

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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DEMOCRATS MAKE GAINS

WORKING CLASS POLITICS NEEDED TO DEFEAT THE RIGHT

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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

Hannah Swoboda Chicago, IL



Trying to understand the world and my newfound senses of independence and responsibility after graduating from high school, I became very concerned about climate change. I felt that my generation and those following it are inheriting a world that will soon be uninhabitable. I read critiques of capitalism's solutions to the climate crisis, which convinced me that there is absolutely no way that we can solve it under capitalism. The driving factor of capitalism is profit, necessitating the unrelenting production of unnecessary products to be sold. I learned that the main source of pollution is corporations, not average people. This same profit motive that pumps out stuff that we don't need also drives the growth of hugely polluting and destructive military forces, and imprisons people to use them as a cheap labor force, disproportionately effecting poor people of color. It takes all the profits for a few unbelievably rich people and throws scraps to the rest of us.

I resolved that capitalism is an existential threat to us all, and took up the label of "anti-capitalist". At this point I didn't know much about socialism and didn't have much of a program to guide me other than "capitalism = bad". I didn't really know what I could do, other than educating myself, ranting to whoever would listen, and feeling bad about the state of the world. Some time later I moved

from my complacent hometown to a university campus with people engaging in various activist struggles and was able to fight back a bit more, but without ever gaining the sense that what I was doing would be enough to fix things.

It was socialism that eventually gave me a vision for a livable future and a method to struggle effectively. Flash forward a few years later, and I found out about Socialist Alternative's work. Eager to do something in a period of reactionary attacks from the Trump regime, I started discussing socialist ideas with members of SA. It soon became clear to me how important it is to have a positive vision of a different society, rather than solely a negation of capitalism. Socialism has painted for me a picture of a society organized by the working class in its own interests, rather than those of the super-rich. It has given me a vision of a real alternative to capitalism, and the conviction to fight until we achieve it. ✦

Anti-Semitism Rears Its Ugly Head Again

The tragic shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh saddened the world. The return of open anti-Semitic terrorism is unwelcome but unsurprising in the era of Trump and right-wing populism worldwide.

It is important for working people and youth to analyze and understand where bigotry including anti-Semitism comes from and who is encouraging it. In this light, Trump is like many other right-wing leaders around the world who create space for the far-right. To look carefully at this and examine the tragedy in Pittsburgh, Socialist Alternative produced this statement which you can read at SocialistAlternative.org:

"Pittsburgh Stands with Tree of Life: Unite to Fight Anti-Semitism and the Far Right"

Trump's response to the Pittsburgh shootings - suggesting more armed guards - implies that working people should only expect more violence against minority communities. His top advisor, Kellyanne Conway, suggested that anti-religiosity is at the root of the shooting and sought to paint the incident as a product of left-wing propaganda.

The shooter in Pittsburgh was a far-right fanatic and it is clear that anti-Semitism, in the main, stems from right-wing sources and conspiracy theories.

Unfortunately, this attempt to paint the left as anti-Semitic is not unique to Trump or the U.S. The corporate media and the right wing in Britain are waging a campaign to paint Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the British Labour Party as anti-Semitic for opposing Israeli government policies.

Our sister organization in Britain, the Socialist Party of England and Wales wrote about it and we reposted it on our website:

"Anti-Semitism: What It Is and How to Fight It"

www.SocialistAlternative.org ✦

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Midterms Weaken Republicans

How Will We Really Defeat the Right?

Tom Crean

The midterm elections in the U.S. represented a limited “blue wave” and an overall rejection of Trump by the electorate. Republicans were relieved their losses weren't worse, while many progressive workers and youth were disappointed the outcome wasn't more decisive. It came in the wake of an election campaign where Trump sought to mobilize his base by whipping up fear of immigrants and using overt racism, while the Democrats focused on “rejecting hate” and defending Obamacare, but offered little that was concrete to working class people.

At the same time, a number of left and progressive candidates, almost all standing as Democrats, reflected the intense desire of millions to push back against the agenda of the right by refusing corporate money and putting forward bold, pro-working class demands like Medicare-for-All, rent control, a \$15 minimum wage, and tuition-free college. A number of self-described socialists won including Julia Salazar, who is going to the New York state senate, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, both heading to Congress.

While the Democrats now control the House of Representatives, a vicious and reactionary regime is still in place in Washington, and we can't wait until 2020 and the presidential election to fight it. We urgently need to build a mass movement, centered on the social power of working people, that takes on and defeats the agenda of the right, and fights to push Trump out. In the coming months, both the Democratic leadership and the new left candidates elected to Congress and state legislatures will be put to the test of rising expectations and demands to confront Trump and the ruling class.

Polarization Deepens

The last few weeks of the campaign saw Trump ramp up xenophobic hysteria to a new and horrific level (even for him), trying to whip up fear to drive turnout of his base. He declared the migrant



Trump pushed out Attorney General Jeff Sessions the day after the midterms.

caravan from Central America, which is winding through Mexico, to be “an invasion,” including MS13 gang members and terrorists from the Middle East. He then ordered thousands of troops to the border to confront a peaceful procession of a few thousand desperate women, men, and children fleeing the social chaos created by neo-liberal policies promoted by U.S. imperialism.

The Democratic leadership, on the other hand, chose very consciously to focus its attention on white, “college educated” women in suburban districts who previously tended to vote Republican. On health care, mainstream Democrats emphasized defending mandatory coverage of people with “pre-existing conditions,” a progressive element of Obamacare. But this was not combined with any bold proposal along the lines of Medicare for All to address the massive crisis in health care and the ongoing attacks of the Republicans. Neither did the Democratic leadership attack Trump's corporate tax cuts or answer the collapse of good, well-paying jobs by putting forward demands like a major green public works program. Instead, the Democrats used the unprecedented diversity of their candidates as a key selling point.

These “centrist” approaches by the Democrats were effective to

differing degrees, but also reveal the party leadership's very limited message in response to the Republican onslaught and the desire of their own electoral base to defeat the agenda of the right. Showing how out of touch they are, Nancy Pelosi – who may well be Speaker of the House again – made a statement right after the election that the Democrats will take a “bipartisan” approach and “seek common ground where we can” with the Republicans. At a meeting of donors and “strategists,” she again reiterated that trying to impeach Trump was off the agenda. Undoubtedly this weakness helped to embolden Trump to fire Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a move clearly aimed to undermine the Mueller investigation.

A Blue Wave With Limitations

There was a massive turnout for the midterm election - 30 million more voted than in the last midterm in 2014. It is projected that the Democrats will have 229 seats in the incoming House of Representatives - a 36 seat gain. This is based on winning the popular vote by a 7% margin, and will give them a 23 seat majority. Since the election became in many ways a referendum on Trump, this shift

in itself indicates that large sections of society reject his sexist and racist message. Significantly, at least 100 women were elected to the House - the vast majority of them Democrats - for the first time in U.S. history.

The Democrats also made modest gains at the state level where the Republicans had dominated over the past decade. They flipped seven governor positions, including in some key Midwestern states like Illinois and Michigan. Several particularly noxious reactionaries lost, including Chris Kobach in Kansas, and the infamous union basher Scott Walker in Wisconsin. On the other hand, Republicans expanded their Senate majority.

The Establishment Pushes Back

Despite the victory of high profile democratic socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other progressives, other results were disappointing to many progressive workers and youth. This included the defeat of Andrew Gillum in Florida's gubernatorial race by the out-and-out racist Ron DeSantis, as well as Ted Cruz defeating Beto O'Rourke in the Texas Senate race.

Both Gillum and O'Rourke took a markedly bolder and more

progressive approach than that of the Democratic leadership. Gillum would have also been the first black governor of Florida, a former Jim Crow state. In neighboring Georgia, Stacey Abrams, who would be the first black woman governor in U.S. history, is not conceding defeat. She is right to demand a recount due to the various irregularities in the Georgia election - part of a broader national Republican effort to step up voter suppression in states they control. These measures are particularly aimed at making it harder for African Americans to vote.

The Democratic leadership is now of course claiming that the outcome vindicates their “moderate” approach. As the New York Times put it, “The candidates who delivered the House majority largely hailed from the political center, running on clean government themes and promises of incremental improvement to the healthcare system rather than transformative social change.” Going further, they argue that “the theory – embraced by hopeful liberals in states like Texas and Florida – that charismatic and unapologetically progressive leaders might transmute Republican bastions into purple political battlefields, proved largely fruitless.” This is plainly ridiculous. In fact, O'Rourke had an outstanding result in a state where no statewide race has been won by Democrats in a quarter century. These and a number of other races actually show that the shift to the left seen in big cities and among young people in other parts of the country has spread to the South.

Additional indications of support for bold left policies came from some of the results on ballot measures. Florida voters restored voting rights to 1.4 million residents convicted of a felony who served their time. Ending this utterly anti-democratic measure will disproportionately benefit African Americans. Anti-gerrymandering measures passed in Michigan and several other states. Three “red” states - Idaho, Nebraska, and Utah - voted to expand Medicaid. San Francisco passed a corporate tax to aid the

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Fault Lines in the U.S. Economy

Risk of Recession Grows

Tony Gong and
Anthony D'Amico

Ten years after the crisis of 2008, official unemployment is low and stock prices are high. But many working people see a different reality — wages are stagnant, the cost of living is skyrocketing, and debt bubbles are out of control.

Underlying Weakness of the Economy

The inability of capitalism to organize a stable economy has wiped out avenues of profitable investment in expanding production. Corporations are only investing half as much of their profit compared to 50 years ago, choosing instead to park trillions of dollars in offshore tax havens or enrich shareholders via stock buybacks.

Productive investment is crucial because it drives economic expansion and creates favorable conditions for workers to win good jobs and higher pay. The ongoing lack of productive investment is a fundamental weakness of the American economy that drives a host of economic problems.

Less investment means fewer plants opening and less research into productive technologies. As a result, America's productivity growth has been cut in half in the past decade, with productivity growth in the manufacturing sector alone falling by 83%! Stagnant

productivity limits profit growth; but at the same time, Wall Street demands ever-increasing profits from corporations.

The economy cannot be fixed by giving corporations even more profit, as Trump promises to do with his tax cuts and tariffs. Corporate boardrooms have stalled investment, productivity, and wage growth, while the leadership of the labor movement has failed to decisively challenge the boss class. This kind of economic system is parasitic and offers no future to workers or the country as a whole.

What Could Trigger a Recession?

The late 1990s had the dot-com bubble; the late 2000s had the housing bubble. Today, it appears we are in an "everything" bubble that is primed to burst with possibly disastrous results. Prices of homes have risen to a new peak, about 10% higher than their 2007 level. These increasingly unaffordable homes have left homeowners with little savings to rely on in the event of the next downturn.

Besides the housing bubble, investors are pouring massive amounts of money into technology stocks, with little productive innovation to show for it. Amazon's stock price is valued at 397 times its actual earnings, but Amazon's online retail subunit actually makes the same razor-thin profit margins



Stock markets have only shown a part of the instability of the economy.

as Walmart. The rise of ridesharing has created a \$1.22 trillion bubble in auto loans that is already beginning to burst, as drivers fall behind in repayments due to low wages. The student loan bubble, valued at \$1.5 trillion (almost a tenth of GDP), and the healthcare sector (almost a fifth of GDP) are other major bubbles waiting to burst.

In addition, Trump's trade war on China threatens jobs due to the scale of Chinese inputs into American manufacturing.

Finally, increased volatility in the stock market is a reminder that the market is overvalued and overdue for a correction. Across ten days in early October, the U.S. market fell almost 5% (as measured by the Russell 3000 Index, which represents about 98% of all U.S. incorporated equity securities).

Unprepared For Recession

The capitalist establishment is less equipped to deal with economic turbulence than in 2008. Central banks cannot slash interest rates and print money for private banks through quantitative easing (QE) like they did during and after the Great Recession. Interest rates have not been raised high enough to be cut significantly, and central banks still need to take back, or "unwind," money printed through QE.

The broader economic effects of Trump's tax cut for the rich have been minor, and are due to subside soon. The main factor keeping the economy afloat at present is spending by the working class and middle

classes. However, consumers are stretched to the limit and unable to weather any more economic turbulence. Seventy-one percent of workers are in debt while disposable income is eroded by rising rents and housing prices. Workers have been forced to focus on survival — shrinking the consumer base for the rest of the economy.

Fight For Socialism

The political impact of a recession will be serious, and can have an initial stunning effect on labor struggles. But as workers begin rediscovering traditions of struggle — as seen in the teachers' and Google workers' strikes — the working class will react to a crisis more quickly than they did in 2008. The failure of both Obama's globalism and Trump's nationalism to protect living standards of workers will provoke many people to search for a bold new economic policy.

This raises the urgency of building what is missing: a new political party, independent of Wall Street and powerful corporations, with a working class program. This party could lead mass movements and unite workplace actions to win necessary changes. If the working class held economic and political power, it would be possible to deploy the enormous wealth held by corporations and billionaires to fulfill basic needs like housing, education and health care. ✪

2018 Socialist Alternative Convention: 300 Gather to Build Socialism

Keely Mullen

Socialist Alternative held its biggest ever National Convention on October 20-22. Over 300 socialists from across the country gathered in Chicago to talk about the crisis of global capitalism, the rising wave of labor struggle, the growing women's movement, renewed interest in socialist ideas, and the growth of the new left. The National Convention is held every two years and is the highest decision making body in our organization with delegates elected by local branches.

As a demonstration of the sheer

determination of our members to fight back and contribute to the movement for a better world, our Convention's financial appeal raised \$125,000!

Changing Landscape in U.S. Politics

Trump's presidency has deepened political polarization and undermined the credibility of capitalism, including both corporate political parties. Despite mass protests, the Trump regime appointed two Supreme Court Justices, passed massive tax cuts for

the wealthy, and has encouraged a dangerous racial polarization.

The Democratic Party has largely failed to take on Trump's agenda. The real test for the Trump administration will likely come in the next two years with a renewed economic crisis. With personal debt climbing, the housing and financial markets overheating, and the escalating trade war with China — all signs point to a recession or even a deep downturn that will devastate sections of the U.S. working class.

A key focus of our discussion on U.S. perspectives was the labor movement which is finding its feet

again after decades of retreat. There were more strikes in 2018 than any year since 2000 which points toward the revival of the strike weapon.

The teachers strikes demonstrated that winning requires a new leadership in the labor movement. Socialists have a key role to play in helping lay the basis for a new, militant labor leadership that can reclaim existing organizations, build new ones, and lead struggles to victory in the coming period.

Another key theme of the convention was the growing women's movement. The appointment of

Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court led to a massive new development of #MeToo. Millions of women are fed up with sexism and harassment and are looking for the most effective way to fight back and win. For many, it is critical that the fight against sexism take the form of a fight against low wages, unaffordable childcare, Medicare for All, and rent control.

We discussed and rigorously debated what is represented by the campaigns of self-described socialists like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

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20,000 Walk Out at Google Against Sexual Harassment

A Bay Area Google Employee

The strike leaders and the worker we picked as MC arrived first at Harry Bridges plaza across from the iconic San Francisco Ferry Building. It was pretty empty. For almost everyone at Google, this was their first strike. No one knew if we were all going to get fired. The farthest office was a 10-minute walk to the plaza, so the crowd gathered slowly at first. One office after another began crossing the streets and arriving. We began to think we might get a hundred or more workers to show up, but soon the plaza was completely filled with over a thousand Google workers.

In a new manifestation of the #MeToo movement, Google offices worldwide went out on a rolling strike Thursday, November 1 at 11:10am locally. From Singapore to Dublin and San Francisco, some 20,000 Google workers attended strike rallies protesting sexual harassment. We closed down, or partially closed down, 50 offices around the globe. It was impressive and inspiring to see so many Googlers around the globe participate in this action, despite not knowing how Google



Google employees in San Francisco walk out.

would respond, or if the bosses would retaliate.

The leaders in San Francisco were six women, mostly women of color, and two men. Every woman had a story of sexual harassment or assault from men at Google, and in most cases the harasser was still employed at Google. Many assaulters were promoted or retired with a fat severance deal.

The internal Google-workers-only website that national organizers set up to encourage workers to strike was visited by 35,000

out of 94,000 Google full-time employees. Locally, while putting fliers up in my office, one woman walked up to me and asked to help. So off we went, office-to-office, putting up fliers in the other Google workplaces in downtown San Francisco.

The strike rally kicked off at about 11:30 am. Our MC spoke about the experience she has had as a woman of color, and the culture of cover-ups for sexual harassment and assault that are unfortunately all too common in the workplace. Another worker got up and explained that this plaza

was the place where the 1934 San Francisco longshoremen-led general strike was launched. A woman worker then read out four stories of different women who were sexually harassed while working at Google. Each woman had attempted to pursue a case against their assailant, and each was not taken seriously by HR and Google management. Again in the majority of these cases, the assailants are still employed by Google.

The rally, inclusive of both women and men, ended after the speeches, with most everyone going back to work. But everyone was changed by this experience. Many co-workers approached me to thank me for my role in the strike. There is a mood of elation that we made a stand, that we united, and that we went on our first ever strike.

Discussions have now been pushed forward into issues like: "what do we do next? How do we win our demands? What will management do?" A small number of workers are opening the conversation about forming a union.

I think this is just the start of Google workers beginning to organize – and what an incredible beginning. ✪

Capitalism Climate Disaster Worsens

Toiya Shester

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently issued a report that states the world has until 2030 – 12 years – until irreversible damage is done to the environment.

The report details the dire effect a warming planet will have on all of Earth's ecosystems. The IPCC acknowledges that avoiding further climate crises would "require 'rapid and far-reaching' transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities," (IPCC, 10/8/2018).

Neither Party Has a Solution

Unfortunately, during the midterm elections, we heard very little about the environment and global climate change from either party. The Republican Party denies there is even a problem, and Trump has aimed to defund agencies that look to protect the environment. The Democratic Party, though it does acknowledge the existence of climate change, puts responsibility on individuals to solve the crisis by recycling, shutting off our lights, and carpooling.

However, this does not go nearly far enough because the problem is not the behavior of the ordinary worker. The problem is the 100 major corporations that have almost no regulations on how much emissions they can produce. While some steps have been made in the right direction, including the Paris climate accord, this isn't nearly large enough considering what is needed to solve the crisis within the next 12 years! It will require a giant leap to convert our society to a green one.

To transition ourselves to a renewable way of powering our world, we would need a massive jobs program that could employ millions of young people to build new green infrastructure. The construction trades could lead the way by training people on building and installing this new technology and organizing the youth into union jobs.

Capitalism Can't Handle This Crisis

With the way things are now, it takes months to recover from natural disasters, our waters and air are constantly poisoned, and storms are getting stronger and stronger. What will happen when things get worse? The working class and youth must organize for a socialist world, which is the only way to keep our planet livable. ✪

Socialist Alternative Convention

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and Julia Salazar. We feel that in order to win the bold pro-working-class demands of Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez and other elected self-described socialists it will be necessary to form a new political party outside the two-party system that has the participation of millions of working-class Americans and is rooted in social movements. Events point to a deepening conflict between large sections of the base of the Democratic Party and the establishment which will be a key part of this process.

Priorities for Building Socialist Alternative

In 2019, Socialist Alternative

will face our biggest battle yet: the fight to re-elect Kshama Sawant to the Seattle City Council. Kshama was first elected in 2013. Her position in Seattle has been a critical tool for working-class Seattleites to win victories like the first \$15 an hour minimum wage in the country, winning millions of dollars for social services, and the building of new affordable housing.

It is certain that in 2019 the corporate elite will be determined to fight us with everything they have. Winning this re-election campaign will require tremendous resources from working-class people in Seattle and across the country. This campaign can be a megaphone for the struggles of

working people against Seattle's wealthiest tycoons and the political establishment.

The convention laid great emphasis on the need for our organization to root itself in the developing struggles of the working class. Our members are playing critical roles in several local unions including the Amalgamated Transit Union in Minnesota and a number of nurses unions. We hope to deepen our ongoing work in these unions as well as build on this by encouraging our members to get jobs in radicalizing workforces like education, health care, and logistics.

Given recent developments, we are laying particular stress on the necessity to build a

socialist-feminist cutting edge within the broader emerging women's movement in the U.S. That means fighting unapologetically for the needs of working-class women, black women, trans women, and all those who struggle with low wages, insecure housing, and poor health care. We hope to work with the DSA and other forces to build the forces of socialist-feminism.

There are tremendous opportunities to build the forces of revolutionary socialism going into 2019 and if our National Convention is any indication, Socialist Alternative is prepared to enthusiastically seize these opportunities! ✪

Socialist Feminism and The New Women's Movement

Kelly Bellin

A new women's movement is emerging in the U.S. and internationally in the context of major threats to women's hard won gains from vicious reactionary forces. Donald Trump's election victory drove millions to the streets, and has further radicalized a section of society on the basis of fighting sexism. In Brazil, women are playing a crucial role in the #EleNao movement against Jair Bolsonaro, the despicable misogynist who has come to power at a time of devastating economic, social, and political crisis. The democratic rights of women, black Brazilians, the LGBTQ community, indigenous people, and the entire working class are on the line under a Bolsonaro administration (see p. 9).

The #MeToo campaign brought sexual harassment and assault front and center in society, not only in the US but internationally. On top of this the Great Recession, as well as the attacks from the right, have detonated a series of explosive struggles in recent years. These have politicized many young and working class women who have been disproportionately affected by the crisis of capitalism. Young women also played a key role in Bernie Sanders' campaign in 2016 which pointed towards a real challenge to the corporate power which benefits from sexism and racism.

Even before millions protested the Predator in Chief, the mood to fight sexism had reached a boiling point. From the Slutwalk protests, to Carry That Weight, to #YesAllWomen, young women made clear that they were ready to fight back against sexism and abuse. Millions of women want to not only fight back against their own Weinsteins and Kavanaughs, but end the endemic sexism which permeates through all of our lives.

As the right-wing continues to carry out attacks on women, LGBTQ people, people of color, immigrants, unions, and all working people, the new women's movement is faced with decisive questions. How can we fight the right? Who are we fighting for? And how do we build a movement that can both defeat these immediate attacks, and go on to win real gains for women?

#MeToo and the Fight Against Kavanaugh

Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the

Supreme Court became symbolic of the overall fight against sexual harassment and assault, with nearly 6 in 10 Americans having followed the Senate Judiciary Committee proceeding closely. Since its inception, #MeToo has taken down a series of powerful men who were exposed as misogynists and abusers. Yet this time, aided by the weakness of the Democrats' approach, the Republicans' ferocious campaign succeeded.

Kavanaugh's appointment represents a direct threat to reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, environmental protections and workers' rights generally. Before Christine Blasey Ford courageously came forward, the Democratic leadership had basically accepted that this was a done deal and they would make only a show of opposition. While they changed their approach once the nation's attention was squarely focused on Kavanaugh's past abuse, they still refused to lead the kind of battle that could have actually defeated the Republicans.

The Democratic leadership could have mobilized protests and direct actions to bring the full force of mass outrage at Kavanaugh, focusing not just on his predatory behavior but using this as a way of mobilizing against the entire reactionary Republican agenda. But this is precisely what they won't do because, while they are happy to use identity politics for electoral purposes, they live in fear of any real mass movement whose demands would go beyond what is acceptable to their corporate donors.

The backlash to Kavanaugh's nomination shows the potential, and the need to develop the new women's movement into a truly mass force that gives concrete expression to the broad mood to fight back against sexism and in defense of our rights. In addition, the outcome shows that the movement cannot rely on the Democratic Party's willingness to take action. The movement, starting from taking on harassment in the workplace, must also take on all the issues that affect working class women. It must fight for healthcare for all, education for all, housing for all, and squarely take up each and every attack on working people.

While millions turned out in the midterm elections this year and voted for the Democrats as a way of pushing back against Trump and the Republican Party, millions also see the need for a new political force. At the same time there is a palpable mood in society to end sexism, racism, and the deep inequality which

ravages our communities.

Lessons of Past Struggles

To wage our struggle today, it is crucial that we learn from the heroic women's struggles of the past as well as all the struggles against oppression. The women's movement of the '60s and '70s coincided with an era of massive social upheavals, from the Civil Rights movement to the movement against the Vietnam War as well as an enormous upsurge of labor struggle. Women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and workers broadly were emboldened to take their fight against oppression and inequality to higher levels of organization and action.

At the same time, women entered the workforce in large numbers in the '60s and '70s, and were part of a demographic transformation of the U.S. working class that also included new industries and job categories opening to black workers and other racial minorities. Working class women organized and fought for equality and respect on the job as well as in their families and communities, which made feminism a genuine current in the working class. This was the engine of changing attitudes about women on a mass level, one of the most crucial gains from this period.

Unfortunately, the leadership of mainstream women's organizations failed to build off the movement's momentum by unabashedly fighting for a pro-working class program that could have mobilized an even broader sections of society. Organizations like NOW and NARAL did not aim to confront capitalism as a whole, and therefore refused to build the kind of movement necessary to end sexism. In the interest of appearing acceptable to the "mainstream" of society, NOW's leadership even consciously pushed away radicals. As a consequence, the movement's failure to adopt a clear program that could speak to the interests and needs of working class women and women of color limited its appeal, even while its campaigns had a positive impact on popular opinion and won some important gains.

Many of the historic tasks of the struggles of the '60s and '70s remain to be completed, but the lessons from that time are pivotal for the new women's movement. The limitations of the past women's rights movements expose that the question of class is decisive for struggle. Liberal feminism, and the organizations led by

it, may fight for sweeping reforms but will ultimately defend the system that keeps women, LGBTQ people, people of color, immigrants, and all working class people under varying levels of oppression. A socialist feminist trend in the women's movement is crucial for not allowing the misleadership of liberal, pro-capitalist feminism to hold back movements that have the potential to genuinely challenge the status quo.

Multi-Gender Workplace Actions Against Sexual Harassment

#MeToo ignited a mass discussion about the need to end sexual harassment, in particular in our workplaces. And while the first year of the #MeToo moment was primarily expressed through online and interpersonal discussion, not through mass demonstrations, it already contained the power to take down high-profile abusers. For millions of ordinary women, this gave us confidence that our own abusers could also be confronted and that a world in which Weinsteins cannot reach such levels of success at all is actually possible.

In the last few months, workers at some of the largest global corporations have shown the way forward for bringing #MeToo into our workplaces and the potential for building class-based struggles against sexism. In September, McDonald's workers carried out the first-ever nationwide strike against sexual harassment on the job in 10 cities across the U.S. including Chicago, San Francisco, L.A., and New Orleans. In part inspired by that strike action, on November 1, Google workers staged an international walkout against sexual harassment, with 20,000 participating (see page 5).

In fact the growing labor upsurge in the U.S. has been spearheaded by heavily female workforces including nurses and teachers. The teachers' revolt this past spring was also a revolt against years of a vicious and essentially sexist campaign that sought to blame teachers for society's problems. The teachers in West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma and North Carolina rose up to defend themselves, their students and their communities.

A notable feature of the Google employee walkout was the number of men who walked off the job to fight sexual harassment. This is a reflection of the overall shift in consciousness, especially among young people. People of all genders, in growing numbers, reject sexism



Socialist Feminists Speak

On the Ground at #CancelKavanaugh Protests

In cities across the U.S., members of Socialist Alternative organized, participated in, and spoke at rallies opposing the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. We spoke out against the misogyny and violence that Kavanaugh represented as well as the broader threats he posed to all working people through his right wing agenda. We spoke at demonstrations in New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Cincinnati and more. Below are excerpts from these speeches from our young female members.



Quinn A.

“We always have the ability to defend women and working class people through protest, strikes, and direct action. In a world where a rapist can sit on our Supreme Court, we need to follow the lead of the McDonald’s workers on strike now demanding a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment in their workplace. In a world where the cost of housing alone traps millions of women in abusive relationships, it’s time to tax the rich to fund affordable housing. In a world where white ivy league elites like Kavanaugh grow up knowing that our racist criminal justice system will leave them untouched, we need to follow the example of Chicago’s Black Lives Matter activists and fight for a future where all people are held accountable for their violence.

We can’t wait on any of these issues, not until mid-terms, and certainly not until 2020. This wave of feminism should be socialist feminism with leadership in unions and grassroots women’s organizations. That means women should not only have access to abortion and contraception but also the free quality public childcare and adequate maternity leave to comfortably manage a family and a job. Socialist feminism means women earning not only equal pay to their male counterparts, but a genuine living minimum wage so that no woman is forced into sex work to keep her lights on. The struggle against Kavanaugh shows that we have the power to build this future for the girls and women of this generation and all those to come.



Mari S.

“This entire trial has been a testament to how broken our system is. The problem is not individual abusers, though they deserve to be punished. The problem is the system built on oppression that lets men get away with heinous crimes against women. Voting in more women to Congress won’t change the fact that 1 in every 4 women have been sexually assaulted. More women CEOs won’t change the fact that many single mothers work multiple jobs and still can’t afford basic necessities. We need to move away from corporate big business feminism that seeks to raise up a few women and suppress the rest.

“We need to build a socialist feminist movement that fights for the rights of working class women, women of color, undocumented women, LGBT women, and disabled women. We need to fight for a socialist society that guarantees universal childcare, free high quality healthcare for all, housing for all, access to education and the arts. We’re fighting against Kavanaugh today, but tomorrow we start the fight for a better world. We need to continue the #MeToo movement so that we can build a new system, with a new standard for how we treat women.” ★

and want to join the broader fight against the bosses. The walkout of Google workers closed or partially closed 40 offices around the world, breaking open a new stage of the fight against sexual harassment as well as representing the first concrete steps toward workplace self-organization among tech workers.

In late October, city employees in Glasgow, Scotland carried out the largest strike action for equal pay in British history. Women made up 90% of the strikers, which reached 10,000 workers on the first day and inspired mass participation in their communities. Pickets were set up in front of hundreds of schools and municipal buildings, which helped gain even more mass support and solidarity. Following this, the mostly male sanitation workers carried out a solidarity strike action which completely shut down sanitation services in Glasgow. Having a male-dominated workforce willing to stand in solidarity with women workers fighting for equal pay was a tremendous boost to the strike and its political impact.

At the cross-section of a rising labor and women’s movements, these workers have shown how the fight against harassment must be brought to the workplace to take on the everyday sexism that we face. A mass movement that takes to the streets and builds effective organization in the workplaces, where working people have enormous potential social power if they take collective action, can disrupt the status quo and challenge abusive bosses and systemic inequality. At the end of the day it’s the whole system of legalized exploitation and abuse called capitalism that needs to be brought to an end.

Socialists believe that to ultimately achieve women’s liberation we need to build a new society. Most importantly, we believe that it’s possible. Every successful struggle that we organize against right-wing attacks on women, LGBTQ people, immigrants, people of color, and unions and every reform we can win under capitalism builds confidence for working people to unite and fight for our liberation and an egalitarian socialist world. 🌟

The lessons from the women’s movement of the ‘60s and ‘70s, as well as a socialist feminist analysis of the new women’s movement, are the topic of a forthcoming pamphlet from Socialist Alternative which can be ordered from our web-store at SocialistAlternative.org/socialistmerch

Trump Prepares Attack on Trans Rights

Build the Fight Against Gender Oppression!

Emerson Johnson

On October 21, the *New York Times* released an article detailing the contents of a leaked memo from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which seeks to redefine gender to exclude trans, non-binary, and intersex people. The HHS is proposing a new definition of gender under Title IX that would base gender on a person's genitals at birth. The HHS is putting pressure on the departments of education, justice, and labor to also adopt this definition. If adopted, this trans-exclusive definition of gender will affect over 1.4 million people living in the U.S.

The Trump administration has taken an adversarial position toward trans people since taking power by supporting transphobic bathroom bills and attempting to ban trans people from the military. However, this recent attack is by far the most vicious since he entered office. Trans people already face tremendous struggles under capitalism with high barriers to trans inclusive health care, disproportionate rates of homelessness, insufficient protections in the workplace and schools, and police harassment particularly aimed at trans people



Socialist Alternative at a Trans rights rally in Boston.

of color. If trans people are stripped of Title IX protections, trans people, but particularly trans youth, will become open targets to transphobic attacks. If this new definition is adopted by the Labor Department, trans workers will be unable to defend themselves against workplace discrimination.

The Supreme Court will soon hear a case that will decide whether trans workers are protected by civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender. The Department of Justice has already

advised the Supreme Court to rule against these protections for trans people which, paired with the new definition of gender, would set a precedent of denying trans people their basic civil liberties and potentially make gender-affirming surgeries and hormones even more inaccessible.

Beyond the material impacts, this new definition would have serious social repercussions. It will legitimize transphobia, just like Trump's policies around immigration embolden racists and xenophobes.

Despite the gains trans people have made over the past period, there is still a misconception among many Americans that sex and gender are the same things. In a study done by the Pew Research Center, they found that only 64% of Democrats believe a person's gender can be different than their sex and that eight out of ten Republicans believe that a person's gender is defined by their genitals. Trump's threatened attack against trans people, along with his attacks against women and immigrants, are aimed at stoking fears and appealing to the most reactionary sections of his base.

Trans people cannot beat back these attacks alone. We need the solidarity of other groups- in reality the vast majority of the population-targeted by Trump and the right. Already, we have seen how the feminist movement has organized mass protests around #MeToo that were able to unseat powerful politicians and wealthy executives. Trans people should join with socialist feminists, calling for the rejection of gender oppression of all kinds. We should reject the pro-corporate feminist agenda that ignores the plights of working and oppressed people and instead build a socialist feminist wing of the women's movement that fights for the rights of

trans people, for democratic control over our lives and bodies, and for Medicare for All that covers abortions, birth control, gender-affirming surgery, and hormone replacement therapy.

Progressive unions as well as women's and LGBTQ organizations need to clearly and forcefully reject this trans-exclusive definition of gender. We need to prepare for massive coordinated action when, as seems likely, the DHSS goes through with this. Importantly the new order will open up a period of 60 days of "public comment" which will create a massive opportunity to mobilize people and bring serious pressure to bear on the right wing to back down. The trans community should also use this not just as an opportunity to fight back against these specific attacks, but to extend our rights. The most pressing issues facing trans people are not isolated to the trans community. It is in the interest of all working people to win rent control, police reform, racial equity, and good paying jobs. We must build the biggest and broadest possible mass movement to win a world where all working and oppressed people are free. ☘

Victory for Left Candidate in Vancouver

Bill Hopwood and Leslie Kemp

Jean Swanson's election to Vancouver City Council is a step toward a political revolution and a victory for the left-wing City We Need movement. Jean has vowed to use her position to ensure social and environmental movements have a real voice inside City Hall.

Swanson, a life-long activist, came in fourth. The top ten get elected. She was one of seven candidates put forward by the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE); three were also elected to Park and School Board. The campaign focused on a rent-freeze, a mansion tax that funds ending homelessness and building public rental housing, free transit for children and low-income people, stopping landlords from raising rents between tenancies, banning renovations, freezing rents for small businesses, affordable subsidized

\$10-a-day childcare, and more. The campaign helped force the provincial government to cut the legal amount rent can be increased in 2019 from 4.5% to 2.5%, which saves an average Vancouver renter about \$500 a year.

Jean said the dominant framing of 40 years of austerity is "we can't ask for this, it will cost too much," so "all the things we can do in this alleged democracy are whittled right down to practically nothing." Instead, she argued, "we have to make it legitimate to ask for what we need, and we can't compromise in advance. We need to change the framing so what we need becomes a possibility and then becomes a political imperative."

The other tale of this election is the demise of Vision Vancouver, the once soft-left party that ruled Vancouver for a decade. Vision's campaign, combining incompetence with hubris, only elected one School Board candidate. Its developer-friendly policies

made homelessness worse and housing unaffordable for all but the super-rich. Vancouver Council now has five right-wing NPA members and five broadly progressive councillors – three Green, one OneCity and Swanson.

Socialist Alternative Canada is proud of our work in this campaign, focused in a key neighbourhood, that helped Swanson's election. One week before the election, Seattle socialist councilmember Kshama Sawant spoke at a packed and boisterous COPE rally that raised \$8,500. The victories won by Sawant and Socialist Alternative in Seattle inspired Jean and the campaign.

Frequently in the past period the failures of "left" parties like Vision, which do not stand on a clear anti-capitalist program, have combined with the neoliberal policies of "centrist" parties and opened the door to victories for right populists. Swanson's by-election success last year energized the left

to run a powerful campaign this year which helped cut across the right.

Swanson will help build movements outside City Hall which can force the council to act. She aims "to represent renters, working and low-income people, and to talk about class." Jean will need this strong movement to counter the pressures from corporate politicians and big business.

Swanson's election can inspire activists across Canada and internationally. The best response to the growing anger about poverty, stagnant living standards, unaffordable housing and all the other woes of austerity-ridden society is a determined fight. The examples of Vancouver and Québec Solidaire confirm that bold policies and enthusiastic campaigning are the way to build the movement and win real gains for the working class. ☘

Brazil: The Resistance to Bolsonaro Begins Now!



Read more on international news at SocialistWorld.net, website of the Committee for a Workers International.

Defend Democratic Rights and Smash the Pension Reform!

The following is an abridged statement from **Liberdade, Socialismo e Revolução (LSR, Brazilian section of the Committee for a Workers International with which Socialist Alternative in the U.S. is in solidarity)**. LSR has been involved in social movements across Brazil, including helping to organize the World Cup protests in 2014 and building the socialist feminist #NiUnaMenos movement in the country. They play an active role in the broad Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSOL), participating in local elections and supporting the presidential campaign of Guilherme Boulos.



Protests quickly broke out against Bolsonaro following his election. The main sign reads: "On the street against fascism."

The victory of Jair Bolsonaro in the second round of the Brazilian presidential elections represents a huge political step backwards for the country and the Brazilian people.

A candidate who explicitly defends dictatorship and torture, and who encourages street violence against opponents that has led to deaths and injuries, should not be treated as a "normal" candidate.

The violence has already cost lives: Mestre Moa do Catendê, a teacher, was stabbed 12 times for criticizing Bolsonaro; Charlione Lessa Albuquerque, a 23 year old son of a trade unionist, was shot by a Bolsonaro supporter at a demonstration.

Brazil has witnessed in recent years one of the worst social and economic crises of its history. This took place in the middle of a political crisis that led to an institutional coup that put a corrupt clique in power to directly serve the interests of big capital. The result of this was more chaos, misery, violence, and a collapse of the authority of the political establishment in the eyes of the people. Bolsonaro's rise to prominence is in this context.

Bolsonaro was elected on the basis of a sequence of coups and abuses following the institutional coup that brought down Dilma Rousseff, the former President from the Workers' Party (PT). [The PT was in power from the early 2000s until now, and while they were initially put into power with a large mandate and instituted some

positive reforms, they also went along with a neo-liberal agenda. They abandoned working people and their support eroded.]

Following his victory, Bolsonaro continued to make threats. In interviews with the national newspaper, Rede Globo, he said that when he spoke of banning all "red bandits" from the country, he was "only" referring to the leaders of PT and PSOL (Party of Socialism and Liberty, in which LSR participates). Bolsonaro also made direct attacks against Guilherme Boulos, PSOL candidate and leader of the MTST (Homeless Workers' Movement).

Intimidation and suppression of opposition and of the right to protest was already happening before Bolsonaro took power. What can we expect now?

Proto-Fascist Practices and Ultra-Neoliberal Policies

Despite not being their first choice, big capital first tolerated and then directly supported Bolsonaro. Their mission is now to contain some of his "excesses" but at the same time to take advantage of his "iron fist" approach to apply tough and radical neoliberal attacks.

They're prepared to tolerate many abuses in the name of deep cuts to social programs, mass privatizations and pension counter-reform.

They know that the majority of Bolsonaro voters did not vote

for him expecting a worsening of their living conditions and a loss of rights. And they know that sooner or later, discontent will come.

Despite this, the government will tend to increase the dictatorial elements that already exist. Bolsonaro is already opening the way for violence by paramilitary groups and fascist elements, to complement his authoritarian government. [While falling short of full-fledged fascism, a Bolsonaro regime may resemble what Karl Marx referred to as "Bonapartism," a phenomenon where, because of a deadlock in the class struggle, the state is able to use authoritarian measures to attain a relative independence and balance between the classes, while still serving the interests of the capitalist class in the last analysis.]

There could be divisions and conflicts within the ruling class in the face of increasing Bonapartism from the government. However, we need to understand that only the organized power of the masses, the working class and all the exploited and oppressed can face up to the authoritarianism and attacks of Bolsonaro.

We Will Not Abandon the Streets

The protests initiated by the student movement on the day after the elections, called to counter mobilizations by the pro-Bolsonaro right wing in the universities, are examples of how we need to take our

places in the streets, workplaces, and neighborhoods in order not to leave any space for proto-fascist groups to make progress.

The defense of democratic freedoms will be a fundamental banner in all our struggles. We also must warn of the danger that Bolsonaro and Michel Temer (the previous president, installed following the 2016 institutional coup against Dilma Rousseff) will make alliances in parliament to implement attacks like the threatened pension reform. [The pension reform proposal was the centerpiece of Temer's agenda, an attempt to change the Brazilian constitution to place a cap on pension spending, effectively dismantling the pension system to pay off Brazil's debt. Faced with mass opposition, including a nationwide general strike, Temer was unable to get the constitutional change through. Similar attacks on pensions in Chile and Argentina have served as catalysts for mass struggle in recent years.]

The trade unions and other social movements must mobilize against these counter reforms, especially the pension reform and the attacks on democratic rights. We must create the conditions for the workers movement to take strong measures, such as the great general strike of April 2017 that stopped the pension reform at the time.

In the days before the second round, a broad movement of activists was reborn. Committees of struggle, democracy brigades,

and anti-fascist fronts were created. A new layer of activists was galvanized and many returned to activity, generating huge hope and solidarity.

The guaranteeing of our security can only be achieved by collective organization. Actions of solidarity, political pressure, mass actions, and also practical self-defense, can only be effective if collectively organized.

For a United Front of the Socialist Left

The task of the moment is the building of a united front of all working-class organizations in resistance to Bolsonaro, the far right, and their neoliberal authoritarian agenda.

However, it is necessary to understand that the basic motor for this struggle must be the united and coordinated action of the working class and the oppressed. Only our class organizations can make the necessary connection between the defense of democratic rights and the fight against the neoliberal agenda and anti-working-class measures. At this time, authoritarianism and neoliberal measures go hand in hand and must be fought together.

In this struggle the socialist left must stimulate a debate about the reorganization of the left. We cannot win against the far right without a deep understanding of how we got here. This means having a deep understanding of the failure of the policies of class conciliation and adaptation to the system adopted by PT.

The far-right has channeled a lot of the popular discontent partially because it could present itself as something new, radical and outside of the system. In truth, they only represent continuity and the deepening of the current order and its chaos.

We, the genuine socialist Left, must offer the working class and poor as a whole a new, radical, combative banner filled out with the ideas of equality, solidarity, democracy, and socialism.

To the struggle! 🗳️

Chicago Hotel Strike Continues Against One Holdout

Matt Smith

The historic citywide strike launched by 6,000 hotel workers in Chicago in September is now down to only one hotel after workers ratified contracts at 25 other locations, winning key demands of year-round health care and across-the-board annual wage increases.

In addition to winning these victories, the hotel workers successfully fought off anti-worker demands made by management, such as heavier workloads for housekeepers and increased health care costs.

At the Hyatt chain, management prolonged the strike by insisting on adding union-busting provisions such as allowing managers to perform bargaining unit work. The union correctly responded by escalating the strike. They organized several mobilizations at Hyatt-owned hotels, involving hundreds of workers and supporters. Following these actions and after nearly four weeks on strike, Hyatt finally backed down and settled a contract.

Hotel Strike Goes National

The hotel strike spread to at least eight other cities across

the country, as Marriott workers in Boston, Detroit, San Francisco, and Maui all walked out in recent weeks. The rallying cry for these workers, “one job should be enough,” highlights the struggle of working people to survive on stagnating wages.

“I think it is very inspiring to see hotel workers across the globe standing together and demanding respect at work”, union steward Don Lydon told Socialist Alternative. “It feels great to know we are a part of a global labor movement fighting for respect on the job.

The expansion of the hotel strike is yet another sign, following the explosive teachers’ strikes earlier this year, that workers nationally are starting to fight back against decades of attacks.

Chicago Strike Continues; Victory Within Reach

The Cambria Magnificent Mile



hotel in the city’s downtown is the last holdout of the Chicago strike, after 25 other hotels signed agreements with the union in recent weeks. Cambria management has refused to sign a similar agreement, insisting on unacceptable concessions such as increasing the already too heavy workload of housekeepers and weakening the union’s grievance procedure. The workers have rightly rejected these proposals and remain on the picket line.

In response to these attacks, the

union made a temporary retreat, reducing the noise level on the picket line and refraining from mass actions or rallies. Meanwhile, union lawyers filed a lawsuit against the city, seeking permission from the courts to resume regular activity. In recent days, the union has slowly resumed their escalation, organizing a picket of about 100 workers on November 1.

A victory at the Cambria is both imperative and within reach. With the vast majority of union

members back at work, the union could concentrate the full weight of its resources to win this fight. This would mean organizing mass solidarity pickets, including union nurses, teachers, construction workers, etc. which would send a message not just to Cambria but to the whole city establishment: working people will not back down.

Larger Fights Ahead

As this strike continues to develop nationally, and as other workers consider strike action in the coming months, we must remember the central lesson in the history of workers’ struggles: our power lies in militant and united action, disrupting the profits of the bosses of society. Workers never won anything without a fight.

Every victory matters. The fight in Chicago must be won and carried forward across the country. Hotel workers need solidarity from working people and their communities. We urge everyone who can to join the picket lines at striking hotels around the country to help deliver this victory and to rebuild a foundation for a fighting labor movement.

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UPS Teamsters Vote No – Leadership Force Contract Through

Chuck Cannon

As we go to press, it is reported that 11,000 UPS Freight drivers – whose contract is separate to the main UPS package delivery worker contract – could go on strike on Monday, November 11. Business Insider quotes a UPS statement saying, “The company has now begun discussions with UPS Freight customers to inform them of the potential for service disruption and the need to arrange alternative carriers.” Contract negotiations broke down over union demands for restrictions on subcontracting, and wage increases among other issues. If this strike goes ahead in the run-up to the holiday season it could have a massive economic effect and could be a rallying point for other workers in the transport, logistics and distribution sector.

At UPS 54% of Teamster members voted no in October to the terrible contract negotiated by the sellout leadership. Despite the rejection, Hoffa and the Teamster leadership imposed the contract on members using a constitutional loophole.

The union’s voting process was a failure and therefore a clear indication of the Hoffa leadership’s intentions ahead of the vote. Across the country, many reported not receiving their ballots in the mail. Previously the membership could watch the physical ballots being counted. With the new system there was no possibility for rank-and-file oversight. The uptick in union militancy, kicked off by the teachers’ revolt in West Virginia, greatly worried Hoffa. The officialdom he leads, in fear of losing control over the rank and file, did everything possible to suppress votes and intimidate members to make sure they got their contract.

Despite widespread anger and discontent, rank-and-file Teamsters did not move into action to fight the imposition of the contract. While the fear mongering – such as claiming that a no vote would automatically put workers on strike or that UPS would withhold millions from the pension fund – was unsuccessful in winning a majority in favor, the lack of an organized rank-and-file fight left the door open for Hoffa to impose the contract.

Teamsters United (TU), a coalition of different opposition trends and the principal opposition to Hoffa, failed to mobilize the rank and file. There was a lack of any real plan to win or to build power within the membership. Representing the right wing of Teamsters United, Sean O’Brien failed to organize any response despite his influence within the locals there.

Much of this anger will now be channeled into building a challenge to Hoffa in 2021.

With the high rates of turnover among part-time workers, a large section of the workers that vote in that election will have not been around for this contract fight or Hoffa’s betrayal. If Teamsters United needs to start building rank-and-file power now, organizing to kick out rotten local leaderships, and fight management on daily local struggles for better conditions in the workplace.

The Teamsters could use their vast resources as well as the overlap and turnover within the logistics industry to begin to organize at Amazon, Fedex, and other non-union shipping companies. The Teamsters were built on working class struggle across the trucking industry – a history that needs to be remembered. Uniting workers across the logistics industry would have enormous power. These connections and solidarity will be imperative to winning future battles. ✪

Midterms Weaken Republicans

continued from p. 3

homeless, while Missouri and Arkansas raised their minimum wage. Some positive issues were defeated due to massive corporate pushback and disinformation campaigns, including California's Prop 10 to expand rent control statewide.

What Now?

The outcome of the midterm election will broadly encourage those who want to fight back against Trump, whereas a Republican victory would clearly have been temporarily demoralizing. However, the immediate pushback of the Democratic establishment against raised expectations is a clear indication of how the debate on how to fight the right will intensify in the coming period, especially in the context of the presidential campaign which will begin almost immediately.

But, especially given the character of the campaign run by Trump, we must be clear about what exactly we are up against. There is debate about whether the Trump regime is "creeping fascism." This fear is heightened by other developments internationally, particularly the election of the far right populist Jair Bolsonaro, who definitely echoes fascist themes as president of Brazil.

There is no doubt that Trump, who now calls himself a "nationalist," is normalizing far-right conspiracies. The dominant Trumpian wing of the Republican Party is increasingly taking on aspects of a far-right party.

But is it fascism or "incipient fascism"? Fascism historically was embodied in mass movements made up particularly of middle-class people left destitute by the crisis of capitalism. It aimed at physically smashing the organizations of the working class and the left. Fascists came to power when sections of the ruling class saw them as a preferable alternative to the real threat of social revolution that would lead to them losing their property and power. The context today in the U.S. is obviously quite different. However, there is a profound social crisis and loss of



Hated Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker lost his reelection bid in 2018.

legitimacy of capitalist institutions. In various European countries, the failure of historically left and workers' parties to defend the working class in the face of neo-liberal attacks – in fact becoming neo-liberal parties themselves – has helped open the door to the growth of far-right parties.

But beyond the outlines of a far-right political force, there remain relatively few actual organized fascists. Fascist groups suffered a significant setback after the killing of Heather Heyer in Charlottesville in 2017 and the mass response that followed. However, they are again being encouraged to come out of their holes. They pose a real, but so far limited, danger. The much bigger and immediate danger is the emergence of a mass far right political force that foments racial division and acts to push back attempts to unite working people in their common interests.

There is a growing understanding among hundreds of thousands that we need a political force determined to fight for ordinary people as hard as Trump is prepared to fight for the interests of billionaires. As we have consistently argued, the project of trying to reform the Democratic Party or push it decisively to the left is understandable, but

almost certain to fail. Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign raised over \$200 million in small donations, and showed the massive potential for what the situation requires – a new independent left party based on the interests of working people and all the oppressed.

Such a party needs to be based on mass social struggle, which is the real way to defeat the right and win serious gains. This year pointed to the potential for constructing a true, ongoing mass movement with the enormous mobilizations of women, student walkouts against gun violence, and the highest number of strikes in nearly 20 years. The teachers' revolt in particular, concentrated in red states, showed the potential of the class struggle to galvanize wider sections of society. The teachers had bold demands, such as taxing corporate interests to fund education and reverse decades of cuts. These won mass support, including among people who had voted for Trump.

In 2019 we will almost certainly see another wave of struggle – this must be combined with the building of an anti-corporate left political challenge to the establishment, which will be the beginning of putting Trumpism on the run for good. ✪

Los Angeles Teachers Poised to Strike

Chris Carroll

After a year of being strung along by Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), on August 30 United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) voted to authorize strike action by an astounding 98%. LAUSD claims that the school district doesn't have the money to accommodate them. However, UTLA has learned that LAUSD is sitting on a \$1.8 billion reserve.

LAUSD has used "financial crisis" clause of the contract to essentially declare a permanent "crisis," thereby justifying the firing of teachers and growing class sizes. Despite California's enormous wealth, the state ranks 43 out of 50 in per-pupil spending. A state historically controlled by the Democratic Party behaves uncannily like the "red" states that were hit by last spring's teacher strike wave where the Republicans had imposed savage cuts and privatization.

New Superintendent of LAUSD Austin Beutner, a former investment banker, quickly introduced sweeping cuts, including reducing resources for special education, nurses, counselors, and librarians. Meanwhile, the LAUSD board gave themselves a 174% raise in 2017 with Beutner himself making \$350,000 per year. This is what happens when billionaires call the shots.

But teachers, allied with community groups such as Reclaim Our Schools and Padres Unidos, are ready to fight back!

UTLA's main demands are:

- ✪ 6.5% raise in teacher salary.
- ✪ Eliminate the "financial crisis" clause.
- ✪ Cap the student-to-counselor ratio at 500 to 1 on high school campuses.
- ✪ Stop the Privatization Drain. Every year the LA charter school industry drains \$600 million from LAUSD.
- ✪ Use surplus land owned by LAUSD to build affordable housing.
- ✪ Create a \$1 million LAUSD-funded Immigrant Family Defense Fund to support students and their families affected by ICE and other state institutions.

Socialist Alternative is in solidarity with the UTLA teachers' strike and backs their demands. We call for all public sector unions to come together around a demand for a general raise, and to prepare to take one day solidarity strike action if the teachers go out. Furthermore, it would strengthen the teachers' cause to link up with forces fighting for universal health care, a full \$15 minimum wage, and rent control. This would represent a broader working-class fightback against the billionaire class and their political clients.

To pay for these demands, we say: Tax The Rich! LA is a massive economic hub with industries from shipping to entertainment making huge profits. A tax on the top 3% of companies in Los Angeles County would provide the revenue to implement these working-class demands.

If UTLA strikes, Socialist Alternative will be there on the picket lines in solidarity. Let's rebuild a fighting labor movement to win real gains for workers and to challenge the domination of the corporate elite. No to the City of Greed; Yes to the City We Need! Strike, solidarity, socialism! ✪

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Socialist Alternative is 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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Democratic Socialists Elected

A Letter from Kshama Sawant to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, and Julia Salazar

Dear Sisters,

I am writing to congratulate you, and other newly elected socialists, on your elections and to outline the lessons of our experience in Seattle since my first election to the City Council in 2013. To those who campaigned for you I also offer my congratulations, including to members of Democratic Socialists of America, who along with my own organization, Socialist Alternative, helped bring your fight to hundreds of thousands of working people.

Your elections represent a significant step forward for the U.S. working class.

Yet while the election of self-declared socialist candidates is a victory in itself, it is also just the beginning. We face a decisive struggle to defeat the bigoted, anti-worker agenda of the right wing and deeply reactionary Trump regime. Trump is licking his wounds from the midterms but his wing of the Republican Party is increasingly taking on aspects of a far-right movement. This is a major threat to the working class and its most oppressed sections especially.

As you yourselves have said, to win real gains through elected office, you must help build fighting movements for the things you campaigned on: like Medicare for All, tuition free college, abolishing ICE, and rent control. You will, of course, face enormous pressures to adapt to the establishment, to set aside your bold demands, and focus on “winnable”

things acceptable to big business.

A few days after taking office, after campaigning on a \$15 minimum wage, two Democratic councilmembers came to inform me: “you may have rabble roused your way in here, but we call the shots in City Hall, and will not let you win a new minimum wage or anything else unless it’s on our terms.”

How did Socialist Alternative and I respond? That same month, we launched the 15 Now grassroots movement. We held mass organizing meetings, rallies, and marches. Less than six months later we won, and Seattle became the first major city to pass \$15 an hour. The establishment was furious, and business leaders later went on record saying they wouldn’t have agreed if not for 15 Now and its threat of a ballot initiative. It should be noted that not one Democratic councilmember endorsed 15 Now or actively campaigned for \$15 an hour, though ultimately, under the pressure of our movement, the ordinance passed unanimously.

But we didn’t win everything we fought for in the legislation. That is because what can be won through elected office is primarily based on the strength of movements on the streets and in workplaces. We voted for the ordinance, but fought against every corporate loophole until the final hour.

Our campaigns have been a source of enormous frustration for the establishment.

After we won a series of victories on renters’ rights, a retiring lobbyist named Jamie Durkan reported that every dollar spent by the real estate lobby in Seattle was wasted. He explained that councilmembers “say all the right things in their offices, then they get out on the podium and it all goes south.” He attributed this to “Sawant’s army” of grassroots supporters: “Even some of the most sane and rational councilmembers drift left because they are afraid of Sawant.”

This is how working people win change. Not by backroom negotiation, but by building movements strong enough to make corporate politicians fear for their political careers. You must reject the idea of setting your activism aside to “become a politician.”

Part of a socialist’s job within a capitalist government is to expose the bankrupt system and its political servants. Your responsibility is not to politician “colleagues” but to the working class and social movements. This means calling out corporate politicians when they sell out, and not creating illusions in them.

Alexandria, it is deeply unfortunate you endorsed Andrew Cuomo - a thoroughly rotten establishment representative. You should not repeat this error in supporting Nancy Pelosi or other corporate politician for House Speaker.

I also want to share a few things with

the emerging socialist movement behind your electoral successes: We should always remember that most gains are won by the mass struggle of working people, not elected office, and that is where we must root our power. Our struggle cannot base itself on a few elected representatives, and our own responsibility must be to the working class, not to any individual politicians, even those we judge well meaning.

Finally, we must recognize that, while we agree on many things, there is a fundamental difference between Marxism and social democratic politics. Socialist Alternative and I are fighting for a socialist world and recognize capitalism cannot be made to work for the working class. Social democrats hope to create a humane capitalism - a futile mission and fundamental error.

We also believe we need a new party for working people, independent of corporate money and the ruling class and do not agree with your decisions to run as Democrats.

But despite these differences we must work together to build a sustained movement to win the working class demands on which you campaigned. This common struggle will educate us all.

But today, let us celebrate your victories and prepare to make use of them in the tumultuous struggles ahead.

Solidarity,
Kshama Sawant