

# The caravan that defies borders



Anthony Vazquez / AP

By ELENA ZELEDON

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica—The 8000 poor people marching together through the states of Central America towards the United States are another sign that the pillars of imperialist domination, already weakened by the blows of the global recession in 2008, are now shaken by the exploding social contradictions of this organic crisis.

The caravan participants, marching together as a precaution against attacks from both human traffickers (coyotes) and the drug gangs linked to the forces of state repression, are primarily from Honduras, the geographic keystone in the military and intelligence networks of U.S. imperialism in Central America.

It was there that the mildly reformist liberal Mel Zelaya, the elected president, was expelled in a coup sponsored by the U.S. intelligence community, and carried out by its surrogates in the Honduran military and Congress under the direction of Hillary Clinton. But it is not the first caravan from Central America that has fought its way northward.

In March of this year, a smaller caravan of 4000

people from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala made its way to the U.S.-Mexican border, despite threats from the racist and xenophobic regime of Donald Trump to send troops to the border to confront the refugees.

### Why this caravan, why now

It is hard to comprehend the hardships that these poor people are enduring in their flight to what they believe will be a better life. What drives them forward? The overarching reason is to try to escape the life of grinding poverty that afflicts the whole region, a condition of existence directly linked to the domination of the economic life of these countries by foreign, primarily U.S.-based, multi-national corporations (MNCs).

Those firms, working in conjunction with the ruling capitalist oligarchies and their repressive state apparatuses, act as a giant vacuum cleaner, sucking up massive amounts of surplus value created by the super-exploited working masses of the region. This leaves a portion for the oligarchs, who in general act as service and financial facilitators for this exploita-

(Above) Caravan members enter a shelter in Mexico City on Nov. 4.

tion. The sums are not insignificant, given the population of these semi-colonial countries, which if Mexico is included, exceeds that of France and Germany combined.

It has also resulted in a permanent fiscal crisis of the state, both because of outright looting of the treasuries (the wife of the former president of Honduras has been charged with stealing \$40,000,000 USD from the social security fund, for example). Indeed, the lack of a permanent tax regime upon which a robust social security program can be based has worsened conditions over the past 10 years in the countries of the region.

Despite the states of Central America receiving above average rates of Foreign Direct Investment flows in the years immediately preceding the 2008 Great Recession, that rate was cut by 30 per cent after 2008. Now, with the U.S. central bank raising in-

(continued on page 4)

# Lessons from a working-class candidacy

By FRED LINCK

In January 2018, Socialist Action decided to run a candidate for U.S. Senate in Connecticut. This would involve getting at least 7500 valid signatures from registered voters throughout the state. We decided that the petition process would provide a fantastic opportunity to talk to workers and to counterpose socialist ideas to the anti-working-class platforms of the two bourgeois parties.

Socialist Action chose me, Fred Linck, an antiwar Iraq veteran, to run. In February, we announced my candidacy for U.S. Senate and embarked on collecting as many signatures as possible.

Petitioning volunteers fanned out throughout at the state, at community events, outside of grocery stores, and in public spaces. Meeting working people throughout the state illuminated what Marxists understand—during times of economic crisis workers are squeezed from all sides.

The petitioning teams and I spoke to thousands of working class people around the state, handing out 25,000 postcards with socialist demands on them. We collected almost 11,000 signatures.

On Aug. 8, volunteers from our campaign brought our 11,000 signatures to the Secretary of State's office in a laundry basket and submitted them for certification. Town clerks are mandated to certify these signatures within two weeks. However, five weeks went by before we heard anything from the Secretary of State, so we called a press

conference on Sept. 11 to explain the situation.

The socialist campaign volunteers checked a sample of the petition forms and learned that 71 voters had been disqualified by Hartford town clerks for being unaffiliated with a political party—which is not a legal reason to reject signatures for an independent candidate.

Twenty-five voters were ruled off in New Haven for being “inactive”—not a legal reason to reject signatures unless the date of birth is missing. Seventy-two legible signatures were ruled off in New London for supposedly being “illegible.”

They found numerous signatures on Bridgeport petitions that were ruled off for being inactive as well. They also found that a very high percentage of signers marked as unregistered are in fact registered. For instance, in a sample of 27 rejected signatures from Wethersfield, 12 show up on the voter rolls (or 44.4%). The violations discovered so far in the samples suggest that hundreds, and likely thousands, of signatures were illegally rejected by town clerks. Even a conservative estimate indicates that there were enough signatures to qualify for ballot status.

Volunteers also found that 56 petition sheets (containing up to 1680 signatures) were *missing*, presumably still in town clerks' offices where they were supposed to have been checked weeks



(Above) Fred Linck, candidate for U.S. Senate from Connecticut.

earlier. Even half-filled, the 56 missing sheets alone could have provided enough signatures to for ballot status.

After we were illegally ruled off the ballot, we decided to run a write-in campaign. We urged supporters to share on Facebook why they would be writing in “Fred Linck” on Nov 6. Hundreds of supporters responded. On voter wrote, “There is a qualitative difference between spending \$\$ on wars ... and spending it on what nurtures us—education, health care, alternative energy. Please consider casting a write in vote for Fred Linck.” Another supporter said, “Fred Mitchell Linck: Honest, car-

ing, and a fighter for the people.”

It has been an honor going around the state to talk to working-class people. I learned so much through this process. The thing that strikes me more than anything else is that working people are really hurting. Our paychecks are not going as far as they used to, I know people who have foregone doctor's appointments or meals to pay rent.

Police are killing young people of color. Our environment is on the verge of total ecological collapse; the right to choose is under attack; trans and non-binary friends are under attack from a system that uses them to either gather votes or to whip up their base; refugees run from the violence that the U.S. creates in Latin America, while the U.S. rains down bombs all over the Middle East.

This is all happening while the tiny minority that owns the means by which we survive get richer and own more and more of the economy that our labor runs.

Our campaign pointed out that since working people make society run, working people should run society. We do not need the financiers and owners that control our companies and our government. We will have to organize the working class to use its power, to force this system to change.

The elections are now over, but we socialists are just getting started. Our power comes from organizing in our workplaces, in our communities, on our campuses, or in the streets. I'll see you in the streets! ■

## JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics—not alliances with the bosses' parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women, LGBT people, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. We are internationalists, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with their own nation's capitalist class. We seek to link struggles across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons. We maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism. Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

**SOCIALIST ACTION** Closing news date: Nov. 8, 2018

EDITOR MICHAEL SCHREIBER CANADA EDITOR: BARRY WEISLEDER

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor.



For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 268-9429, [socialistaction@lmi.net](mailto:socialistaction@lmi.net)

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: [socialistactionnews@yahoo.com](mailto:socialistactionnews@yahoo.com) Website: [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org)

## Socialist Action SUBSCRIBE NOW!

— \$10 for six months. — \$20 for 12 months.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

— I want to *join* Socialist Action! Please contact me.

I enclose an extra contribution of: — \$100 — \$200 — Other

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action newspaper, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.  
Or subscribe on-line with a credit card at [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org).

## WHERE TO FIND US

- BUFFALO, NY: [wmysocialist@google.com](mailto:wmysocialist@google.com)
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, [chisocialistaction@yahoo.com](mailto:chisocialistaction@yahoo.com)
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: [adamritscher@yahoo.com](mailto:adamritscher@yahoo.com), [www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com](http://www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com)
- KANSAS CITY: [kcsa@workernet.org](mailto:kcsa@workernet.org) (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE, KY: [redlotus51@yahoo.com](mailto:redlotus51@yahoo.com), (502) 451-2193
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, [socialistaction@visi.com](mailto:socialistaction@visi.com)
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: (267) 989-9035 [organizer.philly@gmail.com](mailto:organizer.philly@gmail.com) Facebook: Red Philly

- SALEM, ORE.: [ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET](mailto:ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET) (971) 312-7369
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, [sfsocialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:sfsocialistaction@gmail.com)
- WASHINGTON, DC: [christopher.towne@gmail.com](mailto:christopher.towne@gmail.com), (202) 286-5493

### SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE  
[socialistactioncanada@gmail.com](mailto:socialistactioncanada@gmail.com)  
(647) 986-1917  
<http://www.socialistaction.ca/>

# Democrats' blue wave falls short

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

"This is the most important midterm election in the modern history of this country," said Senator Bernie Sanders, and many politicians and pundits agreed. President Trump spoke similarly during his week-long campaign tour, aimed mainly at shoring up Republican candidates in so-called Red States. "Everything we have achieved is at stake," Trump declared to his cheering admirers.

After the election, however, the mood quickly subsided; there was no evidence that substantial changes had come onto the political landscape. For one thing, the hoopla that Democrats had drummed up to create a mighty "blue wave" produced merely a ripple of elected candidates. In a Nov. 7 news conference, in fact, Trump boasted that his campaign rallies had "stopped the blue wave."

The Democrats' lackluster finish came despite the fact that they had received the bulk of Wall Street donations. The securities and finance industry backed Democratic congressional candidates 63 percent to 37 percent for the Republicans, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Of course, the Democrats did succeed in winning a majority in the House for the first time since 2011, and made gains in many relatively affluent suburban districts that had leaned Republican in years past. And here and there, a few rookie Congress members were elected who consider themselves to be "progressives" or even "democratic socialists." More women, LGBTQ people, and people of color than ever before were elected on the Democratic ticket.

But the candidates within the Democratic Party "big tent" ranged widely in their views—from Democratic Socialists of America members to conservatives like party hack Joe Manchin in West Virginia—who shamefully voted for Brett Kavanaugh to join the Supreme Court. The crook Bob Menendez was also re-elected as a Democratic U.S. Senator from New Jersey, despite having been censured by the Senate Ethics Committee for accepting bribes from a wealthy businessman.

Evidence that the "blue wave" did not flow significantly to the left can be seen in the fact that a quarter of the Democratic Party candidates in the Nov. 6 election have a background in the CIA, the military, the State Department, or national security. They included, for example, Elissa Slotkin, who won a congressional seat from Michigan's Eighth District. Slotkin is a former CIA operative in Iraq, who also served as Obama's Iraq director on the National Security Council. Later, she worked at the Pentagon, looking into drone warfare, "homeland defense," and cyber warfare.

All in all, despite the addition of a few "progressive" Democrats to Congress, the complexion of U.S. politics has changed very little since the election. The policies of the capitalist Democratic Party have not been altered one iota from the pro-corporate, pro-war, anti-environmental ones of the past.

The social issues that the Democratic Party candidates addressed in their campaigns were exceedingly narrow. "Medicare for All" was a central plank of the Democrats this year, though we can expect that the proposal will be watered down; as under Obama, the needs of the insurance industry will have to be catered to before the proposal ever reaches a vote in Congress. The Democrats also spoke about repairing the country's roads and bridges—always a safe bet at election time—but ignoring the need for efficient mass transportation, using renewable fuels.

Major issues of an international scope were ignored, such as climate change and out-of-control environmental pollution, and pouring more money into the military (most Democrats in Congress supported this year's \$716 billion military budget). Likewise, questions such as the sanctions against Iran, trade wars with China and other countries, and the endless U.S. wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East were virtually absent from the platforms of Democratic candidates for Congress.

Moreover, important domestic issues such as raising the minimum wage to be enough to live on; the right to low-cost housing; securing the rights of women, immigrants, and LGBTQ people; and stopping police violence against people of color generally received no more than a nod by the Democrats.

## A referendum on Trump

The main issue that the Democrats ran on was simply "stop Trump." CNN and AP VoteCast polls on the eve of the election both showed that close to 70% of



(Above) Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of Democratic Socialists of America from the Bronx, won a House seat on the Democratic Party ticket.

voters hoped to send a message to Trump with their vote; about 26% to 28% of the respondents were for Trump, and 38% to 40% were against. Trump readily agreed that the election was a referendum on his administration. He told potential voters in Mississippi, "Pretend I'm on the ballot."

The Republicans held onto their "strongholds" in rural districts and in areas of discontented white workers who had voted for Trump in 2016. Accordingly, the Republicans increased their edge in the Senate and won several key governor races. In general, right-wing and Trump-supporting politicians were elected, while more mainstream Republicans did not do as well. In a Nov. 7 tweet, Trump acknowledged the fact, saying, "Those that worked with me in this incredible Midterm Election, embracing certain policies and principles, did very well. Those that did not, say goodbye!"

One loyal Trump supporter who followed the formula, Marsha Blackburn, was elected to the Senate from Tennessee. "I'm going to work with President Trump all of the way to build that wall," she affirmed to voters. A Blackburn commercial started with a shot of the immigrant caravan crossing Mexico. "I'm going to stop the criminals who are going toward our border," Blackburn stated in a voice-over.

In order to rally his supporters in the weeks leading up to the election, Trump relied almost exclusively on scare tactics, using racist descriptions that are commonly employed by the ultra-right. Trump described the Central American migrants traveling through Mexico as "invaders" and "terrorists," and he endorsed a campaign ad that likened them to Luis Bracamontes, an immigrant who had been convicted for killing two police officers.

Polls showed that the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court was a key issue for Trump supporters in the election. Only a month before the election, Trump spread the conspiracy theory that people protesting Brett Kavanaugh's nomination ("elevator screamers") were being paid for by billionaire George Soros—a figure who is frequently denounced in anti-Semitic literature.

In the South, with its long history of injustices against Black people, racism was merged with anti-immigrant prejudices in Republican messages against the Democrats. In Georgia, Trump said that Democrat Stacey Abrams, a Black "progressive" running for governor, was "unqualified" for the office, and that she "would turn Georgia into a giant sanctuary city for criminal aliens, putting innocent Georgia families at the mercy of hardened criminals and predators." The National Rifle Association in Georgia put out a message, "Defend yourself. Defeat Abrams." And ABC News reported that a robocall on behalf of her Republican opponent, Brian Kemp, called Abrams a "negress."

## Should socialists work in the Democratic Party?

The elections reflected the broader polarization that has taken place in the United States during the last few years, brought on in part by the dissatisfaction and alienation that working people feel toward the status quo in capitalist society. Some workers and middle-class people, often in "rust-belt" districts that have seen better times, have been hoodwinked by the

anti-immigrant and racist messages of the right wing. But likewise, there is no doubt that the reactionary pronouncements by Trump and the right have had an electric effect in mobilizing people in opposition. The last two years have seen massive rallies in the streets against Trump's policies.

Unfortunately, for the present, working people have no authentic voice in the political arena *except* in the streets. Some socialists mistakenly adhere to the idea that it might be possible to change the pro-big business nature of the Democratic Party by working within it, or that it might be possible to break a "left wing" (such as Bernie Sanders supporters) out of the party. But both scenarios are merely wishful thinking.

Similarly, it is a deadly illusion to think that revolutionary socialists can be elected to public office and work for significant social change when using the ballot line of the capitalist Democratic Party—always a "lesser-evil" trap for the unwary. History has repeatedly demonstrated that the former party of the Klan, White Citizens Councils, and Southern slavocracy serves the ruling class elite unflinchingly.

That this "graveyard of all fighting social movements" can be considered a vehicle for advancing working-class interests is preposterous. In general, when "progressive" or "left" candidates run as Democrats, the party hierarchy forces them to align their positions with those of the mainstream, not the opposite.

Consider Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) from the Bronx who was just elected to the House as a Democrat. At first, the party leadership viewed her with suspicion, but after winning the primary vote, she became a celebrity, the subject of talk shows—and even Barack Obama endorsed her.

Accordingly, the DSA enlisted Ocasio-Cortez to travel to California to raise money and support for other "left" candidates running in the Democratic Party. We can expect, too, that the Democratic Party leadership will use her services in selected and "safe" locales as an opportunity to refurbish the party's image when it suits their needs. They understand that Ocasio-Cortez and other DSAers are fresh faces who can attract young people and activists with new energy into the party—and thus channel dissident voices into the double-talking capitalist mainstream. Sanders played a similar role in 2016, first shepherding the unwary into his campaign and then into Hillary Clinton's.

At her acceptance speech on Nov. 6, Ocasio-Cortez told supporters, "We can make change ... We are here, and we are going to rock the world in the next two years ... This is not the end. This is the beginning."

But real change will never be achieved from within the Democratic Party. The beginning of a new day for working people in the United States will arrive when they construct their *own* party, one that operates not only at the ballot box but in workplaces and in the streets, and with a revolutionary program to enable the working class to take political power in its own name and abolish the rule of the capitalists. ■



## Solidarity with the migrants!

By LISA LUINENBURG

Eyes across the world have been following the human drama of the caravan of migrants making its way through Mexico towards the U.S. border. The caravan is made up of mostly young people from Central America, the majority from Honduras, who are trying to escape the poverty and gang violence in their home countries that are the result of brutal military and economic interventions in the region perpetrated by the U.S. ruling class for centuries.

According to some media sources in early November, there were four migrant caravans traveling through Mexico, which had swelled to contain as many as 12,000 people as more migrants continued to cross into Mexico from Guatemala. It was clear that the Mexican government had already processed thousands of asylum claims, which caused the numbers to dwindle.

Although the U.S. urged Mexico to stop the caravan before it reached the border, the Mexican government generally declined to use open force against the migrants. The response of the Mexican state towards the caravan seems to have been mixed; some towns have welcomed and tried to help the migrants while Mexican police and immigration agents have made some arrests, deportations, and repression.

In the United States, tensions rose greatly as President Trump continued to vilify and attack undocu-

mented immigrants in his cross-country campaigning for the Republican Party in the lead-up to the November elections. According to *The New York Times*, "his [Trump's] renewed emphasis on the issue reflects the belief by strategists in both parties that Republican candidates often benefit if they can link illegal immigration to crime, economic insecurity and terrorism—all resonant concerns with swing voters, especially women—and portray Democrats as too spineless to tackle the problem."

Trump has accused his Democratic Party opponents of funding the caravan in a bid to hurt the Republican election campaign. In one tweet, the president wrote, "If the Democrats would stop being obstructionists and come together, we could write up and agree to new immigration laws in less than one hour. Look at the needless pain and suffering that they are causing. Look at the horrors taking place on the Border. Chuck & Nancy, call me!"

Yet, it is Trump himself who has been an obstructionist regarding the plight of undocumented immigrants. One cannot fail to notice the hypocrisy in his statement. While Trump's housing monopoly undoubtedly profits off of the labor of undocumented workers here in the U.S., Trump continues to use reactionary language to describe the migrants winding their way towards the U.S. He has shouted since day one of his presidential campaign that migrants are all criminals,

rapists, and gang members, coming to the U.S. to steal white people's jobs and run amok in "our" country.

Trump has threatened to close the border to the approaching migrants and deny them the right to seek asylum, and has also threatened to deploy as many as 15,000 Army troops on the border. These troops would reinforce the roughly 2000 National Guard troops that have been stationed at the border since April. Trump has also proposed to abrogate the language of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in order to deny children of undocumented immigrants born in the United States their fundamental right to citizenship.

This strategy is meant to divide the working class over the questions of race and immigration. It denies the fact that migration has been taking place throughout human history, and the fact that it was the United States who created the various crises in Central America and Mexico that are pushing people to flee the horrific conditions in their own countries to seek a better life for their families in the so-called land of opportunity.

The Democrats offer no solution. Let's not forget that Obama deported more immigrants than all former U.S. presidents combined. In 2014, his administration housed 7000 unaccompanied migrant children on U.S. military bases. From June 2006 to July 2008 and from June 2010 to September 2011, former Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama dispatched National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border, at a total cost of \$1.35 billion.

What the working class needs now more than ever is active solidarity with undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. and with the caravans working their way through Mexico. We must remember that migration is a human right, and it doesn't matter if the Democrats or Republicans are in power—the ruling class will always find a way to profit from the super-exploitation of immigrant workers and to use fear-mongering among the U.S. population as a way to control public opinion and gain support for their xenophobic plans to further repress immigrants.

Immigrants are our neighbors, co-workers, members of our unions, and their children play with ours at school. Immigrants have shown they have the power to rise up against reactionary policies, as we saw in 2006 when some of the largest demonstrations in U.S. history occurred against the Sensenbrenner laws. And we also saw earlier this year the power of the U.S. population to rise up in solidarity with undocumented immigrants when their children were literally being ripped from their arms.

We also need solidarity with and support to organizations in border areas that are planning for the arrival of the first migrant caravan in the coming weeks. Solidarity knows no borders. ■

## ... The caravan that defies borders

(continued from page 1)

terest rates, we witness direct capital outflows from the region (and likewise from many of the weaker developed capitalist economies, like Turkey and Argentina).

This has meant a rising unemployment and underemployment rate for the young people of Central America, and an attendant rise in the proliferation of gangs and illegal activities, especially working in the trans-national drug trade, where money is easy and life is short. These mass migration caravans are primarily made up of young people, many fleeing the threats of violence and death from gang members, and whose sole wish is to escape this poverty.

In addition, the increase in the present number of highly politicized migration incidents, despite a longer-term decrease in the trend of refugee applications, there is an increasingly tighter labour market in the United States itself. Tighter market conditions mean more jobs are available in the poorest paid sectors of the service industry, like migrant farm labour and household workers, not subject to minimum wage and working conditions laws. Undocumented immigrant workers make up almost 80% of these workers, a labour pool which is routinely doubly exploited.

Finally, in the specific instance of this caravan from Honduras, the increasing repression of the Honduran state against young people and the wide-open neo-liberal program of investments freed from any regulations and restraint is a result of the December 2017 election.

The election, which even the normally docile lap dog of U.S. imperialism, the Organization of American States (OAS), deemed to be fraudulent, was stolen by the oligarchy headed by Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) in broad daylight. The Popular Front candidate had a seemingly insurmountable lead when the Election Tribunal called a halt to the counting, claiming a computer glitch. When the counting resumed, the lead slowly disappeared and JOH was declared re-elected (itself a vio-

lation of the Honduran constitution).

The reaction of the Honduran working class was a massive show of force repudiating the election result. In many of the poorer barrios, and especially in the northern part of the country, the uprising took on a semi-insurrectional character.

Barricades were erected and the National Police were chased from the neighborhoods. In several cases, los Tigres, a special anti-insurrectional police unit formed for that specific purpose, refused to repress the mass movement and publicly declared its neutrality, saying it was a political, not a police problem.

However, since the ebb of this wave of protest, largely due to the tailing position of much of the left to the electoralist orientation of the bourgeois leadership of the Popular Front known as LIBRE, the government has increased its repression, taking the form of assassination of social movement leaders, particularly indigenous and trade-union activists, beatings, threats and jailing of suspected neighborhood militants, and the firing of those with steady employment.

This government is being advised by Alvaro Uribe, the death-squad former president of Colombia.

### Trump and the politics of immigration

As across Europe, immigration has become a rallying point for the right and the neo-Nazis in the United States. Trump, who now declares he is a nationalist—not unlike Viktor Orban, Marie Le Pen, and Nigel Farage—tried to pump up his political base with a series of rallies prior to the mid-term U.S. elections on Nov. 6.

Trump's political repertoire portrays immigrants with the most vile, racist, and xenophobic images: Mexicans are rapists and criminals; Central Americans are all members of MS 13, the Mara Salvatruchas, heavily tattooed young gang members active in El Salvador and Honduras.

Ironically, the name derives from a Salvadoran general whose exploits in 1858, as part of the United Army of

Central America, helped in the defeat of William Walker and the Filibusters, a U.S. mercenary force that tried to conquer Central America.

According to Trump and the Republicans, members of the caravans are being funded by billionaire Democratic Party contributor George Soros and criminals, many from the Middle East. For Trump and his ilk, no epithet is too demeaning or too filthy. Soros, of course, is the primary initiator behind the university in Hungary that anti-Semite Viktor Orban is trying to close. This International of Scum knows no limits.

The Democrats, fearing anything that might upset their perceived best chances in the election, have remained mute in the face of this onslaught. They know that highlighting the plight of these poor people from Honduras will immediately raise the question of their complicity in creating the conditions causing this movement.

The racist, imperialist social culture of the United States is being used as a hammer against the poor working classes of its own "back yard." Faced with this situation, what should the left do?

The first response from the militant left should be to raise the demands "Open the Borders" and "No One is Illegal." These slogans cut across the entire ideological construct of "U.S. exceptionalism"—a constant smoke-screen for the activities of North American imperialism.

The second is to find ways of mobilizing the populations of the border states of California, Texas, and Arizona. This area of the United States is heavily Latino. In fact, the majority of working-class Californians have Latino roots. (The GDP of California is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest in the world, which underlines its importance).

Already, efforts are being made to organize actions to raise the need for cross-border solidarity in places like Los Angeles. How wonderful it would be if the North American left united in common actions to help mobilize those with the power to open the borders to desperate Mexican and Central American workers.

An injury to one is an injury to all!  
Open the border! Tear down the walls! ■

By GARY PORTER

## Massive gas pipeline approved — BC NDP sells out to LNG Canada

A massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) export project in Canada received final approval by LNG Canada and its partners on Oct. 2, making it the first major new project for the fuel to win approval in recent years.

TransCanada (pipeline) Corporation also announced that it will proceed with construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline project after the decision to go ahead by LNG Canada. The \$6.2 billion project is a 670-kilometre (420 mile) pipeline that would transport natural gas from the Montney gas-producing region near Dawson Creek, B.C., to the LNG Canada facility in Kitimat on British Columbia's Pacific coast. First gas from the project is expected by 2024. The complex course through rocky islands out to sea was a factor in the cancellation of a planned oil pipeline to Kitimat, with delivery to awaiting huge oil tankers.

The total project is estimated to cost \$40 billion. Stakeholders in the project are Shell, Malaysia's Petrolia Nasional Bhd (Petronas), PetroChina Co Ltd, Korea Gas Corp (KOGAS), and Japan's Mitsubishi Corp.

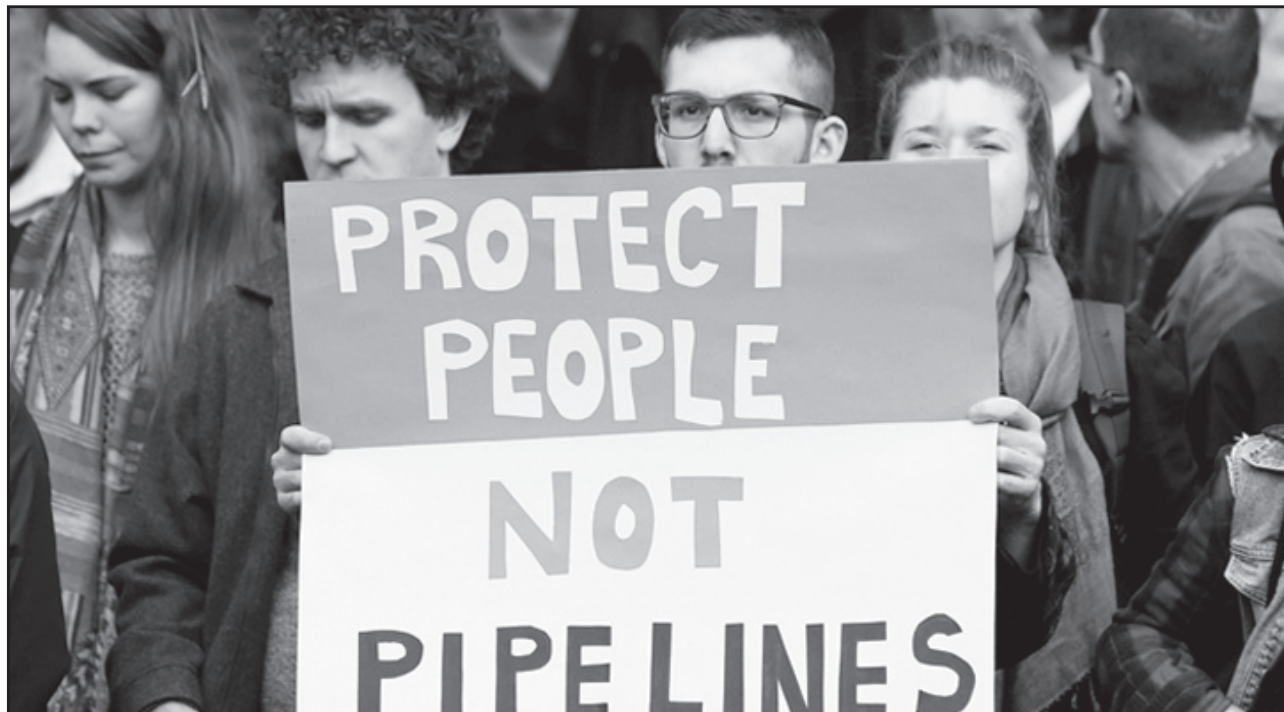
The BC premier, John Horgan of the labour-based New Democratic Party (NDP) government, enthused about this new massive commitment to a hydrocarbon future. "We welcome the unprecedented commitment shown by the LNG Canada partners to work within our province's ambitious climate goals," he said. "The critical importance of this project is what it represents—the intersecting of economic development, jobs for local workers, partnerships with Indigenous communities, and forward-looking climate leadership."

Provincial Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver called the announcement a "profound disappointment." Countering Horgan's list of "advantages" to Canadians on a point by point basis, Weaver said, "Adding such a massive new source of GHGs (greenhouse gases) means that the rest of our economy will have to make even more sacrifices to meet our climate targets. A significant portion of the LNG Canada investment will be spent on a plant manufactured overseas, with steel sourced from other countries."

"B.C. taxpayers will subsidize its power by paying rates twice as high and taking on the enormous public debt required to build Site C. (The massive power dam on the Peace River approved by Horgan last December will serve the LNG development, which is a big user of electrical power.) There may be as little as 100 permanent jobs at LNG Canada."

"I believe we can create far more jobs in other industries that won't drastically increase our emissions," added Weaver. Still, Weaver's Green Party does not challenge capitalism. Weaver wants to manage capitalism better, not get rid of the system that puts profits before survival. He does not advocate nationalizing and rapidly phasing out hydrocarbons, as the NDP Socialist Caucus does. Nor does he advocate a publicly owned massive green energy system, which could create tens of thousands of jobs and dramatically cut GHGs in short order.

Horgan's enthusiasm for the massive LNG project matches NDP Premier Rachel Notley's shrill advocacy of tar sands and pipelines in Alberta. Both demon-



strate that the NDP leadership is more deeply committed to the profits of the oil barons than to the environment on which we depend for life.

There is no word yet from Jagmeet Singh, federal NDP leader currently running in Burnaby South for a seat in parliament. The electoral district is a centre of Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion opposition. Singh may find himself in a very uncomfortable position. His inept leadership over his first year in office does not portend a nimble response from him.

In its own statement, Mitsubishi said the total estimated development cost of the planned Kitimat LNG plant is about US \$14 billion. The cost of the liquefaction plant and a 670-kilometre pipeline to connect gas to the plant will exceed 2 trillion yen (US \$17.6 billion), a company official said. The project will create a lot of jobs in Japan, apparently.

The construction decision also comes amid a Sino-U.S. trade spat that has led to tariffs being imposed by China on LNG shipments from the United States, threatening U.S. President Donald Trump's energy dominance plan. This project could bypass the Chinese tariffs.

Premier John Horgan says his government is mulling ways to implement all of the tax giveaways and relief for the LNG Canada project without a vote in the legislature, a scenario that would avoid a showdown with the NDP's power-sharing partner, the B.C. Green Party.

In March, Horgan's government promised LNG Canada about \$5.3 billion in tax breaks. This leaves BC workers and the poor to carry the tax load while global capitalist corporations pay little or no tax. As expected, Wilkinson's right-wing Liberals issued a statement saying they have supported LNG from the outset and are looking forward to backing any legislation concerning the Kitimat project.

Unnamed government officials said B.C.'s proposed climate plan will be designed to meet legislated targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent by 2030, 60 per cent by 2040 and 80 per cent (or 13 mega tonnes) by 2050. Much of the reduction, they claim, will be achieved by B.C. moving towards electrification, primarily in the transportation and industrial sectors. The officials said the plan will offer industry rebates on carbon tax payments if they meet global clean-energy targets.

But B.C. government staff are working based on LNG Canada's claim that the project is forecast to emit 3.45 megatons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. By contrast, a *Maclean's* magazine editorial stated that LNG Canada represents roughly 10 million tonnes of CO2-equivalent per year. This is one quarter of B.C.'s entire greenhouse-gas budget for 2030, or two-thirds of B.C.'s 2050 target.

In other words, to meet B.C.'s emissions targets and serve LNG Canada, the rest of the province will need largely to decarbonize. So, the LNG development seems inconsistent with Canada's commitment to climate action. How will a government that caves in to the hydro-carbon giants, have the guts to force through such a massive change?

Like virtually all GHG reduction targets set under capitalism, they come a distant second to the priorities of profit and accumulation of vast wealth by the capitalist class. Horgan in BC, the NDP government under Rachel Notley in Alberta, and Liberal Justin Trudeau in Ottawa will strive to ensure that this continues.

Along with the massive Site C power dam decision, this LNG betrayal makes clear that the struggle to defend Indigenous rights and the environment is not centred in Parliament. It should be powered by united mass action in the streets. ■

## New record for homeless NYC students

By MARTY GOODMAN

In 2013, Democratic Party mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio campaigned on a "A Tale of Two Cities," taken from the title of the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel by Charles Dickens. In 2018, the progressive mayor—who considers himself a "democratic socialist"—oversees much of the misery invoked by the novel.

How's he doing? Fully 10% of all New York City grade school students are homeless during all or part of their school year, according to an Oct. 16, 2018, article in *The New York Times* entitled, "Number of Homeless Students: 114,659. And It's a City Record."

Some astonishing realities in the article:

- "There are more homeless students in New York City than people in Albany [the state capital]."

- "The number of students in temporary housing has ballooned to 114,659 students as of last spring, from 69,244 children in 2010."

- "In the 2015-16 school year, just 12% of students living in shelters passed the state math exam and 15% passed English."

- "At PS 446 in Brownsville, Brooklyn, more than a quarter of the students are homeless."

- "Kingsbridge International High School [in the Bronx] ... about 44% of students who attended the school over the last four years were homeless at one point."

- "Last year, students living in shelter[s] missed an average of about 30 days in the school year."

- "For every 1,660 homeless students, there's only one social worker."

There's a double irony here. The "pro-

gressive" Democratic mayor has succeeded, with the help of a Democratic City Council, in imposing five "re-zoning" housing schemes. As *Socialist Action* noted in a September article, "NY's 'Progressive' Dems attack housing rights," "Rezoning is always presented as a way to 'help' distressed communities, not funding services, or clamping down on greedy landlords."

In their 2016 book, "Zoned Out!" by Tom Angotti and Sylvia Morse, the authors wrote, "Mayor de Blasio's approach to planning and housing follows the long tradition of government acquiescence to the carving up of the city into separate for rich and poor ... for black, white, and brown people."

New York City has the greatest income inequality of all U.S. metropolitan areas. In addition, Blacks and whites still mostly live separately, more than 50

years after the Fair Housing Act prohibited discrimination.

The New York City student homeless statistics reveal the utter failure of attaching the word "socialist" to representatives of a party that has a different, in fact *opposite*, interests than those of working people. The Democratic Party is a capitalist party, just like the Republican Party. Expect nothing better from either one.

The housing nightmare rages throughout the United States. There are only 35 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 extremely low-income families. Nationally, nearly half of renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. In 1960, only about a quarter of renters spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Today, nearly 554,000 Americans are homeless on any given night. "It's not a housing crisis. It's a housing catastrophe," said Larry Gross of the Coalition for Economic Survival (*The Nation*, June 2018). ■

# Trump administration attacks trans rights



By AUTUMN RAIN and ERWIN FREED

*The New York Times* reported on Oct. 21 that the Trump administration is “considering narrowly defining gender as a biological, immutable condition determined by genitalia at birth, the most drastic move yet in a government effort to roll back recognition and protections of transgender people under federal civil rights law.” This announcement is one in a long line of attempts to take away trans, non-binary, and intersex people’s democratic rights.

The Trump administration has already sought to ban transgender individuals from the military, the country’s largest employer and often the sole option for the poorest workers. It has also rescinded the Obama-era guidelines on transgender access to school restrooms and homeless shelters, and has imposed new policies for the Bureau of Prisons to make “biological sex” the initial determinant in placement in prisons.

The administration has removed mention of “gender” from the Department of Health and Human Services guidelines on sex discrimination, signaling that it would be disinclined to take or investigate complaints against insurance companies, providers, or other federal health programs. It has also lobbied the UN to remove “gender” from human rights documentation.

Imposing rigid definitions of people’s gender is a worldwide phenomenon affecting trans, non-binary, and intersex people across the globe. In the UK the current Gender Recognition Act (GRA) forces trans people to go through a difficult process that makes their gender a question of medical inquiry. Similar rules pathologize being transgender in the U.S., and the Social Security Administration requires documentation from a doctor to change a person’s gender marker. It is dehumanizing to have to get permission from the government to be who you are.

Proposed changes to the GRA would drop the requirement of legal gender change being decided by a state-appointed case-board and instead implement a system of self-identification. Debate around the GRA has opened a Pandora’s box of attacks on trans people, especially trans women, within the feminist movement.

The repercussions of a new and more rigid official government definition of gender could be far-ranging. It could lead to even more intense struggles over access to bathrooms, appropriate health care, and legal protections at work. Furthermore, the administration’s sanctioning of anti-transgender bigotry will lead to a wider acceptance of discrimination and abuse far beyond the reading of the law.

Unsurprisingly, the members of the working class who do not fit neatly into ideal and abstract gender categories face a great deal of difficulties. Workplace

## ***The Trump administration’s sanctioning of bigotry against transgender people will lead to wider acceptance of discrimination far beyond the reading of the law.***

discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation is not explicitly prohibited in U.S. federal law or in most states, and trans people report their facing discrimination in massive numbers.

Transgender people are more likely to face employment discrimination, poverty, housing discrimination, homelessness, and police violence, and are disproportionately victims of homicide—especially trans women of color. And trans people are, rather astonishingly, 25 times more likely to have attempted suicide.

### **So-called science**

The definition proposed by the Trump administration is arbitrary and unscientific, but reflects an ideologically constructed notion of strict categories in nature that reactionaries uphold. The notion of the gender binary, and the enforcement of gender roles, has been a feature of capitalist development. Though many people are born with sex characteristics that do not fit into rigid categories, the practice of surgically modifying intersex children at birth has been used to force the false notion of binary gender upon human bodies.

The idea that biological sex is an immutable category based upon genitals totally erases this practice of non-consensual modifications of bodies, as well as the very real experience of people who develop intersex characteristics during puberty.

A popular “common sense” notion is that genetics are rigidly sex-specific. Men and women are said to only have XY and XX chromosomes respectively. Over the last couple of years the renowned journal *Nature* has published many articles that put to bed the idea that human bodies exist as either purely male or female at any level.

Not only do people come in all different shapes, sizes, and anatomical make-ups but so do their genes! A person who was assigned female at birth, identifies as a woman, and easily is seen as one may have XY chromosomes in her bladder, or even internal testes. Yet the Trump administration’s new definition would, ridiculously, require genetic testing as the ul-

timate determiner in disputes!

### **Political economy of trans identity**

What is the basis for trans discrimination? Is it based on the ill will of individuals, or does it have a deeper relationship to capitalism’s profit making core?

The enforcement, and reproduction, of gender roles is quite useful to the profit-system. The abstractions of “man” and “woman” are helpful in establishing the subordinate role of one to the other, just as white supremacist racism is useful in establishing the subordinate role of a group of workers of color.

Capitalism relies upon “surplus” populations: a portion of the workers who are unemployed or precariously employed. The exploitation of the working class demands a section of the class that cannot find paid work easily, and can be moved in and out of employment quickly.

Thus the threat of replacement workers helps to keep the cost of employed workers’ wages down, and the presence of a reserve army of labor helps to facilitate the many overturns of workers into and out of employment demanded by a system constantly revolutionizing the means of production. In the U.S., the temporary demand for workers of color and for women workers in World War II stands as a prime example.

Trans people are forced into this reserve army of labor disproportionately and almost as a matter of definition. From discrimination in housing and on the job, frequent loss of family support, and struggles over safe, adequate, and gender-appropriate health care, trans people are forced to endure struggles that render stability nearly impossible. Long-term poverty and joblessness are extremely likely.

Attacks on the reserve army of labor, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, are attacks on the working class as a whole. They include austerity measures like cutting welfare and social spending. Taking rights and services from trans, non-binary, and intersex people reduces the welfare of all working people, and increases the power and prosperity of the bosses and their class.

There is much to be said about the consumptive behaviors demanded by gender roles. Prime examples are the “pink tax,” in which products marketed to women (razors, deodorants, etc.) are more expensive, enforced by social pressure to buy arbitrarily gendered commodities. This is an aspect of capitalism that is, ultimately, secondary to women’s and trans oppression as a whole, and is in the last analysis a product of competition between capitalists. Still, the fact of separate markets for men and women re-enforces social segregation based in the home and the workplace.

Women, trans and cis, are burdened not only with smaller salaries and more precarious labor, but also larger expenses, e.g., make-up, artificially high commodity prices for gender specific products, and for trans women special products to make “passing” as female easier.

The gender roles that the family demands continue to reemerge with every crisis and every new austerity measure that pushes the costs of social reproduction onto the backs of workers themselves. The caricatures of “deadbeat dads” and “welfare queens” are invoked to reinforce the notion that the ruling class has no responsibility to provide care to the people whom it exploits for all its wealth.

Similar is the image of the trans woman who is “really” a man who wants free things from the government. There was much rhetoric around this when Trump originally proposed cutting funding for trans specific health care in the military.

### **Democrats: Road to nowhere for trans rights**

In 2006-2007, the Democrats faced a crisis of legitimacy. They had campaigned hard as the “sane” and “progressive” response to the “embarrassing” George W. Bush administration. After co-opting social move-

(continued on page 7)

# New Haven rally: 'Trans people won't be erased'

By ROZWELL SIMMONS

In a leaked memo published by *The New York Times* on Oct. 21, the Trump administration called for federal agencies to “define sex as male or female, unchangeable, and determined by the genitals that a person is born with.” Alarmed by this persecuting and transphobic policy, members of the LGBTQI community across the country have started to take action, uniting behind the hashtag and rallying cry, “We won’t be erased.”

On Oct. 27, over 200 people came together in New Haven, Conn., to rally for trans rights. Originally planned to take place outside, the demonstration was moved into the United Church on the Green’s parish house due to rain. The event was co-sponsored by a total of 36 organizations and activist groups, including the Party for Socialism and Liberation CT, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, True Colors, Trans Lifeline, Triangle Community Center. Much of the event was a “speakout” during which organizations gave speeches.

A University of Connecticut Youth for Socialist Action member spoke on behalf of Socialist Action Connecticut as follows:

“In another reactionary swing at our very livelihoods, Trump and his administration are making moves to systematically marginalize us. Without any policy even yet being into place, for example, Trump’s memo erases intersex folks. It is important to recognize why they are doing this; it’s not as simple as bigotry, although I must say, that doesn’t really help matters.

“We are being suppressed not because the ruling class sees us as some weak group that may be snuffed out in one fell swoop, but because they know we are strong and they feel threatened. They saw the three million people in the street after Trump was elected and realized what’s going on. People are on the move. Against Kavanaugh, against deportations, against police brutality—working people have been mobilizing. The whole ruling class sees all of this, and they also see what is happening in Argentina, where socialist feminists in Pan y Rosas are regularly organizing hundreds of thousands in mass demonstrations against sexual assault and discrimination, and where there is an open call with broad support to build an independent party of workers to fight against austerity.

“The ruling class knows that there isn’t really anything stopping workers here in the U.S. from following heroic examples of working and oppressed people all over the world. They are terrified. Good! May the administration and the ruling class quake in their boots! We’re a force to be reckoned with, and they’re acting now because they know they’re losing ground.

“Members of the ruling class seek to silence our



(Above) IV Staklo, organizer of a transgender rally in New Haven, Conn., speaks on March 31, 2018.

identities because they know that we are empowered by the recognition and affirmation of these identities. They want to strip us of our power and enforce the binary straitjacket in order to divide, weaken, and more easily oppress us. Without a binary to polarize us, we are unspcakably strong.

“Just 300 years ago, neither sex nor gender were understood anywhere in the world as binaries. There was no ‘scientific’ consensus that people born with certain genitalia or hormones fit the hard and fast categorizations of “male” and “female”, and that no one could have or be both or neither. Nowhere in the world. So where did the binary come from? It came with the whistle of the factory shift clock. It came with the laws and violence that forced peasants into industrial production. The binary came with the slave ships and the genocide of millions of indigenous people and with the force of two world wars.

“Many transphobes hide under the excuse of the preservation of our language. ‘Look gender up in a dictionary,’ they say, or, ‘transgender is a made-up word.’ Well, so are the words ‘male’ and ‘female.’ Our oppressors have fooled themselves into thinking that if we cannot label ourselves, we cannot manifest. That simply isn’t true. The ruling class wants exclusive ownership of labels because they want exclusive

ownership of people. The gender binary secures the ruling class’s control over the bodies of those they oppress—we’ve seen it time and time again, for example with the struggle for access to birth control and safe abortions.

“Trans people are also being oppressed because we are not profitable. We present a problem to the nuclear family model that so efficiently produces and indoctrinates new workers for the labor force. Purely economically, we are not a good investment for the ruling class; we take advantage of existing resources only for the sake of our own freedom, not for the sake of fulfilling an agenda or playing into a systemic complacency.

“It is inefficient for the ruling class to exploit us because without strict categorization we are not easily commoditized. Our fundamental connection is the rejection of the established structure, a structure that serves only to benefit the ruling class and oppress all others. It’s a shame that such a large portion of our population has succumbed to the acceptance of such a structure. But we have the power to break this cycle. We won’t be erased! ■

## ... Trans rights

(continued from page 6)

ments through the threat of what another term with a Republican majority would mean and the promise of a Blue Wave, the Democrats won a majority in the House and the Senate. Even with this majority and literally decades of promising to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would make discrimination on sexual orientation and gender identity illegal, the Democrats never were seriously going to fight for LGBTQIA rights. Instead, the Obama administration merely offered new trans-friendly guidelines for federal agencies that were just as easily revoked as they were introduced.

The liberal wing of capitalism and their party, the Democrats offer policies that are a dead-end for all but the most wealthy or upwardly mobile queer people (an exceedingly small minority within a minority). The Democrats, who are openly a party of landlords and real estate agents, will never give trans people the right to cheap or free quality public housing. One of the main issues plaguing the community will therefore go unaddressed and reproduce housing discrimination and homelessness that keep trans people as the most vulnerable human material to be ground through the teeth of capital.

Material issues plaguing those groups who are considered “surplus populations”—free gender appropriate health care, employment benefits like a shorter workweek and more time off, funding for ed-

ucation, accessible housing, etc.—are forever on the chopping block through the austerity politics of both ruling parties. Only the construction of independent mass movements and of an independent mass party of workers can address the fundamental issues faced by queer people.

Trans people are a small but substantial section of the working class, and their interests intersect with many other hyper-exploited groups. Fights over bathroom access and ease of changing gender markers are crucial. They are in line along with fights over rights to appropriate health care, housing, employment, and for protections from police as material issues that would threaten the security of capitalist profits, and are therefore off the table for the Democratic Party.

### Building the struggle

We have no faith in the twin parties of capitalism to support the liberation of transgender people. Instead, we see trans liberation as an inseparable and fundamental part of class struggle. It is necessary to build mass mobilizations in the street to fight for, and win, demands for trans rights. And that will entail forging bonds of solidarity with other sections of the working class, building united fronts capable of challenging the political domination of capital.

Capitalism is a system of social relations, not personalities. We do not seek to appeal to the moral hearts of the ruling class; we seek to overthrow the class system itself. Revolution is the only way to eliminate the existing systems of domination, like patriarchy and cissexism, and to prevent their reemergence.

In place of a society directed toward profit-making for the few, we want to create a system consciously organized for the fulfillment of human needs and desires, predicated on bonds of solidarity.

The movement for women’s liberation, trans and cis, is growing. During and after the hearings for Kavanaugh’s appointment to the Supreme Court, there were demonstrations in hundreds of cities that included hundreds of thousands of people. In New York City, Grand Central Station was occupied by thousands in a sit-in organized by a coalition of socialist and feminist groups.

Following these most recent maneuvers by the Trump administration, dozens of unions have reaffirmed their commitment to protecting the rights of trans workers in and out of their bargaining units. In Argentina, factory workers have gone on strike against discrimination towards their trans co-workers.

Fighting for trans liberation means fighting for the rights and power of working people. The struggle is over who decides the priorities and social provisioning in our societies. Socialists must participate in the existing mass mobilizations for women’s rights, trans rights, and the rights of all oppressed groups and work to bring them together on a class-struggle basis.

In our unions the role of a revolutionary is to be the tribune of the people, to take that basic organization of class power and use it as an apparatus to fight for democratic and political rights in all spheres. This is the way forward towards working-class power and social revolution. ■

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

## The bosses' trade deals hurt working people

By BARRY WEISLEDER

On Oct. 2 negotiators reached a new continental trade deal. It's called the USMCA. Despite a familiar cadence, it's not a cover version of the song by the Village People. It's NAFTA 2.0. Should we be grateful that it's not worse than it is?

First, the good news. Chapter 11 between Canada and the U.S.A. is gone. The investor-state dispute settlement provisions that were in the North America Free Trade Agreement allowed U.S. corporations to sue Canada for billions over policies and laws that infringed on corporate profits. Energy proportionality is also gone. It required Canada to send a set percentage of its energy resources to the U.S., even in times of shortages.

In addition to the elimination of these two harmful provisions, the cultural exemption clause from NAFTA 1.0 is retained, which allows for promotion of local (Canadian) artists in the mass media. And there are signs of improved labour standards too, including increased wages and collective bargaining freedoms for Mexican workers. Forty per cent of autos and auto parts must be made in factories where workers earn at least \$16 US/hour. But don't think for a moment that Washington is trying to help Mexican workers. It is merely making it more expensive for the auto giants to produce south of the Rio Grande.

Now, here is the bad news. Farmers will pay a heavy price as NAFTA 2 opens Canada's market to more U.S. dairy products, including products that contain bovine growth hormone (BGH), a genetically modified hormone that is injected in cows to make them produce more milk. BGH has been banned in Canada due to its link to serious health concerns. *If the deal is ratified*, there will be increased deregulation and harmonization of rules to accelerate approvals for massive pipelines to be built.

Patents on pharmaceuticals, like biologic drugs, have also been extended to 10 years. That means it will take longer for generic drugs to get to the market. This will keep drug prices higher—and often unaffordable—for longer, and could have an impact on any attempt to implement a national pharma care plan in Canada.

What is also clear is that the United States-Mexico-

Canada Agreement (USMCA) is still based on a trade model that puts corporate interests over people and the environment.

This new NAFTA deal doesn't address climate change. It still leaves fresh water vulnerable to corporate interests that want to buy and sell it. It does not, despite promises by Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, include provisions on gender equality or Indigenous rights.

In many ways, NAFTA 2 is cut from the same cloth

as the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Ottawa also agreed to let Washington and Mexico vet any future trade deal with a "non-market economy." That means Canada could get kicked out for trading with China. *Toronto Star* columnist Tom Walkom calls the USMCA "a fraud" because it doesn't guarantee the key benefit it promises: free trade access to the huge U.S. market. It's not free trade.

If there's one positive takeaway, it's that activists have shown it's possible to change things that were once thought unchangeable in trade agreements. But have no illusions. When bosses negotiate across borders, the losers every time, to one degree or another, are workers on all sides.

The high tariffs on steel and aluminum imposed by Donald Trump remain in place. Trump cited "national security" as the reason. This can be the excuse for imposing high tariffs on anything in the future. If there were revolutionary socialists in Parliament or Congress, they would vote against this deal, like its rotten predecessors, and fight for a Workers' Agenda.

We demand: No barriers against the free movement of workers. Nationalize the energy giants, the big banks, the telecoms, all the major means of production, distribution and exchange, under workers' and community control. Make the polluters clean up their mess. Money for good jobs, not for war and plunder of the environment. ■

## Toronto elections: Round One goes to Doug Ford

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Voter turnout in the Toronto municipal election on Oct. 22 was an abysmal 41 per cent, nearly 20 per cent lower than four years earlier. A big factor was gross interference, in campaign mid-stream, by the Conservative Doug Ford Ontario government. It reduced the number of seats on Toronto City Council from 47 to 25. Many voters, confused by changed ward boundaries, and not knowing who were the local candidates, simply stayed away from the polls.

An equally important factor was the political disarray and lack of inspiration. There was no organized working-class alternative to the candidates backed by the big landlords, property developers, and the banks. The labour-based New Democratic Party did not field a slate. Toronto Labour Council and the fake-left Progress Toronto outfit backed an array of so-called progressives—a motley crew of "independent" Liberals and NDPers, headed by the Liberal Jennifer Keesmat who ran for mayor. Not a socialist among them.

Keesmat, former city chief planner, was trounced by incumbent mayor, big business-backed John Tory, who is now surrounded by a pro-cutbacks, anti-labour city council. His former arch-foe Doug Ford facilitated this outcome by legislating larger wards and the over-representation of conservative-voting suburbs.

*Score Round One for Thug Ford.* He bullied his

way forward, stood up to court challenges, and saw through the feeble complaints of the union brass and Liberal elites. Ford set up Toronto for the next big wave of cutbacks and privatizations. Toronto's subway may be the first asset on the auction block. The sale of individual social housing units, a Keesmat idea that Mayor-elect John Tory admires, could follow.

Disgustingly, white supremacist Faith Goldy came third in the mayoralty race, tallying 3.4 per cent. One of the few bright spots was the fourth-place finish of Seron Gebresellassi, a leftist lawyer of Eritrean heritage who scored 2 per cent. Her call for Free Public Transit redefined the debate.

Socialist Action candidate in Ward 1, tenants' organizer Peter D'Gama, received a small vote. But the SA platform circulated widely and showed what a socialist vision of the future looks like. Now is the time to take stock of the failure of liberal reform, class collaboration politics and chart a course for a Workers' Agenda. The fight for a Labour City Hall should be headed by a re-purposed Toronto NDP. Or it should be the creation of a coalition of socialist parties and social justice movements.

The left needs to get ready to take on John Tory and big business control of city hall in 2022—because conditions of growing inequality, homelessness, pollution, transit grid lock, cop violence and urban decay are sure to get worse. ■

## Toronto Pride (Inc.) capitulates to the cops, betrays BLM

BY JOHN WILSON

Toronto Pride has done it again. On Oct. 16 it held a news conference to announce that uniformed police will again march in the Pride parade. The decision was made solely by its Board, not presented to Pride's membership for either discussion or vote. The news conference was a joint project with cop top boss Mark Saunders and Mayor John Tory.

In a video of the event published by *Xtra*, Pride Executive Director Olivia Nuamah consistently evaded detailed questions. She insisted that the decision was based on "community consultations" without ever specifying who comprised this "community" that was allegedly consulted.

Since it didn't even include Pride's own membership, we may well wonder! Nuamah referred more than once to Pride's "partnership" with the police.

Obviously, great pressure from the police, the mayor and Ontario Premier Thug Ford was brought to bear. But the rightward direction of the Pride leadership has been evident for years, as it continues to distance itself from the "commu-



nity" it supposedly represents. In 2016, when Black Lives Matter temporarily halted the march to protest the massive police presence in it and to highlight other serious issues, one of the major concerns was the intimidating nature of the police presence, particularly to mar-

ginalized sectors in the LGBT population in the parade.

This important issue has been shoved aside in the interest of "partnership" with the mechanism of state repression, and, presumably, funding. (To quote an old Bob Dylan song: "money doesn't talk,

(Left) Toronto Police Chief Saunders at Pride parade in 2016. The cops were banned last year, but now they're back.

it screams.")

This outrageous betrayal completely ignores the role of the police as the praetorian guard of power and privilege and as an oppressor of queer people, racialized minorities, sex workers and the homeless. (It also undercuts other Pride organizations that have removed the police from their parades.) As James Dubro, a long-time gay activist points out, the announcement of this change was made without notice, and predicts that "they're setting it up for major confrontation."

And he's right. Opposition is already growing and it will be massive.

Apparently, Toronto Pride honchos are completely oblivious to the growing resistance to the right-wing Doug Ford-led Ontario government, resistance which will dovetail with opposition to their abjectly opportunist move. As the slogan heading up a petition started by queer activist and Queer Ontario steering committee member Brian de Matos declares, "Liberation, Not Assimilation." ■



# Quebec: CAQ takes power, QS on the rise

By ROBBIE MAHOOD

For the past 45 years, governmental power in Quebec has alternated between the federalist Parti Liberal du Québec (PLQ) and the sovereigntist Parti Quebec (PQ). That political era has ended.

Both these parties were punished by the electorate. The Liberals fell to less than 25% of the vote, the lowest in its history. The PQ paid a high price for its support of neoliberal austerity and the parallel weakening of its commitment to independence. It could manage only 17% of the vote and went from 30 to 10 seats.

The Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) takes up the reins of power with 74 of the 125 seats. It is a right of centre party deploying a xenophobic identitarian nationalism to conceal more austerity, privatization, and fossil-fuel friendly policies.

The CAQ is a motley crew of disaffected former Liberals and PQistes under the leadership of Francois Legault, an ex-PQ minister and one-time airline CEO. During the campaign, Legault threatened to raise barriers to immigration and ban the wearing of the hijab in the civil service and schools. The CAQ opposes independence but will pose as the best defender of Quebec "interests" in negotiations with Ottawa and the other provinces.

Quebec's small left party, Quebec Solidaire (QS), emerged as the other winner in this election. It more than doubled its popular vote to 16% and went from three to 10 deputies in the National Assembly, level with the PQ.

Among the plethora of minor parties, the Greens fared best with 1.68% of the vote, followed by the Conservatives with 1.46 %, and trailing badly, the newly launched provincial Quebec New Democratic Party (NDP) at 0.57 %. The NDP's attempt to split the left vote failed miserably and deservedly so.

As elsewhere throughout the advanced and not so advanced capitalist world, Quebec is experiencing a populist moment. There is the same disenchantment with what Tariq Ali calls the parties of "the extreme centre"—in the case of Quebec, the Liberals and PQ—and a polarization along right-left lines even if expressed in populist rather than clearly class terms.

Although more restrained, the CAQ bears comparison with the right-wing xenophobic parties in Europe and with Doug Ford's reactionary Tory regime next door in Ontario. It is noteworthy that Legault received a welcome tweet from Marie Le Pen, leader of France's Front National, on the morrow of the CAQ victory.

QS provided a left response to the CAQ. After years of stifling neoliberal consensus, its high visibility campaign came as a breath of fresh air. It emphasized the diversity of its candidates and an anti-austerity program that highlighted universal dental insurance, free education from daycare through university, a transition to free public transit, opposition to fossil-fuel extraction, and rehabilitating the vision of an independent Quebec that would be inclusive, egalitarian, and open to a new pact with the province's indigenous peoples.

QS's decision to spurn an electoral pact with the PQ, last year's fusion with the small nationalist PQ breakaway, Option Nationale, and the linking of independence with social reform struck a chord among politically more aware youth and sections of the francophone working class. It is now poised to displace the PQ, even to the extent of duplicating the latter's early electoral success, starting in Montreal and then extending to the regions.

It seems unlikely the PQ can revive its fortunes. Not so the Liberals. They can recover as long as they monopolize the federalist vote.

What are the prospects for a new alternance between the CAQ and the Liberals? This depends on whether there is room for two parties, both of them neoliberal and federalist. Many voted for the CAQ as a way of defeating the Liberals. But there is no denying the CAQ's appeal to xenophobia. It will use nationalist and racist demagoguery to divert attention from its mission to serve the needs of Quebec capitalists allied with Anglo-Canadian and transnational capital within the confines of the federal Canadian state.

Yet the CAQ has a weak mandate. It lacks the internal cohesion and reliable base of the outgoing Liberals. It is vulnerable to mass mobilization under vigorous and determined leadership. Will the unions and QS rise to this challenge?

The bureaucratic leadership of the unions is quite disoriented by this turn in Quebec politics. Its de facto alliance with the PQ is sinking. Yet it hesitates to support and intervene in QS. It has not mobilized the



(Above) Québec Solidaire leader Manon Massé.

ranks, even half-heartedly, for over two years.

An aggressive drive by the CAQ for more austerity and privatization may shake Quebec labour out of its lethargy. But indispensable is a new leadership in the unions that recognizes it will take mass struggle to win and that Quebec labour must take the road of political independence, an opportunity that was missed in the 1970s.

While QS is a left party, it is not a party of the working class. It is anti-austerity but lacking in clear class references. In part, this reflects the historic weakness of the Social Democratic and Stalinist traditions in Quebec. Of more concern is that QS has been silent on two current union struggles, that of the locked-out workers in the aluminum industry and the strike of employees in the province's liquor stores.

QS has much in common with other left populist formations such as Melanchon's La France Insoumise and Podemos in Spain. Although the contexts are different, Sanders in the U.S. and Corbyn in the UK also provide points of reference.

QS's populism was very evident in the campaign. When Manon Massé, the party's dynamic co-leader, was pressed by journalists to clarify if she was a Marxist, she was evasive, refusing to say that she was a socialist or even an anti-capitalist. According to her, QS was above all such "isms."

QS presents itself as a party of the Quebec nation in which class and national aspirations are fused. Consistent with left populism, QS replaces a perspective of socialist transformation and workers power with the idea of a people or nation against a corrupt elite.

The leadership of QS has set its sights on an eventual parliamentary majority. Its program is divided between limited measures for adoption in a first mandate, leaving more radical parts of the program for later implementation. This is reminiscent of the classic divide between minimum and maximum programs decreed by European social democracy prior to the First World War. In this way the parties of the Second International transformed themselves into aspiring managers of the capitalist state with at best a limited reform agenda and at worst support for repression at home and imperialist war abroad.

In contrast to social democracy's absorption by the capitalist system, what is needed is a party that agitates outside parliament for transitional demands that point the way to radical anti-capitalist measures undertaken by a workers' government.

Many socialist groups in Greece had their fingers burned by their support for the left party, SYRIZA, in 2014. We should be no less guarded in our approach to QS. As the party gets closer to winning a majority in the National Assembly, the pressure to adapt and retreat will be enormous.

Should socialists work within or from outside QS? Is QS on the way or in the way?

The Ligue pour l'Action socialiste (LAS) offered critical support to QS in this election. We urge the building of a socialist tendency that pushes the party to become an opposition not only in the National Assem-

bly but also in the streets, where it must work closely with the unions and allied social movements. Without an organized tendency, the efforts of individual socialists in QS will be dissipated.

Legault can be expected to pursue more cuts in health care, education, and social services, give a green light to fracking and additional suburban auto-routes, and introduce measures that further stigmatize immigrants. Will he follow through on his threat to invoke the not-withstanding clause in Canada's Constitution to ban the hijab in the public service, among teachers, or by anyone in a position of authority such as judges or doctors?

Solidarity with the weakest members of our class is a litmus test for socialists and the labour movement. Forcing a retreat by the CAQ on its anti-immigrant policies will stimulate resistance on other fronts, notably against austerity and degradation of the environment.

The election reveals a nation that is more divided than ever under the weight of decaying social conditions and the bankruptcy of the neoliberal order. A period of political uncertainty and contestation lies ahead. Class divisions are more clearly expressed than at any time in the past 50 years.

That is not to say that the national question has disappeared. Sentiment for independence is certainly at a low ebb, but the obituary sought by those favouring the federal tie is premature.

The PQ dragged the independence option through the mud of racism and neoliberal reaction. Besides marshalling sentiment against austerity, QS has quietly but perceptibly rescued independence as a means of realizing the social aspirations of the Quebecois. True, the content is vague. But a genuine struggle for independence will of necessity confront the need for a rupture with Anglo-North American capital and its junior partners in Quebec.

This election reveals popular discontent with the status quo and a rejection of the old political order. Quebec has a long tradition of popular struggle and the highest union density in North America. There is a potential for mass mobilization waiting to be tapped.

Heading into the next period our watchwords should be:

- Quebec Solidaire in the National Assembly but not of the National Assembly. The party's elected deputies should act as tribunes of the people accountable to the working class, social and climate justice movements.

- Win QS to a Workers' Agenda. Win the unions to QS. Quebec needs a fighting party of the working class and its allies.

- Block the CAQ, starting with its racist anti-immigrant agenda and clear the path for mass action against austerity, a halt to climate vandalism, for real climate amelioration, and in support of workers' and popular struggles. ■

# 'Proud Boys' assault NYC protesters



By MARTY GOODMAN

*"We will kill you. That's the Proud Boys in a nutshell."*  
— Gavin McInnes, Proud Boy founder  
*"The German resurrection is a male event."*  
— Engelbert Huber, Nazi author, 1933

Shortly after an Oct. 12 presentation by fascist "Proud Boy" founder Gavin McInnes at the Manhattan Republican Club, three anti-fascist protesters were assaulted by about 20 Proud Boys goons. Visible in a video provided by an independent videographer, the fascists set upon the departing antifa (anti-fascist) protesters around the corner from the Republican Club. Kicks and punches were clearly visible in the video to shouts of "faggots!"

Within moments, cops arrived as the melee unfolded in plain sight, yet no Proud Boy was arrested. The jubilant Proud Boy goons simply walked away unhindered by police. Cops arrested the three antifa victims—Finbarr Slonim, 20, Kai Russo, 20 and Caleb Perkins, 35—on charges of robbery and assault. Perkins faces an additional charge of resisting arrest. The Proud Boys claimed a protester stole the hat of one Proud Boy.

Cops taunted protesters by saying things like, "You should be lucky we're not letting them beat your asses," according to testimony at an Oct. 19 press conference organized by the People's Assembly. A statement was read to the media: "New Yorkers should not forget that the Strategic Response Group [a police unit present on Oct. 12] was created as a response to the Black Lives Matter movement. Since its creation in 2015, the SRG has been used to arrest and jail activists, spy on us, break our bones, bloody our mouths and hospitalize us. The Proud Boys were acting on what the NYPD shows them every day: that in our white supremacist system, poor people, people of color, migrants, women, and LGBTQ people are fair game. On Oct. 13, Gavin McInnes stated on his podcast that he has 'a lot of support in the NYPD.' We believe him."

Once again, capitalist police have shown themselves to be reliable allies, enablers, of racism and reaction! A week after videos of the attack were made available, public outrage eventually resulted in the arrest of nine Proud Boys. City Councilman Rory Lancman said, after viewing the video, "It is revolting to see white supremacists commit a hate crime on the streets of New York City—in full view of the NYPD—and for none of them to be arrested or prosecuted."

The day after the New York attack, on Oct. 13, Proud Boys joined with Patriot Prayer and other far-right groups in a "flash mob for law and order" in Portland, Ore., to counter a memorial gathering for police shooting victim Patrick Kimmons. Police said that people carried knives, hard-knuckle gloves, and firearms into the fight that followed. On Oct. 19 in Miami, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) was confronted by a protest organized by local Republicans, who shouted Trump slogans and yelled that Pelosi was a "Communist."

## Who are the Proud Boys?

Gavin McInnes, born in England, was a co-founder of the Canadian *Vice* magazine—the basis for a liberal TV cable program—but he parted ways with it in

(Above) A Proud Boy member confronts anti-fascist protesters in Berkeley, Calif., last year.

2008, and his politics moved rightward. He founded the Proud Boys in 2016. Today it claims chapters in several U.S. cities and in Israel, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK. McInnes tells recruits that they're not men until they've been beaten up and they've beaten up someone else.

McInnes parades the Proud Boys as a "fraternal" organization. Members are often recognized by their black and gold Polo shirts, and their pro-Trump red caps with the slogan, "Make America Great Again." McInnes officially disavows violence, along with racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and misogyny. A few "Proud Girls" are featured on their Facebook page, and there's even an occasional Black Proud Boy and a handful of gay followers.

Regardless of its claims, however, the Southern Poverty Law Center, an anti-racist, anti-Klan organization, labeled the Proud Boys as "a hate group" that is "known for anti-Muslim and misogynist rhetoric." McInnes has referred to transgender people as "gender niggers" and "stupid lunatics." He wrote, "through trial and error, I learned that women want to be down-right abused" by men, and said in a tweet that "every guy I've ever known to be involved in a 'domestic' was the result of some cunt trying to ruin his life."

## Muslim woman attacked by far right

One self-described Brown Muslim woman wrote of her encounter in New York City with far-right groups: "On June 10, 2017, I attended a counter-protest demonstrating against the 'March Against Shariah,' a nationwide anti-Muslim event organized by the SPLC-designated hate group 'ACT For America' [said to be linked to the Trump administration]. When the event ended at 2 pm, the counter protest marched to City Hall and dispersed...."

"On my way to the train station I encountered a group of 4 men wearing 'Make America Great Again' hats and 'Proud Boys' shirts, who then began harassing me because I was wearing a shirt with Arabic writing on it. One of the men singled me out and repeatedly yelled Islamophobic and misogynistic comments. He told me that my family and I should 'go back to our country.' He called me a 'terrorist' and said that a 'Muslim slut' like me should be killed, along with my family."

"Alone, surrounded, and fearing for my safety, I threw my iced coffee toward him and tried to get away. He became instantly enraged and lunged toward me. He grabbed me by the throat and pushed me up against the wall. He held me there in a choke-hold, but because I was struggling he slammed me to the ground and tried to put his whole body on top of mine."

"I kept fighting back so he slammed me again on my left side and pushed my face into the sidewalk, and then slammed me one more time before he put his knee on the back of my head while he kept trying to choke me. During all of this I remember telling him to stop and that he was choking me, but he said, 'I can still hear you breathing' and choked me even harder."

The writer said she identified a G. Young on Facebook. Young bragged of "bashing that terrorist breeder," and even gave the location where it happened, she

said. The attacker, she continued, "was motivated by bigotry against Muslims, immigrants, and Black and Brown people, along with his hatred of women. The Proud Boys as an organization encourage violence against left wing protestors, offering a 'fourth degree status' to their members if they commit acts of violence. After assaulting me, Geoff Young updated his Facebook bio to say 'Fourth Degree Proud Boy,' implying that he had somehow leveled up by assaulting me, a small Muslim woman."

In their disavowal of the iconography of 1930s-style fascism, the Proud Boys follow the strategy of European fascist organizations who have abandoned overt fascist symbols like the swastika—much like the latter day Ku Klux Klan, whose leader, David Duke, is a Proud Boy admirer.

Brien James, a former Proud Boy leader, stated that he refused to mingle with National Socialists, yet he marched alongside them at the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville. A video of the rally showed James behind a man yelling "Black lives don't matter" and "Hitler did nothing wrong." James, a racist skin-head organizer known for his extreme violence, was removed from Proud Boy ranks only after the widely condemned march, which resulted in the tragic murder of socialist Heather Meyer.

Here are some quotes from McInnes himself: In a June 2016 episode of the Gavin McInnes show, he said, "We will kill you. That's the Proud Boys in a nutshell. We will kill you. We look nice, we seem soft, we have boys in our name ... we will assassinate you." In 2017, he said in an interview that violence "is a really effective way to solve problems." Pawl Bazile pointed out that, as McInnes says, the Proud Boys are "Western chauvinists"—that is, in plain talk, supporters of racism and imperialism.

McInnes in a 2017 interview on NBC, said, "I'm not a fan of Islam. I think it's fair to call me Islamophobic." McInnes' "Rebel Media" video features include "Donald Trump's Muslim ban is exactly what we need right now" and "10 examples of the Koran being violent." He's hosted Pamela Geller, a prominent anti-Muslim bigot, on his newest show, "Get Off My Lawn."

McInnes says, "Fighting solves everything. We need more violence from the Trump people. Trump supporters: choke a motherfucker. Choke a bitch. Choke a tranny. Get your fingers around the windpipe."

At its core, Proud Boys despise changing gender roles and the fight for women's equality. McInnes said last June on his "Get Off My Lawn" show, when speaking of immigrant women, "It's such a rape culture with these immigrants, I don't even think these women see it as rape. They see it as just like having a teeth [sic] pulled. 'It's a Monday. I don't really enjoy it,' but that's what you do. I wouldn't be surprised if it doesn't have the same trauma as it would for a middle-class white girl in the suburbs because it's so entrenched into their culture."

There are three degrees of membership within the Proud Boys, and to become a first degree he has to declare "I am a western chauvinist, and I refuse to apologize for creating the modern world." The second degree requires a Proud Boy to endure a beating until he can yell out the names of five breakfast cereals and give up masturbation because, in theory, it will leave him more inclined to go out and meet women. Those who enter the third degree have demonstrated their commitment by getting a Proud Boys tattoo. The Proud Boys offer a "fourth degree status" to their members for acts of violence; left activists are a favorite target.

## Build a mass united front to defeat fascism!

Far right attacks have risen dramatically with the Trump presidency. In desperation, capitalism is launching trade wars, breeding grounds for racism and nationalism (World Wars I and II). Moreover, capitalism has not fully recovered from the 2008 economic meltdown. Right-wing movements are advancing in Europe and in Brazil, which recently elected Jair Bolsonaro, a death-squad-linked military thug and misogynist, as president. Working people, disgusted with corporate Democrats and even fake socialism, as in Brazil (the Workers Party), are seeking alternatives to the status quo. Some have turned to Trump, and many youth have turned to socialist ideas.

The U.S. right is testing the limits of terror against working people and all oppressed groups, fearing a possible rebellion. Fascism must be stopped in its tracks. Since both Republicans and Democrats represent the wealthy 1%, voting for Democrats is no solution to the Trump madness. Similarly, the cops and courts are part of this corrupt system that needs to be replaced.

Fascism seeks to terrorize working people and their organizations. Only working people, especially the millions organized in unions and doubly oppressed sectors, mobilized independently of the twin parties of capital, can hope to crush the fascist menace and drive them back into their rat holes. ■

# Does criticism of Israel equal anti-Semitism?

By STEVE XAVIER

The aftermath of the Tree of Life synagogue shooting has focused renewed attention on anti-Semitism. Claims that a shadowy group of sinister figures are behind world events—which appear in conspiracy theories about financier George Soros, the 9/11 tragedy, and elsewhere—have dangerous implications.

These conspiracy theories have deep roots on the far right, where concocted stories involving the Rothschild banking family and Soros (both Jewish) are commonplace. Marxists reject prejudice against Jewish people and oppose any attempt to target Jewish communities.

Recently, allegations from Trump and other GOP politicians that Soros, a major Democratic Party donor, is a sinister force behind the migrant caravan going through Mexico has brought anti-Semitism close to the mainstream. In his speeches, Trump has also spoken of the threat posed by “globalists,” a common code word on the far right for Jews. Trump has even attacked the ultra-conservative Koch brothers as “globalists.”

Rather than tackling the real sources of bigotry against Jews, the capitalist media have repeated claims that anti-Semitism is a problem on “both the right and left.” Democratic politicians like Senator and presidential hopeful Corey Booker have declared the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement to be “anti-Jewish.” On campuses, there are moves to marginalize pro-Palestinian activism with attacks on the free speech of BDS activists and Students for Justice in Palestine.

On Oct. 29, *The New York Times* wrote, “Activists on the left—sometimes including young Jews—call for boycotts and divestments from companies doing business in Israel, or the occupied territories. Mainstream Jewish groups are now branding such campaigns as anti-Semitism. Where to draw the line between criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism is a growing source of friction in many colleges and state capitals.”

The *Washington Post* went further in an Op Ed article that claimed that left-wing anti-Semitism is the major problem: “It [anti-Semitism] lived on in the [Soviet] communist attacks on the conspiracy of Zionists with ‘American monopoly capitalists,’ during the anti-cosmopolitan purges of the early 1950s; in the New Left’s denunciation of a supposedly powerful Israel working as a tool of American imperialism in the aftermath of the Six-Day War of 1967; in the Palestine Liberation Organization’s lies that Israel was an apartheid state that practiced deliberate mass murder.”

Problematic notions have even crept into the fringes of the left and antiwar movements. In the antiwar movement, 9-11 “truth” claims can take on an anti-Jewish coloration when they assert that Israel was behind the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers. In the Green Party, 9-11 truthers and anti-vaccination “activists” play a destructive role. Recently, the Green Party in Ohio had to disavow its Congressional candidate, Jim Condit Jr., after his anti-Jewish statements came to light. In a recent radio ad, Condit excoriated “billionaire communist Jews.”

Former Green Party presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney, for years a stalwart of Palestine solidarity activism, has more recently appeared at conferences organized by white nationalists and was called out by activists for posting a blatantly anti-Semitic meme on Facebook.

Marxists are clear that such hatred is not welcome



(Left) Palestine solidarity activists picket the Philadelphia Orchestra, protesting its June 2018 tour to Israel.

on the left, echoing the words of German socialist August Bebel, “Anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools.” But at the same time, we reject the notion that criticism of the Israeli apartheid state, or the colonial-settler ideology of Zionism, makes supporters of Palestinian rights and self-determination anti-Jewish. In fact, it’s true that many of the activists in the pro-Palestine movement are anti-Zionist Jews.

When anti-Semitism rears its head in the movement, socialists do not shrink from fighting against those backward ideas. We do this in the same way that we stand up to racism and sexism in the unions. A responsibility of revolutionary leadership is to take a strong stand against reactionary ideas wherever they present themselves. This means standing against manifestations of anti-Semitism in the movement.

The BDS tactic has made it possible for activists to expose the connections between apartheid Israel and government entities, educational institutions, and corporations. By threatening the base of financial support for the occupation, including settlement building, the BDS movement has undermined support for Israeli policy in U.S. society and internationally.

It is this threat to the legitimacy of the Israeli state that drives the attempts to discredit the BDS movement. Zionist organizations and bourgeois politicians who try to conflate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism actually reinforce the growth of anti-Jewish thinking by blurring the lines between the legitimate criticism of Israeli policy and actual hate speech.

Ironically, some far-right politicians have embraced Israel. This includes white nationalist Richard Spencer, who has stated that Israel is the model for the “white ethno-state” he wants to build here in the U.S. Also, the recently elected president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, who is known for his racist, sexist and homophobic speech, expressed his intent to move the Brazilian embassy to

Jerusalem and was considering shutting down the Palestinian embassy in Brasilia. Bolsonaro’s sons, members of his far-right party, have been photographed wearing Israeli Defense Force and Mossad t-shirts to demonstrate their support of Israel.

In a period when the Palestine Solidarity movement is under attack on campuses and in communities, it is imperative that we defend the right of activists to organize and speak. At the same time, we mobilize in solidarity with those communities targeted by the far right and their hateful speech and actions. Revolutionaries always stand with the oppressed. ■

## ... Mass action

(continued from page 12)

fascists. Defeating the right will depend on the independence of working people and the oppressed and the broadest possible mass counter-mobilizations. As the Proud Boys and other rightist goons mobilize under Trump, it is essential to build a movement to oppose them.

Effectively fighting against the rightist threat, and opposing fascism, requires that we build a revolutionary workers party. Moreover, the growth of the far right internationally means we must uphold a clear internationalist stance. A revolutionary international must be rebuilt to take forward the fight of the oppressed and exploited on a world scale. ■

## Oregonians reject reactionary ballot measures

By ANN MONTAGUE

Two ballot measures, on immigration and on abortion rights, were rejected by large margins in Oregon on Nov. 6. The attack on immigrants would have repealed Oregon 31-year-old sanctuary law, which protected immigrants from discrimination and federal immigration law enforcement. It was the first such law in the nation.

The local organization behind the ballot measure was Oregonians For Immigration Law Reform. They have been linked to white nationalism and labeled as an anti-immigrant hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

In Oregon local police cannot detain individuals based solely on their immigration status or inform federal immi-

gration agents about a person’s immigration status. The weakness of the law is that it does not protect people from deportation and does not ban ICE.

Ramon Ramirez is a civil rights activist and the co-founder of Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, the union for farm workers in the northwest. He likes to remind people what it was like before the sanctuary law: “Back then, local police would partner with federal immigration officials and conduct roadblock raids. Every three months at 5 a.m., local police would stop cars holding people of color and ask to see their papers. Waiting on the side of the road were immigration buses ready to ship people back across the border. I can’t believe this state is arguing over this law 31 years after it was

passed.” Repealing the sanctuary law was soundly rejected, 62.7% to 37.3%.

**Abortion rights** — Oregon is the only state that has no restrictions on abortion. Abortion rights are set out in the state constitution. This year, there was a ballot measure to change the constitution and prohibit state funds to pay for abortion. This would prohibit the Oregon Health Plan (expanded Medicaid) from paying for abortion services. It would also mean that health plans of state workers could not cover abortion.

The right to abortion is protected by the state constitution, which clearly states there are no exceptions. There are no waiting periods, no mandatory ultrasounds or counseling, and minors are not required to inform or gain consent from a parent. State funds are used

to pay for abortions through the Oregon Health Plan.

In 2009 the Oregon State Board Of Nursing issued a decision that suction and aspiration abortions are within the scope of practice of properly trained Family Health Nurse Practitioners.

Ballot measures that attempt to restrict state funding or require parental notification were consistently defeated in 1978, 1986, 1990, and 2006. This year the ballot measure again went down to defeat, 64% to 36%.

**Transgender rights** — In Massachusetts, voters defeated an attempt to repeal the state’s 2016 law extending non-discrimination protections to transgender people, including their use of public bathrooms and locker rooms. In the wake of Trump’s threat to roll back protections for trans people, supporters of the law had feared that a vote to repeal would have given ammunition to similar efforts in other states. ■

## Combat the far right with united mass action

Shelley May / The Tennessean



By JOHN LESLIE

The Proud Boys and “3 Percenter” militia are mobilizing to join in a “We the people” rally of far-right forces in Philadelphia on Nov. 17. These reactionary forces are organizing under the banner of free speech and support for Trump, but are threatening to engage in violence against opponents. These proto-fascist and reactionary actions require a serious counter-mobilization of the broadest possible social forces.

The 3 Percenter Militia, a gun-carrying “patriot” group that claims to support the Constitution, is acting as “security” for the rightists’ rally in Philadelphia. They and the thuggish Proud Boys are less interested in speeches than in intimidation and the threat of violence against people whom they see as opponents—communists, anarchists, liberals, feminists, LGBTQ people, and anti-fascists. It’s worth noting that another militia formation, the Pennsylvania Light Foot Militia, has declined to attend the Nov. 17 event due to the possibility of confrontations.

While a mass fascist movement is not on the agenda at this moment, these far right groups are still dangerous. The far right groups are arming themselves, training, and organizing. The far right, including fascists, have been energized under Trump. In the drive towards the midterm elections, Trump increased the virulent tone of his speeches, characterizing immigrants and refugees as dangerous criminals and terrorists. Far-right ideas and talking points, including anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, are becoming more mainstream inside the Republican Party.

Ultimately, the question of fighting fascism poses the question of which social class holds power. Fascism is a symptom of capitalism in crisis, meaning an effective fight against reaction requires consistent anti-capitalist politics. Working-class political independence is a crucial element of this fightback. We reject the notion that you can defeat fascists by voting for the “lesser-evil” Democratic Party.

Defeating fascism depends on our ability to build united-front-type mass actions. Effective united-front actions require getting the unions involved. The unions are the mass organizations of workers and, as such, play a pivotal role in offering a counter to fascist ideas and actions. The unions, and mass organizations of the oppressed, are also essential to the formation of defense guards to stand against the violence of fascist groupings.

The united-front tactic serves to unite disparate forces in action around a limited set of demands or slogans. High levels of political agreement are not a prerequisite to the formation of United Fronts. The united front was originally conceived by the Communist International in the 1920s as a way of building unified fights against the bosses by making agreements for action between Communist Parties and other, at times reformist, working-class parties. Unfortunately, the refusal of the Stalinist Communist Party in Germany in 1933 to seek a united front with the Socialists eased the way for the Nazis to come to power.

United-front mass actions can help workers and oppressed people learn their own potential power.

(Above) Protesters marched in Murfreesboro, Tenn., Oct. 28, 2017, to counter the threat of a far-right rally, which ultimately was called off.

Marxist writer John Berger referred to mass actions as a rehearsal for revolution.

We can’t rely on the capitalists’ cops, courts, or politicians to protect us against the fascists. U.S. socialist leader Farrell Dobbs laid out the role of police in relation to fascism. The capitalists’ “tactic is to protect the rights of the fascists while at the same time using fascist forces to try to keep others from exercising those rights. One of the forces used to implement this is that most malevolent of all the repressive instruments of capitalist rule, the police forces. The police structure is of a character that makes it a breeding ground for fascists.”

Dobbs continues: “In any kind of confrontation between anti-fascist and fascist forces, the basic line of the cops is to protect the fascists in any way they can and to join in the victimization of the antifascists.” Dobbs’s observations have been confirmed time and again. In the last year, in Charlottesville, San Francisco, Portland, and New York City, the police have looked the other way when the Proud Boys, and other rightist goons have attacked counter-protesters.

As the capitalist crisis deepens, the possibility exists that the ruling class will want to use fascism as a weapon against the workers’ movement. This will require an equally hardened mass response against

(continued on page 11)

