

Millions march for women's rights



By ANN MONTAGUE

Once again women hit the streets on Jan. 20 and 21. The U.S. marches were decentralized in nature, but the turnout was high. They reflected the anger and determination to resist that many women feel under the looming shadow of President Trump.

Last year, the marches took place on the first day of his presidency, and the focus was on Washington D.C. This year, women in the U.S. did not do much traveling but generally marched in nearby cities and small towns around the country.

From 1.6 million to 2.5 million marched throughout the United States, according to researchers Erica Chenoweth and Jeremy Pressman. Close to 500 separate events took place in the U.S., with 200 other events worldwide. In many cities, the turnout was higher than a year ago. Some 300,000 marched in Chicago, 200,000 in New York, and over half a million in Los Angeles. There were around 60,000 in San Francisco, about the same number in Philadelphia, and slightly less in Oakland, while tens of thousands marched in Washington, D.C.

But just as impressive as the numbers in major cities were all the homemade signs expressing the anger

and creativity of the women and children in marches in communities large and small. The predominant themes were anti-Trump resistance and persistence.

The lead organizers for last year's Women's March hoped to be able to influence the independent marches this year with their proposed themes of "March to the Polls" (i.e., Chicago and Washington) and "Power To The Polls" (i.e., Las Vegas) as a way to impose supporting Democrats in 2018. On their website they stated, "This will harness the collective energy to advocate for policies and candidates that reflect our values."

Undoubtedly, the organizers thought their slogan would catch on, and women would participate with t-shirts, banners, and mass-produced signs proclaiming they were simply marching to the Democratic Party's drumbeat. But while some signs referred to the power of voting, and in some areas elected officials spoke, the marches were filled with young women who were angry at the system and wanted to "Smash Patriarchy."

They also addressed DACA and immigration, challenged sexual violence and racism, and supported LGBTQ rights. These issues were also reflected in signs and chants.

(Above) Women's March in Nashville, Tenn., on Jan. 20.

Carole Metellus, an activist in Philadelphia, told WHYY radio that she showed up in support of immigrant communities. "As a Haitian-American, I have to be here to protest what the White House is saying about us and our 'shithole' countries," she said. "It was important to raise my voice in solidarity."

Speaking from the stage in Los Angeles, African American actress Viola Davis reviewed the history of legal Jim Crow in the United States, and paraphrased Martin Luther King in saying, "I'm not willing to wait 150 years for things to change." As one who was sexually assaulted in childhood, she said, "I am in solidarity with all the women who raised their hands [in the #MeToo movement]. ... I am speaking for all the women who are still in silence."

In Chicago, a young woman marcher interviewed by CNN also spoke to the issue of sexual harassment: "I think it's hard sometimes for our generation to comprehend the seriousness of the cases, not just in Hollywood but everywhere. But I think it is important for our generation to understand that we cannot be

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By BILL ONASCH

Transit Equity Day—Transportation recently surpassed electricity generation as the biggest source of climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. That makes expansion of public transit more important than ever in tackling global warming.

Safe, reliable, affordable transit has also historically been an important demand of the civil rights movement. Feb. 5—the next workday after the birthday of the late Rosa Parks, who helped launch the pivotal 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott that ended segregation in public transit—has been declared Transit Equity Day.

This initiative of the Labor Network for Sustainability is being co-sponsored by the Amalgamated Transit Union, Greenpeace, Jobs with Justice, Institute for Policy Studies, Sierra Club, 350.org, among others. Local events will include Transit Town Hall meetings, leaflet distribution at bus stops and outdoor rallies in weather friendly venues in at least 14 U.S. cities. You can find more information at: labor4sustainability.org/transit-equity-day/.

Stop Thief!—In addition to their enormous war machine contracts, General Dynamics runs the privatized call centers to assist Medicare, Medicaid, and Affordable Care Act market clients. The Communications Workers of America represents tens of thousands of call center workers at other employers but don't yet bargain for this group. Nevertheless, CWA has filed a claim of wage theft through the bogus classification of jobs on behalf of 1600 of these agents against the corporate giant. If the Wage and Hours Division of the Labor De-

partment finds merit in the claim, the remedy would be back pay totaling more than \$100 million.

Insult to Pigs—The stock market designation for Harley-Davidson is HOG. Perhaps unfairly to the swine, this association of greed is appropriate to the "iconic" motorcycle manufacturer. Twenty years ago, HOG took advantage of generous federal, state, and local incentives to build a state of the art assembly plant in Kansas City, with the Steelworkers and Machinists sharing bargaining for the new workforce.

Thirteen years later, HOG threatened to close the plant unless the unions agreed to grant draconian give-backs

(Above) President Trump meets with Harley-Davidson execs and union reps at the White House in February 2017.

that included not only a five-year wage freeze and elimination of the eight-hour day but also a new classification of casual workers, used only as needed and paid a lower rate with no benefits. At the urging of the union bureaucracy, the workers reluctantly agreed.

Last year, HOG arranged a photo-op of President Trump sitting on their biggest model on the White House lawn. A few days after receiving this Make America Great Again endorsement, HOG announced that they were opening

a plant in Thailand.

Last month, just hours before the State of the Union Address, in which Trump would boast that employers will use their new tax-cut gifts to create jobs and raise wages, HOG announced they were permanently closing the Kansas City plant, to be completed next year. Eight hundred jobs will be lost, and that will also have a big impact on local suppliers, merchants, and taxes.

This is yet another bitter lesson that neither worker concessions nor government hand-outs can provide job security under "Free Enterprise."

The Times They Are a Changing—A *New York Times* story began, "Journalists at *The Los Angeles Times* voted overwhelmingly to form a union despite aggressive opposition from the paper's management team, reversing more than a century of anti-union sentiment at one of the biggest newspapers in the country." The vote for the CWA News Guild wasn't close—248 to 44.

Drivers Not Drones—According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the Teamsters have already submitted 83 pages of demands to begin negotiations for a new UPS contract covering 260,000 workers to replace the current one expiring in July. Proposed for the first time would be a ban on deliveries by drones or driverless vehicles. Also included are hiring 10,000 new workers and eliminating deliveries after 9 p.m. ■

If you have a story appropriate for *Labor Briefing*, please contact billonasch@kclabor.org

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

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

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

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: Feb. 4, 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@lmi.net

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Mitch Linck: Why I am running for U.S. Senate

By MITCH LINCK

Fred “Mitch” Linck is the Socialist Action candidate for the U.S. Senate from Connecticut.

I want to talk a little about what I learned from my time in Iraq, and how it can help us understand our situation today.

By the time I was 17, there was no one who could tell me that joining the military was not the best thing I could do with my life. I joined shortly after high school, and it was not long before I was living my dream of going to Iraq to free a people from a “brutal dictator” and to bring them democracy. After I arrived, however, it was not long before I realized that everything I had been told, believed, and held as obvious was simply lies.

I couldn’t tell you exactly how I came to this, but one moment stands out when everything turned upside down. My unit and I were patrolling through the streets of Fallujah, Iraq. Some kids, maybe 15 or 16 years old, took a few shots at us from a rooftop and ran off. I was not much older than them, really—just 18. We took cover in a house, and the realization came over me that I had so much more in common with these kids than I did with anyone who had decided we should be at war.

I came to see that being in Iraq, we were making things worse, not better. We were not making anyone safer. And that the things I had done were going to hurt for a long time. And that the scars I will carry are small in comparison to those of the society we decimated in the Middle East.

As my time in the military came to a close, I started asking myself: For all the blood spilled in Iraq and Afghanistan, did we make anyone’s lives better? For all the money spent did we make this world a more just or equitable place? For the 22 suicides that veterans commit each day from the trauma of fighting an unjust war, is anyone safer?

No. But the rich made billions of dollars. They made it off weapons that blew up Iraqi infrastructure. They made it by controlling the flow of oil. They made it off no-bid contracts to repair the infrastructure that helps the rich suck ever more resources from the country. They made it from employing people like me as private contractors to protect the oil fields.

This is what the Iraq war was always about. It was about destabilizing the Middle East to ensure the dominance of American business. It was about profiteering from the destruction of countless lives, Iraqi and American. It was about protecting the American dollar. It was to further entrench the military industrial complex in the Middle East.

And so, I discovered that the real aims of the war had nothing to do with why I decided to pick up a gun and fly thousands of miles from home to join it.

I did not want to go to war to make the rich richer. I did not want to go to war to defend a system that benefits when more people are sick or in prison. I did not want go to war to protect a system that lives by destroying our environment and bringing us always closer to total ecological collapse.

I did not want to go to war to protect a system and a class that lets some people take private helicopters to work while the people who produce their wealth, working people, have to take hours on a neglected public transit system every single day.

What I wanted, when I went to war, was to make a more just world. This is why most young people decide to fight. But fighting in a war doesn’t let you decide its purpose, or even your own role. When you fight for the American military you fight for the rule of American capitalism. Whether it is in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Kosovo, Vietnam, or Korea, or anywhere else.

When you put on that uniform you don’t enter a democratic organization. More than any institution on earth, the military has perfected the art of coercion. The orders flow from the top on down. And at the top are generals tied to the ruling rich by a thousand threads. They trust each other with their lives.

This military, the police, other armed forces, and a massive unelected bureaucratic state machine, enables the rich to maintain an order where you have to work for them in order to live. Where you make them wealthier every day just so you can make it to the next week.

And when you step into that workplace, you do not step into a democratic organization either. There may be a few more smiles, but the orders still come from the top. And if you disobey, or show too little enthusiasm, or work a little too slowly—you’re out on the



(Top) U.S. soldiers patrol a street in Iraq.
(Below) Fred “Mitch” Linck.

on the job, in the streets, and on the campuses, we need to organize independently from their political leadership. We need to organize independently from their parties, the Republicans and Democrats. And if we’re to have a chance, if we’re serious, we need to organize our own party.

That’s because, to win our emancipation, working people cannot simply put a few top hats in jail and call it a day. We are compelled by our situation to create a new society. This means realizing the liberation of women, of African Americans, of LGBTQI people, of Latinxs, the colonized, the immigrants, and the First Nation people. It means taking the great productive forces we have created together and placing them under public ownership and the management of workers.

The Democrats and the Republicans do not care about us. My opponent, Democratic Senator Chris Murphy, does not care about us. He does not care about you. He is a professional politician. Chris Murphy and politicians like him make policies for the ultra-wealthy, not workers.

We need a party of our own—a party that fights every day for the interests of those most exploited by capitalism. A party that has at its very core the idea of taking power from the capitalist class and putting it in the hands of workers.

That’s why I’m running as a socialist candidate for U.S. Senate against Chris Murphy. My party, Socialist Action, believes workers and oppressed people can build a truly democratic society organized to satisfy human needs, rather than corporate profit.

Help us bring this message to your coworkers, your campus, and your neighborhood. Volunteer, host a house party, or make a donation to help build this campaign. Vote Socialist Action in 2018! Vote Fred Linck for U.S. Senate in Connecticut. ■

street. You have no more real say in the aims of your job than I had in the invasion of Iraq.

You fight for your boss every day. You pay for your boss’s wars. You compete with other workers for your boss’s jobs. You compete with other cities and towns for your boss’s investments—investments made with profits created by you.

They have you fighting your allies: your fellow workers, here and around the globe. They have you serving your enemies: The banks, the corporations, the richest few thousand people on earth.

- Do you go to work to make the ultra-wealthy even richer?
- Do you pay taxes to imprison and deport your neighbors and family?
- Do you pay taxes to imprison and murder children in the streets?
- Do you pay taxes to send kids to kill people around the world?
- Do you go to work every day to destroy the basis of human life on this planet?

This is what the billionaires who run this society do with the wealth we make by our own hands, whether we like it or not.

We do what the bosses say on the job. We do what the police and the courts say everywhere else. Like the generals, they are on the side of money. As are the politicians who make the laws the police and the courts enforce.

We do what they say because they are organized better than we are. We do what they say because we are confused. Confused about our interests and about who the enemy is. And no less confused than I was on the streets of Fallujah.

A few thousand rich people have nearly everyone in the whole world working for them and fighting each other. We will only be able to do something about our situation when we join with working people around the planet to fight our common exploiter.

Everywhere the bosses have power we need to organize our own power. And if we are going to crack their hold on this earth, we not only need to organize

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St. Paul marchers say — ‘No human being is illegal’

By LISA LUINENBERG

ST. PAUL, Minn.—On Saturday, Jan. 20, close to 1000 people marched in 30-degree weather here to commemorate one year of struggle against the Trump administration. Responding to the call, “No Human Being is Illegal,” the marchers gathered outside of the Ramsey County Detention Center, which houses immigrants awaiting deportation.

The detention center has been a target for local activists for years, especially after a 30-year-old Ecuadorian woman died in detention there in 2006. Just one day earlier, an article in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* reported that the Ramsey County Detention Center will stop housing immigrants in the jail at the end of January, due to low reimbursement rates from ICE.

But the issue of immigrant detentions and deportations is far from being resolved. The detainees who were once housed in Ramsey County will now be moved to other county jails in Minnesota, farther away from their families. And the Ramsey County sheriff’s department continues to notify ICE when people whom ICE wants to take into custody are being released, even if these people have never been charged with a crime.

According to the *Star Tribune*, the St. Paul ICE office has detained around 3400 people through September 2017, an almost 70% increase from the same period the year before.

These and other issues that affect immigrants were the focus of the recent protest in St. Paul, which was primarily organized by Immigrant Movement for Jus-

tice, a new local coalition led by immigrants in the Twin Cities area. Socialist Action participates in the coalition.

The march was attended by a mix of younger and older people—Brown, Black, and white—and was endorsed by over 30 organizations, including the Women’s March, Black Lives Matter St. Paul, the Minnesota Peace Action Coalition, 15 Now Minnesota, Morena Minnesota, Take a Knee Nation, and many other local immigrant and social justice groups.

Immigrant Movement for Justice organizers reported that the march had gained broad support and peaked a lot of interest in the local community as it was being built.

The demands of the march included: Stop all deportations NOW! Legalization for ALL workers, students and their families NOW! Housing for ALL! Defend Muslims! Stop the Ban! Defend #DACA! Defend #TPS for Salvadorans and Haitians! Raise the Minimum Wage (\$15 or More)!

The speakers at the opening and closing rallies reflected these demands and included Latino, Hmong, Haitian, and Filipino immigrants, women, Blacks, socialists, DACA recipients, and other local activists. After the opening rally, the protesters took to the streets of St. Paul and marched to the Indigenous Roots Cultural Arts Center for the closing rally to hear more speakers and enjoy traditional Haitian and Mexican dances.

These demands have been gaining not only local but national prominence due to Trump’s constant attacks against immigrants and attempts from politicians on both sides of the aisle to tighten national security against immigrants they label as “dangerous.” This has included proposals to tighten border security and extend the wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Racial tensions have remained high as racist groups have gained more prominence since Trump took office a year ago.

These are all tactics the ruling class uses to attempt to drive a wedge between white, Brown, and Black workers, and between those with documents and those without in order to divide the power of the working class. But these attempts were rejected at the march in St. Paul, as workers of different ethnic backgrounds and speaking different languages marched side by side to demand their rights.

Immigrant Movement for Justice hopes to build on the momentum of the recent march to organize an even bigger protest in the Twin Cities on May 1. It will be actions such as these, not watered down legislation proposed by politicians, that will win real gains for immigrants in the coming months. ■

Brooklyn meeting builds March 8 women’s strike

By CHRISTINE MARIE

On Jan. 30, around 100 people gathered at Verso Books in Brooklyn, N.Y., to participate in the launch of a campaign of action in solidarity with the International Women’s Strike (IWS) that will be held around the globe on March 8—a date celebrated as International Women’s Day by the working-class movement.

This will be the second year of some kind of international coordination of women’s mobilizations around the globe. It will build on the wave of massive demonstrations and work stoppages that began even earlier in 2016 in Poland, Argentina, and many other locations. This year, U.S. organizers are building a coalition to prepare a one-hour strike of low-wage, immigrant, and working-class women that will be followed by a march and rally in New York’s Washington Square.

An impressive panel of organizers laid out the theoretical and practical thinking behind this year’s action in New York. Ximena Bustamante, a leader of the IWS NYC collective explained clearly the thinking behind this year’s call. Our goal, she said, is distinct from that of liberal feminism. Our project is not electoral but instead “a refusal to confine the horizons of social change to the terms defined by the Democratic Party.”

The IWS project, Bustamante said, is to attack the “structural origins of multiple fronts of oppression, exploitation, and dispossession that we experience.” This means “articulating already existing struggles as both working class and feminist” and taking part in “the radical transformation of current social relationships.”



In order to develop such a women’s and working-class movement and March 8 action, IWS NYC is developing a coalition of groups in agreement with related goals. The coalition in formation is made up of radical caucuses in some unions, workers’ centers, cooperatives, socialist groups, immigrant rights groups, grassroots feminist groups, and community-based groups around social justice.

The NYC collective has been working toward the consolidation of such a formation all year, in part, by carrying out interviews with women organizers from such organizations. These include the Street Vendors Project, Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC), Retail Action Project (RAP), Brandworkers, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), Laundry Workers Center, Workers Justice Project, New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE), Worker Center Federation, Eco-Cleaning Coop, Beyond Care Coop, Golden Steps Coop, Is Si Se Puede Cleaning Coop, and Palante Coop. These interviews are available at <http://www.publicseminar.org/author/iwsnyc/>.

This work documented the lived experience of organizing women in New York City, demonstrating the weakness of the

arguments of those who opposed last year’s women’s strike on the basis that it was too dangerous for women to take such steps. Natalie Matos of the NYC collective addressed this question directly. “Many say that a ‘women’s strike’ is impossible due to non-strike clauses, precarious labor conditions, and the vulnerability that the majority of women face in their workplace.” We

believe that in spite of all this, “a strike of women is both possible and fundamental in this political conjuncture.”

IWS NYC is confident that a one-hour strike in New York City will make women’s absence unavoidably felt in homes, neighborhoods, communal spaces, paid workplaces, and on the streets. Organizers are clear about the limitations imposed on the event by the complacency of most union leaderships but optimistic about the political impact of the walkouts and protests that will occur.

One of the fundamental arguments for the one-hour strike is that such an activity is hardly a stretch for thousands of working women in the city who already are active in struggles for union organization, against deportation, wage theft, police brutality, and loss of social services.

The first panelist to speak, Jeanette Vizguerra, was the embodiment of the organizing determination of immigrant women. Born in Mexico City, Vizguerra came to the U.S. without papers and within seven months was organizing janitors with the SEIU. Now she is a leader against deportation and for sanctuary. This organizing has taken place for the last eight

years as she fights her own deportation.

A second speaker, Maria Ines Orjuela, a housekeeper at the newly organized Hilton Hotel in Stamford, Conn., voiced the support of her union local, UNITE-HERE 217, for the March 8 strike.

Another theme addressed by the panelists was the movement’s growing understanding of the relationship between women’s problems on the job and at home and in the community. To illustrate the way that a women’s strike can link women’s oppression and exploitation by the boss, Sarah Jaffee recounted the story of the Brooklyn-based Mujeres Guerrillas, or Warrior Women. The activists first came together to organize grocery store and food service workers with Fight for Fifteen but soon discovered that they also shared a need for collaboration against sexual violence in the workplace, in the community, and at home.

Workers problems based on class and gender do not end when they leave the worksite, and fighting oppressions in the community is the only way to free women to lead workplace struggles.

Chaumtoli Huq and Suzanne Adely praised the IWS for its commitment to genuine internationalism. Huq observed the ways that solidarity between female garment workers in Bangladesh and South Asian women in Brooklyn strengthened each other’s struggles.

Adely, who has long experience in Arab-American community organizing, pointed out that while at the Jan. 20-21 Women’s Marches it was often difficult to protest on behalf of the female Palestinian teen Ahd Tamimi—jailed in December for resisting Israeli troops on her family’s land—the IWS recognized that a global movement for women must be anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist. See: <https://www.womenstrikeus.org>. ■

Haitians denounce Trump’s ‘shithole’ remark

Damon Higgins / The Palm Beach Post

By MARTY GOODMAN

As if 200 years of U.S. racism and imperialism weren’t enough, Haitians must contend with the idiotic rantings of the U.S. commander in chief, Donald Trump. “Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?” asked Trump at a Jan. 11 immigration meeting.

Trump was referring to Haiti, El Salvador, and African states, provoking worldwide outrage. During the meeting he asked, “Why do we need more Haitians?” “Take them out.” according to sources cited in a Jan. 12 *Washington Post* article. And that wasn’t enough for Trump, who added, “Put me down for wanting more Europeans to come to this country. Why don’t we get more people from Norway?”

Initially, the White House refused to deny the reports, but Trump tweeted a denial the next day that merely admitted to non-specific “tough talk” and added, “I have a wonderful relationship with Haitians.”

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) confirmed the report, saying Trump used the term “shithole countries” repeatedly; he called Trump’s rant “hate-filled, vile, and disgusting.” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) confirmed Trump’s “shithole countries” slander in a comment to the *Post*, overheard by Sen. Tim Scott. Said Scott, Graham told the *Post* that the remarks attributed to Trump are “basically accurate.” Even the United Nations, usually under the thumb of U.S. imperialism, called Trump’s remarks “racist.”

Trump’s arrogant “shithole” comments were made on the eve of the eighth anniversary of the catastrophic Haitian earthquake, Jan. 12, 2010, which killed up to 300,000 and injured many more in a country of 10 million. Virtually every Haitian family was affected.

Trump: “They all have AIDS!”

On Sept. 16, 2016, candidate Trump said to a small gathering of Haitian Americans in Miami, “I really want to be your biggest champion.” Many recalled Trump’s empty promises after his Nov. 20 racist termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 60,000 Haitians who fled in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, a cholera plague, and a post-hurricane Mathew Haiti. TPS Haitians support 250,000 relatives back home. Haiti is in no condition to receive deportees!

The falsity of those promises was also demonstrated last June, at a White House meeting on immigration, when Trump was presented with a list of immigrants by country. After seeing that 15,000 had entered from Haiti, Trump snarled, they “all have AIDS” (*The New York Times*, Dec. 23, 2017).

The astonishing ignorance and racism of Trump toward Haitians was a throwback to the AIDS hysteria of the 1980s. At the time, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning that “Haitians and sub-Saharan Africans” were highly susceptible to AIDS and banned blood donations by Haitians. Racist stereotyping exploded, but they were, of course, lies. The FDA determination was removed in 1990, but not before 100,000 Haitians and supporters massed at the Federal Building in downtown Manhattan and basically shut the city down in April 1990—proving again the power of mass action!

As if these attacks weren’t enough, Trump has vowed to keep open the notorious Guantanamo, Cuba, gulag, which Obama pledged to close. The early 90s struggle for the entry of HIV-positive Haitians imprisoned in Guantanamo spawned a fight-back of Haitian activists and supporters and AIDS activists in ACT-UP. A combination of street actions and legal battles, led by attorney Michael Ratner, led to the release of the HIV Haitians. Continuing Guantanamo as a human rights atrocity shows how fleeting are victories under capitalism.

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program was also ended on Sept. 5 by Trump, affecting 800,000 children of “illegal” immigrants who are now subject to deportation. Socialists say, “No one is illegal!”



“Defend TPS and DACA!” “Full citizenship for TPS Haitians and DACA recipients!”

Concerning the “shithole” remark, Marlene Bastien of Haitian Women of Miami told *Socialist Action*, “I think his comments were racist and outright disrespectful. To make a comment like that would be out of ignorance. Some people are feeling the impact on their children.”

“The U.S. owes so much to Haiti. One thousand free men came to shed their blood in Savannah [Ga.] to fight for U.S. independence. Just to be able to defeat Napoleon, who had the mightiest army at that time, allowed the U.S. to double in size with the Louisiana purchase.”

On Jan. 15, Martin Luther King’s birthday, some 10,000 to 12,000 angry protesters—including many Haitian immigrants—poured into Times Square in Manhattan. The anger of the crowd was not matched by militant demands and was muzzled by the presence of several capitalist politicians, including “progressive” Mayor Bill de Blasio, whose housing policies continue to force record numbers into homelessness. However, some protesters marched up to Trump Tower at 56th Street and Madison Avenue.

Haiti Liberté journalist and activist Kim Ives spoke to *Socialist Action* about the newly formed 1804 Movement, comprised of grassroots organizations that met on Jan. 13 at the *Haiti Liberté* office in Brooklyn. Present were 50 activists from the New York and New Jersey area. Participating organizations include Le Caye, the Lavalas Family, Haiti Solidarity Network in New Jersey, as well as leftist parties, including Petit Dessalines, the Black Alliance for Justice in Immigration, *Haiti Liberté* newspaper, and U.S. socialist groups.

On the cold morning of Jan. 19, the 1804 Movement led a protest of between 500 to 1000 Haitians and supporters who marched from Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn over the Brooklyn Bridge to rally at the Trump Building on Wall Street.

Haitian American unionist Marie Paule Florestal made these remarks: “The 1804 Movement for All Immigrants has chosen to demonstrate on Wall Street because we condemn the politics of both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. We condemn both the Republican and Democratic parties. We condemn the entire political and economic system which enslaves this country, but also enslaves our countries, where our families and compatriots are forced to work for pennies a day for U.S. corporations.

“If we in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, or Asia try to flee our plight, to sell our smarts and labor elsewhere, we are arrested by the U.S. Coast Guard or Border

(Above) Haitian Americans demand an apology from Trump at his Mar-a-Lago, Fla., retreat on Jan. 15.

Patrol. In short, we are imprisoned in our homelands. But the U.S. demands complete freedom to buy land, set up businesses, and sell products there. Our sovereign nations are, in fact, modern colonies, neo-colonies.”

In Haiti, Mario Joseph, a human rights attorney and a protest leader, said, “On many occasions in the past we have been victims of imperialist countries, particularly the United States.” Even Haiti’s corrupt Senate on Thursday declared their country “is the expression of refusal to be humiliated, since the founding fathers engaged in an epic combat against slavery, colonialism, and racism to indicate to the oppressed peoples of the world the way to freedom.”

One Port au Prince protest drew 2000. “Trump is a vulgar racist, and a racist is a very poor-minded person,” said protester Marvel Joseph. “We don’t feel any resentment against the American people, who we know largely disapprove of Trump’s behavior in the White House.”

Batay Ouvirye (Worker’s Fight) in Haiti released a statement, which reads in part: “For all peoples around the world, if they are calling us shitholes, it’s the capitalist class that is the cause! Let’s coordinate our struggles to overthrow and in this way uproot capitalism with all its racism.”

More Trump racism

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced Jan. 18 that people from Haiti, Belize, and Samoa are no longer eligible to apply for H-2A visas for farm work and H-2B visas for non-farmworker jobs. The department said the nations had a high rate of fraud, abuse, and people overstaying their visa time limits. The overstay rate for Haitians is over 39 percent, out of roughly 1500 H-2 immigrant workers in 2016, the DHS stated.

However, those DHS statistics about Haitians were disputed on the Young Turks TV program, posted Jan. 25 (*Huffington Post*). Citing DHS figures for “overstays” on H-2 visas in 2016, Haitians had, in fact, far fewer in that category. Haitians were only 3.86% “overstays,” compared to people from Afghanistan (13.7%) and Jordan (5.97%), to name a few. A Pew Institute study of 2015 “overstays” found that Canada had 93,000 “overstays,” Mexico 42,000, Germany 21,000, etc.

The conclusion? The Trump administration lied about Haitians as revenge for blowback after Trump’s “shithole” comments. The U.S. and Haiti need revolution! ■

... Women’s marches

(continued from page 1)

okay with this anymore, and we need to finally stand up and change the views of what is right and what we will tolerate.”

Indigenous women missing and murdered

In the Northwest and the Southwest, Indigenous women had contingents marching and in some cases leading the Women’s Marches. It started in Phoenix, where they had been organizing since October around “Honoring Indigenous Women Leading The Women’s March.”

They wanted to focus on the missing and murdered indigenous women in their communities. More than four in every five Native American women have experienced violence in their lifetime, with over 90%

experiencing violence at the hands of a non-tribal member, according to the National Institute of Justice Research Report in 2010. These cases have mostly been ignored. The Centers For Disease Control And Prevention state that in 2016 the third-leading cause of death for Native American and Alaskan American females, ages 10-14, is murder.

Participants were asked to wear red to honor the murdered and missing. In Portland, Ore., over 700 people turned out for the Indigenous Womxn’s March on Jan. 21. Indigenous women led the march of 20,000 in Phoenix. There were five other marches in Arizona, with 1500 in Prescott and hundreds in Sedona and in Flagstaff.

Native American women also marched throughout the sparsely populated towns in Washington State where tribal lands are located, and they joined with non-Native women in cities named after their tribes. In Yakima they expected about a hundred march-

ers and 1000 turned out. Wenatchee saw marches of 1600, and 6000 marched in Spokane. Indigenous women led the march in Seattle. This year showed that the uprising of women with the election of Donald Trump has continued and remains strong even in the smallest communities in the country.

Unfortunately, the Democratic Party will continue to attempt to “harness” the movement and drive it into electing their candidates. They will try to bring women into a political system that has no answers for institutionalized sexism and racism.

At the same time that women were pouring into the streets all over the country, the Democrats were betraying the Dreamers and looking for compromises. Anyone who turned on the television or was watching video of the news on Jan. 20 saw a split screen, with hundreds of thousands of women in the streets on one side and politicians on the other. The choice could not have been clearer. ■

Capitalist environmental destruction and the ecosocialist alternative



The 17th Congress of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International will take place this month. Resolutions to be discussed include, “The Capitalist Destruction of the Environment and the Ecosocialist Alternative,” prepared by the International’s Ecology Commission. We are reprinting several sections of the resolution below. The full document can be read at <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5079>.

Introduction

1.1. The pressure humanity exerts on the Earth System has been growing ever more rapidly since the 1950s. At the beginning of the 21st century, it has reached an extremely alarming level, and continues to grow in almost all areas. Thresholds are already exceeded in some areas, particularly greenhouse gases concentration in the atmosphere.

This increasing quantitative pressure, observable everywhere and in most fields, leads to a qualitative shift that could be abrupt (within a few decades) and largely irreversible. The Earth System would then enter a new dynamic equilibrium regime, characterized by very different geophysical conditions and an even more marked decrease in its biological richness. At the least, in addition to the consequences for other living creatures, the transition to this new regime would endanger the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people, especially women, children and the elderly. At the most, it cannot be excluded that it contributes to a collapse of our species.

1.2. The danger increases day by day, but the catastrophe can be averted, or at least limited and contained. It is not human existence in general that is the determining cause of the threat, but the mode of production and social reproduction of this existence, which also includes its mode of distribution, consumption, and cultural values.

The mode in force for about two centuries—capitalism—is unsustainable because competition for profit, its driving force, implies a blind tendency to limitless quantitative growth. During the 20th century, the countries of “really existing socialism” were unable to offer an alternative to the productivist destruction of the environment, to which they also contributed in an important way.

At the beginning of the 21st century, humanity is confronted with the unprecedented obligation to control its development in all fields in order to make it compatible with the limits and the good health of the environment in which it has developed. No political project can ignore the conclusion of scientific studies on “global change.” On the contrary, every political project must be assessed first of all by taking into account the risk, the systemic responses it brings, the conformity of these responses with the fundamental

Capitalism is unsustainable because competition for profits implies a blind tendency to limitless growth.

requirements of human dignity, and their articulation with its program in the other areas, particularly in the social and economic sphere.

2. A deep gap between the urgency of a radical ecosocialist alternative on the one hand and the relationship of forces and the levels of consciousness on the other hand.

2.1. An entirely different relationship of humankind to the environment is an urgent necessity. This new relationship, based on a caring model for both humans and the environment, will not be simply the result of individual changes in behaviour. Rather it needs a structural change in the relationships between humans: the total and global eradication of capitalism as the mode of production of social existence. This total eradication is indeed the necessary condition for a rational, economical and prudent management in the exchanges of matter between humanity and the rest of nature.

Sciences and technologies can facilitate this management, but only on the condition that their development is not subjected to the dictates of capitalist profit.

2.2. Green capitalism and the Paris agreement do not allow us to get rid of the environmental destruction in general and of the dangers of climate denial in particular. The alternative can only come from a worldwide policy that satisfies real human needs. These are not determined by the market but by a democratic discussion that allows people to take their destiny in their own hands, liberated from market alienation. This will break the impersonal logic of productivist accumulation typical of capitalism.

2.3. The key demands of this alternative are:

1) The socialization of the energy sector: this is the only way to break free of a fossil energy economy, stop nuclear energy, reduce radically the production/consumption of energy and realize as fast as possible the transition towards a renewable, decentralized and efficient energy system according to ecological and social imperatives;

2) The socialization of the credit sector: this is essential given the interweaving of the energy and financial sectors in heavy and long-term investments and in order to have the necessary financial resources for transition investments;

3) The abolition of private ownership of natural resources (land, water, forests, wind, solar energy,

geothermal energy, marine resources, ...) and intellectual knowledge;

4) The destruction of all stock of arms, suppression of useless (weapons etc.) or harmful products (petrochemicals, nuclear energy), the production of use values decided democratically instead of exchange values;

5) A common and democratic management of resources at the service of real human needs, with respect for the good functioning and the capacities for renewal by the ecosystems;

6) The abolition of all forms of inequality and discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual preferences; emancipation of all the oppressed, particularly the emancipation of women and people of color;

7) The abolition of imposed working hours for the production of commodities as an alienating category that destroys leisure time and discourages non-commodified human activities;

8) A lengthy-term socio-economic policy aiming at rebalancing urban and rural populations and overcoming the opposition between town and countryside;

2.4. There is a deep gap between this objectively necessary alternative and the social relationship of forces and the current levels of consciousness. This gap can only be closed by concrete struggles of the exploited and the oppressed in the defence of their living conditions and of the environment. By winning immediate demands, larger layers will radicalize and their struggles will converge. They will formulate transitional demands incompatible with the capitalist logic.

Conclusion: ecosocialism and revolution

Absurd capitalist logic—the irrational expansion, unlimited accumulation as well as a productivism obsessed by the search for profit at all costs—is responsible for placing humanity at the edge of the abyss: facing climate change and ecological destruction.

Moving from the “destructive progress” of capitalism toward ecosocialism constitutes a historical process, a revolutionary permanent transformation of society, culture and consciousness. This transition will not only bring us to a new world of production, to an egalitarian and democratic society, but also to an alternative way of life, a new civilization, beyond the rule of money, beyond habits of consumption artificially produced by advertising and beyond the unlimited production of useless commodities. And, as Marx has said, the Kingdom of Freedom starts, with diminishing working time...

It is important to underline that such a process cannot happen without a revolutionary transformation of social and political structures through mass action by a large majority of the population. In the development of a socialist, feminist and ecological consciousness, the collective experience of people’s struggles is the decisive factor, from local confrontations to a radical change of society.

To dream and to fight for green socialism or as some say, for solar communism, does not mean that we do not to fight for concrete and urgent reforms. Without any illusion in “green capitalism”, we must try to win time and impose on the powers in place concrete measures against the ongoing catastrophe, starting with a radical reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases.

These urgent ecological demands can favour a process of radicalization under the condition that we refuse to limit their objectives by obeying the capitalist market or accepting “competitiveness.”

Each small victory, each partial advance can imme-

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The unemployment conspiracy

By BRUCE LESNICK

Real unemployment in the U.S. today hovers around 8.3%, afflicting more than 17 million people. This is roughly equivalent to the combined populations of New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston. Over one-third of the working-age population has given up looking for work.

On top of this, pundits project that many more jobs will be lost to automation in the near future, with computers and robots replacing as many as 49% of the jobs now done by humans. The mechanization of dirty, dangerous, repetitive, mind-numbing tasks should be a blessing. Instead, the future is described in apocalyptic terms. Why?

The problem is rooted in the disingenuous narrative we are fed. Jobs, so the story goes, are mysterious, ephemeral things, whose comings and goings are largely beyond our control. The number of available jobs has to vary independently from the work that needs to be done and the number of people available to do it, or so we are told.

There is plenty of work that needs to be done—converting our energy industry to renewables, repairing and enhancing infrastructure, building housing for all who need it, improving student-teacher ratios, increasing health-care and elder-care staff, and so much more. And there are millions looking for useful work.

The disconnect between people wanting to work, work that needs to be done, and the number of jobs that happen to be available only occurs if the guiding principle for job availability is *profit*. But when the needs of society as a whole are prioritized over the needs of the wealthy few at the top, then achieving permanent, full employment is a piece of cake.

Productivity at our service

Today, the putative standard is a 40-hour workweek, with a concomitant eight-hour day. But for more than half of U.S. history, the workweek was longer. Not until 1898 did mineworkers win the eight-hour day. Two years later, the movement for a shorter workweek spread to the San Francisco Building Trades. By 1905, the eight-hour day was established coast-to-coast in the printing trades. The Ford Motor Company adopted the new shorter workweek in 1914. Railroad workers won the right in 1916.

Only in 1937, with the adoption of the Fair Labor Standards Act, did the eight-hour day become the national standard. (While many today are compelled to work longer in order to make ends meet, the legal norm remains 40 hours.)

An obvious solution to unemployment presents itself: reduce the workweek *with no reduction in pay*. If the workweek were reduced from 40 to 30 hours, it would create 53 million new jobs. This is more than three times the current number of unemployed. To fill all the remaining slots and maintain current production levels in the United States, the U.S. government would have to plead with other governments to send more immigrants our way!

Can we afford this? Absolutely. Since 1937, the productivity of American labor has increased more than six-fold! In other words, the value produced by a full day's labor in 1937 would require less than two hours today. Up to now—and especially since 1973—increases in productivity have been siphoned off as corporate profits and enriched only those at the top.

The demand to implement 30 hours work for 40 hours pay (“30 for 40”) would simply redirect newly produced wealth away from corporate profits and back into the pockets of those who produce it. Instead of all the benefits of automation and increased productivity going to the top 1%, “30 for 40” would allocate a greater share of those gains to working people.

Big Business despises full employment

Not only would using “30 for 40” to eliminate unemployment directly cut into corporate profits, there are other side effects that corporate behemoths hate but working people would love.

To begin with, full employment would strengthen the working class vis-à-vis the 1%. With abundant, well-paying jobs for all, there would be no one a recalcitrant company could hire as strikebreakers if the workers organized to withhold their labor. It would be more difficult to harass and victimize union organizers because, with full employment, all workers would be harder to replace.

What's more, less time at work leaves more time for other things. This would include time for rest, recre-



The demand for “30 for 40” would redirect newly produced wealth away from corporate profits and back into the pockets of those who produce it.

ation, attention to family, and exploring creative endeavors. But it would also allow extra time for education, organizing, getting involved, and fighting back. In a world imbalanced by massive economic, social and political inequality, allowing the majority more time for education and organization is the last thing those at the top want to see.

Jobs for All vs. Universal Basic Income

Of course, basic human solidarity demands that anyone who is old, sick, disabled, or otherwise unable to work should be provided for at society's expense, with their medical care fully covered and living expenses provided at union wage scales. This can easily be paid for by reallocating funds from the oppressive military budget and by taxing corporate profits. This policy should be combined with a guarantee of a job for all who are able to work.

Lately, some have promoted the notion of a Universal Basic Income (UBI). To the extent that a UBI were funded by redistributing wealth from those at the top to those below—a principle that is by no means guaranteed by the concept—a UBI could be a positive reform. But a UBI is no substitute for a guarantee of jobs for all. Why not?

First and foremost, labor is power. The only power that can counter the concentrated riches of the ruling oligarchs is the collective organization of millions of everyday working people, who, as it happens, produce all of society's wealth. The root of working-class power is the fact that the labor of millions of people generates the riches enjoyed by those at the top, as well as the considerably smaller share currently allocated to the majority. By withholding their labor en masse, working people have ultimate veto power over any government policy.

Guaranteeing jobs for all strengthens the ties of working people to production, maximizing the number participating in the labor force and, thus, the number who have a hand on the lever of society's productive apparatus. A UBI by itself, by contrast, does nothing to reinforce people's connection to work—that is, to the fundamental engine of wealth creation.

In addition, the rate of any UBI will necessarily be too low. There is a built-in imperative for a UBI to be small enough to encourage people to work. In order to induce people to work at all, the UBI has to be inadequate (or “barely adequate”) to live on by itself. But in the absence of guaranteed jobs for all, “encouraging people to work” means compelling them to compete for an insufficient number of low-paying positions.

When the supply of labor exceeds its demand in available jobs, wages are driven down, all other things being equal. And if the UBI is to be low enough to encourage people to work, it must ultimately follow wages downward. So, contrary to the assertion of UBI boosters that it would exert upward pressure on wag-

es, a UBI without a job guarantee is just as likely to lead to a race to the bottom.

A UBI is also susceptible to other kinds of manipulation. If a UBI is used to justify cuts to Medicaid, food stamps, unemployment compensation, and other social programs, it's all too easy for the programs replaced to be inadequately covered by the UBI, or for some sectors of the population to benefit at the expense of others.

A UBI can be used to pit employed workers against those without jobs. And, a UBI would do little to address conditions on the job or provide more than a palliative remedy for the unjust distribution of gains from increased automation and productivity.

A job guarantee is different. It would establish a principle that strengthens the hand of working people as a whole. And the concept of “jobs for all” is automatically adjustable: As productivity or the relative size of the work force increases, the workweek can be reduced from 30 to 25 or fewer hours to spread the remaining work around. That's what a rational society, freed from profit-driven tyranny would do.

The next time some pundit or politician tells you we can't guarantee jobs for all, recognize that they're playing you for a chump. They're drawing an artificial box and counting on your not thinking outside it. Remind them that their assertion is only true if profits are prioritized over human needs. Explain that “30 for 40” solves the problem handily, at great benefit to the vast majority. And who knows? With guaranteed jobs for all, even narrow-minded pundits and politicians might be able to find socially useful work. ■

... Ecosocialism

(continued from page 6)

diately bring us to a higher and more radical demand. These struggles on concrete problems are important, not only because partial victories in themselves are welcome, but also because they contribute to the growth of an ecological and socialist consciousness, and promote autonomy and self-organization from below. This autonomy and this self-organization are the necessary and decisive preconditions for a radical transformation of the world.

This means a revolutionary transformation is only possible through the self-emancipation of the oppressed and the exploited: workers and peasants, women, indigenous communities, and all stigmatized because of their race, religion or nationality.

The leading elites of the system, retrenched behind their barricades, are incredibly powerful while the forces of radical opposition are small. Their development into a mass movement of unprecedented number is the only hope to stop the catastrophic course of capitalist “growth.” This will allow us to invent a desirable form of life, more rich in human qualities, a new society based on the values of human dignity, solidarity, freedom and respect for “Mother Nature.” ■

Baltimore conference calls for spring antiwar actions



By MARILYN LEVIN

Attended by 200 people (space limited attendance) and viewed by thousands via live streaming, the historic Conference on U.S. Foreign Military Bases, Jan. 12-14, 2018, in Baltimore, brought together broad participation from the peace/antiwar U.S. left along with leaders fighting U.S./NATO aggression from around the world.

Initiated by the U.S. Peace Council, a significant coalition representing many organizations—including UNAC, World Without War, Veterans for Peace, Black Alliance for Peace, International Action Center, Code Pink, WILPF, UFPJ and many other local and national peace and justice organizations (see list at www.no-foreignbases.org)—came together to revitalize and connect the movements against the wars at home and the wars abroad and to launch significant actions in the coming year. Over 250 organizations and 2000+ individuals endorsed the Unity Statement that was the basis for the conference.

All sessions were plenary panels that presented an amazing program of in-depth education on the nature of global U.S. aggression exemplified by military bases and the growing opposition to them in all sectors. There were three keynote speakers.

Ajamu Baraka, 2016 Green Party candidate for U.S. vice president and co-founder and president of the newly formed Black Alliance for Peace, spoke of the constant struggle needed to maintain any gains by the people against the capitalist empire's insatiable need for a permanent war agenda to maintain dominance. He stressed that the wars were bipartisan, and as Americans, our task was not to criticize other countries but to focus on *all* U.S. intervention.

The second keynote from Ann Wright, former U.S. Army officer and diplomat, and current leader of VFP and Code Pink, spoke of the ongoing devastation of the land and people by massive bases in South Korea and Okinawa and the ongoing struggles of local people to resist.

David Vine, a professor at American University in

D.C. and author of "Base Nation: How US Military Bases Harm America and the World," gave the third keynote. He described the history and extent of U.S. military involvement, with 800 bases in 80 countries. He reminded us that the first U.S. base was in North America as wars were waged on the Indigenous Peoples, and later Mexico in the westward takeover.

The giant infrastructure of U.S. bases exploded after World War II and became entrenched during the Cold War. The largest bases are in Germany, Italy, Japan, and South Korea, along with 11 aircraft carriers, and military personnel maintain 230 embassies and consulates abroad. This is contrasted to the 45 bases held by all the other countries in the world, at a cost of \$150 billion a year; \$385 billion is spent on contracts. U.S. policy is clearly not defensive but offensive.

The first plenary gave dramatic testimony to the massive environmental and health impact that military installations have both domestically and abroad. Weaponry and chemicals destroy the environment, are not cleaned up, and continue to cause health tragedies on huge scales to soldiers, civilians, and future generations. Little is regulated, and the U.S. government fights attempts to hold it accountable.

People are still suffering from the effects of Agent Orange, depleted uranium, and leftover munitions years after the wars are over. Foreign governments are coerced to sign agreements that free the U.S. from future responsibilities. There is also the social impact of U.S. military presence, with prostitution, violence, and abandoned children of U.S. soldiers.

Additional plenaries were organized around geographical areas: South America/Guantanamo; Asia Pacific/Pivot to Asia; Middle East/U.S./NATO Plan; Europe/Expansion of NATO; AFRICOM/Invasion of Africa. Greetings to the conference were read from organizations in many countries, including Cuba. There were panel speakers and conference attendees from many of the countries and bases covered on the panels—from Vieques, Puerto Rico, South America, Philippines, Korea, Ireland, Germany, and Okinawa.

Many spoke of the U.S. using humane "relief," the war

on terror and the drug wars as intervention excuses resulting in disaster for the countries. They also described the changing nature of bases, which can include movable bases on ships and drones flown and operated from many types of sites. The expansion of NATO under U.S. control was an important topic. NATO sites ring rivals like Russia, China, and Iran, and bring more nations under U.S. domination. Fascists are supported and brought to power in places like Ukraine.

On the positive side, speakers detailed how, in spite of trillions spent on war, the U.S. is losing hegemony in many areas, failing to control the oil fields in Iraq and bring about regime change in Syria. The relationship of forces outside of the U.S./NATO orbit are shifting away from their domination. Polls in the U.S. show that 86% want military intervention only as a last resort, and 76% are against sending military aid abroad.

Important local protests are ongoing against U.S. intervention in many places around the world—Ireland, Philippines, Korea, Okinawa, Japan, Germany, Italy, Cuba, Greece. The U.S. rewards its proxy allies in the Middle East—Israel and Saudi Arabia—with huge arms deals and green light to suppress their opposition in countries like Palestine, Yemen, and Bahrain.

Many panelists pointed out the racist nature of U.S. wars, in which the NATO allies include the colonialist nations now making war on former colonies and people of color world-wide. The millions of refugees driven from their homes by war, climate change, foreign political intervention, and economic collapse are people of color who are then scapegoated. It is inevitable that the military racism abroad intensifies the militarization and racist wars at home, particularly directed at immigrants, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, indigenous peoples, and Muslims.

The doctrine of U.S. exceptionalism goes hand in hand with white supremacy and fools many working people that the U.S. has the right to determine the fate of others.

The last session focused on future plans of action. There were three resolutions that passed unanimously. The first called for a global day of action to close Guantanamo and return the territory to the Cuban people. The date, Feb. 23, is the 115th anniversary of the U.S. seizure of Guantanamo.

There was a resolution to convene a global conference against U.S. and NATO military bases within the next year. Because of the U.S. government's denial of access to many leaders and activists from other countries, the conference will be held outside the U.S. The unity statement that convened the no bases conference here will be the basis of agreement in the call for the international conference.

The final resolution to call for a national day of action in the spring of 2018 generated the most discussion. Given the limited amount of time and the nature of the no bases conference, no specifics like date, location(s) or other logistics could be settled there. There will be a new, even broader coalition, organized to issue a call for action and carry out the planning. The demands of the resolution brought to the no bases coalition by UNAC and adopted by the coalition to introduce at the conference will be the start of calling together the forces to build the spring actions.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: In a Feb. 4 conference call, people representing some 66 antiwar groups across the U.S. agreed to build April 14-15 actions in several U.S. re-

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By METIN FEYYAZ

The author is a Fourth Internationalist in Turkey. The article is abridged from the FI online journal *International Viewpoint*.

On Jan. 21, while Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was announcing his military operation against Afrin, at the same time in the city of Bursa, which is the heart of the automotive industry in Turkey (and one of the most important hubs for the entire European automotive industry), trade unions were coincidentally announcing their strike decision, which would affect most of the industry in that city.

Erdoğan threatened anyone who protests against the attack on Afrin, saying that they would pay a serious price. In the same way, a few days after announcement of the strikes in the metal industry, a decree was published prohibiting these strikes, saying they are harmful to national security.

Class war in time of a shooting war

The strike decision in the metal industry was a result of ongoing collective bargaining negotiations with the Metal Employers Union. The main issues in dispute were wage increases and the length of the agreement. The unions asked for a two-year agreement, but the metal employers were pressing for three years. ... All the unions were forced by workers to take a strike decision after the failure of collective bargaining negotiations.

The automotive industry produces the country's biggest export item. But despite this enormous wealth, automotive workers working in multinationals such as Renault, Mercedes, Ford, FIAT, etc., earn as little as \$390 euros per month for a 45-hour week. So the demands of the workers for better working conditions overcame the political environment in the country, where every

sort of demand is labeled as treason.

But then the war came to help the unions who were reluctant to take the decision to strike. Just after the launch of the military campaign, the rhetoric of "national security" emerged again, and the Türk metal union made a declaration, saying that "we are standing alongside the Turkish Armed Forces with all our heart ..." They withdrew from the strike, but the other union involved, Bırselik Metal, issued a statement saying they would go ahead.

In the end, the strike, planned to start on Feb. 2, did not go ahead because following negotiations, the workers were given a significant wage increase—24 per cent for the first six months.

Erdoğan was talking about and preparing this military attack for a very long time. Turkey tried to get support (or at least con-

sent) from the USA and Russia before starting this military operation. Now a week after the start, it is possible to find many videos and images of destruction created by air strikes of Turkish army and torture of prisoners by Turkish-backed Islamist militias.

After the start of the war, the government kept their promise and detained around 400 people because of their social media posts against the war. The entire executive council of the Turkish Chamber of Medicine was arrested because of an antiwar declaration called "War is a public health problem."

War is rather useful for the Erdoğan government in trying to solve their governing crisis. Their rhetoric, based on national security, has succeeded in bringing together all sides of Turkish society. This pretext of a national crisis allows the government to advance their already authoritarian agenda—even including banning the planned strike by metal workers. ■

By JEFF MACKLER

During a Jan. 17 Stanford University speech, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced that the U.S. military will arm, train, finance, and otherwise support—for an indefinite time—a new, 30,000-strong, Kurdish and U.S.-allied Arab nation border force in northeastern Syria. This force in formation, effectively aimed at the partition of Syria, will be backed by at least 5000 U.S. troops installed in the three new and permanent U.S. military bases in Syria. Thousands more troops are stationed on U.S. aircraft carriers and other war ships off Syria's Mediterranean coast, while thousands more operate from the major U.S. Air force base in Qatar.

Tillerson's speech was a first for a top Trump or Obama administration official. But this former Exxon-Mobile chief essentially stated what U.S. policy has been since 2011 when the Syrian government's attack on largely peaceful protesters demanding democratic rights and aid for drought-stricken farmers inadvertently provided the U.S. with a pretext for the now seven-year U.S.-orchestrated regime-change imperialist war that has cost the lives of some 500,000 Syrians and displaced nearly half the population.

In 2011 the compliant Turkish government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a U.S. NATO ally, opened its military bases to the U.S. to facilitate the entry into Syria of some 70,000 ISIS and associated fundamentalist terrorists from some 70 countries seeking the overthrow of the Assad government and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. *The New York Times* noted this in mid-January 2018, stating, "In 2011 Mr. Erdogan then financed Syrian rebel groups and later allowed foreign recruits to the Islamic State and other jihadist militant groups to stream through Turkey into Syria."

Assad, as with Libya's president, Col. Muammar Gaddafi, months earlier, was widely expected to flee for his life, leaving the oil-rich Middle East region open as never before to U.S. domination and exploitation.

Today, with ISIS largely defeated at the hands of the Syrian government army, which lost 50,000 soldiers in this effort, a quarter of its fighting force, aided by its invited allies—Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah—the U.S. pretext has all but evaporated. Contrary to the arrogant imperialist braggart, Tillerson, the impending defeat of ISIS forces was qualitatively more a product of the resistance of the Syrian government and its invited allies than it was to the uninvited U.S. invaders and their *selective* bombing campaigns. Indeed, as long as ISIS forces proceeded south with the aim of capturing the Syrian capital of Damascus, they were allowed to proceed virtually unhindered by U.S.-allied forces.

Likewise, until November 2015, according to the Nov. 16, 2015, *New York Times*, "The United States refrained from striking the [ISIS] fleet used to transport oil, believed to include more than 1,000 tanker trucks, because of concerns about causing civilian casualties. As a result, the Islamic State's distribution system for exporting oil had remained largely intact." Intact for sure, as ISIS until a few years ago pumped oil from the self-same oil fields that the U.S. today seeks to partition under U.S. control in Syria.

Tillerson pulled no punches in stating that neither Iran nor President Bashar al-Assad would be allowed to take over areas that have been "newly-liberated" by U.S. bombing.

Covering Tillerson's Stanford speech, *The New York Times* reported on Jan. 17, "Staying in Syria, Mr. Tillerson said, will help ensure that the Trump administration does not repeat what he described as the mistakes of former President Barack Obama, who withdrew troops from Iraq before the extremist threat was doused and failed to stabilize Libya after NATO airstrikes that led to the overthrow of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi."

In point of fact, the U.S. created "the extremist" threat in Iraq, ISIS, with the objective of overthrowing the government of that country. Similarly, the saturation bombing of Libya that destroyed that nation's infrastructure also facilitated U.S.-backed mercenaries from Qatar who subsequently invaded and took control of that nation's capital, Tripoli. Secretary of State John Kerry then proceeded to establish a new Libyan government that soon afterward descended into chaos and corruption, and today is marked by the open institutionalization of Black slavery.

Tillerson's announcement struck a raw nerve in Turkey, whose air force almost immediately struck at U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in northwestern Syria with the aim of preventing the formation of a contiguous region along Syria's 500-mile east-west border with Turkey. For a few days following Tillerson's partition announcement, a direct military confrontation between these two NATO allies seemed to be on the agenda, especially in the northeastern city of Manbij,

U.S. seeks Syria partition

Kurdishstruggle via Flickr



where United States troops have been training and equipping Kurdish forces.

In the same vein, the main brunt of an ongoing Turkish attack has targeted the Syrian northwestern border town of Afrin, which is controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces. Describing the SDF, *The New York Times* Bureau Chief Anne Barnard wrote on Jan. 24, "The United States military's official partner in Syria is a militia known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, which includes Arab and Assyrian fighters but is dominated by the Y.P.G. [People's Protection Units]. The Americans de-emphasize such details."

The YPG maintains close ties to the imprisoned Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) leader, Abdullah Ocalan, viewed by Turkey as the devil incarnate because of his longstanding struggle for an independent Kurdish state. The U.S. and Turkey have long designated the PKK as a terrorist organization.

The Times added, "The United States effectively gave a green light to the current Turkish offensive against Afrin, urging restraint but emphasizing that it does not work with the YPG *there*."

Further complicating this equation is the fact that the remnants of the previously and still U.S.-backed Free Syrian Army, a loose coalition of so-called moderate anti-Assad rebels, most of whom long ago deserted to ISIS or al-Qaida, are now fighting in alliance with the Turkish Army against the U.S.-organized Kurdish-led forces!

Nawaf Khalil, a former official in the Syrian Kurdish local government, characterized Tillerson's speech as "a clear American vision on the situation in Syria. ... It finally seems like the White House and the Pentagon are on the same page in Syria." Needless to say, any conception of a future Kurdish state will never take form under the auspices of imperialist troops. The right of self-determination for the long oppressed and geographically dispersed Kurdish people can only be contemplated with the complete withdrawal of all U.S. imperialist troops.

Kurdish illusions in the aims of U.S. imperialism notwithstanding, a Jan. 22, 2018, statement by James F. Jeffrey, a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Iraq made the U.S. position unmistakable. "We told the Turks that the Kurds were temporary, tactical, and transactional to defeat ISIS. Now we need them to contain Iran. The whole purpose of this is to split the Russians from the Syrians by saying we're going to stay on to force a political solution in Syria."

With the support of Syrian government allies—Russia, Iran and the Lebanon-based Hezbollah—U.S.-backed forces, ISIS included, have today lost control of most of the estimated two-thirds of Syria that they previously occupied. The near-imminent and U.S.-projected fall of the Assad government has not come to pass. In a real sense this turn of events represents a significant defeat for U.S. imperialism, its NATO allies and associated "coalition."

Today, the Trump/Tillerson threats to establish a long-term military presence in Syria are nevertheless aimed at extracting as many concessions regarding Syria's future as the present relationship of forces allow. The overt conquest of Syria is today on U.S. imperialism's back burner. In its stead will be the ongoing United Nations-backed "negotiations" in Geneva on

(Above) Kurdish YPG fighters. Self-determination and the formation of an independent Kurdish state can never be achieved under the auspices of U.S. imperialist troops.

the one hand and the Russian-sponsored negotiations in the Russian resort town of Sochi on the other.

Here, the U.S. hopes to achieve, at least in part, what it could not achieve on Syria's battlefields. This includes perhaps an agreement for a future Syrian election process wherein President Assad will agree to eventually step down and perhaps to an associated agreement for greater Kurdish autonomy in parts of northern Syria, an eventuality that the Assad government has at least nominally embraced. Undoubtedly, control over Syria's oil fields and future pipeline routes will be high on imperialism's agenda as well as inclusion of pro-U.S. forces in a future reconstituted Syrian government.

Syria's historic right to self-determination, mistakenly thought to be extinguished by significant portions of the "left," has today been restored, at least in part. The overt conquest of Syria by U.S. imperialism and its allies in all their varied manifestations has been thwarted, but a U.S.-backed occupation will undoubtedly be used to extract future concessions.

The central responsibility of the U.S. and worldwide antiwar movement today is to mobilize in the streets to demand U.S. Out Now! Under these conditions—that is, without a U.S. imperialist/colonial presence—will the Syria people best be situated to effectively deal with their own capitalist rulers. ■

... Antiwar actions

(continued from page 8)

gional centers.]

Holding the actions in the spring are very important as the U.S. escalates the war in Syria, threatens North Korea and Iran, announces its intention to defeat its economic rivals in Russia and China, and continues to expand its bases and interventions globally.

It was stressed that the alarm be called now because there is the likelihood that many activists will be pulled into campaigns to build the Democratic Party as the solution to the Trump administration's right-wing actions and policies, while the core issue of bipartisan endless war will be buried anew. It is vital that our message get out, and it is of major importance that the rest of the world see that resistance is alive in the United States. ■

The conference was live-streamed. We encourage all antiwar and social justice activists to watch the rich and informative panels representing leaders from movements around the globe.

Marilyn Levin is national co-coordinator of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC).

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

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On eve of NDP federal convention — Policy, not image, should be focus of Leader

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The honeymoon was over in record time. The business press that blatantly boosted Jagmeet Singh over his lack-luster NDP leadership rivals turned away from him within weeks of his Oct. 1, 2017, triumph.

A burst of unfair media criticism quickly gave way to a studied disinterest.

Singh was unjustly singled out for comment on the Air India bombing—which occurred when he was six years old. He was chided for not immediately seeking a seat in Parliament. And then, the NDP did very poorly in the six by-elections held on Dec. 11. It now sits at a mere 17 per cent in opinion polls.

Singh gave a stirring speech to the B.C. NDP convention, but later dodged the Site C Dam decision. He has been nearly mute on a rising wave of issues including the future of NAFTA, the rebellion against electoral fraud in Honduras, Trump's affront to Palestine on the status of Jerusalem, and Washington's supply of lethal weapons to the reactionary regime in Kiev.

Even on tax evasion by the rich and powerful, including by Liberal Finance Minister Bill Morneau, Singh has been out-hustled by Tories Andrew Scheer and Pierre Poilievre.

The problem now is not image, or timing, or electoral tactics. It is political. It is the lack of bold policies, and the absence of direct action.



(Above) NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh.

Recall that Jagmeet Singh was the most conservative of the four aspirants who ran the last lap of the leadership race. The political up-side of his win was his positivity and pride as an articulate, equity-seeking racial minority person.

The 38-year-old turbaned Sikh lawyer from Brampton is the first person of colour to head a major Canadian political party. The significance of this was evident long before the Terry Milewski CBC interview, when he was confronted by a racist woman in Peel who absurdly berated him for being a Muslim. Singh countered by simply repeating the words "We love you. We support you." Bourgeois pundits lapped it up.

The truth is that racism and incipient fascism must be countered by stressing the need for working-class unity against the system that breeds racism, and by initiating mass actions to crush the racists. But to establishment politicians, that's not "cool."

Singh handily defeated his opponents for the NDP leadership by skillfully recruiting from his extensive social network. His election represented a doubling down on the party's shift to the centre, to glamour politics, to trying to beat the Liberals at their game.

Snazzy three-piece tailored suits and his public courting of an attractive South Asian woman have failed to out-dazzle Justin Trudeau's "sunny-ways," super-selfie persona. It is simply a losing proposition for the NDP to compete with Justin in a glamour gambit when the NDP base, the working class, needs system change not another personality contest.

This is especially true when the political right wing, including the Liberal government, is moving ever more stridently against democratic rights, to condone criminal tax avoidance, to tighten the grip of imperialism on the world, and to put profit before the environment.

Sadly, the most left wing candidate for leader, Niki Ashton MP, squandered the opportunity to present a bold socialist policy platform, to integrate grassroots socialist activists into her campaign, and to turn it into a vehicle for mass action against capitalist austerity. She steered away from the radical path of British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Jagmeet Singh, former Ontario NDP Deputy Leader, appointed leadership opponent and Quebec MP Guy Caron to be NDP House Leader until the 2019 election. Charlie Angus, who was praised by the *Toronto Star* for having "the most nuanced position on pipelines and energy projects", is left out in the cold. Does this mean Singh will oppose pipelines, and fight for public ownership and for a rapid Green energy transition away from carbon dependency?

Maybe. But it would take enormous pressure from below to move him in that direction. Remember, Singh initially favoured the Energy East pipeline, then backed down under pressure from Niki Ashton and others.

When he last ran for public office, he initially opposed LGBTQI-positive sex education in Brampton schools. As an Ontario MPP he fully backed

Leader Andrea Horwath's failed 2014 Ontario election campaign opposing tax increases on corporations and the rich (a policy not unlike Tom Mulcair's "Balanced budget, No matter what").

As Horwath's Consumer Affairs Critic, Singh did nothing to advocate public auto insurance, a longstanding Ontario NDP policy championed by beloved NDP MPPs Mel Swart and Peter Kormos.

During the 2017 federal leadership race Singh stunned members when he came out against universality in seniors' benefits. He infamously toured Israel hosted by Zionist organizations, and he was backed by the openly pro-imperialist NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Helene Laverdiere. On post-secondary school fees and student debt he has been vague.

On the positive side, Singh has a visionary position on illegal drugs. He wants to de-criminalize all drugs and invest in the treatment of substance abuse as a health issue.

However, he never uses the word "socialist" to describe himself; he proposes only minimal changes to tax law; and offers not a word about striving for democratic control of the economy. He is silent on internal party affairs, particularly the need for greater democracy.

So, what is to be done? Party and labour leftists should press Singh sharply on Pharma-care, dental care, free post-secondary education, steep taxation of corporations and the super-rich, for BDS against Israeli apartheid and Canada Out of NATO, and for public ownership, particularly in the areas of energy, banking, telecommunications and transportation.

We need a commitment to respect the local NDP candidate nomination process and for the Leader to actively campaign for the policies adopted at convention.

Instead of trying to revive a short-lived honeymoon for the new Leader, working-class activists need to set a militant tone at the February 2018 NDP federal convention. This should be done by advancing socialist policies and by demanding that Singh lead the fight for a Workers' Agenda. He can do it, if we unite to demand it. ■

Boom and bust — the capitalist curse

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is basking in the reflected "glory" of the Canadian economy. The GDP is up. Unemployment is down. Housing starts are on an upswing.

However, before popping a champagne cork, consider the following. The growth in exports is weak. Trade is in deficit territory. Wage improvements are the slowest since 1998. In fact, the past 40 years have seen a virtual wage freeze, except for the top 1 per cent of the people, each of whom makes more money in a day than most workers do in a year.

In order to pay their bills, millions of working people go into debt. This is encouraged by low interest rates, and by a selfish desire to eat and sleep under a warm roof. More about debt in a moment, but first...

Do the ups and downs of the so-called free enterprise economy seem like a merry-go-round (except for the merry part)? Well, that's due to the very nature of the market economy. Despite the fact that giant monopolies dominate it, the system is chaotic, unplanned, and quite irrational. It puts human needs at the bottom of the list, well below profit, the so-called bottom line. For proof, just look at how bankrupt firms, like Enron, Stelco, Target and Sears, treat their retired workers.

Capitalism is characterized by generalized commodity production. That means production for profit, not for use. When sales of goods and services slow down, assembly lines slow, or grind to a halt, and workers are laid off.

Is that because there is no work to be done? No. It's because too many commodities were produced to generate high profits. Viola! An overproduction crisis occurs. Often, it involves the overproduction of use-

less things. Bombs, not homes. Industries are periodically over-capacity. Machines sit idle. Workers' incomes decline, many to the point of impoverishment and desperation.

Over-production crises are a mainstay of capitalism. The decline in the rate of profit is also a feature of the system. It results from the growing reliance of capitalism on machines, increasingly on robots. The *rate of exploitation of labour* can be increased. But machines cannot be squeezed to produce more surplus value (profit).

The threat of workers' revolution prompted some 20th-century liberals to propose "solutions" to these deep-seated problems. One experiment, proposed by British economist John Maynard Keynes, seemed to work for a while. Government expenditure (based on tax revenues, deficit spending, and some money-printing) created public projects, social services and jobs. But a by-product of such currency creation, deficits and public spending is inflation. Inflation can quickly get out of control. Eventually debt mushrooms, and becomes bad debt. Then the bubble bursts.

Remember 2007-2008? Of course, the government comes to the rescue... to the aid of the biggest banks and corporations -- not to the rescue of heavily indebted workers.

Is there any "conventional" way out of the boom-bust syndrome, given the physical limits of global resources and the world market?

Yes. But it's very risky and very bloody. Imperialist war destroys the competition. It also kills millions of people and devastates the natural environment. Conquest by war lays the basis for a new round of capital accumulation and production for profit. This works like a charm for the ruling rich if wages and benefits

are slashed as a result of the smashing of workers' parties and labour unions by fascism and war.

Some countries, due to exceptional circumstances, can avoid one or another aspect of the destruction. But no capitalist country can escape the booms and the busts, the very temporary nature of the "solutions," and the persistent social misery of poverty and injustice.

There is only one way out of this mess—that is, in the interests of the working class and the dispossessed. Break the stranglehold of monopoly capitalism! To do that it is necessary for working people to take hold of the commanding heights of the economy (not the corner grocery store or barber shop, but the big banks, mines, mills and factories) and run it according to a democratically decided plan.

The notion, entertained by some liberals and social democrats, that capitalism can be "regulated" to be in harmony with nature, and to put an end to periodic crises, is pure illusion. Nationalization of a few large firms (with or without compensation, with or without workers' and community control), will not be sufficient to break, permanently, the dynamic of private capital accumulation and the anarchic organization of production. Only public ownership and a planned economy can replace the waste and brutality of capitalism with a cooperative commonwealth.

Canada is not currently on the verge of an economic transformation. But that day is surely coming as capitalism continues to wreak havoc on people and the environment. Radical change will be hastened as socialists step up efforts to explain the necessity and viability of it.

Hopefully, the transformation will occur before catastrophic climate change makes political action a tragically belated, academic exercise. As Rosa Luxemburg famously said, "Socialism or barbarism" is the choice facing humanity. ■

A children's book that teaches about justice

By JOHN LESLIE

"P is for Palestine," a children's alphabet book by Golbarg Bashi, illustrated by Golrokh Nafisi.

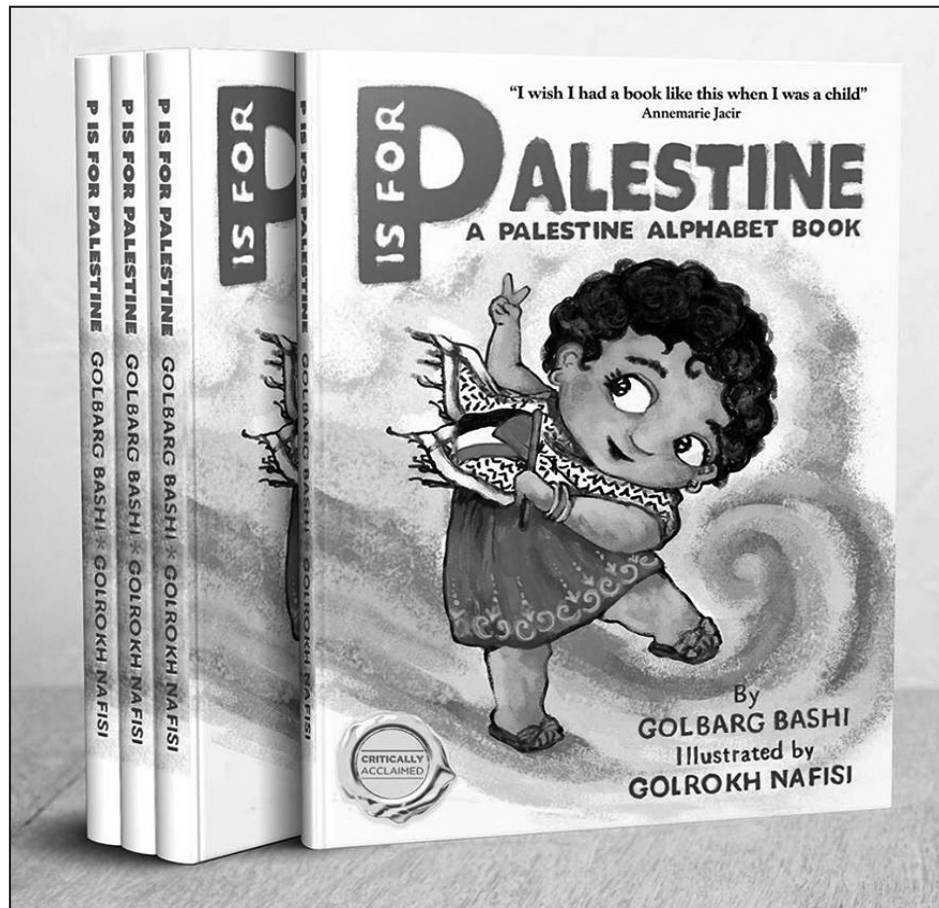
The publication of the book, "P is for Palestine," has sparked controversy and charges of anti-Semitism from pro-Israel parents and politicians. Some parents were particularly upset by the choice of "I is for Intifada" as part of a primer on the alphabet. Pro-Zionist parents in New York have called for the book to be removed from shelves.

The author of the book, which is now in its second printing, disputes the notion that "P is for Palestine" promotes either hate or violence. "This is a book written from a place of love, not a place of hatred. It is a book celebrating Palestinians and empowering their children without an iota of animus towards any other people—Israelis included," Bashi told the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*.

"P is for Palestine" is a delightful book for parents and children alike. The illustrations are beautifully drawn with warm colors and bright imagery. It's the imagery of Palestinian resistance, culture, and social life that enrages Zionists commentators. For example, "G is for Gaza, a city like Mombasa without any plazas, but full of generous casas." Contrast this with the reality of Gaza as a hellscape created by Israeli bombardment and blockade.

Also, controversial for some critics are images of Handala, the creation of Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al-Ali. Handala stands as a witness to abuses against Palestinians. Critics also decry the inclusion of "I is for Intifada, Intifada is Arabic for rising up for what is right, if you are a kid or a grownup!"

Opponents of Palestinian self-determination accuse the international campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of anti-Semitism. By conflating anti-Semitism and opposition to Zionism, apologists for Israeli policy hope to demonize and marginalize voices who would speak against the human rights violations of the Israeli



apartheid state.

Detractors of the book claim that the reference to Intifada is proof of the book's advocacy of violence. This claim ignores the constant violence against the Palestinian people and, in particular the children.

O is for Oppression

The opponents of "P is for Palestine" want us to ignore the actual lives of Palestinian children. In 2016, Israeli armed forces killed more than 90 Palestinians and injured more than 3200 in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel. This does not include the more than 66 incidents when settlers attacked Palestinians or destroyed property, including crops.

In a 10-year period from 2006 through mid-2016, Israeli authorities bulldozed 1113 homes, rendering 5200 people homeless, 2600 of them children.

Alarming numbers of children in both Gaza and the West Bank face homelessness and malnutrition.

Schools and playgrounds have also been targeted for destruction. Last August, Israeli forces razed three schools in the West Bank shortly before the school term was to begin. In 2017, more than 100 buildings that were financed by European Union donor nations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were destroyed, including schools and water facilities. Playgrounds have been destroyed in Beit Jala (2010), Bil'in (2014), Silwan (2016), and Nablus (2016). In 2014, an airstrike destroyed a playground, killing eight children and two adults. Forty-six people were wounded.

According to a United Nations study, home demolitions in the occupied territories are "continuing at the highest

rate since the United Nations started collecting such data, and included the demolition of donor-funded humanitarian facilities serving vulnerable communities." The UN also reports that the construction of illegal settlements, built on stolen Palestinian land and in Occupied Syrian territory (Golan Heights), has more than doubled. The continued construction of illegal settlements creates the facts on the ground to provide the Israelis with the rationale for annexation of land and the forced expulsion of Palestinians from the occupied territories.

Israel holds about 400 Palestinian children as prisoners, including Ahed Tamimi, who recently turned 17 in jail. Roughly 60% of Palestinian child detainees are sent to prisons in Israel, a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Why buy this book?

I would suggest that parents, especially those who may be unfamiliar with the subject, read through the book and the handy glossary at the back. Familiarize yourself with the terms. One addition to the glossary, which would have been handy for non-Arabic speakers, would be a guide to pronunciations. It would also be useful for parents to read about the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. "10 Myths About Israel," by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, would be a good place to start.

As parents, we try to teach our kids about kindness and justice. Our obligation is to teach our children to stand up to bullies, whether they are in the schoolyard or a regional power linked to imperialism. Love of justice is taught; it's not instinctive. Solidarity with the oppressed is a value we must do our best to model for the next generations.

For kids, the love of books and reading is essential. Palestinian kids, who are too often robbed of their childhoods by a brutal occupation regime, deserve the same right to play, learn, read and laugh that any other children enjoy. ■

Democratic, the NDP's middle name, eh?

By ELIZABETH BYCE

Is the New Democratic Party democratic? Compared to the Liberal and Conservative parties, it is. The policies of the parties of Bay Street are set by their leaders, not by members. Their conventions are just a showcase for party big wigs and a playground for trial balloons. Whatever else happens, the interests of the rich prevail.

The NDP, on the other hand, is a working-class party, based on the unions. Its purpose is to fight for the needs of the vast majority, against the evils of capitalism. Its policy is decided by working-class delegates at large party conventions. There should be ample discussion, and the policies are to be implemented, supposedly. But is that really what happens?

My experience is that very little debate on policy occurs at convention. Decades ago, most of the time at NDP conventions was devoted to policy debate. But in recent years, less than 25 per cent of the time is spent that way. Worse, very few radical, or even slightly controversial resolutions make it to the floor. Even worse is the fact that progressive policies that are adopted are often quietly buried.

I can think of three examples: "Canada get out of NATO," "Abolish the GST," and "Demand public ownership of the energy resource sector."

A controversial issue today is Palestine and the campaign known as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against the racist Israeli state.

Before the Oct. 19, 2015, federal election, the NDP leader blocked nomination bids or removed locally nominated candidates for the crime of just mentioning Palestine, or for quoting Amnesty International data on the crimes Israel committed against the people of Gaza.

But the majority of New Democrats support self-determination for the Palestinian people; they even back the BDS campaign as a peaceful tool in the quest for a little justice in the Middle East. That's why Palestine is such a big issue in the NDP today—which brings us back to the issue of internal democracy.

The NDP badly needs a democratic revolution. What would that look like? It would be much less costly to become a convention delegate. Most of the time at convention would be devoted to policy debate, which would make for more time to deal with resolutions submitted by grassroots bodies, including progressive and socialist policies. The party brass would be stopped from obstructing or removing locally nominated candidates for political reasons. Party electoral campaigns would not just reflect, they would highlight the most progressive policies adopted by the ranks at convention.

Resolutions circulated by the NDP Socialist Caucus that aim to make those changes are in the convention resolutions book now, submitted by many NDP district associations, unions and youth clubs. It's time for a change, don't you think? Join the democratic revolution! ■

Toronto: Solidarity with the workers of Iran!

Despite frigid temperatures, there was a good turn-out to the Solidarity with the Workers of Iran rally in Toronto on Jan. 6. Socialist Action joined over 100 people rallying in support of the mass protests that took place across Iran since late December.

The protests began in the city of Mashhad and quickly spread across the county to many other cities, including Tehran. The protests were organized from the ground up by working and oppressed people peacefully speaking out against poverty, unemployment, violence, and the daily indignities and injustices imposed by the Islamic Republic.

Iran is a country with over 80 million people, yet despite immense natural resources and wealth, over 70 percent of the population live in poverty. Corruption, huge concentrations of wealth by the few and vast inequalities define Iran today. Some protesters were injured, killed, or arrested by Iranian security forces.

Socialist Action stands in solidarity with the brave protesters and we express our disgust with the brutal neo-liberal capitalist regime of Iran. We also stand opposed to economic sanctions and any attempts by Canada, the U.S., and its allies to pursue war with Iran. Socialist Action also strongly opposes and condemns any interference by Western governments, Israel, and the reactionary, nationalist, and pro-monarchy forces.

A leading Socialist Action member addressed the crowd and warned about right-wing forces taking over the popular uprising. He called on progressive forces in Canada and elsewhere to stand in solidarity with the working-class and poor people of Iran. He also stressed the need to build revolutionary parties around the world.

Socialist Action supports the workers' demands of Bread, Jobs and Freedom and demands that Western imperialism keep out of Iran! ■

Palestine leadership rejects the recognition of Israel



By WAYNE DELUCA

The Palestinian Liberation Authority's central council voted on Jan. 15 to "suspend recognition of Israel until it recognizes the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders and revokes the decision to annex East Jerusalem and expand and build settlements." This is an important move that would also reverse the Palestinian leadership's adherence to the 1993 Oslo Accords and security cooperation with Israel. The decision must now go to the PLO's executive board for implementation.

The declaration comes on the heels of the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The occupation of East Jerusalem since the Six-Day War 1967 has always been illegal under international law and has repeatedly been condemned by the United Nations. The claim that the city is Israel's capital is designed to annex territory that is legally accorded to the Palestinians. Protests in Palestine against Trump's declaration resulted in several deaths and hundreds of arrests.

On Jan. 16, the Trump administration announced that it would withhold \$65 million of \$125 million scheduled in U.S. aid to the United Nations relief effort in Palestine, UNRWA, unless Palestine engages in peace talks. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas replied, "damn your money," and has stated that he will not participate in peace talks with the United States as a mediator. He called Trump's recognition of Jerusalem the "slap of the century."

Palestinian leaders refused to meet with Vice President Mike Pence during his visit to Israel. Arab members of the Israeli Knesset were thrown out of the chamber for holding up signs during Pence's speech on Jan. 22, in which he said, "Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine." The following week, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Trump complained about Pence's treatment and repeated his threat: "That money is not going to them unless they sit down and negotiate peace."

The UNWRA would lose almost 30% of its budget,

which provides health care, education, and social services to Palestinian refugees. This would be a particularly vicious blow against Palestinians in the Gaza strip and refugees in Jordan. Many refugees will have nothing if the UNRWA leaves, opening the specter of an uprising in refugee camps.

Meanwhile, encouraged by American support, Israel has approved 770 new settlement homes in the West Bank. The homes would be deep enough in the West Bank that a peace agreement would require their evacuation. This is not a major change from last year, when 6742 new housing projects were approved.

On Dec. 19, a 16-year-old Palestinian, Ahed Tamimi, was arrested after she slapped an Israeli soldier. Her teenage cousin Mohammed had just been shot, nearly fatally, with a rubber-coated bullet. Tamimi is being held in a military prison and faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted by a military tribunal.

Tamimi has become a human face of the occupation of Palestine and a symbol of global resistance. She is also a reminder that Israel detains hundreds of Palestinian children aged 12-17 every year. Many are locked up for nothing more than throwing stones.

Tamimi has also seen a harsh backlash from Israeli civil society, with insinuations that she is no more than a propaganda tool for the Palestinian cause. Yet nothing is more telling in Palestine than the fact that the day-to-day brutality of the occupation, which has already killed four Palestinians in 2018, must create such moments of propaganda.

As international pressure has mounted, Israel has lashed out at critics. On Jan. 7 its Strategic Affairs Minister, Gilad Erdan, released a blacklist of 20 NGOs that will be banned from Israel for supporting the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. It includes Palestine solidarity organizations as well as antiwar groups such as the American Friends Service Committee, Code Pink, and Jewish Voice for Peace.

The BDS movement is an international campaign, coordinated with Palestinian civil rights organizations, to demand that Israel end its human rights abuses in Palestine. Modeled on a campaign against

(Left) Palestinians in Nablus protest visit of U.S. Vice President Pence to Israel on Jan. 22.

the apartheid government of South Africa, BDS works to stop purchases of Israeli goods, encourages university and pension funds to divest from Israeli corporations, and calls for international sanctions. The campaign has been slandered as anti-Semitic and has been subject to legal attacks both in Israel and in 21 states in the United States.

The "two-state solution" in Israel and Palestine is, more than ever, a dead letter. Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers live on land seized by Israel in 1967. The West Bank is cut into nonviable "bantustans" by the illegal border wall that incorporates not only Israeli territory but its settlements. Gaza remains an open-air prison, living under a 10-year blockade. Even if it were enacted, a two-state solution would still leave millions of refugees outside its borders, and over 1.6 million Arabs as second-class citizens of Israel.

Following Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, long-time Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat called for a "struggle for one-state with equal rights for everyone living in historic Palestine, from the river to the sea." The framework of the Oslo Accords, with two states in a lengthy peace process—which was always a mirage—is now receding from view.

A lasting peace will require a single, democratic, secular state in all of historic Palestine. This must include the right of return for refugees and full rights regardless of nationality or religion. Anything less will simply mean an extension of the settler-colonial regime of brutality and dispossession of the Palestinian people.

Socialists demand an end to U.S. political, economic, and military support for the apartheid state of Israel. Fully fund the UNRWA! End the attacks on antiwar organizations! Support the BDS movement! No more homes on stolen land! Free Ahed Tamimi and all political prisoners! Free Palestine! ■

