

THE ORGANIZER



For a Labor Party, For a Workers' International

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'Day Without Workers' Needed May 1st to Stop Trump's Attacks!

Labor Must Break with Trump and Democrats to Organize the Fightback!



On Feb. 28, in his address to the joint session of Congress, Trump announced that his administration would request an additional \$54 billion in the next fiscal year for the "greatest military buildup in U.S. history." This is money that will come out of social spending that is so vital to millions of Americans in need. The already frayed social safety net is about to be shredded to pieces.

What did the Democratic Party leadership say in its nationwide reply to Trump's bombshell? Nothing. Former Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear did not include one single word about the \$54 billion military buildup in his prime-time speech.

Beshear's lack of response was not unexpected. Throughout the election campaign, Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton went out of her way to sound more hawkish

**HUELGA
SHUT IT DOWN
5-1-2017**

than Trump, who, we should remember, pretended to be more cautious about U.S. interventions abroad. (With Trump's huge military buildup, that pretense just flew out the window, along with the other pretense of "cleaning out the swamp." Trump's cabinet is now filled with the very Wall Street banksters and billionaires he denounced throughout the cam-

paign.)

But at least, we all thought, the top leadership of the AFL-CIO would speak out against the \$54 billion buildup and everything it portends for the working class at home and abroad. But that, too, was not to be. In his press conferences and interviews on Feb. 29, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka went out of his way to offer critical support to Trump and his administration. And not a peep about the military escalation.

While Trump pushed his proposed increase in military spending and while he announced that his government has "undertaken an historic effort to massively reduce job-crushing regulations," Trumka told Fox News that the unions were prepared to help Trump "rewrite the rules of the economy," particularly on trade and immigration policy.

"Will we partner with him? Absolutely," Trumka said. "Will we partner with him to try to rewrite the immigration rules of the country? Absolutely."

How can the country's top labor official remain silent on the war budget and then offer to partner with a president who is hell-bent on separating families and deporting 3 million more undocumented immigrants; promoting the federal "right-to-work" (for less) bill now in Congress; getting rid of full-time jobs, with benefits and job regulations; slashing pensions and access to healthcare; privatizing public schools through vouchers that "promote God's Kingdom" (to quote Education Secretary Betsy DeVos) — and so much more?

No! Labor must change direction and strategy — and this must happen fast! Labor's reliance on Trump, just as labor's reliance in the past on Obama and the Democrats, is the road to disaster for the U.S. labor movement.

Labor Must Embrace the Resistance!

Millions of people — including hundreds of thousands of trade unionists — have been in constant motion during these first 100 days of

(continued on page 3)

THE ORGANIZER

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Organizer is the publication of Socialist Organizer, U.S. fraternal section of the Organizing Committee for the Reconstitution of the Fourth International.

Since we began publication of *The Organizer* in February 1991, we have focused the newspaper on helping to advance the struggle for independent political action by the working class and all the oppressed — at home and abroad.

That focus governs all the activity of Socialist Organizer. It is the reason behind our persistent advocacy of a Labor Party based on the trade unions and rooted in struggles of the working class and all the oppressed sectors of society, a Labor Party that charts a clean and decisive break with the twin parties of the bosses, the Democrats and Republicans.

Consistent with this view, *The Organizer* is a **Forum that is open to all individual and currents** in the workers' movement seeking to build a Labor Party and a Workers' International.

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You can reach us at Tel. 415-216-5346 or by email at:

[<theorganizer@earthlink.net>](mailto:theorganizer@earthlink.net).

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Luisa, S.F. Bay Area Immigrant Rights Organizer, Speaks Out



[*Note: The following interview was conducted by The Organizer on March 2.*]

Question: Tell us about the attacks on immigrant rights by the Trump administration.

Luisa: There are new attacks on immigrants every day. It's outrageous! In Seattle, Los Angeles and other cities, undocumented immigrants are being detained and deported without cause; many have lived in the U.S. for 25 years or more. Sanctuary cities are being targeted and threatened with a cut in federal funding if protections granted to immigrants are not removed.

We've also just learned that the administration is working to broaden fast-track deportation. Trump has pledged to deport an additional 3 million people, just in the short term — on top of the 3 million already deported by Obama. And Trump wants to bring back S-Comm, so-called Secure Communities. This is the program that enables the collaboration between ICE and local law enforcement. It's a long list.

Question: What are immigrant rights activists in the San Francisco Bay Area doing to organize and resist?

Luisa: There have not been any confirmed raids in the Bay Area, but we are expecting they will come. Trump talked a lot about San Francisco's alleged protection of "undocumented criminals" throughout his campaign. We are on high alert in the Bay Area.

And we are organizing and getting prepared. Many different organizations are collaborating to make sure that anyone impacted gets immediate and full access to representation. There have been lots of trainings, both of immigrant rights organizers and community supporters.

Keep in mind that we in California have won some important battles against the Obama deportation machine. In California

there are current laws — such as the Truth Act — that stall the deportation machine and make it more difficult to deport our people. We're a step ahead.

Also, San Francisco and other cities, despite the threats, are not backing off in their commitment to Sanctuary City and the defense of undocumented immigrants. This is because we are organized.

But we know that a big battle is coming. Trump wants to make an example of the Bay Area, which is why the trainings and Sanctuary Cities have to reach more unionists and community activists, and why we need to expand these trainings to other states across the country — and fast. We need to build a nationwide movement of resistance.

Question: Tell us about preparations for May First in the Bay Area.

Luisa: Coalitions are meeting and planning actions for May First. Everyone understands that May First must be huge, and it must have a real impact all across the country, as much as, or more than, May First 2006, when millions of people took to the streets nationwide to protest the Sensenbrenner Bill.

It has to be a Day Without Immigrants, but also a Day Without Workers. The unions need to organize strike actions, mass sick-outs, and other actions. Everyone in the Bay Area must be in motion. Students must organize walk-outs, teach-ins, mass civil disobedience. It cannot be business as usual.

Labor and community must unite and say, "We're Not Going to Take It Any More!"

We have the power to shut down production. United, we can demonstrate that the government — whether it was under Obama yesterday or under Trump today — does not represent us.

We have to unite in one solid fist, in an independent movement of resistance!

... May 1st: 'Day Without Workers!'

Donald Trump – be it demonstrating in the streets, protesting the Democratic Party's lack of response to Trump at Town Hall meetings (to the great chagrin of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who called on Bernie Sanders to go tell "his people" that the Democrats are "not the enemy"), campaigning for Single Payer healthcare and the Fight for \$15; and organizing vigils and countless other acts of resistance. But organized labor — with a few notable exceptions — has been largely Missing In Action.

This cannot continue. We must sound the alarm and work like mad to reclaim our unions — built with the blood, sweat and tears of millions of workers before us — for struggle. Workers, particularly trade unionists, are eager and ready to mobilize as an organized force to defend their rights and gains. All they need is a call to action. The interviews and articles published in the *Unity & Independence* supplement of our paper [see pages 5-12] demonstrate clearly that at all levels of the labor movement, including among many top officials, there is a readiness to organize the fightback, together with labor's community allies.

One place to start is by organizing our unions to take part in the May 1st actions through mass sick-outs, strikes, in-plant actions, and other forms of protest. One union with 40,000 members in the San Francisco Bay Area has put out a call for all of labor in the region to stop production on May 1st to demand an end to Trump's war on working people. This is the kind of resolute action it will take to send a message to the bosses and the government that labor is not rolling over and accepting its slow death.

And it's about time that a serious discussion begin to take place in the labor movement about changing political direction.

There is an insurrection under way in the Democratic Party — not just by Bernie Sanders supporters. Many traditional Democrats are publicly denouncing their party leaders for "failing to stand up to Trump." At a Town Hall meeting in San Francisco, Senator Dianne Feinstein was confronted by her base, which chastised her for supporting the majority of Trump's cabinet nominations. Her reply was revealing: "What do you expect me to do," she replied. "This is how the two-party system works." There you have it, straight from the horse's mouth: The twin parties have no choice but to do the bosses' bidding, and there is not much anybody can do about it.

Wrong! More and more voters are demanding fundamental change and a break with parties that subordinate workers' interests to Wall Street. Growing numbers are not buying



Sanders' call to "reform" the Democratic Party. For many, the DNC leadership maneuvers against Keith Ellison were the last straw. [See *U&I* supplement page 10.]

Throughout the country, in fact, there is a growing clamor to build a new mass third party. Many say it could be based on the platform put forward by Bernie Sanders.

There can be no question about it: The time is ripe to launch a Labor Party Advocates-type national organization to get the discussion going in the labor movement about the need for a new political strategy and a new political direction. The time is ripe for labor and community to unite in running independent labor-community candidates for local office, be-

ginning in November 2017.

There is a real void that labor must fill so that the efforts in direction of a new mass party are not derailed back into the Democratic Party or into some other dead end.

It is precisely to help move that discussion forward in the labor movement that the Labor Fightback Network is holding its third national conference in Cleveland on July 21-23 [see conference call on page 8.] We urge all our readers to make plans to attend the conference and to get your unions and community organizations to send delegates.

The time is now to advance the struggle for independent working class political action!

— The Editors

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Afghanistan: No Peace Without Justice!



By Left Radical of Afghanistan

A recent United Nations report recorded 11,500 civilian casualties in 2016 — the highest number during the 16-year destructive U.S.-NATO war in Afghanistan. Under the new U.S. administration under Donald Trump, like that of Obama, has declared its determination to continue the bloody mission in Afghanistan.

In the last month of 2016 and the beginning of 2017, hundreds of new U.S. troops have been sent to Helmand, Farah, and other provinces of Afghanistan. Similarly, some members of NATO, such as the UK, have followed the steps taken by Trump and urged the deployment of additional troops to Afghanistan.

Apart from the official UN figures, which never show the real face of the depth of human tragedy in Afghanistan, every day around 200 to 300 persons — including Afghan civilians, police, soldiers, Taliban, and other opposition forces — lose their lives in armed conflicts.

U.S. imperialism and its allies in NATO have created and funded terrorist groups like Daesh (ISIS). Their own leaders have acknowledged this. Then, under pretext of fighting “terrorism,” they escalate the war and the killing of innocent children and civilians in Afghanistan.

The U.S. and its war partners have not contributed to the reconstruction and restoration of peace in Afghanistan, but they have also deteriorated it in a manner that is unprecedented. As a result of NATO’s heavy military presence, Afghanistan has received the “honor” of being named the most corrupt

country and No. 1 producer of opium in the world.

More than a half of the Afghan territory is controlled by the armed opposition; the violence against women has been increasing day by day, which renders invalid the claims by the U.S. and NATO regarding women and human rights in Afghanistan.

There are more than 14,000 U.S. and



“Let’s join together to put an end to the human tragedy in Afghanistan!”

NATO military troops and tens of thousands of intelligence operatives in Afghanistan, yet hundreds of Afghan people have lost their lives because of the cold winter and the lack of basic food.

This is not only the case in the remote provinces of Nooristan, Badakhshan and Daikundi, where hundreds of families have

died because of the snow and lack of food. In Kabul City there are dozens of Internal Displaced People’s camps where in this cold winter tens of thousands of families — with their children and ill family members — are living under plastic shelters without food, medicine and heaters.

Meanwhile, the UN, U.S. and other NATO authorities travel in their comfortable vehicles throughout Kabul City, completely blind to the thousands of 5-to-13-year-old malnourished children in the streets who are begging. This is the real meaning of the UN and NATO “humanitarian mission” in Afghanistan!

Punish All the War Criminals!

Recently, the United Nations Security Council removed the name of a famous warlord and war criminal — Gulbuddin Hekmatyar — from the UN blacklist. He and his party committed heinous crimes in the early 1990s.

There is no doubt that the people of Afghanistan need peace, but not at the cost of sacrificing justice. The people of Afghanistan expect that all war criminals must be dragged to court and held accountable for their past crimes.

The U.S. and NATO, in pursuit of their strategic interests, toppled the dark regime of the Taliban but installed a “democratic regime” composed of war criminals and anti-women and anti-democracy elements. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar remained in opposition, but tens of his prominent commanders were part of the U.S.-NATO-installed regime in Kabul as ministers, governors and Members of Parliament.

These corrupt elements of the regime deserve to be sent to jail and punished, but as long as they serve the interests of the U.S. and NATO occupation forces, they enjoy immunity and high ranks in the government. And now, Gulbadin Hekmatyar himself — in a shameful deal on the blood of the innocent people of Afghanistan — has also received this immunity.

The people of Afghanistan strongly condemn the UN decision regarding the immunity granted to warlords and war criminals, and demand a trial and punishment for all the war criminals in Afghanistan.

There will be no sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan in the absence of justice and accountability. The people of Afghanistan once again call on people in the United States and Europe to demand that their governments end the war and occupation of Afghanistan. Let’s join together to put an end to the human tragedy in Afghanistan!



Trade Unionists Speak Out Against Trump; Call For New Direction for Labor Movement

*[Note: This issue of **Unity & Independence** opens with four interviews with leading trade unionists in the United States conducted for publication in **Workers Tribune** (France) and the **IWC Newsletter**, which is the weekly newsletter of the Continuations Committee of the Mumbai Workers Conference Against War, Exploitation and Precarious Labor. The interviews with Chris Silvera, Nancy Wohlforth, Gene Bruskin and Donna Dewitt were all conducted by Alan Benjamin, member of the Mumbai Conference Continuations Committee.]*



**Interview with
CHRIS SILVERA,
Secretary-Treasurer,
Teamsters Local 808
(Long Island City, N.Y.) and
Past President, Teamsters
National Black Caucus**

Question: What is your reaction to the Trump address to the joint session of Congress?

Chris Silvera: Trump spoke to his base, which he's agitated over many years to demand a powerful police and military solution to the country's ills, whether real or imagined. Security and protection are his buzz words.

But there won't be more security at home

or abroad under Trump — quite the opposite. And nor will there be public funds for education, environmental protection, healthcare, vital social safety-net programs (which have already been frayed by recent administrations, whether Democratic or Republican). Even Medicare, which has been spared the ax for now, will be eaten up. All will be starved and dismantled to fund the "biggest military increase in American history."

Clean water is also on the chopping block. Everyone knows that pipelines have leaks. The North Dakota Sioux nation simply want to preserve their aquifer; they're not saying no pipelines, they're just saying make a detour around our sources of clean water.

Or take healthcare: Trump wants to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, but has nothing to replace it with!

Question: What should the labor movement do about it?

Silvera: Some say that the labor movement has been asleep at the wheel during Trump's first 100 days. But I say, labor is in a coma, and if things don't change, it will soon be in a casket.

Trump has lured some in our labor movement with the promise of jobs — but what kind of jobs will these be? Not union jobs, not living-wage jobs, not jobs with benefits and safety protections at work. How can anyone trust a president that has called for a national "right-to-work" (for less) law and that worked with Republicans in Congress to submit — as they did on Feb. 1 — a bill to ban the union shop and destroy the trade union movement? How can anyone trust, let alone embrace, a president that nominated a labor-hating corporate CEO [Andrew Puzder] to head up the Labor Department?

Nor should labor accept the promise of a job at the expense of our freedoms! Take the child of Mohammed Ali, who was born in Philadelphia and raised in this country. He was stopped at a Florida airport only because of his name. This cannot continue!

Labor needs to stand up and be counted as

an organized force — not dispersed in the crowd — with its union banners and union colors. It needs to mobilize and call for an end to this entire reactionary agenda, but it also needs to attach a demand, or set of demands, that speak to the aspirations not only of trade unionists, but of all the exploited and oppressed.



Question: May First is just around the corner. Shouldn't this be a Day Without Workers, in addition to being a Day Without Immigrants?

Silvera: No question about it! We in organized labor may only be 10.6% of the workforce (7% in the private sector), but we are the most critical percentage of the workforce. We are powerful, if only we choose to exert our power to win our demands. We have the power to stop production, not only in the United States, but globally.

We need to cement our alliances with the immigrant rights activists, the Black youth fighting against police violence, the indigenous people fighting to preserve their clean water, the Muslim sisters and brothers fighting Islamophobia and the travel ban. We must reclaim May Day as a day when working people rise up, alongside their community allies, to raise their demands as workers.

And those of us who believe labor needs a new agenda in relation to mass action and the political arena need to come together in Cleveland on July 21-23 at the Labor Fightback Conference. We need a new direction for labor!

OPEN FORUM FOR DISCUSSION ON INDEPENDENT POLITICS



Interview with NANCY WOHLFORTH, Secretary-Treasurer Emerita, OPEIU

Question: What is your reaction to the Trump address to the joint session of Congress?

Nancy Wohlforth: I am absolutely appalled. Trump announced that he was seeking an additional \$54 billion for war spending, but this figure could go as high as \$84 billion according to reports published the day after his address to Congress.

And what a cruel joke to make us think we will be more secure. That's one of Trump's biggest lies. Not to mention that this military buildup will be at the expense of vital social programs.

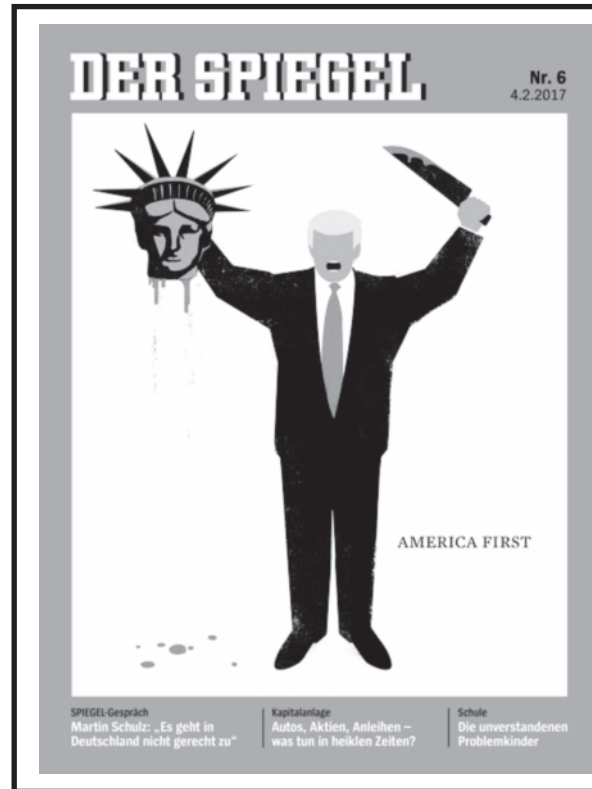
If one were to believe Trump — and, alas, too many people actually do — the United States is under attack from hoards of enemies both internal and external. So we must circle the wagons, build a wall on our border, arm our military to the teeth, and militarize our police (or so he told the CEOs at the White House).

But the exact opposite is true. It's our government that is intervening in country after country, establishing military bases around the world, and funding invasions. Trump's military buildup will only make us less secure.

Trump would also have us believe — another outrageous lie — that the reason workers are out of jobs, especially good jobs with benefits, is that the corporations are taxed at rates much higher than anywhere else in the world. So his answer is to cut corporate tax rates even further, so that their tax breaks will supposedly jump-start the economy and jobs will trickle down.

The fact is, as Bernie Sanders pointed out in his rebuttal to Trump's address, that U.S. corporations pay little or no taxes. Based on real facts, not Trump's "alternative facts," Sanders demonstrated that \$100 billion in taxes are lost every year because Big Business doesn't pay its fair share of taxes.

Trump talked about cleaning out the swamp of Wall Street banksters. Another cruel joke:



"If one were to believe Trump — and, alas, too many people actually do — the United States is under attack from hoards of enemies both internal and external. So we must circle the wagons, build a wall on our border, arm our military to the teeth, and militarize our police (or so he told the CEOs at the White House)."

He put them all in his cabinet to further deregulate the financial industry and pave the way for another major financial crisis.

It's appalling that Trump is allowed to turn things on their head. He makes one outrageous statement after the other, and those who do the fact-checking, unfortunately, don't get the kind of media attention they should be getting.

Question: What should the labor movement do about it?

Wohlforth: It must denounce the military buildup, expose the lies, and join the hundreds of thousands of activists in the streets — in labor contingents — to oppose all of Trump's reactionary agenda.

Unfortunately, the labor movement has failed to do this, with a few notable exceptions. I was astonished that [AFL-CIO President Richard] Trumka did not even mention the military buildup and the need to move the money toward jobs and social services in his various TV interviews the day after Trump's address to Congress.

Most important, the labor movement as a whole should be campaigning for Medicare For All (aka Single Payer healthcare). Yes, we must defend the gains that were contained in the Affordable Care Act, but, as we all know, the Act itself had many serious flaws. And it is not what we all truly want and need — which is Medicare For All.

Here is the perfect opportunity, when there is a heated discussion nationwide about how to solve this healthcare crisis, as well as huge openings to push forward new solutions, to

launch a nationwide campaign for a real and lasting solution: Medicare For All. It is frustrating beyond belief that the top leadership of the labor movement is not agitating around this issue day and night.

Mind you, a few good statements have been issued by the AFL-CIO. One example is the statement issued jointly with the Canadian Labor Congress denouncing the travel ban against the seven countries with a Muslim majority. Also, labor did pull out all stops to try and stop the nomination of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. But there needs to be more resolve, more mobilizations, more independent action.

And there cannot be backtracking from positions held by our movement — be it in relation to the Dakota pipeline or the fight to defend undocumented immigrants.

Trump is now calling for a mass infrastructure project — which is one of labor's traditional demands. Well, the labor movement should immediately explain what kind of infrastructure program we need to rebuild our roads, schools, bridges, dams and more — with union jobs, at union scale. We must formulate our demands clearly and fight like hell to ensure that our demands are met.

Question: May First is just around the corner. Shouldn't this be a Day Without Workers, in addition to being a Day Without Immigrants?

Wohlforth: Absolutely. In whatever form it takes, the labor movement should be in motion alongside all our community partners.



Interview with **GENE BRUSKIN,** long-time union organizer, co-founder of U.S. Labor Against the War

Question: What is your reaction to the Trump address to the joint session of Congress?

Gene Bruskin: Up till now, Trump has shot himself in the foot with his outrageous politics and demeanor. That has helped us. But his Feb. 28 address to Congress was more polished; it disguised the insidious agenda that he is proposing.

Trump's call for a massive \$54 billion military buildup is appalling and unacceptable. He is explicitly taking the money from the public sector and social programs to fund the military buildup: Public libraries, social services, Medicaid, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Endowment of the Arts (which funds community theaters in places as far away as Nebraska), and so much more are going to be shut down.

Trump's "America First" is going to put American working people last, but it's not just American workers who are targeted; everybody around the world is targeted. His domestic policies are linked to his war policies abroad. On both fronts, Trump is determined to resolve all matters through force and violence. On the home front, it's with more cops and more ICE agents; on the international front, it's with more guns and military bases.

Trump thinks he can run the country and the world like he runs a corporation. If you express any disagreements, you're out. It's frightening.

Trump has managed to present the United States — the richest and most militarized country in the world — as the victim of the rest of the world. He has turned everything on its head. This is how, for example, he can justify his goal, not abandoned, of seizing Iraqi oil.

Question: What should the labor movement do about it?

Bruskin: This is a crisis moment for the

labor movement, which totally tied its aspirations to a failed party: the Democratic Party. Labor is now everyone for themselves. It is far from clear that anyone is listening to what [AFL-CIO President Richard] Trumka has to say.

The Building Trades are severely compromised. Not only did they turn their backs on the rest of the labor movement, they turned their backs on labor's allies. They met with Trump, who put his arm around them all, only to punch them in the ribs.

These unions think they're going to get good union jobs from Trump on pipelines or infrastructure. Think again. What they're going to get is more deregulation, a federal "right-to-work" law, and the elimination of Project Labor Agreements and Davis Bacon [paying local prevailing wages on federal public works program — Editors].

Trump may create jobs, but it won't be jobs that working families can live on. There will

be a huge shift to private companies that hire non-union labor. All you have to do is look at Trump's cabinet. It is filled with billionaires whose wealth came from deregulation, cheap labor, privatization, and massive speculation — all at workers' expense. We're paying for their wealth.

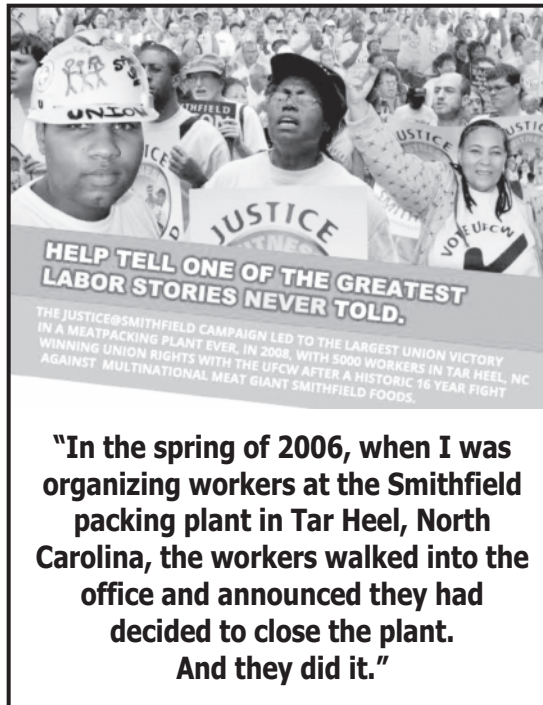
The unions that supported Bernie Sanders are talking to each other. They need to develop a counter-pole around a platform of demands that could include the fight for a \$15 minimum wage, infrastructure (but the massive public works program that we want (rebuilding schools, public transportation, road, bridges, national parks with union labor at union scale), Single Payer, no more deportations, union rights, etc.

Question: May First is just around the corner. Shouldn't this be a Day Without Workers, in addition to being a Day Without Immigrants?

Bruskin: Yes, absolutely. In the spring of 2006, when I was organizing workers at the Smithfield packing plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, the workers walked into the office and announced they had decided to close the plant. And they did it. The bosses couldn't retaliate. They needed these workers and couldn't take any action against them all.

[This was when millions of immigrant workers and their allies were marching in cities across the country to oppose the anti-immigrant Sensenbrenner Bill — Editors]

What is hopeful is that there has been an unprecedented response and protests across the country from many thousands of people from all walks of life to object to Trump and what he represents. People are in motion and saying NO to sexism, racism, homophobia, Islamophobia, rule by billionaires, cutting health-care, and the entire Trump agenda. The challenge for the left is to help organize the outrage.



"In the spring of 2006, when I was organizing workers at the Smithfield packing plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, the workers walked into the office and announced they had decided to close the plant. And they did it."

U.S. Labor Against the War Statement on Trump Budget (excerpts)

U.S. Labor Against the War condemns in the strongest terms President Trump's call upon Congress to increase the country's military budget by nearly 10% in the coming fiscal year while dramatically reducing the budgets of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of State, and virtually every other function of government that serves human needs and the machinery of peace.

The U.S. military already spends more

than the next eight countries' military spending combined. We condemn the priorities President Trump's budget proposal reflects.

We organize our opposition on the basis of values that have nothing in common with the values Trump's priorities embody.

We call on working people everywhere to oppose this budget proposal and all it represents.

Call to the Third National Conference of the Labor Fightback Network

(July 21-23, 2017 — Cleveland, Ohio)

For the labor movement, business as usual is no longer an option. If the eight-year aftermath of the 2008 economic crash did not send the message loudly enough, the November 2016 election of Donald Trump as president of the United States surely has done so. The jury is in; the verdict is unanimous. It has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt that what the labor movement has been doing is *no longer working*.

Organized labor's campaign to bring back the "good old days" — when employers and unions shook hands over contracts that provided a pay raise in each year of the agreement, increased health and retirement benefits, and high enough wages to support a family comfortably — may have made sense at one time. During the quarter century after the Second World War, American workers, by and large, enjoyed a better standard of living than any working people at any time or place in history. But those days are gone, and they are not coming back.

Organized labor's very survival is in question. The threat that a labor-hating Republican Congress will pass a national "right to work" law and send it to the desk of a labor-hating Republican president is a clear-and-present danger. Indeed, the human species' very survival is in question, as the science-denying Congress and president green-light pipelines for Bakken crude oil and dirty oil from tar sands. Efforts to curb the causes of climate change are off the agenda under this administration. In this light, the AFL-CIO officials' *support* for the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline is inexcusable.

But all is not doom and gloom. Far from it! The working class majority is fighting back against Trump — and challenging the entire establishment in the process. Millions have taken to the streets in the historic January 21 Women's March and in protest actions taking place up and down the country on an almost daily basis. The Resistance movement is growing by the day, and it is already scoring

some victories — such as the decision by Andrew Puzder to withdraw his nomination as incoming Secretary of Labor.

Immigrant rights activists are demanding "Not One More Deportation!" Black Lives Matter activists are demanding an end to police killings and a halt to the disenfranchisement of Black voters. Labor and community activists are protesting the illegal travel ban and denouncing the rise of Islamophobia, as they ratchet up the fight for a \$15 minimum wage and a union. "We Won't Go Back!" to the days of back-alley abortions and Jim Crow segregation is a chant that is sweeping the country.

The big question now is: What direction for this Resistance movement? Does it get channeled back into the Democratic Party, as so many politicians are already urging, or does it chart a new and independent course?

And what should labor's role be in all this? If the strategies employed by the labor movement in recent years have not worked, what will?

Should the labor movement continue to rely on Democrats and heed the call to bring back the Democrats in 2018? Can the Democratic Party be "reformed," as Bernie Sanders is proposing?

Or should labor embrace a new strategy, an independent mass-action strategy (including mass strike action, following the example of ILWU Local 10's port shutdown in Oakland, Calif., on Inauguration Day) with hundreds of thousands of union members in the streets, in union contingents, joining with the millions who, since the epic January 21 Women's March, have launched this ever-growing Resistance movement? Should labor not be making common cause with the activists and youth fighting against misogyny, racism and police violence, homophobia, immigrant-bashing, Islamophobia, environmental degradation, and other such scourges?

And should such a mass-action strategy not be coupled with the drive to promote labor's own independent political voice in the electoral arena, including the possibility of running independent labor-community candidates for local office?

These discussions are already taking place on the campuses, in the union halls, and on the shop floors. New appeals are springing forth calling on Bernie Sanders to form his own party (a petition by Bernie activists has gathered thousands of endorsers around this call), or calling on labor to form its own party.

There is a growing sense that labor needs a new strategy, a new direction. But what direction is this exactly?

We need to share our ideas, our proposals, our energy, and our dedication to a better future — indeed, simply *a future* — for working people. For that reason the Labor Fightback Network calls on working people dedicated to peace and social justice, whether union members or not, to attend a national conference at Cleveland State University in Cleveland, Ohio, from the afternoon of Friday, July 21, through the morning of Sunday, July 23.

We need *you* to be there. Information on workshops, speakers, registration, housing, costs, and other logistics will be forthcoming. Please make plans to attend!



Labor Fightback Network

P.O. Box 187, Flanders, NJ 07836

conference@laborfightback.org • (973) 975-9704

http://laborfightback.org

Decisions of the Second Labor Fightback Conference Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. (May 15-17, 2015)



Conference participants gather for a photo after the closing session of the Second Labor Fightback Conference on Sunday morning, May 17, 2015. Conference photos in this special issue by Tom Bias and Alan Benjamin



Interview with DONNA DEWITT, Past President, South Carolina AFL-CIO

Question: What is your reaction to the Trump address to the joint session of Congress?

Donna Dewitt: The message from Donald Trump was outrageous. It does not take a calculator to conclude that adding \$54 billion dollars to a Defense Budget that has already been oversized to control the world, \$50 billion for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), \$21 billion to build a Wall — while proposing to build and repair highways, bridges and tunnels — will not make the U.S. “lean and accountable to the American People”, as Trump proclaims.

In addition to the many domestic programs that will be impacted, Trump’s budget blueprint cuts foreign aid and sends a strong message of militarism, rather than diplomacy. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and civilian casualties, while the wars and conflicts have led to the displacement of over 10.1 million people.

It should be evident to every American that the old adage of “the cost of war” is real, and by October the Trump blueprint will likely face a government shutdown. It’s a budget of military buildup and war — not peace and diplomacy. It’s a policy that tramples upon human and civil rights.

Question: What should the labor movement do about it?

Dewitt: The labor movement is at a cross-

roads: Either it rises to the challenge and organizes a fightback against Trump and his policies, or it will continue to suffer setback after setback.

The signs emanating from the top leadership of our labor movement in Washington are not encouraging. What we’re seeing is silence on key issues (such as Trump’s war budget) and critical support for many of Trump’s policies — all of which contain poison pills for the labor movement. Take the case of pipeline construction and infrastructure, for example. Trump promises to create jobs, but they will be temporary, deregulated non-union jobs; Trump and his cronies have already submitted to Congress a federal “right-to-work” (for less) bill.

In October, the AFL-CIO will be holding its quadrennial convention in St. Louis, Missouri. There needs to be a thorough discussion about changing course and laying out a new direction for the labor movement, because the old direction is not working. Labor is facing a deep crisis situation; things cannot continue as they are.

The Labor Fightback Network will be holding its 3rd National Conference in Cleveland on July 21-23. One of our goals will be to prepare model resolutions that can be submitted by union locals and central labor councils to the AFL-CIO convention on the main issues confronting working people.

Four years ago, at our 1st Labor Fightback Conference in New Brunswick, N.J., we adopted a number of resolutions that were submitted to the convention, two of which were adopted, one in full, the other in part: “Organizing the South,” which was submitted by the Savannah, Georgia, Central Labor Council; and “Defending Undocumented Immigrants,” submitted by two central labor councils in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Question: May First is just around the corner. Shouldn’t this be a Day Without Workers, in addition to being a Day Without Immigrants?

Dewitt: Mass mobilizations all across the country on May First are needed urgently, and labor has to be a central player. Labor needs to strengthen its alliances with our community partners and take action in the streets of this nation.



On Immigration, Trump Is Playing Obama’s Game

[Note: Every once in a while, mainstream journalists get the story right. This is the case of Washington Post columnist Ruben Navarrette, Jr., whose recent article (March 1) tells the truth about the Obama administration’s anti-immigrant onslaught — which, not surprisingly (as he is a Democrat), did not elicit the outrage among the media and the liberal political establishment that Trump’s heinous policies have elicited. We are printing below brief excerpts from Navarrette’s article.]

Who knew that so many people cared so much about what happens to immigrants who are in the country illegally?

For eight years, I tried to get readers and colleagues to see what activists and immigration attorneys quickly figured out: Barack Obama was the most anti-immigrant president since Dwight Eisenhower, who loaded more than a million Mexicans onto railroad cars in 1954’s Operation Wetback.

Obama established quotas, eliminated law enforcement discretion and pressured local cops to enforce federal immigration law. All that helped him deport roughly 3 million people, divide hundreds of thousands of families and dump thousands of abandoned U.S.-born kids into foster care.

No one listened. Liberals were protective of Obama, but conservatives were just as protective of their false narrative that a Democratic president wanted an open border.

Now, the world of immigration enforcement is upside down.

Liberals have rediscovered their outrage at the mistreatment of the undocumented, even though Trump is, for the most part, simply following Obama’s deportation blueprint.

Meanwhile, the same conservatives who charged that Obama wasn’t doing enough are now applauding Trump for going above and beyond when, in reality, the new president is mimicking the old one.



Anger and Insurgency in the Ranks of Bernie's Supporters



By CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

(excerpted from article published on Newslogue, Feb. 26)

When the DNC elected establishment underling Tom Perez to DNC Chair, my beloved Bernie Sanders released a statement addressed to the new Chairman congratulating him on his win and letting him know he looks forward to working with him.

“At a time when Republicans control the White House, the U.S. House, U.S. Senate and two-thirds of all statehouses,” Sanders wrote, “it is imperative that Tom understands that the same-old, same-old is not working and that we must open the doors of the party to working people and young people in a way that has never been done before. Now, more than ever, the Democratic Party must make it clear that it is prepared to stand up to the 1 percent and lead this country forward in the fight for social, racial, economic and environmental justice.”

Right, Bernie. Now is when we can finally expect things to start changing. Now that they’re done sabotaging your campaign with a stacked primary, sabotaging Ellison’s campaign with spurious accusation of anti-Semitism and adding an establishment-endorsed candidate late in the race, voting against a ban on corporate lobbying and installing the pro-TPP corporate crony who helped the Clinton campaign undermine and smear you to the very chair position that was most pivotal in sabotaging your campaign, *now* is when things finally start turning around. Now that they’ve taken everything they wanted and spat in our faces at every turn in order to maintain the same-old, same-old, now, surely, we can expect them to dispense with the same-old, same-old.

Yeah, sounds about right. I wonder if that’ll be before or after wearing my vagina hat magically fixes the nation’s ills and all those viral click-bait articles about Trump’s imminent

impeachment come true?

Tom Perez does not know how to beat the Republicans, Bernie. None of those horrible people do. But you and I and the millions of people who supported you in the primaries do. We know how to beat Trump, but they won’t let us. They’ve wedged us out. They turn everything into a wedge, even you, Bernie; I can’t think of a single time in recent memory where someone’s told me “Well Bernie says” this or that who wasn’t a proponent of the same-old, same-old of the Democratic establishment. They’re even using you to wedge us out, Bernie.

They can’t beat the Republicans because all they know how to do is wedge, and soon they’re going to wedge themselves right off a cliff.

And it won’t be our fault. By electing Perez, the DNC has told us in no uncertain terms that its addiction to corporate funding and corporatist power is more important to it than we are, and it has absolved us of all responsibility we may have once felt toward the Democratic Party. Which is great, really; we’re now free to build something new and better, without any sense of guilt or obligation to help the party out when it crashes and burns.

We already knew that the Democratic establishment is opposed to most of the things we stand for, like economic justice, massive changes in environmental policy, peace, military non-interventionism, ending exploitative trade deals and getting money out of politics, but the Republicans are so crazy we’ve often felt obligated to help the Dems out against them.

We no longer need to do this; the Democratic elites have now accepted sole responsibility for the spectacular losses they’re going to take in the 2020 elections and the 2018 midterms.

We can free up our energy and creativity to figure out something bright and beautiful to replace the smoldering donkey carcass and give the Republicans a real fight.

Statement by the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Progressive Caucus on the Election to DNC Chairman (Excerpts)

The Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus is extremely disappointed that the DNC Executive Committee has chosen to select Tom Perez as the next DNC Chairman.

In choosing Perez, the DNC chose to ignore lessons that should have been learned in the rigged and divisive primaries of 2016 and more importantly chose to ignore lessons that should have been learned in the failed general election campaign of 2016.

In choosing Perez, the DNC chose to reject the bottom up grassroots-centered people approach offered by challenger Keith Ellison and chose instead to continue the top-down corporate controlled centrist approach that has miserably failed the party in recent election cycles.

In choosing Perez, the DNC chose to continue on the path of mistrust and defeat for the rank and file so that they themselves could personally continue on the path of power and privilege.

Nevertheless, the Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus will continue work with the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party, The Ohio Democratic Party and the DNC to move the progressive agenda forward in Northeast Ohio whenever possible. When this is not possible, the Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus will work outside the Democratic Party to advance the progressive agenda.

DRAFT BERNIE FOR A PEOPLE’S PARTY

(Excerpts from a petition that has been endorsed by thousands of Bernie supporters)

Sanders’ efforts since the election have sparked a conversation between reforming the Democratic Party and creating a new party.

(continued bottom next page)

[Note: The following article by Mike Griffin, co-director of the WarZone Education Foundation, has been abridged for reasons of space. The full article can be obtained from *The Organizer* newspaper.]

The Gathering of Buzzards

It was shocking to see the so-called leaders of the skilled trades unions clamor to find a position under Donald Trump's desk in a significant break from the AFL-CIO. This was a meeting that left an incredible smirk on Trumpenstein's face, allowing him to make the false claim that he had the support of labor for his agenda. Trump has referred to that support several times.

It is not hard to understand why top so-called leaders of so many unions now find Trumpenstein's style so acceptable. In the last 50 years, Carpenters, Plumbers, Electricians, Laborers and other Trades unions have busied themselves consolidating locals, stripping voting rights from memberships, controlling conventions, and raising their own salaries and benefits while acting as contractors to the contractors. They busied themselves selling out their constitutional duties to negotiate contracts that improve the lives of their members and give them a voice on and off the job.

A perfect example in the industrial sector is the "Mighty UAW." In lock-step with Barack Obama's auto czar, the UAW rolled over for unbelievable concessions in the bailout of GM and Chrysler. The bailout was a ploy to extract concessions from autoworkers at GM and Chrysler — with the aid of the UAW — that the rank and file would not agree to. It took Obama, an alleged Democrat, to make the transaction happen.

The AFL-CIO, in particular, has refused to embrace the social and economic justice mainstream social organizations that have mobilized in fighting back against deep cuts for ordinary workers and the poor. Where is that new voice that John Sweeney and Richard Trumka promised when they took control of the house of labor in 1995?

Where was the AFL-CIO when the massive protests took to the streets of America in opposition to Trumpen-

stein's anti-worker, anti-American agenda? Now is the time for labor to join the fight against the pro-corporate, anti-American agenda of the Republican right-wing assault on fundamental democracy. But the silence is deafening.

In a scathing letter to the AFL-CIO, the president of the Skilled Trades describe Union Solidarity as a "touchy feely" dynamic that has no relevance in today's union movement. For the 37 full-time jobs [the thousands of other jobs are all temporary jobs — Editor] the Keystone pipeline will give American workers, the Trades are willing to risk the security

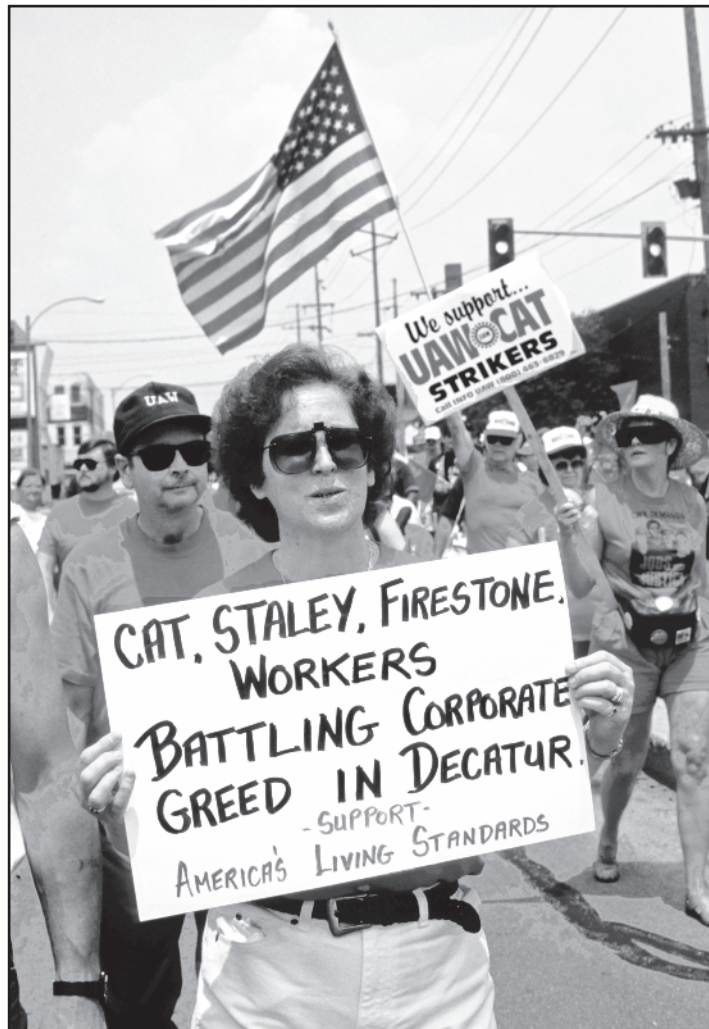
of the Ogallala aquifer that supplies fresh water to seven states. Forget the land seizure of American farmers and landowners. Forget the fact that the Canadian pipeline has had dozens of oil spills in the past few months.

And forget the rights of Native Americans, the environment, workers' rights, labor protections — and forget the democracy that every American is entitled to. Sucking up to Trumpenstein is apparently worth the thousands of temporary construction jobs Keystone and the Dakota pipelines will provide. They are worth dividing the house of labor, alienating the American electorate, destroying

the environment, and turning your backs on every American who relies on our social safety nets. Aren't you proud?

As a survivor of the Warzone, Decatur IL, when 4,000 families were locked out or on strike, I had the pleasure of organizing with hundreds of locals and tens of thousands of supporters who came to our aid in Solidarity. I know from experience the value of union Solidarity and the hearts of those who came to our aid. They were the real union and represented the best that our precious union has. It was a gathering of eagles, not buzzards.

Without an energized and democratic Union Movement willing to fight for workers and social justice for all Americans, our beloved America will not survive. Union leadership must be willing to join forces with the fightback movement for social and economic justice. Otherwise they should simply step down, stop pretending, and stay under the desk of the most cowardly, anti-American, lying, deceiving, and narcissistic scumbag ever to take the oval office.



... Draft Bernie Petition

The American public has now answered that question with a resounding call for an independent alternative. Gallup figures reveal that the number of Americans who identify as Democrats has fallen by a staggering 20 percent

since the presidential election. That represents about 14 million Democrats who have gone independent since November. The movement out of the establishment parties is a striking national referendum in favor of a new people's party. A majority are now calling for a major third party.

Millions of hard-working Americans are joining Bernie Sanders as an independent. They are waiting for a leader like Sanders to unite them into a political force that can revolutionize the country.

As a lifelong independent, Sanders is well aware of the option of starting a new party.



From Resisting Trump to What?

(Excerpts)

By **LES LEOPOLD**

Executive Director, The Labor Institute
(reprinted from the Feb. 2 issue of
The Huffington Post)

Resistance is breaking out all over: the women's marches, the immigration airport protests and the defiant Sally Yates, the State Department mass dissents, the battle for the Supreme Court, with much more to come.

But where are we going? Are we simply calling for a return to the pre-Trump status quo of runaway inequality, the largest prison population in the world, inadequate and costly health care, unjust immigration policies and accelerating climate change? Or do we have a new vision for America? If so, what is it and how do we fight for it?

Where's the glue?

Some hope that the Democratic Party will provide the infrastructure for an alternative vision and movement. Not likely. Too many party leaders are still deeply committed to Wall Street. Too many Democratic officials refuse to interfere with corporations that shift jobs abroad simply to secure lower paid labor and weaker environmental regulations. And, far too party leaders have an eye towards securing lucrative positions among America's financial elites.

Could labor unions form the organizational core? In the 1930s the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) played this role by organizing unskilled workers and pushing for an aggressive worker agenda that helped to secure Social Security, a minimum wage, the 40-hour work week, and much more.

But today labor is torn. The Building Trades are applauding Trump for restarting the Keystone and Dakota Access pipelines. Manufac-

turing unions are taking a wait and see attitude given Trump's interventions to stop the offshoring of jobs, his withdrawal from the anti-worker trade agreement (TPP), and his upcoming plans for massive infrastructure investments. Meanwhile, public and service sector unions, who after going all in for Hillary against Bernie, have yet to respond vociferously to Trump.

Can the remnants of the Sanders campaign fill this vacuum? The jury is out. Electoral campaigns tend to unravel unless the candidate decides to run again. Our Revolution, the political extension of the Sanders campaign, has possibilities but so far it has not attracted a mass following. But all those young Bernie supporters are still interested in the broad social democratic agenda he so effectively popularized. How do they express their support?

A new formation?

There are many significant institutions with dues-paying members that could play a vital role. For starters there are the unions that supported Sanders, including the National Nurses United, the Communications Workers of America, the Amalgamated Transit Union and the American Postal Workers Unions. With a combined membership in the millions, they have enough funds and troops to launch a new national organization.

Ideally, they could be joined by the more progressive service sector unions like the Service Employees International Union as well as church, community and environmental organizations that represent millions of immigrants, lower-income residents and environmentalists. Together they could form a new national political organization that we all could join.

The goal would be to popularize a Sanders-like agenda, organize protests to resist Trump

while also building an alternative politics for the next round of elections.

Another key goal would be to bring back the working class Trump voters who previously voted for Obama and Sanders. There are millions of them. Unions that represent workers in manufacturing have found that up to 50 percent of their members (who voted) voted for Trump, largely because of Clinton's record on anti-worker trade deals like NAFTA and TPP. The goal of any new formation should be to win back those working class Sanders supporters.

Dream on?

Of course, it's a long shot. ... But Trump could do wonders to help us overcome these difficulties. Sooner or later, we should go beyond resistance and advocate a vision for the future — a common agenda that includes a Robin Hood Tax on Wall Street, free higher education, criminal justice reform, humane immigration policies, Medicare for All, an end to outsourcing, fair trade and a guaranteed job at a living wage for all those willing and able.

Perhaps a little more time spent with the craziness of Trump will wake us up from our organizational stupor.

(This piece was originally written for
Alternet.org)

Les Leopold, the director of the Labor Institute, is currently working with unions and community organizations to build the educational infrastructure of a new anti-Wall Street movement. His new book .Runaway Inequality: An Activist Guide to Economic Justice serves as a text for this campaign. All proceeds go to support these educational efforts.

Despite Scrapping TPP, Trump Is a Dedicated 'Free Trader'

By JACK RASMUS

Less than a week after assuming office, President Donald Trump signed an executive order abandoning the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership "free trade" agreement negotiated by former President Barack Obama, but not yet ratified by the U.S. Congress.

Trump's flurry of executive orders canceling trade deals, his phone calls to country leaders, his appointed representatives' public statements, and his constant tweets on social media suggest to some, including the U.S. mainstream media, that Trump is anti-"free trade," that Trump is ushering in a new trade protectionism, and that his attacks on "free trade" agreements, like TPP and NAFTA, will precipitate a global trade war. It is this writer's view, however, that none of this is likely.

Trump is a dedicated "free trader." He

just rejects multilateral, multi-country "free trade" deals like TPP and NAFTA. He wants even stronger, pro-U.S. business "free trade" deals and intends to renegotiate the existing multilateral treaties — to the benefit of U.S. multinational corporations and at the expense of the U.S. trading partners.

Trump's threats of protectionist measures, like the 20-percent border tax and previous election promises of imposing a 45-percent import tax on goods from China, are primarily tactical and aimed at conditioning U.S. trading partners to make major concessions once U.S. renegotiation of past deals and agreements begin.

And as for a trade war, the answer is also a very likely "no." The big "four" targeted trading partners — China, Japan, Germany, and Mexico — currently exchange goods and services with the huge U.S. economy amounting between US\$1 trillion to US\$2

trillion a year.

What Trump trade policies represent is a major shift by U.S. economic elites and Trump toward bilateral "free trade," country to country. Trump believes he and the U.S. have stronger negotiating leverage "one on one" with these countries and that prior U.S. policies of multilateral "free trade" only weakened U.S. positions and gains.

But "free trade" is free trade, whether multilateral or bilateral. Workers, consumers and the environment pay for the profits of corporations on both sides of the trade deals, regardless of how the profits are re-distributed between the companies benefiting from "free trade."

Dr. Jack Rasmus, Ph.D Political Economy, teaches economics and politics at St. Mary's College in California.

UK: For a Labour Government Enforcing Brexit in the Interests of the Workers

Six months ago, on June 23, the British people rejected the European Union. "It was a class vote," had to admit the *Financial Times*: 75% of union members voted "leave," thus inflicting a major defeat for all those who, on the right as well as on the left, subordinated themselves to the EU and its destructive policies.

This democratic decision taken by the people of this country was a victory for the nurses, the rail-workers, the millions of low-paid workers, the two million workers and youth on zero-hour contracts, and those who wanted to protect their rights.

We fought in that campaign against all those who are in the service of the City of London, the IMF and the World Bank. We achieved this victory in spite of the fact that the top leaderships of the main unions and of the Labour Party, including Jeremy Corbyn (who had been elected to the position of party leader on the basis of his long-lasting fight against the European Union), called to vote "remain."

The present government of Theresa May is taking things further than David Cameron. It wants to move fast because it



is aware that its situation is very fragile because of the blow carried by Brexit. One of the reasons it dares to do so is, of course, that the leaderships of the Labour Party and of the trade unions did not fight on the position of the majority of workers to quit the EU.

The labour movement has been divided. The question is not to return to the past. The question is to move forward.

The main and immediate demands of the working class are:

Put an end to casualization and the zero-hour contract system and to the low wages.

Let's secure work and wages through collective bargaining.

Open the borders to migrant workers, with equal rights.

It's high time to put a stop to the destruction/privatization of the NHS [National Healthcare System] and education.

By leaving the EU, we have finished with the so-called budgetary rules.

It's time to put an end to the scandalous armament expenditures. It's time for Britain to pull out of NATO and stop taking part in military aggressions and adventures.

Rail, mail, utilities such as gas and electricity must be brought back under public ownership.

What government can implement such measures? A government of the Labour Party supported by the trade unions. A government of the Labour Party implementing the mandate that was issued by the people of this country on June 23, a government of the Labour Party that takes the pledge to implement the demands of the working class.

— **From a British correspondent**
(reprinted from *The Internationale* No. 5, February 2017)



SOUTH AFRICA / AZANIA:

Bonginkosi Khanyile Released on Bail After Five Months in Jail!

On March 1, the Constitutional Court finally decided the release on bail of Bonginkosi Khanyile, a student activist at the Durban University of Technology.

Bonginkosi had been in jail since Sept. 27 for being one of the leaders of the “Fees Must Fall” movement in South Africa/Azania — a movement of hundreds of thousands of Black students demanding a “free and decolonized higher education.”

His continued detention on trumped-up charges expressed the continued refusal by the government issued from the Kempton Park agreements in 1994 — the government of the ANC and Communist Party — to heed the demands of the Black youth. In fact, the repression unleashed against the “Fees Must Fall” activists is widely understood as a form of revenge on the students



Bonginkosi (center) and comrades shortly after he was released from jail on March 1st.

for taking action to demand their rights.

Bonginkosi’s mother, Phumzile Khathini, who had not seen her son during the five months of his detention, said, “I will not stop him from continuing to do what he is doing.”

For more background on this struggle and on comrade Bonginkosi’s specific case, we are reprinting on this page an interview with Philani Gazuzu Nduli, an organizer of the campaign to free Bonginkosi. The interview was conducted three days before the Feb. 24 mass protest actions in various cities across South Africa to demand his freedom.

We thank everyone across the United States who endorsed the Appeal demanding Bonginkosi’s immediate release from jail. The mass protests on Feb. 24, supported by the international solidarity campaign, no doubt played a pivotal role in the Constitutional Court’s decision to release him on bail. Now the task is to ensure that all the bogus charges against him are dropped.

— **The Editors**

Interview with Philani Gazuzu Ndulo on the Campaign to Free Bonginkosi Khanyile

(Interview reprinted from Tribune des Travailleurs / Workers Tribune, France)

Question: Who is Bonginkosi Khanyile, and how was he involved in the “Fees Must Fall” (FMF) movement?

Philani Gazuzu Ndulo: Bonginkosi Khanyile is a student at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). He was doing his final year in Public Management and Economics in 2016. He completed his course work with Cum Laude recognition.

He has been involved in a number of struggles, being a critical voice in the FMF protest in 2015/16. He is also actively involved in the “Outsourcing Must Fall” campaign, which led to his first arrest on Feb. 4, 2016, from which he was released on warning the next day. So essentially he has been a soft target of the State due to his contribution to the struggle as a very powerful and fearless young fighter.

Question: Since what date has he been in jail, and what are the charges against him?



Philani: He was arrested on Sept. 27, 2016, which was Day 2 of the DUT FMF shutdown.

The charges have been expanded in almost every Court appearance, which is proof that these charges are just concocted so that they get conviction. There are now 14 charges, all concocted. As far as evidence is concerned, it’s almost non-existent; they are trying to paint him as a terrorist rather than a protester.

Bonginkosi was denied bail in the Magistrate two times. They explained that because there were so many students who came to support him at Court, this proves his influence over the student population; meaning that if he is released, he will continue to “incite violence” given that he broke his bail conditions after being released on warning during the “Outsourcing Must Fall” campaign.

We also approached the High Court to appeal the Magistrate’s decision. The high court agreed with the Magistrate’s ruling denying him bail. We then approached the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) to appeal for bail. The SCA dismissed the matter saying that it is not urgent. We are now in the process of approaching the Constitutional Court to appeal for bail.

Question: Tell us about the mobilizations going on in Kwazulu and throughout South Africa to demand his immediate release?

Philani: We have been mobilizing to show support during his Court appearances to try and sway the Magistrate’s and Judge’s decisions through public opinion. But that hasn’t been working. We are now planning to organize protests in the major cities of South Africa on Feb. 24 to try and put pressure both on the State and on the government to release him now.



Women and the Russian Revolution: March 8, 1917

BY JEAN-JACQUES MARIE

On the morning of February 23, 1917 (March 8th in the Gregorian calendar, International Women's Day), the women textile workers from several factories in the Vyborg district of Petrograd, Russia — fed up with having to spend hours waiting in breadlines for bread that had become more and more expensive and more and more rare — gathered in a meeting and decided to demonstrate against the high cost of living and the shortage of bread.

They went on strike and adopted a resolution asking for the support of the male metal workers of the neighbouring Ericson factory, sending them a delegation carrying the resolution. The Bolshevik in charge of the district, Kayurov, had made a tour of the factories the very day before “forbidding” (according to his own words) “any agitation for a direct call to strike.” Also — he wrote — he “was outraged by the behavior of the strikers (...) The night before I had myself called them to order and discipline — then suddenly it was a strike. There was, it seems, neither an objective nor a reason, except the breadlines, made up essentially of women and children.”

But given the determination of the strikers, Kayurov convened the Revolutionary-Socialists and the Mensheviks. The three parties having thus assembled, he wrote, “adopted the decision (it must be said, against their will) to support the women workers on strike, thus forcing the hand of the three socialist parties to this end, and deciding to ‘get all the workers without exception into the street and taking the lead of the strike and the demonstration’.”

On that day, the initiative of the women textile workers brought about massive demonstrations and a strike. It was the spark. The next day there were 90,000 strikers in Petrograd. The first clashes with the police amplified this movement for the rejection of the whole Tsarist system, bogged down in a war that was ruining the country and had already killed 1.5 million men, without counting an-

other half-million disabled, and had imposed an unbearable existence of privation on the workers, and — for the women, endless hours of queuing in lines that began at four o'clock in the morning before going to work, up until they were relayed by their exhausted children.

Thus began the revolution, a revolution that would, several days later, lead to the founding of the Petrograd Soviet and the abdication of Tsar Nicholas the Second.

The power of the movement was such that it imposed a first (and unique) measure on a provisional government, which called itself democratic but still decided to pursue the war. On July 20, 1917, Russia was the first government in the world to give women the right to vote.

The October Revolution

The October Revolution was to be express itself in a set of measures for the emancipation of women, the achievement of which was, clearly, the product of a social revolution. As of October 29, three days after the forming of a first Soviet government, a decree was published that regulated, among other things, the length of the working day for women and children under 16 years of age. This led to the adoption, in 1923, of measures in favor of contraception.

In the wake of the decree on the separation of Church and State, the Soviet government did away with religious marriage and recognized the right to divorce. The decree details the measures to be taken concerning the family names that the divorced spouses and their children should bear, the proportion of expenses linked to the raising of the children, and any possible alimony to be paid by the husband.

On November 20, 1920, the law recognized abortion under medical control. The Stalinist reaction was to do away with this right in June 1936.

Of course, the downfall caused by the civil war in Soviet Russia — imposed by the upholders of capitalist order, who had been re-

sponsible for the butchery of World War I — was to give some of these rights a merely formal aspect for many years. But once codified, they tended little by little to impose themselves in real life — except those that the Stalinist reaction was to rescind, such as the right to abortion, or to make more difficult, such as divorce.

Some of these rights have today been trampled upon in a great many countries of the world. Thus, under pressure from the churches, and especially the Catholic Church, abortion has been forbidden from Mexico to Poland and Ireland, including Brazil. Civil marriage is subject to the same ban from Israel to Saudi Arabia. Here and there, the right to divorce has been replaced by the pure and simple repudiation of the wife by her husband.

The legitimate demand of equal pay for equal work has been trampled upon almost everywhere, and replaced by the much-hyped demand from a few hundred privileged women, to be able to sit on corporate boards or to hold as many ministerial positions as men — in order to implement, in common, the policies decided upon by the IMF and the European Union, i.e., by finance capital.

Commemorating the Russian Revolution of February 1917 and evoking the ones that came before and triggered it is thus not only aimed at restoring the truth of a history that has so often been falsified; it is also, and even more important, about reviving the ties with a past that is still close and linking them to the urgent necessities of a present that is marked by endless wars and the destructive measures that are destroying the social rights wrenched over the decades by those who live only by selling their labor power.





San Quintin Farmworkers Organize Caravan: 'No Ban, No Wall, We Want a Contract Now!'

More than 80,000 farmworkers in the Valley of San Quintín (Baja California, Mexico) are still waging a fierce battle for union rights on this second anniversary (March 17) of their mass strike against BerryMex, a subsidiary of Driscoll's, and other U.S.-based growers.

The mass resistance of these workers compelled the Mexican government to grant legal recognition to their new independent union — the National Independent Democratic Union of Farm Workers (SINDJA) — but Driscoll's still refuses to sign a collective-bargaining agreement with the union.

And the State repression against the workers has continued. On Feb. 20, 2017, the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) in Mexico City issued a report documenting the "arbitrary detentions and excessive use of force, among the verifiable illicit actions that have taken place and continue to take place in San Quintín." (*La Jornada*, Feb. 21)

To celebrate the second anniversary of their fight for union recognition and a collective-bargaining agreement, the leaders of the struggle — organized in the Alliance of Organizations for Social Justice (Alianza) and SINDJA — have organized a two-week Caravan of farmworkers. It began March 4 in San Quintin, traveled five hours north to Tijuana and Mexicali (Baja California) on March 5-8, and then headed down to Mexico City, for a tour-ending rally in the nation's capital on March 17.

Given that the *Caravana* was launched only a few days before International Women's Day (March 8), the leaders of the Alianza and of SINDJA brought a large number of women farmworkers to the cross-border protests.

U.S. supporters of the Mumbai World Conference Against War, Exploitation and Precarious Labor (November 18-20, 2016) raised US\$1,000 to help transport these women workers to the border action. The fundraising campaign was part of the international campaign, launched in Mumbai, to highlight on March 8 the role of women workers in the struggle against war and ex-



ploitation on this 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution (which was sparked, in February 1917, by the mass strike of women workers for bread, peace and freedom).

The fundraising effort was in direct response to an appeal by the leaders of the farmworkers' organizations in San Quintín that reads, in part:

"Dear sisters and brothers supported the World Conference Against War, Exploitation and Precarious Labour in Mumbai, India.

"We send you greetings from the San Quintín Valley. We are aware that our struggle was addressed at your [Mumbai] conference. We also want to tell you that we, in turn, are at your side in your different struggles.

"March 17 marks the second anniversary of the historic strike of more than 80,000 farmworkers in the San Quintín Valley, led by the Alianza de Organizaciones Nacional, Estatal y Municipal por la Justicia Social. This mass strike brought to public attention the exploitation that millions of workers throughout Mexico are subjected to. Out of that historic movement — which continues to this day — we obtained one of our major victories: our new independent trade union federation (Sindicato Independiente Nacional Democrático de Jornaleros Agrícolas), together with which we will not rest until we obtain a collective-bargaining agreement.

"We have been informed that the World

Conference in Mumbai called for protests on March 8 in the framework of International Women's Day to commemorate and continue the fierce battle waged by Russian women 100 years ago in defense of their labor rights, so we know that we will be able to count on you to support the just demands of women fieldworkers fighting for their labor rights in the San Quintín Valley. They struggle day by day against low wages, modern-day over-exploitation, exposure to chemicals, and sexual harassment, among other outrages.

"We would like to be able to take four buses to transport these farmworkers to Tijuana. We are sure we will have your support."

"Receive our combative greetings.

"For a better future and a new homeland (Patria Nueva)!"

"Alianza de Organizaciones Nacional, Estatal y Municipal por la Justicia Social

*and
Sindicato Independiente Nacional
Democrático de Jornaleros Agrícolas"*

