

How can we fight climate change?



By BILL ONASCH

The working class faces challenges on many fronts today. But one crisis is overarching. On both land and sea, Northern and Southern Hemispheres alike, our planet is getting hotter. The scale and pace of this global warming is unprecedented in human history. The last three years have been the hottest since precise measurements began in the 1880s.

This heat is expanding the volume of oceans. Along with melting sea and glacial ice in the Arctic, Antarctic, and Greenland, this is raising sea levels. If not stopped soon it will eventually inundate coastal areas that are home to hundreds of millions. The New York City penthouse at Trump Tower would remain dry—but by 2050 the tip of Manhattan, including Southport, Battery Park, and much of the World Trade Center would be submerged.

Familiar weather patterns are being disrupted, leading to severe droughts in some areas and giant floods in others. In February, 11,743 local record warm daily temperatures were recorded just in the United States. The world has been hit by ferocious storms, like Cyclone Debbie in Australia, and massive wildfires such as the recent one in Kansas that killed thousands of livestock, consumed all of the hay sup-

ply, and destroyed hundreds of farm structures.

In some regions of the world, such as eastern Africa, this early-stage climate change has resulted in famine—and thousands of climate refugees.

Pernicious liars like the president of the United States assert that climate change resulting from global warming is a hoax, variously attributed to either greedy climate scientists bilking tax-payers or the Chinese government trying to wreck our economy.

Other deniers don't challenge the validity of thermometer and sea level readings but insist this is a natural cycle of our planet that will eventually get back to what we consider normal. They see no cause for alarm or need for drastic changes. In any case, they say there's nothing we can do to stop Mother Nature.

But the overwhelming majority of scientists accept irrefutable evidence that the principal cause of global warming is the release of greenhouse gases by the ravenous energy demands of industry, agriculture, transportation—and war.

These emissions are still growing. The damage this causes to the fragile biosphere that has nourished human civilization is irreversible. While its worst effects will be felt by future generations, climate change has been advancing faster than expected and

(Photo) The Peoples Climate March brought 400,000 protesters to New York City in 2014.

requires urgent and far-reaching countermeasures.

How capitalism fouls things up

After steam engines fueled by wood and coal gave a big boost to the 18th-century Industrial Revolution, the capitalist economy became increasingly addicted to fossil fuels. Since the first modern oil wells began pumping in Oil Creek, Pennsylvania, in 1859, the United States, Britain, and other major powers have been exploring and conquering on land and in the sea to satisfy the thirst of diesel, internal combustion, and jet engines, as well as for raw material for production of petrochemical products like plastic.

For some time now, the U.S. has had more registered cars and trucks than licensed drivers. Big new markets have been carved out for products like snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles, and motor homes. Once serene lakes are now battered by racket and wakes of ubiquitous motorboats and jet skis. And we shouldn't forget those dirty, noisy two-stroke engines commonly used to mow lawns.

While plug-in electric cars are now starting to ap-

(continued on page 5)

Grassroots struggle for immigrant rights in Chicago area

By CRISTOBAL CAVAZOS

DuPage Immigrant Solidarity Coalition

Though, ironically, immigrant detentions are slightly down as the Great Deporter in Chief Barack Obama leaves office, Donald Trump's new immigration guidelines seek to go well beyond Obama's, with the possibility of deportations of millions of documented workers.

Immigration agents and police officials, who in their majority supported Donald Trump, have been emboldened in their tactics by the racist and xenophobic nature of the new presidency. They have targeted farmworkers, students, and activists with pressure from the White House for local police to begin enforcing federal immigration law under the widely hated Secure Communities or "Polimigra" program.

This was evident on March 23, in Geneseo, N.Y., when a police officer called ICE agents on a family of seven from Guatemala after a routine traffic stop. A mass spontaneous protest ensued, provoking ICE to release the parents. "¡Estamos con ustedes!" ("We are with you!") chanted close to 100 protesters who erupted onto the scene.

Since the election of Donald Trump, here in west suburban Chicagoland at least one ICE operation was confirmed by the press. In February, in conjunction with ICE sweeps in New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles, ICE agents parked outside a heavily Latino apartment complex in the area. While the majority of residents rightly stayed inside their homes, when one individual



ICE photo of Feb. 7 Los Angeles round-up, via AP

stepped outside to go to work he was immediately picked up and taken away.

Local activists have been informing undocumented residents of their rights, and steps that can help protect them in case of raids. For example, not opening doors, not answering questions, and if knocking persists, asking for a signed warrant from a judge that includes the targeted person's name on it.

ICE agents in the Chicago area, often without warrants from immigration judges, and still slammed with cases from the close to 3 million deportations under Obama, have resorted to trickery and deceit to get immigrant workers to open their doors. "There has been a robbery in the neighborhood and we need to talk with you," ICE agents reportedly said in a recent raid.

The reactionary proposals from above

have fueled transformative action from below. In February, with leadership from ARISE Chicago Workers Center and other local organizations, such as PASO (Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights), the city of Oak Park passed an ordinance to become a sanctuary city, setting a new precedent in the area. Naperville, Aurora, and West Chicago, along with Lake and Cook counties have stated under sustained pressure from immigrant rights activists and organizations that they would substantially limit the enforcement of immigration laws and cooperation with federal immigration officials.

Over 300 jurisdictions nationwide have sanctuary-like policies, and this number is growing. Pressure is being exerted on DuPage County Sheriff John Zaruba to follow suit with the recent

formation of the DuPage Sanctuary Coalition. The grassroots coalition's goal is to gain sanctuary in DuPage County under the rallying cry of "No Human Being is Illegal! Stop All Deportations!"

We will target individual cities where there is evidence of police racial profiling (which is the majority) while promoting sanctuary in those municipalities and in schools and churches. A new Latino-Muslim solidarity will be forged.

These efforts will continue even as the large immigrant rights organizations, with their millions in establishment money, push Latinos and immigrants into the graveyard of Democratic Party politics. Their goal is to turn everything into a referendum on Trump—similar to what they did under President George W. Bush with Obama promising immigration reform in his first 100 days in office.

Immigrant and Latino workers must reject the narrow reactionary paradigms of the Republican and Democratic Parties with renewed activity in grassroots sanctuary movements, strikes, and struggles at their workplaces for union organization and higher wages.

May Day will be such a mass expression of outrage against the government's racist anti-immigration agenda. Massive numbers of people will take to the streets with the call of Legalization for All, No Polimigra, Full Citizenship for All Workers!

With the hope of a new future of justice, equality, growing solidarity, mass protest, and rejection of xenophobia, racism, and anything that seeks to divide workers and communities, we can achieve real victories. ■

JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

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

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

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Landmark UN report scores Israeli apartheid

By MARK UGOLINI

A powerful United Nations report labels Israel “an apartheid regime” that “dominates the Palestinian people as a whole.” It also calls for “boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) activities and [urges governments to] respond positively to calls for such initiatives.”

Issued by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on Mar. 15, it concludes that “beyond a reasonable doubt,” in accord with existing international law, “Israel is guilty of policies and practices that constitute the crimes of apartheid.” According to these covenants, apartheid is categorized as the second gravest crime against humanity, second only to genocide.

While numerous past UN reports have been highly critical of Israel, this is the first to explicitly describe Israel as both an apartheid and racist state. Not surprisingly, the report was quickly disavowed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres after it met with angry condemnations from the U.S. and Israel. U.S. UN envoy Nikki Haley denounced the report as “anti-Israel propaganda.”

ESCWA Director Rima Khalaf was forced to resign her position due to pressure from UN officials to remove the report from its website. Khalaf is a Jordanian national held in high regard in the international community. She played a major role in previous reports highly critical of Arab regimes.

This new report was co-authored by Richard Falk, former UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, and Virginia Tilley, of Southern Illinois University. Both are well-known experts on Middle-East politics and history; and Falk is an eminent international law expert.

The full version appeared on the UN site, but only a summary now remains. The full 75-page report is available at: <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/un-official-resigns-after-pressure-withdraw-israel-apartheid-report>. It describes a full range of laws, practices, and administrative mechanisms through which the Israeli state maintains a system that segregates Palestinians from Jews throughout the territories it controls.

In describing Israeli apartheid, the UN report does not compare Israel to apartheid South Africa but instead to the “1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid,” which defines apartheid as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.”

It refers to the “state’s essentially racist character.” It also strongly implies that apartheid currently ex-



(Above) Palestinian women trying to enter Jerusalem for Friday prayers are confronted by Israeli checkpoint.

ists not only throughout the occupied territories, but also within the pre-1967 borders. It points to how apartheid policies and laws, implemented via “demographic engineering,” have been veiled in a shroud of “democracy” since the inception of the Israeli state:

“The first general policy of Israel has been one of demographic engineering, in order to establish and maintain an overwhelming Jewish majority in Israel. As in any racial democracy, such a majority allows the trappings of democracy—democratic elections, a strong legislature—without threatening any loss of hegemony by the dominant racial group. In Israeli discourse, this mission is expressed in terms of the so-called “demographic threat,” an openly racist reference to Palestinian population growth or the return of Palestinian refugees.”

This “demographic engineering” includes the expulsion of nearly 800,000 Palestinians in 1948 and denial of the right of return of more than 6 million Palestinians in the worldwide diaspora. The report discusses how Israel’s “Law of Return” provides automatic citizenship and all associated rights to Jews living anywhere in the world regardless of where they were born. At the same time, it “denies citizenship even to those Palestinians who have a documented history of residency in the country.”

Within the pre-1967 borders, Israel points to its “democratic” elections in which Palestinians have a formal right to vote. However, according to Israel’s Basic Law, a set of laws similar to a constitution, all parties are barred from holding positions that run counter to the concept of a Jewish-exclusive state. So,

a political platform upholding democratic rights for all—equal rights—is essentially illegal. Palestinians are allowed to vote, but not for Palestinian rights or in opposition to Jewish exclusivity.

This UN report is published amid strong worldwide opposition to the rapid growth of illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This further exposes Israel’s determined drive for a single Jewish-exclusive state. Emboldened by Trump’s victory in the U.S. elections, Israel has recently announced plans to construct nearly 6000 new illegal settlement housing units. This new construction has been accompanied by a sharp increase in demolition of Palestinian homes.

Other recent developments include a well-financed campaign to criminalize and suppress support for Palestinian rights. On Mar. 6 Israel’s legislature enacted a new law barring entry or residency to non-Israelis who advocate boycott of Israeli products produced in any part of Israel and its occupied territories.

Already, Israel restricts nearly all entry to territories it occupies and controls, and for years has used broad discretion to deny access to political activists, Palestinians, and other Arabs. This new law will have greatest impact on Palestinian citizens of Israel who are applying for reunification with family members living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip or outside the country. ■

Republican health-care plan: Dead on arrival

By JOE AUCIELLO

In an early test for the Trump administration, the pledge to “repeal and replace Obamacare” was developed into a legislative proposal that was withdrawn before its anticipated defeat in Congress. The full support of the president and a major push by Speaker of the House Paul Ryan came to nothing.

The failure also highlighted the lack of competence in a president who has touted his business acumen and negotiating skills. Despite, persuasion, pressure, and ultimatums, President Trump could not generate enough support within his own party to do what the opponents of Obamacare have been vowing to do since the Affordable Care Act was first adopted in 2010.

This dead-end legislation resulted from factional warfare within the GOP. Republicans have begun governing by the proverbial circular firing squad. To draft a new health-care bill, they aimed assault rifles at each other and began blasting away, with predictable results. As his fatally wounded plan lay dying, President Trump chose to blame the Democrats.

For a bill to have been approved in Congress, party and faction compromise would have been necessary, but despite

concessions to both Republican groupings, the pieces could not be made to fit. No coalition formed, not even a temporary one.

Democrats would have no part of the Republican plan. The GOP centrists or moderates were too few. The 30 to 40-member hard-right House Freedom Caucus would not budge from its demands, even with the result of preserving Obamacare. This group, like all the others, was too small to pass a bill but large enough to block one. Stalemate meant failure.

A socialist leader once said, “The art of politics consists in knowing what to do next.” By that measure, the president who loudly claims to have mastered the art of the deal has clearly not mastered the art of politics.

That Americans deserve and need better than what Obamacare has offered is hardly in doubt. That President Trump and his business buddies will provide better is definitely in doubt. In fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that any Republican replacement plan will certainly provide less coverage to fewer people at higher cost—and with higher corporate profits—despite claims to the contrary from GOP leaders.

All of the health-care plans and pro-



posals emanating from the Washington-Wall Street nexus, from ACA/Obamacare to the eventual Republican plan, suffer from the same fatal flaw. They are all intended, in the first place, to create exorbitant corporate profits, and, in the second place, to provide some measure of “good medicine.” These two goals—money and health—are inevitably in conflict.

Capitalist America places the greater value on the health of business rather than on the health of people. The latter is simply a byproduct of the former.

Despite the recent debacle, battles over quality health care are far from concluded. Before facing voters again, Repub-

licans will have to try to make good on their promises. Eventually, Republican Healthcare 2.0 will be released to Congress—that is, another bill that takes away from the poorest, the oldest, the neediest, and gives to the wealthiest. At this point, though, Republicans are still reeling from their defeat: no future plans or timelines have been announced.

Americans will need to see through the right-wing fog of rhetoric in order to go beyond the Republican plan, beyond Obamacare, and towards a universal health-care program with access for all. Until then, Obamacare, a flawed system whose insurance costs are still too high for too many, remains in place.

What should be on the public agenda now is a serious discussion about proposals for national health-care and single-payer plans. This sentiment was brought forward repeatedly in speeches and interviews at the annual convention of Students for a National Health Program, meeting in March in Philadelphia. Matthew Moy, a fellow at the American Medical Student Association, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* at the gathering, “When you believe that health care is a human right, the only way to adequately and efficiently provide for everybody is through a single-payer system, which won’t waste money with a middleman insurance company telling you where you need to go.” ■



As climate catastrophe threatens — The case for eco-socialism

Alexandre Araujo Costa, a Brazilian ecology activist, spoke to Belgian ecology writer and activist Daniel Tanuro on a range of questions concerning the environment. Major excerpts from that exchange appear below. The full article, which first appeared in *International Viewpoint* under the title, “Ecosocialism is more than a strategy, it’s a project for civilization,” can be found at www.socialistaction.org.

• **From your viewpoint, how worrying is climate change? Is it simply a matter of using the right technologies such as substituting fossil fuel by renewables? Can the Earth’s climate be set right by a combination of carbon capture and geo-engineering?**

Climate change is extremely worrying. Actually, it is probably the most dangerous social and ecological threat we must cope with, with huge consequences in the short, middle, and long term. I won’t go into too much detail, but one must know that a 3°C temperature rise will most probably provoke a sea-level rise of about 7 metres. It will take us a thousand years or more to get there, but the movement will be impossible to stop. In the short term, specialists think a sea-level rise by 60-90cm could occur by the end of this century. It would mean hundreds of millions of refugees.

If you take into account the other effects of climate change (extreme weather events, decrease in agricultural productivity, etc.), the conclusion is frightening: above a certain threshold, there is no possible adaptation to climate change for a humankind of 8-9 billion people. Where you place the threshold is not (only) a scientific question but (above all) a political one. In Paris, the governments decided to act in order to maintain the warming well below 2°C and to try to limit it to 1.5°C. An average 2°C warming should be considered a catastrophe.

Obviously, climate change is not the only threat: other threats are the massive extinction of species, the acidification of the oceans, the degradation of soils, the possible death of marine life due to nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, chemical pollution, the depletion of the ozone-layer, overuse of freshwater resources and aerosol loading of the atmosphere.

But climate change plays a central role and is connected, directly or indirectly, to most of the other threats: it is an important factor in biodiversity loss, ocean acidification is caused by the rising atmospheric concentration in CO₂, the excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus in the oceans come from agribusiness, which plays a central role in freshwater overuse and soil loss, and so on.

The fact that most problems are interconnected entails that it would be wrong to isolate the response to climate change from the response to the other challenges. However, all these ecological challenges have the same fundamental origin: capitalist accumulation, quantitative growth driven by the race for profit.

This means that climate change is far more than a technological issue. It poses the fundamental ques-

tion of a global alternative to this mode of production. And this alternative is objectively extremely urgent. Actually, it is so urgent that, even from a technological point of view, the strategy of green capitalism is biased.

Of course, it is perfectly possible to rely only on renewable sources to produce all the energy we need. But how do you produce the PV panels, windmills and other devices? With what energy? Logically, you have to take into account that the transition itself will require extra energy, and that this extra energy, being 80% of fossil origin when the transition starts, will provoke extra CO₂ emissions.

Thus, you need a plan, in order to compensate these extra emissions by extra cuts elsewhere. Otherwise, the global emissions can continue to rise even if the share of renewables improves quickly, which means you may be exceeding the so-called “carbon budget,” which is the amount of carbon you can add to the atmosphere if you want to have a certain probability of not exceeding a certain temperature rise threshold before the end of the century.

According to IPCC, this carbon budget for 1.5°C and 66% of probability is 400 Gt for the period between 2011-2100. The global emissions are about 40 Gt/yr, and they’re improving. In other words, the 1.5°C carbon budget will be spent in 2021. So, we have already hit the wall. This is the concrete outcome of the capitalist frenzy for profit and of its refusal to plan the transition in function of the necessary emissions reductions.

This, indeed, opens the debate on carbon capture and geoengineering. Within the framework of the capitalist productivist system, carbon capture and geoengineering are the only possible “solutions” to offset exceeding the carbon budget. I use quotation marks, because these are sorcerer’s apprentice solutions.

One of the most mature technologies is so-called bio-energy with carbon capture and sequestration (BECCS). The idea is to replace fossil fuels by biomass in power plants, to capture the CO₂ resulting from the combustion and store it in geological layers. Because growing plants absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere, a massive deployment of the BECCS should permit to reduce the greenhouse effect, and, as a consequence, improve the carbon budget.

It’s a very hypothetical solution, among other reasons because nobody knows if it will be technically possible to keep the CO₂ underground, and for how long. At the same time, it’s an extremely tricky response to the problem, because producing the necessary biomass will require huge land surfaces: about the equivalent of a fifth or a quarter of the land used by agriculture today.

On the one hand, conversion of cropland to biomass plantation would be detrimental to food production. On the other hand, establishing industrial biomass plantations in non-cultivated areas would entail a terrible destruction of biodiversity, a phenomenal impoverishment of nature.

It is, let’s say, highly questionable that 95% of the IPCC climate scenarios include the implementation

of such a technology. Between brackets, this is further evidence that science is not neutral and objective, especially when it comes to making social-economic projections.

It is important to note that the fact that the carbon budget for 1.5° will be exceeded and that the 2°C budget will most likely be quickly exceeded too, does not mean that we should accept capitalist technologies as a lesser evil. On the contrary. The situation is extremely serious, the fact is that reducing and cancelling carbon emissions won’t suffice.

Saving the climate requires removing carbon from the atmosphere. But this objective can be better achieved without resorting to BECCS or other dangerous technologies. The reason capitalism opts for technologies such as BECCS is that they suit the race for profit.

The alternative is to develop and generalize a peasant organic agriculture and careful forest and land management, respectful of Indigenous peoples. In this way, it will be possible to remove great amounts of carbon from the atmosphere and to store it in the soil, while fostering biodiversity and providing good food to everybody.

But this option means a fierce anticapitalist battle against agribusiness and landowners. In other words: the solution will not be found in the technological field, but in the political arena.

• **Recently Oxfam presented a study showing that eight men alone control the same amount of wealth as half of humanity. We also broke the global temperature record (again), and our atmosphere surpassed 400 ppm of CO₂ concentration. Are climate change and inequality connected?**

Of course they are. It is well known that the poor are the main victims of catastrophe in general and of climate catastrophe in particular. Obviously, this is also true for climate catastrophes due to human activity (more accurately: due to capitalist activity). It is already the case, as we have clearly seen in all regions of the world: in the Philippines in 2014 with the typhoon Haiyan, in the United States in 2005 with the hurricane Katrina, in Pakistan in 2010 with the great floods, in Europe in 2003 with the heat wave, in Benin and other African countries with the droughts and the rising sea level, and so on.

Furthermore, the capitalist response to climate change works as an accelerator of this social inequality. This is because this policy is based on market mechanisms—in particular, commodification/appropriation of natural resources. It relies mainly on the “internalising externalities,” which means the price of environmental damage has to be assessed and included in the prices of the goods and services.

Of course, this price is then passed on to the final consumers. Those with money can invest in cleaner technologies—electric cars for instance—the others cannot, so that they pay more for the same service (in this case, for mobility).

In the deepening of inequalities, the insurance sector plays a specific role: it refuses to ensure growing risks in areas where the poor live, or improve the premiums people have to pay to the companies. The financial sector in general plays a major role, because it invests in the carbon market, which is highly speculative. For example, it invests in forests because the function of forests as carbon sinks has become commodified. As a result, Indigenous peoples are banned from their livelihoods, in the name of the protection of nature that they have shaped and protected for centuries.

A similar process of expropriation and proletarianization is under way in the agricultural sector, due to the production of biofuel and biodiesel, for instance. Here too, the protection of nature is used as a pretext for a policy that deepens inequalities and enforces corporate rule.

It is likely that these market mechanisms of commodification and appropriation of resources will become more and more important in the future, generating more and more social inequalities. This is obvious in the light of what has been said before, about the implementation of geo-engineering, BECCS in particular.

But it goes even further than that. The last report by the Global Commission, a very influential think-tank chaired by Sir Nicholas Stern, is dedicated to the role of infrastructure in the transition to a so-called green economy. The document defines nature in general as “infrastructure,” explains the necessity to make the infrastructures attractive to capital, and concludes that a key condition for this attractiveness is generalization and stabilization of property rules.

Potentially, capital wants to incorporate nature in general as it incorporated the workforce (though the workforce also is a natural resource). ■

Chicago Teachers Union hosts International Women's Day rally

By MARK UGOLINI

CHICAGO — Over 1000 trade-union women and supporters gathered at the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) Hall on Mar. 8 to celebrate International Women's Day and declare solidarity with women everywhere struggling to protect and extend woman's rights.

Chairing the rally, Adriana Alvarez of Fight for \$15 spoke of the struggle of woman workers against sexual harassment at Burger King and McDonalds restaurants. She reported on a demonstration earlier in the day targeting a local Burger King that woman workers charged with EEOC violations.

The context for the Mar. 8 rally was the local and state government assaults on unions representing large numbers of women. State workers represented by AFSCME recently voted overwhelmingly to strike if negotiations with Governor Bruce Rauner continue to stall.

Demanding a fair contract, Charter School teachers set a strike date of Mar. 17. State worker Marion Murphy of AFSCME Local 2806 and Marines Martinez of Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff Local 4343 conveyed details of their struggles and received cheering



(Left) Palestinian activist Rasma Odeh addressed the Chicago rally. She will now accept a plea agreement and be deported.

ovations of support from the crowd.

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 308 leader Deborah Cosey-Lane addressed the plight of Chicago transit workers who have been without a contract for over 14 months. "We're sick and tired of being sick and tired!" she said, after describing working conditions of woman drivers, who are forced to endure unsafe and demeaning rules, working long hours, and being denied bathroom facilities and breaks.

Earlier in the day, a group of CTA women workers, participating in Woman's

Strike activities, rallied at Chicago Transit Authority offices in Chicago. Joined by other ATU members, they demanded adequate bathroom break time and improved maternity leave benefits.

Dozens of Muslim women from the Arab American Action network joined the CTU rally, and were represented by Rasma Odeh, who addressed the crowd. A prominent figure in the Palestinian national liberation movement, Odeh in 1969 was subjected to sexual abuse and psychological torture while confined in an Israeli military prison.

She endured intense abuse for three weeks, and was coerced into a false confession of involvement in Jerusalem bombings. As a result, her U.S. citizenship was revoked in 2014, and her deportation has been under review by an immigration court.

To a standing ovation Odeh declared: "I stand before you as a 50-year survivor of sexual abuse at the hands of the Israeli military." Two weeks later, Odeh announced that she had decided to accept a plea agreement in which she must plead "guilty" to unlawful procurement of naturalization. She will avoid more prison time but lose her citizenship and be deported.

Other speakers at the March 8 rally included Karen Lewis, president of the Chicago Teachers Union (opening remarks); Christel Williams, CTU; Liz Radford, Woman's March of Chicago; Alyx Goodwin, Black Youth Project 100; Faith Arnold, SEIU Healthcare Illinois & Indiana; and Katie Thiede, Planned Parenthood. ■

... Fighting climate change

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pear, nearly 99 percent of the auto industry is still cranking out fossil-fueled cars and trucks. More than 900,000 American workers are directly involved in making parts and assembling these vehicles. Millions more earn a paycheck by selling, maintaining, repairing, insuring—and ultimately scrapping them. Hundreds of thousands of others are employed in building and maintenance of highways and city streets. And, of course, auto is a prime customer for the steel, rubber, and glass industries.

With zero redeeming social benefit, the fighters, bombers, tanks, cruise missiles, and drones used in constant wars of intervention to advance the interests of capitalist globalization are also a huge greenhouse polluter.

Of course, it has never been the intention of the capitalists to wreck our biosphere. That's collateral damage in the class war they wage, which has made today's American ruling class the richest in history. Some of them favor measures they hope will slow down global warming so that the next generations can figure out something better.

The bosses and bankers mainly promote ineffective schemes like carbon price, carbon tax, and carbon offsets, which have been widely used since the Kyoto Accords were adopted in 1997—but never implemented by Clinton or Bush II.

Obama's much hailed "Clean Power" initiative—which Trump is now trying to dismantle—was the first American contribution to world efforts to adopt goals to reduce carbon emissions. It was mainly based on inducing many power plants to convert from coal to somewhat less carbon-polluting natural gas. This hasn't happened out of climate concerns by the utilities. Gas has become cheaper than coal—mainly because of Obama's promotion of environmentally destructive hydraulic fracturing (fracking.)

"Clean Power" also relied on the cooperation of states to develop carbon markets and quotas—much like Obama's Affordable Care Act counted on states doing the right thing. And because this "historic" plan was introduced through an executive order, it can be modified and perhaps even nullified by order of the current Denier-in-Chief.

Real solutions are available

Since burning fossil fuels is the main culprit in creating the greenhouse effect driving climate change, a total solution is simple and obvious—quit burning them, *leave them in the ground*. We in fact don't need them. There are clean, renewable energy sources available free for the taking everywhere on Earth—sun, wind, and water.

We can replace dirty, inefficient internal combustion and diesel engines that consume fossil fuel with electric motors. We can conserve energy and reap many other ecological benefits by reversing urban sprawl, reclaiming the forests, wetlands, and farm lands that once surrounded and nurtured many of our cities before being wrecked by irresponsible "development."

To facilitate population return to our depleted, long

neglected urban cores would require craft workers now building pipelines and fracking wells to be put to work rebuilding and renovating quality affordable housing and a sustainable infrastructure. Safe, reliable, electric-powered mass transit would be a high priority project.

Climate change is a global crisis. No country can escape its impact—not even the U.S., the richest country in history. A large part of this American wealth—of which the lion's share is controlled by about one-tenth of one percent of our population—is accumulated through exploitation of other nations, leaving them "underdeveloped" and polluted. Sustainable restructuring of the world's biggest economy can convince the whole world that there is now a road to development far superior to our history marked by unintended ecological destruction.

When American capitalism decided to go all-in for the Second World War, they didn't try to induce industry to build unprecedented numbers of ships, planes, and tanks through tax credits or other fiscal and market measures. Instead, the government essentially took control of the entire economy and dictated products and production quotas. This project of Big Government was the most successful crash mobilization of economic resources in history.

To be sure, this is a far from perfect analogy. The end use of that production led to 70 million deaths and the beginning of the era of nuclear war. We want to end wars and war spending, not make them bigger or more efficient.

Nor is it realistic to expect a capitalist government to carry out a planned economy to combat climate change. The capitalists were rewarded handsomely for compliance with the government's World War II plan, and the U.S. victory led to opening up vast new markets to U.S. domination. They will not make any sacrifices to eliminate the most important sources of profit.

The only force in society with both the potential power and material interest to challenge destructive capitalist rule is the working-class majority. With the same sense of wartime urgency, our class that does nearly all the work, in alliance with scientists and environmentalists, can take charge of a planned rapid restructuring of a sustainable economy and run it democratically.

Some hopeful signs from labor

The only class-based mass organizations in the USA are the trade unions. This movement has long been divided over climate and environmental issues. But today a number of important national unions are educating and mobilizing their members around climate as well as class justice. Those making that connection include the Amalgamated Transit Union, American Federation of Teachers, American Postal Workers, Communications Workers of America, National Nurses United, Service Employees International Union, and the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers.

Some of these unions are part of the labor/environmental Blue Green Alliance. All are affiliated with the Labor Network for Sustainability, which is doing valuable work in hammering out a program for "Making a Living On a Living Planet."



Most have also joined the global Trade Unions for Energy Democracy. Among other demands, TUED favors socialization of all energy under worker management—a goal Socialist Action heartily supports. But to secure the needed massive restructuring plan, we think socialization will need to also include at the very least the financial and transportation sectors and, because of its central importance, the auto industry as well.

Both the LNS and TUED strongly support the application of Just Transition—a topic of an article in the February issue of this newspaper. This long standing working-class principle holds that when workers lose their livelihood for the better good of society we have a collective obligation to give them income, retraining, and relocation support until they can find suitable new jobs.

Unlike Trump's phony promise of putting miners back to work digging coal, we can honestly and confidently guarantee Just Transition to the millions of workers who will be affected as we replace climate-wrecking jobs with sustainable ones. At the same time as we save our biosphere, we will generate full employment with a decent standard of living for generations. As the working class replaces the present capitalist ruling class, we can use some of their ill-gotten wealth to also provide generous solidarity grants to nations exploited by the old rules, so that they too can be part of making a decent living on a healing planet.

This, of course, won't be done overnight. While climate change relentlessly advances, the struggles for both climate and class justice are in their early stages. There are no short cuts. We need to continue to educate and motivate around the urgent need for climate action while helping the working class recover from class identity theft. Periodic mass demonstrations, along with education in union halls and workplace break rooms, and teach-ins on college campuses, remain essential.

Scientists and environmentalists have done their job well in explaining the climate crisis and offering ways to satisfactorily resolve it. But the necessary alternatives require taking political power away from the climate-wrecking class. That won't be done until the working class breaks the two-party political monopoly that allows this tiny destructive minority to rule. The need for a mass working-class party in the United States—likely arising from our unions—is every bit as urgent as the climate crisis itself. ■

The tragedy of American science

Steven Senne / AP



(Left) Scientists rally during Boston conference of American Association for the Advancement of Science in February 2017.

By CLIFF CONNER

The corruption of Big Science by Big Money is the consequence of a profit-driven economic system that hamstring's humanity's ability to make rational economic decisions.

The Earth Day 2017 March for Science signals resistance to Donald Trump's sharp infusion of irrationality into the national discourse. Official support for climate-change denial and other anti-science agendas has suddenly become much more explicit. At the same time, many protestors recognize a continuity linking Trump's bizarre bluster with a pre-existing condition sometimes referred to as the "Republican war on science."

But the problems at the root of the tragedy of contemporary American science—its corporatization and militarization—are not ones for which either the Democratic or Republican parties can offer solutions.

Describing science as tragedy would have seemed peculiar to most people as recently as the first half of the 20th century. The reputation of science was then golden. The expectation that modern science could and soon would solve all of humanity's problems was almost universal.

That benign image received a double jolt during the Second World War. First came the horrors of Nazi racial science and its accompanying technology of human extermination. That was followed by the advent of the nuclear age in the instant incineration of a hundred and thirty thousand inhabitants of two Japanese cities. J. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the atomic bomb's creators, invoked the name of Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction, to signal the emergence of science's ominous dark side.

The roots of the tragedy

The out-of-control proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction is perhaps the worst of contemporary science's tragic fruits, but there are others. The misuse and abuse of science to justify destroying the Earth's habitability has also become a source of widespread anxiety.

These and other perils have a common root: the corruption of Big Science by Big Money. More precisely, they are the consequence of a profit-driven economic system that hamstring's humanity's ability to make rational economic decisions.

Science is presumed to be a reliable source of knowledge based on objective fact rather than subjective bias. By definition, that requires research to be

conducted impartially by scientists with no conflicts of interest that could affect their judgment. But a science harnessed to the maximization of private profits cannot avoid material conflicts of interest that are anathema to objectivity.

The focus on *American* science is not chauvinistic bias on my part. The science of the United States is the major component of world science—as American science goes, so goes science in general. The American federal R&D [Research and Development] budget is larger than those of Germany, France, Great Britain, and Japan combined. American science's primary competition vanished in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. By 1998 science in Russia and the other Soviet spin-offs was on the edge of extinction, surviving only by means of charitable donations from abroad.

The idea that anything about American science could be tragic may seem a bit unsettling to some readers. It does not at all jibe with American Exceptionalism, an axiom of the ideology that reigns supreme in the public discourse of the United States. American Exceptionalism covers all things American with a halo of virtuousness and a blanket of immunity from wrongdoing.

Furthermore, isn't the United States where most of world's scientific and technological innovations have been and still are produced? How about airplanes? Television? The computer? The Internet? The iPhone? And hasn't American science been responsible for great medical and biochemical advances? The current state of American science may present some difficulties and challenges, but isn't it gross hyperbole to call it a *tragedy*? Unfortunately, it is not.

The corporate takeover

As corporate domination of science and technology has grown, the ideal of objective scientific investigation has diminished accordingly. Big Science has increasingly become the deferential servant of cor-

porate interests and billionaires. Allegedly scientific studies are now routinely conducted by individuals and institutions with large financial stakes in their outcome.

Big Oil and Big Coal fund climate-change-denial studies. Big Tobacco produces findings minimizing the link between smoking and lung cancer. Big Pharma investigates the benefits and risks of the medicines it sells. Big Food enlists nutritional science as a marketing tool for their products.

The scientific method has been refashioned to fit the new reality. "Hypothesis-driven research" now signifies formulating propositions to advance corporate interests and designing studies to provide evidence for them. Investigations that produce a semblance of support for a desired hypothesis are accorded full public relations treatment, while those that do not are quietly consigned to the paper shredder.

The results of all this research are at worst fraudulent and at best untrustworthy. And yet, abetted by venal legislators and a credulous mass media, corporate science-for-profit shapes the public discourse and public policy that adversely affect our environment and our health.

Institutionalization of Science for Profit

There are rational voices in the public discourse that have raised concerns and warnings about the

corruption of science by Big Money, but the voices serving the corporate interests have all but drowned them out. By skillful application of the false-equivalence fallacy, the latter have managed to skew the conversation far to the irrational side.

Manipulating research results to serve private commercial interests is anti-science masquerading as science. The forces of anti-science have strong institutional support in the United States, most significantly in our fundamental political institutions.

One dangerous result has been the weakening of governmental regulation of commercial activities that contaminate the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the medicines we take. The ability of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration to provide the oversight they were designed to provide has significantly declined. And the Trump gang promises to accelerate that trend; the regulatory environment is sure to get worse before it gets better.

Politicians' appeals to ignorance are not the only weapons in the effort to undermine the integrity of American science. University research laboratories and Think Tanks alike have devolved into intellectual brothels in their ignoble quest for corporate funding to support their research. Private interests have been happy to oblige, and the obvious *quid pro quo* need never be spoken aloud.

The militarization of American science

But the most tragic distortion of American science is a consequence of its extreme militarization. Big Science literally exploded onto the scene as a result of the Manhattan Project during World War II. Its success was validated by mushroom clouds rising over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, thus establishing the martial inclination of Big Science's subsequent development.

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If you take one thing away from reading this article, let it be this: Today, *American science's primary mission is to find new and more efficient ways to kill people*—from thermonuclear bombs, to robot drones, to cluster munitions, to antipersonnel weaponry of many kinds.

Science and technology, rather than being the creative engines of human progress, have instead been reoriented toward destructive and antihuman ends. American science has also made beneficial advances, but many of those have been accidental byproducts of military research.

The proof is in the U.S. budget, where more than half of the Research and Development (R&D) funding—amounting to trillions of dollars over the past decades—has been for military purposes.

Imagine, by contrast, what could be accomplished if all of that money and all of that scientific talent were instead directed toward finding solutions to the crucial problems facing the human race today, such as poverty, hunger, disease, and environmental devastation. But they are not, and if that isn't a tragedy, the word holds no meaning. Meanwhile, massive war spending begets massive weapons production that begets ever-escalating aggression that begets human tragedy of mind-numbing dimensions.

The tragedy deepens with the realization that this is a problem that cannot be fixed—at least not in the context of present American reality. That is due to the American economy's absolute, hopeless, incurable addiction to military spending.

The metaphor of drug addiction is not nearly strong enough. Some heroin addicts, with great difficulty, sometimes get the monkey off their backs, but American society as currently structured is completely incapable of breaking its addiction to militarism. War spending in the American economy is more like an inoperable tumor destined to grow uncontrollably until it kills its host.

How did the military become everything?

This fatal malignancy, not surprisingly, has been downplayed in the public discourse of the United States. President Eisenhower's 1961 warning about the dangers of the "military-industrial complex" is well known, but the conversation went no further. Nonetheless, a recently published book sports a title suggesting that perhaps it may finally be breaking into the National Conversation: "How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything." By stating the problem so bluntly, the author, Rosa Brooks, has done us a service by acknowledging its existence, but her proposed solution—to *increase the military budget!*—is downright Orwellian. Or Strangeloveian.

The attention-grabbing assertion that the military has become *everything* is meant figuratively, not literally. But the military's death grip on the federal budget and its R&D component is real enough and the question is: How did it come about? If the United States were ruled by a military dictatorship it would be understandable, but that is not the case. To think the Pentagon drives the process is to believe the tail wags the dog.

Nor are the elected politicians primarily to blame for handing the generals the keys to the treasury. Concerned above all with satisfying the big-money benefactors who butter their bread, the legislators simply kowtow to irresistible economic forces they don't understand and feel no need to understand. The addiction to military spending is built into our economic system.

This dilemma has a name—a two-word phrase that sounds terribly academic, but is useful as a shorthand way to identify the problem: "Weaponized Keynesianism."

Here is the obvious kernel of Weaponized Keynesianism: If you think the American economy is having a hard time *now* generating enough jobs to keep unemployment from rising to the skies, just imagine what it would be like without the hundreds of billions of dollars a year in military spending.

In the United States today, if the Pentagon ceased to provide a gigantic artificial market for industrial production, millions of workers—and not only defense-plant workers—would lose their livelihoods. Without paychecks they would be unable to buy things and the wheels of the economy would rapidly grind to a halt. It would not be merely a repeat of the Great Depression, it would be the Ultimate Demise of the Current Global Economy.

American Exceptionalism

Most Americans, unfortunately, are oblivious to the military domination of American science and all that it entails. It is a society-wide blind spot. What could account for the collective inability to see this monstrosity ballooning before our eyes? It follows from



This problem cannot be fixed in the context of the U.S. economic system's incurable addiction to military spending.

(Above) A nuclear-tipped "Honest John" missile from the 1950s. The primary mission of U.S. science is to find more efficient ways to kill people.

accepting, consciously or unconsciously, the doctrine of American Exceptionalism.

American Exceptionalism is the contention that the United States is not bound by traditional norms of morality in international affairs. Invading other peoples' countries and killing them when they resist is generally considered war crimes most foul. Also, the use of torture has been condemned as immoral and repugnant by all civilized peoples since the 18th-century Enlightenment. When the United States invades, kills, and tortures, however, it is deemed acceptable because America is allegedly a benevolent superpower that acts only in defense of peace, democracy, and human rights.

This normalizes the outrageously inflated, runaway American arms production as all being in a good cause. It serves as the rationale for a "national security state" that monitors the private communications of everyone in the country and spawns secret terrorism tribunals that dangerously erode the rule of law. But because American Exceptionalism has served as the ideological justification for many wars resulting in many millions of deaths all over the globe, it is long overdue for critical examination.

But all is not lost! (Breaking out of the box.)

Does the preceding litany of woe seem to imply unavoidable doom and destruction of the entire social order? That is not my intention. The current tragedy of American science may appear to lead to a hopeless impasse, but there is a way out.

It is not an easy way out. To comprehend it requires some serious thinking outside the box. In this case, *the box* is the market-based, profits-driven economic system that almost all American commentators and ideologues take for granted, as if no alternative system is possible or even worth mentioning.

This has, for many decades, been a strong, indestructible box that has successfully imprisoned the minds and constrained the thinking of almost the entire American public. But the 2016 elections began, perhaps, to reveal stress fractures in the box. The campaign of Bernie Sanders brought the word *socialism* into the public discourse as something other than a swear word for the first time in most Americans' living memory.

I do not believe Bernie Sanders' candidacy offered a solution to the crucial conundrum of Weaponized Keynesianism that threatens to engulf the planet in thermonuclear flames. The record of his quarter century as Senator and Congressman from Vermont reveals that he is an unreliable bulwark against military spending and war. While criticizing "excessive" defense budgets, he frequently voted to approve them,

and to approve military aggression in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Somalia and elsewhere, demonstrating that he posed no real challenge to the warhawks' agenda.

However, the 2016 Sanders campaign deserves a great deal of credit for popularizing the idea of socialism, and destigmatizing it, among young people in America. At least that now opens the way for serious discussion of alternatives to the current American economic system.

That discussion is essential to breaking out of the death spiral of war spending and warfare. Discussion is certainly not enough. If words don't lead to organization and action, then the problem will remain unsolved. But the discussion is nonetheless crucial.

One element of that discussion is whether science and technology can be reoriented from destructive to creative purposes by a transformation of the economic system. Fortunately, history does offer some important indications of how genuine, unfettered science might fare in a post-capitalist economy. Examining that history demonstrates that scientific advance is not, as pro-capitalist ideologues claim, dependent upon material incentives to private enterprise. The most heartening examples are in the Cuban medical sciences.

Our daunting challenge

The tragedy of American science today is that its direction is determined by private profit considerations rather than by the desire to improve the human condition. As a result, Big Science has been irredeemably corrupted by Big Money. That corruption threatens the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the medicines we take.

The U.S. economy's addiction to military spending distorts and deforms science by making it overwhelmingly subservient to military interests. This transforms science's classic ideal as a creative force for the advancement of humankind into its destructive and antihuman opposite. That trillions of dollars in resources and scientific talent are devoted to warfare rather than to solving the problems of poverty, disease, and environmental destruction is among the greatest tragedies in all of human history.

The Bernie Sanders experience once again reveals that there is no "progressive wing" of the Democratic Party that can offer a genuine challenge to the corporatization and militarization of American science.

The hopeful note in all of this is that replacing the current science-for-profit system by a science-for-human-needs system is not an impossible, utopian dream. To make it a reality, however, requires a fundamental restructuring of our society. That is the great, daunting challenge facing today's youth and the generations to come. It is by no means melodramatic to say that the survival of the human race depends on their success. ■

Cliff Conner is the author of "A People's History of Science." He is currently writing a book on the history of American science from World War II to the present.



The unmitigated corruption of capitalist politics

By JEFF MACKLER

“The evidence is in,” say gleeful Democratic Party cheerleaders. Donald Trump was elected president because his Russian spy collaborators stole 20,000 secret e-mails from Democratic National Committee (DNC) computer servers, including e-mails from Hillary Clinton’s national campaign chair, John Podesta.

The stolen e-mails demonstrated proof positive that the Democratic Party, violating its own charter and signed statements of “neutrality” by DNC leaders, went all out to thwart the Bernie Sanders primary campaign, including laundering money raised for all Democrats to fund Clinton’s picks only. So blatant were the Democrats’ crimes that top party functionaries, including DNC head Debbie Wasserman Schultz, were forced to resign and the party itself was compelled to defend itself from lawsuits claiming fraud while publicly apologizing to Sanders.

An obliging Sanders, playing the shepherding “lesser evil” fiddle to the end, insisted that Hillary Clinton had adopted his program. He endorsed her campaign and stumped the realm for Hillary.

When the DNC computer hacking was first discovered, Democrats found themselves in a dilemma when the FBI demanded access to their systems to ascertain whether Vladimir Putin’s Russian government was directly involved. There is still no proof from anyone that it was. WikiLeaks insists that it got the DNC files from an internal government leaker and not the Russian government.

Whether to expose their base internal corruption, maneuvers, and dirty tricks to steal the primary or to use the incident to expose a possible Trump connection to the Russians was a tough choice. Caught in its own scandal, the DNC first opted for the cover-up route and refused the FBI entry. Today, Democrats have shifted gears to redeem and resurrect their racist, anti-immigrant, warmongering, sexist party of Wall Street billionaires and their corporate/banking empire as they prepare for the 2018 election cycle, refurbished a bit, with the likes of Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and Minnesota congressman and DNC deputy chair Keith Ellison in tow.

Capitalist elections

A note on capitalist elections is in order here in case any readers might still believe that we are discussing any semblance of democratic process in the periodic charade that is presented to the world wherein two billionaires and their corporate sponsors and media vie for the nation’s top office. Democracy in capitalist America is for the rich only, whether it be in the electoral arena or in the rarified one percent world of big capital, in which the Obama administration bailed out the nation’s leading and virtually bankrupt banks and related institutions to the tune of \$32 trillion.

Many outraged voters rejected the most obvious candidate of the ruling rich, Hillary Clinton, who received, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, \$23 million from Wall Street’s elite in direct election contributions. In recent years, Bill and Hillary Clinton have raked in \$153 million from Wall Street speaker fees. They charge \$225,000 a pop. And yet, their speeches, especially Hillary’s to Goldman Sachs, are still banned from public scrutiny. We note here that U.S. elections are today billion-dollar af-

fairs, with Hillary Clinton spending \$1.4 billion as compared to Trump’s “paltry” \$958 million.

FBI/NSA side with Democrats

In mid-March the FBI and the National Security Agency broke with their longstanding “code” to publicly announce that they were undertaking a long, perhaps multi-year investigation to determine if Trump and/or his associates had collaborated with the Russians to rig the U.S. election or to otherwise interfere with the workings of U.S. “democracy.”

This departure from the agency’s (feigned) secrecy as to their investigations, said FBI Director James Comey, was in the “public interest.” In truth, it amounted to an open declaration of war against the Trump administration—a sign of emerging deep divisions within the U.S. ruling class, wherein important sectors are increasingly concerned that Trump and company cannot be trusted to serve broader ruling-class interests. The latter includes maintaining a semblance of public civility in the workings of government, as compared to Trump, who has effectively torn off the thin veneer of rationality from a crisis-ridden U.S. capitalism whose ugly deeds need to be shielded from public view.

The implication of an FBI/NSA investigation finding Trump guilty of a conspiracy to undermine U.S. elections in collaboration with Russia can only lead to future measures to remove him from the presidency.

No doubt Comey and his spy agency associates had a hand in leaking whatever information they deemed helpful to begin the process of undermining Trump’s legitimacy. Today, Democrats are the chief beneficiaries, with various leakers, including top unnamed officials, anonymously providing them with the names of various Trump campaign associates who had dealings in one form or another with Russians. In truth, such contacts are the norm with regard to virtually all contacts between the business and political representatives of all foreign governments and U.S. officials. “Big Brother” monitors all!

Democrats today rely on the world’s most extensive surveillance/spy apparatus, whose porous operations always manage to reach the public eye when political advantage is to be had. This is the same corrupt and murderous spy apparatus that was exposed by WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange, as well as Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning, all honest leakers and heroes, today deemed criminals by capitalist America, while unnamed government leakers who reveal Trump or Clinton affairs are taken for good coin.

WikiLeaks exposes CIA cyberweapons

In the middle of the “who spied on whom?” Democrat-Republican spectacle, the CIA suffered yet another devastating blow when WikiLeaks revealed, according to the March 8 *New York Times*, the most massive trove of deadly cyberwar spying in history. The CIA’s cyberweapons/malware included, “instructions for compromising a wide range of common computer tools for use in spying: the online calling service SKYPE; Wi-Fi networks; documents in PDF format; and even commercial antivirus programs of the kind used by millions of people to protect their computers.”

The WikiLeaks trove includes 700 million lines of

secret computer code aimed at hacking smartphones, televisions, the security applications of Google and Apple, and more. WikiLeaks affirmed that this was the first installment in a more massive trove of secret CIA material, including 7818 web pages with 943 attachments.

WikiLeaks reported that the CIA and allied intelligence services had compromised both Apple and Android smartphones, thus providing their own hackers the capability to bypass the encryption systems on popular services such as Signal, WhatsApp, and Telegram. According to WikiLeaks government sleuths can now penetrate smartphones and collect “audio and message traffic before encryption is applied.”

Another CIA program called Wrecking Crew “explains how to crash a targeted computer, and another tells how to steal passwords using the autocomplete programs on Internet Explorer.” WikiLeaks revealed that NSA hackers could now masquerade as Russian hackers! Patriotic to be sure, WikiLeaks redacted the actual CIA “cyberwar codes.” One can only imagine if it had published them as well, perhaps allowing the world’s few whacked-out thrill seekers as well as governments everywhere to play with computer-driven mechanisms that include nuclear missiles and other such weapons of mass destruction. Not unaware of such possibilities, the most recent issue of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* noted past breaches in various U.S. missile systems.

At least for the moment, until the next hacker discovers these cyberweapon codes,

we can be reassured in the knowledge that they remain in the “safe” hands of the world’s sole superpower, with 11,000 military bases around the world and at present conducting wars of mass murder and destruction in seven countries. No doubt the U.S. drone killers make good use of their ever more sophisticated cyberwar toys. The same superpower has intervened some 140 times with military force in other nations since 1880 to advance U.S. imperialist interests. (See: Evergreen State College’s Dr. Zoltan Grossman’s “From Wounded Knee to Syria: A Century of U.S. Military Interventions.”)

Obama spies on Trump

The latest media hullabaloo revolves around President Trump’s repeated twitter allegations that the Obama administration tapped his Trump Tower phones or otherwise spied on him and his associates. On this one, I side with Trump 100 percent! The notion that the top surveillance operation in the world would stop at spying on a U.S. president-elect is patently absurd! We already know that in the name of “national security” President Obama and his predecessors authorized NSA spying on virtually everyone on earth, provided, so his recently expanded spying rules say, the spying is authorized by a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) judge.

Virtually all Russian officials or businesspeople working in the U.S.—including their hundreds, if not thousands, of lobbyists, UN and Washington, D.C., functionaries and the Russian ambassadorial staff—are subject to U.S. government spying, based on the explicit thesis that they are all “foreign agents.” Indeed, as we shall see, “foreign agents” are everywhere; they include the agents of “enemy” and “allied” nations alike.

A March 23 *New York Times* article entitled, “Trump Buoyed In New Version Of Surveillance,” commented on Republican chair of the U.S. House Intelligence Committee Devin Nunes’ revelation of documents secretly leaked to him by his own informants in a U.S. spy agency. The documents pointed to Obama administration spying on Trump and his campaign associates, a charge that Obama and all spy agencies have, until now, categorically denied. *The Times* blithely commented, “the incidental intelligence gathering on Trump associates—during the presidential transition late last years, when Mr. Obama was in office—was not necessarily unlawful or inappropriate.”

The Times continued, “American intelligence agencies typically monitor foreign officials of allied and hostile countries, and they routinely sweep up Americans who may be taking part in the conversation or are being spoken about.”

The Times added, “The real issue Mr. Nunes told reporters was that he could figure out the identity of Trump associates from reading [secret] reports about intercepted communications that were shared among administration officials with top security clearances. He said some Trump associates were also identified by name in the reports. Normally intelligence agencies mask the identities of American citizens who are incidentally present in intercepted communications” (emphasis added).

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In this case, Obama employed his own changes in surveillance rules to “unmask” the names of those on the Trump team that had contacts with Russians. It was likely all “lawful,” says *The Times*, even though Obama and company denied doing it.

Nunes’ revelations also exposed as a blatant lie FBI Director Comey’s official statement before Congress two days earlier. Said Comey, “I have no information that supports those [Trump’s] tweets.” In the same vein, President Obama had previously issued a statement saying that neither he “nor any White House official ever ordered surveillance on any U.S. citizen.” Lies, lies, and more lies!

In dirty politics, “two can play the same game.” In this case while the Democrats lambast Trump, based on their leaked documents, Nunes, like the Democrats, used his own “anonymous” sources to obtain incriminating “evidence.”

“I have seen intelligence reports,” said Nunes, “that clearly show that the president-elect and his team were at least monitored and disseminated out [unmasked] in intelligence,” adding that he hoped to ascertain who in the government had sought details about the Trump team and had asked for their identities to be “unmasked.”

When the sound and fury of today’s bipartisan corruption scandals subsides, what will be left is whether or not Trump’s presidency will be allowed to run its four-year course. We have not heard the last of these government spying scandals. Indeed, Trump himself, if he so chooses, has the “legal” right to demand to know if his phones were tapped.

Demonization of Vladimir Putin

Today’s Cold War demonization of Russia and President Putin has qualitatively less to do with any overtures by Trump for a rapprochement with Russia than it does with the defense and advancement of U.S. military, political, and economic interests in general, including the marginalization of Russia as the world’s leading fossil-fuel exporter and as a minor but still significant player in world affairs. U.S. interests in Ukraine regarding oil pipeline routes and control over Eastern Ukraine’s vast coal resources were dominant in the 2014 European Union-U.S./Ukraine-Russia events. Replacing Europe’s dependency on Russian oil exports with U.S.-controlled pipelines, as well as U.S.-fracked natural gas, stood high on U.S. imperialism’s priority list, not to mention NATO’s ongoing military encirclement of Russia itself.

To date Trump’s policies have differed little, if at all, from Obama’s on these key issues, despite Trump’s rhetoric, if not his personal identification with Putin’s courting of right-wing and neo-fascist groups across Europe and elsewhere. But in its essentials Trump has neither made nor proposed any changes in U.S.-Russia policy. Punishing sanctions stemming from the Ukraine/Crimea



Socialist Action sponsored an April 1 forum in Hartford, Conn.: “Greece and Puerto Rico: The Fight Against Austerity.” Panelists were (from left) Manos Skofoglou, OKDE in Greece; Jason Ortiz, CT Puerto Rican Agenda; Michaela Mckeown, UConn Youth for Socialist Action.

events remain intact.

Readers will recall that in 2014 the U.S. backed a neo-fascist-led coup that removed the Ukrainian president and replaced him with a corrupt and murderous regime replete with U.S.-backed officials who do the bidding of the European Union and U.S. imperialism. Russia’s annexation of Crimea, accomplished in a referendum in which 86 percent voted to secede, was accomplished without the slightest resistance and in a context where Ukrainian fascists in the coup government moved to virtually outlaw the Russian language in the majority Russian-speaking portions of the country.

Virtually the entire Ukrainian army in Crimea peacefully surrendered, with the majority joining the Russian army. (For a full account, see Socialist Action’s “Ukraine in Turmoil” by Michael Schreiber and this writer.)

A final note on U.S. interests in Russia and the former Soviet Republics is in order. Trump and associates are far from the key U.S. investors in these regions. Despite the sanctions, Russia’s dealings with the U.S. still amount to at least \$9 billion annually, with major U.S. corporations contractually relying heavily on Russian metallurgy and mining industries for the manufacture of U.S. airplanes and a broad range of other products.

Indeed, U.S. billionaire capitalists, Democrats and Republicans alike—not limited to ex-Exxon Mobil chief Ross Tillerson, today Trump’s Secretary of State—have long before invested in or collaborated with Russia and everywhere else a handsome profit can be made or influence peddled. Viktor Vekselberg, for example, the Russian billionaire head of the Renova Group and the head of a partnership called the “Russian Silicon Valley,”

donated between \$50,000 and \$100,000 to the Clinton Foundation, according to donor records, Renova, whose offices were raided by U.S. government officials, is under criminal investigation for bribery. Renova’s interests in mining, oil, and telecommunications boosted Vekselberg’s fortunes, making him one of Russia’s richest individuals.

Russia’s largest bank, Sherbank, confirmed that it hired the consultancy firm of Tony Podesta, the elder brother of Hillary Clinton’s former presidential campaign, John Podesta, “to lobby its interests in the United States and proactively seek the removal of various Obama-era sanctions,” according to the Russian press agency, TASS. “Standard business,” said a Sherbank official. None of the above is aimed at demonstrating Clinton’s or her associates’ illegal action! Just business as usual.

Trump/Obama military policies

With regard to Syria, U.S. war policy remains intact, with the Trump administration sending more than 1000 troops to Northern Syria in an effort to bolster U.S. negotiating influence in a future Syria. Under Obama, U.S./NATO coalition forces, Gulf state monarchies, U.S. and Turkish-trained jihadists and U.S. secretly approved Nusra Front/al-Qaeda terrorists led an unsuccessful six-year imperialist war aimed at imposing a pro-Western regime in Syria. The Obama administration previously spent \$1 billion annually in a failed effort to secretly train and supply its own mercenary army to oust the Assad government.

While the Trump administration calls for a \$54 billion, 10 percent increase in military spending, Todd Harrison, director for defense budget analysis at the Center for Strategic and International Studies informs us that “there were at least 10 higher increases since 1977 and four since 2002.”

The present rift between Democrats and Republicans reflects their sometimes conflicting approaches to world capitalism’s ever-deepening crisis. Their common denominator, however, is how to most effectively transfer the wealth created by working people to themselves. Today’s financialization of capital, wherein “profits” are increasingly generated in highly speculative stock market and related uncontrolled money manipulation, as opposed to commodity production, is a sure sign of a system in crisis, with bubbles galore waiting to burst, e.g., the Dow Jones current astronomic 20,600 mark.

Similarly, the globalization of capital, aimed at increasing ever flagging average profit rates, has slowed considerably as competing capitalists scramble to shore up their bottom lines by the super exploitation of the world’s poorest people.

Trump’s anti-globalization rhetoric reflects the fact that imperialist foreign competition in previously U.S.-dominated near slave-labor markets, as in China, has cut deeply into U.S. corporate profit rates. His solution, far from incompatible with that of the Democrats, is to increase the rate of exploitation in the U.S. in an environment free of unions and social benefits, replete with robot-automation-driven production and distribution centers, while ever shifting the tax burden from the wealthy one percent to the broad population.

Today’s capitalist crisis has graphically exposed the inherent horrors of a predatory social system incapable of meeting the basic needs of the vast majority. Capitalism has brought unprecedented millions into the streets who reject its scapegoating the working-class majority in all its manifestations—immigrants, oppressed national minorities, women, the LGBT community, etc.

Capitalism’s victims, as never before in the modern era, are in search of new forms of organization and a fighting leadership capable of winning back and expanding what has been stolen by the twin parties of plunder. In this environment, receptivity to revolutionary socialist ideas opens important opportunities to those who seek capitalism’s abolition. ■



Help defend Gaël Quirante!

Sign the petition! Stop the relentless repression against French postal worker and union representative Gaël Quirante!

Gaël, departmental secretary of SUD Postal Activities in the Hauts-de-Seine region of France (more commonly known by its post code 92), faces multiple legal and disciplinary charges, which could result in dismissal from work.

In the span of his 13-year career, he has already suffered a year and a half of suspension from work because of his union activities.

Gaël was summoned to the Administrative Appeals Court in Versailles on March 28 due to

a procedure dating back to 2010. This attempt to have him laid off was refused by the Labor Inspection, the Minister of Labor, and the Administrative Court. Still, the Post Office has once again demanded that the Labor Inspection authorize taking action against Gaël. They accuse him of “toxic and alarming behavior” vis-a-vis the “entirety of the management.”

We demand that all legal and disciplinary pursuits against Gaël Quirante be stopped. He must be able to perform his role as a union representative without any repression! Please sign the petition here: <https://www.facebook.com/socialistactionusa/>.

The story of North Korea



By ADAM RITSCHER

The U.S. government's hysterical campaign against North Korea is likely to escalate as the Kim Jong-un regime works toward testing an intercontinental ballistic missile. The Trump administration is considering its military options to try to stymie the tests, including air strikes against North Korean missile bunkers and re-arming South Korea with nuclear weapons.

The U.S. has already taken harsh measures to isolate and punish the North Koreans. The Pentagon, for example, has ordered frequent cyber and electronic strikes against North Korea's missile launches. The New York Times reported in its March 4 edition that U.S. sabotage efforts, in a program begun by the Obama administration in 2014, appear to have caused a large number of the country's rockets to explode or veer off course.

As the drums of war beat ever louder, North Koreans remember that the U.S. even considered dropping an atomic bomb on them in the Korean War of the early 1950s. In the article below, we look more closely at Korea's history. A much longer version of the article can be found at www.socialistaction.org.

One of the prevailing themes of the history of the Korean people has been their centuries-old struggle against foreign domination. In the wake of its defeat of Tsarist Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, Japan was given the nod by the other imperial powers to gobble up Korea as war booty. By 1910, Japan had subjugated Korea, and turned it into a colony. The brutal occupation was met by a number of popular rebellions that, unfortunately, were all ultimately unsuccessful.

In 1925, in the wake of the inspiring Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the Korean resistance gave birth to an embryonic communist movement. The brutal repression by the authorities forced the young communist movement to take up arms in self-defense. The Japanese response was to organize sweeping military offensives that drove many of these revolutionaries to the far north of the country, and over the border into the neighboring Manchuria region of China.

But Manchuria provided no refuge. Using the deposed ruling family of the old Chinese empire as their puppets, the Japanese set up a puppet state in Manchuria that they dubbed Manchukuo.

Within Manchuria Korean communists soon found themselves not only hounded by the Japanese, but also often by the Chinese Communists, who looked on Koreans as possible collaborators of the Japanese, and who killed thousands of them in purges. Despite this, the Stalinist-led Communist International insisted that the Korean communists submit to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and as a result, the bands of Korean resistance fighters in Manchuria came under Mao Zedong's nominal control.

One of the most important leaders of these Korean resistance bands was Kim Il-Sung—the future leader of North Korea. While Kim Il-Sung's feats were later grossly exaggerated when he became North Korea's leader, it is true that he led one of the more successful bands of revolutionaries, and engaged in a number of armed actions with the Japanese.

By the end of the 1930s, Kim Il-Sung and most Korean communist leaders found themselves forced to take refuge in Soviet Siberia after a series of massive Japanese military offensives against them. Here the Korean fighters would sit

out most of the rest of the Second World War, as the Soviets were hesitant to anger the Japanese by letting the Koreans use the USSR as a base of operations.

Not until the Soviet Union declared war on Japan in August 1945 did Kim Il-Sung and company get to cross the border again, and then it was as part of the baggage train of the Soviet armies that occupied Manchuria and the northern part of the Korean peninsula in the final weeks of the war before Japan surrendered.

Creation of North Korea

Once the war ended, the Allied Powers decided to divide the Korean peninsula between the North, occupied by the Soviets, and the South, to be occupied by the United States. No consideration was given to the will of the Korean people; they weren't even nominally consulted on the matter.

Both the Soviets and the U.S. quickly set about creating puppet governments in their new protectorates. Unlike the U.S. though, the Soviet army soon withdrew from North Korea, leaving a new Stalinist regime headed by Kim Il-Sung in place. Within the Korean Communist Party (later renamed the Korean Workers' Party), Kim Il-Sung soon pushed out any potential rivals and assumed undisputed control of the party and the government.

Despite the growing repressiveness of the Stalinist regime in the North, the Communist Party continued to have broad support in the U.S. puppet state in the South. Beginning in 1945, it organized armed resistance against U.S. occupation forces and attacked pro-Japanese landlords and other collaborators.

In 1950, in a bid to re-unite the Korean people, the North Korean army invaded the South. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of South Koreans rose up against the U.S. occupation. The Syngman Rhee regime in Seoul was forced to flee, and U.S. forces were pushed back to a tiny corner of the peninsula around the city of Pusan.

While one can criticize the tactics used by the North Koreans to re-unify their people, the fact remains that reunification was nearly universally supported. The Syngman Rhee regime, comprised of numerous Koreans who had collaborated with the Japanese occupation, was extremely unpopular. It ruled only through U.S. military backing.

The will of the Korean people, however, mattered little to the imperialists in Washington, D.C. President Truman and his generals quickly mobilized reinforcements for the beleaguered troops trapped in Pusan, and then launched a massive amphibious landing behind North Korean lines, forcing the North Koreans to retreat. The U.S. military, joined by a number of other pro-imperialist armies under the guise of the United Nations, pursued the North Koreans past the former border and into the North.

Aided by devastating carpet bombings and massive use of napalm, the United Nations forces devastated the North. Its cities were leveled, tens of thousands were killed, and hundreds of thousands fled in terror before the advancing UN forces. But the imperialists were dealt a stunning blow in 1951 when an army of Chinese soldiers came to the aid of the North Koreans.

U.S. and UN forces were pushed back down the peninsula, back to a line near the original border—where the war would drag on for another two years in the form of bloody trench warfare. In the end the imperialists had to agree to a ceasefire, but the cost in lives and destruction had been astronomical and the peninsula and its people were left divided. In the wake of the war, the U.S. poured significant

(Photo) Refugees flee Korean War battles in 1951.

resources into rebuilding South Korea, and supported a string of brutal dictators who vigorously repressed the labor, socialist, and student movements. The North Koreans, in comparison, received far less reconstruction aid from the Soviets and Chinese.

Nevertheless, the North was able to slowly rebuild. Benefiting from having most of the peninsula's mineral resources, and having been the site of most of the industries that the Japanese had built during their occupation, the North Korean economy was able to boast significantly higher growth and output compared to the South throughout the 1950s, '60s, and into the 1970s. Capitalism had been expropriated, but the workers had been denied democratic control of the society by the self-serving, parasitic bureaucracy surrounding Kim Il-Sung.

By the 1980s it had become clear that South Korea had economically surpassed North Korea. South Korean capitalists, taking advantage of cheap labor, generous U.S. aid, and Japanese investment, were able to become major producers of steel, ships, automobiles, and electronics, among other things.

Meanwhile, North Korean industry was unable to advance beyond a 1960s level of technology. Internationally isolated, things went from bad to worse when the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991. Cut off from the subsidized oil that the Soviets had provided, energy poor North Korea went into a serious crisis. Many factories were idled for lack of energy, and electricity blackouts became common.

Agriculture was similarly affected by a decrease in the amount of fertilizer and other chemical inputs that North Korea's failing industries were able to provide. But these problems would be dwarfed by the natural disasters that were to follow.

In 1995, a devastating series of floods destroyed thousands of acres of cropland and knocked out roads, dams, and railroad tracks. There was a drop of 50% to 75% in the nation's harvest, and matters were made worse by an ensuing drought. By 1996 the country was in the grip of famine, and it's estimated that between 1996 and 1999 anywhere from 200,000 to 3 million people died.

Nuclear & missile stand-off

Kim Il-Sung, who had ruled North Korea since its founding, died in 1994 at the beginning of the crisis. He was succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-Il, who continued his father's absurd cult of personality while inheriting a state in near total economic ruin.

It was during this time that North Korea began to accelerate its nuclear program. Having begun in the 1980s with a small Soviet research reactor, the North Koreans went on to build their own primitive reactor in Yongbyon in an attempt to reduce imported petroleum.

North Korea also succeeded in reverse engineering old Soviet Scud missiles, from which they went on to produce a whole family of single and multi-stage missiles. During the 1990s North Korea became one of the world's leading missile exporters, with many going to countries on the U.S. bad side, like Iran and Syria.

Despite the fact that the U.S. has for decades openly kept nuclear weapons in South Korea, and on naval vessels in the region, the U.S. hypocritically denounced the North Koreans for their nuclear and missile programs. The North Koreans insisted that they had the right to defend themselves, and indicated that what they were after was a non-aggression pact from the U.S., a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, and energy aid.

After a series of United Nations resolutions and attempts to further isolate North Korea economically and diplomatically, in 1994 the Clinton administration finally agreed to sit down with the North Koreans and work out a compromise. In exchange for shutting down their nuclear reactor, and agreeing to allow inspectors in, the U.S. would provide a certain amount of petroleum and assistance in providing alternative nuclear technology that could be used for generating electricity, though not weapons-grade material.

This deal held for several years until the U.S. broke it. The U.S. began to reduce the amount of oil delivered to North Korea, and under the Bush administration the spigot was cut off completely. The North Koreans then restarted work on their reactor and in 2006 tested a nuclear bomb.

U.S. campaign against North Korea

American workers are being fed a steady diet of anti-North Korean horror stories. There is no denying the fact that North Korea is a brutal Stalinist dictatorship, which represses its own people and puts the interests of the ruling bureaucracy and its armed forces above all else. Nevertheless, it is not the job of the United States to police the Korean peninsula. Only the Korean people have the right to determine their country's policies, and to overthrow their government—both North and South.

The bully tactics of U.S. imperialism are not meant to improve the lot of the Korean people, or to protect them from nuclear war. Rather, its policies are geared towards increasing its own power and position in East Asia to the detriment of the working people of the region.

While we do not lend any political support to the North Korean regime, Socialist Action unconditionally defends North Korea against U.S. aggression. We call on all antiwar activists to join us in opposing all U.S. and UN military, economic, and diplomatic moves against North Korea. ■

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The Ontario New Democratic Party is heading toward the June 2018 provincial election, stuck in third place behind the discredited Liberal government at Queen's Park and the chameleon-like official opposition Conservatives, according to most opinion polls.

Hydro electricity rates, which have doubled in 10 years, command public attention. Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne's last ditch plan to cut rates by 25 per cent has NDP Leader Andrea Horwath saying, "me too." But Horwath's proposals to tinker with delivery costs, time-of-use rules, private profit margins, and her plan to buy back, at top dollar, the 30 per cent of Hydro One that the Liberals sold off, leave many Ontario consumers cold.

Instead of a bold policy—immediate nationalization of all energy generation and transmission, with minimal, long-term compensation to rich stock holders—the ONDP offers only short fixes. Typically, it calls for another study, rather than a phase-out of the dangerous and uber-costly nuclear power plants.

After the June 2014 electoral debacle, Horwath hired Manitoba NDP government guru Michael Balagus. His speeches to ONDP provincial council meetings have been larded with selective poll data he uses to rationalize opposition to free post-secondary education. He proposes commendable, but milquetoast, policies to ease union organizing and modestly raise the minimum wage.

Balagus and Horwath say the party should champion "bold policies." Agreed. But where are they? Is the platform now being cultivated in party back rooms, with the usual dearth of membership input, enough to warrant a vote of confidence in the Leader at the ONDP convention in Toronto, April 21-23, 2017?

Recall the Ontario NDP convention in November 2014. After months of intense campaigning, drawing on all the party's resources, Horwath managed to hang onto her position. But she did so only after promising to atone, and by pledging to turn left.

In the mandatory leadership review, Horwath received 76.9 per cent support from the 1055 district association and union delegates, only slightly more than the 76.4 per cent she got two years earlier. The move to remove Horwath sprang from the discontent of NDPers with the June 2014 provincial election campaign she led.

Like Tom Mulcair, whose subsequent "balanced budget no matter what" mantra sank the ship in the 2015

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Is Ontario NDP ready for 2018 election?

federal election, Horwath embraced moderate, populist themes and discarded social justice issues. Moreover, the turn to the centre was not mandated by the party ranks, and it strained relations with large segments of the labour movement.

The shift mostly helped the Liberals. Kathleen Wynne campaigned for pension improvements and a wage increase for low-paid workers, while Horwath promoted a Ministry of Cost Savings that seemed to target jobs in the public service. She also pledged to hold the line on wealth taxes.

Once the Liberals emerged with a majority government, costing the NDP three key seats in downtown Toronto, Horwath purged her senior staff and apologized to delegates at the party's Provincial Council. She later told the Convention that she would "keep talking about our ultimate values and goals and not just our first steps." While this was pretty thin, it persuaded many members to give her another chance—especially as there was no heir apparent to the Leader.

Still, the mood of the convention was angry, and quite critical of the party tops.

Although the establishment dominated elections to the provincial executive with an official slate, the organized party left wing, the Socialist Caucus, and independent candidates did remarkably well.

Debates on convention procedures and resolutions produced a number of upsets. In the opening minutes of the convention, delegates voted to amend the agenda, forcing the vote on Leader to occur late Saturday afternoon, rather than immediately following the Leader's rah-rah speech set for the morning. This meant that hundreds of

delegates summoned by conservative riding and union leaders to vote to sustain Horwath had to hang around an extra seven hours.

Motions of referral, with instructions to integrate tougher language into resolutions from the official vetting committee, succeeded in a number of cases. This radicalized the policy on Social Assistance, Post-Secondary tuition, the bitumen pipeline known as Line 9, the Ontario Municipal Board, and nearly did so on Minimum Wage. The rebellious feeling also produced a win for more time to debate Labour issues. It led over 30 per cent to vote against acceptance of the Provincial Secretary's Report, a report that was clearly identified with the failed election campaign.

By far the biggest upset to the establishment was the victory for Free Post-Secondary Education, Abolish Student Debt -- a long standing Socialist Caucus cause celebre. Sadly, the adopted free tuition policy was buried by Horwath, and remains interred. In 2014, NDPers were looking for change. But as Toronto Star columnist Martin Regg Cohn then wryly observed, "New Democrats are sticking with their leader largely because they are stuck with her."

That was cold comfort for the Leader who pledged to change her ways. The question is: What have we seen since then? Clearly, not enough to justify a vote of confidence.

In the wake of mass sentiment for the ideas of Jeremy Corbyn in Britain and the march of 4 million women and men in the U.S. against Donald Trump's agenda in January, there are plenty of reasons for the party and union left to continue to press for a Workers' Agenda. ■

... Women strike

(continued from page 12)

own change."

A few days before March 8, it became clear that the strike would be big when Jim Causby, superintendent of the 16 Chapel Hill-Carrboro City public schools in North Carolina announced that schools would be closed on March 8 due to the lack of staff on that day. Three quarters of the 2000 workers said they would be striking.

Soon afterwards, Alexandria, Va., schools superintendent Alvin Crawley decided not to hold classes, as hundreds of staff members would not be working. In addition, the New School in New York and a preschool, Maple Street School in Brooklyn, closed their doors in solidarity with women workers.

Thirty-three teachers at Bayard Taylor elementary school in Philadelphia took the day off to draw attention to the fact that Philadelphia teachers, mainly women, have worked for almost four years without a contract and five years without a raise. Later, about 400 protesters rallied and marched through central Philadelphia.

At the University of California, Berkeley, at least 30 professors and instructors planned to either take their students to a demonstration in support of the strike or not hold classes at all. After it was clear that 1700 teachers in Prince Georgia's County, Md., public schools and 30% of the transportation staff would not be working on Wednesday, the district decided to close all schools.

Many women left work as individuals, and it was hard to assess the impact in mixed-gender workplaces or places where women were not concentrated in one location. But it makes sense that there was a big impact on schools. Schools are like traditional factory floors, where everyone is in one place, making organizing easier. They work in the same buildings and take lunch and breaks together.

In Chicago, some 200 rallied, and the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) filled their hall with close to 1000 union women, Planned Parenthood, and immigrant rights and anti-racism organizations.

In Washington, D.C., there were two marches. One was at the White House to protest the global gag rule, which threatens access to safe abortion and health care for millions around the world. The Executive Order cuts off U.S. aid for international NGOs that offer abortion services or abortion referrals. There was also a massive rally at the U.S. Department of Labor, where women workers and their allies demanded an end to sexual harassment

and violence against women in the workplace, a living wage, and union rights.

Forward to May 1!

Women have also been leading actions that are protesting anti-immigration policies, including the Day Without Immigrant strikes. As low-wage workers, women are leaders of the struggles for the Fight For 15 and Walmart campaigns.

On the heels of the March 8 Women's Strike, activists will now be organizing for strikes on May Day. A statement by the National Committee of the International Women's Strike, US states, "As antiracist feminists of the 99%, many of whom are ourselves immigrants, we stand against the vicious ICE raids that have in recent times tried to terrorize our communities and split up families. As cis and trans women we have been in the forefront of organizing against such raids, of defending our families..."

"The violence of ICE against immigrants is part of the systemic police violence against Black people, Latinx and Native Americans, and the mass incarceration of people of color. This violence and systemic sexism and racism oppress and humiliate women of color, including Native women and immigrant women, every day of our lives. To those who want to narrow down feminism, we say feminism cannot be narrowed down only to demands over reproductive rights and formal gender equality.

"Feminism is a struggle against poverty, racism and immigration raids. The women who are part of or aspire to be the 1%, rely on the rest of us, especially immigrant women and women of color, to do the caregiving and service work for low pay or no pay. This is why we will strike on May Day."

SEIU United Service Workers West President David Huerta issued a press release announcing that tens of thousands of his members will be striking on May Day despite the fact that "this is an act that encompasses some risk". At a large press conference in Los Angeles to promote the strike, Huerta said, "Workers are under attack. If we are not resisting, we are collaborating."

The rest of the speakers were mostly women activists in unions supporting May Day activities. A Guatemalan immigrant member of UFCW 770 called for shutting down her store, and a woman from Unite/HERE Local 11 spoke about her organizing efforts for May Day.

A woman from United Teachers in Los Angeles reported that the teachers are telling the school district to shut down the schools on May Day. This echoed what happened on International Women's Day in three school

Are female bankers role models?

A few female bankers have broken the glass ceiling. They are being paid millions of dollars a year. Is this a gain for women, a triumph of feminism?

To be sure, the rise of the women's liberation movement put pressure on the patriarchal capitalist rulers. They dusted off some seats at the corporate board table for women—women who are willing to play by the rules of elitism and exploitation.

As a result, Janice Fukakusa, former chief financial officer of the Royal Bank of Canada, enjoyed a salary of \$4.67 million in fiscal 2016. Jennifer Tory, also of Royal Bank, got \$4.29 million in 2016; Colleen M. Johnston of the Toronto-Dominion Bank received \$3.1 million; and Diane Giard of the National Bank of Canada made \$2.84 million.

Nonetheless, there are still no female Chief Executive Officers at Canada's largest banks. And the highest paid females still fall far short of the highest paid male CEOs.

But women are still making progress, right? No, not where it matters to most women, those whose labour is paid, or not paid at all. On average, women are paid 13 per cent less than men in Canada. In fact, the gap would be bigger if male workers' wages had not stagnated or fallen over the past two decades.

Twenty-seven per cent of employed women work fewer than 30 hours per week, more than double the 12 per cent of men who work part-time. Seven out of 10 part-time workers are female. Low-paid women increasingly hold more than one job to survive; 56 per cent of multiple job holders are women. Female post-secondary students are a majority of those who bear onerous student debt after leaving college.

Deep inequality is rooted in the capitalist system. It can be overcome only by ridding the world of that outmoded system, with all its oppressive and destructive tendencies. Bourgeois feminism won't accomplish that. Only socialist feminism, based on the political self-activity of working women and men, has that as its aim. — ELIZABETH BYCE

districts where teachers walked off the job. These women are leading the way towards collective action and building solidarity in their communities at the same time as the new feminism for the 99% is building a working-class-based feminist movement. ■

Women's strikes: Forward to May 1!



Daniel Pockett / Getty Images

By ANN MONTAGUE

Cinzia Arruzza, an organizer of the International Women's Strike, US and a Marxist feminist writer and activist, has stated in interviews that "feminists are currently leading the way." In the United States in the last three months, women clearly have led in organizing the largest mobilizations—such as the Women's Marches on Jan. 21, which brought millions into the street in Washington and some 600 other cities.

The leadership role of women was shown again on March 8, International Women's Day, when coordinated women's strikes took place in over 50 countries. Women-led actions will continue on May 1, in conjunction with strikes and protests by trade unionists and immigrant groups.

The size of the March 8 strikes varied, often based on how many years women have been organizing and striking. The largest turnouts were in Argentina, Poland, Ireland, Spain, Italy, and Turkey. The first reports came from Rome, which was essentially shut down as 20,000 women participated in street protests that started at the Colosseum, blocking traffic and shutting down public transportation.

In Argentina there were three days of strikes. A teacher's strike took place on the first day, followed by a strike called by the industrial unions against the government's economic measures, and then followed by strikes in solidarity with International Women's Day. This involved transportation workers, airport workers, teachers, and students. Tens of thousands of women marched in Buenos Aires. Femicide is a major issue for Argentina's feminist movement, where one woman is killed every 30 hours because of gender.

In Iceland, which has had several women's strikes in its history, the government announced plans to in-

troduce legislation to end gender pay disparities by 2022. It will be mandatory for both public and private employers.

Four Russian feminists unfurled a giant poster outside the Kremlin denouncing patriarchy. They were promptly arrested and then released. Fourteen women were arrested at a larger protest in St Petersburg. "We were harshly detained for singing songs and chanting on Malaya Sadovaya Street. We are on our way to the 78th police precinct. Happy Women's Day," activist Varya Mikhailova wrote on Twitter.

France saw demonstrations in cities across the country. Unions, feminist organizations, and student associations called for strikes starting at 3:40 p.m. as a symbol of when working women stop being paid, compared to men's wages. The average pay gap is 26 percent. There were 20 demands, including salary increases, less temporary work, and more enforcement of penalties for employers who discriminate against women, including when they are pregnant.

More than 700 feminists rallied in a conference hall in Seoul, South Korea, calling for an end to gender discrimination and abortion restrictions. Their signs and chants included "3 o'clock, stop!" in reference to the pay gap. They are essentially working for free after 3 p.m. Women also organized in the Philippines; women demonstrated outside of a Roman Catholic church in Manila and wore masks smudged with blood to call for an end to violence against women.

Marches in Dublin and Warsaw made reference to the ongoing struggles for reproductive rights. The major demand in Ireland is to set a date for the referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment, which is the basis for the country's anti-abortion law. Tens of thousands of women took over the streets of Dublin and blocked the O'Connell Bridge. In Australia over

(Above) March 8 strikers in Melbourne, Australia.

1000 child-care workers went out on strike around the country as part of their ongoing campaign for higher wages for workers caring for young children.

U.S. schools and businesses close

In the United States, a new organization was formed called "International Women's Strike, US" to plan March 8 actions in solidarity with the women around the globe who were planning strikes. They developed a platform of "Feminism for the 99%."

This is clearly the development of a new and more defined feminist movement. They reject economic inequality, racial and sexual violence and imperialist wars abroad. They are for labor rights, environmental justice, and reproductive justice for all. They clearly state they are in solidarity with working women, women of color, Native women, immigrant women, Muslim women, and lesbian, queer and trans women.

The activists had three weeks to organize strikes, rallies, and marches around the country, and they worked in solidarity with the organizers of the Jan. 21 Women's March, who chose March 8 as their "Day Without Women." In the end, over 50 towns and cities in the United States planned March 8 events, including walking out of work.

Lamis Dek, a Palestinian who is on the Women's Strike, US planning committee, told *Harper's Magazine* why she was striking: "We are not interested in a feminism of the elites. We are interested in a feminism of the masses ... it must be anti-racist and anti-imperialist feminism. So it is important for me to be a part of organizing this movement, to mobilize Arab and Muslim communities, to say we are agents of our

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