

French workers and students on strike!



Christophe Enn / AP

By **MARTY GOODMAN**

In a massive display of working-class power, workers throughout France walked off the job on March 22 and on April 3. The strike wave is aimed at the anti-working-class attacks of the neoliberal French president, Emmanuel Macron.

The recent series of strikes gained tremendous force on March 22, when over 500,000 demonstrators marched in the streets—65,000 in Paris alone. Thousands upon thousands of teachers, nurses, and other workers joined rail staff on strike.

Some are comparing the attacks on workers in France today with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's war on coal miners in 1984—meant to seriously cripple the entire labor movement. "We need to rid this country of its strike culture," said a very nervous Gabriel Attal, a spokesman for French President Emmanuel Macron's neoliberal political party, Republic on the Move.

Phillippe Martinez, head of the CGT (General Confederation of Labor), said, "they've decided to break the Code du Travail [the massive French labor rights code]. There will be fewer rights for workers."

In recent weeks, an amazingly wide array of the French working class has mobilized against the attacks. In addition to the powerful rail, airline, and postal workers' unions, others have struck too—nurses, students, refuse workers, energy, supermarket employees facing layoffs, and lawyers angry over the centralization and "streamlining" of the court system. Students have gone on strike at a dozen university campuses and have joined with workers in mass demonstrations.

Rail unions have projected a series of 36 rail strikes beginning April 3 and lasting through June 28. The strategy calls for striking two days out of every five during that period. Thousands of rail workers met in a spontaneous rank-and-file general assembly in Paris on March 22, where they discussed further

(Above) Striking rail workers gather at the Gare de l'Est in Paris before joining March 22 protest.

steps to deepen their struggle.

Four of the unions on the SNCF rail system observed the April 3 strike. Some 77% of SNCF drivers and 34% of its staff were striking, but unions gave a higher figure of 60% or more striking on the first day. Only 40% of high-speed TGV trains and only around a third of commuter trains were running. One in five regional trains were operating.

About 30% of short-haul to medium haul flights out of Paris airports were canceled. In Nice, up to 50% of flights were scrapped. Airline workers, fighting for a 6% raise, are scheduled to strike April 7, April 10, and April 11. Air France workers have not received a raise since 2011. Two company executives had their shirts ripped-off during protests in

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Massacre in Gaza as Israeli troops fire on protesters

By STEVE XAVIER

At least 18 Palestinians are dead and more than 1700 injured after Israeli forces opened fire on peaceful protesters gathered at the Gaza border fence with southern Israel.

The event was timed to mark the anniversary of Land Day, commemorating the 1976 killing of six Palestinians taking part in mass protests against Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land.

The March 30 protest was the beginning of a 45-day nonviolent mobilization called "The Great March of Return," demanding that Palestinians be allowed to return to their lands from which they were expelled or fled when Israel took them over in 1948.

The protest is due to end on May 15, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Israeli state, or the Nakba (catastrophe). Israel says that it is ready to respond with force against future protests as well.

On Good Friday, 30,000 Palestinians massed at the border between the embattled Palestinian territory and Israel. In the days leading up to the protest, Israeli military spokesmen promised violence, despite assurances that the mobilization would be nonviolent. Israel massed tanks and troops on the border, including 100 snipers. The attack on the protest included the use of drones to drop tear gas on the protesters.

At least one of the dead is a farmer who was assassinated by a tank shell as he worked in his field. There was not a single injury on the Israeli side, illustrating the one-sided nature of this massacre.



U.S. media have reported the massacre as "clashes" between Israelis and Palestinians. A clash implies two equally matched forces in conflict. This is an obvious misuse of language to imply violence on both sides in order to justify this criminal massacre.

The current situation in Gaza is a human rights disaster. The Israelis have imposed a full blockade on Gaza, restricting access by land, air, and sea. There are only two legal crossing points out of Gaza—Beit Hanoun into Israel and Rafah into Egypt. Both crossings are kept tightly controlled and remain mostly closed with few exceptions.

Israeli bombing has targeted infrastructure and destroyed homes,

schools, and medical facilities. The blockade makes rebuilding impossible and unemployment is high—close to 50 percent overall and much higher among the youth. Hunger and poverty are rampant. Children, of course, suffer the most.

While Israel formally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, their effective clampdown on the territory has turned Gaza into what can only be termed an open-air prison. Moreover, Israel consistently violates the human rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are treated as second-class citizens.

The U.S. blocked adoption of a statement by the UN Security Council ex-

pressing "sorrow" at the massacre.

Earlier in March, the United Nations Human Rights Council condemned Israeli violations of human rights, sparking a backlash from the U.S. foreign policy establishment, which accused the council of bias. Trump's UN ambassador, Nikki Haley, threatened U.S. withdrawal from the body. The U.S. government, including both major capitalist political parties, consistently provides aid and comfort to Israel.

The UN criticized Israel over settlements in the Occupied Territories, saying that settlements are "fundamentally threatening the Palestinians' right to self-determination." The UN also criticizes Israel for restricting freedom of movement, violating the right to education, and freedom of religion. Israel is also criticized for attacking the right to access land and water, and for undermining of basic economic rights.

These violations of Palestinians' rights create the framework for the apartheid state of Israel's attempt to annex the Occupied Territories.

Socialists call for the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people. We support the formation of a democratic, secular Palestine with equal rights for all. All political prisoners must be freed immediately. We call for an end to all military and economic aid to Israel and the cessation of all illegal settlement building.

We call for Israeli occupation forces and settlers to stop the destruction of crops and homes.

We demand an end to the occupation and opening the borders of the open-air prison that is Gaza. ■

JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: April 3, 2018
 Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor.



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

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- BUFFALO, NY: wmysocialist@google.com
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, chisocialistaction@yahoo.com
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: adamritscher@yahoo.com, www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com
- KANSAS CITY: kcsa@workernet.org (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE, KY: redlotus51@yahoo.com, (502) 451-2193
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, socialistaction@visi.com
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: (267) 989-9035 organizer.philly@gmail.com
 Facebook: Red Philly

- PROVIDENCE: ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM (401) 952-5385
- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET (971) 312-7369
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com, (202) 286-5493

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
socialistactioncanada@gmail.com
 (647) 986-1917
<http://www.socialistaction.ca/>

Teachers' strikes: The rank and file take the lead

By MARK BRUNT

Across the country, teachers have taken West Virginia's lead after a successful wildcat strike. In Kentucky, legislators passed a teacher pension reform bill, and, although a strike on the specific day was not planned, so many teachers called out on March 30 that 20 counties were forced to close schools. They remained out the following week.

In Oklahoma, legislators passed a bill to increase teacher pay that they hoped would put an end to strike talk. But teachers were not solely concerned about their own income; on Facebook, teachers from Oklahoma posted photos of decrepit textbooks that still referred to George W. Bush as the current president. Teachers walked out on April 2 and, as of this writing, have yet to return. In Jersey City, teachers struck for a single day before a new contract was negotiated. Teachers in Arizona are aggressively talking about striking.

Oklahoma teachers are among the lowest paid in the entire country, and around 20 percent of the school districts are so underfunded that they have cut back to a four-day school week. Meanwhile, the state legislature is seeking to redirect a billion dollars in funding to building two new prisons. While students suffer, Oklahoma's incarceration rate ranks second in the nation.

Educators across the country have taken the lead over their unions. By and large, union officials have tailed behind rank-and-file organizing. Walkouts have been organized on Facebook and other social media platforms. In West Virginia, teachers refused to return to work even after union leaders called for an end to the strike.

The timing of the wave of strikes couldn't be more appropriate. In oral arguments before the Supreme Court on *Janus v. AFSCME*, in which right-wing forces are seeking to undermine unions by striking down direct collection of agency fees, union attorney David Frederick warned that a ruling in favor of *Janus* could "raise an untold specter of labor unrest throughout the country."

Frederick's words proved to be even more prescient than he likely intended. Indeed, the original ruling in favor of agency fees, in *Abood v. Detroit*, was largely a concession by the capitalist class in the hopes of weakening one of labor's strongest weapons—the strike. By mandating agency fees, the state reasoned, unions would no longer have to be militant in order to attract members. And while agency fees did, in fact, strengthen union protections for public-sector workers, it also minimized union militancy, and created a relative peace between labor and capital.

Frederick's warning that labor unrest, always bubbling beneath the surface of American society, could resurface was meant to frighten the Supreme Court justices on the grounds that striking down agency



fees could lead to new, radicalizing unions. But if the justices need to see the possibilities of labor unrest, they need look no further than teachers, especially those in conservative states, who have consistently been targeted since the Reagan era.

Teachers are the largest group of public union workers in America, and yet their pay, benefits, and overall respect are a constant target for the right wing and the political establishment. The strike in West Virginia was the turning of a tide. Striking primarily over health insurance premiums, teachers took to the streets, and refused to go back even when their union bureaucrats accepted a deal that was substantially less than what the rank and file had demanded. The unwillingness of rank-and-file teachers to simply obey the edicts of the bureaucracy and politicians announced that the power of labor is not dead and buried. The wildcat strike went on to win far greater concessions than the union had previously been offered.

Oklahoma teachers also threatened on Facebook to drop their union membership in response to the union bureaucracy's willingness to accept a lesser deal. While Socialist Action does not endorse dropping union membership, we recognize that this is a sign of the threat of labor unrest and the rising of the sleeping giant of increasingly hard-pressed workers, no longer prepared to submit to what Lenin called,

(Above) Teachers and students rally at Capitol in Oklahoma City, April 2.

"labor lieutenants of the capitalist class," meaning bureaucrats whose primary purpose is to preserve stability at the expense of workers' interests. Socialist Action encourages workers to struggle to make their unions fully democratic, as fighting institutions that are answerable to the needs of the membership.

Perhaps most interestingly, these strikes are taking place predominantly in deep "red" states. They represent the power of the working class to make gains, even against the most reactionary elements of the ruling class. Demands in West Virginia were not won against progressive reformers, but against the forced hands of conservative lawmakers who had no choice in the face of a conscious and confident workforce. This model can be applied everywhere. No governing body is too reactionary for militant labor action to succeed.

The wave of teacher strikes has the power to fundamentally alter the face of labor in the United States. Is the era of "labor peace" over? We have yet to see for sure. But the willingness of public-sector workers, especially some of the most targeted and demoralized in the country, to walk out even against the orders of labor bureaucrats is indisputably a turning point. ■

Graduate employees sit in at UConn

By UCONN YOUTH FOR SOCIALIST ACTION

Since Oct. 19, 2017, University of Connecticut's Graduate Employee Union-UAW Local 6950 has been in negotiations with the university administration for a second collective bargaining agreement. Under the leadership of university President Susan Herbst's administration and the state appointed Board of Directors, the university has hired the union-busting law firm McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP, all the way from New Jersey to represent UConn's "interests."

On the table are hard-won gains and protections from the first contract, including annual raises, affordable health-care, employee child care, and contractual safeguards against sexual harassment.

Reflecting the international wave of labor militancy shown through teacher strikes in West Virginia, New Jersey, and in Europe, an estimated 150 members of the GEU occupied administrative building Guley Hall. The sit-in was full of energetic chants and affirmations of the value of their work to the university and the necessity of unionization.

The university is unjustifiably threat-



ening to substantially increase premiums for members, which would make health insurance prohibitively expensive for many workers.

One graduate assistant told his comrades how he had four herniated disks the previous semester, and thanks to the protections won in the first union contract, he was not only able to afford spinal surgery, but also keep his job. Another GEU member told how she was able to begin seeing a mental health profes-

sional because of the union's affordable, quality health insurance. A third simply stated, "I cannot pay double premiums because that money will be cut from my food." The average annual salary of UConn graduate employees before taxes and student fees is \$20,000, and some make \$16,000 or less.

Working conditions at the University of Connecticut are indicative of the general situation in higher education. While a very small proportion of the faculty

holds protected tenure positions at relatively high wages, the vast majority of educational labor is done by adjuncts and graduate employees making less than minimum wage.

On the surface, the public university seems like an apolitical space, yet it is conditioned by capital. Administrators like Susan Herbst are representatives of the capitalists and their state, mediating subsidies to corporate research through federal grants, state investment, and similar initiatives. Workers' organizations like the GEU, then, are big thorns in the side of capital as a whole.

In this context, the efforts of the administration against the union make perfect sense. So too does the partnership between the president's office and the campus police, who made a barrier between the demonstrators and Herbst, despite her having open office hours.

As one GEU member noted, if TAs were to prematurely cancel office hours to avoid dealing with students, they would surely be reprimanded. The police also guarded all entrances to the building, preventing anyone from joining the sit-in, even though they openly admitted that Guley Hall was not at holding capacity.

UConn's Youth for Socialist Action group stands with our graduate employee members and mentors for a good contract and a fighting union! ■



(Left) Police mug shot of rapper Meek Mill, arrested and assaulted by Officer Reginald Graham, who is accused of robbery.

Philadelphia district attorney reveals 'do not call' list

By JOHN LESLIE

On March 6, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner revealed the identities of 29 current and former cops deemed too corrupt, racist, or unreliable to be called to testify in court. An additional 37 Philadelphia police, with various legal issues that would constrain prosecutors from using them in court cases, were also named. At least nine of the "do not call" list are still active-duty police.

Several notable names are on the list of 29: **Reginald Graham**, currently retired, who was investigated by federal authorities. Graham was the original arresting officer in rap star Meek Mill's case, and Mill's attorney has filed a motion alleging perjury by Graham; **Ryan Pownall**, who murdered David Jones in 2017, shooting him in the back as he fled from police on his dirt bike. The shooting of Jones was not the first time Pownall shot a fleeing suspect in the back.

Michael Spicer was one of six narcotics squad cops tried and acquitted for official corruption. All six were later reinstated. Since his reinstatement, Spicer has been promoted to the rank of sergeant. **Eric Snell** is awaiting trial on drug charges flowing from the Baltimore police corruption case reported in the last issue of *Socialist Action*.

In May 2015, six Philly narcotics officers, Thomas Licardello, Brian Reynolds, Michael Spicer, Perry Betts, Linwood Norman, and John Speiser were found not guilty in a federal trial. They had been accused of faking and planting evidence, theft of drugs and money, and of framing suspects. A seventh officer, Jeffrey Walker, took a plea deal and agreed to testify against the others. After their acquittal, the six got their jobs back. (One was later dismissed for failing a drug test.) Of the six, Spicer is the only on the "do not call" list.

Philadelphia is not the only locale where district attorneys have lists of police who potentially will not be

used to testify in court because of a history of violence, corruption, racism, or other legal issues. King County, Wash., a jurisdiction covering Seattle and surrounding cities, has a list of as many as 214 questionable current or former cops. Snohomish County, Wash., has a list of 43 police ineligible to testify. The majority are no longer on the job. In San Diego, the DA's office acknowledges the existence of a list but has not named who is on it.

Some prosecutors have referred to cops on these types of lists as "Brady cops"—meaning that the potential for violations of *Brady v. Maryland* exist in these cases. In *Brady*, the Supreme Court ruled that defendants must be told about potentially exculpatory evidence in criminal cases, including questions about police witness credibility. It is mind-boggling that the so-called justice system can on the one hand name cops as too corrupt to testify and then keep these same cops on the streets.

The problem of police repression in Philadelphia is, of course, linked to the broader question of mass incarceration and the racist character of the "justice" system under capitalism. Philadelphia has an arrest rate that is double that of other cities and the highest incarceration rate in the Northeastern United States.

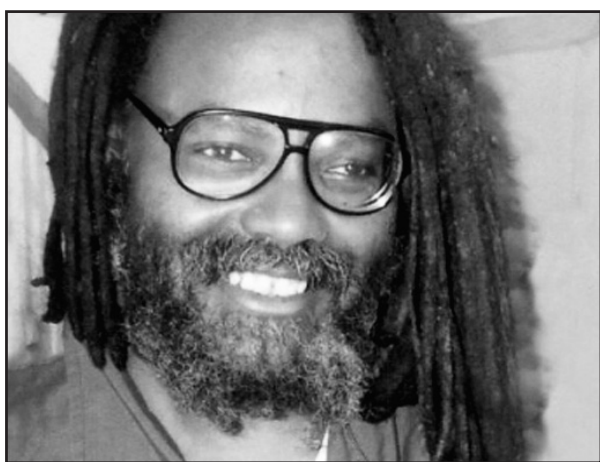
The problems of policing in Philadelphia are structural and long-term. They flow from a culture of hostility to oppressed nationalities by a police department that acts like an occupying army. This is the police force that bombed a neighborhood, destroying 61 homes and killing 11 people, including five children. This is the police force that framed Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE 9.

Philadelphia police are largely unaccountable because of a lax Internal Affairs process, weak civilian oversight, a history of district attorneys' failing to prosecute bad cops, and union contract provisions that make it next to impossible for the department to fire a cop. All of this creates a culture of impunity.

The new district attorney, Larry Krasner, was elected with the support of left reformist forces. Krasner campaigned on promises to never seek the death penalty, bail reform, and ending mass incarceration. He has already backed off on his promise on the death penalty.

Krasner's ability to make some cosmetic changes will satisfy some of his supporters but this won't fundamentally alter the repressive nature of the DA's office or the criminal justice system under capitalism. The solution is not in just electing a "progressive" DA here or there. Disarming and dismantling the police is an urgent task for working people and the oppressed. Ending mass incarceration and abolishing prisons is a fight that must be waged all over the U.S. ■

All out for Mumia Abu-Jamal!



Supporters of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal are mobilizing to be at Mumia's next court hearing in Philadelphia. The *Williams v. Pennsylvania* decision has presented an opportunity to finally win Mumia's freedom.

Mumia's original trial was a travesty, based on the collusion of prosecutors, cops, and a corrupt judge. Mumia was convicted of the 1981 murder of a police officer, Daniel Faulkner, in a frame-up trial presided over by a judge who was a member of the Fraternal Order of Police. At the time of the trial, the judge, Albert Sabo, was overheard by a white court stenographer saying that he was going to "help them [prosecutors] fry that n****r."

Winning freedom for Mumia is particularly urgent

because his health continues to be in danger. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has failed to adequately treat his liver damage, and a skin condition that causes severe itching is persisting. It's clear that the so-called "justice" system, which was thwarted in its attempt to execute Mumia legally, is trying to execute him through medical neglect.

A new hearing date is set for Monday, April 30. There will be a major mobilization aimed at pressuring the DA's office and the criminal justice system on this date. Mass action and grassroots organizing were crucial elements of the effort to keep Mumia alive over the years. In conjunction with attorneys' efforts in the appeals process, human rights advocates and activists mobilized in the streets in solidarity with Mumia's fight for freedom. It is not an exaggeration to say that mass action kept Mumia alive and will eventually free him from prison.

Socialist Action urges political activists, the labor movement, and all supporters of democratic rights in the U.S. and internationally to build demonstrations in their local areas. We also encourage all who can come to Philadelphia on the April 30 court date to pack the court for Mumia's freedom—8 a.m., at the Criminal Justice Center, 13th and Filbert Streets.

This is a critical juncture in Mumia's case. We cannot rely on the capitalist courts and politicians to grant him justice. Winning Mumia's freedom depends on the mass actions of all of those who oppose oppression.

For updates and information go to: <http://www.free-mumia.com>. ■

Twin Ports prison & cop protests

By LUCAS ALAN DIETSCHKE

DULUTH, Minn.—March was definitely a lion when it comes to prison abolition and demands for justice in the Superior/Duluth area.

On March 12, there was a picket line in Superior, Wis., organized by Ex-incarcerated People Organizing and Lake Superior Socialist Action against a proposed new Wisconsin prison. A lot of honking and verbal support for the action was expressed by passersby, including several high school students who pointed out that funds for the new \$350 million prison should go to social programs.

After a week of protest actions throughout the state, the proposed prison bill failed to pass the Wisconsin Assembly.

Meanwhile in Duluth, opposition has been mounting against the police department request for 100 pieces of riot gear (they call it "protective gear") at a cost of \$125,000. At a public forum that drew more than 75 people, many voiced concerns over the equipment being used against indigenous people and people of color.

A March 17 rally against the riot gear drew members of the indigenous community, Ex-incarcerated People Organizing, Socialist Action, Anonymous, and Occupy Duluth. As yet, City Council has not scheduled a vote or future public sessions on the issue. ■

By CHRISTINE MARIE

"Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression." Edited by Tithi Battacharya; forward by Lise Vogel (London: Pluto Press 2017).

Social reproduction feminism is not new. Marxist thinkers began to focus in earnest on the relationship between production and social reproduction in capitalist society nearly 40 years ago, in the context of what used to be referred to as the second wave of feminism. In 1979, the Fourth International approved the resolution, "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation."

That early mass movement also put on its agenda the theoretical work of Lise Vogel, "Marxism and the Oppression of Women," first published in 1983. Vogel and other Marxist scholars put forth the concepts of what came to be called "social reproduction theory."

Tithi Battacharya explains in the introduction to this new book that "social reproduction theorists perceive the relation between labor dispensed to produce commodities and labor dispensed to produce people as part of the systemic totality of capitalism. The framework thus seeks to make visible labor and work that are analytically hidden by classical economists and politically denied by policy makers."

She goes on to point out that social reproduction theorists "by no means represent a unified political or theoretical tradition." But while differences remain among the exponents of the theory, "SRT is primarily concerned with understanding how categories of oppression (such as gender, race, and ableism) are coproduced in simultaneity with the production of surplus value."

It is no accident that the new volume of essays on social reproduction theory, edited by Battacharya, is appearing in the midst of the emergence of giant women's mobilizations on the global stage.

These mobilizations include the 2016 Polish women's strike to defend abortion access, the October 2016 Ni Una Menos demonstrations and strikes

against femicide in Argentina, and the March 2018 strike of 5 million in Spain against discrimination in wages and violence based on gender. These 2016 women's strikes led to the formation of a new international network of radical women.

The potential for sustained motion by working women struggling in the context of the most serious global anti-working-class offensive in around 100 years has created the context for a burst of new work on the roots of gender oppression and its relationship to one of capitalism's most profound contradictions. The system needs to drive women into the pool of waged labor producing surplus value, while relying on gender and the kin-based family, rather than socialized institutions, to create, develop, and sustain that workforce.

As profit rates have dropped over the last three decades, and the bosses have both super-exploited women in the less developed countries and cut the social wage in developed countries to the bone, the crises for working women have grown exponentially. Mass action and strikes by women, on the job and off, are becoming central factors in the class struggle.

Key figures from the leadership of the U.S. formation

(Above) Anti-capitalist feminists march in Venezuela in 2017.

attempting to provide an anti-capitalist framework for this new upsurge, the International Women's Strike U.S., have essays in this volume. Cinzia Arruza explains how social reproduction theory can anchor a movement to challenge the liberal feminism that sees Hillary Clinton as a solution. Tithi Battacharya interrogates the parts of Marx's "Capital" that imply but do not detail the relationship of social reproduction to production.

David McNally argues that we should use the wonderfully thick descriptions of radicalized and gendered class experience provided by those working with intersectionality theory, but reject its failure to explain the workings of capitalism and the related strategy of defeating it.

Additional essays are included from such key figures as Nancy Fraser, Salar Mohandesi, Emma Teitelman, Susan Ferguson, Carmeen Temple Hopkins, Serap Saritas Oran, and Alan Sears. Every socialist needs to read it now. ■



Twin Cities activists to march for immigrants' rights on May 1

By KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

In the Twin Cities, Immigrant Movement for Justice (a Latinx worker-led organization that came together last year at this time to lead a protest action on May 1) is spearheading a coalition effort to bring out immigrants and their allies this May 1 to collectively reject Trump's anti-immigrant agenda.

Immigrant Movement for Justice recognizes that Trump's anti-immigrant policies are but symptoms of a more insidious disease. The capitalist / imperialist agenda views the entire world, all the land and all the people, as merely resources to be exploited for the greatest profit. U.S. imperialists wreck countries, and when the residents become refugees and flee to this country they are treated as criminals or worse.

So we must fight for programs that protect *all* immigrants and refugees in the U.S. (including TPS, DACA, and other reforms) while building the revolutionary movements that are needed to challenge capitalism and replace it with a socialist system, capable of caring for all people and the planet that sustains us.

Immigrant Movement for Justice also recognizes that May 1 is but a single day—although we march for issues that affect us *every* day. So while we are building for the largest possible action on May Day, we are building a united front capable of advocating for justice for immigrants beyond May 1 as well.



As of this writing, the May 1st Coalition's "No Human Being Is Illegal" rally and march in St. Paul has been endorsed by over 60 organizations, prominent individuals, and businesses. There is a campaign underway to get local businesses to close for the day in support of immigrants.

Many businesses are supporting this effort, posting signs in their windows that read: "This business will be closed this May 1st in support of immigrant workers. No human being is illegal."

The signs are also available in Spanish.

The flyer advertising the May 1 rally and march (from the Cathedral to the Capitol) is now available in English, Spanish, Somali, French, Swahili, Filipino, Thai, Korean, Hindi, Arabic, and Amharic. The coalition hopes to get the flyers in Oromo and Hmong soon! The intent is to have a true outpouring of immigrants welcoming International Workers' Day.

A statement put out by the organizers explains:

"We invite you to march this May 1st with Immigrant Movement for Justice. This May 1st, this International Workers' day, will be a day of resistance. We are fighting to get out of the shadows, to be able to live decent, respected and respectable lives. We are fighting for equality for all immigrants. We deserve to live without fear of deportation and separation of our families.

"We are demanding a path to legalization for all immigrants and refugees. We speak with the voice of 12 million workers, students, immigrant families who are sacrificed daily in factories and on industrial farms. We build the homes we cannot afford to live in, clean stores and hotels where we cannot afford to shop or stay, cook and clean restaurants where we cannot afford to eat. Today we raise our voices together. Today we take action together.

"We are tired of having our civil rights denied, of being oppressed, of being used by politicians in their perverse political games.

"We are fighting for our freedom, for the future of our families, regardless of skin color, race, religion, gender or nationality. We stand together.

"We are organizers and activists, we are workers, parents, mothers, students and supporters of immigrants, and we demand: Halt the unjust deportations now! Legalization now!" ■

The militarization of American science



By CLIFF CONNER

Following World War II, a think tank named the RAND Corporation took the lead in formulating policies guiding military-industrial Big Science. Some of the titles of books and articles about RAND provide a hint of what it represented in the public imagination: “The Think Tank that Controls America,” “America’s University of Imperialism,” “Dr. Strangelove’s Workplace,” and “Wizards of Armageddon.”

RAND’s signature initiative was its hypothetetical venture into “thinking the unthinkable.” Its legendary Nuclear Boys Club waded into the topsy-turvy world of megatons and megadeaths in a quixotic effort to put nuclear warfare strategy on a rational, scientific basis. Spoiler Alert: The end of the world begins with a “Fuck You, Buddy.”

The logical foundation of the American strategy for waging nuclear warfare was constructed by a man best known as a paranoid schizophrenic. As surreal as that sounds, it is the truth. Paranoid schizophrenia is a devastating mental illness whose victims deserve the utmost compassion, but it is terrifying to realize that the fate of the human race could rest on a theoretical framework built upon paranoid delusions.

One of the RAND Corporation’s leading nuclear strategists was John Nash, a gifted mathematician whose descent into psychosis was the subject of the Oscar-winning film “A Beautiful Mind.” However beautiful Nash’s purely mathematical conceptions may have been, their application to the real world of human society have produced the most hideously ugly consequences imaginable.

Nash was a pioneer of mathematical game theory, which analyzes the rules of games in order to devise winning strategies. Among its theoretical progeny was James M. Buchanan’s Public Choice Theory, which set the agenda for the Koch brothers’ efforts to “dismantle the administrative state” (i.e., eliminate trade unions, privatize the social security and health-care systems, constrain governmental regulatory power, and the destroy the public education system).¹ But its original application provided the basis of Cold War nuclear brinkmanship policies, including the one aptly acronymed MAD: Mutually Assured Destruction.

“All Is Number?”

It is not unusual for mathematicians to profess a philosophy of science based on the proposition that “All Is Number,” a variety of philosophical idealism that gained an early champion in Plato. It makes “number” the essence of all reality and mathematics the arbiter of all truth and knowledge.

The scientific method associated with that philosophy is *a priorism*—the notion that the details of science can be derived from “first principles” by deductive logic. Its adherents insist that knowledge of nature is not to be gained by observation and experimentation, but by pure reason. Hey, if it works for geometry, why not physics? Why not biology? Why not

The Doctrine of Massive Retaliation gave an explicit warning that the U.S. would meet Soviet aggression by unleashing the full force of its nuclear arsenal.

economics and political science?

Plato’s antiempirical method served to derail scientific inquiry into the actual workings of nature for 1400 years. Although his followers thought they had solved all of science’s general problems, the onset of the Scientific Revolution a few hundred years ago revealed that those solutions were worthless.

Fast forward to the 20th century, where we find John Nash applying Platonic *a priorism* to the problem of how to prevent the thermonuclear incineration of the planet Earth. His contribution was to derive strategic solutions from mathematical game theory.

A “game” of global risk and peril

In 1945, when American policymakers made the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan, the game was simple. They did not have to fear retaliation because they knew Japan could not respond in kind. The more farsighted among them were aware, however, that the United States’ monopoly of nuclear weapons could not last forever.

American policymakers had no choice but to adjust to that reality. A debate among them ensued over how best to assure that the fearsome power they had unleashed upon the world would not be turned back against the United States. Their deliberations posed the complex problems that the RAND Corporation’s nuclear strategists took on.

In fact, following the dropping of the bombs on Japan, it was only four years before the Soviet Union had become the second member of the nuclear club. On Aug. 29, 1949, the USSR exploded its first nuclear weapon. This was (*ahem*) a game-changer.

The Soviet nuclear test in August 1949 prompted the United States to immediately up the ante. President Truman announced the intention to create a thermonuclear weapon, or “superbomb,” with explosive power that would dwarf that of the bombs dropped on Japan. In response, the Soviet Union vowed to do the same. An arms race to Armageddon was underway.

The United States performed its first hydrogen bomb test in November 1952, releasing the energy equivalent of 10.4 megatons of TNT—more than 700 times that of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. In less than a year, in August 1953, the USSR replied with a much smaller (400 kiloton) fusion device test, but it was enough to demonstrate that Soviet scientists knew how to make hydrogen bombs. In 1961 the Soviet Union tested the largest bomb ever detonated—

a 50-megaton behemoth with the explosive force of 3800 Hiroshima blasts.

Planning to win the game that ends in Doomsday

Early in the course of the Cold War, American policymakers saw the world in stark terms: Two implacable superpowers face-to-face, armed to the hilt with weapons on hair-trigger alert that could conceivably destroy all human life. What could be done—what steps should be taken—to prevent the world from ending in thermonuclear conflagration?

General Curtis LeMay, as head of the Strategic Air Command, was in charge of the U.S. nuclear strike forces. His proposal typified the kill-it-in-the-cradle instincts of the military mind: He called for massive preemptive nuclear strikes against the USSR. He advocated that policy despite the Strategic Air Command’s estimates that it would annihilate more than 77,000,000 people in 188 targeted cities. Fortunately, President Eisenhower had the final word and ruled against preemptive strikes.

The official nuclear policy of the Eisenhower administration was the Doctrine of Massive Retaliation, an explicit warning to the Soviet Union that the United States would not hesitate to meet any Soviet act of aggression by unleashing the full force of its nuclear arsenal. The bigger the threat, it was assumed, the more effective the deterrent.

Meanwhile, the RAND Corporation’s “national security analysts” had taken on the assignment of thinking more deeply about the problem and promptly identified fatal flaws in the Massive Retaliation strategy.

RAND’s war strategists acquired a number of colorful nicknames, including the Nuclear Boys Club and the Megadeath Intellectuals. The most famous member of the group was an ebullient grandstander named Herman Kahn, a man with a Santa Claus demeanor who gained celebrity as a tireless popularizer of doomsday prophecy. His provocative, whimsical ruminations about the end of the world made him the target of Stanley Kubrick’s wickedly satirical film “Dr. Strangelove.” Kahn presented his views in a 1960 book entitled “On Thermonuclear War.” He insisted that an all-out nuclear war between the superpowers was preventable, and even it were not prevented, it could be survivable, and even winnable by the U.S.

It was Kahn’s view that stability arises from a scenario wherein neither side has reason to believe they could destroy their enemy without putting themselves in grave danger. To achieve that, both sides must amass such fearsome nuclear arsenals that both are afraid to use them.

The quest for security in a “balance of terror,” however, was illusory. What actually occurred was a frenzied nuclear arms race that made the world ever less secure. While not exactly what Kahn had in mind, the official U.S. deterrence strategy became known as MAD, or Mutually Assured Destruction. MAD, most

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independent commentators concluded, was indeed madness:

A critique of RAND science

Kahn and his RAND colleagues insisted that their analyses and policy recommendations were derived scientifically, and from science alone. Their professions of dispassionate objectivity, however, were worthless. Their methodology was founded on the ideological proposition that nations have no choice but to regard each other as absolutely, unyieldingly hostile enemies.

Historian of science Peter Galison called this the Cold War “ontology of the enemy.” It required a view of the Soviet Union as simply a “cold-blooded, machinelike opponent” with no ideals, values, or goals beyond an absolute desire to win the nuclear showdown game.²

The McCarthyite premise upon which the entire edifice of RAND nuclear strategy stood was the assumption of the Soviet Union’s unalterable enmity toward the United States. Historians William Appleman Williams, Walter LaFeber, Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, and Gar Alperovitz, among others, have marshaled powerful arguments against that proposition.

The animosity between the United States and the Soviet Union was not a foregone conclusion when World War II came to an end. The two countries had been allies throughout the war. There is ample evidence that Stalin naïvely expected to preserve that alliance indefinitely, but the United States and its European allies had opposite intentions.

Even before the war’s end, American policymakers looked upon the Soviet Union as the primary obstacle to their dream of an “American Century.” In February 1946, George Kennan, an American diplomat in Moscow, articulated a policy of “containment” of the Soviet Union and “strong resistance” based on military muscle rather than diplomacy. Less than two weeks later, a declaration of open hostility was issued in a speech by Winston Churchill as he stood beside Truman in Fulton, Missouri. Churchill declared that an “iron curtain” had descended across Eastern Europe, separating “Soviet Russia and its Communist international” from the “Western Democracies.”

The Soviet leaders, Churchill declared, aimed at “indefinite expansion of their power and their doctrines.” His warning that “throughout the world, Communist fifth columns are established and work in complete unity and absolute obedience to the directions they receive from the Communist center” provided the themes of McCarthyism that instilled an all-pervasive “us-against-them” mindset in the American public for several decades.

While it would be absurd to entertain illusions of Stalin’s benevolence, the McCarthyist warnings of worldwide communist subversion were based on a deliberate misreading of the Soviet leader’s motives. Stalin and the highly conservative Soviet bureaucracy he represented were anything but radical revolutionaries. It was not in their interest to rock the global boat by fomenting rebellions around the world. The expansionism Churchill decried was antithetical to their desire to be left in peace to exploit their own realm.

The Kremlin’s frequent expressions of support for international revolutionary movements were grist for the McCarthyist mill, but historians should not take them at face value. The guiding Stalinist slogan “Socialism in One Country” meant that the Communist International under their command was not charged with extending the world socialist revolution, but with stifling it. That their opportunism was not always successful does not disprove their intentions.³

Nonetheless, the RAND analysts reduced the messy complexity of international relations to a one-dimensional duel-to-the-death between intransigent foes. And with that we have arrived at the doorstep of the magical realm of mathematical game theory.

John Nash: “Fuck You, Buddy”

If Herman Kahn was king of the Nuclear Boys, John Nash was the creative power behind the throne. Nash played a crucial role in creating the mathematical framework that underpinned the RAND analysts’ deterrence strategies.

Mathematical game theory was not the brainchild of Nash alone. John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern inaugurated the field with a 1944 book entitled “Theory of Games and Economic Behavior.” It was a bold attempt to put economic theory on a rigorous, axiomatic base derived from mathematical models of economic decision making.

Professional economists at first ignored game theory, but other social scientists began to notice its potential applications in other fields. Most significantly, it was picked up and transformed by the Nuclear Boys Club at RAND into their primary tool for the analysis of military strategy. Nash’s critical contribution was to transcend the limitations of Von Neumann and



(Above) John Nash, receiving the Abel Prize in Norway in 2015.

Morgenstern’s simplified model by generalizing and validating their conclusions for more complex games of strategy.⁴

More ominously, Nash also influenced the social agenda of game theory by inventing a number of games to illustrate its potential usefulness for the social sciences. Nash’s games, based on the classic Prisoner’s Dilemma, were explicitly noncooperative in nature as opposed to games that encouraged or at least permitted cooperation among players.

The most notorious of Nash’s games was one provocatively named “Fuck You, Buddy.” (To avoid further repetitions of the coarse term here, the game will henceforth be referred to as “FYB.”) FYB was a four-person game in which a player can only progress by forming coalitions with other players. But a player can only *win* the game by betraying those with whom he or she had coalesced. “When this game was tried out at dinner parties,” a website for board game aficionados says, “a common outcome (reportedly) was that couples were so angered by the betrayals that they went home in separate taxis.” One commenter added a warning: “Do not play with people who take things personally.”⁵

The antisocial attitude encapsulated in the game’s title reflects a misanthropic view of human nature that is built into its rules: that all human behavior is motivated *only* by self-interest, and that rationality demands all players consider each other to be absolutely untrustworthy.

FYB established a pattern for games in which trickery, backstabbing, and blunt force are winning strategies, and trustworthiness is the currency of losers. That its primary author, John Nash, suffered from a pathological condition characterized by irrational suspiciousness of others is not irrelevant. Games of this genre served as models shaping American military strategy in the thermonuclear era, substituting paranoid reflexes—“FYB!”—for thoughtful diplomacy.

How the RAND secretaries played the game

The RAND Corporation submitted Nash’s games to empirical test. Experimental trials were performed using secretaries as players. The trials did not support the experimental premises, and in fact tended to refute them. This is one of numerous accounts that have appeared in print:

“The RAND scientists believed that mutual distrust should rule the day. ... They tested their ideas on RAND’s own secretaries, creating all sorts of different scenarios in which the women could cooperate with or betray one another.

“In every single experiment, however, instead of making choices in the self-interested way that RAND expected, the secretaries chose to cooperate. ... Nash blamed the failed experiments on the secretaries themselves. They were unfit subjects, incapable of following the simple ‘ground rules’ that they should strategize selfishly.”⁶

Because the secretaries were women, this story seemed to beautifully confirm feminist claims that female sensibilities are essentially altruistic and cooperative in contrast to masculine egocentric aggressiveness. There is evidence in RAND documentation to support the story, but the evidence is not very strong. The experimental sample size was far too small to yield significant results. Only two experimental trials were performed, and only two RAND secretaries served as subjects.

Nevertheless, the outcome was by no means with-

out value. The author of the study pointed to a crucial insight that deserved to be heeded: “The main lesson from this limited experiment is that the social relationship between the subjects can have a controlling influence on their choices.”⁷

The tale of the two secretaries also illustrates a fundamental violation of scientific procedure on the part of Nash and his colleagues. When confronted with evidence, however meager, contradicting their ideological biases, they were unwilling to rethink their premises. From that point forward, their research rushed unimpeded toward conclusions that shoehorned human social behavior into absurdly oversimplified schemas.

The fallacy propagated by the RAND game theorists resides in their misapplication of formal logic to real-life situations that lie far outside its scope. They err at both ends of the process by starting with abstract mathematical postulates unmoored from space, time, and material reality, and ending up with mathematical models that model nothing that actually exists.

The Impossibility Theorem

A crucial early step along the road was a premise called the Impossibility Theorem, which was devised at RAND in 1948 by Kenneth Arrow. Arrow’s theorem declared the impossibility of any workable political system based on such notions as “the public interest” or “the public good.” The Impossibility Theorem, however, was based on extreme assumptions about human behavior. Arrow’s imaginary social universe reduced all human motivation to individual self-interest. There was no place in it for altruism, compassion, concern for others, or notions of social equality.

Because no such society has ever existed anywhere on Earth, Arrow’s assumptions obviously were not derived from empirical observation. They were purely hypothetical constructs with no basis in social reality. Nonetheless, his Impossibility Theorem resonated with the RAND Nuclear Boys, who integrated it and its assumptions into their strategic thinking.

RAND’s construction of nuclear military strategy on a foundation of game theory is perhaps the single most consequential example of mathematical malpractice in the long span of human history. One-dimensional models that reduce human interactions to one-against-all antagonism produce inflexible strategies heavy on trickery and blunt force, and light on intelligent efforts to resolve disagreements. By creating a framework within which U.S. policymakers could only treat the USSR with unyielding hostility, RAND rationalized a Cold War that humanity has thus far been fortunate to survive. ■

1. For more on James M. Buchanan, see Cliff Conner, “The Lenin of Libertarianism,” *Socialist Action*, socialistaction.org, Dec. 26, 2017.

2. Peter Galison, “The Ontology of the Enemy: Norbert Weiner and the Cybernetic Vision,” *Critical Inquiry*, journals.uchicago.edu, Autumn 1994.

3. The most consequential example of Stalin’s policy of discouraging socialist revolutions in other countries was its application in China in the 1920s, which was chronicled by Harold Isaacs in his classic work, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (1938). The Chinese Communists eventually succeeded in taking power in 1949 despite decades of betrayal by Stalin’s Communist International.

4. For a more thorough exposition of Nash’s theoretical contributions to mathematical game theory, see Roger A. McCain, *Game Theory and Public Policy*, 2nd edition, 2015.

5. “So Long, Sucker (1964),” Board Game Database, boardgamedatabase.blogspot.com, April 17, 2016.

6. Douglas Rushkoff, *Life, Inc.: How the World Became a Corporation and How to Take It Back*, 2009.

7. Merrill M. Flood, “Some Experimental Games,” U.S. Air Force Project RAND Memorandum RM-789-1, June 20, 1952.

March on April 15! No war & no warming!

By 350 CONNECTICUT

A broad national coalition has been formed to build regional U.S. actions against war and militarism on April 14 and 15. (See springaction2018.org.) The Connecticut chapter of 350, an international organization against climate change, has endorsed the march and rally scheduled to begin at 2 p.m. at Herald Square in Manhattan on April 15. Their statement on the action appears below.

April 15, 2018, has been designated a day of nationally coordinated action to challenge the U.S. war-makers and defend humanity. Because of the intrinsic relationship between resource wars and global warming, the demands for this antiwar action include protecting the environment against life-threatening fossil-fuel-induced global warming and a just transition to a 100 percent clean, sustainable

energy system with union wages for all displaced workers.

We hope that this call will alert all climate activists to the contribution of the Pentagon to climate catastrophe. According to H. Patricia Hynes, a former professor of environmental health at the Boston University School of Public Health and director of the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice, “the U.S. military is the single largest institutional contributor to the disasters intensified by global climate change.

In just 2009, according to [investigative journalist and author] Nick Turse, the U.S. military awarded \$22.5 billion in energy contracts, with more than \$16 billion in bulk energy purchases. Given the expansion of U.S. military operations since, we can only guess at today’s figures.

In 2008, U.S. military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan used 90 million gallons of fuel per month. If you added up all the fuel expenditures for every U.S. military

effort to secure fossil fuel resources for U.S. corporations, the numbers will be astronomical.

Today, the U.S. has military bases in 170 countries around the world, and the trillions spent on these outposts are desperately needed for social services for the victims of climate change and a deeply inequitable economic system.

According to Nick Buxton and Ben Hayes, authors of “The Secure and the Dispossessed: How the Military and Corporations are Shaping a Climate-Changed World” (2016), the Pentagon think tanks view the victims of climate change worldwide as a threat to the security of U.S. elites and, in response, are erecting an ever-more elaborate and inhuman system of surveillance, border control, and military intervention.

Trillions \$ for an emergency transition to 100% clean renewable energy, not for fossil fuel wars and border walls! ■



Claude Paris / AP

fessors and teachers at the university, eyewitnesses said.

Debate on union strategy

Sebastien Menesplier, head of CGT Energy, said, “We haven’t been this close to an unprecedented social revolt for years.”

Nevertheless, top union officials have failed to try to mobilize all sectors of the working class in a unified and massive strike protest. Laurent Berger of the CFDT union federation, aligned with the timid Socialist Party, said he was not interested in building a united front with other forces against austerity and cuts: “the convergence of struggles is not the CFDT’s cup of tea.” Jean-Claude Mailly, general secretary of the Force Ouvriere (FO) union federation, also opposes any convergence.

But one union is seeking a more aggressive strategy. In an interview in the March issue of *Jacobin* magazine, Bruno Poncet, federal secretary for SUD Rail, an independent left-wing union affiliated with the national labor organization Solidaires, explained it this way:

“The method of two days of strikes every five days, it allows for the preservation of unity between the four labor unions. For us, SUD Rail, we think we need a tough movement. That is to say a full and long-lasting work stoppage, right away. And even for that, it’s not SUD Rail that will decide, it’s not the other unions. What will happen is that in general assemblies that will take place every day during the strike, people will decide for themselves the conduct of the strike.”

Many in the French left and beyond see the possibility of the return of the mass militancy of 50 years ago, during the epic May-June 1968 revolt in France, which threatened the capitalist order with over nine million workers on strike and giant student mobilizations. Today’s rulers are trembling at the thought! The first wave of current strikes began on March 22, the 50th anniversary of the first protest that ignited the 1968 rebellion.

The last time the French capitalists made a frontal assault on public workers, particularly SNCF workers, was in 1995 by Prime Minister Alain Juppe. Then too, unions struck and mobilized massive protests. Juppe, after a fierce battle, threw in the towel in the face of sustained working class anger.

Striking by public employees in France is not illegal and not outlawed as it is many U.S. cities, such as for workers in New York City’s transit system. Striking is a constitutional right in France. However, in France, strikers must notify management in advance of strikes. Moreover, public workers must maintain a minimum of public service.

Unfortunately, French unions comprise only about 9% of the workforce, similar in size to the U.S. labor movement. But French unions, particularly rail, can still deliver big blows against the rulers—especially when unions are united, willing to fight, and resolved to work with other social forces around common demands.

The broad resistance in France gives the international workers’ struggle more power and reveals the depth of the crisis that capitalism has spawned worldwide as a reactionary, destructive force. Our ability and willingness to strike will be key to rolling back the agenda of the capitalist rulers and building a movement that can ultimately replace their destructive system with socialism. ■

... French strikes

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2015 against cutting 3000 airline workers.

Several unions, more conservative, have targeted April 19 for a massive strike, while withholding—for now, at least—support for the larger 36 strike strategy. Airline and rail workers are preparing to go out together on that date, along with many public and private unions.

President Macron: a yuppie on steroids

Stoking working-class rage is French president and former investment banker Emmanuel Macron, 40, elected in May 2017. Macron, dubbed “the president of the rich,” has championed frontal attacks on unions and students, masking them as “reform.”

Macron and his new party, La République en Marche (Republic on the Move), are a real horror show for French workers. For Macron, it’s mean and lean—120,000 public worker jobs are to be cut out of 5 million public workers by 2020; wages are to be frozen, at least for some; bosses are emboldened to fire or lay off workers more easily or to downsize the workforce; pensions will be slashed and the retirement age rolled back. For students, the “reforms” mean limiting access to France’s free college system.

Macron’s pronouncements were followed by large-scale layoffs. Unemployment in France is about 9% overall and for youth 25%, higher than the Eurozone average.

France is a member of the European Union, an alliance of mainly imperialist countries dominated by German capitalism, and must comply with the profit-driven agenda of the European banks. The watchword is ‘cost-cutting’ across the board, that is, cutting wages, health care, pensions and implementing

anti-worker measures by 2020. In addition, France must face “competition” from private transportation firms, where the goal is greed, not service.

Macron and the French rulers are particularly keen on bashing mass transit, the state-owned French National Railways, SNCF. Macron portrays SNCF workers as being paid too much and with pensions that are too high. He says that their retirement is too early—for what is often a dangerous job. Legal safeguards against layoffs are too strict, says the president. Based on manipulated data in the “Spinetta Report,” the bosses say that the public transportation system is too expensive and its fares “uncompetitive” with that of other countries.

One Macron tactic is to divide and conquer the unions—particularly the more conservative ones—with closed-door “negotiations” in which each union’s bureaucrats are unaware of what Macron promised the others. After “negotiations,” to the surprise of dumbfounded union officials, Macron publicly unveiled a detailed anti-worker program that had been apparently kept under wraps all along.

Moreover, Macron has used his parliamentary majority to rule essentially by decree, drawing criticism for an authoritarian style not unlike that of U.S. President Donald Trump.

With little doubt, the French authorities will resort to repression and violence if they feel it is necessary to break the labor movement. A harbinger of this tactic was seen on March 22 when students were attacked after they had occupied a college auditorium in Montpellier, a city in the south of France. A school dean allowed a group of masked men—armed with bats, Tasers, and reinforced punching gloves—to beat up the students and evict them from the auditorium. Security guards at the university stood idly by and watched the beatings, according to one account. Several students were hospitalized.

Some of the goons were revealed to have been pro-

Nursing home care and the class divide

By SARAH MILLER

LANCASTER, Pa.—Another missed call, another voice mail. I look at my phone and recognize the number. The call was from the daughter of an elderly hospitalized patient. The social workers have been pushing to get her mother out of the hospital and to a nursing home, but the daughter wanted to visit potential facilities before agreeing to placement. I press play. “My mother is not going to that place. I wouldn’t even put my dog there! Please call me back.”

In hospitals, elderly patients wait in their rooms for days, weeks, and sometimes months. Cleared for discharge by the physicians, they have no place to go. Too sick or debilitated to return home and no family willing or able to care for them, their only option is nursing home care.

Hospital social workers provide a list of local facilities to the families. Invariably, they choose the highest rated with the best reputations. After all, they want their loved ones to get the most quality care possible. But that is out of reach for most. The social worker will call the posh nursing homes to inquire about admission, but the behind-the-scenes conversation is always the same: “There’s no way the family can afford that facility.”

It isn’t until the daughters and sons visit the few homes that will accept patients with low incomes that they fully realize the disparity that exists between the care provided for the rich and the treatment of the poor. The first thing that hits you as you walk in the door is the smell. It is a distinct odor of human urine, processed institutional meals, and old construction. Every nurse knows about the “nursing home funk.”

Then you see the surroundings—fluorescent lighting, old linoleum, a magnet board declaring the current weather, “cool, cloudy,” the date, and the next holiday. The bustling nurse’s station is a flurry of activity—bells ringing, charts stacked on the counter. Residents yell from various reaches of the hallways, sometimes words or names but often just screams. The sensory overload is enough to make you want to turn around and run out the door.

First impressions are not always accurate but state inspections of these nursing homes often tell harrowing tales. Violations in various for-profit facilities in 2016 included physician-ordered testing not being completed, increases in bed sores, residents kept in restraints beyond the legal maximum time limit, over-medication with anti-anxiety and sedating medications, and unsafe food storage. Staffing and turnover is also an issue. In one facility (according to state documents), each resident received 30 minutes of direct care from an RN daily compared to the state average of 58 minutes.

But what about the other retirement communities? The ones with sprawling campuses, activities coordinators, and no violations? Families see the billboards encouraging older people to “Live Life Here” and “Be



A Part of Our Community!” The advertisements don’t lie. There is gorgeous landscaping, activity buses taking residents to shops and local attractions, multiple restaurants and spas. For those in need of skilled care, they have private, well-furnished rooms and private baths, low nurse to patient ratios, and minimal medication errors. There is no “funk” in the air, just the smell of freshly disinfected hallways.

The most expensive retirement community in Lancaster County, Pa., charges an entrance fee between \$99,000 and \$419,000 depending on the amenities and type of residence chosen. Monthly fees range from \$1814 a month for a studio apartment to \$5004 per month for a two-story town home. If a spouse or significant other is also residing there, an additional \$26,000 to \$45,000 entrance fee and another \$1226 per month applies. Community members can be moved to skilled care if the need arises without any additional costs. Another private, church-affiliated facility charges \$439 per day for skilled care or \$13,170 per month.

Daily nursing-home care in Pennsylvania averages at \$228 a day for the least expensive facilities. Most of the residents choose these facilities because they have no other choice. The entire cost is paid for by Medicaid. Reimbursement rates are determined by the state and are often less than what the facilities normally charge and sometimes much less than what it costs to provide care.

So one would think that it would be advantageous and more cost-effective to provide in-home assistance. The average rate for a home health aide is \$20/hour. These aides are non-nurses and are trained to

help with tasks like bathing, dressing and light house-keeping. Having an aide eight hours a day averages to be \$160/day or \$4800/month. Compared to \$6840/month for nursing-home care, it seems like the obvious choice.

But private insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid pay nothing for in-home care. Financial assistance exists only for those in poverty. To qualify for home-care waivers in Pennsylvania in 2016, the recipient must earn less than \$2205 a month and own less than \$8000 in assets. There are waiting lists in areas where demand outnumbers availability, causing many in higher populated cities to be without help.

Most patients I have encountered in my years of nursing only want one thing—to be at home. Elderly women in dementia wards will grab me by my arm, pull me close and, in an urgent tone, ask me when they are going home. When I ask patients in the ICU what they want to see happen with their care, they say, “I just want to go home.”

I listen to children of sick patients tearfully tell me that they want to care for their ill parent, but they have to work or they do not have anyone else to rely on. After all, no one person can provide care 24/7. Help is needed to both provide quality home care and maintain the caregiver’s well-being.

Why doesn’t the state and, more broadly, the nation, advocate for patients? Why won’t they pay for the sick and elderly to be cared for at home? In a word—capitalism. No one benefits from for-profit nursing-home care except the companies who own the facilities. A 2011 study showed that the 10 largest for-profit nursing homes had the greatest number of violations, the lowest nurse to patient ratios and, often, the sickest patients. (Kaye, H. Stephen, Charlene Harrington, and Mitchell P. LaPlante. “Long-Term Care: Who Gets It, Who Provides It, Who Pays, And How Much?” *Health Affairs*, 29, no. 1, 2010.)

Gone are the days of the “county home” or the “poor house.” For-profit nursing care facilities dominate the field. Locally, the Lancaster County “almshouse” was sold by the county in 2005 for \$13.8 million. In response to local controversy over the sale, county commissioners quipped, “The County shouldn’t be in the health-care business” (Lancasteronline, Sept. 27, 2005). What they meant was, “We are losing money by caring for our most vulnerable people.”

The daughter who left me a desperate voice mail did eventually agree to place her mother in a different, yet still substandard, nursing home. In a country where some can spend millions on comfortable retirement and quality care, daughters should not lie awake at night, wondering if their mothers are being mistreated.

The class divide is laid bare in the nation’s nursing homes. The rich plan to retire with the rich while the poor are forced to have inadequate care alongside the poor. There is no reason why we cannot provide for the elderly, regardless of class status and income. Without equal health-care availability to everyone, our society cannot improve. Daughters will continue to cry, the sick will perish in greater numbers, yet profits will continue to increase. Elderly people are our parents, grandparents, neighbors and fellow humans. They are not a source of capital. ■



Stop the firing of Gaël Quirante!

The nervous ruling class in France has targeted Gaël Quirante, departmental secretary of SUD Activités Postales 92 (a post office trade union) and a militant of the Social Front, for disciplinary abuse. There have been 10 attempts to fire him in 14 years, and almost a year of accumulated disciplinary suspensions.

The labor minister, Muriel Pénicaud, decided not to follow the earlier opinion of the labor inspectorate and the report of the counter-investigation,

both of which concluded that there was discrimination in Quirante’s case. This decision was unjust, according to two official investigations—yet the Macron administration decided nevertheless to target him!

Two support rallies for Gaël have taken place, one of which drew 500. A range of labor movement and political figures—Mickaël Wamen, CGT Goodyear; Olivier Besancenot, NPA; Jean-Luc Mélenchon, France Insoumise; Jean-Pierre Mercier, Lutte Ouvrière; etc.—addressed the participants in support of Gaël.

La Poste has decided to strike hard against combative militants. The intervention of the GIPN (National Police Intervention Groups) against strikers in a sorting center in Bègles-Bordeaux in 2005 began this strong offensive. Since then there have been many disciplinary proceedings, and penalties; disciplinary sanctions have multiplied against trade unionists and more broadly against all those whom refuse to submit. For example, there are 10 years of accumulated disciplinary suspensions against the militants of SUD and CGT (trade unions in France) in the Ile-de-France (the Paris metropolitan area) since 2012. ■

Sign the petition to stop the firing of Gaël Quirante! See www.socialistaction.org for more details.

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

CLC: Disaffiliation, dues strike, special convention?

By MIKE PALECEK

President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers

On Jan. 17, UNIFOR, the largest mostly private sector union in Canada announced that it quit the Canadian Labour Congress. On its website, UNIFOR National President Jerry Dias and Quebec director Renaud Gagne claimed the Congress failed to deal with their concern that U.S.-based unions are "trampling on the rights" of workers to choose their union representation.

Rather than lead a fight for more democratic procedures in the CLC and its affiliates, the UNIFOR leaders, wrapped in the Canadian flag, and without a vote of the union's members, conducted a split that weakens the House of Labour, stepped up a wave of union raiding (instead of organizing the unorganized), and helped the Liberal government in Ottawa to continue to carry out its anti-worker policies.

The break also precipitated an internal crisis over whether UNIFOR members, like CLC President Hassan Yussuff, can continue to hold office in the CLC, provincial federations of labour and local labour councils.

Overall, the split shows the new depths to which the labour bureaucracy has sunk. It underscores the urgent need for a radical rank and file movement, from below, to change the present course of the workers' movement. — THE EDITORS

At the emergency meeting of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Canada Council in early February, it was clear that many large affiliates were opposed to CLC President Hassan Yussuff's constitutional interpretation. Despite this fact, the interpretation was upheld by a large margin.

This in itself raises other constitutional questions. There are also disagreements on other questions that were left unsaid. These deep divisions within the house of labour cannot be papered over. We can be certain that many of the larger affiliates are now considering their options for how to move forward. Below are a few of the possibilities.

Disaffiliation

Any union has the right to disaffiliate from the CLC at any time, as UNIFOR did recently. For some, this question can be reduced to a simple cost-benefit analysis. Do they get out of the CLC as much as they put in? This is a difficult question

to answer at the best of times. For CUPW, this is also a principled question. We are constitutionally-bound to be affiliated to the CLC, the federations of labour and the labour councils and for good reason.

We know that we are stronger with a united labour movement that can advance the struggle together. A recent example can be found in the Save Canada Post campaign. We never could have stopped that austerity-drive without the broad support we received from the entire labour movement.

Labour councils across the country were key to mobilizing communities and ultimately defeating this agenda. It was a spectacular demonstration of what could be done when labour comes together at the grassroots level.

We have always remained in the CLC even when unhappy about the direction it is taking. For us it is not only a question of what is, but also what could be. This is why our conventions have committed time and again, through our action plans, to attempt to rejuvenate and revitalize bodies of the labour movement, to arm them with a militant, grassroots agenda of mobilization. There is no force stronger than an organized and united working class movement.

Dues Strike

Another option that some affiliates are likely considering is withholding their dues payments from the CLC. This is a means of putting financial pressure on the organization, without actually withdrawing entirely from the house of labour.

This is something that has been done many times in our movement, often with bad consequences. These kind of pressure tactics could have unintended consequences on staff and severely inhibit the work of the labour movement. This is a poor means of settling political questions.

Special Convention

It is clear that the most democratic means of solving important divisions within the labour movement is with a convention. Conventions of the CLC happen every three years, with the next convention scheduled for 2020 in Vancouver. But when matters of extreme importance are raised, such as the current internal crisis facing the labour movement, there are provisions in the CLC constitution to call a special convention.

A special convention can be called by a

Simmering discontent in UNIFOR

By BRUCE ALLEN

Simmering discontent among UNIFOR members (in Canada's largest mostly-private sector union) over their National Executive Board's (NEB) arbitrary decision to withdraw from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) continues to surface. On March 21, UNIFOR Local 199 Retired Workers' Chapter voted unanimously in favour of a motion by long-time activist and former local union leader Tom Lacas calling for a reversal of the NEB decision.

The adoption of the motion follows decisions by UNIFOR Local 88 in Ingersoll (near London, Ontario) and UNIFOR Local 222 in Oshawa in which the members told the NEB they want to return to the CLC.

These decisions show substantial support among UNIFOR members and some leaders, particularly in the auto and auto-parts sectors, for a return to the CLC. Furthermore, this dissent is not limited to these three local unions. A petition circulating via social media calling for a UNIFOR return to the CLC has been signed by over a hundred

UNIFOR members.

These manifestations of dissent within UNIFOR are the most significant since the uproar over former CAW National President Buzz Hargrove's notorious agreement with Magna Inc. about a decade ago. They also come in the aftermath of the concessionary auto contracts in 2016, which generated unprecedented levels of opposition at contract ratification meetings.

Given that there is no short-term likelihood of UNIFOR returning to the CLC, this dissent over the crippling effects on the labour movement of its withdrawal from the CLC is likely to persist longer than the relatively short-lived discontent over the Magna agreement.

Whether this dissent will generate serious questioning of the policies and political direction of UNIFOR remains to be seen.

So far, the latest dissent has yet to address other issues and become meaningfully organized. Those voicing this dissent must do both, as part of a broader effort to realize change in the labour movement. ■

Narrowing Liberal-NDP gap

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Heading towards the June 7 Ontario provincial election, the gap between the election platforms of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party is narrowing—to the dismay of many NDP voters.

The late-coming Liberal promises for much-needed debt relief for post-secondary students, for increased spending on hospitals and home care, and for new public services in the fields of pharmacare, dentacare, and childcare seem clearly disingenuous. However, the political timidity of the NDP under Andrea Horwath and her predecessors has made this gambit a relatively easy one for Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Horwath is correct to point out that the Liberals had decades in office at Queen's Park to implement the changes they now profess—in the manner of a death-bed confession. But the labour-based NDP also had plenty of time to advocate bold change while on the opposition benches.

Still, it's not too late to be bold, nor

to steal the populist thunder of right-wing Tory leader Doug Ford.

Now is the time for Horwath and the NDP to take further steps to the left, steps that the Liberal Party will not follow.

Those steps should include standing up for free and universal childcare (to include infants), abolition of university tuition (not just ridding Ontario of student debt), the establishment of a publicly owned pharmaceutical industry to research, develop, produce and deliver free medical drugs (nationalization of Apotex would be a good place to start), calling for a free and comprehensive dentacare programme, and proposing to pay for all this, and more, with an overhaul of the tax system to significantly increase taxation of corporations, banks and rich individuals, while providing tax relief for those earning less than \$60,000 a year.

Savings can be found by ending public funding of separate, religious schools, trimming bloated police budgets, and expropriating the ill-gotten gains of tax cheats. ■

majority vote of the Canada Council, or by request of affiliates representing 50% of the membership of the CLC.

This is a costly exercise, and this alone gives reason to be hesitant. But when one considers the cost of any other course of

action, it is obviously the right one. A convention where thousands of delegates from across the country can meet, debate and decide the future of the labour movement is the only means of solving these questions. ■

The real concern: Singh's support of Canadian state violence

By YVES ENGLER

There is reason to be concerned about Jagmeet Singh's support for political violence. But not the stuff that's making news. While the business media makes much of the new NDP leader's ties/indifference to Sikh violence, they've ignored the record of a party that has repeatedly backed Canadian state aggression.

In a *Rabble* story on the controversy, Karl Nerenberg described Singh as the "leader of a party" that has throughout its history favoured peaceful and non-violent solutions." As such, Nerenberg called on the NDP leader to "make a stronger statement against any use of violence in furtherance of Sikh goals."

While not downplaying the terrible human loss in the 1985 Air India bombing or disagreeable aspects of the Khalistan movement, it's more pertinent to know

Singh's position on Canadian state violence. Contrary to Nerenberg's claim, the NDP has repeatedly supported Ottawa's aggression.

Seven years ago, the NDP wholeheartedly endorsed bombing Libya; a quarter century ago it applauded the bombing of Serbia; and in 1950 it cheered Canadian participation in the Korean War. At the beginning of this century important elements of the party backed Canada's deployment to Afghanistan and the NDP was ambivalent towards Canadian-assisted violence in Haiti.

After the Communist Party took control of China in 1949, the U.S. tried to encircle the country. They supported Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, built military bases in Japan, backed a right-wing dictator in Thailand, and tried to establish a pro-Western state in Vietnam. The success of China's nationalist revolution also spurred

the 1950-1953 Korean War, in which eight Canadian warships and 27,000 Canadian troops participated. The war left nearly four million dead.

The NDP's predecessor, the CCF, endorsed the U.S.-led, United Nations-sanctioned war in Korea. Deputy leader and party spokesperson Stanley Knowles immediately endorsed the deployment of Canadian naval units to the Western Pacific, which the government sent in case they "might be of assistance to the United Nations and Korea." Before Ottawa committed ground troops, the CCF Executive Council called for them. The CCF started to shift its position on the Korean War when Washington had the UN condemn Chinese "aggression" six months into the fighting.

The NDP backed Canada's significant contribution to

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March 14 has a significant number of social demands. These include full and equitable funding for schools in Black and Brown communities, more social workers and nurses, more favorable teacher to student ratios, spending on better school building facilities, and stopping charter school expansion. Beyond this, the Chicago students demanded an end to the criminalization of youth, elimination of gang databases, and no guns in schools.

Philadelphia students raised similar demands. In Philadelphia, students clearly demanded “divestment from school police officers.” They also questioned the myth that police in schools are an adequate replacement for guidance counselors. Cops and guidance counselors receive very different training.

The Philadelphia demands also explicitly include protection of families and students from ICE arrests around schools and “gun control that does not result in targeted policing of black and brown bodies: Just like outside school grounds, Black and Brown people are unfairly targeted by law enforcement using racist stop-and-frisk practices.”

An article in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* (March 26, 2018) quoted an African American student, Jordyn Williams, 15, as explaining, “I want the same thing that those [Parkland] kids want ... I’m not saying that those kids’ lives didn’t matter. I’m saying they aren’t the ones being treated like nothing.” Another student, Kaiyah Taylor, said, “We have a lot of dying in our community, and no one is paying attention.”

Activists should link the demands of students with those of teachers and the broader working class for greater investment in education, health care, and jobs. We should seek to link this new youth mobilization to Black Lives Matter and the broader struggle to strengthen public education. The way forward requires us to get at the economic and social roots of alienation and violence.

The right to self-defense

We must unequivocally support the right of the students to protest and their right to free speech. But this does not require support to every demand that is put forward. In this regard, calls for banning certain types of firearms, rigorous background checks by the state, etc. are bad mistakes. Indeed, if the police and military are allowed to have assault weapons, no civilian ban could ever prevent right-wing bigots from getting their hands on them, given their intimate association with those institutions.

Gun control has often been used to disarm Black and Brown people, while the law has ignored the actions of racists. Following Hurricane Katrina, for example, Blacks in New Orleans were disarmed while cops gunned down Black people fleeing the city. The racial disparity in convictions for gun crimes is greater than for any other class of federal crimes (47.3 percent were for Black people in 2013). And Blacks were far more often to be faced with mandatory minimum sentences and enhanced penalties.

During both the Civil Rights Struggle and the Black Power movement, Black activists asserted their right to defend themselves “by any means necessary,” in the words of Malcolm X. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) defended both Malcolm and Robert Williams, who organized a Black self-defense group against the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina in the 1950s. The SWP also defended the right of the Black Panther Party to organize free of state repression.

We understand the Second Amendment as having two souls; it has been employed as a reactionary prop to white supremacy, but it is also a right won by work-

... Violence of the system



ing people and the oppressed for self-defense against racists and fascists.

Build an economy that really cares about kids

Politicians of both parties claim that they “care” about the futures of children, but this caring always seems to take a back seat to the interests of Wall Street and the ruling rich.

We are told by politicians of both parties that we “can’t afford” decent public education. We can’t afford to pay teachers and fund pensions. We can’t afford to build schools, so kids are forced to “learn” in buildings that are in substandard condition. This is, of course, an urban problem. If you drive 40 minutes into the suburbs, the schools are like temples and the education offered is excellent. Teachers in the suburbs are still treated badly, but not as poorly as city teachers.

Honestly, we can afford these things but the capitalists and their politicians choose not to. Instead, they choose military intervention, drones, and handouts to the rich.

The U.S. has 800 military bases in more than 70 countries, but our roads and bridges are falling apart and our schools are in horrible shape. Instead of building an economy based on the right to health care and a decent job, wealth continues to be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. We spend more on policing and prisons than we do on education.

No one with any power is even considering disarming the police, or ending the manufacture of assault weapons—including for the military and police.

Virtually all of the current proposals, from increased police in schools to stricter gun ownership laws to allowing mental health professionals to violate patient confidentiality with police, will lead to a worse situation for working and oppressed people. It will mean increased law enforcement and therefore more peo-

ple in prisons, and more people facing violent encounters with the police.

Stationing police in schools must be totally opposed. This sentiment was reflected in rallies on March 24, with hand-made signs demanding, “Books, Not Bullets,” and raising similar slogans. In schools where police are stationed, there is an increase in arrests of students and violence against students. Of course, the victims of cop violence and over-zealous policing in schools are disproportionately students of color. Socialists favor the disarming and demilitarization of cops. Schools are not prisons.

For the same reasons, we oppose the Trump/NRA proposal to arm teachers. Such a move, which is insulting to teachers who struggle for resources on a daily basis, would do nothing to make classrooms safer. This would, in fact, make both teachers and students more vulnerable.

“Solutions” that ostracize people for mental illness or violate doctor-patient confidentiality will do more harm than good, because people will hesitate to seek help if they think the therapeutic environment isn’t safe. And we should be troubled by the effort to scapegoat neurodiverse people, who are far more likely to be the victims of violent crime than the perpetrators of it.

Bigots kill because they are bigots, not because they have mental illnesses. (Politicians and the media have made every attempt to frame the issue of these killings around an abstract notion of guns, and this has erased the racist and misogynist nature of the crimes.)

Socialists fight to change the social and economic conditions that make gun violence happen. We understand that these conditions are effects of capitalism, a criminal and heartless system driven by the thirst for profits. ■

... Canadian violence

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NATO’s 1999 bombing of the former Yugoslavia. Contravening international law, the 78-day bombing campaign killed hundreds and spurred the ethnic cleansing of Albanian Kosovars that NATO officials claimed to be curbing. The party became critical of this only over a month after the bombing began.

Important elements within the NDP initially supported Canada’s October 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. Two days after the George W. Bush administration declared war, NDP leader Alexa McDonough and defence critic Peter Stoffer issued a “joint statement,” saying they “completely back the men and women in the Canadian military assigned to the U.S. coalition.”

The NDP was wishy-washy on the Feb. 29, 2004, US/France/Canada coup in Haiti and violence that followed. In the days after the U.S./France/Canada military invasion, NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Svend Robinson called for an investigation into Jean-Ber-

trand Aristide’s removal and asked if “regime change in Haiti” was discussed at the January 2003 Ottawa Initiative on Haiti, where high-level U.S., Canadian, and French officials deliberated on overthrowing the elected President. Subsequent Foreign Affairs Critic Alexa McDonough largely stayed mum as Canada offered military, policing, diplomatic, and financial support to a dictatorship and UN force that killed thousands violently suppressing Port au Prince’s poor (pro-Aristide) neighborhoods.

In 2011 the party supported two House of Commons votes endorsing the bombing of Libya. “It’s appropriate for Canada to be a part of this effort to try to stop Gadhafi from attacking his citizens as he has been threatening to do,” said party leader Jack Layton. But, the NATO bombing campaign was justified on the basis of exaggerations and outright lies about the Gaddafi regime’s human rights violations, as I discuss in detail in “The Ugly Canadian: Stephen Harper’s foreign policy.”

Additionally, NATO forces explicitly contravened the UN resolutions sanctioning a no-fly zone by dispatch-

ing troops and expanding the bombing far beyond protecting civilians. Canada also defied UN resolutions 1970 and 1973 by selling drones to the rebels. After Gaddafi was savagely killed, NDP leader Nicole Turmel released a statement noting, “the future of Libya now belongs to all Libyans. Our troops have done a wonderful job in Libya over the past few months.”

Beyond this history, there are good reasons to fear Singh will support Canadian aggression. During the leadership race he allied himself with pro-U.S. Empire MP Hélène Laverdière and subsequently reappointed the former Canadian diplomat as NDP Foreign Affairs critic. At last month’s NDP federal convention he mobilized supporters to suppress debate on the widely endorsed Palestine resolution. Singh has said little (or nothing) about Canada’s new defence policy, which includes a substantial boost to military spending and offensive capabilities.

In the interests of a *first do no harm* Canadian foreign policy, it is indeed time for a comprehensive discussion of Singh’s views on Canadian state political violence. ■

The March for Our Lives —

Build a movement against the violence of this system

Henrietta Wildsmith / The Times



By JOHN LESLIE

Student-initiated demonstrations, in the aftermath of the Parkland, Fla., shootings, which tragically claimed 17 lives, have energized a drive for more restrictions on gun ownership. High school students are mobilizing on this issue in a way they have not done in a long time.

The March for Our Lives, calling for greater restrictions on gun ownership, built events large and small in more than 800 cities worldwide on March 24. The main march, in Washington, D.C., has been labeled as perhaps the largest demonstration ever held there, with more than 800,000 estimated participants.

In Philadelphia, the crowd of approximately 15,000 was overwhelmingly white, and the majority were older people. High school aged students were a very small minority of the marchers in Philadelphia, and similar percentages were reported in other cities, like Oakland, Calif.

While high school students, including Parkland survivors, were among the main speakers in many areas, Democratic Party operatives and politicians often joined the youths on stage. In San Francisco, for example, Board of Supervisors President London Breed spoke, in addition to U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein.

This can only be seen as an attempt by the Democrats to take the reins of the movement and channel it

into electoral action.

Behind the scenes, Democratic Party constituency groups like Move-On and Planned Parenthood, and gun-control groups, lent logistical and financial support. Prominent liberals like George and Amal Clooney, Steven Spielberg, Oprah Winfrey, and Kate Capshaw all made significant contributions of \$500,000 each. Other corporate sources gave large contributions. The movement also raised more than \$3 million through a gofundme page.

The NRA and the right have responded to the actions of the young activists by seeking to demonize them, calling them Nazis and traitors. The ludicrous reactionary former Senator and presidential candidate Rick Santorum suggested that the students would be better off taking CPR classes than fighting for gun control. Santorum has since backed off from this assertion.

Rightist trolls have particularly targeted Parkland survivor Emma Gonzalez, with one GOP politician calling her a “lesbian skinhead.” Rightists also attempted to red-bait her because of a Cuban flag patch on her jacket, and photo-shopped a photo of her ripping a target to make it look like she was ripping the constitution. The 18-year-old Cuban American is openly bisexual and the president of her school’s Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA).

The March For Our Lives raised three demands—

(Above) High school students march in Shreveport, La. on March 24.

ban the sale of assault weapons while preserving their use by police and military, prohibit the sale of high-capacity magazines, and close loopholes on background checks. Parkland students writing in the British *Guardian* offered even more intense proposals, like increased police presence at schools and relaxation of HIPAA privacy laws to make it easier for mental health professionals to share details about their patients with law enforcement. In all, the content of the Parkland “Manifesto” is law-and-order oriented and based on the notion that the state should have a monopoly on force.

March 14 student walkouts

In the March 14 student walkouts, tens of thousands participated in big cities, small towns, and rural communities. In some areas, parents, school administrators, and teachers were supportive. In others, students were threatened with punishment or received detentions or suspensions. In Atlanta, schools were put on lockdown to prevent a walkout and kids took a knee in the hallway instead.

In contrast to the Parkland Manifesto, a list of demands issued by Chicago students for the walkout on

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