

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Issue #25 - July/August 2016



## Socialist Alternative National Convention Report

p. 5

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### BEYOND BERNIE:

### CONTINUE THE

# Political Revolution

#STILLNOTWITHHER #JILLNOTHILL #SEEOUINPHILLY



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# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower student-teacher 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 towards fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ For rent control combined with massive public investment in affordable housing.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Break the power of Wall Street! For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ 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. Massive public investment in renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low fare, high-speed, and accessible transit.
- ✦ Democratic public ownership of the big energy companies, retooling them for socially necessary green production. A "Just Transition" for all workers in polluting industries with guaranteed re-training and new living-wage jobs.

## Equal Rights for All

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

- ✦ Black Lives Matter! 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.
- ✦ Defend immigrant rights! Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ 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. At least 12 weeks of paid family leave for all. For universal, high quality, affordable and publicly run child care.

## Money for Jobs and Education, Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, 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 environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and other 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 failed system. No to 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. ✦

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# WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

## Patti Milheron Grand Rapids, MI



For as long as I can remember, I've been supportive of unions and workers' rights. Maybe it's because I'm a person who feels unfairness and injustice as sharp pains, both personal and collective. As a working person, I've always been keenly aware of the power imbalance between workers and capitalists/management. And I've heard a lifetime of stories from friends and acquaintances about the many ways people are treated in dehumanizing fashion, reduced to numbers, essentially, in the name of profit.

As workers, our one elusive freedom is to survive by working for one exploitative capitalist or the other. Their freedom is use us to fullest advantage, even if trampling on the most basic of civil and human rights, to make as much profit as possible. Is there any more profound conflict of interests?

Many years ago, I worked at a large retail grocery chain. The break room was always filled with anti-union propaganda. The messages were all the same. It was ungrateful and disloyal to unionize – the proverbial sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there was no forgiveness. I saw it for what it was: an attempt to keep control via manipulative persuasion. I wasn't buying it then, and I still don't today.

Because of this, I think that I've always been a socialist at heart, and I believe that socialists are born, not made. They just have to be unearthed. There are probably millions out there who just need to be awakened and brought forth to see that they are, indeed, socialists, whether they realize it or not.

My views have always been progressive, believing in workers' and women's rights, anti-racism, anti-war, and pro-gun-control. When I found the Socialist Alternative platform, it was all my progressive views carried further, to a saner, kinder, and more logical conclusion. How could I not be for that? Where progressivism seeks to fix or put patches on capitalism, a bad system, socialism's goal is to radically change and overhaul the system itself, to meet the needs of all citizens rather than maximizing profit for the few. Socialism is a system where the highest good for the most people is the ultimate goal and value. It's a system that seeks to have a society where the suffering brought about by greed and profit as the highest goal is eliminated. Socialism is about putting people first, and I love that. ✦

## Mexican Teachers Strike Continues

### Working People in Mexico Need Fighting Unions, an Independent Left Party, and Socialism

Tens of thousands of teachers in Mexico have been on strike since May 16, led by the National Education Workers Coordinating Committee (CNTE) in opposition to an education reform law that would open the door to mass firings of teachers, weaken public sector unions, and pave the way for the privatization of public education.

The neoliberal government of Enrique Peña Nieto took a hard-line approach toward the teachers' strike from the start, refusing to negotiate with the CNTE, firing more than 4,000 teachers for missing work to participate in the strikes, and arresting key CNTE leaders on trumped-up charges. The repression took a violent turn on June 19 when, as Telesur reports, "authorities deployed tens of thousands of riot police." At least 10 people were killed in the hours that followed, most of whom were from the Oaxacan town of Nochixtlan.

In the wake of this tragedy, the CNTE



has vowed to continue its opposition to the education reforms, receiving considerable community support. In Mexico City, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and the National Revolutionary Movement (Morena) party held an enormous rally, with as many as 250,000 people by some estimates, in support of the teachers. There has also been a tremendous amount of international support. Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant expressed solidarity with the striking CNTE teachers on behalf of Socialist Alternative and the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) in a letter and video.

The Peña Nieto government, for its part, has refused to back down and Education Minister Aurelio Nuño, reiterated plans to implement the neoliberal education reforms. ✦

## Taking the Political Revolution Forward



# Beyond Bernie: Still #NotWithHer

**Kshama Sawant**  
Seattle City Councilmember

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*This is a shortened version of an article originally published at CounterPunch.org.*

Since the June 7 California primary, the historic upheaval that coalesced around Bernie Sanders' campaign has continued to defy the demands of the political establishment, but it has also increasingly turned into a search for the way forward. After a powerful, year-long mass campaign over the hostile terrain of a rigged primary, our political revolution is at a crossroads.

Following the AP's preemptive nomination of Clinton, the post-California period began with a revolt. In the hours and days after this corporate media assault and the initial ballot results, there was a wave of angry social media reaffirming Sandernistas' rejection of the establishment's demands for capitulation. Elizabeth Warren's full-throated endorsement of Clinton came shortly thereafter, and hundreds of thousands of people un-liked her Facebook page and otherwise registered their disgust online. The petition that Movement4Bernie and I launched two months ago calling for Sanders to run independent or Green caught on fire. It tripled its number of signatures in just a few days time, at an initial rate of 1,000 people an hour, and it now has over 115,000 total.

A huge debate is unfolding among millions of Bernie's backers, providing an enormous opportunity for the left to raise the need for a political alternative to the Democratic Party.

Unfortunately, Bernie's livestream speech a week after California pointed in a different direction. While Bernie refused to formally concede and reaffirmed his intention to continue the political revolution into the Democratic National Convention, he also sent the message that he was beginning to retire his campaign. His plan to contest the nomination in Philadelphia was left aside, while he took further steps toward Hillary in saying he looked forward to working with her to change the Democratic Party.

It was one part political revolution, one part concession, and five parts



Democratic Party reform. This has helped kick off a process that, no doubt, has some Sandernistas beginning to second-guess their commitment to not support Wall Street's favored candidate, Hillary Clinton.

But the rebellion is far from subdued. A *Bloomberg Politics* poll on June 14 showed that barely half of Sanders' supporters are prepared to vote for Hillary.

But while the recent polls show that a great many Sanders supporters aren't ready to drink the Clinton Kool-Aid, they also hint at the largely unanswered questions many hold at present: whether to support Jill Stein of the Green Party, to hold their noses and vote corporate Clinton, or to protest instead by voting right-wing "anti-establishment" with either libertarian Johnson or billionaire bigot Donald Trump. Johnson is at 9%, which gives a sense of where things could go if the left fails to build for Stein.

## Taking on "Lesser Evilism"

Dozens of high-profile messengers, including a long parade of left luminaries, will each in different ways make the case for a lesser-evil vote for Clinton in the coming weeks and months.

While these arguments will increasingly have a big effect, the genie has come out of the bottle, and even the corporate establishment is beginning to recognize that U.S. politics are not going to go back to the way they were.

But nothing is automatic. The right wing can also potentially strengthen itself out of this mass anger, just as the

Tea Party built itself out of the fury at the Wall Street bailouts while the left largely made excuses for Obama. For the left to win the things Bernie Sanders has demanded and we have fought for, we will need to build a powerful mass movement based on our political independence from the two parties of neoliberalism.

To succeed at this, we'll need to confront and answer the genuine fears people have about not voting for Clinton to stop Trump. We should recognize that we'll be running up against decades of propaganda that has attacked independent politics and asserted that progressives must "vote blue, no matter what." We need to sympathetically explain the case for supporting the strongest vote for Jill Stein, the case for a new mass party of the 99%, and why voting for Clinton undermines our political revolution. But we should not exaggerate or damage our own arguments by saying things like "Clinton is worse than Trump," or that there is "no difference," or that it "doesn't matter" if Trump wins. We have to genuinely and politically take on lesser evilism by addressing the strategic questions about what's really necessary to defeat the right. We won't win over everyone right now. But our goal is to bring as many people with us as possible to not capitulate to the Democratic Party in November. The discussions with those we don't convince will continue next year as they experience, most likely,

continued on p. 11

## Socialist Alternative and Movement4Bernie

# All Out for Protests at the DNC in Philadelphia!

Millions are standing against the tide, resisting a Democratic Party establishment hell-bent on forcing Sandernistas behind Wall Street's "lesser evil" candidate, Hillary Clinton. But how can we build a political alternative to continue the struggle against the billionaire class?

Movement4Bernie and Socialist Alternative are organizing a series of forums across the country in early July to debate these questions facing our movement. The forums will feature a video address from Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein and Seattle's socialist City Councilmember, Kshama Sawant.

These meetings will also be part of the mobilization to get as many as people as possible to come to Philadelphia to join the protests and mass meetings during the Democratic National Convention, July 23-28. Tens of thousands will be venting their anger at the un-Democratic Party, which blocked Bernie Sanders' campaign, and to discuss the way forward.

**Join us to discuss how to help Jill Stein's campaign make the biggest possible impact in 2016, how you can help mobilize for the DNC protests, and how we can build toward a socialist alternative to this crisis-ridden capitalist system.**

For more information contact [movement4bernie@gmail.com](mailto:movement4bernie@gmail.com).

## Support Jill Stein



A recent poll shows that the support for Green Party candidate Jill Stein has increased to 7% nationally. While still an early reading, it shows the real potential of this campaign. There's a real opportunity to win a strong left vote in November, numbering in the millions, to continue our political revolution.

Jill Stein's platform has a great deal in common with Bernie Sanders' platform. She's calling for Medicare for all, a \$15 minimum wage nationally, a rapid transition to renewable energy, and an end to mass incarceration. Socialist Alternative does not agree with the Green Party on all issues, but there can be no doubt that Stein deserves the strongest possible support from Sandernistas. If a large section of our movement is able to resist the growing pressure to fall into line behind Clinton and, instead, put its energies into Stein's campaign, it will spur the development of a much bigger fight-back and lay the groundwork for building a new party of the 99%. ☺

For a Socialist Federation of Europe

# Brexit Vote Against Bosses' EU



**SocialistWorld.net**

For more in-depth coverage, see  
SocialistWorld.net, website of the  
Committee for a Workers International.

The following is a statement by the Socialist Party (England and Wales), part of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), with which Socialist Alternative in the U.S. is in solidarity. The Socialist Party plays an important role in the left of the British labor movement and in mobilizing working people against the endless austerity imposed by Cameron's Conservative (Tory) Party government with the collusion of the Labour Party.

Last year, Jeremy Corbyn, a longstanding left-wing, anti-austerity Member of Parliament, was elected leader of the Labour Party based on a political revolt of young people and trade unionists. In the Brexit referendum, Corbyn tragically abandoned the historic position of the Labour left in opposing the European Union "bosses' club" and weakly campaigned for "Remain" as a concession to the right wing of the Labour Party. If Corbyn had boldly campaigned from the left for Brexit, it would have massively strengthened the fight against austerity and immediately posed the possibility of a Corbyn-led Labour Party coming to power in the wake of Cameron's collapse. The right wing is now trying to unseat Corbyn and the civil war in the Labour Party may be coming to a head.

**Hannah Sell**

"The referendum result may well go down in history as the 'pitchfork moment,'" declared the *Financial Times*, wailing the anger and despair of Britain's elite at the decision by the majority of voters in Britain to leave the European Union (6/24/2016).

For British capitalism in particular, it is a terrible defeat. If there is another vote for independence in Scotland, it could lead to the breakup of the United Kingdom, and it could also mean the collapse of the Tory Party, once among the most successful capitalist parties on the planet.

Many of the seventeen million people who voted for exit, however, will have woken up with a sense of elation at being able to express their rage at everything they have suffered as a result of big business making the working class pay for the economic crisis in recent years: low pay, zero-hour contracts, benefit cuts, the lack of affordable housing, and public services cut to the bone.

What is more, by voting in this way, they have forced Cameron – the hated prime minister – to announce his resignation.

Not only in Britain, but across Europe, many workers have been inspired by this vote against the bosses' EU.

In response to the referendum result, the financial markets are in upheaval, with sterling plunging to its lowest levels for thirty



The public transit union RMT was one of the few unions to take a stand against EU austerity and call for a leave vote.

years. The gyrations of the financial markets will not necessarily be immediately reflected in a new crisis in the "real" economy, either in Britain or worldwide. However, the referendum debate has been used to distract from the signs of a new stage of economic crisis for both UK and world capitalism that is developing regardless of Brexit, and which can be added to by the shockwaves caused by the referendum result.

## Project Fear

During the referendum "Project Fear" reached gigantic proportions. Economic catastrophe, a third world war, and the fear of an increase in racism and intolerance were all used to try and browbeat voters into supporting "Remain." Legitimate fears around these issues were major factors in why 48% of people did decide to vote for Remain. In particular, it appears that a majority of young people voted Remain partly because of fears that racism would grow if there was a vote for exit.

Nonetheless, it is incredible the number of people who voted for "Leave" and used the referendum as an opportunity to oppose the undemocratic, remote EU and to protest, ignoring threats from the leaders of all of Britain's establishment parties.

Without doubt, the dangerous atmosphere whipped up by right-wing politicians during the referendum debate has increased the danger of racist and far-right attacks. But it was not only the racism of the official Leave side, but also the constant attacks on migrants by Cameron. Regardless of the outcome of the referendum, it would have been equally necessary for the workers' movement to stand clearly for unity, against racism, and in defense of the rights of migrant workers in Britain.

At the same time, it is completely false to

suggest that the exit vote had – in the main – a right-wing or racist character. Of course, some of those who voted for exit will have done so for racist or nationalist reasons, but the fundamental character of the exit vote was that it was a working-class revolt.

Particularly with a referendum, where voters are given a binary "yes or no" choice, there are bound to be different motivations among people who voted on both sides. No working-class movement is 100% pure, completely without reactionary elements or sub-currents. It is the job of socialists to see what is primary – in this case a largely working-class electoral uprising against the establishment.

With the exception of Scotland and Northern Ireland, there was a correlation between the amount of poverty in an area and there being a majority for exit. However, in England and Wales it was not only white working-class areas, but also more ethnically diverse working-class areas that voted to leave.

While the scale of immigration became a central issue in the referendum campaign, for the majority this was, in the main, not about opposing people who have come to Britain from other countries. Instead, it was based on experience of employers using any means they can – including workers from other countries – to drive down wages, plus anger at the huge cuts that have taken place to public services and fear that these services could not cope with a further increase in the population.

The Socialist Party explained that we are against the bosses' EU, which acts in the interests of the 1%, but in favor of workers' solidarity across the continent and standing for a voluntary socialist confederation of Europe.

This has to be linked to a struggle for a £10 an hour minimum wage and opposition

to cuts in public services as the only way to defend the rights of all workers, regardless of their country of origin.

The complete absence of a mass working-class voice in the referendum has left the ground free for the ex-Tory, ex-stockbroker Nigel Farage to falsely pose as the voice of the "little people." In reality, of course, the divisive Little Englander ideas of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) offer no way forward for working-class people. Yet this does not guarantee that UKIP and their ilk will be the gainers from the Brexit.

A clear call now for an immediate general election could still lead to the coming to power of a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government, especially if an anti-austerity program is put forward.

At the same time, the trade union movement needs to go on the offensive against this weak and divided Tory government, fighting for a 24-hour general strike to be called against any new threats of austerity in the wake of Brexit.

Of course, for big business in Britain a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government is a nightmare they will do their utmost to avoid, fearing the huge expectations it would raise among working-class people who have suffered years of austerity.

## Fight Austerity

The capitalist class is facing a crisis; they are fumbling around to try and find parties that can act reliably in their interests.

But while the capitalist class is in chaos, it is urgent that the working class find its own political voice. The referendum result shows the enormous potential for a mass fight-back against austerity in Britain. The task is to create a mass political party capable of leading such a fight-back, politically armed with socialist policies. ☘

# Socialist Alternative Convention Marks Huge Step Forward

Tom Crean

On June 11-13, over 220 members of Socialist Alternative (SA) gathered near Denver, Colorado for our twelfth national convention. The convention gathered elected delegates from 33 branches in 20 cities, as well as observers from around the country. Every geographical area of the country was represented – from the Northeast to the Southwest. The convention reflected the increasing diversity of our membership but especially its youthful, dynamic character. What was striking was the focus and seriousness of the delegates, many of whom were attending their first convention, over three long days of discussion and voting.

In the wake of the re-election of Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant as a Seattle city councilmember; the politicization and radicalization of millions through Occupy, Black Lives Matter, and Bernie Sanders' campaign; and Socialist Alternative tripling in membership in just three years, the convention marked a qualitative turning point in the redevelopment of Marxism as a serious force in the United States. While there is a huge space for the creation of a new, broad left party of the 99% – which Socialist Alternative supports and assists in all serious steps in this direction – there is also enormous potential to develop a distinct, clearly socialist force of thousands that will be essential to the success of a new broad party and to the rebuilding of a fighting labor movement. Socialist Alternative is clearly poised to build that force, standing in solidarity with socialists in 45 countries around the world united in the Committee for a Workers International (CWI).

## Crisis of Global Capitalism

The opening session of the convention was “The Crisis of Global Capitalism: World Relations and the Stage of the Class Struggle,” with an introduction by Tony Saunois, Secretary of the CWI. Saunois described the imminent prospect of another deep global recession against the backdrop of an obscene concentration of wealth. Capitalism has been exposed as a completely bankrupt system, and the mass of the working class hates neoliberalism.

Focusing to a large degree on important recent developments in Europe, what has been lacking in the past period is leadership from the labor movement, either against austerity or during the refugee crisis. This has opened the door to the right in a number of countries. In Greece, the left party Syriza, led by Alexis Tsipras, betrayed the Greek working class despite a magnificent movement, including 30 general strikes, to resist the austerity



Over 220 people participated in Socialist Alternative's 2016 National Convention.

diktats of the IMF, the EU, and the Bundesbank. Important sections of the left, including in Spain and Portugal, are trying to learn the lessons of the Syriza betrayal, including that future left governments will have to be prepared to take serious measures as part of breaking with the austerity agenda, including leaving the eurozone.

However, in Britain, the new left leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, squandered a brilliant opportunity to decisively defeat the right-wing government in the Brexit referendum. (See article p. 4.)

What is also striking is the redevelopment of the class struggle in recent weeks in France and Belgium in the teeth of an “anti-terrorist” crackdown. Contrary to all the propaganda about the “end” of the working class as a distinct force in society, the class struggle will keep coming back as the only way to defend the interests of ordinary people. The discussion covered developments in Mexico, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, South Africa, and Nigeria. Later, Saunois gave a report on the work of the CWI: many sections are making decisive contributions to the redevelopment of the workers' movement and a fighting left.

## U.S. Perspectives

In the U.S., the enormous dislocation caused by the neoliberal offensive against working people was exacerbated by the profound crisis of the system beginning in 2008-09. Now, the international economic situation, as well as the weakness of the economic recovery in the U.S., points to a coming recession, although it is very difficult to be precise about the timing of this.

Massive social polarization and unprecedented levels of inequality have led to an overall shift to the left in consciousness and a sharp political polarization. This is especially true among young people. The institutions of capitalism face a deep crisis of legitimacy. But the discussion at the convention also

underlined that we have to see the limitations of this shift in that it follows a whole historic period when class consciousness was thrown back internationally and in the U.S.

The labor movement has been in retreat since the '80s, but the convention noted that there are important signs of life, most significantly the Verizon strike – the biggest strike in at least half a decade – which ended in a victory for this strategic workforce. The convention also drew a partial balance sheet on Black Lives Matter, which has represented the most significant radicalization of black youth since the '70s. The movement is entering a new phase where the challenge will be to build a sustained struggle rooted in all the day-to-day issues facing the black working class and linked to a wider movement challenging the domination of society by the corporate elite.

No matter who is elected president in 2016, the next period will be one of increasing social unrest, with the potential for serious fight-backs by young people, women, and immigrant



*“When we engage in a movement, we are not there simply to be part of the movement, but we have a definite set of ideas of what will be required to win victories. Intervening means how can we have an active, intentional approach to bring forward the ideas and strategies of socialism to help the working class advance their struggles.”*

*- Teddy Shibabaw, Madison, WI*

workers as well as the ongoing struggle against environmental catastrophe. At a certain point, all of these strands could coalesce into a much more extensive mass movement – especially if sections of the working class begin to organize and fight. But clearly, up until now working and young people have found it easier to express their discontent, their opposition to the establishment and to neoliberalism, on the political plane than through the class struggle in the workplaces. Both Sanders and Trump, the latter in a distorted way, are expressions of this revolt. Sanders' campaign shows the potential for building a new political force of the 99%. But his campaign was contradictory because he accepted the framework of the pro-corporate Democratic Party, which is a decisive roadblock.

The convention then discussed the U.S. presidential election. Delegates overwhelmingly affirmed their support for the engaged approach Socialist Alternative took toward the Sanders campaign. Going forward, Socialist Alternative will seek to use Jill Stein's campaign as a rallying point for those who want to continue the political revolution against the billionaire class.

In the last session before voting, the convention heard reports from different areas and discussed the way forward to build Socialist Alternative. (Read more on pages 6 and 7.)

In the end, it is hard to overstate the impact of this convention on all those who attended. It will certainly be remembered as a turning point and, in reality, it marked a transformation. The organization that arrived in Denver was not the same as the one that left, and the change was very much to the good. ✪



*“The debates we are having really force you to see the potential of the coming period. ... Right now, Socialist Alternative is really well-positioned in the left, but we are going to face difficulties. In the U.S., with the rapidly changing political situation, the entire left will be tested. This convention allows us to consolidate ourselves into a force that can really lead the struggles in the coming period.”*

*- Cora Bergantiños, NYC*

# American Capitalism

The following is the conclusion section of the key document on U.S. perspectives which was agreed by the National Convention of Socialist Alternative in June. The full document is now available online at [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org).

In developing perspectives, Marxists help to draw out a clear, conscious understanding of the historic, revolutionary shifts taking place that are the background to understanding the current political situation. These include the end of the American Dream, a crisis of legitimacy of capitalism and its institutions, and a weakening of the position of U.S. imperialism.

## Economic Crisis and the End of the “American Dream”

Historically, the relative stability of U.S. capitalism has rested upon the material foundation of rapid economic growth that delivered rising living standards for decisive sections of the working and middle classes. This was etched into the American psyche as the “American Dream.” The dynamic growth of the U.S. economy allowed the capitalists to provide enough concessions to maintain political stability and help cut across developments toward a mass workers party or socialist movement. This was the material basis for “American exceptionalism” and the two-party system of big business.

This era is now over, marking a fundamental change in U.S. society. Since the 1970s, there has been a historic transfer of wealth from labor to capital, leading to an intense polarization of society. It is increasingly recognized that today’s youth will have a lower standard of living than their parents. This historical pivot, the end of the American Dream, started in the 1970s with the end of the postwar boom and the beginning of the neoliberal offensive. The full effects of this, however, were partially masked by the growing entrance of women into the workforce, the extension of consumer credit, and the housing bubble. The 2008 crash has brought this new reality home sharply.

Integral to this process has been the shattering of the postwar architecture of labor relations. There is a huge low-wage workforce which makes up a key section of the U.S. working class, especially young workers. The era of the limited “labor peace” that existed during the postwar period has been replaced with a more brutal and direct form of class conflict. Union density in the private sector has fallen from a high point of 34% in the 1940s to 6.7% today. Half of states are now “right to work.” Sections of the ruling class no longer



With 45,000 workers out, the Verizon strike was the largest in decades.

see the need for the buffer of a union bureaucracy. This is laying the basis for less-controllable social explosions by removing a key safety valve in the form of the class collaborationist union leaders.

This is part of a deep-rooted international trend. A stunning 2016 Oxfam report stated, “In 2015, just 62 individuals had the same wealth as 3.6 billion people – the bottom half of humanity. This figure is down from 388 individuals as recently as 2010. The wealth of the richest 62 people has risen by 45% in the five years since 2010 – that’s an increase of more than half a trillion dollars (\$542 billion), to \$1.76 trillion. Meanwhile, the wealth of the bottom half fell by just over a trillion dollars in the same period – a drop of 38%.”

## Crisis of Legitimacy for Capitalism and Its Institutions

This deep polarization of society is accompanied by a crisis of capitalist rule - an ideological failure of capitalism and a crisis of legitimacy of the main institutions of U.S. society.

Most stunning is the discrediting of capitalism and the growth in support for socialism given the U.S.’s role as the bastion of global capitalism and its long history of deeply ingrained anti-socialist propaganda. Precisely because of its history as America’s continuously lauded state religion, capitalism is now taking the blame for all its associated evils: Wall Street fraud, stagnant wages, home foreclosures, and health insurance companies that

don’t pay claims. In a striking parallel to the process in Eastern Europe in 1989, though in reverse, an alienated populace has evidently concluded that, if socialism is anti-capitalism, it must be better than the failing system they are living under.

These historic and sweeping declines in the broad outlook of the American people toward the key institutions of U.S. capitalism are an expression of a deeper political crisis for the U.S. ruling class. Over the past period, the political system has become increasingly dysfunctional and unresponsive to the needs of capitalism as well as the needs of working people.

This dysfunctionality of the political system for the ruling class is expressed most sharply by the increasingly unhinged character of the Republican Party. We have traced out in our material how the Republican Party has, on a number of issues, failed to act in the strategic interests of U.S. capitalism due to political or ideological factors, such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the threatened debt default, the refusal to reach a “grand compromise” with Obama in 2011 that would have enacted key neoliberal reforms, and the impeachment of Clinton in 1998. At the same time, we have seen a tremendous timidity by the Democratic Party in response to the Republicans’ unbalanced policies.

We have also seen an increasingly brazen and partisan Supreme Court carrying out a right-wing agenda, most glaringly in their 5-4 decision in 2000 to hand the presidency to

George W. Bush by refusing to allow a ballot recount in Florida. This was also followed by another 5-4 decision in the 2010 Citizens United case, legalizing the naked domination of billionaires over the political process. The liberal minority in its dissent astutely warned of the tremendous damage being done to the legitimacy of bourgeois democracy, a core ingredient in gaining the consent of the oppressed, when they argued that the ruling “threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation ... [and] will do damage to this institution. A democracy cannot function effectively when its constituent members believe laws are being bought and sold.”

## Crisis of U.S. Imperialism

Compounding the economic and political crises of U.S. imperialism is the relative decline of U.S. imperialism. There is no doubt that the U.S. remains by far the top global power economically, militarily, and strategically. But its domination is declining, and world events are increasingly beyond its control.

It is hard to overstate the significance – for U.S. power, prestige, and for the psychology of the American people – of the greatest imperialist power in world history utterly failing to win the Iraq War and, instead, triggering an unending disaster throughout the Middle East. This follows on from the drawn-out quagmire in Afghanistan and the decisive U.S. defeat in Vietnam. There is far less willingness in the population to support military adventures, with an “Iraq Syndrome” reinforcing the “Vietnam Syndrome.” This series of defeats has created serious complications for the U.S. to engage in future major wars that are not seen as directly needed to defend the American people.

The growing inability of the U.S. to control world events has been underlined by the September 11 terrorist attacks, the chaos in the Middle East, the civil war in Syria and the rise of ISIS, growing tensions with Russia and China, weakening U.S. domination over Latin America, an inability to manage climate change, and increasingly unstable world relations.

Underlying these developments is a relative weakening of the economic position of U.S. imperialism. Once the world’s largest creditor nation, it is now the largest debtor nation. Up until the 1980s the U.S. was a net creditor, exporting capital around the world. Since then, the US has become a debtor, relying on investment and loans from its rivals.

## Historic Opening for Socialists

The material for this convention has

# o Rebuild the Workers and Socialist Movements

# talism In Crisis

## Society Moving Left

extensively described the huge changes in consciousness in U.S. society, the growth of struggle in the past period; and the perspective for even wider social upheaval in coming years. Within these overall processes, we must again stress the critical importance of the radicalization and growth in support for socialism among young people.

While having no illusions about the limited character of this new socialist understanding, there is no doubt that this is a historic conquest and massive leap forward for the U.S. working class given the hostility and poison created during the Cold War against “socialism.” It represents an enormous opportunity to build a new, broad socialist movement. Marxists must seize on this interest and desire to learn about socialism to build their forces by positively explaining genuine socialism.

The basis now exists for the emergence of a broad socialist movement in the U.S. in the next period, especially among students and youth. However, the huge gap between the general interest and the very small size of the forces that are consciously working to capitalize on this interest creates big complications and can delay its development. But it also provides a unique opportunity for Socialist Alternative to punch above its weight and have a disproportionate impact as a cohesive force that understands the potential and can confidently offer a program and strategy to build around.

Overall, we can expect – relatively quickly over the next few years – the further development of social movements, a broad left, and steps towards independent left politics. These will contain a multitude of different trends, with reformist and populist ideas likely to initially dominate. There will also, inevitably, be anarchist and ultra-left trends. The ability of these broader developments to win and conquer new ground will depend both on objective factors but also, critically, the policies, strategy, and tactics they adopt, which will be determined by a political struggle within these formations.

Alongside these broader developments, the objective space exists for the construction of a small Marxist party of three to five or even ten thousand members over the next few years. Such a force, a party based on the genuine ideas of Marxism and Trotskyism, would be able to act as a powerful pole of attraction that could be at the forefront of the left wing of the broader struggles and political formations that will develop. It can play a critical role in arming the left of these movements and parties with the necessary analysis, program, and strategy to make a decisive difference in their development. ☛

*The following is from a longer section in the perspectives document about the overall shift to the left in U.S. society. We see this as the dominant trend. Of course, this does not mean that, in the context of sharp political polarization, some sections of the population couldn't be pulled to the right, as we see in the growth of xenophobia among a minority.*

A new Harvard University survey of young adults between ages 18 and 29 found that 51 percent of respondents do not support capitalism, while just 42 percent said they support it. Thirty-three percent said they supported socialism. A subsequent survey that included people of all ages found that somewhat older Americans are also skeptical of capitalism. Socialism is most strongly supported by 18- to 20-year-olds (41%), Democrats (50%), African Americans (39%), and Hispanics (38%).

Commenting on these results, *The Washington Post* wrote: “Although the results are startling, Harvard’s questions accord with other recent research on how Americans think about capitalism and socialism. In 2011, for example, the Pew Research Center found that people ages 18 to 29 were frustrated with the free-market system. In that survey, 46 percent had positive views of capitalism, and 47 percent had negative views — a broader question than what Harvard’s pollsters asked, which was whether the respondent supported the system. With regard to socialism, by contrast, 49 percent of the young people in Pew’s poll had positive views, and just 43 percent had negative views” (4/26/2016).

John Della Volpe, the polling director at Harvard, said the figures are an indicator of a lack of trust that young Americans have that extends to “the very premise of how our country’s organized.” Della Volpe “went on to personally interview a small group of young people about their attitudes toward capitalism to try to learn more. They told him that capitalism was unfair and left people out despite their hard work” (*The Washington Post*, 4/26/2016).

“The word ‘capitalism’ doesn’t mean what it used to,” said Zach Lustbader, a senior at Harvard involved in conducting the poll. For those who grew up during the Cold War, capitalism meant freedom from the Soviet Union and other totalitarian regimes. For those who grew up more recently, capitalism has meant a financial crisis from which the global economy still hasn’t completely recovered. Lustbader said the darkening mood on capitalism is evident in the way politicians talk about the economy. When Republicans — long the champions of free enterprise — use the word

‘capitalism’ these days, it’s often to complain about ‘crony capitalism,’ he said,” (*The Washington Post*, 4/26/16).

This “socialist” consciousness is limited and is not as fleshed out as Socialist Alternative’s understanding. It represents a searing anger at Wall Street and the super-rich, a discrediting of capitalism, along with a notion of a more just redistribution of wealth. It is strongly associated with support for increased public services, universal health care, free college education, and higher wages along the lines of the traditional European welfare state.

### Crisis of Legitimacy for Establishment Institutions

The discrediting of capitalism goes hand in hand with a broader public contempt for the political establishment and discontent with the general state of the country. The Pew Research Center found “overall confidence in the future of the U.S. is ... substantially lower than during the 1970s. [Today,] just 38% of those younger than 30 have ‘quite a lot of confidence’ in the future of the U.S., the lowest of any age group,” (*People-Press.org*, 11/23/2015).

The Pew Report found, “The public’s trust in the federal government continues to be at historically low levels. Only 19% of Americans today say they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right ‘just about always’ (3%) or ‘most of the time’ (16%).” This is down dramatically from the all-time high in 1964, when 77% of the public said they could trust the federal government to do the right thing nearly always or most of the time, (*People-Press.org*, 11/23/2015).

From *Gallup.com*: “Congress is the institution in which Americans express the least confidence this year, with 8% doing so, one point above its 7% rating last year – the lowest Gallup has ever measured for any institution,” (6/15/2015). Confidence in the presidency is also at historical lows, with only 33% of Americans expressing confidence in it compared to a historical average of 43%.

“Americans’ confidence in most major institutions has been down for many years as the nation has dealt with prolonged wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a major recession and sluggish economic improvement, and partisan gridlock in Washington ... Americans’ confidence in all institutions over the last two years has been the lowest since Gallup began systematic updates of a larger set of institutions in 1993 ... Today’s confidence ratings of Congress, organized religion, banks, the Supreme Court and the presidency show the greatest deficits compared with their historical averages, all running at least 10 points below that mark,” (6/15/2015).

However, the surveys also point to important reservoirs of support for the establishment. The military had the highest-rated ranking of all institutions, with 72% confidence, up from a historical average of 68%. Second was small business, with 67% confidence, up from a historical average of 63%. And while confidence in the church and police had fallen, they still remained relatively high overall. It is also notable that the decline in authority of key institutions extends to organized labor, with the poll finding only 24% expressing confidence in organized labor, down from 26% historically, (*Gallup.com*, 6/15/2015). ☛



Calling himself a socialist, Bernie Sanders got millions of votes and raised millions of small donations.

Socialist Alternative Pride 2016 Statement

# End Hate, War, and Poverty

*Below is the text of the leaflet that Socialist Alternative distributed at Pride events around the country.*

The LGBTQIA community lost 49 of our sisters and brothers this month in the horrific attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. As we celebrate Pride, we do so with a spirit of mourning but also of renewed resistance.

The attack on Pulse was carried out in a place that was transformational for individuals and foundational for communities. It was Latin night at Pulse – important to remember, as many queer people of color and immigrants struggle to find inclusion amidst the narrow, often white-oriented “gay” norms in society. The Latin night was meant to be a refuge where people could find a community and be true to themselves. What happened that awful Sunday morning was a heartless destruction of queer lives and an attack on a particular queer community at its very core.

Worsening the situation, Donald Trump and right-wing reactionaries are now attempting to make the homophobic killing of 49 people, 90% of whom were Black and/or Latinx LGBTQIA people, about so-called “radical Islamic terror.” This is a completely brazen attempt to connect 1.6 billion Muslims to the hateful acts of networks and organizations of reactionary extremists. All over the country, LGBTQIA people and organizations are standing up against Islamophobia, aware that our Muslim brothers and sisters are not the enemy – they are us!

At the same time, Hillary Clinton used the attack to bang the war drum for “hardening our defenses” and announce that she’s not afraid to say “radical Islam,” only adding fuel to the fire of Islamophobia that conservative leaders have set burning in our country.

## Right-Wing Counterattacks

Given the attacks that have rocked our community this month, it is hard to believe that, only one year ago, we celebrated the victory of marriage equality across the United States. But since marriage equality, LGBTQIA people have faced an enormous backlash. In addition to the horror in Orlando, our trans and gender-nonconforming communities have been under direct attack, led by the sexist and transphobic Republican establishment. The discriminatory and dangerous anti-trans bathroom bills being debated and signed into law across the country – notoriously exemplified by H.B. 2 in North Carolina – must be resisted and defeated.

Although Republicans are leading the onslaught, we must remember that the Democratic Party has never been a reliable



Seattle Socialist Alternative's stall at Seattle Pride, 2016.

advocate for the LGBTQIA community. Eleven Democrats in North Carolina voted for H.B. 2. Hillary Clinton only endorsed marriage equality in 2013! She also supported DOMA, which prohibited the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages for the purposes of federal programs and benefits. At the time, LGBTQIA critics called it discriminatory, yet the Clintons pushed it through. Hillary says they did so because “there was enough political momentum to amend the Constitution of the United States of America” to prevent same-sex marriage altogether. *The Washington Post* rated that claim “Four Pinocchio’s” for its dishonesty.

Bathroom bills are based on lies about the danger of women being attacked in bathrooms by transgender women. In reality, it is men’s rooms that are dangerous for trans women. Madeleine Gauss, a trans woman from Raleigh who testified at the North Carolina hearing, explained, “I can’t use the men’s room. I won’t go back to the men’s room. It is unsafe for me there. People like me die there.” But H.B. 2 was also a broad attack on LGBTQIA people: It repeals nondiscrimination ordinances protecting LGBTQIA people, even though polling shows Americans overwhelmingly favor such protections.

The highest recorded number of reported murders of trans women in the United States in a single year was in 2015. We refuse to forget that the trans community has heroically led LGBTQIA struggle since its modern inception, epitomized by the week of riots in front of the Stonewall Inn in 1969. It was drag queens and trans women of color – like Miss Major, Sylvia Rivera, and Marsha P. Johnson – who led the fight-back at Stonewall, not a fictional, whitewashed protagonist thrown up

by Hollywood’s 2015 film *Stonewall* to erase trans activists and drag queens from our own history. And it is trans activists who, today, are leading the way in struggle. The entire LGBTQIA community must stand shoulder to shoulder to defeat transphobic attacks!

## Rebuild the LGBTQIA Rights Movement

For too many years, Pride has meant corporate-led parades and celebrations that prioritize the lives and experiences of middle-class, white, and cisgender gay men while failing to take forward the fight for full equality for working-class and less visible LGBTQIA people.

LGBTQIA people are finding their strength at this dark time. Together with all working people, we can rise up to confront the hate and defeat it. Politically, we must continue to build fighting organizations and directly confront this system of capitalism that generates bigotry, fear, and violence.

We must link the special oppressions LGBTQIA people face with the broader inequality plaguing the whole international working class. The issue of access to pre-exposure prophylaxis to fight HIV is a question of accessibility to universal, nonjudgmental health care: We need a full Medicare for all system. The need for

affordable housing or a \$15 an hour minimum wage is more acute for LGBTQIA people, who receive unequal pay for equal work and high rates of discrimination in housing, wages, and hiring. Of course we need stronger laws in place to end these types discrimination; however, even that is not enough. Capitalism thrives on pitting worker against worker so that the boss can make a bigger profit. The only way to end exploitation is for all workers, regardless of gender identity, race, or sexual orientation, to unite and defeat the bosses, the capitalist class, the 1%. We don’t need more gay millionaires; we need a new LGBTQIA liberation movement helping lead the socialist movement and fighting alongside other movements for liberation, higher living standards, and a socialist future!

## What We Call For

Socialist Alternative calls for building a powerful and organized movement from below to confront and stop homophobia and transphobia in all its forms: hate crimes, anti-trans bathroom bills, housing and wage discrimination, and extrajudicial killings by the police, particularly of trans women of color and sex workers. But even this is not enough. We must also link our struggles with a broader working-class program completely opposed to all forms of oppression.

Socialist Alternative calls for dismantling the decaying and oppressive system of capitalism and building a new system of democratic socialism, fought for with a bold anti-discrimination, working-class program that speaks to all LGBTQIA people. We must also stand up against rising Islamophobia that unfairly attempts to tar our Muslim brothers and sisters with guilt for the actions of violent extremists. Together, all working-class people can build a world free of discrimination, where LGBTQIA people are safe, healthy, and free. Another world is possible! ✪



The historic Stonewall Inn in New York City is now a national monument.

15 Now Launches Initiative Against Business Opposition

# Minneapolis Workers Submit 20,000 Signatures for \$15

Ginger Jentzen

On the heels of recent national victories for a \$15 minimum wage across the country, Minneapolis workers delivered 20,000 signatures in support of a \$15 minimum wage ballot initiative – nearly three times the number required – collected over just 9 weeks.

Over a hundred and fifty people, mainly volunteers, dedicated over 2,000 hours of their time to knock on doors in working class neighborhoods and campaign against poverty wages. The signature effort has been funded by ordinary people, harnessing much of the same energy as the Sanders campaign, with over 700 individual donors supporting \$15 on the ballot. 15 Now Minnesota, initially launched by Socialist Alternative in 2014, has built a powerful coalition – including worker centers like CTUL, community organizations like NOC, unions like the MNA and CWA, and faith and neighborhood organizations.

Gathering 20,000 signatures is only the first hurdle for the fight for \$15 an hour in Minneapolis. Some City Council members and the City Attorney have raised “concerns” about the legality of taking a Charter Amendment to voters. But local and national legal experts

recently weighed in with a legal memo rejecting that, saying the initiative is not only legal for Minneapolis, but a question of civil rights.

Going so far as to reference the “Brexiteer”, some City Council members have tried to skirt the issue by saying their opposition isn’t to the popular \$15 demand but instead to ballot initiatives in general and putting “hard decisions to the voters” (*Star Tribune*, 6/28/16). This is a last ditch effort by the Minneapolis establishment, dominated by the Democratic Party, to retain control over the process. It shows how the political class is increasingly out of touch with ordinary people, who are prepared to fight for their own interests and can’t wait any longer. It also shows the space to build a new party of the 99% that fights unapologetically for the demands of working people.

15 Now and others groups supporting the initiative aim to link up worker actions with mobilizing the wider community necessary to defend Minneapolis workers taking \$15 an hour into their own hands. A key aspect of our legal strategy is building a movement of working people who can stand up to the Chamber of Commerce lawyers and big business representatives that will throw millions into Minneapolis to



sow doubt in our legal standing and try to keep us off the ballot.

Gathering 20,000 petitions was a huge success, but getting \$15 onto the ballot and winning in November will require a massive mobilization of workers to force City Hall to back down. The Twin Cities are home to 17 Fortune 500 companies – the highest concentration in the country – yet also to the worst racial inequities in the nation. Big business has deep pockets, and will spend millions to protect their profits. Winning \$15 an hour in Minneapolis is possible. It would open the door to \$15 across the Midwest, but it’s going to take ordinary people dedicating time and money to ensure victory. When we organize, we can win! Get involved today. ✪

## Seattle University Student Occupation Forces Dean Ouster

Manuel Carrillo, Seattle U alumna

After years attempting to address the lack of an ethnically diverse curriculum, a need for cultural competency and hostile classrooms a group of Seattle University student’s calling themselves the MRC Student Coalition began a sit-in at the Matteo Ricci College’s administrative offices.

Matteo Ricci College presents itself as a rigorous, ivy-league-level humanities education within the university. Over the past decade, the curriculum of the college has been challenged by students for its euro-centrism, and Dean Kelly refused to even discuss it.

Enough was enough.

Students, backed up by a faculty fighting for union recognition and some professors who also testified to a hostile atmosphere, decided to occupy the Casey Building and demand the Dean of the Humanities department, Dean Kelly, was fired.

This sit-in united students and faculty at Seattle U, as well as students from around Seattle. It united movements for an ethnically diverse curriculum as well as the unionization effort for adjunct faculty. Seattle U is a private, Jesuit university for whom Dean Kelly was the face of its anti-union arguments.

Over the course of the sit-in, current and former faculty of the Matteo Ricci college shared their experiences voicing concerns only to be threatened, intimidated, and even fired. Students used the space to not only discuss the current fight against

the Dean but also the racist system that denied the dignity and humanity of LGBTQ students and students of color.

After sitting in for 22 days, Seattle University (Seattle U) students won a victory on their path to greater say in their curriculum at the University’s Matteo Ricci College, a humanities program for undergraduate students. Dean Jodi Kelly was put on administrative leave, and two days later, students secured the administration’s agreement to all their demands regarding curriculum review and proposals.

Once the sit-in started, the students used it to reach out to faculty, staff, and students. Among others, Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, once an adjunct at Seattle U, visited and discussed with students. Within days, students organized a march through campus of up to 200, and continued to attract attention from students, alumni, and faculty. Multiple articles were written in the local news, yet rarely presented students’ concerns fully or accurately.

The Seattle University sit-in reaffirms that “power concedes nothing without demand.” Students stood up and sat in to demand the education they deserved and won. This is an example to students everywhere and continues the student movement that includes ConcernedStudents1950 at Mizzou, and the students at Yale. In addition, the actions of the students reinvigorated the adjunct faculty’s union drive and brought many new adjuncts to the cause while raising the profile of the campaign. It shows, struggles build on struggles, and solidarity matters. ✪

## Fighting Back Against the KKK in the Heart of the Deep South

Mobile Bay Socialist Alternative

On June 18, Mobile Bay Socialist Alternative (MBSA) held a loud and proud rally against the Ku Klux Klan, who have been active in Mobile, Alabama and surrounding areas for the past year. Local citizens have been waking to find that members of the KKK had been skulking about in the dark hours of the morning, leaving recruitment fliers on doorsteps that called for a “cleansing” of the transgender “abomination.”

The flier also references the recent bathroom debate by suggesting that trans people use a “tree in the backyard” as a restroom. This appears to be an ominous reference to lynching people from a tree.

Following several of these midnight distributions of KKK recruitment fliers, all targeting the LGBTQ community as well as people of color, MBSA reached out to several regional and local activists and community leaders to organize a protest to boldly let the Klan know that they, and their poisonous ideas, are not welcome in Mobile. Dozens of people attended, despite the presence of a heavy rainstorm which threatened to overshadow the event. The event was organized to push back against the rising brazenness and militancy of the far-right white supremacist cancer, and to provide a voice and platform for people of color and trans activists.

MBSA member, Tyler Henderson, was quoted in a rawstory.org article and a Channel 15 TV story as saying, “The KKK seem to prefer to do their business in the dark and distribute these fliers in private, stalking around. We’re going to come out in broad daylight to raise our voices and tell them that they are not welcome in our town. They are not welcome, and they need to take their corrupt ideology back to the 19th century where it belongs.”

Turning to white supremacy is not the way out of the pressure cooker that the white working class finds itself in. Faced with dramatically falling living standards and increased exploitation, working-class people of all colors and genders must unite under a program of green jobs, economic justice and equality. Rather than working-class people fighting each other over a limited number of low-paying jobs and resources, we need to unite all working-class people to demand our share of the immense wealth being hoarded by the richest 1%.

MBSA urges all workers and young people in the South, and nationwide, to organize against white supremacy and work toward building an independent party for the 99%. Already, a group called Mississippi Rising contacted us and told us we inspired them to organize a KKK protest of their own in Mississippi!

- ✪ Down with bigotry and hatred!
- ✪ Tax the super-rich!
- ✪ Living-wage jobs and fully funded education for all!

We will not allow our communities to be intimidated by the KKK with threats of lynchings, violence, racism, or homophobia. Please support our on-going efforts to build a movement against the KKK in the South! ✪

Seven Day Strike in Twin Cities

# Working Class Support for Nurses Taking Stand against Allina

On June 19, 4,800 registered nurses from the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) at five Allina hospitals in the Twin Cities began a seven-day strike. Nurses are fighting to defend their insurance benefits, improve staffing, and have a seat at the table on hospital workplace violence committees. The other five hospital systems in the Twin Cities already settled a three-year contract with the MNA with no changes to benefits and a 2% wage increase each of the next three years (6% total). However, Allina decided it wanted to test the MNA and the nurses to see if they can push the nurses out of their “cadillac health plan” and their contract language which states that the hospital has to negotiate any diminishments to the plans with the union.

This attack on health insurance is almost certainly an opening volley in a wider offensive by the company against the union’s strength



Nurses’ picket line in St. Paul, Minnesota.

in the workplace and will in future negotiations include attacks on the pension as well, if Allina is allowed to succeed. Other area hospitals will be watching to see if Allina can break the MNA nurses, and, if they smell blood, they’ll be on the

attack in three years.

Health insurance is connected to work-life issues. Nurses have a right to take breaks each and every shift and work in a safe place without fear of assault, or fear of not being able to care for their patients

properly due to chronic short staffing. While facing risks like communicable diseases and assault in the workplace, it is very important for nurses to have quality health insurance. Everyone should have access to quality health insurance and no one should be bankrupted over an illness or injury.

The seven day strike was successfully used to highlight the importance of safe staffing for better patient care, playing a large part in winning public support to the side of nurses. Over the past period, MNA has effectively drawn the link between nurses’ working conditions and patient health. They have opposed budget and staff cuts which boost corporate profits at the expense of patient care. Along with National Nurses United, MNA stands for Medicare for all, a policy championed by Bernie Sanders and supported by millions of people. It shows how a strong labor

movement can represent the interests of working people generally.

The MNA is also actively supporting the fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, starting with the ballot initiative in Minneapolis. Winning \$15 an hour would give a raise to over 100,000 workers in Minneapolis, including thousands of health care workers and staff. It deepens the solidarity between nurses in Minneapolis and the community they treat, presenting a united front against the same corporate power which has devastated unions and working people generally.

On the picket lines, nurses were both excited by the feeling that we can fight back but also mad as hell at Allina. There was an understanding that this will probably not be the last strike before this contract is settled, and that the fight needs to continue. ✪

## Interview with an Activist

# Verizon Strike Ends in Victory

On June 17, the 39,000 workers in the CWA and IBEW unions at Verizon overwhelmingly ratified the contract which ended the biggest strike in recent U.S. history which lasted 45 days. Below is an update interview with CWA activist Jay Harrison, assessing the outcome.

### Was it a victory?

Yes. Everyone felt good coming back to work, confidence is high, the supervisors are demoralized, the company threw everything they had at us but we stood strong together and beat back their union busting demands. There were some concrete gains: a first contract for retail wireless workers, 1,500 new call center jobs, and making the many term employees permanent. The company got some flexibility in routing calls between centers but the work will stay union. Our medical costs are going to go up, but no one is surprised by that, it was just a matter of how much it would be. That’s just the world we live in today. As long as we are left to fight for

ourselves on issues like health care there is only so much room to push back, that’s why I think the unions should be 100% behind Medicare For All.

### What did it take to win?

I think that the huge public support was key, I’ve had lots of people come up to me on the street since the strike and congratulating us on a job well done, working class people were watching us and wanting something in the “win” column. The energy around Bernie Sanders campaign and the presidential primaries played a role as well. It was easy for folks to see our strike as part of the fight against the billionaire class. Verizon lost over \$200 million in sales because people were honoring our picket lines and boycott.

### How did the union support you?

This strike was an investment in the next generation, and worth every day of it, but it’s a real financial stress to be out of work for that long. We had a good strike fund built up, and donations were pouring in from individuals and other unions. CWA committed to

taking care of everyone’s necessary medical costs, and union offices were used as “community support centers” for members in need. Local Officers and Reps kept in touch with everybody, making sure everyone was ok financially as well as keeping things going, organizing picket lines, rallies and other actions.

### Do you have any other last thoughts?

There are real limits to the “one day longer” strategy the union pursued. Our hands were really tied by the all the rules on effective picketing, every creative tactic we came up with to go after the scabs was countered by Verizon and the courts. We adjusted and stayed active on the streets, and at least in Philly the scabs were afraid to work in the city, but if it wasn’t for the public and political support this could have ended differently. Now we have 3 years till the next contract and none of the economic pressures on Verizon or the Telecom industry have fundamentally changed. They will be back for more on 2019.

We won this strike but we have to recognize that we just struck for 45 days to hold the line. 45 days to keep what we had. 45 days for a status quo contract. We were not able to reverse any of the concessions from the 2012 contract, new workers still have no pension and are treated differently under the medical and retirement plans. We live in a world where enforcing your union contract is becoming a radical demand and where it takes a 45 day strike by 39,000 workers to get a first contract for seven retail wireless stores. This is the political environment we are dealing with.

But the most important thing is that thousands of workers just learned the lesson that fighting can lead to victories - but not fighting guarantees defeat. If a struggle raises the confidence of working people in their own collective power, it’s a step forward. We need to talk up the lessons of this strike to working people far and wide. Rebuilding a fighting labor movement is going to be complicated but this outcome is an encouragement to all those who want to organize and fight back. ✪

# Beyond Bernie

continued from p. 3

Hillary Clinton in office.

As I explained recently in *Jacobin*, collapsing our movement behind a neoliberal Democratic politician like Hillary Clinton would sabotage the political revolution, abandon the incredible momentum and energy we have built over the past year, and in the end would help right-wing populists to gain strength. It would effectively throw more fuel on the fire, because it is the genuine anger of middle and working class people at bipartisan and blatantly pro-corporate policies that has helped created the basis, in a distorted way, for Donald Trump in the first place. We need to present a clear pro-worker alternative. The most important task will be building powerful mass movements of working people and youth to fight boldly for our interests and against the disastrous system of capitalism. Occupy Wall Street, the Fight for 15, and Black Lives matter, all show what is possible, only we need to take the fight to a higher level and on a much greater scale.

But we cannot ignore the presidential race in a presidential election year. Concretely, the continuation of the political revolution after Sanders means supporting Jill Stein.

## The Next Five Months

If we take real stock of the situation, we have to recognize that Bernie said all along he was going to support the nominee of the Democratic Party. This was a fundamental contradiction built into his campaign when he launched it. When he chose to fight a political revolution against the billionaire class from within a party controlled by that same billionaire class, he also signaled his intent to support Wall Street's candidate if he wasn't able to defeat her in the rigged primary.

But leaving Bernie aside, a lot has been learned by Sandernistas along the way this last year.

An important minority, having experienced

both the successes and limits of the Sanders primary campaign, now sees clearly the corporate and corrupt character of the Democratic Party. They've witnessed a seemingly endless series of undemocratic events over the past months, as well as the exposure of a number of prominent "left" Democrats.

It says a great deal about the whole of the Democratic Party leadership – which claims that its key priority is to defeat Trump – that it has fiercely backed Clinton in spite of the fact that the polls have shown Sanders to be the far stronger candidate in every matchup.

Because of course the problem is much larger than just Warren, Clinton, or Debbie Wasserman Schultz. At the heart of the matter is a political party that is thoroughly undemocratic and corrupt to its very core – one that answers to Wall Street, not working people. It's the second most pro-capitalist party in the world, after the Republican Party.

If we are to break the stranglehold of corporate politics and stop the economic and environmental disaster they are creating, ordinary people will need to build a new mass party of our own – a party of the 99%. This is not optional. We will never win what we're fighting for without our own political organization that fights with us, rather than against us. Had it not been for the backing of my organization, Socialist Alternative, I would never have been elected and re-elected as a socialist in Seattle, because the Democratic Party has opposed me at every stage.

The next five months present a historic opportunity to build on what we've started and take a huge step in organizing the progressive forces prepared to take the next step. We simply can't afford to waste that.

With Bernie stepping out of the race, and likely endorsing Clinton, it will be up to us to continue the political revolution and to stand up against both Clintonism and Trumpism. ✪

# Fighting Trump and Right-Wing Populism

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Jill Stein of the Green Party whose program continues Bernie Sanders' political revolution.

If we don't do this, we leave the field clear for Trump (or future right populists) to exploit the anger and make gains for the right. The recent UK referendum on the EU (the Brexit) provides important lessons on this point.

Many people fear the victory of the Leave campaign in Britain shows Trump could win here. The Leave campaign was dominated by the right wing who made similar anti-immigrant arguments as Trump. But the truth is that while some working-class people responded primarily to these arguments others were voting against the undemocratic bosses' club that is the EU.

Contrary to endless propaganda in the media, the overall political direction in Britain is not to the right. In fact, anger at EU-led austerity fueled the stunning election of socialist Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader last year, along with growing protests. In the wake of Brexit, polls show growing support for a Corbyn-led Labour Party government.

Tragically the majority of the British left backed the establishment's Remain campaign. This left the field wide open for the right-wing to tap into the opposition to the EU and austerity. Socialist Alternative's sister party, the Socialist Party, campaigned for a Leave vote, as part of a broader battle to bring down the existing right-wing Tory government and fight austerity.

## Rise of Right Populism in the U.S.

The growth of the Tea Party in 2009 and 2010, seizing on the anger at Obama's bailouts of Wall Street, in a similar way reflected the failure of the left and the labor movement to lead any struggle against the capitalists' attacks on working people. The left largely supported Obama and the Democrats and allowed the Tea Party to make big gains.

It wasn't until Occupy Wall Street in 2011 – an independent movement – that anti-establishment anger was given a left-wing expression and the Tea Party was pushed back. This is the key point: independent mass movements, not the Democratic Party have been the key force in narrowing the space for right populism.

It's been Occupy, the Fight for 15, the Dreamers movement, Black Lives Matter, protests against the Keystone XL pipeline, the LGBTQ movement, and Bernie Sanders' insurgent campaign that has shifted the country to the left, not the Wall Street loyalists of the Democratic Party establishment.

Even if Hillary Clinton wins the presidency, her corporate policies will provide fuel for right-wing populism by disappointing progressive workers and youth. Already Hillary Clinton's supporters on the Democrats' Platform Committee have blocked opposition to the TPP and many other key pro-worker issues.

It will take independent movements of workers and youth around a clear pro-worker agenda to transform the anti-establishment mood into a force for far-reaching change. Supporting Clinton and the Democrats will not achieve this end. ✪

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# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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## Stop Trump and the Right Populist Threat



Patrick Ayers

**Donald Trump's stunning victory in the Republican primaries has raised the stakes of the 2016 election. Clinton is positioned to defeat him in November, but her corporate policies could fuel the next Trump. The key to stopping the racist right populist threat is the independent action of working people.**

Trump has blamed Mexicans, Muslims, and Black Lives Matter for problems created by billionaires like himself. Good jobs gone in the U.S.? It's not Wall Street's reckless greed, it's Mexico and China. Terrorism? It's not the destabilizing effects of US foreign policy, it's Islam.

He's attacked the Republican establishment, the media, free trade deals, and even boasted he would turn the Republicans into a "workers party." With a mix of racism and anti-establishment rhetoric, Trump has managed to capture a part of the growing populist anger in the U.S.

Of course, no crooked billionaire is going to solve the problems facing working people. His racism only divides us when history shows

that solidarity is an indispensable weapon against the establishment.

Already, Trump has given confidence to racist right-wing forces, and we can't wait for November to fight back.

We should build massive peaceful demonstrations that boldly stand against Trump's bigotry now, and link this to a pro-worker, anti-corporate agenda that can transform the lives of millions.

### Republicans in Crisis

Trump's success thus far points to deeper processes. As capitalism slides further into crisis, right populism can grow. Trump led a revolt of the GOP's base although the leadership could still attempt to block him at the Republican National Convention.

Trump is in one sense the Frankenstein monster created by decades of Republican racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. But, still, the traditional party leadership would much prefer dog whistle racism to Trump's bullhorn.

Their opposition is motivated by a fear their party – and the broader ruling class agenda

– is being seriously damaged by Trump. However, while his reactionary bluster might win a Republican primary and demonstrates the space for a more defined right populist force in the US, winning a general election on the basis of Trump's politics is a different matter.

A June *Washington Post/ABC* poll found more than 70% of the population has a negative view of Trump, including 94% of African Americans and 89% of Latinos.

Trump has the dubious honor of being the most disliked candidate of one of the two main big business parties in history.

### Hillary Clinton

Offsetting this however, is that Trump's opponent is the second-most disliked candidate in recent history. 55% of the country has a negative view of Hillary Clinton according to the June *Washington Post/ABC* poll.

Trump will no doubt attack Clinton at times from the left. Clinton supported the Iraq war – which Trump opposed – and she has historically been a fierce advocate for job-destroying corporate free trade deals, which

Trump has opposed on the campaign trail.

Many voters understandably see Clinton as the lesser evil particularly on issues like reproductive rights, immigration and the environment. But Clinton's close ties to Wall Street means that Trump can present himself to many white workers as a lesser evil. The Democrats' character as a big business party itself is a key reason why anger can end up being diverted toward right populism, if no clear pro-worker alternative is put forward.

Polls have consistently shown Bernie Sanders doing far better against Trump than Hillary. But the Democratic Party establishment would much prefer a Wall Street loyalist to a candidate who supports "political revolution against the billionaire class".

### Lessons of Brexit

Right populism will not be stopped in one election cycle but we can't let Trump be the sole anti-establishment voice this November. That is why Socialist Alternative is supporting

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