.

Please read a full version of this important article here:

<http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/6531>



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Budget Debate

Make Big Business Pay, Not the 99%

Alan Jones

It's been a year since Obama's re-election in 2012, but the administration's approval ratings have plummeted to 42% (November WSJ/NBC poll) – the same level of George Bush after the callous handling of Hurricane Katrina in 2005! Increasingly, the candidate that inspired millions as the representative of “hope” and “change” to replace the most unpopular president in U.S. history is exposed as a loyal servant of Wall Street and big business, with one scandal exploding after another.

Where can you start? There are still 1.5 million jobs less than when the crisis started in 2007. The economy is almost eight million jobs short of the number needed to keep up with population growth. There has been no increase in real family income in 25 years. Chaos has surrounded the launch of Obama's flawed health care bill. Revelations surrounding the NSA's spying program have escalated domestically and internationally. On top of all this has been further outrage over Obama's continuing use of drones.

Cut in Food Stamps

As a result of non-action from Congress, in November 48 million Americans saw their food assistance benefits shrink, in the first ever reduction for food stamps payments. These cuts, which will reach a total of \$11 billion over the next three years, are part of the sequester agreement between Republicans and Democrats. Millions of children, the elderly, poor, and disabled people will now go with less, or go hungry.

The bill that was finally approved to end the October government shutdown extends the automatic across-the-board “sequester” cuts program that started last March and will extend the cuts for the next eight years to the



tune of \$1 trillion. The only discussion about “reforming the sequester” was to try to restore funding for the intelligence agencies, Homeland Security, and the military, while continuing with the cuts in social programs.

As part of the deal to end October's government shutdown, Republicans and Democrats agreed to create a bipartisan conference committee which will oversee serious budget cuts in order to prevent another government shutdown, including further cuts in food stamps, federal workers' retirement benefits, and cuts in unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed, throwing millions more into abject poverty.

Two Corporate Parties

In addition to these cuts, both the Republican leadership and President Obama have repeatedly said that they are planning to make a “grand bargain” that will be mainly aiming

to slash hundreds of millions of dollars from Social Security, Medicare, and Medicare and to lower corporate tax rates. This bipartisan deal is aimed at undermining the core social programs from the New Deal and the Great Society periods.

The opinion polls show the massive disgust of the public with the politicians and Congress. A recent poll shows that 52% want a new political party. But as long as there is no alternative, working-class people will continue to be made to pay for the crisis of a sick capitalist system.

The profits of Wall Street banks are soaring after their federal government bailout to the tune of more than \$1 trillion per year. Yet despite massive support for programs like food stamps, Social Security, and Medicare, both corporate parties target these programs for cuts rather than refuse to implement the most popular policy of all: increased taxes on

big business and the rich elite.

Socialist Policies for the 99%

That's where socialists come in. Socialists call for a moratorium on cuts to social programs that benefit working people. Kshama Sawant's stunning success running as a socialist for city council in Seattle was built around the demand for a \$15 an hour minimum wage and a tax on the super wealthy to fund education and public transit.

Imagine if the labor unions linked up with Occupy activists and other left organizations to run similar campaigns across the country. This would change the national political debate. The mobilization of the public around similar socialist demands could stop further corporate-sponsored budget cuts in their tracks.

This shows the need for a new political party that stands for the interests of working people and for making big business pay for the crisis of capitalism. Socialists would call for new party to support a massive green jobs program, a \$15-an-hour federal minimum wage, a genuine health care system (Medicare for all), and public ownership of the big banks corporations under democratic public control.

Chris Hedges wrote in a recent article for Truthdig.com: “Class struggle defines most of human history. Marx got this right. The sooner we realize that we are locked in deadly warfare with our ruling, corporate elite, the sooner we will realize that these elites must be overthrown.”

His conclusion: “It is time to grab our pitchforks.” Join the socialists in the struggle to build a new party to challenge the corporate dictatorship, kick out the corporate politicians, and open the way for a new, democratic socialist society. ✪

Women and Immigration

Continued from p. 13

rules restricting and obstructing any easy path to citizenship. But women would be particularly hit hard since the bill denies them access to health services for up to 15 years. Immigrant women would have to work for a *minimum* of 10 years after gaining citizenship before they could receive benefits such as Medicaid.

Even with the Affordable Care Act as it stands now, tax credits and subsidies that are supposed to encourage participation in health insurance marketplaces would be denied to immigrants. This would create huge financial and health hardships for women who may need care like mammograms and routine pap tests.

In September, more than 100 undocumented and documented women locked arms and blocked an intersection in Washington, D.C. in a protest around the immigration reform bill. The call was for “fair immigration reform,” but their call fell on the deaf ears of the corporate-funded politicians in Washington.

The Obama administration has a deplorable record on justice for immigrants. Since Obama was elected in 2008, more than two million immigrants have been deported. That's more than under any other president in U.S. history. In the time since the Senate passed the immigration bill, the Department of Homeland Security has deported

a further 100,000 people (*New York Daily News*, 10/5/2013).

Latinos were among the biggest supporters of a second term for Obama's reelection-based on the promise that immigration reform was a top priority. What has that support done for undocumented women and other immigrants?

Build a Movement in the Streets

Undocumented women and their families can't wait anymore for empty promises of empty reforms. Politicians have failed because big business in the U.S. wants to exploit workers and their families for every

dime they have – and they fund both major political parties. Undocumented women have been suffering in silence and it cannot continue.

We need continued protests out on the streets. Native-born and immigrant workers must to break with both the Democrats and the Republicans. We need women's rights activists and organizations to link together with the demand of full legal rights for all immigrants. At a time of capitalist crisis, when all workers are under attack, the struggle for immigrant rights needs to be linked to building a powerful movement to win decent living standards for all workers. ✪

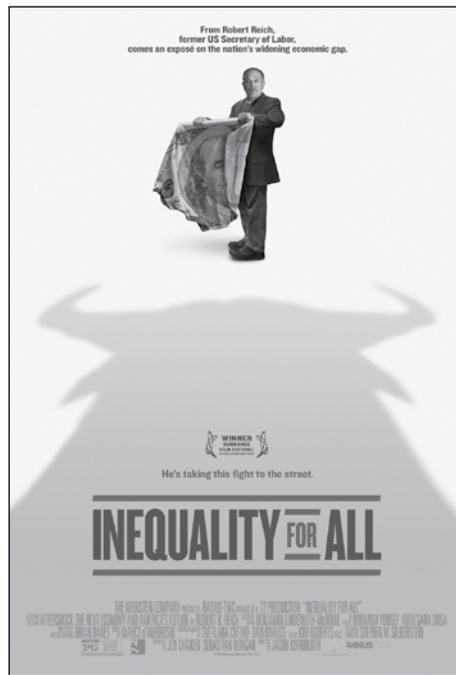
Movie Reivew

Inequality for All Falls Short

Naeemah Kitchens

Inequality for All is a 2013 documentary film in which former U.S. Labor Secretary under Clinton, Robert Reich, examines the growing gap between America's wealthy and working classes. Reich quickly traces the fiscal history of the United States from the onset of the Great Depression to the present, drawing parallels between the pre-1928 U.S. economy and the pre-2008 U.S. economy. He points to increased middle-class debt, decreased capitalist-class consumerism, and the wealth gap as indicators of an economy on the brink of calamity.

Reich's argument is this: The ever-expanding chasm between the rich and the poor is leading to the destruction of the middle class, and without the middle class the national economy will be crippled. If the middle class cannot remain solvent in spite of the outrageous and rising cost of living, he argues, the U.S. will find itself in a major crisis. Without the middle class's consumerism, which the U.S. economy is desperately dependent on, the country will not be able to turn itself around financially. Reich makes little to no mention of the many people in America who already find themselves in what can aptly be described as a "financial crisis." His analysis, although not without some truth, only scratches the surface of the roots of the



recession and the potential solutions.

The film is full of important dates and figures about Reagan-era financial deregulation and tax breaks that benefit the rich while decimating the poor. Unfortunately, however, Reich spends a great deal of the film's ninety minutes romantically recounting his own political career – from Ford to

Clinton – being sure to highlight that the biggest period of economic growth for the middle class was during his years as Labor Secretary. It is clear, nevertheless, that Reich is a Washington politician whose interest in the middle and working class does not go far beyond maintaining our ability to spend and consume in order to boost the economy.

Reich minimizes the deliberate campaign to destroy labor unions in this country and doesn't mention President Clinton's participation in deregulation at all. The film fails to mention either the Clinton administration's acceleration of "free trade" policies that shipped out millions of union industrial jobs, Clinton's destruction of welfare as we knew it, or the doubling of the prison population in those eight "glorious" years.

When he does specifically address the effect of the financial crisis on working people, he visits a Calpine factory in California where a working couple, moved to action by their inability to provide their children with health insurance, is trying to unionize their workplace. In this particular scene, one of the factory's workers tells Reich that the company has been better to him than he "deserves" and because of that, paired with his strong religious convictions, he opposes unionizing.

It's interesting that Reich chose this as the moment to describe workers organizing, because it totally fails to demonstrate the

capacity and determination of the working class to organize and struggle. This image, juxtaposed with the depiction of the compassionate, millionaire venture capitalist that Reich interviews in the first half of the film, demonstrates why working people cannot depend on Washington liberals to represent us in government or the media.

One of the film's most salient points is made by Reich himself; he says that thirty years ago, when he first started preaching the dangers of growing income inequality, his ideas were considered centrist, although now his detractors have gone so far as to call him a radical Marxist. Although Reich didn't expound on the point, this does demonstrate something important about the changing nature of the American economy and the gross devaluation of the poor and working class. Political ideas that support and protect those other than the rich are considered radical and unrealistic among the capitalist class.

Like his fellow Clintonite Al Gore, Reich seeks to monetize a long and already peaked Democratic career by transforming a lecture and PowerPoint presentation into an award-winning documentarian/liberal propagandizing/soothsaying career. However, *Inequality for All* offers little to working people by means of solutions to the growing income gap between the working class and poor on the one side and the rich on the other. ✪

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Philippines: Typhoon Destruction Aggravated by Capitalism

See the full article on socialistworld.net
<http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/6556>



The Politics of Sports Stadiums

This article by Ryan Reilly will be appearing on SocialistAlternative.org. Hundreds of millions of public dollars are handed to billionaire owners of sports teams. The owners threaten to ship beloved teams out of cities if the taxpayer money isn't coughed up. Written by a working-class sports fan, the coming article will be discussing this situation in detail and proposing solutions.

Socialist Member of European Parliament, Paul Murphy, Speaks Against Detention of Greenpeace Activists

See the short "Free the Arctic 30" speech in European Parliament here:
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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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Black Friday and Beyond ESCALATE THE FIGHT AGAINST LOW PAY



Cheyenne Gracia

Low-wage workers, from fast food to retail, have protested, picketed, and gone on strike multiple times this year to demand higher wages and rights on the job. As we approach the holiday shopping season, there is an opportunity to build the movement of low-wage workers on “Black Friday.”

Dubbed “the busiest shopping day of the year,” Black Friday is the culmination of capitalistic voyeurism, resulting in near riots among consumers as they scramble to purchase cheaply made imported goods. Meanwhile, employees are forced to work longer hours in hectic conditions at wages that make it impossible to support themselves. Additionally, conglomerates such as Walmart engage in shady scheduling practices that result in an estimated one-third of its 1.2 million U.S. employees unable to access health benefits or earn a living wage.

Though Black Friday sales entice shoppers with outrageous savings, the cost of operating retail stores like Walmart falls heavily on taxpayers. Working in the second-largest

employer in the country, the average Walmart associate earns \$8.86 an hour, with an average annual salary of \$17,841. Lack of benefits, sick leave, and a sufficient salary force many employees to rely on public assistance to ensure they will have access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and health care. Recent research has found that the average Walmart “associate” receives \$5,000 in public aid annually. This amounts to about \$1 million public dollars being allotted per store. Meanwhile, Walmart rakes in profits projected at \$15 billion dollars.

McProfits

Fast-food corporations such as McDonald’s engage in similar exploitative practices. A study conducted at UC Berkeley found that more than half of low-wage workers in the fast-food industry rely on some form of public assistance, amounting to \$7 billion dollars in aid. McDonalds alone is estimated to cost taxpayers 1.2 billion. Like Walmart, profits in the fast food industry reach into the billions, while forcing the public to foot the

bill for their irresponsible and reprehensible business conduct. While public assistance is an important and necessary part of organized society, it is ridiculous that some of the largest employers in the country force their workers to depend on social programs so they can eat and pay their rent.

The demand for a \$15 minimum wage is a direct result of companies like McDonald’s and Walmart hoarding profits while ignoring the needs of its workers. Fast-food workers have organized in major cities across the country, participating in one-day strikes and walkouts. City council campaigns by Socialist Alternative members have embraced the struggle for a living wage as part of their political platform, insisting that corporations take responsibility for their employees.

In 2012, 400 Walmart workers walked off the job in the midst of the Black Friday chaos. Despite the anti-union policies of the global conglomerate, employees have managed to organize another Black Friday strike, scheduled for November 29. This is an important opportunity to engage with a massive workforce that could potentially aid in propelling

the \$15 minimum wage into reality.

Next Steps

While the importance and necessity of one-day strikes should not be overlooked, it is essential to expand the movement’s approach. Citizens of SeaTac, WA are voting on Proposition 1 in their upcoming election, hopefully leading to a citywide raise with a \$15 minimum wage. In nearby Seattle, Socialist Alternative city council candidate Kshama Sawant is demanding an implementation of a similar \$15-an-hour initiative. Furthermore, the right to organize and form unions without retaliation must be fought for. It is through these types of efforts that the movement will proceed effectively.

As Black Friday approaches, consider which side of the crowd you want to be on. Will you join the throng of eager shoppers or stand in solidarity with the millions of underpaid workers in the United States? Please be sure to check in at socialistalternative.org for more details about Black Friday demonstrations. ✪