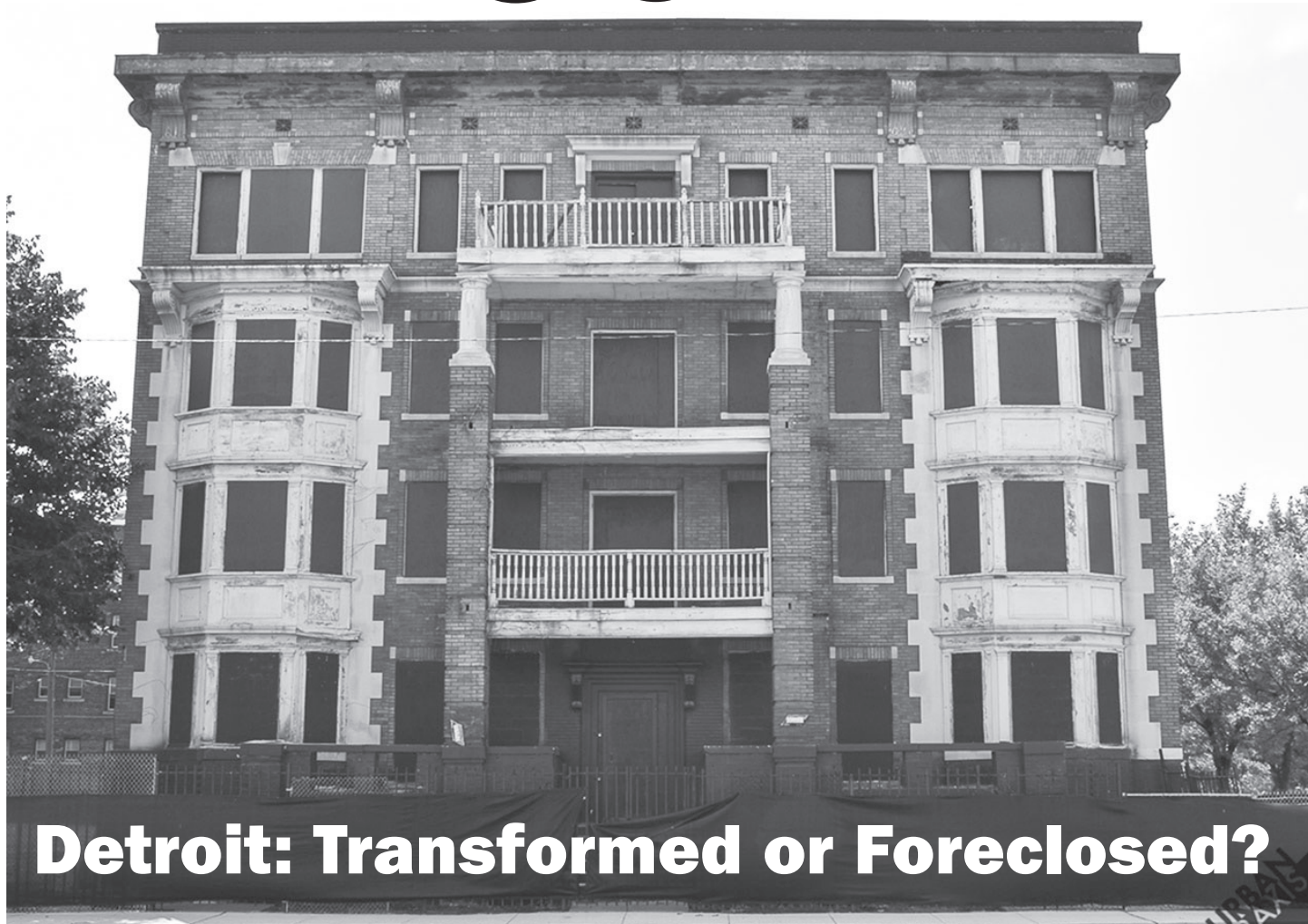


Reviews: History and Standing Rock ♦ Tear Down the “Manosphere”

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AGAINST THE CURRENT

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL



Detroit: Transformed or Foreclosed?

The Syndicalism of William Z. Foster

♦ AVERY WEAR

Bolivia: Revolutionary Affectation vs. Reality

♦ BRET GUSTAFSON

Review: Latinx Workers' Struggles

♦ ALAN RUFF



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A Letter from the Editors:

Impeachment and Imperialism

DONALD TRUMP IS the first modern politician who's used the U.S. presidency — as everyone knows, since the liberal media, punditry and presidential historians repeat it on a daily basis — to brazenly solicit a foreign regime's intervention for his personal benefit in electoral politics. It's a damning indictment of the "big twit" in the White House. It also happens to be false. The notorious precedents aren't even secret anymore: Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, in their election campaigns, pulled the same tricks that Trump did with Russia in 2016.

During the 1968 campaign, Nixon reached out to the government of South Vietnam to ensure that outgoing president Lyndon Johnson's attempts at a last-ditch peace agreement would fail. Known as "the Chennault affair," after the rightwing operative Anna Chennault who carried it out, the full story is told by John A. Farrell ("When a Candidate Conspired with a Foreign Power to Win an Election," www.politico.com, August 6, 2017). Indeed Nixon won, and the war would last another seven years, inflicting even more death and devastation on Vietnam than between 1962 (when John F. Kennedy began the secret bombing of South Vietnam) and the upheaval of 1968.

Fast forward: Reagan's 1980 campaign contacted the rulers of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure that U.S. diplomats held hostage in Iran *would not be released* until Jimmy Carter's presidency was done. As if hiding in plain sight, the story is laid out by Kai Bird ("Some 'Conspiracy Theories' Turn Out to be True," *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2017).

Indeed, in a theatrical gesture the hostages in Iran were released on the day of Reagan's 1981 inauguration. Shortly thereafter Reagan's operative William Casey, installed as CIA director, authorized Israel to sell military equipment to Iran — a forerunner of the "Iran-Contra" clandestine sale of U.S. weapons to Iran, with the proceeds secretly allocated to fund the murderous Contra war against Nicaragua.

It's difficult to overstate how the consequences have shaped today's chaos in the world, and in U.S. politics. The Reagan presidency was the era when the United States supported *both* Saddam Hussein in Iraq's invasion of Iran, *and* Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda movement in the U.S. proxy conflict with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The ultimate results have been the virtual destruction of Afghanistan, and later George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq with all the ruinous events that have followed.

And not only that — the counterrevolutionary U.S.-backed Central American genocidal wars of the 1980s, along with "free trade" that destroyed much of Mexican and Central American agriculture, and the insane bipartisan U.S. "war on drugs" — directly brought about the hemorrhaging of those societies and the desperate flight of so many people toward the United States. That's the direct background of today's crisis and the unspeakable brutality of the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers at the border.

What's New About Trump?

So much for the myth that Trump's appeal to Russia for dirt on Hillary Clinton in 2016, and his attempt to extort Ukraine for "opposition research" on Joe Biden in 2020, mark something new and an unheard-of degradation of "our democracy." But beyond the spectacular spread of this scandal — involving his attorney general, secretary of state and personal attorney as players in the extortion scheme — two fundamental points arise from these earlier cases as well as the present one.

First, there actually is something different about Trump. Contrary to some fashionable left rhetoric, Trump is not a fascist. Rather, he's a thief, or as Samuel Farber has perceptively put it, a "lumpen capitalist" (<https://jacobinmag.com>, October 19, 2018).

His fundamental loyalty is only to himself and his shady business interests. Yet those degenerate qualities also make him a useful tool for the real agenda of billionaires, corporate deregulators and privatizers, white nationalists, reactionary religious fanatics, and the fossil fuel industries with their all-out drive to maximize extraction and profits before the clock runs out for humanity.

That combination controls the agenda of today's Republican Party. Because its obscene reactionary social and economic agenda cannot hope to win a majority by democratic means, it seeks to rule permanently through voter suppression, racial gerrymandering, executive orders and stuffing the judiciary with rightwing cadres. The regime we're living under today has been gaining momentum long before Trump came along, and it will not disappear with him.

This is an authentic capitalist ruling class agenda, yet also one that could create a massive crisis for the system's economic stability and political legitimacy. With Trump's pseudo-populist rhetoric and crude nationalism, racist appeals and sadistic anti-immigrant orders, he's a useful front man for the worst forces of reaction and greed. All that, along with his love affairs with international dictators who know how to fawn on him, rather than ideology or mass mobilization, makes him a menace to humanity.

He's also unusually crude. Unlike types like Nixon and Reagan, Trump is confident to act right out in the open, including undisguised witness intimidation and incitement to violence. His "high crimes and misdemeanors," perpetrated on a daily basis, are barely hidden — if at all.

His tactics for getting away with one week's scandalous behavior are to do something more outrageous the next, whether it's the Muslim travel ban or family separations at the border or dismantling every environmental protection, pushing the citizenship question on the census or his daily blatant, shameless lying.

In the process he's demonstrated what everyone now knows, including (especially) his aides and the Republican leadership that enables him — that the administration he's assembled is a bottomless corrupt cesspool, that his mind is an open sewer and his mouth a running toilet.

But what Trump's tenure has taught us is that for a considerable time, none of this brings him down. The Republican leadership and party faithful not only have stuck with him, they mostly love his performance even if they

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Above: The 1919 Steel strike: William Z. Foster (left), striking workers (above), police violence against strikers (below).

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Behind the Revival: Detroit Foreclosed

By Dianne Feeley

MARY JONES-SANDERS BOUGHT her home on Detroit's east side back in 1975. That's where the African-American woman raised her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

More than 35 years later, in her late seventies and living on a fixed income, she had trouble paying her property taxes, but managed to do so before the deadline. However, her home was foreclosed and sold in the county auction that fall because she failed to pay a \$600 fee she didn't realize she had.

A California investor snatched it up for \$2300. It was only when her granddaughter saw a notice that she found out she no longer owned her home. Not knowing what to do, the two came to a Detroit Eviction Defense meeting. We organized a delegation to go to the local management company and demand that the investor sell the home back for what he'd paid. Initially he refused, demanding six times his investment.

But when the media picked up the story, he agreed to do so if she could come up with the money within the week. Mrs. Jones-Sanders was able to borrow from a non-profit, United Community Housing Coalition, and DED held a fundraiser. With her family's help she proudly paid the loan back within six months.

Unfortunately, she is not the only Detroiter who lost her home for less than \$1,000! Since the economic crisis hit Detroit in 2002, half a decade before the rest of the country, more than 200,000 residential properties have gone into foreclosure. The initial cause was the prevalence of adjustable rate mortgages. In Michigan 52% of all sub-prime loans were sold to African Americans, even higher-income African Americans.

As the interest rate went up and the value of the home plummeted, Black families were twice as likely to be "underwater" as white homeowners and less able to weather the crisis. Banks and mortgage companies such as Detroit-based Quicken Loans foreclosed on approximately 65,000 Detroit area homeowners.

Dianne Feeley is an editor of ATC and an activist in Detroit Eviction Defense. She is a retired autoworker.



Mrs. Jones-Sanders (in the black hat) with her family.

As African Americans lost both their investment and their home, their assets were wiped out. Across the country, Black homeownership dropped more than 10%.

Between 2008 and 2010 Detroit's rate of vacancy doubled and abandoned homes, along with boarded up schools and businesses, deteriorated. As a Detroit Future City report remarks, "This large number of abandoned structures has become one of the defining features of the city."

Detroit used to be a city of working-class homeowners. Although African Americans, who now make up 80% of the population, didn't become homeowners in large numbers until the 1960s, owning a home was an aspiration.

Starting in the 1950s, the auto industry left for the suburbs and beyond, and thousands of white workers, able to obtain federally-financed mortgages, followed. The city bled from this flight to the more affluent, job-rich and *de facto* segregated suburbs.

Contours of City's Crisis

The city shrank but still had more than a million residents. So the results of the 2010 census shocked city officials, who learned that 25% of the city's residents had left over the decade — including a large portion of African-American families.

Some walked away from their "underwater" homes while others moved to the

suburbs because of the turmoil in Detroit's public schools, then under state receivership.

One-third of the remaining households were living on \$15,000 or less; 24% had little access to health care. Twenty-five percent were 55 or older; and in a city with limited public transportation, one quarter of the residents did not own a car.

Even today the majority of working Detroiters commute to jobs beyond the city limits. Of every 100 Detroit jobs, only 30 are held by residents.

The foreclosure crisis continued, this time through tax foreclosure. *Twice as many homes have been lost from tax foreclosure as from mortgage foreclosure.* While Detroit's property taxes account for only 2.5% of the city's budget, they are proportionally among the highest in the country.

Assessed taxes are based on homes' market value. As the value plunged, the handful of city tax assessors couldn't possibly carry out the mandated annual reassessment. So the tax assessment office continued to bill at the old rates.

Between 2009 and 2015 an estimated 75-85% of the assessments were too high. Yet if they were not paid within the year, an 18% fee was tacked on. And during the Emergency Manager's reign, unpaid water bills — again among the highest in the nation — were added.

After three years of non-payment on the full amount, residential property goes into foreclosure. It is turned over the Wayne County's treasurer's office to be sold at a state-mandated yearly auction. These unpaid taxes range from \$160 to more than \$100,000.

The auction occurs online in two phases — with the second pretty much of a giveaway, but where homeowners are excluded from the bidding. The idea behind the auction is to restore properties and strengthen the city's tax base. It has done neither.

While the state does provide indigent homeowners with a poverty exemption, in Detroit the exemption has not been widely publicized. Of approximately 35,000 homeowners who could qualify, less than 6000 did so in 2017. Most importantly, even when

granted the exemption is only for the current year.

Of course some homeowners are able to enter into a payment plan or receive the poverty exemption while others manage to stave off eviction at the last minute. But over the last five years, an estimated 17,000 occupied homes were auctioned off. That's approximately 40,000 people displaced.

Foreclosures peaked in 2015 with the auction of 28,000 properties. By 2019 fewer than 3000 parcels were auctioned, including 521 occupied homes. In a supposedly "recovered" economy, that still means at least 1000 people may face eviction. *How does that benefit Detroit or stabilize neighborhoods?*

After thousands have lost their homes, Detroit's mayor and two Wayne County executives have come up with a plan that could keep people in their homes. But it would have to pass the state legislature and of course would not restore the homes of

all those who have already suffered displacement.

Keeping Detroiters Poor

After undergoing massive foreclosures and evictions, in July 2013 Detroit was forced by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder into bankruptcy. Appointed by the governor, Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr cut budgets and "restructured" the city's \$20 billion debt. Over half of the cuts were benefits that retired city workers had earned. Their pensions were shaved by five percent, while a small monthly stipend replaced their health care coverage. Current city workers also took cuts in wages and benefits.

Detroit emerged from forced bankruptcy in 2015 only to downplay the statistics that reveal an impoverished population, a severely polluted city and aging infrastructure. More than one-third of the adults and half the children are poor, a majority living in

areas defined as "concentrated poverty."

High rates of asthma and lead pollution — from paint rather than water pipes as in Flint or Newark, NJ — attack children's health. More than 70 hazardous waste sites are awaiting remediation. Foreclosures continue to dispossess the poorest Detroiters and destabilize neighborhoods.

In a city of 672,000 there are 238,400 jobs. Fewer than 50,000 are held by people who live and work in Detroit. For the 112,000 residents who work outside the city, 36% earn less than \$15,000 a year. The lowest paid 10% commute the furthest.

Of the 158,000 who come into the city for work, 59% earn more than \$40,000. Detroit's official unemployment rate is typically twice that of the national average; today it stands at eight percent, but that vastly underestimates the reality.

There isn't enough affordable housing for a city with a high poverty rate and a

An Overview of Detroit's Affordable Housing

BETWEEN 1837, WHEN the first Michigan constitution abolished slavery, and 1910, with the Great Migration of southern Blacks — and southern whites — to the North, Detroit had no formal housing segregation. However, racial and class distinctions meant that the majority of Blacks lived in the older, more rundown lower east side.

In Michigan, Black men only won the vote with passage of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. And although public schools were open to Black children, the fact that Blacks were clustered into poorer neighborhoods — although ethnically diverse — meant their schools had few resources and likely to be segregated.

It was only in the 20th century that housing segregation became enforced by custom, law and government programs. These ranged from restrictive contracts, which forbade selling property to anyone who was not white, to redlining for the purpose of receiving federal-backed mortgages to segregated public housing.

Detroit never had much public housing because city officials debated which "race" would be the project house. However Brewster Housing, opened in 1938 under New Deal financing, was the country's first public housing built for African Americans.

Brewster's 701 low-rise apartments were located just north of the city's business district, close to where the majority of Blacks lived and worked — Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. This housing project was paired with construction of Parkside Homes, 785 low-rise units on the far eastside and only open to whites.

Even before World War II was declared, the housing commission identified 70,000 substandard units in the city. At least a

quarter million people flocked to find jobs in Detroit's industries during the war. Three-fifths were African Americans, confined to the most rundown housing but forced to pay the highest rents.

Civil rights leaders convinced the housing commission to construct a Black public housing project, the Sojourner Truth Homes, in an industrial area near a white neighborhood. In early 1943, as Black families began to move in, white neighbors rioted. As a result, nearly 100 Blacks were arrested and three dozen hospitalized.

The housing commission then formally adopted a policy of segregated housing. They only began to disregard "race" in assigning families to specific sites a dozen years later.

After the war public housing was built for returning white veterans and their families in three additional areas on the city's east and west sides. To ease the housing problem for African Americans, the housing commission built the Frederick Douglass Homes just south of Brewster, and the Edward Jeffries Homes a mile to the west.

These "elevator buildings," as June Manning Thomas dubbed them, were not helpful in checking on children playing outside or monitoring visitors. As the government set income limits that forced out families with good jobs and skimmed on maintenance, they became concentrations of poverty. Most have been torn down.

The purpose of post-war urban redevelopment was to halt the economic decline of the downtown business district, not to build affordable housing — even for those forced to move. By 1962 urban renewal had adversely effected one-third of the city's African Americans.

Of the 3340 units of public housing that

still remain in Detroit, there is a 95% occupancy rate and a waiting list of 5760.

Today public housing is primarily a voucher program known as Section 8. But once approved, the applicant must find a landlord willing to accept it. Detroit's waiting list of 6000 has been closed for more than five years.

Currently, the federal government's commitment to affordable housing is through tax credits given to developers. They then set aside a certain proportion of low-housing units, usually 20-40%, in the building. After 15 years, however, the owner can apply to convert these units to market rentals.

According to University of Michigan researchers, 7000 Detroit apartments and homes will reach the 15-year mark between 2016 and 2022. Since many are in the city's more desirable areas, chances are that most will be lost to affordable housing.

Twenty years ago several non-profits built single family homes for low-income families. These were not well built nor did management companies maintain them adequately. Further, residents were told a portion of the rent would go toward buying the home but that never happened.

A 2016 city housing study found nearly 60% of Detroiters "rent burdened," meaning they were paying more than 30% of their income for housing. Over the last decade, the average monthly rent increased by 30%, while median wages fell 20% when adjusted for inflation. As a result, Detroit averages about 30,000 rental eviction cases each year.

The U-M researchers project that the city needs at least 21,000 rentals earmarked for those making less than \$20,000 a year. Meanwhile the city's goal is to build 2000 new homes and preserve another 10,000. ■

high proportion of seniors living on fixed incomes. Affordability is based on the idea that no one should pay more than 30% of the median income of the area for their housing. But what's the "area"?

While the 2017 median income for a family in Metro Detroit was \$58,411, in the city it was \$32,924. Given that the Black and brown residents represent 88% of the city's population, the difference might stand as a rough approximation of what racism costs.

This figure, however, does not reveal family assets, whether we are talking about education, savings or home ownership. For many, owning a home is a family's greatest asset. But the catchup that African Americans were able to accomplish in the brief post-civil rights period unraveled in the economic crisis.

Auction a Tool of Renewal?

Ninety percent of all those purchasing homes at the auction are speculative investors buying in bulk. Since the majority of the city's housing stock (73%) is the single-family home — mostly built between 1930 and 1950 — from a developer's point of view rehabbing a home isn't economically viable.

As a result, investors park the property for a more opportune moment or rent the house without making improvements. They favor "rent-to-own" contracts that saddle the prospective homeowner with the responsibility not for only the rent, but for its property taxes and repairs.

When even one payment is missed, the landlord has the right to break the contact and quickly evict the tenant — and start over again with another family. Such contracts do not have to be registered.

Detroit housing is in such turmoil that there have been cases where the landlord (or someone posing as the landlord), collects the rent, pockets the money and doesn't pay the taxes. Eventually the home goes into foreclosure and auction. Meanwhile the family continues to pay rent — until they are informed they are being evicted.

A 2018 *Detroit Free Press* survey of two dozen homes found that over a seven-year period although three fourths were occupied when auctioned, 78% became vacant. A 2015 survey carried out by Loveland Technologies, a mapping service, discovered that almost one out six homes purchased in the 2014 auction were already vacant, with 180 candidates for demolition. *That is, the city program helps to perpetuate vacancy and blight.*

As Joshua Akers, assistance professor of Geography and Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Michigan-Dearborn remarked, "The Wayne County Tax Foreclosure Auction is one of the greatest destabilizing forces in Detroit."

Those homes that go unsold in the auc-



This house was purchased by Michael Kelly, who operates Detroit Property Exchange and other companies that purchase properties from the Wayne County Tax Auctions. He offers low-income residents contracts on dilapidated homes and has the highest rate of Detroit evictions — more than 1,160 between 2009 and 2016. urbanpraxis.org

tion are then turned over to the Detroit Land Bank Authority, now the city's largest landholder. It owns 95,000 properties, including vacant and occupied homes, shuttered businesses and vacant lots. It has had the double task of selling properties that could be restored as well as organizing the demolition of those that can't.

Set up in 2011, the Detroit Land Bank has established a number of programs through which it sells homes to investors, nonprofits and individuals. Given that these homes have a low market value and need major repairs, people who want to purchase a home can't secure a mortgage. Just three of the 635 homes the land bank sold between November 2018 and February 2019 were able to obtain such a loan.

As *Detroit Free Press* reporter John Gallagher noted, "The mortgage market doesn't exist or barely exists in more than half of the city." The reasons why this is so range from a depressed market to insufficient income or a poor credit rating.

With so many properties, the land bank has tried to set up partnerships with non-profits, banks and Dan Gilbert's Quicken Loans. The authority has sold homes to investors with the provision that they will rehab the home and if there is an occupant, allow them to rent or buy. Investors promise to abide by the rules, but then proceed to do what they want.

Why Millions for Demolition?

A second task that the land bank has been saddled with, but that will expire at the end of this year, is administering the city's demolitions.

Mayor Mike Duggan's administration had successfully petitioned the Obama admin-

istration to divert \$250 million from its Hardest Hit Funds to tearing down blighted structures rather than aid impoverished homeowners facing foreclosure. Since 2014 19,000 structures have been torn down.

Not only did the blight removal program take money that should have been used to help homeowners, but the land bank lacked the oversight necessary, given the issues of asbestos and lead, to make sure the work was carried out and stored safely. Additionally, with the electoral defeat of a community development resolution in favor of a weaker one, it's hardly surprising that a *Detroit Free Press* study found

only 26% of the contracts were awarded to minority-owned companies.

In at least one case, a home that was not blighted was torn down, yet land bank attorneys continue to fight the family's legal case with the city's tax dollars.

For years mayors have focused on demolition rather than thinking about how to keep people in their homes. Given the small percentage that residential property taxes contribute to the city's budget, and after spending \$250 million of the Hardest Hit Fund demolishing structures, why should Mayor Duggan be proposing a 2020 budget with \$50 million earmarked for demolitions? He is also contemplating a referendum for a \$250 million bond so that he can completely wipe out all blighted properties — an additional 20,000 — by 2025. But until October 2019, when asked if he would campaign before the state legislature to make poverty exemptions retroactive, he replied that's not fair to those who have paid their taxes.

Assuming the city is able to demolish a total of 40,000 structures, it still won't have addressed the underlying problem. The 2014 Motor City Mapping survey found 40,000 blighted structures and almost that many more with a high risk of becoming blighted.

Without financial aid in the form of poverty exemptions, stopping the auctions of residential property and grants to maintain and repair homes, the mayor's promise hasn't a chance of becoming a reality.

The "Action before Auction" Program

Wayne County, which includes Detroit and the near suburbs, established its land bank in 2006 but turned over most of its Detroit properties when the city created its

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Fossil Fuels and Revolutionary Affectation: Thoughts on Bolivia

By Bret Gustafson

The battle, the struggle, is permanent. And I want you to know, sisters and brothers, that as long as imperialism exists, as long as capitalism exists, the struggle will continue, not just in Bolivia, not just in Latin America, but across the planet, wherever there are human beings. [...] Because, sisters and brothers, uprisings don't just happen in Bolivia nor in Latin America, but around the world, we can talk about the French Revolution, we can revisit the grand uprisings of many countries, of Africa. That is to say, where there is inequality, where there is injustice, the people rebel, the peoples rise up...

SO SPOKE BOLIVIAN President Evo Morales on the 7th of November, 2017. It happened to be the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, so his message was fitting. Yet it was also a moment of state ritual during which money generated from natural gas development was transformed into material objects — in this case checks — delivered to the people.

Since 2006, Bolivia's government has reaped the benefits of natural gas exports. After the neoliberal regime collapsed in 2003, Evo's election in 2005 led to what Evo's government called the "nationalization" of gas. More accurately, the government renegotiated contracts with foreign gas companies, yielding a much higher percentage of royalty payments, or rents, to the government.

Over the past 13 years of Evo's presidency (he has been re-elected three times), these rents have been redistributed in many ways, chief among them these direct deliveries from the president to the people.

Opponents refer to much of this expenditure as waste. In some cases, new airports in small towns and outsize stadiums in the high Andean plateau have gone unused. Other money has been spent on grandiose projects, including the aerial cable car system that now criss-crosses the skies of Bolivia's capital city, La Paz.

*Bret Gustafson teaches Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis. He is the author of two books on Bolivia, *New Languages of the State: Indigenous Resurgence and the Politics of Knowledge in Bolivia* (Duke 2009), and *Bolivia in the Age of Gas* (Duke, forthcoming), from which this essay draws.*

One of the most significant buildings is the monumental new 'Big House of the People' — La Casa Grande del Pueblo — which evokes China's Great Hall of the People. The new skyscraper in La Paz will serve as the presidential palace and residence, complete with karaoke bar, a jacuzzi that holds eight, and a helipad on the roof.

One anarcho-feminist critic, María Galindo, called it a "phallic monument... a fascist vision... [like] a Las Vegas casino... a high-class brothel... or the big house of the master." As the country geared up for elections in October, 2019, the right-wing opposition held up these projects as evidence of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) mismanagement of the bonanza of gas.

Even so, much of this state largesse is well-received. Usually these transfers involve some public works project: a new soccer stadium with artificial turf field for a small rural community, a local hospital, new computers for a school, an electrical transformer station, a new gas-line installation, or a new gasoline filling station.

On the day he spoke of global revolutionary struggle, Evo was in Potosí, the famous city whose silver mines enriched the Spanish empire. Of late, Potosí had been politically problematic. Civic leaders in the poor department demanded more attention from the government.

Potosí was still a mining department, and mining had not yielded the rents that gas had. Meanwhile the gas-rich departments of Santa Cruz and Tarija were reaping so much from the boom that they had trouble spending, or even stealing all of it.

Attempting to show that the state distributed to all equally, Evo's strategy in Potosí was to bypass the opposition leaders and go directly to the local communities.

After his speech, he handed out checks to one hundred or so municipal representatives, monies theoretically destined to fund local projects like bridges and irrigation systems. Evo said once again that day in Potosí that he was fulfilling the obligation of the state to the people and delivered about two million dollars' worth of checks.

Recalling Revolution

In his speech, Evo repeated what he says often. The conquest of gas — and the goods

and resources being delivered to the people — were the result of a longer history of revolutionary struggle against the military dictatorships, U.S. military intervention, and neoliberalism.

As Evo frequently says, he said again, "we have to refresh our memory," to recognize how we fought oppression in the past, a history that has made us much better off today.

This invocation of memory is important, since the uprising in 2003 that led to neoliberalism's collapse is now receding into the past, as are the struggles against U.S. militarism dating to the 1960s, and Evo's own resistance to the U.S.-backed military interventions tied to the so-called "Drug War" in the 1980s and 1990s.

Yet Evo also seeks to produce and enact a kind of revolutionary affect — an emotional invocation of heroic struggle against capitalism and radical change. Evidenced in his own body and history, his words invoke a sense of liberation, and a euphoric embrace of the possibilities of collective struggle. Of course the euphoria is also represented materially in the goods and money that Evo brings to the people, thanks to the conquest of gas.

Furthermore, Evo continues to represent, for many Bolivians, the upheaval of centuries of racial inequality. As the first Indigenous person to occupy the highest seat of power, as many Bolivians will say, "someone like us" now has control of the redistributive levers of the state. This power, by and large, comes from the export of natural gas.

Of course, fossil fuels are a big problem for global warming and other forms of violence that fossil fuel regimes produce, from pollution to war to militarism. And fossil fuels are also, in a global sense, the fuel of contemporary capitalism.

As Andreas Malm has argued, fossil fuels, which can be taken out of their place of origin and moved according to the demands of capital, are central to the process of accumulation (and to the production of CO₂).

For Malm, fossil fuels are the bedrock for the "biospheric universalization of capitalist rule." Furthermore, because of the interdependence between the capitalist system and fossil fuels, all capital is fossil capital and all fossil capital is inherently capitalistic.

Yet Evo continually speaks of revolution.

From the outside, Evo's MAS government appears to be a radical left alternative to the rightward shift in the region, recently hailed by a writer in *The Nation* as a "socialist success story." Yet in this deep dependence on fossil fuels — and fossil capital — lies the dilemma of revolutionary Bolivia.

Partnering with Global Capital

The renegotiation of the gas contracts that took place in 2006, Evo likes to say, made Bolivia a "partner" (*socio*) of the foreign firms. As such, this was an improvement on the contractual order envisioned by the neoliberal regime and the World Bank. Yet as partners of multinational capital, Bolivia necessarily aligns a significant portion of its political and economic policy with the demands of multinational (fossil) capital.

Fossil fuel capital, especially as it faces a rising challenge from those of us concerned about the violence it wreaks on people and the earth, is in a hurry of sorts. Fossil capitalism increasingly seeks contractual or financial acceleration, that is, the removal of barriers to rapid monetization of gas.

For example, Evo's government has moved to weaken indigenous rights to a process called "prior consultation." Prior consultation is supposed to allow Indigenous organizations some voice in the process of gas exploration and extraction. Yet often a timely affair that takes some months, it's seen by the industry as a time-consuming obstacle to exploration or drilling operations.

On the other hand, fossil capital needs a political instrument to justify continued exploration and extraction, like Evo and his checkbook. The gas companies also need a government that will tell a convincing story that responds to a collective demand for change in a country known for powerful social uprisings.

In short, fossil fuel companies want to access the gas and monetize as much as possible as fast as possible. Evo, in many ways, does them a service by suggesting that the current moment is the endpoint of revolutionary struggle, rather than a beginning, and that the extraction and sale of gas is itself, a revolutionary, if not socialist act.

In the United States the fossil fuel companies have distorted the public sense of time and change through other various (and nefarious) forms of climate science denialism or stories. Of late, the story is that we need natural gas as a "bridge" to a renewable future. Of course building gas infrastructures will lock us in to destructive levels of CO₂ emissions.

Other mechanisms, such as the Trump regime's regulatory capture of the EPA and other institutions are also prolonging this temporal delay, pushing change further into the future. Rapid monetization and returns

for fossil capital and the infrastructures it has built and that it wants to build will lock us further in to dependence while delaying the transition.

Evo Petrolero Emerges

In Bolivia this works through what Evo calls "partnership" with the gas firms, and through Evo's revolutionary affect, or perhaps more accurately, his revolutionary affectation. From the perspective of fossil capital (fossil time, mobility and freedom in space must take priority), or in political terms something akin to sovereignty, over all other concerns, through any means possible.

In his work delivering public goods to the people, Evo Morales engages in a certain kind of labor for private multinational capital. We might call this figure "Evo Petrolero," or Evo the Gas Man. Evo Petrolero often wears a national oil company helmet when he goes to inspect a gas field or turns on the gas supply in somebody's kitchen.

This is rife with the symbolism of nationalist struggle for resource sovereignty against foreign exploitation. In a marginal neighborhood of Oruro, the president posed for a picture beside a gas meter installed in the exterior wall of a humble abode.

Then, inside the kitchen, at the stove (and wearing his helmet), like a local utility employee, he turned on the gas while festooned with a traditional wreath of flowers and the ubiquitous confetti that accompanies public ritual in Bolivia.

He lauded the process of nationalization that allowed the government to "attend to the demands of the people" and reduce their gas costs to around \$2 per month. All of this, he argued, was because "thanks to Mother Earth" Bolivia has "cheap gas."

So, against the accelerated temporality of fossil capital that seeks to access space and monetize material things by moving them elsewhere as fast as possible, Evo works to produce a revolutionary temporality in which the current moment of redistributive largesse is said to be the culmination of a long century of revolutionary struggle.

With Evo's daily labor, handing out checks or turning on the gas, he aims to activate an affective response, a simultaneous embrace of himself, of gas, and of the story of popular struggle. This is condensed into a story of revolutionary transformation, moving from inchoate affect to revolutionary affectation.

In invoking rebellion he is not suggesting that people keep rebelling, but rather that the present moment is the accomplished result of that universal struggle. So, we might say — at the risk of crude functionalism but for the sake of argument — that Evo's revolutionary affectation seeks to reconcile the contradictions created by the temporal disjunctures that fossil capital must bridge, and

to give meaning to the abstractions created by ongoing dependence on fossil capital.

As long as Bolivians remain convinced of this, the gas will continue to flow. To my mind this is not socialism, but rather a gas-dependent redistributive politics tied to other less progressive realities, about which more below.

The Balance Sheet

To be sure, Evo Morales has been rightly celebrated for being the first indigenous president in the Americas, and of Bolivia. He has overseen a relatively ambitious program to redistribute public goods. Bolivia's turn to the left is a welcome alternative to those emerging from the right, across Europe and the Americas.

One must acknowledge the economic stability that has been maintained in Bolivia. Foreign reserves are at record high levels. Poverty has decreased. Economic growth has bested most of the rest of Latin America. The currency is stable. Wages are up from around \$50 per month in 1995 to over \$100 per month.

In macro-economic terms, the government of Evo Morales appears — for the moment — to have finally captured the surplus, and used it to capitalize the country.

One taxi driver summed up his support for Evo in acknowledgement of the government's policy to democratize access to credit: "I never set foot in a bank before Evo was elected. Now I have a new house and a new car."

On the surface, the regime has managed a gas boom in relatively good fiscal terms. Yet all of this depends on continued extraction of gas.

It is for these reasons that by late 2018, the Vice-President Alvaro García Linera, though questioned by many on the left in Bolivia, could receive such resounding applause for his participation at Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales' first international forum on critical thought held in neighboring Argentina.

Taking credit, on behalf of the left, for lifting millions of people out of poverty; for women's autonomy over their bodies; for the combination of street democracy and parliamentary democracy, García Linera said that in the next wave of the left in Latin America there must be "ecological socialism."²

Like Evo, Alvaro was working at managing time, pushing the ecological crisis of the present onto a future socialism to come later. As with Evo's management of revolutionary time — which pushes resistance into the past — Alvaro's management of revolutionary expectations pushes the possibility of real radical change into the future.

In both cases, willingly or not, these modes of speaking dovetail with the tem-



Evo Morales (third from left) and his vice-president Alvaro García Linera (left), with models and a Bolivian race-car driver, celebrating the running of the Dakar Rally, a fossil-fuel spectacle that criss-crossed the Andes in 2015.

poral concerns of fossil capital, which is to compress time and accelerate extraction in the present. Even so, the Vice-President reaped great applause and adoring praise from would-be revolutionaries in the land of the YouTube comments section.

If revolutionary affectation is effective at home in Bolivia, it seems equally effective in international forums.

Deep Contradictions, Perverse Outcomes

At least the redistributive state redistributes, something no neoliberal state does well. There are also significant differences from modalities of neoliberal incitements to improve health, to self administer and to aspire to self-improvement. This is the discourse of the right, for example, their feeble alternative to Evo and the MAS: that the country should become a country of “entrepreneurs.”

For the right wing, whether technocratic neoliberal or unabashedly fascist, the natural workings of the market and the rational individual condense into a bourgeois theory of inevitable fossil fuel consumption.

But in the gas-encompassed state, the incitements are to “defend” and to “recover” collective public goods, real and imagined, to demand that the state fulfill its obligation (even when it doesn’t), and to embrace the right to “consume” as a *pueblo*, the collective subject of both nation and struggle.

As such, the inevitability of fossil fuel

extraction is achieved through a different means. Nonetheless, the labor of transforming an aspirational revolutionary temporality into consumptive practices dependent on a hegemonic fossil fuel regime has deep contradictions and perverse outcomes.

Far from a socialist success story, Evo and the MAS have overseen a rather conservative and pragmatic *detente* with Bolivia’s own capitalists, entrenched in the eastern agro-industrial sector. The recent fires in the Amazon have drawn attention to the government-backed expansion of a large-scale soy export economy.

Growing opposition to the extractive economy exists in some parts of the country, even from Indigenous organizations. Another contradiction emerges from the androcentric shape of the industry itself, which transforms the economic boom into the commodification and consumption of everything, deepening existing forms of violence, especially against women.

While femicide — the killing of women — is at alarming levels globally, it is particularly high in Bolivia. Drawing direct linkages between gas and this gendered violence is difficult. However, Evo’s government relies on a male-centric form of politics that bridges social organizations, the military and the party — all in turn reproduced through control of the police and the judiciary.

Activists have suggested that this patriarchal political order — again far from any socialist ideal we might imagine — is

to blame for the rise in violence against women. In addition, victims’ families rarely see justice. To draw attention to this point, María Galindo, the activist quoted above, recently joined her comrades to douse the façade of the new “Big House of the People” in red paint, symbolizing the blood of murdered women.

In addition, despite the endless invocation of anti-imperialist struggle, Evo is overseeing the legal and political labor of subordinating sovereignty and reorienting the collective will of the people in favor of fossil fuel infrastructures. This has the perverse outcome of degrading Bolivian nature, and undermining the political foundations of movements by reducing their political horizons to internecine battles over gas rents.

Perhaps the most egregious recent reflection of this is when Evo Petrolero — as Evo the *Presidente Indio* of Plurinational Bolivia — attended the inauguration of the racist, militarist and fascist Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. Concerned that Brazil might reduce its purchases of Bolivian gas, Evo found himself referring to Bolsonaro as a “brother” in a “shared struggle.”

In Bolivia, where Evo makes much of his revolutionary credentials, this is referred to as “eating toads” (*tragando sapos*). Such is the sovereignty of gas, that the landlord bows to the customer and tenant.

While Bolivia’s management of the gas economy is certainly a success story in some ways, one would be hard-pressed to suggest that gas-based redistribution reflects a serious or ambitious political horizon for socialist thought, given these internal contradictions, let alone what we know about global warming.

Because of Bolivia’s deep history of social movement struggle and rebellion, even right-wing economists observe that without a nationalist frame, no oil or gas would be exported from Bolivia. In order to argue that this signifies revolution, enter Evo the gas worker, who also performs as Evo the revolutionary, to produce, manage and embody revolutionary struggle and revolutionary temporality.

At the end of the day, fossil capital achieved its goal, the monetization of nature in the service of capital accumulation. Evo’s revolutionary affectation in Bolivia achieved what neoliberal orthodoxy could not: the flow of gas. At the time of writing, all evidence suggests that Evo (and the gas industry) will be re-elected this October. ■

Notes

1. Evo Morales, speech delivered on November 7, 2017. Ministry of Communication. 2017. Translation by the author.

2. His office tweeted the quote (https://twitter.com/VPEP_Bol/status/1066857954996117504), from the speech available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUfZ3NCi9IA>.

Defeating Trump By Dave Jette

DIANNE FEELEY'S VIEWPOINT in ATC 202 (September-October 2019) "What Sanders' Campaign Opens," very well describes the possibilities that Bernie Sanders' pursuit of the Democratic Party's 2020 presidential nomination opens up for socialists. I agree with this presentation, but I think that it incorrectly omits the critical need to defeat Donald Trump next year even if we have to actively support a more mainstream Democrat for this purpose.

There are two basic reasons for what may be for some a shocking proposition: first, Trump is systematically, and with considerable success, bringing about fascism in our country; and second, he is destroying whatever defenses we presently have to help avoid the climate change which will be catastrophic for the whole world.

This suggested course of action would certainly have been shocking to me until very recently, for until then I had been adamant in rejecting any collusion with the Democratic Party, realizing that it like the Republican Party is a creature of the 1% and that its role for countless decades has been to emasculate and absorb any serious challenge to their rule.

Attempts to "capture" and transform the Democratic Party into one serving the needs of the vast majority of our populace have been demonstrated, time and time again, to be a fool's errand. Nonetheless, the political situation with which we are now faced is so grave that it is imperative to do whatever is possible to deprive Trump of an even more devastating second term of office — we simply cannot avoid to stick our heads in the sand and hope that things work out for the better.

Regarding Dianne Feeley's article, I am less pessimistic than she about the prospect of Sanders garnering the Democratic Party's nomination — he's running a highly active grassroots-based campaign, and he may be able to pull it off in spite of the Party's leadership.

But more to the point is the refusal of the Democratic Socialists of America, through a resolution passed at DSA's national convention in August, to support

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any Democratic Party presidential candidate other than Sanders. Her take on that decision seems to be supportive, pointing out that it demonstrates that Sanders' candidacy doesn't trap individuals and organizations inside the Democratic Party.

My own take is rather different, that it is highly dismaying, demonstrating that DSA is not yet able to do that which is absolutely necessary at this time, i.e. to work as hard as possible to prevent Trump's continuation as president. It's fine to have strongly socialist politics, but not if your (well justified) antipathy to the Democratic Party results in your dropping the ball.

What to Do?

I've been highly active in the Green Party for many years, serving as treasurer for its electoral campaigns at all levels including for federal office.

As usual, the Green Party will be running a candidate for president next year, and it was therefore natural for me to come up with a proposed set of objectives for its candidate's campaign, keeping in mind the overriding necessity of defeating Trump while also not watering down its own excellent political stance. I came up with the following four points:

1. The presidential campaign should encourage everyone to defeat Trump by voting for the Democratic Party nominee in any state in which the race is at all close, and to help get out the vote in those states. The Green Party should become clearly identified with the struggle to prevent a second term for Trump and substantially contribute to defeating him.

2. The campaign should support the campaigns of local Green Party candidates, as the necessary first step in building the party. Running presidential and statewide candidates with no chance of winning is basically a waste of time and energy.

3. The campaign should promote the Green Party as a genuine progressive electoral party, which will occur naturally through promotion of the first two objectives, as well as in campaigning in the absence of local Green Party candidates. On the one

hand it will establish the political maturity of the Party through its active and highly public involvement in the effort to dump Trump, and on the other hand it will be advocating a full progressive political platform for serious consideration.

4. The campaign should still seek to get a high vote total for the Green Party presidential candidate. Although this will be a secondary objective contingent upon satisfying the first three objectives, it is still desirable to demonstrate substantial voter support in states in which it cannot possibly hinder ousting Trump.

The foregoing objectives could of course apply for any progressive third-party presidential campaign, but my intention was to convince the Green Party (at its presidential nominating convention next July) to approve this course of action for its nominee.

But after investigating prospects for such approval, I've been convinced that there is no chance of these objectives being obtained, and I have accordingly decided to no longer waste my time and to withdraw from active participation in the Green Party, which evidently has no capability of becoming the sort of progressive electoral party which is so needed.

The reader may be interested in my article "Relation of Progressives to the Democratic Party" which was published in the July 2019 issue of *Works in Progress* of Olympia, Washington; it is available at <https://olywip.org/relation-of-progressives-to-the-democratic-party/>. ■



The Costs, the Benefits, the Urgency: **Which Green New Deal?** By Howie Hawkins

AS A CANDIDATE for the Green Party 2020 nomination for president, I released a Budget for an Ecosocialist Green New Deal¹ during the Global Climate Strike, September 20-27, 2019. Our bottom line is that a ten-year, \$27.5 trillion public investment in a Green Economy Reconstruction Program is needed to zero out greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 across all sectors of the economy: electric power, manufacturing, agriculture, transportation and buildings.

The program would create 30.5 million jobs, including 8.7 million jobs in manufacturing. Unlike any of the other Green New Deal proposals, we show our homework — how we got these numbers.

Our ecosocialist Green New Deal also includes an Economic Bill of Rights, which is an ongoing program of public provision to ensure jobs, income, housing, health care, education and retirement. The Economic Bill of Rights will cost \$1.4 trillion per year and create another 7.6 million jobs.

Our whole Green New Deal is a 10-year \$42 trillion program that creates 38 million jobs.

We derive our goal for 2030 from the global carbon budget that climate science indicates is the timeline that rich countries like the United States must meet to get atmospheric carbon dioxide back into the safe zone of below 350 parts per million (ppm) by the end of this century. The Earth reached 415 ppm in May 2019.

The 2020 deadline that we advocated in 2010 was based on this same science. But nearly ten years later, 2030 is now the earliest a crash program could convert the economy to 100% clean energy. Beginning a decade later means that we have to not only eliminate carbon emissions as soon as possible. We also have to invest more in drawing carbon out of the atmosphere and into Earth's soil and crust through forestation, organic agriculture, habitat restoration, and perhaps through industrial acceleration of the natural geological carbon cycle.²

Our Signature Issue

The Green New Deal in fact has been the signature issue of the Green Party for a decade. I was the first to run on it in 2010 for governor of New York. It was our program to get us out of the Great Recession. We proposed to revive the economy with public investments in clean energy and in public jobs, education, health care, and other social supports.

We called for public ownership and investment in clean energy to zero out greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. We called for an Economic Bill of Rights for living-wage jobs, an income above poverty, affordable housing, publicly-funded universal health care, lifelong tuition-free public education, and a secure retirement through a supplementary public pension program for all workers in the state.

We called it the Hawkins prosperity plan vs. the Cuomo austerity plan. The Democratic “lesser evil,” Andrew Cuomo, touted himself as “the real Tea Party candidate.” He blamed teachers and public employees for the state’s fiscal crisis, called for cuts in education and public employment, and opposed tax hikes on the rich.

We showed how restoring the more progressive income tax structure and the stock transfer tax of the 1970s would close a \$9 billion fiscal gap and provide an additional \$25 billion the first year for the Green New Deal.³

By August 2010, 62 Green candidates across the country came together to issue a call for a federal Green New Deal that included a 70% cut to military spending to help pay for it.⁴ Jill Stein, the Green presidential candidate in 2012 and 2016, ran on the Green New Deal, as did many Green candidates for local, state, and congressional offices over the decade.⁵

One week after November 2018 elections, the national media focused on the Green New Deal thanks to the Sunrise Movement. These youth — joined by newly-elected Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) — occupied House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office to demand a Green New Deal. A December public opinion poll showed that more than 80% of registered voters supported it.⁶

Almost every Democrat running for



Howie Hawkins (center) with Green Party activists, denouncing New York Governor Cuomo's fake environmentalist policies.

president soon had a Green New Deal. Even Governor Cuomo had his own Green New Deal for New York. Greens were glad that the idea was now at the center of political debate, but the Democrats had taken the brand and watered down the content.

The original demand for a Select Committee for a Green New Deal was soon shot down by Speaker Pelosi. So AOC and Senator Ed Markey came back with a Non-Binding Resolution for a Green New Deal.

The aspirational goals in the non-binding resolution retained the Green Party's link between economic justice and climate action with its call for an Economic Bill of Rights, which Greens believe is essential to counter the jobs-vs-environment line the energy corporations use to counter proposals for serious climate action.

The non-binding resolution, however, cut out or weakened important pieces of the Green Party's climate action side of the Green New Deal. It extended the goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions from 2030 to 2050, which is too slow to prevent climate catastrophe.

The resolution also dropped the federal ban on fracking and building of all new fossil fuel infrastructure, the indispensable immediate demand of the climate movement. It cut out the rapid phase-out of nuclear power and did not call for a major shift in spending from the military to clean energy.

The Democratic leadership then shot down the non-binding resolution. Speaker Pelosi would not schedule a vote on the non-binding resolution, which she ridiculed as a "green dream."

Senate Leader Mitch McConnell did schedule a vote to force the several Senators running in the Democratic primary to take a position, but the Democratic leadership told their senators not to go on the record by voting "present." The Democratic senators obeyed their leaders, except for the four who joined the Republicans in voting "no."

Despite these maneuvers, the Democratic and Republican leaders have not been able to shut down the movement and popular support for a Green New Deal. It is now the central theme of the whole climate movement. Many of the Democratic presidential candidates have felt compelled to offer their own versions.

An Ecosocialist Budget

Our ecosocialist Green New Deal emphasizes public ownership and planning, instead of relying on the profit motive in markets to effectively and rapidly implement the program. It also emphasizes rebuilding America's hollowed-out manufacturing sector so that we have the capacity to build the clean energy infrastructure and equipment for a new economy of environmental sustainability and economic security for all.

We propose to do what the federal government did in World War II when it built or took over a quarter of U.S. manufacturing in order to turn industry on a dime into the "Arsenal of Democracy" — it needs to do nothing less today to defeat climate change.

Rebuilding the manufacturing sector on an environmentally sustainable basis (clean power, zero waste, non-toxic materials)

is key to the whole program, and unique among all the Green New Deal proposals to date. We will need that manufacturing sector to build the clean energy systems in all sectors.

Elizabeth Warren does have a 10-year \$2 trillion Green Manufacturing Plan as part of her Green New Deal. But relying on federal R&D, procurement, and export subsidies rather than public ownership and planning, Warren's plan will not transform manufacturing with the speed and certainty that is needed.

Public ownership and planning is the only way to rebuild and convert all sectors — manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, buildings as well as electric power — to clean energy and zero emissions. The ecosocialist Green New Deal therefore employs a large sector of public enterprises in green manufacturing — starting with the machine tool industry that is necessary to produce the manufacturing equipment for intermediate and consumer goods manufacturing.

These manufacturing public enterprises will produce the equipment needed for an Interstate Renewable Energy System, an Interstate High-Speed Rail System, and an Interstate High-Speed Internet System.

While public enterprises in some sectors should be publicly-administered services — energy, railroads, internet, health care, public housing — others, such as manufacturing plants, should be leased out to worker cooperatives where workers would control their labor process and share the full fruits of their labor in proportion to their work contribution.

Our ecosocialist GND budget also shows how we can pay for the gross cost of this 10-year \$42 trillion program. Progressive tax reforms (income, wealth, estates, financial transactions, land value and more) would generate \$22 trillion. Cuts to spending on the military, border enforcement, and the war on drugs would generate nearly \$8 trillion.

That still leaves about \$13 trillion that will need to be borrowed under the current monetary system. We propose public banks and Green Quantitative Easing (Green QE) to finance this additional investment, only this time the Fed would use a Green QE asset purchase program to bail out the people and the planet instead of the banks.

The Green Party has a proposal for raising this money without incurring federal debt. It is a modern version of the greenback demand of the farmer-labor populists of the Greenback-Labor and People's parties of the late 19th century.

Under the Constitution's provision that

gives Congress the power to "coin money," the Federal Reserve would be nationalized as a Monetary Authority in the Treasury Department and issue greenbacks (United States Notes as opposed to Federal Reserve Notes in digital and paper form) that the Treasury Department would place into the economy on the Green New Deal without incurring debt by borrowing through the issuance of treasury securities.

The net cost of the Green New Deal may be zero or even positive in the long run. Sales of public goods and services created by Green New Deal industries — green machinery sales, electric power fees, internet fees, public transportation fares, public housing rents — will generate a return on the public investment.

Bernie Sanders says his Green New Deal will pay for itself through the sale of publicly owned and distributed electric power. We have not calculated revenues from our Ecosocialist Green New Deal, because what those prices should be are policy decisions

that will have to balance the need for revenues and the need to provide some goods and services at lower cost, such as clean electricity and public transportation, in order to encourage their use.

Determining those prices should be done by the cabinet-level Office of Climate Mobilization that we call for, which will be charged with planning the implementation of the Green New Deal and coordinating all federal agencies to achieve its goals.

Democratic GND Proposals

We will leave aside the Economic Bill of Rights part of the Green Party's Green New Deal here in comparing the Democratic Green New Deal proposals, because theirs only focus on the climate/clean energy aspect — except for Bernie Sanders who has called for an Economic Bill of Rights as a program separate from his Green New Deal.

All the Democratic candidates' proposals fall far short of what is needed for climate

Howie Hawkins for President

I AM RUNNING for the Green Party nomination for president because I was urged to do so by many Greens around the country. I am running as part of a collective leadership this "Draft Howie" committee put together that is diverse by race, gender, sexual orientation, age and geography.

We have conceived of a campaign with two basic goals: to advance an ecosocialist program and to build the Green Party.

We are emphasizing three life and death issues an ecosocialist program must address:

The Climate Crisis: We are calling for an ecosocialist Green New Deal that calls for public ownership and democratic planning of key sectors of the economy — energy, railroads, manufacturing — in order to coordinate the transformation of all productive sectors — electric power, manufacturing, agriculture, buildings, and transportation — to zero greenhouse gas emissions and 100% clean energy by 2030.

Growing Inequality: Inequality kills. The life expectancy gap between America's richest and poorest counties is now 20 years. The bottom half of the income spectrum has trouble paying for rent, utilities, groceries, medical bills, and/or college costs each month. People avoid medical care because of the cost. Many die prematurely.

We call for an Economic Bill of Rights to secure universal access to living-wage jobs, an income above poverty, affordable housing, comprehensive health care, lifelong public education, and a secure retirement. We also call for reparations for

African Americans, decolonization of U.S. territories, and honoring the treaties with and the land rights of Native Indians and Mexican Americans.

The New Nuclear Arms Race: The United States has initiated a nuclear modernization program to rebuild its strategic nuclear force with hypersonic speeds that are six times faster, thus radically reducing response time and putting nukes already on hair-trigger alert with even less time to respond to a perceived attack.

Washington is also deploying more tactical nukes for conventional battlefields, and meanwhile abandoning nuclear arms treaties. Other nuclear powers, fearful of being wiped out in a first strike, are following suit.

We intend to make nuclear disarmament a 2020 campaign issue. Specifically, we call on the United States to adopt a policy of No First Use and Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament to Minimum Credible Deterrent, to be followed up by urgent negotiations among the nuclear powers for complete global nuclear disarmament in accordance with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons approved by 122 non-nuclear nations in 2017.

We are making the case in the new socialist movement for independent working-class political action — so the socialist movement has its own oppositional voice and identity. We are arguing that socialism means democratic social ownership of the major means of production, rather than merely progressive social reforms that precariously depend on taxing the capitalist

economy.

Our party building goals include:

Ballot Access: We intend to qualify for the ballot in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 39 of those states and DC, what we do in the presidential year determines whether the Greens have a ballot line for the next election cycle so that Greens can run local races next time around.

Federal Primary Matching Funds: We intend to qualify for this one-to-one match on donations per individual of up to \$250, which requires raising \$5,000 in each of 20 states from donations of \$250 or less per donor.

Training Organizers: The Greens tend to be reliable activists who show up, but who are not as adept at organizing as they are to mobilizing. We will hold training sessions to spread the kind of knowledge and skills that good union and community organizers have.

Expanding the Green Party Base: We are prioritizing recruitment to the campaign and to the Green Party among the groups with the most alienation from the two-party system and the lowest voter turnout: the working class generally and youth and people of color in particular.

We also hope to build more unity across the independent left. Accordingly, we are also seeking the nominations of the Socialist Party USA and progressive state parties like the California Peace and Freedom Party.

The campaign website is www.howiehawkins.org. —Howie Hawkins

safety, with the exception of Bernie Sanders' proposal. They rely on federal standards, regulations, and tax and subsidy incentives to move the economy to zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Many of them seek 100% clean electricity by 2030 or 2035, but electric power production accounts for only 28% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. They wait until 2050 to eliminate emissions from the transportation, buildings, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors that account for the other 72%.

The public spending levels that the Democrats propose for their Green New Deals are far below what is needed to convert the economy to clean energy.

While we find that a 10-year \$27 trillion public investment in clean energy is needed, their 10-year budgets are an order of magnitude lower: Joe Biden \$1.7 trillion, Cory Booker \$3 trillion, Pete Buttigieg no budget, Tulsi Gabbard no budget, Kamala Harris no budget, Jay Inslee \$3 trillion, Amy Klobuchar no budget, Beto O'Rourke \$1 trillion, Elizabeth Warren \$4 trillion, Andrew Yang \$2.5 trillion (mostly for adaptation to climate change).

While many of these candidates state that their public investments will generate three to five times more in private investments, Kamala Harris simply calls for \$10 trillion in public and private investment without indicating the public/private leveraging ratio or being specific on any details.

Tulsi Gabbard has not endorsed the Non-Binding Resolution for a Green New Deal and counterposed it to HR 3671, the Off Fossil Fuels Act (OFF Act), of which she is the prime sponsor.

The OFF Act aims to zero out emissions by 2035 through a combination of banning new fossil fuel infrastructure and mandating dates for clean electric power, zero-emissions vehicles, and electrified trains. It relies on private industry to meet the mandates rather than public ownership and planning, a politically dubious assumption.

Exxon and Koch Industries, Duke Energy and National Grid, GM and Ford, and Union Pacific and CSX are not going to simply comply. They need to be socialized to take their enormous private economic power out of the political equation.

Of all the Democrats, only Gabbard and Sanders call for bans on fracking and new fossil fuel infrastructure, a transfer of money from the military to clean energy, or a phase-out of nuclear power. Biden and Yang call for more nuclear power and carbon capture technology to allow continued fossil fuel burning.

Bernie Sanders' Green New Deal is a serious proposal with public investment in the same order of magnitude as our proposal. He calls for a 10-year public investment of \$16.3 trillion. While his proposal doesn't

show how he derived his numbers, the numbers look reasonable to us given his slower timeline for zeroing out emissions across all sectors.

It will take a global commitment to a rapid transition to renewable energy to avert a climate holocaust...But most of the world's nations, including most of its poorest nations, have been pushing for stronger climate action.

Sanders' proposal seeks zero emissions from electric power by 2030 and from all other sectors by 2050, in contrast to our timeline of all-sectors zero emissions by 2030. Like our proposal, his calls for public ownership of utilities and a large sector of renewable energy. But Sanders doesn't call for public ownership of manufacturing and railroads, which we believe is essential to make the transition rapidly.

International Dimensions

It will take a global commitment to a rapid transition to renewable energy to avert a climate holocaust. China's Belts and Roads Initiative will be powered by 700 coal plants. Russia recently launched the first of seven planned barges with two nuclear reactors into the Arctic Ocean to power oil and gas wells. India's carbon emissions are growing at five percent a year as it rapidly expands its coal plants and oil-fueled vehicle fleet. But most of the world's nations, including most of its poorest nations, have been pushing for stronger climate action.

It will take a sophisticated mix of diplomacy and economic incentives to help the rest of the world jump from the 19th century fossil fuel age into the 21st century solar age. Many of the Democratic candidates talk about providing U.S. "global leadership" on climate, but only Sanders commits money to it. His Green New Deal would invest \$200 billion investment over 10 years in the Green Climate Fund.

The Green Climate Fund was set up at the UN climate conference in Copenhagen in 2009 to help developing nations build clean energy facilities. But thanks to vetoes by China, India and Saudi Arabia, it does not ban investments in fossil fuel projects. Our ecosocialist Green New Deal calls for a 10-year \$1 trillion investment in a Global Green New Deal to assist developing countries to develop clean energy systems.

A 10-year, \$42 trillion ecosocialist Green New Deal may seem like a lot to ask of a federal government that would spend \$44 trillion over 10 years for all of its programs if the FY 2019 budget level continues. But

the costs of not making that investment are greater.

A recent study in *Nature*⁷ found that if the world meets the goal of the Paris climate agreement of 2°C above the pre-industrial level (we have already reached 1.1° increase), global GDP will still fall 15% below the 2010 level by 2100. If temperatures rise by 3°C, global GDP will fall 25%. If temperatures rise by 4°C, global GDP will fall by more than 30%, which is more than it collapsed in the 1930s Great Depression.

These losses are permanent due to irreparable damages to services the environment provides to the human economy. Our Ecosocialist Green New Deal aims to limit the rise in temperature to 1°C or less by the end of the century.⁸

Global GDP in the worst case would be \$10 to \$20 trillion a year below its 2010 level. With almost a quarter of global GDP, U.S. losses would be about \$2.5 to \$5 trillion a year.

By preventing these losses, an investment of \$2.7 trillion a year over the next 10 years in rapidly building a clean energy economy will more than pay for itself. ■

Notes

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3. Green Party of New York State, "Peace, Justice, and a Green New Deal," <http://howiehawkins.com/2010/images/stories/2010/Slate-Platform.pdf>; Howie Hawkins, "Take the Rich Off Welfare to Erase the Deficit and Fund Jobs, Schools, Homes, the Environment, and Local Governments," <http://howiehawkins.com/2010/platform/26-progressive-tax-reform.html>; Howie Hawkins, "Jobs, Climate Protection, and a Green New Deal for New York State," <http://howiehawkins.com/2010/media-releases/289-hawkins-on-jobs.html>; Howie Hawkins, "Tax the Rich for a Green New Deal," <http://howiehawkins.com/2010/images/stories/2010/labor-day-flyer.pdf>; Howie Hawkins' Green New Deal, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwccul0i0Wc>.

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6. Timothy Cama, "Poll: Majorities of both parties support Green New Deal," *The Hill*, December 17, 2018, <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/421765-poll-majorities-of-both-parties-support-green-new-deal>.

7. Marshall Burke, W. Matthew Davis, and Noah S. Diffenbaugh, "Large potential reduction in economic damages under UN mitigation targets," *Nature*, May 28, 2018, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-018-0071-9>.

8. See note 2.



A group of steelworkers listening to a speaker about striking the steel industry, September 22, 1919.

Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/2002695618/.

Introduction:

William Z. Foster and Syndicalism

By the ATC Editors

WHILE FOR MANY years the U.S. labor left was weak and isolated, the rise of a new labor insurgency and of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has opened the space for renewed activism and discussion around socialist participation in the labor movement. In this context, the concept of a “rank-and-file strategy” is gaining wider currency.

The rank-and-file strategy starts from the centrality of unions as a locus of class struggle, and as schools of workers’ democracy. But it also recognizes the obstacle of bureaucratic business unionism that has long afflicted the labor movement. Responding to those contradictions, the strategy aims to build a layer of rank-and-file militant leaders, capable of confronting the power of capital and the union bureaucracy.

The vision is one of reviving the labor movement from the ground up, expanding the ranks of class-conscious workers, and creating a bridge to socialist politics. This perspective has been particularly associated with some socialist currents emerging out of the 1960s radicalization, and feeding into such organizations as Teamsters for a Democratic Union and *Labor Notes*. This journal and our sponsoring organization Solidarity proudly identify with this tradition.

The essentials of the rank-and-file strategy, however, have a much longer history. One key proponent of this approach was William Z. Foster. Although largely remembered for his

leadership role in the Stalinized Community Party between the 1930s and 1950s, Foster was a pioneering organizer in numerous struggles to establish industrial unionism in the 1910s and 1920s.

Here Foster was notable for his insistence on the need for radicals to work within the mainstream of organized labor — the American Federation of Labor craft unions — building rank-and-file movements to challenge business unionism and encourage amalgamation along industrial lines. Focusing on Foster’s mid-1920s work in the CP-led Trade Union Educational League, Kim Moody calls this “the first experiment in rank and file strategy” (<https://solidarity-us.org/rankandfilestrategy/>).

While the TUEL years are recognized as a valuable source of historical lessons (positive and negative) for present-day labor radicals, Foster’s earlier history deserves more attention in today’s activist revival. The relationship of Marxism and socialist politics to the unions is deeply complicated, and we cannot afford to overlook the lessons that the history of earlier movements teaches.

We hope that Avery Wear’s detailed account of Foster’s syndicalism and organizing efforts in the packinghouses and steel mills can provide further insights into this kind of transitional approach to socialist participation in the unions. ■

A Forgotten Bride in Labor History

William Z. Foster and Syndicalism

By Avery Wear

IN THE 1930s, U.S. union membership leapt forward, general strikes and sit-downs won strings of victories, welfare and labor laws were passed, and the mass-production heart of the economy got organized. Anti-capitalists in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and Communist Party proved the value of marginalized methods: direct action, mass democracy, and struggle against race and sex discrimination.

But “Labor’s Giant Step” was not just a break from the past. The 50-year-old American Federation of Labor (AFL), not just the new insurgent Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), provided organizational scaffolding for the advance. And the CIO itself, despite its rebellious ranks, stayed under John L. Lewis’ established leadership. This conflictual mix of radical and conservative reflected both the prior accumulation of forces on each side, and decades of emerging strategy on the Left.

Many accounts rightly point to the revolutionary Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as pioneer of the tactics and incubator of the personnel vital to the breakthrough. Marxist and socialist parties played important roles as well. An almost forgotten strand, however, includes the syndicalist period of William Z. Foster.

At first glance Foster’s long career — forming a series of short-lived union reform groups, heading two big organizing drives that ended in defeat, ultimately leading the Communist Party into 1950s decline — promises no great lessons. Yet Foster’s circle did more in the 1910s and ‘20s to develop strategies that bridged the old and the new than did much larger forces.

Foster’s packinghouse and steel campaigns blazed a path to the successful unionization of basic industry; he developed a method for revolutionary work inside unions; and he began an organizational tradition for that work that continues today. Foster prefigured united front methods, rank and file caucuses, and revolutionary organizational forms before they had names.

The syndicalism associated with Foster, despite apparent



William Z. Foster in September 1919, during the steel strike of 250,000.

failure, was a key bridge from a workers’ movement rendered archaic by capitalist restructuring, to one audaciously resurgent.

Industrial Transformation and Turmoil

Unions formed in the United States even in the eighteenth century. (Foner vol. I, 70. References are listed at the conclusion of this article — ed.) But the modern labor movement dates from the 1880s — the decade of the Haymarket martyrs, the Knights of Labor, and Samuel Gompers’ Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, later renamed the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

Unlike the Knights, who organized across industry regardless of specialization, the AFL practiced old fashioned craft unionism. AFL unions also looked backward in their frequent refusal to admit Black, women and/or immigrant workers. For these reasons, IWW members derisively termed the AFL the “American Separation of Labor.”

Craft unions, with their membership of skilled and better-paid workers, had often successfully leveraged their members’ monopoly on job knowledge in the age of small-shop manufacturing. But by the 1890s that age was ending due to technological advances. The reorganization that accompanied the concentration and centralization of capital led to the creation of modern corporations.

“Scientific” management, involving deskilling of tasks and intensified supervision, undermined the skilled trades and swamped craft employees in the factories with semi- and unskilled workers. Twenty million people immigrated to the United States from 1880 to 1920, feeding manufacturing’s growing demand for unskilled labor.

With a fast-expanding national market and a fledgling U.S. empire abroad, most of the twentieth century’s corporate giants formed in this period. General Electric, US Steel, the meatpacking oligopoly and others at first made deals with the craft-unionized minorities in their new plants. But starting in the recession of 1903, they flexed their muscles.

Corporate employers’ associations and small-town middle-class Citizens’ Alliances routed strikes and broke the unions in heavy industry. Two of the once powerful craft unions reduced to impotence were the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen, defeated in a strike in 1904, and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, similarly routed in 1909.

Workers resisted the “new industrial discipline” with or without, and sometimes against, the unions. A “New Unionism within basic industry” emerged as a decade of worker unrest

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began in 1911. (Montgomery, 101) Between 1911 and 1920 union membership grew by more than 250%, from 2.3 to five million workers. (Wolman, 2)

Each year of U.S. involvement in World War I saw more than a million workers striking — more than had ever struck in any year before 1915 — peaking in 1919 with more than four million workers on strike. (Montgomery 97. The rest of this section draws on Montgomery's essay — AW)

This defied the AFL's official wartime "no-strike" pledge. In 1920 7.4% of strikes, and 58% of strikers, acted without union sanction. According to historian David Montgomery, this "New Unionism" fed off a twin revolt of skilled workers defending their control of the work process, and of unskilled and immigrant workers for better wages and against scientific management. (The IWW and the Socialist Party opposed the war; many of their leaders were jailed.)

These struggles in the new mass production industries, often involving AFL unions, were in many cases led by socialists and revolutionaries. But lacking a fully formed industrial and political leadership reflecting the new militancy, most strikes "ended in total defeat." (*Ibid.*, 94)

Nor was membership growth consolidated — from its peak of five million in 1920, union membership had declined to 3.4 million by 1929. (Bernstein, 84) The old craft exclusionist and racist policies of the AFL, not to mention its commitment to a business union model, weighed heavily.

Left union strategy

Anarchists and Marxists helped lead the 1880s labor movement, especially in Chicago, where the International Working Peoples' Association (IWPA) built a mass eight-hour day movement admired by revolutionaries worldwide. From at least the time of the Knights of Labor, socialists recognized the necessity for industry-wide unions to confront the emerging factory system using broad class (not mere craft) struggle.

Eugene Debs' short-lived American Railway Union (ARU), which led dramatic mass organizing drives and strikes in 1894-5, showed the potential of the industrial form of organization (despite the ARU's dangerous failure to break with segregation). But the ARU experience also committed Debs and others to bypassing the craft-oriented AFL to start new unions — what was termed "dual unionism."

Daniel DeLeon of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) initially argued the alternative proposition that revolutionaries should "bore from within" existing unions. For DeLeon, unions should not only lead the fight against capitalism, but also should take over the administration of industry and government after revolution. (Kipnis, 13-16)

Though such notions would become foundational to the international movement known as syndicalism, the fiercely "orthodox" Marxist DeLeon differed from syndicalists in insisting on propagandizing through independent socialist participation in bourgeois elections. William Z. Foster claimed to have read all of DeLeon's pamphlets, calling him "the Father of American syndicalism." (Barrett, 31)

But DeLeon changed course before giving "boring from within" a real historical test. In 1895 he led the SLP out of the AFL after losing a convention leadership fight. The SLP began attacking the AFL as a corrupt counter-revolutionary organization of "labor fakers." They formed their own union

federation — the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance — which lasted for ten years of revolutionary purity and utter futility.

The SLP faded after Debs' Socialist Party (SP) entered the field in 1900. (Kipnis, 104) The SP grew into the first mass party of U.S. socialism. SP members of its Right and Center wings, like Max Hayes and Morris Hillquit, worked to influence the AFL from within. Their reformist goals were to pass union resolutions favoring social ownership of the means of production, and endorsements for SP electoral candidates.

Pursuing these aims meant, for the SP right and center, accommodating to the backward policies of the AFL. The SP's influential Left wing, including Debs and Western Federation of Miners' leader "Big" Bill Haywood, reacted against this. In his speech at the IWW's founding, Debs said the AFL's role was to "chloroform the working class while the capitalist class go through their pockets."

Debs and Haywood enthusiastically supported the founding of the IWW in 1905. DeLeon and Haymarket anarchist Lucy Parsons joined them.

Foster and the IWW

Founded in 1905 amid enthusiasm for the first revolution in Russia, the IWW declared in the preamble to its constitution, "Instead of the conservative motto of 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword 'abolition of the wages system.'"

In addition to gaining the support of the leading worker revolutionaries of the day, the new organization also attracted the established Western Federation of Miners and United Metal Workers' unions. All wanted a militant alternative to the class-collaborationist AFL and set out to create "one big union" to embrace the whole working class.

Through a general strike "the workers of the world (could)...take possession of the means of production." Organizing on industrial instead of craft lines meant coping with "the ever-growing power of the employing class" by enabling "all its members in any one industry" to strike together. But it also meant revolutionary goals: "It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism.... The army of production must be organized...to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown." (IWW Constitution, Preamble)

IWW organizers, known as Wobblies, prioritized direct action. They leveraged their strength by sending their itinerant membership to wherever mass campaigns popped up. Struggles often took on the dimensions of local uprisings. Aiming to unionize the unskilled and the skilled together, they brought anti-racism into the highly fractured working-class cultures of the time.

For these reasons the Trotskyist ex-Wobbly James P. Cannon in his history of early American Communism wrote, "In action the IWW, calling itself a union, was much nearer to Lenin's conception of a party of professional revolutionaries than any other organization calling itself a party at that time."

Despite a promising start with some 40,000 members according to Vincent St. John, the IWW never seriously challenged the AFL for leadership of the union movement, nor did it (despite leading impressive strikes) succeed in bringing lasting organization into mass production. By the time William Z. Foster joined the IWW in 1909, it had lost its largest founding

union, the Western Federation, and had suffered other splits.

Foster's Early Years

Born in 1881, Foster grew up poor among pro-labor Irish nationalists in Philadelphia. (Much of the biographical information on Foster's life comes from Barrett and from Johannsmeier 1994.) In 1895 the street gang he belonged to (the Bulldogs) destroyed streetcars in support of strikers.

Starting in 1900 Foster was already living as an itinerant laborer. Between then and 1916 he traveled 35,000 miles hopping boxcars across the country. He worked "logging, sawmills, building, metal mining, railroad construction, railroad train service, etc." He even worked for a winter on a cargo sailing vessel, sailing "one and a half times around the world." (Foster 1970, 13, 12)

Foster lived and worked in Portland, Oregon from 1904-07. There he worked with the SP Left around Tom Sladden, who argued that unskilled workers, not middle-class elements, should lead the Socialist Party. Laid off in Portland, Foster found work on Seattle's railroads.

Hermon F. Titus led SP Left factional struggles there, expelling middle-class advocates of electoral alliances with Democrats. Titus's politics anticipated Foster's evolution: won over by DeLeon's advocacy of revolutionary industrial (as opposed to craft) unionism, Titus nonetheless joined the SP instead of the SLP, as he rejected the dual unionism of the IWW.

Titus and his followers walked out of the 1909 State SP Convention in Everett Washington, charging that Right-wing reformists stole the leadership. The Party's National Executive sided with the Right, so Titus, along with the *Workingman's Paper*, split away.

Soon after, Foster went to Spokane, Washington, to cover an IWW free speech fight for Titus' *Workingman's Paper*. Day laborers had to buy mining and lumber jobs from contractors. Among other abuses, contractors sold non-existent jobs. The IWW organizing campaign employed a favored tactic: using street speakers to recruit, propagandize, and if necessary fill the jails to dramatize the lack of free speech rights.

In Spokane, Foster found thousands of workers in a defiant battle at the center of city life. (Foner vol. 4, 180) Several years in the SP, a vehicle (even for the Left wing) more for electoral than grassroots activity, had never exposed him to class struggle on this scale.

Police jailed him for 40 days on December 6, 1909 for watching an IWW soapboxer. Wobbly prisoners were energetic and well organized. They chose Foster for the three-man committee that negotiated the partially victorious settlement with the Mayor. (Foster 3/12/1910, 1)

"It was chiefly disgust with the petit-bourgeois leadership and policies of the SP that made me join the IWW," Foster would later write. In joining he became a syndicalist, believing trade union action and not political parties led to revolution. "The paralyzing reformism of the SP (convinced me) that political action in general was fruitless." (Foster 1970, 15)

He now believed in "the possibilities of direct action" as in Spokane, "especially the marvelous effectiveness of the passive resistance strike." He wrote to the *Workingman's Paper* that "it has convinced me that it is possible to really organize the working class."¹



So committed was Foster to these new principles that he decided to deepen his knowledge with a 1910 trip to France to observe the world's leading syndicalist organization, the Confederation General du Travail (CGT). He wrote to Titus, "I am on my way to a country where I should learn a little." (Barrett, 43) What he learned on the trip would lead him beyond the IWW.

Syndicalism Toward Revolution

Socialists attained mass influence in Europe in the two decades after founding the Second International in 1889. The Second International's parties and allied union federations formally espoused Marxism. But the unions, run by full-time bureaucrats with economic interests distinct from the rank and file, saw themselves as auxiliaries to the socialist parties. They downplayed or opposed militant bottom-up action.

The parties, in turn, increasingly emphasized elections over revolution. They won seats in local and sometimes national governments (France's Millerand in 1899), but in doing so generally betrayed their principles and members. "In Western Europe revolutionary syndicalism...was a direct and inevitable result of opportunism, reformism, and parliamentary cretinism (in the socialist movement)," wrote Lenin. (Darlington, 57)

But while Foster and other syndicalists agreed with those criticisms of the Second International (of which the SP was a member), they also absorbed unique positive revolutionary concepts from syndicalism. When many later rallied to the Russian Revolution and became Communists, a sophisticated synthesis resulted from the infusion of syndicalism into Marxism.

Between 1905 and 1920, not only French but Spanish, Irish and Italian syndicalist federations often led their countries' union movements. Observing this, Foster rather mechanically theorized, "The natural course of evolution for a labor movement...is gradually from the conservative to the revolutionary." (Foster and Ford, 43)

Any Marxist would agree with the assertion that united actions, even limited strikes, educate and organize workers, creating conditions for radical consciousness to develop. The

early 20th century rise of syndicalism was contingent on the general labor upsurge of the time. (Darlington, 49)

Ralph Darlington lists eight elements shared by the major syndicalist movements of the period, including the CGT and the IWW (though at the time the IWW considered itself “industrial,” not “syndicalist”). These were (1) “Class-Warfare and revolutionary objectives,” (2) “Rejection of Parliamentary Democracy and the Capitalist State,” (3) “Autonomy from Political Parties,” (4) “Trade Unions as Instruments of Revolution,” (5) “Direct Action,” (6) “The General Strike,” (7) “Workers’ Control,” and (8) “Anti-Militarism and Internationalism.” (Darlington, 21)

In his 1913 pamphlet *Syndicalism* Foster brought out two other principles common to the movement internationally. First, “Great strikes break out spontaneously and ... they spontaneously produce the organization so essential to their success.”

Luxemburg (1906) and Lenin (1902) similarly welcomed the necessarily spontaneous breakthroughs in struggle with which revolutionaries must engage (without concluding that organization would emerge so spontaneously), but they were in a small minority in the Second International.

Second, quoting the 1906 CGT Convention, Foster wrote, “the fighting groups of today will be the producing and distributing groups of tomorrow.” In other words, unions become the bodies that manage the economy post-revolution.

By the 1920s Foster and thousands of radicals who would go on to organize the struggles of the 1930s had refined and modified these principles. In particular, they viewed syndicalist anti-political tendencies as one-sided. But the basic theme of bottom-up worker mass action remained.

Today syndicalists are usually associated with anarchism (“anarcho-syndicalism”). In Foster’s time, anarchists vied with syndicalism for influence against both Marxists and pure-and-simple unionists.

Anarchists worked with Marxists and others in the IWW. In Ireland and Britain, anarchists had no significant syndicalist role. But anarchists dominated the heroic years of the Spanish CNT, played a strong role in Italy, and ran the French CGT intermittently.

Foster acquainted himself with Pouget, Yvetot, and Herve, anarchist radicals in the CGT. (Barrett, 44) He became a virtual anarchist, “accepting on principle the anarchist positions... on neo-Malthusianism [the belief that workers should abstain from having children-AWW], marriage, individualism, religion, art, the drama, literature etc.” In *Syndicalism* he wrote, “Syndicalism has placed the Anarchist movement upon a practical, effective basis.” (Foster and Ford, 31)

Foster’s early writings from France breathed a quasi-anarchist heightening of native IWW militancy. He considered the CGT’s advocacy of industrial sabotage to “mark an epoch in the development of working class tactics,” founded on an understanding “that capitalist property is not sacred, but that it is simply stolen goods.” (Foster 12/8/1910)

At the same time, he criticized the views of some CGT members who considered sabotage “a general panacea for their social ills” and failed to see that violent tactics could enable state repression. (Barrett 45-6)

Foster aligned with Wobbly anti-politicals, arguing that adopting a “no politics in the union” rule was key to the

CGT’s success. In his account, battles between socialist factions aiming to rule or ruin the CGT marked its early history. He argued that elected Socialists in France “persecuted (the CGT) with the most vigor,” and that Socialist railroad union leader Niel broke the 1909 strike led by syndicalists.

He recommended that the IWW adopt “strict official neutrality towards all political parties, and as individuals to vigorously combat the political action theory (of advancing workers’ interests).” (Foster 3/23/1911, 1, 4)

Boring from Within

These ideas were controversial but not new in the IWW. But soon Foster noticed that the CGT had not organized its own separate dual union. Instead it had “bored from within,” forming organized “militant minority” groups (*noyaux*) inside the established union organizations. Through the *noyaux*, they eventually took the unions over. (Foner vol. 4, 417)

The CGT wasn’t huge, but with 400,000 members and a revolutionary leadership (compared to 14,000 members in the IWW in 1913), Foster considered the CGT the most feared workers’ organization in the world. He pointed to Emil Vandervelde, top official of the Second International, who admitted that the CGT had achieved more in practical results than the much larger Socialist-allied unions in Germany.

CGT head Leon Jouhaux said to Foster “tell the IWW, when you return to America, to get into the labor movement.” Jouhaux spoke from experience. A few months before Foster went to France, British IWW militant Tom Mann visited the CGT. Returning to the UK, he dropped out of the tiny British IWW and founded the Industrial Syndicalist Education League (ISEL). (Barrett, 48) British unions, the world’s oldest, were seen as notoriously conservative by radicals. (Foster 1922)

British syndicalists did not enjoy the French luxury of helping build the unions from the ground up. They confronted an established union movement under conservative leadership — like the AFL. Yet during the Great Labor Unrest of 1910-1914, Mann and the ISEL were “at, or near, the center of many disputes.”

These included the Liverpool transport strike of 1911, whose strike committee Mann headed. This was “the most serious challenge to capitalist authority” because the “strike committee began to act as an alternative organ of class power through its control over the city’s transport system.” (Darlington, 85, 78)

The ISEL thus campaigned successfully for militant direct action. It also advanced demands for amalgamation of craft unions into industrial unions “of all workers on the basis of class.” The formation of the National Transport Workers’ Federation in 1910, the 1913 National Union of Railwaymen, and in 1914 the Triple Alliance of miners, railway workers, and transport workers followed. (Darlington, 65)

Foster marveled at these achievements, carried out by Mann and a few dozen followers entering the existing unions as an organized League. Following Jouhaux’s advice, Foster attended the 1911 IWW Convention and proposed that it focus on boring from within AFL unions in order to revolutionize them. He won over five out of 31 delegates, including Jack Johnstone of Vancouver BC and Earl Ford of Seattle.

Then he wrote an editorial for the Wobbly paper *Industrial Worker*, “Why won’t the IWW grow?” His answer: the founders’ “dogma” of dual unionism. (Foner vol. 4, 419) Foster later

related IWW dual unionism to the alleged sectarian proclivities of its “socialist politician” founders Debs and DeLeon. (Foster and Ford, 32)

The way to “revolutionary unionism,” he wrote, was to “give up the attempt to create a new labor movement, turn (ourselves) into a propaganda league, get into the organized labor movement, and by building up better fighting machines within the old unions than those possessed by our reactionary enemies, revolutionize these unions even as our French Syndicalist fellow workers have so successfully done with theirs.” (Foner vol. 4, 420)

IWW papers *Solidarity* and *Industrial Worker* hosted a debate on Foster’s proposal. One Wobbly related successfully boring from within the Seattle AFL, complaining that success turned to failure when the borers abandoned the effort and joined the IWW instead.

Johnstone wrote that the “strongest weapon” of conservative “labor fakers” was to argue that radical dual unionists aimed to destroy their organizations.

But most letters opposed Foster. They called the AFL a “corpse” and job trust, said the United States was different from France because it had more unskilled workers, that many Wobblies had already been kicked out of AFL unions, and that most IWW members couldn’t join the skilled craft unions of the AFL.

Others argued that some IWW members, still inside AFL unions as “dual card holders,” were already “boring from within,” and that this complemented attempts to build dual unions outside. *Solidarity* declared “discussion closed” on December 16, 1911. (Foner vol. 4, 421)

Claiming he didn’t get to respond fully, Foster wrote a series of articles for the *Washington Agitator*, paper of anarchist Jay Fox. Foster argued that “dual card holders” could not successfully bore from within, because the workers’ correct instinct for unity made it easy for conservative leaders to attack them as rival unionists. Further, the AFL would prevent the growth of any radical rival by scabbing on its strikes.

To those who declared the AFL dead due to its outdated craft structure, he declared the form of organization less important than revolutionary spirit. In France and England even conservative unions had been revolutionized, and converted from craft to industrial unions. He pointed out that some mainstream U.S. unions were already moving toward industrial organization.

Organizing the unorganized, Foster claimed, would proceed far faster if militants captured AFL resources for the purpose — something his own efforts at the end of the decade would prove spectacularly. Most of all he hammered the message that dual unionism robbed the AFL of its natural “militant minority,” leaving the conservative “labor fakers” in charge. (Foner vol. 4, 422-36)

The Syndicalist League of North America

Now Foster struck out on his own. Setting up shop in Chicago, he joined the mainstream Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, paying his last IWW dues February 15, 1912. Working as a car inspector 12 hours a day, seven days per week, he kept up correspondence with contacts across the country. But first he had to jumpstart his own “militant minority” group.

Drawing on his hobo skills, he rode freight cars to towns across the country, speaking before IWW and AFL locals. On



Filling the jails in Spokane, Washington in 1909: Foster was an activist in the IWW-led free speech campaign.

one brutal ride in March, Foster almost froze to death on the high plains. His speaking tour failed to pull IWW Branches away, but it did induce individuals and small groups to join him.

Foster wrote in the *Agitator* that the IWW failed because it tried to be both a propaganda society and a union federation. Instead a loose network linked together by a newspaper was needed. (Foner, *Ibid.*)

Foster convinced Jay Fox, a labor anarchist with roots in the Haymarket period and Debs’ American Railway Union, to relaunch his paper under joint editorship with him. They called it the *Syndicalist*. After an August 15, 1912 article calling “direct actionists” of the “militant minority” to contact him personally, a Chicago gathering formally launched the Syndicalist League of North America (SLNA) in September.

League members, mostly ex-Wobblies and worker anarchists, joined their local AFL unions. Branches formed in Nelson and Vancouver, British Columbia (BC Canada, where Johnstone worked), Kansas City, St. Louis, Omaha, Chicago, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Tacoma, San Diego and Denver.

Reflecting Foster’s emphasis on avoiding even the appearance of dual unionism, the League had no membership fees. Income came only from donations and selling publications, while National Secretary Foster took no salary and kept his day job.

Foster wrote that the SLNA was “the first definite organization in the U.S. for boring from within the trade unions by revolutionaries.” It was “not a political party or a union. It would not organize unions except to assist and act as a recruiting ground for all unions. It was not pro-AFL and not anti-IWW, but mainly encouraged militants to enter the AFL.” Stressing a refreshing non-sectarianism absent from both the AFL and the IWW, he declared that it would support all workers’ struggles. (Foner vol. 4, 428-29)

The SLNA attracted worker revolutionaries who worked with Foster over the next decade and beyond. In the 1920s they made up much of the initial core of the U.S. Communist Party’s (CP) labor activists. Besides Johnstone and Fox, who brought their own contacts into the SLNA, the great Lucy Parsons joined the Chicago Branch and hosted meetings at her home.

Sam T. Hammersmark was another Haymarket veteran who later participated in the 1917 packinghouse campaign. Ironworker Joe Manley joined the League, Kansas City unionist and future CP Chairman Earl Browder collaborated closely with it, and so did James Cannon (though Cannon remained

in the IWW). (Barrett, 62-63) Tom Mooney was yet another working-class luminary in the League. (Johanningsmeier 1989, 329-53)

The League scored major successes in Kansas City. Bringing vision and ambition to the City Trades' Council, they helped it launch the "Labor Forward" campaign. They "led several important strikes" and "organized numerous AFL locals," adding 10,000-15,000 new union members by 1916.

Browder led an auditing committee that uncovered corruption and helped drive out the conservative head of the Council. (Barrett, 63) Foster claimed that after that the League had "virtual" control of the Kansas City Council, and "practical control" of the Cooks, Barbers, and Office Workers' unions. (Johanningsmeier 1994, 71)

In St. Louis, League members led strikes of waiters, taxi drivers, and telephone operators. Fox became Vice President of the International Union of Timberworkers, which organized a one-day general strike for the eight-hour day on May Day.

Foster claimed that the SLNA "practically controlled the AF of L" in Nelson, BC. The SLNA had about 2000 members at its height. (Barrett, 63, 58) Operating in a period of labor upturn, its accomplishments suggested some promise for the novel combination of boring from within the unions as a militant minority.

Never before in the United States had revolutionaries so self-consciously organized themselves precisely to maximize their contact and influence with the mass of workers, and to minimize all separation. They began transcending in practice the apparent contradiction in union work between revolutionary principles on the one hand, and mass action, connections, and influence, on the other.

But though it began a long and fruitful (if small) tradition, the group itself faded out by 1915. The SLNA "made quite a stir," Foster later wrote, but it "was born before its time. The rebel elements generally were still too infatuated with dual unionism."

This was especially so because the IWW in 1912 began to catch the wave of the broader labor upturn itself. It was the year of the famous Lawrence strike. "The IWW made a great show of vitality" and eclipsed the League, he wrote. (Foster 1922, "Bankruptcy")

Also, as Foster himself later thought, "because of his belief in decentralization, the national league was incapable of developing into a very unified organization." Finally, Foster later argued that the group's "leftist direct attacks upon the workers' nationalistic feelings and their religion also needlessly alienated the mass of workers" — an error he would zealously correct in his next venture. (Johanningsmeier 1994, 71, 78)

The ITUEL and "Right Opportunism"

Attempting to relaunch, Foster and 13 former SLNA members met January 7, 1915 in St. Louis and founded the International Trade Union Education League (ITUEL). Foster logged 7000 miles on yet another hobo trip, but at the end of it still had only the Chicago chapter. The fewer than 100 members there held key positions (for example as business agents and organizers) in the painters, machinists, carpenters, tailors, retail clerks, garment workers, and iron molders. (Barrett, 66-68)

Though stillborn, the new organization helped to bind the network of collaborators who would participate in big cam-

paigns to come. (Johanningsmeier 1989) Foster also at this time produced a new pamphlet — *Trade Unionism: The Road to Freedom*. Ditching anarchist rhetoric for language closer to mainstream U.S. political traditions, he called for workers to "join the Trade Union Movement and be a fighter in the glorious cause of liberty!"

Unions, he argued, "by their very nature driven on to the revolutionary goal," he wrote. "As their strength grew, organized labor would inevitably overthrow the wages system." Even craft unions concerned only with partial demands were "as insatiable as the veriest so-called revolutionary union." (Quoted in Johanningsmeier 1994, 80, 81)

The SLNA's successes had followed the French CGT model of an organized minority gaining influence inside unions. In their ITUEL and succeeding campaigns, the Foster coterie owed more to the British Industrial Syndicalist Education League's stress on amalgamating craft unions. The direct-action emphasis on the strike weapon, plus appeals to rank and file militancy against union leaders, continued, as did Foster's commitment to unions as revolutionary and anti-capitalist.

As the ITUEL faded out, its members still bored from within but no longer built a militant minority formation. So, facing conservatizing pressures as an individual, the stage was set for what Foster later called his "sag into right opportunism." (Barrett, 66)

His worst "sag" was support for the United States in World War I. Foster saw the war as labor's moment, in which domestic labor shortages in war production would increase unions' leverage. He even spoke in war bond sales drives. (Murray, 448)

In the Big Leagues: The Packinghouse Campaign

Before the war Foster, as a delegate to the Chicago Federation of Labor, proposed to affiliate all 125,000 railroad industry workers into a citywide council federating the railroad craft unions. (Barrett, 69) With the U.S. entry into the war in April 1917, his sights rose. "One day as I was walking to work...it struck me suddenly that perhaps I could get a campaign started to organize the workers in the great Chicago packinghouses" (including the railroad workers servicing them). (Foster 1937, 91. Quoted in Foner vol. 7, 235)

Months later his brainstorm led to an achievement previously untried by the AFL — "the first (unionization of a) mass production industry in the United States." (Foner vol. 7, 235) Foster believed "such a great influx of members...would lead to the revolutionization of the AF of L." (Barrett, 78) To meet this challenge he sought a new non-segregated, actively anti-racist organizing strategy.

The defeat of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen (AMC) in the 1904 strike left only its organized "remnants...(among) the predominantly Irish and German 'butcher aristocracy.'" (Halpern, 44) But struggle spontaneously revived in the packinghouses during the war.

A general labor shortage resulted from conscription and an 80% immigration dropoff. With workers in demand, meat-packing jobs lost out to less unpleasant employments. Annual labor turnover in the industry by 1917-18 stood at 334%. Aware of their newfound leverage, unskilled Polish, Slova, and Lithuanian workers struck individual departments "at a frenzied pace throughout 1916 and 1917."

"Business cannot be conducted in an orderly manner in this age of unrest" said one executive. Stockyard worker Arthur Kampfert wrote of leading a pork-trimmers' strike in 1916. Workers elected him to a bargaining committee which won a four cent per hour raise. The company then fired Kampfert. Within a month he led a walkout at the next plant, winning a five-cent increase in a three-hour strike. This sparked several other wildcats.

As in the Haymarket days, Chicago stood as a beacon for progressive labor, through the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL). From 1917-19 it launched a Labor Party effort, worked with feminists to organize teachers, and led in the campaign to free framed unionist (and SLNA alum) Tom Mooney. (Halpern 45, 47-8, 50)

Led by Irish nationalist John Fitzpatrick, the CFL allowed space for Foster and other radicals to take initiatives. While neither a syndicalist nor revolutionary, Fitzpatrick advocated industrial unionism (Johanningsmeier 1994, 91)

Foster's Railway Carmen endorsed his packinghouse plan July 11, 1917. Within a week the AMC and CFL followed. His innovation was forming the Stockyards Labor Council (SLC), with representatives from more than ten craft unions. These jealously guarded jurisdiction over different jobs. But the SLC — as in Tom Mann's ISEL amalgamation schemes — ran the organizing drive. Foster and Johnstone got paid to lead it.

A Polish and a Lithuanian organizer (both of whom turned out to be company spies) came on board to reach the largest immigrant groups. (Foner vol. 7, 235-36) The AFL and United Mineworkers provided Black organizers. The Women's Trade Union League assigned Irene Goins to recruit Black women. (Barrett, 79-80)

Necessary resources depended on a diverse coalition, and tensions flared between conservatives and radicals at every turning point. Foster considered AMC officials "reactionary," while AMC President Dennis Lane complained of "self-elected" SLC leaders Foster and Johnstone "mak(ing) laws to suit themselves." (Halpern, 55; Johanningsmeier 1994, 104)

Balancing agendas of the craft locals, pushing back on AFL conservatism, and above all fighting racist divisions among workers made an incredibly daunting task of organizing these workers "for years...considered unorganizable." But by year's end the President's Mediation Commission estimated 25-50 percent of packinghouse workers had joined. (Foner vol. 7, 235, 236)

Foster spoke before "fraternal and other community groups." The drive "caught fire...especially among Poles." More than 20,000 Slavic workers signed up by war's end, and white workers as a whole largely joined. (Barrett, 79)

"Black politicians and preachers...subsidized by the packers" opposed the SLC and promoted a Black-only company union, the American Unity Packers Union, which stated it did "not believe in strikes." Worse, some national stockyard unions constitutionally forbade Black membership.

Foster fought these provisions, but ultimately had to accept a supposedly temporary Jim Crow compromise in which Samuel Gompers agreed to charter all-Black AFL "federal labor unions" to be part of the SLC. Black workers were promised they would later be transferred into "locals of their respective crafts." Meanwhile, the federal labor unions excluded women. (Foner vol. 7, 237-38)

Most Black stockyard workers came during the wartime "Great Migration" from the South. Chicago was "the leading center of Black industrial labor during World War One." In 1915 1100 Blacks worked in the packinghouses (5%); by 1918, 10,000 (20%). (Street 659, 660)

"Northern" Blacks, in Chicago prior to the War, joined the unions as much or more than European immigrants — to the tune of 90% by 1918. But a different set of experiences and pressures made the Southerners hesitant. Few other industries hired Blacks at all, and packers promoted Blacks somewhat more readily than elsewhere.

Forcibly concentrated into a ghetto "Black Belt" near the stockyards, and as yet lacking community support structures Poles and others had built over years, new Black workers depended more on the goodwill of their bosses to survive. (Street 667, 663-64) As Foster said, "The colored man as a blood race has been oppressed for hundreds of years. The white man has enslaved him, and they don't feel confidence in the trade unions." (Johanningsmeier 1994, 108)

Racist condescension or outright hatred from white workers could be confronted by unions, or manipulated by packers. Since they couldn't shut down production if Blacks and supervisors worked through strikes, union leverage depended on solidarity over racism. Packer Philip Armour admitted to "keep(ing) the races and nationalities apart after working hours, and to foment(ing) suspicion, rivalry, and even enmity among such groups."

Inside the plants, the Wilson company transferred loyal Black workers from its southern plants to fight the union on the shop floor. Austin "Heavy" Williams, beef kill boss at Wilson, used favoritism in job assignments against pro-union Blacks, "preached against the union," and "backed up his beliefs with his powerful fists." He was part of a group of 15 southern Blacks working against the union. Meanwhile on the same killing floor, Black unionists Frank Custer and Robert Bedford braved abuse, scorn from fellow Blacks, and discrimination from the company to act as one-half of the stewards' team representing Black and white workers together. (Halpern 24, 64, 57-8)

Recognizing that "organizing the colored worker was the real problem," Foster "aggressively pursued African-American grievances, including racial discrimination." He spoke before Black community groups, and cultivated a group of active Black worker militants for the campaign. (The SLC also demanded equal pay for women). (Barrett, 80; Foner vol. 7, 238)

Through these efforts the SLC made headway toward Black-white unity. Historian Paul Street claims the SLC "probably never recruited more than 20 percent of Chicago's Black packinghouse workers," but James Barrett estimates that 4,000-5,000 Black workers joined, while Philip Foner says "estimates vary between 6,000 and 10,000." (Street, 662; Barrett, 80; Foner, vol. 7, 237)

Workers pushed to strike in late 1917. Samuel Gompers and the AMC opposed, but Foster organized a membership strike vote, which came out massively in favor. (Halpern, 54; Barrett, 81) The strike threat forced the White House to mediate to avoid disruption in war provisions. At the ensuing public hearings, Fitzpatrick said that the unions "will be unable to prevent a walkout if the (mediator's) decision is not announced immediately."

Federal Judge Samuel B. Altschuler then produced a March 30, 1918 ruling granting, in Foster's words, "85% of the union's demands." While not gaining union recognition, workers won an 8-hour day, overtime pay, a 20-minute paid lunch period, a 10% wage increase, seniority rights, and clean dressing areas and bathrooms. The judgment banned racial discrimination in hiring and work assignments. (Foner vol. 7, 236)

Aftermath of the Victory

The impressive settlement boosted membership. The largest SLC affiliate, the AMC, claimed 62,857 members in November 1918, ten times more than in 1916. (Barrett, 82; Foner vol. 7, 237)

But that month the war ended. Returning workers flooded home. Unemployment soared, with Black workers hit hardest — in May 1919 "10,000 Black laborers were searching for work." As racial tensions rose, "fist fights broke out regularly" in the stockyards, "and frequently these altercations escalated into brawls involving bricks, knives, and even guns." Menacingly, May and June saw race riots in Texas, South Carolina, and Washington DC. (Halpern, 62)

The SLC responded in a "giant stockyards celebration" of solidarity, with an interracial parade through Black and white neighborhoods. The packers disingenuously claimed the march would cause racial conflict, and the City banned it. The SLC had two separate marches which joined together at the end. The CFL claimed 30,000 marched.

"One placard declared: 'The bosses think that because we are of different color and different nationalities that we should fight each other. We are going to fool them and fight for a common cause — a square deal for all.'"

The "buoyant mood" after the march led to "concrete organizational gains among the previously aloof Black workforce." The companies stepped up harassment, leading to a strike of 10,000 successfully demanding removal of the packers' goons.

But on July 27, after Blacks went to a "whites only" beach, the Chicago Race Riot began. In five days it left 23 Blacks and 15 whites killed, and burned hundreds of homes.

Democratic Alderman Frank Ragen sponsored an "athletic club" — Ragen's Colts — operating as an Irish street gang. They attacked Blacks with impunity. An official investigation found that without such gangs, "it is doubtful if the riot would have gone beyond the first clash."

White immigrant workers in the packinghouse "Back of the Yards" District "interceded to protect Blacks from pursuing mobs." The pro-labor Polish language press even published an anti-racist historical article asking of Blacks "Is it not right they should hate whites?" (Halpern 65, 66-7)

But these real beginnings of interracial solidarity lacked the momentum to overcome the tide of mistrust. This decisively affected stockyards workers. Now the craft unions either failed to honor the promise to incorporate Blacks, or to admit them on equal terms. (Foner vol. 7, 238)

The SLC had never won a contract. Without one the packinghouses used high unemployment, racial and craft-union divisions, and the repressive post-War political environment to break the union.

The packinghouse campaign showed the obstacles between the conservative, racist and petty-craft structured unions, and the goal of industrial organization. When the CIO's

Packinghouse Workers' Organizing Committee finally unionized the yards in the 1930s, they used a simple all-embracing industrial charter. But in other ways they followed the SLC.

Foster's packinghouse tactics centrally emphasized anti-racism, foreshadowing the best of the CIO. The Depression-era Communist Party, in one sense a larger, tighter version of a "militant minority" group, went further.

CP militants worked for active anti-racist and class struggle on a multiracial basis, citywide — organizing against evictions, for example — as well as in the packinghouses. Inside, their members patiently re-unionized at the shop-floor level. (Halpern, 102) With organized Black Communist rank-and-filers as the vanguard, this combination would finally prove strong enough for unionization to win over racial division.

High on temporary success in the stockyards, in April 1918 Foster hatched an even more ambitious plan. (Foner vol. 8, 151) He would seek CFL backing for a nationwide steel organizing drive. Then he could bid for national AFL support. If successful, this drive would swell the AFL with unskilled immigrants in the country's key heavy industry. Transformed bottom to top, Foster dreamed, the AFL could then launch similar drives across the full range of U.S. mass production industries. (Barrett, 84)

On to Steel

The steel campaign paralleled packinghouse in several ways. Steel too saw wartime labor shortages partially filled by migrating Black southerners. Indiana's Black steel work force rose to 14.2% by 1918. (Brody, 46)

Immigrant workers fought wartime price and production pressures in unofficial strikes. On January 7, 1916 Youngstown Sheet and Tube security guards fired on striking workers, igniting rioting that burned four city blocks. Pittsburgh stood on the edge of a general strike in April when steelworkers joined Westinghouse factory hands in striking and rioting for the eight-hour day.

AFL craft unions in the mills capitalized on this unrest. The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers, for example, went from 7,000 to 19,000 members from 1915 to 1918. (Brody 47, 49) The CFL jumped on board Foster's proposed steel campaign, and the reviving Amalgamated Association gave "at least lukewarm support."

Foster and Fitzpatrick then organized three meetings on steel organizing at the June 1918 AFL Convention. On their request the AFL set up the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers August 1. Like the SLC, the 24 federated unions in the National Committee agreed on paper to pool resources and follow the Committee. (Foner vol. 8, 151-52)

Gompers as AFL president nominally headed the Committee. But Fitzpatrick and Secretary-Treasurer Foster led the actual work. Iron and steelworkers' councils brought together the different unions in each city. Foster said "these knit the movement together...strengthened the weaker unions...prevented irresponsible strike action by over-zealous single trades...[and] inculcated the indispensable conception of solidarity along industrial lines."

The National Committee had little formal authority: "This is a federated proposition, and it is a free-will organization," he said. In fact, "Chairman Fitzpatrick never knew how many organizers were in the field," because each union kept control

of its own employees.

But as in the SLC, vision and initiative empowered the radicals. William Hannon, Machinists' representative on the Committee, commented that "the Secretary (Foster) of the National Committee assumed the leadership, the International representatives having but little to say about (the strike's) direction." (Brody 66-7, 165)

Foster requested \$500,000 from the 24 unions to launch a "hurricane drive simultaneously in all steel centers." (Foner vol. 8, 152) But at the first meeting they pledged a pathetic \$100 each, and only "one or more" organizers per union. By year's end they had contributed \$6,322.50 in total. Starting in January they agreed to increase this to \$5,000 per month, but they consistently failed to meet this.

Instead of Foster's organizing hurricane, the Committee had to settle for a launch in the key centers of Gary and Pittsburgh. Wretched financial backing was, in historian David Brody's judgment, "The Committee's first major failure, and, in retrospect, probably the fatal one." (Brody 68-9; Foner vol. 8, 152)

Immigrant workers in Gary joined the Committee through mass meetings there. Foster said their response "compared favorably with that shown in any organized effort ever put forth by workmen on this continent." One organizer complained that the native born showed much greater restraint. But they came on board once immigrants led the way. Success in the Chicago District, which included Gary, gave momentum to expand the drive to Ohio, Pennsylvania and Colorado.

But the end of the war on November 11 changed the balance of power. The National War Labor Board had mandated shop committees to handle grievances in steel as a means of preventing strikes. Bethlehem Steel President Eugene Grace informed a Board functionary on November 17 that the company would no longer comply with his orders. (Brody 75, 76)

With war production ended, government pressure eased, and unemployment rising, the companies now made war on the workers. In February 1919 Midvale Steel fired "hundreds of men...point blank." "They are picking out and discharging the oldest employees they have who belong to unions...Many of the men have from 10 to 35 years in point of service." (Foster quoted in Brody, 87)

Workers in dozens of steel company towns, with judges and police loyal to the mill owners, faced constant spying, harassment, and bans on freedom of assembly. Foster responded with a page from the IWW playbook — free speech campaigns across the steel-making Monongahela Valley. (Foner vol. 8, 154; Barrett, 89)

In Monessen, PA, the Committee defied an ordinance to organize a mass meeting on April 1. Thousands of union miners from surrounding country marched into town in solidarity, leading officials to back off threats of prosecution. Monessen became a union stronghold. (Brody 92-93) Legendary radical Mother Jones, 89 years old, broke a free speech ban in Homestead PA, went to jail, and was quickly released "to dissuade an angry crowd bent on freeing her." (Foner vol. 8, 154-56)

Fourteen workers died before the Great Steel Strike started. (Barrett, 91) Fannie Sellins, on loan to the National Committee from the Mineworkers, died at the hands of Allegheny County cops. She had successfully organized three



The steel industry was a central target of post-World War I union organizing. The great

US Steel plants. But workers had begun to lose their fear. The repression pushed immigrant workers to break with their conservative community leaders and join the fight. Postwar layoffs also fueled rage. One hundred thousand workers joined by June. Local workers demanded a six-hour day, a demand not envisaged by Foster or the National Committee. (Foner vol. 8, 154-56)

The Historic Steel Strike

Pressure to strike built, especially as Elbert Gary of U.S. Steel openly organized intransigence against union recognition across the industry. When Gompers equivocated, Foster again leaned on the ranks, organizing a rank and file National Conference and strike vote. On August 20, 98% voted to grant strike authority to the National Committee, should negotiations fail. (Barrett, 89-90)

Elbert Gary refused any meeting when Foster and Fitzpatrick called on him August 26. Gompers then set up a meeting with President Woodrow Wilson on August 29. Wilson promised to strong-arm Gary into negotiations. According to Gompers, Wilson said "the time had passed when any man should refuse to meet with the representatives of his employees."

The Administration did pass Wilson's request to Gary. But when Gary refused, they did not tell the public. On September 10 the Committee set a strike date for September 22. (Brody, 101-05)



1919 strike was lost, but left a legacy that would be fulfilled two decades later.

Library of Congress

With shock they learned from the news that Wilson demanded the unions hold off striking. He organized an October 6 Industrial Conference of labor, management and the public, to discuss postwar production. While the Committee had hoped Wilson would help them in the battle for public opinion, by communicating secretly with Gary and publicly with them he had done the opposite.

Gompers and seven union presidents on the National Committee pushed for compliance with Wilson. Meanwhile telegrams from the local steelworkers' councils warned "the men will strike regardless." (Brody, 105-06) Foster, Fitzpatrick and the Committee majority overcame Gompers, arguing that delay would fatally demoralize the surging masses. (Barrett, 89-90)

The National Committee claimed that 275,000 workers struck the first day, growing to 365,000 next week. Historian David Brody, citing production figures, says "the actual number was probably somewhere around 250,000 — about half the industry's work force." But he notes it "still exceeded in magnitude and scope anything in the nation's experience," and "proved once and for all that a national strike could be mounted against a basic industry." (Foner vol. 8, 160; Brody, 113-14)

The strike spanned Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Colorado. But the "unexpectedly strong" movement soon succumbed to

long odds. The race divide proved crucial again, as employers imported Black and Mexican strikebreakers from points south. (Foner vol. 8, 160-65)

Gary's heartlessness "had aroused considerable animosity," and the steel companies saw the initial "basic sympathy" of the public for the strike. They "began a concerted drive" to make Bolshevism the issue. Politicians and the media slandered the workforce as un-American radicals, singling out Foster's old Syndicalism pamphlet. U.S. flags at strike headquarters failed to prevent this. Heralding the anti-labor reaction of the 1920s, police violence and free-speech bans returned with a vengeance. (Murray 452-53; Foner vol. 8, 160-66)

The Feds got involved too. The Department of Justice's Palmer raids expanded to steel towns, and "hundreds of steelworkers were detained, most of them aliens who could be deported."

The *New York Times* reported a false story of a gun battle between state police and Wobblies/Bolsheviks in Sharon, PA. But it was the true story of a Gary, Indiana riot pitting strikers against imported Black strikebreakers on October 4 that brought in Federal troops. General Leonard Wood, angling for a Presidential run, occupied steelworkers' citadel Gary. He organized a hysterical round-up of "caches of weapons, secret societies... (and) foreigners professing a belief in violence and revolution." (Brody, 134-35)

Momentum slipping, the Amalgamated Association broke ranks. More than half of the recruits to the National Committee fell under the Association's jurisdiction, increasing their revenue far more than their contributions to the strike fund.

Worse, some 5000 skilled workers in independent finishing mills had contracts owned by the craft union. When these workers struck (along with new, unskilled Association members not covered by the existing contracts), Association President Michael Tighe ordered them back to work.

The Cleveland local refused, so Tighe revoked their charter. Fitzpatrick asked whether "the contractual obligation to employers was more sacred than the moral obligation to the other unions" — but the answer, for Tighe, was yes. (Brody, 167-68)

The beaten down strike was called off January 8. Though a few left-inclined unions — ILGWU, Furriers and ACTWU — had contributed generously to the strike fund, the overall picture was severe neglect. The 24 unions in the Committee provided only \$46,000 of their pledged \$100,000. (Foner vol. 8, 166)

As Foster wrote, "Mr. Gompers sabotaged the steel strike from beginning to end." (Foster 1922) In his book about the strike, he argued that the resources committed "represented only a fraction of the power the unions should and could have thrown into the fight. The organization of the steel industry should have been a special order of business for the whole labor movement. But...the big men of labor could not be sufficiently awakened." (Foster 1971, 234-35)

Foster also blamed racist discriminatory practices by the unions, arguing "nothing short of... (their abolition) will achieve the desired result. (Foster 1920, 209-10; quoted in Foner vol. 8, 168) Reflecting on the wartime era of tight labor markets,

continued on page 44

REVIEW

They Wanted the Revolution: Voices from the “Other ‘60s”

By David Grosser

You Say You Want a Revolution: SDS, PL, and Adventures in Building a Worker-Student Alliance

John Levin and Earl Silbar, editors
San Francisco, 1741 Press, 404 pages,
2019, \$18.95 paperback.

JACOBIN RECENTLY REVIEWED a couple of books about FBI infiltration and disruption of the left.¹ One reviewer wrote that the book *Heavy Radicals* contains a bombshell that upends our understanding of the disintegration of SDS. There were a number of FBI infiltrators at the fateful last SDS convention where the faction that went on to become the Weather Underground outvoted the Progressive Labor Party (PLP). *Heavy Radicals* shows that the FBI gave its infiltrators explicit instructions on how to vote — against the PLP.

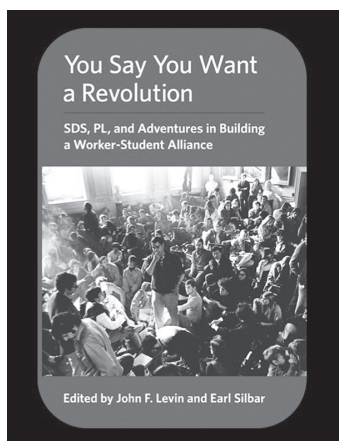
The FBI's reasoning was that they could handle the isolated adventurism of the group that would soon become the Weather Underground, but they feared the PLP could turn SDS into a disciplined, mass organization.

Historians and memoir writers in the 50 years since SDS cracked up have followed the FBI's preference for Weatherman luridness. One could easily fill a bookshelf with histories of the group, histories of the '60s that assign a primary role to the group and memoirs of ex-members.

You Say You Want a Revolution (YSWR) goes a little way to redress that historical imbalance, containing 23 chapter length remembrances of the other wing in SDS — the Worker Student Alliance Caucus and its leadership core — the Progressive Labor Party (PL).

PL/WSA has up till now garnered almost no attention except condemnation as the skunk at the new left garden party — receiving almost universal blame for the 1969 implosion of SDS, which was the most important white student radical organization of the time. WSA competed with the precursors of the vastly over-exposed Weather Underground and the forerunners of various

“New Communist” groups of the '70s for control of SDS leading to the ill-fated split that destroyed the organization in 1969.



Analysis of '60s movements has often been divided on the questions of the “good” '60s (the early SDS, participatory democracy, the beloved community of SNCC) and its displacement by the “bad” '60s (violent protest;

revolutionary Black Nationalism, collapse of the liberal Democratic Party coalition leading to the ascent of the Republicans).

Many writers lay much of the responsibility on PL for the transition to the bad '60s. Kirkpatrick Sale, for example, in his pioneering history of SDS presents a parallel narrative of PL's development and initiatives in SDS as if it were a body alien to the organization proper (set off by solid line divisions in the text). He doesn't treat any other faction that way, implying that the organization's destructive factionalism was entirely PL's fault.

But even those who defend the “bad '60s” as a healthy development, approving the displacement of reformist illusions by revolutionary consciousness, for the most part disdain PL. They see it as an anachronistic throwback to the old left dominated by the debates of the 1930s, which a new '60s radicalism had passed by in search of up-to-date answers to current, not past, questions.

Now, in YSWR PL/WSA'ers tell their stories, and in many ways their experience parallels that of the '60s new left as a whole.

Origins and Personal Accounts

Drawn from various parts of the country, and including both those who joined PL and those who never did, the 23 contributors write for the most part about their personal experiences and motivation. They do little theorizing or reflection on PL's shifting ideological trajectory and the volume doesn't have an academic feel.

Although as should be expected, given both the recent revival of organized socialism and the deepening crisis that engulfs us, most draw lessons from their experience for today, experience definitely predominates over analysis. Editor John Levin writes in the Introduction:

“These accounts are both optimistic, for those still inspired and bitter, from those now critical of their involvement. The stories they tell speak across the years, as a new generation of young activists ... face[s] decisions about how to organize to stop wars abroad, confront racial oppression at home, and end violence and neo-liberal exploitation.” (3)

Levin notes that in today's rapidly expanding Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) some members find Marxism Leninism “trendy,” therefore “all the more reason to read the stories of activists who have been there before.” (3)

PL's story began in 1962 with dissidents, favoring China in the emerging Sino-Soviet split, who left or were expelled from the U.S. Communist Party. In a period when SNCC, SDS and other emerging new left forces were still sorting out their positions regarding liberalism, the New Deal Democratic coalition and social democracy, PLers immediately distinguished themselves by their militant rhetoric and combative anti-imperialist and anti-racist politics.

In short order, the Progressive Labor Movement (which declared itself a party in 1965) took important initiatives sponsoring two student delegations to Cuba in defiance of the State Department travel ban, and leading an early march against the Vietnam War on May 2, 1964.

PLers' defiant response to government persecution impressed many. Called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, which had been hounding radicals since the 1940s, members of PL's Cuba trip defiantly disrupted the hearings. When Harlem erupted in 1965 after a white policeman killed a Black teenager, PL distributed a flyer headed, “Wanted for Murder, Gilligan the Cop.” In response, New York State authorities indicted and convicted PL Vice Chairman Bill Epton on “Criminal Anarchy” and “Conspiracy” charges.

At a time when SDS still had an anti-communist exclusion clause in its

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constitution, and antiwar groups debated whether to allow communists to participate in their organizations, rather than avoiding or soft-pedaling their politics. PLers proudly and defiantly embraced communism in public.

PL created an anti-imperialist student group, the “May 2nd Movement” in the wake of their 1964 march, then in 1966 disbanded it and sent their student members into SDS which seemed destined to become the center of radical white student organizing. Within SDS, PL organized a “Worker Student Alliance” (WSA) caucus to promote its strategy for student and antiwar organizing in SDS national and local chapter politics.

As a high school student in the late '60s I was drawn to PL and organized with them at my school for two years. While I was peripheral to the action on college campuses that occupies most of the memoirs in the book, I was nonetheless part of the same political milieu. Three main political points attracted me to PL and I found these themes raised often by the YSWR contributors.

First, PL rejected the liberal explanations for the Vietnam war as a tragic mistake in an otherwise sound foreign policy born of over-zealous anti-communism of U.S. leaders, and for ongoing racism as the result of prejudice by individuals. Rather, they pointed to the systematic nature of the problems embedded in U.S. capitalism and asserted that no moral appeals to the good will of leaders could solve the problems.

Rather, only massive power directed against the ruling class could force leaders to change their policies. Ultimately only a socialist revolution could sweep away the evils that the movement confronted. In this PL's views did not differ from those of many in SDS from varying perspectives, but the further strategic implications they drew most surely did.

Working-Class Centrality

PL staunchly asserted that students alone, or others (intellectuals, the “lumpen”) that were often put forward as a new revolutionary force at the time, could not overthrow capitalism — only the working class had that power.

In the wake of the shootings at Kent State in 1970, at the height of student campus unrest as student strikes proliferated on campuses across the country (more than 400, including my high school) some PL/WSA'ers dismissively advanced the slogan, “When students strike there is no school, when workers strike there is no war.”

So, it was of the utmost urgency for the student movement to find ways to ally with the working class which was itself seething with unrest at the time — exemplified by GI mutinies in Vietnam, revolts in big city Black



Columbia University strike, 1968.

ghettos and the biggest wildcat strike wave since 1946.

Bruce Clark, then a University of Iowa SDS'er, highlighted what for many was the fundamental appeal of PL's analysis:

“(I)t was at [the] Bloomington [Indiana 1966 SDS National] conference that PL put forward the “Build a Base in the Working Class” proposal as a vision of moving forward in the student movement. I remember being hit by how obviously correct that argument was — that students were never going to make change on their own. I had an increasing appreciation that all the things I opposed clearly resulted from capitalism and that only the working class had the power to bring capitalism down.” (228)

But to carry out that massive revolutionary task we needed a revolutionary Marxist party like the Bolsheviks of 1917, or the Vietnamese and Chinese Communist Parties which we saw as leading the worldwide struggle against imperialism at the time. The U.S. capitalist class was well organized, ruthless and armed to the teeth.

We needed to be better organized and to create our own “general staff” to concentrate and direct our forces. The loose undisciplined activism of most student radicals was not sufficient: we needed disciplined and focused organization and we bought the exaggerated, and idealized, self-portrait presented by the party leadership.

Overthrowing the most powerful ruling class in history was easier said than done of course — then as now. The contributors to YSWR recount their efforts to carry out that daunting historic mission and the ultimate collapse of the project.

It is a story filled with excitement and elan, sustained for a time by extreme optimism and commitment. Many look back with pride to the priority they made in fighting racism. According to Joe Berry (University of Iowa, San Francisco State University):

“The concept was that this was something in the interests of most workers and therefore most people, not just a matter of moral solidarity....the value of emphasizing the link between the class interests and the need to oppose all

forms of racism was a key contribution of PL/WSA.

“And finally, the idea that effective opposition to racism among working people was possible. Most white workers were not inevitable racists....A united workers struggle against racism and against exploitation was possible.” (236)

WSA put forward what seemed like a reasonable strategic perspective as the '60s crisis deepened. It challenged New Leftists to come to grips with the role of the Democrats in maintaining the system and to think about how to move beyond the welfare state capitalism that was starting to crack apart. And as a result, the caucus grew.

WSA led some important campus struggles — for example building support for the 1968 third world student strike against racism at San Francisco State College. Contributors to the book point with pride to the militance they displayed in the face of police repression, and their role in organizing white students to support Black students' demands.

They also affirm the organizing skills they gained as they helped make the strike a mass struggle throughout the Bay Area. John Levin, at that time a PL leader at San Francisco State recounted:

(W)e reached out to the larger community for support. SDS ...chapters on dozens of campuses on the West Coast...[sent] contingents of supporters...to SF State ...and held rallies on their own campus to collect bail money and build support.... [W]e sent representatives from our speakers' bureau to speak about the strike....We addressed unions and community groups around the Bay Area...asking for resolutions of support....PL clubs [branches]...mobilized in support of the strike bringing their comrades from union caucuses and community groups to the picket lines and demonstrations. (116-117)

WSA had similar results in 1969 at Harvard when they led SDS in demanding the abolition of ROTC and an end to university expansion into the community, which was pushing up rents and driving out low income tenants. After activists took over the administration building, the administration brought in the police who brutally evicted the occupiers to the disgust and horror of the large numbers of students.

A campus-wide strike resulted, closing the university for the remainder of the semester. Harvard/Radcliffe SDS meetings ballooned to 400 members at least briefly.

Similar, although usually less spectacular, scenes played out across the country. SDS grew to perhaps 100,000 members (by no means solely due to the efforts of WSA). In the midst of widespread unrest in urban ghettos, broad disenchantment with the war in Vietnam and mounting repression, many concluded that revolution was a real and imminent possibility.

As PL/WSA's strength grew within SDS, diverse forces came together to block them from winning control of the organization. In the overheated crisis-inflected atmosphere, the two factions split the organization at its 1969 convention, in effect killing it.

The ideological faction fighting meant a lot to a small proportion of the members, pro- and anti-PL, but little to the vast majority who simply moved on. PL had won control of SDS at the cost of destroying the organization in the process

The Decline

For many in *You Say You Want a Revolution*, a turning point came around then. They mention a number of factors. Of course, the context became more difficult and maintaining optimism more difficult. After 1970 the seeming imminence of revolution faded for many across the left, not just those in PL. But a host of internal weaknesses caught up with PL/WSA as well and drove many former supporters and activists away.

PL began to break with some of its core political positions, often in undemocratic, top-down ways that blindsided activists on the ground. Formerly sympathetic to Black nationalism, the party leadership condemned all nationalism as reactionary including the nationalism of the oppressed embodied in the demands for Black Studies programs on campuses like San Francisco State and in the political program of the Black Panther Party (then under murderous attack by local police and the FBI).

They also condemned the Vietnamese for negotiating with the United States. The negotiations legitimated the U.S. war effort, PL said. And in 1971 they broke with China, charging that it had become capitalist.

To say the least, many of the contributors mention that defending such positions, especially condemning the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and the Panthers who had widespread sympathy and admiration from U.S. activists, was difficult. For many also, the way that these decisions were made exposed a deep-seated lack of internal democracy which was rotting away the organizations from the inside.

Eric Gordon in New Orleans noted that after the split, the PL-allied SDS remnant "had fallen into a deep authoritarian arrogance....[T]he National Office made all manner of highhanded decisions for the organization, hurling insults and accusations toward anyone who questioned their tactics or puffed-up leadership." (98)

A couple of years earlier in the midst of the strike, John Levin, PL leader at San Francisco State, felt "gob smacked" when told by higher level party functionaries that the Party's position of nationalism had changed and that he had to change a resolution that he had written for the SDS National Convention.

Returning home, "...PL retained its influence in the strike, mostly because of the respect people had for our leadership and militancy but also because we opportunistically explained PL's position in such a way that allowed us to maintain our support for the strike demands." (118-119)

Levin concludes that "I soldiered on as a PL member. It took me three wasted years to leave PL..."

Just as their reasons for joining the New Left were similar to those of non-PL activists, the contributors to YSWR experienced the same frustrations as the radicalism of the '60s peaked and went into decline: the stability of the government, the effectiveness of repression, and their inability to widen their base beyond the student and post-student milieu.

The feverish activity that seemed appropriate in a seemingly pre-revolutionary situation was ultimately unsustainable over the long haul. And the party leadership increasingly resorted to manipulation and intimidation to keep the pace of commitment up and stifle the growing doubts of the rank and file.

Dead-end "Leninism"

The party's version of Marxism became an obstacle to continued participation. PL looked to the CPUSA of its hyper-sectarian early 1930's "Third Period" (before it had sunk, in their view, into "Browderite revisionism") as its model of a revolutionary organization. The lessons they applied to PL's political program and internal life copied the worst aspects of Stalinism and drove many of the YSWR contributors out of PL and WSA/SDS.

PL counterpoised "democratic centralism" (a central tenet of the construction of "Leninism" by the Stalinized CP's) to "bourgeois democracy" and asserted the superiority of the former. Their version of democratic centralism was, as is the norm in Stalinist organizations, all centralism and little democracy: entirely top-down with their leadership making all important decisions and all leadership positions filled, in turn, by other members of the leadership as a self-perpetuating hierarchy.

In one of the most regretful reminiscences of the book, Emily Berg, who had been in the Boston area and later national student leadership of PL, reflects:

"PL was, by any useful definition, a cult, and the behavior of all of us who stayed with it past the earliest days, when it was weaker and less organized and thus more democratic, doesn't bear close examination without discomfort. As in all cults, loyalty to the leadership was the highest virtue, and open disagreement with party positions was aid and comfort to the enemy. Almost any tactic, including lies and violence, became acceptable in the service of the party line. We are lucky that there was never the

slightest chance of PL's becoming an important force in the world." (302)

PL's version of "Leninism" asserted that that only one correct version of Marxism existed and that their party was uniquely situated to formulate it. Moreover, "revisionists" lurked everywhere set on derailing the movement with incorrect ideas and strategy. As a result PL related to the rest of the left with extreme sectarianism, thus its truly lamentable role in the destruction of SDS.

While many in the book assign equal blame to the anti-PL "Revolutionary Youth Movement" factions, nevertheless, as Michael Balter, who had been a UCLA SDSer, concluded:

"Where I really fault PL was that it did not see that it was being sectarian and did not realize that the way it was operating within SDS was diminishing the possibility of having a really broad-based organization. We were insisting on too much ideological purity. I don't think anybody saw it that way at the time, but that was, in essence, what was going on. If you're going to have Students for a Democratic Society as a broad based organization, PL would have had to have been able to tolerate more liberalism or just kind of run-of-the-mill radicalism, or even anticommunism." (167)

Reflections and Lessons

Here lies the most important lesson that the PL experience has for the current mass radicalization especially within DSA. Many caucuses and factions are developing in DSA at the moment, and those of us who remember and rue the destruction of SDS should try especially to ensure that while strategic differences get an airing in the developing socialist movement, that it be done in a comradely manner that keeps the real enemy, corporate capitalism squarely in mind and seeks to preserve unity among all who are struggling for socialism.

Finally, PL adhered to an extremely narrow, workerist version of Marxism. Ironically, the '60s was a period of great experimentation and creative ferment in the arts and politics. The horizons of Marxism expanded in many directions. Important previously unpublished works of Marx, like his 1844 *Manuscripts* and the *Grundrisse* became available and widely discussed in English for the first time, for example, but PL would have none of it.

Thus, *PL Magazine* in 1969 smeared noted left philosopher Herbert Marcuse through guilt by association, claiming that Marcuse's work for the OSS (forerunner of the CIA) during World War II established that his views were part of the U.S. government's intellectual counterinsurgency efforts. The article "Marcuse: Cop Out or Cop?" suggested that Marcuse's search for an alternative to the working class as a revolutionary force was not just a different, even mistaken, view but a traitorous sellout.



Claude Beagrie

Ernie Brill, YSWR contributor and one time culture editor of PL's newspaper *Challenge/Desafío* spent "years...struggling with PL people to take a broader view of culture and literature and not be so dogmatic."

The last straw came when he had a dispute with the paper's editor over the movie version of Mel Brooks' "The Producers." The editor calls the movie "fascist." Brill explains that it's a satire. The editor responds: "It's a fascist movie. The main dance number is 'Springtime for Hitler' with all these dancing Nazis!" Brill counters that his editor has misunderstood the comic intent.

The editor rejoins: "What is there to understand....I don't think dancing Nazis is too hard to understand. They don't need understanding comrade, they need killing." After more back and forth, the editor got someone else to write the review, Brill notes, and, "Before I went to sleep I typed up my resignation as *Challenge* Cultural Page editor and from Progressive Labor." (142-143)

PL still exists, although it is no longer a force even within the narrow confines of the U.S. left. As the contributors to YSWR write from a vantage point long removed from participation in PL/WUSA, their later life trajectories continue to present some common themes as does their summary of the PL/WUSA experience.

First, again similar to '60s leftists of all types, they stayed on the left and continued living out their ideals in various ways. They sought employment and career choices in the "helping professions" broadly defined — teaching, social work, health care, the arts, progressive electoral politics, labor organizing, etc.

All have maintained some kind of political commitment around issues that motivated them in the '60s, as well as others including feminism, LGBT liberation and environmentalism that only entered our consciousness in a mass way as a result of the political struggles of that era.

For them, the smug "yippie to yuppie" narrative, beloved by the mainstream media and based on the rightwing drift of select, media-created "leaders" like Rennie Davis, Jerry Rubin and Eldridge Cleaver;² and glibly portrayed in the popular movie "The Big Chill" (1983) is way wide of the mark. In this the PL/WUSA'ers follow along with the general trend of '60s new leftists as a whole.³

However, almost none have continued participation in the organized, socialist left.⁴ I find this surprising given two prominent themes of their '60s radicalism that diverged from the general trend of the new left as a whole: the vital need for organization, and the centrality of the working class as an agent of social change.

Not that the organized left fared well among any surviving sector of the new left as the long neoliberal counterattack against the gains of the 1930s and '60s ground on and on into the new century — so the disconnection of the former PL/WUSA'ers need not surprise us much. In accounting for PL's ills, the sectarianism, dogmatism and authoritarian internal structure, the contributors to YSWR most often lay the blame on "Leninism" or "democratic centralism," which for them exhausts the possible positions on the revolutionary left.

PL had an answer — and called it communism. It was motivating and gave confidence and certainty for a while — until it no longer did. Then most of the contributors to YSWR were left still committed, but humbled and lacking the world view and encompassing plan of action that they once got from PL. Says Emily Berg of her current political beliefs:

I think I would classify myself as an anarcho-skepticlike most people after the disastrous and lethal failure of socialist revolutions... it's not at all clear to me that there is any real workable alternative to "democratic socialism" which is really just managed capitalism....I don't know what the "answer" is; I even suspect that there isn't one; but I usually can know which side I'm on. It may be that that is all that can ever be done; in any case it's the best I can do for now. (306)

Looking back, it seems to me that the dreams we had of revolution in the 1960s were unrealizable but we could have created some lasting left organization that would have better contested the one-sided class war we have faced since then. But for the majority of the YSWR authors, revolutionary socialism was a dead end with nothing to replace it.

Their view of Leninism — as practiced at the time in the USSR, China, the pro-Soviet Communist Parties and further left group-lets like PL — as expressing the essence of

what revolutionary Marxism could be is to me ahistorical and circumscribed. Virtually none of the contributors analyzes their experience in terms of Stalinism.

They do not see the Marxism of PL and the many "New Communist Groups"⁵ that followed quickly on the collapse the New Left in the 1970s as a stage in the unfolding history of the left that reached a turning point with the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in 1990 — one that opened up new possibilities for renewed socialist organizing at least in the long run.

But even at that time of SDS's implosion, alternatives to Stalinism existed: the International Socialists (a forerunner of Solidarity), the New American Movement, the Socialist Workers Party and radical pacifist groups were all available alternatives although even taken together they didn't have a comparable national profile or membership.

The collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the development of capitalism in China has presented an opportunity for a new, different form of Marxism, but the YSWR contributors for the most part see the era of organized Marxism as over or at least don't feel qualified to speculate on or participate in building that new socialism (which the rapid growth of DSA suggests is currently happening).⁶

John Levin's closing thoughts capture the spirit of cautious reticence of many of the contributors, "I've been out of the advice business for close to half a century, but I hope that the new revolutionary generation might draw some insight from the experiences detailed in my account and others in this book." (120)

If in large part those experiences graphically demonstrate what not to do, they leave it up to a new generation to figure out a way forward. ■

Notes

1. See "Half the Way with Mao Zedong" by Paul Heideman, *Jacobin*, May, 2018 and "Enemies of the Left," by Chip Gibbons, *Jacobin*, March 2019.
2. On the media's role in "selecting" and "certifying movement leaders" see Todd Gitlin *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. University of California Press, Berkeley (1980)
3. See Richard Flacks and Jack Whalen, *Beyond the Barricades: The '60s Generation Grows Up* (1989).
4. Becky Brenner (71) joined the October League (later CP ML) which collapsed in the early 1980s. Eric Gordon joined the U.S. Communist Party in 2009 "now that it had no Moscow line to 'tail'" (102), and Ed Morman's author bio lists him as a member of DSA "at least on paper:" (187)
5. On the New Communist Movement of the 1970s see Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air* (Verso 2018).
6. On the International Socialists Milton Fisk, "Socialism From Below in the United States" Chs. 5 & 6 <http://www.marxists.de/trotism/fisk/ch5.htm>; on NAM https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_American_Movement; on the SWP Breitman, George, Le Blanc, Paul, & Alan Wald, *Trotskyism in the United States: Historical Essays & Reconsiderations*, Humanities Press International, 1996; for radical pacifism Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the Seventies and Eighties*, University of California Press 1991.

REVIEW

New Deal Writing and Its Pains By Nathaniel Mills

Labor Pains:

New Deal Fictions of Race, Work, and Sex in the South

By Christin Marie Taylor

Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019, 232 pages, \$30 paperback.

DURING THE 1930s, Communist Richard Wright and Harlem Renaissance veteran Zora Neale Hurston exchanged brief reviews of each other's fiction that have long framed both writers' reputations. In 1937, Wright suggested that the "facile sensuality" of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a story of a southern Black woman's psychological and sexual growth, had no social or political relevance and thus, like minstrel shows, merely gratified whites.

The following year, Hurston excoriated Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* for flattening Black life into Communist propaganda. Wright, she charged, depicted the southern Black folk as "elemental and brutish" individuals, and Black experience as merely violence and victimization. Racialized gender politics of representation inform both reviews: if Wright suggested that a novel about Black female interiority would merely titillate white audiences, Hurston found in Wright "lavish killing . . . enough to satisfy all male black readers."¹

These arguments have come to typify two polarized approaches for representing the Black folk: Hurston's experimental modernist prose, appreciation of folk culture, focus on the interiority of individuals, and centering of women's experiences; or Wright's leftist radicalism, misogynistic biases, stock characters, and simplistic naturalist style.

As Christin Marie Taylor notes in the introduction to her new study, *Labor Pains: New Deal Fictions of Race, Work, and Sex in the South*, this exchange starkly dichotomizes "protest and a focus on racism and materialism" or "a focus on the self and desire" as alternatives to African-American representation. (Taylor, 17) Both reviews are almost entirely caricature, yet the Hurston-Wright debate raises some crucial questions for African-American writing about the Black folk.

In a more judicious 1937 evaluation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Black leftist

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by whites to bury the dead from a recent hurricane.

Minus laments that this scenario passes without clear political commentary: "The incident is there and the seeds of action are there, but neither the characters nor their creator spade the earth. Here one wishes that Miss Hurston had allowed Janie and Tea Cake to be less in love for enough paragraphs to show more fully the depth of this bitter reaction."²

Minus here indicates the need to depict politics and personal experience, materialist protest and human emotion, as intertwined: capturing the brutality of Jim Crow is not a matter of simply parroting superficial propaganda, but of "spading the earth," exploring the psychological depths of characters to show how sociopolitical conditions manifest themselves, in complex and emotionally dense ways, within the psychic lives of both oppressed and oppressors. How it *feels* to be a member of the Black southern working class under Jim Crow, in other words, requires a synthesis of the priorities of Wright and Hurston.

Minus's synthesized perspective suggests that complex approaches to the Black folk and the politics of representation were present in African-American leftist discourse of the 1930s, even if that presence has been obscured by the looming influence of the Hurston-Wright exchange.

Christin Marie Taylor's study doesn't consider interventions like Minus's, but it echoes and develops many aspects of Minus's piece. In *Labor Pains*, Taylor examines fiction from the Depression through the 1960s — an era she defines by associating it, not always convincingly, with the influence of

critic, Marian Minus, speaks to the heart of the debate when she indicates the need for a balance between depicting socio-political conditions and internal human emotion. Minus notes that late in the novel, *Tea Cake* — the love interest of protagonist Janie — is conscripted

the Popular Front on literature. The author asks us to consider the southern Black folk agricultural worker as a trope by which writers not only enact critiques of racism and capitalism, but mine the internal, felt realities of work, race, gender, sexual desire and social exclusion.

In chapters dedicated to studies of writers George Wylie Henderson, William Attaway, Eudora Welty and Sarah Wright, Taylor reads for "the feeling imbued in black working-folk aesthetics" (19), the interplay of human instincts, emotions, desires and aspirations that remain more amorphous than the prescriptions of political protest, and whose ambiguities resist public economies of representation, but which reflect both the oppressive environment of the Jim Crow South and the indelible humanity of Black agricultural workers.

Taylor's readings chart the interpenetration of left politics and personal interiority, realist documentation and emotional exploration — the poles Minus denoted as the victimizations of Jim Crow and *Tea Cake* and Janie's love. Reading representations of the Black folk with an eye toward both their political orientations and their handling of human affect — the emotive forces of psychological and subjective interiority — Taylor brings new appreciation to the writers and works she studies.

Broadening the Popular Front Left

Taylor's chapters on Henderson and Welty introduce new texts to scholarly conversations in literary studies of the left. George Henderson's *Ollie Miss* (1935) is relatively unknown today and has been seen as a romanticized novel of Black folk life. Taylor focuses on its depictions of labor and female desire.

The Black female protagonist of *Ollie Miss* is a working-class alternative to Hurston's Janie, the most well-known heroine of African-American literature who, as Taylor points out, possesses a certain degree of autonomy derived from her middle-class status. Ollie, by contrast, is a homeless woman who comes to work on a black-owned farm in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Henderson studied at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, and Taylor shows how the farm in *Ollie Miss*, which produces not for private profit but for the shared sustainability of its Black community, enacts a Washingtonian style of Black economic

self-reliance. Despite Washington's conservative political and economic policies, this space enables Ollie to experience a relationship to her labor other than exploitation. Taylor shows how in the communal environment of the farm, Henderson recodes Ollie's work as empowered knowledge and poetic expression, and in doing so supplements Marxist analyses of exploitation with reclamations of labor as autonomous self-discovery and libidinal fulfillment.

Eudora Welty's fiction, as Patricia Yaeger points out, is often "made over in the image of her private persona: the friendly, generous, sweetly intellectual white lady." In part this is because Welty does not stage explicit protests of racial injustice: "Welty does not focus on southern racism as an epic event, but as a quotidian praxis, a sadistic solution to the ordinary riddles of everyday life."³

Similarly, Taylor offers a Welty whose fiction "take[s] up the mantle of African American workers to subtly resist" white supremacy. (106) In the 1941 story "A Worn Path," the terror of white racial violence is experienced by Phoenix Jackson, a Black folk worker, as she navigates the southern landscape: the trauma and threat of lynching, for instance, shapes her perception of trees, and the sight of white-owned property provokes thoughts of economic violence and slavery.

Fear reproduces southern race relations at the level of the psyche as Welty explores white terror of Blackness and Black terror of whiteness in "A Sketching Trip" (1945) and *The Golden Apples* (1949). Taylor concludes that while Welty may not have penned the kind of explicitly hortatory fiction of her contemporaries on the left, she deploys "the ambiguity of fear and desire" to unsettle southern power structures. (135)

William Attaway and Sarah Wright, by contrast, are more typically read as writers of the literary left. Attaway was a member of Communist-backed literary groups during the 1930s and 1940s, while Wright was a member of the postwar Black left and a leader of the Harlem Writers Guild alongside Marxist writers like John Oliver Killens and Rosa Guy.

Taylor's reading of Attaway's 1940 proletarian novel *Blood on the Forge* identifies what she calls "the feeling of black manhood under pressure," the way industrial production shapes and deforms imperatives of masculinity for male workers. (63) *Blood on the Forge* follows the Moss brothers, three members of the southern Black folk, as they migrate to Pennsylvania to work in a steel mill, and eventually participate in the 1919 steel strike. Taylor artfully connects the role of pressure in the production of steel to psychological forms of pressure that the men in the novel endure as they struggle to negotiate their manhood under the dehumanizing conditions of a production process

that reduces them to its tools. Unable to be subjects in their labor, male workers release pent-up desires through "steely" heteromasculine expressions of chauvinism and violence that ultimately damage working class solidarity. If Ollie's agricultural work allowed her to possess her femininity in *Ollie Miss*, industrial labor in Attaway transforms men into brutal machines.

In her reading of Sarah Wright's 1969 novel *This Child's Gonna Live*, Taylor attends to how Wright portrays "the affect of rejection" through the struggles of Black working-class mother Mariah Upshur. (30) The novel is set among Black workers in the Maryland oyster industry in the 1930s, which for Taylor allows it to address the racialization of state welfare practices both under the New Deal and in Wright's own moment.

Taylor argues that the 1935 Aid to Families with Dependent Children Act employed a racialized, heteronormative definition of family that effectively excluded many Black working-class women. In 1965, Daniel Moynihan's infamous *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action* stigmatized African-American women as agents of a pathological culture of matriarchy in the Black community that emasculated Black men and kept African Americans in poverty.

Moynihan's report, like the earlier New Deal policy, thus rejects any state responsibility or ethical obligation toward working-class and poor Black mothers. Mariah's story forces readers to reclaim kinship to the working-class Black women and families that America has rejected.

Taylor's reading is compelling, but it misses an opportunity to link Sarah Wright's novel not only to labor-related and Popular Front-era influences, but to contemporary 1960s Black Power discourses that also engaged Moynihan's matriarchy thesis, particularly radical Black feminist critiques of both racist and racial nationalist heteropatriarchy carried out by writers like Toni Morrison or Gayl Jones.⁴

Additionally, Konstantina Karageorgos notes that Wright's 1960 visit to Cuba was a major inspiration on the novel, which she terms African-American literature's only "palimpsest narrative linking two key moments of 20th century Black Marxism, the Great Depression and the Cuban Revolution."⁵ Taylor's focus on the labor pains of rejection could have been situated in productive dialogue with such New Left political influences.

Defining "Popular Front"

Taylor's close readings are often excellent and trace sophisticated movements of tropes and figurative language in texts less astute readers might dismiss as sentimental or didactic. She also boldly brings together writers and texts not often read at all, or

not read alongside each other.

At the same time, the political and historical contexts Taylor uses sometimes hamper the effectiveness of her analyses. For one, cursory terms like "materialist" or "protest" are often used to designate writing that provides any consideration of economic oppression, and such imprecisely defined terminology sometimes shortchanges Taylor's readings of texts' precise Marxist aesthetic strategies.

Taylor also at times invokes Richard Wright's fiction much as Hurston caricatured it: narrowly focused on economic and ideological conditions, androcentric, and neglecting psychological depth. This stereotype of Wright has been challenged and complicated in recent scholarship, yet Taylor's recourse to it sometimes means her claims rest on oversimplified distinctions between Marxism and affect as priorities in African-American writing.

The organizing historical frame for *Labor Pains* is the "Popular Front era," which Taylor defines as "a time when forms of literary and political radicalism were used to combat the racism and classism that persisted from the interwar years through the 1960s." (4)

In policy terms, the Popular Front, of course, was a 1930s-40s Communist Party strategy of allying with various labor organizations and liberal political groups to combat international fascism. The broader political and temporal definition used by Taylor derives from Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture* (1997), which used the Popular Front as a broader rubric for the prevalence of socialist, pro-labor, pluralist, anti-racist and anti-fascist values in U.S. culture from the Depression to the 1960s or later. Yet as Alan Wald writes, Denning and others taking similar approaches sometimes show a "tendency to homogenize and marginalize the often specific varieties and experiences of commitment permeating the Left."⁶

Similarly, in *Labor Pains* a broad definition of the Popular Front leads Taylor, at times, to an overly general definition of authors' political commitment and the leftist content of their novels. *Ollie Miss*, for example, gives a depiction of farm work that as Taylor writes might "[ring] of socialism" (47), but her reading suggests that the novel's political reference point is closer to a particular kind of agrarian collectivism than radical socialism or anti-capitalism. And when it comes to biographical evidence of Henderson's leftism, Taylor's evidence is somewhat scant. She cites his membership in the New York Typographical Union, friendship with figures like Langston Hughes, and in a somewhat metonymical argument, his classification as a Harlem Renaissance figure and thus likely left leaning, given general points of overlap between the two movements.

For a more resolutely left-wing writer like Attaway, the specific policy dimensions of the Popular Front were of a greater importance to his writing that Taylor acknowledges, as *Blood on the Forge* dissents from Popular Front Communist policy in its skepticism toward the possibilities of interracial working-class alliance.⁷

Arguably the monumental novel of the African American left — Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) — also sets itself at odds with the Popular Front through its excavation of the experiential and ethical difficulties of solidarity across racial lines. In addition, variations of Popular Front anti-fascism enacted by the Communists in support of the U.S. effort in World War II would help drive writers like Ralph Ellison and Wright away from the left, as support for the war against fascism led, in their view, to a diminishment of leftist anti-racist and anti-capitalist work.⁸ In short, the specifics of the Popular Front as a policy were often crucial to how African-American writers engaged with the left in the 1930s and 1940s.

New Considerations

Taylor's open-ended use of the Popular Front is elastic enough to inspire new consideration of writers like Henderson and Welty — an elasticity that should open up new avenues for future scholars — but is often imprecise when defining the actual political or ideological content of Popular Front influence, an imprecision that obscures the particular commitments and projects of individual writers.

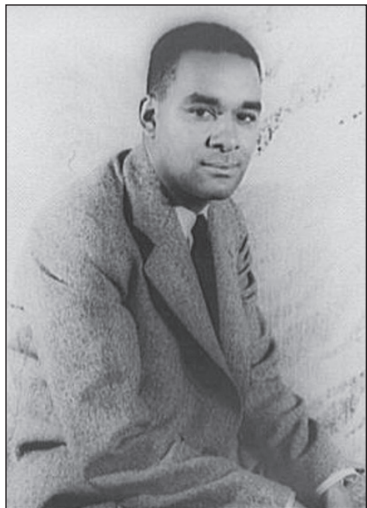
The study's two periodizing rubrics, the New Deal and the Popular Front, are temporally expanded in such a fashion as to raise questions about the utility of either in framing the literary tendencies Taylor analyzes.

But while its extension of “the Popular Front era” into the 1960s could use further justification, it raises a question that scholars of the U.S. literary left could and should address: how do we define the temporal parameters and ideological content of a “leftist” or working-class moment in U.S. literature and culture, without effacing the particular institutional and policy commitments of individual writers who identified, at one time or another, with one or multiple variations of the left?

For instance, writers like Richard Wright or Ralph Ellison were certainly, in a general sense, left-wing and Marxian in the 1930s and early-mid 1940s, but their political commitment was also filtered through and

often positioned both within and against the particular institutional stances and practices of the Communist Party (including those associated with the Popular Front position). Attention to writers' particular personal institutional connections and investments is a vital aspect of any methodology in left literary studies.

Finally, one wishes Taylor had applied her deft readings of labor, affect and the folk to the work of additional African-American writers



Did the writings of Richard Wright and those of Zora Neale Hurston represent polarized approaches for representing the Black folk?

firmly affiliated with the Communist left during the 1930s, such as Margaret Walker or Langston Hughes. A more institutionally-specific understanding of the Popular Front as a certain Communist position would not necessarily have narrowed this study, but it could have introduced new interpretations of the forms of leftist commitment operating in the work of Walker, Hughes, Wright, Ellison and other African American writers for whom the Black folk was a major figure in their engagements with and revisions of Communism.

These concerns aside, *Labor Pains* nonetheless offers a compelling answer to an important methodological consideration for readers and scholars of left-wing literature: how do we incorporate a consideration of affect — with all the messiness, irrationality, and resistance to delineated representation the term denotes — into our understanding of the ethical necessities and aesthetic complexities of protest writing? How do we read, at the same time, for the kinds of concerns so unfortunately dichotomized in

the Hurston-Wright debate? Taylor's readings not only point the way toward such a method, but demonstrate that for mid-century writers, Black political interest was not removed from the needs of the inner life, from what W.E.B. Du Bois famously called, with the same emphasis as *Labor Pains*, “the souls of black folk.” ■

Notes

1. Richard Wright, “Between Laughter and Tears,” *New Masses*, October 7, 1935, 25; Zora Neale Hurston, “Stories of Conflict,” *Saturday Review*, April 2, 1938, 32.
2. Marian Minus, review of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston, *New Challenge* 2 (1937): 87.
3. Patricia Yaeger, *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 62-63.
4. See Madhu Dubey, *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
5. Konstantina Mary Karageorgos, “Reintroducing Sarah Wright,” *Against the Current* 170 (2014), <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/170/p4161/>.
6. Alan Wald, “Marxist Literary Debates in the 1930s,” *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature of the 1930s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 32.
7. Alan Wald, *Trinity of Passion: The Literary Left and the Antifascist Crusade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 64.
8. Hazel Rowley, *Richard Wright: The Life and Times* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 263; Arnold Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 141. For a discussion of the complexities of leftist and Popular Front understandings of fascism's ideological and economic bases in the Depression period, see Martin Oppenheimer's review essay “Fascism—What is it Anyway?,” *Against the Current* 202 (2019), <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/202/what-is-fascism/>.

WE CAN SEE 2019 as a year of strikes. By mid-January 34,000 Los Angeles teachers were on the picket lines. Their successful action drew rallies of more than 50,000. In February 2,500 Oakland teachers struck for seven days. Later in the month 1,700 U.E. locomotive workers struck for nine days against two-tier wages. July saw 400 members of the Inlandboatmen's Union shutting down ferry lines along the Alaskan coast for 11 days during peak season. Then Kentucky miners occupied a railroad track and blocked a train loaded with coal they didn't get paid to dig.

The fall started off with almost 50,000 UAW workers walking the picket line along with 850 UAW Aramark maintenance workers. During the month-long strike more than 600,000 workers were laid off at GM plants and parts suppliers throughout North America. Meanwhile 3,500 UAW members struck heavy-duty Mack truck plants in three states.

As we go to press the third largest school district in the country — with 360,000 students — is shut down by 25,000 Chicago teachers and 7,000 auxiliary staff. Given the high-poverty school district they serve, they are demanding not just an increase in salaries, but more staff: nurses, librarians and social workers. ■

REVIEW

Latinx Struggles and Today's Left By Allen Ruff

The Latino Question: Politics, Laboring Classes and the Next Left

By Armando Ibarra, Alfredo Carlos, and Rodolfo D. Torres. Foreword by Christine Neumann-Ortiz. London: Pluto Press/Univ. of Chicago, distr., 2018, 256 pages, \$27 paperback.

ASSAYING THE POLITICAL and social terrain facing Latinx workers and communities in the United States, this significant work by activist scholars Armando Ibarra, Alfredo Carlos and Rodolfo Torres comes as a critical engagement and important set of interventions.

The authors take on a range of strategic and tactical concerns for a way forward in these increasingly reactionary times, striving to reintroduce the centrality of class back into the course and direction of Latino politics.

A series of theoretical and analytical discussions made concrete by a mix of case studies drawn from interviews and oral histories, the personal stories of Latinx workers and community members, the book centers upon ways to best understand and demystify various conceptions regarding the "Latinization" or "browning" of the United States.

Too often, that diverse social and political reality has been simplistically described as an undifferentiated mass, some "slumbering giant" or "the Latino vote," as a monolith of assumed shared interests based upon commonalities of "identity" and "culture" or ethnicity, in which class relations are given short shrift at best.

At a time of increasing inequality and social polarization alongside purposefully generated white fear based upon some conjured "Latino Threat" and parallel mounting debates on the Left regarding identity politics and class relations, the authors focus upon the material bases of exploitation and oppression as the fundamental element defining the lives of the vast majority of Latinos.

The "Latino question," they argue, can only be understood within the historical context of the United States' political economy, of its foreign policy and demands of capital, the international division of labor, and the widespread rending of the social

fabric in Mexico and further south resulting from the neoliberal "recolonizing" of the hemisphere.

While recognizing the national and ethnic diversity of the country's more than fifty-seven million Latinos, the work primarily focuses upon the conditions faced by Mexican-Americans who currently constitute over two-thirds of that total, including not just the U.S.-born or "naturalized," but also cross-generational borderlands migrant workers as well as more recent legal and undocumented alike. (The next largest group, Puerto Ricans make up but nine percent of the total, followed by Cubans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans and other Central and South Americans.)

The New Demographics

The authors early on lay out some illuminating demographic descriptions of the broader Latino population as a portal for their main focus. They point to the "Latinization" of not just the Southwest, but of a number of major metropolitan areas on the cusp of becoming majority Latino. Los Angeles, we're told, is now a majority Latino city and California has become a "minority-majority" state.

That demographic shift, the authors tell us, reflects nothing more than capitalism replenishing the ranks of the working poor as Latinos have become a growing and increasingly militant portion of the U.S. working class.

Examining the issue of migrant labor and the "immigrant question," the book takes to task the widely held notion of "push-pull factors," a market theory of migration which simply posits that countless individuals suddenly decide to leave their homes and loved ones in search of the "opportunity" to sell their labor elsewhere.

Countering that "rational choice" explanation, the authors argue for what they refer to as an "empire theory of migration," the context of long historical realities of imperial penetration, domination and dependency imposed by "el Norte."

The present period's mass migrations cannot be understood outside that context of hegemony over Mexico and Central America, made worse by neoliberal "free trade" strategies such as NAFTA, failed promises of liberalization, direct and indirect interventions, and capital's ongoing dispossession forcing peoples off the land, into the

cities and northward.

In a quest for an "alternative Latino politics," the authors forward the necessity a "Latino cultural political economy," a dynamic dialectical approach to class, race and ethnicity. The authors set out to articulate the essential basis for that alternative by grounding it in the lives of that Mexican and Mexican-American working class, the majority of whom find themselves largely locked into the "economic trap" of urban and rural low wage work and limited social progress.

At the level of politics, the authors critique such conceptions as "the Latino vote" and the "sleeping giant" myth commonly used to describe some imaginary monolithic voting bloc lacking ethnic diversity or class differences. They point out that homogenized conceptions of "Latino" or "Hispanic" obscure the social and political experiences and cloud over internal class divisions and interests amidst growing inequality.

Class Analysis Central

At another level, as the authors describe it, the book stands as an attempt to rescue class analysis from the "cultural turn." As such, it contributes to an ongoing critique of Chicano/a Studies and the contemporary "discourse" that fails to acknowledge how Latinos/as are being produced and reproduced in the struggle against capital. In doing so, it reclaims an older history of class struggle and working class politics.

The authors remind us that it has been militant, indeed radical motion from below led by class conscious and organized community-rooted Mexicano workers that has defined some of the most significant social struggles extending back decades before the United Farm Workers' 1972 founding.

The same has been true, despite the presence of other class elements, for the more recent unprecedented nationally coordinated "Day Without Immigrants" general strike of 2006, subsequent May Day marches in places like Milwaukee, and more recent community-centered efforts nationwide in regard to DACA, demands for comprehensive immigration reform, opposition to ICE, and resistance to the ethno-class war against Latino/Chicano studies curricula and educators and more general populist xenophobia.

The authors argue that the "Great Recession" beginning in 2008 hit Latinos the hardest at all levels, but also resulted

Allen Ruff is a historian and author, anti-imperialist activist and radio talk show host based in Madison, Wisconsin.

in a crisis of hegemony and authority and an increased lack of trust in the established political process. This opened new opportunities for self-organization and potentials for new social movements from below potentially soldering together new solidarities of race, ethnicity, gender and class.

Complementing the book's analytical sections, particular chapters based upon personal histories and case studies of work and community in various parts of the country and sectors of the economy breathe life into the work.

Such chapters as one on the history and present of Mexican families and migrant work in California agriculture, one recounting the life stories of the working poor in Milwaukee where thirty-five percent of Latinos live under the poverty level, and the depiction of "Latina/o Labor in Multicultural Los Angeles" illuminate and give substance to the authors' main arguments.

Some of that longer history is consciously laid out to dispel the myths that frame Latino working communities as "new" or "foreign."

The book sets out to challenge the prevalent orthodoxy of a Latino identity politics that posits "self," in the absence of material conditions, as the most important unit of analysis for understanding and explaining the complexity of social relations.

While acknowledging the important historical diversities in the broad Latino/a universe and the absolute necessity of avoiding the "analytical trap" of economic determinism or reductionism, the authors forward the essential value of Marxist categories in understanding the "new social movements" and the wider political economy in which they operate.

In their view, that "cultural turn" with its individuated "identity politics" based on race, ethnicity and gender, the retreat from class, and calls for "intersectionality" created a new orthodoxy that not only rendered capital and labor invisible but also declined to subject capitalism to nuanced and profound critique at a time of increasing social and economic disparities, inequality and stagnant wages. (181)

While laying out an explicit materialist intervention in response to the abandoning of those questions of inequity, class relations and the critique of political economy — that now often forgotten essential point of interrogation in the development of Mexican-America studies in the late 1960s and early



'70s — the authors also recognize the need for "a middle ground" that recognizes the role of culture in reinforcing capitalist social relations. (180)

After all, they clearly recognize the historic and contemporary value of cultural identity and the crucial key role of cultures of resistance as an essential element of movement building. They clearly emphasize, however, that:

If Latinos are to combat the growing inequality and economic subjugation in the unrepentant economy, then their response must be based not on individualist or self-focused analyses but rather on a collective and solidarity-based understanding of their position within the economic power structure as a class, a working class.

Toward the "Next Left"

The book's concluding section calls for a strategic outlook that focuses upon the specific material manifestations of capitalism, not just on broad concepts like "racism" and "oppression," but on their roots embedded in and resulting from the social relations of production.

In their conclusions regarding a "Next Left," our authors rhetorically ask a key what-is-to-be-done question, "What can working-class Latinos achieve in the near future?" With Antonio Gramsci's notion of a "strategic war for position" in mind, they respond:

(O)ur response is simple: Organize and find common ground with other social movements that have been for far too long divided

by ideological boundaries. Organize to end the onslaught of capital and to end economic exploitation, for better wages and working conditions, for affordable and community-owned housing, and for fairer, more democratic, and more just workplaces. (183)

Importantly, the book's portrayal of the Mexican-American working class — migrant, immigrant and U.S.-born — presents it not just as object or exploited victim but as the increasingly organized collective subject-in-information.

In important ways, the work suggests that this layer is in the process of becoming an exemplary leading edge of multi-leveled resistance and "fight back" against neoliberalism's punishing assaults; in some ways a leading element of "a class for itself."

The book actually is about a "slumbering giant" — not in the narrow electoral sense but rather as a social mass increasingly moved to collective action by incessant exploitation and dispossession, reactionary immigration policies, and racist discrimination, alongside people's increasing consciousness of their power that comes from organized direct action.

A rich study of the transformative nature and potential of a class-based Latino politics from the bottom up, the book should be deeply plumbed not just by those most immediately affected, but by the broader Left. The authors' hope and this reviewer's as well is that it reaches all those seeking perspectives that will inform today's popular struggles to reshape the course and direction of our history. ■

REVIEW

Tear Down the Manosphere

By Giselle Gerolami

Misogyny:

The New Activism

By Gail Ukockis

Oxford University Press, 2019, 336 pages.

\$24.95 hardcover.

GAIL UKOCKIS IS a writer, social worker and instructor who taught Women's Issues at Ohio Dominican University for 11 years. In the title of her book *Misogyny: The New Activism*, she consciously avoided the word "feminism." While Ukockis considers herself a feminist, she invites those who are not feminists but reject misogyny to read her book.

Ukockis argues that we are seeing new forms of misogyny, or "hatred of women," with the rise of social media, be it rape threats by trolls on the internet or revenge porn by men who feel rejected. These new forms of misogyny and the less extreme sexism add to those that have always confronted women in public, whether at work, in the street, or elsewhere: objectification, dehumanization and humiliation.

Thus, feminism as a tool for social justice is still relevant today, and although it doesn't appear in the title, Ukockis does advance a feminist agenda.

Ukockis's book is divided into 10 chapters. The first seven describe aspects of misogyny. The last three take up activist strategies. Ukockis limits her scope to the United States and looks at historical forms of misogyny as well as current ones.

Ukockis uses "intersectionality" to conceptualize current feminist politics. The term, popular now, was first used in the 1970s by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who looked at how identities could intersect and amplify discrimination.

Ukockis emphasizes that trauma, specifically Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), is an often-overlooked aspect of intersectionality. African-American women face the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype and are threatened by police almost as much as are African-America males.

Native women are murdered at ten times the national average, and 84% of Native women experience some form of violence in their lifetime. Latina farm workers experience wage theft and health issues related to pesticide use, while Central

Giselle Gerolami is a member of Solidarity and has served on its Gendered Violence Commission since 2013.

American women risking the trek to the United States experience high levels of sexual assault along the way.

Using this theoretical perspective, Ukockis outlines some common forms of misogyny in U.S. society. In her section on gender violence, she includes her own research on sex tourism, which she conducted by studying public sex tourist blogs. She concludes that the growth of sex trafficking in the internet age was sparked by men who reject both U.S. dating sites and domestic sex workers because these women resist objectification in various ways.

Instead, these men want the ultimate "girlfriend experience" with under-age women who pretend to love them. Unsurprisingly, sex tourist blogs are rife with misogyny, including ageism, fat-shaming and the ranking of women from one to ten.

Resisting Toxic Masculinity

Ukockis goes on to critique other online men's spaces, or the "manosphere," where life is a competition to become an alpha and get "hot babes." The way to a "hot babe" includes *negging* (a negative comment designed to bring down a woman's self-esteem) and *kino*, which is light touching to test the sexual waters without coming across as creepy.

Once a man has won a woman over, he is expected to physically and sexually dominate her. Men who are unsuccessful in the manosphere may become *incels*, involuntary celibates, who promote violence against women as punishment for having rejected them.

This behavior falls into the category of toxic masculinity, or "behaviors and attitudes of hypermasculinity that stress virility over cooperation and violence over compassion." Ukockis points out that self-reliance, playboy behavior and power over women are linked not only to violence against women but to negative mental health in men. She believes that male self-compassion would go a long way towards lessening toxic masculinity.

Turning to reproductive health, Ukockis notes men's ignorance about women's bodies and their disgust at menstruation. At a time when male legislators show a profound lack of understanding of reproductive science, there has been promising activism against taxes on tampons and pads and for free feminine products in schools, prisons and homeless shelters.

Similarly, while abortion rights are under attack as never before, women are fighting back and talking openly about their abortions. Even with a majority of the U.S. population supporting abortion rights, doctors who perform abortion continue to receive death threats. Catholic hospitals not only deny abortions but refuse gender transition procedures, sterilization, or emergency contraception.

Some politicians, including Trump, think women should be punished for having abortions. Such criminalization of abortion will disproportionately affect marginalized women, since rich women will always be able to obtain abortions.

Ukockis calls for "thoughtful activism" and looks for examples where women have forged alliances with other movements, such as the labor and environmental movements.

Recently, UNITE HERE organized around panic buttons in hotel rooms to protect female cleaning staff who find themselves in unsafe situations with clients. Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United organized around low wages and the sexual harassment that 90% of restaurant workers experience.

Ecofeminism is another alliance. The women involved in resisting the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) fought against tremendous odds and "were injured by water cannons, concussion grenades, rubber bullets, tear gas, mace, sound cannons, and unknown chemical agents."

"They have been sexually assaulted on the front line; kept naked in their jail cells and denied legal representation; locked in dog kennels; permanently blinded." (242)

Ukockis finds inspiration in the example of Lakota elder Spotted Eagle, who talks about bio-politics in opposition to corporate greed as "human life processes [that] are managed under regimes of authority over knowledge, power and 'subjectivation.' In other words, our indigenous bodies, which are essentially a direct reflection of Mother Earth, have been and continue to be controlled by corporations and governments that operate for profit without regard for human life." (244)

Optimistic Outlook

Ukockis is optimistic about today's resurgent feminism. The movement represents a cultural and political shift, with new opportunities for legislation on women's issues.

continued on page 36

REVIEW

Turkey's Roots of Authoritarianism By Daniel Johnson

Why Turkey is Authoritarian:

From Atatürk to Erdoğan

By Halil Karaveli

Pluto Press: Left Book Club, 2018, 256 pages, \$21 paper.

TURKEY'S RULING JUSTICE and Development Party (AKP) was delivered a number of blows in municipal elections in March 2019. The party of President Tayyip Recep Erdoğan lost the country's three largest cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, as well as the important urban centers of Adana, Antalya and Mersin.

The Istanbul race was especially close, with People's Republican Party (CHP) candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu defeating the AKP's Binali Yıldırım by some 13,700 votes in a city of more than 15 million. The AKP unsurprisingly contested the election and, equally unsurprisingly, Turkey's Supreme Electoral Council agreed to the regime's demands for a rerun.

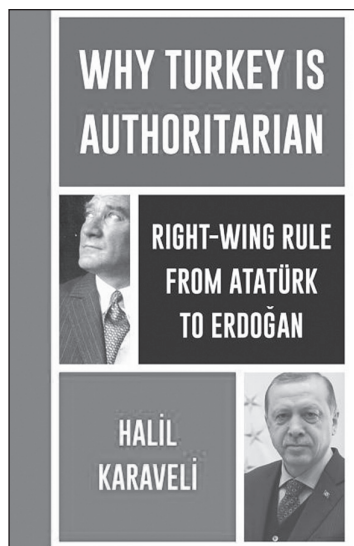
The June do-over proved a momentous trouncing for the AKP. İmamoğlu's margin of victory increased by more than 800,000, a clear denunciation of the party's refusal to accept democratic defeat. Yıldırım's loss is an even bigger disappointment for Erdoğan, a former mayor of Istanbul who has famously stated of municipal elections: "whoever wins Istanbul, wins Turkey."

Celebrations in Istanbul lasted through the night, with the election arguably constituting the biggest challenge (there have been others) to Erdoğan and his party's nearly two decades of rule. With a number of high-profile founders having left or rumored to be leaving the party, some believe the 2019 election will be remembered as the beginning of the end of the AKP's dominion in Turkey.

As opponents of the pro-capital, socially conservative party justly revel in AKP losses, a key question for the left now that Erdoğan and his party are no longer seen as invincible is: what now?

More than a hundred journalists and thousands of members of the leftist People's Democracy Party (HDP) remain imprisoned while social movements are weak. Erdoğan

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removed from office.

A new work whose subject is how Turkey arrived at its present state is Halil Karaveli's *Why Turkey is Authoritarian: From Atatürk to Erdoğan*, published by the Left Book Club.

Karaveli, a senior fellow with a Swedish-based research institute and editor of its publication *Turkey Analyst*, argues that the explanation for authoritarianism in Turkey is not a result of a political defect related to Islam, or of clashes between secularists and fundamentalists, but is rather explained by the continuity of right-wing rule.

Though this seemingly simple argument itself begs a number of questions, *Why Turkey is Authoritarian* is a perceptive and powerfully argued, if analytically and strategically flawed, analysis of rightwing rule in modern Turkey.

Violence, Kemalism and the Left

During Turkey's post-World War I independence struggle, founder of the Communist Party of Turkey Mustafa Suphi urged fellow socialists to support the Kemalists [followers of modern Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk — ed.] and the government in Ankara in their anti-imperialist struggle — even though "they might be nationalist bigots."

When Suphi and 14 other exiled communists attempted to return to Anatolia from Russia in early 1921, they were murdered off the coast of Trabzon and dumped into the Black Sea.

The murders, perpetrated by rightwing nationalists against a potential threat from

has called İmamoğlu and other new non-AKP mayors "lame ducks" and, true to form, in August 2019 the democratically elected mayors of Diyarbakır, Mardin and Van (all from the HDP) were

the left and tacitly approved by the new government, was just the first manifestation of a pattern of violence that according to Karaveli continues to the present.

From the secular republic's authoritarian repression of civil society organizations in the 1930s to the Islamist AKP's repeated attacks against dissenters, governments in Turkey have consistently suppressed the left, or implicitly sanctioned nationalist violence against them.

Yet many on the ostensible Turkish left, the "nationalist left," continue to adhere to a belief in Kemalism as a progressive force. In Karaveli's view this notion stems from the fact that Turkish "progressives" (as he terms them) have generally privileged the fight against religious obscurantism over that of social justice, with secularism rather than equality standing as the primary indicator of modern progress.

"The left," the author asserts, "has taken issue with religion, and much less, if at all, with capitalism." Since, Karaveli argues, ordinary people are held by Kemalists to be too uneducated and unsophisticated to make proper use of democratic freedoms, the way has been paved for conservative forces to claim the mantle of democracy in opposition to elitist secularists.

While oversimplifying (and never actually defining) "the left," Karaveli is correct that an obsessive fear of religion among secularists has consistently played into the hands of the religious right, constituting one key reason for the continuity of rightwing rule.

Rather than mobilizing the people for change, Kemalist leftists have historically placed their hopes for social transformation in the military. This includes many student radicals in the 1960s, who argued that a top-down national democratic revolution was required before a socialist revolution could take place.

As Karaveli shows, however, the Turkish military has consistently been the watchdog, "not of secularism, but of the bourgeois order of the country." That was made painfully clear after the 1980 military coup.

Not only were thousands of radicals arrested and tortured, but in the coup's aftermath neoliberal reforms were implemented while religious education was expanded and the military promoted the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis," a doctrine earlier developed by conservative intellectuals as

an antidote to increasingly popular leftwing ideas.

Subsequently, in the 1980s and 1990s what Karaveli calls the “liberal left” embraced the capitalist class as a counterforce to a corrupt authoritarian state. The notion that the despotic state had prevented the development of civil society and democracy served as a reason to support capitalist interests as manifested in the AKP.

The “left” has therefore been at least partly responsible for the continuity of rightwing political dominance in Turkey. In the early republic a Kemalist left supported a state whose primary concern lay in developing a domestic bourgeoisie and suppressing dissent, while in recent decades liberal leftists have given credibility to the right’s claims to represent the people against a pro-Western authoritarian elite.

Karaveli argues that the old strategies are obsolete.

Capitalism, Class and Culture

While the subtitle of *Why Turkey is Authoritarian* implies that the book begins with the rule of Atatürk after Turkey’s winning independence in 1923, it in fact reaches further back in history. This is because social development in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire substantially determined the shape of 20th- and 21st-century authoritarianism in the Turkish nation state.

Drawing on the work of historical sociologist Çağlar Keyder, Karaveli notes that the Ottoman state prevented the formation of a dominant landlord class that could challenge its power. Throughout the Ottoman period the peasantry was therefore able to maintain its independence as a small landholding class.

However, though lacking a substantial bourgeoisie or landless proletariat, the Ottoman Empire was increasingly integrated into the European capitalist world system in the 1800s on exploitative terms, leading to concessions to Western powers that continued until the demise of the Ottoman state following defeat in World War I.

As the wealth and prominence of a minority of non-Muslim traders (mostly Greek Orthodox Christians, and to a lesser extent Armenians and Jews) increased with the empire’s integration into Europe’s economic orbit, Muslim rural, mercantile and artisan groups found themselves unable to compete with cheap European imports. Ruling Ottoman elites exploited these religious differences, as ethnic and religious violence occurred with growing frequency in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

According to Karaveli, what appeared to be a religious conflict in fact had social and economic origins. This has been another recurrent pattern in Turkish history:

“(B)usinessmen from religiously conservative, small-town Anatolia, who did not enjoy the same privileged relation with the state as culturally ‘Westernized’ businessmen and industrialists did, were to form the backbone of the Islamist movement that arose in Turkey in the late 1960s, while working-class frustration at economic inequality also ‘naturally’ came to be expressed in cultural and religious terms, as the economically privileged groups in society had a ‘Western’ cultural outlook.”

To argue, however, that “the conflation of class and culture has benefited the right” implies that class and culture (and therefore the economy, politics, etc.) are somehow separable orders. This orientation posits a base/superstructure model that promotes a “false consciousness” interpretation of popular belief — an unhelpful approach for those interested in social change.

Moreover, the argument that East/West (or religious/secular) distinctions have substituted for “real” class consciousness also reproduces an essentialist civilizational divide that Karaveli rejects at the book’s beginning.

The historical development of capitalism in the late Ottoman Empire to some extent helps Karaveli explain ethnic and sectarian violence that culminated in the attempted destruction of the Ottoman Armenian population during WWI. It feels somewhat more forced in explaining the historical repression of Kurds and other minorities from the early republican period to the present.

Although a systematic analysis of the Turkish state’s long history of subjugation of Kurds, Alevis (a Sufi sect that in Turkey is politically progressive) and others would seem essential in a study of authoritarianism in Turkey, it is only treated sporadically in *Why Turkey is Authoritarian*.

Bülent Ecevit and Social Democracy

Karaveli rightly argues, though without elaboration, that the future of the Turkish left will depend on a more inclusive social vision — including an understanding of popular religiosity. In all of Turkish history, in fact, there has only been one leader on the left who successfully appealed to the pious masses.

Why Turkey is Authoritarian devotes a long chapter to the exception — Turkey’s only social democratic prime minister, Bülent Ecevit — and argues that his example is proof that the Turkish people are not by nature averse to progressive politics.

This is an important point. Unfortunately, Karaveli’s excessive attention to Ecevit as a man “idolized” by the masses (and ultimately betrayed by them) suggests a Great Man view of history that most clearly demonstrates the shortcomings of the book.

Ecevit, compared to other 1960s “radical aristocrats” like Robert F. Kennedy in the

United States, Pierre Trudeau in Canada, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber in France, and Olof Palme in Sweden, was a driving force in pushing Atatürk’s CHP to the left in the 1960s. According to Karaveli, like these leaders Ecevit was young, rich, progressive, charismatic and shared their desire to inspire progressive change in the masses.

Despite his elite origins, in contrast to Kemalist politicians Ecevit sought to engage with the working classes and eschewed the traditional bourgeois privileges of political life. He extolled an “Anatolian humanism,” a belief that Turkish culture was predisposed to a commitment to tolerance, democracy, progress, equality and solidarity. The notion that mosque attendance and leftist politics were not incompatible was borne out in 1977, when devout Muslims voted for the CHP in large numbers for the first time.

Ecevit’s ability to appeal to the people in a way no previous politician on the left had been able to is surely admirable. Yet Karaveli’s treatment of Ecevit borders on hero worship, while other developments of the ’60s and ’70s (industrialization, rural-urban migration, trade unionization, class conflict) are given comparatively little attention.

The social and cultural context of Ecevit’s rise and fall — except for the right’s violent response to the left’s gains — are neglected in favor of a dramatic story of rightwing opposition to the noble and tragic leader.

Karaveli acknowledges that the radical left was suspicious of Ecevit’s reformism. He also concedes that Ecevit was a social democratic reformer, not a Marxist revolutionary; and he mentions (also without elaboration) that a major reason Ecevit pushed the CHP to the left in the 1960s was because of the creation of the Workers’ Party of Turkey (TIP) in 1961, the country’s first legal socialist labor party.

Yet more important for Karaveli is the fact that Ecevit went further than any other leader in “challenging capitalist power.”

Ecevit was undoubtedly in a difficult position as premier in the late 1970s, as economic crisis, rightwing violence (increasingly met with counter-violence by the left), and labor militancy produced a turbulent political environment.

Karaveli usefully discusses the pernicious U.S. role in Turkish politics, historically and in 1979 when Washington decided Ecevit had to go. The coup of 1980 would have been impossible without the approval of the American government, as cold war imperatives and suspicion of Ecevit led to U.S. approval of the military putsch.

Karaveli argues that the labor movement’s abandonment of Ecevit in 1979 was a “grave mistake,” while the “working class and peasants defected to the right at the first opportunity” following Ecevit’s agree-

ment to an IMF bailout. Though he acknowledges the persistence of worker militancy after Ecevit's "abandonment," the possibility that Ecevit's decisions were themselves mistaken is never considered.

Rise of the Right

A final chapter on "The Rise of the Islamists" recounts the economic and political contexts in which the AKP came to power in the wake of the 1980 coup. Beginning with Erdoğan's involvement in the conservative student movement in the late 1960s and ending with a failed military coup in the summer of 2016, the chapter will be useful for readers interested in the AKP and its Islamist predecessors.

Like their previous incarnations, since the 1970s religious conservatives claimed to speak for the people in opposition to the secular elite. The main shift in recent decades has been a move from statist and protectionist policies to a neoliberal orientation that continues to deploy a "social" rhetoric.

Crucially, in Karaveli's view it was neoliberal globalization that brought about bourgeois unity. Previously small Anatolian capitalists opposed to the Istanbul-centered and "big bourgeoisie" became major exporters to Europe by the 1990s; now, both the "secular" and "Islamic" bourgeoisies wanted to be a part of the American-led global capitalist order.

This unity made possible the rise of Erdoğan and the AKP. Though this is also well-covered ground, Karaveli distills a complex recent past into an accessible and succinct narrative.

Concepts and Conclusions

In an afterword, *Why Turkey is Authoritarian* addresses Turkey's "Kurdish question" with reference to its 2018 invasion of Afrin in northwest Syria. According to Karaveli, historically and today the mobilization of anti-Kurdish ideology "helps sustain the hold of authoritarian nationalism" in the country, even among the left.

Characteristically, however, the author's definition of the left is so capacious (here it signifies the centrist CHP's support for the invasion) as to be nearly devoid of meaning. Nevertheless, for Karaveli the main task for the Turkish left today is for it to emancipate itself from its Atatürkist past.

How exactly this is going to happen, and how the left's penance for its nationalist sins will lead to justice for Kurds and other oppressed groups, is unclear.

This relates to a final problem in Karaveli's analysis. It is symptomatic that for Karaveli, again evoking Ecevit, "the emergence of a social and democratic reformer able to establish a following among the pious lower classes remains to this day the key to breaking the vicious cycle of authoritarianism in Turkey."

It should be clear that authoritarianism in Turkey cannot in fact be broken by any one individual, and hoping for the emergence of a charismatic leader capable of uniting a working class divided by religion and ethnicity is not a viable political strategy. Fittingly, Karaveli cites political theorist Chantal Mouffe's argument concerning the purported need for a charismatic leader to crystalize a populist "we" identity, and notes

with approval Mouffe's influence on Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France and Podemos in Spain.

Perhaps sensing the many problems with Mouffe's theory (not least of which is her rejection of the Marxist terminology so prominent in *Why Turkey is Authoritarian*), Karaveli does not wholeheartedly endorse the leader principle. He claims that charismatic leaders are decisive — but "only up to a certain point."

Yet the reason for this objection is practical rather than theoretical. In the case of Turkey, Karaveli claims, Bülent Ecevit's charisma (and Ecevit is credited with single-handedly mobilizing the Turkish masses against the capitalist system) "could not withstand the onslaught of the system he sought to change."

Unfortunately, Karaveli doesn't conclude from this claim that what is needed is not a new social democratic leader but rather a broad coalition of social movements, organizations and parties able to oppose the authoritarian rule that has so long dominated Turkey. Since capitalism and authoritarianism are more entrenched in Turkey today than was the case in the 1970s, one wonders exactly how a new charismatic reformer would fare any better than did Ecevit.

If Karaveli's top-down perspective ultimately falls short in advancing socialist strategy, *Why Turkey is Authoritarian* contains a wealth of information that will be of considerable benefit to readers. Karaveli's writing is sophisticated yet readable, and the breadth of his knowledge of modern Turkish history is impressive. ■

Tear Down the Manosphere — continued from page 35

One success was the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Harassment Act of 2017. Forced arbitration had made it difficult for women to come forward about workplace sexual harassment.

The number of women looking to run for office has skyrocketed to 30,000 from 920 in 2015-2016. This number includes many African-American women. Young feminists have become energized and active in such movements as "Know Your IX" around Title IX.

If you removed the footnotes and illustrations from *Misogyny: The New Activism*, the book is quite short. The breadth of the topic is too ambitious for a book of this length. Ukockis jumps from one idea to the next without transition and without sufficient development.

Throughout the book are boxes and case studies. These disrupt the flow and contribute to the scattered effect. She meticulously footnotes her references and citations but fails to connect those references.



Critiques of capitalism pop up in passing throughout the book, but as a socialist feminist I found them lacking in depth. At one point, she lumps misogyny and "Marxism-Leninism" together as "stupid ideas that deserve to die out." I am not

one to defend Stalinism, but I found this less than helpful, and I suspect she might include all Marxists in the "stupid" category.

Her attempts at humor sometimes fall flat as she inadvertently plays into stereotypes; in her preface, she jokes about how she has become a "Scary Feminist" who carries scissors in her purse to castrate men.

The chapter on intersectionality compares the hierarchy of oppressions to the group of people she has encountered in

the hot tub, each one trying to one-up the other on the numbers of surgeries they have had. This oversimplifies a complicated issue in a way that is not very instructive.

There are several other instances in the book where complex issues are reduced in ways that do nothing to advance the cause of women's rights.

Ukockis shares that, as an instructor, she often had to develop her own materials when none existed. Her book serves best as a primer on women's issues. The invitation for all to read the book as opposed to just feminists is appropriate, and her accessibility is admirable.

The opening chapters all end with "Action Steps," and the last three chapters are a call to activism. How many books call on their readers so directly to get off the couch and do something? One might quibble about the specific content of her activist advice, but Ukockis' call to action is both refreshing and necessary in the current political climate. ■

REVIEW

Remembering a Fighter

By Joe Stapleton

John Maclean:

Hero of Red Clydeside

By Henry Bell

Pluto Press, 2018, 256 pages, \$21 paperback.

THE CITY OF Glasgow at the turn of the 20th century was among the places in the industrial West where capitalism's contradictions were in plain view. It was a cosmopolitan port city, where "Italian, Irish, Gaelic, Yiddish, Lithuanian, Chinese, and Russian could be heard;" it was also made up of vast worker slums, where half of the population "lived in one- or two-bedroom flats." (*John Maclean: Hero of Red Clydeside*, 10-11).

It was out of this hotbox of international converse and capitalist exploitation that John Maclean emerged. Henry Bell's well-written biography is a serious achievement in Left historiography.

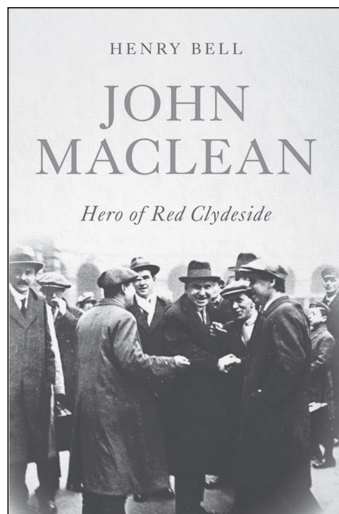
There have been earlier works on the subject of John Maclean, either taking him as their primary subject or addressing him as an important leader in the history of the socialist movement in Scotland. Some notable books dedicated to Maclean tended to be propaganda from the former Communist Party of Great Britain attempting to claim his legacy for their own.

Harry McShane's *No Mean Fighter* and Tom Bell's *John Maclean: A Fighter for Freedom* are some early examples. Other books, such as *John Maclean* by Nan Milton (his daughter) and work published by the Scottish poets who adored him, were hagiographical.

Bell's book does the important work of placing the existing Maclean literature in perspective — also giving us significant insights into the relevance of Maclean's life and work in today's struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Born in 1879 on the outskirts of Glasgow, Maclean's formative years as a political activist began with working in the Social Democratic Federation, agitating for constitutional reform by parliamentary means. But as World War I approached, Maclean was already moving toward a revolutionary Marxist position that emphasized the education of workers, their self-organization based on solidarity, and internationalism.

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classes, which he taught for most of his life.

Maclean's antiwar stance and public adherence to Marxist and socialist principles brought the attention of the likes of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, with Lenin referring to Maclean by name as one of the most important revolutionary organizers in Western Europe.

The factory-dense area along the Clyde river in Glasgow, which produced supplies for the British troops at the front, became one of the "hottest" areas in all of Europe from around 1915-1919, thanks in no small part to Maclean's indefatigable organizing. He spent a significant chunk of that time in prison for violating the "Defense of the Realm Act," a wartime measure to dissuade peace advocates.

While Maclean's fame as a socialist and internationalist grew during his incarceration, his health deteriorated as he was subjected to force-feeding and other forms of torture. It was shortly after the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, in June 1917, that Maclean was finally released from prison, and soon afterward, in 1919, that Glasgow experienced the workers' upsurge known as "Red Clydeside."

Sadly, the movement dissipated. A combination of deep-seated reformism in the Scottish working class, brutal repression and relentless propaganda from the Scottish state, and the distance of the revolutionaries in the CPGB from the Scottish masses doomed the "Red Clydeside" movement to a slow death.

After this culmination of worker militan-

cy that had been building for much of the preceding decade, Maclean's personal life was in shambles and his health was consistently in question. Despite all this, he continued to organize at the pace he had always maintained, until his premature death at the age of 44.

These positions led him to the left wing of the newly formed British Socialist Party (BSP). At the onset of the war, Maclean tirelessly supported peace and constantly agitated workers through fiery speeches and through his Marxist economics

A Complex Political Life

A great strength of this book is Bell's judiciousness in choosing which aspects of Maclean's life require serious investigation. There are three that I believe are particularly useful.

One aspect is biographical: Maclean's mental fitness after his multiple stints in prison. A second is theoretical: Maclean's evolving internationalism and how it interacted with his flashes of Scottish nationalism. A third is social: the struggle of Maclean's wife Agnes, without whom Maclean would not have been able to be the organizer he was, and from whom he was separated from 1919 until just before his death in 1923.

After 1919, the BSP morphed into the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), under the leadership of Theodore Rothstein, who had close ties with Lenin. Maclean ardently protested against this move, both because he felt it ridiculous to have Scottish workers in a party headquartered in London and because he harbored suspicions about the leadership of the new party. (161)

Maclean went so far as to pen an open letter to Lenin detailing his concerns, believing the latter had made a grave error in endorsing the formation of the party. Both at the time and since, CPGB leaders claimed that Maclean's opposition was due to his deteriorating mental health and creeping paranoia.

This all too convenient division between the mentally stable Maclean, beloved fighter for the working class, and the paranoid, disoriented Maclean critical of the CPGB, allowed the party to dismiss Maclean's critique of its leadership while claiming one of the most popular Marxists in Great Britain, after his death, for their own tradition.

Bell is not dogmatic in his careful examination of this strategy, but provides valuable perspective on what ended up becoming one of those leaders Maclean accused of being spies for the British government — two of the three, it turns out, actually were! (164)

Nationalism and Marxism

Bell's retrieval of Maclean's post-CPGB reputation allows him a fuller understanding of the complex relationship between Maclean's internationalism and his Scottish identity; the latter had previously been written off by CPGB biographers as symptoms of his ill health, and by others as a sign of latent nationalism.

In Maclean's open letter to Lenin, he wrote of the Scots' "rightful racial and class hatred" as fueling their push to "break the bonds of English capitalism." (166) This reference to "English" capitalism and Scottish "racial" hatred, combined with Maclean's founding of the Scottish Workers Republican Party in February 1923 (prior to his death that November), has led some to dismiss Maclean's later work as betraying his internationalism.

The way his legacy was put to use by the Scottish nationalist movement in the following decades didn't clarify the issue. It seems that Bell sees Maclean as an internationalist through and through, but does not deny the significance of his shift to Celtic republicanism later in life.

Bell characterizes a speech by Maclean as late as 1920 this way: "Nationalism is for Maclean still a matter of pragmatism rather than an end in itself and, whilst his language was increasingly romantic, and his focus increasingly Celtic, these themes are always subordinate to Marxism." (159).

Later, Bell includes "internationalist" in his description of a speech that was "quintessentially Maclean" (180), and speculates that frequent trips to Ireland in 1923, where Maclean saw the disappointing results of the achievement of the Irish Free State, dashed his hopes for the usefulness of nationalism for forwarding communist revolution. (186).

There is clearly a shift in Maclean's language after these trips away from references to the "Celtic race" and "English capitalism." Bell concedes that this shift could be more pragmatic than ideological — the natural assumption being there is no reason to assume Maclean's earlier shift toward Scottish nationalism wasn't for similar reasons.

Love and Martyrdom

Ultimately, Maclean's life is a tragedy ending in martyrdom. But he was martyred as much by the British state, through intermittent and brutal imprisonment, as he was by his refusal to take his wife Agnes' concerns about his health seriously.

In 1919, Agnes was so concerned about her husband's deteriorating physical health, paired with his always-frenetic pace of work, that she gave him an ultimatum: either he would take a rest from organizing work to recover his health, or she would leave him, taking his beloved daughters with her.

Maclean chose to continue organizing over his family, and even accused Agnes of being a government agent for her concerns.

Bell's odd phrasing ("Agnes's action proved to be disastrous for their marriage ...") serves — at least grammatically — to place the onus of their separation on Agnes, and the list of possible reasons for the breakup he provides through a survey of previous writing on the topic fails to note one rather obvious one: she was trying to save her husband's life. (142)

Maclean's conflation of a rest from organizing with "abandonment of his principles" is a cautionary tale for contemporary organizers who might (subliminally) mistake unsustainable and unhealthy organizing habits for "doing the work."

Maclean and Agnes ultimately reunited near the end of Maclean's life. Bell's treatment of their reconciliation, with letters they exchanged during the process, allows us to see the deep love they shared. (190)

Marxism and Biography

In his review of Isaac Deutscher's three-part biography of Leon Trotsky, the Scottish Marxist Neil Davidson described the dilemma of writing biography in the Marxist tradition:

*"Focus too narrowly on [the subjects'] lives, and run the risk of treating the social context in which they played their role as a mere historic backdrop. Place too much emphasis on their times, and stand in danger of reducing them to the sum of the social forces that shaped their personalities."*¹

It strikes me that this dilemma could apply equally to any biographer and not only those writing in the Marxist tradition. In any case, Davidson is right to point out the poles between which good biography must navigate.

Happily, Bell charts a steady course through this channel. The author allows his incredibly rich subject matter to speak for itself — a more difficult task than it sounds. At the same time, readers will pick up on truly great writing that almost seems to hide itself in the momentous events of the narrative of Maclean's life; Bell's compact but evocative exposition of the close of WWI at the beginning of chapter II is just one example.

There is also a deep textual analysis of Maclean's famous "speech from the docks," in which Bell beautifully brings the moral thrust of the speech to life, guiding the reader through the many rhetorical moves Maclean employs.

I'd like to end by pointing to a possibility for biography of the kind Bell has written specific to Marxist readers.²

Marxism has an aversion to formal moral system — rightly so, considering those usually on offer.³ This has allowed our tradition

to avoid the ethical traps that liberalism and its various religious forms lay for themselves, which more often than not render them unable to think about serious political and economic change.

In that sense, its aversion to the moral systems available in capitalist society has been one way Marxism has maintained its ruthless critique of it. But this aversion has also kept Marxism, by and large, from imagining good answers to crucial questions its adherents must face in their lives.

One of these questions might look like: "How, as I fight against capitalism and imperialism in all its forms, do I also live a good life?"⁴ In other words, what does it mean to live a good, fulfilling life as a Marxist?

Organizing on your job, leveraging power to fight for freedom, studying revolutionary theory — all of this could be part of an answer to that question; but what about the more mundane parts of our lives, and what about how we structure our lives as a whole toward the material goal of world communism?

Marxism, it could be argued, is not a rule for life. Maybe not. But even if it isn't, biographies of Marxists are essential for those who would like to know what being a Marxist means for their ethical life.

If Marxism may very well be right to abjure prescriptive moral systems, all the more then biographies of Marxists ought to show us what being a Marxist looks like — which is, in many ways, of greater use. John Maclean: Hero of Red Clydeside does just that. ■

Notes

1. Neil Davidson, *Holding Fast to an Image of the Past*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2014, 81.

2. I owe the following insight on the moral use of biography to Paul Griffiths, *Christian Flesh*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018.

3. For arguably the best attempt at creating a coherent Marxist ethical system, see Paul Blackledge, *Marxism and Ethics*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012.

4. Something similar to this question is precisely one the moral philosopher and erstwhile Trotskyist Alasdair MacIntyre believed Trotskyists should have asked, but didn't.

AN ONLINE JOURNAL, *Lausan* (<https://lausan.hk>) is the collective work of writers, researchers, activists and artists from Hong Kong and its diasporas. Beginning from decolonial left perspectives, the collective includes articles translated from Cantonese and republishes pieces by some of the group's own members. Their ambition is to connect Hong Kongers' struggles against capital, colonialism, and state power with unfolding histories of resistance around the world.

Readers are encouraged to check out the content, send feedback, and feel free to share online. See @lausanhk on most social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter.

REVIEW

History and the Standing Rock Saga By Brian Ward

Our History is the Future:

Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance

By Nick Estes

Verso, 2019, 320 pages. \$26.95 paperback.

NICK ESTES IS a revolutionary and co-founder of the Native liberation organization The Red Nation, and is a citizen of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe. Estes begins *Our History is the Future* with a sketch of what the Standing Rock fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) looked like at the confluence of the Missouri and Cannonball Rivers in North Dakota.

The Standing Rock Indian Reservation is home to the Hunkpapa Lakota, who are part of the Oceti Sakowin, the seven nations of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota (dubbed by the United States as “The Great Sioux Nation”). The largest single act of Indigenous resistance in the United States since the 1970s occurred at Standing Rock from April 2016 to February 2017.

Energy Transfer Partners, a natural gas company, was ramming DAPL through Oceti Sakowin treaty territory on a 1,712-mile course from the Bakken oil fields to Illinois, crossing both the Missouri and the Mississippi Rivers along the way.

Originally the pipeline was planned to go north of North Dakota’s majority-white capital city, but outcry in Bismarck led the company to redirect the pipeline underneath the Missouri River a half-mile from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

Though the new plan would impact the tribe, there was no consultation or discussion about the plan. The Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868 were supposed to protect these lands, but once again the United States was violating them.

In response to the redirected pipeline path, tribal members formed a small organized resistance camp called Sacred Stone Spiritual Camp on a member’s land. The camp quickly outgrew the space and a new encampment was developed on Army Corps of Engineer lands that had been stolen from the Oceti Sakowin. The growing camp came

to be called the Oceti Sakowin — an assertion of Indigenous history and resistance to the oppression by the United States.

As solidarity came from other Indigenous nations and non-Natives, the encampment hosted more than 10,000 people, making it the 10th largest city in North Dakota. Protestors called themselves water protectors and adopted the slogan *nni wiconi*, Lakota for “water is life.” The struggle for clean water was not only for Standing Rock, but for everyone down river as well.

Ultimately, this grassroots struggle forced the Obama administration to put a temporary halt on DAPL. Although Trump quickly reversed that decision once in office, the power of the water protectors cannot be denied. They have lit a fire that has ignited a level of Indigenous resistance not seen in decades.

Legacy of Resistance

Our History is the Future is a must read for anyone who is interested in understanding the encampment at Standing Rock and how it is connected to centuries of resistance by Indigenous people. When Estes refers to traditions of Indigenous resistance, he looks beyond what is normally understood as “Indigenous.” He explains:

A tradition is usually defined as a static or unchanging practice. This view often suggests that Indigenous culture or tradition doesn’t change over time — that Indigenous people are trapped in the past and thus have no future. But as colonialism changes throughout time, so too does resistance to it. By drawing upon earlier struggles and incorporating elements of them into their own experience, each generation continues to build dynamic and vital traditions of resistance. Such collective experiences build up over time and are grounded in specific Indigenous territories and nations.

Estes covers a lot in a short number of pages and connects history to current struggles. What is most fascinating is that he goes beyond the typical coverage of Indigenous history — resistance during the “Indian Wars” in the mid to late 1800s and the Red Power movement in the 1970s — and covers everything from the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), to the Army Corps of Engineers’ dam project on the Missouri, to how Indigenous people have connected to the international community.

Estes effortlessly convinces the reader how each piece of history is tied to the same string as the next. Estes combines the

best of Indigenous historical analysis, putting past movements into a modern, historical materialist framework. He veers away from liberal commentaries that often tokenize Native people as being mystically connected to the earth; rather, Estes shows the reader how Indigenous nations materially connect to the human and nonhuman world and have organized themselves into powerful forces throughout U.S. history.

The United States and American capitalism were founded on two major pillars: the ideology of white supremacy, which forced hundreds of thousands of Africans into slavery in this country, and settler colonialism, which involved the displacement of the Indigenous population to make way for both settlement and privatization of land. Without these two elements, American capitalism would not look the way it does today.

Throughout the book Estes connects the Indigenous struggle to other struggles: the fight against police violence toward African Americans, U.S. imperialism, the struggle for Palestinian liberation, and the climate justice movement. In fact, Estes sees Indigenous people as a crucial lynchpin to many of these fights.

Estes identifies settler colonialism and capitalism — two deeply intertwined aspects of U.S. history — as the oppressive systems that have fueled Indigenous resistance. Estes links those historical origins to present-day realities in his definition of settler colonialism, the specific form of colonialism whereby an imperial power seizes Native territory, eliminates the original people by force, and resettles the land with a foreign, invading population.

Unlike other forms of colonialism in which the colonizers rule from afar and sometimes leave, settler colonialism attempts to permanently and completely replace Natives with a settler population.

The process is never complete, and the colonial state’s methods for gaining access to new territories change over time, evolving from a program of outright extermination to one of making Indigenous peoples “racial minorities” and “domestic dependent nations” within their own lands, and of sacrificing Indigenous lands for resource extraction.

This definition is important in order to understand the debate on the left about whether the United States is still a settler colony. Some theorists argue that a settler

Brian Ward is an educator, socialist and long-time Indigenous solidarity activist. In September he attended the Native Liberation Conference in New Mexico. This is a slightly revised version of a review appeared in the final issue of International Socialist Review (112).

colony is a system where the non-Native population is the driving force of displacement and has a material interest in displacing Indigenous people, and therefore is incapable of standing up for Indigenous rights.

This was without a doubt true for the United States up until the mid to late 1800s, exemplified by pieces of legislation such as the Homestead Act and the Dawes Act (both of which took Indigenous land and parceled it out to non-Native settlers to entice them westward).

Estes, however, looks at settler colonialism in a more nuanced way, one interconnected with capitalism and imperialism, changing throughout history in a process that is still happening today. In his analysis, “settlers” can encompass individuals benefiting from the displacement of Indigenous people and corporations like Energy Transfer Partners, pushing DAPL through Native land.

This framework is complementary to Marx’s analysis of capitalism, centering the exploitation of the land and labor. Settler colonialism and its ideological companion manifest destiny are baked into the development of the United States, much like slavery and racism, and cannot be extracted without overhauling the entire system.

Estes details examples of what settler colonialism looks like in the modern era in his chapter “Flood,” covering the development of the Pick-Sloan Act that ordered the construction of six dams on the Missouri River between 1946 and 1966. It was designed to help prevent flooding in non-Native communities and to employ veterans returning from World War II. The project flooded many Indigenous nations’ land and displaced one-third of the residents across five reservations.

These infrastructure projects were connected to the newly established termination policy, which aimed to force Indigenous people off reservations into cities in order to achieve “the total liquidation of Indigenous political authority.” The Bureau of Indian Affairs linked the two directly, saying that flooding and displacement would “force [Indians] into seeking cash income to make up for substantial portion of income now represented in their use of natural resources of their present environment.”

Entering the capitalist economy would be a necessity, since the Missouri River Basin Investigation, a two-year fact-finding mission in 1946, stated that prior to the flooding most Indigenous communities in the area relied on the “free goods of Nature,” such as hunting, trapping, and gathering. When Estes refers to the ongoing settler colonial project, this is what that means.

Looking Toward Liberation

In the final chapter, Estes explains what “Liberation” might look like. Here he returns to the Oceti Sakowin encampment where, despite its shortcomings, “[f]ree food, free education, free health care, free legal aid, a strong sense of community, safety, and security were guaranteed for all.”

He continues: “Capitalism is not merely an economic system, but also a social system. And it was here abundantly evident that Indigenous social systems offered a radically different way of relating to other people and the world.” Solidarity, Estes writes, is an essential component of these radically different systems:

“Non-Natives believe that somehow Indigenous people will do to settlers what they did to them. But the opposite is true. The exam-

ple of the Black Hills Alliance in the previous chapter demonstrates that when Indigenous and poor settlers organize around treaty rights, they can beat multinational energy corporations and take control of their lives. The same happened during the 2013 protests to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline and the 2016 efforts at Standing Rock to defeat the Dakota Access Pipeline. Although both projects remain active, a diversity of forces, from environmentalist groups, to farmers and ranchers, to labor unions — what Zoltan Grossman calls ‘unlikely alliance’ — have put up significant obstacles.”

The brief victory at Standing Rock and Keystone XL would not have been possible without solidarity. Unlike in the past, the non-Indigenous working class no longer has an interest in the dispossession of Native land and would benefit from Native liberation; the same energy companies that are breaking treaty rights are the companies exploiting workers. In turn, Indigenous liberation will not be possible without “emancipation” from capital:

“Mni Wiconi — water is life — exists outside the logic of capitalism. Whereas past revolutionary struggles have strived for emancipation of labor from capital, we are challenged not just to imagine, but to demand the emancipation of earth from capital. For the earth to live, capitalism must die.”

I would argue that the future Estes is looking toward is a socialist society that puts forward Indigenous self-determination and liberation and counters racism, white supremacy, settler colonialism, imperialism and capitalism — a society centered around an Indigenous and Marxist understanding of how democratic communal relations and control of the earth is the only way forward for all. ■

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Hisham H. Ahmed, a Remembrance By Suzi Weissman

HISHAM AHMED, A longtime Palestinian political resister, distinguished scholar and contributor to *Against the Current* on the Middle East, died July 7, 2019 at age 56, after a long and difficult struggle with colon cancer. He is survived by his wife Amneh, and school-aged children Noor and Ahmed, his many colleagues, friends and family in California and in Palestine.

His death leaves a deep hole in the lives he touched. He was beloved and respected by his students and fellow professors and the community at large. We have lost a brother, father, friend, teacher, colleague and comrade. Hisham was generous, sweet, funny and positive in outlook, even in the worst of circumstances whether personal or political.

Hisham was a professor of Politics at Saint Mary's College of California, an expert on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially Hamas, and the dynamics of terrorism. His last research project was on the Syrian refugee crisis. His articles in this journal (ATC 132, 140, 156, 157 and 167) touched on political Islam, Hamas, Middle East politics and imperialism.

Hisham was the author of or a contributor to seven books, including *Ibrahim Abu-Lughod: Resistance, Exile and Return* and *From Religious Salvation to Political Transformation: The Rise of Hamas in Palestinian Society*, written while on a Fulbright scholarship in Palestine in 1993-94. In addition to teaching at Saint Mary's for 13 years, Hisham taught political science at Birzeit University in Palestine from 1994 to 2006.

I had the good fortune of interviewing Hisham many times on my radio program on KPFK — where he became one of our go-to experts with his depth of knowledge and his clear, analytical and even-handed approach.

From West Bank to the Bay Area

I was chair of our department when Hisham was hired. His application arrived literally as soon as the ad appeared, just after midnight our time, quickly followed by nearly a dozen superlative recommendations. One in particular sticks in my memory, which came from Santa Barbara, where Hisham had gotten his Ph.D.

The professor described Hisham's extraordinary scholarship and skills, but

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then entered the qualification that Hisham was known to be a little reckless, especially when riding his five-speed bicycle to class, particularly in view of the fact that he was blind — making clear in a wry and understated manner just how special a person Hisham was. After Hisham joined our department, I asked him how he managed to ride a bicycle. In reply, he asked me if I'd like him to drive me to the airport.

Hisham was also brave, and not just in facing his difficult health problems: In an astonishing act of courage and commitment in December 1995, Hisham persuaded the owner of two bulldozers to topple the fenced wall that surrounded Deheisheh, the refugee camp where he was born.

Hisham rode shotgun on one of the bulldozers — and was soon joined by thousands to celebrate the tearing down of the “Berlin Wall of the West Bank.”

This was no mean accomplishment, and even more remarkable for a scholar who was blind from birth. For five hours he and the wall destruction crew he commanded smashed the cement blocks, ripped the barbed wire and destroyed the chain-link fence, which was the oldest security fence in Palestinian territory, put up by the Israelis in 1980.

The old roads leading into the camp reopened and, for a time, the residents no longer lived in a cage; Hisham said he never felt more free.



Hisham on the bulldozer, 1995.

In Deheisheh

Hisham was born on New Year's Day in 1963 in Deheisheh, a destitute and overcrowded refugee camp just outside Bethlehem. Rain often carried sewage down the hilly alleyways. Hisham was the second

of four children who survived. His two sisters were sighted, but both Hisham and his younger brother were born blind.

Hisham's father was a day laborer who had a fourth grade education but made a point to read as many books as he could. His mother, who did not read or write, stayed home to care for the family. Hisham described her as intelligent and wise.

Hisham's father managed to take Hisham to Egypt when he was four to see if his blindness could be cured, but was advised to focus instead on Hisham's education.

That was a tall order in 1967, when the Six Day War brought education and normal life to a halt.

As a result of the war, Hisham and his family were displaced to a more distant and more cruel camp in the Jordanian desert, called Wad Thlail. Their accommodation in Wad Thlail was a flimsy tent in the hot desert, with the nearest source of water six miles away. It made the small, one room house in Deheisheh, with a roof that leaked when it rained and disappeared whenever the wind picked up, seem luxurious by comparison.

One incident from this time introduced Hisham, in his words, to important qualities he would need in life. His father left the tent one day to look for work, and his mother had to leave to get food rations from a UN distribution center three miles away. She took Hisham's one year old brother with her, but entrusted Hisham, age 4, with the care of his older (and sighted) sister, younger brother, and the tent.

Hisham and his sister decided to explore and zippered up and locked the tent. When a terrible desert storm began, they were quickly covered in sand. Hisham tried to return to the tent, but it was locked, and he and his sister could only cry and wait until their mother returned — and they then had to wait for their father to break the lock and let them in. Hisham said they slept without food that night, but he learned a lesson about responsibility.

The family did to get back to Deheisheh, but life there had become terrifying. Soldiers were everywhere, and the camp was surrounded by a fence and checkpoints, making it very difficult to get in and out, especially for a young blind student making his way to the school for the blind in Bethlehem.

Hisham excelled in his studies and got the third highest score in the country on

a national exam, allowing him to enter Birzeit University, and then to continue his education in the United States when Birzeit was closed more than open during the Israeli wars in Lebanon of the early 1980s.

Activist Scholarship

In the United States Hisham completed his BA, MA and Ph.D. He spent several years teaching, first at Florida International University, then at the University of North Dakota before returning to his homeland in 1993 as a Fulbright scholar to write about Hamas.

People in Deheisheh were very proud to have a professor come from the camp. After writing his book on Hamas, Hisham got a two-year fellowship from the Institute of World Affairs in Hanover, NH to do a project recording the life histories of ordinary Palestinians. These stories convinced Hisham



that he should do more to better the life of his country.

He decided to run in the first Palestinian national election for one of the four seats from Bethlehem in Parliament. He later said the election and possibility of taking part in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations paled in comparison to the tearing down of the wall, taking down “the damn barrier piece by piece.”

Hisham took a position at Birzeit University, where he became the leading academic in both the Department of Political Science and the Abu-Lughod Institute of International Relations. A colleague wrote that Hisham’s intellectual interventions infused eloquence into the political malaise of the post-Oslo Palestine, and he spoke “truth to power in the deafening silence imposed on Palestinians by

the international Arab and even official Palestinian media.”

Hisham also challenged the conventional disciplinary divides with his critical approach in an atmosphere where “international relations” had become a field exclusively in the service of the Palestinian political establishment. In so doing, he ruffled many institutional feathers.

When Hisham accepted the job at Saint Mary’s, I asked him why he left Birzeit, where he was revered by colleagues and students. He explained that he had lived five minutes from the campus and managed well on his own. Then some 500 new roadblocks were erected as part of the repressive Israeli response to the Intifada, turning his five-minute walk into a dangerous and changing odyssey that took one to two hours, something he had great difficulty navigating alone.

To say that Hisham Ahmed is missed is truly an understatement. ■

Detroit Foreclosed — continued from page 4

own five years later. Wayne County administers around 1000 properties but its larger responsibility is the annual auction for both city and county.

Three years ago the county launched an “Action before Auction” program to sell properties to cities and a small set of selected investors before the auction. They said this would cut down on speculation.

For its first year of operation, it hand-picked nine developers and pulled 141 properties, 64 of which were occupied, out of the 2017 auction. This meant that there was less time for occupants to redeem their homes. And of course these properties, chosen by investors, were the choicest homes.

Developers bought the lot for a total of \$1.5 million. They were to offer the previous owner or renter the right to continue renting and the opportunity to buy the rehabbed home.

The developer was to invest at least \$25,000 but allowed to sell for \$5,000 above cost. The first 44 homes the investors sold brought them \$4.5 million.

In the second year the county instituted an application process for developers. But they allowed even those who were delinquent on the taxes of property purchased the previous year. Two hundred and forty properties were pulled from the auction.

Several occupants were told they were “ineligible” for the program. They questioned the land bank’s decision and three have successfully fought to keep their homes.

Given all the criticism and publicity, the Wayne County Land Bank was forced to discontinue Action Before Auction. Yet for some the struggle is not over.

Back in 2013 a Canadian real estate investor bought 10 homes in Detroit. Mecelle Burrell, an African-American mother in her thirties, rented one. Two years later she signed a rent-to-own contract for \$31,500 and has receipts for her monthly payments. Burrell’s copy of the contract is unsigned. It does state she is responsible for the taxes or that they will be paid by the seller and charged to her. However she never received any bill.

Meanwhile the Canadian developer claims he never received any money and assumed the manager died. Efforts to locate that person have failed.

The home went into tax foreclosure for \$2,513; Realty Transition purchased it as part of a bundle of 63 properties under the 2018 Action Before Auction program. No one approached Burrell to ascertain her eligibility; Realty Transition posted an eviction notice on her front door in May 2019.

Burrell is currently suing both the land bank and Realty Transition in an attempt to force them to comply with the terms of their own program and give her a chance to keep her home. They are claiming she is not a party to the program and therefore has no standing.

Although Action before Auction is discontinued, the fate of the 381 properties may remain unsettled for some time to come. The program did not stop speculators or keep people in their homes.

What Could be Done?

Detroit spends money on developers — not just on those who buy houses. Dan Gilbert, a developer who also owns Quicken Loans, received \$618 million in tax

incentives to renovate four of more than 100 downtown buildings he owns. The city provided parcels of land and \$398 million to the Illitch organization for the construction of the Little Caesars Arena, where the Red Wings play. They gave a \$240 million tax subsidy to Ford to restore the train station and use as a center for developing autonomous vehicles.

Yet there is no dedicated money to keep people in their homes. Simply getting the state legislature to provide retroactive property tax exemptions to poor homeowners, and ending the mandated auction on residential properties, would begin to stabilize neighborhoods.

Given the history of Detroit, it would seem important to provide no-interest loans to homeowners so they could fix up their homes. But what about the thousands who have been displaced. Where is the program to help them?

Why not rehabilitate some of the beautiful homes and apartment houses throughout the city and turn them over to African-American families under a reparations program. This, rather than throwing money at developers, would genuinely “transform Detroit.” ■

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William “Buzz” Alexander (1938-2019) By Alan Wald

WILLIAM RAYMOND ALEXANDER, always called by the childhood nickname “Buzz,” died at the age of 80 in Ann Arbor of complications from frontal temporal degeneration on September 19th. In 1986, he was a founding member of Solidarity and afterwards an occasional contributor to *Against the Current*.

Buzz was also a committed radical professor whose innovative, path-breaking pedagogy made many of his old-school colleagues blanch. In fact, his entire adult life can be considered a rebuke to the default setting of those who assume that academics live in an ivory tower, happily cut off from the rest of the world to indulge their own privileged pursuits.

Born in Chicago and raised in the affluent suburb of Wilmette, Buzz was the son of a Republican who ran a successful family law firm. A gifted student of literature, he received a BA from Harvard University in 1960, a second one from Cambridge University in 1962 and, after traveling in Europe, returned to Harvard to receive a Ph. D. in 1968.

Subsequently, he was an instructor at Harvard for several years before becoming an assistant professor of English at the University of Michigan (U-M) in 1971.

While a student, Buzz had become a Democrat, supporting John F. Kennedy and organizing for Eugene McCarthy. He also was a founder of Harvard Faculty Against the War in Vietnam.

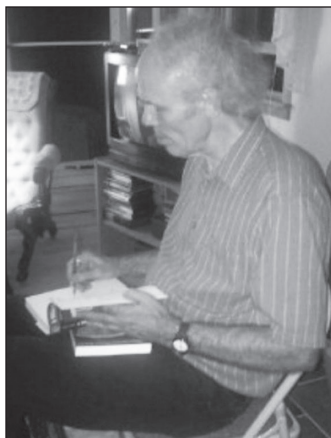
When he arrived at U-M, however, there was an evolution: He became intrigued by documentary film and started researching a book about the pro-Communist groups of the 1930s. It was published in 1982 as *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942* and focused on the Workers Film and Photo League, Nykino, and Frontier Films.

Buzz was motivated by the interviews he had conducted with surviving participants to integrate his political commitments into the way he practiced his academic life. Moreover, at a time when “sage on a stage” lecturing dominated college-level teaching, he experimented with classes where the students collectively studied and sometimes produced documentaries.

Soon he moved to new courses where guerrilla theater about political issues was

Alan Wald is an editor of Against the Current and a member of Solidarity.

examined and then performed around the campus, an artistic form that he felt provided a more direct mode of collaboration, provocation and participation. In 1990, he began to offer a course that involved working in prisons around theatrical productions.



A Faculty Activist

Buzz was one of the first two faculty members I met when I arrived at U-M in 1975. Immediately we began collaborating in organizing the Ann Arbor Committee for Human Rights in Latin America. This was notable for a November 1976 “Teach-in on Terror” that drew 3,000 people and had participants from some nine different countries in Latin America — such as the widow of Chile’s assassinated president Salvador Allende.

At the same time Buzz was one of the small number of faculty actively supporting the campaign for U-M Divestment from South Africa, and the protest effort against the Political Science Department’s denial of tenure to one of its central leaders, Prof. Joel Samoff. Buzz’s own tenure would be controversial at the college level, with a negative decision in 1977 overturned following a mass undergraduate mobilization and an appeal by the English Department.

The Ann Arbor Committee for Human Rights was followed by the Latin America Solidarity Committee, and then Faculty for Human Rights in El Salvador and Central America.

After trips to Nicaragua in fall 1986, on March 2, 1987 we published a call to arms in the *Michigan Daily* with the title, “Two Profs Call for Faculty Action.” This was an urgent plea for mass actions to halt Contra aid (given by the United States to counter-revolutionary forces in Nicaragua) and support Ann Arbor’s sister city project in Juigalpa, Nicaragua. A year later we collabo-

rated in an unsuccessful effort to get U-M to give an honorary degree to Nicaraguan poet-priest-revolutionary Ernesto Cardenal.

Sometime in the mid-1980s Buzz joined the International Socialists, and we drove together to Chicago to participate in the 1986 fusion of organizations (I was a member of Socialist Unity) that created Solidarity. Then in the late 1980s, Buzz was a founder and supporter of “Concerned Faculty,” mostly formed to protest racism but other matters, too.

In 1991, we founded a new group, “Network for Cultural Democracy,” around defense of affirmative action and meaningful multiculturalism. By this time, however, the arduous year-round demands of his teaching in prisons had taken over most of his time and energy, and his association with Solidarity became more distant if still friendly.

Pioneering Prison Creative Arts

For the last 30 years Buzz was nationally known as the founder and principal organizer of the Prison Creative Arts Program (PCAP) at the University of Michigan, recognized and admired for his hands-on, anti-elitist activism. Buzz was not exactly a fiery orator, but he had charisma to spare when it came to interacting directly with individuals — they knew that he genuinely cared.

Over the decades the lives of thousands of students and inmates were transformed, and the story is recorded in his prize-winning book, *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* (2010).

Prior to his incapacitation in 2016, Buzz supervised volunteers who entered 27 adult correctional facilities, several youth facilities, the Forensic Psychiatric Center and a public housing community each year.

Although the initial focus was writing and performing plays, PCAP’s most visible program became the Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners, which he and his collaborator and wife, Janie Paul, created in 1996.

Buzz was tall (6 ft. 4 in.) and athletic looking with untamed hair and an eternally boyish face. But he usually had the temperament of a gentle giant with a soft-spoken pedagogical and political radicalism that allowed him to bridge generation gaps.

The political influences on him were diverse and eclectic. His famous teaching was somewhat affected by the critical ped-

agogy movement of Brazilian Paulo Freire; rather than present an analysis, he would more often elicit opinions and interactions from the students themselves.

He also felt the need to personalize the political realities of a class-divided society by urging students to consider their own role in maintaining or potentially dismantling this system. The process could be upsetting and

emotionally grueling at times.

Throughout the years, Buzz displayed an impressive tenacity that belied his age. Dealing with prison officials, and working continuously to acquire financial support and approval for his projects couldn't have been much fun. But he was fully committed to working for what he called an "engaged agenda" and to advance public scholarship

on an institutional level.

In particular, he challenged all of us to recognize the full humanity of prisoners, a commitment that survives him in the now multigenerational and enduring work of PCAP, and the other endeavors Buzz's legacy has encouraged. In addition to Janie, Buzz is survived by his children, Jonathan and Allegra. ■

William Z. Foster and Syndicalism — continued from page 23

he wrote that "even with a mediocre organizer, instead of a 'labor statesman'...(heading the AFL), great armies of toilers could have been drawn into the labor organizations." (Foster 1922) Foster and his crew of revolutionary unionists, who joined him in the steelworkers' campaign, had shown this to the world.

Conclusion

Even during his self-described "right opportunist" phase, Foster's work contributed to the revolutionary labor tradition. It proved on a grand scale that anti-racism, industrial organization, militancy and democracy could be advanced from inside conservative-bureaucratic unions, growing and transforming them in the process.

Foster appreciated the flexibility of unions, which he described as "afflicted by all sorts of capitalist ideas...because the workers as a whole suffer from them." (Foster 1922) But though sharply critical he never fully theorized the union bureaucracy, later understood as an intermediate social layer with its own conservatizing material stake in labor stability, but wavering between the shifting class pressures of the capitalists above them and the workers below.

Accepting union staff positions removing him from the rank and file, Foster's somewhat individualist practice in this period partly anticipated the unprincipled and ultimately barren late 1930s Communist Party practice of "permeationism." This meant ostensibly trying to revolutionize unions by seeking union office independent of active rank and file mandates, often while hiding one's affiliations. (On this history see Moody 2014)

Still boring from within, Foster had temporarily abandoned the other of his two guiding concepts — that of the organized militant minority. Though he often gave that notion an unnecessary elitist bent,² it had been key to revolutionary union work. Accountable in some way to a formal collective in the SLNA, the conservative pulls on "borers from within" the unions had met a sturdier counterbalance than their individual wills.

Yet profoundly enriched by his wartime experiences in the big leagues of labor and politics, Foster would return to organize a bigger and better militant minority formation in the years ahead. This was part of the international Marxist-syndicalist synthesis of the early Communist International.

That story of the Trade Union Educational League, which directly inspired influential 1970s rank-and-file union caucuses, will be the subject of a future article. ■

Notes

1. Barrett, 41. After the IWW settled, the free-speech fight continued under the leadership of AFL unions. Foster noted that this second phase of the struggle was more successful than the first. See Johanningsmeier 1994, 41-2.

2. For example, in *Syndicalism*, he wrote of the "weak and timid majority" of the working

class (17), and that the militant minority "are the directing forces...the sluggish mass simply following their lead" owing to the minority's "superior intellect, energy, courage, cunning, organizing ability, oratorical power, as the case may be." (43-44) Later, in his early Communist period, he reflected these attitudes as follows: "revolutions are not brought about by...far-sighted revolutionaries...but by stupid masses who are goaded to desperate revolt...and who are led by straight-thinking revolutionaries." (Barrett, 122)

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privately fear and loathe him. In general, the method works — so well that some of Trump's worst atrocities are hardly even noticed. A case in point is the brutal reduction of the number of refugees to be admitted annually to a miniscule 18,000 — at the very moment when *close to 70 million people* globally are displaced by war and assorted natural and unnatural disasters.

At a certain point that's impossible to precisely predict, Trump's kind of behavior can become a liability — to the institutional system to which he has no loyalty, or to his party. It might be when an economic downturn looks like a serious threat. Or perhaps when it appears that he might drag the Republicans down in 2020. Or when his precipitous, treacherous betrayal of the Syrian Kurdish forces drives the U.S. military, diplomatic and "national security" elites into a frenzy.

But while these are dangers for Trump's regime and enablers, as this statement is being drafted they haven't yet reached the point of a decisive rupture between the broader interests of the system and its current venal "executive committee." Instead there's an impeachment crisis — which like our election season may be nasty, brutish and long — that erupted as the revelations of Trump's political extortion of Ukraine gave the hesitant Democratic leadership no real choice.

We don't believe the impeachment inquiry came about through "pressure from the masses" or progressive Congressional Democrats pushing it. Rather, the fact that Trump was openly repeating his 2016 appeal to Russia, by shaking down the new Ukraine president to work with Trump's filthy attorney general Barr and his unhinged personal lawyer Giuliani, meant that with no Democratic response he'd be free to just keep doing it.

At this early stage we won't try to guess where the impeachment process goes. The outcome depends not on the Democrats, but on the Republicans and their base. We're not predicting that Republican support for Trump will collapse; but if it does, we suspect that it won't happen in ones and twos, but rapidly. On the one hand, no Republican in the Senate or inner circle can afford to be the first defector. On the other, no doubt those who are closest to him know that there's a whole lot more criminality waiting to be uncovered, or covered up.

It's Imperialism, Stupid

There's a more basic, second point to pursue here. If we look back to those earlier machinations of Nixon and Reagan, and connect the dots to Trump's 2016 and 2019-20 gambits, the element of continuity is clear enough. *It's about imperialism.* That's what gives the presidency the power to coerce and manipulate foreign leaders (and in Trump's case of course, their ability to manipulate him too).

Imperialism, and the accompanying ideology that the United States has the inherent right to dominate the world, inevitably in the 19th and 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries created an imperial presidency and its corrupt opportunities. Donald Trump is the malignant outgrowth in part of that tendency — along with the profound failures of U.S. capital to meet the basic needs of huge sections of the working and middle classes left behind in the rush to globalization and corporate "prosperity."

To see the logic of imperialism, look at the Democrats' and media's main charge leveled against Donald Trump, which, from Ukraine to Syria, goes: "*He's threatened our national security* with his behavior that undermines our professional diplomatic and intelligence services, and causes our allies not to trust U.S. leadership."

The complaint is not about the sadistic U.S. sanctions that are contributing to starvation and death from lack of basic medical supplies in Venezuela, or the severe hardship in Iran from the drive to strangle the economy of that country (where there used to be a reservoir of popular admiration for the United States — no longer). Throwing away the lives of millions of people isn't the problem. Rather, it's "weakening our leadership."

In this debate the massive war crimes of Nixon and Reagan are bracketed to the side as "mistakes" or "excesses" because, in the conventional accounts, they acted in the framework of strong U.S. "leadership of the Free World" in the Cold War. A couple of million dead and many millions of poisoned Vietnamese, and the shattered societies of Afghanistan and Central America, were acceptable collateral damage since ultimately "our" side won the Cold War and the Soviet Union dissolved.

Nixon was finally brought down, not by his 1968 secret maneuvers to keep the war going so he'd get elected, but by the 1972 break-in at the Democratic Watergate Hotel headquarters carried out by his secret "Plumbers" gang, which was created to plug the leaks about how badly the war was going.

Socialists, to put it mildly, do not worship at the feet of the "Founders" and "Framers" of the United States and its Constitution. They had issues — slavery, genocide, extreme patriarchy among them. But in the framework of their time, they did understand some things. Evidently they recognized that a crook like Donald Trump could become president and use the office for self-enrichment, including colluding with foreign powers.

That's why, for example, they included a clause forbidding "emoluments" as well as an impeachment process as a check on tyranny. What's not clear is whether they could envision the corruption not only of a president but of a major political party, and a big part of a federal judiciary, mobilized to enable and protect him. They could hardly have imagined the massive coercive power of a global imperial hegemon with its "military-industrial complex" and political apparatus, subject to presidential orders and whims.

In that sense, Trump's accusers have a point when they say that the practice of U.S. representative government (such as it is) stands at considerable risk. But let's not forget that the state institutions whose "integrity" the Democrats are eager to defend include the monstrous national surveillance apparatus, the FBI with its murderous history of repression of dissident movements and leaders, and the CIA with its global record of interventions and assassinations.

How the current crisis plays out for Trump's own criminal presidency is a big open question. But it's important to impeach more than Trump. Restoring a "status quo before Trump" is no answer to the mess capital has made. We need a revolutionary insurgent movement to impeach imperialism too! ■

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