

# Internationalist Notes

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*Address all subscription requests and correspondence to:*

*IWG Publications*

*P.O. Box 14485*

*Madison, WI 53708*

*Email: [northcentraliwg@gmail.com](mailto:northcentraliwg@gmail.com)*

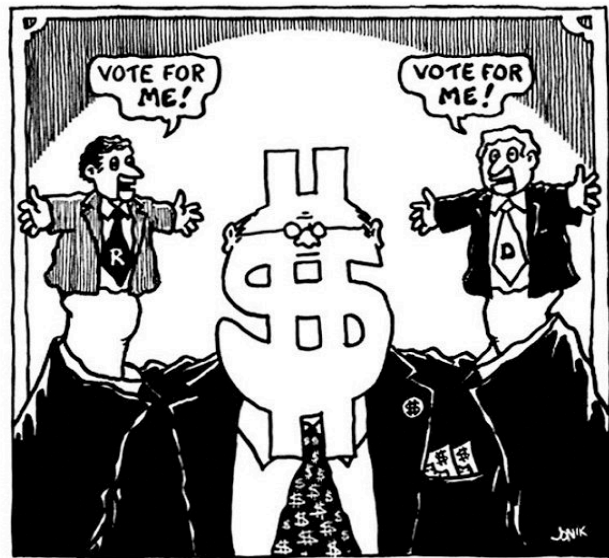
Here is the first issue for 2014. Our format for now will be to put out an electronic issue twice a year as a pdf, with an eye to increasing this rate of publication in the future.

A. Smeaton -Ed

## The Arcane World of Capitalist Electoral Politics in the U.S.

For those who may have had some optimism in regard to the election victories of Kshama Sawant of Socialist Alternative [1] in Seattle and Adam Ritscher of Socialist Action [2] in Douglas County, Wisconsin, have the answer to their optimism in a spate of legislation restricting voting in 19 states, and a recent Supreme Court decision that did away with all limits on amounts that can be contributed by individuals to election campaigns. This Supreme Court ruling was in line with the Citizen's United decision of 2010 that reaffirmed that a corporation has the same rights to free speech as an individual. The capitalist class functions as an organic whole that produces its own anti-bodies, evolving mechanisms to assure the ideological dominance of their class. Present capitalism cannot be conquered with nineteenth century means, nor will it provide a platform for revolutionists to conduct propaganda in denouncing the capitalist system. It is a system that must be overthrown.

Making sure that their election rituals stick to their script has been a historically accomplished task for the bourgeoisie. Gerrymandered voting districts, eternally increasing ballot access requirements, enforced media blackouts; legal challenges and outright political repression are all a part of the



arsenal a republic uses to control the results of an election.

From their inception in the 19th Century, ballot access laws developed into a web of laws often written with the express purpose of keeping specific political parties off ballots. Repressive laws often follow on the heels of periods of class struggle. The goalposts constantly move and shift to suit the needs of the bourgeoisie. Even if lasting reforms could be won in favor of the working class, they would still function to extend the life of the system aiding capitalism in its further evolution as a system. Alabama today requires 41,000 signatures just to get on a state ballot, that is to say one would have to collect more signatures than they would need votes to get elected to the most positions in state government.

For any but the smallest local political offices one would have to get an enormous number of valid signatures just to get listed on the ballot. Most of these signatures will get thrown out by the local election authorities, or failing that, legally challenged until the election is over and done. Even if one were to get on

the ballot, as a freak deviation from the standard political script, then that candidate would most certainly be completely shunned in the vast majority of all media outlets. The ruling parties choose the voting districts, they control ballot access and they appoint the courts.

The average amounts spent winning elections have increased constantly for decades. For a U.S. Senator the average amount needed to run is \$2,794,057. For the House of Representatives this figure stands at \$623,105. These are just the averages from the last congressional elections according to the Federal Electoral Commission reports. [3] The numbers aren't reflective of the amounts actually needed to win the election, rather they indicate solely the amount needed just to run with the big dogs.

For the US Congress the rates of re-election of Congress are the envy of the bourgeois world. For US Senators the rate of re-election is 91%, for the House of Representatives it stands at 90% as of 2012. Even nations ruled by one political party would have a hard time beating this for an incumbent re-election rate. [4]

There is as well the pseudo-Leninist argument that you can use the elections and political office of the bourgeoisie as a platform for disseminating propaganda and denouncing the capitalist parliamentary system itself. So, while running for city council we should be advocating for the overthrow of the capitalist system and the government with it and

asking people to vote. Reaching the masses by standing up at a city council meeting to denounce the regime one serves in? Using the bourgeois parliament as a revolutionary platform may sound like a sensible theory but it isn't connected to reality. It is a tactic without a basis of success in practice, apart from the Bolshevik experience. Those times are not ours. Our circumstances do not correspond to those of the Bolsheviks in Czarist Russia.

Often reformist third-party candidates of the left are physically removed or even arrested for even trying to enter into a presidential debate. Green Party candidates are consistently barred from any participation in debates, escorted away as Ralph Nader was, or handcuffed and hauled off as the last Green Party presidential candidate, Jill Stein was when she attempted to join in a Presidential election "debate" in 2012. Even the most mainline liberal-reformist political organization doesn't stand a chance. The presidential "debates" are controlled by a Presidential Debate Commission, appointed by the Democratic and Republican Parties that see to it that their sham elections go according to script. Participation in this rotten electoral institution lends legitimacy and ideological support to this political machinery of capitalism.

Voter participation skews upwards by income, as US Census data shows. That is to say the people most likely to be registered voters that actually vote tend to be those

who earn over \$150,000 per year. [5] Of course the bourgeois citizens are the ones more likely to vote than everyone else — it's their system.

As with all things capitalist the most rights go to those who can mobilize the most capital on their behalf. Thus it is with "freedom of speech" during an election. Candidates are sold to a passive population by the same people who come up with ad campaigns for consumer products. The same people who advertise beer and cosmetics advertise our candidates.

Even the status and category of a 'third party' is a false construction. When a Green reformist refuses to run in elections where there is a 'progressive democrat' or when Libertarian and Constitution Party candidates refuse to run in elections against Republicans the very parties that purport to be an electoral alternative tacitly accept rather than challenge the ruling parties in any way. When the Socialist Action candidate won the Brown County Supervisor District Six seat in Superior, Wisconsin it was because there were no other candidates running in that campaign for that seat. For Kshama Sawant on the Seattle City Council, it works to the advantage of the Democrats who recognize their control over their token leftist. She will ultimately follow their lead.

So, while running for a city council seat we should be advocating for the overthrow of the capitalist system and the government with it and asking people to vote. Reaching the

masses by standing up at a city council meeting to denounce the regime one serves in before moving on to the business at hand? Using the bourgeois parliament as a revolutionary platform may sound like a sensible theory but it isn't connected to reality. It is a tactic without a basis of success in practice, apart from the limited Bolshevik experience. A token left reformist in the halls of power simply allows the bourgeoisie to pat themselves on the back for how democratic they are. More than anything it reveals the dishonesty of any would-be parliamentarians of the left, who would sell you their electoral snake oil.

AS

Notes

[1] Socialist Alternative is the US branch of the Committee for a Workers' International in the US. The CWI, based in Britain, grew out of Ted Grant's "Militant Tendency". Socialist Alternative supports the creation of a reformist mass "workers party".

[2] Socialist Action grew out of the 1983 expulsions from the SWP (US) when the SWP had withdrawn from participation in the Fourth International the previous year. Entryists in a mass Labor Party that doesn't exist, Socialist Action supports the creation of a mass reformist "Labor Party", into which they might practice their traditional entryism.

[3] Center for Responsive Politics.  
Price of Admission. 2013

[opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org)

[4] Center for Responsive Politics.  
Reelection Rates Over the Years.  
2013

[opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org)

[5] Voting and Registration in the  
Election of November 2012 -  
Detailed Tables Table 7 - Reported  
Voting and Registration of Family  
Members, by Age and Family Income

[census.gov](http://census.gov)

## USA - How a Republic Enforces its Order

The murder of Kelly Thomas and the acquittal of the officers involved, indeed any open act of police violence, is a direct attack on all of us. They want us to fear their power thus the forces of order allow this violence because it is they themselves that are afraid. This is why the state allows this ferocious and violent demonstration of its order. Because they are aware of how widely they are hated and this causes the capitalist class to seek to maintain this ongoing demonstration of violence and impunity.

The police are, before all else, the guardians of the property of the capitalists. Remember the reaction of the regime and its media when New Orleans police allowed people loot stores, often for needed items. In the case of Kelly Thomas, he was asked to vacate the premises of a local business, which he did, but not until the owner called the police. The police arrived and began by questioning him and ended by beating him to death. All to help a business sell more coffee without any homeless mentally ill people inconveniencing the customers. In as far as police are guardians of capitalist property, the six Fullerton police were fulfilling their exact function. Another explicit purpose of the function of police to make



everyone else fear their power, to instill the message that resistance is futile.

Los Angeles police chief Darryl Gates, at the time of the Rodney King Riots in 1991, had been in his position for decades. He is credited for creating the one the first para-militarized police units, so called special weapons and tactics or SWAT teams. These units were official units, there were other sorts of units such as the "Legion of Justice" Red Squad in Chicago, or the "Secret Army Organization" in San Diego (from 1968 to 1972) which functioned extrajudicially with the specific purpose of political repression.



**One month after the beating blood still stains the pavement**

In the eighties these same Red Squads have begun to see their metamorphosis into “anti-terrorism” focused units largely carrying out the same functions against the same people. This is the other side of the police function of protecting and serving the capitalist class.

Saturday, January 18th, a protest against the verdict and against police brutality was attacked, after riot police arrived and issued an order to disperse, declaring that the protest was an unlawful assembly. One protester was arrested for writing a slogan in chalk, another for spray-painting the “anarchy is the mother of order symbol” on the

wall of the police department. A shoplifter was arrested at a nearby grocer and was falsely counted by the police as being a protest related arrest. Ten of the protesters were arrested for remaining at the protest and refusing to recognize the dispersal order from the Fullerton police. The protest against police brutality itself became a victim of police brutality, an all too common occurrence.

According to the Cato Institute's National Police Misconduct Reporting Project [1], which compiles statistics only on those actions that were reported on in the press, police are more likely to commit assault, rape and murder than the general population. They are more likely to abuse family members. They are more likely to commit child sexual assault. Making the citizens of the grand republic “safer” isn't a primary task of the police.

The question is how to fight this brutality, this expression of the violence perpetrated by the servants of the oppressor class. Protests against police brutality usually call for reforms, better training or community policing or civilian review boards but you can't just reform away a blood stained system.

AS



[1] Cato Institute. National Police  
Misconduct Reporting Project.  
[policemisconduct.net](http://policemisconduct.net)  
Monday, February 3, 2014



## **May Day Statement of the Internationalist Communist Tendency 2014**

### **Capitalism Means War: The Only Alternative is Class War**

Since January this year our rulers have been making a song-and-dance about commemorations for the 100th anniversary of the First World War. Needless to say the imperialist causes of the mass slaughter are less remembered. Instead, there are lamentations over a vague “catastrophe of the century” spun together in a thick web of nationalist myths. By any stretch of the imagination this is no longer just about political history. Meanwhile even bourgeois commentators have begun to point with

embarrassment to parallels with the present convulsions of world history. In truth, there are many indications that our rulers’ international power poker is once again experiencing a fateful dynamic. The First World War was the first global contest in capitalism’s imperialist stage. It was a war unlike any previously. This war was not merely about adjusting state boundaries. It was a total war, a *guerre a outrance*, a fight to the death between competing imperialist powers determined to annihilate the economic, as well as military, capacity of their rivals. It began on a wave of national euphoria whipped up by the competing imperialist powers to get workers to fight for the fatherland or “king and country”. It was to cost the lives of over 20 million people. It would only be ended by the working class revolutions in Russia and Central Europe. Although the international wave

of revolutionary uprisings ended the war, regrettably it did not put an end to capitalism whose bestial appetites were a long way from being satisfied. The Stalinist counter-revolution in Russia, the rise of Fascism and the World economic crisis of 1929 were only steps of the fateful developments which finally fed into the Second World War with its more than 70 million victims. All this should be kept in mind when looking at the events in Eastern Europe, and especially in Ukraine.

### **Crisis and War**

Seldom has anyone been as wrong as the political scientist Francis Fukuyama, who predicted the “end of history” after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Far from leading to a new “era of peace and development” (George Bush senior), the multi-polar world order which arose in 1989 led to a continual sharpening of imperialist conflicts and tensions. Across the world, the pack was re-shuffled, as the urge to win a place in the imperialist power structure opened up. Against this background, the conflict in Ukraine is a significant moment in a long chain of warlike confrontations (Kosovo, the Gulf Wars, Afghanistan, Syria, etc.). Putin’s takeover of Crimea is an unmistakable response to western maneuvers to take Ukraine into their bloc. In the case of Ukraine we get down to the nitty gritty. It plays a key role

in the plans of both Washington and Moscow. For years Russia has assiduously worked to embrace its former satellite states more closely through trade agreements, as well as trying to create an economic space with its own security and military policies in a so-called Eurasian Union. Due largely to its geo-strategic control of important raw materials and energy routes, Russia would become a formidable counter-weight to the USA and the EU. Of course, in the present confrontation, there is much lamentation over “territorial integrity” and “national self-determination” but it is hard to hide the fact that the Ukraine conflict is primarily a concrete imperialist power struggle, conducted on both sides with increasingly desperate measures. In capitalism’s imperialist phase, every demand for “national rights”, no matter under what pretext, what political banner or with what justification, is necessarily part of the inter-imperialist power game.

However, it is not just in Europe that imperialist contradictions collide ever more implacably. Without forgetting the agonies of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Gaza, Mali or the Central African Republic, to name but the most obvious, the fiercest arms race since the end of the Cold War has broken out in Asia. China has increased its arms spending eightfold in the last twenty years but its Pacific (or less pacific?) “neighbors” are

trying to keep up. Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Japan are all massively increasing arms spending whilst India has overtaken China as the world's largest arms importer, as well as the world's largest builder of warships. The USA, which must defend its claim to hegemony as a military superpower against a growing number of challengers, spent a whopping \$640bn on its defense budget in 2013 alone. This has not, however, prevented the aspiring superpower China from pulling out all the stops to outstrip the USA, especially in the Pacific region. The enmity displayed in the disputes over even the smallest territories, like, for example, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, is evidence of the sharpness of inter-imperialist confrontations in a world where permanent arms build-ups and militarization are the essential precondition for state sovereignty.

### **Against All Nationalist Ideology!**

On the domestic front, sharpened world competition is reflected in more and more aggressive nationalist propaganda and rhetoric. The idea of the nation always was and continues to be a key ideological prop for all bourgeois domination. It masks the class character of the capitalist system and encourages the idea that the existing conditions are an expression of the common interests of the

people. In the name of "national competitiveness" sacrifice is preached, social security is cut and the thumbscrews of exploitation are tightened, while "national security" serves to legitimize the apparatus of surveillance and repression, and the locking up of unwelcome oppositionists. The often-invoked defense of "national values" or "national culture" has always been the easy way to reinforce racism and action against anyone who does not conform to the dominant sexual morality.

Reactionary ideologies always feed on social decomposition, atomization and growing insecurity. From the Front National in France to the Jobbik Party in Hungary the racist right is on the rise, and is searching for votes with a dangerous mixture of racism, anti-Semitism and social demagoguery. In Greece, the fascist "Golden Dawn" has become a threat to the very existence of immigrants and, thanks to its supporters in the police and army, it has obtained important positions of power in the state apparatus. However, the fascists do not stand outside the presently constituted nationalist and authority structure of bourgeois society. They are an integral part of it. Nazis embody neither protest nor opposition against the dominant conditions but, on the contrary, sharpen the content of the ideologies which our rulers spread daily. For this reason, it is nonsense to want to fight the Nazis in order to defend

democracy. The notion of the defense of democracy boils down to accepting, spreading and finally succumbing to the myth of the state as a class-neutral entity. Resistance to fascism has to be part of a comprehensive anti-capitalist struggle for the overthrow of all forms of bourgeois domination. This however demands that conditions be seen as a whole.

### **Crisis and Class Composition**

It is now seven years since the speculative bubble burst and threw the world economy into the vortex of recession. But, in defiance of all the prognoses and incantations for a prompt recovery, the crisis has only got worse. The debt mountain grows higher, instability increases and financial speculation is running at full speed. In the meantime, you can happily bet on the next bubble bursting. All this is down to a deep structural crisis of the system, which has been growing for decades (in fact, since the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1973). Capitalism finds itself at the end of an accumulation cycle, from which, in the end, it can only escape through a massive devaluation of capital. In capitalism's early days, a few failures and bankruptcies would suffice. The successful capitalists bought up the losers at bargain prices and the system could start again. Today, however, despite the restructuring of the 1980s, the mass of capital in the world

is so great that only a massive devaluation of capital can fire up accumulation again and lead the system out of crisis. Such a devaluation would demand such a massive annihilation of capital that it could only be effected by the physical destruction of a global war. Even if the political and diplomatic pre-conditions for such a war do not yet exist today, the danger is virulent and grows daily. In the face of this challenge the working class finds itself on an almost hopeless seeming defensive. For decades, capital has banked on compensating for its falling profit rate through comprehensive restructuring of the production process (e.g., through the introduction of microelectronics) and the massive increase in the rate of exploitation. Jobs are shifted to low-wage countries, where people toil in sweatshops for starvation wages, while workers in the traditional centers of capitalism are forced to swallow wage cuts and worsened working conditions. Across the world, there is a merciless competition to push down wages using methods of exploitation which remind one of the 19th century. Temporary part-time jobs with so-called "zero-hour" contracts (which, for example, affect over a million people in Britain, who have to be at the bosses' disposal around the clock for any type of work), mini-jobs and fake self-employment are just a few examples of the creativity used to enslave the working class to capital. The working class has

clearly suffered a loss in its degree of organization and unity. The manifold fragmentation and lines of division alongside the spread of precarious conditions of employment place great challenges to the development of collective defence.

### **Autonomous Class Struggle!**

But this is not just about structures. On the contrary the revival of an effective working class fight back is about a political understanding of the struggle's aims and perspectives. We will only be able to resist austerity if we understand all resistance to the ruling class's attacks on our living conditions is part of our worldwide struggle. This requires the clear rejection of all nationalist ideologies and every attempt to subordinate our class's concerns to any fraction of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, it is necessary to understand that even those victories we achieve will only be temporary. It is becoming ever more obvious that humanity only has a future if there is a change in the mode of production. The sole solution is a society in which money, exploitation and profit have been eliminated and in which production stands in harmony with humanity and the environment, a society in which production is for the satisfaction of human needs and not for profit. By this we mean communism! Such a social alternative will not take shape by

itself. It can only be fought for by a social movement consciously doing away with relations of domination. There is a long road in front of us. Nevertheless, those who have understood the need for a new society must take the first steps in order to unite themselves as communist minorities in an international and internationalist organization. Such a communist organization is not a government in waiting, but an indispensable instrument to give the struggle for a new society a clear political perspective. This struggle will have to be fought everywhere the working class challenges capitalism. But it is not just a question of simply fighting this or that aspect of capitalism, but on the contrary, fighting the system as a whole. The contradictions of capitalism will not disappear. They lead to increasing inequality, exploitation, murderous wars and the destruction of the environment. It will not be easy to free the planet from this plague. But everyone who joins the struggle for a new internationalist class organization brings us a step closer to our aim: An "association of the free and equal" in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

For a classless and stateless society!

Sunday, April 27, 2014

**The Internationalist Workers' Group is the organization of members of the Internationalist Communist Tendency in the US.**

*"We are called internationalists because we believe that the interests of the exploited are the same all over the world, and that communism can not be achieved in a single geographic area, a myth peddled as true by Stalin. We, are therefore, bitterly opposed to Stalinism in all its varieties, for too long taken to be communism, both by the bourgeoisie and many generations of workers who looked to it in good faith when the ownership of industries, distribution, land, etc. went from private to state hands, leaving capitalist relations and its components (commodities, money, wages, profits, borders etc.) largely intact. This was not communism but a particular form of capitalism, state capitalism. After 1917 the economic blockade of the Soviet Union and the failure of the world revolution in the West meant that the revolution was transformed into its opposite, eventually becoming an imperialist bloc that would collapse after only seventy years."*

***Internationalist Communist Tendency – About Us***

**For more information about our organization and answers to frequently asked questions:**

**<http://www.leftcom.org/en/about-us>**