



# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

ISSUE #57 • OCTOBER 2019  
SUGGESTED DONATION \$2

# WORKERS AND YOUTH FIGHT BACK

## INSIDE

DEMOCRATS BEGIN IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS  
BUILD A MOVEMENT TO  
DRIVE TRUMP OUT!

p.3

subscription address box

# 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, health care, 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 JOINED SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Following college, I worked as a caregiver for a couple years in my home state of Arizona. I have always been passionate about social justice but this experience changed my perspective profoundly. I was confronted with the sheer callousness of the capitalist system and its total inability to take care of our most vulnerable community members, either by meeting their basic material needs or in respecting their right to autonomy and self-determination. I was making \$9/hour and had to go on food stamps while working full time. Rapid turnover of staff due to lack of training and low pay lead to an unstable situation that left our clients vulnerable to abuse. I advocated the best I could within the company for the needs and rights of my clients, but was told that due to underfunding there was "nothing we can do" to improve their quality of life. I felt helpless on my own and so left, discouraged, to find new work.

My experience as a caregiver taught me how vitally important every single "reform" under capitalism can be to the people who need them most. So when I moved to Seattle and found out about the work that Kshama Sawant's office- along with Socialist Alternative- was doing, it immediately made sense to me. As an individual I had been powerless to help the people I cared about. But by joining a movement fighting for things like \$15/hour, affordable housing, and taxing the rich to pay for vital social services- I could make an immediate material impact on the lives of countless people.

The series of inspiring wins in Seattle- from raising the minimum wage, to diverting city funding from a new police bunker to affordable housing, to divesting from Wells Fargo in solidarity with NODAPL- showed me

## Comprehensive Rent Control Bill Introduced in Seattle

### Eva Metz

On September 23, over 250 people joined Socialist Alternative's Seattle City Council-member Kshama Sawant and renters' rights organizations to pack City Hall demanding universal rent control. The meeting featured Sawant introducing rent control legislation to be discussed and debated.

Dozens of renters, workers, and community leaders spoke in support of the draft bill for rent control. A barista named Chris explained that she came to the meeting out of "desperation" because her rent in a shared three-bedroom home had risen \$500 over three years: "This has to end, and rent control can stop landlords and big developers from pricing us out of our homes."

Rents in Seattle have soared 69% since 2010. Studies show that when the average rent in a city increases by \$100, homelessness increases by approximately 15%, often higher. With renters accounting for nearly half of Seattleites, these sky-high rents have pushed thousands of working families out of their homes or out of the city altogether, and Seattle was recently ranked the third most rapidly gentrifying city in the country.

We also need to fund public programs to provide an alternative to the failed private market. As Lea, a graduate student, renter, and member of UAW Local 4121, said:



## Alycia Lewis

### Seattle, WA

that a better world is possible if you're willing to get organized and fight. It also showed me that big business is prepared to go all out to protect their interests- as they're trying to do right now by wielding an unprecedented \$1.7 million in corporate PAC money to defeat Kshama Sawant's re-election campaign.

If we are going to protect any of the improvements we make to the lives of working people, it's going to require challenging the power of the 1% head on and a complete socialist transformation of society. There's a lot of work to do but I'm a socialist because I no longer believe I'm alone in the fight for justice. Instead, we have the power to come together in common struggle for better lives and a better world. ✦

"Taxing big business to build the affordable social housing we need cannot come soon enough!"

Rent control is taking off across the country, from victories this year statewide in Oregon and California to key protections in New York State to strengthen and extend rent control. Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are both calling for national rent control. Now, Washington is the only state on the West Coast without any form of rent control! If Seattle leads with a landmark rent control policy, citywide and free from corporate loopholes, we can set a powerful example to renters and activists across the country, just like with the \$15 minimum wage which was first won in Seattle in 2014 due to the leadership of Kshama Sawant and the grassroots 15 Now campaign.

As Councilmember Sawant explained, "building a powerful movement that can overcome what will be fierce opposition from the real estate corporations" will be the "most crucial part of winning rent control." Our campaign for rent control is off to an incredible start, but our enemies are powerful. Vulcan, one of Seattle's most notorious real-estate developers, is bankrolling Kshama Sawant's re-election opponent to the tune of \$150,000 because they are terrified of our movement. We cannot let big developers buy this election. Please donate today at [www.kshamasawant.org/donate](http://www.kshamasawant.org/donate). ✦

**SOCIALIST  
ALTERNATIVE**

[SocialistAlternative.org/join](http://SocialistAlternative.org/join)

[info@SocialistAlternative.org](mailto:info@SocialistAlternative.org)

@SocialistAlt

/SocialistAlternative.USA

[YouTube /c/SocialistAlternative](https://www.youtube.com/c/SocialistAlternative)

# Democrats Begin Impeachment Proceedings

## Build a Movement to Drive Trump Out!

### Socialist Alternative Editorial

As we go to press, the Democratic Party leadership in the House of Representatives has opened a formal impeachment investigation against Donald Trump. While this is not the same as definitively bringing forward articles of impeachment, it is clear now that this is the direction in which things are headed. Millions of people who hate this reactionary regime will welcome that the Democrats have finally taken this step.

We need a mass nationwide day of action to push forward a process to drive Trump out of office. Every day of this regime adds fuel to racist right-wing violence, mass deportation of immigrants, and a trade war can that can accelerate the prospects of yet another recession. The days of a "Predator in Chief" sexist billionaire in the White House need to be brought to a close.

This won't be possible if we allow the Democratic Party leadership to limit calls for impeachment narrowly to the issue of Trump's attempts to pressure the Ukrainian regime to investigate Biden. To build a mass movement, we need to not only oppose Trump but also pose an alternative: Medicare for All, a Green New Deal for working people, support for strikes, and a stop to mass deportation and detention of immigrants.

The Democratic Party leadership has taken far too long to introduce impeachment. For many months, Nancy Pelosi has held the line against moving in this direction, concerned about the impact of impeachment proceedings on the Democrats' electoral chances and also wanting to not cause "instability" in the system. Up until recently it seemed that the push towards impeachment had stalled. Recent revelations though point to Trump putting pressure on a foreign power to help him gain advantage over Joe Biden, a possible rival candidate in next

year's election.

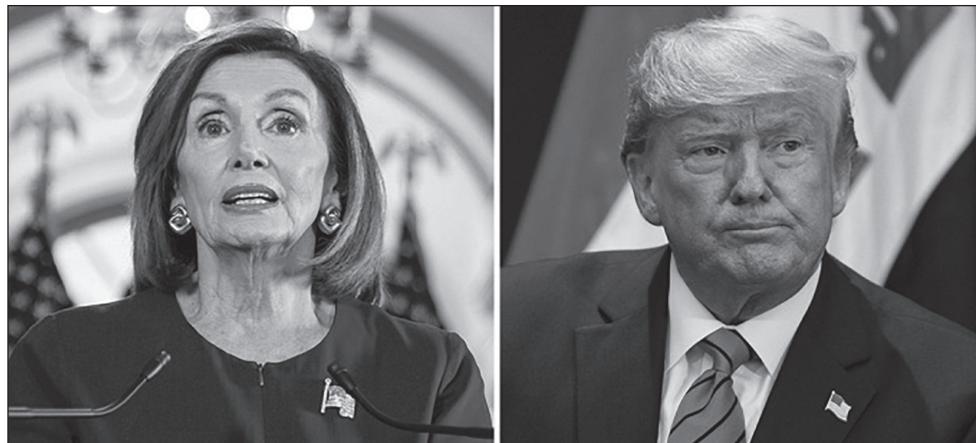
We in Socialist Alternative have supported impeaching Trump from the beginning. However, we also stated that we did not accept the Democrats' narrative that Russian government meddling played a key role in the outcome of the 2016 election. Nevertheless, Trump's authoritarian tendencies are very clear and we oppose his deep corruption which goes hand-in-hand with ongoing voter suppression by the right wing.

Trump and other right-wing politicians around the world have risen to prominence due to distrust in the capitalist establishment who have overseen decades of budget cuts, war, privatization, environmental devastation, and union-busting. We have record income inequality, and the politicians of both parties are bought and sold by corporations and the capitalist system they represent. The Democratic Party leadership, which created the space for Trump, cannot be trusted to carry out a strategy to defeat him or the underlying cause for his ascendancy. That's why we need a mass socialist movement to pose an alternative to both right-wing populism and corporate domination.

### What is Next?

Impeachment could certainly pass in the House where there's a Democratic majority, and this would be significant. However, a public trial against Donald Trump will likely be dead on arrival when it reaches the Republican-dominated Senate without a mass movement to drive Trump out or more shocking revelations. It would require 20 Republican Senators turning on Trump in order for him to be removed from office.

Regardless of the exact outcome, impeachment proceedings will likely develop into a political and media focal point in the coming months. The Democratic primaries have become much more contested than the



party's establishment would like, with Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren topping many major polls. The establishment would have far preferred to enter the primaries with an already anointed candidate, but Biden has been unreliable in fulfilling that role.

Therefore the initiation of these impeachment proceedings can be seen as a strategy by the party leadership to posture as unafraid to take on Trump. However, with Biden as a major subject in these proceedings, it is not guaranteed that this will help him in the slightest. The real danger for the Democrats, given their political weakness, is that they will fail to make the case with the electorate that their narrowly-defined impeachment articles mean the president should be removed. A new Quinnipiac poll show 37% support impeachment while 57% oppose.

In truth, the most effective way to defeat Trump as we enter the Presidential elections is to build a mass movement around Bernie Sanders' campaign and program. Working-class and young people are lit up by Sanders' proposals for erasing student and medical debt, taxing the rich, a Green New Deal, national rent control, and Medicare for All. Fighting for this program is not just an electoral campaign, but also should include mass

rallies, direct action and strikes.

A mass movement fighting for this program is the best bet at taking down Trump. As the Chicago Teachers Union prepare for a possible strike, Bernie Sanders' hosted a rally with them to amplify their demands for fair pay and benefits, smaller class sizes, and staffing. This shows the potential that exists for a movement that brings together the unions as well as young people energetically fighting for Sanders' pro-working-class program. So does the hundreds of thousands of young people around the country demanding "system change not climate change" and opposing the climate denier in chief.

In almost every single national poll, Bernie Sanders' defeats Trump in a general election. This is the basis on which he can be defeated. The recent developments around impeachment should be seen as a welcome sign that Trump is vulnerable and now is the time to begin constructing a genuine mass movement to bring down Trump and fight for a pro-working class, anti-racist program. This can be a crucial step towards ending this rotten capitalist system and all the racist, sexist, anti-worker political monsters it creates. ✪

## 50,000 GM Workers on Strike

### Steve Edwards

The strike of 50,000 UAW members, which began September 15 at midnight at all 55 GM plants in the U.S., has the potential to mark a new stage in the revival of working class action. GM immediately responded to the strike by cutting off health care for strikers the next day.

The GM strike is the latest sign of the willingness of wide sections of the working class to fight back after a long "recovery" which has overwhelmingly benefited the rich. Not only are workers prepared to fight but there is more sympathy and support from the broader population. Polls show public support for unions at a 15-year high of 62%.

In 2018 more workers went on strike than in any year since 1986. The increase in strikes has continued in 2019. Other battles loom, for example the Chicago Teachers Union and an SEIU local representing ancillary school employees are preparing for strike action this fall as are 80,000 Kaiser Permanente health care workers. In Southern California the strike threat by 47,000 grocery workers forced the employers to back down on their planned attacks on health care and pensions earlier this month.

### Strike Underway

Socialist Alternative members in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin talked to UAW members as the picket lines went up

at GM plants. What we found at the factory gates was a deep anger at the arrogance and deceit of the company, which came to their union with a begging bowl in 2007 pleading financial difficulties - well before the 2008 recession. The union gave big but supposedly temporary concessions which the company has since refused to give back. These included half-pay for new hires as well as letting the company hire three different categories of low-paid temporary workers and also allowing contractual workers employed by outside companies to work in GM factories.

Despite these concession and a massive \$50 billion government bailout two years later, the subsequent 2015 contract produced no return to pre-recession pay and

benefits. Today, workers understand that they were flat-out lied to. Full-time workers on the picket lines expressed strong solidarity with their temping co-workers. The feeling is overwhelmingly that the UAW sacrificed to bring GM back to life, and that it's time for GM to give back to the workers, all of the workers, now that it's profitable.

What this strike, and its motivation, potentially represents is a break with almost 40 years of concessionary bargaining. This strategy has never worked. The record shows that since that moment, GM has gone from 440,000 unionized employees in the U.S. to the present figure of just under

*continued on p. 11*

# Bernie Releases Program for Labor

*"If there is going to be class warfare in this country, it's time that the working class of this country won that war." Bernie Sanders*

**Justin Harrison**

As the fight for the Democratic nomination grinds on towards the winter and spring primary season, Bernie Sanders continues to work hard to differentiate himself from the pack by putting forward a bold, clear, working class program to revitalize and mobilize the labor movement. He is calling on the unions to rally to his campaign and join him in the fight against the obscene accumulations of wealth and power of the billionaire class.

In a series of campaign events, speeches and social media posts this August and September he rolled out his Workplace Democracy Plan, "...establishing a national goal to double union membership..." and declaring that if elected, "I'm not only going to be Commander in Chief. I am going to be Organizer in Chief." committing to use the office of the president to actively support union organizing and to mobilize mass support for his program.

Included in his plan are commitments to guarantee the right of public workers to organize and bargain collectively, give federal workers the right to strike, enact "card check" organizing, eliminate "right to work" laws, ban the permanent replacement of striking workers, and re-legalize sympathy strikes.

Many of these proposed reforms look back to the militant fighting tactics that built the US unions in the first place, tactics that the bosses decided were much too effective and used their political power to make them illegal.

These proposals would eliminate most of the current legal and economic barriers to organizing unions and conducting successful strikes, and dramatically shift the balance of power in the workplace and the broader

economy in favor of the working class.

Point by point Sanders responds to the political demands of the union leadership giving them everything that they have been saying they need to restore the economic and political power that unions have lost over the past 50 years. This shift of power would result in the dramatic improvement in wages, working conditions, health, and the overall quality of life for the vast majority of Americans.

Based on this, every union in the U.S. should be endorsing and campaigning for Sanders right now, mobilizing and engaging their membership to fight alongside him to win the election and carry out his program.

## Serious Opposition

Big Business will not sit still and let Sanders win the election and carry out his plan. Even if he wins the nomination, corporate America would rather have four more years of Trump than a Sanders presidency. He is already facing the full opposition of the Democratic Party establishment that is lining up behind Warren as a reliable 'progressive' alternative to Sanders in case Biden should falter.

If Sanders wins the election and begins to carry out his planned reforms, he will face the most ferocious opposition from the rich and powerful, including economic and political sabotage by the Billionaire Oligarchs, the Democratic Party leadership and the corporate media.

Winning even the most basic of these reforms will require a mass mobilization of



*Bernie Sanders walks the picket line with striking GM workers at the Detroit-Hamtramck plant.*

the unions the youth, and working class communities beyond anything we have seen since the 1970's. It will mean being prepared to take political strike action. It means building a new political force that contests with the corporate dominated parties alongside determined, peaceful, disciplined mass actions to have a chance of winning.

## Time For A New Party

We need to lay the groundwork now to build a new party to fight on Sanders program in the likely event that he is undemocratically blocked from the nomination, just like 2016. Unfortunately Sanders has not drawn this conclusion and continues to argue for turning the Democrats into a "working class party".

The only way this happens is if the Democrats' public representatives end all reliance on corporate cash, commit themselves to fight for pro-working class policies and if they are accountable to democratic structures. The establishment will split before accepting any of this.

With an intentional approach to building sustainable local structures organized around his unifying working class program, and linking them with ongoing struggles against racism, sexism, climate change, oppressions and class exploitation and all oppression, Sanders campaign can initiate the work of building a new mass party uniting all working and oppressed people in America. ✪

## Elizabeth Warren Opens the Door to Corporate Donors

**Toiyah Shester**

New revelations about Elizabeth Warren's fundraising have brought into question how steadfastly she plans to reject corporate influence into her campaign. She was the first candidate to announce that she would not take corporate PAC money nor money from wealthy donors but at private events has taken back that pledge. Elizabeth Warren recently used money from a multimillionaire donor in California to purchase a voter database from the DNC.

This has now opened the door for more private fundraising events which will further bring her allegiances into question. She has already said she will not reject any money should she make it to the general election. When asked about this, Warren claimed that the Republicans would be receiving corporate money and stated, "I do not believe in unilateral disarmament when it comes to winning the general election against President Trump."

Bernie Sanders made the same pledge but unlike Warren, Sanders intends on keeping

that promise through the general election. Warren's tactic of fundraising through grassroots efforts with working-class people was just that: a tactic, and a temporary one at that!

Socialists like Seattle Councilmember Kshama Sawant and Bernie Sanders have proven that progressive candidates CAN raise more money and defeat Republicans AND Democrats by putting forward a program that speaks to the needs of workers and youth with radical demands that challenge this exploitative, capitalist system to its core. ✪

## EFCA - A History of Betrayal

We should ask ourselves, if Sanders wins the presidency do the Democrats have the spine to carry out this fight? The Democratic Party's key campaign promise to the unions in 2008 was to pass the Employee Free Choice Act (also known as EFCA, or "card check"). This would greatly simplify the legal process of organizing a union and winning a first contract. This was the centerpiece of the AFL-CIO's legislative agenda, the 'must have' reform that would reset the balance of power in the workplace.

Obama and the Democrats swept into power in 2008 with a solid majority in both houses, but as soon as the dust settled after the elections, opposition to EFCA revealed itself within the Democratic Party as the corporate establishment mobilized all its forces to fight it, even threatening economic sabotage. Under this intense pressure from corporate America, the Obama administration quietly dropped EFCA and never looked back. These same forces within the Democrats then lined up with the corrupt insurance and pharmaceutical companies - and the Republicans - to fight Obamacare every step of the way, weakening it as much as possible and eliminating the "public option" from the final legislation, guaranteeing the continued obscene profits of the health care "industry." ✪

# Millions Join Climate Strikes

## System Change not Climate Change

### Grace Fors

In the first half of 2019, seven million people worldwide were displaced by extreme weather events. We are seeing the impact of climate change with our own eyes as the Amazon rainforest is torched to the ground and the Bahamas devastated by Hurricane Dorian. Disaster after disaster has spurred a new sense of urgency about the climate crisis. On Friday, September 20, over four million people in 164 countries took part in the Climate Strike, the largest mobilization for the environment in history.

### Youth Enraged

The movement has exploded in the past year following increasingly dire reports from the IPCC and escalating youth involvement. The first global day of action on March 15 drew 1.6 million, and in just a few months participation nearly tripled for the Climate Strike.

Greta Thunberg has risen to international prominence through the school strike movement and her fiery speeches that have galvanized a whole generation. Equal credit is due to the thousands of young people who have formed the backbone of the movement on the ground, mobilizing their classmates and carrying out restless agitation. By flying public transportation, organizing in schools, and using social media to get word out they have built up the numbers to wield an enormous impact. In New York City alone, 300,000 people flooded the streets demanding immediate and drastic measures to tackle the climate crisis.

Although the strike platforms varied across countries, they shared the demand for an immediate transition away from the use of fossil fuels and to wage a fight against the instability, inequality, and violence exacerbated by climate change.

### Our Demands

Socialist Alternative and the CWI recognize the enormous significance of the new climate revolt.

Our sections from South Africa to Brazil, from Ireland to Hong Kong intervened with a common set of demands linking the immediate crisis facing the planet to the larger fight for a society that values people and planet over profit.

Inheriting an existential crisis, this generation of climate activists are taking up a systemic analysis. They know protest alone

is not enough and are ready for bold action.

There is a strong mood to hold accountable the 100 corporations responsible for 71% of emissions. We encountered a lot of openness to our demand to take them into democratic public ownership, run by elected bodies of workers and civilians, not wealthy executives.

What is produced in a capitalist economy, and how, is decided by a gamble, a best estimate of what would bring in the most revenue at the lowest cost. We on the other hand must take into account the reality that the market itself is not a viable mechanism for reversing the catastrophe already underway.

Only a global planned economy organized on the basis of human need would enable the cooperation required to implement rapid change on a global scale. Such a sweeping transformation will only be accomplished through building a mass movement that can link international collective action and strikes to bring the capitalist economy to a grinding halt.

### Strengthening the Movement

While today's youth have a particular material stake in reversing the crisis, a livable planet is in the interest of workers all over the world. The working class has the most to lose from environmental destruction, and the most to gain from the millions of jobs created in the course of transitioning to renewable energy, building eco-friendly mass transit, and restoring communities and ecosystems ravaged by natural disasters.

Unions have started to answer the call. 350.org reports 73 unions internationally endorsed the strike, including Public Services International and the 200-million strong International Trade Unions Congress. U.S. unions such as SEIU and the American Federation of Teachers supported the strikes, and many unions had contingents at the demonstrations.

While endorsements from unions represent a major step forward for the climate



Students in New York City marching for immediate action to address climate change.

strikes, greater solidarity and coordination is needed between the youth movement and the broader working class. With the momentum of the developing strike wave in the U.S., there is great potential for unions to continue to step up involvement in the climate strikes. Organized working-class participation will be the single most decisive factor in winning the demands of the climate strikes.

The 1,000 workers at Amazon's Seattle headquarters who walked off the job in solidarity provide a stunning example of what is needed. Amazon responded with new targets for transition to renewables and carbon neutrality, proving the effectiveness of workplace action to win concrete victories. However, this is the corporation that raised its minimum wage to \$15 only to follow up by slashing hours and taking health care from part-time workers at Whole Foods. We can't take corporate pledges at face value and must keep up the pressure. Distrust of big business was prominent in striking students' homemade signs that read, "The wrong Amazon is burning."

City Councilmember and Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant sponsored a resolution supporting the right of city workers in Seattle to participate in the strike without retaliation. This points to the role socialists in elected office can play in bolstering the power of workers to take a stand for the climate.

### System Change

Sawant stated it clearly in her speech to the demonstration in Seattle; "Our mortal enemy is the system of capitalism itself, and the politicians who want to maintain the

status quo."

Despite their strategic statements of support for the climate movement, status quo political leaders continue to frustrate the expectations of the best climate activists. As long as capitalism dominates, politicians will view their job as maintaining corporate profitability in an increasingly volatile world economy.

History will remember the colossal failure of the capitalist ruling class to take action. Emissions are higher than ever and scientists warn that global temperature increase and sea level rise are actually accelerating. The "twelve years" warning is now eleven, leaving no time to waste.

The Climate Strike captured the seething anger of millions who will not back down until something is done. Even slowing this process down which will buy humanity time will require a mass movement pushing back against the fossil fuel industry. But we should not settle for the minimum requirements to delay catastrophe, but rather build up the force to reverse it entirely and achieve real climate justice. The latter would require eradicating the threat at its source, the system of capitalism.

Although clean air and water, guaranteed housing, good jobs, and a future free of the looming threat of mass extinction are fundamentally at odds with capitalism, these goals are concretely achievable with socialist planning. This moment can't be allowed to dissipate, but must be escalated until we see with our own eyes a real transformation. Workers and youth united have the power to build a socialist alternative that guarantees a livable planet for future generations! ✪

# Fighting for Medicare

## Marty Harrison

Member, Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (personal capacity)

Ordinary people are increasingly demanding an end to the dysfunctional US healthcare system. The fight for Medicare for All against entrenched corporate interests can be the beginning of a more decisive struggle for the kind of society we need.

It is the task of socialists to clearly lay out the class divide in this fight, with “Big Pharma” and private insurance CEOs on one side with their paid politicians and working class people and families on the other. Winning Medicare for All, which would eliminate private insurance and create a national guaranteed healthcare plan with no premiums, copays, or deductibles will require building a sustained mass movement. Also, it will require building a new independent working-class political party and to build rank-and-file led, fighting unions in the workplace.

## Sanders Brings Medicare For All into a National Conversation

Bernie Sanders introduced millions of people to the idea of “Medicare for All” during his 2016 primary campaign though the concept had been around for many years. It had gone by other names and had gained some support - but it had never enjoyed the widespread popularity it has now.

Sanders’ 2016 campaign broke through the corporate wall of silence created by the pharmaceutical industry, for-profit hospital corporations and insurance companies who oppose it. Sanders brought his message to huge crowds at rallies and to millions more through the national media attention the campaign attracted. Polls throughout the campaign

tracked increasing support for the measure, ultimately showing a large majority of self-identified Democrats and even a slim majority of Republicans favored a Medicare for All type plan.

Together with the profound dysfunction within the Republican Party, this new support for Medicare for All is partially responsible for the failure of President Trump’s repeated attempts to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act known as Obamacare – one of his key campaign promises. The Trump administration has found many ways to undermine the positive effects of Obamacare, but it has failed to overturn it wholesale. Momentum continued through the 2018 mid-term elections with Medicare for All featured prominently in the campaigns of many successful candidates, particularly the young self-described democratic socialist challengers like Alexandria Ocasio Cortez at the national level and many more at state level.

## Where the 2020 Candidates Stand

The growing support for Medicare for All has the private medical industry fighting back, resulting in most established Democrats who



initially signed on to the bills now trying to walk it back and put forward some “realistic” compromise which leaves private health insurance in the mix. Most notably, Kamala Harris’ proposal would actually expand the role of private insurers in Medicare and would be phased in over ten years.

Senator Elizabeth Warren signed on to Sanders’ legislation and has pledged to end private health insurance. However, unlike her hyper-detailed policy proposals on student debt, combating fraud in Washington and virtually any other issue up for debate in the presidential primaries, her new statement on health care is remarkably vague, general and short. It is silent on some of the biggest questions, like the fate of co-pays, deductibles and out of pocket expenses. The failure to be decisive on these questions leaves room for compromise with health care profiteers.

In contrast, former Vice President Joe Biden has never supported Medicare for All. His current position is to strengthen Obamacare. Biden favors adding a public option to what’s left of the ACA. The public option would allow people to buy Medicare-like coverage from the government as if it were any other insurance plan.

Many on the debate stages have used union members as a stick to beat Bernie with, suggesting that Bernie’s plan strips union members of their contractually negotiated healthcare. This is laughable in the face of the GM strike where the company has refused to pay healthcare benefits to striking workers forcing the cost of healthcare onto the United Auto Workers (UAW) union itself. Sara Nelson, president of the Flight Attendants Association, wrote on this: “UAW has one of the best plans

in the country, but management can still use it to hold workers hostage. Medicare for All puts power back in our hands.”

Bernie Sanders stands alone in the 2020 field as he’s doubled down on his support for Medicare for All despite the intense pressure and scrutiny that comes with launching a national presidential campaign. He followed up his initial 2018 legislation with an improved version in 2019 to more closely match Pramila Jayapal’s House bill.

Perhaps most crucially, Sanders has mobilized his network of supporters to the picket lines of health care workers on strike against the University of California system and to rallies against the closure of a safety net hospital in Philadelphia. He has reiterated something that we have long said, which is that it is not the election of one person to the Oval Office that will effect radical change. It will require the building of a mass movement rooted in the working class.

The crisis of for-profit healthcare does not need to be explained to working class people. 41% of working age Americans have medical bill problems or are paying off medical debt. The growth of support for Medicare for All shows that the rage and conviction experienced by millions of Americans about outrageous healthcare costs could be turned into a powerful and determined mass movement.

While Sanders has real political limitations including accepting the framework of the corporate Democrats,, a victory in the Democratic primary would mark a historic turning point in the fight for health care and would strengthen the working class in the U.S. For this reason, and many others, opposition to Sanders will be vicious and unrelenting. The multitude



Bernie Sanders went with diabetes patients on a bus to Canada for affordable insulin.

# are for All

## The Health Care Industry Produces Profit No Compromise on Medicare for All!

The cold reality is that healthcare today in America is like any other industry under capitalism – run for profit. Like any other industry, it is not run to provide services to meet basic human needs if those services cannot be sold at a rate of profit acceptable to shareholders. Even officially not-for-profit entities are drawn into the race to maximize profits because they must compete with the for-profits, or cease to exist.

Relying on insurance as the primary funding source for services that meet the basic, human need for healthcare is genius for the profiteers and madness for the rest of us. In other industries, people buy insurance to protect themselves against known, but infrequent, risks- e.g. fire, flood and car accidents.

But health care doesn't work that way. The statistical chance that each and every one of us will need healthcare is 100%. Preventative care, mental health care and wellness programs are on-going, daily needs, not risks to be managed. The insurance companies make no money if they improve the health of their patients.

President Obama's Affordable Care Act (ACA) contained several significant improvements, including protections for

people with pre-existing conditions and family plans which covered children up to age 26. However, it also vastly enriched the already wealthy health insurance companies by adding millions of people to the insurance pool and providing direct and indirect government subsidies for low income people who qualified.

Pharmaceutical corporations are among the most profitable in the economy as a whole, and the most vicious. The shameless profiteering and unabashed cruelty displayed by the makers of essential medications like epi-pens and insulin and the cold calculation of the makers of oxycontin in the opioid epidemic further enraged public opinion. These examples touch on the extremely problematic ethics of a system which puts the pharmaceutical industry in control of the scientific research to develop new medications and treatments.

Wedge between the drug companies and the insurers, hospital corporations run their institutions like steel mills and auto plants to extract every last dollar. Speedups and automation force health care workers to meet productivity targets and give care in compliance with strict protocols, rather than the unique needs of an individual human patient. Urban and

rural safety net hospitals, increasingly unable to recover their costs, are closing in record numbers.

### Why Medicare for All is Different

Medicare for All would eliminate the private insurance companies and would be an enormous step forward. However, Medicare for All would leave intact the for-profit pharmaceutical corporations, medical device companies and hospital chains. Without the power to control costs, Medicare for All would run into the hard limit of balanced budgets and have to cut services.

You cannot control what you do not own. Hospitals, clinics, suppliers, labs, pharmaceutical and medical device companies would all eventually need to be taken into public ownership and run democratically in the interest of patients, health care workers and the public at large.

Health care for all will not be ensured until all of the major industries are taken into public ownership under democratic working-class control and their assets invested into the public good. ✪

of Democratic candidates putting forward watered down variations of Sanders' policy proposals are the first line of defense for the Medical industry - designed to confuse, distract and divert. Securing Sanders' nomination and laying the basis for the mass movement he himself says he's determined to build will require a struggle from below.

### Time to Build a Powerful Grassroots Struggle

Newly elected officials at all levels of government who ran on Bernie's program, including Medicare for All, and who owe their victories to their support for those policies should endorse Sanders now. This crucially includes Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. They have the opportunity to shape the conversation and to weigh in on who becomes the frontrunner. Waiting until the primaries are underway would be a clear statement that they are more interested in their futures within the Democratic Party than in actually winning any of the policies they claimed to support.

As a conscious step toward building a mass movement for Medicare for All, millions of regular people can get involved in the Sanders' campaign now, organizing debate watch parties and groups in their workplaces, like Teachers for Bernie, and their neighborhoods. Workers in unions can organize support in their unions and advocate that their unions endorse Sanders. Whether they result in endorsements by the national unions or not, political workplace conversations can further the development of a reinvigorated labor movement and a new rank-and-file leadership.

Healthcare workers and their unions have

added responsibility and opportunity in this fight. Nurses' unions, particularly National Nurses' United, have done ground-breaking work on Medicare for All at both the national and state levels. These unions should explicitly make building a movement for Medicare for All a litmus test for all candidates and build a campaign that ties the presidential election to the fight for Medicare for All, warning that the fight against big pharma doesn't end with the election.

NNU has the power and the resources to organize a Medicare for All national day of action before the February 2020 Iowa caucus. A public invitation to unions and union members to build for rallies in their cities and towns would give supporters a way to engage their coworkers, friends and families in conversation and then in direct action for Medicare for All. If taken up by unions in other industries, the campaign for the day of action could be used to organize new unions in workplaces in those industries also.

A bigger, stronger, more active union movement is an essential element in the fight for Medicare for All, but it is not sufficient. Ultimately, this is a fight for a tremendous shift in power and money from the capitalist class to the working class. It will be vicious and the staunchest defenders of the status quo will come from both the Republican and Democratic parties. The working class will need a political party solidly on its side through which the fight can be waged. That party does not yet exist and will need to be built. Engagement in the Sanders' 2020 campaign is one starting point in this process, but the end point is incompatible with the Democratic Party and its capitalist funding base. ✪

## Subscribe today to Socialist World

### Socialist Alternative's New Political Journal

The second issue of Socialist Alternative's new journal *Socialist World* is coming out! The second issue will include articles on:

- ✪ Refounding the Committee for a Workers International
- ✪ Ecological crisis and the case for socialism
- ✪ The GM strike and rebuilding the industrial labor movement
- ✪ 1989: the collapse of Stalinism
- ✪ Puerto Rico's struggle against colonialism
- ✪ World economy facing crisis
- ✪ A socialist analysis of Brexit
- ✪ The health care crisis in the U.S.



Subscribe to our new journal and  
our paper for only \$3.50 a month!

Visit [SocialistAlternative.org/Dual-Subscription-Deal](https://SocialistAlternative.org/Dual-Subscription-Deal)

# When the Iranian Masses Deposed a Dictator

## The 1979 Revolution Didn't Have to End in a Religious State

**Seamus Whelan**

Forty years ago, in January 1979 the hated Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, fled the country to the U.S. The Shah was driven out by a mass movement led by workers and youth allied with other forces in the countryside. The question of how this initially progressive revolution degenerated into the current Islamic state controlled by reactionary clerics is one not usually discussed by the corporate-owned media or in academia. But it remains highly relevant as Iranian society remains wracked by contradictions as a new wave of revolutionary movements has emerged this year in North Africa, particularly in Sudan and Algeria.

The Aljazeera-made documentary, "Iran-Legacy of a Revolution" argues that the Ayatollah was the inevitable new leader, as the opposition had little to unite it and there was no post-revolutionary blueprint for them to follow. But nothing is inevitable. The mass uprisings of 1978-1979 had the potential to not only replace the Shah, but throw off the yoke of U.S. imperialism and remove the entire capitalist system in Iran. The leadership required to navigate this situation was not present.

### Workers Lead the Struggle

Maintaining control over the oil and gas reserves in the Middle East has always been a focus of U.S. foreign policy. In the post-WWII period, U.S. imperialism installed and defended client puppet regimes in the region which enriched these leaders' as they brutally repressed their own peoples. The Shah was installed in power by a U.S./UK backed military coup in 1953. The coup overthrew a democratically elected government which threatened to nationalize Iran's oil and petrochemical industry, at the time controlled by British corporations.

Iran under the Shah was an "island of stability" for these interests. For 26 years, the U.S. government trained his vicious SAVAK secret police and sold \$19 billion worth of weapons to his regime. While the country's oil wealth flowed into the pockets of the foreign oil companies and the into the pockets of Shah's family and friends, most Iranians were struggling to survive.

Over 10 million Iranians, a third of the population, took to the streets and demanded an end to the Shah's tyrannical regime during 1978 and 1979. The crucial factor that led to his ouster was the oil workers' strikes involving tens of thousands of workers which paralyzed the key national industry.

Iran has a long history of workers' struggles. In the aftermath of the Russian revolution, workers in the Gilan region revolted

in 1920 and in Kurdistan in 1945. By the time of the coup in 1953 the Tudeh Party, which emerged from the Moscow-influenced Communist party, had a membership of 100,000, and exerted significant influence particularly among oil workers.

A strike wave which began in 1978, grew in strength with 65 new strikes reported on one day alone. Workers began to organize their own councils or shorahs as has happened in every working-class revolutionary movement since 1917. On International Women's Day 1979, 100,000 protested in Tehran against a new hijab law which required all Iranian women to wear headscarves outside their homes. These mobilizations showed that the consolidation of power by Ayatollah Khomeini was in no way immediate or automatic. Many struggles broke out throughout 1979 and 1980 against the attempts at counter revolution led by Khomeini.

However, the left in Iran failed to meet the challenge presented by these events and failed to seize the opportunity to win power and develop the workers councils as the basis of a workers republic. This failure of leadership created a vacuum that enabled the Ayatollah to come to power.

### The Outcome Could Have Been Different

The argument that revolutions are always violent and lead inevitably to repressive undemocratic regimes is frequently used against the Iranian revolution and every other attempt to bring about a fundamental reorganization of society away from capitalism. The mistakes of the Iranian left unfortunately were a crucial factor which paved the way for the theocracy to successfully consolidate power.

The Tudeh Party adopted the standard Stalinist "two-stage" doctrine that the first stage of the revolution in neo-colonial countries had to be led by the "progressive" capitalists to end imperialist domination and lay the basis for a "normal" capitalist society. This meant that the working class had to subordinate its own struggle for socialism until a later stage. In country after country, the Stalinists betrayed the struggles of workers and peasants by reining them in to this schema. This was the opposite of the approach of the Bolsheviks in 1917 who urged workers not to put their faith in the capitalists and their "socialist" allies in the struggle against Tsarism but to continue the revolution until the working class took power backed by the mass of the peasantry.



*International Women's Day, March 8, 1979, protest against the forced wearing of the hijab (head scarf) by the newly installed government headed by the Ayatollah Khomeini.*

Tudeh's support for the Ayatollah and the new Islamic republic continued right up until the Tudeh Party, the trade unions, and the rest of the left were wiped out in the 1982-83 period by the new regime. Imprisonment and the mass execution of thousands of non-Islamic and Islamic opponents of the regime were carried out.

Missing in this situation was a revolutionary organization armed with a socialist program who could give voice to the desire for transformative change of Iranian working people and youth. Such an organization would have challenged Tudeh leadership on one side and taken an independent class approach to expose and cut across the reactionary and anti-democratic agenda of the Islamic clerics.

### 1979 Holds Important Lessons for Today

Iranian workers and youth have not submitted meekly to the rule of Islamic state. Iran has been transformed into a predominantly urban-based educated society. The overwhelming majority are under 30. For Iranian youth, neither Western capitalism nor the local Islamic variation offer a way forward or prospects for a future without poverty, exploitation, and repression – not to mention a future with freedom to live their lives and express their culture. Iranians have moved to protest despite vicious state repression not just against the rule of the Islamic clerics but also of late they have opposed the so called "reformers" who have been tried, tested, and

found wanting.

The economic embargo and the nuclear standoff initiated by the Trump administration has further exacerbated the living conditions of the Iranian masses. The maintenance of regional dominance and control over the vast oil and gas resources in the area is behind the West's intervention. As the second-largest country in the Middle East, Iran is very important to the world economy. It has the world's largest natural gas supply and the fourth-largest proven oil reserves. The welfare and interests of the peoples of the area has never been a concern for Western or Eastern imperialist powers.

Austerity measures imposed on the poor and working people of Iran by their government has created huge anger. The increasing percentage of the budget going to the families and business interests of the ruling clerics and the ruling-class allies has not gone unnoticed and has led to an increase in strikes and protests.

The contradictions that led to the Iranian revolution have not disappeared but have intensified as the worldwide crisis of capitalism deepens. The rebuilding of the organizations of the left, the trade unions, and the establishment of a genuine party of Iranian workers and youth is needed. A socialist program and leadership is a key task for organizations and movements that will reemerge. With this, a new healthy Iranian revolution could help transform the whole region and the world away from the dead end of capitalist exploitation and Islamic reaction. ✪

# Amazon Wildfires: Bolsonaro's Policies Accelerating Environmental Crisis

**Bruna Leão (LSR - CWI Brazil), adapted and updated by Socialist Alternative Editorial Board**

Since the 2018 Brazilian elections, there has been a marked concern about the direction environmental policies would take should Jair Bolsonaro assume the presidency. Bolsonaro's declarations on the environment have always been controversial, because they treat any consideration for the preservation of the forest or for indigenous peoples as something that hinders the country's economic growth.

Sure enough, Bolsonaro's presidency so far has been marked by a slashing of environmental funding and regulation, the catastrophic impacts of which are already becoming apparent.

## Amazon Burning

According to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), between August 2017 and July 2018 reports showed deforestation of the Amazon totalling 4,500 km<sup>2</sup>, while between August 2018 and July 2019 the number rose to 6,800 km<sup>2</sup>, an increase of 64.8% over just one year!

In Brazil wildfires are not uncommon at this time of year, but never at this scale. Data from INPE's daily satellite imaging show that, just between August 18 and 19, 1,346 new outbreaks were spotted in the country. In a one week period in August, there were 9,507 new burn points! According to the Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM), this year was the least dry out of the past three, so dry weather can't be blamed for the spike in fires. There was, however, a 70% increase in illegal fires that contributed to the growth in wildfire outbreaks in the Amazonian region.

## Anti-Environment Policies

The government regulatory agency IBAMA (the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources) reports imposing one-third fewer fines on environmental violators in 2019 than last year, directly coinciding with the rise in deforestation and forest fires. The Bolsonaro administration has been cutting IBAMA's funds, particularly for inspections and oversight.

In addition to attacking regulatory oversight, Bolsonaro's administration is seeking to undermine environmental protections by attacking research and data collection. This can be seen in the recent firing of the INPE director, who challenged the president by defending the technical and scientific data collected by the institute, as well as in cuts to public universities that produce

the researchers and specialists needed to address the country's environmental situation.

## Doing the Bidding of Big Business

The advance of deforestation is connected to the ecologically unsustainable hunt for profits on the part of the corporations and wealthy elite that control Brazil's government.

Supported by Bolsonaro, the "ruralist" bloc in congress representing major landowners is aggressively pushing proposals to deregulate mining, logging, and industrial agriculture and expand them into previously protected areas. In the meantime they can increase the use of illegal fires to clear protected forest land thanks to Bolsonaro's aggressive attacks on regulatory agencies.

Some may have hoped the "international community" of states might step in to defend the Amazon in this moment of crisis. But for all their hand-wringing, western capitalist governments are also beholden to anti-environmental corporate interests. In fact, the German and Norwegian governments responded to the acceleration in forest fires by cutting nearly \$40 million in funding for Amazon protection efforts! While the official reason cited was a lack of faith in the Bolsonaro administration to correctly use the funds, simply reducing international funding for environmental protections is clearly not a strategy for halting or reversing the crisis. But it is a way to cut state spending and save money for Germany and Norway's own corporate elite!

## Climate Strike: For the Amazon, for the World

Instead of looking to capitalist governments to solve the environmental crisis they themselves have created, it is increasingly obvious that the only force up to the task is the global working class and youth. The Global Climate Strike on September 20 of this year (see article on p.5), which saw heavy participation by Brazilian youth, was just the beginning of what will inevitably be an epic battle between the overwhelming majority of humanity who wish to preserve the world for our children and grandchildren and a tiny but



powerful elite who will eagerly sell our future for their own short-term gain.

Climate change will have disastrous consequences, particularly for the working class, such as landslides, forest fires, crop failures, hunger, disease, extreme rainfall, heatwaves, floods, and prolonged droughts. The state of São Paulo, like much of northeastern and midwestern Brazil, has already been through a severe water crisis and is now experiencing widespread public-health problems related to air quality. The priority for us on the left is to stand up to this short-sighted economic system, a system that ignores the need to conserve natural resources and is only motivated by profit. In his book *Capital*, Marx states that "all progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil."

The capitalist system is leading our world into chaos, and we must topple it! We can only change things by fighting for a socialist transformation of society, with working people in control. We already have the technical means to plan production in accord with our needs rather than profit, and we can establish a rational use of all the planet's resources. This means fighting for a democratic socialist society, with a democratic planning of resources on an international scale. The construction of a force for environmental and socialist struggle is the strategy required to respond to the attacks of the Bolsonaro government and of capitalism. Let's continue to build off the momentum of the international climate strike in September, bringing together the forces of the youth, the working class, and all who are fighting against the destruction of our planet. ✪

## Demands for the Global Climate Movement:

- ✪ Immediately stop oil, gas and all forms of hydrocarbon mining.
- ✪ Make massive investments in renewable energy technology and infrastructure to produce and distribute the energy we need without fossil fuels.
- ✪ About 50% of climate change gasses come from 100 companies that extract and trade oil and natural gas such as BP, Shell, and others. These companies will never give up their profits to save life on the planet. We have to make them do it by taking their resources into democratic public ownership and directing them entirely towards constructing a fossil-fuel-free energy sector.
- ✪ A handful of multinationals are responsible for 70% of deforestation on the planet. These companies must also be taken into democratic public ownership in order to immediately shift to sustainable agricultural, logging, and mining practices that meet human need without destroying the planet (entirely possible with current technologies).
- ✪ Massive investments in low-cost, convenient public transportation. In big cities, transportation has to be free and accessible for all.

The above-mentioned revolutionary changes will not be made by a political and economic system that puts profits above life on the planet. Politicians and business leaders have known how climate change will unfold since the 1960s. Big business and their politicians will refuse to take any action that jeopardizes their profits, their concerns consist of crocodile tears and non-binding promises.

# Chicago Education Workers Prepare to Walk Out

**Nick Wozniak**

Shop Steward, SEIU 73  
(personal capacity)

Against the backdrop of successful teachers' strikes across the country, contract struggles for the two major unions in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) are escalating. As we go to print, strike action is becoming more likely every day for the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and SEIU Local 73 and the almost 33,000 teachers, educators, and schools workers they represent. In preparation, the unions organized a mass rally featuring Bernie Sanders who expressed his support for the struggle and funding Chicago schools.

The city establishment and the corporate elite they represent continue to push the "broke on purpose" status quo in CPS. In an attempt to undermine broad support for educators, new Mayor Lori Lightfoot is focusing almost exclusively on pay in order to present teachers as greedy. In negotiations, she has offered inadequate pay increases while ignoring the deep wounds in the schools system that remain after decades of cuts and sabotage in the name of corporate education "reform."

For CTU and SEIU 73 this contract fight is about grappling with the whole past period of attacks waged against educators, students, and the very idea of public education in Chicago. Under the leadership of the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE), CTU

went on strike in 2012 and set an example for the #RedforEd strike surge. But after the strike, Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Democratic establishment returned with a vengeance, closing dozens of schools, setting schools against each other with new ratings and funding systems, hounding activists, and driving out experienced teachers. After years of worsening conditions many educators are exhausted, frustrated, and fed up.

To push for their demands, both unions are getting ready to strike by mid-October - if necessary. This contract fight is an opportunity to reestablish momentum in the fight for high quality public schools in Chicago. It will also be watched by teachers and other workers across the country who are increasingly looking toward strike action.

## Transform Our Schools, All Out Support for CTU and SEIU 73

Educators and school workers are looking for real gains that will push back against the grinding toll of work under CPS. Compensation that values educators' vital work and allows them to live in an increasingly expensive city is important. This is especially the case for support staff in both unions. SEIU 73 members, which include special education aides, security officers, bus aides, and custodians, are making poverty wages while often working with the highest need student population.

But most critical in this fight, teachers



and educators need working conditions that allow them to meet students' learning needs. Scandalously, only one in four Chicago schools has a full time librarian and almost half are without a nurse. CTU is demanding increased support staff such as nurses, librarians, and social workers, smaller class sizes, and respect for prep time and professional self-direction, among other issues. Winning these demands would strengthen our schools, improve students' lives and education, and create momentum for more gains for public education.

At the same time educators are moving into action, 3,000 Chicago Park District workers, also organized by SEIU 73, voted 94% in favor of strike action in the face of the city's

outrageous proposal to double their health care costs on top of the existing low pay and abuse of part-timers. Simultaneous strike action from both unions, across both agencies would set an example of public sector unity in the face of austerity. The unions' current demands will be implacably opposed by the developers and financiers that run Chicago. The rest of city's labor leadership needs to give these workers its unequivocal support, mobilizing its members and the public to the picket lines and actively arguing for the restoration of Chicago's battle-damaged public schools as part of a program of building a city fit for workers to live in, instead of the playground for the rich that Daley, Emanuel and now Lightfoot seem intent on building. ✪

# UC Workers Strike Wins Big Gains

**Erin Brightwell,**

Organizing Captain,  
UPTE-CWA 9119

After a long contract campaign that included going on strike five times, 15,000 University of California workers in the University Professional and Technical Employees (UPTE-CWA 9119) union have won a victory. The new contract will give research and technical workers 29% raises over five years and health care workers 32% raises over the same period. UPTE members clearly saw the deal as a step forward, with 95% voting to approve the contract.

UC management insisted that UPTE's wage demands were "economically unrealistic," while initially offering an insulting 6-8% total increase over four years. From the revelation of a \$175 million slush fund in the office of UC President Janet Napolitano to the six and seven-figure salaries paid to the bloated ranks of executives and administrators, it was obvious that UC could afford to

pay their frontline workers more.

Also at stake during negotiations were health care costs and the pension. The union defeated UC's attempts to increase health care premiums and weaken the pension plan - for now. The union did concede to reopen negotiations on the pension and wages during a 30-day period starting April 1, 2021. This represents a potential danger, and requires our union and members to remain vigilant and organized.

There are a variety of problems that were left unaddressed by the contract, from wage discrepancies between workers doing the same job to the planned outsourcing of a whole new facility at UC Davis Medical Center. Building on the progress in member organization and mobilization with working groups and campaigns before the next contract fight will be key to attacking the unresolved issues that workers face on the job.

Despite these weaknesses, the contract is strong economically thanks to hundreds of UPTE activists, many of whom have stepped

up and gotten active for the first time during this campaign. In fighting for this contract, UPTE had its strongest picket lines ever, as new workplace leaders organized in committees to win more members to the idea that we have to fight back if we are to get what we deserve from UC.

## Working-Class Unity is Key

Perhaps the most powerful of the five UPTE strikes was in May, 2018, when UPTE, AFSCME and CNA all struck together, representing more than 50,000 workers across the UC system. There was a powerful feeling on the picket line as workers from the three unions marched together. We went out together and we should have gotten a new contract together too. Working together, with a goal of shutting down the campuses and medical centers completely, the three unions could have led a struggle to not just win adequate contracts but to solidify the presence of a powerful and unified workers movement.

Workers have learned some important lessons coming out of this contract fight. Most crucially, we would never have gotten the big wage increases over this contract without mobilizing and striking.

Winning free tuition, an end to privatization measures, fully funded departments, decent wages, and quality medical care will take a unified struggle of UC workers and students. Unions should coordinate organizing unorganized workers and a strategy for contract negotiations. Maximum unity among workers - with the coordination and solidarity to take action together - is the strongest weapon there is to fight privatization and austerity at UC. ✪

*Erin is a rank and file union activist in UPTE-CWA 9119 and a member of Socialist Alternative. She is a healthcare worker at a San Francisco hospital. Erin went on strike for the first time last May when UPTE struck in sympathy with AFSCME and CNA workers at the University of California.*

# Amazon vs. the Socialists in Seattle

continued from p. 12

a Green New Deal. Both are running as Democrats, while I am an independent socialist and calling for a new mass party for working people, but the bold left platform we are campaigning on has struck a chord with people across the city.

We're jointly organizing Green New Deal meetings with other progressive candidates and our movement in different neighborhoods in Seattle. We're also discussing with other campaigns about a joint event to stand against the corporate PAC money flooding into Seattle's elections.

If we can win all three campaigns, not only can we block Amazon's and the Chamber's efforts to buy the elections, we can push the City Council further to the left and pave the way for future victories for working-class movements.

But first we have to unmask the fake progressivism of the Chamber candidates, who are all now pretending to represent ordinary people, despite being thoroughly beholden to Amazon, the real estate lobby, and wealthy Republicans. They each say that the massive corporate PAC funding doesn't mean anything, that it is out of their control. Showing

their brazen dishonesty, some are even lamenting the existence of the corporate PACs. In fact, in order to even be eligible for the Chamber's PAC funding, the candidates had to apply for it, fill out lengthy questionnaires, and participate in closed-door interviews.

## What's at Stake

Just as big business has a great deal at stake this year in Seattle, so do working people. If we are able to win our struggles for rent control and a Green New Deal, once again that momentum would have the power to spread to other cities.

All of our struggles are connected. Seattle's historic \$15 minimum wage victory was instrumental to further victories around the country, and Sanders' 2016 campaign decisively changed U.S. politics. Socialist ideas have always been met with powerful opposition



from the ruling class, because of their power to inspire working class people into struggle.

If we are going to step up to the challenges facing humanity, to fix our broken health care system, to end the crisis of affordable housing and homelessness, and to avoid climate catastrophe, we urgently need to fight back. We need to stand up to Amazon and corporate America before they take working people over the cliff in order to protect their massive profits. ☸

# 50,000 GM Workers on Strike

continued from p. 3

50,000. In 2018, GM reported \$10.8 billion in U.S. profits but announced the shutting down of five North American plants - four in the U.S. One of these, in Lordstown, Ohio was closed despite the over \$100 million in annual concessions that workers were told would save it. GM continues to make Lordstown's last product line, the Chevy Cruze, in Mexico.

GM has been one of the top corporate recipients of tax breaks and subsidies from all levels of government and workers' pay has crashed. In 2007, when the UAW agreed to allow new hires to be taken on at half of the existing pay scale, this \$14 hourly rate was lower in dollar amounts, let alone buying power, than any wage that the union had agreed to in a generation.

This strike coincides with new revelations in a long-brewing UAW corruption scandal that has now seen the present, and previous, International Presidents of the union having their homes searched by federal agents.

Workers on the line understand that this doesn't change the fact that the union is essential to protect against corporate greed. Instead, they've told us that see it as a "black eye" that they will need to fight even harder to make up for.

On the other hand, the company's hardball decision to cut off workers' healthcare the day after the strike began, caused the union to respond and commit to picking up these payments so that there will be no break in coverage. This was the right decision and it also makes it crystal clear that the labor movement

needs to get behind Bernie Sanders' Medicare for All proposal, which would take health care off the bargaining table once and for all.

## Fighting Strategy Needed

What is needed is for UAW leadership to take a bold, confident approach which would raise the living standards of its members and re-organize outsourced suppliers, creating a solid basis for organizing the foreign-label plants whose low pay and unrestricted speed-ups have undercut the union's power.

The union also needs to urgently reconsider the traditional strategy of striking only one of the Big Three automakers at one time. The UAW's strike fund stands at a reported \$800 million. It could be deployed to strike all three U.S.-based auto makers simultaneously, in a move which would reverberate throughout the entire economy as a massive demonstration of labor's strength and power.

## Green New Deal and Industrial Policy

One factor fueling workers' anger is the corporations' use of their record profits not to invest in new or retooled factories but to pay their investors and top executives massive sums via stock buy-backs. This refusal to invest in new technology is a source of the long-term decline of U.S. manufacturing versus its European and Asian competitors.

There is an urgent need for new technology such as electric vehicles and rebuilt mass

transit systems to deal with the crisis of climate change. The Big Three automakers have all signaled their intent to outsource these things to non-union "start-up" corporations in yet another move in their endless shell game to undermine working-class living standards.

The UAW should join the unions which advocate strong action on climate change in actively mobilizing support for a workers' Green New Deal, which has the potential to create millions of new jobs. It is the fossil fuel bosses who must be left in the dust, not the workers who have a key strategic role in fighting for this industrial transition.

A bold vision for the use of new technology to create new jobs and extend union pay and benefits to broader layers of workers than at any time since the "Rust Belt" decline of the 1970's can make this strike a turning point for the U.S. labor movement.

- ☸ End multi-tier pay and benefits, temporary and contract employment. One job, one pay scale based on seniority. No more than three years from hire to full pay for entry-level jobs.
- ☸ End plant closures, reopen the shuttered plants!
- ☸ No concessions on pensions and health care. For a uniform, defined benefit pension with full health care for all!
- ☸ Union control over health and safety.
- ☸ Retool the auto industry - for a workers' Green New Deal to save jobs and fight climate change. ☸

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE  
ISSN 2638-3349

EDITOR: Tom Crean

EDITORIAL BOARD:

George Brown, Eljeer Hawkins,  
Joshua Koritz, Ty Moore, Keely Mullen,  
Kailyn Nicholson, Calvin Priest,  
Tony Wilsdon

✉ Editors@SocialistAlternative.org

## NATIONAL

639 Union Street, Basement  
Brooklyn, NY 11215

info@SocialistAlternative.org  
facebook.com/SocialistAlternativeUSA  
Twitter: @SocialistAlt

## IN YOUR AREA

### NEW ENGLAND

BOSTON, MA ..... (732) 710-8345  
PROVIDENCE, RI .....  
WORCESTER, MA ..... (508) 335-8633

### MID-ATLANTIC

NEW YORK CITY ..... (347) 749-1236  
PHILADELPHIA, PA ..... (267) 368-4564  
PITTSBURGH, PA ..... (615) 310-5555

Contact our national office for:

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
NEW JERSEY and  
RICHMOND, VA

### SOUTHEAST

GAINESVILLE, FL ..... (352) 538-6014  
Contact our national office for:  
NASHVILLE, TN

### MIDWEST

CHICAGO, IL ..... (773) 771-4617  
CINCINNATI, OH ..... Cincinnati@SocialistAlternative.org  
COLUMBUS, OH .....  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI .....  
MADISON, WI ..... Madison@SocialistAlternative.org  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN ..... (443) 834-2870

### SOUTHWEST

HOUSTON, TX ..... (281) 635-5286  
NW ARKANSAS ..... ArkansasSA@gmail.com  
Contact our national office for:  
DALLAS, TX,  
DENVER, CO,  
FORT COLLINS, CO,  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK,  
PHOENIX, AZ, and  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

### PACIFIC

BELLINGHAM, WA ..... (360) 510-7797  
LOS ANGELES, CA ..... socialistalternative.la@gmail.com  
PORTLAND, OR ..... (503) 284-6036  
OAKLAND / SAN FRANCISCO, CA ..... (510) 220-3047  
SAN DIEGO, CA .....  
SEATTLE, WA ..... (612) 760-1980

### INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

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!

CANADA ..... (604) 738-1653  
contact@socialistalternative.ca  
www.SocialistAlternative.ca

MEXICO ..... Coming Soon  
QUÉBEC ..... info@AlternativeSocialiste.org  
www.AlternativeSocialiste.org

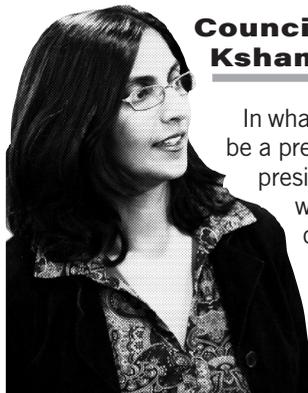
# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

ISSUE #57 • OCTOBER 2019  
SUGGESTED DONATION \$2

# TAX amazon

## Affordable Housing for All @TaxAmazon #TaxAmazon Join the movement. Amazon vs. the Socialists in Seattle

### Progressives & Socialists Must Unite Against the Corporate PAC Onslaught



**Councilmember  
Kshama Sawant**

In what may turn out to be a preview of the U.S. presidential election, with the ruling class hellbent on stopping Bernie Sanders at all costs, big business in Seattle is carrying out

an unprecedented assault of corporate PAC money against socialist and progressive candidates in this year's elections.

The corporate elite are deeply concerned about the rise of socialist politics, whether my election and reelection as a socialist City Councilmember in Seattle, Bernie's self-described democratic socialist presidential campaign, or AOC's election to U.S. Congress. Our victories in Seattle, including our historic \$15 minimum wage law and landmark renters rights wins, and the growing national fight for Medicare for All and a Green New Deal, are all completely unacceptable to the ruling class.

In Seattle, already \$450,000 has been spent by Amazon, with nearly \$2 million in corporate cash overall, and it seems clear they're just rolling up their sleeves and getting started.

Amazon's Jeff Bezos and big business are

infuriated by our movement's victories and are fearful of what it would mean if socialist and Democratic Socialists of America candidate, Shaun Scott, and left candidate Tammy Morales join us in City Hall. Now they're determined to block our struggle for rent control and prevent a Seattle Green New Deal. Last but not least, they have a powerful aversion to any form of taxes on big business, as was on display with the Amazon Tax struggle last year.

### A Corporate Tax Haven

As he has publicly acknowledged, Bezos largely based his decision to launch Amazon in Seattle on his desire to dodge taxes. Washington State has long been a corporate tax haven, having the most regressive tax system in the entire nation. More than anywhere else in the U.S., the tax burden falls most heavily on working and middle-class people, while big business pays next to nothing. This is no small part of why Seattle has become one of the most deeply unequal cities in the nation.

The region's corporate elite means to keep it that way. Bezos made national headlines last year when he bullied Seattle to stop the Amazon Tax on the largest 3% of businesses, aided by corporate-bankrolled Mayor Jenny Durkan and the Democratic establishment. Over a modestly-sized tax, Amazon executives acted like mafia dons: threatening to move 7,000 jobs unless the City Council backed down. After the Council passed

it unanimously anyway, under the pressure of our movement, Amazon's lobbyists went to work in the backrooms. Less than one month later, our corporate tax to fund housing and services was repealed, with only myself and one other councilmember voting in opposition.

It bears noting that in spite of the majority of the Council caving on the tax, Amazon moved those 7,000 jobs anyway. Which just goes to show, once again, that bowing down to bullies doesn't work.

Of course, it's not only about Amazon. Boeing executives have a long record of extorting billions in handouts from Washington State. And a central feature of neoliberalism has always been its fierce opposition to progressive taxation and workers' rights. Trump's tax cuts were only the latest development in the long arc of brutal austerity and deepening inequality - a process that has continued over decades, whether Republicans or Democrats occupied the White House. Fundamentally, this is driven by the bankruptcy of capitalism and its long-term stagnation beginning with the 1970s. Since the end of the post-war boom, profits have increasingly been derived from a relentless squeezing of social services, unions, health care, and the working class as a whole.

### Left Unity Needed

The best defense is a good offense. Our movements are going all out to fight for rent

control and for a Green New Deal in Seattle, and have energized thousands of working people in our city. Over 12,000 Seattleites have signed on to a petition for citywide rent control, free of corporate loopholes, in just a few months time.

We are building the most powerful grassroots re-election campaign Seattle has ever seen. In addition to our army of volunteers going door to door across the district, we're on track to raise more in donations than ever raised before by any Seattle City Council campaign, without taking a dime in corporate cash. If the corporate PACs are going to break records, working people need to as well.

And crucially, we will need to build left unity across the city if we're to stop big business' attempts to buy the elections.

Amazon and the Chamber of Commerce were successful in getting their purchased candidates through in all seven City Council races this year. This includes my opponent, Egan Orion, who was the #1 recipient of corporate PAC money out of the record 55 candidates who ran in the primary.

To the Chamber's dismay, fellow socialist candidate Shaun Scott is also campaigning for a Green New Deal and to tax big business to build public housing, in the district just north of mine. Meanwhile, in the district to the south, progressive candidate Tammy Morales is campaigning for rent control and

*continued on p. 11*