

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Make 2014 the Year of \$15 – p. 5

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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



Jess Spear
Seattle, WA

Organizing Director for 15Now.org

the same sense of urgency. But by 2008, with carbon emissions rising year after year, I recognized the futility of all these methods, and cynicism began to creep in. "Obama-mania" could not reach me.

"Hope and change" came for me not in the form of a new Democratic president, but in the form of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, the bold Wisconsin workers who took over the capitol and demanded their collective bargaining rights, and the young activists that sparked the Occupy Wall Street movement. I immediately went down to Occupy Seattle on October 15 and signed up to get involved with Socialist Alternative.

Through joining Socialist Alternative, I learned that climate change was a symptom of global capitalism, which necessitates environmental destruction for its profits. To stop global warming, we have to struggle for a better, more democratic, more rational system: socialism. The mass struggles of 2011 showed the way forward. Through mass movements to improve our lives, we can steer society to make a better world, a world where all seven billion of us can have a high standard of living along ecologically sustainable lines.

Global warming is causing Earth's climate to change, rapidly. Over the past few years this has been more clearly visible as we've experienced an onslaught of massive storms, drought, and floods. As a young person in college, I believed I could help solve this problem and set out to follow the suggestions by Al Gore and others to make my lifestyle more "environmentally-friendly," and I urged my friends and family to do the same.

Feeling that lifestyle politics was just one part of the solution, I also attended protests, wrote to my elected representatives, and voted for Democrats who I thought shared

New SocialistAlternative.org Website!



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 47 countries, on every continent. Join us! ✪

Why We Fight for a \$15 an Hour Minimum Wage

By Sarah White, Seattle

“You know what your boss was trying to say? It’s like, ‘Hey if I could pay you less, I would, but it’s against the law.’” – Chris Rock

CEOs will be boasting 2014 with salaries 328 times that of average working people’s salaries, while working for minimum wage 40 hours a week doesn’t provide enough income to rent a two-bedroom apartment and manage other living expenses in any state in the nation (*Out of Reach*, National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2012).

Workers will enter 2014 celebrating the bold win in SeaTac, WA for a \$15/hr minimum wage, the growing momentum of fast food worker’s movement, and the ongoing struggle of Walmart workers for a living wage. In Seattle, Kshama Sawant, a Socialist Alternative candidate was elected to city council on a platform calling for a citywide minimum wage of \$15/hr. Her inauguration grabbed national and international headlines. Sawant, with labor and community groups at her side, declared 2014 as the year of the \$15/hr minimum wage in Seattle. A win for \$15 in a major city would embolden workers, igniting a struggle for better pay and benefits across the nation!

While low-wage workers are out in the streets across the country demanding increases in the minimum wage out of necessity, Obama and the Democrats hope they have found an issue under which they can take cover from the failures of the Obamacare rollout and the NSA scandals. At the same time, they hope to use the minimum wage as a way to mobilize the electorate for the 2014 midterm elections.

In the State of the Union address, Obama has called for raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10/hr, while workers are facing skyrocketing rents and increasing health care costs. In reality, \$10.10 still won’t be enough. But the Democrats’ loyalties are not to families seeking a dignified existence: but to corporations that keep them in political power—otherwise, they would proposed a living wage which would provide for the needs of families. One thing is clear: Working people can’t expect the Democrats to fight for us; our interests are diametrically opposed to the corporate interests they defend.

How Will \$15/hr Help Workers and the Unemployed?

Raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr nationally would raise millions out of poverty, with 51 million workers getting a raise, (*ThinkProgress*, 12/2013). But who are the people making minimum wage? Nearly 80%



Eljeer Hawkins (Socialist Alternative) speaks at an MLK rally in Seattle on January 20.

are over the age of 20, not the high school kids trying to earn extra cash as we are told, (BLS, 2012). Women work a disproportionate share of minimum wage jobs and the majority of minimum wage workers are parents, (National Women’s Law Center, 2014). Raising the minimum wage will lift nearly one-third of the nation’s children out of poverty, (EPI, 8/2012).

People of color are also disproportionately affected by the minimum wage, as they are overrepresented in low-wage work compared to the rest of the population. Low-wage workers are “more likely to live in the South,” (Pew Research, 7/2013). Even soldiers in the U.S. Army ranking below sergeant would see a raise! As costs for food, housing, education, transportation, and health care rise, raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour will be an important boost to help the 99% make ends meet. And for workers currently making more than \$15/hr? They’ll also see their incomes increase as pay scales are adjusted upwards to accommodate the new minimum, (Shierholz, 2009). Additionally, history shows that raising the minimum wage will stimulate the economy and create jobs, (EPI, 8/2012). All working people, as well as the unemployed, have an interest in this struggle!

But Can the 1% Afford to Give us a Raise?

The average CEO of an S&P 500 company

makes \$12.3 million a year on average. They can afford it. The 1% is able to make that kind of money by only paying workers an average of \$34,645 per year, despite escalating productivity. Corporations are using the excuse of the recession to slash pay, attack pensions, and ratchet down their health care contributions. You’ve heard the rhetoric: “We all have to tighten our belts.” But in the last year, we saw 100 new billionaires added to the Forbes Billionaires List.

Meanwhile, since the recession corporations have replaced 60% of middle-income jobs with low-wage jobs, (National Employment Law Project, 2012). So what are the corporations doing with the savings stolen from working people? Well, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, they are sheltering increasingly larger sums of money overseas, to the tune of \$1.3 trillion in 2012 (3/10/13). What are they “sheltering” that money from? Taxes. \$1.3 trillion corresponds to an estimated \$455 billion dollars in tax revenue. You know, taxes to fund things like education, mass transit, and health care.

Then take the case of the Waltons. Four members of the Walton family have inherited a place on the billionaires list. Their positions on that roster are subsidized by your taxes: Walmart pays its employees so little nationwide that they need \$2.66 billion a year in government assistance just to make ends meet, (Good Jobs First, 7/2013).

The thing is, wages haven’t kept pace with productivity, which has doubled over the past 40 years. If they had, the minimum wage would be approximately \$18, (CEPR, 9/2013). So if productivity has increased, it isn’t out of economic necessity that wages are so low — it’s the insatiable greed of the 1%. This is how capitalism functions: Workers are impoverished while wealth is concentrated at the top. If this system can’t afford to pay us fairly, we can’t afford this system!

But What About Small Businesses?

Anger is growing across the country as it becomes increasingly clear that big business is escalating its exploitation of low-wage workers. To fight against the growing movement to raise the minimum wage, these mega-corporations are trying to deflect attention from their super-profits by spending huge sums of money on publicity focusing on the “concerns of small business.”

Socialist Alternative is very open to help ing small businesses – but not on the backs of the workers. Everyone working full-time deserves a decent living. Help for small businesses can be organized by taxes on big business (which are at historically low rates) and eliminating corporate welfare to subsidize small businesses, along with cutting the property tax burden on small businesses and, in Washington State, the business and occupation (B&O) tax. Raising the minimum wage will help small businesses by increasing the spending power of their potential customers.

Won’t It Lead to Pink Slips and Inflation?

So when big business and the super-rich claim they’ll be ruined by paying a living wage, it rings a bit hollow, not to mention that claim hasn’t been borne out in practice. In 2003, San Francisco passed Prop L, raising the minimum wage to \$10.55, the highest in the nation. This provided a real-life, concrete opportunity to see the actual effects of a wage hike. What happened? The implementation of Prop L led to “increased worker pay and compressed wage inequality, but did not create any detectable employment loss among affected restaurants,” (Cook, 4/2013). Little, if any, cost was passed onto the consumer; prices rose by pennies, if at all. Further, they found that increased wages resulted in higher rates of retention and a larger proportion of restaurant workers working full-time rather

Why We Fight for \$15

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Democrats Making Populist Turn

The Politics of Poverty

By Tom Crean

While the question of Obamacare has receded from headlines, the minimum wage has become the biggest domestic political issue in the country. A recent CBS News poll found that 69% of the population wants to see the federal minimum wage raised from the current abysmal \$7.25/hr. The minimum wage has been allowed to stagnate for decades during the bipartisan neoliberal offensive, and it is now worth less in real terms than under Harry Truman in the late 1940s!

Since the outbreak of the Occupy movement in September 2011 amidst the vast scale of social inequality in the U.S., the extent to which this inequality has grown over the past 30 years has become an increasingly urgent topic in national and local politics. The fast-food workers' campaign, launched by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in 2012, popularized the slogan "\$15 and a union." Last November, SeaTac, WA, became the first city in the nation to pass a referendum for a \$15 minimum wage. Now, Seattle is the center of the national fight for a minimum wage that could begin to lift millions of workers out of poverty. This is happening in the wake of the election of Socialist Alternative Councilor Kshama Sawant and the launch of the 15 Now campaign. Already it is reported that, in several other cities, including Chicago, groups are working to bring forward \$15 ballot initiatives.

Wedge Issue for Midterms

Given all this, it is probably not surprising that the Democratic Party has decided to make the minimum wage a key issue in this November's midterm elections. They believe this is an issue which will wrong-foot the Republicans. Most House Republicans, for example, remain adamantly opposed to

raising the minimum wage, despite the fact that a CBS poll showed 57% of Republicans favoring an increase. The Democrats also hope that minimum wage initiatives, which they are putting on the ballot in a number of states, will help to motivate young people, poor people, and people of color to vote in greater numbers. These are the sections of the population that significantly favored Obama in 2008 and 2012, but tend to sit out during midterms. Democratic strategists have also taken note of Bill de Blasio's landslide victory in November's mayoral race in New York City. The main theme of de Blasio's populist campaign was "the Tale of Two Cities", highlighting the growing chasm between rich and poor in the heart of American finance capital.

Obama himself has recently spoken at length about inequality and the need to raise the federal minimum wage. In a speech in December, he stated, "The combined trends of increased inequality and decreasing mobility pose a fundamental threat to the American Dream, our way of life, and what we stand for around the globe." By saying this, Obama is reflecting one strand of ruling-class opinion, which is concerned that low wages are hurting the ability of the economy to fully recover from the 2007-2008 implosion. They are shifting away from the right-wing obsession with balancing the budget through endless austerity, a policy that Obama signed onto for a good part of his five years in office. As Obama stated in December, "When it comes to our budget, we should not be stuck in a stale debate from two years ago or three years ago. A relentlessly growing deficit of opportunity is a bigger threat to our future than our rapidly shrinking fiscal deficit."

But the anxiety felt by this section of the elite about growing inequality and declining social mobility stems from more than the impact on economic growth. It reflects a fear that social division is feeding a radicalization, especially among young people, which could result in a significant increase in social struggle, and ultimately even a threat to the capitalist system itself.

Limitations of Proposals From the Democrats

Obama is planning to speak at meetings around the country about the need to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10/hr. Some people might see this as proof that the Democrats can be pushed in a more progressive direction. But from our point of view, \$15 is truly the minimum to bring people out of bare subsistence, especially for workers supporting families. This is doubly true in high-priced cities like Seattle or New York. Also,



while a \$10.10 federal minimum wage would certainly be an appreciable change for tens of millions of American workers currently being paid poverty wages, in no part of the country can it remotely be called a "living wage." A number of the ballot initiatives being pursued at state level aim even lower, like in Arkansas and New Mexico where the minimum wage Democrats are demanding is \$8.50 an hour! De Blasio, for all his rhetoric, has not supported any concrete demands.

Need for Mass Action

Nowhere in the country are the Democrats prepared to countenance mobilizing working people, such as through mass demonstrations that might give workers a sense of their social power. They see the issue of raising the minimum wage first and foremost as a way to gain electoral advantage. The role of populists like de Blasio is to draw people back toward this discredited corporate party, without promising too much. It really must be asked: How is it that the minimum wage was allowed to effectively decline over such a long period? Why are the Democrats suddenly clamoring to "do something about it"? Could it be the increasing pressure from below?

And what is the fundamental difference between socialists and the Democrats on the question of the minimum wage, especially when it comes to Democrats adopting more radical-sounding populist language? The Democrats support this demand as a way to entice people to continue supporting the capitalist system, a system that inevitably results in massive inequality and poverty. Socialists, on the other hand, understand that unless we replace capitalism by a democratic socialist society, then working people will never enjoy a secure life. We also fight for a higher minimum wage not only to improve the lives of

working people, but as a step to building a radical mass movement of workers to challenge the capitalist system and the two-party system that it props up.

Some on the left have criticized Socialist Alternative's call for a \$15 wage as too modest a demand. This would be true if we limited our demands to a \$15/hr minimum wage, or if we promoted \$15/hr as a "solution" to poverty or inequality. Instead, we see it as a step toward a living wage, which should be far higher than \$15/hr. We see the demand for \$15 as the best way right now to galvanize mass anger at the system. The fight for \$15 can be compared in many ways to the fight for an 8-hour day by the labor movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It is an enormous step forward that a wide range of unions and community groups have come together with socialists in Seattle to campaign for a \$15 minimum wage. The next step must be to increase the pressure on the Seattle establishment by building a powerful grassroots movement in Seattle, while spreading the 15 Now campaign as far and wide as possible nationally. We can be absolutely sure that the ruling class will push back, and we need to be prepared to fight that.

If a genuine mass campaign can force the establishment to make real concessions on this issue, it will enormously increase the confidence of the working class and young people to fight back on other important issues across the board. A mass struggle around the \$15 demand will help to clarify the need to break from the two-party system that serves the interests of big business, and it can begin to lay the basis for the creation of a new, independent, political working-class movement that can fight for the real interests of working people and the poor. ☺



The Fight for a \$15 Minimum Wage

15 Now Campaign Kicks Off



Kshama Sawant speaks at an MLK rally on January 20 (photo: Joshua Kelety)

Last year, fast food workers across the country organized waves of one-day strikes demanding a \$15/hour minimum wage and the right to organize a union without retaliation. This exciting movement has taken root most firmly in Seattle: Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative city councilor, is forcing the entire political establishment to take a stance on the issue. Voters in SeaTac, a small city just south of Seattle, narrowly approved a labor-backed ballot initiative on \$15 in November despite big business pouring millions of dollars into the town of just 28,000 people in an attempt to defeat the initiative.

The 15 Now campaign, endorsed by unions and prominent left-wing national activists interested in organizing a grassroots movement, held an unusually energetic kick-off rally on January 12 at the Seattle Labor Temple, with 400 cheering supporters overflowing from the main hall. Thousands turned Seattle's January 20 march to commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. into a protest for \$15.

If Seattle's mayor or council derails, delays, or dilutes attempts to pass an ordinance, these activists and donors will be vital to the formation of neighborhood and campus action groups to build public pressure and collect signatures to get an initiative on the November 2014 ballot.

Let's turn this into a nationwide battle for \$15 everywhere. 15 Now needs your support to counter the millions of dollars that will be poured into this struggle by mega-corporations whose record profits are threatened by this movement against poverty wages. Please go to 15Now.org to volunteer, start an action group in your community, and donate. Help us reach our initial goal of 1,000 people pledging \$15/month to support this historic movement. ♡

Make 2014 the Year of \$15!

Call for a National Week of Action March 7 to 15 & Mass Demonstrations on May Day

Statement from 15Now.org

Across the country, there is a groundswell of momentum for a \$15/hour minimum wage, as evidenced by the wave of protests, strikes, and electoral initiatives. The question of income inequality – the divide between the 1% and the 99% – has become a central question dominating political discussions from federal to state to city level.

The fight for \$15 has captured the imagination of hundreds of thousands of low-wage workers, young people, and Occupy and union activists.

Now is the time to step up this struggle. We have an historic opportunity. The fight for \$15 has the potential to be a catalyst for turning back the decades-long corporate assault on working people.

15 Now, a new grassroots campaign arising from the fight for a \$15 in Seattle, is appealing to all Fight for \$15 groups, young people, Occupy activists, unions, and low-wage workers to come together this spring for two rounds of

coordinated national actions:

1) A week of action from March 7 to 15 for raising the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15. These actions can range from organizing a public meeting or town hall to setting up a picket line outside a McDonald's, holding a large demonstration, or anything in between.

2) The week of action in March could set the stage for massive demonstrations across the country on May 1, 2014, and it would send a clear message to the capitalist establishment that workers are no longer willing to stand idly by as wages and benefits get cut while the 1% get richer and richer. Let's unite to make May Day 2014 a historic demonstration of support for \$15 and immigrant rights. Let's re-ignite the traditions of May Day as a day of international working-class solidarity and struggle!

Where possible these rallies should be organized directly around the demands for \$15 and immigrant rights, but in some cases it may make more sense for supporters of \$15 to organize \$15 contingents at the larger May 1 rallies. ♡

Join the Movement for an Alternative to Capitalist Crisis

The Five Years of Economic Crisis

By Patrick Ayers

Five years ago, the U.S. was in the grips of the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. Nearly nine million jobs were destroyed, household incomes plummeted, and millions of homes were lost. Rubbing salt in our wounds, the bailed-out Wall Street bankers then paid themselves record bonuses.

The economy has barely grown since then. The last five years have accounted for the weakest economic recovery since World War II, with growth totaling nine percent since June 2009, compared to 22 percent growth in the first four years after the recession in the early 1980s, (USA Today, 9/11/2013). A socialist alternative is needed more than ever.

Growing Inequality

Despite the weak recovery, the 1% has managed to do better than ever before. The corporate elite celebrated record highs for both the stock market and profits in 2013, while the 300 richest people on the planet increased their fortunes by more than half a trillion dollars. In fact, 95 percent of all growth between 2009 and 2012 went to the 1%, and in 2012 the 1% took more than half of all the wealth created in the U.S., their highest share since 1917.

For the rest of us, there has been very little recovery. In fact, median household income continued to fall after the recovery began in 2009 and through 2012. While there has been a little growth since then, in 2013 the household median income in the U.S. was still 4.4 percent lower than it was at the start of the recovery.

Meanwhile, poverty is at an all-time high, with nearly 50 million people in the U.S. — or one out of six — now living in poverty. In October, the percentage of people employed in the economy dropped to 62.8 percent, the lowest level since 1978. A massive jobs crisis remains. More than six million jobs need to be created to return the economy to pre-recession employment levels.

“Short of death or a debilitating terminal



disease,” wrote economics journalist Megan McArdle, “long-term unemployment is about the worst thing that can happen to you in the modern world. It’s economically awful, socially terrible, and a horrifying blow to your self-esteem and happiness. It cuts you off from the mass of your peers and puts stress on your family, making it likely that further awful things, like divorce or suicide, will be in your near future. When millions and millions of people are stuck in this debilitating trap, we should be sounding forth the alarm,” (thedailybeast.com, 4/22/2013).

A Rotten System

“Even before the recession, American-style capitalism was not working for a large share of the population,” wrote former head of the World Bank Joseph Stiglitz. “The recession only made its rough edges more apparent. Median income (adjusted for inflation) is still lower than it was in 1989,” (www.project-syndicate.org).

The problems facing “millenials” have been well-documented. Young people today are the second American generation in a row predicted to make less than their parents. Student debt is out of control. Yet a college

education is much less of a guarantee of a living-wage job than ever before.

Meanwhile, once-booming cities like Detroit have been ravaged since well-paying union jobs have been largely destroyed. U.S. capitalism, which could boast to being the world’s creditor after World War II, today has its highest levels of personal and government debt ever.

This situation is not simply the result of bad policy or greed, as some would argue. Instead, it’s the result of the underlying logic and dysfunction of capitalism as a system. Decisions under capitalism are not planned; they are the accidental result of corporate owners seeking to maximize their short-term profits. Is it any wonder that the needs of the 99% get pushed aside?

For example, millions of people who could work have no opportunity to do so because there is no potential for profit to be made off their labor. Yet there is plenty of socially useful work they could do, like rebuilding the rotting infrastructure in the U.S. But Big business would rather stash hordes of idle cash in offshore tax shelters than invest it in society.

In the past, capitalism was able to pioneer new markets, techniques, and technologies that developed the productive resources of society. This was due to the early period of vibrancy of U.S. capitalism. But over the past decades, U.S. capitalism has become choked by structural failures. It has not grown so much through investment in real jobs and the real economy, such as manufacturing and the production of goods: Most of the “growth” has been achieved through driving down living standards and the creation of speculative bubbles.

While a tiny handful of people have gotten very rich, there are no solutions on the horizon to the problems of daily life for the majority. Capitalism has failed the 99%. Organizing society’s resources in a casino-like system to make billions for the elites in hopes that

some wealth will trickle down is a fallacy. If the 99% are going to have a better future, we must fight for a socialist alternative to the crisis of capitalism.

What Socialists Support

Socialists call for building powerful movements now, on the important issues facing working people. Working people have tremendous power when we struggle together in our numbered millions. The last five years have provoked enormous anger, and we have seen the first stirrings of working-class action with the movements in Wisconsin and Occupy, and in the fastfood worker strikes. Huge battles are being prepared.

Socialists have an important role to play in building movements because we don’t accept the limits of what the capitalist system can afford. That’s the basis for a losing battle! We start by campaigning for the immediate needs of working people:

- ✦ Raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour, adjusted annually for cost of living increases, as a step towards a living wage for all.
- ✦ Create millions of full-time, living-wage union jobs through a massive public works program to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, health-care, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ No budget cuts to education and social services! Full funding for all community needs. Massively increase taxes on the rich and big business, not working people.

Break the Power of Wall Street

Socialists fight tooth and nail to help movements win victories on concrete issues, while connecting these struggles to the need for changing society altogether.

The biggest thing standing in our way is both political parties and the massive corporations that dominate our society. A tiny elite has an outright dictatorship over the economy. Scientists in Switzerland did a study in 2011 and found that a mere 167 transnational corporations control more than 40 percent of the world economy, and 737 of them control 80 percent! (New Scientist, 10/22/11)

Walmart uses its massive power to keep out unions and force poverty wages on communities. Big Oil uses its power to block the development of renewable energy. Wall Street gets just about anything it wants. Recently, all Boeing had to do in order to have the

Fight for Socialism
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People of Color and Women Hit Hardest

While the economic crisis has hit the 99% hard, people of color and women have been hit the hardest.

According to figures from the Census Bureau, real household income dropped 8.3 percent from 2007 to 2012. Between 2011 and 2012, income rose from \$56,570 to \$57,009 for white people. In the same period, African Americans, starting from a position of greater income inequality, also saw incomes barely increase, from \$32,902 to \$33,321. For Latinos it fell, going from \$39,430 to \$39,005.

Meanwhile, a report from NBC News anchor Maria Shriver found that more than 42 million women — and 28 million dependent children — are burdened with financial hardship during the recovery. Women make up two-thirds of all minimum wage workers, (shriverreport.org).

Food Stamps and Unemployment

These Cuts Won't Heal

By Katie Quarles

On December 28, 2013, emergency unemployment insurance expired, leaving 1.3 million people without this key source of income because Congress refused to extend it.

Despite the high unemployment rate of 6.7 percent, 45 percent of unemployed workers have run out of unemployment benefits, and 38 percent of unemployed people have been out of work six months or more. At this point, getting a job becomes significantly more difficult, with employers assuming something is wrong with an applicant that no one else wants. On top of this, Republicans are finding a way of calling the unemployed lazy.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY.) said, "When you allow people to be on unemployment insurance for 99 weeks, you're causing them to become part of this perpetual unemployed group in our economy."

But how can every unemployed person be at fault for not finding a

job when there are three job seekers for every one job opening?

The government is taking aim at the poor, and especially hard-hit are women, children, and people of color.

Congress is preparing to cut food stamp benefits by \$8.7 billion over the next ten years. This comes only two months after the country's 47 million food stamp recipients were hit with \$5 billion in cuts.

The \$5 billion in cuts affected everyone, with a family of four now getting \$36 less a month. These new \$8.7 billion of cuts will most likely affect approximately 850,000 households in states that give recipients \$1 in heating assistance in order to trigger higher food stamp benefits. Cuts to benefits will average \$90 a month. Currently, the average household benefit is around \$270 a month.

Food stamps or, as they are now known, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, are clearly necessary. One in seven people in the U.S. receives



its benefits, and half its recipients are children.

The cuts have already resulted in more people showing up at food banks. Further cuts will only continue that trend, making it even more difficult for food banks to keep people fed.

A recent study shows that among

diabetics in low-income neighborhoods, hospitalizations were 27 percent higher in the last week of the month compared to the first, when most states send their food stamps out. Another study shows children from food-insecure families are 30 percent more likely to have been hospitalized for a range

of illnesses.

While politicians talk about how there isn't enough money for these programs, we all know that the money is there for corporate tax breaks and military spending. We need to organize and fight back to tax the rich to fund people's basic needs! ✪

Why We Fight for \$15

continued from p. 3

than just part-time. With more stable and better-paid jobs, workers would also be far more inclined to organize into unions to protect and improve conditions in these jobs.

Also, because low-wage workers would spend this increased income on products – unlike the 1%, who hoard much of their income – raising the minimum wage will provide modest stimulation to the economy, resulting in job growth.

However, in the longer term, big business will make every effort to undermine a higher minimum wage. That's because the capitalist system cannot meet the needs of the 99% in any real way. Yet, this is not an argument against raising wages. It is an argument to link the struggle for \$15 to a struggle for affordable housing, cheap public transport, free public education, high quality health care, and pensions for the all workers and poor people. For Socialist Alternative, the struggle to improve the conditions of workers is linked

to fighting the whole profit-driven system of capitalism.

As a first step, winning \$15 will make an enormous difference in the lives of working people and inspire workers everywhere to fight to improve their own living and working conditions.

Let's Take the Momentum Forward in 2014!

While working people and poor people understand the challenges of making ends meet on poverty wages, the Democrats would rather offer crumbs in the form of inadequate increases in the minimum wage in order to mobilize its base for midterm elections.

The demand for \$15/hr has its roots 51 years ago in the March on Washington. One of ten demands was, "A national minimum wage act that will give all Americans a decent standard of living." Protesters demanded nothing less than \$2/hr, which



would be just over \$15 today.

Those are types of actions we need now if we want to win a living wage for all. We need mass movements that cut across race, gender, and sexual orientation by recognizing our shared struggle against a system based on economic injustice. And make no mistake: any hope placed in the parties of big business will be dashed. Miserly corporations like Walmart and fast-food giants line the pockets of

both Democrats and Republicans at the national and state levels. Working people need a party of our own that will fight for our interests, not those of big business. If we've learning anything from the election of Kshama Sawant, it's that elections can be won without dirty money and independent parties can change the debate. Get organized and let's take the momentum forward in 2014! ✪

How a Socialist



By Ramy Khalil,
Vote Sawant Campaign Manager

Everybody knows you have to accept corporate money and work within the corporate-dominated two-party system to get elected, right? Not so with Kshama Sawant. In November, nearly 100,000 voters elected her to Seattle City Council - as an open socialist - and she didn't take a dime in corporate cash!

In a huge political upset, Sawant's victory sent shockwaves through the political establishment and even around the globe. Sawant is the first independent socialist elected in a major U.S. city in decades. Her historic breakthrough was covered by every major newspaper in the country, major TV stations, and newspapers around the world.

Now she and her Socialist Alternative political party are leading a movement to implement her main campaign pledge: raising Seattle's minimum wage to the highest in the country - \$15/hour - and the movement is spreading nationally.

How did Sawant and Socialist Alternative succeed in unseating a well-connected Democrat, an established 16-year incumbent? Is Seattle just a Mecca of progressive politics?

"Our campaign is not an isolated event," claims Kshama Sawant. "In fact, it's the bell-weather for what's going to happen in the future."

Sounds nice. But is she dreaming?

Lesson #1: The Times Have Changed

The success of other progressives in November suggests that this isn't just a dream. Bill de Blasio was elected by a landslide as New York City mayor by promising to fight inequality and racist police brutality - much like Sawant, although he is by no means a socialist. Ty Moore, another Socialist Alternative candidate, ran for Minneapolis City Council and came within only 230 votes of being elected. The labor movement in Lorain County, Ohio, got fed up with the Democrats' betrayals and succeeded in electing two dozen "independent labor" candidates (though some maintained ties with the Democratic Party).

"It's a sign of the times," argues Kshama Sawant. "The Great Recession has provoked a backlash from the 99%. People are fed up with losing jobs, homes, and pensions."

A new study found that the richest 1% captured 95% of the income gains of the economic "recovery" while working-class people saw their incomes decline. Student debt has surpassed \$1 trillion, more than the total accumulated credit card debt in the country.

A groundswell of resistance from working-class people keeps erupting across the globe: revolutions in the Middle East, general strikes across Europe, a labor uprising in Wisconsin, Occupy Wall Street, Turkey, Brazil, Ukraine... It's only a matter of time before the next mass struggle breaks out.

Lesson #2: Transitional Method

Everyone is talking about inequality - and lots of people are eager to do something about it - but only a few activist movements in the U.S. have been able to give a popular expression to this burning desire.

Occupy Wall Street thrust the issue of inequality into the mainstream, but eventually the movement began dwindling, with no clear way forward. As Occupy activists got drawn into the 2012 corporate-controlled elections, Socialist Alternative argued that Occupy could rebuild the movement by running 200 independent Occupy candidates across the country. Unfortunately, very few activists took up this call, and discussions about challenging inequality were drowned out by the corporate media, which refocused political debates around Obama, Romney, and other corporate politicians' agendas.

One exception was the tremendous response Occupy activist Kshama Sawant received in her first election campaign in 2012, when she won 29% of the vote against the Washington State House Speaker. This demonstrated the potential Occupy could have had by running independent candidates.

Around the same time, fast-food and Walmart workers captured people's imaginations by organizing one-day rolling strikes across the country demanding a \$15/hour minimum wage and decent working conditions. In 2013, Sawant's next campaign linked up with the strikers in Seattle, and we in Socialist Alternative recognized that the demand for a \$15 minimum wage was gaining a tremendous resonance. We decided to focus our campaign around a call to "Make Seattle Affordable for All" and three specific, concrete demands: rent control and affordable housing, a tax on the super-rich to fund mass transit and education and, above all, a \$15 minimum wage.

Socialist Alternative used what we call "the transitional method": We connect with the consciousness of everyday people, meet them where they are at, and point a way forward to help social justice movements achieve victory. The transitional method also entails linking demands for basic improvements in workers' day-to-day lives with the need for a fundamental restructuring of wealth and power in society along socialist lines.

Alex Garland

SAWANT'S HISTORIC VICTORY

It Won

Lesson #3: Growing Openness to Socialism

Despite universal demonization of socialism by the corporate media and the political establishment, the Sawant and Moore campaigns demonstrated that "socialism" is no longer a dirty word. In 2011, The Pew Research Center found that a third of Americans react more positively to the idea of "socialism" than "capitalism" - a historic increase. A majority of both African Americans and young people (ages 18-29) now support "socialism" over "capitalism" - a sign of things to come.

One of the secrets of our success was our analysis of the various levels of political consciousness of different sections of the population. Although only a small number of people consciously identify as socialists, there is quite a broad section of the population, especially youth, who are very open to socialist ideas. There is an even larger section who question capitalism, and almost everyone is angry at Wall Street and corporate "politics as usual."

Lesson #4: The Need for Political Leadership

Our electoral campaign tapped into the disgust with the political establishment (despite widespread political confusion), and we educated people, raising their class consciousness and popularizing socialist ideas. For example, Sawant popularized the idea that large corporations such as Boeing should not be run for the profit of a few but should be taken into public ownership and democratically run by workers and the wider community.

However, the working-class anger at corporate politics that is simmering beneath the surface of society would never have been expressed in Seattle if we had not taken a bold electoral initiative. That is why it is vital that labor and other progressive movements not only organize rallies, strikes, etc. but also follow the examples of Sawant and the Ohio labor movement and run independent candidates. Otherwise, political discussions and debates throughout society will be controlled and limited by the two corporate parties.

If working-class activists and progressive organizations do not build a strong left-wing political alternative, then the vacuum of growing anger in society will be filled by right-wing demagogues - or by populist Democrats who will attempt to contain our movements within the "safe" channels of the corporate Democratic Party.

To build on the momentum of Sawant's 29% of the vote in 2012, Socialist Alternative appealed to Occupy, labor, civil rights groups,

and left-wing parties to join Sawant in running a slate of vigorous independent progressive candidates for Seattle City Hall the following year. Unfortunately, they failed to see the opportunity that existed, declined our requests, and many continued to bang their heads against the wall of the Democratic Party.

In Minnesota, in contrast, the state council of SEIU unions not only endorsed Ty Moore's Socialist Alternative campaign but contributed considerable financial and human resources. If more unions and progressive organizations would direct their resources to run and/or support independent candidates like this, there is no doubt we could run many successful independent candidates and begin to build a new political party of the 99%.

Sawant's tremendous impact demonstrates how candidates and a political leadership are absolutely necessary to give a visible expression to the underlying anger and desire for change in society - and to channel that discontent around a clear agenda.

How much more could be accomplished if we had our own independent political voice: a mass party, fighting for workers and exposing the Republicans' and Democrats' corporate agenda? A mass party of workers, people of color, and environmentalists would shift the whole terms of debate in the country, unite various movements together, and significantly raise workers' consciousness about our real interests. Building such a party is an absolutely essential task today.

Lesson #5: The Crucial Role of Socialist Alternative

Many progressive activists have argued that building a party such as Socialist Alternative is "sectarian" and a "distraction" from building a broader movement. Although Socialist Alternative is not yet large enough to fill the vacuum that exists for a broad third party, it's clear that Sawant would not have won if we had not built up our Socialist Alternative organization in the years before 2013.

It was Socialist Alternative's political analysis that enabled us to identify the opportunity that existed for independent left-wing candidates. And it was only the existence of our activist organization that allowed us to implement our tactic and test out this perspective in practice. Without an organization, our analysis and ideas would have remained untested, and a historic opportunity would have been lost.

While the Sawant campaign relied on much broader forces than Socialist Alternative alone, Socialist Alternative served as the main backbone of the campaign, politically

Join Socialist Alternative Today!

Socialist Alternative has proven that we can relate our ideas to the aspirations of a majority of workers, poor people, and the youth. The strategies put forward by our organization will be crucial to providing a way forward in building movements to better the living standards of the 99%. Kshama Sawant, a leader of Socialist Alternative, will appear regularly in the media, putting forward a working-class perspective on the economy and U.S. politics.

Socialist Alternative will be providing dynamic strategies and an organizational backbone in this year's fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage - not only in Seattle, but also beyond. Through these struggles, thousands of workers will draw essential lessons about the need for independent politics, working-class activism, and how to effectively fight against corporate domination.

Capitalism has no fundamental way out of this crisis. This economic recovery is shallow, and over 90% of the new wealth recently created has gone into the hands of the 1%. Meanwhile, the vast majority of new jobs created have been low-wage jobs, further entrenching both the sexist gender-wage gap and institutional racism. There is an economic crisis, there is a political crisis, and there is an acute environmental crisis. Capitalism is leading humanity down a blind alley.

There is also a growing interest in socialist ideas, and Socialist Alternative is by far the best-positioned organization to pull together these new forces. We aim to educate hundreds this year in Marxist ideas, in working-class history, and in the lessons of the class struggle and recent international events. We will also point out what kind of organization is necessary to win struggles against big business. We are setting up new branches across the country, and we can help you along in organizing in your area. Feel free to contact us. Tell us something about your experience that led you to socialist ideas. Donate to Socialist Alternative and join us online.

Join the growing movement for socialism today! Sign up at socialistalternative.org

and organizationally. Without an organized core of experienced, dedicated socialist activists, it would not have been possible to organize a grassroots campaign of over 450 volunteers and pull together a broader alliance of *The Stranger* newspaper, six union locals, civil rights organizations, immigrant organizations, progressive parties, and many others.

Sawant definitely could not have won if we had not built Socialist Alternative in spite of all the nay-sayers telling us we were utopian dreamers wasting our time. Against all odds, we had to painstakingly build our organization practically from scratch.

For years, we organized and educated workers and young people around Marx's ideas that the capitalist system is wracked by crises and increasingly unable to meet the basic needs of ordinary people, and that the working class is the revolutionary force which can build a new society. In addition, we benefited immensely from the contemporary Marxist perspectives, ideas, and experience of the Committee for a Workers International, a socialist organization in over 45 countries around the world.

Lesson #6: A Bold Class Appeal

Another lesson from Sawant's success is that the majority of people don't want milquetoast moderate candidates who compromise with big business. Most people are dying to see something different, a political leadership that will stand firm against the corporate onslaught.

The Green Party has run some good left-wing candidates, but when third parties run middle-of-the-road candidates who are only marginally different from the corrupt establishment, they really limit their appeal. Sawant's popularity stemmed from her relentless attacks on the Republican and especially the Democratic politicians as tools of big business.

Sawant's pledge to live on only the average

worker's wage and donate the rest of her salary to building social justice movements made her stand out. She did not straddle the fence between the working class and the ruling elite; she stood completely on the side of the working class.

And she inspired tremendous enthusiasm by not pulling any punches and arguing boldly - though also tactfully - for her principles.

Lesson #7: Principled, But Not Sectarian

While our campaign argued clearly that social change won't happen under either Republicans or Democrats, we also took a non-sectarian approach to voters who supported Sawant but had not yet fully broken with the Democratic Party. We welcomed many activists who were excited to volunteer for our campaign but were also volunteering for Democrats in other races. In October 2013, a group even formed called "Democrats for Sawant," expressing rank-and-file Democrats' discontent with their party leadership.

Unlike some ultra-left radicals, we did not put up artificial barriers that would obstruct people beginning to move in a positive direction from getting involved with Sawant. As long as people supported our core demands and our candidate who persistently critiqued the Democratic Party and capitalism, we welcomed their support.

Crucially, we used a friendly, patient tone to explain our positions. A condescending, impatient attitude would have been counterproductive.

At the same time, we did not opportunistically bend to the intense pressure to lower our socialist banner or endorse Democratic

Election Victory Lessons

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Election Victory Lessons

continued from p. 9

candidates.

This transitional approach was essential for convincing a number of unions to endorse our campaign. At first, practically all the labor leaders dismissed our electoral campaigns and endorsed our Democratic opponents: Chopp in 2012 and Conlin in 2013. But eventually our principled, non-sectarian approach and our strong labor record kept winning more and more support among rank-and-file union activists. By October 2013, we won a strong majority for an endorsement in the King County Labor Council. Unfortunately, the 28 to 21 vote fell just shy of the two-thirds required for a formal endorsement.

Lesson #8: Mass Fundraising and Outreach

We could not have won without taking a bold, serious approach to fundraising. Richard Conlin raised \$242,000, but we built a powerful war chest of \$141,000 - 58% of what Conlin raised. Yet our donations were overwhelmingly from working-class people and activists - 1,400 donors with a median donation of only \$40.00.

Without these donations, we could

not have afforded approximately 50,000 handbills, 140,000 mailers, over a dozen organizers, robocalls, a few newspaper ads, five banners, etc.

Our campaign inspired 450 volunteers to blanket the city with 7,000 posters and 1,350 yard signs and to knock on over 17,000 doors. We called thousands of voters, tabled at farmer's markets, and participated in protests and parades. Our staff also worked tirelessly, earning around 150 media articles.

We were extremely fortunate to have the support of *The Stranger*, a liberal weekly which is the second-largest newspaper in Seattle. This was partially due to our strategic approach of carefully selecting which seat to run for. Crucially, we picked races where there would likely be only one other opponent, with no Republican in the race. This way, Democrats couldn't scare people into voting for "the lesser of two evils." (In most large cities, the Democratic Party has a monopoly over local politics, and other campaigns can definitely run in similar races across the country.) And in both 2012 and 2013 we challenged incumbents who had been in office for at least 16 years - plenty of time

to expose their corporate connections and anger their working-class supporters.

Lesson #9: Join the Fight

Last but not least, we had Kshama Sawant - an intelligent, eloquent, passionate yet tactful immigrant woman of color running against stale establishment white guys in both 2012 and 2013.

Sawant is an impressive speaker and a determined fighter, no doubt. But she is also an ordinary person who happened to attend a couple public forums in 2008 and was impressed with the Socialist Alternative speakers' political clarity. Through discussions with Socialist Alternative, she decided to dedicate her life to fighting for a socialist world.

Most ordinary people gravely underestimate our own potential to play a role in changing the world. We should follow Sawant's shining example and commit ourselves to this cause for which there is no greater reward. Nothing in life is more meaningful than fighting alongside other working-class people to end inequality, oppression, and environmental devastation. Join Socialist Alternative today. ☘

Fight for Socialism

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entire Washington State establishment line up in support of a record \$8.7 billion tax giveaway was threatened to build its new factory in another state.

Simply regulating Wall Street and the big corporations will not guarantee working people a decent future. In the past, many reforms were won. But as soon as struggles subsided and the structural crisis of capitalism reasserted itself, the 1% used its power at all levels of society to reverse those reforms!

Public Ownership of the Biggest Corporations

We need to break the power of Wall Street and the big corporations if we want a future they cannot undermine. To do that, socialists call for taking the 500 corporations that dominate the U.S. economy under public ownership and running them democratically for the interests of society as a whole, not for profit.

There is a lot of misunderstanding about this. The right wing argues that socialists want "the government" to run the economy. But the government under capitalism is run in the interests of the 1% by its two corporate parties.

Instead, we think working people should have their own organizations to democratically control the economy themselves.

Imagine if we could democratically decide whether our society should invest trillions of dollars into speculation, war, and oil exploration beneath the polar ice caps or, instead, invest trillions into renewable energy, jobs, health care, and education.

The Tea Party argues that socialists want a dictatorship. But this is absurd. Genuine socialism has nothing to do with the totalitarianism of the former USSR. Furthermore, socialists have always been at the forefront of the struggle for democratic rights. Socialists helped lead the women's suffrage movement as well as the Civil Rights Movement, and we strongly oppose the growing attacks on democratic rights today.

In reality, capitalism is undemocratic. How can it be democratic when a few corporations dominate the government and the economy? Socialism would mean a massive expansion of democracy into the day-to-day decisions that affect our lives. Rather than inviting people to vote every four years for one of the two big business parties, working people would be involved in democratic discussion and decision-making every day.

On the basis of democratic public ownership, we could develop an overall plan for the economy from the starting point of meeting the needs of all people. By retooling industry and ending profit-driven industrial pollution, socialism can reverse global warming. With modern technology and other vast resources that would be available - freed from the constraints of capitalist dysfunction - we could rapidly transform the world, ridding it of poverty, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, and many other common problems caused by capitalism. This is a vision worth standing for.

Join Socialist Alternative today and help us fight for a socialist world. ☘

Corporate Handouts for Sports Stadiums

Ryan Reilly

Like tens of millions of my fellow working-class Americans, I love sports. I work long hours in a factory, and watching and playing the games I love is both a way to relax and a large part of my social life with friends and family. Still, when tickets to games are less and less affordable and social programs are being cut, it annoys me to see the government hand hundreds of millions of dollars to greedy billionaire team owners.

The idea of taxpayer money going to enrich a few private individuals is, unfortunately, nothing new in today's world. Trillions of dollars were given to the banks that crashed the economy because they were deemed "too big to fail." It was said that if the

banks were allowed to fail, the effect on the economy would be disastrous. No such excuses can be made for the millions of dollars in tax money that is given to the super-rich owners of sports teams to build privately owned stadiums.

According to research done by Harvard Professor Judith Grant Long, annual public subsidies for pro-sports facilities in 2010 totaled \$259 million. It is generally recognized that the owners themselves know for sure, since they are not required to disclose their finances - despite being given public tax money.

The full version of this article appears on SocialistAlternative.org, and it deals with how stadiums affect local economies while presenting a working-class alternative to the dictatorship of the owners in sports. ☘

Women and the Struggle for Socialism

It Doesn't Have to Be Like This

Now Available Online

Christine Thomas is the author of an important book on women's liberation and the socialist response to sexism today. While movements of the 1960s and '70s won gains for women, capitalism still thrives on low wages, unpaid work, and women's oppression. This book gives historical context and analysis as part of a guide to action for a new generation of working-class women moving into struggle against capitalist crisis worldwide. Check out this book at socialistworld.net and leftbooks.co.uk.



The Tale of Stop and Frisk in NYC

Stop Racist Police Profiling!

By Stephanie Sucasaca
Queens, New York

The Supreme Court's decision in the 1968 *Taylor v. Ohio* case loosened the requirements for establishing "probable cause" for a police search. This decision eroded the Fourth Amendment right protecting against "unreasonable search and seizure" by extending the definition probable cause for a legal stop to include the subjective "reasonable suspicion," giving police officers wide latitude to determine what constitutes suspicious behavior. On this basis, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) has implemented its "Stop and Frisk" policy, devastating communities of color, terrorizing youth, and bringing unnecessary pain and suffering to the families who have become its victims.

The record of Stop and Frisk

In New York, Stop and Frisk was originally implemented with a stated aim of taking guns off the streets and decreasing the number of victims from shooting incidents. However, the policy has failed miserably in its stated goal. As shown by data from the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), "In 2002, there were 1,892 victims of gunfire and 97,296 stops. In 2011, there were still 1,821 victims of gunfire but a record of 685,724 stops," (*Stop and Frisk Facts*, www.nyclu.org). Clearly, the policy isn't working. Instead, the policy has criminalized youth in communities of color and led to more deaths at the hands of the officers who are supposed to be in communities to "serve and protect."

Stop and Frisk began to be more aggressively used in 2003, and this was clearly tied to policies of "developments," i.e., gentrification. The areas in which these development projects have been and are being built are areas whose residents are mostly working class, working poor communities of color.

In one of the few known recordings of a "routine" stop and frisk, recorded by Harlem teen Alvin, the brutality of the policy really can be felt. While walking home from his girlfriend's house, 18-year-old Alvin is stopped for the second time that night by three police officers. Alvin asks why he is being stopped, an officer answers aggressively, saying, "Want me to smack you?" As the harassment continues, Alvin's hands are placed behind his back while officers start patting him down. While holding Alvin's hands behind him, an officer tells him, "Dude, I'm gonna break your f***ing arm, then I'm gonna punch you in the f***ing face."

This is how stops in New York are usually conducted. One *NY Times* analysis found that more than 20% of these involve the use of force. Growing public outrage at these policies led Judge Scheindlin to rule the practice unconstitutional in the *Floyd v. City of New York* case which ordered an end to the use

of the policy until reforms were made. This ruling was recently overturned by a panel of three judges from the Second Circuit courts following an appeal by the exiting of New York Mayor Bloomberg.

The anger in communities of color against the racist Stop and Frisk policy was exploited and co-opted by Democrat Bill de Blasio in his campaign for mayor. De Blasio has promised to drop the city's legal challenge to the reforms of Stop and Frisk recommended by Judge Scheindlin.

The Architect of Stop and Frisk Returns

Mayor de Blasio was elected for his progressive and populist rhetoric, which tapped into the post-Occupy Wall Street mood and the anger built up over 12 years of the Bloomberg administration. One of his major points of his platform was ending the practice of stop and frisk.

Since his landslide victory, de Blasio's rhetoric has begun to change. He now speaks about 'reforming' stop and frisk and implementing a "constitutional" stop-and-frisk policy. He has proposed to place an inspector general to oversee the NYPD while also increasing police resources and promising to maintain a police force of at least 34,000 officers – a number as large as some standing armies. Now, Mayor de Blasio has chosen Benjamin Bratton as the new police commissioner – a decision that has received backlash from New Yorkers and activists. Bratton actually helped to initiate Stop and Frisk in New York City while serving as police commissioner during the Giuliani administration. During Bratton's appointment as police commissioner for the LAPD from 2003 to 2011, the number of stops increased from 163,000 to a record 685,000. A small group of activists, victims of NYPD violence, and their families have organized New Yorkers Against Bratton to oppose his appointment.

The Fight-Back Against Stop and Frisk

We need to draw lessons from history to address the racism that is inherent to the policing practices under capitalism. Racism is a necessary element of the U.S. capitalist system, a system based on amassing profits for the few. But this rule can only be achieved by using the tactic of divide and rule among the working class, poor people, and communities

of color. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense challenge the system by organizing their own independent community patrols that sought to end police violence in the black community of Oakland.

Today, we have groups like Cop Watch, in which Socialist Alternative members in New York are active participants. Cop Watch organizes nationally among communities of color to patrol their neighborhoods by filming police stops and informing and empowering communities by teaching them their rights while being stopped.

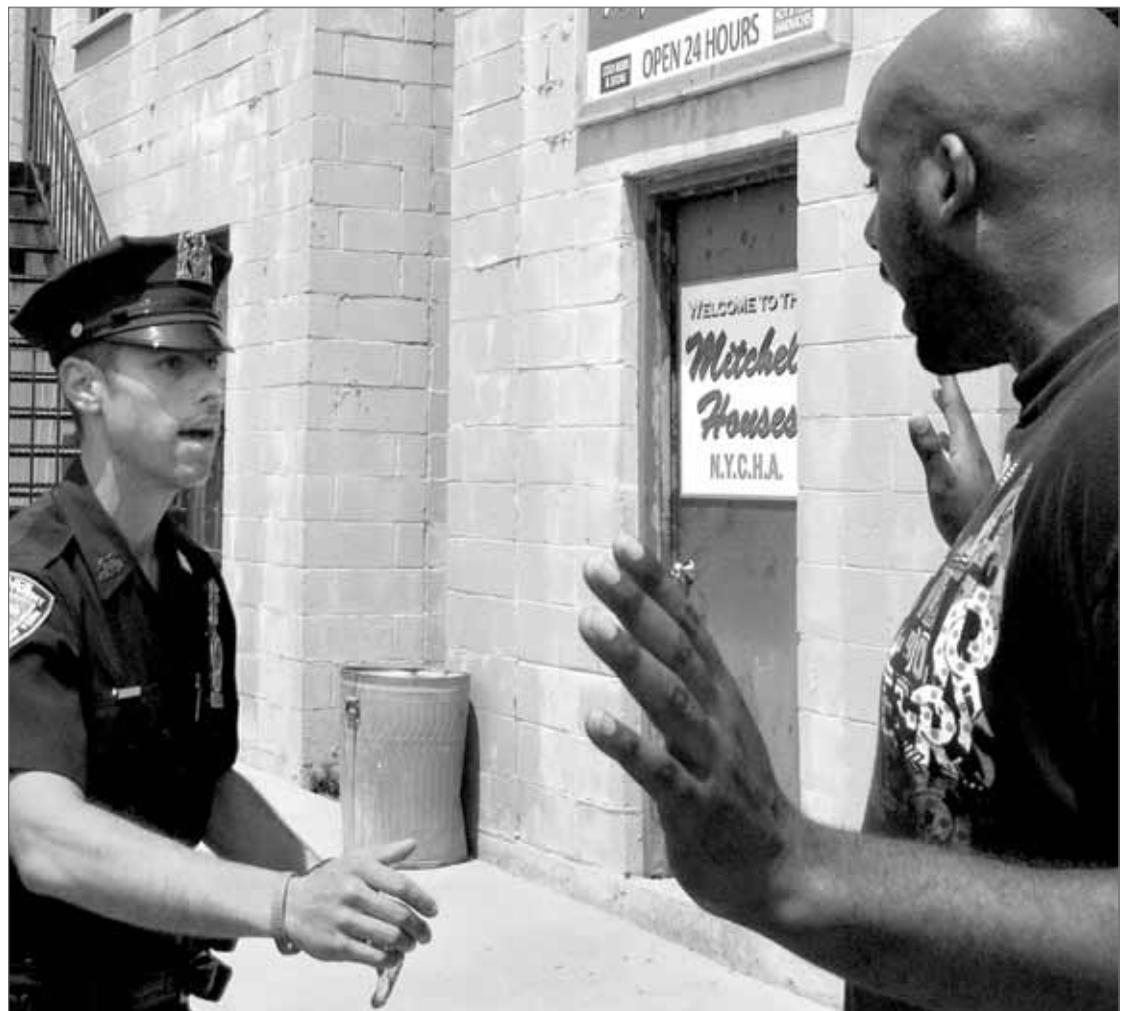
Instead of resorting to harmful measures like Stop and Frisk, if we are truly dedicated to reducing crime in our society, the real reasons for crime need to be addressed. The working class, poor people, and people of color in this country are forced to make hard decisions for survival due to poverty and lack of living-wage jobs.

A socialist program would address these needs by fighting for jobs with a living wage, a publicly owned healthcare system, affordable housing, free education from Pre-K to college, community centers for recreation, and job training for our youth in the inner cities. To address the issue of police violence, we need the creation of an elected, accountable civilian review board that will have the power to shut down police precincts that have a known record of police violence and

corruption. This would provide an example of community control over public safety.

While we cannot expect any fundamental difference in policing methods, Mayor de Blasio and Bratton will have a different public approach to policing than former mayor, billionaire Bloomberg. De Blasio and Bratton will emphasize seeking close "working" relationships with community, church, and civic organizations like Al Sharpton's National Action Network or the NYCLU to simmer down community outrage at acts of police violence.

Despite some small in perception and policy, Mayor de Blasio and Police Commissioner Bratton will continue to push the interests of the ruling elite. It is possible that Stop and Frisk will be reduced to pre-2003 levels. While this is not insignificant, it is in no way the same as ending this unconstitutional, racist practice. The only way to make our needs met is to build a movement that demands Stop and Frisk be abolished totally, as well as an end to all racial profiling. At the same time, we need to fight for a working-class alternative to the corporate policies that dominate City Hall. We need to create our own political party for the working class that will fight for our interests and not sell out to those at the top. We need to build a powerful socialist movement to dismantle this racist capitalist system. ☘



Big Steps Forward for South African Unions and Working Class Politics



Statement from the Workers and Socialist Party Statement

After striking miners were killed in what is known as the "Marikana massacre" of April 16, 2012, tremendous working-class indignation, organization and political consciousness has emerged. The article below was produced in December of 2013 to reflect on the process of rebuilding the fighting capacity of South African unions and the political organization of the working class. Despite the previous heroic role of the African National Congress (ANC) and the recently departed Nelson Mandela, the ANC has become the main ruling party of the South African capitalists, overseeing drastic neoliberal measures and the most unequal society in the world.

Since the Marikana Massacre, the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), the affiliate organization of the Committee for a Workers International, has come to the forefront of the struggle. The DSM, in political solidarity with Socialist Alternative in the US, has, along with miners' leaders, initiated a new political force called the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP). The statement below is from WASP. It addresses major developments in South Africa's largest union, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), a component part of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the main union federation.

In what will go down in history as the most important trade union congress since

the founding of COSATU in 1985, Delegates at the special congress of the NUMSA have taken the bold and historic decision to cut ties with the ANC. With financial and logistical support for the ANC withheld, the ANC will be entering the 2014 elections without the support of COSATU's biggest and most politically influential union. Given the support NUMSA enjoys in the rank and file of all COSATU affiliates – including those under pro-capitalist leaders – this means that the ANC stands to lose not just the votes of the 340,000 NUMSA members, but potentially more than a million more from the rest of COSATU's affiliates. The ANC will emerge from the 2014 elections significantly weakened. The less than 50% nightmare scenario of the ANC's own election strategists cannot be ruled out.

The political plane is now giving expression to the aftershocks of the earthquake detonated at Marikana, which loosened the foundations of the post-apartheid political dispensation put together so cunningly in the negotiated settlement at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). To adapt the title of political commentator Allister Spark's book on perspectives for the country after CODESA, today South Africa is another country. The golden bars of the political prison in which the working class has been kettled for going on twenty years have been broken, and the process of the class emancipation and political independence of the working class has begun in emphatic fashion.

Additionally, NUMSA will cease financial

contributions to the South African Communist Party (SACP), breaking the political link with this party which is, in the words of NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim, "ideologically bankrupt."

The anger and sense of betrayal that delegates felt for the ANC and SACP leaderships was on full display throughout the conference. At no point did a single delegate make any serious argument for continuing to support the ANC. In the minds of NUMSA members, the reality is clear: The ANC and the SACP are parties of the capitalist class. Everything in their actions over the past twenty years demonstrates this. The next ANC-led government, with the neoliberal National Development Program as its centrepiece, will be a consciously anti-working-class government and does not deserve the support of the working class.

At this stage, NUMSA has held back from taking a decision to support an alternative party in 2014 and has simply reiterated the right of NUMSA members to vote as individuals according to their convictions. Instead, NUMSA has taken the decision to launch a "united front" modelled on the United Democratic Front of the 1980s to unite the struggles of workers and communities, whilst simultaneously helping to bring into being a "movement for socialism." WASP, in its open letter to NUMSA, made the call for the launching of a socialist trade union network to help overcome the divisions in the working class and the paralysis of united struggle caused by the crisis in COSATU. We also made the call for an Assembly of Working Class Unity to draw up a battle plan for the struggles of the masses. In NUMSA's decision to launch a United Front and a Movement for Socialism we recognize these calls as broadly met.

However, with the national and provincial elections only months away, we invited NUMSA to "take its place in the leadership of WASP." WASP was launched to unite the struggles of workers, communities, and youth and it is organised in a democratic and federal way that would have allowed NUMSA to use the WASP umbrella to stand its own candidates, selected by NUMSA's own procedures. NUMSA could take its opposition to the National Development Plan into the national parliament as an ancillary to the

struggles that will be waged in the workplaces and the communities. At NUMSA's special congress, the leadership laid down criteria that any political party would have to meet in order to warrant political support. These criteria were endorsed by the delegates in the adoption of the secretariat's report. We believe that WASP meets these criteria.

WASP was born out of the struggles of the mineworkers and bases itself on the working class; WASP stands for public ownership of the mines, the banks, the commercial farms, the factories, and other big business on the basis of workers' control as part of the struggle for a socialist society; WASP is a thoroughly democratic organisation. As part of the adoption of their new political strategy, the NUMSA leadership was given a mandate to "be alert" to a "party committed to socialism standing for elections in future." We therefore repeat our call for NUMSA to take its place in the leadership of WASP and support and stand candidates under the WASP umbrella in the 2014 elections as a crucial part of building the new Movement for Socialism.

The limitations of NUMSA's specific position on the 2014 elections cannot, however, detract from the monumental shift in the political landscape that NUMSA's decision heralds. The break-up of the post-1994 political settlement is now well advanced, and the path towards the political independence of the working class embarked upon. NUMSA's decision has accelerated the process begun by the mineworkers in 2012. In recognising the changed political situation post-Marikana that required the convening of a special congress, NUMSA has taken this process on to a far more conscious level.

Delegates welcomed survivors and family members of the Marikana Massacre, and raised an astonishing R200,000 for the families of the slain. This will be topped up to R500,000 by NUMSA's Investment Company staff and the company itself. The prominence accorded at the congress to the mineworkers' struggles of 2012, including the Marikana Massacre, was NUMSA's acknowledgment of the role the mineworkers played as the advance guard of the working class in breaking free from the prison of the Tripartite Alliance. The mass exodus from the National Union of Mineworkers was simultaneously the breaking of the political link with the ANC. It was out of this opening battle that WASP was born. NUMSA has now fully joined the battle that the mineworkers began.

NUMSA sent a clear signal to mineworkers and other workers that NUMSA will not

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The Cost of the Affordable Care Act

Marty Harrison

As details of the insurance plans offered under Obama's new Affordable Care Act became accessible, many working and poor people have had to realize that this is not the answer to their health insecurities they had hoped for. Designed to convert the 47 million uninsured Americans into paying customers for the insurance and pharmaceutical corporations, Obamacare adds unnecessary costs and layers of complexity for patients and health care providers.

Socialist Alternative fights for health care for all. Unfortunately, the Affordable Care Act delivers insurance – not care – and is not affordable. It mandates that every American have health insurance, so everyone not covered by an employer's plan will have to buy insurance on their state exchanges or pay a fine. The fines begin this year at \$95 per adult and \$47.50 per child for a family maximum of \$285 (or 1% of income, whichever is greater), and rise steeply to \$695 per adult and \$347.50 per child, for a family maximum of \$2,085 (or 2.5% of income, whichever is greater) in 2016.

Prices will vary from state to state, depending on what the insurance companies deem profitable in each "market." In Philadelphia, a single 40-year-old has the choice of 24 plans: nine bronze, seven silver, six gold, and two platinum plans, covering 60%, 70%, 80%, and 90% of health care costs, respectively. The bronze plans have the lowest monthly premiums, of between \$238 and \$307, but they also have high annual deductibles of \$4,000 to \$6,350, copays of \$20 - \$40, and a \$6,350 cap on annual out-of-pocket expenses. With a little bad luck and a few new, brand-name drugs, a bronze plan holder could end up with bills totaling \$10,000 in a year – Hardly affordable for anyone living paycheck to paycheck in this economy dominated by low-wage, part-time, insecure jobs.

The much-touted subsidies for those making from 100%



to 400% of the federal poverty line will take the form of tax credits which can be applied to the cost of premiums. About 20% of Pennsylvania's 1.4 million uninsured will not qualify for subsidies because Governor Corbett, like about half of all state governors, refused the federal money to expand Medicaid.

More than half of all those who told a national survey that they had difficulty paying, or were totally unable to pay, their

medical bills were covered by employer-sponsored plans, (*kff.org*, 1/7/14). Insurance does not guarantee affordability. It guarantees profits to the insurance corporations.

That's why socialists call for expanding Medicare to provide coverage for everyone, over and under 65. It would be the cheapest, most effective, most efficient way to provide access to high quality, affordable health care for everyone, as a big first step towards socialized medicine. ☺

Latin American School for Socialists Held in Brazil



Following the June uprising against transportation fare increases in Brazil, there has been another, less-publicized wave of workers' struggle. This has included strikes of teachers and industrial workers as well as mass resistance to home removals, all with the participation of socialists. The Committee for a Workers International, in political solidarity with Socialist Alternative in the U.S., has a dynamic

youthful section in Brazil. They hosted a school for socialist activists in Latin America in January with visitors from Venezuela, Cuba, the U.S. and elsewhere. A background meeting of the Committee for a Workers International helped set the tone for the school. See the full report of the session on Latin America at socialistworld.net.

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abandon them to the pro-capitalist misleadership of unions that continue cling to the ANC. Irvin Jim declared that NUMSA "will no longer reject any worker," in open defiance of COSATU's "one union, one industry" policy. Jim even lamented that this has not been NUMSA's policy at the time of Marikana. This will put NUMSA on a collision course with the pro-ANC right-wing of COSATU and almost certainly led to the break-up of COSATU. The decision to withhold their monthly R800,000 COSATU affiliation fee until the demand for a special congress is met is another bold move.

With plans for rolling mass actions in early 2014 and the extension of the hand of solidarity to the mineworkers by the congress – who will most likely be waging new struggles over wages and retrenchments in the new year – means NUMSA will be at the centre of workers' struggle in the next period. The planned conference for socialism will continue the discussion, begun at the special congress, on building a working-class political alternative. NUMSA has taken its first steps into the new landscape they have helped create and, alongside WASP and the mineworkers, has taken up the historic task of rebuilding the political independence of the working class. WASP salutes the NUMSA leadership and the NUMSA delegates for their decision.

WASP will be producing more detailed material and analysis of the tasks faced by the working class in light of the decisions taken at Numsa's special congress. Follow-up articles will appear on socialistworld.net and workerssocialistparty.co.za. ☺

90 Corporations Responsible for Global Emissions

Kelly Bellin, Minneapolis

Unless drastic action is taken to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, the planet will heat up by a minimum of 4°C by 2100, according to the most recent research. That takes the global forecast up to twice its current level, from “dangerous” to “catastrophic,” as recognized by governments around the world. The study, published in the journal *Nature*, found that as the planet continues to heat, fewer sunlight-reflecting clouds form, causing temperatures to rise in an upward spiral.

Faced with a catastrophic future, ordinary people are, understandably, asking themselves what they can do. Corporate media and politicians prey on this sentiment, spinning both the cause and the solution for climate change into an issue of personal responsibility and putting the pressure on working people to save the planet through expensive “green” products and lifestyle changes.

A Systemic Problem

Individualizing the cause of climate change will only conceal the truth. A study published in the journal *Climate Change* indicated that since the dawn of the Industrial Era just 90 companies have caused two thirds of all man-made global warming emissions. All but seven of the 90 were energy companies producing oil, gas and coal, (“Global Warming Down to ‘90 Big Firms’”, *The Guardian*, 11/21/13).

These corporations can’t blame their crimes on ignorance. *The Guardian*

(11/21/13) reports, “Half of the estimated emissions were produced just in the past 25 years – well past the date when governments and corporations became aware that rising greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of coal and oil were causing dangerous climate change.” In other words, they dramatically sped up their polluting even after learning about the dire consequences.

These same companies that are destroying the planet are some of the largest financial backers of climate-change-denying propaganda and lobbying. Most energy companies are making record profits and pumping catastrophic amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, then strong-arming legislators into striking down any measures that could compromise their profits (“Dirty Money,” *ThinkProgress.org*, 9/27/10).

Between 1999 and 2010, the oil, gas, and coal industries spent over \$2 billion lobbying Congress. Is it any wonder that politicians across the world do not carry out the comprehensive action necessary to hinder the catastrophic trajectory of climate change?

World leaders have repeatedly put forward grand gestures of intent, but they consistently fall short of action since they are held hostage by the pocketbooks of big business. Despite the continual rise of greenhouse gas emissions causing global warming, at the recent UN-sponsored climate talks in Warsaw no concrete measures were put in place to stop this catastrophic threat. The inaction of governments across the globe will continue as long as capitalism goes unchallenged and big business is free to pour billions into securing their ability to pollute. To develop

a carbon-neutral global economy, economic and political power must be taken out of the hands of the major corporations that have caused this catastrophic global forecast.

Socialist Policies Needed

As socialists, we call for the public ownership of these destructive corporations as a major step forward in reducing global carbon emissions. Imagine what could be accomplished if just these 90 corporations were taken into public ownership and run democratically instead of for profit. Public control of the energy industry, for example, could allow for massive investment in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, implemented through a green jobs program

that will create millions of new living-wage jobs.

Now more than ever, it’s clear that as long as big business is allowed to dominate politics, the needs of the environment will not be prioritized above short-term profiteering. While taking on environmentally friendly practices in our daily lives is certainly one part of our responsibility, the larger part – the only part that has the power to actually save the Earth – is fighting the corporate control of politics that is holding our planet hostage. Saving the planet depends on the environmental movement adopting a clear socialist program to fight climate change through system change. ☘



Stop the TPP! New Free Trade Policy a Trap for Workers and the Environment

By Christian Brooks

Looking back on the last 20 years, the effects of the NAFTA free trade policies are crystal clear. Despite the promises of politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties that the policies would create jobs in the United States, NAFTA has caused nearly one million U.S. jobs, along with hundreds of thousands of Canadian jobs, to be lost. In Mexico, through cheap government-subsidized corn being pumped into the country by U.S. agribusiness, the national corn industry was absolutely devastated, causing untold misery for the Mexican working masses.

At the same time, largely outside of the media spotlight and behind the backs of the working class, corporate politicians from both parties of U.S. capitalism are pushing forward a new free trade agreement along the lines of NAFTA. President Obama is pushing to fast-track the legislation to prevent opposition ensnaring the bill through endless amendments.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has been compared by activists to “NAFTA on steroids” and is projected to include many measures that would be devastating to the struggles of environmental activists and workers fighting for a \$15 minimum wage.

While the TPP talks are largely being conducted in secret,

what we have managed to learn about the proposal is terrifying, to say the least. Under this proposed deal, not only would barriers to offshoring of jobs and capital flight be broken down further, as with previous free trade agreements. There would also be a series of new legal changes to the way that corporations interact with governments and to the power of citizens to force their governments to put forward policies which reflect citizens’ interests.

The TPP trade policy, as it is currently being put forward, would give corporations an equal footing with signatory governments through a series of foreign investor services enforced through what is known as the “investor-state system,” raising them far above citizens in terms of their rights under U.S. and international law. Multinational corporations would be given the right to sue governments under World Bank and UN rules through a three-person tribunal of private sector lawyers. This would enable large corporations to demand compensation from taxpayers for projected profit losses resulting from policies passed by governments.

What this means for activists across the country is that if we were to win crucial battles such as a \$15 minimum wage or the prevention of environmentally destructive projects, such as oil pipelines and coal terminals being constructed, the corporations who would lose profits from such policies could use

an arbitrary legal process to extract enormous sums of money from ordinary taxpaying citizens as compensation for losses to potential profits.

The TPP should be vigorously opposed by environmentalists, low-wage workers, and union activists. Without giving an inch of ground on the struggles for a \$15 minimum wage and other issues, activists across the country should be prepared to draw attention to this vicious attack on our living standards and basic democratic rights, to build the groundwork for an international fight-back against the TPP both in the U.S. and in the other signatory countries. Wherever possible, we should immediately build links with the union movement and other movements in the signatory countries to make a united struggle against the TPP.

Big business and its servants in the two-party system are deathly afraid of a mass fight-back on this, given the huge struggles which broke out against NAFTA and the FTAA all over the world in the 1990s. Socialists and activists should use the issue of the TPP to expose the true allegiances of the Democratic Party and to make a strong case for the labor movement to break from the Democratic Party and build an independent political party that will struggle against neoliberal policies like the TPP and fight for the interests of the working class and the environment. ☘

Ohio Independent Labor Candidates Elected

"We asked voters: 'Are you tired of the Democratic Party walking all over us? Are you tired of all the things we've won getting eroded or shot down?' This message sold well to union households." -Joe Thayer

When it comes to local government, most Americans are ruled by a one-party system. Lorain County, Ohio, is no exception. In this industrial, union-dense county, the Democratic Party has enjoyed a political monopoly for decades. Like elsewhere, business interests have always dominated the Lorain County Democrats, but in the past a strong economy meant local government and businesses could afford to buy labor peace through concessions to strong local unions.

This approach of basing negotiations on the idea of reaching a compromise with management, rather consistently fighting for the needs of workers, has been long strained by capitalist globalization and neoliberal policies at a national level and now completely undermined by the economic crisis. The Democratic Party has moved to more openly embrace anti-worker, pro-corporate policies, sharpening tensions with unions who traditionally backed them. This story isn't unique to Lorain; virtually every Democratic Party city and town in the country has suffered the same process. What is unique about Lorain County is that unions had the audacity to stand up and fight back in the electoral arena, building a labor-based political alternative.

Last fall, most unions in the area joined together to run two dozen candidates for local offices in several cities and towns across Lorain County, winning all but two seats. Some were incumbents also backed by the Democratic Party, but several high-profile contests featured union members winning against brazenly pro-business Democrats.

Union teacher Josh Thornsberry defeated incumbent City Councilor Frank DeTillo, president of the Lorain County Chamber of Commerce. "We intend to stand with you and with all of Lorain County's working people," said Thornsberry shortly after his victory. "This is just a first step, but we will be taking many together in the future."

The unions have not formally created a new party, but as Harry Williamson explained, "We got T-shirts made up saying 'Lorain County Independent Labor Party.' That idea is gaining momentum."

Interview with Lorain County Union Leaders

On January 8, Ty Moore of Socialist Alternative spoke with the three union leaders at



Harry Williamson, CWA Local 4370 President and Lorain County AFL-CIO President

the center of labor's electoral challenge to the Democratic Party in Lorain County, OH, last fall. Joe Thayer is marketing director for the Sheet Metal Workers and former president of the Lorain County Central Labor Council. Harry Williamson is current president of the AFL-CIO in Lorain County. Jim Sloane is chair of the United Auto Workers CAP Council.

Thayer: Labor's relationship [with the Democrats] was strained for years because there was a concerted effort by the leadership of the Democratic Party to run Chase Ritenauer for mayor of Lorain against Tony Krasienko, a brother of labor with the sheet metal workers [who was mayor from 2007-2011]. The old guard of the Party didn't like that, so they ran a campaign and set Tony up to fail, and they beat our guy out in the primary in 2011. ...Tony would try to bring legislation up in the city to bring working people's issues forward. The council was 100% Democrat, so you would think life would be easy and we could make some progress. But the council would road-block on votes, not letting him do anything. Chase Ritenauer was backed by the Association of Building Contractors. When you get a Democratic mayor taking money from our number one enemy, you can't just take that lying down.

Williamson: The repeal of the Project Labor Agreement, pushed by Ritenauer, was icing on the cake. [The PLA ensured all city contracts employed unionized workers, with 75% hired locally with at least 9% workers of color]. We give and give. We do a lot of fundraisers and campaigning work for the Democratic Party. But we

got tired of being used.

Sloan: We're tired of being taken advantage of by the Democratic Party. This is the first shot. They really weren't expecting all the unions to come together. They didn't count on that. This is the closest our unions have worked together in the history of Lorain County. We are in closer communication than ever. We talk over issues together. We were meeting so much together that our wives thought we were cheating on them!

Williamson: The Democrats' county chairman told us, "There is no way in hell your independents are going to beat Democratic incumbents." We vetted independent candidates that supported our issues and believed in our same ethics. Many of them are union members themselves.

Thayer: We had tailored lit pieces to different voters and sent out multiple lit pieces. It came down to old-school ground-and-pound campaigning, hitting the doors and the phones. We had a great volunteer base and got our folks out there. We felt pretty confident because we took away the workhorse of the Democratic Party by going on our own. We were always the workhorse for the Democrats. They don't like to campaign on their own. We asked voters, "Are you tired of the Democratic Party walking all over us? Are you tired of all the things we've won getting eroded or shot down?" This message sold well to union households.

"Anyone looking at us from around the country, our message is to not give up. Stay together and fight together!" ☺

Help Me Build Socialist Alternative With Your Donation Today!



By Kshama Sawant

In Seattle, big business is preparing resources to try to defeat our fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Walmart, McDonald's, and their political representatives will slander and misrepresent our initiative to increase living standards and empower working people. If we are able to win this battle, then it will educate and give confidence to millions to fight back against corporate domination.

The 93,000 votes and victory for myself and Socialist Alternative in Seattle show the unique potential to build the forces of socialism, the fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, and independent working-class politics. We can't

waste time, and we need your help!

In 2014, Socialist Alternative has a tremendous opportunity to double our membership, win battles to increase wages, and lead the process of rebuilding working-class activism among young people, women, and people of color in particular.

We are aiming to raise \$75,000 in the next two months. Key to this drive is the push for monthly contributors to Socialist Alternative. You can sign up online to give a monthly donation at socialistalternative.org.

Thank you for your support!

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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Kshama Sawant Takes Office

Socialist Inauguration Speech



My Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for your presence here today. This city has made glittering fortunes for the super-wealthy and for the major corporations that dominate Seattle's landscape. At the same time, the lives of working people, the unemployed, and the poor grow more difficult by the day. The cost of housing skyrockets, and education and health care become inaccessible.

This is not unique to Seattle. Shamefully, in this, the richest country in human history, fifty million of our people – one in six – live in poverty. Around the world, billions do not have access to clean water and basic sanitation, and children die every day from malnutrition.

This is the reality of international capitalism. This is the product of the gigantic casino of speculation created by the highway robbers on Wall Street. In this system the market is God, and everything is sacrificed on the altar of profit. Capitalism has failed the 99%.

Despite recent talk of economic growth, it has only been a recovery for the richest 1%, while the rest of us are falling ever farther behind.

In our country, Democratic and Republican politicians alike primarily serve the interests of big business. A completely dysfunctional Congress *does* manage to agree on one thing – regular increases in their already bloated salaries – yet at the same time allows the federal minimum wage to stagnate and fall farther and farther behind inflation. We have the obscene spectacle of the average corporate CEO getting seven thousand dollars an hour, while the lowest-paid workers are called presumptuous in their demand for just fifteen.

To begin to change all of this, we need organized mass movements of workers and young people, relying on their own independent strength. That is how we won unions, civil rights, and LGBTQ rights.

Again, throughout the length and breadth of this land working people are mobilizing for a decent and dignified life for themselves and their children. Look at the fast-food workers' movement, the campaigns of Walmart workers, and the heroic activism to stop the Keystone XL pipeline!

Right here in SeaTac, we have just witnessed the tremendous and victorious campaign for fifteen dollars an hour. At the same

time, in Lorain County, Ohio, twenty-four candidates ran, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as "Independent Labor" and were elected to their city councils.

I will do my utmost to represent the disenfranchised and the excluded, the poor and the oppressed – by fighting for a \$15/hour minimum wage, affordable housing, and taxing the super-rich for a massive expansion of public transit and education. But my voice will be heard by those in power only if workers themselves shout their demands from the rooftops and organize *en masse*.

My colleagues and I in Socialist Alternative will stand shoulder to shoulder with all those who want to fight for a better world. But working people need a new political party, a mass organization of the working class, run by – and accountable to – themselves: A party that will struggle and campaign in their interests, and that will boldly advocate for alternatives to this crisis-ridden system.

Here in Seattle, political pundits are asking about me: Will she compromise? Can she work with others? Of course, I will meet and discuss with representatives of the establishment. But when I do, I will bring the needs and aspirations of working-class

people to every table I sit at, no matter who is seated across from me. And let me make one thing absolutely clear: There will be no back-room deals with corporations or their political servants. There will be no rotten sell-out of the people I represent.

I wear the badge of socialist with honor. To the nearly hundred thousand who voted for me, and to the hundreds of you who worked tirelessly on our campaign, I thank you. Let us continue.

The election of a socialist to the council of a major city in the heartland of global capitalism has made waves around the world. We know because we have received messages of support from Europe, Latin America, Africa, and from Asia. Those struggling for change have told us they have been inspired by our victory.

To all those prepared to resist the agenda of big business – in Seattle and nationwide – I appeal to you: Get organized. Join with us in building a mass movement for economic and social justice, for democratic socialist change, whereby the resources of society can be harnessed, not for the greed of a small minority, but for the benefit of all people. Solidarity. ✪