

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



# Re-Elect **KSHAMA SAWANT!**



**Jeremy Corbyn Elected Leader of British Labour Party**  
page 9



**Right Populist Surge: Warning to the Labor Movement**  
page 5

# 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. Black Lives Matter.
- ✦ 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

## Rob Darakjian Oakland, CA

I attended a private Catholic high school. The wealth disparity was plain: most of my classmates were given high-end luxury cars when they turned 16, while black students were almost exclusively bused in for their athletic abilities. I spent most of my time, since I was fifteen, working at a Yogurtland. I worked fifteen- to twenty-hour weeks while going to school. Unionization was secretly forbidden. When I brought it up very casually with the owner, he immediately threatened to fire me. Many people who worked with me were in their mid-twenties, unable to pay for university, and stuck - either at home, or renting very cheaply while working fifty- to sixty-hour weeks. This theme of inhabiting two worlds continued as, at nineteen, I was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and underwent many rounds of chemotherapy, culminating in a stem-cell transplant and months spent in agony in recovery. In the cancer ward, there was only one thing that was harder than managing to survive; it was hearing the stories that patients had regarding the treatments that were available to them and what their insurance could afford. To my knowledge, many of these people may well be dead because of what their insurance would or would not cover. One of the



things that kept me going in the hospital was the idea of what I could do if I was to live. I read all of Marx's Capital Volume One while undergoing the transplant process. I came to Socialist Alternative many months later, in a very different physical and mental state but with a desire that was inflamed in those years of suffering: the desire to work with dedicated radicals to change and overthrow capitalism, but to not be relegated to a marginal debate club. My months in SA have alleviated any reservations I had about finding a Marxist group that I could be comfortable with. I have met some of the most inspiring people while in SA, and I am very proud to call anyone in the organization a comrade. ✦

## Defund Planned Parenthood Fight for Reproductive Justice

### DeAnna Marshall, Seattle

"Defund Planned Parenthood!" The familiar battle cry can be heard from all corners of the GOP. Since the anti-choice group Center for Medical Progress released a series of heavily edited "sting" videos in July, federal funds dedicated to the nation's largest reproductive health provider are in the spotlight. Multiple state and federal investigations concluded that Planned Parenthood affiliates did not violate federal laws regulating fetal tissue donation. Such evidence has done little to dissuade Republican legislators from waging war on the organization.

What does "defunding" Planned Parenthood mean? The messaging is intentionally vague, so as to imply that millions of federal dollars have been funneled into abortion care. In reality, the Title X grants - which provide federal funding for family planning and related health services - that are earmarked for Planned Parenthood cover everything except abortion, including contraception, STD testing and treatment, and routine screenings for low-income men and women. Already overstretched, other Title X grantees are unlikely to absorb patients from defunded Planned Parenthood health centers, especially in rural areas.

Who pays the price? Low-income patients

who previously relied on Planned Parenthood will be deprived of essential health services. Contrary to conservative rhetoric, the buck is also passed on to the American taxpayer. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, nearly four dollars in cost savings are achieved for every public dollar spent on contraceptive services alone.

Congressional leaders pontificating about the "horror" of abortion is nothing new. Legislators on both sides of the aisle have chipped away at abortion and contraceptive access for years. We can no longer rely on the Democratic Party's defensive strategies, which only serve to maintain the status quo. Grassroots activism and an independent third party free of corporate interests are needed to proactively fight for women's right to the full spectrum of reproductive health services. The Hyde and Helms amendments, which restrict the use of federal money for domestic and international abortion care, should be repealed. Contraception, elective and therapeutic abortion, miscarriage management, and prenatal care should be easily accessed through a single-payer health care system. Reproductive justice doesn't end at a woman's right to choose. We must continue to fight for working families so that all parents have adequate resources to raise the children they want to have. ✦

Socialist Alternative Editor Tom Crean • Editorial Board Ty Moore, Tony Wilsdon, Jess Spear, Joshua Koritz

• [info@SocialistAlternative.org](mailto:info@SocialistAlternative.org)  
• PO Box 150457, Brooklyn, NY 11215

# Rent Control, Rent Control! Make Our Cities Affordable!

As housing prices skyrocket nationally and internationally, the idea of rent control is again on the rise. In addition to becoming a central debate in Seattle elections this year, new rent control laws were recently passed in Richmond, California, and in Berlin, Germany. In 2008, a statewide California proposition to ban rent control was decisively defeated, with over 61% in favor of keeping rent regulation.

However, as the demand for rent control becomes louder, so does the real estate industry's fear-mongering campaign. In order to dispel the myths peddled by developers and the corporate media, we interviewed **Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative Seattle City Councilmember**, who has made rent control a central demand of her reelection campaign.

## Why rent control?

**Kshama Sawant:** Right now, landlords have the right to raise rents by however much they like: 50%, 100%, or even 200%. People can only take stagnating wages and skyrocketing rents for so long before they fight back. Without the resources and power to control housing supply, communities inevitably are forced to demand regulation over their rising housing costs.

Rent control is merely a way of outlawing price gouging and preventing landlords from profiting off the increase in property values driven by real estate speculation and lack of supply. It's essential to address the existing power imbalance in which landlords and developers have all the control, just as a minimum wage is essential to defend workers from corporate executives who prefer to keep wages low.

**Aren't rent increases a function of supply/demand? Don't we just need to build more units?**



Twitter: @cmkshama



*Already we've achieved our first victory: On September 21, 2015, the Seattle City Council, under tremendous pressure from our movement, was forced to formally ask state lawmakers to lift the statewide ban on rent regulation.*

**KS:** Developer lobbyists often argue that the price of housing is simply a function of supply and demand. Left to their own devices, though, developers generally maximize their profits by building luxury apartments and condos. And rather than lowering rents, such development, instead, tends to drive up prices in a given neighborhood, as existing affordable housing is torn down and replaced with high-end units.

So, contrary to what the proponents of the free market will tell you, we will never build our way to lower rents through private development, no matter how many tax breaks and sweetheart deals are cooked up for profit-hungry developers.

**San Francisco has a rent stabilization ordinance dating back to 1979 but also has an expensive housing rental market. Why didn't its rent stabilization laws stop skyrocketing rents?**

**KS:** Unfortunately, as in other cities, San Francisco's rent regulations have been slowly repealed under repeated attacks from real estate interests. In 1995, California passed the Costa-Hawkins Act that prohibited the expansion of rent stabilization to newer units. This created an economic incentive to tear down existing rent-controlled housing, and now San Francisco's rent-regulated housing stock shrinks every year from demolition as new unregulated units are built in their place. The legislation also deregulated rents after the tenant moved out, so a landlord can raise the rent as high as they want, even though the housing is "rent controlled." This policy, called "vacancy decontrol,"

not only undermines long-term affordability but also gives landlords incentives to evict.

## Won't it stop development?

**KS:** The enemies of rent control often argue that it prevents investment in residential construction, reducing new housing supply. The facts do not support this argument when looking at the actual history of rent regulation. In fact, the two largest building booms in New York City history occurred in periods of strict rent control, first in the 1920s and again from 1947-1965. Rent regulation in no way inhibits construction, which is, instead, controlled by macroeconomic factors such as the boom-and-bust cycles under capitalism.

## How can we win rent control?

**KS:** The fight over rent control in Richmond, California – passing 9-2 on the city council only to see developers block its implementation – reveals this struggle for what it really is: a battle to control the housing supply, between the community that needs high-quality affordable housing and big developers who exploit this basic need for profit. While we fight to stop price gouging with rent control, we can also loosen the grip of the market on housing supply by investing in a public option: the construction of high-quality public housing paid for by taxing the big developers. Just as with the \$15 minimum wage, winning rent control and affordable housing will require building our independent strength and a movement to demand real action. ✪

## CEO Cash Flowing In

# Help Hold Kshama Sawant's Seat for the 99%!

**Over \$120,000 from hundreds of corporate CEOs, anti-\$15 business owners, and the real estate industry from across the country have poured into the campaign coffers of Kshama's opponent. The stakes are enormous for them. Even pharmaceutical giants are donating to unseat Seattle's socialist councilor.**

After less than two years in office, it's clear: working families in Seattle have gained a tremendous advantage having a voice for the 99% on the city council. With Kshama in their corner, movements in Seattle have won a \$15 minimum wage, millions in funding for vital social services, and serious momentum for rent control and progressive funding for affordable housing.

Kshama's record in office brilliantly illustrates the potential power of independent working-class political representation. That's why so many third party advocates, union activists, and left commentators across the country are closely watching this race.

But we're not the only ones. Big business and their servants in the Democratic Party establishment are also paying close attention to this race. The victories we've achieved with Kshama in power were not free. They cost the big corporations millions in profits in the short term. But it's the potential of a real political challenge to their system emerging if a "bad example" is allowed to flourish and spread that's put Kshama's seat in the crosshairs of corporate CEOs.

The virtual monopoly of the 1% over politics depends on the 99% playing a passive role, voting every few years for their hand-picked candidates - or simply not voting. What Kshama and her record in office represent is the direct opposite of that. With Kshama in office, working people inside and outside Seattle are beginning to feel confident and optimistic that together we can make a better world, a world where the 1% no longer rules. Re-electing Kshama will increase this confidence and empowerment.

Just shy of two years in office, and we've won so much - but we have so much more to gain. The stakes are enormous for us, too. We can re-elect Kshama and continue building our power, but it will take all our supporters, from every corner of the country, to join the fight. Let's make damn sure that this glimmer of hope for a new kind of politics, this city council seat, is not snuffed out by the 1%.

Our median donation to defend Kshama's seat against big developers and corporate cash is \$50. Can you match that? Go to [www.KshamaSawant.org/donate](http://www.KshamaSawant.org/donate). ✪

facebook.com /VoteSawant

@votesawant

## Clinton Campaign in Trouble

# Sanders Is Making the Establishment Sweat



Jess Spear

Bernie Sanders' insurgent campaign for the Democratic Party nomination is beginning to make the establishment of the Democratic Party really sweat. As of the end of September, Sanders is in a dead heat with Clinton in polling in Iowa and 16 points ahead in New Hampshire! Nationally he has cut Clinton's lead from 34 percentage points to 15 – and down to 7 if Biden enters the race. Sanders' call for a political revolution against the billionaire class combined with his refusal to take money from corporations or rely on Super PAC money is tapping into the massive vein of discontent and disgust with the corporate political establishment.

This, in addition to positions like calling for \$15 minimum wage, single payer health care and opposing the Trans Pacific Partnership has led to Sanders' early endorsement by the National Nurses United, and a surge of rank and file support in a number of other unions.

Sanders has also substantially strengthened his program on racial justice, police brutality, and mass incarceration and is regularly addressing these issues after being silent in the early stages of the campaign, which, as we said, was a mistake. He is also being more proactive in spelling out his differences with Hillary Clinton for example on breaking up the big Wall Street banks and re-enacting the Glass-Steagall Act.

Sanders also points to the important vote to attack Iraq in 2003 as a clear difference between himself and Hillary Clinton. His refusal to give in to the massive pressure from a near constant

drumbeat for war is noteworthy. However, we disagree with his earlier votes for war against Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia. His largely uncritical support for the Israeli state, despite its systematic oppression of the Palestinian people, is particularly egregious.

## Hundreds of Thousands Activated

Nonetheless, these positions do not change the fact that hundreds of thousands of ordinary people are being radicalized by his campaign. To these hundreds of thousands, including large numbers of young people, Bernie Sanders represents an opportunity to stand up to the billionaire class and fight for fundamental change. As we have repeatedly insisted, socialists and left wing activists should be a part of this movement, not stand aside from it.

In particular, we need to address the question facing this movement: how to achieve the key pro-worker aspects of Sanders' program that have attracted so many.

Sanders says, and we agree, that "the only way we succeed is when millions of people stand up and decide to engage." But what kind of engagement? Is it just joining the Democratic Party and voting? We say this requires a mass movement in the streets and building a new political force independent of the Democratic Party.

## The Gloves Will Come Off

The fundamental contradiction underlying the Sanders campaign – running

against the billionaire class within the structures of a party thoroughly funded and controlled by them – means that as Sanders become a more serious threat, the question is not if, but when, the gloves will come off.

A preview was given by a Hillary-linked super PAC statement attacking Sanders' support for socialist Jeremy Corbyn in Britain (see p. 9) and for negotiating with the Venezuelan government under Hugo Chavez to buy cheap heating oil for working people in Vermont. Should Bernie Sanders actually start winning primaries, the Democratic Party machine will not stand aside.

The lack of debates is already an indication the leadership is looking to control the primary process to ensure the triumph of a candidate that does not inspire millions to fight against Wall Street. If Hillary looks too vulnerable, sections of the establishment may also push Joe Biden to run as a way of distracting from Sanders' challenge.

The Democratic Party will never carry out a political revolution against the billionaire class. The primaries are dominated by corporate cash and the machine of the Democrats is closely tied to Wall Street. Not a single Democratic Senator supports Sanders and the so-called super delegates – party officials and elected representatives – are already being lined up against him.

The better Sanders does, the more this will be revealed. Sanders should not stay within the straightjacket of the Democratic Party, which will, at the first opportunity, cut off his political revolution.

Should he lose the primaries, it would

## People's Climate Movement

### October 14 National Day of Action

At the end of November, world leaders will come together in Paris to hammer out a global treaty aiming to reduce carbon emissions and keep global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius. Scientists are warning we are quickly running out of time to transition to renewable energy and avoid the worst consequences of global climate change.

Politicians have dragged their feet for decades. It's up to us to build a movement inside and outside the halls of power. Building on the largest ever climate march last year, which saw 400,000 people on the streets in New York City and thousands more across the country, organizers have called for a national day of action on October 14.

Join a march or rally in your area to demand a serious and rapid response to the threat of global warming.

Go to [PeoplesClimate.org](http://PeoplesClimate.org) for more information.

## #MillionStudentMarch

You've got nothing to lose but your debt!

### November 12 National Day of Action

- ✪ Tuition-Free Public College
- ✪ Cancellation of All Student Debt
- ✪ A \$15 Minimum Wage for All Campus Workers

Education should be free. The United States is the richest country in the world, yet students have to take on crippling debt in order to get a college education. The average college graduate of the class of 2015 has over \$35,000 in debt. More than 40 million Americans share a total of \$1.2 trillion in student debt and 58 percent of that is held by the poorest 25 percent of Americans.

#MillionStudentMarch will be a day of local actions. From coast to coast, students, current and former, are organizing rallies and marches on college campuses and high schools. We are people of all colors, genders, and sexual orientation, and we are united to fight for education as a human right. Together, we can build an independent movement capable of winning tuition-free public college, a cancellation of all student debt, and a \$15 an hour minimum wage for all campus workers!

Go to [StudentMarch.org](http://StudentMarch.org) to sign up and join an action in your area.

be an enormous mistake for Sanders to direct his supporters to support Hillary Clinton or any other Democratic nominee under the control of Wall Street. In such a scenario, the best option to build toward Sanders' program of \$15, single-payer health care, as well as toward activating working people in their own interests, is to support the strongest independent left challenger: most likely Jill Stein of the Greens.

If he somehow won the nomination, despite all the obstacles, he would face the unremitting hostility of the Democratic Party apparatus. Either way, it is urgently necessary to use Sanders' campaign to begin taking steps toward what we really need: a new political force independent of the Democratic Party, connected to mass movements in the streets like the fight for 15 and Black Lives Matter. This is how we really start a political revolution with the potential to not only win Sanders' progressive platform, but to break the corporate grip on our political system. ✪

## Right Wing Populist Danger

## Trump and Carson Top in Polls

Bryan Koulouris

As the economic and political crisis facing working people has continued, with no answers from the establishment, a sharp political polarization has developed. Many people are looking for thorough change in society and seeking out answers. This poses opportunities for the labor movement and the left, but it also provides openings for racist scapegoating, increased cultural division and right-wing populist grandstanding. The opening for right populism has become more pronounced because there is no visible mass organization campaigning for working-class unity. Currently, with a weak left and labor movement, Donald Trump, Ben Carson and other reactionaries can get a thunderous echo.

It is the crisis of the capitalist system – poverty, recession, and income inequality which produce a mood of powerlessness, worries about job security, and a desire to see something completely different – that fuels the support for people like Trump. Without powerful working class organizations talking about genuine solutions to these issues, people look for easy targets to blame – immigrants, people of color and LGBTQ people. This bigotry is combined with rhetoric against “the establishment,” “politicians,” and even sometimes against big banks and corporations. Trump himself proposed increased taxes on hedge fund managers and penalties for companies that move jobs overseas in

search of cheap labor.

In this context, Trump and, to a lesser extent, Carson are pulling together growing right-wing populist sentiment, particularly in suburban and rural areas. Many of these areas have been left out of the “recovery” that’s been concentrated in certain big cities. This situation provides fertile ground for “radical” ideas like deporting all undocumented workers. Polls show that half of all Iowa Republican caucus-goers favor widespread deportation of millions of undocumented immigrants. As we explain in more detail below, while the ruling elite has no intention of undertaking mass deportations, such right populist rhetoric acts to divide working people. And while the labor movement is weak there are signs of its potential reemergence, particularly the fight for 15 days of action by fast-food workers. Right populism can act to undermine such developments.

A coherent working-class alternative to mainstream politics could cut across this momentum for reactionary populism. By putting forward a number of bold pro-working class demands Bernie Sanders’ campaign shows the potential for such a political alternative to develop. But to really begin to push back against the right, this campaign needs to move beyond the Democratic Party towards the building of a new independent political force representing the 99% which could challenge the entire capitalist establishment.

Guaranteed quality health care and a jobs program paid for by taxes on the super-rich, for instance, are popular policies among



Ben Carson and Donald Trump.

working people, even white workers in suburban and rural areas. A campaigning movement for jobs, services and independent politics would need to argue against racism and put forward policies against deportations and racist policing, presenting the need for working-class unity to benefit everyone in the 99%. The left’s job is not just to mock right-wing ideas or unite with the establishment in calling them “extreme.” To effectively fight Trump and what he represents, we need clear policies and a fighting approach to win victories that affect people’s lives, like the successful minimum wage campaigns across the country.

If we are unsuccessful in seizing the opportunity to build the left and labor movement, the potential for right-wing populism – and worse – will only grow. Economic, political and social uncertainty will reign in coming years of the capitalist crisis. Republicans, libertarians, and the racist right will target unions and the left as they seek to rally sections of the population to go along with their bigotry and “anti-establishment” posturing. If unchecked by a united movement of working people with a political expression, then Trump’s campaign could be overshadowed in the next few years by even more dangerous developments. ✪

## Build a Movement Against Anti-Immigrant Hysteria

Ty Moore

Donald Trump’s racist call for the mass deportation of 11.2 million undocumented immigrants is stirring up popular outrage among immigrants and progressive workers. More outrageous than Trump’s racist rhetoric is the lack of response from the Republican establishment. Even top Democrats



Immigration rally in 2006.

have limited themselves to dismissive quips against Trump, completely failing to articulate a full-throated defense of immigrant rights.

But even if Trump himself deserves only ridicule, the impact of his campaign in whipping up racist, anti-immigrant ideas is no laughing matter. Realistically, carrying out Trump’s deportation policy would require methods reminiscent of the Gestapo. A 38 second infomercial, produced by AJ+ and watched by 2.6 million people, laid out the implications:

“What exactly would deporting 11.2 million people look like? That’s roughly the populations of New York City, San Francisco, Boston, Seattle, and Detroit combined. Like other times the U.S. has forcibly removed people en masse, the U.S. would likely have to deploy the army. The army would have to run around the country, rounding people up, putting them in massive holding centers and then shipping them on trains, buses, ships, and planes.”

The last time the Republican right made a serious proposal for mass deportations was in 2005, when the House of Representatives

passed the “Sensenbrenner Bill.” That threat sparked the largest wave of protest in U.S. history – millions took the streets across the country demanding full legalization for undocumented immigrants. A political strike on May 1, 2006, caused widespread workplace closures as millions demonstrated what “A Day Without Immigrants” in America would look like.

In reality, big business has no interest in mass deportations. Huge sections of the American economy, from agriculture to meatpacking, and food service to janitorial, rely on undocumented immigrant labor. At the same time, big business does have an interest in whipping up racist attitudes to prop up a system of super-exploitation of immigrant labor. The threat of deportation is regularly used to crush unionization drives among immigrant workers.

We need to build a new movement on the scale of what happened in 2006 to win equal rights for all immigrants and to transform the racist attitudes among big sections of the U.S. working class. The unions could play a crucial role, answering Trump’s racist appeals with calls for mass demonstrations

for immigrant rights.

Trump’s right-populist appeals are able to win support among some workers because of their genuine economic insecurities caused by the economic crisis and unresolved in the “joyless recovery” over the last six years. However, a mass movement led by immigrants, trade unions, and other progressive forces could dramatically undercut support for racist ideas. This is exactly what happened in 2006 when millions in the streets defeated Sensenbrenner although the the movement was unable to win its broader goal of full rights for all immigrants.

As we said at the time, this required other sections of the working class to be mobilized around a common program based on the idea that through unity we can all move forward and end the bosses’ attempts to use division to keep us all under their heel. Today, such a movement would need to link the call for legalization of all immigrant workers with broader demands for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, taxing the rich to fully fund education and social services, and a massive jobs program to address the continuing unemployment crisis. ✪

# It's Time to Build An Alternative

Tom Crean

The 2016 presidential race, to date, offers striking evidence of massive loss of support for the political establishment and a sharpening polarization within both major parties. On the one hand, Bernie Sanders – who has called for a “political revolution” against the billionaire class – is currently receiving 35% support from likely Democratic primary voters, according to the latest NBC poll, and is rising fast. Hillary Clinton, favored choice of the corporate wing of the party, was supposed to be on a long victory lap, but now her campaign is in serious difficulties. Meanwhile, the two front-runners in the Republican race, Donald Trump and Ben Carson, are right populists whose support is partly based on having no experience as politicians. This shows the hatred for political insiders who engage in horse trading.

What is happening here is part of an international trend, which in some countries has gone much farther, with the complete collapse of key establishment parties and the rapid emergence of new political forces both on the left and the right. The most recent and a very significant development (which we discuss in more detail on page 9) is the victory of Jeremy Corbyn in

the race for leader of the British Labour Party. Corbyn, a longstanding socialist Member of Parliament, ran on the basis of opposing the austerity agenda that the Labour Party leadership had completely accepted for years. Rather than debating how much austerity to impose, Corbyn has called for resistance to the savage cuts being imposed by the Conservative government.

These developments show the huge potential that has opened up to build the left here and in many other countries. But only if the necessary conclusions, especially the need to build an independent political force for the 99%, are drawn in time.

## New Era of Struggle

These developments are the political reflection of the deep crisis that global capitalism has entered since the 2007-08 implosion in the financial markets, a crisis which may be about to enter a new phase with the economic downturn in China. It is true that, in the U.S., there have been some elements of an economic recovery, but it is fundamentally a recovery for the rich. The bulk of the working class has not experienced it. The latest data from the Census Bureau show that median household



income was 6.5% lower in 2014 than in 2007. The jobs being created are overwhelmingly low-paid, and working conditions are worsening.

Over the past few years, we have seen a growing wave of resistance, beginning with the Wisconsin uprising of workers and youth against Governor Scott Walker in 2011. A few

months later, the Occupy movement exploded onto the national scene, raising the banner of the 99% and putting the question of inequality firmly on the agenda. Since the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson just over a year ago, tens of thousands of black youth have taken the road of struggle. The fast-food workers' actions for “\$15 and a union,” which reached a new height on April 15, 2015, are increasingly explicit in linking the fight for economic and racial justice. They also point to the potential to rebuild a fighting labor movement, which is critical to begin a full-scale push-back against super-exploitation. Hundreds of thousands have also taken to the streets to demand real action to fight the looming climate catastrophe.

## Can the Democrats Be Reformed?

This is a key question that must be answered. We do not say that all Democrats are the same, nor do we deny that, under pressure, the party can shift some of its positions. Nevertheless, our view is that the Democrats are a political entity thoroughly dominated by corporate interests.

This is expressed in many ways, but two key elements are the role of corporate cash and the tight nexus between politicians – of both parties – and corporate lobbyists: while the top 10 unions spent \$153 million in the 2012 election cycle, the Koch Brothers alone spent over \$412 million!

But parties serving the interests of capitalism also have an apparatus whose job is to make sure that dissent is contained

and that candidates acceptable to the elite are chosen.

In the very unlikely event that Bernie Sanders wins the Democratic Party nomination, he will face the unremitting hostility of the party's dominant corporate wing and apparatus. In fact, he will face that hostility long before he wins the nomination. This is exactly the situation facing Jeremy Corbyn in Britain as he faces full-scale resistance from the neoliberal apparatus of the Labour Party. In effect, Corbyn must set out to build a new party.

The Democrats are even more tightly controlled by corporate interests than the Labour Party. Sanders and his supporters must, therefore, set out now to build the outlines of a new political

force independent of corporate interests, or at some stage they will succumb to those interests. This is why we have engaged with Sanders' thousands of supporters, who currently are the most important factor pushing toward real left politics. They want to see the many positive elements of Sanders' program achieved. So do we. But how is this to be done? Only by taking the road toward building a new party.

Sanders has recently begun more openly challenging Hillary Clinton's politics. He has also said that the Republicans did not win in 2014; rather, the Democrats lost because they failed to inspire working people, minorities, and young people, who stayed home in record numbers. This is true. But Sanders implies

that an overall Democratic victory in 2016, based on moving toward a slightly more populist position, would represent a decisive change for working people. This is not true.

If they win in 2016, who will the Democrats in Washington answer to? The trade unionists, black people, Latinos, women, and young people who put them there? Or their corporate paymasters? Such a situation happened not so long ago. Between 2008 and 2010, the Democrats controlled both houses of Congress and the White House. This was when Obama filled his staff with people from Wall Street and Congress approved the massive bailout of the banks while millions lost their jobs and saw their homes repossessed. ✪

## What Is Needed

There is clearly a rising tide of anger and a powerful desire for serious change among large sections of the working class and youth. For several years, polls have shown that socialism as a broad concept is increasingly popular, especially among people under 30. Polls have also consistently shown majority support for left positions like higher taxes on the rich – in 2013, 52% supported the statement “redistribute wealth by heavy taxes on the rich” – and, earlier this year, no less than 63% said they supported a \$15 minimum wage. A Gallup poll in September 2014 showed 58% supporting the idea of a third party.

But it is also clear that, unless the left is able to rise to the task of building a coherent alternative to corporate politics, right populist forces will take advantage of the political vacuum. This has already been seen in a number of European countries.

We in Socialist Alternative have long argued

# ernative for the 99%



from the lack of experience of mass labor or socialist parties, of the type historically seen in many European countries.

This view is based on a misunderstanding. The labor movement and the left played a massive role in the past in this country and helped win huge gains for working people as a whole. Furthermore, the potential to build a broader mass party was very real at a number of points, including during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the economic crisis of the mid-'70s, but it was also cut across by significant factors that reflected the power of U.S. capitalism throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of course, with their own party, workers could have potentially achieved far more, but union leaders, instead, threw their support behind the Democrats.

But U.S. capitalism has been in long-term decline since the mid-1970s, and its institutions and establishment have lost credibility. Of course, we can't ignore that the response of the ruling elite to this decline was the neoliberal offensive of the '80s and '90s, beginning under Ronald Reagan, which led to a massive retreat of the labor movement, along with a broad attack on the public sector and social services, that has lasted right up to the present. The role of the Democrats in pushing forward the neoliberal agenda should not be forgotten. Under Bill Clinton, we saw the "end of welfare," the passing of the job-destroying North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the ramping up of mass incarceration through "three-strikes" laws and harsh sentencing guidelines. All the while, Democrats kept pocketing checks from the unions while giving ever less in return.

Today, however, neoliberalism is thoroughly discredited, and the political parties, including the Democrats, are to the right of the majority on many key issues. The huge desire for

change, in the absence of a fighting labor movement, is looking for expression on the political plane. Genuine left-wing politics now have the potential for a mass base in American society. The question is whether the forces can be assembled to tap into this potential before this opening closes.

## The Two-Party System

Many argue that it is impossible to break the political stranglehold of the two existing big-business parties and that working outside this framework is counterproductive. A concrete expression of this is the description of left candidates, particularly in national races, as "spoilers" allegedly taking votes away from Democrats and thereby allowing reactionary Republicans to win. Generations of progressive

activists have been caught in the vise of such "lesser-evil" arguments.

Lesser-evilism is, of course, rooted in the reality that, in many cases, the Republicans are demonstrably more hostile to working people's interests. But supporting the Democrats has, at best, resulted in slowing down the retreat of working people, not stopping it. At worst, it actively demobilizes the struggles of working people, allowing the "greater evil" to win. We can only begin to regain what has been lost when we have fighting unions and a political party that answers to our interests.

It is also worth pointing out that, today, large numbers of cities and congressional districts are, in reality one-party rather than two-party operations. Political analysts have been pointing out for some time that there is a geographical polarization underway in the U.S., where "blue" districts become more blue and "red" districts more "red."

When Kshama Sawant was elected two years ago as Seattle's first socialist council member in 100 years, with 95,000 votes, the local media began talking about Socialist Alternative as the city's "second party," given that there is no effective local Republican operation. Of course, the corporate media is thoroughly hostile to us, but calling us the second party in Seattle is a recognition of reality, and there is no reason in principle why this could not be replicated in many cities and towns across the country – including in places currently run by Republicans – and, building on that strength, to become a "third party" in Congress.

## What Will A New Party Look Like?

In the past, socialists have looked to the

**continued on p. 11**



for the building of a new mass party that serves the interests of working people and the poor rather than the 0.01%.

Many people think of a political party only in electoral terms, but what is needed is a party rooted in communities and workplaces, a party of social struggle whose political representatives give voice to the demands of ordinary people in the halls of power. At the end of the day, all key reforms achieved by working people, black people, women, and LGBTQ people have come through struggle. But while elections are not the source of fundamental change, it is also critical to see that, as long as the electoral plane is ceded to corporate forces, working people's interests will be constantly undermined.

Clearly, a new political force on the left must take no money from corporate interests. Some think it is impossible for the left to make an impact politically in the post-Citizens United world because of the avalanche of corporate cash. But Bernie Sanders' anti-establishment campaign, which refuses corporate donations, raised \$15 million in the first couple months from 250,000 donors giving an average of \$31. Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant's re-election campaign for Seattle City Council has so far raised over \$300,000, a remarkable figure. Imagine what would be possible if even part of the unions' massive political funds – the top ten unions alone spent over \$153 million in the 2012 elections – were put behind independent working-class candidates standing in targeted local and national races.

## American Exceptionalism?

To many progressives, the idea of a new party still seems far-fetched. This partly flows

# Europe Shaken by Worst Refugee Crisis Since World War II

George Martin Fell Brown

On August 27, the world watched in horror as an abandoned truck was found on the outskirts of Vienna carrying the dead bodies of 71 refugees decomposing in the summer heat. They were among millions who are fleeing the devastation of war, repression, and sectarian conflict in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This comes on the heels of the sinking, four months prior, of a ship off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy carrying over 800 refugees, primarily from sub-Saharan Africa.

These tragedies have brought about an outpouring of anger and solidarity throughout

Europe. Shortly after the discovery of the abandoned truck, 20,000 marched in Vienna demanding that refugees be given the right to asylum. Similar demonstrations have taken place across Europe and, in response to the growing anger, a number of European governments have been forced to take positive measures to assist the refugees and break down previous immigration barriers.

The European leaders' newfound concern for the plight of refugees reeks of hypocrisy. Shortly before the Lampedusa shipwreck, the European Union shut down its Mare Nostrum rescue mission in the Mediterranean and replaced it with the Triton operation, centered

around border security rather than search and rescue. And European capitalism is notorious for whipping up xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiment. But, thanks to the growing popular anger at the treatment of refugees, the European leaders had to at least appear welcoming.

Not everyone has been so welcoming. Amnesty International reports that the U.S.'s oil-rich gulf allies Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain have offered zero resettlement places to Syrian refugees. Meanwhile, the state of Israel has refused to admit Syrian refugees, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declaring, "We will not allow Israel to be submerged by a wave of illegal migrants and terrorist activists."

## Created by Capitalism and Imperialism

The current refugee crisis is Europe's biggest since the Second World War. But the refugees are fleeing even bigger crises in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the horn of Africa. It is the ruling classes of the imperialist countries, and especially the U.S., who bear major responsibility for this crisis. Historically, British and French imperialism employed divide-and-rule techniques to secure their colonial rule. More recently, U.S. imperialism's "War on Terror," begun under Bush and continued under Obama, has been the main destabilizing force in the region, enflaming terror rather than combatting it.

Apologists of imperialism may talk of spreading democracy throughout the world. But the real-life consequences of imperialist intervention have had the opposite effect. The bombing and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq served to prop up various dictators who

served the interests of U.S. capitalism. This created the conditions that allowed groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda to thrive. The resulting chaos has spilled out into Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, and even as far as Nigeria.

## A Working-Class Solution

The workers' movement in Europe needs to take a lead in demanding that the refugees are granted asylum, helping organize the relief, and encouraging the refugees themselves to get organized. There also needs to be a concrete program of what can be done to help settle the refugees and, most importantly, where the resources will come from. The demands need to link together the needs of the local population and those of the refugees. For example, there is a need for housing for refugees and also a housing crisis facing the host population. Unless this is addressed, there is a danger that this mass exodus will provoke a counter-reaction as right-wing and far-right forces try to exploit the situation, particularly by claiming that the refugees are taking resources away from the host population.

The crises of capitalism and imperialism can be challenged. In the revolutions that began in 2011 in North Africa and the Middle East, we saw a glimpse of how action by working people can bring change. And we saw it in the working-class struggles in Southern Europe at the time. Such movements, armed with a socialist program, can put an end to the sectarian divisions, wars, repression, and poverty, opening the road to a world free from capitalist exploitation where the use of the globe's resources is democratically planned in the interests of the masses of humanity and not the ruling classes.✪



*Tens of thousands have fled war and unrest to seek refuge in Europe.*

## Government Account of Disappearance of 43 Rejected Mexico: A Seething Cauldron of Discontent

by Carla Gonzáles

A year after the disappearance of 43 teacher's college students at the historically radical Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa in Guerrero, Mexico, sparked waves of protests throughout the country, a panel of experts from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights rejected the government's official account of events. In January, Mexico's attorney general tried to squash the students' families' calls for an independent investigation by declaring the missing students dead. The state then claimed Iguala's mayor had ordered the students be arrested and handed over to a local gang, Guerreros Unidos, who then allegedly murdered them and dumped the missing students' bodies. The report states that there is no physical evidence supporting the government's story.

President Enrique Peña Nieto's government stands discredited, all signs pointing to a government cover-up of the murders. The panel reports that local, state, and federal police all participated in attacking the students and that military intelligence was

at some of the attacks and did nothing. The federal government also destroyed key evidence, such as video footage showing the attacks as well as one of the buses carrying the students.

The report's findings could set off another wave of protests by workers and youth. The fate of Ayotzinapa's 43 Disappeared quickly became a national symbol of the cartel violence and state repression many of Mexico's workers and poor face every day, calling into question the government's legitimacy. At the mercy of a corrupt political system serving the interests of the rich and corporate organizations like COPARMEX, Mexico's working class is dealing with the pressures of declining wages, a disastrous and bloody war on drugs, generally weakened labor unions, and heavy state repression of people's movements.

Alongside the 43 movement, teachers in Oaxaca and other southern states are leading a militant fight against the state's attacks on Mexico's teacher's union and on public education. Although the National Coordinating Committee, a left-wing section within Mexico's National Union of Education

Workers, leads the resistance, they are struggling against the state's political stranglehold on unions. Historically, the state controls the unions in Mexico, and since the 1950s – when the ruling party used the police to install their own party loyalists in union leadership positions – the unions have mostly acted as an extension of the state, crushing rank-and-file dissidents and ensuring that wages stay low. In the middle of the ongoing war on drugs, the state has reacted with more and more brute force to break strikes and independent labor organizing.

Mexican people need to form their own independent unions and break from the corrupt political parties to begin to form a mass workers party fighting for their everyday needs, including the right to defend themselves against the brutal drug cartels and government repression. The striking teachers and the movement for the 43 can be the tipping point that pushes the working class of Mexico, after years of setbacks and defeats, to mount an effective mass resistance against the austerity and repression dealt by their government.✪



*Families of murdered students march in Mexico City.*

Socialist Elected Labour Party Leader

# Britain: The Corbyn Earthquake

The British Labour Party was formed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by socialists and trade unions as a workers' party, but in the 1990s a pro-capitalist leadership around Tony Blair moved it significantly to the right and systematically removed socialist ideas and working-class influence. Socialists inside the Labour Party were reduced to a tiny group, with just nine Labour Members of Parliament out of 230.

However, the Blairite apparatus made a fatal mistake in reworking the procedures for the party's leadership election, allowing anyone to register as a supporter and vote if they paid £3 (\$5). They also allowed socialist Member of Parliament (MP) Jeremy Corbyn to run. He stood on a platform against austerity and inequality and for policies such as public ownership of the rail and energy companies, a £10 an hour minimum wage, free education, building public housing, and repeal of the anti-union laws. Hundreds of thousands of anti-austerity supporters registered to vote.

On September 12, Corbyn won a massive 59.5% of the 400,000 votes, including 80% of newly registered supporters – a 40% majority over his closest challenger.

This is an extract from the editorial of *The Socialist*, paper of the Socialist Party of England and Wales, with which Socialist Alternative is in political solidarity.

For decades, the Palace of Westminster [the building housing Parliament] has been almost completely devoid of serious disagreements. All three of the major establishment parties – the Tories, Labour, and the Lib-Dems – have agreed on the central questions such as the supremacy of the “free” market, support for privatization and austerity, and the need to undermine workers' rights.

Nine members of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, isolated on Labour's weak left wing, were very often the lone opponents of the endless attacks on the rights of working-class people. Despite their best efforts, they resembled prisoners occasionally smuggling out a note to the population outside.

But now, the world has been turned upside down. The Blairites – who have dominated Labour for two decades – are now the 4.5%: the percentage gained by the most right-wing candidate, Liz Kendall.



Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn thanks supporters at a rally.

With the overwhelming vote electing Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party, the pro-austerity consensus has been smashed. The hopes of millions who want to see a society for the 99%, not the 1%, have been raised.

The Socialist Party has long argued that the potential exists in Britain for a new mass workers' party. We have argued that – if it could find an outlet – the anger, voiceless until now, could very quickly become a powerful force. In Scotland, it found an outlet in the independence referendum and then in the Scottish National Party landslide in the May general election. In England and Wales, it has now found an unexpected channel in Jeremy Corbyn's campaign for Labour leader. No one, least of all Jeremy Corbyn, expected this outcome.

The possibility of building a powerful mass party can be seen from the events of the last few days. We considered it more likely to come into being from forces outside of the Labour Party – as has been the trend in most countries – given the Labour Party's transformation into a capitalist party. However, we have no fetish about by what route the crisis of working-class political representation would be solved and have never excluded the possibility of Labour swinging left. As long ago as 2002, we argued that, “under the impact of great historic shocks – a serious economic crisis, mass

social upheaval – the ex-social-democratic parties could move dramatically toward the left.”

## A New Party

However, the reality is that the Corbyn surge has mainly not come from within the Labour Party but from outside it: new members and registered supporters who were attracted by the hope of something different. This is a new party in the process of formation, and it will face relentless attack from the “old” pro-capitalist New Labour.

The question is how best to consolidate and build on Corbyn's success. Winning the leadership of Labour is a very long way from transforming the party as a whole. In attempting to do so, Corbyn and his supporters will face the determined opposition of not just the right-wing Labour MPs and Labour machine, but also of the capitalist class. There will now be a huge campaign to try and extinguish the anti-austerity flame that has been lit with the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader.

It is clear that the Labour right will attempt to imprison and undermine Corbyn, with the aim of removing him as soon as possible. To win requires building on the popular movement against austerity that found a voice in his election campaign. Unity has to be built around clear anti-austerity policies.

The appointments to Corbyn's

leadership team are a mixed bag. Alongside his campaign manager, John McDonnell, as Shadow Chancellor [the treasury spokesperson], the majority are Blairites. Many on the right of the party have refused to serve in the Shadow Cabinet, but there is a division of labor, with those inside the tent trying to imprison Jeremy Corbyn and others trying to sabotage from the back benches.

To defeat the onslaught, Jeremy Corbyn will face going beyond the constraints of the right-wing-dominated Labour Party machine or the niceties of Labour's constitution as recast by Blair.

As a starting point, we would urgently encourage Jeremy Corbyn to organize a conference of all those who have supported him, plus the many trade unions which support a fighting anti-austerity program. The Socialist Party would participate in such a conference and would encourage all other anti-austerity campaigners to do the same.

A campaign needs to be launched to recreate Labour's democratic structures, including the reselection of MPs: the democratic right of a party's members to replace an MP who has voted against the party's policies. That should be uncontroversial. However, it is not a surprise that it upsets Labour MPs who have voted for welfare cuts, austerity, and war.

The Labour Party was founded by the trade unions as part of a

struggle by the organized working class to create its own political voice. Nonetheless, from the beginning Labour was a capitalist workers' party – with a working-class base but a pro-capitalist leadership. Yet the working class was able to influence it via the party's democratic structures. An essential part of the transformation of the Labour Party into a capitalist party over recent decades was the removal of the trade union vote within the party. This should be restored and, at the same time, a Corbyn-led Labour Party needs to reach out to all those opposing austerity, including community campaigns and other political parties. A new constitution could be based on the original, federal constitution of the Labour Party.

Jeremy Corbyn has, up until now, rightly taken a flexible and welcoming approach to the movement that has sprung up around him, but any insistence by his campaign that the only way to support Jeremy Corbyn is to sign up as a Labour Party member under the existing constitution would be a mistake, which possibly could act to repel potential supporters.

## Fighting Austerity

At local level, anti-austerity alliances will be needed to bring together all those who want to fight the cuts. This is urgent. Local council services have already been cut by 39% and will face further catastrophic cuts next spring. Jeremy Corbyn has, rightly, made the call for councils to stand together and refuse to implement government cuts. However, some of Corbyn's supporters are now emphasizing the importance of his being seen to be “moderate” and “reasonable,” arguing, therefore, that Labour councils should continue to

continued on p. 11

Read news from the  
Committee for a Workers  
International active  
in 47 countries.

**SocialistWorld.net**



Seattle's First Education Strike in 30 Years

# Teachers Wage Bold Fight

**Matt Maley,**  
Member of Seattle  
Education Association  
(personal capacity)

The 5,000 members of the Seattle Education Association (SEA) organized their first strike in three decades to start the new school year.

While school districts across the country are facing federal pressure to link teachers' evaluations to their students' test scores, the SEA was able to end this widely discredited practice in Seattle. Students of color are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled in the city's schools, so the union won "racial equity teams" at one-third of them. The new contract guarantees 30 minutes of recess for all students, introduces caps on caseloads for some school social workers, lowers student-to-teacher ratios for special education classes, and pushes back on declining real wages after six years of not receiving a cost-of-living adjustment from the state. Had the union mobilized its full support from the public, it's likely even more could have been won. Nonetheless, this contract is something SEA members can be proud of and build upon for the future.

Drawing lessons from the 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike, the SEA was able to mobilize parents and community members who have seen Washington State become an active battleground in the fight for public education. The active participation of members was outstanding. Between 95 and 97% were on the picket lines. Thousands came to the



Photo Credit: Clay Showalter

Teachers' picket line at Garfield High School on September 13, 2015.

union's meetings. The union included 40 people from all professions in the bargaining team. A daily leaflet provided educators with updates from the union. Demands combined workplace issues and wages with calls for better education and racial equity.

## A Strike for Good Schools

The local legislature is being held in contempt by the State Supreme Court and fined \$100,000 per day due to their failure to adequately fund public education. In May, the Washington Education Association organized 57 school districts to walk out in protest and 6,000 union members and parents marched in the streets of Seattle.

After the Seattle Public Schools district stalled negotiations with the SEA all summer and then refused the union's demands wholesale at the final hour, members voted unanimously to strike.

The strike inspired parents, students, and working people in Seattle and around the country. Unfortunately, the union did not call for a big mobilization of support, but parents organized a rally of more than 600 and gave a glimpse of the support the educators enjoyed. A mass rally organized by the union and vividly mobilizing the full public support for educators in Seattle could have strengthened the position of the bargaining team against the district and given a big boost to the confidence on picket lines.

Socialist Alternative members within the SEA advocated for the idea of a mass march, and many rank-and-file members supported our proposal.

It is now incumbent upon Seattle teachers and the labor movement as a whole to take the lessons learned by the SEA to help rebuild strong unions as the backbone for future struggles for quality public education and social justice. ✪

## ATI Steelworkers Locked Out for Two Months

**Kris Cummings,** Pittsburgh

On August 14, Allegheny Technologies Incorporated (ATI), one of the world's largest specialty metal manufacturing companies, announced that they had decided to lock out over 2,200 workers at their production facilities in six states. The workers in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Oregon are represented by the United Steelworkers (USW) labor union. The USW's bargaining committee had been engaged in heated negotiations with the management of ATI for much of the year leading up to the lockout, with the aim of replacing the contract that expired June 30.

The USW has had a simple, consistent, demand: they are seeking the same

terms that were within the contract that expired. ATI, on the other hand, presented the USW with a "last, best, and final" offer – filled with concessions which the USW call "draconian and unnecessary" – and left the negotiation table, demanding the offer's ratification by the union membership. Within the full text of the offer are major changes to health care coverage, pensions, wages, and even an attempt to redefine the workday to a twelve-hour day – destroying a fundamental right that U.S. workers won almost 80 years ago.

At present, the jobs in the plants that used to be done by USW members are done by replacement workers – scabs – from Strom Engineering, a staffing firm that commonly boasts about its work in strikebreaking. Meanwhile, the USW

members are present outside of the facilities, walking informational picket lines to make their voices heard – and trying to put pressure on management.

The locked-out workers at ATI are fighting not just for themselves, but for all their fellow Steelworkers. On September 1, contracts expired between the USW and U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal – representing 13,000 and 17,000 workers respectively. Many feel that these companies are using the lockout at ATI as a bellwether to see if intimidation can work against the union and its members. If ATI is successful in forcing major concessions from the USW, then it is likely that these other major corporations could use similar tactics to force concessions during their contract negotiations. ✪

## Chrysler Workers Reject Contract!

As we go to press, it is reported that the United Auto Workers membership at Fiat Chrysler have decisively rejected a proposed contract which would have expanded the two tier wage system that has undermined workers' living standards. This bold stand by the UAW membership after decades of retreat is a reflection of growing working class anger. **Go to [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org) to see our full analysis.** ✪

## Dyett High School

# Hunger Strike Defends Public Education in Chicago



**Steve Edwards,** Chicago

The parents and community members who went on hunger strike August 17 in response to the last in a long series of disingenuous maneuvers by the unelected Chicago Public School (CPS) board, ended their strike on September 20 after 34 days without solid food. As striker and spokesperson Jitu Brown has said, having to go on hunger strike to defend a neighborhood school is an outrage that is visited only on communities of color.

The strikers won several central demands: that Dyett High School will be reopened, keeping its historic name; that it won't be privatized; and that it will be an open-enrollment school for students from the neighborhood, open until 7 in the evening. They won part of another demand, that the curriculum will include a technology component. This took a combination of tactics, including driving Mayor 1%, Rahm Emanuel, out of "Hizzonner's" city budget hearings when Dyett supporters refused to allow the meetings to proceed until he agreed to meet with the hunger strikers.

The fight will continue, focusing next on the demand for an elected Local School Council and replacing the "arts" focus imposed by CPS with the community's already well-developed plan for a Global Leadership and Green Technology high school. ✪

# Building an Alternative

continued from p. 7

unions as the key force to build a new political party in the U.S. Today, this is not a likely scenario, although some unions could be pushed to play a role in such a development. But, in general, a new left party will not, at this point, be centrally based in the organized working class – at least at the start – and, politically, will not begin with a socialist program.

In the formation of a new party of the 99%, socialists will argue for a clear left, anti-capitalist program opposing cuts to government services, anti-union attacks, environmental destruction, and structural racism and sexism, while boldly calling for taxing the rich to begin addressing the horrible social and infrastructural decay permeating our society. Clearly, such a party must take no corporate cash, and we would also argue that its public representatives should, like Kshama Sawant, commit to taking the pay of an average worker to remain tied to the reality of working people.

Again, if the party of the 99% is to succeed, it must be rooted in workplaces and communities, linking the movements in the streets to the fight against both corporate parties in city councils and Congress. This is precisely what we sought to do in Seattle when Kshama Sawant won office in 2013. On a small scale, this is a model for what a new party could do.

Kshama's campaign focused on the call for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, and her victory helped to take this question to a new level. Through building

the grassroots campaign 15 Now, with the support of key unions, Socialist Alternative and Kshama Sawant played a leading role in achieving the first local \$15 minimum wage in the country, which led to further breakthroughs in Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Now, Kshama and Socialist Alternative are fighting to win rent control in Seattle and to push back against the profit-lust of the developers and their allies in the political establishment. This battle, too, has important national repercussions, as city after city faces rapid rent increases and destructive gentrification. The victory on the minimum wage and the fight around other social issues is also helping to spur the Seattle labor movement into greater activity, as evidenced by the recent teachers' strike.

There are other independent leftists in local public office who are waging determined fights against entrenched public interests, notably the Progressive Alliance in Richmond, California, whose representatives have resisted the attempts of Chevron to unseat them and also recently passed rent control. Nevertheless, Kshama's position is the most prominent one occupied by someone clearly trying to create a new political force, which makes her re-election vital.

We must, in the coming months and years, take the "Seattle model" on the road and make it a key part of building a powerful socialist current



within the broader forces pushing toward a new party.

## Real Democracy

We must be very clear that establishing a new party is not, in itself, the solution to the problems working people face. But it is a vital step. However, given the range of forces that must come together to make such a party viable, there will inevitably be different currents. In particular, there will be a vigorous debate between those who believe capitalism can be tamed through a series of reforms and made to serve the interests of working people, and the socialists who, while fighting for every possible reform under this social order, believe that capitalism must ultimately be removed as a roadblock to human development. Such a discussion, linked to the building of an independent political movement and involving tens or even hundreds of thousands of people, would in itself be an enormous step forward.

We firmly believe that, for the party to go forward and lead the mass movement that will finally end corporate domination of society, it will have to

adopt a fully socialist program. But this position will be arrived at on the basis of experience and the testing out of different positions.

It is, therefore, essential that the party of the 99%, as a party of social struggle, have a genuinely democratic internal life and accountable structures so that the lessons of struggles and political campaigns can be fully assimilated, thereby strengthening the party's roots in the broader working class. It must, for example, be possible for the party membership to recall public representatives who no longer represent the party's positions.

We believe 2016 could be a key year for the emerging left in the U.S. There are great opportunities, but these opportunities will not seize themselves. In particular, we can see how Bernie Sanders' supporters will face hard choices if they seriously want to develop a political revolution against the billionaire class. Socialists have a key role to play in the discussions that will unfold that could lead to concrete steps toward establishing a genuine independent political alternative for the 99%. ☺

# Corbyn

continued from p. 9



implement Tory cuts. This would be a terrible mistake. A Corbyn-led Labour Party will be popular if it is prepared to oppose austerity. But it is likely that the majority of Labour councils will continue to implement government cuts.

Where this happens they should be opposed in elections by anti-austerity activists. This will strengthen the hand of Jeremy Corbyn and the anti-austerity movement as a whole.

However, it is also necessary to go beyond the very good demands Jeremy Corbyn puts forward. He merely calls for "meaningful regulation of the banking sector" rather than for nationalization of the banks under democratic control, for example.

The experience of Syriza in Greece shows that defeating austerity requires a determined struggle with a clear goal. Endless austerity and growing inequality are not an accident; they flow from the needs of capitalism, where profits for a few have been restored at the expense of the majority.

The most important single consequence of Jeremy Corbyn's victory is that questions like, how can inequality be ended and austerity be defeated and, above all, what is socialism and how can it be achieved are now being discussed widely. A new generation is hearing about socialist ideas for the first time. ☺

## SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE In Your Area

### NATIONAL

PO Box 150457  
Brooklyn, NY 11215  
(206) 526-7185  
info@SocialistAlternative.org  
facebook.com/SocialistAlternativeUSA  
Twitter: @SocialistAlt

### NEW ENGLAND

BOSTON, MA (910) 639-3948  
NASHUA, NH (603) 233-2999  
PORTLAND, ME (207) 415-8792  
WORCESTER, MA (617) 285-9346  
UMASS-AMHERST (910) 639-3948  
LOWELL, MA, NEW HAVEN, CT, and PROVIDENCE, RI contact our national office

### MID-ATLANTIC

NEW YORK CITY (347) 749-1236  
PHILADELPHIA, PA (267) 368-4564  
PITTSBURGH, PA (412) 589-2558  
WASHINGTON, DC, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ, and RICHMOND, VA contact our national office

### SOUTHEAST

JOHNSON CITY, TN (617) 721-8915  
MOBILE, AL (251) 300-4727  
NASHVILLE, TN (931) 220-0427  
NEW ORLEANS, LA (617) 676-7879  
TAMPA BAY, FL (727) 641-0252

MONTGOMERY & BIRMINGHAM, AL, CHARLOTTE, NC and LOUISVILLE, KY contact our national office

### MIDWEST

CHICAGO, IL (773) 771-4617  
MADISON, WI (608) 620-3901  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN (612) 760-1980  
SPRINGFIELD, IL (217) 546-2537  
ST. LOUIS/FERGUSON, MO (952) 270-7676  
BLOOMINGTON, IN, COLUMBUS, OH, GRAND RAPIDS, MI, MILWAUKEE, WI, and TOPEKA, KS contact our national office

### SOUTHWEST

AUSTIN, TX (440) 339-9793  
For DALLAS, TX, DENVER, CO, FORT COLLINS, CO, HOUSTON, TX, OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, PHOENIX, AZ, and SALT LAKE CITY, UT contact our national office

### PACIFIC

BELLINGHAM, WA (360) 510-7797  
OLYMPIA, WA (206) 579-5309  
PORTLAND, OR (503) 916-9391  
OAKLAND/ SAN FRANCISCO, CA (510) 220-3047  
SEATTLE, WA (206) 526-7185  
SPOKANE, WA (509) 879-7169

TACOMA, WA (253) 355-4211  
For HAWAII, LOS ANGELES, CA, SAN DIEGO, CA and YAKIMA, WA contact our national office

### INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

Socialist Alternative is also in political solidarity with the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), a worldwide socialist organization in 47 countries, on every continent. Join us!  
CANADA (604) 738-1653  
contact@socialistalternative.ca  
www.socialistalternative.ca  
QUEBEC info@AlternativeSocialiste.org  
www.AlternativeSocialiste.org

## Boston: Threat to Privatize Mass Transit

Boston transit workers are fighting to "Keep Public Transportation Public". Massachusetts' Republican Governor Charlie Baker has made it a key aim to privatize parts of the the publicly-run Metro Boston Transit Authority (MBTA).

The MBTA's subway line, the T, has been criminally underfunded. This led to a massive crisis during the brutal weather the region faced this past winter, with the whole system shut down for days and taking months to come back to full service due to its dilapidated infrastructure.

Socialist Alternative stands with the workers of the MBTA in their battle against privatization and hopes to help build a strong campaign with public sector workers and community allies to fight all attacks on public services.

Read the full story at SocialistAlternative.org.

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Issue #17 - October 2015

## Low Pay Epidemic!

### Step Up the Fight for \$15!



photo: reuters

**Meghan Brophy**

Working people across the U.S. are facing a low pay epidemic. While the cost of living continues to rise, real hourly wages have largely stayed the same or declined over the past decade. According to recent studies from the National Employment Law Project, the lowest paid professions in the United States have faced enormous wage declines over the past five years. Home health aides, food preparation workers, and janitors have seen their real hourly wages drop by nearly ten percent!

A growing number of people are juggling multiple jobs and longer hours, yet they are worse off than before. Even though less than a quarter of the jobs lost during the Great Recession were low-wage, more than half of the new jobs created between 2010 and 2012 are low-wage.

Since 2012, there has been a series of nationally coordinated low-wage worker strikes and days of action to fight for \$15 an hour and a union. The movement gained significant strength in Seattle, where Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant was elected at the end of 2013 on a bold platform that included a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

Seven months later, the battle for a \$15 minimum wage was won in Seattle and, since then, the fight for \$15 has made enormous steps forward throughout the country. Other major cities, such as San Francisco and Los Angeles, have also won a \$15 an hour minimum wage. But while we have had a huge impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers and on the national political discussion, we have

only begun to make a dent in the national epidemic of low pay.

### Huge Shift

Polls show 63% of the public now supports a \$15 an hour minimum wage. This is forcing some Democratic Party politicians to voice support for the demand. The Democratic National Committee recently added a point in their platform calling for \$15, although they've made it clear that their elected officials are under no obligation to support this in practice.

To make further gains, it's crucial to remember how things went down in Seattle. After being elected, instead of making backroom deals with the corporate establishment, Sawant used her position as a city councilmember to launch and build 15 Now, a grassroots movement to fight for \$15, which a number of unions supported. It was this strong movement of workers and socialists that put \$15 on the agenda and secured its victory. On the other hand, the Democratic Party politicians, who opposed \$15 just months before, then relentlessly tried to water it down through big-business-backed amendments.

The election of one socialist to the Seattle City Council, linked to building a tremendous grassroots movement, was able to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in less than a year. Imagine what could be possible if independent, pro-working class candidates were elected throughout the country, alongside a sustained movement to fight for \$15 an hour, union rights, single-payer health care, free higher education, and other transformative demands! ✪

November 10

## National Day of Action for \$15

### Let's Turn the Tide Against Inequality!

The central question facing the wider Fight for \$15 movement is how to translate popular support for \$15 an hour into concrete victories to raise up tens of millions of workers. The potential exists to reverse the economic tide pushing more and more workers into poverty, to begin closing the widening gap between the rich and poor.

15 Now is planning to put a ballot referendum to voters in Minneapolis in November 2016 to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

November 10 is the next big national day of strike action for the SEIU-led Fight for \$15, and this offers another major opportunity to launch a nationally coordinated

campaign. The last national strike of fast-food and other low-wage workers back in April drew 60,000 workers in over 100 cities into the streets. Unfortunately, up to now, most of these actions have limited their demands to specific low-wage employers rather than calls to raise the minimum wage to \$15.

Alongside 15 Now, Socialist Alternative calls on the major unions and community groups to get behind the wider fight for \$15 nationally and launch a coordinated campaign to win \$15 in all major U.S. cities. If this happens, the movement could explode in 2016, scoring a dramatic wave of victories and raising up millions of workers. ✪