

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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# TAX THE RICH

FUND EDUCATION & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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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. ✦

# OBITUARY

## Tribute to Lorraine Dardis

Jeff Booth, (a founding and current member of Socialist Alternative, U.S.)

Lorraine Dardis, a founding member of Socialist Alternative in the U.S. and later an active member of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, passed away in London on March 22. Despite struggling against an illness for the last four years, and recently entering hospice care, Lorraine's passing was a terrible shock to her loved ones, comrades, and friends.

Most of Lorraine's adult life was dedicated to revolutionary socialism through helping to organize with the methods and ideas of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI).

From a young age, Lorraine was incredibly kind and empathetic, often helping out friends in need. At the same time she was adept at connecting problems with their root causes in capitalism. Lorraine's upbringing in a close and loving family and her experiences in her younger years, prepared her for socialist activism.

Despite the hardship of moving a lot as an "army brat," Lorraine learned to enjoy travelling and meeting new people in different countries. Her parents, Leon and Mimi, encouraged Lorraine to care deeply about others and to value learning.

Lorraine's family eventually settled in Toms River, New Jersey. In high school, Lorraine became active in protests against a multinational corporation, Ciba-Geigy, whose dye plant polluted the town.

Lorraine attended Boston University but the pull of political activism and a growing political awareness compelled her to leave school. Travelling in Europe, she became involved in international peace and anti-nuclear movements, including lending a hand at peace camps at Greenham Common and Faslane.

After returning to Boston and working difficult, low-paying jobs, Lorraine re-connected with a close friend from college who had become a CWI supporter. Lorraine entered into political discussions with her friend, as part of a small group of union and socialist activists in the process of starting a new socialist group in the U.S. She soon formally joined this effort, becoming a founding member, in 1985, of what is now Socialist Alternative.

Lorraine wrote about why she joined: "Having already come across a range of political groups with different approaches and principles, I was attracted to Socialist Alternative for two main reasons: 1) its support for creating a genuine democratically-run and grassroots-controlled socialist society internationally and, 2) its member-based, democratic, and anti-bureaucratic structure and functioning."

Lorraine's intelligence, enthusiasm, and



energetic activism were quickly noticed in the new U.S. grouping. She was elected into leadership positions, including becoming a full time organizer. Lorraine worked first in Chicago, and then back in Boston; playing a key role in organizing young workers and helping to educate a new generation of Marxists.

The late '80s and '90s were a difficult time for socialist organizing but Lorraine joined comrades in toughing it out, making organizational gains against great odds, and establishing a foundation for Socialist Alternative in the U.S. Some of Lorraine's more public work as an organizer for Socialist Alternative included helping to lead a campaign against domestic violence. She was involved in numerous union solidarity campaigns: from helping organize new unions to strengthening existing unions involved in strikes, contract campaigns, and making unions more democratic.

Near the end of the '90s, Lorraine left full time organizing, but remained a leading member of Socialist Alternative in Boston and nationally.

In 2000, Lorraine moved to London to be with her partner, Lynn, a leader of the Socialist Party in England and Wales and she became member of the Socialist Party. As an active member of the Socialist Party, Lorraine began working at University College of London and in her 15 years there, she went on to gain a Masters Degree in Public Policy and she began a PhD program in education.

In 2015, Lorraine took ill-health retirement. She maintained a keen interest in the Socialist Party and CWI work, even as she fought her illness.

The "old-timers" in Socialist Alternative in the U.S. will never forget Lorraine's dedication to our cause of human liberation from capitalism and for international socialism. Those of us who were personal friends with Lorraine will never forget her amazing kindness, generosity, and love. Her life will continue to inspire us. ✦

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## Midterm Elections and the Threat of War

# Trump Regime in Crisis as Teachers' Strikes Spread



*After cabinet purge, Trump is under even less constraints than before.*

## Bryan Koulouris

Turmoil in the Trump administration has reached a new phase at the same time as teachers' strikes spread across the country and the midterm elections loom large on the political situation.

Trump has purged the White House of not only the racist Steve Bannon and Reince Priebus's mainstream Republican faction, but also the President's own family. Chief of Staff John Kelly and reactionary Attorney General Jeff Sessions could be the next two on the chopping block. Trump is consolidating his own grip on the regime, making it even more prone to wild political shifts based on Trump's personalized authoritarian whims.

John Bolton, a right-wing warmonger, has been brought in – a move which stands in contradiction to Trump's largely isolationist posture on foreign policy during his 2016 campaign. Trump is only political consistent about a couple things: his inconsistency and his desire for control. He is gripped by scandal and a tightening investigation by Mueller. Meanwhile, the Republicans face a "blue wave" in the November midterm elections which is likely to give Democrats control of the House and possibly the Senate. High-ranking House

Republicans are jumping off the sinking ship, and 48-year old Paul Ryan retirement is only the latest "man overboard."

While the Democratic Party leadership is not building movements against the right-wing agenda, millions are not satisfied with "waiting until November" to fight the Republicans. Teachers in West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma have gone on strike often without the help of their union leaders, and Arizona and possibly Colorado are up next. Students are walking out against gun violence while also livid about facing a future of deteriorating education, college debt, skyrocketing housing costs, low wage jobs, discrimination, and environmental destruction.

## Teachers Revolt Shows the Way Forward

Coming off years of historically low numbers of strikes, the labor movement is reawakening. Teachers are leading the way after years and years of budget cuts, privatization, union-busting, and vilification in the corporate media. The current strike wave, often organized from below without initiative from union leaders, threatens to spread. A stronger labor movement is necessary to beat back the attacks on our living standards, and strikes will be an

essential tactic in the face of capitalism in crisis and the policies of politicians who are little more than puppets for the billionaire class.

We should not forget that the crisis in public education didn't start with Trump. Local, state and national Democratic Party leaders have criminally under-funded education, ushered in high-stakes testing and viciously attempted to bust unions. "Mayor 1%" Rahm Emanuel in Chicago is only the most obvious example of this trend. This teacher fightback is long overdue and points the way forward for a labor movement that too often refuses to fight when faced with attacks on workers' rights like the coming Janus ruling by the Supreme Court which will create "right to work" (for less) conditions in the public sector nationally.

These strikes can be a starting point for a widespread labor revolt despite the fact that Janus can damage the labor movement as happened in Wisconsin after the anti-union laws in Wisconsin brought in under Republican Scott Walker. As in the labor upsurge of the 1970s, thousands of young activists from other struggles are turning to the unions. Back then, they had experience from the Black Power, women's liberation, and antiwar struggles, drawing socialist

## Why Socialists Are Against Bombing Syria

Desperate for a distraction from domestic woes, Trump ordered the bombing of Syria, uniting with other embattled right-wing heads of state in Britain and France and threatening to provoke a wider war in the Middle East. The brutal regime of Bashar al-Assad has committed horrible atrocities and war crimes, but we shouldn't trust that Trump or the Western ruling classes have the interests of ordinary Syrians at heart when they bomb Syria and claim Assad's chemical weapon use as the reason. The Western powers for instance have no problem supporting the wretched dictatorship in Saudi Arabia when it serves their interests as they are doing right now while the Saudi bombing campaign leads to famine in Yemen.

The Middle East is rife with division and the threat of conflict. The Israeli state has been particularly belligerent lately, gunning down unarmed Palestinian protesters and bombing Iranian positions in Syria. The Saudi royal ruling class also has impulses towards war with Iran. Assad's brutal Syrian regime is tied heavily to both the Iranian and Russian ruling classes.

The bombing of Syria is not just Trump's policy; big sections of the U.S. establishment support this action, including Hillary Clinton and other Democratic politicians. The American ruling class wants to try to re-assert their authority and military might in the Middle East and internationally as they are losing influence across the world to China, Russia and regional powers like Iran.

At the same time, the ruling class doesn't at this point want a wider war in the Middle East, fearful of how this might affect corporate investments and of the massive opposition to deeper military involvement at home. Yet, working through the unpredictable and undisciplined Trump, they are willing to risk precisely this outcome in order to assert their power and bring particularly the Russian regime to the negotiating table to work out a "solution" in Syria more favorable to Western capitalism yet unlikely to bring down Assad's dictatorship.

Working people around the world want peace, stability and a decent future. Neither U.S. or Russian imperialism or the reactionary regimes in the Middle East offer any solution except endless conflict. Socialists stand for the unity of working people, the poor and youth in a struggle against this escalating crisis of war and poverty at the heart of capitalism. We demand that all imperialist powers including the U.S., Russia, Iran, and Turkey withdraw their forces. While protests against war are currently small, the threat of wider and escalating conflict means we need to start laying the basis for a mass antiwar movement now. ☺

conclusions and looking toward the working class as the key force for change. Today, young people have been galvanized around Occupy, Black Lives Matter, the new women's movement, the Bernie Sanders campaign, and anti-Trump struggles with tens of thousands of activists getting organized in the Democratic Socialists of America.

Socialist ideas and organization have been key ingredients in

every successful labor upsurge in the history of this country, and these struggles have been central to every increase in living standards and workplace rights that we've achieved. Big business and their politicians have been intent on rolling back these historic gains for decades. But as a new wave of class struggle develops socialist

**continued on p. 11**

# Teacher Revolt Shakes the Establishment

Alan Jones

Militant strikes and mass demonstrations of tens of thousands of teachers, students, and community supporters have spread like wildfire across the states of West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona, and Oklahoma since the end of February. Other teacher actions, demonstrations, and one-day strikes have taken place in New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and recently the threat of walkouts spread to the state of Colorado.

While not achieving all their goals, the teachers' revolts have made important wage gains and scored gains for funding public education in general. The movement started with a nine-day strike by 20,000 teachers across West Virginia at the end of February. It won a 5% raise for 75,000 West Virginia public employees in a state where Trump got nearly 70% of the vote and that only recently passed severe anti-union legislation. The teachers exposed the mass anger in society against the neoliberal agenda of cuts to education, health care, and social services alongside handouts to the super rich and corporations. When the state legislature attempted to punish the strikers by lowering the raise to 4%, teachers threatened to occupy the capitol building vowing to remain until their demands were met.

Inspired by the victory of their sisters and brothers in West Virginia, 30,000 Oklahoma teachers went on strike at the beginning of April. These teachers had not seen a wage increase in over a decade while funding for schools education and public services have been severely cut. For nine days, teachers, students, and other workers laid virtual siege to the state capitol in Oklahoma City demanding not only higher wages but an end to the virtual third world conditions in their schools.

Free food was delivered daily by local businesses, just one expression of the massive community



Oklahoma teachers crowd the state capitol.

support. Construction workers refused to do any work in the capitol while the teachers and their supporters were there protesting. Over 100,000 Oklahoma state employees began to mobilize to demand wage increases. The reactionary Republican state government conceded a \$6,000 yearly wage increase for the teachers and a small increase in education funding but refused to reverse tax cuts for the rich and big business.

A poll at the end of the strike showed that 72% of Oklahomans supported the teachers' walkout "until all of their demands are met." These are astonishing numbers for a state considered to be a right-wing bastion.

## Kentucky and Arizona

There were huge protests, sick-outs, and walkouts by teachers in Kentucky when the Republican-dominated state government tried to impose vicious cuts to pension programs and threatened more cuts to education funding. The crowd at the state capitol was over 10,000, comprised mostly of teachers but including an inspirational mobilization of other public employees, private sector unions, and students. They forced the Republican

governor and legislature to retreat and abandon their plans.

Meanwhile in Arizona, Governor Ducey was forced by a month of massive protests at the state capitol and local schools to concede a 20% pay raise for teachers by 2020. It is significant that the teachers were not only fighting only for themselves but also seeking increased pay for all support professionals, and a freeze on corporate tax cuts until per-pupil spending reaches the national average. As we go to press, it has been announced that the teachers have voted to walkout on April 26 if Republican lawmakers refuse to reinstate about a \$1 billion in education cuts which they implemented over the last decade. Teachers are also correctly pointing out that the promised pay raise is still not included in the state budget.

## Background

Teachers deal daily with the consequences of the policies of the past decades and the massive social crisis engulfing large parts of the working class: massive poverty, homelessness, unemployment, social displacement, and the opioid crisis. At the same time, three corporate oligarchs have equal wealth to the bottom 50% in the country - 150 million people.

Teachers are forced to work two and three jobs, are unable to pay their student loans, and face ever increasing cost of health care and

## Education Cuts Quick Stats

- ✪ As of 2015, state money allocated for schools was still lower than it was before the recession in 29 states.
- ✪ Compared to 2008, there are 170,200 FEWER school employees nationally but 1.4 million MORE students.
- ✪ In Oklahoma, as elsewhere in these states, when there was a budget shortfall, the Republican state government responded by cutting taxes on the rich and giving a \$470 million tax break to the profitable oil and gas industries!
- ✪ Education funding alone has been cut by 28% per student since 2008 in Oklahoma.

cost of living. These experiences are shared by a large section of the working class in the U.S. even during this supposed economic "upturn."

Several times in the course of the struggles in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona union officials were eager to accept the first vague, paltry offer from the politicians. Again and again, they were rebuffed by the rank and file of the teachers in mass assemblies and on social media. They forced the

struggle to continue until the Republican politicians retreated in the face of overwhelming popular support and bold, escalating action.

During the strikes and mobilizations, the Democrats played the role of middlemen between the teacher unions and the Republican-controlled state legislatures. They and the union leaders' strategy was not to support and build the rank and file revolts, but to deflect them and channel the anger into next November's elections and the effort to elect Democrats to office. But the Democratic Party in these states has largely collaborated with the Republicans in passing budget cuts and supporting these policies. In some states like West Virginia, Democrats were in power until recently.

This fall, the Democrats are likely to be major beneficiaries of the teachers' struggles in these states as people seek to "throw the bums out." Teachers, and working people generally, need their own independent political representation which refuses any money from big business. But while this may not materialize before this November, teachers already realize through their own experience that they cannot rely on the word of politicians but will have to keep their movement going even when the Democrats are in charge.

## New Forms of Struggle

Social media played an

important role in the successful organizing of the teachers. In several cases, social media allowed teachers to overcome the conservatism of their leaders and to extend or continue their actions.

This reflects the current early stages of political awakening of hundreds of thousands of working people in the U.S. Social media, however, is not a substitute for real, on the ground organizing and building local fighting and democratic organizations rooted in activism, democratic assemblies, and open debate. In some cases, this would involve reforming existing unions but in some cases building new organizations.

The momentum coming out of the historic revolts and victories of teachers and public sector workers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Kentucky represent an opportunity to start a serious fight back of public sector workers across the U.S. The Supreme Court will soon rule on the Janus case which if upheld will extend the anti-union "right to work" conditions which exist in these states to the entire public sector nationally.

While Janus would be a significant setback, the boldness and heroic resistance of the teachers and their ability to win in right to work states shows this ruling does not have to be a death sentence for public sector unions. We have urged that preparations be made by the national unions, including the teacher unions, as well as Bernie Sanders and other progressive figures, for a national day of action in opposition to Janus and for other demands including taxing the rich to fully fund education. This would put the labor movement on a collision course with Trump and the Republicans. As the teachers have done at state level, to win they would need to broaden out the struggle and work to galvanize a true mass movement of all working people including the poor, people of color and immigrants against this rotten regime. ✪

Read the full version of this article at [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org).

Teachers from West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona came together along with union activists from around the country at Labor Notes in early April. Read our report from this important convention of the labor left at [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org).



Tax Amazon protest in Seattle, April 10, 2018.

# Tax Amazon!

## Affordable Housing Alliance and Socialist Alternative Bring Housing Fight to Tech Giant's Doorstep

wait, we are ready to tax big business now! Speakers from community, labor, and student groups addressed an animated crowd carrying "Tax Amazon" picket signs, which reflected off the shiny glass walls of the tech giant's iconic spheres. Protesters demanded the Seattle City Council pass a \$150 million tax on the top 5-10% of businesses in the city and use the money to fund affordable housing and homeless services.

The protest was the result of an active campaign conducted by the Affordable Housing Alliance, a coalition of housing and social justice activists convened by Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative to fight for bold demands addressing the city's staggering housing crisis. The crowd ranged from seasoned activists of the housing struggle to people attending their first protest.

Amid chants of "Amazon has got to pay" and "Housing is a human right," speakers addressed the skyrocketing rents and homelessness crisis that have grown in parallel with Amazon's now sprawling campus described by one speaker as "ground zero" of the housing crisis. Many speakers ointed to the clear anger

prevalent against wealthy corporations like Amazon that "we know have the money."

The legislation to "Tax Amazon" is officially known as the Employee Hours Tax (EHT), a tax on the top 5% to 10% of Seattle big businesses to put millions toward public housing and homelessness services.

Sawant explained that Amazon and big business can easily afford to pay and rejected "skin in the game" proposals that cynically sought to include small businesses in the EHT. This "trojan horse" from big business and the political establishment is a dishonest maneuver to try to make small business the sympathetic face of the opposition, and has already resulted in a letter signed by 301 business opposing the EHT.

Last year, Jeff Bezos became the richest man in the world. In that same year, Amazon, scandalously, paid \$0 in federal taxes after raking in billions in profits. On top of this, it will receive an additional \$789 million tax break from Trump's new tax plan! By taxing Seattle's biggest businesses like Amazon, Microsoft, and Vulcan Real Estate to build homes and shelter the homeless, ordinary Seattleites can pave the way for the biggest transfer of corporate wealth

back to the working class since the passage of the \$15 an hour minimum wage.

The battle over the EHT is far from over. The corporate-dominated majority of the Seattle City Council voted in November against a similar tax on big business just as Amazon gave \$350,000 to now-Mayor Jenny Durkan's campaign. While support for taxing big business to fund desperately needed housing and public services is palpable across our neighborhoods and communities, it will take broader mobilizations and a campaign of escalating tactics and actions to pressure the city's political establishment to take meaningful action to put the massive wealth accumulated on the backs of working people toward our needs, not profits for big business! ☘

As we go to print, four Seattle councilmembers plan to unveil legislation to institute a \$75 million Employee Hours Tax (EHT) on the top 3% of big businesses in Seattle. It is only half the \$150 million the movement has demanded, but nonetheless represents a victory. However, there is no guarantee that the proposed legislation will pass as is. To win, we must continue building the movement to exert pressure for strongest EHT we can win.

### Sunny Aiyar

Hundreds of workers, students, and housing activists gathered at the Amazon "spheres" in Seattle's glitzy Belltown neighborhood to deliver a strong message to Jeff Bezos and the city's corporate establishment: Our housing and homelessness crisis will not

### We Can't Live in the City We Build – Hard Hats for Affordable Housing Say "Tax Amazon!"

Logan Swan, Iron Workers Union Local 86 (personal capacity)

From my worksite 40 stories up, a soon-to-be luxury hotel and apartment tower, I also see the human toll of our housing crisis. I look down on the flimsy canopies of people coughed up by this crisis, while the working class grinds along the choked highways to staff a city that's off limits when you're off the clock.

We need housing now in Seattle. And my union sisters and brothers are ready to start building it. ☘

Read the full version of this article at [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org)

## Defamation Lawsuit Brought by Two Cops Defend Kshama Sawant

### Freeman Ryan

Two Seattle police officers who shot a black man in 2016 have filed a defamation lawsuit aimed at silencing socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant and any public figure speaking against police killings.

The two officers who shot and killed Che Taylor are claiming damages because their careers were affected by Kshama's statement that the shooting was a "brutal murder." Andre Taylor, Director of Not This Time, and brother of Che Taylor, posed the issue in a very different way when he spoke at the Kshama Solidarity Campaign's initial press conference. "These officers' feelings were hurt, and my brother's life was taken." The two policemen shot Che Taylor in February 2016 in Northeastern Seattle after he followed orders to get down and put his hands in the air.

Attempting to play the martyr role, the two police officers had originally stated publicly that they didn't want "one red cent of public

money" out of the lawsuit. After the City of Seattle agreed, under pressure from activists, to pay Kshama's legal costs, a judge granted the officers' request to dismiss the original lawsuit. They have now re-filed the lawsuit, this time demanding damages be paid by the city of Seattle.

Their case is on weak legal grounds. According to Emily Chiang, legal director at the ACLU of Washington, "it's a very very high bar to prove defamation" (*TheStranger.com*, 8/25/2017). Proving defamation in the courts requires proving the intent of Sawant's statement was false and intended to cause harm.

With legal experts saying they have low odds to win this frivolous case, why are the officers re-filing it? The reasons are political. There is a strong movement against racism and police brutality in Seattle. The intent behind this lawsuit and the right wing forces who back it are to push back against the movement by damaging the credibility of the most prominent elected official in Seattle who

takes a clear stand against police brutality.

Forcing movements to spend precious dollars and time to fight lawsuits has always been among the tactics used by corporations fighting labor unions and the right-wing fighting broader progressive and radical social movements. These attacks will not silence Sawant, who has received no funding from big corporations, and will continue to speak out against police brutality and for worker rights.

We need more public representatives to stand up and build movements against racism and police brutality. In a similar way we need to defend immigrants rights activists who fear arrest and deportation by ICE

officials for speaking out against Trump's anti-immigrant agenda.

Many community leaders have already come out to show support and solidarity for Kshama in this lawsuit. We need to use the publicity around this lawsuit to speak out against all cases of police brutality and police killings.

The launch of the Kshama Solidarity Campaign will take place on May 4 at 6pm at Washington Hall in Seattle. We will highlight the struggles of other activists who face intimidation, while preparing for the fight to defend one of the few public representatives willing to speak out so directly against police brutality. ☘

### Donate to the Kshama Solidarity Campaign!

**DONATE ONLINE:**  
[www.gofundme.com/65qcf-kshama-solidarity-campaign](http://www.gofundme.com/65qcf-kshama-solidarity-campaign)



# May 1968 General Strike

## WHEN FRE CHALLENGE

In today's world, preoccupied with talk of "a new Cold War" between major powers, the events of half a century ago in a European country far from the U.S. may seem of little relevance. But for those who want to understand how a different – a socialist – world can be created, it is well worth looking at the "events" of May 1968 in France as **Clare Doyle**, member of the International Secretariat of the Committee for a Workers International, explains.

In those days, there was a Cold War, but it was one between two very different social systems. The economies of the "West" were capitalist – based on private ownership and profit. In the "East" they were state-owned, bureaucratically-run, claiming to be "socialist" but excluding workers, sometimes brutally, from any decision-making – at work or in society.

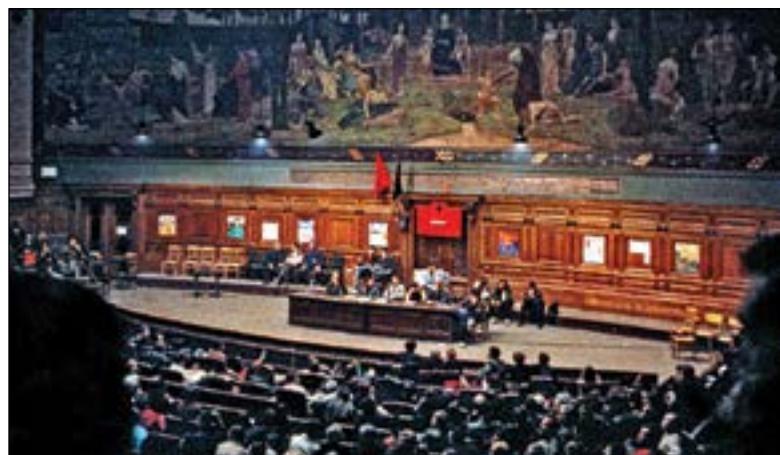
On both sides of the "iron curtain" the fear of "mutually assured destruction" stayed the hands of the nuclear powers. But capitalist and Stalinist regimes alike feared a revolution anywhere that would put power firmly in the hands of democratically elected representatives of the working class.

In France in May 1968, such a revolution was entirely possible and would have spread like wildfire, across Europe – West and East. It could have leapt across the Atlantic (and the Pacific) to the U.S. where the dry kindling for such a conflagration was accumulating in the antiwar, black freedom, and women's movements which also contributed to a massive wave of working class unrest.

### How it All Began

In Europe, after World War II, there had been a rapid increase in production, particularly in industry, but many workers were living in slums and earning wages that did not allow them to buy the very cars, washing machines, fridges, and cookers that they were producing. In France, the Fifth Republic established by General de Gaulle in 1958 was based on a "strong state" which had (and still has) dictatorial powers to over-rule parliament when the president deems it necessary and to call troops onto the street.

Students were beginning to express their own dissatisfactions – about over-crowded lecture halls, outmoded rules and regulations the war in Vietnam and apartheid in South Africa. Their protests – those inside the universities, with sit-ins and round-the-clock debates and those outside on the streets – were brutally attacked by the forces of the state, including the hated semi-militarized CRS. University campuses were closed. Some student leaders were taken to court and imprisoned. Hundreds were arrested, thousands were beaten and bloodied on the demonstrations, hundreds were hospitalized.



Students held continual assemblies during the month of general strike.

The ruling layer – the government in particular – was split over whether to carry on with repression or make concessions. This is a typical feature of any developing revolutionary situation. In Paris, at the beginning of May 1968, concessions actually emboldened the students. More demonstrations saw more injuries and more sympathy from the middle layers in society.

The trade unions begin to call solidarity demonstrations outside Paris. Students in hundreds of secondary schools (lycées) strike and occupy their school buildings. Young workers begin to join the street battles. "If they can do this to the sons and daughters of the 'tops' in society," they reasoned, "What can they do to us when we are on the streets with our demands?" The cries went up for De Gaulle to resign: "Hey, Charlie, ten years is enough!"

The leaders of the sizeable "Communist" Party of France began by condemning the students as anarchists, Trotskyists, and Maoists "playing at revolution." But pressure building up from below for solidarity action with the students forced the CP-led trade union federation, the CGT, along with the more "moderate" CFDT and also the lecturers' union, the FEN, to call a 24-hour general strike for Monday, May 13.

### Escalation

This was the only official call for strike action in France throughout the "month of revolution" and yet the movement that developed became the most powerful general strike in history. On that day, more than five million workers came out on strike. One million demonstrated on the streets of Paris and tens of thousands in other cities across France. The trade union leaders hoped this would act like the valve on a pressure cooker and that workers

would bow once more under the yoke of capitalist exploitation.

Far from it! A few workers in one factory – Sud Aviation in Nantes – decided to stay on strike and occupy their factory. They set the ball rolling. Workforce after workforce followed suit – striking and occupying auto plants, shipyards, hospitals, coal mines, transport depots, and post offices. Schools, shops, hospitals, offices, theatres are occupied. Farm workers begin sit-ins at farms and depots and their unions call for a national demonstration on May 24.

On the May 18, there was near paralysis in the country and the fascist organization, Occident, can muster no more than 2,000 for a demonstration aimed at breaking the strike!

By Monday, May 20, six million were on strike and occupying their workplaces, setting up committees for conducting the strike and organizing rotations for looking after machinery and equipment. In some cases, they locked bosses in their offices and fed them by buckets lowered through the skylights. Everywhere red flags were hoisted and the Internationale, the famous workers' hymn, was sung. Outside some factories effigies of the bosses were dangling from scaffolds!

Lawyers, architects, civil servants, teachers, soccer players, bank-workers, department store workers, and workers at nuclear power stations were all getting involved. As at the time of the great sit-in strikes of 1936, even the dancers of the Folies Bergeres joined in, complaining about their working conditions and dreaming of a different life! The Cannes film festival was cancelled, state radio and TV workers took control over programs and news and even professional soccer players went on strike. Ports are paralyzed, sailors and police begin to mutiny.

White collar workers at the headquarters of the bosses' organization (the CNPF) occupied the board-room. Committees everywhere discuss how a future society will work, often in terms of socialist or communist democracy. The major workers' party, the pro-Stalinist Communist Party, is riven with tensions as it tries to hold the line, declaring this is not a political strike.

By Friday, May 24, 10 million – more than half of France's total workforce – were on



strike. Violent battles raged on the streets of Paris where barricades had been built for the first time since the liberation struggle against German fascist occupation at the end of World War II.

On May 25, tripartite talks begin between De Gaulle's government, the bosses, and the trade union leaders ... who are still insisting that the struggle is not political! After three days and nights of talks, a very generous package of reforms is agreed – on wages, holidays, working time etc. These reforms were the product of revolutionary events but were not enough to quench the thirst of the millions of workers occupying their workplaces. The next day, at the giant car factories and elsewhere, when the union leaders present them, they are unceremoniously rejected. Workers are striving for something else, as yet unarticulated by any of their "traditional" leaders.

### What Now?

Fifty-thousand people fill the Charlety Stadium for a rally organized by the non-communist left about a political alternative to Gaullism and capitalism. The CGT calls a demonstration for May 29 and half a million strikers march through the capital. On that day, De Gaulle packs his bags and flies out of France, telling the American ambassador that the future now "depends on God!"

But the workers' leaders have no program for taking the power that is lying in the streets.

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# NICH WORKERS

# ED CAPITALISM



*Workers vote at a Renault auto plant in Boulogne-Billancourt, France in May 1968.*

Those who have an idea of what is needed do not have a strong enough voice. Workers wait for an alternative program of action from the “communists” but nothing is forthcoming. Later, the CP leaders will say the state was too strong, but the state was already disintegrating.

## Revolutionary Situation

A classical situation of dual power existed: a revolutionary situation with the ruling layer in tatters, the middle class on the side of the working class and adopting its methods of struggle – occupations, demonstrations – and the working class on the move and ready for a fight to the finish. Workers in neighboring countries had already shown their solidarity in action as well as words – refusing to do the work of the striking French workers such as printing government material, moving goods in or out of the country etc.

So what could a revolutionary leadership with a mass base of support have done to complete the revolution in France in May 1968? The idea of linking up the strike committees on a local, regional and national level to form an alternative government was put forward by people whose voice was too small, who lacked a base in the workers’ movement.

The “Trotskyists” of the Fourth International, with whom the Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, sister organization of Socialist Alternative in the U.S.) had broken in 1965, turned their backs on the working class, saying they would not move into

action for at least 20 years. In France, they concentrated on the student movement and elsewhere on the revolt against colonial rule. When one of their leaders, Ernest Mandel, voiced this opinion in London at a public meeting in the Spring of 1968 – just one month before the May explosion – he was challenged by Militant’s editor, Peter Taaffe, insisting it would not be long before the workers of France, with their revolutionary traditions, would be on the move again!

In the early days of the “events” themselves, he pointed out to a meeting in the London School of Economics, that a sure sign that a revolution was in the making was the 12 and 13 year olds trying to join the demonstrations and teachers locking them in their classrooms...until they themselves went on strike!

“France is the country in which the class struggle is fought to a conclusion,” said Marx’s great co-thinker, Friedrich Engels. The situation was rotten-ripe for a revolutionary takeover and examples had developed of joint strike committees of workers, students, and small farmers taking over from the old state forces.

In Nantes, the home of Sud Aviation, where the strike originally took off, such a committee was formed early on in the movement. It took control in the region of Loire Atlantique over every aspect of society – production, distribution, and exchange. Food was brought into the towns by the small farmers, prices and fares were held down, the police were made

redundant by students and workers patrolling the neighborhoods, and other areas were urged to follow suit.

If similar representative bodies had developed in every region of France and sent elected delegates on to a national council, committees of struggle would have become organs of workers’ rule. As in Russia in October 1917, a trusted revolutionary leadership would have taken all the necessary measures to bring the bulk of the existing state forces over to the side of a socialist government. They would have made an appeal to the workers of every other country to follow suit and paralyzed the possibility of a military intervention from outside.

But the leaders of the major union federations and of the Communist Party were the ones who least wanted a successful revolution. If workers could take power in a developed industrial economy, they knew, it would inspire the workers of the Soviet Union to throw the parasitic bureaucracy off their backs and reconstruct genuine workers’ democracy – the Cold War would have melted away like snow under the sun’s rays! They literally betrayed it.

## The End

The leaders urged workers to return to work but more workers actually joined the strike, searching for a way of changing society forever. But no lead was given by the political forces they knew. De Gaulle returned to France, calling an immediate election and mobilizing the forces of reaction onto the streets. The police and army moved in against strikers and left organizations. Hundreds of militant workers were fired, a number of left organizations were outlawed.

In the June parliamentary election, the Gaullists gained and the Communist Party lost votes – standing, not for a new socialist society, but “law and order.” Yet within a year De Gaulle was gone, replaced by Georges Pompidou – like the French president today, a former Rothschild banker.

The initial gains from the tripartite agreement were undermined by inflation and the continuation of capitalist exploitation in general. But the trade unions grew in numbers and in 1969 various socialist forces came together to launch a new Socialist Party. Francois

Mitterand became its leader in 1972 and in less than a decade was elected president of the country. The same year, 1981, the Socialist Party was voted into government by a massive 55% of the electorate.

Without an all-out program of nationalization and democratic workers’ control and management, even a “socialist” government by name will end up implementing policies in the interests of the 1% – the capitalist class. This was the lesson of the Mitterand government and of the more recent government of Francois Hollande and his “Socialist Party” which was driven from office last year with a massive collapse of the SP vote.

## A New ‘68?

Today, France is embroiled in a new contest between the classes. Emmanuel Macron is determined to push through a program of anti-working class “reforms.” The workers and the youth of France are determined to fight it. Railworkers are striking to prevent privatization of the railways and attacks on their wages and conditions. Students in schools and universities are fighting a system of selection aimed at excluding children from working-class backgrounds. Days of action see millions of workers and young people striking and demonstrating together.

A new ‘68 is in the air, but it could yet be dissipated by a failure of the trade union leaders and of popular left figures like Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Olivier Besancenot to mobilize for a fight to the finish. History never repeats itself exactly and time is needed to build a leadership that is capable of leading the flood of revolution on to victory.

Discontent, even anger, is everywhere in today’s world – not least in the U.S. where school students and workers have been demonstrating a new militancy against the injustices of a very ugly capitalist world. A look at the greatest general strike in history can inspire in a new generation the confidence that socialism can be won, not just in one country – wherever it breaks out first – but worldwide.

History has lessons for all of us if we take a little time to look at it. The conclusion? “We are many, they are few!” A socialist world is possible! ☘

## Debates in the Movement

## How Do We End Gun Violence?

Keely Mullen

In the past two months, millions of students have participated in walkouts and demonstrations against gun violence in the U.S., most notably the biggest student walkouts since the 1960s on March 14 and the massive March for Our Lives on March 24. This movement, sparked by the massacre at Stoneman Douglas High School, took sharp aim at the NRA and the politicians it bankrolls. What started out as student survivors in Florida speaking out against Congress' inaction on gun control turned into a mass youth revolt. Through this, the students have pushed dozens of corporations to sever ties with the NRA and state legislatures in a number of states have scrambled to pass basic gun control or strengthen existing measures.

A key feature of this movement is that it has been organized around a set of clear demands. The students called for - among other things - universal background checks, banning the sale of assault rifles, raising the age to buy a firearm to 21, and funding for mental health counseling in schools. These demands are an excellent starting point, however they also pose the question: What comprehensive program can end violence in society that extends beyond mass shootings? As the movement has developed, debate has also naturally developed around this and related questions.

### Parkland Manifesto and Response from Black Students

One debate was sparked by a widely read manifesto by the editorial staff of the Eagle Eye, the school newspaper at Stoneman Douglas High School, published in The Guardian which outlined a comprehensive list of demands that they said would halt mass shootings.

Some of these demands echoed the broad demands of the movement mentioned above. However, this manifesto went further by calling for strengthening the role of law enforcement in schools, including changing privacy laws to allow law enforcement to communicate more readily with mental health care providers and increased funding for school security.

On the other hand, a number of black students at Parkland came out publicly to say that an increased police presence on their campus after the massacre had left them feeling more in danger given the epidemic of police shootings of young black men and women. One student said, "It's bad enough we have to return with clear backpacks, should we also return with our hands up?"



Portland Socialist Alternative at the March 24 March for Our Lives.

While we disagree with this aspect of the Eagle Eye manifesto we should be clear that it does not reflect the thinking of the more radical wing of the movement exemplified by Emma Gonzalez and David Hogg. They are very focused on bringing out the different experience of black youth in regards to gun violence especially in inner city areas where there are no mass school shootings but conditions are actually more dangerous. One of the most noteworthy features of the walkouts in fact was how students in many inner city schools came out in solidarity with the Parkland survivors but also correctly told their story.

While we understand why a section of Parkland students, and those affected by mass shootings more broadly, would feel that an armed presence on school campuses is a necessary defense, we are opposed to the further militarization of schools. In recent years, there has been growing criticism of the growing presence armed "school resource officers" in schools around the country. Their role has little to do with keeping students safe from outside threats and more to do with maintaining punitive "discipline codes" that disproportionately affect black and brown students.

The public funding that would go toward increasing police presence in schools or hiring armed "school resource officers" should be spent on wrap-around social work and counseling services as well as after-school and extracurricular programs to enable students

to develop intellectually and emotionally on the healthiest basis. Schools should have democratically elected committees to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all employees, students, and parents. These committees should have a controlling oversight over all measures pertaining to health and safety, and the power to decide what physical measures are needed to protect both students and staff.

### "Vote Them Out"

A major theme across the movement has been the call to vote out the rotten politicians, mostly Republicans, who've been vociferously opposed to any gun control measures throughout their political tenure. While we fully agree with the need to throw out the Republicans and their corporate backers, the question we need to answer is: Who should replace them?

The Democratic Party, a party bankrolled by the predatory banks on Wall Street and massive pharmaceutical corporations, are not reliable allies in the fight against systemic violence in our society. The Democrats like to talk about gun control and opposing the NRA but their record of accomplishing anything on this front is fairly pathetic.

Just months ago the Democratic Party sold out young people when they covered away from a fight to defend Dreamers. While they temporarily shut down the government over the question of DACA, only days later they agreed to end the shut down on only a promise from Mitch McConnell that he would at

some point address immigration. The budget negotiations came and went, and Dreamer youth - though temporarily protected by the decision of a Federal Judge in California - still face the threat of deportation with no permanent protection for them or their families.

In order to win the demands of the student movement against gun violence, we certainly need to drive out the NRA-funded Republicans. The movement needs real fighting allies in the halls of power. However, we believe the most reliable allies will be those who draw their strength from social movements and are unapologetically independent from big business and corporate money. We believe that the most effective way to "vote them out" and continue the movement to end gun violence is by running independent, working-class candidates who stand for not only basic gun control measures, but a broader program to address the poverty, inequality, alienation, and despair that plagues capitalist society.

### A Program to End Violence

While we understand the many legitimate reasons people would want to own a gun and defend their right to do so, the recent mass shootings and the terror they bring show that the prevalence of guns in the U.S. is not a positive thing for the vast majority of people.

We support basic gun control demands like many of those being raised by the students leading this movement but we do not in any way see that as a fundamental solution to the many forms of gun violence.

The U.S. is wracked by social crisis and inequality as the super rich continue to get richer. Meanwhile the rest of society faces stagnant wages, lack of access to high quality health care, the disappearance of affordable housing, and crushing debt. It is also a society where violence is widely glorified. This is no accident. You cannot separate the crisis of gun violence from the relentless violence promoted by the ruling class abroad in endless wars to protect corporate profits and at home to enforce segregation and crush any serious opposition to its rule.

Our solution must extend far beyond gun control to include the demilitarization of the police and public schools; full funding for social service programs in schools including music, art, and libraries; a \$15 minimum wage and other anti-poverty measures; socialized health care; and a massive jobs program. We also need a growth of solidarity and social struggle to fight for a decent society. This is what will really begin to overcome alienation and what the endlessly violent ruling class of this country fears most. ✪

# French Rail Strikes Against Macron



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

Elisabeth Wichser-Krajcik

In the battle against French President Emmanuel Macron's attacks on the working class, unions and students have launched a highly politicized struggle consisting of intense strikes and university occupations. On March 22, this movement reached a turning point. Unions and students came together in massive protests across France. The SNCF, or the publicly owned train system that traverses France, is facing privatization. Macron seeks to change the SNCF from a completely publicly owned and funded system to "government owned shares," which undoubtedly in a few years will be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

In addition to privatization, the railway workers' pensions and working conditions are under attack from Macron's "reforms." The railway workers are one of the strongest and most militant parts of the French working class. They are staging rolling strikes, currently two days out of every five. Macron is testing them to see the extent to which he can slash social safety

nets for the whole French working class.

In Paris, train lines can not legally be completely shut down, but simply are running less frequently during strikes. Travel around France is hit hardest, with regional trains being completely canceled on strike days. In addition some management officials are being offered hefty bonuses to act as scabs. Despite all this, these strikes are still incredibly effective and have been inspiring students across France to continue fighting Macron's education "reforms."

The solidarity between the railway workers, other workers facing attacks by Macron's neoliberalism, and students is impressive. On March 22, the first day of the rail strike, about 55,000 people marched together in Paris against Macron's vicious attacks. Macron's *Sélection* law would drastically reduce access to free, quality education to working-class students



French rail workers are striking two days out of every five.

while cutting professor positions at universities across France. The student movement, though still relatively small, has occupied 25 universities across France.

Closely mirroring May '68 (see pp. 6&7), the current student movements have been met with police violence. In the student districts of Paris you can see "1968/2018," "Solidarity with the Conductors," and "I support the Conductors!" spray-painted on advertisements and walls.

It's not just students who

support the striking rail workers. In fact, Macron's approval ratings have plummeted, with 52% of the country disapproving of him. In only one month, the railway workers solidarity fund has raised €700,000 (\$860,000). Though the corporate media has been pushing a false headline that a majority of French people disapprove of the strikes, there is a huge sense of solidarity.

As May 2018 approaches, there is growing anger amongst the students and workers in France. Janitors, hospital workers, postal

workers, teachers, and lawyers have all been participating in strikes against these reforms. At the same time, workers and students are getting organized by continuing their strikes and occupations, coming together in larger protests, and refusing to back down. However, it will take more than this to defeat the rising tide of neoliberalism. Now, the question is whether the movement will be strong enough to drive out Macron for good. The potential is there, but students, unions members, and ordinary workers must come together to escalate the struggle bringing in wider layers of the working class.

Leftist leaders Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Olivier Besancenot have correctly called on trade unions and political organizations to act together to stop Macron. In workplaces, schools and universities, in the streets, in the unions, and in the movement of France Insoumise, Gauche Revolutionnaire (CWI in France) is advocating mass struggle to stop Macron, fighting for a socialist program to put an end to his destructive capitalist policies. ✪

## Belfast Rape Trials and the Battle Over the 8th Amendment

# Ireland's Growing Women's Movement

Statement of the Socialist Party (Ireland)

The outcome of the Belfast rape trial saw an explosion of spontaneous demonstrations in every major city in Ireland bringing to the surface opposition to the culture of sexism and victim blaming in the legal system and society generally. It comes against the backdrop of the historic referendum to repeal the 8th amendment in the south and the emergence of a new feminist movement globally.

"This working-class woman would've kicked their ass," "Even I know no means no" (a placard on a dog), "I'd rather be sued than raped." Just some of the home made placards that have appeared on demonstrations in cities Ireland, North and South in the wake of the high-profile Ulster Rugby rape trial.

On March 29, 4,000 protested in Dublin, the day after the verdict, and an incredible 8,000 marched on the following Saturday in a

protest and rally facilitated by Socialist Party member of parliament, Ruth Coppinger. In Belfast up to 1,000 demonstrated outside the courts where trial took place on the Thursday in a protest organized by the feminist movement and 500 attended a further demonstration on Saturday organized by ROSA. Protests also took place in Derry, Kilkenny, Galway, Cork and elsewhere.

These protests were young, mostly female and extremely angry. Reflecting the youthful nature of this new movement, hashtag after hashtag relating to trial have been trending on social media including; #IBelieveHer, #Stand-WithHer, and when Paddy Jackson's (one of the defendants) solicitor threatened to sue people for comments made in support of the victim, the response on social media was for #SueMePaddy to trend.

The trial has brought to the fore the prevalence of sexist and misogynistic attitudes that exist in the legal system and society in general.

In Northern Ireland, over 94% of all rape trials have resulted in no conviction for the accused. The conviction rates for sexual violence are far lower than for any other crime. In the South, only 19% result in convictions and 7% when the case is contested. As Suzanne Breen, one of the few journalists who have covered this trial in a fair manner, put it: "This was a case where it wasn't always clear who exactly was on trial. Each defendant is rightly allowed their own legal representation. But a 21-year-old woman being cross-examined by four defence barristers over eight days pulls at your heart-strings. The young woman failed to secure the verdict she desired. She did not win, yet she has certainly not lost."

### Action on Sex Education

When asked in court whether or not the complainant had said "yes," Paddy Jackson replied, "she didn't say no." The fact that this

was interpreted as an affirmation of consent, rather than an admission that consent was not obtained, is extremely telling. At least three of the four accused in the recent rugby trial went to a school that uses the Christian fundamentalist and anti-choice organization, Love for Life, as their provider of sex education, as do 70% of schools in Northern Ireland.

Alongside the important movement for repeal and abortion rights, a new youth movement can emerge to demand action to overhaul sex education in our schools, North and South. The southern government has already announced a review of the sex education curriculum. This is a reflection of the pressure being exerted by the #IBelieveHer protests and the "Objective Sex Education Bill" that Ruth Coppinger and Solidarity have introduced in the Dáil (Irish Parliament) and

continued on p. 11

# Pipeline War in British Columbia

The below article was written by Socialist Alternative's sister organization in Canada. The battle over the Kinder Morgan Pipeline comes just months after a major spill on the Keystone XL pipeline in South Dakota which tragically confirms the warnings of those resisting the pipeline at Standing Rock.

**Bill Hopwood**

The battle over the Kinder Morgan pipeline in the province of British Columbia in Canada is getting nasty. Kinder Morgan, the largest energy infrastructure company in North America, wants to build a \$7.4 billion pipeline from the neighboring province of Alberta's tar sands to the port of Vancouver in BC to deliver diluted bitumen to over 400 large tankers a year. The previous Canadian government led by Stephen Harper approved the pipeline based on a flawed process.

On April 8, Kinder Morgan announced the suspension of all "non-essential spending" on the pipeline due to the "extraordinary political risks." It set a deadline of May 31 for the federal government to provide guaranteed "clarity on the path forward," or it may cancel the

project.

## Extreme Political Risks

What are these risks? British Columbia's (BC) government has a legal case seeking to block any increase in diluted bitumen shipments through BC waters, due to safety concerns.

More significant are several court cases from First Nations objecting to the approval process, due to the lack of consultation. The Supreme Court of Canada insists that the Canadian government must consult First Nations. The pipeline would cross the traditional territories of First Nations staunchly opposed to it and they have plans to block construction.

There is widespread public resistance. In one month 200 people, including two Members of Parliament, were arrested for peaceful protest and charged with contempt of court. Many thousands more are committed to doing so.

Alberta's government rushed legislation that threatens to restrict gasoline supplies to BC. There are suggestions that the Federal government could withhold transfer payments to BC for health services.

In response to Kinder Morgan's announcement the Alberta provincial government and the national Canadian governments are discussing buying into the project using billions of taxpayers' dollars. Alberta's Premier Notley is considering "purchasing the pipeline outright." The main target of the pressure is the BC government. However, even if it backed down the "risks" would remain; the court cases cannot be resolved by May 31 and people's resistance will continue. Some politicians have called for army intervention. Others have suggested using the War Measures Act. With this approach, the allegedly progressive prime minister Justin Trudeau could be heading for a Standing Rock.

## We Say No to the Pipeline!

The pipeline makes little economic sense. Trudeau and Notley falsely claim it will provide jobs in Alberta. Yet, Kinder Morgan says there will be only 90 full time jobs, after construction.

The inevitable leak or spill will destroy thousands of jobs in BC. The approval of two other tar sands pipelines and the high cost of processing bitumen with low oil prices have



*Protest in British Columbia against the Kinder Morgan Pipeline.*

undermined the pipeline's viability.

The tar sands are Canada's biggest source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, yet Trudeau claims that the pipeline will help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It would boost climate change, costing billions of dollars in fires, floods and other disasters. The jobs this pipeline will really create are firefighters, emergency responders, dyke builders, etc.

## The Next Stage

This battle is heading to the courts and a constitutional crisis. Québec's Premier has warned the federal government to be "very careful," viewing its desire to overrule BC's concerns as "not a good sign for federalism."

Trudeau's image on the

environment and First Nations is ruined. But as Canada's economy depends on extracting and exporting raw materials, he has to show global capitalism that Canada is open for exploitation.

As an oil spill in the harbour would threaten thousands of jobs and close the port for weeks, Socialist Alternative supports a one day shutdown of the port of Vancouver to stop Kinder Morgan.

Canada's fossil fuel industry receives \$3 billion of annual subsidies and governments are willing to use billions more to buy into this dodgy project. If this money was used to replace fossil fuels with clean energy and upgrade buildings there would be far more good jobs, while respecting Indigenous rights and protecting the environment. ☘

## California Nurses Win Major Victory From Kaiser Permanente

**Martin Jennings**

Over the course of the last month, 19,000 California nurses working at facilities owned by medical giant Kaiser Permanente won a significant victory. Their new contract includes several important new provisions demanded by the union and forcing back all of the concessions originally demanded by Kaiser. California Nurses Association (CNA) / National Nurses United has risen to be one of the strongest and most radical faces of organized labor, with California having one of the highest proportion of nurses unionized in the country. The fruits of their action are here with this contract and will continue to grow. Alongside the recent victory of West Virginia teachers, the Kaiser nurses are showing the way forward – a path to win more victories.

Kaiser Permanente is a conglomerate of medical facilities with different business practices. It is an enormous company that generates vast wealth from the labor of nurses and

many other workers and by constantly raising insurance premiums for its customers. Kaiser's CEO is paid about \$10 million per year and the company has cash reserves of \$21 billion. Even from this extremely comfortable financial position, the company fights against raises for nurses. Kaiser and other medical companies strive to cut costs at every turn and it is only through the organized struggle of the workers that wages are raised and patient care is improved.

## Threat of Strike Brings Contract Victory

Faced with Kaiser's concessionary attacks, the nurses voted overwhelmingly in early March to authorize a possible strike. The threat of a strike was a key factor in forcing Kaiser to accept the workers' demands. The threat was credible not only because of the near unanimity of the vote, but also because the nurses have taken strike action in the past and have developed a reputation as some of

the most militant workers in America today. Kaiser withdrew their demands and gave in to those of the nurses. The union was able to bargain from a position of strength because they did not ask merely for the minimum demands that would be acceptable to their workers, but instead set big goals to improve the workplace for both nurses and patients.

Nurses calculate that this contract equals the equivalent of a \$400 million transfer from Kaiser's hoarded profits and into the hands of the hard working people who generated that wealth in the first place!

This struggle fits into the small but growing trend of workers seeking to fight for progress in pay and working conditions. Teachers are putting up a monumental battle to regain lost ground following the victory of education workers in West Virginia.

The nurses and teachers can learn much from each other's victories. One thing that is clear is that workers are stronger when they link their struggle for better pay and conditions to winning wider changes that directly

improve the lives of working people and their communities. We need to rebuild the traditions of solidarity that underpinned the powerful labor struggles of the past. Without the workers, no company or institution can continue to function, a fact that gives us tremendous power when we organize and act together.

## The Way Forward

California nurses won a significant battle with the new Kaiser contract. But each victory must be seen as a moment to build on, a movement in the making. From here we have an opportunity to bring more and more working people into union and political activity. Union organizing and solidarity campaigns can help connect the fight for wages and jobs to the struggles working people face in other aspects of life: skyrocketing rents, sexual harassment, gun violence, deportations, and racist policing. ☘

# Trump Regime Crisis

continued from p. 3

ideas of solidarity, struggle, and working-class political independence will rise with every successful battle. The teachers' struggle also points to the need for flexible tactics in organizing workers, building wider support in the community and the working class, including a political struggle against union leaders who refuse to fight against the bosses and the politicians who serve them.

## The Coming Blue Wave

Ryan's resignation is only one sign that the Democrats are likely to make big gains in November. There are counter currents to the "blue wave," namely gerrymandered districts, Trump's hardcore base still supporting him, and the possibility of voter apathy as the corporate-controlled nature of the Democrats prevents them from mobilizing people around an exciting program for substantial change. However, rich Republican donors are abandoning House races to try to "stop the bleeding" in the Senate while droves of politicians retire.

Socialists sympathize with the desire to use the November elections to strike a blow at the right wing. Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership have not made decisive moves to drive out the weak Trump regime, and they sold out young immigrant DACA recipients in their budget deal with the Republicans. They also opened the door to Trump's right populism with years of pro-corporate policies. We need to build our struggles from below to effectively win victories against Republican proposals.

We think an important way to build the power of working people is by supporting strong independent left campaigns like Tim Canova in Florida, running for Congress against former DNC chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz, and Gayle McLaughlin running for lieutenant governor in California. The Democratic Socialists of America should actively build these campaigns as part of the bold electoral strategy we advocate to forward the struggle for a mass working

class party and socialist change. At the same time, we should engage with supporters of populist Democrats like Cynthia Nixon in New York to discuss what type of program and movement is necessary to defeat the billionaire class.

If the Democrats do gain control of Congress or even just the House, this will alter the political terrain and they won't be able to claim that their "hands are tied" to effectively stop Trump's policies. We will need to intensify movements on the streets, workplaces, campuses, and communities to force them to act decisively against Trump.

## Security State Threatens Trump

Mueller's investigation and Comey's book are causing Trump to freak out on Twitter and in real life. Trump's wannabe dictator personality leaves him open to making blunders and it is possible he fires Mueller which would lead to mass protests across the country that would destabilize Trump's regime.

Trump is undoubtedly a corrupt, racist, sexist bigot and a threat to workers and the oppressed. We are in favor of bringing him down along with his policies. At the same time, socialists point out that the FBI is a repressive institution with a history of attacking the left and particularly black activists. We have also repeatedly pointed out that it was the weakness of Clinton and the Democrats not Russian interference that ushered Trump into office.

If Trump fires Mueller, socialists should intervene in protests that would likely be historic in their breadth and determination. We would advocate, unlike Democratic leaders, that the protests do everything in their power to defeat Trump, including civil disobedience, strikes, and occupations. Socialists would also propose that this potential new stage of the movement against Trump bring forward



Trump and the recently fired Rex Tillerson.

pro-worker demands for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, full funding to education, and guaranteed single-payer health care. Trump might not be impulsive enough to fire Mueller and trigger a social crisis, but he's certainly not above outbursts and inexplicable blunders.

For example, Trump has fired the opening shots of a potential trade war with China that – if it escalates – could drag the economy back into a recession. The current shallow recovery is a key reason why Trump's hardcore base hasn't abandoned him yet, but that can change if the economy crashes. Trump's threatened tariffs and China's "tit-for-tat" responses have already sent jitters through international markets and could threaten both the agricultural and auto industries in the U.S. This shows, once again, that Trump's promises that capitalism can "bring the jobs back" are empty rhetoric and that this system has no way out of the crisis it created.

We can't wait until November, and we need a socialist program that can link up all the struggles taking place now. Socialists should work to rebuild the labor movement and make steps toward a working-class party that fights for democratic public ownership of the big corporations that dominate our lives. ✪

# Ireland Women's Movement

continued from p. 9

that is due to be discussed on April 18.

## Repeal the 8th

This movement is happening at an important juncture in Irish society – on the eve of an historic referendum campaign to repeal the 8th amendment from the Irish constitution. North and South we live in a society where there is an incredibly low rate of conviction for rape and sexual violence yet the threat of prison hangs over women who have an abortion. It has been a movement of young people and women that has forced a referendum on this odious, anti-women amendment, including the pioneering work of ROSA in exposing that abortion in Ireland is a daily reality, through direct actions with the abortion pills.

It will also be a grassroots movement from below that will ensure that we get pro-choice legislation as well as win abortion rights in the north. A "Yes" vote will be an important step to winning women and pregnant people bodily autonomy, but also striking a blow against sexism and the conservative institutions who peddle it. As even a recent UN official, commenting on the denial of abortion rights, stated, "the situation in Northern Ireland constitutes violence against women that may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

## Capitalism: A Misogynistic System

Capitalism inherited the oppression of women and honed it to a new level. It will never willingly grant full rights to half the population, for fear that the inequality on which the system is based will be challenged. It gains from the oppression of women, for example the unpaid work of women is estimated to stand at \$10 trillion globally per annum. Furthermore mega-profits rest upon capitalist culture's pushing of the sexist objectification of women's bodies. This, and the promotion of outdated binary gender roles, which is pushed by the beauty, fashion and sex industry, makes billions in profits annually.

It is no coincidence that women members of the Socialist Party and ROSA activists have been prominent in this movement and have been prominent in campaigning for repeal and pro-choice legislation. It flows from a political analysis that understands the rotten nature of this system that breeds inequality and oppression, but also an analysis which has confidence in the ability of women, LGBTQ, young people, and workers to challenge that system and build a socialist society free of inequality and oppression. ✪

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# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



## Tom Crean

When Donald Trump was a candidate for president he made clear that undocumented immigrants would be a key target of his administration. He called immigrants from Mexico “rapists.” Since being elected he and his administration have let ICE off the leash, stepped up workplace raids and targeted leading immigrant activists for deportation.

He has created a climate of terror in immigrant communities unprecedented even during the height of mass deportations under Bush and Obama. People fear not just deportation but the horrific ICE jails where sexual abuse is rampant. This network of prisons is becoming America’s internal gulag. The Trump regime has even started to separate immigrant children from parents seeking asylum.

In a sick twist, Trump then pretended to be concerned about the fate of Dreamers, young immigrants who have never known another home, while cancelling the DACA program that protected them from deportation and allowed them to work and attend college legally. The program only continues because of a federal court order which might well be overturned by the Supreme Court.

## Where to Turn?

Immigrants might have thought that the Democrats who denounce the president for his racist comments about “shit-hole

countries” in Africa and talk about “resistance” might stand up for immigrants. And indeed the base of the party and many of its elected officials genuinely want to defend immigrants. But the party’s leadership, completely beholden to corporate interests, refuses to organize mass struggle on any issue. They briefly used their leverage in budget negotiations and shut down the government over DACA. But then they caved based on a hollow promise from the Republicans to debate immigration reform.

Who should the immigrant population turn to? This is a critical question to ask on May Day which was revived as a day of struggle in the U.S. after the mass movement of immigrants in 2006. Historically it is the international day of working-class solidarity which originated in the U.S. in the 1880s during the fight for the eight-hour day.

The immigrant population is overwhelmingly working class, doing many of the toughest, dirtiest jobs in the country for very low pay. The corporate elite are overwhelmingly in favor of a greater level of immigration. But they want to keep the immigrant population as a super-exploited workforce with few rights and use them to depress the overall level of wages. The ruling class constantly seeks to keep working people divided.

But, as Kshama Sawant Seattle’s socialist councilmember pointed out last May Day, “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.”

## Immigrant Rights Are Workers’ Rights

It is not only the duty of the labor movement to stand in solidarity with immigrant workers, it is in fact a critical piece of rebuilding a fighting labor movement in the U.S. In the past few months, the revolt of the teachers in Republican-dominated states – where the attacks on public education had gone furthest – have graphically demonstrated the collective power of working people. They have successfully appealed to the broader working class for support and won real gains. The mass movement of high school students against gun violence has also shown the power of solidarity and put the reactionary NRA on the defensive. The emerging mass women’s movement has pointed toward the need for working people to stand together against all forms of harassment on the job. We need to unite all these struggles into a mighty force that brings down Trump and defeats the Republican agenda.

The old slogan of the labor movement “an injury to one is an injury to all” is more important than ever. We need to build a mass movement and a political force of working people around a set of demands that speak to our interests. This is what Bernie Sanders

started to do in 2016 when he called for a “political revolution against the billionaire class.” But tragically he did not continue his campaign as an independent after the Democratic establishment rigged the primary. We need to learn the lessons and start laying the basis for a new political force completely independent of corporate money.

We also need to look beyond this system. The popularity of socialism as an alternative continues to grow especially among young people. Capitalism has long ago exhausted its potential to move humanity forward. Now, it offers only more inequality, racial and gender oppression, war, and environmental catastrophe. The working class internationally is the force that can unite all the oppressed into a mighty force to end this nightmare and build a new world based on solidarity and democratic socialism.

- ✪ End the deportations and the terrorization of immigration communities;
- ✪ Make DACA permanent – immediate legalization for all undocumented immigrants;
- ✪ Tax the rich to fund education and affordable housing;
- ✪ For a federal \$15 minimum wage;
- ✪ Free college for all; cancel student debt;
- ✪ Medicare for All;
- ✪ End mass incarceration;
- ✪ For a trillion-dollar public investment in rebuilding the nation’s infrastructure as part of a transition to a renewable energy economy. ✪