

Democrats fail symbolic vote on Green New Deal

Marty Goodman / Socialist Action



By GRAHAM ROGERS

The political theater of the U.S. Congress lurched through yet another performance on March 26, as the Senate decisively rejected a bill put forth by Republican Senator Mitch McConnell that copied Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's and Senator Ed Markey's February non-binding resolution calling for a Green New Deal. Forty-three Democrats, including all Democratic presidential candidates in the Senate, voted "present" on the measure—in effect, abstaining—while four Democrats crossed the aisle and joined all 53 Republican Senators in voting against.

Democrats' efforts to downplay the vote as a bad-faith tactic on the part of the Republicans could not cover up the fact that the tactic appears to have worked—the Democratic Party's lack of commitment to climate action was revealed once again.

The premise of the Green New Deal is that immediate, drastic, large-scale action is needed to address climate change and its impending environmental and social catastrophes. The Green New Deal's proponents invoke the original New Deal of the 1930s, which helped alleviate the Great Depression until the U.S. entry into World War II ended it, as the model for

a massive state intervention to address social crises. The initiative is being spearheaded by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, and endorsed by all the Democratic presidential frontrunner candidates.

The actual policy content of the Green New Deal is still under development, but its broad outlines were sketched in a resolution introduced in February by Ocasio-Cortez and Markey. The resolution established two interconnected crises of climate change and economic inequality, and called for a 10-year national mobilization in order to address them. The resolution laid out goals of overhauling the country's infrastructure and industry along sustainable lines, creating millions of well-paying jobs, addressing systemic injustices against marginalized communities, and securing access to clean air, water, food, and nature for all citizens.

The resolution went on to outline a series of projects that would achieve those goals, including a federal jobs guarantee; full rights of workers to unionize and collectively bargain; the decarbonization of industry, agriculture, and transportation; just transition programs for workers in disrupted industries; programs for universal health care, education, and housing; and public financing and community wealth-building.

(Above) Young students in New York City join worldwide Climate Strike on March 15.

There is plenty to appreciate within even this rough sketch of the Green New Deal's proposals. Revolutionary socialists support a rapid, thorough conversion to green energy, green transportation, sustainable agriculture, and a just, environmentally sustainable economy. To the credit of the Green New Deal's architects, many of its proposed programs fall squarely within this paradigm and are of inarguable benefit to the working class. However, there are critical differences between the solutions favored by liberals and progressives (including the "democratic socialist" wing of the Democratic Party), and those promoted by revolutionary socialists.

At the heart of these differences lies a difference in perspective on the nature of the crisis. The Green New Deal's "progressive" proponents point to "bad actors" within an economic system that they consider otherwise fundamentally sound, and endorse an electoral strategy through which the Democratic Party can be won to a program that fundamentally challenges capitalist profit prerogatives. They even claim that a

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Failure of Mueller probe exposes Democrats

By STAN OREGANO

For the past three years, the center of Democratic Party opposition to the Trump presidency has been on the basis of loud and repeated claims that Trump is a bought-and-paid-for agent of the Kremlin.

Dreams of recouping the party's fortunes by explaining away the debacle of Hillary Clinton's 2016 defeat stirred the Democrats to initiate charges in Congress and later ignite an investigation by the FBI. Since May 2017, the Democrats' efforts have rested mainly on the probe headed by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, a former director of the FBI.

For months MSNBC and CNN have worked from the stance that it was inevitable that evidence of illegal relations with Russia would come to light. But when the summary of the Mueller Report was released on March 24, it revealed no evidence that the law had been broken concerning the Trump campaign's relationship to the Russian government.

This isn't to say Trump's real crimes are not numerous. He has overseen a monstrous treatment of immigrant families and the escalation of ICE as a terrorist police force against working people. He has encouraged the big fossil-fuel emitters in polluting the environment and exacerbating climate change. He has helped to whip up a violent and semi-fascist far-right movement. And he has worked tirelessly to make the experience of trans people in this country even more precarious and



(Left) Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.) was key to investigation of Trump in Congress.

dangerous by attempting to remove what little legal protections they have.

Each of these policies, which merely represent a small selection of his reactionary actions, would justify a mass movement of opposition in themselves. But the method and basis of the Mueller probe never had the potential to be anything of value to a genuine movement opposed to Trump and the system that makes him possible.

The Democrats are trying to fight Trump on the same terms in which they opposed his presidential bid—that he is personally “unworthy” of the office since he is a liar and a crook. But that is true of all bourgeois politicians, including the Democrats who invested themselves in the probe. They can't oppose him on most policy grounds without openly admitting their own bankruptcy. The real mass movement activity that is needed to defeat the retrograde capital-

ist agenda is just as antithetical to the Democrats as it is to Trump.

The Democrats are a party of the capitalist class, and as such, they are far more attached to law and order prevailing than they are in fighting the politics that Trump represents. Even when individual Democrats sometimes express themselves as being favorable to a more “progressive” policy, their party affiliation makes them virtually incapable of acting on that inclination.

Although the Democrats have stage-managed rallies in the street on occasion, as they did in the months immediately following Trump's election, they have given little support to tactics that have actually been effective at opposing Trump's policies. The airport protests in the wake of his Muslim ban, the sickouts of airport workers during the government shutdown, and the massive wave of teachers' strikes were generally

opposed by the Democratic Party.

Socialists point out that it is a grave mistake to place any confidence in sections of capital that claim to be the “friends” of working people. Maintaining faith in the twin parties of capital—the Republicans and Democrats—is entirely detrimental to building a movement for social change and progress. The only force that can stand at the forefront of a serious opposition to Trump, and the political policies that he champions, is one that is led by the independent action of working-class people and their close allies.

The disproportionate coverage that the Mueller probe received from the media and the semi-official mouthpieces of the Democratic Party caused the investigation to receive an enormous amount of attention, to the exclusion of more serious ways to oppose Trump. Accordingly, the failure of the probe has helped to restore public confidence in the president—leading to a four-point jump in his approval ratings and a boost to his campaign for “four more years.”

The puncturing of the Democratic Party's charges against Trump make allegations that he is being unfairly persecuted seem more reasonable to people who are uninformed. But for class-conscious workers and those who are more politically aware, these developments merely confirm the bankruptcy of the Democrats and the rottenness of their politics. ■

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: April 4, 2019

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

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

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Ilhan Omar's anti-Zionist statements are smeared as anti-Semitic

By JEFF MACKLER and BRUCE LESNICK

In a new campaign reminiscent of the McCarthy era witch-hunt, politicians and media pundits have taken to smearing pro-Palestinian, pro-BDS activists as anti-Semitic. Singled out for special attention are those, like Somali-born Muslim Congresswoman Ilhan Omar and Palestinian-American Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, who happen to be people of color.

A typical incident began when journalist Glenn Greenwald tweeted: "GOP Leader Kevin McCarthy threatens punishment for @IlhanMN and @RashidaTlaib over their criticisms of Israel. It's stunning how much time U.S. political leaders spend defending a foreign nation [Israel] even if it means attacking free speech rights of Americans."

Omar reposted Greenwald's tweet and commented, "It's all about the Benjamins baby." "Benjamins" is taken from a 1996 rap song and a 2002 movie and is slang for \$100 bills, which are faced with the image of American independence leader Benjamin Franklin.

Someone named Batya Ungar-Sargon then tweeted, "Would love to know who @IlhanMN thinks is paying American politicians to be pro-Israel, though I think I can guess. Bad form, Congresswoman. That's the second anti-Semitic trope you've tweeted."

Omar replied, "AIPAC!" AIPAC refers to the American Israel Political Action Committee, a lobbying group that, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, spends \$100 million per year lobbying U.S. politicians to support U.S. policy in the Middle East. Immediately, defenders of Israel and Zionism piled on to charge Omar with anti-Semitism. However, nothing Omar said was untrue, and her remarks were clearly aimed at Israeli policy and its promoters, not Jews.

The false and furious accusations against Omar paralleled the ongoing campaign by the British media and corporate politicians to smear Jeremy Corbyn and the British Labor Party as anti-Semitic because of Corbyn's vocal support for Palestinian rights. Socialist Action rejects any and all notions that anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism.

Diversion from real fight against bigotry

While anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry must be unequivocally opposed, we recognize this reactionary witch-hunt equation for the dangerous diversion that it is. Indeed, false charges of anti-Semitism undermine the real fight against racism and bigotry.

Zionist efforts to demonize college professors and leading human rights activists and scholars as anti-Semites, most recently Angela Davis and Alice Walker, as well as Omar and Tlaib, have generally backfired. But that did not happen without the Zionists having had some success in pressuring university administrations to fire anti-Zionist professors, expel protesting students and even implement campus rules restricting what groups like Students for Justice in Palestine can advocate without being subject to dismemberment, discipline, or expulsion.

Pressured to have the U.S. Congress condemn Ilhan Omar's remarks, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was compelled to back off and, instead, submit an omnibus resolution that condemned racism, sexism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other manifestations of hate and discrimination, without mentioning Omar. This, in itself, was a potent and inadvertent recognition that condemning Omar, a Muslim woman who spoke the truth, while ignoring the society's more generalized racist, sexist, and homophobic prejudices, was no longer acceptable in U.S. society.

A condemnation of Omar, in the eyes of factional Democrats, might also be seen as supporting President Trump's overt Islamophobia.

The slandered Omar is no anti-Semite. Neither is she a revolutionary, of course, but rather a bright capitalist politician and reformist spokeswoman for the oppressed and persecuted Minneapolis Somali Community. Her recent statements supporting a "two-state solution" in Israel/Palestine and her weak, if not retrogressive, statements on Venezuela and Syria, inform us that, as with Ocasio-Cortez, or any other Democrats, she has no intention of funda-



(Above) Congresswoman Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.).

mentally challenging the Democratic Party's imperialist views.

Ocasio-Cortez, for example, was undoubtedly pressured immediately following her Democratic Party primary victory to take down from her website criticism of the Zionist state. It was prerequisite for her playing politics in the pro-Zionist Democratic Party, the former party of the Southern slaveocracy, many of whose offspring continue to operate, in slightly more civilized fashion, of course, as "Blue Dogs" or "social conservatives"—that is, modern-day racist Democrats.

U.S. imperialism's relations with Zionist Israel

The assumption that any lobbyist group or individual, AIPAC included, *determines* U.S. policy in any matter is fundamentally flawed. However, AIPAC and similar groups do act as self-appointed enforcers for U.S. capitalist policy, ensuring that "freely elected" representatives toe the imperial line.

Since its formation in 1948, when historic Palestine was forcefully partitioned and half granted to the small minority Jewish population, backed and armed by the departing British "mandate" imperialists at the expense of the vast majority of the Palestinian people, U.S. imperialism has viewed Israel as its central weapon in the Middle East to advance its interests against the people of that region. That the Israel military is funded by the U.S. government at \$2-3 billion annually, the largest amount of foreign aid granted to any country, has everything to do with its role as the U.S. imperial surrogate in the region and nothing to do with AIPAC or any other lobbying group.

More than 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homeland or murdered, their property confiscated, and their rights denied in the process of Israel's colonial establishment. The U.S. government supported that policy then and has continued to do so with regard to every successive and monstrous assault on the Palestinian masses to this date.

Revolutionary socialists in our tradition have always refused to lend any legitimacy to the 1948 partition and colonization of Palestine, in the same manner that we refused any legitimacy to the imperial colonization of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In those cases, the world's superpowers divided up whole continents and decreed that their conquests were part of the imperial "mother country"—declaring that the peoples and resources of the colonized were the property of their slave-master overseers.

Today in the U.S., Zionist-led groups, from AIPAC to the Anti-defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, focus their attention on degrading and attacking every effort to condemn Israel's persecution of the Palestinian masses and efforts to support BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against Israel. Recent B'nai B'rith statements, in mid-March 2019, condemn the

Brown University student body for voting for university divestment in Israel. They condemn the UN Human Rights Commission that they claim "consistently singles out Israel for passing endless resolutions that solely and falsely allege Israel misdeeds."

On March 22, the B'nai Brith "welcomed President Donald Trump's announcement recognizing Israel's control over the Israeli conquered and occupied Golan Heights [in Syria] which reflects the longtime strategic reality in the region." Of course, "strategic reality" means nothing less than Israel's role as U.S. imperialism's colonial enforcer.

AIPAC and B'nai B'rith today focus on promoting the lie that opposition to the racist Zionist state is synonymous with anti-Semitism. They do so in the context of a rising (if not majority) recognition in the U.S. that the Palestinian people are oppressed, discriminated against and murdered, as in Gaza, by Israel.

In fact, March 30 marked the first anniversary of the Israeli slaughter of Palestinians at the Gaza border who peacefully mobilized in the thousands to demand their land and the right to return to it.

The growing Palestine solidarity movement

Growing support for the Palestinian cause is reflected in the passage of ongoing university student BDS efforts, in the major faith-based organizations that adopted BDS resolutions and even in the actions of some U.S. corporations that followed suit. Strikingly, today, perhaps a majority of the American people rejects a "two-state" solution wherein the future Palestinian state, at best, is envisioned as akin to a tiny isolated non-viable Bantustan under near total Israeli control. In truth, even this colonial conception is inimical to today's Zionist racist Israeli leaders whose "final solution" is the total extrication of all Palestinians from their ancestral Palestinian homeland.

Our historic advocacy of a democratic secular Palestine, with the right of expelled Palestinians and their families to return, is increasing seen as the only realistic "solution." This, of course, implies the illegitimacy of the present Zionist state, a view long championed by Socialist Action. It envisions a new Palestine where Palestinians, Jews, Christians, and all nationalities can live together in peace in the context of a democratic society.

Our view is that the true liberation and freedom of the oppressed, artificially divided, and still imperialist-dominated Middle Eastern region can best be accomplished in the context of a fight for a United Socialist States of the Middle East, as opposed to the present Gulf State monarchy-dominated, subservient mini-states and tiny enclaves previously carved up and established by the European conquerors. ■

Brothers and sisters in the Building Trades — Time is running out for the planet



By A WORKING CARPENTER

I've been a carpenter my whole adult life. I worked nonunion before I joined the Carpenters' Union—easily the smartest thing I've ever done. For a working-class person, a union is still the best anti-poverty program.

Recently, the heads of the Building Trades unions, alongside the leaders of the United Steelworkers and the United Mine Workers (UMWA), spoke out against the proposed Green New Deal. They claim that the GND will “cause immediate harm to millions of our members and their families.” Right-wing climate deniers immediately seized on union opposition to the GND as proof that proponents are out of touch with reality.

The science is irrefutable: Climate change is real. The energy companies spend millions of dollars trying to convince you that the science isn't definitive. (Just like the tobacco companies tried to tell us that

(Above) Hurricane Michael's destruction in 2018.

cigarettes are not a danger to your health.) Politicians crack jokes in the wintertime to downplay the seriousness of the situation.

The dangers are real: We're already seeing the effects—melting ice caps and rising sea levels, extreme weather, flooding in the Midwest, more intense hurricanes, wildfires in the West, and refugee crises that will only become more dire. Famine is a real threat. Wars may be fought over water and arable land. Democracy could be threatened as a result of social unrest. If left unchecked, climate change could mean the end of life on Earth.

It doesn't have to be this way: If corporate interests, and the richest 1%, are left in control of the economy and government, they will balance the cost of the climate crisis on our backs. The rich will stop at nothing to keep their wealth and power. This means playing working people against each other, inciting fear of

immigrants, and fanning the flames of conspiracy theories about socialists wanting to take away your hamburgers. The bosses want you to believe that environmental protections are bad for jobs. It's a lie. Too often, our union leaders put the interests of the bosses ahead of the members, and the rank and file have little or no say in the decisions.

Are you willing to let the same union busters who have tried to shove right-to-work laws down our throats lead the way on the climate crisis?

The current economic and political system, in which the rich get tax breaks and accumulate wealth while the rest of us get the scraps, is unworkable. The majority of the jobs created in the U.S. are low-wage with few benefits. The majority of U.S. workers have no pensions or retirement savings. Many new jobs are part-time. Millions in the U.S. lack access to affordable health care, and student debt threatens the future of younger generations. Worldwide, millions live without basic sanitation and clean water.

We can do better: The Green New Deal is just an initial step. We have to take emergency measures as a society to convert to sustainable, renewable sources of energy. We also have to re-imagine how work itself is organized. Do rich people need more luxury apartments, while others sleep in cars or on sidewalks? How many strip malls do we need, when schools and infrastructure are in disrepair? Who decides?

The money and resources are there to create good jobs, decent housing, education, secure retirement, and health care for all. But the truth is that this money is squandered on handouts to the rich and endless wars overseas.

Critical infrastructure is needed to secure our coastlines against rising sea levels. Improved and expanded mass transit must be built to reduce our dependence on cars. Working people have the skills; we can democratically plan and run the economy in the interests of working people. We can make decisions necessary to save the planet. For humanity to survive, we must go beyond the idea of growth for the sake of growth. We can put a stop to climate change, wars, and poverty.

Solidarity and democracy are key. We can't let the bosses and their politicians, in both major parties, turn us against each other. The solutions the bosses offer will surely preserve their wealth and privilege at our expense. Ask yourselves, what sort of planet do we leave behind for our kids and grandkids? ■

By ADAM VIRGA and RYAN ANTLY

From the Long Island peninsula to the Massachusetts Cape, from Rhode Island throughout all of Connecticut, thousands of members of United Food and Commercial Workers voted in their union locals in favor of authorizing a regional strike in order to force their employer to renegotiate more favorable terms.

Despite being New England's number-one grocery retailer, achieving over \$2 billion in profits in 2018, and recently receiving generous tax cuts, the corporate directors of Stop & Shop have proposed staggering rollbacks in their employees' wages, pensions, and benefits. This is not being done at a time where the company is teetering on bankruptcy, nor is it even losing business.

Upon expiration of the previous employee contract on Feb. 24, 2019, these new demands essentially propose to strip hard-working union members, both full and part-time, of nearly every benefit they have earned and that they have enjoyed for decades. In turn, the union locals and their membership have accused the company of negotiating in bad faith and thus have refused all of their demands.

Of the five union locals affected by this new contract, representing over 31,000 workers, all have voted unanimously not to yield to any of the rollbacks and instead authorized their union leaders to call a strike in the event of continued bad faith on the part of their employer.

The unions have been negotiating a new contract with the company since Jan. 14, well before the previous contract expired, and yet it appears as if the company is bent on pursuing rollbacks and refusing to budge on its principle demands. The new contract currently offered by the employer wasn't even released until March 8. The cuts proposed by the company are staggering at best, and corrupt and insulting at worst.

It appears as if the meat-cutters' union, Local 371, is among those facing the most severe cutbacks. The company intends on

Stop & Shop workers prepare for a strike



opening a new meat-packaging plant in Massachusetts, and rather than sending uncut meat directly to the grocery stores, doing all of the meat cutting and packaging itself. This, in effect, would demote all current meat cutters to mere “meat clerks” and would be heavily reflected in their wages. Most long-time meat cutters currently make \$20 or around \$30 an hour, yet this new policy would bump them all down to a mere \$15 an hour. As for the meat managers, they would see a pay reduction from their current \$850 a week to \$700 per week.

In response to the company's revealing its plans to essentially downgrade the quality of their meat to the pre-packaged variety, union representatives stated that the public would be dissatisfied with the result. The company responded, “We will train customers how to shop.” Needless to say, these measures are nothing the workers nor their unions are willing to accept; over 600 union members of Local 371 who attended their subsequent union meeting voted unanimously to strike.

The rollbacks that the rest of the employees face are nearly as severe. In terms of wages: for full-timers who became full-time after April 17, 2016, their wages would max out upon reaching \$17 an hour, a posi-

tion currently maxing out at \$18, and once reached, doing away with raises altogether and instead offering them a \$750 yearly bonus; for part-timers who have seven or more years of service, their yearly raises would be 25 cents a year for three years; while part timers with three to six years of seniority will receive 20 cents a year for the next three years.

As it is now, any employee can earn up to five weeks of paid vacation time once they have worked with the company for 25 years. Under the proposed contract, part-timers hired after 2016 would max out at two weeks of paid vacations.

Employees currently enjoy having Sunday as a non-mandatory workday, arguably the busiest day of the week for grocery stores. All employees who have been employed for over a year receive time-and-a-half pay for every hour worked on Sundays, while employees who have been employed under a year receive an extra dollar an hour for Sunday pay. But the company's proposal includes reducing Sunday to a normal workday. This would mean no extra pay for the by far busiest workday, which now constitutes a substantial portion of most employees' weekly checks.

As a rule, part-time union members must maintain a 15-hour minimum workweek with the exclusion of Sunday. Although the proposed contract would increase this minimum to 20 hours per week, it would in turn include Sunday as part of the workweek.

The benefits of UFCW members are among the best within the industry. But Stop & Shop has made clear that they no longer intend to contribute to any employee's pension, nor provide a pension to anyone hired after 2016. Full-timers with no family currently pay \$13 a week, while full-timers with a family plan pay \$26 per week for health-care coverage. The company's demands would more than double these costs,

requiring an employee to pay \$36.14 and \$53.13 a week respectively. Employees who currently enjoy a prescription plan of a modest \$4 fee per prescription will now pay a \$25 minimum for each of their prescriptions. On top of all these disgraceful demands, the company has the audacity to ask the union to give back \$200 million toward employees' health insurance costs.

Local 919 held their membership meeting on March 10, which more than 700 concerned members attended in order to be briefed on the details of what their employer had demanded. Tensions were high as union president Mark A. Espinosa explained exactly what was at stake. He then asked the crowd to stand and express any disagreements they had with constituting a strike. Not a single member stood up. Subsequently, when asked to stand in an approval to strike, the room exploded in cheers and applause by nearly the entire audience—an unanimous vote to strike.

This is the closest the union employees have come to striking in over 30 years. The last Stop & Shop strike was in 1988. Some union stewards speculate that the reason for the company's outrageous demands derive from new legislation in Massachusetts both raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and not requiring employers to pay overtime for Sundays or holidays.

Negotiations resumed on March 12, while tens of thousands of union workers returned to work awaiting the call to walk out. At the end of March, union representatives rejected the employers' “final offer,” and a federal mediator was called into the talks.

If one thing is certain, both the union members as well as the unions themselves have refused to back down while not giving in to the greed of their wealthy employer. Many customers have shown support for the employees and have pledged to not cross the picket line. ■

... Democrats & Green New Deal

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green sustainable future can be built *without* challenging those prerogatives.

Revolutionary socialists, in contrast, understand the problem to lie within the nature of capitalism itself—particularly its imperatives of constant expansion and the pursuit of profit over human needs. The system cannot function without riding roughshod over social, political, and environmental limits alike, and this tendency cannot be reformed away. From the socialist perspective, therefore, a strategy that relies on the pro-capitalist Democratic Party to implement an anti-capitalist program is fundamentally flawed.

It cannot be emphasized enough that climate change is a threat to the continuation of human civilization and possibly the human species, and that action even more substantial than the scale envisioned by the Green New Deal is needed for there to be even a hope of survival. Today the ambient global temperature stands at 1°C above the pre-industrial average—a seemingly negligible increase that has nevertheless brought a host of observable negative effects.

Seventeen of the 18 hottest years on record have occurred since the year 2000. Storms, droughts, and floods have increased in frequency and strength. Arctic sea ice loss has destabilized the polar jet stream, causing the polar vortex phenomenon that brought sub-Antarctic temperatures to parts of the Midwest this past winter. Half the world's coral reefs have died in the last 30 years, due largely to rising ocean temperatures and acidity levels. The UN Food & Agriculture Organization reports billions of dollars in losses in the global agricultural industry due to weather abnormalities, a figure that is rising exponentially. All of these factors, and more, point to a planetary climate system that has already been pushed to the brink.

The latest emerging climate science gives us little cause for reassurance. The voluntary agreements offered by the signatories of the 2015 Paris Agreement, even if followed, put us on a track to 4-5°C of warming by the end of the century. The environmental effects of this level of warming will be catastrophic. Scenarios for these levels of warming already predict the drowning of coastal areas and the displacement of millions who inhabit them; the collapse of agriculture across Africa and the American Midwest, and the extension



of permanent drought across densely inhabited areas such as southern Europe; and an 80-90% reduction in the total human population as the ecosystems on which we depend unravel under the pressures of rapid environmental change. These realities, which are set to unfold over a matter of decades, add up to an existential threat to human civilization that must be confronted and addressed.

In the face of this emerging reality, the two dominant bourgeois parties continue to choose petty partisan theater over a committed, principled response. The March 26 Senate vote was a manifest example. Republican Senators stood by their party's stance of climate science denial and openly derided the Green New Deal concept. McConnell himself called it a "far left science fiction novel" while his colleague Mike Lee mocked the proposal with images of tauntauns, Aqua-

man, and Ronald Reagan wielding a machine gun while riding a dinosaur.

The Democrats, for their part, could not bring themselves to show even symbolic support. This bizarre failure to maintain a consistent position—especially on a non-binding resolution with zero legislative consequences—should raise serious alarms for anyone expecting the Democratic Party to be the vehicle of salvation from climate catastrophe. How are we to square the circle of a party that claims the Green New Deal as its own yet fumbles the first opportunity to walk its own talk?

These postures, far from demonstrating a strong position against their political opponents, merely waste time and energy we can scarcely afford. Democratic leaders criticized McConnell for attempting to "create division" within the party, when in truth, he merely revealed divisions that already exist between its nascent progressive wing and its entrenched neoliberal leadership. They demonstrate the underlying schizophrenia of the Democratic Party establishment—outward lip service to climate action and social justice belied by thinly veiled loyalty to capitalist prerogatives and an obsession with the electoral capture of power.

The Green New Deal, especially in its current developing form, will be a contested terrain where all of the conflicting interests in society will clash. It will attract those who genuinely understand the need for a deep reorganization of society in order to survive the coming climate gauntlet. It will also attract those who prefer the Green New Deal

as a cynical means to channel environmentalists towards the ballot box. And it will be opposed at every step by the forces of capital, which are hostile to any challenge to their prerogative to amass wealth at the planet's expense.

The outcome of that clash—and the capacity of the Green New Deal to deliver on its potential—will depend fundamentally on the class nature of the struggle. Effective climate action lies in the working class organizing in a powerful, independent movement capable of asserting its own will—not in hoping that bourgeois politicians will change their spots. The salvation of humanity rests on the vast majority entering the struggle with their own independent organizations and building a mass power that cannot be denied. ■

March 30-31 antiwar rallies: U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!

By JEFF MACKLER

A broad national coalition representing some 150 organizations across the U.S. and in Europe mobilized on the weekend of March 30-31 in Washington, D.C., and Oakland, Calif., to demand U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!, No to NATO! and No to U.S. Wars at Home and Abroad!

Initiated by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), the Spring Action Coalition 2019 and the U.S. Peace Council, the Washington event began with a rally of 800 at Lafayette Park, across from the White House, followed by a march through the nation's capital, passing by buildings housing U.S. imperialist-dominated institutions, from the International Monetary Fund to the Organization of American States.

The protests, featuring speakers just returned from Venezuela who debunked the corporate media demonization of Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro government, scored the U.S. coup attempts against Venezuela as well as the scheduled D.C. meetings touting the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-led imperialist North American Military Alliance (NATO), whose recent interventions include the U.S. backed "regime change" wars in Libya and Syria.

Several speakers focused on the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King

Jr.'s April 5 Riverside Church speech scoring the U.S. war against Vietnam and decrying the racism and poverty that marked U.S. society.

The protest of 100 activists at the Oakland Federal Building on March 31 featured a broad range of speakers, including Green Party activist Larry Shoup, author of "Wall Street's Think Tank: The Council on Foreign Relations;" Cindy Sheehan, organizer, Women's March on the Pentagon; Darien De Lu of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and eyewitness reporter from Venezuela; Alicia Jrapko, *Resumen Latinoamerica* and national coordinator, National Network on Cuba.

Also: Rick Sterling, Hands Off Syria Coalition and Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center; Sabrina Jacobs, host, KPFA Pacifica Radio's "Rude Awakening" and Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal; Michael Brannon, Socialist Action; Marsha Feinland, Peace and Freedom Party; Jeff Mackler, UNAC National Administrative Committee; and a representative from the Philippine antiwar and social justice organization, BAYAN USA.

The D.C. rally speakers included UNAC National Coordinator Joe Lombardo; Ajamu Baraka, Black Alliance for Justice; Pam Africa, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Joe Jamison, U.S. Peace Council; Rhonda



(Above) Cindy Sheehan speaks at the March 31 rally in Oakland.

Ramiro, BAYAN USA; Rev. Grayland Hager, Plymouth Congressional United Church of Christ; Ann Wright, Veterans for Peace; Medea Benjamin, Code Pink; Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers, Popular Resistance; Loan Tran, International Action Center; Reiner Braun, No to NATO Coalition; Alexander Neu, Member of the German parliament.

Also: Pippa Bartolotti, Extinction Rebellion, Wales; Andre Francois, Haitian speaker and president, Boston School Bus Driver Union, USW 8751; David Swanson, World Beyond War; Cheri

Honkala, Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, and others.

Both rallies featured greetings entitled "Hands Off Venezuela!" from the renowned and innocent U.S. political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Earlier, a March 16, "Hands Off Venezuela" protest in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the ANSWER coalition and endorsed by UNAC and others, attracted an estimated crowd of 800. ■

Before Venezuela, there was the coup in Honduras

Sandra Cuffe / Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies



(Left) Police attack protesters in July 2009, following the Honduran coup.

By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

"The Long Honduran Night: Resistance, Terror, and the United States in the Aftermath of the Coup," by Dana Frank. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018).

Activist and scholar Dana Frank has given us a useful book to help us understand the present events in Honduras, at the U.S.-Mexico border, and elsewhere in Latin America. The 2009 coup in Honduras that toppled a democratically elected and mildly progressive government was engineered and sponsored by the U.S. government under President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Frank gives us an analysis of the coup and subsequent resistance movement, as well as a first-person account of the activists and events since the coup. The book is readable and fact filled, but it is also necessary to any understanding of events in the so-called backyard of the United States.

Frank is a professor emerita of history at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She is best known in academic and labor circles for her insightful history of women workers in the banana industry, "Bananas: Women transforming the Banana Unions of Latin America," published by South End Press in 2005. She has extensive personal connections with unions and feminist organizations in Honduras and has a strong grasp of the scholarly research on Honduras in both Spanish and English.

The coup against the democratically elected president of Honduras Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales took place on Sunday, June 28, 2009. The Honduran military, with the support of the Honduran Supreme Court and Congress, arrested the president and flew him to Costa Rica. The book explores the reasons for the coup and the popular struggle to restore democracy in its aftermath.

The coup was orchestrated by the U.S. with the support of the Honduran elite and military, both groups with close ties to Washington. When Obama took office in January 2009, the administration turned its attention to Latin America, an area that had been somewhat neglected under the Bush administration, which was focused on the Middle East. Noting the significant erosion of U.S. economic and political domination, the U.S. sought to reassert imperialist control over the empire's traditional "backyard," a pejorative expression in Latin America.

President Zelaya was a member of the traditional Honduras elite. Elected in 2006, he started moving in

a reformist direction. He joined the Venezuelan and Cuban-led ALBA, supported a 50% increase in the minimum wage, and blocked efforts by the wealthy to privatize publicly owned ports, schools, and electrical systems.

These efforts at reform generated enormous resistance from the U.S. and the Honduran elite. In response to this resistance, President Zelaya proposed a non-binding survey question to be included on the ballot for elections held on June 28. The survey asked if voters wanted to include in the upcoming November ballot a question on authorizing a vote for delegates to a constitutional convention, to be held at some unspecified time in the future. Notice that this was not a vote to authorize a constitutional convention, nor was it an election of delegates to such a convention. All of this, by the way, was completely legal under the Honduran Constitution.

This tepid exercise in democracy was clearly too much for the empire and its clients. The U.S. and Honduran elite feared that the spread of democracy would undermine neoliberal policies in Honduras and challenge U.S. and elite control. The army, legally responsible for distributing ballots, refused to do so. Instead, on the morning of the elections, they grabbed President Zelaya and kicked him out of the country. The president of the Honduran Congress, Roberto Micheletti, declared himself president.

Now events unfolded following the typical U.S. script. The army seized government buildings. Demonstrations against the coup started almost immediately all over the country. In response, the government declared a state of siege, imposed a curfew, and sent tanks and soldiers into the streets. The resistance escalated in turn.

On July 2 (four days after the coup), hundreds of thousands demonstrated in the streets of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, Honduras's two largest cities. World leaders around the world condemned the coup, except for Obama.

One week after the coup, Zelaya tried to fly into the Tegucigalpa airport, along with the president of the United Nations General Assembly, the presidents of Argentina, Ecuador, and Paraguay, and the Secretary General of the Organization of American States. The Honduran military blocked the runway, preventing the plane from landing while Honduran army snipers killed Hondurans who had come to welcome home their president. Estimates of the crowd ranged from several hundred thousand to one million.

Frank highlights the geopolitical reasons for the

coup. Honduras was the weakest link in the chain of regimes moving toward independence from U.S. imperialism, or to use her metaphor, "Honduras was the first domino that the United States pushed over to counteract the new governments in Latin America" (p. 19).

Honduras is the home of the Soto Cano Air Base, one of the largest U.S. Air Force bases in all of Latin America. Honduras is also the source of super-profits for several major transnational corporations. For all of these reasons, in addition to the fact that U.S. imperialism tolerates no dissent no matter how mild, the U.S. wanted Zelaya overthrown.

Much of the book details the emergence and struggles of the popular resistance to the post-coup government. Within weeks of the coup, opposition groups coalesced into the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular [National Front of Popular Resistance] or FNRP. The FNRP was commonly called simply La Resistencia [the Resistance] and included a broad range of groups, including the traditional Marxist groups, labor unions, and peasant organizations, as well as feminist groups, environmental groups, and LGBT groups. The FNRP organized non-violent demonstrations and strikes while the government stepped up its crackdown on all political dissent.

The U.S. played for time by manipulating negotiations between Zelaya and Micheletti in Costa Rica. The negotiations paved the way for the Nov. 29, 2011, presidential elections while excluding Zelaya. The elections were a textbook example of a "demonstration election," an election in form without the substance of any democratic participation. The election of Porfirio Lopez, a coup supporter, was almost a forgone conclusion.

Weeks after the election, which the U.S. hailed as a triumph of democracy, assassinations and early morning raids on political activists increased. At the same time, the U.S. re-opened the aid spigots that had been shut off during Zelaya's presidency. President Lopez began to privatize major government owned assets.

In spite of the slow and steady slaughter of Honduran political activists, the Resistance continued until dealt a surprising body blow. The presidents of Colombia and Venezuela (Juan Manuel Santos and Hugo Chavez, respectively) had negotiated the Cartagena Accords between Zelaya and the Honduran government. The accord included first, dropping all charges against Zelaya and his ministers; second, a commitment on the part of the Honduran government to human rights; and third, creating a legal path for the FNRP to become a political party. This agreement was negotiated behind the backs of the Resistance, who both called for a constituent assembly to write a new constitution and opposed participation in the corrupt and undemocratic election process.

The Cartagena Accords split the FNRP and paved the way for a new U.S.-backed dictator to emerge. Part of the Resistance formed LIBRE, a political party based on Zelaya's supporters. LIBRE ran Xiomara Castro, President Zelaya's wife and a popular figure in the country, in the November 2013 elections. The final results, unsurprisingly, gave the election to Juan Orlando Hernandez, the U.S.'s man in Tegucigalpa. Hernandez proceeded to increase political repression and purge the Honduran judiciary and police, especially of those who opposed corruption or Hernandez's rule (Hernandez and segments of the Honduran ruling class have strong connections to the drug trade).

The U.S. appointed General James Nealon, a former head of SOUTHCOM, as ambassador to Honduras. And so it goes: the U.S. and the Honduran ruling class are back in control while the Honduran people face repression, crime, and brutal capitalist exploitation in a seemingly never ending long Honduran night. Is it any wonder that Hondurans seek a better life in the center of the capitalist system?

For more information, contact the Honduras Solidarity Network, at www.hondurassolidarity.org. ■

Feminists lead in the global class struggle

By CHRISTINE MARIE

“We are the feminist, trans feminist, anti-racist, antifascist tide that will take over Verona, opening up liberating spaces which were born from the global power of the International Women Strike!” So concludes the call for action that put 30,000 feminists and their allies on the streets on March 31 to protest a meeting of the World Congress of Families (WCF), a virulently anti-LGBTQI and anti-abortion organization.

The WCF promotes the “traditionalist identity” named as the ideal by illiberal European regimes such as Poland, Hungary, and Russia, as well as admiring right-wing political parties across Europe and large evangelical groups in the U.S.

Verona was chosen as the site of this year’s WCF conference due to the national electoral victory, in combination with the 5 Star Movement, of Matteo Salvini’s far-right Northern League (now called simply the League Party) in 2018 and an ordinance won by Verona’s hard-right mayor, Federico Sboarina, that made the city a “pro-life” town and required women seeking an abortion to consult with anti-abortion advisors offering financial assistance for pregnancy.

World Conference of Families

Salvini, Italy’s Interior Minister, was the featured speaker of the WCF conference. He was joined on the platform by Minister for Family and Disability Lorenzo Fontana and Minister of Education Marco Bussetti. Until a few days before the event, when outrage forced a retreat, it was built with the endorsement of the regional government. A hard-right program of opposing immigration, and pushing higher European birth rates, while opposing reproductive rights, same-sex marriage, and gender fluidity marked the day. The Italian fascist group Forza Nuova set up a full calendar of regional marches and rallies in support of the conference, reminding Italians that Verona had been a fascist stronghold during the time of Mussolini.

The head of Arcigay, Italy’s oldest mainstream gay rights organization, noted that this was the first time that the WCF conference has been held outside of the socially conservative former Soviet states and in the heart of Western Europe. Arrayed against the assembly and parades of both the electoral and fascist right, Trans-Feminist Verona and the Italian affiliate of the International Women’s Strike known as Non una di meno (Not One Less, not one more woman killed) drew from the strength of the national March 8 International Women’s Day strike to take a stand against the normalization of hard-right “traditionalist” thought and against the plan to abolish or weaken abortion, divorce and family law, and the social institutions to which victims of sexual, gender, homophobic, and transphobic violence have turned.

In particular, they mobilized against the League’s Pillon law, which would roll back Italian codes on divorce to the Dark Ages, changing the rules on child custody, domestic violence, and child economic support in the event of divorce.

International Women’s Strike

On March 8, 2019, Non una di meno put hundreds of thousands of women in motion amidst collaborative national 24-hour shutdowns of bus, metro, tram, and train networks, airport ground operations, and municipal offices and schools in Rome.

In Milan, the transport unions issued demands that included a stop to male violence against women, gender discrimination and precarious employment; privatization in the welfare sector, the right to free and accessible public services, universal and unconditional earnings at home and at work, with equal pay, and a policy of shared support for maternity and paternity leave.

They began organizing three years ago after witnessing the 2016 strike of Polish women in defense of abortion rights and watching the Ni una menos movement in Argentina use the organizing tool of national and local assemblies to call a “women’s strike” in October 2016, in response to the murder of 16-year-old Lucía Pérez, who was raped and impaled in the coastal city of Mar del Plata. Ni una menos spread quickly to other cities in Argentina and soon to Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, El Salvador, Mexico, Turkey, and Spain.

In 2017, the International Women’s Strike, or Paro Internacional de Mujeres network, began to link these struggles in a more formal way and set March 8,



Fernando Alvarado / EFE

‘We are in the front row against the reactionary right, the neoliberal plans, and the interference of the imperialist governments.’

— Ni una menos, Argentina

International Women’s Day as a global day of action for women fighting not only against sexual violence, for reproductive justice, and an end to discrimination, but against all the anti-working-class attacks on the social wage and the neoliberal restructuring of employment that hit women and gender non-conforming people the hardest.

The development of the IWS, from the global South to the south of Europe, before its expansion to more than 50 countries, is no accident. It reflects resistance in the places facing the most brutal of the impacts of the global capitalist crisis—the austerity demands placed on indebted nations, and the cutbacks and extreme pro-business measures implemented by local elites responding to the bidding of the IMF and other lenders.

In 2019, the outpouring globally on this date exceeded that of previous years. In the Spanish state, alone, at least 6 million respected the national call for a general strike, and demonstrations numbered 350,000 in Madrid, 250,000 in Barcelona, and 200,000 in Zaragoza. Julia Cámara, who toured the U.S. in February, described the organizing as involving linked networks of immigrant women; North African, Middle Eastern, and Central American refugees; caucuses of women in the unions; unorganized women fighting the stresses of precarious work; and young women struggling around sexual violence.

All were together to restore not only desperately needed social provisioning such as housing, health care, education, and dignity for women, cis and trans, under attack due to the economic crisis and lack of a sufficient response from more traditional working-class organizations and parties.

Some insight into the process by which feminist activists and young working women are radicalizing, developing a systemic critique of the political order, and discovering themselves as agents of change for the whole working class can be gleaned from the many calls and documents put out by various assemblies for the International Women’s Day marches.

In Argentina, the movement, while founded in response to a sexual murder, rejects carceral feminism (calling on the police), arguing that sexual violence is inextricably bound to the economic violence of the state, and refuses to ally with a criminal justice system that defends profits through racialized policing and jailing. In opposition to all the attacks on Argentine labor law and payment of the debt to those banks by President Mauricio Macri, they proclaim: “In this strike we collect the history of all the historic strikes of the feminist movement and make it our own, because we are in the front row against the

(Above) Over 350,000 marched in Madrid on International Women’s Day, March 8.

reactionary right, the neoliberal plans, and the interference of the imperialist governments.”

In Buenos Aires, the March 8 action began with a militant but disciplined face-off between the police and the organized women workers of Coca Cola, Hospital Posadas, the occupied MadyGraf print shop, and other work sites. The assembly also had to debate the place of bourgeois electoralism in the struggle, with supporters of former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner trying to assert leadership and finally withdrawing financial support for the strike sound system and stage. A vigorous intervention by trans-critical feminists hoping to exclude trans women was defeated, and the document supported a fully inclusive movement.

Toward a feminist international

On the eve of March 8, an international group of signatories from the IWS movements in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Spain, Italy, and the U.S. published “Beyond March 8: Toward a New Feminist International” on the site of Verso Books. “The new feminist wave,” they wrote, “is the first line of defense to the rise of the far-right. Today, women are leading the resistance to reactionary governments in a number of countries.”

The term “Feminist International,” coined by the Argentinian movement, they say, is meant to evoke the new sense of urgency attached to international solidarity and transnational meetings to coordinate, share practical experiences, and deepen analysis. On April 6, Swiss activists are sponsoring a meeting of international feminist speakers from the U.S., South Africa, India, Tunisia, and Belgium to build for a June 14 women’s strike in Geneva and to discuss the way forward for true international coordination.

The response to the calls of the women of the world for a new feminist movement that can go beyond fighting for equality under the law to the struggle for a real systemic transformation of society is much more of a leap in the U.S. than in Europe. This is due to the weakness of the labor movement, the dominance of many social movements by the Democratic Party, and the generally lower level of the class struggle. The perspective of the International Women’s Strike movement, however, is the perspective of revolutionary socialists, who can bring the experience of the global movement to radicalizing working women and students in many ways, rooting the expansion of their political imaginations in internationalism, and laying the base for a future of class struggle feminism.

Socialist Action encourages its supporters to support tours of IWS internationals, plan forums, hold educational, and to begin to help form coalitions or assemblies to plan activity on March 8, 2020. Many Socialist Action branches, in collaboration with the International Women’s Strike, will also be organizing reading groups on the new IWS text, “Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto,” by Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser. Please join us. ■

The New Deal: Roosevelt's answer to 'radicalism'



(Left) Franklin D. Roosevelt.

By DAVID RIEHLE

Four score and seven years ago ... Franklin Roosevelt brought forth in this country a New Deal. Not a Square Deal (Teddy Roosevelt) or a Fair Deal (Truman) but a NEW DEAL. New York Governor Roosevelt was nominated for president at the Democratic Party national convention in Chicago on July 2, 1932. In his acceptance speech he said, "I pledge you and I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people."*

FDR's Labor Secretary, Frances Perkins, revealed that when Roosevelt took office in March 1933, "the New Deal was not a plan with form or content. It was a happy phrase he had coined during the campaign and its value was psychological. It made people feel better."

Fundamentally, the New Deal was a series of recovery programs designed as aids to businesses and banks. Congress passed and Roosevelt signed during his first 100 days in office the First New Deal Program (1933-5), including an Emergency Banking Act (March 1933), an Economy Act (March 1933), and the establishment of a Federal Emergency Relief Administration (March 1933), to be followed in June by the creation of a National Recovery Administration.

Participation in the NRA was merely voluntary, and participating businesses were supposed to put the NRA's symbol, the Blue Eagle, in their windows. The Wobblies called it "The Blue Vulture." At the same time, there was a program of public works legislation, the WPA. Most significant and enduring for workers are three measures:

1) The National Labor Relations Act, passed in 1935, which gives unions whatever legal status they have in this country.

2) The Social Security Act, passed in 1935, was a watered down version of Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party Representative Ernest Lundeen's bill proposing a comprehensive social insurance system "for all workers, including all wage earners, all salaried workers, farmers, professional workers and the self-employed." The bill provided for compensation equal to average earnings for wages lost due to layoffs, injuries, illnesses, maternity, and old age. Mothers of children under 18 also would receive allowances if they lacked male support.

The Lundeen Bill was reported out of the House Labor Committee in 1935, but Congress failed to enact it. Instead, the Congress passed and President Roosevelt signed the restrictive and discriminatory Social Security Act, which excluded almost all African American workers—i.e., agricultural laborers, as in the cotton fields—and (mostly African American) female domestic workers.

3) The Fair Labor Standards Act, passed in 1938, which required overtime pay after 40 hours at the time and one half rate, outlawed most child labor and established a national minimum wage. Most embedded in the memory of the working class, perhaps, is the public works program known as the Works Progress Administration, or WPA. I happen to remember

that *Mad* magazine, reviewing FDR's first term in office, with its alphabet soup of new federal agencies and programs, (NIRA, AAA, FCA, FSA, CCC, TVA, WPA, CCC, FHA, FTC) said "Roosevelt's first term was an initial success." It's probably needless to say that all three of these threshold standards are under relentless attack and have been for the last 40 years or so.

In July 1932, Roosevelt was speaking as unemployment, which had surged up from around 4% after the October 1929 stock market crash, was now, nearly three years into the Depression, approaching 25% and still rising. There was virtually no social safety net, and people were obviously desperate.

There had been depressions before in American history, but FDR assured the delegates that "the great social phenomenon of this depression, unlike others before it, is that it has produced but a few of the disorderly manifestations that too often attend upon such times.

"Wild radicalism has made few converts, and the greatest tribute that I can pay to my countrymen is that in these days of crushing want there persists an orderly and hopeful spirit on the part of the millions of our people who have suffered so much. To fail to offer them a new chance is not only to betray their hopes but to misunderstand their patience."

Of course, this was in July 1932. Their patience wore thin pretty quickly. "To meet by reaction that danger of radicalism is to invite disaster," Roosevelt said. "Reaction is no barrier to the radical. It is a challenge, a provocation. The way to meet that danger is to offer a workable program of reconstruction, and the party to offer it is the party with clean hands."

Why did FDR have the danger of "wild radicalism" on his mind? This was not just an abstract consideration, or even simply a recollection of the social turmoil during the depressions of the late 19th century. Roosevelt, in fact, had every reason to be especially aware of and sensitive to "wild radicalism."

FDR had been involved in New York and national politics for decades. At the time of his nomination for president he had been serving as governor of New York for the previous four years, and he had earlier been a member of the New York state legislature. New York, and New York City in particular, was the center of working-class radicalism in the United States, with tens of thousands of workers who supported left-wing parties and made up the membership of militant unions, particularly in the garment industry. In 1920, five socialists whom workers in New York City had elected to the state legislature were denied their seats by the Democratic/Republican majority on the grounds that they were "elected on a platform that is absolutely inimical to the best interests of the state of New York and the United States."

By 1938, when FDR was serving his second term, "wild radicalism" had made enough converts to produce a wave of mass strikes in 1934, the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations by the seceding unions from the American Federation of Labor, and the semi-revolutionary occupation in late

1936 of the giant General Motors plant in Flint Michigan, led by radical autoworkers.

As socialist journalist Art Preis wrote in "Labor's Giant Step," his history of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), "The picture of Roosevelt as a 'friend of labor' giving the people concessions out of the tenderness of his heart—this portrait painted by both the conservative trade union officialdom and the Stalinists—is completely false. Roosevelt was a clever, adroit politician who carefully gauged popular sentiment. His slightest concession to the workers was given grudgingly out of fear of the masses and to prevent their moving left.

"He voiced this in his 1932 acceptance speech, saying that 'a resentment against the failure of Republican leadership ... the failure of Republican leaders to solve our troubles may degenerate into unreasoning radicalism. ... To meet by reaction that danger of radicalism is to invite disaster.'"

Preis quotes Raymond Moley, one of Roosevelt's closest associates of the early "New Deal," who wrote in his book, "After Seven Years": "It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the policies which vanquished the bank crisis were thoroughly conservative policies. If ever there was a moment when things hung in a balance, it was on March 5, 1933—when unorthodoxy would have drained the last remaining strength of the capitalist system. Capitalism was saved in eight days."

And he cites Ferdinand Lundberg, in "America's 60 Families," the classic study of the big capitalists who run this country, who concluded that the New Deal was neither "revolutionary nor radical; in reality it was 'conservative.' He wrote that 'its mild tentative reformist coloration' was a concession in the face of widespread unrest."

The original draft of NIRA (National Industrial Recovery Administration) said nothing about collective bargaining rights. Long afterwards, Miss Perkins admitted that Section 7(a) was written into the bill only after protests by William Green (then president of the American Federation of Labor). She comments: "Written in general terms, 7(a) was a problem in semantics. It was a set of words to suit labor leaders, William Green in particular."

Of course, everyone knows that FDR came from the upper class, but does anybody really know where the family got its wealth? It wasn't from operating a farm in upstate New York (FDR identified himself on the census as a "farmer.") Franklin Roosevelt was a member of the oldest section of the American ruling class, what is sometimes called the "Knickerbocker Aristocracy." This group's original fortunes derived from vast land grants along the Hudson River from the Dutch West Indies Company in the 17th century. Eventually the Roosevelt family fortunes came to rest on banking, railroads, and shipping. FDR's grandfather, Warren Delano II, made a fortune in the highly profitable China opium trade.

It is interesting to note that no less than five members of the extended Roosevelt clan served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy: Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt Jr. who served from 1921 through 1924 under Harding and Coolidge, Theodore Douglas Robinson (the son of Corinne Roosevelt) who served from 1924 through 1929 under Coolidge, and finally Henry Latrobe Roosevelt, a descendant of Robert Fulton's old friend "Steamboat Nicholas" Roosevelt, who served from 1933 through 1936 under FDR.

FDR, who received presidential compensation of \$75,000 annually, also was given a \$75,000 yearly allowance by his mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, while he was in the White House. If Roosevelt knew anything about poor people, it was that God must have loved them, because he made so many of them.

Now: The Green New Deal

The first problem in calling for a Green New Deal is that it misrepresents the original, which was, if anything, miserly and conservative. It happened to coincide with the most massive labor uprising in U.S. history, but it didn't create it. At this point in time, it is doubtful if many people under 60 years old except students of history and Democratic Party politicians have ever heard of the "New Deal." And trying to rally people around a false version of history has obvious complications, to say the least.

The "Green New Deal" that we're hearing about now is a response to an October 2018 report from

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the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which found that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences worldwide, the global temperature must be prevented from increasing by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius over the next 12 years. To reach this goal, global greenhouse gas emissions need to be 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and be net zero by 2050.

This will require, they say, in a very limited time frame, "extraordinary transitions in transportation; in energy, land, and building infrastructure; and in industrial systems."

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has achieved instant celebrity as an electoral phenom, at least presents the GND proposition in more sweeping terms. She calls the Green New Deal proposed in Obama's 2008 platform a "half measure" that "will not work." She says, "The Green New Deal we are proposing will be similar in scale to the mobilization efforts seen in World War II or the Marshall Plan. It will require the investment of trillions of dollars and the creation of millions of high-wage jobs. We must again invest in the development, manufacturing, deployment, and distribution of energy but this time green energy."

In other words, if this statement is to be taken seriously, the model is not FDR's "New Deal," but an all-out and continuing mobilization of national (and international) resources of the scale and intensity of World War II, but directed at saving the ecosystem, and not destroying it in the name of "democracy."

The Marshall Plan, it should be noted, was a forthright attempt, largely successful, to resuscitate capitalist Western Europe and inaugurate the Cold War, notably with the help of Nazi war criminals in West Germany.

This at least has the merit of posing or strongly implying that the challenge to humanity demands an unprecedented social, economic and political effort. However, it is historically out of context. The economic, military, and human mobilizations by the United States during World War II were directed towards achieving maximum human and material destruction, the only goal around which the ruling class could coalesce effectively. The greatest technical accomplishment was at the same time the most sinister—the atom bomb—used to immediately extinguish the lives of more than 200,000 non-combatant human beings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in August 1945.

All these things were carried out with the full force and credit of the U.S. ruling class, and primarily through executive fiat by FDR. (Nuclear war against Japan was authorized by Harry Truman after FDR's death in April 1945.)

But how is this green transformation to be accomplished? Several socialist organizations have explored this question.

For example, *Socialist Alternative*, the newspaper of the organization of the same name, writes (Dec. 18, 2018), "We have seen young people propelled into action on this issue, as shown by the occupations of Nancy Pelosi's office in November demanding a 'Green New Deal,' and it is likely this movement for climate justice will develop further in the coming year. We need a massive green infrastructure program to create millions of good paying jobs transitioning the U.S. away from fossil fuels and to renewable energy!"

The goals enunciated are compelling, but vague. There is little sense here of the utter urgency of taking on the unpostponable crisis of climate change. While *Socialist Alternative* scores what it calls the "corporate Democrats," like Pelosi, it champions the Democratic Party's main proponent of the Green New Deal, Al-



exandria Ocasio-Cortez. This reinforces the delusion that any progress can be achieved by people of good will, through the medium of the capitalist Democratic Party, not to say the Congress of the United States.

Directing this movement into the Democratic Party, and the U.S. Congress, will suffocate it: "Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate" ("Abandon all hope, ye who enter here").

Even FDR, with all the unilateral power of the Oval Office and the momentum of a landslide victory, was repeatedly stymied by the Supreme Court and reactionary inertia and sabotage of Congress. And all he was trying to do was save capitalism.

It is absolutely true that the emerging crisis cannot be seriously and effectively addressed without the elimination of fossil fuels. But the extraction and use of fossil fuels is not even slowing down; pipelines, crude oil trains, supertankers—it's too fabulously profitable and it has been so for over a century. This is the most arrogant and richest class in the history of the world—and the most destructive. They will not give this up; they are incapable of it. They want more. What are they doing in Venezuela, which has the world's largest proven reserves of oil?

Leon Trotsky explained, in his introduction to "The History of the Russian Revolution," what makes a revolution possible: "The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct intervention of the masses in historical events. In ordinary times the state, be it monarchical or democratic, elevates itself above the nation, and history is made by specialists in that line of business—kings, ministers, bureaucrats, parliamentarians, journalists. But at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives, and create by their own intervention the initial groundwork for a new regime...."

"The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny."

It's no accident that the majority of young people ex-

(Above) Despite the New Deal, high unemployment persisted during the Roosevelt administration until the beginning of World War II.

press a preference for socialism over capitalism. They don't know much about the theory of surplus value or dialectical materialism, but they sense that capitalism is dog-eat-dog and that socialism holds out the promise of a society of peace and human solidarity, and a genuinely green planet.

And they are beginning to move into the streets to demand change. We've recently seen demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of young people—people under 18—in many countries. This is the beginning. This is the vanguard that doesn't want to compromise with self-serving politicians, that demands action now. These are the youthful legions that are on the threshold of becoming the vanguard of the working class of the world—a movement in the streets that can begin to express political independence and can educate and inspire others.

It is clear from the testimony of history that there is no other social force that can push aside, overthrow, and repress the architects of the overwhelming disaster facing the human race other than the masses, the workers, the farmers, the wretched of the earth. Can it be done in time? That is, of course, impossible to say. But we do know that when a window opens up, when an opening is created by a social and human crisis of unprecedented depth and intensity, the historic possibility is there.

If a crucial minority has been assembled that is prepared to act decisively to "create by their own intervention the initial groundwork for a new regime," it can be done. And all history shows there is no other way. ■

*FDR's distant cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, had introduced the "Square Deal": "...if there is one thing that I do desire to stand for it is for a square deal, for an attitude of kindly justice as between man and man, without regard to what any man's creed or birthplace or social position may be, so long as, in his life and in his work, he shows the qualities that entitle him to the respect of his fellows."

Polluted water near air bases endangers Pa. communities

By JOHN LESLIE

In the suburban Philadelphia neighborhoods surrounding two now-closed U.S. Navy air bases, residents are faced with a drinking water crisis. Contaminated groundwater linked to a fire-fighting foam forced the closing of both public and private wells. The Department of Defense (DoD) knew as early as 2001 that the foam contained potentially carcinogenic compounds. Pennsylvania Department of Health studies have found an increased rate of pancreatic and bladder cancer among residents in these communities.

Since 2014, public wells in Horsham, Warrington and Warminster, Pa., have been shut down, affecting more than 83,000 customers. In all, a total of 16 of 36 public wells and more than 200 private wells have

been taken out of service. The Navy and Air Force are paying to connect well owners to public water systems.

The Naval Air Warfare Center in Warrington was closed in 1996 and redeveloped into parks, homes, and businesses. The nearby Willow Grove Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base has also been shuttered, with a small section still under the jurisdiction of the Air Force. Plans for redevelopment have been put on hold.

The government is investigating 400 military sites for water contamination and has found it at more than two dozen bases so far. In Bucks and Montgomery Counties, the contaminants have been found in groundwater miles away from the bases.

The response by government authorities has been slow. The EPA has yet to release a comprehensive plan for how to deal with

these dangerous chemicals. The chemicals, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl compounds, or PFAS, including PFOA and PFOS, are implicated in kidney cancer, testicular cancer, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, and other health conditions.

With more than 1000 bases worldwide, the U.S. military is widely recognized as a major polluter. But this pollution is rarely discussed in public. Despite the military's seeming unlimited use of climate change-inducing fossil fuels, the U.S. and other military machines are not considered in international climate accords. Frequently, foreign bases dispose of trash, medical waste, tires, and other refuse in open-air burn pits.

An Air Force staff sergeant told this writer that in Afghanistan, the smoke from one such burn pit would envelope the flight line, forcing personnel to breathe the toxic air.

The U.S. imperialists and other imperialist countries continue to use their forces in wars for oil and other resources. As the climate crisis continues to unfold, the probability exists that wars will be fought over arable land and water sources. Likewise, the climate crisis could lead to the use of military forces to maintain order, leading to attacks on democratic rights.

War and militarism are a threat to our rights and very existence. The billions of dollars squandered on military apparatuses and wars worldwide must be redirected to meet human needs, remediate the environmental damage already done, and prepare society to address the effects of climate change. Building an effective movement against climate change requires an internationalist and anti-imperialist perspective.

In the communities that have been affected by toxic groundwater, the government must do more to remediate the harm already done and ensure that water is safe to drink. ■

Northern Lights

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The Liberals' federal budget: Feast for the rich, crumbs for the rest

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Justin Trudeau's undeserved reputation as a "progressive" is now officially in tatters. His one-day wonder of a federal budget, calculated to overshadow the ongoing SNC Lavalin scandal, quickly shrank to a footnote. Still, there is plenty of fiscal anguish, even in Liberal ranks.

At the *Toronto Star*, a media pillar of liberalism, there is much hand wringing. The March 20 lead editorial was titled "Morneau's Budget—Liberals can be bolder." *Star* columnist David Olive later wrote, "Since it came to power in 2015, the (Justin) Trudeau government's progressive instincts have weakened this week's budget should have Grits worried that their party is losing its soul."

Well, if there be such a thing as a soul, the Liberal Spiritus Sanctus is comfortably dwelling deep within the Canadian Corporate Corpus. The pre-election 2019 federal budget sprinkles bread crumbs on the sea without raising a ripple against the vessel of capitalist private profit. While the captains of industry and commerce continue to enjoy public subsidies and tax havens abroad for their billions, here are some conspicuous acts of neglect and omission on the domestic landscape.

Pharmacare: About 20 per cent of Canadians are uninsured or under-insured for prescription drugs. One in 10 goes without prescribed medications due to cost. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that universal pharma care would save more than \$4 billion a year if the government exercised its purchasing power as the sole buyer. (Even more would be saved if a public enterprise did the research, production and distribution of medical drugs.) But Finance Minister Bill Morneau kept such a scheme out of the budget. He prefers to wait for the final report of an advisory body he appointed, which may recommend only filling in the gaps left by Canada's current hodgepodge of pharmaceutical plans. That would keep Big Pharma happy.

Skills training: The budget says workers between the ages of 25 and 64 will be eligible for a training allowance of \$250 a year, to a maximum of \$5000.



Not much training can be purchased for that paltry amount. Worse, the allowance can be accessed only if the provinces change their labour laws to let workers take re-education breaks without losing their jobs. Furthermore, adults who take time off work for re-training will be eligible for a mere four weeks off the job at just 55 per cent of full pay, and only once every four years. Is this the definition of useless, or what?

Childcare: For just one child it can cost as much as \$12,000 a year. The government's Canada Child Benefit has reduced the child poverty rate, but that doesn't build any daycare spaces. It doesn't enable many more women to go to work, or reduce the debt burden that is weighing down so many people. Canadians have accumulated more household debt than the residents of almost any other country. Debt dismay fuels right wing populism.

Housing: Young workers are shut out of the home ownership market. Many are couch surfing, some even living rough and dying on the streets. Trudeau/Morneau's answer is a "shared equity" mortgage plan. It raises the amount people can borrow from their RRSP (if they have one) to put into a down payment. But the plan effectively caps the price of a home to be purchased this way at around \$500,000. Experts say this no help in big markets like Toronto and Vancouver. Queen's University real estate professor John

Andrew calls the move symbolic. "They're trying to appease the real estate lobby ... to appear as though they're doing something for first-time home buyers."

After World War II, the state built affordable housing to accommodate the baby boom and subsequent waves of immigrants. Socialists demand the creation of a public land assembly and housing construction corporation with a mandate to build 500,000 energy-efficient, affordable, quality units within five years. Venezuela built 2.5 million homes in eight years. But hey, that's a government Ottawa wants to overthrow, not emulate.

Energy: The feds opt for a mix of electric cars and dirty oil pipelines. Seriously. To be precise, the Liberal budget allocates \$435 million in incentives for electric or hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicle buyers in order to nudge hitherto unwilling auto makers—after spending \$4.5 billion to buy the Trans Mountain Pipeline (and double that to build a new parallel line). Trudeau refuses to convert the extensive Canada Post delivery fleet to electric—much less nationalize job-killing GM in Oshawa or Fiat/Chrysler in Windsor to produce the trains, buses, freight hauling, and personal vehicles for a green, sustainable future. Scientists say it's 12 years to irreversible climate catastrophe.

Farmers: The supply management system in Canada protects farmers in dairy, poultry, and egg sectors by limiting imports from abroad and setting quotas for domestic production and sales. But Trudeau/Free-land signed trade agreements with the EU and the Pacific Rim that opened up these markets to foreign competition. Will the \$3.9 billion support program for these farmers keep them operating?

Low-income seniors: Folks age 65+ have been falling behind for decades. The budget promises to spend \$1.76 billion over four years to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement—beginning in 2020. It will also increase the amount of income seniors can make without shrinking the supplement payouts they receive. In other words, low-income seniors are encouraged to keep working. O joy!

Pinch the Rich? Hardly. In 2017, 2,330 Canadians "earned" more than \$1 million and claimed stock options tax deductions (i.e. bought company stocks, only half of which is taxed). The budget caps at \$200,000 the use of this tax dodge at large "mature" companies (which exempts millionaires at start-ups). Clearly, this measure does nothing to fund social needs, much less close the gap between the super-rich and the working class. According to author Linda McQuaig, top CEOs receive 2000 times the earnings of the average worker.

And what about electoral reform? Indigenous reconciliation? Feminism? Better forget about it, so long as Colonel Sanders is in charge of the hen house.

Forgive the pun, but under capitalism, big business greed trumps workers' needs. "Affordability anxiety" preoccupies 57 per cent of Canadians, according to the Abacus Data polling firm. With appropriate leadership, it could power a challenge to capitalist rule. ■

By SAM CHEADLE

Labour rallies downplay job action to stop Ontario Tory agenda

Over 800 labour activists from across the province responded to the call of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) on March 25 to attend a "Take Back Ontario Conference" at the Metro Convention Center, just a few blocks from the Toronto Stock Exchange. The event was billed as a discussion to initiate a coordinated fightback against the Conservative Doug Ford government. But it was not a decision-making body—more like a public forum.

Since Ford's election last June, labour and activist groups like Socialist Action have been calling for an emergency OFL convention where elected delegates could set policies and make plans for a general strike. With the "Progressive" Conservatives holding a majority of seats in the legislature, many on the left emphasized that we cannot afford to wait until the next election to challenge this government directly. It is imperative that labour make the province ungovernable and thwart the neoliberal austerity agenda, before irreparable damage is done.

SA members Julius Arscott and Barry Weisleder spoke early from floor mics to argue for escalating actions toward a general strike to oust the Tories. Many folks applauded. To deflect this sentiment, former UNIFOR staffer and current OFL President Chris Buckley asked, "Can we mobilize 100,000 people tomorrow in Ontario to fight the Ford government?" But isn't this the wrong question? What

we need to know is: How do we prepare to mobilize 100,000 people? Sending activists back to their communities to have tea with their neighbours is not going to reverse the Ford agenda. An effective response from labour is needed.

It is time to draw a line in the sand, to unequivocally state that the movement will defend every union local and every public service from further privatization and theft. That means when Ford tells teachers, "don't even think about strike action," the response should be, "See you on the picket line!" It means when a PC politician's office is messed up, don't make sappy apologies; double down and denounce the violence inherent in taking over \$3 billion in wages away from Ontario workers when the planned \$1/hour increase in the minimum wage was cancelled just before Christmas.

It also means putting resources into community groups to engage in direct actions, not telling rank-and-file activists to go build the movement, while the labour brass thinks about getting on board. The labour leadership has been putting the rank and file to sleep for the past 30 years. Now witness the full consequences of that.

What are some highlights of the conference? Injured workers issues were discussed, the idea of an OFL *rapid response*

network was promoted, and one speaker, migrants' rights activist Preethy Sivakumar, laid out some stunning truths that are not often aired in official union gatherings.

She spoke about the connections between racism and inequality, how right wing political leaders use racism to divide the working class and maintain economic equality, and how union members are not immune to these types of narratives. She maintained the number-one job of unions is to "eliminate competition between workers and lift the floor for everyone."

Massive support was pledged for a health care rally on April 30 at Queens Park. Attacks on the construction unions were analyzed. Again, for effective actions to come from these discussions we need uncompromising leadership. Organizers of the April 30 rally should look to shut down Queen's Park and fan out from the lawn, stop traffic, push aside the barriers, and take over the front steps. Who knows, workers might decide to address the legislature. Union leaders representing members in the construction trades who tacitly supported Ford during the June 2018 election need to be replaced.

The OFL conference was followed by an evening "Stewards Assembly" convened by the Toronto and York Region Labour

Council, with attendees seated by electoral district. While it was interesting to connect with local area activists, the assembly severely limited cross-city input (there were no mics on the floor).

By the end of the evening the mood of disappointment was palpable. Chris Buckley gave another tiresome speech, doling out a few contradictory and self-serving phrases. After the event, organizers released a statement that accurately reported the "massive turnout for yesterday's Stewards Assembly spoke volumes about the appetite to get organized and build solidarity." But the nearly 1000 rank-and-file activists in the room received little more than platitudes. Exceptional was a speech by author Linda McQuaig and some short videos featuring rank-and-file activists who are battling austerity within their workplaces.

Nonetheless, the small opening offered by the labour bureaucracy should be seized. Resolutions passed in community and labour groups that call for mass action are needed.

Support striking workers. Defy back-to-work legislation. Confront and shut down alt-right and white supremacist groups where they appear. Occupy spaces that are under threat from the Thug Ford government. The slogan of "educate, agitate, organize" must take on a more radical meaning, and come to life, to spark mass resistance and force an entrenched labour bureaucracy to join us on the street as we confront the major assault on the working class in Ontario that is taking shape at breakneck speed. ■

Solidarity with the struggle of the Algerian people

By THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU OF THE
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

On April 3, the Algerian government confirmed President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's resignation. But reports state that demonstrations are continuing, with demands that his entire governmental clique step down from power. The following statement was written on March 27.

Algeria is experiencing a popular uprising that is unprecedented since the proclamation of national independence. Since 22 February 2019, following calls launched on the Internet, large rallies, with a massive presence of women, have been organized in all cities, followed by workers and young students.

The trigger for this powerful popular anger was the obstinacy of the government in keeping Abdelaziz Bouteflika as president of the country for a fifth term—when he has already spent 20 years in office—by expanding his powers through successive amendments to the Constitution. The government's desire to impose a very sick old man as nominal president is strongly felt as contempt for the people, and in effect as a transfer of his prerogatives to a behind-the-scenes faction. This contempt has unleashed decades of pent-up anger against the policy of looting national wealth, dismantling the public sector, increasing domestic public debt, and further repression of democratic freedoms.

The popular struggle is growing and attracting new layers of demonstrators united by the goal of ousting Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power as soon as his term ends on 28 April 2019 and refusing to allow his defenders and all government members to be involved in determining the country's future.

The ruling clique has so far tried to be unwavering faced with this popular uprising and manoeuvring to gain time to avoid its fall. After being convinced to hold elections to impose the sitting president's candidacy, it decided to cancel the presidential elections and extend Bouteflika's term in a way that violates the Constitution, which it amended at will in the hope of deceiving the demonstrators. It has even begun to implement its plan presented as a roadmap for a "new republic" built by the outgoing president.

The popular response was expressed on 16 March 2019 at the largest demonstration of millions of Algerians throughout the country, calling for the rejection both of President Bouteflika's continuation in office after the end of his term and of the clique behind him.

This faction of the ruling regime will oppose attempts to overthrow it and will try by all possible means to escape the people's verdict using one of the following ways:

- Temporarily withdrawing in order to then regain control over the Algerian people;
- Concluding an agreement with the liberal opposition parties to include them in the government in exchange for guaranteeing the interests of this corrupt clique;
- Direct intervention by the army, which would be justified by the dangers threatening the country, or by the legal vacuum left by the end of Bouteflika's mandate if elections are not held;
- Inviting a personality with a little credit to play the



role of appeasing popular anger in the meantime.

All these options constitute a major betrayal of the popular demands. Abdelaziz Bouteflika's fourth presidential term is drawing to a close, leaving Algeria on the brink of an economic crisis. Monetary reserves are declining at a record pace and may run out in the coming years. The budget deficit is growing significantly and the excessive printing of money will create inflation and a currency collapse that will lead to a sharp drop in purchasing power.

The government wants to keep its material base by leaving the economy focused solely on specializing in the export of hydrocarbons and derived products, importing its main capital and consumer goods. It continues to benefit from oil rents, widespread corruption, and the monopoly of import and investment permits.

The imperialist institutions will use their influence to take advantage of the current situation and force Algeria to implement quickly and fully neoliberal measures such as the opening of the market to imperialist capital, the privatization of the public sector, the liberalization of the energy sector, the abolition of public subsidies for mass consumption, and cuts in public sector jobs.

This neoliberal doctrine converges with the project of the liberal bourgeoisie, which also opposes Bouteflika's clique in power on the pace of this liberalization. The implementation of these neoliberal policies will constitute a profound regression for Algerian working and popular classes and a theft of their sacrifices. Hence the responsibility of socialist activists to join forces on the basis of a programme of demands with a perspective of class independence that will accompany the mobilization and organization of the working class, youth and women for a sovereign constituent assembly that will ensure a radical democratic regime and an independent economy to meet the basic needs of the population, based on collective ownership and grassroots control.

Young people and the popular classes have played an important role in the ongoing popular struggle, as have workers, particularly public service workers. However, the intervention of workers with an independent class perspective and decisive economic strength requires the support and mobilization of workers in strategic sectors, such as petrochemicals, ports, banks, transport, and logistics. This would profoundly change the balance of power and stifle the ruling clique and, more importantly, it would guarantee that the Algerian people decide the political and economic future of the country.

The Fourth International expresses its full solidarity with the struggles of the Algerian people to bring down a regime of dictatorship, corruption, and dependence, and supports its right to popular sovereignty through a sovereign Constituent Assembly.

We condemn the support of the imperialist governments for the ruling regime and their intervention in a matter that concerns the Algerian people exclusively. We hope that the dynamics of the struggles that are emerging in Morocco and Tunisia, which are also experiencing a political and social crisis, will mark the beginning of a victory of the popular revolutions that will revive the glory of the national liberation revolutions, of which the Algerian revolution was one of the symbols in the struggle against imperialism on an international scale.

We call on all socialists and democrats in the world to support the Algerian people in their struggle and to prepare themselves for the duty of international solidarity in the face of the evolution of a great struggle that is still in its infancy.

Long live the struggle of the Algerian people for their popular sovereignty!

Down with the dictatorship of corruption and archaic dependence, for a sovereign Constituent Assembly!

For international solidarity with the struggle of the Algerian people! ■

... Venezuela

(continued from page 12)

ing (FAIR) published a piece thoroughly debunking the *Times* story. Entitled, "Pathological Deceit: The NYT Inverts Reality on Venezuela's Cuban Doctors," the FAIR piece concludes, "the *New York Times*' Andes bureau chief mobilizes anonymous sources and defectors—whose testimony ranges from dubious to preposterous—to further demonize Venezuela and provide cover for Washington's murderous regime change policy."

Multi-faceted attack

The next move in the imperial assault on Venezuela came on March 7 with a cyber-attack on Venezuela's power grid.

According to Venezuela's *Telesur*, "An ongoing series of cyber attacks were perpetrated starting Thursday against the El Guri hydroelectric plant control system leaving the Venezuelan population without electricity for now almost 96 hours. According to the Venezuelan government, this nationwide blackout was brought about by foreign-backed actions aimed at destabilizing the government [of] President Nicolás Maduro, who stressed that the aggression 'affected everyone equally without political distinction.'"

As noted in a March 9 story in *Forbes*, the U.S. has long had plans for disrupting the infrastructure of

"uncooperative" nations: "Interrupting power and water supplies, disrupting traffic patterns, slowing or interfering with internet access, causing smart homes to go haywire and even remotely triggering meltdowns at nuclear power plants were all topics increasingly being discussed in the national security community at the time as legitimate and legal tactics to undermine a foreign state."

The Cuban government issued a strong statement condemning the attack:

"The Revolutionary Government strongly condemns the sabotage perpetrated against the power supply system in Venezuela, which is a terrorist action intended to harm the defenseless population of an entire nation and turn it into a hostage of the non-conventional war launched by the government of the United States against the legitimate government headed by comrade Nicolás Maduro Moros and the civic and military union of the Bolivarian and Chavista people."

Genuine aid

On March 25, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that two Russian military planes had landed in Caracas: "The Russian delegation, made up of 100 soldiers and military officials, arrived over the weekend to provide technical consultations linked to arms that Venezuela previously had purchased from Moscow, according to Russian state media. One of the planes carried 35 tons of unspecified equipment, said a security consultant

with close ties to Caracas."

Russia, Cuba and China have also delivered humanitarian aid in cooperation with the Venezuelan government. *Telesur* reported, "China delivered 65 tons of medicine and supplies to Venezuela Thursday as a result of a strategic cooperation between the two countries. The delivery of aid is one of many, according to government officials."

According to Nicolás Maduro, as quoted in the Feb. 19 edition of *El Periódico*, "On Wednesday, 300 tons of Russian humanitarian aid will be legally delivered to the international airport of Caracas." The article continues, "He also insisted that the donations made by the United States and Colombia at the request of the Venezuelan Parliament, which has an opposition majority, and that are blocked at the border, are outdated and contaminated food."

"The issue of humanitarian aid is a show, it is a hunting trap, they rob us 30 billion dollars and they offer us 20 million in rotten food, contaminated, to try to intervene in Venezuela," he insisted while asking the Colombian president, Ivan Duque, and the American, Donald Trump, stop the "madness."

Revolutionary socialists fully support the right of the Venezuelan government to obtain military, technical, and humanitarian aid from wherever they choose. One does not have to agree with every policy of the Maduro government to understand the stakes in the current conflict and to loudly demand: End the Sanctions! U.S. Hands Off Venezuela! ■

U.S. hands off Venezuela!

Ariana Cubillos / AP



By **BRUCE LESNICK**

When you corner a rat, it lashes out. The rats in charge of the U.S. empire are cornered by the contradictions built into their own system: increasing economic inequality, regular depressions and recessions, declining profit rates, perpetual austerity, and endless wars promoted to stave off increasing global competition. The current vicious U.S. assault on Venezuela—along with the ongoing attacks on working people here at home—are what it looks like when the imperial rat lashes out.

The Trump administration has openly declared the goal of regime change in Venezuela. Such an aim is illegal under international law. The mere threat of aggression is “not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

But U.S. hostility toward that sovereign, independent nation did not begin with the current administration. In a classic case of what Malcolm X called “turning the victim into the criminal,” Barack Obama declared a state of emergency in January of 2017 asserting that Cuba and Venezuela were national security threats to the U.S.

What is the reason for U.S. hostility toward Venezuela, a country that has never threatened any other, let alone the U.S.? Simply put, the popularly elected Chávez and Maduro governments have failed to blindly adhere to U.S. neoliberal economic priorities and imperial dictates. As the CIA acknowledged: “Social investment in Venezuela during the CHAVEZ

administration reduced poverty from nearly 50% in 1999 to about 27% in 2011, increased school enrollment, substantially decreased infant and child mortality, and improved access to potable water and sanitation through social investment.”

Naturally, big business and the U.S. government they control couldn’t stand idly by while a country in their very “back yard” followed a road that, however tepidly and imperfectly, took steps that hinted at prioritizing human needs over private profits. A series of executive orders and sanctions, beginning under the Obama administration and continuing under Trump, have sought to economically strangle the Venezuelan people.

From freezing Venezuelan gold and U.S. dollar reserves held in foreign accounts, to blocking the sale of oil, Venezuela’s chief hard currency export, the impact on the Venezuelan economy is estimated to be upwards of \$20 billion in 2018 alone. Together these sanctions amount to a criminal siege, according to UN Special Rapporteur for Venezuela, Alfred de Zayas.

This was followed by a U.S.-sponsored coup attempt on Jan. 23, 2019, when President Trump announced U.S. recognition of opposition politician Juan Guaidó as the “legitimate” president of Venezuela. This was despite Guaidó’s never having run in a presidential election.

Mainstream Media Complicity

To cover up its illegal aggression, the U.S. attempted to stage the delivery of “humanitarian aid” at the Columbian and Brazilian borders with Venezuela on Feb. 23. Venezuelan officials denounced the stunt as

(Above) Rally in Caracas on March 30 against the imperialist-abetted coup.

a “Trojan Horse,” noting that U.S. Special Envoy Eliot Abrams, who was promoting the phony aid drop, was known for concealing weapons in planes with Red Cross markings in support of the Contras—anti-Nicaraguan government mercenaries supported by the U.S. in the 1980s.

The phony aid drop was stopped by Venezuelan troops. Near opposition groups escorting the aid, one of the trucks caught fire. Video footage from the scene by *Telesur* showed opposition supporters starting the fire. Nevertheless, *The New York Times*, *CNN* and other mainstream media, plus John Bolton, Marco Rubio and Mike Pompeo, blamed the fire on the Venezuelan government forces for two weeks after the incident.

Only after the lie had been sufficiently spread and reinforced did *The Times* reverse itself on March 10, acknowledging that the same video published widely by Max Blumenthal of *The Grayzone* and by other alternative media sites weeks earlier proved that Venezuelan troops were not responsible for the fire.

The Times barely paused before spreading additional misinformation in a story entitled, “‘It Is Unspeakable’: How Maduro Used Cuban Doctors to Coerce Venezuela Voters.” The story was calculated to smear the Venezuelan and Cuban governments, as well as thousands of Cuban doctors and teachers who have volunteered to provide concrete, legitimate aid to the Venezuelan people.

Nine days later, Fairness and Accuracy in Report-

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