

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Middle East: Another US Quagmire - p. 6

Issue #7 - October 2014

@SocialistAlt

www.SocialistAlternative.org

/SocialistAlternativeUSA

Price \$2

WAR **ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION** **RACISM** **SEXISM** **INEQUALITY**

WORKING PEOPLE NEED AN ALTERNATIVE

KAREN LEWIS MOVES CLOSER TO RUNNING FOR MAYOR OF CHICAGO - P 4

SOCIALIST JESS SPEAR CAMPAIGNS IN SEATTLE - P 3

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. ✪

Kshama Sawant: Build A Movement For Housing Justice

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
"The rent won't wait" was one of the most powerful slogans in our successful fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage. However, in cities like Seattle the rents are also not waiting to skyrocket.

For many workers, homeownership is out of reach. But even for those able to afford to buy, homeownership frequently creates a different financial problem: Roughly every third Seattle resident with a mortgage is "under water" - with debts higher than home value.

In the richest nation in the world, homelessness is a constant threat for poor people.

In Seattle, for example, there are 24,000 people on the waiting list for low-income housing - and they have to wait for years!

The market system has utterly failed to meet the needs of the people.

This is a nightmare that has to be ended, and it can be ended.

Step 1: Cities and states have to step in and launch a publicly funded housing program to provide good quality housing. To avoid any bureaucratic waste in building and maintaining, we need democratic control by elected representatives of the wider public, of the tenants, and of the city to run and maintain these projects.

Step 2: We need rent control. Rent increases have to be tied to increases in the general cost of living. No one should be forced to pay more than 30 per cent of his or her income for decent housing.

Step 3: Tax the rich to fund housing, education, and public transport.

Housing authorities - the bodies running low-income housing - have been constantly underfunded by Congress. This needs to change - now. However, this cannot be an excuse to try to increase the rents, like the



Kshama Sawant speaking at a protest against the Seattle Housing Authority's (SHA) plans to raise rents and drive out tenants. This is the "solution" of the SHA leaders, appointed by the mayor and the city council's majority, to the lack of affordable housing.

Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) is trying to do at the moment. Tenants are fighting back - and they have my full support!

Developers are stepping into the housing crisis, acquiring property just to remove the present tenants and build expensive condos. This has to stop. The law must guarantee people's right to either stay in their apartments at the present rent, or if they are forced out, to be paid full compensation by the developers. Developers also have to be forced to build affordable housing.

After "Occupy Homes" - the movement defending working-class homeowners against foreclosure by the big banks - tenants are now starting to rise up. Let's come together in a powerful movement for housing justice. Let's make our cities affordable for the workers who make them run.

In solidarity,
Kshama Sawant ✪

WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

James Parker Seattle, WA

I have Type 1 diabetes and I work low-wage jobs. This means I am constantly in jeopardy of not getting the medication I need. I have been on the phone with many insurance agents who have told me that there's nothing they can do - I won't be able to get my life-saving supplies. These supplies cost pennies to make, but they charge hundreds of dollars for bits of plastic in order to make more profits for the pharmaceutical billionaires. There is no shortage, but people like me are still denied access to what we need to live.

We are drowning in solvable problems. We have mass hunger even though we produce enough food to feed the world. We have mass homelessness even though we have enough housing for everyone. We have mass unemployment even though we have ample tasks that need doing. We are devouring fossil fuels even though we have enough technology to



power the whole world on renewable energy. Our problems are solvable, but not under our economic system of capitalism.

We need to distribute our resources equitably. With inequality come massive social ills for everyone. With equality come massive social benefits for everyone. I'm a socialist because we're all better off when we're all better off. We can do so much better than this. ✪

Elect a Fighter for Working People

Jess Spear is running for Washington State House, Seattle, 43rd LD, Position 2

Jess Spear



As 15 Now organizing director, she helped lead the successful fight for \$15 in Seattle. She stands for:

- ✪ Rent control and affordable housing
- ✪ No more corporate handouts
- ✪ Tax the rich – fund education, transit, and clean energy

VS

Frank Chopp

Speaker of the House, corporate politician of the Democratic Party. His record:

- ✪ \$6 billion annually in corporate handouts
- ✪ Illegally underfunding education
- ✪ \$10 billion in cuts to social services



Grassroots Campaign Takes on Corporate Politician

By Calvin Priest, Vote Spear Campaign Manager

With already more than 200 volunteers, the grassroots Vote Spear campaign is answering the big-business-backed Frank Chopp by building a massive doorknocking campaign and team of neighborhood coordinators.

It's clear that Washington's Democratic Party establishment has consciously chosen the Spear campaign as the ground on which to launch its counteroffensive against Socialist Alternative's growing influence. With maximum donations from a long list of corporate sponsors, Chopp has already spent more than \$100,000 and carpeted the district with four mailers. The local Democratic Party machine has fully awakened to the threat represented by Sawant and Spear and wants nothing more than to halt the exposure of their blatant big business policies.

Chopp's Record

Housing and education funding remain the central issues faced by working people in the 43rd. The clear demands of the campaign have already had an enormous impact. Chopp publicly professed support for lifting the state ban on rent control, declared a newfound interest in taxing the wealthy, and sought to portray himself as a community activist in the mold of his opponent. But his attempts ring hollow when stacked up against his record.

After 12 years with Chopp as House Speaker, the state now suffers as the eighth worst on affordable housing, fourth worst on class sizes, and dead last with the most regressive tax system in the nation. More than \$10 billion have been cut from social services, while an average of \$6 billion annually were doled out in corporate handouts.

After a low turnout in the primary, the general election is a whole new race, with a more diverse and working-class electorate. In the weeks remaining, Socialist Alternative's campaign will shine a spotlight on Chopp's corporate pork-belly politics and gutting of social services, and offer voters the choice of a real working-class fighter in Jess Spear. ✪

Guilty: Chopp Criminally Underfunds Education

By Jess Spear, candidate for WA state house

Frank Chopp has been a loyal corporate servant throughout his 20 years in office. Now it's just been made official, with the State Supreme Court finding him and the legislature in contempt for education underfunding - while he was giving \$8.7 billion to Boeing bosses, instead.

Fed up with underfunded schools, lack of resources in the classroom, and the fourth-worst classroom sizes in the nation, two families filed a lawsuit against the legislature for failing to adequately fund education. First, a lower court agreed with the families, then the State Supreme Court upheld the *McCleary v. Washington State* decision and went further in ordering the legislature to come up with a plan to fully fund education by 2018. A plan was due to the court by early 2014.

Chopp's Priority: Subsidize Profits

The politicians in Olympia decided they could ignore the court order, arguing they were working on getting the necessary revenue but that it "takes time." Unfortunately for the State Legislature, everyone is fully aware that they had no trouble convening a special legislative session and reaching bipartisan consensus in a mere three days to continue tax breaks for Boeing until 2040, costing the state billions in lost revenue. When asked about this at the State Supreme Court hearing on September 3, the state defense attorney argued that it was "easier" to pass a tax handout than to fund education!

Politicians constantly try to cover up the extent of their service to corporate interests. Rather than fund education and public services, the legislature chose to subsidize a



"The 1 million children in our state's public schools can ill afford more delay. They only get one shot at their education."

Mary Jean Ryan, WA State Board of Education

multinational corporation's profits. And the calls for austerity, deregulating capitalism, and lower taxes on business will continue unless we push back.

Nationwide, the political establishment has no idea about how to expand the reach of the "recovery" to the working class. We need to kick them out. What is needed are independent left-wing political candidates willing to boldly advocate for ending corporate welfare and taxing the rich to fully fund social services. ✪

Fighting Global Warming

As we go to print, September 21 saw hundreds of thousands on the streets all around the country. Jess Spear and Socialist Alternative brought together a strong coalition of environmental groups and activists as well as labor unions in Seattle. "The solutions to global warming and helping working people gain financial stability are intimately linked. Millions of people need good union jobs, and we urgently need to end the fossil fuel economy. Massive public projects to power society through clean energy could put all these people back to work and on a path to stop climate change," argues Jess Spear. ✪

First Public Debates

What happens when a socialist debates a corporate Democrat? A lot of sputtering and exposed lies.

While Chopp refused to debate Spear during the primary campaign, he is now facing a series of candidate forums. He will be forced to defend his record in front of a live audience - a terrain which does not favor him, as has already been clearly demonstrated in the first two public forums.

In September, Jess Spear sliced through the arguments of WA Speaker of the House Frank Chopp twice in one week.

"It's time to put our needs first by removing this 20-year big business servant," said Spear. After \$10 billion in social service cuts over the last six years, these words ring true. ✪

Find out more, volunteer & donate - VoteSpear.org

Karen Lewis Closer to Running for Mayor in Chicago

Build a Powerful Campaign to Kick Out Mayor Emanuel

Karen Lewis, the president of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) who led an inspiring and popular strike in 2012, has taken the first steps toward running for mayor. Support in the polls indicates that this is an opportunity to bring workers' struggle to the next level and build a grassroots campaign extending far beyond a single election. This chance has to be used, argues Tony Wilsdon.

Karen Lewis' run for mayor opens up the potential to inflict a defeat on the big business agenda in Chicago and to encourage others to move into struggle. Already, she is well known as a fighter for the working class and the poorest communities in the city. A poll published in the *Chicago Sun-Times* astonishingly put her ahead of Democratic Mayor Rahm Emanuel by 45% to 36%, with 18% undecided. The American Federation of Teachers pledged \$1 million in support if she ran.

At the time of writing, Lewis has not developed a platform. Her main issues have been related to education. She has fought and exposed Emanuel's right-wing agenda of school closures, attacks on education and teachers, and high-stakes standardized tests, that have led to the massive wave of school closures in the poorest neighborhoods. She has branded Emmanuel the "murder mayor." She stated, "Look at the murder rate in this city. He's murdering schools. He's murdering jobs. He's murdering housing."

Karen Lewis won the presidency of CTU in 2010 as part of CORE, a left-wing rank-and-file insurgency group. Building on extensive and effective campaigning against school closings, the 2012 strike rallied working-class parents behind the power of the union, especially in poor black and Latino neighborhoods. However, since the strike Emanuel's hand-picked Board of Education has closed more 50 schools.

In declaring her candidacy for mayor, Lewis registered as "non-partisan." While it's a promising step that she did not directly associate herself with the Democratic Party, the CTU has an ambiguous position on the Democrats. In January 2014, CTU passed a resolution calling for candidates "capable of leading strong electoral and legislative campaigns to benefit working families." Yet just recently it endorsed the re-election of Democratic Governor Pat Quinn, who has been leading the attack on public sector workers' pensions.

Imagine the potential to build a voice for the 99% if labor stopped throwing billions at the big business Democrats and used its resources – activists, networks, workplace roots and money – to build, together with



Karen Lewis (right) and Chicago teachers rally during the 2012 strikes

community organizations and left activists, a new party for working people. The CTU can set the example and follow that route in a principled way.

The Need for Independence From the Democrats

While it's clear that Karen Lewis will be able to mobilize broad support among the working class, poor people and communities of color, Socialist Alternative urges Karen Lewis to go further and use this support to build a really powerful movement of the 99%.

The only way to really inflict defeats on the corporate agenda is to build a powerful movement of the working class, which is separate not only from reactionary Republicans but also from big business Democrats. She needs to expose the Democratic Party's record in Chicago as a corporate party committed to the agenda of the elite 1%. Lewis will need to put forward bold demands that speak to the real needs of working people and the poor in Chicago: a \$15 per hour minimum wage and reversing the cuts in education and social programs. This can outline a program that is prepared not to accept the limits of capitalism in crisis but, instead, to point toward the struggle for a socialist change.

For example, it was only the creation of an independent campaign by 15 Now in Seattle that forced the political establishment to concede a \$15 an hour minimum wage in

June. The strength of 15 Now came out of the momentum created by the success of Kshama Sawant's independent socialist campaign for city council in 2013.

In order to be successful, Lewis' campaign has to build a powerful force on the ground. Action groups for Lewis need to be built in local communities, labor unions, and on college campuses. These groups can provide a powerful community base for her campaign. Supporter groups can organize activities, help develop the platform, raise money and develop strategies to take the campaign forward. They can also play a crucial role combating the inevitable counteroffensive of the powerful Democratic Party machine. The ability of the campaign to mobilize working-class people will be crucial to winning. It can also provide the basis of a fighting organization for working people after the election.

Despite her best intentions, if this campaign looks like it can win, Karen Lewis will be confronted by huge pressure from the establishment and big business. Unless there is a powerful base of supporters to combat this pressure, it's more likely that Lewis would either be defeated or else would be sucked into the established networks and structures serving Chicago's elites. The danger exists that this campaign could be channeled into yet another fruitless attempt to push the Democratic Party to the left. This would leave angry and alienated workers and youth without a political alternative to the Democratic Party's corporate machine.

To build a new force, independent of big business and the establishment, Lewis should reject any corporate donations and rely on the power of a grassroots campaign as her base of support.

A National Trend

Mainstream Democrats like Obama are proving incapable of inspiring support at a time when the country is moving to the left. The space opening up for Lewis' campaign is part of a growing trend toward left populism and challenges to the neoliberal agenda.

The search for an alternative on the left was shown in recent electoral victories by Socialist Alternative's Kshama Sawant in Seattle and – in a complicated, more distorted way – populist Democrat Bill de Blasio in New York City.

While Democratic Party figures like Elizabeth Warren voice criticisms of the agenda of the 1%, they don't offer an independent alternative to big business.

There are enormous possibilities now present for the left to build at the local level a viable working-class challenge to the two-party system, as a step toward building a new political party for working people. In this regard, Karen Lewis has the potential to help write history, and not only in Chicago. Let's push things forward to make it happen – not only at the ballot box but, more importantly, with organizing in the neighborhoods, campuses and workplaces. ☘

Book Review: *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*

Naomi Klein's new book is reviewed by Bill Hopwood.

Naomi Klein's book is a welcome and much needed addition to the debate on how to tackle global warming. Klein not only outlines the enormous threat to humanity, but names the core problem: capitalism. She states, "Our economy is at war with many forms of life on earth including human life. Only one of these set of rules can change, and it's not the laws of nature." The book's subtitle is *Capitalism vs. the Climate*.

Many mainstream environmentalists are demoralized and desperate as, after over 30 years of talk, carbon dioxide emissions continue to increase. Some are turning to desperate and useless ideas such as nuclear power and geoengineering. Klein uses strong evidence and moving experiences to show that the failures of the last 30 years are due to using the wrong strategies and, especially, not attacking the root cause of global warming - and many of the other ills of the planet - capitalism.

Capitalism exploits both the planet and people to make its profits. Governments have trillions of dollars



to bail out the banks but no money for green jobs or for the public services to protect from and deal with the impacts of global warming.

Neoliberalism has increased damage to the environment and to social well-being. Its ideology has captured almost all politicians, so that regulations or controls on corporations have been torn up. Agreements such as NAFTA, are used to smash rules to protect the environment and jobs.

The inconvenient truth is that the support of Al Gore and the big environmental groups was vital to the

introduction of NAFTA. Klein criticizes the failing strategies of many of the major U.S. environmental groups - "Big Green," as she calls them - for working with Washington politicians and the major corporations, including some with the worst environmental records. This sleeping with the enemy includes investing in and taking money from major energy companies.

These groups, unwilling to challenge capitalism, only advocate market-based, profitable solutions - such as carbon markets, light regulations, consumer guilt, and fracked

gas as a 'bridge fuel' - that have not tackled the problem. Cap-and-trade and carbon offsets are a big scam to make corporations richer. Yet solutions do exist: they require ending capitalism.

The energy industry, rather than reducing the production of fossil fuels, is increasingly turning to ever-more-dangerous and environmentally damaging sources - deep water drilling, the Arctic, tar sands, fracking - what Klein calls "extreme energy."

Often, environmentalists state that we have to "save the planet" and, therefore, that we don't have time for social issues. Klein argues that, as capitalism is both destroying the environment and failing the vast majority of people on the planet, there is the need - and the opportunity - for a plan to tackle both. The "jobs versus the environment" claim is a lie, put up by big business to divide opposition to its rule. A program to heal the planet could provide millions of good jobs.

In contrast to the 30 wasted years of Big Green's strategies, there is a growing mass movement of resistance to energy extraction and climate change. This movement

around the world is cause for confidence about the future. Real progressive changes - ending slavery, workers' rights, fighting discrimination - have always come from mass movements, not from lobbying corporations and politicians.

Environmentalists, workers, indigenous people, and social and economic justice activists linking together can consolidate and spread these struggles. At the core is the need to fight capitalism and put forward positive alternatives. As Klein says "The only people who will be truly empowered to say no to dirty development over the long term are people who see real, hopeful alternatives."

Naomi Klein is excellent at critiquing capitalism. However, the only way to end capitalism and carry out the many great and necessary changes she puts forward is to build a socialist society. This opens up a new and necessary debate: How do we build a political force able to offer a real alternative and fight against global warming and capitalism? ☘

To read Bill Hopwood's full review of the book go to SocialistAlternative.org.

Massive Environment March Rocks NYC



On September 21st, NYC experienced one of the most amazing examples of people's power in recent times. An estimated 400,000 people, alongside protesters around the country and the world, occupied the streets to tell the UN leaders that we have had enough of empty promises. We want real solutions and we want them now!

With a march full of energy lasting more than five hours, stretching over dozens of city blocks, with large presence from trade unions and environmental organizations, the potential of an emerging mass movement was made clear. However, the lack of demands or speakers and a list of sponsors including corporations like BP, HSBC, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase, blurred the message. We need to be

clear there is no time for half measures which can satisfy both big corporations and working people. Change will come only by organizing independent movements representing the interests of the 99%. And that's the message Socialist Alternative shouted loud and clear.

On Saturday night Socialist Alternative participated in an electrifying panel with Kshama Sawant, Chris Hedges, Naomi Klein, Bill McKibben and Bernie Sanders which was attended by 900 people in a church in Manhattan (see the full video at socialistalternative.org)

On Sunday we marched, chanted, and had discussions with hundreds of people about the way forward. As our banner said "Capitalism failed people and the planet; join the struggle for socialism". ☘

Howie Hawkins Campaign Gains Steam

By Elma Relihan

New York State voters are clearly looking for an alternative to Governor Andrew Cuomo, who for the last four years has served corporate interests with utter consistency. He has attacked public education and public sector workers and stalled measures to improve working people's lives, like raising the minimum wage and banning fracking.

Howie Hawkins, the Green Party candidate for governor, has been receiving a tremendous response. Howie is a longstanding fighter for workers' rights and a member of Teamsters Local 317. He has been an organizer and supporter of numerous movements, including 15 Now. He calls for taxing the rich to create green jobs as part of a "Green New Deal" and takes no corporate money. His running mate is Brian Jones, a socialist educator and union member.

The dissatisfaction with Cuomo



was dramatically demonstrated in the Democratic primary, where a progressive candidate with almost no resources, Zephyr Teachout, won almost 35% of the vote. Teachout ran on an anti-corruption platform, denouncing the power of Wall Street and attacking Cuomo's neoliberal policies.

Howie has received 7% in at least one statewide poll. If that result were to hold, it would represent an historic breakthrough for left politics in New York State. We call on Teachout and her supporters to get behind Hawkins and build a real left alternative to the two parties of big business. ☘

"If you watch the nightly news, it feels like the world is falling apart," said the U.S. president with resignation. Obama's admitted lack of strategy is not stopping him from sliding into the next Middle East war. On the contrary, he is the fourth U.S. president in a row to bomb Iraq. But the complete absence of any viable plan for the medium term is a reflection of the decline of U.S. imperialism, despite its military might and remaining economic power.

In the post-World War II period, the U.S. established itself as the dominant capitalist power, and as "the world's policeman." It was able to use its military and political power to influence other nations and enrich the U.S. ruling class. However, recently the U.S. government has not been able to exert its influence to the same extent and has faced a number of humiliating setbacks.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq was supposed to bring about democracy and improved rights for Iraqi citizens – or at least bring cheap oil access to George W. Bush's corporate friends. An important target was to overcome the "Vietnam Syndrome" – to get the U.S. population used to new military adventures to secure profits for U.S. corporations all around the globe.

Now, Iraq is divided into three: Kurdish forces control the north; the Iraqi government – with the help of Iran – controls the south and west, which are deeply divided between Shia and Sunni people; and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, sometimes referred to as IS or ISIL) holds the remainder. This is a nightmare of bloody sectarian, religious, and nationalist divisions for the people and a complete failure even from the cynical point of view of those who started this war for oil. As the Committee for a Workers International said in 2003, the invasion of Iraq would represent the beginning of its dismemberment. This process now seems irreversible. Instead of overcoming the aversion of the U.S. population to imperialist wars, there is now a new "Iraq Syndrome," with a huge unwillingness of U.S. workers and youth to fight the capitalist elite's wars.

On top of the decline in the Middle East, new economic turmoil is on the horizon. A new "cold war" is developing with Russia, turning the Ukraine into a battlefield in Europe. There is also a confrontation with China which could lead to proxy wars in Asia.

The Monsters U.S. Imperialism Creates

The beheadings by ISIS have shocked the world. They have brought home to millions of workers the catastrophic realities of the vicious cycle of war in the Middle East and the terror that ISIS and other forces have inflicted on the region's population.

The Iraqi government installed by the U.S. has been unable to firmly establish itself, even with huge U.S. assistance. The lack of social support of this regime was clearly reflected in the absence of any will to fight among the Iraqi army. ISIS was able to take huge chunks of land, with the Iraqi military melting away before them – leaving only the U.S.-supplied

military hardware.

The brutal acts of ISIS, condemned by socialists, have also forced President Obama's hand, and the U.S. and other Western powers have hastily drawn up a three-year plan to yet again carry out military actions in Iraq.

But the growth of ISIS directly flows from the bloody history of U.S. intervention. In attempting to create stable, friendly regimes, U.S. imperialism has conjured up a nightmare for the people of the region and created new monsters it can't control.

The Arab Spring showed the anger of workers and poor people in the region about oppression and social misery. However, with the lack of a clear alternative, the movements' successes were stolen from their hands. New dictatorships were set up – like the Egyptian military taking over again – with U.S. backing. All elements of a people's uprising in Syria against the brutal dictator Assad are now dragged into a battle between different reactionary, anti-democratic and, in the end, pro-capitalist forces.

The present inability of the working class and the poor masses in the region to form their own organizations and develop a program to overthrow the reactionary, often Western backed, regimes like Saudi Arabia is the background for a temporary domination of reactionary powers. Saudi Arabia, for example, sanctioned at least eight beheadings in the month of August – in reality, as shocking as the ISIS killings.

Obama's "Plan"

Obama's announced "plan" to defeat ISIS tries to bank on these reactionary regimes, and to make use of the disgust over the reactionary methods and policies of ISIS.

It is estimated that Obama's plan, which is sailing through Congress, will have a \$30 billion price tag. This stands in stark contrast to the amount of aid devoted to combating the worst Ebola outbreak in history, which has so far totaled \$100 million – including the money given to U.S. pharmaceutical companies developing vaccines.

It is an attempt to cynically continue the divide-and-rule game, played by different imperialist powers in the region for more than 100 years. In addition, it is complicated by the frayed regional relationships that exist. Simply put, it will not re-establish U.S. dominance or create peace and stability for the people.

Based on the cooperation with the reactionary regime of Saudi Arabia, in partial alliance with Iran, in alliance with Kurdish forces, and its allies in Turkey and Israel, the U.S. elites aim to secure their interests. The fact that these forces are in sharp conflict among themselves and most of them will be subject to future upheavals of politically and economically oppressed masses sharply undermines this "strategy" from the beginning.



Iran has already sent ground troops into Iraq to fight against ISIS and to back up Iraq's shaky army. But Iran's nuclear programs and regional ambitions have led to hostility between Iran and the U.S. and its allies in the region. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) objected to Iran being involved




Obama Announces O



1980 to 1988: Iran-Iraq war. U.S. government backs Saddam Hussein's Iraq, turning a blind eye to his use of chemical weapons.






January 1991: Beginning of Gulf War. U.S. and coalition forces attack Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Thousands of retreating Iraqi soldiers slaughtered on the "Highway of Death."




1991 to 2003: U.S. establishes no-fly zone in the north of Iraq to provide security for Kurdish population, applies sanctions to the Iraqi economy.

1998: Clinton orders the bombing of Iraq, aimed at "military targets."

September 11, 2001: Bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon building by Al-Qaeda results in U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.

March 2013: Iraq by G-tense th "weapons tion," whic false. Sub pation of I 2013.





Offensive Against ISIS

EMPIRE CRACKED IN SYRIA

in developing a strategy to oppose ISIS, but Foreign Secretary John Kerry has left the door open to future cooperation.

The U.S. has so far rejected working with the Assad regime in Syria, which a year ago Obama was seeking to bomb. The Syrian Civil War, which the UN's own self-confessedly conservative estimate states has cost the lives of 191,000, previously saw Assad use chemical weapons and other military means to put down the population.

But it is in opposition to Assad that ISIS grew, initially as an affiliate of Al-Qaeda but later expelled due to its extreme actions. ISIS has grabbed a large part of the territory in the northern part of Syria as well as the northern and eastern parts of Iraq. It has carried out massacres against Shia Muslims and religious minorities in the areas that it controls, and in certain areas it has sought to implement a vicious dictatorship.

In seeking to counter the growth of ISIS, Obama has devised a strategy that fits in with the broader aims of the U.S. within the region. Obama's plan - collaborating with other western governments and U.S.-friendly regimes in the region - is to work through existing fighters in the civil war, backing them up with training, supplies, and air strikes. Sending in U.S. troops on the ground has not been ruled out either, through Obama says it has.

The U.S. has been looking for rebel Syrian groups it can work through since the start of the civil war. A concerted effort was previously made to back the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a loose coalition of opposition groups. But the FSA has been almost completely sidelined by the growth of ISIS. It is reported that one of the American citizens beheaded was not captured by ISIS, but by another, less hardline rebel Syrian group, which then sold its captive to ISIS to ransom off. The head official from a U.S.-backed liaison office was recently kidnapped by Syrian rebel groups during a meeting.

A New "Cold War"

The U.S. is also increasingly clashing with other countries internationally. The Ukrainian conflict shows capitalist Russia's demand and ability to play a role regionally, as well as its willingness to clash with the U.S. and the European Union.

The crisis in the Ukraine turned from a people's uprising into a civil war of different nationalist, pro-capitalist groups under the influence of different powers seeking regional dominance. The lack of a working-class-based leadership left the vacuum for these pro-capitalist and even far-right and fascist groups to capture the momentum and try to set their agenda.

The result is a decline into a civil war and instability in Europe, last seen during the Yugoslav wars.

Developing Conflicts With China

China has also been keen to extend its influence internationally, and the \$400 billion Russia-China gas deal brings together two of the international opponents of the U.S. The

disaster of Iraq will only reinforce the weakening of U.S. power internationally.

While the U.S. economy is creeping forward with a weak recovery which overwhelmingly benefits the rich, the world economy is stumbling into new crisis. The Eurozone never really left the Great Recession following the shockwaves of 2007 and 2008, and is now sliding back, with 0% growth in the recent quarter.

China is increasing its restrictions on foreign companies, which is cutting into the export outlet for manufacturers with excess capacity, such as European car companies. China itself is suffering the effects of a real-estate bubble and a financial bubble of "zombie banks."

China appears less able to play the role of the locomotive for the rest of global economy.

On top of these economic problems, huge changes on a world scale are developing that are having enormous political and economic repercussions. As the U.S. economy has been getting weaker compared to its rivals, U.S. imperialism is no longer able to easily set the agenda.

But the clashes between the governments of the U.S., China, Russia, and regional forces such as Iran represent, at root, clashes over who gets to profit off the backs of workers worldwide. These divisions internationally are played out over the bodies of workers and the poor.

None of these forces is interested in raising living standards and guaranteeing stability.

Recently, thousands of Iranian miners took strike action, and many of the leaders are facing imprisonment. During the Israeli slaughter in Gaza, a march of thousands of Palestinians showed the potential for a mass antiwar movement - and terrified the U.S. and Israeli regimes enough to force an intensification of ceasefire negotiations.

It's when workers and poor people organize that a real challenge to war and exploitation can develop.

At the moment, these forces are more hidden and pushed back. However, the Arab Spring with its repercussions worldwide, the close interactions of young people and workers around the globe within Occupy, the "enraged" and "Indignados" in Europe - all of this shows how quickly an inspiring movement can change events. And, in the Middle East, despite the decline into civil wars and bloody divisions, this setback for the masses is temporary and new uprisings are being prepared by the lack of any alternative capitalism and imperialism have to offer.

To end oppression, exploitation, and war, we need to end the rule of big business. It is our duty to fight capitalism and war here in the U.S., in the heart of imperialism. The success of socialist Kshama Sawant in Seattle's city council race last year encouraged activists all around the globe. Movements in the U.S. have huge repercussions and will help to rebuild the resistance of workers and young people internationally. The fight for a socialist America in a socialist world, to stop the capitalist war machine and to fight to end exploitation and oppression - that's the contribution we can offer to end the history of slaughter and begin to build a new era of international solidarity. ☪

2003: Invasion of George Bush on pre-empt Iraq possesses of mass destruction which later proves to be subsequent U.S. occupation which lasts until



2006 to 2007: Iraqi Civil War erupts in opposition to U.S. occupation. This is fueled by the shutting out of the Sunni population from power and creating an Iraqi government that is dominated by Shia forces. Although this is the height of the civil war, insurgent movements have been continuous since 2003.



January 2011: Arab Spring begins with mass protests and the overthrow of the government of Tunisia. Mass protests begin in Egypt and result in the resignation of the dictator Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Protests break out in a number of Arab countries, including Syria.



2011 to Present: Mass revolts in Syria result in brutal repression by Assad regime. This develops into an ongoing civil war.



2013 to present: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) begins to emerge as a strong radical Islamic group in the civil war in Syria. In 2014 it expands, fighting into Sunni areas of northern Iraq and taking control of the major city of Mosul.

Growing Resistance to Violence Against Women

Challenging Colleges' Silence on Sexual Violence

Erin Kennedy

There is a noticeable shift in the country. Women are increasingly refusing to accept violence directed against them. The protests against sexual assault at Columbia University, the huge outcry against the NFL's failure to address domestic violence, the #YesAllWomen Twitter storm, the reproductive rights filibuster in Texas, and the "Slutwalks" are all examples of a growing determination to resist violence against women.

As a result of increasing campus activism, colleges in particular are being forced to confront the rampant prevalence of sexual violence that students face while pursuing higher education. Sexual violence remains endemic in our society, and college campuses are no exception, including some of America's most prestigious institutions. For instance, Harvard University had over 100 cases of sexual assault reported within the last three years.

While it is estimated that only 5% of college rape survivors report their experience to law enforcement, 1 in 4 women experience rape or attempted rape at some point during their college careers (*The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study*, prepared for the National Institute of Justice, 2007).

Due to mounting pressure from students and activists, the White House is being forced for the second time in three years to



"Carry That Weight" protest at Columbia University, NYC.

address the reality of how common rape and sexual assault are on campuses. In January, Barack Obama outlined plans to develop a "White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault." The question many are asking is, will this be enough to permanently eradicate sexual violence on college campuses?

This past spring, the U.S. Department of Education released the names of 77 schools that are currently under investigation for their mishandling of rape and sexual assault cases. The list of colleges stretches from coast to coast, including Harvard, UC Berkeley, Florida State, Yale, and Princeton, just to name a few. Many have been found guilty of blatantly falsifying their records of campus assault in order to avoid negative attention so they can raise funds from alumni and wealthy donors

and avoid losing Title IX funding. This often leaves students in the dark about the risks of their schools. And when students report complaints about rape or sexual assault, they often face an unresponsive bureaucracy.

For example, Columbia University student Emma Sulkowicz alleges she was raped in her dorm room. She eventually reported the incident to university officials, but the university ultimately dismissed the case. So Emma recently began lugging her mattress around campus until her rapist is held accountable. More students have been joining in carrying mattresses around campus. Building a mass movement of visible protests like these, or better yet, even larger protests, can pressure college administrators to take this issue seriously.

Together, we need to demand real

community intervention that provides effective monitoring and rehabilitation. Clear and concise education, training, and awareness programs should be mandatory for all students and staff. We also need to overhaul the legal system, which currently handles sexual offenders and victims with gross ineptitude and neglect.

To truly address violence against women, we need to go further and tackle the root cause of women's oppression. Sexual assault is the inevitable by-product of a sexist, capitalist society based on inequality, exploitation, and domination – a profit-driven society in which women are reduced to mere sex objects a thousand times a day in the media and men are taught to compete for wealth, power, and masculinity.

Ultimately, we need to establish a democratic socialist society based on equality and cooperation so that the systemic exploitation, oppression, and inequality inherent in capitalism will no longer distort human relationships and the world would be a much safer place for women. ☺

Also, read our coverage of the struggle against domestic violence in the NFL at SocialistAlternative.org

Education Should Not Be a DEBT Sentence

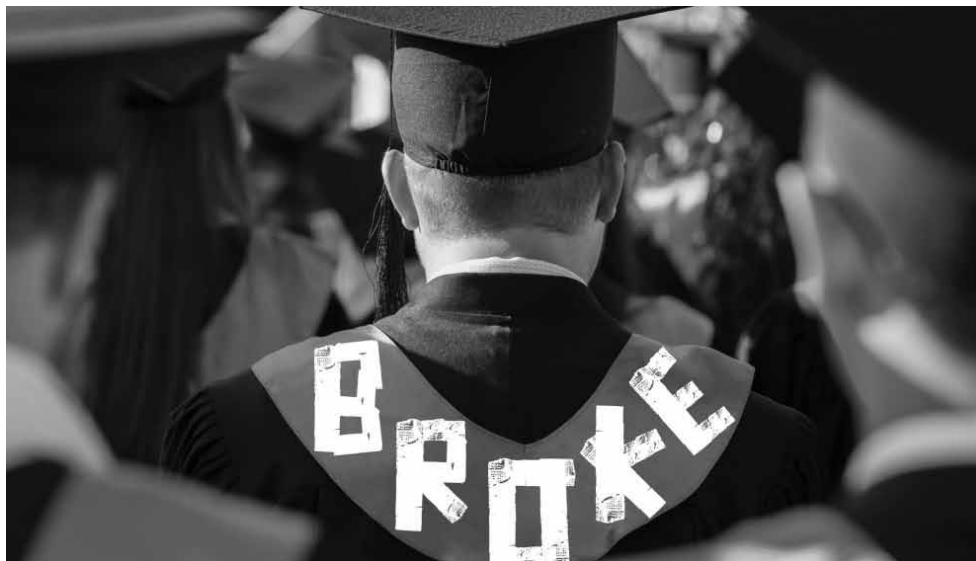
Aila Barbour

Langston Hughes once asked, "What happens to a dream deferred?" Does it follow you like a student loan, affecting your life for decades to come? For youth around the country, higher education has become increasingly unaffordable and garners the risk of getting stuck in one of the worst types of debt.

Recent college students are defaulting on loans at the highest rate in two decades. This can lead to garnished wages, intercepted tax returns, being sued, and even having Social Security withheld later in life. Nationwide, student debt has tripled over the past decade to a staggering \$1.2 trillion. The class of 2014 is graduating as the "most indebted class ever," and the trend shows no signs of decreasing.

People of color and women are disproportionately affected by the student debt trap. Students of color have higher amounts of debt compared to their white counterparts, with African-American students having the highest differential, at 29.5%. And since women make only 59% of what men earn over their lifetimes, women have a harder time making loan payments and must devote a larger portion of their paychecks to student loans than men.

Overall, this is the direct result of the massive neoliberal cuts to education implemented after the Great Recession that slashed the



funding of higher education institutions by 23%. Public colleges responded by raising tuition rates which, combined with families' falling incomes, caused students to take out larger and larger loans to cover the costs.

Another driver of student debt is hundreds of for-profit schools that can be up to twice as expensive as state universities and six times as expensive as community colleges. For-profit colleges also encourage their recruiters to increase enrollment by using fear tactics that prey on low-income youth.

Under capitalism, corporations like Sallie Mae trap students in a vicious cycle of debt with huge interest rates. This is similar to when major banks created the sub-prime mortgage crisis, setting in motion capitalism's worst recession since the Great Depression. Afterward, the banks got bailed out and the homeowners had to deal with the consequences of foreclosures and evictions. College students are now stuck in a stalled economy, unable to find employment with an income high enough to pay back their loans

in time, creating a student debt bubble reminiscent of the housing bubble in 2007.

President Obama has worked to lower the interest rate on student loans and cap monthly loan payments at 10% of a student's income. Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren has proposed a bill that would allow students to refinance their loans at lower interest rates. Although these would be small steps in the right direction, they are not nearly enough to curb the exploitive nature of capitalism and the student debt trap. Socialist Alternative would take it much further, proposing to cancel all student debt.

Education should be a human right. Our country should make higher education free, as they have done in some Nordic countries like Sweden, where not only is higher education free, but students are given a monthly grant to help with living expenses.

Instead of offering youth a promising future, capitalism makes students carry the burden of its failures as a social system. The fight to cancel student debt needs to be connected to the fight for the socialist transformation of society, where corporations are publicly owned and democratically controlled so economic decisions are based on human and environmental needs, not maximizing profits.

What message do we want to send to future generations: that they should reach for their dreams, or struggle just to survive? ☺

Eyewitness in Ferguson Justice for Michael Brown!

The scenes in Ferguson, Missouri have gripped the national spotlight and gathered massive international attention. In the richest, most powerful country in the world, a whole community is brutalized while showing its anger at the unjust killing of a young man, Michael Brown. Below, we give an eyewitness account from a Socialist Alternative reporter, Chris Gray, of events in Ferguson.

The corner of Ferguson Avenue and West Florissant in Ferguson was for several weeks the Tahrir Square for a new generation of young, radicalized black and brown people who are prepared to risk everything for the possibility of a better future. The spark for this rebellion was the vicious murder of Mike Brown. But the fact that the movement still has momentum is because everyone - inside and outside Ferguson - sees that this stretches beyond Mike Brown.

Young people from Ferguson lead the movement, supported by ordinary people from the community. They've earned this by standing up every night for almost two weeks against impossible odds, raw and violent repression by the state, and some community "leaders" who consistently undermine the victories already won here by telling people to go home after they've come so far.

The Police

When the sun set, massive armored trucks



moved in, packed with police officers wearing body armor and tactical gear, pointing assault weapons at peaceful demonstrators. They provoked the youth, waiting for any excuse to start arbitrarily arresting people and using teargas and rubber bullets. Most of the arrests were in ones or twos. The cops lined up or otherwise blocked the crowd, there was a standoff, and then the cops rushed in pointing assault weapons to try to arrest a young

person.

While the police response has sparked a national conversation about police militarization, few politicians have stepped forward with any meaningful policies. In an era where social unrest has been cited by ruling-class institutions like the IMF as the #1 threat to global economic stability, there's little perspective that police repression, a fundamental institution of the capitalist state, will be

scaled back anytime soon.

The Liberal Left

One of the strangest events I saw in Ferguson happened in the daytime. The NAACP was leading a march of a few thousand up the street. To the amazement of the Ferguson residents grabbing lunch who had not heard of the protest, the cops were calmly redirecting traffic. At the head of the march, holding the NAACP banner, was the chief of the Missouri State Patrol flanked by other high-ranking police officers. The march did two laps up and down West Florissant before leaving, in the process burning the trust of many young people in Ferguson who had experienced such brutal police repression the night before.

The established black organizations offer a complex obstacle to the youth of Ferguson. They recognize that they have lost touch with an entire generation of young people of color, whose bleak future is the direct result of decades of black misleaders pushing the Civil Rights Movement into the established halls of power. They tell people to stop "getting arrested for nothing," failing to recognize that the radicalized black youth in Ferguson have inspired and raised the confidence of their entire generation. No matter what the approach, in the end the liberal's argument is

cont. page 11

Immigrant Workers Outraged by Obama Betrayal

Teddy Shibabaw

Sixty thousand people will be the sacrificial lambs of political expediency for this fall's midterm elections. That's the number of undocumented immigrants likely to be deported between now and November because Obama has broken yet another promise on immigrant rights. This time, the cause is Senate Democrats in tight races facing the right-wing, nativist hysteria surrounding the wave of young refugees from Central America on the border. The Senate candidates successfully lobbied the White House to delay a moratorium on deportations that Obama had promised to implement by now. As a *NY Times* editorial put it, "A political emergency collided with a human one, and the humans lost," (*NY Times*, 9/10/14).

Earlier this year, after months of sharp criticism from immigrant rights activists who dubbed him "the Deporter-in-Chief," Obama relented in words. Speaker Boehner's admission that there would be no House action on immigration this year removed the political space for the White House to claim it was holding out for the ever-receding mirage of comprehensive reform.

"It's time for a president who won't walk away from comprehensive reform just because it becomes politically unpopular," Obama said



in 2008. In a June speech in the Rose Garden, Obama vowed to sidestep the gridlock in Congress driven by hard-right Republicans in the House, promising to take executive action to halt deportations by summer's end. Now the can has been kicked down the road again, with the promise of action shortly after the midterm elections are over.

Yet, after so many broken promises and delays, and so much subterfuge, immigrant rights activists are not buying it. Presente.org said in a September 6 statement, "This delay is a betrayal of the Latino community and is

certainly one of the single biggest attacks on Latino families by the Democratic Party in recent memory. With news of recently deported children dying in Honduras and record level deportations and separations of families continuing, all eyes are on the President's actions that totally devalue Latino life."

Anger at Obama and the Democrats on immigration has been brewing for some time. Obama has already set the record for the most deportations of any president in U.S. history. Contrary to claims that deportations have largely targeted violent criminals, the

evidence shows that two-thirds of deportations have come from minor offenses like traffic violations (*NY Times*, 4/7/2014). Add to that resume a most extensive militarization of the border, replete with profiteering from private contractors. All of this was done in the name of convincing House Republicans that his administration takes immigration law enforcement seriously enough to be a partner in comprehensive immigration reform. It is an unquestionably failed strategy, and yet the president is once again doubling down along the same path.

Only bigger, bolder mass action with complete independence from the Democratic Party shows a way forward. Already, protests have forced Obama to deliver temporary relief from deportation for hundreds of thousands of immigrant youth through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. We demand not only executive action to defer deportations for all 11 million undocumented immigrants, but also immediate and unconditional full legalization for all. To win those demands, the immigrant rights movement, supported by organized labor, will need a return to the levels of mass action carried out in 2006 - when millions protested and went out on strike - combined with running independent working-class candidates who unabashedly advance immigrant rights demands. ☪

Striking Fast-Food Worker Speaks Out!



A Socialist Alternate member interviewed fast-food worker Jose on strike in Philadelphia.

If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?

Respect.

We don't get our benefits, but the manager does. We work harder than our managers. We need our \$15, we need our union, we need medical bills paid, our paid sick leave.

What keeps the big fast-food corporations from giving you a raise?

They want to keep the money for themselves. They don't like to share the wealth. But we're gonna get bigger every time we do this. We're gonna keep striking. We're gonna keep taking our arrests. We're gonna keep doing whatever it takes to get our \$15.

What do other workers in your restaurant think about the fight for \$15?

They're just pretty scared. They think they're gonna get fired. They think they're gonna get roughed up for something like this - until they see me. This is like my third action. And they see me coming back to work, still strong, still working, about to get promoted. Then they'll say... "Jose actually did this. He's really a team leader. He's fighting for \$15 for everyone, not just him, for everybody, for his coworkers, his friends, everybody."

What would be the best way to reach them?

Get louder. Close our own stores down. Each worker here today, we could go to their store and strike and shut our own stores down for the day, like we just did to this McDonald's today. Take it to our own stores.

What could unions do to help?

Unionize more stores. Not just janitors and nurses and teachers, but start unionizing where people work. There's a strike everywhere all over the United States today. We need to be out here and we need to be heard.

Final thoughts?

Basically, everybody out there, just come out and join. Think about your children - if you were working at fast-food right now and you have a child and you can't pay your bills and can't support your children. Just come out. Come out. ✪

Fight for \$15 at Minneapolis Airport Sharpens

Ginger Jentzen

On Monday, September 15, workers at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP), backed by dozens of community supporters, delivered 1,000 petitions signed by their coworkers to the Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC) calling for a \$15 an hour minimum wage. This action, led by workers organized in 15 Now and Socialist Alternative activists, marked the public launch of a major new front in the fight for \$15.

The campaign at MSP airport emerges less than two weeks after the first major fast-food workers strike in Minnesota and amid public discussion among city councilors about \$15 an hour in Minneapolis. But as the victory for \$15 an hour in Seattle showed, winning a strong \$15 will require escalating pressure from a grassroots movement. Winning \$15 at the airport would build momentum to win in the City of Minneapolis, similar to how the win at Sea-Tac airport inspired the launch of 15 Now and the victory in Seattle.

Over the past decade, wages at the airport have been slashed and well-paid jobs have been outsourced to the lowest bidder. "This is a part of a nationwide struggle for \$15. The fast-food strikes raised expectations, then Seattle workers showed it could be won. Now it's our turn," explained Kip Hedges, a Delta baggage handler who helped to launch



Airport Workers & Supporters at MAC meeting

the 15 Now airport campaign.

Airport workers in St. Louis, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles have won a \$15/hr minimum wage. (*Labor Notes*, 11/15/13). Just days after workers demanded \$15 at the MAC, service agents in the merged American Airlines and US Airways voted to unionize with CWA-IBT, winning with 86% support.

Poverty Wages

Thousands of workers at the MSP airport make poverty wages. Delta, the largest employer at MSP, recorded \$2.3 billion in profit in 2013. Some workers are paid as little as \$8 an hour to clean Delta's planes while Delta CEO Richard Anderson made \$14 million in 2013: over \$6,600/hr!

The Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC), which governs all airport activity and commerce, is run by a board of 15 commissioners appointed by Governor Mark Dayton, as well as the mayors of

Minneapolis and St. Paul, all considered liberal Democrats. At the airport and in the wider Twin Cities, the politicians preside over very sharp racial and economic divides.

To win at the airport, we will need to expose the complicity of these politicians and build pressure on them to act. A full victory for \$15 will require building a powerful movement of workers and community supporters, with organized labor throwing its full weight behind the campaign.

But the huge support in the Twin Cities for the fight of airport workers and 15 Now is bringing together a growing movement of campaigners with a number of union locals declaring their support for 15 Now, including Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1005, Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA), International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 1883. The pressure on the politicians and the corporations to concede a basic living wage is building. ✪

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! ✪

Largest-Ever Socialist Alternative National Convention

Andy Moxley

It was a fever pitch as the largest-ever Socialist Alternative National Convention met for three days this past Labor Day weekend in Seattle. The National Convention is the highest decision-making body of the organization, convened at least every two years to not only analyze key economic, social, and political developments but to collectively decide how best to build Socialist Alternative and the broader movement.

The convention began with a discussion on international developments introduced by Peter Taaffe, of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), the grouping of socialist organizations and parties in 40 countries with whom Socialist Alternative stands in political solidarity. We discussed the prolonged structural crisis of capitalism and the chaos and upheaval this is creating around the world.



Attention was given to the increasing difficulties being confronted by U.S. imperialism around the world, and especially in the Middle East.

Where is the U.S. Going?

The bulk of the rest of the first day was taken up with a discussion of perspectives for the United States over the next period. A major feature of the discussion

was the range of social struggles now emerging across the country. For example, there were eyewitness reports from the rebellion in Ferguson, as well as speakers on the growing national fight against income inequality, spurred on by the victorious achievement of a \$15 minimum wage in Seattle.

The largest part of the discussion focused on how the general shift to the left in the U.S., especially among young people, and the

massive disillusionment with corporate politics. Delegates discussed the implications of a possible race of Bernie Sanders for president and of Karen Lewis for mayor of Chicago. These paramount discussions concluded with a series of votes, with members from around the country agreeing on the most important issues for Socialist Alternative.

We took stock of the organization's explosive growth, having doubled in size in the past 10 months.

Our goal is to grow by another 50% by the end of 2014 and to consolidate our presence in a range of new areas while moving to a monthly paper (see below). Delegates agreed that, for us, a critical task is to defend the beachhead for genuine left politics which has been achieved in Seattle through the election of Kshama Sawant.

The tremendous commitment and enthusiasm of the convention was reflected in the record-setting financial appeal, which netted \$43,000 in pledges, increased dues, and one-time donations.

The final day featured the adoption of a new constitution, the election of a new National Committee, and a report on the work of the CWI – a brilliant note to end upon. The potential for building socialist forces worldwide was like a shock of electricity to the spirit of those in attendance, which they can take back into local Socialist Alternative groups across the U.S. 🇺🇸

Justice for Michael Brown! Continued from page 9

always the same: Go home and let us handle this now.

The Grand Jury

Now, everyone is talking about the grand jury that has been convened to decide whether Mike Brown's killer should face charges. Everyone knows the only reason there is a grand jury is because of the movement. Three of the twelve jurors are black. Nevertheless, community leaders and politicians are appealing for an end to the protests, for people to "respect the justice system." It's just another hurdle thrown in front of the movement, and it has had an effect. The nightly protests are shrinking from hundreds to dozens.

The Protesters

Travis is one of the working-class black youth who are the backbone of this movement. He lives a few blocks away from Camden Apartments, where Mike Brown was murdered. Travis had a part-time job at Menards until the protests. He is ubiquitous in this movement. He stays out all evening, leading



marches, leading chants, and he is willing to talk to people. He encourages people to stay, keep standing up, keep the movement alive. The night before, I met two young women, Josie and Peach, who have been there since the beginning. They both have full-time jobs — one is studying at a local college. These are the real mighty youth of Ferguson, and they're not backing down anytime soon.

Every 28 hours, an unarmed black person is killed by the police in this country. But Ferguson is unique because of the heroic movement these young people have organized to challenge the barbaric system of oppression they face. They refused to be ignored in the first days of the protests. They refused to let raw state repression

clear them from the streets. They challenged the traditional leaders who have betrayed the community time and again. In the process, they have inspired an entire generation of young people of color to stand up and opened the possibility of a new black freedom movement, independent of the old guard and their reliance on the Democratic Party.

We Demand:

- ✪ Justice for Michael Brown! For his killer to be indicted and face trial.
- ✪ A full, independent investigation of the entire Ferguson Police Department by community organizations and unions.
- ✪ Democratic community control of the police; a \$15 an hour minimum wage; free, quality education; and health care for all.
- ✪ A new black freedom movement as part of a working-class struggle against police violence, racism, low wages, and the two main political parties.

Get the *Socialist Alternative!*



If you want to see the development of a real workers media in the United States; if you want to hear about the fight to develop the beachhead for left politics that was created by the election of Kshama Sawant; if you want to read eyewitness accounts of the fight for a \$15 minimum wage and of the emerging struggles against racism and sexism and to reforge a fighting labor movement; if you want a frankly socialist analysis of key national and international events, then you are reading the right publication!

This is the second issue of the monthly *Socialist Alternative*. Increasing the frequency will greatly develop our ability to comment on key developments and struggles from a working-class standpoint, as well as develop an ongoing dialogue with ordinary people about the way forward to change this society. Our national convention decided to launch an ambitious paper campaign to increase the circulation of *Socialist Alternative* by 500% both through subscriptions and sales in neighborhoods, campuses, and workplaces.

This very ambitious goal is also linked to financing and developing the rest of our publications including our website SocialistAlternative.org, our social media presence, and the publication of a more extensive range of pamphlets.

Find out what's really going on – subscribe to *Socialist Alternative* today!

SocialistAlternative.org/subscribe

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Issue #7 - October 2014

CORPORATE POLITICIANS FEELING THE HEAT

15 NOW!

Ty Moore, 15 Now National Coordinator

New chapters of 15 Now, the movement we initiated in Seattle last January, have formed in over 20 cities nationwide. Alongside the fast-food strikes and other fight for \$15 campaigners, 15 Now is at the cutting edge of a wider movement combating income inequality in America.

The victory for a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Seattle would not have been possible without 15 Now. Our win in Seattle opened the floodgates nationwide. Workers' confidence, expectations, and political power are growing. Everywhere, big-business mayors and city leaders are haunted by the specter of \$15 as they face mounting pressure to follow Seattle's lead.

This summer, left trade unionists in San Francisco struck a deal with their mayor for a \$15 an hour minimum wage after threatening their own ballot initiative - the same tactic 15 Now used to win in Seattle. Then in Chicago, after 21 of the 50 Aldermen declared in favor of \$15, reflecting the popular pressure of workers there, 1% Mayor Rahm Emanuel moved to cut across the budding movement by promising a \$13 an hour minimum wage. Facing similar pressures,

Governor Cuomo has promised to support legislation that would open the door to \$13 in New York City.

Finally, Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti joined the chorus, calling for \$13 after labor and several city councilors introduced a proposal for \$15. As an August 29 *Time* article pointed out, the calls for \$13 in the nation's three largest cities fall short of "the now iconic \$15 demand of low-wage workers everywhere... For who, on that cold November day two years ago [when fast-food strikers first demanded \$15], could have envisioned that a proposal to raise the minimum wage in America's second-largest city to more than \$13 - a nearly 50% increase over three years - would not only be taken seriously but would strike some as being too modest?"

From Pittsburgh to Tampa Bay, from Madison to Tucson, 15 Now chapters are energetically building to transform workers' growing anger - and their growing confidence - into a force for political change. But the fight looks different in different places.

Like many across the country, Oregon 15 Now chapters are fighting to overturn state "pre-emption" laws, big government bans taking away the autonomy of cities to set their own wage levels. Oregon 15 Now chapters have won important

union support for their campaign, including a resolution passed by the 55,000-strong SEIU 503 statewide convention.

In Philadelphia, 15 Now has established three neighborhood action groups and is campaigning with campus workers and students to get Temple and U-Penn to ensure all campus workers get a living wage. Meanwhile, in the Roxbury neighborhood in Boston, 15 Now gathered enough signatures to put a ballot referendum for \$15 to voters in November. In Minneapolis, pressure from 15 Now pushed several city council members to back a minimum wage hike, and 1,000 airport workers signed our petition for a \$15 an hour minimum wage at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport (MSP).

Like the call for the 8-hour workday helped to inspire the early American labor movement, the fight for \$15 is emerging as a battle cry for today's generation of low-wage workers. Within this wider struggle, 15 Now is the only national force open to all workers to join and democratically control. As a socialist, I know that building a mass movement is the only way to defeat big business and their politicians. So I appeal to you: Join 15 Now and together let's turn this unequal, corporate-controlled system upside down! ✪