

All out for the Jan. 20-21 women's marches!



By ANN MONTAGUE

Last year, the largest protest in the history of this country brought 4 million women into the streets. A march that was originally organized as a women's protest on the first day that President Trump sat in the White House, Jan. 21, quickly morphed into over 600 marches in cities and towns across the country.

The determination of women in every corner of the country to make a statement against the "Misogynist In Chief" and to exhibit their anger at the ongoing rollback of women's rights was on display. The national organizers had no demands for the marches, so every woman made up her own. The shock of the media and the women themselves at their numbers meant they could not be ignored.

Most young women at the march in Washington, D.C., had never before been in a demonstration of 60,000 to 80,000 people. One woman commented, "Early on there was so much wrangling about march permits, but when you have this many women, we just went wherever we wanted. There was no way we could be blocked. I felt so free."

After the march, many thought it had been a one-time expression of women's anger that was sparked by the election of a president. But they had not listened to Angela Davis, who was the last speaker and quoted Ella Baker, "We who believe in freedom can-

not rest until it comes."

Less than two months later, women hit the streets again on International Women's Day, March 8. These actions were organized by International Women's Strike, U.S. in solidarity with over 50 countries where women were planning strikes on that day

In the United States the organizers began to explain and popularize their platform calling for a "Feminism of the 99%" and clearly addressed economic inequality, racial and sexual violence plus imperial wars abroad. Thirty cities and towns across the U.S. saw rallies, marches and meetings. There were also strikes of women in paid and unpaid work.

Few people knew that what had started out as a reaction to an election would soon explode in a completely different direction.

Tarana Burke: "#MeToo is now a movement"

After millennia of experiencing misogyny exhibited by bullying, sexual harassment, and violence, women started speaking out—and when they did, it became a deluge with no end.

The hashtag #MeToo was started 10 years ago by Tarana Burke. She is program director for "Girls For Gender Equity." As a survivor of abuse she wanted to find a way towards healing for young girls of color. She explained on "Democracy Now!" that someone had said to her "me too" and it started changing the

(Above) Supporters of the #MeToo campaign against sexual harassment march in Los Angeles on Nov. 12.

healing process within herself. These two words were "about reaching the places that other people would not go, bringing messages and words of encouragement to survivors of sexual violence where other people wouldn't be talking about it."

The cascading catalyst was when Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein was criminally investigated after dozens of women started coming forward. Burke is not surprised by the outpouring of allegations but, "it is important to realize that for every R. Kelly or Bill Cosby or Harvey Weinstein, there is an owner of a grocery store, coach, teacher, neighbor. We don't pay attention 'til it is a celebrity. We need to keep talking, but this is not about a hashtag—it is not a moment, it is a movement." She encourages people to look at the numbers: "This is a pandemic."

It soon would become clear how deep and pervasive this pandemic is throughout the society. Burke's hashtag democratized the struggle as it gave voice to all women who had not been heard. The victim or the perpetrator did not have to be famous, it was now all about women speaking and listening to each other.

(continued on page 5)

Labor Briefing

By BILL ONASCH

Overcoming Hang-Ups—A *New York Times* story about a Communications Workers of America contract settlement after a long, often bitter fight opened: “Stemming the tide of rising economic insecurity for service workers, a major union has won significant job protection and increased pay for about 20,000 AT&T wireless employees, as well as a commitment to bring work back from overseas.”

One Game Ends So Another Can Be Played — Amalgamated Transit Union 1005 represents 2500 bus drivers, light rail operators, technicians, and mechanics in the Twin Cities. After months of stalling beyond contract expiration, the Metropolitan Council finally made an offer to Local 1005 in November. It included a major takeaway—increased hours for part-time drivers.

Since it would delay promotions to full-time, this was no favor for most part-timers, and the deal was overwhelmingly rejected by the membership. The union then put the Council on notice—if no satisfactory agreement was in place by the first weekend in February they would strike.

That just happens to be when the Super Bowl is scheduled to be played in Minneapolis attracting tens of thousands of out-of-town visitors. This seemed to have a salutary effect. The Council dropped their part-time concession demand, agreed to three annual 2.5 percent raises, and accepted

union proposals for increased security measures to protect drivers from assaults and to establish adequate numbers of restroom facilities for drivers. It was approved by 82 percent of the ranks.

Tending to Their FLOC—Whether or not you had a decorated once-living tree in your living room, you may appreciate a mostly inspiring holiday story first reported by the prolific Mike Elk in *The Guardian* about a victory by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. Among their mostly Latino members in North Carolina are workers planting and cutting Christmas trees.

It was discovered that one employer, Hart-T-Tree Farm, not only stole some of their wages but also exposed them to dangerous conditions including toxic chemicals. In addition to commitments to correct these complaints, the union won \$330,000 in back wages owed to 54 workers.

Once Joint, Now None—One of the few substantial victories for workers during the Obama era National Labor Relations Board was the 2015 *Browning Ferris* decision. It established a principle of “joint responsibility” of corporations with their contractors and franchises in collective bargaining.

Among many potential advantages, that decision opened a clear legal path for the 15 and a Union movement for winning recognition and contracts in franchises of huge fast-food chains like McDonald’s and Burger King.

In December, by a 3-2 vote, the new Republican board majority reversed



Glen Stubbe / Minneapolis Star-Tribune

that decision.

Moving With the Speed of Ivy—In November 2016, the Harvard Graduate Students Union appeared to lose a certification election at the world’s wealthiest university after more than 300 votes were rejected as invalid. But the union convinced the NLRB field office that Harvard had supplied them with incomplete and inaccurate lists of grads in the bargaining unit.

A new election was ordered, and the employer appealed that ruling to the national board. In December 2017, the NLRB commissioners upheld the new election order. No new date has yet been announced.

655 Still Growing—United Food & Commercial Workers 655 claims to be the biggest local union in Missouri. They augmented their numbers with two organizing victories in December.

(Above) Twin Cities transit drivers demand protection against what the union calls an “epidemic” of physical assaults against them by passengers.

Bon Appetit Food Services already had UFCW contracts at several St Louis locations and didn’t contest the union’s claim to represent 300 workers at the Washington University campus. They promptly negotiated a contract, providing raises ranging from 11 to 14 percent over three years.

Their other win was a much smaller unit but a breakthrough of sorts; a Dollar General store in suburban Jefferson City voted 2-1 to unionize. This was the first union victory at any of the company’s more than 14,000 U.S. stores. ■

If you have a story suitable for Labor Briefing please contact billonasch@kclabor.org

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

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

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

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Disputed election stirs protests in Honduras

By WAYNE DELUCA

TEGUCIGALPA—On Jan. 27, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández is scheduled to be inaugurated for an unprecedented second term. Elections held Nov. 26 were disputed as both Hernández and challenger Salvador Nasralla claimed victory, and the Organization of American States has called for a new election. Hernández's government cracked down on unrest in the weeks after the vote, and at least 30 Hondurans were killed and hundreds imprisoned.

Irregularities emerged while the votes were being counted. Nasralla emerged with what was described by experts as an "irreversible" lead, before the computer voting system stopped functioning for several hours. When the system came back on line, Hernández had gained a slim lead, which he would maintain throughout the counting.

In the days after the changed result, the popular response began as a traditional Latin American *cacerolazo*, a noisy but nonviolent demonstration banging pots and pans. They quickly escalated to barricades and seizures of toll booths. A 10-day curfew was enforced mostly in pro-Nasralla areas in early December. Militarized police, developed as part of Hernández's "mano dura" (iron fist) policy to combat gangs, were turned against the civilian population. There was even a brief period when the police refused to enforce the curfew in several cities.

Protests grew to include burning tires and barricaded highways, including as much as 80% of the youth in cities despite authorities firing with live ammunition, but flagged as the month wore on. By Dec. 17 Hernández's government was declared the winner, and plans have moved ahead for a second inauguration.

Nasralla's coalition has remained defiant, and filed numerous appeals to the electoral tribunal, which is controlled by Hernández's National Party. Not surprisingly, they have all been refused. On Jan. 6, tens of thousands marched and rallied in San Pedro Sula, the country's second largest city, in conjunction with Nasralla's call for nationwide mobilizations and a national strike. Former president Manuel Zelaya declared, "Nobody should obey a usurper government."

No resident of Honduras has ever run for re-election. Anyone who has already held executive power is barred by the Constitution from becoming president, and there is a provision that immediately removes any sitting president who suggests changing this rule. This was the pretext for the 2009 coup d'état that removed Zelaya, who had called for a referendum to hold a constituent assembly, from office. But Hernández was able to pack the Supreme Court with his allies, and in 2015 they overruled this provision and opened the door to his second term.

The 2009 coup was quickly legitimated by the State Department led by Hillary Clinton. Zelaya was viewed as a second Hugo Chávez, and the Obama administration wanted to clamp down on the anti-neoliberal turn spreading to Central America.

Both the Obama and Trump administrations have courted Hernández as an ally. Honduras has received over \$114 million in security-related aid from the United States in the past eight years, and Donald Trump's Chief of Staff John Kelly is a key ally of Hernández. While the recent repression was ongoing, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson certified the country's human rights record, allowing military funding to continue, and has endorsed Hernández as the winner of the election. The elite security forces funded and trained by U.S. dollars, the Cobras and TIGRES, are the same units that cracked down on dissent.

Hernández, who positions himself mostly as being tough on crime, weathered mass protests and demands for his resignation in 2015 when it came out that Social Security funds had been misappropriated for his election campaign. His government survived by arresting several top officials for bribery and defrauding customs funds. He is the prototype of the new right-wing alliance in Latin America between local landowners and neoliberal financial elites as the "Pink Tide" of social democratic governments has receded. His government has been a student of neoliberal capitalism, attacking wages while raising the sales taxes.

The government has been complicit in a string of murders of indigenous and environmental activists. Since the 2009 coup, 123 land or environmental activists have been murdered. Most opposed development plans that benefit companies owned by relatives of politicians. The most famous victim of this



(Left and above) Salvador Nasralla addresses Jan. 6 protest rally in San Pedro Sula. Ex-president Manuel Zelaya stands behind him.

Hernández. Nasralla's personal appeal is to a middle class sick of corruption, as the rule of law is so degraded that police run protection rackets indistinguishable from the criminal gangs. The coalition has come to prominence in the political vacuum left by the rift in the Liberal Party after the 2009 coup. Zelaya had won as the Liberal candidate in 2005, but when he was overthrown four years later, he was replaced by Roberto Micheletti, also of the Liberal Party.

Zelaya's backing of this thoroughly middle-class candidate was based on the hope of a constituent assembly that would allow many of the inadequacies of the 1980 constitution to be corrected. But there was little chance of this happening under Nasralla, who mostly wanted the idea of the *constituyente* as a rhetorical weapon. There was no prospect of a new progressive turn from an

Alianza government.

The Honduran people showed tremendous resistance against the electoral fraud, and for several days had brought the country to a standstill. It is transparent that Hernández stole the election; tapes had been received by *The Economist* before the election with instructions being given to stuff ballot boxes for the president's re-election. Rather than continuing the insurrectionary protests of December, Alianza vacillated over recount strategies and international support, and lost the initiative.

Bringing down Hernández's government will require a national mobilization and strike. It is imperative for democracy in Honduras to hold new elections without Hernández or the electoral tribunal that abetted his electoral fraud. Such a process would need to address the deep-seated problems in Honduran society, primary among them the severe inequality that sees almost 63% of its people living below the poverty line.

The fall of Hernández itself will not improve conditions in Honduras. There is a need to end the worst excesses of capital and guarantee the right of labor to organize. But the underlying issues will not go away without building a new society free of the exploitation of capitalism. Honduras needs a revolutionary socialist party as part of a revolutionary international that fights against capital around the world.

In the United States, socialists have a special obligation to object to the imperialist U.S. government's role in the current state of Honduras. American dollars go to fund the militarized police there, and American companies profit from the despoiling of the nation. The Obama and Trump administrations have both supported the post-coup governments and whitewashed the decline of democracy in Honduras. No military aid to coup governments! Solidarity with the Honduran people!

violence was Berta Cáceres, who had won international acclaim for her opposition to logging, dams, and other projects that threatened indigenous lands. Cáceres was assassinated in March 2016. Of eight men arrested for her murder, two received military training in the United States at the former School of the Americas.

Nasralla is a television personality known as a sports announcer and game show presenter, who came into politics as the leader of the new Anti-Corruption Party during the presidency of Porfirio Lobo. He also spent time as the CEO of Pepsi Honduras, making him a curious ally of Zelaya, who was considered part of the "Pink Tide." His 2017 candidacy was on the basis of the Alliance of the Opposition against the Dictatorship, known in Spanish as Alianza, which has a constituent assembly as its central demand.

Corruption in today's Honduras is systemic rather than individual. There is an extensive network linking government, private businesses, and organized crime. Companies with government ties are given inflated contracts and offer proxy shares to the handful of families who control most private enterprise in Honduras, and money laundering to the criminal gangs. Drug trafficking is extremely lucrative in Honduras, which is the route for most cocaine coming from Latin America to the United States. Such links go to the highest level; Hernández's brother Tony has been linked to drug cartels.

These networks are, of course, international. The same machinery that allows the capitalist class to hide much of its money in offshore tax havens also allows politicians and criminals to conceal the public funds they appropriate. Hernández has also used the national secrets law in an unprecedented fashion to obscure the money flows. International capitalism, of course, has encouraged this pattern as the post-coup governments declared Honduras "open for business."

Alianza has no program other than its opposition to



(Left) Elevated train in Philadelphia.

Labor and climate groups support Transit Equity Day

By BILL ONASCH

On Feb. 5, civil rights, trade-union, student, church and environmental activists across North America will come together in a variety of events to call attention to a looming crisis in public transit.

The diversity of these groups indicates that they recognize not only the urgent need to save what we have but also the *potential* crucial role transit expansion can play in providing affordable transportation that is accessible to all, that can reduce traffic fatalities and congestion—and *that can curtail greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change.*

But today, New York City's subways moving a record 5 million passengers a day are on the verge of collapse, a major line is being shut down for renovation lasting for more than a year—and their buses aren't doing much better. Washington, D.C., has neglected even routine maintenance, leading to accidents and delays on the Metro.

Transit-union contract negotiations remain highly contentious in Washington and Chicago. Some public agencies continue to contract work out to non-union penny-pinching private outfits who can do it cheaper only by providing inferior service and paying substan-

dard wages. Washington, D.C., is moving to privatize the Red Line subway. More of the same—and even worse—are in store.

This is not the first crisis for transit. After setting record ridership numbers during World War II, when there was full employment, no new cars were being built, and tires and gasoline were rationed, the ruling class took America into a very different postwar development scheme. From the end of World War II on, highly subsidized urban sprawl promoted a massive exodus of residents and jobs to new suburban areas. The streetcar and bus lines in the urban cores did not follow them.

In many cases, such as in Los Angeles and Kansas City, consortiums of auto, oil, and tire companies became silent owners of transit properties. They dismantled their impressive electrified streetcar and trolley bus networks—which would require many billions to replicate today—replacing them with diesel buses produced by General Motors, as they steadily slashed service. One result in Los Angeles was the introduction of a new word to our vocabulary—smog. Out of sprawl an important new division in the working class soon emerged—either car dependent or transit dependent. Because a high percentage of the transit-dependent

population remaining in the depleted urban cores are African Americans, transit has often been on the agenda of the Civil Rights movement. The chosen date in February marks the birthday of the late Rosa Parks, who became famous for an act of civil disobedience that launched the well-planned boycott campaign to end racial segregation on Montgomery, Ala., buses in 1955. This pivotal action, initiated by Black trade unionists led by E.D. Nixon, is credited with launching the revival of the mass Civil Rights Movement in the South—and propelling Dr. Martin Luther King into national prominence.

Montgomery led to a Supreme Court ruling that segregating passengers was unconstitutional. Soon afterward, most transit agencies voluntarily ended their ban on Black bus drivers, and today transit jobs are among the best employment opportunities for African Americans.

The 1974 Urban Mass Transportation Act stabilized shaky transit systems by providing for the first time billions in federal funding for both capital and operating expenses. During the 1970-90s, new subway systems were built in the Bay Area, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and Los Angeles. Less densely populated areas such as Seattle, St. Louis, and the Twin Cities launched highly successful "light rail" systems linking urban areas to airports and suburbs.

But money from Washington for operational expenses dried up long ago, and matching funds for capital improvements are to be almost completely eliminated under Trump's budget "blueprint" as "offsets" to pay for the mammoth tax cuts for corporations and the rich.

Transit Equity Day was called by the Labor Network for Sustainability, Amalgamated Transit Union, Institute for Policy Studies, Jobs with Justice, Partnership for Working Families, and the Labor Community Strategy Center. Their website is: labor4sustainability.org/transitequityday.

TED will not be marked by mass demonstrations like those organized around women's and climate issues soon after Trump's election. The initiators are setting more modest goals such as getting resolutions passed by organizations, submitting opinion pieces to local newspapers, organizing community meetings to discuss local transit issues—and, where weather permits, outdoor rallies in public places.

The choice of the date was a worthy effort to identify with the historic link between civil rights and public transit. But it would have been better to have issued the call much earlier. Some areas were getting started with initial planning with only a month to go. The response on Feb. 5 will give a better picture of the current potential for building the effective transit advocacy movement that is so sorely needed today. ■

Union group argues for public ownership of energy systems

By CHRISTINE MARIE

As Bill McKibben and other climate leaders keep reminding us, the cost of solar and wind energy keeps dropping. They assure us that if government continues to incentivize private investment with guarantees of profits, it would make these renewable sources competitive with fossil fuels and lead to a green capitalism.

This thinking is based on a seminal 2006 paper by Nicholas Stern, former chief economist at the World Bank. However, "Working Paper No. 10" (available at <http://unionsforenergydemocracy.org/>), just released by the Trade Unionists for Energy Democracy (TUED), proves that the "Stern Review" was a pipe dream and urges labor organizations to fight like the devil for an alternative course—public ownership of energy systems run under democratic control.

According to the International Energy Agency and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IEA-IREA), the investment needed to keep global warming below the threshold of two degrees Celsius would have to double the 2016 levels of investment to \$600 billion a year and reach \$14 trillion invested in solar and wind by 2030. The chances of this happening, under the current paradigm of public-private partnerships that guarantee profits and mitigate risk to private investors, according to the "Working Paper No. 10" authors Sean Sweeney and John

Treat, is zero. In fact, they argue, based on a close study of the situation in the UK, that the idea that we can reach safe levels of renewable energy via aid to private profiteers is "the greatest policy failure ever."

Public money, they argue, is already responsible for the vast bulk of the world's energy deployment. But it takes ever-increasing amounts of public funds to actually get private industry to make even token commitments to renewables in the midst of a capitalist crisis full of risk for stockholders.

The net result is that wind and solar today generate just 4.6% of global electricity. In a world full of idle capital, and a decade of government incentives, the current levels of investment in a transition to renewable energy will doom us to an unlivable planet. Sweeney and Treat explain that as long as there are more profitable and less risky places to invest, private capital will continue to refuse to be part of humanity's effort to secure its home.

The historic task of decarbonizing energy generation, Sweeney and Treat explain, "will require virtually unprecedented levels of long-term planning, coordination, and cooperation" that are completely at odds with the way that capitalist markets work. "Ending the market that never was by reclaiming energy systems open up an altogether different set of possibilities and an entirely new energy transition scenario where there can be full attention

paid to the technical challenges without the policy-afflicted distractions generated by obstructive and destructive 'competition' between different private actors and interests," they say.

Perhaps most importantly, they insist that "unions and their allies are well positioned to challenge the myth that a transition to renewable energy can be accomplished by catering to the interests of big companies and private investors. The global labor movement can and should demand and fight for a viable transition pathway—one that is anchored in public financing, social ownership and democratic control."

To popularize this vision, TUED has mounted an animated video explaining the need for social ownership and workers control of energy on its website. It is called "This is What Energy Democracy Looks Like" and is available at <http://unionsforenergydemocracy.org/resources/video>. It is designed to be shown at union meetings and other gatherings of workers and can lay the basis for the sharing of written arguments for the nationalization and municipalization under democratic control.

What is missing from "Working Paper No. 10" and this introductory video is a full discussion of just how the unions and unorganized working people might successfully carry out a struggle to implement this strategy. In the United States most union leaders limit their political advocacy to positions acceptable to the

Democratic Party and their corporate backers. In order to educate the ranks and mobilize them in numbers sufficient to put public ownership on the agenda, the union leadership will need to break through this obstacle and chart a course for "a living wage on a living planet" that is independent of both capitalist parties.

After such a break, the labor movement will then need to also repair their broken relationships with immigrant workers, with the Black and Latino communities, with women, and youth. This vision will certainly animate the best class-struggle fighters in the coming period. ■

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... Women's marches

(continued from page 1)

It was also shocking to union members when actions of top levels of union leaders were exposed. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) were accused by Mia Kirshner of "inadequate protection against sexual harassment and abuse in the film industry."

When it was revealed that SEIU Executive Vice President Scott Courtney was put on leave and then resigned for abusing his power over women staff members who were his subordinates, a number of SEIU staff said, "Finally! What took so long?" Courtney was a top-level strategist for the Fight For 15 campaign. Soon afterward, two other top staff in Chicago resigned. When the phrase, "this was an open secret" came out, it was clear to SEIU staff and union members that having an ethics policy (SEIU has a comprehensive one) means nothing. Members now need to empower staff, as staff have empowered them to take on abusive worksite managers.

There is an even deeper meaning here for all unions. At least half of all SEIU members are women. There are many women on staff and in leadership positions. In the last few years there has been an affirmative action plan in place to increase the number of people of color in leadership positions at all levels of the union. But as in so many unions, white men still dominate in the top levels. They are the chief strategists. Just as on corporate boards, that is where the power lies, and when women on staff speak up about abuse, those at the top circle the wagons and "protect" the organization.

This, of course, is not unique to SEIU. In most unions those men are the same ones who do not really believe in an organizing model with rank-and-file control and decision making. Business unionism not only makes for weaker unions; it has left harassed and assaulted staff members as victims.

When the accusations continued to spread and started hitting members of Congress, noted feminists started warning that there would be a backlash against women speaking out. It is now clear that the movement is getting stronger regardless of apologists (Democrats and Republicans) for the abusers. "Listen To Women" will be a major focus of the marches this year.

A year of attacks on social programs

The first attack from the White House came on the first day of Trump's presidency as four million women were in the streets. He made a statement that his first executive action would be to eliminate funding for programs that fight global maternity mortality.

Trump reinstated the federal "Global Gag Rule" from the Reagan era. This is the international version of the Hyde Amendment, the bipartisan law that bars federal funds from being used for abortion services. This prohibits international NGOs from receiving funds if they even speak to patients or provide pamphlets that mention abortion. The rule is in effect even in countries where abortions are legal. Many small NGOs as well as international aid groups depend on that money to fund their operations. This measure is detrimental to women's health services worldwide.

In March Trump issued an executive order to revoke the 2014 Fair Pay and Workplaces Act, which ensured that federal contracts were awarded only to companies with no history of unsafe working conditions, sexual harassment, or discrimination complaints.

In May Trump's first budget threatened to slash government programs largely used by poor women and children. The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program was cut by \$200 million. This program ensures health and nutrition for mothers, newborns, and young children. The program remains in place but is greatly hampered by the cuts. President Trump issued an administrative rule that eliminates the requirement that all insurance company plans cover birth control.

There have been persistent attacks on Planned Parenthood, starting with a move to eliminate Title X funding. This is a federal subsidy to organizations that offer services related to contraception, pregnancy care, fertility, and cancer screenings for persons with low income. Previously, there was a rule that barred states from withholding funds from organizations just because they offer abortion services. In April a bill was passed that put an end to this provision, basically giving states the freedom to defund Planned Parenthood.

States continue women's rights restrictions

Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed two bills that he calls "Pro-Life Insurance Reform." This legislation prohibits insurance providers from "forcing" any policy holder to purchase general health insurance that pays for elective abortions. If a woman wants insurance to cover abortions, she must now purchase a separate policy. The bill does not provide exceptions for rape or incest. At the signing, Gov. Abbott announced, "This ensures that no Texan is ever required to pay for a procedure that ends the life of an 'unborn' child."

The second bill expands reporting requirements for complications resulting from abortions. Within three days of treatment, doctors must report the patient's

Women resist sexual harassment on the job

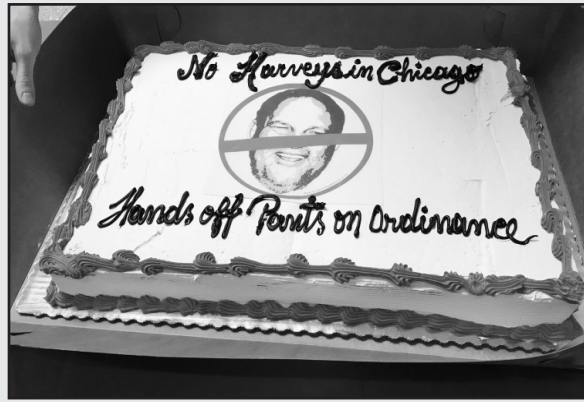
By ERNIE GOTTA

The movement of working women and the fightback against sexual harassment, abuse, and rape on the job is growing. The movement is challenging past practices of human resource departments and management everywhere that are guilty of sweeping sexual harassment complaints under the rug.

For generations, women have been silenced on the job for reporting sexual abuse. A 2003 study by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) showed that 75% of women who report sexual abuse are retaliated against.

These statistics are nothing new for women in the workplace. The daily reality for millions broke into the open as numerous women in Hollywood came forward to expose decades of sexual harassment by executive producer Harvey Weinstein. Weinstein went as far as hiring former Israeli Mossad agents to silence accusers.

In November, prior to the "Take Back the Workplace" march in Los Angeles, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, an organization comprised of 700,000 current and former farmworker women, wrote an open letter expressing their solidarity with Hollywood actresses fighting back against sexual abuse in the movie industry. The farmworkers wrote, "Even though we work in very different environments, we share a common experience of being preyed upon by individuals who have



(Above) Cake celebrates new Chicago ordinance to stop sexual harassment of hotel workers. Unite Here Local 1 worked for passage of the law.

the power to hire, fire, blacklist, and otherwise threaten our economic, physical, and emotional security."

As we begin the new year, 300 Hollywood actresses launched the "Times Up" initiative to fight sexual harassment on the stage and screen while also extending solidarity to working-class women. Their initiative includes, "A legal defense fund, backed by \$13 million in donations, to help less privileged women—like janitors, nurses and workers at farms, factories, restaurants and hotels—protect themselves from sexual misconduct and the fallout from reporting it."

Time magazine included union hotel housekeepers, members of Unite Here, fighting sexual harassment on the cover of the "Silence Breakers" 2017 person of the year issue. Every day, women hotel workers, many of who are immigrant, Black or Latino, punch in and face unsafe working conditions.

In Chicago, Unite Here hotel workers were instrumental in passing the "Hands Off Pants On" ordinance, which is aimed at protecting hotel workers from harassment. A survey conducted by Unite Here Local 1 in Chicago of hospitality workers shows "49% of housekeepers surveyed have had guest(s) expose themselves, flash them, or answer the door naked. 65% of casino cocktail servers surveyed have had a guest grope, pinch or grab them or try to touch them in an unwelcome way."

From hotel housekeepers to Hollywood movie stars, women are taking the lead in the fight against sexual harassment. It is becoming more clear each day how the capitalist system uses sexual violence to exploit and oppress women. We can increase the opposition to sexual harassment by bringing our coworkers to the Women's Marches on Jan. 20-21 as well as organizing workplace, community, and campus actions around the country on March 8 for International Women's Day.

Last year, dozens of schools faced closures due to teachers' calling in sick on International Women's Day. Is your union ready to do the same? If you're not ready for action, begin by building a base that is ready to mobilize. Union members can demand time during monthly meetings to discuss how to build a fightback in their shops. College students can organize forums that feature students alongside hotel workers.

Let's make 2018 a year of solidarity and fightback for the rights of women on the job, on the campus, and in the home. ■

birth year, county, race, and marital status.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster issued an executive order to direct state agencies to block women from getting preventive care at Planned Parenthood clinics.

In Pennsylvania, on Dec. 18, Gov. Tom Wolf vetoed an anti-abortion bill that had passed the state legislature. It passed the House earlier in the month by 120-70 and passed the state Senate last February, 32-18. Republicans can still try to override the veto, but appear to lack the two-thirds majority to do so.

Pennsylvania's Senate Bill 3 would have banned abortions after 19 weeks of pregnancy, four weeks earlier than the current law. It also would have restricted doctors from "dismembering the unborn child" through the dilation and evacuation method—the most common abortion procedure in the second trimester. Federal judges have already issued injunctions against this restriction in states such as Texas, Alabama, Kansas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.

According to Planned Parenthood, the Pennsylvania bill would have contained the most vigorous time restrictions in the country. It was seen as a bellwether for passing similar bills in other states and was opposed by the Pennsylvania Medical Society and the Pennsylvania section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Among their concerns is that women often receive a critical ultrasound around the 20th week of pregnancy that can detect abnormalities that, in many cases, can be life threatening to the fetus. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists reports that delivery before 23 weeks of gestation typically results in death to the fetus.

2018: women to march in local areas

This year, the marches will be decentralized. Women will turn out in U.S. cities and towns on Jan. 20 and 21, reflecting their increased anger and activism over the past year. Some women still believe that an electoral strategy is the way towards change, but transformative change has always come about through the pressure of social movements independent of elections. Women have seen their issues immobilized and their time wasted by politicians and then used as fund-raising ploys.

The women's marches this year will be a time to organize and to make our demands visible and clear. The economic demands of the women on strike in December at the Christian Care Home in Ferguson, Mo., are a significant example. After striking for 25 days in 20-degree

weather, they received "illegal" replacement notices from the board of Christian Care Homes right before Christmas.

The demands for justice by the Indigenous women who will be marching together in the Women's March in Phoenix, Ariz., are particularly notable. They are asking women to wear red to raise awareness of the missing and murdered indigenous women. Some 84 percent of Native American women experience violence in their lifetime. The marchers are also connecting their violence "to the struggle of the continued assaults and desecration of Mother Earth."

Sadly, what most women demonstrators will hear from the rally platforms is a call for them to go all out to elect Democrats in the mid-term elections or run for office themselves in this same big business party. The movement that we clearly need, however, must be fiercely independent of both of the political parties that are bought and paid for by the bosses. A movement must be built that can stand on its own and demand all that we need from whomever sits in the legislature and in the White House.

One important effort in that direction is the organizing that has begun for the International Women's Day action in New York City. The organizers, in solidarity with global actions in 2018, call themselves the International Women's Strike NYC, and describe themselves as a coalition of grassroots groups and labor organizations. They state their goal as bringing together as many people as possible under a militant feminist banner.

What does militant feminism mean to them? They say: "We would like next March 8th to be a day of action and visibility by and for working class women: women of color, immigrant women, Muslim women, queer and trans women, sex workers, domestic and care workers, and mothers.

"We want to continue recovering the radical history of the International Women's Day by striking, marching and protesting together to demand free health care for all, including free abortion, contraception, and reproductive care; to oppose the Trump administration's xenophobic and Islamophobic policies; to protest tax cuts for the rich; to demand social provisioning, environmental justice and a liveable minimum wage. We hope that next March 8th will contribute to build a feminism for the 99%, in solidarity with working women, their families, and their allies throughout the world." Women around the country should follow their example. ■

Rise and fall of the 1979 Iranian Revolution: Lessons for today

David Burnett / National Geographic



(Left) Protesters carry wounded man to ambulance during 1979 Iranian Revolution.

By **KAMRAN NAYERI** and **ALIREZA NASSAB**

The following paper was prepared for and presented at the III Conferencia Internacional de La Obra de Carlos Marx y Los Desafios del Siglo XXI (The Third Conference on the Work of Karl Marx and the Challenges of the 21st Century) in Havana, Cuba, in May 2006. The conference was organized by the Instituto de Filosofia de Cuba. Alireza Nasab presented the paper to an afternoon session on the first day of the conference.

Alireza Ismaeli Nassab was an Iranian Trotskyist who lived in exile in London and died there of meningitis on April 22, 2011. He was 57 years old. Nassab (better known by his movement name as Behzad Kazemi) was a leading socialist activist, well-respected among the Iranian socialists and labor activists in Europe.

I have edited the paper, which was drafted in a rush for the conference, and Nassab reviewed it, offering a few minor changes. Almost all changes from the original draft are typographical, grammatical, or stylistic. Informational hyperlinks to the Iranian political personalities, parties, organizations, and places have been added. Some of these sources may contain errors or omissions. The original draft is still available at the Institute of Philosophy's website. — K.N.

The February 1979 Iranian revolution was the largest urban mass uprising since the 1917 Russian revolutions. It changed the strategic relation of forces in the Middle East to the detriment of imperialism. In 1953, the Shah's regime had been imposed by the CIA-MI6 coup that overthrew the democratically elected nationalist government of Mohammad Mossadegh. It overthrew imperialism's regional gendarme, an ally of the colonial-settler state of Israel, and a supporter of South African Apartheid. It dissolved the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), a regional anti-Soviet Union military pact.

After the 1953 defeat of the mass movement, the Shah's regime had gradually consolidated an autocratic capitalist state, on the basis of an imperial Farsi (Persian) chauvinist ideology that denied the oppressed nationalities any rights, and increasingly choked off the political life. The February revolution destroyed the monarchy, the historical form of the State in Iran, and badly damaged its repressive and ideological props. Aside from those who were caught by the revolutionary forces, with the royal court almost all the major industrialists and bankers, the military brass and top bureaucrats fled the country, mostly, for the United States.

Who led the February revolution?

No political party or individual led the February revolution. Instead, grassroots organizations in the

neighborhoods, workplaces, high schools and universities, and among peasants and oppressed nationalities, and eventually in the armed forces, were formed to challenge the Shah's power structure. Workers began to exert control over workplaces. Peasants moved to take the land they had tilled for centuries; closely tied to this oppressed nationalities began to revive their cultural heritage and exercise autonomy. Universities became centers of political discourse. Neighborhoods were organized through popular committees. Political parties, including the banned communist groups, began to function increasingly openly. Finally, as the discipline in the armed forces began to break and some soldiers went to the side of the revolution, the population armed itself and overthrew the monarchy.

It was entirely possible for Iranians to inaugurate the first workers and peasants government in the Middle East and open the road to socialism. Instead, Ayatollah Khomeini, who had opposed the Shah's capitalist modernization reform programs in 1963 and was subsequently arrested and exiled to Iraq, captured the moment and established himself as the spokesperson for the revolution. By 1983, he had used populist demagoguery and ruthless repression to suppress all independent mass organizations and practically all political parties to consolidate a theocratic capitalist regime. Thus, he offered a historically reactionary response to imperialism in the Middle East.

The Shah's regime and its opponents

In Iran the state has been the force behind capitalist industrialization. The Pahlavi monarchy led this effort in the 1930s, and it was resumed soon after the CIA-MI6 coup of 1953. The pace of capitalist development picked up after the White Revolution in 1963 as it reformed class relations especially in the countryside in order to facilitate capitalist primitive accumulation and ongoing capital accumulation.

The agrarian reform favored a shift of rural surplus funds to capitalist accumulation and rural surplus population to towns where industrialization was underway. The White Revolution contributed to the weakening of the power of the Shiite hierarchy, itself a major landowner and tax collector; and its traditional ally the Bazaar merchants, who were also part of the traditional absentee landowners. The Shiite hierarchy opposed key planks of the White Revolution, including the land reform, Health and Knowledge Corps (army draftees whose mission was to bring elementary health and literacy campaigns to the countryside), and the extension of the right to vote to women (even though the right to vote itself had little meaning under a dictatorship). Thus, an alliance of Shiite hierarchy, bazaar merchants, and sectors of the old land-

owning classes opposed the Shah's regime. The Shah's regime was also opposed by social classes and sectors that his own capitalist modernization program had created. Most importantly, this included the proletariat; between 1963 and 1975 the size of the Iranian working class doubled. Millions of the pauperized peasants had become squatters in the large cities, especially Tehran, and came increasingly into conflict with the State apparatus. Finally, the "new middle class" and the intelligentsia became the most vocal critics of the Shah's regime. They also provided most of the cadre for the nationalist, Islamic, and socialist forces opposed to the Shah.

The bourgeois nationalist parties

The Iranian capitalist class developed belatedly and dependent either on the State or the imperialist powers, never cutting its ties to pre-capitalist social relations. Thus, it was never willing or able to carry a national democratic revolution. In the 19th century Iranian merchants held Russian citizenship to safeguard their wealth against the Qajar kings. During the course of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, they took refuge from the Qajar autocracy in the British Embassy.

The state-sponsored industrialization spurt under the Pahlavi dynasty helped to develop a small layer of industrial and financial capitalists; but they remained subservient to the royal court and the international bourgeoisie.

The period of glory of bourgeois nationalism was limited to a brief campaign for nationalization of the oil industry in the early 1950s that was led by Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, who became the prime minister on popular demand. In a period of the climax of confrontation with the royal court, Hossein Fatemi spoke of a republic while Mossadegh limited himself to the notion that "[t]he Shah should rule but not govern." In his confrontation with Britain, Mossadegh sought the support of the World Court and the U.S. administration. When Washington and London joined forces to stage a coup in the summer of 1953, Mossadegh refused to mobilize and arm the masses even after the first coup attempt failed. Three days later, a second coup succeeded and a generation of Iranians suffered the consequences.

The National Front, the umbrella organization of the bourgeois nationalists formed around Mossadegh, never attained the same glory. The combination of dictatorship and a lack of a genuine program and strategy for a national democratic revolution fractured it into a half a dozen small sects organized around various personalities. On the eve of the February revolution, Shahpour Bakhtiar, one of the leading National Front figures, accepted the Shah's offer to become his caretaker prime minister. After the triumph of the February revolution, Mehdi Bazargan, another National Front leader who had merged nationalist and Islamic sentiments, became Ayatollah Khomeini's interim prime minister. His cabinet was made of assortments of nationalist figures who merely served as a transition belt for the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

Bazargan's cabinet was forced out after it was discovered that he had secretly met with the Americans in Algeria in the summer of 1979. A few other Islamic nationalist characters, like Banisadr Ghotbzadeh and Yazdi served the Islamic Republic as non-clergy confidants before they were also purged (Banisadr went into exile in France and Ghotbzadeh was executed for a Saudi Arabia-backed coup plot. Yazdi was forced out of politics). Thus, the Iranian bourgeoisie has proved unwilling and incapable of leading a national democratic revolution.

The working class and its leaderships

Iran's working-class origins include thousands of oil workers in Baku (annexed in the late 19th century by Tsarist Russia) and the early influence of the Rus-

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sian Social Democratic Labor Party, especially the Bolsheviks. In 1904, the first Iranian social democratic group (*Hemmat*) was founded in Transcaucasia. Social Democrats participated in the Constitutional Revolution, including, with help of their Russian Social Democrats, in the defense of revolutionary Tabriz, when monarchist forces staged a counter-revolution from Tehran. Iranian Social Democrats established links with the leaders of the Second International and helped the Bolsheviks smuggle *Iskra* into Transcaucasia. In June 1920, after the Bolsheviks called for the formation of the Communist International, Iranian communists held their first party congress and founded the Communist Party of Iran.

During the same period, there were rank-and-file attempts to form trade unions in the few industries that had emerged. Notable was the printers' trade union. However, the political development of the Iranian working class was largely influenced by the communists from the very beginning. The communist world view entered Iran before it emerged from the struggles of workers themselves. This process differed from much of the historical development during Marx's and Engels' time and their conception of the developmental trajectory of the working class, beginning with trade-union formations. The existence of autocracy also proved detrimental to the development of trade unions and economic struggles as the pretext to class (political) struggle. Thus, the Communist Party was established before any large-scale trade unions were attempted. The formation of trade unions or any other workers' organization became the task for communists.

This uneven development proved critical for the history of the Iranian labor movement. By 1930, the Communist Party and most of its leadership were destroyed by the combined blows from Reza Shah's dictatorship and the Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union. Many communists rotted in Reza Shah's jails, and some, including Otis Sultanzadeh, the party's principal leader and a leader of the Communist International in Lenin's time, were executed during Stalinist purges.

As elsewhere in the world, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and ascendancy of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste destroyed the Bolshevik revolutionary program and strategy. Communist parties were transformed into reformist bureaucratic organizations that blindly followed Moscow's policies.

After the occupation of Iran by the Allies in 1941, with the support of Moscow and the initiative of the Stalinist members of the former Communist Party, the Tudeh (masses) party was organized as a Popular Front, anti-fascist organization. The Tudeh party became more similar to the typical Stalinist parties after the Cold War began; that is, it never developed a socialist program and strategy. Instead, like other Stalinist parties in the semi-colonial and colonial world, it has pursued a strategic alliance with the "national bourgeoisie" who it has claimed will lead a national democratic revolution.

The Tudeh party's influence on the Iranian working class has been disastrous. The leadership of the Central Council of the United Trade Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers, which it came to control in 1946, was entirely imposed by the party and made up of key party cadre who were from the Iranian elite, not the working class. The Tudeh party used its influence in the labor movement to bargain with the capitalist regime. It put down militant labor strikes, including of oil workers in Aghajari, when it believed it was possible to wrestle concessions from the government. This is how Tudeh party was offered three ministerial posts in the reactionary Qavam cabinet in 1946. These policies mirrored Moscow's own: to please Roosevelt and Churchill, Stalin pulled out the Red Army from Azerbaijan. This made it possible for the Shah's advancing army to overthrow the pro-Soviet government of Pishvari.

The Tudeh party advocated oil concessions in the northern portions of Iran for Moscow when the government was considering oil concessions in the south for the West. The Tudeh party did not join the fight for nationalization of the Iranian oil industry led by Mosaddegh. It also did not use its significant influence in the army to fight the CIA-MI6 coup of 1953. When the coup succeeded, its most committed militants were given to the firing squads. Not surprisingly, the Tudeh party never regained its standing with the Iranian workers again.

With the Sino-Soviet rift, the exiled Tudeh party leadership also suffered a split. The various Maoist groups that emerged were not essentially different in their program and strategy. Like the Tudeh, they all hoped for a "national bourgeois" force to lead the national democratic revolution. Meanwhile, after the



The February 1979 Iranian Revolution was the largest mass urban uprising since the Russian Revolution Of 1917. The event changed the relation of forces in the Middle East to the detriment of imperialism.

(Above) The beginnings: Anti-Shah demonstrators protest killing of professor in 1978.

White Revolution of 1963, Moscow, and later Beijing, established good relations with the Shah that lasted until his overthrow by the February 1979 revolution.

During the 1960s, a layer of the youth influenced by the Cuban and Algerian revolutions split off from the National Front and from the Tudeh party. They formed the Mujahedin-e Khalq (People's Mujahedin) and the Fedayeen-e Khalq (People's Fedayeen) respectively. These were anti-dictatorship and anti-imperialist urban guerrilla forces. Despite the sincere self-sacrifice of its original leaders, these organizations tried to substitute the reformism of bourgeois nationalists and the Tudeh party with heroic armed actions and determination to struggle. They lacked any mass-action program and strategy for radical social change. Thus, they remained vulnerable to the more sophisticated Stalinist forces.

The Mujahedin suffered a Maoist split in early the 1970s. The Fedayeen were split by the pressure from the Tudeh party after 1979. The guerrilla movement itself was quickly militarily defeated by the Shah's repressive apparatus and was soon politically superseded by the mass movement of the working people who made the February 1979 revolution.

After the 1953 coup, Stalinist and centrist political forces had little direct contact and influence in the labor movement. Meanwhile, the quickening pace of industrialization doubled the size of the labor force and gave it a measure of power in relationship to employers. At the same time, intensification of dictatorship limited trade-union development and institutionalized economic struggle. Combined, these factors contributed to the development of the mass working-class movement in 1978-79 and after the February 1979 revolution.

The Islamic Republic as counterrevolution

The events of 1978-79 showed that in the relative absence of Stalinist and centrist parties workers can display an amazing capacity for organization and action even under a system of dictatorship. Thus, Iranian workers with no prior strike experience formed formidable strike committees. Iranian workers with no experience in workers' control developed workers' councils and took charge of their work places. Even during the counter-revolutionary offensive of the summer of 1979, workers councils were being formed and organized into regional and national networks.

These could have developed further and a class struggle working-class leadership could have emerged in due time to pose the perspective for a workers and peasants government. However, by 1983, all workers' councils were destroyed or substituted by corporatist Islamic Shoras (councils) of Labor and the Workers' House.

The historical weakness of the national bourgeoisie

and crisis of the working-class leadership provided a vacuum in 1978-79, which Ayatollah Khomeini filled. A resolute opponent of the Shah, Khomeini and his allies were negotiating a peaceful transfer of power to keep the capitalist order intact. The behind the scenes negotiations, which included Washington, settled on a government headed by National Front figures to take over the power from the Shah. What motivated these negotiations was the common fear of a proletarian revolution. However, Shahpour Bakhtiar, the National Front figure chosen by the Shah as the caretaker prime minister, decided to remain at the helm. Meanwhile, a section of the army brass that was rooting for a blood-bath decided on a military coup. The show down with the masses led to the Feb. 19-21 armed insurrections.

Thus, in the actual reality, the power fell into the hands of the grassroots organizations that had no common perspective for the future. However, the bulk of bourgeois nationalist and petty bourgeois parties, including the Tudeh party, most Maoist groups, Fedayeen, and Mujahedin supported Khomeini's bid for power. Khomeini's secretive Revolution Council that was set up to take the power from Shah-Bakhtiar proposed a provisional government headed by Mehdi Bazargan and staffed with National Front figures. The provisional government itself had no mass base and drew its legitimacy from Ayatollah Khomeini. Thus, the Khomeini-Bazargan government, on one hand, and the grassroots organizations that sprang out of the revolutionary struggle, on the other hand, produced a situation of de facto dual power.

From the first day after the February victory, Khomeini's designated government pursued policies to resolve this duality of power by undermining the grassroots organizations that held the potential of for a proletarian revolution.

A necessarily limited chronology has to suffice. Pro-Khomeini forces arrived soon after the liberation of the State-run TV and radio stations (there were and are no others) to take them over and impose a censorship that excluded, among other things, socialist points of view. Soon all news, information, and entrainment deemed "non-Islamic" were censored and staff that did not cooperate were fired. Within a few days after the insurrection, Khomeini issued a decree to disarm the neighborhood defense committees and authorize top-down Islamic armed squads (Committees of Islamic Revolution) that were based in mosques. When these tightly controlled Islamic squads proved inadequate to control the mass movement, some in the Shiite hierarchy recruited youth from the urban poor into semi-fascist Hezbollah squads. These were used to attack demonstrations and political or social groups.

Just before International Women's Day, Khomeini issued a decree requiring women to wear Islamic garb. Hezbollah goons attacked the women's March 8 march with chains, sticks, and knives. During the Iranian New Year at the end of March, the air force bombed Turkmen Sahra, where the oppressed nationality Turkmen live, on the southeastern coast of the Caspian Sea where peasants were taking over the land.

On March 30 and 31, Khomeini staged an undemocratic referendum in which the population was given

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Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

BC NDP slips up on Site C power dam

By GARY PORTER

On Dec. 11, British Columbia's New Democratic Party Premier John Horgan announced that his government would complete the third massive power dam on the beautiful Peace River in northeastern BC at a cost of \$11 billion. Andrew Weaver, leader of the BC Green Party—who signed a “confidence and supply” agreement with the labour-based NDP allowing it to form a minority government after 16 years of right-wing rule by the BC Liberal Party—condemned the decision. But Weaver said he would not force an election over it.

The Site C go-ahead tramples the rights of Indigenous peoples in BC. It mocks the promise of the BC NDP to respect those rights. The dam will flood 80 kilometers of forest along the river and bury over 6500 hectares (14,000 acres) of prime agricultural land (BC Hydro estimate), along with the history, cultural treasures, and burial grounds of the Native peoples.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated that “a nod of approval doesn't guarantee that this project will, in fact, happen. Certainly, there are thousands of people that are bitterly disappointed.” Bob Botterell, attorney for the Peace Valley Landowners' Association, said that his clients viewed the NDP government review process preceding the “go” decision as a sham. He predicted that his clients would use every

legal tool to stop the project.

Premier Horgan argued that the \$4 billion cost of halting the project, \$2.2 billion already spent and \$1.8 billion to re-remediate the affected area, would prompt an immediate 12 per cent increase in hydro prices. This claim is either ignorant or dishonest. Such cancellation costs under government accounting rules in Canada can be written off over as much as 30 years.

The original project cost estimate in 2012 was \$6.6 billion; it is now \$11 billion. No one really knows what it will cost to proceed. All of this will be financed by high grade BC bonds—a boon to the financial

brokers and bankers of Canada. Instead, \$11 billion could finance 100 new schools or 20 new hospitals.

Environmentalists point to rapidly falling prices of solar, wind, and geothermal power, and to the geometric increases in battery storage capacity. If the project were stopped today and simply re-remediated, and the province proceeded instead with solar and wind projects, the power could be generated more cheaply and with no violation of the rights of Indigenous people or any destruction of the fertile Peace River Valley.



Perhaps the worst is yet to come. Site C was launched by the previous BC Liberal government to provide massive power support for a prospective LNG industry in BC using fracking technology. Although one large project proposed by international hydrocarbon giant Petronas has folded, other big oil and gas companies have expressed passing interest. Horgan, as NDP Energy critic while in opposition, expressed his support for this water polluting, environment wrecking, earthquake causing enterprise.

More recently, Michelle Mungall, the BC NDP's new Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, stated in Vancouver, “Our position has always been supportive of LNG, as long as the industry meets our four conditions. And what I think is important to remember is that conditions are not roadblocks; they're road maps.” Mungall's job description letter from the premier includes a directive to nurture the sector, based on four criteria: a “fair return” for the province, accommodation of First Nations' interests, protection of the environment, and guarantees of jobs and training for British Columbians.

Given the Site C decision and the loose approach to the facts and the reasons for proceeding, can the NDP be trusted to negotiate these conditions in good faith? Basically, jobs and royalties are likely all they consider worth fighting for. If the LNG dream becomes reality, it would put the BC NDP government squarely on the wrong side of the struggle for environmental sanity—right alongside the tar sands oil industry backed by Alberta's NDP government.

The Site C decision makes it abundantly clear that the struggle to defend Indigenous rights and the environment is not centred in the parliamentary arena. It must be waged and won in the streets—by mass action. Indigenous peoples, environmentalists, deeply disappointed New Democrats, young people, and trade unionists who understand that planetary survival is the only way to defend workers in the medium term, should unite to stop this sellout to big oil and gas, and to the financial institutions that fund them. ■

The discreet charm of the philanthropist

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The cause of death of billionaire Barry Sherman, 75, and his wife Honey, 70, on Dec. 15 in Toronto remains a mystery. Murder or suicide, the outcome is truly a tragedy. But the outpouring of adoration for the super-rich couple by the big business media and politicians, the gushing praise by Canada's elite for the two is not only disproportionate by any objective measure; it obscures a harsh reality.

Behind the veneer of philanthropy, Apotex, Sherman's drug firm with annual revenues of \$1.2 billion and 10,000 employees in Canada and abroad, launched hundreds of lawsuits against competitors.

Amir Attaran, professor in the Faculties of Law and Medicine at the University of Ottawa, told the *Toronto Star* that Sherman's public relations machine portrayed his court battles to overturn patents as his attempt to pro-

vide cheaper drugs for Canadians in the form of generics.

“That is outrageous fabrication,” said Attaran, “Because for all his efforts being the biggest generic drug company in Canada ... Canada pays among the highest prices in the world for generics.”

A 1998 *Toronto Star* story described Apotex as “a pit bull,” constantly looking to expand its territory in the pharmaceutical world and beating off attacks by its competitors.

In one of Apotex's most high-profile battles, the company went to war with Dr. Nancy Olivieri, a blood disease specialist at SickKids Hospital in Toronto. Olivieri was researching the drug deferiprone as an alternative treatment for thalassemia, a disorder that can lead to unsafe buildups of iron.

When Olivieri raised concerns about potentially life threatening risks of the drug, Sherman's company initiated legal action and pulled funding for her clinical trial. Years later, in 2014, Ol-

ivieri and Apotex settled their mutual lawsuits.

Research integrity and patient safety were at the heart of the issue, said Arthur Schafer, a University of Manitoba professor and founding director of the school's Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics. “The Olivieri scandal was the greatest ethical scandal I would say in Canadian corporate history and certainly in pharmaceutical history,” he said. “It's included now in bioethics textbooks, it's a standard illustration of how drug company power can be used to subvert the integrity of research hospitals and universities when the profitability of the company and the effectiveness and safety of their drugs is challenged by a researcher.”

Sherman's defenders may still point to the billionaire's donation of millions of dollars to a variety of charities. He could certainly afford to do so. In a 2007 *National Post* article, Apotex revealed that it spent roughly \$60-million a year on le-

gal fees alone. On the subject of philanthropy, the final word goes to Oshawa autoworker and political commentator Corey Weir, who inscribed this in his December blog:

“I'm so sick of people praising billionaires as ‘philanthropists.’ When working class people donate to charitable causes, they are donating their own labour essentially; when billionaires act as philanthropists they are donating stolen labour in the form of exorbitant profit they've leeches from their workers. At the end of the day, working class people are still responsible for putting that money towards any given cause—their labour created it—a fact that is obfuscated by the bosses' appropriation of it.

“Even in charity they are parasites. If they felt a true moral obligation to the world, they couldn't allow themselves to accumulate wealth at the expense of the suffering and death caused by poverty they themselves create. Stop cheering for ruthless scumbags who are only trying to avoid the pitchfork and the guillotine.” ■

Poverty in Canada

Nearly five million people in Canada—that's one out of every seven individuals—currently live in poverty. At the dawn of 2018, poverty is a widespread issue across the country and around the globe. People living with disabilities, single parents, elderly individuals, youth, and racialized communities are more susceptible to impoverishment.

The effects are expressed in various ways, including food security, health, and housing. The following statistics, from www.cwp.csp.ca, show the different manifestations of poverty in Canada, one of the richest countries in the world today.

- One in seven (or 4.9 million) people in Canada live in poverty.
- Poverty costs Canada between \$72 billion and \$84 billion annually; Ontarians pay \$2,299 - \$2,895 per year; British Columbians pay over \$2,100 per year.
- Precarious employment has increased by nearly

50% over the past two decades.

- Between 1980 and 2005, the average earnings among the least wealthy Canadians fell by 20%.
- Over the past 25 years, Canada's population has increased by 30%, and yet annual national investment in housing has decreased by 46%.

Marginalized Communities

Which groups are particularly likely to experience poverty?

- People living with disabilities (mental or physical) are twice as likely to live below the poverty line.
- Nearly 15% of people with disabilities live in poverty, 59% of which are women.
- Estimates place the number of homeless individuals living with a disability or mental illness as high as 45% of the overall homeless population.
- Children with disabilities are twice as likely to live in households relying on social assistance.
- 21% of single mothers in Canada raise their children while living in poverty. (7% of single fathers

raise their children in poverty).

- Women parenting on their own enter shelters at twice the rate of two-parent families.
- Indigenous Peoples (including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples) are over-represented among the homeless population in virtually all urban centres.
- 28%-34% of shelter users are Indigenous.
- One in five racialized families live in poverty in Canada, as opposed to 1 in 20 non-racialized families.
- Overall, racialized women earn 32% less at work.
- Nearly 15% of elderly single individuals live in poverty.
- Nearly 2 million seniors receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and live on about \$17,000 per year. Yet the most basic standard of living in Canada is calculated at \$18,000 per year for a single person. ■

* Canada Without Poverty is a federally incorporated, non-partisan, charitable organization. Stemming from the Poor Peoples' Conference in Toronto in 1971, it was founded later that year as the **National Anti-Poverty Organization**. In April 2009, it changed its name to Canada Without Poverty.

... Iran Revolution

(continued from page 7)

the choice of continuing with the monarchy that they had just overthrown or the undefined Islamic Republic. The voters rejected the monarchy by an over 98% majority; Khomeini and his allies claimed that such huge majority actually wanted an Islamic Republic which at the time was just a slogan empty of content. He then used the vote to exclude all non-Islamic groups from the legal political discourse. In April, a mass circulation daily, *Ayandegan*, which was critical of Khomeini, was shut down by force.

This was followed by a war waged against the Kurdish people, who have been struggling for self-determination for decades. At the same time, armed Hezbollah gangs were used to ransack headquarters of socialist parties, and 40 newspapers were shut down. Meanwhile, Khomeini decided that instead of a democratic constituent assembly based on grassroots organizations that had issued from the revolution, an Islamic Assembly of Experts should write a constitution for the Islamic Republic he had rubber stamped in the April referendum.

By all appearances, the reactionary offensive of the summer of 1979 had consolidated the Islamic Republic and all opposition parties were driven underground. However, when a select group of pro-Khomeini students took over the US embassy in October, streets of Tehran and other cities were once again filled with millions of anti-imperialist demonstrators. Open political activity revived. Once again, the workers showed the way forward. United workers' councils led several mass demonstrations in Tehran and elsewhere. Workers' councils that sprang up in individual factories had learned that in order to manage their workplaces they need to link up with other workers' council within the same industry, region, or industrial group. Peasant councils were also formed, and some linked up with others, and land occupations were underway. This posed the problem of working-class management of the economy and society and the need for a workers and peasants government.

What was lacking was a working-class leadership to link up these class-specific demands with the anti-imperialist movement and the defense of democratic and political freedoms through the expansion of the already existing grassroots organizations, in particular workers and peasants councils; this would have created a workers and peasants government. Only such a government, like the one that issued from the October 1917 revolution, and subsequently in Cuba after 1959, could have charted a consistent anti-imperialist, that is, anti-capitalist and socialist, course. History has produced no other alternatives.

Such leadership did not exist. Instead, Stalinist and centrist parties were essentially divided into two camps. A group best exemplified by the Tudeh party and Fedayeen Majority argued that the conflict with imperialism and monarchism required political support for the "anti-imperialist" Khomeini regime. Others such as the Mujahedin and Fedayeen Minority countered that Khomeini is the gravest danger facing the revolution. Thus, they each looked for an alternative force within the Islamic Republic and in the bourgeois political spectrum. President Bani-Sadre temporarily provided such a bourgeois figure for the Anti-Khomeini opposition. In practice, each of these two camps subordinated actual class struggle to their perceived need to either politically support or to militarily confront the Islamic Republic.

Take the case of the workers' council movement. In the spring of 1980, the Islamic Republic party begun to systematically organize and use Islamic Associations in workplaces to divide the workforce into "followers of Imam (Khomeini)" and those who were not prepared to pledge allegiance to him. The same scheme was used to split workers' councils and establish the corporatist Islamic Councils of Labor. This scheme not only split the working class according to workers' religious or ideological belief, it also created organizations of workers with the explicit goal of supporting the clerical, capitalist regime and its management in the State sector of the economy, which was extensive thanks to the expropriations. Further, this policy created tensions and conflicts among workers, which allowed management and State officials to intervene. After the start of the Iran-Iraq war, workers' resistance to these and any other capitalist policies were labeled as "counter-revolutionary."

The Tudeh party and Fedayeen Majority asked their membership to identify themselves as Muslims and "followers of Imam." They even joined noon time prayers at workplaces. The Mujahedin and Fedayeen Minority and others who placed open struggle against Khomeini quickly came against a still substantial section of the workforce that still harbored illusions in



Khomeini and the Islamic Republic. These groups were quickly isolated given that they had no proposal for uniting workers as a revolutionary class. Their followers in factories were quickly fired or were forced to operate secretly.

In September 1980, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran. Khomeini called this "a divine gift." He and the Islamic Republic began an offensive to destroy the grassroots organizations and political parties. Workplaces, especially factories, were militarized. All workers' protests against the management or the State were called "counter-revolutionary." Soon after the war began, Khomeini heeded the demand by Ayatollah Golpaygani and Ayatollah Mar'ashi, two arch-conservative Shiite leaders, to discard a modest land reform bill in the Islamic parliament. Landowners went on an offensive against peasants.

Socialists and others who did not agree with the Islamic Republic but wanted to participate in the defense of the revolution against Saddam Hussein's army were expelled from the fronts. Meanwhile, the Iraqi army destroyed the oil industry in the South, thereby undermining the strongest section of the Iranian proletariat, the oil workers. In the villages, the Iraqi army executed members of the peasant councils.

At the same time, imperialist and monarchist terrorism provided additional opportunity for the regime to clamp down on political freedoms. The failure of socialist currents to join the fight against imperialist and monarchist terrorism and the increasingly systematic State repression undermined independent working-class organization and action.

In the summer of 1981, under blows from the Islamic Republic, the Mujahedin leadership decided to stage an "armed insurrection." This putsch failed quickly. The government used it to justify a murderous campaign to physically destroy the Mujahedin and the armed centrist groups such as the Fedayeen Minority. The Tudeh party and Fedayeen Majority helped the authorities in identifying and persecuting these groups whose members and sympathizers were routinely imprisoned, tortured and in the summer of 1981, executed. As a result, Mujahedin and Fedayeen Minority and other centrist groups retreated to Kurdistan, which still was not under the full control of the Islamic Republic. Most these groups eventually splintered and no significant organization remains today. The exception is the Mujahedin, who built a cult organization in the service of imperialism (the French, and later, American imperialism) and then organized an armed unit of several thousand to attack Iran from Iraq at the pleasure of Saddam Hussein.

After dealing a decisive blow to the labor movement, the Mujahedin, and centrist groups, all with the complicity of the Tudeh party and Fedayeen Majority, the government turned against them. Late in 1982, the government arrested the bulk of the Tudeh leadership and some of the Fedayeen Majority leadership. Some were tortured and executed. Others appeared on the State television to denounce Marxism, explain how they spied for the Soviet Union, and praise Khomeini and the Islamic Republic.

The combination of these Stalinist betrayals and centrist policies disoriented workers and the youth and facilitated capitalist attacks on the labor and mass movements. These led to demoralization of a generation of youth and working-class fighters well before the Soviet bloc collapsed.

By 1983, all grassroots organizations and socialist political currents were effectively destroyed in Iran.

(Above) Women march without head scarves in huge demonstration in Tehran on March 8, 1979, International Women's Day.

Khomeini pursued the fratricidal war with Iraq even after the Iranian army and volunteers had effectively driven the invading forces out in the spring of 1982. The war continued until 1988 when both sides were exhausted and over a million were killed or maimed. After 1988, the Islamic Republic began a massive economic offensive against the working class that continues to this date.

Lessons for today

The 1979 Iranian revolution could be gainfully compared to the 1917 Russian revolutions. In both revolutions workers and peasants brought down autocratic monarchies. Although the Bolsheviks' influence had indirectly prepared the workers, the February revolution in both countries triumphed without the leadership of any individual or party. In both revolutions, grassroots organizations of workers and peasants were formed: The soviets in Russia and the workers, peasants, and other popular councils in Iran. But here the similarities end.

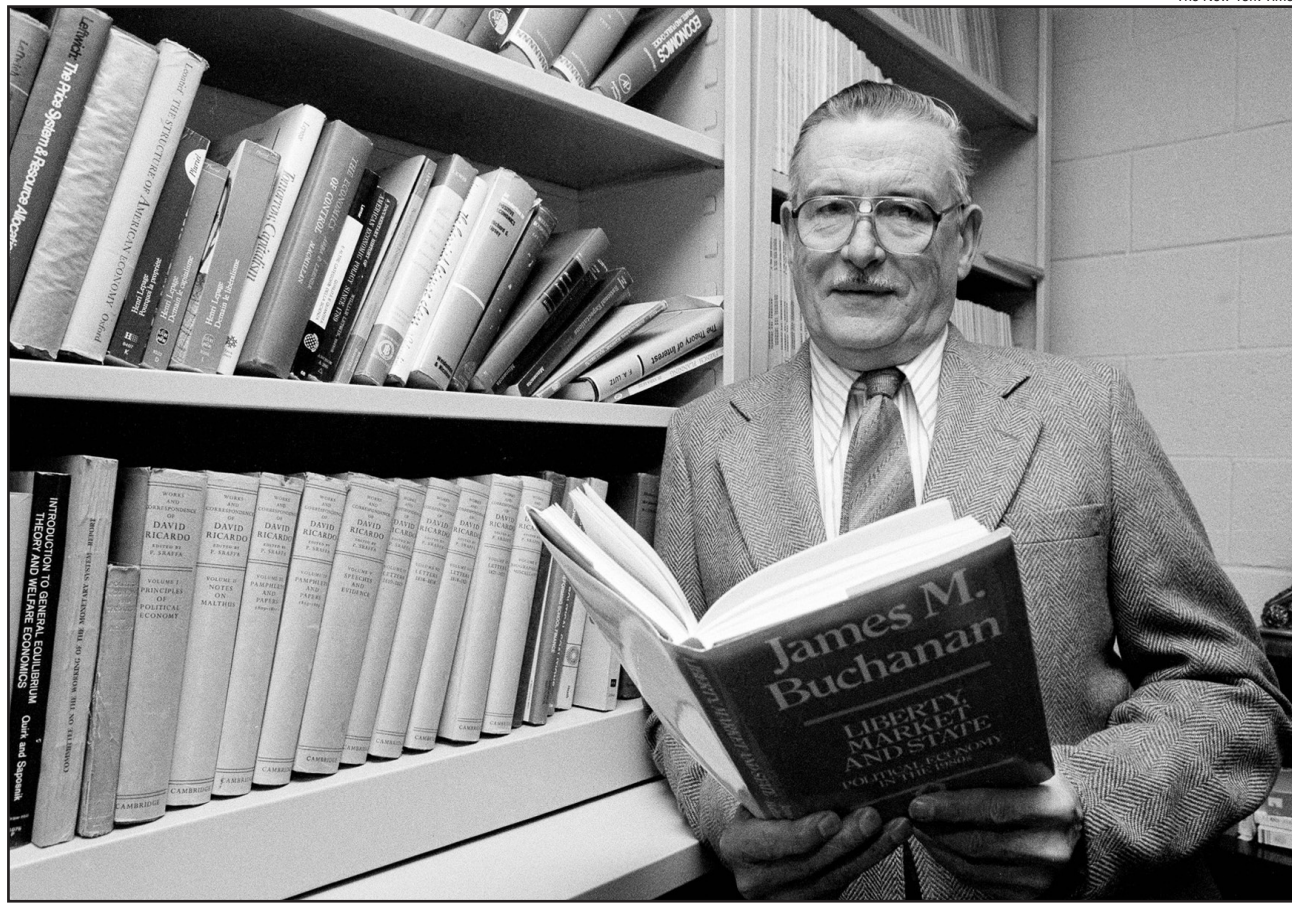
In Russia, Lenin recognized that proletarian character of the revolutionary process and educated and mobilized the Bolshevik party to fight for a government of the commune-type based on the soviets of workers, soldiers, and peasants deputies. In Iran, the Stalinist and centrist parties, much like the Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution, called for support to the capitalist Islamic Republic or other bourgeois forces within or outside of it (or organized their own sectarian, sometimes armed, campaigns). These class-collaborationist and sectarian policies were decisive in the defeat of the working class and the revolution.

Unfortunately, the experience of the Iranian Revolution is not unique. As noted, similar policies defeated the mass upsurge in Iran from 1945-53. Dozens of revolutions in the industrial capitalist countries and in the periphery have suffered a similar fate. With the demise of the soviets' power and the rise of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste, the Bolshevik program, strategy, and tradition were buried in favor of a new doctrine suitable to the conservative new elite. These policies were imposed on the young Communist parties, and those communists who opposed them were violently purged, sometimes murdered. Thus, the communist movement was defeated as a mass movement by the end of the 1920s.

The Marxist theory of socialism seeks human emancipation through self-organization and self-activity of the proletariat as the ruling class. This is also what Lenin stresses in "State and Revolution." The fundamental lesson of the Iranian Revolution is to return to this long lost treasure of working-class and socialist movements: to critically re-appropriate the Bolshevik legacy (which includes Trotsky's) in light of what Marx and Engels left us from their critical appropriation of the 19th-century struggle for socialism.

Marx's legacy is an open system, and the socialism of the 21st century will have to tackle new problems, most importantly the fight to the re-appropriation of nature in theory and practice as the basis of our humanity and a fundamental plank of Marxian socialism. However, to tackle new problems, it is imperative that we find the courage to learn from previous defeats and to revise the theory and tradition that has contributed to our victories. ■

The Lenin of Libertarianism



By CLIFF CONNER

Nancy MacLean, "Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America." Viking, 2017.

Who is James McGill Buchanan? He was a Nobel laureate in "economic sciences," but if his name is unfamiliar to you, you are not alone. He was not a publicity hound. He didn't broadcast his views far and wide because he never wanted them to be widely known. Buchanan believed that certain vital truths about the political world we inhabit should be hidden from public view.

Buchanan's secret truth was that democracy and liberty are incompatible, and that therefore democracy must be suppressed. After his death, his private papers revealed warnings to cothinkers that "conspiratorial secrecy is at all times essential."¹

We know about those private papers and their contents thanks to historian Nancy MacLean, whose "Democracy in Chains" has exposed them to the world and alerted us to the danger they represent. This remarkable book is based on a large trove of documents discovered among James M. Buchanan's private papers after his death in 2013. It is evident from their contents that Buchanan never intended for these documents to be made public.

Buchanan was a key figure in the development of today's powerful libertarian movement. Be advised: This is not your grandfather's libertarianism. If you still think of libertarianism as the quaintly eccentric blend of *laissez faire* economics with concerns such as privacy rights, civil liberties, and antimilitarism, you are behind the times. That old-time libertarianism has been marginalized by a hardcore, right-wing, enemy-of-humanity libertarianism fashioned by Buchanan and the Koch Brothers.

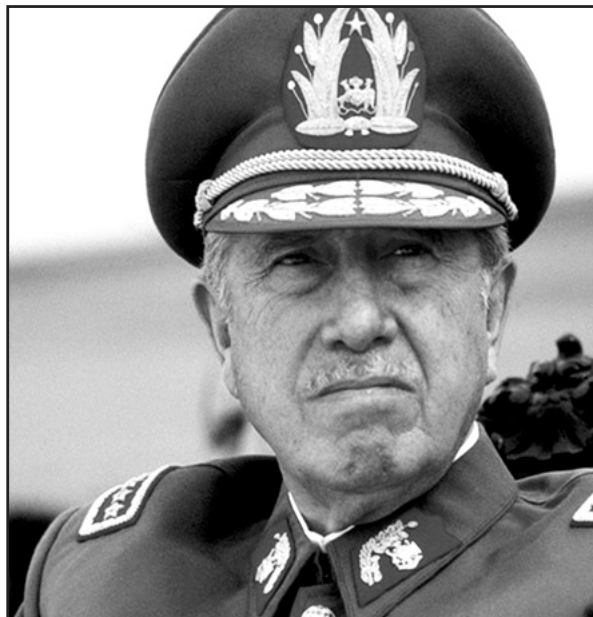
What "liberty" in libertarianism has come to mean

The well-funded libertarian movement today is the creation of self-interested billionaires, led by Charles and David Koch, who want above all else to decrease their taxes and minimize governmental regulation of their businesses. They disparage old-time "conventional libertarians" as impotent, and flaunt the hegemony of their own right-wing agenda.

When the hard-right libertarians trumpet their devotion to individual rights, it is code for *individual property rights* and has nothing to do with the *human rights* of the vast majority of individuals. In the new libertarian worldview, an individual without property has no rights.

Today's libertarians are single-mindedly devoted to "dismantling the administrative state." As anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist famously exclaimed, "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub."

If there is any lingering confusion regarding libertarian commitment to genuine individual freedom, it should be laid to rest by their interpretation of the



(Top) James M. Buchanan
(Below) Chilean dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

1973 Pinochet coup in Chile. To this day libertarian polemicists continue to hail that abominable crime against humanity as an "economic miracle" confirming the wisdom of free-market economic policy.

They claim that an economic revival following Augusto Pinochet's seizure of power was due to the guidance of *Los Chicago Boys*, Chilean economists who had been educated in free-market principles at the University of Chicago. The "miracle" they wrought was built upon the destruction of a vital labor movement requiring the murder and torture of tens of thousands of trade-unionists and their supporters. It was liberty for wealthy investors and property owners at the expense of the life, liberty, and happiness of the majority of the Chilean people.

As for the vaunted economic revival, its benefits flowed mainly to foreign investors and the Chilean upper classes. A United Nations report cites "a virtual explosion of poverty in both urban and rural areas" in Chile between 1970 and 1980, and attributes it in part to the "policy reforms under the authoritarian rule of the Pinochet regime."²

Libertarian apologists sometimes deny that they or *Los Chicago Boys* endorsed Pinochet's tyranny or his oppressive methods. But even if their denials were to be accepted at face value, the "Chilean miracle" dramatically refutes their ideological claim that free-market economics is synonymous with democracy and freedom.

The libertarians' love affair with the Pinochet dictatorship also exposes their greatest paradox. While denouncing "statism" and all governmental influence on the economy, they allow one enormous exception: They depend on the power of the state—in the Chilean example, a police state—to defend the property rights upon which their notion of "liberty" is based. American right-wing politicians are no less hypocriti-

cal in demanding the total destruction of governmental power while nurturing the most powerful military state—or "national security state"—the world has ever seen.

Makers versus takers

In 1980 Buchanan, who was also educated at the University of Chicago, was invited to Chile by the Pinochet regime to participate in drafting a new constitution for the country.

Buchanan's hardcore libertarian definition of liberty—the absolute freedom of entrepreneurs to run their businesses in any way they please—is not one most people would find satisfying. He knew that most Chileans would not be attracted to his profoundly antidemocratic program, so it would be a waste of time trying to achieve it openly, via the will of the majority.

"Despotism," Buchanan once wrote, "may be the only organizational alternative to the political structure that we observe."³ By "the political structure that we observe," he meant the system defined by the American constitution.

His service to the Pinochet regime demonstrated a willingness to embrace despotism that was not merely hypothetical. Buchanan helped the Chilean "alliance of capital and the armed forces" create a legal framework to eliminate the trade unions, privatize the social security and healthcare systems, constrain governmental regulatory power, and destroy the public education system.⁴

The extremism of Buchanan's views might be more astonishing if they had not already become part of the national discourse in the United States. Mitt Romney created a stir during his 2012 campaign for the U.S. presidency when remarks he thought would remain private were leaked to the public. In those comments,

Romney complained that 47 percent of the American people "pay no income tax," are "dependent on government," "believe the government has a responsibility to care for them," and "believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it."⁵

Romney's views were in perfect harmony with Buchanan's, although the latter would surely have put the percentage way higher than 47. In Buchanan's worldview, the population is divided into *makers* and *takers*. The makers are the productive classes—owners of capital whose profit-making activities expand the national economy—and the takers are the indolent masses. To Buchanan, any taxation that redistributes wealth from the makers to the takers is a downright immoral form of robbery, and any governmental attempt to regulate the makers' businesses is a criminal violation of their liberty.

The economic history of the world is indeed a story of takers robbing makers, but Buchanan's odious interpretation has the relationship upside-down and backwards. The great wealth of the United States was founded first of all on agricultural production created by the unpaid labor of African slaves, and secondarily on the industrial production of the underpaid labor of industrial workers. A small number of Southern plantation owners and Northern manufacturers amassed fabulous fortunes by appropriating the profits those laborers produced. Who, then, were really the makers and who were the takers?

The ill-gotten wealth of the exploiters of labor allowed them to gain political control, limit the franchise of the laborers, and create a legal system to consolidate their system of economic injustice. Adding insult to injury, the slaveholders and Robber Barons justified their conquest by propagating ideologies, from Social Darwinism to libertarianism, that denied and devalued the laborers' role in creating the modern economy.

To appreciate the sheer audacity of Buchanan's perversion of history, consider the plight of the former slaves after the U.S. Civil War. Having been forcibly *taken* from their homelands, having had their labor violently *taken* from them for decades, and being left in dire poverty in the post-war South, many were dependent on barebones federal assistance for survival. That made them, in Buchanan's eyes, contemptible "takers."

The Lenin of libertarianism?

What places Buchanan among the most dangerous of the right-wing ideologues is that he not only professed anti-democratic ideas; he devised strategies to successfully implement them. He was a social engineer who found ways to turn libertarian theory into public policy. It has been suggested that as the movement's key cadre-builder, Buchanan was to libertarianism what Lenin was to Marxist socialism.

Buchanan took the ideas he learned from his Chicago School mentors to the University of Virginia and

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created a more extreme Virginia School of economics. Its institutional expression was the Thomas Jefferson Center for Studies in Political Economy, which he founded in 1957 to develop “a line of new thinkers” to challenge the “increasing role of government in economic and social life.”⁶ That was to be accomplished by a “constitutional revolution” that would covertly rewrite the rules of the American economy to enrich the few at the expense of the many. Among its primary ambitions were the total elimination of the social security, public health, and public school systems.

Buchanan stated privately that the study center was named after Thomas Jefferson to deflect attention from the “extreme views” that were “the real purpose of the program.” This was the embryo of the modern libertarian intellectual movement. He envisioned the creation of a “counter-intelligentsia” backed by a “vast network of political power” to replace the existing establishment intellectuals.⁷ He thus provided the blueprint for today’s powerful array of libertarian think tanks and their army of paid academics, lobbyists, and politicians.

Buchanan was fully aware, however, that his plans would have languished on the drawing board without the material support necessary to put them into practice. Attracting that support was part of his master plan. In 1983, he reconstituted his academic institute at George Mason University, renaming it the Center for Study of Public Choice. George Mason University, identified in the Wall Street Journal as “the Pentagon of conservative academia,”⁸ was the ideal venue for Buchanan’s operation.

GMU has sometimes been referred to as *Koch U*. due to its position “at the center of the Koch college universe.”⁹ When Buchanan’s strategy for totally annihilating the government’s influence over the economy gained the support of Charles and David Koch, the counter-intelligentsia of their shared dreams began to become a reality.

The Koch brothers have donated tens of millions of dollars to George Mason University and to Buchanan’s Center for the Study of Public Choice, which trained the young intellectuals who would fill the Koch think tanks and become speechwriters for Koch-financed congressmen. Eventually, tactical disagreements led the impatient billionaire brothers to force Buchanan out and take direct control of the research center. If Buchanan had been the movement’s Lenin, the Kochs became its Stalin (all proportions guarded, of course).

Buchanan’s first research institute was created in the mid-1950s to provide ideological cover for the defiance of federal orders to desegregate the public schools. Two years after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954 declared segregationist state laws unconstitutional, Buchanan presented the University of Virginia with a plan to mobilize its intellectual resources in defense of the state’s white supremacist institutions. University officials agreed, and in 1957 the Thomas Jefferson Center for Studies in Political Economy was born.

Buchanan was careful not to frame the Center’s mission in explicitly racial terms. Instead, it threw the weight of “economic science” behind the familiar States Rights argument that the federal government had no right to usurp the authority of Virginia’s legislature and assert dictatorial control over Virginia institutions. When it became obvious that the States Rights position would not prevail, Buchanan proposed that Virginia should privatize its school system and do away with public education altogether.

De jure segregation eventually ended in Virginia and the rest of the United States, but, as economist Mar-

shall Steinbaum has observed, “the racist stench attached to Buchanan’s intellectual projects and that of his heirs” endured.¹⁰ And destroying the public school system, which taxes “makers” to benefit “takers,” remained a central plank of Buchanan’s ideological platform to the end of his days.

As I was writing this account of Buchanan’s words and deeds, a headline popped up on my computer’s news feed: “219 Republican House Members Just Voted to Cut Medicaid, Medicare, and Public Education to Give Tax Breaks to Millionaires and Corporations.”¹¹ The U.S. House of Representatives had voted 219 to 208 to approve a national budget proposal that would cut more than *five trillion dollars*—\$5,800,000,000,000—from health care, education, environmental protection, services for children and the disabled, scientific research, the arts, and other federal programs that are essential to human wellbeing.

This was a timely reminder of the real-world consequences of Buchanan’s abominable “makers and takers” ideology and the misery it has already inflicted on American society. While the draconian budget cuts had not at that time achieved the force of law, they provided a clear indication of how deeply the libertarian cancer had already pervaded the body politic. Although Buchanan’s full program of completely eliminating all beneficial social programs has not yet been accomplished, its partial fulfillment has already damaged or destroyed millions of human lives.

Buchanan’s antipathy to public education was not only due to its cost but to its function as an essential pillar of a democratic, self-governing society. That a majority of elected representatives in the U.S. Congress could vote to transfer trillions of dollars from the social majority to a relative handful of super-wealthy individuals further indicates how successful Buchanan’s well-funded strategy to undermine American democracy has been.

How scientific is Buchanan’s “economic science?”

The official name of the honor Buchanan received in 1986 is “The Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences,” but his practice of the discipline made a mockery of the very notion of economics as a science.

Buchanan’s economics research centers have long been recognized not as institutes of independent thought but as partisan propaganda mills. The “science” they promote is not founded on objective premises but on the moral judgment that the vast majority of human beings are economic parasites on the capitalist class. The notion that the world’s poor are stealing the billionaires’ lunch money is so contrary to reason that without the funding of self-interested billionaires it would be unlikely to attract many followers.

Beyond its fundamental irrationality, Buchanan’s economic ideology is unscientific in its *a priorism* and reductionism. *A priorism* is the method characteristic of Aristotelian science, the rejection of which was the central achievement of the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries.

When, for example, Buchanan was confronted with empirical evidence that raising the minimum wage does not create unemployment, he rejected it out of hand on the basis that it contradicts *laissez faire* theory. To allow such a possibility, he angrily responded, is “equivalent to a denial that there is even minimal



(Above) Buchanan’s first research institute, at the University of Virginia, was founded to provide ideological cover for efforts to thwart federal desegregation attempts in the 1950s.

scientific content in economics.”¹² On the latter point I find myself in agreement with him.

As for reductionism, Buchanan’s “Public Choice Theory” reduces real-world economic decision-making to the sterile abstractions of mathematical game theory. In a universe where human beings always act like purely self-interested automatons, game theory could perhaps offer some useful insights into economic behavior. But Buchanan applies mathematical models based on misanthropic assumptions about human nature to complex social interactions.

Nancy MacLean describes the hypothetical social order from which Public Choice theorists deduced their axioms as one in which “individuals always acted to advance their personal economic self-interest rather than collective goals for the common good.” Buchanan and his fellow theorists, she writes, were simply conducting “thought experiments, or hypothetical scenarios with no true research—no facts—to support them, while the very terms of their analysis denied such motives as compassion, fairness, solidarity, generosity, justice, and sustainability.”¹³

In brief, Buchanan’s method is of no scientific value at all. It is designed not to attain new knowledge about economics, but to justify an economic system of vast material inequality.

“Democracy in Chains” is a must-read for all people engaged in the struggle for social justice. No matter how well you think you already *know thine enemy*, I predict—based on my own experience—that you have much more to learn from this book. ■

1 Quoted by MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*, from a February 1973 typescript conference-planning document by Buchanan bearing the title “The Third Century Movement.”

2 Oscar Altimir, “Income Distribution and Poverty through Crisis and Adjustment,” *CEPAL Review*, December 2008. [CEPAL is the Spanish acronym for the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.]

3 James M. Buchanan, *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (2000); quoted by MacLean.

4 MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*.

5 Video clip: “Mitt Romney Fundraising Comments on Video in Boca Raton,” C-Span, *c-span.org*, May 17, 2012.

6 Buchanan, “Working Papers for Internal Discussion Only,” December 1956; quoted by MacLean.

7 James M. Buchanan, “America’s Third Century,” *Atlantic Economic Journal*, November 1973; quoted by MacLean.

8 Lawrence Mone, “Thinkers and Their Think Tanks Move on Washington,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 1988; cited by MacLean.

9 David Levinthal, “Koch Brothers’ Higher-Ed Investments Advance Political Goals,” Center for Public Integrity, *publicintegrity.org*, Nov. 4, 2015.

10 Marshall Steinbaum, “The Book That Explains Charlottesville,” *Boston Review*, *bostonreview.net*, Aug. 14, 2017.

11 *Common Dreams*, *commondreams.org*, Oct. 5, 2017.

12 From a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed of April 1996; quoted in Steinbaum, “The Book That Explains Charlottesville.”

13 MacLean, *Democracy in Chains*.

... Alabama

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2011 fiscal year, more than \$150 billion of which funded continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.” In contrast, said *The Times*, Trump’s war budget expenditures were only \$626 billion, of which only \$66 billion were earmarked for foreign wars. “Adjusted for inflation,” *The Times* added with delight, “the gap” between Obama’s spending and Trump’s “would be greater still.”

The Times article continued with refutations of Trump’s claims to be breaking new paths with regard to “border security,” quoting a range of sources to prove that Obama was world class in this category as well. Need we mention that Obama, the “great deporter,” had deported more people than the combined totals of all previous modern-era presidents? Doug Jones’s objection to Trump’s \$20 billion anti-immigrant border wall proposal was only that it was “too expensive.”

Today’s Democratic Party purveyors of lesser-evil politics, with Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and other warmongering capitalist liberals in the wings, are hailed by virtually every major corporate newspaper in the country. Doug Jones’s victory was touted as a harbinger of the hopeful glorious return of the Democrats to power, starting in 2018.

Once again we are heading for a deadly dose of lesser evilism, this time around in the context of a deeply crisis-ridden casino capitalism, with no way out for the ruling rich other than through unprecedented financial speculation (the Dow Jones reached an historic high at 25,000!) and an ever-deepening across the board rip-off of working people and the oppressed.

The virulent racism and sexism that has been stunningly exposed only through the courage, activism, and mobilization of its victims, is not an accidental feature of U.S. society today. It is inherent in the very foundations of the capitalist order. The recently exposed sexist horrors perpetuated against women by rich and powerful figures are the norm, not the ex-

ception in every capitalist society.

The increasingly privatized for-profit racist prison-industrial complex is a prime example. The majority Black, Latino, and Native American prison population is increasingly sold to private corporations at “wages” averaging 50 cents per hour. Why hire an immigrant when a near-slave Black prisoner can be had for less than a tenth of the cost?

If there ever was a time for the country’s working masses to break with capitalist politics in all its manifestations, now is that time. The need to return to the streets in unprecedented numbers in massive mobilizations independent of and against the twin parties’ war and repression has never been greater. The time for the construction of a massive independent and fighting labor party, organized and financed by working people and in alliance with all the oppressed, is now. The ruling-class one percent has two parties. Working people need one of their own, a party that fights 24-7 for their cause in the political arena, in the streets, and at the points of production. ■

Doug Jones vs. Roy Moore Lesser evilism wins in Alabama

By JEFF MACKLER

“Our opponent,” said Kayla Moore, wife of the now defeated Republican Party U.S. Senate candidate in Alabama, “who is an ultra-liberal, who was an Obama delegate, who is for full-term abortions, who is for more gun restrictions, who is for transgender bathrooms, who is for transgender [people] in the military—is against everything we in Alabama believe and stand for.”

“Opponent” Doug Jones, who on Dec. 12 became the first Alabama Democrat elected to the Senate in 25 years, replied, “If you look at the positions I’ve got on health care, if you look at the positions I got on jobs, you should look at the support I have from the business community, I think I’m pretty mainstream. I want to reach across the aisle...”

Jones often explained his reference to the “aisle” with a story about two Civil War generals, one from Maine, the other from the slave state of Alabama. They faced off at the historic Battle of Gettysburg. Then we were on different sides, he explains. Today we must work together, “across the aisle.” This was Jones’s way of appealing to at least some of the Southern racist bigots needed for his victory.

The not so perfect and clean newcomer Jones favors increased spending on the military. He also is quite frank on the abortion issue, stating, “I fully support a woman’s freedom to choose what happens to her own body. That is an intensely, intensely personal decision that only she, *in consultation with her god, her doctor, her partner or family, that’s her choice*” (emphasis added).

For many Alabama voters, the “mainstream” Jones served as the “lesser evil” next to the evangelical racist-sexist Judge Roy Moore, who was backed by Donald Trump and Steve Bannon. Moore was accused by multiple women of pursuing relationships with them when they were teenagers and he was in his 30s. Some of them accused Moore of sexual abuse.

In 2003 Moore was removed as Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court by the Alabama Court of the Judiciary for refusing a federal court order to remove a marble monument of the Ten Commandments he had installed in the lobby of the Alabama Judicial Building. He often presented his view that the Sept. 11, 2001, New York City Twin Towers terror bombing was the Lord’s divine punishment for America’s “blasphemous” toleration of homosexuality and women’s right to choose abortion. I can only wonder if Moore’s 9/11 wrath was directed at New Yorkers because they live in the North as opposed to his beloved racist South.

One would think that Moore’s outrageous views would serve as a major handicap, even in today’s Deep South. The Alabama Senate race came to national attention when the Democrats saw a wide-open opportunity to pick up a Senate seat from the very vulnerable Republican sexist bigot. Yet, Moore almost won, receiving 72 percent of the white male vote and 63 percent of the white female vote. It was only the massive Black vote, well over 90 percent, combined with disgruntled Republicans whose usually stuffed campaign coffers did not fully materialize, that defeated him.

Doug Jones, a 1997 Clinton-appointed U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Alabama in Birmingham, had previously been the lead prosecutor in a 1992 case against two of the four Ku Klux Klan members responsible for the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombing that killed four African-American girls. Thomas Edwin Blanton Jr. and Bobby Frank Cherry were found guilty of those murders in 2001 and 2002, respectively. Each was sentenced to four life terms.

“Justice” was done in Alabama, almost three decades after the murders! Never having held elected office, Doug Jones was slated as the man of the hour. Few, if any, corporate mainstream reporters were



(Left) Democratic Senator Doug Jones.

for the former Southern slaveholders’ agreeing to vote Republican in a future election.

The Lyndon Johnson-era civil rights legislation was qualitatively more a product and of the massive civil rights mobilizations led by Southern Blacks than it was the largess of Johnson, who was a Texas segregationist in his own right—a property owner with codicils included in his property deeds to ensure that his land could not be sold to Blacks.

Johnson had come to the presidency as John F. Kennedy’s vice president after the Kennedy assassination. In those days the Democrats’ “strategy” was to win the presidency with a combination of a “liberal” Northerner for president and a racist Southern Democrat in the V.P. slot.

The Democrats’ answer to Nixon’s “Southern strategy” was to switch to running a Democrat of Southern racist heritage for the top spot and a Northern liberal for V.P. Hence, the more recent Democratic Party candidacies of Jimmy Carter (Georgia), Al Gore (Tennessee), and Bill Clinton (Arkansas)—all slick-sounding refurbished Southerners with deep roots in the racist South. The then segregationist Carter, for example, was among those pro-Nixon Democrats.

In the 1960s, the “lesser-evilist” Democrats and “progressives” of that era winced at the inclusion of openly Klan racists on their tickets but insisted that the Republicans, like Barry Goldwater, were far worse.

Today, the lesser-evil swindle is being played out big time, with the Democrats gearing up for an image change in preparation for 2018 and then 2020, when they promise to challenge Trump’s increasingly discredited racist, sexist, populist, proto-fascist tirades. Trump’s \$1.5 trillion tax rip off, opposition hype aside, was a bipartisan affair.

This time out, to be sure, the rhetoric will be modified, but the content of all twin party ruling-class politics will differ little, if at all, from the reactionary achievements of the Trump administration. Indeed, the chief Democratic Party media booster, *The New York Times*, recently challenged Trump’s boasts to be top gun with regard to “border security” and war spending. In a Dec. 19 “Fact Check” article entitled, “He’s Not the ‘First,’ And It’s Not a ‘Record,’” *The Times* countered Trump’s braggadocio with their own facts.

“President Barack Obama,” they stated, “signed a defense authorization bill of \$725 billion for the

inclined to review the South’s political history prior to this election contest—25 Republican years since the last Democrat was elected was history enough. The fact that it was only in 1968, when Republican presidential candidate Richard Nixon’s infamous “Southern strategy” was deployed, that the South turned decisively to the Republicans was not mentioned. Nixon campaigned in the South for “states’ rights,” the code words of Southern Democratic Party segregationists who desired a return to the good ol’ days of overt racist white rule and “legal” segregation.

Nixon’s focus in the South was against Democratic Party President Lyndon Johnson’s 1964 civil rights legislation that formally, but not until decades later in fact, ended, or better, *limited* legal segregation. Under Nixon and his Republican successors, the virulent racist “solid South” bloc of racist Democratic Party Senators and Congresspersons became the virulent racist “solid South,” and today “red state,” terrain of the Republican Party.

Few today care to note that the Democrats originally arose as the party of post-Civil War plantation owners and Southern capitalists who smashed the post Civil War Reconstruction-era gains won by Blacks by utilizing their created organizations like the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Councils.

All of the racist re-segregation legislation with regard to the obliteration of civil and democratic rights won following the Civil War were the product of the former racist slaveholders’ new political vehicle, the Democratic Party coming to power with the consent of the former Northern Republican slave state “liberators.”

Indeed, an infamous deal was cut wherein Northern occupying troops would be withdrawn in return

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