

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Ebola Crisis Exposes Private Health Care Failings - 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

Chelsea Forgenie

Brooklyn, NY

I am an immigrant, originally from the island of Trinidad. My family and I left at a point when kidnappings and human trafficking were at an all-time high. We - like the majority of immigrants - wanted to feel safer and have a better chance at receiving quality education. After twelve years of creating a home in the States, my family is still struggling to recognize the so-called "American Dream." The issue of the abuse of immigrant workers has hit my family in every way possible. Immigrants are brutally underpaid and overworked, with little to no benefits. In addition, the capitalist system we struggle under makes it expensive, confusing, time-consuming and, in some cases, hopeless for immigrants to keep their loved ones together and create the comfortable life they imagined for their families.

After high school, I struggled to find federal and state funds to help me continue into college. Because of my status then, I wound up receiving no aid and ended up having to pay out-of-pocket. The politics of the two-party system has fostered this abuse, which affects the growing population of immigrants in this country and has purposely delayed



even the most basic reform of immigration laws that would provide low-cost status adjustment applications, health care and unemployment benefits, and a simple path and funding to higher education institutions.

I am a socialist because I believe that for too long we have lived under a system of oppression and abuse, and we have become passive and have accepted oppression as part of the struggle of life. Although we have the great gift of being able to adapt and endure in the face of trials, we must remember that we are also vehicles for change. However, we can only bring change by working together and maintaining solidarity. ✦

Seattle's Mayor's Business as Usual Budget Fails to Deliver for the 99%

By Philip Locker

A budget is the clearest statement of the politics and priorities of the government. Seattle Mayor Murray's proposed budget is a continuation, with only very small changes at the margins, of the previous City of Seattle budget. The results of these previous budgets are clear: a housing crisis, a shocking growth in homelessness, drastic underfunding of social services, an inadequate public transit system, and growing income, gender, and racial inequality.

This status quo does not serve the vast majority of the people of Seattle, but it is working very well for the big real estate developers and downtown business interests, who are reaping record profits.

In contrast, Kshama Sawant, Seattle's Socialist Alternative councilmember, argues for a people's budget that fully funds human services, affordable housing, and public transit.

Mayor Ed Murray promises to prioritize in his budget "human services, public safety and transportation." Yet his actual budget proposals are far from delivering on such laudable goals. While his budget has some positive initiatives, it overwhelmingly reflects the domination of the wealthy interests over Seattle's government.

For example, the proposed budget does not address the housing crisis, only kicking the can down the road by establishing another "advisory committee" dominated by the developers and politicians who caused this crisis over the last few decades.

It accepts a continuation of the social conditions which are leading to increased crime and antisocial behavior throughout our city. While Murray talks of improving public safety, he continues to dramatically underfund critical human and social services and does not address the gentrification which displaces existing communities and undermines the social cohesion which is essential for healthy and safe neighborhoods.

It is true, as Mayor Murray says, that the city's current revenue does not match its needs. The state government has placed many right-wing restrictions on cities' taxing powers. But Murray's proposed budget ignores potential options under existing law for taxing the wealthy and large corporations.

Yet to make fundamental change - to access the huge wealth and resources of our city and country - we need to build powerful campaigns to demand structural changes in Olympia and Washington, D.C. to provide funding for the needs of the 99%. It is clear that the establishment which runs Seattle has been unwilling to take such steps. They fully accept the existing framework which underfunds our needs in the interests of the 1%.

That is why, in order to win real, fundamental change, we cannot rely on the political establishment but will need to build powerful movements of working people, especially of our unions and community organizations, and build our own political representation independent of the two parties of big business. ✦

To read more about our demands for the Seattle city budget, see SocialistAlternative.org.

Jess Spear Challenging the Speaker of the Washington House

By Stephan Kimmerle, CWI

Jess Spear, Socialist Alternative's candidate for State Legislator in Seattle took on one of the most powerful politicians of Washington state, House Speaker Frank Chopp. Funded by an army of corporate donors, and backed by the Democratic Party establishment, Chopp was able to outspend Jess Spear by a factor of three to one. However, in all the debates Jess exposed him as the "corporate servant" that he is.

In the middle of the campaign, the Washington Supreme Court held the legislature in contempt for criminally underfunding education. Pointing to the \$8.7 billion handout for Boeing bosses, while Boeing shifted thousands of jobs out of the state, Jess Spear was quoted in *The Seattle Times*, the most widely read newspaper in Seattle: "It was noteworthy that the state Legislature argued that it was easier to pass a tax handout rather than fund education."

Against this wave of money and media power, door-knocking and direct conversations were crucial. More than 300 volunteers helped to talk to people in the neighborhoods, flypost, and leaflet.

During the campaign, Jess – a climate scientist herself – brought



together a coalition of environmental and labor organizations to organize the People's Climate March in Seattle on September 20, the same day as the historic march in New York City. This protest demanded jobs and protection of the environment – and ended in blocking the tracks used for oil and gas trains for two hours, in an act of civil disobedience.

Jess' yard signs demanded to "Tax the Rich – Fund Education" and "Rent control." After winning the \$1 an hour minimum wage in Seattle, in which Jess was 15 Now's organizing director, the question of affordable housing is the most pressing issue in the Emerald City.

Future campaigns can build on the experiences and successes of a marvelous effort to chop Chopp. ✪

For a full balance of the campaign and a detailed review of the election results after November 4, go to VoteSpear.org.

In the past, Frank Chopp has taken over \$800,000 of dirty money from big business including Walmart, McDonald's, BP Oil, Boeing, Microsoft, Alaska Airlines, Wells Fargo, Comcast, and Verizon. He and his cronies hand out billions yearly in corporate welfare.

The Seattle Times (October 7): "Some of Spear's supporters confronted Chopp about his acceptance of corporate donations over the years..."

"Chopp said he's taken money from such companies in the past, but has refused or refunded some donations this year, knowing he'd be challenged by 'these people.'" ✪

Help "these people" challenge corporate power. Donate to VoteSpear.org today!

Howie Hawkins Campaign Making a Historic Step Forward for Independent Politics

By Elma Relihan

Howie Hawkins, the Green Party candidate for governor in New York state, has been receiving a tremendous response. The most recent Quinnipiac poll shows the independent left candidate at 9%, which means that potentially hundreds of thousands will vote for the Hawkins-Jones ticket while Andrew Cuomo, the Democrat seeking re-election, sees his support continue to fall below 50%. If these results were to hold, they would represent a historic breakthrough for left politics in New York and nationally. This will help build momentum for other left candidates independent of the reactionary Republicans but also big-business-friendly Democrats and towards a new party representing working-class people.

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 job and for an end to hydro-fracking, and takes no corporate money. His running mate, Brian Jones, is a socialist educator and union member.

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 consistency. A report from Bill Mahoney at NYPIRG shows that Cuomo gets 49% of his campaign funds from just 331 donors who gave \$40,000 or more! Cuomo 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.

New York Socialist Alternative, as well as Kshama Sawant, have endorsed the Hawkins-Jones campaign, and we are campaigning across the city with leafleting, fundraising, and public meetings. If we all go all out for Hawkins-Jones over the next three weeks, we can make a major statement on fracking, the environment, economic inequality, peace, and - as Socialist Alternative is emphasizing - the need to build a new force, armed with socialist ideas. We ask all our supporters to get involved - and to spread the word to everyone else you know. Here's the place to get started: www.howiehawkins.org/about.

To learn more about what Socialist Alternative is doing, contact us at 978-549-3855. ✪

New Opportunities for Independent Left Politics



By Kshama Sawant

As we go to print, independent left candidates are poised to make historic breakthroughs. In Seattle, Jess Spear of Socialist Alternative is likely to get the largest left vote ever against House Speaker Frank Chopp, topping even the totals of previous Republican challengers. Meanwhile, Howie Hawkins is gaining momentum in his Green Party campaign for governor of New York, and he could get the highest third-party vote for that position in the last century.

Over a dozen more independent, anti-corporate, and sometimes even socialist campaigns are making a significant impact in local races. This momentum needs to be built upon. The activists coming around these campaigns need to stay organized to struggle for wage increases, against racist policing, and for quality housing while also proclaiming, as Socialist Alternative did in Ferguson and St. Louis, that "the whole system is guilty."

We also need to do more than just take up worthy causes at the local level. These campaigns are the tremors under the surface of society from massive inequality, and we need to turn this into a political earthquake that shakes the ruling class to its foundations. We need to bring these campaigns together and have the maximum effect on the national political discussion.

A conference in early 2015 could build upon our current momentum and also discuss next steps. Bernie Sanders, Vermont Senator, could convene a conference of thousands wanting to discuss not only his campaign but a strategy for the 99% in politics. At such an event, I would argue for full independence from the Democrats, a clear program for working people's interests, a refusal to take corporate cash, and a challenge to the capitalist system itself. Building upon the foundations established by these exciting 2014 campaigns, we could lay the basis for what is really needed: a mass party of working people encouraged by the plans for the strongest left challenge ever for president in 2016. ✪

Midterm Elections and the Dysfunction of the Two Major Parties

By Tony Wilsdon

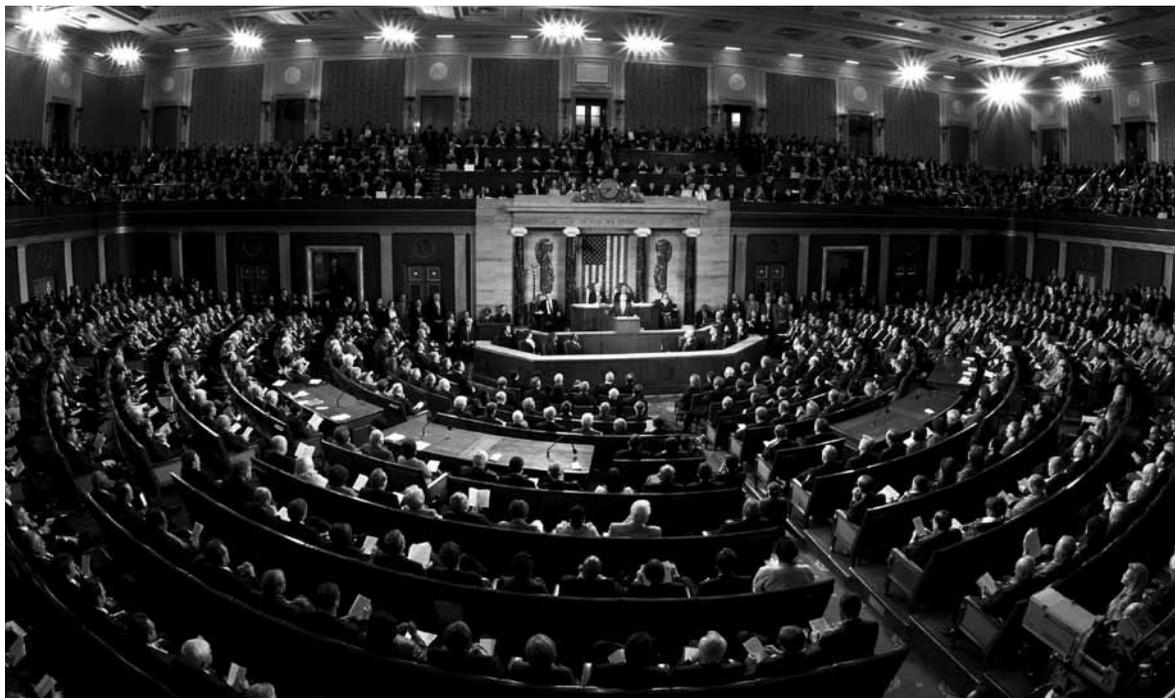
Unbearable levels of student debt, sky-rocketing rents, low-wage jobs without benefits, lack of quality public transport, escalating environmental destruction, rampant racism and sexism: these are only some of the crucial issues facing young people, workers, and the poor. Yet neither major party is offering any real answers. No wonder voters say they are fed up with them.

In the mid-terms elections, the Republican Party has been honing its message around an agenda of fear. ISIS, terrorism, and Ebola are now seemingly only one border crossing away from plaguing America. One Republican leader after another has blurted out ever more crass ways to threaten the public with unspeakable evils crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. Attempts to equate Ebola with Obama demonstrate the willingness of Republicans to ramp up fear-mongering to confuse the public into voting for their pro-Wall Street, anti-immigrant, anti-poor agenda.

In a rational world, this should be a topic for late-night comedy shows. But with the Democrats unable to offer a real alternative for working people, the Republicans could gain ground in these elections! Instead, the Democrats' main message is also one of fear – fear of bringing Republicans back into power. No wonder opinion polls show public support for both parties is at a historic low. A recent New York Times/CBS News poll found just five percent of voters thought most members of Congress deserved re-election. 87 percent said it was time for new people.

The Republicans are ever more exposed as a political party that represents the elite 1%, especially among young people and working

Growing numbers of Republicans have become disgusted at their party. In several key races, the GOP faces right-wing third-party candidates.



87% of Americans think that most members of Congress should not be re-elected.

people. Yet Republicans, like the Democrats, need to manipulate a section of the broader public to vote for them to get into power. Republicans have built their political base among small businesspeople, conservative Christian fundamentalists, Tea Partiers, libertarians, and a section of older, socially conservative white workers. But growing numbers in their political base have become disgusted at the willingness of Republicans, when in power, to drop their concerns in favor of the elite 1% and big business. In a number of key midterm races, right-wing third-party candidates are challenging Republican candidates.

The Democratic Party

While there is huge disillusionment with the Democrats, there is still an understandable tendency for many workers to see them as the “lesser evil.” Unlike Republicans, Democrats talk nicely about raising the minimum wage, promising immigration “reform,” fighting for women’s rights, opposing racism and imperialist wars, and making promises on the environment.

Yet look at the Obama administration’s record on each of these issues. Either Obama has done nothing or, in many cases, he has made things worse. Since 2008, there have been a record number of deportations, an approval of drilling

in the Arctic, a stunning evisceration of civil rights and liberties, a normalization of the use of drones abroad - resulting in 2,400 deaths - and further imperialist wars. This is to say nothing of the role of many Democrats at state and local level in implementing massive cuts to social services and education.

The reality is that the public as a whole stands to the left of both parties on almost every issue, sometimes far to the left. Growing anger about inequality, falling living standards, the failure to stop global warming, and a host of other issues has increasingly exposed the corporate nature of the Democrats.

This is where the populist “Elizabeth Warren wing” comes in. Warren is a very popular Senator from Massachusetts, elected in 2013. Speaking about the Obama administration, Elizabeth Warren states: “They protected Wall Street. Not families who were losing their homes. Not people who lost their jobs. And it happened over and over and over”, (Salon.com 10/12/2014). Individuals like Elizabeth Warren and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio can feel the growing anger at these openly pro-Wall Street policies, and they want the Democratic Party to address some of these concerns. While the Warren wing of the party has not been a major player in these midterms, it has been supporting a number of more liberal Democratic Party candidates, and it is very likely

The reality is that the public as a whole stands to the left of both parties on almost every issue, sometimes far to the left.

that they will become an important factor in the run-up to the 2016 presidential elections.

While socialists would support every policy that improves the lives of working people, unlike the populists we don’t see the Democrats as an empty vessel which can be filled with popular ideas.

New Crisis of Capitalism

Starting in the late 1970s, big business abandoned the postwar policies of “structural reform” and pressured both its parties to move to the right. Despite empty promises before gaining office, every Democratic Party president since Jimmy Carter has pushed the pro-corporate neoliberal policies demanded by big business. The subsequent savaging of the living standards of American workers has fractured the basis for political stability in the U.S. Both

major parties, committed to capitalism, can only offer broken promises to an angry public.

The leadership of the Democratic Party serves the interests of the 1% and capitalism, not any sense of fairness for the 99%. The idea that Warren and the populists can win the Democratic Party over to their ideas is a pipe dream. While they may shift the language used by the Democratic Party, resulting in more progressive-sounding promises and, in a few cases, limited reforms, the Democrats will not deliver real change. Instead, once again they will disillusion voters who are attracted by their promises.

Republicans are expected to make gains in these midterm elections, possibly gaining control of the Senate. In this case, the media will begin a hue and cry that the country is moving to the right. We reject this. Instead, a victory by Republicans will demonstrate once again how anger and disappointment with the Democrats opens the door for the return of Republicans.

We are not oblivious to the threat from the right. But we would also point out that anger at Republican and Tea Party gains in 2010 propelled the revolt of workers and students in Wisconsin and the birth of Occupy Wall Street in 2011. The last few years have seen the beginning of fight-back on left progressive issues. Republican gains can result in increased urgency in ongoing struggles for a \$15 minimum wage, against racism and climate change, etc.

Independent left Candidates

Socialist Alternative calls for a break from both main corporate parties. We call for independent left candidates to run as a step to forming a new political party of the working class. The election of Kshama Sawant in Seattle in 2013, and the encouraging support for Howie Hawkins and Jess Spear (see articles on page 3), demonstrate the huge potential that exists for candidates with bold, genuinely left policies like a \$15 an hour minimum wage, major taxes on the 1% and big business, public ownership of the big oil and energy companies, and a mass program of green jobs to provide jobs and rebuild the economy based on green energy. ✪

Ebola: Exposing the Chaos of Private Health Care

By Sarah White,
Registered Nurse (RN)

"On Friday, September 25, 2014, my Uncle Thomas Eric Duncan went to Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, Dallas. He had a high fever and stomach pains. He told the nurse he had recently been in Liberia. But he was a man of color with no health insurance and no means to pay for treatment, so within hours he was released with some antibiotics and Tylenol.

"Some speculate that this was a failure of the internal communications systems. Others have speculated that antibiotics and Tylenol are the standard protocol for a patient without insurance."

Josephus Weeks,
U.S. Army and Iraq War Veteran

Ebola, a deadly virus that spreads through contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person, has wreaked havoc in Western Africa and now threatens to spread on a global scale. While sections of the media and the Republican Party are trying to whip up fear in the U.S., where the resources certainly exist to contain Ebola, there is no denying the seriousness of this crisis.

Furthermore, the first cases of Ebola transmission in the U.S. have laid bare the total failure of privately run hospitals and health care in the U.S. The need for coordination of health care in the U.S. demonstrates the need for a national health care plan. This is crucial for improving responses to combat the spread of infectious disease. Our patchwork of separate health care entities, each run for profit,



National Nurses United (NNU) join the People's Climate March in New York City, 21 September 2014.

has totally failed to prepare and respond to the health care threats of Ebola - not to mention its continuing failure to provide affordable and quality care for the public.

The events in Texas also highlight how the for-profit health care system in the U.S. fails to protect frontline caregivers, with two RNs contracting the disease at work and more cases expected. From Thomas Duncan's first discharge from the emergency room to the infection of his nurses, there have been repeated system failures. It is clear: A health care system designed to enrich investors will not do what is needed to keep people healthy.

Health care workers, from

janitors and cooks to doctors and nurses, perform vital services in keeping communities healthy. But as we saw in Texas, hospital executives aren't willing to spend the extra money on personal protective equipment (PPE) or safe staffing to protect these workers. While the CDC workers who handled the first patients infected with Ebola transferred from Africa worked in full hazmat suits, staff at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital describe caring for Mr. Duncan with only non-impermeable gowns that left areas of their bodies exposed, tape to protect their necks, and optional respiratory protection. Despite numerous data showing

that safe nurse-to-patient ratios are key to cutting down on hospital infections, hospital administrators didn't reduce the nurses' patients load as they cared for Mr. Duncan. Given these multiple failures, it should come as no surprise that the infection was passed along to providers.

Health Care Workers Fighting Back

While those in charge fail to do what is needed to protect patients, staff, and the community, health care workers are standing up and demanding better. National Nurses United, the union representing 185,000 nurses, sprang into action

when the head of the CDC insinuated that the nurses were responsible for contracting the disease due to breaching protocol. They polled nurses across the country, revealing a broad majority said their hospitals weren't prepared to safely deal with Ebola. They went on a media offensive, bringing health care workers' perspectives to the story. They convened a national conference call of 11,500 nurses. They also threatened to put up pickets if their safety concerns were not addressed.

The egregious inaction by management isn't unique to Texas Health Presbyterian, and it isn't unique to health care. Nurses' fear to speak out against management malpractice in the Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital can be replicated across the country. It demonstrates how workers need labor unions to give them a voice against management's dictatorial power. It also demonstrates the validity of the socialist policy that workers should be running their workplaces rather than bosses. In a similar way, through democratic socialist planning, workers can run the economy and society far better than the two major parties and their failing capitalist system.

Both major parties started a blame game over cuts to the CDC, yet both parties agreed to cut funding to the CDC, including a \$430 million cut in fiscal year 2013. The failure of the U.S. and world leaders to protect the public demonstrates the inability of capitalism, a system driven by profit rather than human need, to provide even the necessary health protections for the people of the world. ✪

A "Single-Payer" Health Care System

Experts across the health disciplines are calling for coordinated and planned efforts to stop the spread of Ebola. Only a public health care system that insures high-quality care to everyone across the nation can efficiently coordinate such a response. While Obamacare has extended health insurance to millions, many remain underinsured, and the drug companies and private hospitals rather than nurses and doctors have been left in control of distributing health care in America.

As long as the market, rather than health experts, decides which vaccines and drugs are developed, and as long as big pharma's profits are prioritized above human life, we can expect to see further health care failures. The only humane and, indeed, efficient way to manage the pharmaceutical industry, including research and development, is to take the major companies into public ownership so they will be run in the interests of people, not profit. ✪

Africa and the Failures of the West to Eradicate Ebola

A United Nations spokesperson warned that we have just under two months to stop the spread of the disease "or we face an entirely unprecedented situation for which there is no plan."

This poses the question: Why has it taken until now to raise the alarm? This warning comes after months of the major world powers repeatedly ignoring the alarms raised by Doctors Without Borders in March and again in September that the health systems in Africa were failing and the disease was



spreading rapidly.

Ebola was first discovered in 1976. However, with the outbreak contained to rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa, Ebola has essentially been ignored by the West. Research into vaccines and medications to treat infections has been

scant as big drug companies didn't see any possibilities for profit in a disease that has primarily affected poor Africans.

Ironically, millions of dollars aren't required to stop Ebola, which points to how ravaged Africa is economically. Dr. Paul Farmer, known for treating HIV, tuberculosis, and other infectious disease in places like Haiti, Russia, and Rwanda, states that Ebola can be contained and treated with basic infection control measures and aggressive supportive care. ✪

Fighting Back on Unaffordable Housing



Working people in America face a severe housing crisis. Renters are confronted with skyrocketing rents, and ten million homeowners' mortgages are still underwater six years after the bursting of the housing bubble. Over 600,000 people, one-third of them families, are homeless on any given night in the U.S.

By Calvin Priest

In cities across the nation, the cost of living is exploding - first and foremost the price of housing.

The anger over income inequality saw its expression in the struggle for \$15 an hour, led by fast food workers, trade unions, and grassroots campaigns like 15 Now. In Seattle, this movement achieved a major breakthrough, winning a \$15 an hour minimum wage - the highest in the nation.

As with the fight for \$15, winning affordable housing will require a mass movement of working people, labor, and grassroots organizations. This movement cannot limit itself to what big business will accept, but must base itself on the needs of working people.

Rent Control - An Essential First Step

Economists commonly define affordable housing as "only" taking up to 30% of household income. But even that is out of reach for a great many households in metropolitan areas,

where real estate developers and landlords are making profits hand over fist.

Rent control, which would tie all rent increases to the cost of living, is an essential first step. It would prevent rental costs from spiraling further and further out reach of working people.

As Jess Spear, Socialist Alternative candidate for the Washington State House, said: "There is no mystery about rent control. Rent control would set limits and prevent the big property owners from rapidly raising our rents. Developers and their representatives hate rent stabilization laws for a reason - because they limit their ability to make massive profits on the backs of working people."

Effective rent control needs to be comprehensive and implemented citywide. This avoids the pitfalls of rent control in cities like New York, where rent-controlled apartments have become an all-too-scarce commodity [see box]. The main weakness of San Francisco's rent control laws, "vacancy decontrol," must also be avoided. This practice means that rent control only applies for the duration of the tenancy - incentivizing evictions and failing to control rapid rent escalations for all but long-term tenants.

But in addition to capping rent increases, the shortage of affordable housing must be addressed by building high-quality, below-market-rate, public housing. This would create tens of thousands of jobs and greatly expand the availability of affordable housing, without being dependent on private developers.

Paying for any significant expansion of affordable housing will require a reversal of current regressive tax policies and major expansion of taxes on developers and the wealthy. This is why the fight for affordable housing cannot be waged without a struggle against income inequality and the ending the billions in corporate handouts.

Publicly funded construction of housing has to be democratically overseen, by representatives of the communities, the labor unions, and the tenants. This will ensure the best use of resources and avoid waste and bureaucratic mismanagement.

Socialist Alternative demands:

- ✪ Comprehensive rent control, implemented citywide, in all major cities
- ✪ No "vacancy decontrol", and increased protection of tenants' rights
- ✪ Tax the developers and the rich to fund publicly owned, high-quality housing that is affordable for working people
- ✪ Reverse all cuts for low-income public housing; expand a national program of green growth to build public housing, mass transit, and jobs in an environmentally sustainable way

Failure of the Profit System

The chaos created by capitalist markets is at the heart of the crisis in affordable housing. Developers build only when and where they can maximize profits. Every fifth house in the

foreclosure process is called a "zombie foreclosure" - where homeowners are forced out and the houses are not resold, but left to rot until they're uninhabitable and torn down.

Exploding rents, the destruction of homes, and increasing homelessness show that the banks and big business have failed to deliver this basic human need. On the basis of a for-profit economy, the need of working people for quality, affordable housing will never be met.

That's why, as well as campaigning for immediate improvements, we also need to end the domination of corporate greed over society. We need a fundamental shift towards a democratically planned socialist economy, which will use resources in the interests of people and the environment, not the wealthiest 1%.

Homeowners Underwater

Millions of homeowners lost their houses to foreclosure after the bubble burst in 2008, and in the years following. While the banks got bailed out, homeowners got sold out, and many were left trapped in mortgage debt worth far more than their homes - known as negative equity.

In June 2014, approximately 648,000 homes in the U.S. were in some stage of the foreclosure process. Big banks continue to place onerous burdens on people trying to buy a house. In the first week of October 2014, mortgage applications were approximately 43% lower than in October 1998. The banks

Seattle



n sing



Occupy Homes in Minneapolis fighting evictions, 2013.

are not delivering what working people need to get or keep a decent home.

As long as banks and financial giants continue to create speculative housing bubbles and big developers build only what maximizes profits, the housing crisis epidemic will persist. The struggle to make housing a human right is inextricably linked to the struggle against capitalism.

Socialist Alternative has supported anti-foreclosure struggles across the nation. Flowing from the Occupy movement, many activists formed groups to stop the banks from kicking people out of their homes and neighborhoods. Anti-eviction activists in Minneapolis formed Occupy Homes to stop evictions. In Seattle, a group called Stand Against Foreclosures and Evictions (SAFE) was formed and has led a series of eviction blockades and other actions to defend homeowners.

Socialist Alternative demands:

- ✪ All foreclosures must be halted until a just negotiation takes place to keep families in their homes
- ✪ For homeowners in negative equity, revalue the principal on today's market value
- ✪ Stop evictions; police and other public resources should not be used to carry out evictions or any other aspect of the banks' dirty business
- ✪ Take the big banks and major developers into public ownership so the resources can be democratically used to provide housing for all

Residents share their renting stories, using #RentersRiseUp.



Seattle

Seattle faces the fastest-rising rents in the country, and it has recently broken into the top 10 of most expensive housing overall, joining the ranks of New York and San Francisco.

The State Legislature, led by House Speaker Frank Chopp, has grossly underfunded affordable housing, resulting in the state ranking eighth worst overall in the nation. While 24,000 applicants sit on waiting lists in Seattle alone, low-income housing is torn down and luxury apartment buildings go up.

The city has become a playground for wealthy developers who are receiving sweetheart deals, making enormous profits, and are given virtually free rein over our neighborhoods. The process of gentrification is pushing people of color, low-wage workers, youth, and even sections of the middle class out of our city. Something urgently needs to be done.

Recent months have seen a number of struggles break out around rental housing, most recently at the Panorama House in the First Hill neighborhood of Seattle. The apartment building houses many elderly people who have called it home for decades. Sold to a big development company, renters have been given a few months' notice to move out so the building can be upgraded and rents doubled. With no form of rent stabilization in place in Seattle, double-digit and even 100% increases like this are entirely legal and all too common.

Renters have also risen up at Lockhaven, Theodora, and Squire Park buildings to take a stand against out-of-control rent hikes and privatization of public housing. At Squire Plaza, a united campaign of tenants, Socialist Alternative City Council Member Kshama Sawant, and the Tenants Union were able to score a victory against the attempted sell-off of the building to private developers.

Under the Twitter hashtag #RentersRiseUp, tenants in Seattle have started to report about their problems and build networks to push back against rising rents and attacks by the housing authorities. Hundreds came together, organized by the community and supported by Kshama Sawant against cuts of the Seattle Housing Authority (see next box).



Stop the Seattle Housing Authority's Cuts!

In the midst of skyrocketing housing prices, one of the most egregious attacks on low-income housing in Seattle's history is taking place. Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) has introduced a proposal called "Stepping Forward" that would all but eliminate most low-income housing, turn it into transition housing, and push many residents into homelessness.

Kshama Sawant said: "A battle has been taking place in recent weeks to defend low-income housing, which is faced with extinction by the 'Stepping Forward' proposal. This Orwellian program is in every way a step backward. Tenants and communities are standing up against it, along with housing advocates like Jess Spear and myself. Where is Frank Chopp to defend the affordable housing he says he supports?"

All five public hearings on the "Stepping Forward" proposal have been greeted with an organized and defiant response by an enraged, largely immigrant, community. Tenants and housing advocates waved signs and chanted "No Rent Hikes" and "Show Me the Jobs," and they repeatedly shouted down the dishonest attempts of SHA President Andrew Lofton to present the proposal as a benevolent hand up. The final hearing resulted in the majority walking out, who then held a separate organizing meeting to discuss how to defeat the hated plan.

They demand:

- ✪ Scrap the SHA plan!
- ✪ Increased funding and construction of public affordable housing - make developers pay
- ✪ We need rent control
- ✪ Include a representative of SHA residents and Kshama Sawant on the Mayor's Housing Affordability and Livability Advisory Committee



New York

By Eleanor Rodgers

From the 1930s through to the '70s, New York City introduced a range of programs to ensure that it was possible for working-class and middle-class families to live here. Rent control is perhaps the most famous, but it was followed by rent stabilization and complemented by a massive building program of public housing which, in turn, was followed by the Mitchell-Lama program, with government-subsidized private construction of lower-rent buildings.

Since the '70s, there has been a concerted attack on these gains for working people. Rent control, in particular, was singled out for attack in the media as an example of government overreach.

Socialist Alternative asked NY Housing Lawyer Seth Miller to answer some of the most common attacks on rent control:

The example of a Hollywood star living in a rent-controlled apartment is frequently presented as an argument against rent regulation.

"That's not a realistic picture of who lives in these apartments. According to the Rent Guidelines Board, the median income in rent regulated apartments (both controlled and stabilized) is \$40,209, but for rent-controlled apartments alone, it's much lower – in 2005, it was \$22,200. Also back in 1993 the state passed a law allowing de-regulation of an apartment if the tenant's income was over \$250,000 for two consecutive years. And there have been very few cases of landlords using that law to deregulate – because those people just don't live there."

What about the claim that rent regulation prevents development?

"First of all, rent regulation applies to older properties, not new developments. Secondly, nothing gets built in New York without government subsidy. Back in the days of real rent control, there were major additions to the New York housing market through Mitchell-Lama that benefited lower- and middle-income families. Now, it's buildings for the wealthy built with tax breaks – look at One57 [currently under construction, it will be the tallest residential building in New York]. It's being built with a 421a tax benefit, and it's nothing but high-end condos."

Over the last forty years, political attacks on rent regulation, neglect of public housing, and the timing out of Mitchell-Lama projects - combined with government policies to support and subsidize high-end real estate development - have built up into a massive housing crisis for low- and middle-income New Yorkers.

A 2012 study by the city comptroller found that almost 30% of city households spent over 50% of their income on rent, and 19% spent over 75%.



Only Working People Can Defeat Terror and Oppression

End U.S. Middle East Interventions

By Ty Moore

Another war with US involvement has started in the Middle East. Obama is the fourth president in a row to bomb Iraq. This is not an intervention to help ordinary people but rather to defend the interests of US corporations in a geostrategic region full of oil resources.

Every US intervention has created new terror and reactionary forces on the ground. Even the "Islamic State" (IS or ISIS) is a product of imperialist intervention (as for example the Taliban or Saddam Hussein before).

The so called war against the atrocities of the IS – and these are truly horrible acts – is conducted with allies like Saudi Arabia, itself a reactionary fundamentalist, undemocratic regime that beheads people, brutally oppresses women and follows its own agenda in the region.

Solidarity With the Fight for Kobane

Facing the threat of extermination by the reactionary IS forces in Kobane, the Kurdish population there is waging a courageous



Kurdish forces preparing for battle in Kobane.

and desperate battle for survival. Yet at the time of writing, it appears possible Kurdish militias in Kobane, currently supported by US air strikes and weapon supplies, will turn back the IS offensive. The willingness of the Kurdish forces to come to the aid of other ethnic and religious minorities threatened by IS and the prominent role of women fighters in their forces, have inspired the Kurdish diaspora and millions more across the world.

If successful, the stunning turnaround in Kobane will only underline the need for a united and mobilized movement from below

to permanently defeat IS. Imperialism's wider strategy of relying on air power, the demoralized Iraqi military, and support from the hated and corrupt regimes in the region, will fail.

Imperialist intervention is only serving to worsen the catastrophe. The origins of the current slaughter can be found in the legacy of previous interventions. While working to defeat IS, the US government is also looking to defend and strengthen US corporate interests in the region. No trust can be placed in the Sunni or Shia elite and rulers in the region, which are being drawn into the conflict and

seeking to use it for their own ends.

Anbar

IS forces may now try to launch a further offensive to take the Sunni western part of Baghdad. Anbar province was at the centre of the Sunni uprising against the US occupation in 2003. The real reason for the rapid advances of IS in Iraq and Syria is that it fueling a generalized Sunni uprising.

Shia militias, supported by the Shia-dominated Iraqi government, have made some advances against IS north and north-east of Baghdad. But the militias' brutal

response has not distinguished between IS fighters and ordinary Sunni people. This helps drive more of the Sunni population under the umbrella of the IS, as many do not see any other force to "defend" them. The IS forces have been able to base themselves on the oppression dealt out against the Sunni population under the western-installed Iraqi government of Maliki.

For a United Movement

Defeating IS and all other right-wing sectarian forces in the region will require building a united movement of the Sunni and Shia Arab masses together with the Kurdish, Turkish, and all other peoples. The immediate task is to establish non-sectarian democratic committees and militias to defend populations against the IS and other sectarian forces. Such bodies can be the basis for building an independent movement of working people and the poor to combat oppression, capitalism and imperialism. A voluntary and equal socialist federation of states would guarantee the democratic, national and ethnic rights of all peoples of the region. ☪

Hong Kong Protests Continue



Socialist Alternative stands in solidarity with the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a worldwide socialist organization in 47 countries, on every continent.

The CWI website, SocialistWorld.net, carries the latest news and analysis from activists on the ground.

For the latest from Hong Kong, South Africa, Scotland, Greece, Iran and more, check out:

SocialistWorld.net



Victory for Irish Socialist in Important By-Election

Adapted from *socialistworld.net*.

October 12, 2014, will be a day that's remembered for years to come in Ireland. An estimated 100,000 marched in Dublin against the hated water charges. And, on the same day, Paul Murphy, Socialist Party (SP) member and Anti Austerity Alliance (AAA) candidate, won the Dublin South-West by-election by leading the call for a mass campaign of nonpayment and active resistance to this double tax. Paul becomes the third member of the Socialist Party in the Irish Parliament, or the Dáil. The SP is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), with which Socialist Alternative stands in political solidarity.

AAA made the by-election not



Paul Murphy, center, celebrates with supporters at the count in Dublin.

just about being against water charges, but about how to beat them and, crucially, about who working-class people can trust in this fight.

The choice was made clear: Should people put their hopes in another political party, like Sinn Féin, promising to form a government that may abolish water

charges at some point? Or should they rely instead on organizing in communities, on mass nonpayment and protest, and on building political pressure that no government can ignore?

All of the political analysts and commentators in Ireland agreed that this election was Sinn Féin's "to lose," and nobody thought

that the AAA could win. Sinn Féin, a nationalist party using populist rhetoric, had made big gains in the local and European elections in May of this year, as people have comprehensively rejected the establishment parties.

The Irish Times newspaper, on the day after the election, wrote that the AAA campaign was a "master stroke in political tactics and timing," (10/12/2014). The result was a major upset, which would have been impossible without a correct political assessment and an ability to give expression to an underlying anger.

The lesson that must be taken is that the time to build a new movement to represent working people and against the water charges - and all austerity - is now. ☪

Ferguson October: A Weekend of Resistance

“Mike Brown Means Fight Back!”

By Eljeer Hawkins

The weekend of October 10-13 saw Ferguson pulsating with sustained protests that expressed the undying rage at the killing of Michael Brown, with the possible indictment of police officer Darren Wilson due to be announced next month by a grand jury.

Just days before, another African-American youth, Vonderrit Myers Jr., was shot to death by the police in the Shaw area of St. Louis. Police claimed he had a 9mm gun and open fire at them when conducting a “pedestrian check.” Vonderrit Myers had previously been in a store to buy a sandwich. He died from 17 shots by the officer. There were 17 arrests as the youth staged a sit-in, beginning an explosion of mass anger in response to this new police killing.

Over 60 Days and Counting

The youth - mainly working-class and often led by young women - have kept up the pressure with energetic, spontaneous, and determined protests in Ferguson and St. Louis. The work of the Justice for Michael Brown Leadership Coalition, Hands Up, trade union activists, and countless grassroots organizations have kept the name of Michael Brown, police violence, and systemic poverty at the forefront of this struggle.

The anger at the Ferguson City Council meeting on September 9, one month after Brown’s killing, highlighted the unbridled determination to put the Ferguson elected leadership on notice. St. Louis activist John Chasnoff summed up the mood: “You’ve lost your authority to govern this community... You’re going to have to step aside peacefully if this community is going to heal.” (cbsnews.com, 09/10/2014)

The development of a new Moral Monday movement in St. Louis and Ferguson is an important step forward. They conducted nonviolent civil disobedience that led to 20 arrests, including that of public intellectual and activist Dr. Cornel West, on Monday outside of the Ferguson police station.

Ferguson - along with parts of St. Louis, following Vonderrit Myers’ killing - are virtually a police state, with roads blocked off by police barricades and cars. The combination of a militarized police force, the impending grand jury announcement, and deplorable economic conditions make the city of St. Louis and Ferguson a tinderbox. The movement has shown it is willing to stop “business as usual” and make the political establishment of Missouri uncomfortable. It is these tactics that can secure justice for Michael Brown and family.

The Black MisLeadership Class Exposed

“We’re going to take our anger out on the



Protesters blocking the streets of Ferguson during the week of action.

people who have failed us, and if they are prepared to deal with that, then let them have at it.” -Ashley Yates, grassroots organizer.

The events of Ferguson and St. Louis have exposed the crisis of militant leadership in the black community. Following Michael Brown’s killing, the old lions of the Civil Rights Movement like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, as well as the media, descended upon Ferguson to “help,” “heal,” and to “represent” the Brown family and Ferguson.

A new, youthful, grassroots-based, leadership has been born in Ferguson and St. Louis, challenging the traditional leadership in the churches, communities, and universities. Ferguson organizers like Tef Poe, Tory Russell, and Ashley Yates have stood out, demanding a new voice and vision to eradicate police violence and bring justice to the Brown family. This came to a head on Sunday, October 12, during an interfaith service at Chaifetz Arena at Saint Louis University with a long list of speakers from the faith community and the NAACP. As they took over the program, the youth and organizers of the protests around Michael Brown challenged the true commitment of the speakers and their program to end the crisis facing this generation.

It’s clear that generational and ideological shifts are taking place in the midst of this struggle. While the future direction of the movement is not clear at this point, the movement in Ferguson shows a marked difference from those around previous police violence cases, with increased staying power, new steps in organization, and the rise of a

new leadership. Ferguson is a continuum of the Arab Spring, Occupy, and workers’ movements internationally. The next few weeks to months are important, particularly as the indictment announcement is forthcoming.

The Challenges Ahead

As election day, November 4, approaches, a sector of the movement, particularly Democratic Party elected officials, NGOs, and proxy grassroots organizations are attempting to co-opt and tame the movement with calls of “register to vote.” While Socialist Alternative supports voter registration, it should not be an end in itself but, instead, be part of building powerful struggles. We must not let the movement be taken off the streets. Also, we must reject the agenda of big business and end the abusive historical role of the Democratic Party, the mortician and gravesite of social movements.

It’s encouraging that longtime activist and a member of the Michael Brown Leadership Coalition Zaki Baruti has announced a write-in campaign for St. Louis county executive, as an independent. Zaki Baruti’s candidacy could provide an example for the development of independent working-class politics in Missouri.

The movement in St. Louis and Ferguson is posed with a serious question of how to deal with police accountability and control. Socialist Alternative calls for community control over public safety and for community policing to be overseen by local committees

of democratically elected representatives from the trade unions and community organizations. These committees should have the power to hire, retrain, fire, and to shut down police stations known for corruption, misconduct, etc. This is vital to combat police violence as part of challenging capitalism’s control over society.

At the same time, we must conduct a war against poverty, income inequality, and racial oppression under capitalism - the very conditions that breed crime and violence in our communities - and to end the misery and despair working people face daily. We need clear demands like for a \$15 an hour minimum wage; free, quality, education; health care for all; and affordable housing.

The System Is Guilty!

Socialist Alternative members have been involved in this organizing. We participated in the 5,000-strong march and rally on Saturday, October 11, under the banner “The System is Guilty!” We joined the civil disobedience actions throughout the weekend. We also organized a public meeting in St. Louis, which brought over 50 youth and activists to learn more about a program for a new black freedom movement and socialism.

St. Louis and Ferguson provide the touchstone for a new and vibrant movement to cleanse the crimes of capitalism and white supremacy from present and future generations. The need for a system change is on the agenda now! A socialist world is possible. ✪

2,000 More Boeing Jobs Lost in Washington State

Democrats' Historic Tax Break Fails to Stop Loss of Good Jobs



By Patrick Ayers

Boeing announced last month that it would move 2,000 more good-paying jobs out of the Seattle area. More than 6,000 jobs have been moved since the company was given a \$9 billion tax break - the biggest in U.S. history - by the Washington state legislature last year.

Concessions on pensions, health care, and wage scales were also demanded from Boeing's 30,000 machinists, members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM). Using the same blackmail used with taxpayers, Boeing threatened to move jobs out of state. They got everything they wanted and moved jobs anyway!

Failure of the Democratic Party Establishment

Boeing's stock price reached record highs recently, and its profits increased 52 percent from last year. This megamonopoly is not struggling. Yet Democratic Party Governor Jay Inslee led the way and forced the massive giveaway through in just three days. Only 13 out of 147 legislators in the House and Senate voted against it!

Later, when IAM workers voted down concessions two to one, Governor Inslee publicly intervened to demand a new union vote, blaming the union for any future decline of jobs if they didn't accept concessions.

The controversial second

vote, on January 3, was rammed through with the help of international IAM leaders while thousands of senior machinists were still away on vacation. Members immediately started organizing to take back their union, supporting the first opposition slate against the IAM leadership in 50 years and recently electing a new leadership in Local C of District 751.

A New Strategy to Defend Jobs

Tax breaks and concessions don't save jobs and only encourage the corporate bosses to demand more. Boeing's highly skilled aerospace workers are powerful; they can't be replaced overnight. With a new strategy, jobs can be defended without concessions or tax breaks.

"People in this community will campaign to support any step the workers take to defend these jobs," argued Jess Spear, the Socialist Alternative candidate running against Frank Chopp, the Democratic Speaker of the Washington State House who helped Boeing extort taxpayer money at the expense of education and other social services.

Spear explained: "Boeing has a huge backlog of orders. If the union were to slow down production, work to rule, and hit the company where it hurts - in its pockets - we would back them. The workers built the company and they are the heart of it. Without their approval, jobs should not be moved." ☘

Philadelphia Teachers Under Attack For A One-Day City Workers General Strike

By Kate Goodman and Marty Harrison

In a barely legal, 17-minute meeting on Monday, October 6, the School Reform Commission (SRC) voted unanimously to cancel the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers' (PFT) contract. The latest volley in the ongoing campaign to eliminate quality public education in Philadelphia, this vote allows the school district to begin charging teachers and staff for health benefits, cease payments into the union's health and welfare fund, and cancel health benefits for retirees!

Teachers' contributions to their health benefits will net a modest \$44 million for the district this year. This "savings" must be understood in the context of an overall \$2.8 billion district budget and a \$291 million deficit. Mayor Michael Nutter cited the health benefits as the only possible source of additional funding, declaring, "There's no more money to be had from anywhere." City Democrats and state Republicans applaud the school district's multimillion dollar payouts to charter school management while refusing to increase taxes - or even eliminating existing tax breaks, subsidies, and abatements - for wealthy corporations, developers, and individuals.

Unfortunately, the PFT leadership's response to the massive state cuts in education funding for Philadelphia - as well as school closures, mass layoffs, and the transfer of students and resources to charter schools - has been inadequate. However, it is precisely the lack of resistance that emboldened the SRC to take this latest step. But the



Philadelphia teachers protest at the wave of attacks on working conditions.

desire to fight back among teachers and students is clearly there. Students at several schools walked out in support of their teachers, but much more can be done and much bolder action can be taken.

An Attack on All Working People

The union now has the chance to organize broad constituent and community support. The PFT should take up the call to replace the SRC with a locally elected school board made up of educators, students, parents, and community members. The demand that the contract must be restored can be broadened through the mobilization into a call that all resources cut from education be restored. Students and parents will engage with the teachers as allies and build a mass movement for a fully funded education system that serves our interests - if the union offers a real strategy to push back.

Voiding the teachers' contract is an attack on all city workers and on all unionized workers generally. Philadelphia has one of the highest rates of union density of any big city in the country. Reports indicate that

a number of local union officials were in favor of calling a general strike in the city. But PFT President Jerry Jordan argued that the union should first pursue "all legal remedies" and, in the end, the union council decided to focus on defeating Republicans in November.

This kind of "strategy" has led the labor movement straight into the blind alley it finds itself trapped in today. While Republicans clearly oppose both public education and unions, Democrats try to say enough to get working-class votes without actually doing anything that could jeopardize their corporate funding. The first instinct of the outraged union officials was right: There should be a one-day general strike of city workers in Philadelphia to call the question, "Whose side are you on?" Such an action in defense of teachers and public education would have mass support from working-class people and would demonstrate that workers will fight back against austerity and union busting. The PFT could also call for a national day of demonstrations and protests to defend education and teachers' rights - and would find a great response to such a call to action. ☘

Capitalism Kills

By Timothy Volpert

On September 29, 2014, the *New York Times* ran an article about Maria Fernandes, who died while napping in her car between shifts at two of her three jobs. Her death is a tragedy, but so too are the circumstances that led to it. We hear all the time about the economic recovery, about job creators. Yet these are the kinds of jobs that are increasingly

being created. We're working harder than ever, for less money - in cases like Maria's, we're literally working ourselves to death. Maria had dreams, goals, and untapped potential just like we all do, but at just slightly above minimum wage, she had little time to pursue those dreams. She was working around the clock to fund her mere survival. Someone willing to work as hard as Maria should be able to afford to live

and should be allowed to channel that energy into something productive, rather than supplying busy commuters with an endless stream of sugar and caffeine. We need to keep fighting to raise the minimum wage, but even that will merely be treating one of the symptoms, not the disease itself. The disease is capitalism, and whether through poverty wages or environmental destruction, in one way or another, it's killing us all. ☘

Fight the Attacks of the Right: No Faith in the Democrats

Let's Turn the Anger into Building a Mass Independent Women's Movement

By Genevieve Morse

In the U.S. media and popular culture, it is increasingly common to see women shown in places of political and economic power. However, the reality of most women's lives is completely at odds with this picture.

For example, the jobs that the majority of women are concentrated in are low-pay, non-union service sector jobs, with the wage gap still at 77 cents to a man's dollar. The availability of maternal and paternal leave and quality child care in the U.S. are among the worst in the advanced economies.

Women Fighting Back

However, some things have changed, significantly: Women are less and less prepared to stand for ongoing oppression and discrimination. The anger is boiling, and whenever a serious protest is developing, a vibrant layer of young and angry women is taking it up. And women – together with men – are fighting back against a series of attacks and



provocations by the right.

In particular, over the past decade there have been escalating attacks on reproductive rights. In 2014, the right wing has become bolder and attempted to attack reproductive rights on the federal level. For example, in the Hobby Lobby decision, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations with religious owners cannot be required to pay for insurance coverage of contraception.

The attacks have been particularly intense in the South. The fight over the new Texas law which would effectively close 33 of the 40 abortion clinics in the state is just the latest example of the new abortion

restrictions.

Over the past few years, there has been a growing resistance to sexism and violence against women. These include: the huge SlutWalks in 2011, the exposure of rampant sexual harassment and violence in the armed forces, #YesAllWomen protests over the summer, the outrage over the cover-up of domestic abuse in the NFL, and the evolving movement of young women against the cover-up of the rape crisis on college campuses. This growing movement, together with explosions of anger on the campuses, have played a direct role in the passing of the "Yes Means Yes" law in California, which is an important

step forward (see page 12).

The Broader Fight for Equality

This shows the necessity of struggle for winning even basic reform. But the broader question is how to build a movement that can take up all the issues that face women in this society.

There is a strong desire to see society no longer dominated by old, wealthy white men, which gives the idea of a woman president great appeal.

Unfortunately, it is Hillary Clinton, as of now, who is the most likely female candidate in 2016.

She has been entrenched in corporate politics for decades, with ties to the largest corporations in the world, including Boeing, Goldman Sachs, and Walmart. She's part of the club – not a tool to end their agenda. Any effective real fight for women's equality will come up against the resistance of corporate America, which will not accept changes that affect their bottom line. This is why we need to build a mass

women's movement independent of both corporate parties linked to a new political force representing the interests of the 99% against the 1%.

The Democrats want women to believe that the way to defend their rights is to vote Democrat. It is certainly true that right-wing Republicans have been the main force attacking women's rights in recent times. Yet the Democrats have singularly failed to stop these vicious attacks.

Contrast Clinton with RoseAnn DeMoro, the head of the female-dominated National Nurses United, who exposed the lack of any protocol to protect nurses and other health care workers at the Dallas hospital with the first case of Ebola on American soil. Also, consider Seattle Council Member Kshama Sawant, who played a key role in the fight to win a \$15 minimum wage, which disproportionately benefits women workers. These examples show how rebuilding a fighting movement of working people is an important part of building a broader and more powerful fight-back by women. ☺

Read the full article at socialist-alternative.org.

Governor Dayton: End Poverty Wages at MSP Airport

In July, workers at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Airport (MSP) formed a 15 Now Action Group, winning support among airport workers and a growing list of labor endorsements. Alongside demonstrations, workers have launched an online petition (see below).

MSP airport is ground zero for income inequality between the rich and the working poor. On the one hand, you have companies like Delta, which made \$2.3 billion in profit last year and is headed toward \$4 billion for 2014. Nearly one-third of that profit was earned right here at MSP, according to a Delta vice president. That's \$700 million. Delta CEO Richard Anderson made \$6,000 per hour last year.

On the other hand, many of my coworkers at Delta have to work two and three jobs to make ends meet. Workers at Air Serv, who clean Delta aircraft, make \$8 and \$9 per hour. In fact, thousands of workers at MSP who fuel, clean, and load aircraft for Delta, United, American, and other airlines make poverty wages. Faring no better are those who staff airport stores, restaurants, and other services.

We know it doesn't have to be this way. When workers got organized in other airports like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, they were able to win a \$15 an hour minimum wage. That's why some of my coworkers and I have gathered well over 1,000 signatures on a petition asking the Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC) to raise the minimum wage at MSP Airport to \$15 an hour. Over 50 of us turned those petitions in to the MAC, a body appointed mainly by Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton.

Now we need your support and solidarity. Please sign our petition asking Governor Dayton to take a stand against poverty wages. If Governor Dayton leads, the Airport Commissioners he appoints will follow. A victory at MSP can pave the way for winning \$15 in Minneapolis and St. Paul. It can begin to reverse the deep economic inequality plaguing our state. It can address the fact that Minnesota taxpayers currently subsidize the profits of highly successful companies, when low-wage workers are forced to use public assistance.

United and organized, we can win.

Sincerely,
Kip Hedges
Delta Baggage Handler

Go to 15now.org to sign the petition asking Governor Dayton of Minnesota to take a stand against poverty wages!

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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Issue #8 - November 2014

"Yes Means Yes" Law – A Step Forward in Countering the Campus Rape Crisis



Women Fight Back!

By Genevieve Morse,
Shop Steward, MTA UMass
(personal capacity)

In September, a bill was signed into law in California that overhauls university standards in handling rape and sexual assault cases and attempts to outline a new standard of "affirmative consent."

This is a result of women standing up against the systematic covering up of rape and assault, especially at universities.

To make the crime - but also the cover-up of university authorities - visible, Columbia University student Emma Sulkowicz began carrying the mattress on which she was assaulted. She carried it everywhere she went on her campus in Columbia University. "Carry That Weight" quickly spread awareness and spurred solidarity action across the country.

The California "Yes Means Yes" law is a reaction to this outcry. It is the first legal

victory based on the movement of young women against university administrations that have either tried to cover up the extent of sexual assaults or totally lacked policies to protect young women on college campuses.

The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) recently published statistics on sexual violence. Every two minutes, a person is sexually assaulted, and they estimate there are 237,868 victims of sexual assault each year. 80% are under the age of 30.

The U.S. Department of Education said earlier this year that over 55 colleges and universities were under investigation for their handling of sexual assaults and harassment.

"Carry That Weight" came quickly after the "#YesAllWomen" protests and the wave

of protests about the NFL domestic violence cover-up. Altogether, this shows the potential for a much bigger movement taking up the sexist and misogynist discrimination in society, a society based on divide-and-rule, a society relying on systematic discrimination along the lines of gender, race, and sexual identity to allow the top .1% to keep control over the majority in society, whom they exploit.

While the California law represents a step forward in the struggle, we need to be clear that there have been very important setbacks for women on other fronts, especially in terms of reproductive rights. There is a determined campaign by the right, particularly in the Southern states, to cut access to abortion services. *Roe v. Wade* - the Supreme Court decision to guarantee a woman's right to decide over an abortion - is being systematically whittled away in many parts of the U.S. ✪

Socialist Alternative demands:

- ✪ For independent review boards for sexual assault cases, free from university administration influence. Hold universities accountable.
- ✪ For independent bodies based on democratic women's organizations and labor unions to offer counseling, help, and sex education programs, funded through the universities - public and private.
- ✪ Defend abortion rights - fight back against all attacks and for the immediate repeal of all anti-abortion legislation.
- ✪ Reverse all funding cuts to education, health care, child care, education; add funding for rape crisis treatment.
- ✪ For labor to organize a campaign against domestic violence, assault, and discrimination in workplaces, neighborhoods, campuses, and schools.
- ✪ Build a powerful movement to challenge sexual violence in society.
- ✪ For a joint fight-back against all cuts, for free education and health care, for affordable housing, decent jobs, and living wages to cut across the capitalist agenda of divide-and-rule.

Read more - See page 11 & SocialistAlternative.org