

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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# BEAT BACK REPUBLICAN ATTACKS



**BUILD FOR A  
SUMMER OF  
RESISTANCE**

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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.
- ✦ Fight discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community, and all forms of homophobia and transphobia.

## 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. ✦

# WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

## Leticia Parks Working Parent Seattle, WA

I am a socialist because I learned early on that even though our communities work hard and contribute to the wealth of this country they remain largely marginalized and oppressed by politicians and the billionaire class. As a socialist I have learned that as a working parent I still have a voice, my daughters have a voice and our strength comes from joining forces with local activists leading political actions to distribute wealth back into our communities.

Beyond my own personal choice to be a socialist, there is an urgent need to provide a solution to our growing inequality. For centuries, our most vulnerable communities have been exploited to create wealth that only the 1% benefits from. Here we are in the 21st century and our communities are still being exploited, criminalized and providing free labor while incarcerated or deported when they pose a risk to private corporations.

Our current two-party system is pitting us against each other rather than addressing our most urgent needs as a society. They continue to ignore our perpetual education debt and growing health bills.

More concerning was the reaction from the current "progressive" party telling us to "remain calm and give our new president a chance." Now ICE bulldozes through our neighborhoods terrorizing people of color and



separating families.

We, the working class face the same uncertain future and concerns with our current system. We all go to bed with the same worries, can we pay this month's rent? Can I pay my child's college? What will happen to my family if I require hospitalization? Or lose my job? Can I afford day care?

If we focus on fighting together for our common interests like free education, decent wages, health care access, paid parental leave, housing affordability we can change the political landscape to our favor.

Building a real opposition now in the U.S. requires joining up local and national movements into the strongest possible social and political force leading struggles and victories across the nation. Socialism is feared and demonized by the 1% because it gives the masses, ordinary people like me, the power to demand and restore equality and distribute wealth back to our communities. ✦

## The Push for Single-Payer Health Care in California

Hanna Burge

The defeat of Trumpcare was a devastating blow to the Republicans who have been on an anti-Obamacare tirade the past seven years, promising to repeal it as soon as the opportunity presented itself. The Trump era is that opportunity, but despite having control over the House, Senate, and White House, the Republican-backed bill could not get past its own party.

The battle over Trumpcare, the mass health care rallies organized by Bernie Sanders, and the growing debate around the need for affordable, high quality health care has led to the highest ever levels of support for a single-payer system. Working people know that they deserve something better, and 60% of Americans now support single-payer.

The discussion has exposed the reality that while a large majority firmly rejected Trumpcare, most are also unsatisfied with the status quo of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). While the expansion of Medicaid was a real step forward, for people in the insurance exchanges, the experience was not so good. Like a hospital gown that barely keeps you covered, the ACA leaves you exposed when and where you really need it. Skyrocketing premiums, high copayments and deductibles force many to decide between medical bills and food, while leaving 27 million uninsured.

In California, a growing collection of progressive groups have coalesced around a push for a single-payer style, state-level system. Campaign for Healthy California, All-Care Alliance, Labor for Single Payer, California Nurses Association, and many other groups have come together to introduce a single-payer bill, SB 562, to the state senate.

The bill has come about as the culmination of grassroots activism, and would create a state run agency to guarantee health care for all residents, while eliminating premiums, copays, deductibles, coinsurance, and regulate cost controls. Unfortunately, California Governor Jerry Brown does not support single-payer, and the opposition of corporate Democratic leaders is a major obstacle to SB 562 going forward.

The struggle for truly affordable and universal health care will require building a powerful movement prepared to stand up to the wealthy insurance and pharmaceutical lobbies, for whom single-payer is a hostile attack on their profits. But the fight for single-payer also provides an opportunity, because it can unite working class people around a demand that can make a fundamental difference in their lives - undermining support for both the vicious Republican agenda and corporate Democratic politics, while beginning to build a working-class political alternative, independent of corporate money and power. ✦

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# Trump Administration Damaged and Unpredictable

Calvin Priest

A damaged Trump administration continues to search for a way forward from the series of humiliating defeats it has suffered in its first months in power. These setbacks, and in particular the collapse of Republican healthcare plans, have also fundamentally undermined Trump's ability to make progress on key parts of his and the Republican Party's agenda.

The ongoing wave of mass protests since Trump's inauguration have underscored the complete lack of a mandate for his right wing policies, while the defeat of Trumpcare and the Muslim ban, as well as the departure of key cabinet appointments under pressure, have shown that the Trump agenda can be beaten back. When Trumpcare was killed on March 24, it had been reduced to just 17% support in the polls following opposition in town hall meetings and at rallies around the country. Trump's approval ratings followed suit, hitting a new low of 35% in the days after the defeat, worse than Richard Nixon's during the Watergate hearings.

Increasing sections of the Republican base are now deeply disappointed, as was reflected in the collapse in the Republican vote in the Kansas and Georgia special elections for vacant House seats.

But while Trump is down, he is not out. And there are few things more dangerous than a bully who is bruised and backed into a corner.

The situation remains contradictory and unpredictable. Trump is continuing to forge ahead with some of the most reactionary parts of his domestic agenda. For example, Attorney General Jeff Sessions is preparing to abandon consent decrees with various cities to let cops off the leash and re-boot the war on drugs and at some point the administration will seek to more decisively criminalize political dissent.

Meanwhile, Trump's defeats which have intensified the crisis in his administration, have also pushed him in many areas toward policies more acceptable to the Republican establishment and the ruling elite, though also deeply hostile towards the working class.

## Foreign Policy Turn

Trump is increasingly looking to recast his presidency as that of a strong commander in chief who is not afraid to reassert American military might. The airstrikes in Syria and overall shift of the administration's approach away from isolationism was preceded by a



Trump meets with CEOs on April 12.

shakeup in the National Security Council with white nationalist and "America First" ideologue Stephen Bannon taken off the body and "hawkish" mainstream advisers and generals promoted.

Trump's missile strike on Syria marked a sharp shift from Trump's earlier position. Trump had long maintained that he was against intervention in Syria, and greater involvement in the region. Shortly after his election he said, "My attitude was you're fighting Syria, Syria is fighting Isis, and you have to get rid of Isis." Assad in turn called Trump a "natural ally."

The attack is also part of a change in Trump's approach to Russia, the major power behind Assad's regime. As socialists, we completely oppose the vicious dictatorship in Syria, but we also oppose the long history of brutal interventions by U.S. and Western governments in the Middle East, which have led to the rise of ISIS and are the main source of the crisis in the region.

But Trump's attack had nothing to do with outrage over civilian casualties and everything to do with getting him off the defensive in terms of his domestic defeats and by countering the ongoing media stories and investigation around his links to Russia.

Equally striking are developments in East Asia. Trump's recent pivot on China is almost as dramatic as his pivot on Russia. Trump has now abandoned his claim that China is a currency manipulator after already backing off on his threat to abandon the "One China" policy that recognizes Taiwan as part of China. The Chinese regime is in turn prepared to make a few concessions to avert an

enormously damaging trade war with the U.S. that would be disastrous for the whole world economy.

But the administration's threats toward North Korea could inflame relations with China, which sees the moves against the country as a threat to its authority in the region.

While nervous about many of these developments, leading Democrats, and the corporate media broadly support both Trump's attack on Syria, his shifting position toward Putin and the tough talk about North Korea. They are happy to see a move away from his avowed isolationist policy, and toward the neoliberal establishment view of Russia. They are also pleased by the quiet abandonment of Trump's protectionist threat to rip up trade agreements with China and Mexico. As socialists, we oppose both the continuation of neoliberal corporate trade policy and protectionist trade wars. We stand instead for working-class internationalism and democratic control and management of the top 500 corporations that rule our economy and our lives to fundamentally counter the poverty, environmental devastation, and war generated by capitalism.

## Republican Party Deeply Divided

The deep crisis within the Republican Party was put on full display by the Trumpcare defeat. A section of more moderate Republicans refused to hitch their wagons to the hugely unpopular plan for fear of signing their political obituaries. Meanwhile, the far-right

wing Freedom Caucus refused to back it on the basis that it did not go far enough in attacking working people. They demanded the elimination of minimum health care benefits and the requirement to cover those with preexisting conditions. The debate exposed the utter viciousness of the Republican agenda, as even the modified, more brutal proposal failed to satisfy ultra-conservatives.

Trumpcare was also defeated by mobilized opposition. The bill became increasingly toxic as it was shouted down at town halls around the country. People got the message that 24 million would be cut from health care; that Medicaid would be gutted; and that this "reform" was really a cover for a massive tax cut and transfer of wealth to the top 1%.

The defeat of the healthcare bill blew a gaping hole in the GOP budget plans, and created major complications for their 2017 agenda going forward. Republicans had structured their overall budget as well as their plans for "tax reform" around the cost savings enabled by Trumpcare.

These billions in "savings" (from gutting Medicaid) were designed to make space for major tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans, a 10% expansion in military spending, and for an infrastructure bill at some stage. Much of this is now in disarray, with Republicans still scrambling weeks later to reshape their agenda.

Trump's budget proposals – including deep cuts to education, the Environmental Protection Agency, mass transit, renewable energy, public water systems, and across-the-board attacks on social services – are also sparking huge opposition. This is not to mention the ongoing ripping up of environmental regulation by executive order. Altogether, the current Republican agenda represents one of the most vicious assaults on the American working class in modern history, as well as an all-out declaration of war on the environment.

## Democratic Leaders Under Pressure

Democratic leaders, after taking an initial position following Trump's election that he must be given a chance and "his success is our success," have been forced under huge grassroots pressures to oppose parts of his agenda.

After a prolonged internal debate over whether to filibuster Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch's nomination, a majority of Democrats ultimately carried out the

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Nikkita Oliver &amp; Jon Grant Campaigns

# Seattle's Independent Left Is Growing

*In the age of Trump, socialists mobilizing together can turn around U.S. politics.*

**Kailyn Nicholson, Seattle**

With millions across the country urgently searching for effective methods of resistance to the Trump administration, and Democratic leaders continuing to disappoint, Seattle is again taking a lead. Following the path blazed by Kshama Sawant, Seattle's socialist city councilmember, two respected left activists are stepping into the political arena as independent candidates vowing to fight back against the corporate domination of Seattle's political system.

Both Jon Grant – running for City Council – and Nikkita Oliver – running for mayor – are conducting serious campaigns and have pledged not to accept money from big business. Grant already has a substantial volunteer base, is utilizing the new “democracy voucher” public financing program, and has raised over \$100,000 – an unprecedented amount for a left challenger this early in the race. Over 800 community activists came together for Nikkita's rousing kick-off event on April 2, gathering widespread media attention.

Longtime tenant rights activist Jon Grant narrowly lost a 2015 council race running as a left Democrat on a housing justice platform against a business-backed Democratic incumbent. With most Democratic Party and labor leaders again refusing to back him, this time Grant decided to run as a democratic socialist. Grant should harness the energy and enthusiasm of the sizeable socialist and grassroots constituency in Seattle to build his campaign, stand up against pressure from the establishment to not appear to “radical,” and in turn use his campaign to strengthen the socialist movement for future fights.

Seattle mayoral challenger Nikkita Oliver, a racial justice activist, lawyer, and educator, is running on the ticket of the Seattle People's Party, which aims to give a political platform for marginalized communities in Seattle. Her campaign focuses heavily on housing affordability, police and prison reform, and education, all with a strong focus on racial justice. Nikkita was active in the successful struggle to block the city establishment's efforts to build a new \$160 million police bunker, and she is a central figure in the ongoing movement to stop construction of a new youth jail. Her platform calls for an end to youth incarceration in Seattle and a shifting of funds toward education and community-led



*Nikkita Oliver speaks to over 700 at her campaign launch party.*

restorative justice programs.

The ever-worsening housing crisis facing poor and working-class Seattleites is ample proof that the developer-backed Democratic Party is unable to prioritize human need above free market ideals. Socialists in Seattle can use this opportunity to work together and show in practice the power of a politics designed to meet human need rather than maximize profit.

## Challenge the Two-Party System

Socialist Alternative urges Nikkita Oliver and Jon Grant to use their campaigns to help build a sustainable, democratic political organization that lasts beyond the election cycle. An electoral campaign can be a powerful tool to activate and organize new people, which is the first step toward building a new mass political party of and for working people. Armed with socialist ideas, such a party could take the fight against racism, sexism, and inequality all the way by ending the era of capitalist exploitation and opening the door for a new type of society.

Both Nikkita and Jon support Kshama Sawant's calls for rent control and taxing the super-rich and big businesses so the city can invest in publicly owned affordable housing. Although neither candidate identifies the need to fundamentally break with capitalism and reorganize society on a socialist basis to achieve social and racial equity, their campaigns are poised to change the scope of the discussion around what is possible to accomplish in Seattle and beyond.

Another opportunity to build the power of the socialist movement can be seen in Minneapolis, where Socialist Alternative member Ginger Jentzen is running for City Council. She hopes to break the Democratic Party's stranglehold on the city, which is actively suppressing progressive movements like the fight for a \$15 minimum wage. If such candidates are supported by the many socialist organizations rapidly growing in the U.S., like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), they can provide proof of what a new, broad Socialist Party could achieve. If the DSA, Socialist Alternative (SA), and others on the left work together to run candidates with a bold left program, we can draw working people, youth, unorganized socialists, and people on the left into activism and transform the political landscape in the U.S.

Socialists around the country should support Grant, Jentzen, Oliver, and similar left independent candidates regardless of where they are running. With the Democratic Party unwilling to take up the bold progressive policies called for by millions of young and working-class people, left independents need to bring the demands of BLM, 15 Now, Medicare for All, Cancel Student Debt, etc. into the halls of power ourselves by coming together to build a new mass party for all working-class and oppressed people.

Support Jon Grant's campaign in Seattle here: [ElectJonGrant.nationbuilder.com](http://ElectJonGrant.nationbuilder.com).

Support Nikkita Oliver's campaign in Seattle here: [SeattlePeoplesParty.com](http://SeattlePeoplesParty.com).

Support Ginger Jentzen's campaign in Minneapolis here: [GingerJentzen.org](http://GingerJentzen.org). ✪

## Seattle Socialism Conference

### Strategies and Tactics to Defeat Trump

**Joshua Koritz**

The Seattle Socialism Conference brought together 600 people at University of Washington's Kane Hall on Sunday, April 2. The conference discussed strategy to fight back against Trump and the billionaire class in Seattle and nationwide. Another Socialism Conference is being held in New York City on April 22.

Since Bernie Sanders' campaign, and particularly since Trump's election, there has been a tremendous growth of interest in socialist ideas. The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has grown by over 10,000 just in the last five months. Socialist Alternative has also grown rapidly. Trump is playing the role of uniter of the left, as millions of people have demonstrated against his agenda.

Organized by Socialist Alternative, Seattle DSA, and the International Socialist Organization (ISO), this conference was a show of strength and unity for the socialist movement, and the left, in Seattle.

Headlining the conference was a discussion with Socialist Alternative National Secretary Philip Locker and the editor of *Jacobin* and DSA Vice-Chair Bhaskar Sunkara. Locker explained Socialist Alternative's strategy to fighting Trump, including escalating the protests and encouraging independent socialist candidates. Sunkara agreed about encouraging DSA members to run in local elections but, unlike Locker, said he thought socialists could use the Democratic Party ballot line to run their campaigns. Socialist Alternative has long called for a new mass party for working people, independent of corporate money.

The panel that focused on Seattle included local independent candidates Jon Grant and Nikkita Oliver, Seattle Councilmember Kshama Sawant, immigrant rights activists, a Socialist Students activist, and two prominent union activists in education unions.

In her speech, Kshama Sawant pointed to the crucial discussion around strike action that has begun to emerge. “We need to use our social power against Trump and the billionaire class. We need to hit them where it hurts, by shutting down their profits,” she said. She called for unity in organizing the largest May 1 protests possible and for taxing the rich. And she pointed to the importance of Jon Grant and Nikkita Oliver's independent left campaigns, in both taking on the Seattle Democratic establishment and in setting an example nationally.

Commenting after the event, Socialist Students activist Kailyn Nicholson pointed out, “Socialist politics are going to be the backbone of the anti-Trump resistance. This event was vital to building unity and clarifying the debates within the socialist wing of this movement in Seattle.” ✪



Building a Student-Worker Movement at Northeastern:

# Food Service Workers Fight for a Living Wage

Rebecca Green, Socialist Students Northeastern

As workers across the country walk off the job on International Workers Day, students too will be pouring out of classrooms to fight back. At Harvard and Northeastern, this fight against the neoliberal agenda of the billionaire class has been taken up by university dining hall workers supported by students.

At Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, a university with a \$693 million endowment, some three hundred food service workers across the campus are currently paid an average of \$20,520 a year. Represented by UNITE HERE! Local 26, workers and students have been campaigning together around contract negotiations to demand a livable wage, affordable health care, and justice for workers. Socialist Students at

Northeastern has been actively engaged in this campaign, helping lead up the campaign's student outreach efforts.

The food service workers at Northeastern unionized and won their first contract in 2012. The initial contract improved conditions by increasing the hourly wage of workers and securing a better health care plan, but since then, hours have since been slashed, many workers are laid off over the summer, and the health care plan offered by Northeastern is still largely unaffordable.

As the contract negotiations are fast approaching, the HOWL coalition, made up of Socialist Students and a number of other progressive political and cultural groups on campus, is building student support for the union and the workers' demands for minimum annual incomes and affordable health care

plans.

Socialist Students at Northeastern has taken up organizing the outreach working group within the HOWL coalition and has been focused on bringing the campaign to the attention of the broader student body. We are bringing the campaign to a citywide student coalition called Coalition to Organize and Mobilize Boston Against Trump (COMBAT) to build citywide student support for.

The September 2016 strike at Harvard is a concrete example of the necessity of progressive student groups and unions fighting together on college campuses. Dining hall workers at Harvard, also represented by Local 26, went on a 22-day strike after failed contract negotiations demanding minimum annual incomes and more affordable health care. In support of this, students walked out of class in the

hundreds. Their victory demonstrated the power of student-worker struggle.

When workers withhold their labor and students refuse to attend class and shut campus operations down, we show the administrators that they need us to run the university, but we don't need them. Each campus victory grows a united student-worker movement that can challenge attacks on working-class people everywhere.

Representing mostly immigrant and non-white workers, Local 26 fought Northeastern's administration to allow workers to strike on Inauguration Day and the university gave in, enabling hundreds of workers to strike and attend a rally organized by Socialist Alternative and the Democratic Socialists of America later that day.

The work at Northeastern has exposed many students and

community members to the poverty wages and dismal health care situation that are compounded with discrimination, lack of economic opportunity, and threats of deportation faced by immigrants in the U.S. Socialist Students stands for organizing on campus and in the larger community for living wages, health care, and to oppose Trump's right-wing agenda of cuts. The HOWL campaign, and the victory at Harvard, are demonstrating how a strong labor movement and strike action with community solidarity can both stop attacks and win materials gains for working-class people and working-class immigrants. It is crucial that students organize both on and off campus in order to win gains for themselves as well as all working people living under Trump's reactionary regime.



Minneapolis Elections:

# Big Business and the Democratic Party Establishment Join Forces

Ginger Jentzen, 15 Now organizer, Socialist Alternative member, and candidate for Minneapolis City Council in Ward 3

*As this article goes to press, a majority of candidates for Minneapolis City Council have publicly stated support for a \$15 an hour minimum wage with no tip penalty. City Council is expected to introduce a minimum wage proposal early this summer. The movement for 15 Now will continue mobilizing to fight for \$15 and against corporate carve-outs.*

Low-wage workers have organized for two years to force a \$15 an hour minimum wage to the center of Minneapolis' 2017 elections. Today, I'm excited to see a growing list of candidates emerging to challenge corporate politics in City Hall, taking a clear position in support of issues like \$15. They face an uphill battle against incumbents with deep ties to the political establishment, big business, and developers: firm opponents of workers' rights initiatives like \$15, fair scheduling, and

substantive police reform.

Anti-\$15 corporate interests hosted a fundraiser for Ward 1 City Council member Kevin Reich - part of the council majority that voted to block \$15 from being put on the ballot in 2016 - to raise money for his re-election. Co-hosts included Steve Cramer, president of the Downtown Council, an anti-\$15 big business group, and Minnesota Restaurant Association lobbyists.

The Democratic Party (DFL) establishment is also going after the two sitting City Council members who stood with low-wage workers and voted to put \$15 an hour onto the ballot: Cam Gordon and Alondra Cano. Earlier this year, Dan McConnell, Minneapolis Chair of the DFL, spent \$2,000 of DFL money on a negative messaging poll to test the viability of running his wife against Cam Gordon, the only Green Party City Council member. Gary Schiff, the former Ward 9 council member and longstanding opponent of \$15 is running against Alondra Cano.

It's not surprising that the same big business interests who are fighting against \$15

are supporting the conservative majority on the council.

## Build a Political Alternative!

I'm prepared to work with anyone on concrete initiatives that benefit working people - both as a council member and as an organizer - even though I don't think that the best path to do this is through the Democratic Party process. It's a terrain that favors big business, big donors, and backroom deal-making over working people, as we've seen with the establishment's blatant attempt to defeat pro \$15 candidates.

We have the potential to build something new. Bernie's call for a political revolution against the billionaire class got a deep echo in Minneapolis. On April 4, many turned out to the DFL caucuses looking to oust the "conservative majority" in City Hall. Combined with anti-Trump anger, this shows the possibility for a new party of working people that is free from corporate cash, based on a clear program that benefits working people, and

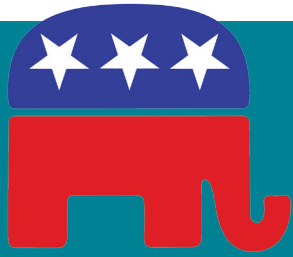


rooted in social movements. If the establishment succeeds in blocking pro-\$15 candidates at the DFL caucuses, these left candidates should keep running as independents.

I welcome more candidates to join me in refusing to take a penny from big business. Elected officials cannot serve two bosses: they cannot unapologetically stand with working people while taking money from the very business interests lobbying to undermine workers' rights. More candidates should base their program on unapologetic demands that speak to the real needs of working-class people, like \$15 an hour, taxing the rich, selling municipal bonds to build thousands of city-owned affordable housing units on vacant land, and creating an elected review board with full powers over the Minneapolis Police Department including budgets and department priorities.

My campaign is again proving that there is broad support for left independent politics in Minneapolis. Together, we can build a party that fights 100% for working-class people.





# REPUBLICAN PARTY

# E P

## Tom Crean

It's a long way from Abraham Lincoln's Grand Old Party and the war to end slavery to today's Republicans and their relentless attacks on immigrants, women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and the labor movement. It is not news that the modern Republican Party leadership has perfected the art of racist "dogwhistles" and using "social issues" like abortion and gun rights to distract attention from an agenda that is squarely about serving the interests of Wall Street, corporate America, and the super-rich.

In November, the Republicans attained their greatest dominance of American politics since 1928 with control of the presidency, both houses of Congress, 33 governors and full control of 32 state legislatures. But after a few months in control of Washington, the Republicans are floundering, internally divided and facing mass opposition in the streets.

How did the Republicans manage to get this far with an agenda that is so out of touch with the interests of working class people? One can, of course, point to the disastrous Democratic campaign in 2016 where they nominated Wall Street ally Hillary Clinton who focused on Trump as an "existential threat to the Republic" rather than making the case for real change that would benefit working people. But one has to go deeper and further back to understand the situation we are in now.

## From Nixon to Reagan

The Republican Party, as we know it today, was defined by the social upheavals of the '60s and '70s. Under Richard Nixon, the party adopted the "Southern strategy" that aimed to win conservative Southern white voters reacting to the social change caused by the defeat of Jim Crow segregation policies. At the same time, the Civil Rights and the antiwar movement were putting pressure on the Democrats and especially its arch-segregationist right wing from the left.



This was the beginning of the long demise of the "liberal Republican" establishment embodied by Eisenhower and the Rockefellers. Of course, the Republicans had always also had a hard right wing that temporarily got the upper hand when Barry Goldwater won the party's nomination in 1964 before losing badly to Lyndon Johnson.

While the hard right was rebuilding, Nixon came into office in 1968. He carpet bombed Southeast Asia and was eventually thrown out because of Watergate. However, under pressure he also brought in important domestic reforms including the Clean Air Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. It was under his administration that abortion was legalized. He was even willing to countenance some form of universal health care. All of this reflected the role of powerful mass movements and the intensifying class struggle. The ruling class – facing a potentially serious threat to its rule – felt the need to make concessions.

The sharp economic crisis of the mid-1970s began the end of the postwar economic expansion and brought a shift away from the Keynesian (welfare state) policies that both Democrats and Republicans had broadly supported. The ruling class now sought to push back the gains made by working people and to massively cut social services. This was the beginning of the neoliberal agenda of privatization and globalized "free trade" that sought to restore the bosses' profit margins on the backs of working people. This agenda actually began under Democratic President Jimmy Carter in the late '70s even though Reagan's election in 1980 is remembered as the key turning point.

Ronald Reagan broadened the base of the Republicans by appealing to conservative white workers in the North and Appalachia disillusioned with the Democrats' abandonment of any pretense to represent their economic interests. The Reagan years saw the full flowering of modern Republicanism.

Combining a reactionary social agenda and an increasing role for the Christian right, Reagan went on the offensive against the labor movement and sought to reverse the gains of the civil rights movement.

Meanwhile, the Democrats also veered rightward on economic policy. When Clinton was elected in 1992, he proceeded to deepen the attacks of the Republicans, passing the job-killing North American Free Trade Agreement and then "dismantling welfare as we know it." The difference was that while the Republicans were overtly racist and anti-labor, the Democrats still pretended to be friends of labor and people of color.

## Bush and the Road to Disaster

The Bushes essentially followed Reagan's script. Bush Jr.'s presidency from 2000 to 2008, however, more fully revealed the degeneracy of contemporary capitalism and the dysfunction of the political system. The oil interests and Wall Street ran the White House more directly, there were massive tax cuts for the rich, while the neo-conservatives were allowed to pursue their crazed plans to recast the Middle East at the cost of trillions of dollars. All of this ended with disaster in Iraq, the virtual collapse of the world economy in 2008-9, and the opening up of a full scale economic, social and political crisis of the system which continues to reverberate.

It is very important to remember that with a huge swing in the 2006 midterms the Democrats retook control of the House as Bush's popularity plummeted. This was followed by Obama's victory in 2008 on a wave of hope for change including mass support for the idea of taxing the rich to pay for a decent health care system and high-quality public education. The labor movement expected the Democrats to deliver legislation that would make it easier to organize

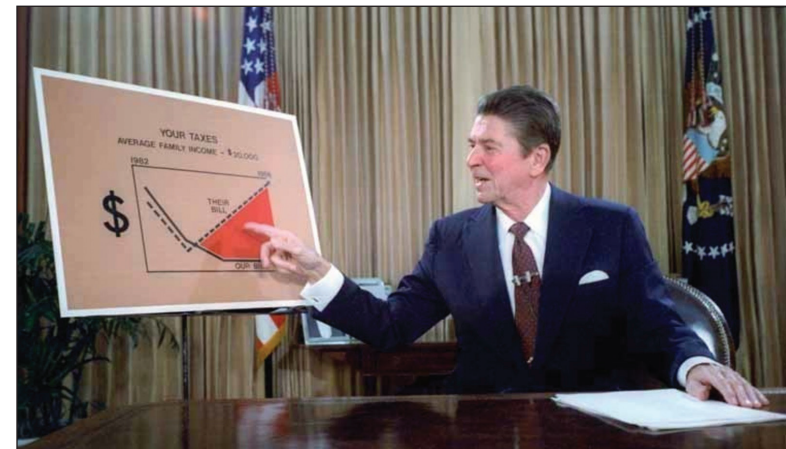
and begin the reversal of decades of retreat. There was huge hope for overcoming racial divisions.

Instead the Democrats under Obama – while delivering some stimulus and a very flawed health care reform – also bailed out Wall Street at a cost even greater than Bush's wars and did nothing as millions lost their homes and millions more lost good manufacturing jobs. The Democrats did nothing for the unions while Obama's Education Department specialized in bashing the teacher unions and making teachers the scapegoat for the disastrous state of public education in many areas. Obama deported more immigrants than all previous presidents combined and while his Justice Department did respond to the revolt of black youth against police violence, he left with little achieved in terms of real reform.

The disillusionment of Obama's voters opened the door to the Tea Party gains in 2010 but it also sparked a reaction from working people and youth, first of all in the 2011 revolt against Wisconsin governor Scott Walker which the Democrats then did everything possible to move into "safe" electoral channels.

## Polarization and the Shift to the Left

We have consistently pointed out that American society in the last period – while increasingly polarized – also broadly shifted to the left on a range of economic and social issues. There is a widespread understanding that the "American Dream" has died for large sections of the working class, especially for young people who face far greater economic insecurity than their parents. The shift to the left was given visible expression by Occupy Wall Street, and continued with the enormously popular fight for a \$15 minimum wage and the Black Lives Matter revolt. But it was the huge appeal of Bernie Sanders open support for "democratic socialism" and his call for a "political revolution against the billionaire class" that showed most clearly the potential for a new





# enemies of Working people and the Poor

working-class politics that could challenge the dominance of corporate power. Unfortunately, Sanders threw his support behind Clinton who embodied the Democrats' ties to Wall Street. This only helped to open the door further to Trump's demagogic right populism.

What is less recognized is that the revolt against massive inequality and the devastating aftermath of the Great Recession also had a distorted reflection within the Republican Party. Donald Trump won the Republican nomination to a significant degree because he attacked Republican nostrums on issues like trade, talked about bringing jobs back, "draining the swamp," and upholding the "forgotten men and women" of the heartland. Unlike the mainstream Republicans, he promised to not touch Social Security and Medicare. This is in no way to deny the appeal of his nativism and misogyny to a section of the white working class and middle class, but to point to how class issues are finding their way to the surface in U.S. society and can be cynically tapped into by the right if the left leaves a vacuum.

To many progressives it was obvious that Trump's promises were a con and this is now being revealed on issue after issue. But from Jimmy Carter through Bill Clinton to Barack Obama, the Democratic Party, while raising hope, has utterly failed to deliver meaningful change. Inequality continues to grow and working-class people of all colors keep losing ground. While the Republicans focus on social "wedge issues" to keep their base loyal, the Democrats focus on corporate identity politics, promoting the alliance of women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and the youth as the wave of the future. But the real appeal of identity politics for big business Democrats is precisely that it allows them to appear progressive while promising very little to ordinary people that will really affect the corporate bottom line.

## Two Parties in Crisis

As revealed in 2016, the American political system is in profound crisis. The Republicans may have achieved their strongest electoral showing in nearly 90 years but they have no mandate for their profoundly reactionary agenda. Furthermore, they would never have made these gains were it not for the complete bankruptcy of the corporate leadership of the Democratic Party. Now, under intense pressure from their base the Democratic leadership is being forced to put up some resistance but they will go no further than their big money donors will allow.

But Trump's administration – the embodiment of capitalist crisis and the Republican Party's profound dysfunction – has also sparked a mass resistance which will not be easily stopped. A mass working-class centered movement built around a program that speaks to the real needs of the 99% can lay the basis for a fundamental realignment of politics and a mass party of working people and the poor. Socialists, who are growing rapidly in numbers in Trump's America, have a key role to play in helping to develop the strategy that can lead the movement to victory against the billionaires and reactionaries. ☛

## Budget and Trumpcare: Cut from the Same Cloth

Eljeer Hawkins

The 53-page budget proposed by the Trump administration, "America First: A Blueprint to Make America Great Again," exposes their utter contempt for working, poor people, and particularly people of color. No wonder, given that the billionaire President Donald Trump and his cabinet of millionaires, billionaires, and alumni of the notorious Goldman Sachs firm have more wealth than forty-three million Americans combined.

### Cuts for Working People; Money for Bombs and Walls

"America First" is a vile frontal attack on working people and the poor. The budget encompasses \$54 billion in cuts and eliminates long-standing federal social programs and support for arts and sciences. But it's not all cuts. Trump's \$1.15 trillion budget transfers \$54 billion from vital social services to already vast military and Homeland Security budgets and includes billions for the famous wall on the Mexican border. He also wants to increase spending for charter schools continuing the attacks on public education and teacher unions.

Some key Trump cuts are:

- ☛ \$6.2 billion from Housing and Urban development (HUD). HUD administers Federal aid to local housing agencies (HAs) that manage housing for low-income residents at rents they can afford. During

the election Trump promised an urban renewal program for our inner cities. This round of proposed cuts does the total opposite worsening the deep crisis of underfunding public housing already faces nationwide. The cuts will have prevent much needed repairs and services for public housing residents. This naked attempt to undermine and eventually eliminate public housing will worsen the housing crisis in city after city.

- ☛ \$2.6 billion to Labor Department for job training for seniors and underprivileged youth.
- ☛ \$2.5 billion from the Environmental Protection Agency eliminating 50 programs and 3,200 jobs.
- ☛ Eliminates arts and cultural agencies like National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities as well as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Truly heinous is Trump's threat to eliminate school lunches and the popular Meals on Wheels program. Meals on Wheels provides the elderly, veterans, and poor with hot meals. Colin Kaepernick, exposed Trump's cruelty by donating \$50,000 to the program, to the delight of many.

The cuts to the Appalachian Regional Commission – established by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty – would be devastating to many working, poor people, and Trump supporters in the region. The 52-year-old program provides



federal funding for running water, retraining, and education in the region. The rustbelt states and Appalachia continue to be hit the hardest by the loss of manufacturing, textile, coal jobs, as grinding poverty and economic inequality increase.

The proposal decreases the Transportation Department by \$2.4 billion which would eliminate funding for new projects and particularly long distance Amtrak construction. This will have a major effect on cities and infrastructure which Trump claims to want to overhaul.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) also has a \$1.1 billion decrease, but its 2018 proposed budget of \$27.7 billion will be used to strengthen its law and order mandate under Jeff Sessions, attacking immigrants, BLM, and people of color. Already, the DOJ has made it clear it will back away from the various consent decrees with cities found responsible for law enforcement abuses.

### GOP Attacks Working People

This vicious budget proposal is in line with the recently

defeated Ryan and Trump Care proposal. If passed, Trumpcare would have had deadly consequences. There would be 24 million fewer people without health care access, insurance premiums would explode for the elderly and poor, and the richest 400 households in America would each receive an average annual tax cut of \$7 million (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities).

### A Sustained Fightback is Needed!

Trump's budget is an open declaration of class war. We must organize a sustained fight back and put the cost of the social crisis in U.S. society on the backs of the 0.01% and Wall Street where it squarely belongs. Through continued agitation, protest, demonstrations, and nonviolent civil disobedience we can defeat Trump's austerity budget just like Trumpcare was defeated. The labor movement must take a stand for working people against Trump and mobilize its base. We need a people's budget that places the needs of the 99% over the greed and profits of Wall Street. ☛

# Fighting the Far Right

## Socialist Strategy and Tactics

**George Martin Fell Brown**

*This is a condensed version of a longer article which appears on SocialistAlternative.org.*

As Trump has launched attack after attack on working people and the oppressed, he has fomented racist, sexist, and xenophobic hysteria to boost support for those attacks. Many have accused Trump of fascism. But alongside Trump's attacks we have seen the growth of far-right forces that much more closely fit the fascist label. Fascist, neo-Nazi, and white nationalist organizations have popped out of the woodwork, sometimes under the guise of the so-called "alt right". The reality of fascist and far-right forces on the ground has come as a rude awakening for many. And the question of fighting the far right has come back on the agenda.

### What is Fascism?

Fascism is best understood as a social movement, not as a checklist of psychological traits. That's how Marxists like Leon Trotsky approached the question in the 1930s when fascism was at its peak. German and Italian capitalism had gone into crisis provoking massive revolutionary upsurges. But the working class suffered a series of defeats, while capitalism remained unable to solve its crisis. The fascist movements of Hitler and Mussolini

were mass movements whose aim was to physically liquidate all the organizations of the working-class in order to save capitalism. Resting on the ruined middle class, fascism served the interests of big business, with the brownshirt thugs doing what the capitalists couldn't accomplish on their own.

We may not be repeating the experience of Germany in 1933, but the rise of the right does pose a threat to workers and the oppressed. They can intimidate immigrant communities, transgender people, and other oppressed groups. And they can still carry out violent assaults on strikes and protests, as seen in the white nationalists who fired shots into a Black Lives Matter demonstration in Minneapolis in 2015.

### The So-Called "Alt Right"

One new phenomenon that distinguishes the far right of today from classical fascism is the development of the so-called "alt right."

Forces identifying with the "alt right" became a prominent wing of the Trump campaign. After Trump's election, "alt right" activists held victory parties where they gave Nazi salutes and changed "Heil Trump." All of this points to the use of the term "alt right" as less of a new movement and more of a way for fascist and semi-fascist forces to worm their way into political respectability.

As far right forces have gained



*Protesters gather in Berkeley before Milo Yiannopoulos was due to speak, 2/2/2017.*

in respectability, the movement against them has grown. When "alt right" figures like Milo Yiannopoulos and Richard Spencer go on speaking tours around the country, left-wing activists have mobilized to shut them down.

But these actions have provoked a debate around the question of free speech. If we shut down people's speaking tours, it's argued, we're no different from the fascists we're protesting. This debate popped up prominently after an anti-Milo Yiannopoulos protest in Berkeley that Socialist Alternative helped to organize. The protest grew much bigger than expected and turned violent, with acts of vandalism breaking out and anti-fascist protesters getting into physical altercations with the Yiannopoulos supporters.

Supporters of the "alt right" have used this to portray themselves as the victims.

But Yiannopoulos was intending to use that platform to dox undocumented students. When Milo Yiannopoulos used his platform to publicize the personal information of transgender and undocumented students he wasn't expressing his opinions. He was directly organizing a campaign of harassment and intimidation. And before his recent fall from grace, he had begun a campaign to out undocumented students across the country.

But if a layer of liberals adopts a crude, essentialist defense of free speech at all cost, there is also a layer in the anti-fascist movement that adopts a crude essentialist defense of the notion of "no

platform for fascists."

### The Need for Mass Action

We absolutely defend the right of workers and the oppressed to self-defense. But the most effective resistance to the far right will be mass resistance. When black bloc anarchists in Berkeley broke through the police barricade while Milo Yiannopoulos was trying to speak, it served to concretely shut down the event and prevent the outing of undocumented students.

But this was accompanied by graffiti and smashing windows which actively turned off the wider public. Moreover, the black bloc action was carried out without any democratic participation from the wider masses, including the other protesters. It was a small group of self-styled revolutionaries acting on behalf of the masses with no accountability.

Physically confronting the far right is a necessity. But limiting oneself to small-scale street battles misses the wider struggle we're facing. We need to defend not only against fascists, but ICE raids and police repression. We need to build the capability of organizing mass strikes. We need to build a party of the 99% that can take on, not only the fascists, but Trump and the whole billionaire class. We need to fight, not only the far right, but the conditions that allow the far right to grow. ☘

## Pray for the Dead and Fight like Hell for the Living!

# The Struggle for Transgender Rights Today

**Alyssa Pariah**

2016 was the deadliest year in history to be transgender in the U.S. 27 murders. In four months in 2017, we have already lost eight. This reality transgender people face cannot stand.

Abroad, things are not better. A deeply disturbing video from Brazil of a group of men torturing a transgender woman was seen online by millions. Transphobic bigotry knows no borders.

### This Violence is Societal

A critical thinker will ask why. Is it a backlash to the increased visibility of transgender

people in entertainment? Is it a reactionary rebuttal to social justice discussion that places transgender and nonbinary people at the center? We must examine where violence against transgender women flows from.

Questions around the impetus of individual hate crime perpetrators cannot be engaged with outside the frame of the society that gives rise to violence itself, capitalism. Hate is not innate or even accidental. It must be cultivated. Look at the ratcheting up of demonization and scapegoating around the Republican-sponsored "bathroom bills." These are political attacks wielded by the most powerful in society against some of the most marginalized. The causal links between this and the violence against trans people are undeniable.

### An Injury to One, Is An Injury To All

A way forward will require building a sustainable movement. The resistance movement against Trump and big business must highlight the violence toward transgender women and fight for transgender rights.

We need transgender organizations that are not beholden to corporate money, nonprofit organizations, and Democratic Party politics. We need grassroots organizations that are independent, leadership that is accountable, and a program to organize in the transgender community around housing, health care, jobs, and unimpeded bathroom access. To extract such concessions from the ruling class, it will

require sustained organizing, agitation, and challenging business as usual through protest and demonstrations.

Under capitalism, transgender people are sanctioned because their bodies and minds do not fit within the scope of the gender binary as it is understood under this system of oppression and bigotry. It will be incumbent on us not just to fight and win these reform, but to secure them with a sustainable political force. Only the potential power of ordinary working people dedicated to ending the barbarism of oppression, inequality, and violence against transgender people once and for all can stop this misery. Let's fight for a socialist world. ☘



## French Elections Reflect Deep Discontent

# Left Candidate Melenchon Rises in Polls

Adapted from an article on *SocialistWorld.net*.

The presidential election in France has become a tight race in the final days before the first round election, with a third of the electorate still undecided. A deep discontent with the existing order is reflected in the dramatic rise in the popularity of left and socialist candidates.

In particular, Jean-Luc Melenchon has soared in recent polls as we go to press. The candidate of the movement called "France Insoumise" ("France Unbowed"), Melenchon has run a strong left campaign against austerity policies attacking social services, working people and youth. He is now polling within a few points of the leading candidates. By comparison, the candidate of the so-called Socialist Party (PS), Benoit Hamon, is fighting a losing battle after years of his party's unpopular pro-business policies in government.

French capitalism offers no way out of stagnation, joblessness, cuts in welfare and authoritarian government. The "flour bombing" of Francois Fillon, the main candidate for the Republican right, recently is just one sign of frustration and "disrespect" for those who represent the establishment.

Melenchon's campaign is effectively voicing the rage of the French workers and youth against the pampered, swindling elite who live in luxury while the majority face worsening conditions and joblessness. There are parallels with the Sanders campaign last year. Enthusiasm has been evident at Melenchon's rallies of tens of thousands of people around the country.

In recent years, Melenchon has attempted to form a "Left Front," but while popular with workers, he has been slow to get a real alternative organised.

Melenchon's program includes raising the minimum wage by 15%, shortening the working week to 32 hours, lowering the retirement age to 60, and heavy taxation on the rich. He sees the European Union as a neoliberal block against implementing these policies and advocates leaving NATO. However, although a former Trotskyist, Melenchon does not talk of an alternative socialist Europe. He also stops short of advocating the key measures necessary for dealing with the multinationals and the banks - that is, bringing them into public ownership under democratic socialist planning.

## Background

Last Spring, France was engulfed in a wave of strikes and mass demonstrations. Now the country is in turmoil on the political plane, reflecting a tense social situation.

In the final days before the first round of



Tens of thousands have attended Melenchon's rallies in the past months.

voting, the far right candidate, Marine le Pen of the the National Front (FN), seems certain to go through to the second, run-off round. Most polls predict she will not be able to muster as many second round votes as whoever her rival will be, though this is by no means a foregone conclusion.

Like Trump, Le Pen and the FN are viciously anti-immigrant while falsely claiming to represent French workers left behind by globalization. She is also an admirer of Putin. Le Pen campaigns simply as "Marine!" while claiming to be fighting "In the name of the people." She has a think-tank called which has drawn up plans for all contingencies, including a discussion of which military commanders can be trusted in the event of a President le Pen declaring martial law!

## Establishment Parties in Crisis

The so-called Socialist Party, after being in power for the past five years is also hugely unpopular and in danger of breaking up and disappearing from the political scene. It has presided over a period of sluggish growth, dwindling jobs for young people and enormous social discontent - the direct result of its neoliberal, fiercely pro-business policies.

After last year's mass movement against the Socialist Party government's attacks on labor rights, the party's established figures were roundly rejected in its presidential candidate selection in favour of the most left candidate, Benoit Hamon.

The primary selection process for the major right-wing party also brought about a surprise result. The two major contenders were defeated by an "outsider," Francois Fillon.

A prime minister for five years, Fillon favors a "shock treatment" of austerity, deregulation, and the slashing of France's esteemed welfare system. For a while he was considered most likely to face le Pen in the second round, but has fallen in opinion polls because of a corruption scandal.

With both establishment parties so discredited, a former government minister, Emmanuel Macron and his new "En Marche" organization have emerged as the establishment's preferred choice as the best chance for a continuation of neoliberal policies. While running as "neither left nor right," in favor of "tolerance" to immigrants and strongly pro-European Union, Macron favours a 25% cut in business taxes, and is pro-corporate through and through.

## The Second Round Dilemma

The former ruling parties of the French right and "left" are now so discredited that it is possible neither will appear in the second round. This would be unprecedented since the establishment of the Fifth Republic by President De Gaulle in 1958.

The ruling class is horrified at the prospect of a Melenchon vs. le Pen second round election, with both candidates posing the potential for an end to the EU, and with the threat of Melenchon's socialist, anti-corporate program and working class base.

The dilemma for workers and young people, who have been angered by the Socialist Party, is if Melenchon does not reach the second round, would they vote for Macron or a traditional, bosses' representative like Fillon from the Republicans to stop the far right le Pen



## Snap Elections Called in England

### Corbyn Must Fight General Election with Socialist Policies

Theresa May has called a general election because of the government's weakness in face of a rising tide of anger in British society. Workers are suffering the most prolonged squeeze on wages since the start of the nineteenth century. If Corbyn, the left-wing leader of the Labour Party, fights on a clear socialist program - for a Brexit in the interests of the working- and middle-class - he could win the general election.

Read more on this and other international news at the newly redesigned [SocialistWorld.net](http://SocialistWorld.net), website of the Committee for a Workers International

from coming to power?

Left and right populists both seem to represent the people against the elite, but Le Pen has appeared to them more determined to reap radical changes and improve life for the population. This in itself is a condemnation of all the parties of the so-called left who have failed to inspire working people with a socialist program for change.

In 2002, parties to the left of the pro-capitalist Socialist Party scored nearly 4 million votes in the presidential race, and even in 2007 the joint vote was nearly 3 million. While the opportunities to form a new party offering a clear working class and anti-capitalist program have so far been squandered, it is not impossible for the rising tide of support for Melenchon's program to be channeled into a genuinely socialist movement that can attract many of the workers and youth who have temporarily turned to the far right for a rebellion against the system.

## Build a Movement of Socialist Struggle

A Macron victory in the presidential race is still, at present, the most likely outcome and this spells no relief for France's discontented working class. Macron would find himself without a majority in parliament, but this will not stop him forging cross-party alliances to carry through his program of "neoliberalism lite".

The most urgent task of the hour in France, as in so many other countries across Europe, is to build a new socialist party of workers and youth.

The next few weeks will witness further political earthquakes in France, but as the world's social and economic crisis deepens, the legendary combativity of the French working class will light a beacon internationally. If the correct political conclusions are drawn, French workers and youth can point a way forward along the road of socialist transformation. ✪



# The History of May Day

**Steve Edwards and Hector Salazar**

The movement for a shorter working day was the first to unite workers internationally against industrial capitalism. Karl Marx had pointed out that within the United States, as long as slavery existed any attempt to build a labor movement was paralyzed; but that “The first fruit of the American Civil War was the eight hours agitation.”

In 1867 the Republican Party passed the Reconstruction Acts to uphold the rights of freed slaves in the former Confederacy, and they also passed laws limiting the working day to eight hours. Black workers in the South were to find themselves betrayed as soon as the Republicans had broken the political power of the Confederacy, and that betrayal led to the horrors of Jim Crow. The eight-hour campaigners in the North, while their situation cannot be compared to that of the freed slaves, also found that the laws they had fought for would not be enforced except by themselves. Winning the eight-hour day would

require decades of struggle.

May 1, 1886 was declared by a national union, predecessor to the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to be the day when workers nationally would cease to work more than eight hours. Hundreds of thousands went on strike and marched nationwide. The biggest march was in Chicago, and the response of the city’s ruling class was a murderous police attack on unarmed strikers. The next day, a protest meeting in a spot known as Haymarket Square was also attacked by armed police and this time, an unknown person threw a bomb. This bomb was the pretext for mass arrests and the trial of the movement’s leaders, who were executed the following year despite massive national and international protests.

In 1888, the AFL defiantly called for another eight-hour strike, and they sent a delegate to the founding conference of the Second (Socialist) International in 1889 calling for international action. It was this conference that organized the first ever simultaneous international workers’ demonstration on May Day 1890.



*Socialists pack Union Square in New York City on May 1, 1912.*

## The Power of May Day Revisited

Just twelve years ago, between December 2005 and May 2006, immigrant communities rose up in a way that still reverberates today. The impetus for the wave of marches was the proposed federal legislation known as HR4437 which would

have increased penalties for “illegal” immigration and classified undocumented immigrants as “aggravated felons,” along with anyone who helped them enter or remain in the U.S.

Republican Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin sponsored the House bill approved in December 2005 which was scheduled for

a Senate vote in March 2006. This created a season of protest.

The demands of the immigrant rights movement were legalization for all, full equality, an end to raids and deportations, and a visa procedure that would grant immigrant workers full labor rights.

The demonstrations that followed brought out hundreds of thousands of people at a time coast to coast. These people came from all different immigrant communities and spoke multiple languages but mostly were from the Latino community. This culminated with the May Day demonstration May 1, 2006 which drew over 1.5 million into the streets nationwide in one of the largest days of protest in U.S. history. The megamarches doomed HR4437. Sensenbrenner’s criminalization bill never even came to a vote in the Senate. Neither the House nor the Senate version won enough support in the other chamber to become law.

In 2012, Occupy Wall Street brought new life to May Day as well.

*These are the traditions of working class organizing and internationalism on which May Day was built.* ✪

## The Soviets and Workers’ Democracy



**Leon Pinsky**

In 1905, a mass strike wave followed by a revolution took place in Russia. Workers began organizing themselves in strike committees. These organizations were discussing ways to win victories against the bosses and the Tsarist autocracy, helping the strikers with money and food, etc. However, very quickly these organizations found that serious political and inclusive structures were needed, they transformed themselves into councils (soviets) of workers. The councils gave workers the possibility to directly discuss and shape their day-to-day lives in the workplace and community.

The workplace Soviets elected deputies to town or city wide soviets which represented hundreds and thousands of workers. In that sense, they posed the question of an alternative form of government – one which relies on real working class democracy rather than institutions dominated by the landlords, prominent industrialists and the monarchy. The revolution of 1905 was crushed and with it the soviets but limited reforms of free speech, assembly, and a new parliament

(Duma) were conceded by the Tsar.

During the World War I, many workers joined the socialist parties and growing opposition to the war.

### Dual Power and The Bolshevik Revolution

In February 1917, the working class organized mass strikes and demonstrations, forcing the Tsar to abdicate. The main capitalist party, the Constitutional Democrats, known as the Cadets, joined forces with the SR’s and Mensheviks to establish a new provisional government. But as in 1905, the workers immediately began setting up soviets. These rapidly spread from the urban workplaces into the armed forces. All soviet elected representatives earned the average worker’s wage and were subject to immediate recall which made the soviets a far more accurate reflection of the shifts in popular opinion than a capitalist parliament.

The largest left parties; the Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks attempted to use the Soviets as an instrument to topple the Tsar. However, they refused to replace

Tsarism with soviet democracy. Instead, they wanted to help the large capitalist parties establish a Western capitalist regime.

The Bolsheviks, still being a minority among the Soviets, rallied workers, soldiers, and peasants behind demands that they put on the government to expose their real goals. For example, they and only they called to end the war, an enormously popular demand. At the same time, they supported the peasants’ demand for redistribution of the land to show the inability of the majority parties to break away from capitalism and landlordism.

The question of redistribution of land to the peasants brought them to form soviets in the countryside and participate in the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets in June 1917.

The Provisional Government’s refusal to end Russia’s part in the war meant hundreds of thousands of further deaths in 1917. The new government lost its support among the majority of the workers. Under these conditions, the weak government was forced to give more authority to the soviets to run different aspects of society. Dual power

emerged in Russia, forcing both sides to compete against each other for state power.

In April, Lenin proposed a new program for the Bolsheviks and the soviets - state power. Those in power were incapable of solving the most burning questions the workers, peasants, and soldiers faced. As the year continued, the Bolsheviks won a majority in the soviets. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks led the soviets to take power. The 2nd Congress of Soviets met during the revolution to ratify the taking of power by the working class, as well as proceeding immediately to end the war and distribute land to the peasants.

The civil war erupted 1918 with the revolt by Tsarist supporters backed up by 14 foreign armies. The soviets survived this challenge but the Stalinist counter-revolution which followed led to the bureaucratization of the Soviets and destroyed their democratic character. Nonetheless, the soviets did not end there. Often beginning as strike committees, these instruments of struggle and workers democracy emerged in every serious revolutionary movement of workers since, beginning in Germany in 1918. ✪



# Trump Damaged, Unpredictable

continued from p. 3

filibuster and forced the Republicans to use the so-called “nuclear option.”

Yet much of the Democrats’ opposition to Trump has centered around his election campaign’s links to Russia, rather than firmly or consistently opposing his right wing agenda and appointments, or helping to build social movements.

While the Democratic Party leadership refused to support Trumpcare, they also failed to use the opportunity to build support for a real alternative to the dysfunctional, for-profit American health-insurance system – a Medicare for all, single-payer system – just as they did when they held all three branches of government in 2009. Leading Democrats focused almost exclusively on defending Obamacare.

As Bernie Sanders organized rallies to defend health care and call for Medicare for all, Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative City Councilmember in Seattle, has called repeatedly for Democratic-led state governments in Washington, Oregon and California to take the initiative in creating a single-payer alternative on the West Coast.

Support for a single-payer is at an all-time high. Yet key Democrats have already rejected the call for it, including California governor, Jerry Brown, and Washington State Governor, Jay Inslee. Building a fighting working class centered movement - for single-payer, a federal \$15 minimum wage, taxing the rich to fully fund social services, and other concrete positive demands that would make a real difference in the day-to-day lives of working class people - is the key to decisively defeating Trump. But this is exactly what the Democratic Party leadership will not or cannot do.

If an election were held today the Democrats might well retake the House. But it’s a long way to 2018 and the Democratic Party leadership has shown again and again how prepared they are to blow up their own chances rather than give ground to demands from the left.

The situation is crying out for a new working



Republican politicians attacked at townhall meetings around the country.

class based political force but the main energy at the moment will clearly go to getting the Democrats back in power in 2018, with most progressives focused on trying to “take back” the party. But the potential exists even now for socialists to point the road towards genuine independent working class politics as Ginger Jentzen of Socialist Alternative runs for City Council in Minneapolis and other viable independent left candidates are emerging in Seattle (see pages 4 and 5).

## A Summer of Resistance

As Socialist Alternative has explained since his election, stopping Trump’s right wing agenda will require a massive and ongoing mobilization of working people. At the time of Trump’s inauguration, we called for 100 days of resistance leading up to May 1, International Workers’ Day. Since then we saw the single largest day of protests in U.S. history, with the tremendous Women’s Marches on January 21, as well as

a broad wave of protests, mass civil disobedience, and the growing radicalization of young people and working people searching for a way to defeat Trump. As we go to press, protests have occurred around the country demanding that Trump release his taxes. This will be followed by the March for Science and Earth Day marches at the end of April and potentially large scale actions by immigrant workers and others on May Day. The struggle against the Republican budget, in defense of LGBTQ rights, and against other looming attacks points towards a “summer of struggle”.

There will be ups and downs in the fight against Trump. The crisis of the administration can on the one hand decrease the sense of imminent danger and need for immediate fightback, but on the other it can embolden the movement as it increasingly feels its own power. The mass protests that have happened so far, and those coming in the next weeks, are only a beginning of a period of far greater social upheavals in the U.S. and around the world. ☘



## May Day Statement

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billionaire class needs to include running candidates who fight in the interests of workers and the oppressed with demands like single-payer health care, free tuition-free college, a \$15 an hour minimum wage, and an end to the deportations of immigrants. Our candidates must be connected to the movement, accountable to it, and completely independent of big business money and political control.

## International Movement

The problems of capitalism – from war to rampant inequality and environmental devastation – are getting worse, and we need an international movement to combat these ills. In the face of austerity programs and grotesque economic inequality in which eight rich men own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world’s population, we need fundamental change. The main levers of the economy – the richest 500 corporations – should be taken into public ownership and run democratically on the basis of workers solidarity and environmental sustainability.

A successful movement across the world for working people to control the wealth that they create could wipe out many of the conditions that force people to migrate in the first place. By breaking the power of the billionaire classes internationally, we could begin to build an alternative to the devastation and crises created by the bankrupt system of capitalism. I hope you will join us. ☘

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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!  
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# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

## NO WALL NO RAIDS NO DEPORTATIONS

HOW THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT  
AGENDA CAN BE DEFEATED



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International Workers Day on May 1 is marked every year with rallies and protests organized by unions and socialists around the world. Since the historic “Day Without an Immigrant” strikes in 2006, May 1 has been a day of mass immigrant rights protests in the U.S. It is an opportunity to show our solidarity and strength as well as our resistance to the injustices of capitalism. This year, immigrants in the U.S. face a racist president who wants to destroy their livelihood, and the labor movement slogan “an injury to one is an injury to all” is more relevant than ever.

Determined protests at the airports pushed back Trump’s “Muslim ban,” and the movement also helped to defeat Trumpcare. With April’s “March for Science” and “People’s Climate March” setting the stage for rallies on May Day, the struggle against Trump’s right-wing agenda is reemerging. The ruling elites are trying to assert their control over the White House by reining in aspects of Trump’s agenda that damage the prestige of the corporate politicians, and Trump is flip-flopping on issue after issue. However, we can’t afford to be complacent.

Trump’s anti-immigrant policies, rhetoric, and deportations will continue. His administration is openly

waging war on the environment. The billionaire class will eventually use Trump’s presidency as an opportunity to introduce repressive anti-union laws. The proposed budget is an onslaught of anti-worker policies, while Trump’s plans to build a wall on the Mexican border and intensify the assault on public education remain on the agenda.

### Big Business and Immigration

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and proposals were central to Trump’s election campaign, and now he is looking to follow through with mass deportations, ICE raids, and other anti-immigrant measures. We need to build resistance beyond the actions on May Day to stop this. From the labor unions to the women’s organizations to the environmental movement, all of us who oppose Trump’s agenda need to mobilize to defend our immigrant sisters and brothers. If Trump is allowed to carry out millions of deportations, this will embolden him and the right-wing Republicans. However, if we can deal him a defeat on his anti-immigrant policies we can knock the wind out of his bigoted, billionaire-backed agenda.

Millions of refugees and other immigrants who have fled to the U.S. would prefer not to have left their home countries. They are not just refugees of war, but also of economic

devastation inflicted by capitalism’s drive to make working people, the poor and youth pay for a crisis that this system created. Budget-cutting austerity programs have gutted social services and privatized former public institutions, while the “recovery” from the global economic crisis has been shallow and mainly benefited the super-wealthy around the world. These are the conditions which lead people to flee their homes, and the U.S. billionaire class is all too often responsible for the policies leading to that devastation.

Unlike Trump, many of his big business friends are in favor of immigration as long as they can hold down immigrants as second-class citizens who face the constant threat of deportation. Marginalizing sections of the workforce helps big business to drive down wages for everyone. This situation also helps them carry out a “divide and rule” policy because it can lead to some workers born in the U.S. feeling resentful and fearful of lower wages and unemployment.

We need to understand though that this is a situation created by the billionaires and politicians, not the immigrant workers. If all workers living in the U.S. were granted full legal and citizenship rights, then it would make it harder for employers to use fear to drive down wages and benefits. With the threat of deportation lifted, all workers would be stronger together in demanding better

jobs, social services, and democratic rights.

### Discussion about Strikes

In the preparation for both International Women’s Day and May Day, there were discussions about strikes against Trump. This is a welcome and important development because it points towards the type of determined action that will be necessary to defeat Trump, and also to the potential power of working people to change society.

While neither day of international action produced mass strikes of tens of millions of people, some unions did decide to take action on May Day, and there were further discussions about the possibility of strikes. The determined tactics of disruption, civil disobedience, and strike action will be absolutely necessary to stop Trump if he moves to deport millions of people or to bust the unions.

While Republicans have spearheaded the worst attacks on immigrants, the Democratic Party leadership is not a reliable ally for immigrants. Obama deported more people than all the presidents before him combined. If Democrats really support immigrants, then they should not only block Trump’s proposals, but also help build mass rallies, protests, and strike actions. Our strategy to build a united movement against Trump and the