

Class struggle is the only way Trump tariffs won't save jobs

By Chris Fry

Donald Trump on March 8 signed proclamations that impose a 25 percent tariff on imported steel as well as a 10 percent tariff on imported aluminum. He tweeted, "Trade wars are good and easy to win." He claims the tariffs will protect jobs in those industries.

It would have been appropriate to have his buddy and "advisor," tycoon Carl Icahn, standing behind him. Icahn raked in a cool \$30 million by selling some of his stock in steel-hungry Manitowoc, a construction crane maker, a week before Trump's tariffs were announced. The stock's new owners might lose from the higher steel costs to Manitowoc. It's doubtful that the Trump regime will investigate this as a clear case of insider trading.

But demagogue that he is, Trump knew that having a fellow billionaire present would have signaled that his

tariffs are aimed at helping only the owners. U.S. workers have lost more than 60,000 steel jobs since 2010 from changes in technology that increase productivity, not from competition with foreign workers.

So instead of Icahn, Trump lined up a dozen or so steelworkers, decked out in jeans and hard hats, to witness the signing. Both AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and United Steelworkers President Leo Gerard applauded Trump's move. Gerard said, "Trump was able to see the steelworkers' agenda."

Trumka told the press: "We need to protect our industry from cheating. That is what these tariffs can do. We're excited about it and we think it is good for the country but we think it is good for the industry." (cns-news.com, March 9)

The two union leaders both attacked China, accusing that country of "overproducing" steel and aluminum.

China ranks only ninth in steel imports to the U.S. and fourth in aluminum.

Most of Wall Street opposes Trump's new tariffs. Many of their economists predict that far more other jobs will be lost than steel jobs saved. Of course, these wizards of high finance don't care about workers any more than Trump does, but they are concerned that Trump's tariffs may disrupt their carefully crafted global network designed to force subsidiaries to pay the lowest wages to their workers to win supplier contracts. If Trump's measures touch off a trade war, that might lower their profit margins.

Thus, the Council on Foreign Relations estimates that 40,000 jobs will be lost due to the price hike for steel. The Associated General Contractors of America states that 30,000 construction jobs could be lost because of Trump's tariffs. The Trade Partnership think tank esti-

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With student and community support, education workers packed Capitol and stayed out to WIN their raise.



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Marching for Dreamers in L.A., ‘fighting to stay home’

By John Parker

Over 100 people participated Feb. 28 in a Fighting to Stay Home march from McArthur Park in downtown Los Angeles to the Metropolitan Detention Center. They were marching in solidarity with the Dreamers who are marching 250 miles from New York to Washington, D.C., demanding an end to deportations and terror against migrants living in the U.S. One of their demands is for a Clean Dream Act, so their lives are not used to further Trump’s repressive demand for increased Mexican border security and a racist wall.

Claudia Treminio of Movimiento Consecha said: “We are demanding a Clean Dream Act to provide undocu-



PHOTO: MARCO FLORES
Rallying for the Dreamers in Los Angeles, Feb. 28.

menting youth permanent protection, without pushing the rest of the immigrant community further into the shadows. We will be taking over the streets to show other immigrants that it is important to make sure our voices are heard, to organize and show up. Especially at this moment in which our communities have been terrorized by ICE” [Immigration and Customs Enforcement].

Movimiento Consecha initiated and led the action made up primarily of undocumented youth. Other participating organizations included American Indian Movement, Union del Barrio, California for Progress and Workers World Party, which helped provide signage. □

Fight for women’s liberation with Workers World

Marxists strive not just to honor history, but to help make it — to promote major changes needed to put the workers and the oppressed first instead of last. Workers World always commemorates the socialist holiday of International Working Women’s Day, March 8, with a roundup of women’s protests for freedom, justice and equality the world over.

While all issues are women’s issues, WW focuses in 2018 on women in the U.S. who bear the brunt of Trump’s racist, sexist, bigoted, xenophobic agenda — working-class immigrant women who are being detained and deported for the “crime” of crossing borders to find work so they can provide for their families, and the “Dreamers,” whose Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status is still in limbo as both parties in Congress ignore their demands.

Struggle is the only way to bring about change. The Black Lives Matter movement, started by women and transgender activists, boldly countered racism and demanded redress for centuries of oppression. Women are

powering the fight for \$15 an hour and a union. Two-thirds of low-wage workers are women, often women of color and mothers solely responsible for their families. Inspired by the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement, women are speaking up on the job against harassment and for respect.

If you appreciate WW’s year-round coverage of struggles that advance the rights of women, it’s time to join the Workers World Supporter Program and help build the newspaper.

For a donation of at least \$75 a year — and much more if you’re able — members receive a year’s subscription to Workers World, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free subscriptions to give to friends. Write checks (either monthly or once a year) to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up to donate online at workers.org/donate/; it’s easy to set up monthly deductions. And thank you for your help in building Workers World. □



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Lessons of the West Virginia strike

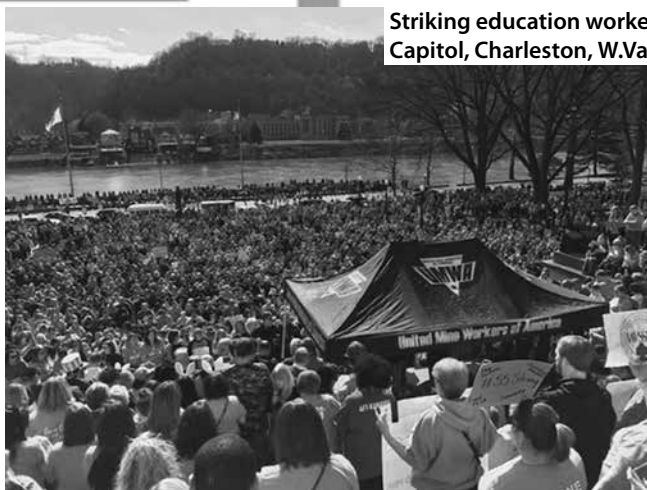
Part One



Teachers on the picket line in Beckley, W.Va., Feb. 27.



Educator David Sole in solidarity with striking workers, Charleston, W.Va., March 5.



Striking education workers at the Capitol, Charleston, W.Va., Feb. 26.

By Otis Grotewohl
Charleston, W.Va.

West Virginia teachers and school service workers triumphed in a major victory on March 6. After striking for nine working days, 20,000 teachers and 13,000 school service employees wrung substantial concessions out of a right-wing billionaire governor and reactionary state legislature. The strike began on Feb. 22.

Their win included a 5 percent, single-year wage increase, not just for themselves, but for all state employees potentially. West Virginia teachers rank 48th in the U.S. in wages — just two steps above rock bottom.

Education worker militancy also succeeded in forcing the billionaire governor, Jim Justice, to pull anti-education, anti-worker bills out of the legislative agenda. These included a charter schools bill, a “payroll deception” bill to stop deductions for union dues and a bill to eliminate seniority protection for teachers.

The education workers were also fighting for lower insurance premiums and proper funding of the state Public Education Insurance Agency (PEIA). This issue remains unresolved.

The strike won creation of a taskforce to study how to adequately fund PEIA to reduce worker payments. But of 22 appointees the governor recently announced, only five represent the workers’ interests, including the heads of the striking unions: the American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia, the West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association.

The preponderance of the taskforce are CEOs of insurance companies, heads of hospital conglomerates, and West Virginia legislators who fought tooth and nail against the workers’ demands. There is even a representative of the state police, historically used as deadly strike-breakers in the state, the same as police are used everywhere.

The anti-worker composition of the taskforce makes it likely workers may once again have to mobilize and act to get their basic demands met.

Breakthrough tactics

In West Virginia, all teacher wages and working conditions are determined by the state legislature. The teachers and school service personnel were striking against the state, not a corporate boss. Though represented by their unions, the workers had no right to strike under state law, and their strike, therefore, was “illegal.”

This was not a conventional strike

where the union’s collective bargaining agreement has expired and the boss refuses to bargain. The education workers had no option, no contract and no bargaining rights. And their situation was worsening.

So the West Virginia rank-and-file members escalated their tactics beyond lobbying and rallies, engaging in direct action — and took class struggle to a higher level. Perhaps they had learned a lesson from the 2011 struggle in Wisconsin. There, under assault from a right-wing austerity governor, a mass uprising of workers and community actually occupied the Capitol building for a month.

But in Wisconsin, the majority of labor leaders, working with the Democratic Party, told union members to abandon the occupation and take no other forms of direct action, such as strikes statewide. Subsequently, the Big Boss, right-wing, anti-worker, anti-oppressed, anti-community initiatives rolled on in Wisconsin.

Rank-and-file leadership

The biggest lesson of the West Virginia strike was that the rank and file led the strike. Workers saw the power they truly have — and this was recognized by and impacted on their union leadership.

Even before a formal authorization vote, roughly 2,000 teachers and service employees from Mingo, Wyoming, Logan and Raleigh counties walked out on Feb. 2, and took their demands to Charleston, the state capital. Significantly, the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, the militant union struggle of 10,000 workers against Big Coal bosses and state police, took place in Logan County.

Rank-and-file strike leadership was primarily in the hands of women. Their effectiveness in building solidarity was such that, when the three unions walked out on Feb. 22, all 55 counties went on strike simultaneously. Historically, women have been the backbone of West Virginia strikes, as strikers, strategists and in the support that sustains strikes.

When the governor proposed a “deal” to end the strike, and union leadership urged workers to what seemed to be premature compromise, the rank-and-file leadership remained militantly steadfast in continuing the strike.

David Sole, current member of AFT Local 2000 and former president of United Auto Workers Local 2234, was in Charleston as part of a Workers World Party-Detroit delegation to support the

‘Solidarity Forever’ Battle of Blair Mountain still rings true

By John Steffin

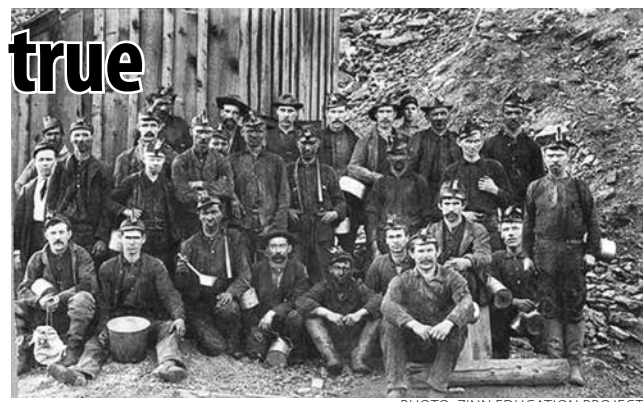
The role of West Virginia’s education workers who are reviving a militant spirit in U.S. labor should come as no surprise to those who know this mountainous state’s labor history. West Virginia is, after all, the land that gave us “Solidarity Forever,” one of the most famous union anthems.

Wobbly (Industrial Workers of the World) organizer Ralph Chaplin wrote the song after a bloody campaign in 1913 to improve the working conditions of coal miners in Kanawha County, W.Va. The criminal coal companies turned to violence to break the strike, firing on the workers with machine guns and high-powered rifles. But the workers persevered, and after a year of striking — and tragic bloodshed — the coal miners won a favorable contract.

It was this heroic solidarity that inspired Chaplin to write the lines, “When the union’s inspiration through the workers’ blood shall run / there can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun.”

During the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, West Virginia miners showed the meaning of Chaplin’s lyrics. In addition to braving the dangerous conditions in the mines, the workers were fed up by the violent harassment of the “gun thugs” hired by the coal companies to silence any labor unrest.

Arming themselves in self-defense, a multinational formation of over 10,000 Black and white coal miners — some of



Veterans of the Battle of Blair Mountain, W.Va., fought against federal troops by Black, Irish, Italian immigrant and Appalachian-region workers in 1921.

them first-generation Italian and Irish immigrants — marched through southwestern West Virginia to liberate the coalfields from the owners. The state responded by sending in federal troops, which turned the miners’ righteous struggle for union rights into the bloodiest episode of class warfare in U.S. history.

It was during the Battle of Blair Mountain that the miners wore iconic red bandanas, leading to the term “redneck.” Since then, workers in West Virginia — from the striking miners of the 1960s and 1970s to the education workers demanding what’s rightfully theirs at the Capitol in the early days of March — have worn the red bandana in remembrance of past struggles.

It is a history all workers can benefit from and be proud of. It impelled the bravery and solidarity of the mostly women education workers to strike in the state’s 55 counties, sending an inspiring message to union workers everywhere. Some, like the teachers in Oklahoma, have voted to take action.

Support the workers’ right to strike! Livable wages and affordable health care now! Solidarity forever! □

strikers. He reflected to WW on the seeds of their militancy: “The West Virginia strike was distinguished by the unity between the [teachers of] NEA [the National Education Association], the AFT [the American Federation of Teachers] and the school support staff union. Talking to many staff and teachers at the March 5 rally in Charleston, it was clear that almost every striker had connections to the mineworkers in their family or neighbors and friends, whose history of struggle still permeates the state. When national leaders thought they could get the workers back on the job with some backroom promises, the workers refused and the union leaders had to rush to get back in front of the strike. Teachers we spoke to revealed that the rank and file were able to organize from below using their smartphones, combining old West

Virginia traditions with the modern age.”

West Virginia’s education worker militancy is spreading to other states.

Oklahoma teachers have commented on social media: “If West Virginia can do it, so can we!” That state’s pay for teachers is the lowest in the U.S. The Oklahoma Education Association is initiating “Together We Are Stronger” community meetings in every county to prepare for an April 2 strike. The Oklahoma Public Employees Association, representing all workers employed by the state, voted on March 10 to join the action. (tinyurl.com/y77ns598)

In Kentucky, right-wing politicians are plotting to steal 33 percent of retired teachers’ pensions. Opposition is mounting, with teacher and student walkouts, “walk-ins” and rallies. (tinyurl.com/y8vuughj)

To be continued. Martha Grevatt also contributed to this article.

On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

Support Spectrum workers’ strike!

Union busting is the name of the zero-sum game that telecommunications giant Charter Communications, known for its Spectrum brand, is playing in New York City against 1,800 workers in International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3, who have been on strike since March 28, 2017.

During a negotiation meeting with Charter days before Christmas, the union agreed to drop all its demands for raises in pensions, health care coverage and other benefits for new hires as long as current workers continued under the old plans, stated Christopher Erikson, business manager of Local 3, on the Feb. 7 radio show “America’s Work Force.” But the company flatly turned that proposal down. “If the company can beat Local 3 in New York City, that does not bode well for labor anywhere in the U.S.,” warned Erickson.

Meanwhile, no good news for Charter. A judge refused to bar striking workers from coming within 25 feet of any Spectrum facility. (NY Post, Jan. 9) A judge ruled that Charter must face a lawsuit by the New York state attorney general for “providing customers slower-than-advertised internet speeds.” (Reuters, Feb. 16) And a city government report showed that Charter lied when it flouted the terms of its franchise agreement with the city to “use local labor whenever possible.” (NY Daily News, Feb. 25)

Strike support is urgently needed. Sign petitions at spectrumstrike2017.com. For the latest information, visit NYCableTruth.blogspot.com.

W.Va. telecommunications workers vs. Frontier’s miscommunications

The 1,400 telecommunications workers at Frontier Communications in West Virginia and Ashburn, Va., went on strike March 5 for a new contract with guaranteed job security and good health benefits. Frontier has cut 500 jobs since it acquired Verizon lines in West Virginia in 2014. Customer complaints have steadily increased ever since. (WV News, March 5)

Communication Workers District 142, the union representing the workers, states that after 10 months of negotiations and two extensions, the company failed to come to an agreement with the operators, maintenance administrators and technicians. Instead, Frontier hired scabs who don’t know how to handle the complex equipment and has not resumed bargaining. But support has poured in from many national unions as well as the community. With the resounding echo of the victorious teachers’ strike in the air, the workers have an ear toward victory.

Teachers & unions add Black Lives Matter to curriculum

The three demands of Black Lives Matter Week of Action, Feb. 5-10, were to hire more Black teachers, mandate study of Black history and ethnic studies, and replace harsh disciplinary policies with a restorative justice approach. This weeklong push to affirm the value of Black lives in schools was born in Philadelphia and Seattle last year and has since spread, thanks to rank-and-file teachers’ unions, to over 25 cities. (Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb. 7) Some school districts expanded the week to a full month during Black History Month.

Teachers organized around local issues. Los Angeles students and teachers mobilized against random searches targeting Black youth with a “Students not Suspects” campaign. The Chicago teachers’ union fought school closings that disproportionately hurt Black neighborhoods and hiring of Black teachers. Baltimore teachers explored the lives of Huey Newton and Kathleen Cleaver with a “Black Panther Party Mixer” and adapted Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou poems tied to principles of the BLM movement. Seattle teacher Jesse Hagopian noted the effort “might be unprecedented when you think about the fact that these unionized workers from around the country are coordinating these events together.” (The Real News, Feb. 5)

Reagan belongs in ‘labor hall of shame’

“What’s a crying shame? Ronald Reagan in the hall of fame!” chanted members and supporters of the American Federation of Government Employees in an impromptu picket March 1 outside the U.S. Department of Labor. They denounced Reagan’s induction into the so-called “Labor Hall of Honor,” citing his firing of 14,000 striking PATCO workers in 1981. According to a United Steelworkers statement, that “gave a green light to corporate chieftains to declare war upon workers and unions. ... The union movement suffered because of him.” Protesters also denounced Reagan’s deep cuts to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s enforcement program. (March 2)

Farmworkers demand: Keep federal anti-pesticide rules

The Trump administration announced plans to reverse crucial safety standard protections against pesticide exposure and poisonings. These safety standards were put in place to protect the 2.5 million farm workers — the majority of them immigrants — in the U.S. who experience a reported 10,000 to 20,000 pesticide poisonings per year. To protect these vital workers, sign the petition addressed to senators at tinyurl.com/ya7supjw. □

Class struggle is the only way Trump tariffs won’t save jobs

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mates that for the 30,000 jobs that Trump’s tariffs might save, 150,000 other jobs will be lost. (qz.com, Mar. 5)

Impact on working class

How should the working class view Trump’s tariffs? Should we line up behind the anti-worker, pro-corporate bigot-in-chief to “protect” the steel industry?

In 2013, U.S. Steel CEO Mario Longhi began a cost-cutting, “streamlining” program called the “Carnegie Way,” named after Andrew Carnegie, the founder of the steel company. The billionaire Carnegie, along with his goon Henry Clay Frick, locked out unionized workers in 1892 at the Homestead factory in Pennsylvania. Frick brought in dozens of mercenary Pinkerton agents, who shot down at least 16 workers as they threw out the union from the plant then.

Workers at U.S. Steel’s Gary Works plant have discovered that the company’s “Carnegie Way” plan has lived down to its name. Frank Bokodi, who has worked at Gary Works for three years, said that while USS “reported losses totaling hundreds of millions of dollars translating into zero profit-sharing and a horrible union contract with no raises in pay and major concessions by the USW [Steelworkers union] for its members, ... Longhi has collected tens of millions of dollars in salaries and bonuses, yes bonuses for hundreds of millions in losses.” (Northwest Indiana Times, May 10)

Should workers “protect” the bosses at Allegheny Technologies, who locked out 2,200 USW members in 2014? For seven months the company waged war on its workers with security guards and scabs, trying to force a concession-filled contract. But the workers won that long struggle.

The largest steel producer in the U.S. is the Nucor Corporation, with more than 200 facilities and more than \$16 billion. There is no union at Nucor, and all of its plants are in “right to work” states, which means anti-union states where the workers have the right to work for less pay. In the blast furnace

steel factories, it takes some 10 human-hours to produce a ton of steel. At the electric-furnace Nucor factory, that same ton of steel can be made from recycled materials in 0.4 human-hours, that is, one worker produces the same there as 25 do in a blast-furnace plant. Most of the Nucor plants’ floors are packed with automated machines.

It’s the shift from worker-intensive unionized blast furnace steel plants to highly automated, nonunion electric furnace factories that robbed thousands of USW members of their jobs, not foreign workers.

George W. Bush imposed a 30 percent tariff on steel for 13 months in 2002. The result? Studies indicate that 200,000 workers lost their jobs because of the higher steel price, with a loss of \$4 billion in wages. (tradepartnership.com, Feb. 4, 2003)

In a socialist society, automation and trade should be good for workers, with each advance reducing the backbreaking labor necessary to produce the commodities that the people need. But under capitalism and imperialism, the bosses use these as weapons to drive down our wages. For the last 40 years, they have waged a relentless campaign to destroy our unions.

After adjusting for inflation, wages are only 10 percent higher in 2017 than they were in 1973, with annual real wage growth just below 0.2 percent. (brookings.edu) Meanwhile, productivity grew more than 70 percent. (epi.org) Union membership for “private sector” workers is 6.5 per cent, the lowest rate since 1932.

Union leadership can and should do everything they can to save good-paying jobs and benefits. But supporting Boss Trump in blaming U.S. workers’ plight on foreign workers, while calling for tariff “protection” of the steel industry, won’t save workers’ jobs.

What will? The same things that have always worked for working people: solidarity with workers and oppressed here and abroad and struggle against the bosses.

Fry is a former steelworker and auto-worker, union steward, bargaining committee person and strike vice chairperson.

Michigan Activists hound fascists

By Martha Grevatt

About 75 Metro Detroit anti-fascist activists protested March 4 outside a Holiday Inn Express in Warren, Mich., where alt-right, neo-Nazi Richard Spencer and his cohorts were reportedly gathering. “Traditionalist Workers Party” leader Matthew Heimbach was reportedly sighted.

The activists’ turnout was remarkable considering the difficulty in finding out where the conference of Spencer’s Foundation for the Marketplace of Ideas was taking place. Although the conference was announced well in advance, the location was kept secret in an effort to thwart demonstrators.

Through courageous and successful infiltration, anti-fascists determined that Spencer would be hosting a cocktail hour at a German cultural club. At the last minute they discovered his appearance had been canceled.

The decision to change the location of the protest to the Holiday Inn Express was made after members of the anti-fascist coalition sighted Heimbach there. They and members of an ad hoc coalition formed to oppose Spencer’s visit managed to get word out to dozens of activists, who then protested outside the hotel.

Chants included, “No hate in our state!” “Cops and the Klan go hand-in-hand!” “When I’m under attack, you got my back? We got your back!” and “Warren is a union town! We don’t want this scum around!” Warren is home to a number of auto plants where workers are represented by the United Auto Workers.

Participating organizations included the Michigan People’s Defense Network, Solidarity and Defense, By Any Means Necessary, the Democratic Socialists of America, Refuse Fascism, Great Lakes Antifa, the Metro Detroit People’s Action Network, Workers World Party, the Industrial Workers of the World and the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Later, when it was learned that the fascists were headed to a gathering in Ann Arbor, activists followed them there to continue protesting. Between the two locations, the dedicated demonstrators were busy denouncing fascism for five to six hours.

Some of the neo-Nazis, in the process of attempting to evade the anti-fascists tailing them, were reportedly arrested by police; it was discovered that they were in illegal possession of weapons. It is unclear

Continued on the next page

National conference in Detroit, March 24

Developing a program to defeat austerity

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

March 24 will be an important date for the Moratorium NOW! Coalition and more than 50 other organizations and individuals who have endorsed the National Conference to Defeat Austerity in Detroit. The gathering is being held at the historic St. Matthew's-St. Joseph's Church.

This event has its origins in several developments in the city. Hundreds of thousands of residents have seen their standard of living drop precipitously amid massive layoffs in the retail and service sectors, along with the ongoing property tax foreclosure epidemic and rising rents.

The corporate media narrative promotes the city as making significant progress after emerging from what was in actuality an illegal municipal bankruptcy during 2013-14, while simultaneously overlooking the plight of the majority African-American, working-class population, many of whom are mired in poverty.

The NCDA concept arose after the Moratorium NOW! Coalition mobilized people for the World Conference of Mayors meeting held last Oct. 23-27 at the MGM Grand Casino Hotel. The billionaire ruling class, headed by Quicken Loans and Cleveland Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert and the Illitch Companies, sought to use the World Conference of Mayors to spread blatant misrepresentation of the social and economic situation in Detroit.

A citywide town hall meeting titled "Real Detroiters Speak Out!" was convened Oct. 27 after a week of activities, including an intervention at the World Conference of Mayors itself. At subsequent meetings in November and December, organizers decided to build a broader event that would thoroughly analyze the present crisis and develop a programmatic response to the domestic and U.S. foreign policies devastating cities and whole countries around the world.

Why the people struggle

The recently enacted first phase of federal tax legislation will result in enormous cuts to social programs and envi-

ronmental safeguards under the guise of providing incentives for corporations and allegedly workers and consumers.

However, subsidizing financial institutions through a formal 14 percent corporate tax reduction means that the masses of working and poor people will be denied desperately needed housing, health care and food assistance while the Pentagon budget continues to grow.

Relating to Detroit, Moratorium NOW! has stressed over the last three years that more than \$700 million has been redirected from the federal Hardest Hit Fund, initially designed to assist homeowners negatively impacted by foreclosures and evictions, to questionable projects related to so-called "blight removal." A significant portion of these funds has been turned over to the Detroit Land Bank Authority, described as a quasi-public entity, although it is run in the interests of the banks, corporations and real estate investors. The DLBA has been under federal investigation over allegations of bid-rigging and deliberate cost overruns.

Business-friendly Mayor Mike Duggan has opposed the use of federal funds earmarked for homeowners to stabilize neighborhoods. Working on behalf of the billionaires based downtown, both Duggan and the compliant City Council have repeatedly voted in favor of the transfer of public assets such as taxes, land and infrastructure to an array of prestige projects which provide no tangible benefits to the majority of people.

From Detroit to Puerto Rico

Highlighting the NCDA program will be activists from Puerto Rico, the devastated island nation which has long been a colonial outpost for U.S. imperialism. Ricardo Santos Ramos, the former president of the Electrical Industry and Irrigation Workers Union (UTIER), will attend and address the conference.

Like Detroit, Puerto Rico was placed into an unprecedented bankruptcy, which claimed that the people owe \$72 billion to the banks. Compounding this financial crisis, hurricanes Irma and Maria caused extensive physical damage, destroying homes, electrical grids and

bly snipers, a few armored vehicles owned by MSU police, dozens of riot cops with batons and a unit of police with rifles. About 24 police on bikes formed one massive block, but broke out at times to patrol in small groups. Outnumbering the protesters, the police allowed two dozen fascists to get inside.

When an armored vehicle tried to go past the crowd, many people ran out in front of it, forcing it to retreat. Some activists who stopped the vehicle were arrested. The police surrounded the vehicle with bikes, using them to form a fence and to hit protesters.

When fascists attempted to crash the protest, they were blocked. But police were unable to control the massive crowd, who put their bodies in the way of the police and the fascists, making it nearly impossible for them to move forward. TWP founder Heimbach was punched in the face.

The demonstration forced Spencer to break off his planned two-hour speech after only 30 minutes. The huge anti-fascist crowd was in high spirits throughout the entire event.

M.J. Anderson and Joshua Klarr contributed to this article.



WW PHOTO: KRIS BALDERAS HAMEL

Detroit activists demand end to tax foreclosures, Sept. 5, 2017.

production centers.

The delay in reconnecting power, rebuilding homes and facilitating the general restoration of normalcy for the people is clearly related to the dominance of the U.S government, which has stifled the economic growth and development of Puerto Rico in order to further facilitate its exploitation of the people.

Another prominent speaker will be the Rev. Edward Pinkney, a former political prisoner who was targeted, framed, prosecuted and imprisoned on two occasions since 2006 for opposing the imposition of so-called emergency management in Benton Harbor, Mich.

Yvonne Jones, co-founder of the Detroit Active and Retired Employees Association, will discuss the character of austerity in the city. Tens of thousands of municipal retirees were subjected to cuts in their pensions and annuities during the bankruptcy in 2014. Guaranteed lifetime health care coverage was completely eliminated.

Other invited speakers include Dior Gabrielle, organizer for the event; Dante Strobino of the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, United Electrical Workers Local 150; representatives of the Southern Workers Assembly; Maurice B.P. Drew of the Refund America Project, ACRES; Yexenia Vanegas, Detroit organizer for the Poor People's Campaign; Elena Herrada of the Detroit School Board in exile; Jonathan Roberts of the Restaurant Opportunities Center of Michigan; Julia Kassem of the U.S. Palestine Community Network in Detroit; Jesus Rodriguez Epinosa, former Counsel General in Chicago for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Jerry King of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute in Detroit; Kristy O'Connor of the Library Defense Network; S. Baxter Jones, a disabilities rights advocate and former member of the Homrich 9; and the Rev. W.J. Ride-

out, an organizer for the Fight for \$15 Campaign and Defenders for Truth and Justice.

A packed agenda

There will be workshops on housing, water shutoffs, the Poor People's Campaign, education and public transit. A national town hall panel will give voice to people across the country, while another session on the international struggle against austerity will illustrate the global aspects of the crisis.

The conference will close with a community meal and cultural program in the evening. Organizers will live-stream portions of the proceedings to reach broader audiences.

This event will be both educational as well as activist. Several resolutions will be introduced calling for actions around pressing issues in Detroit and nationwide. Over the next several months various struggles against poverty and racism and for labor rights and environmental justice will intensify.

Conference organizers will seek support for demonstrations to demand a moratorium on 36,000 scheduled property tax foreclosures in Wayne County. The delegates will be asked to support anti-war demonstrations slated for April 14-15 in several cities.

Organizers hope the NCDA will serve as a partial springboard for broader participation in Michigan and around the country for the National Poor People's Campaign. Plans will also be discussed for unified actions on May 1, International Workers' Day. Additional resolutions and action proposals will be accepted.

To attend or support this important conference, visits the event's Facebook page at [tinyurl.com/ycx68v2s](https://www.facebook.com/tinyurl.com/ycx68v2s). Although conference registration is free, donations for printed materials and food will be accepted. □



Continued from page 4

whether Richard Spencer was among those arrested or detained.

Massive protest in Lansing

A huge protest occurred the next day at Spencer's planned speech at Michigan State University in East Lansing. Student activists had attempted to get his speech canceled, but the university "compromised" by allowing him to hold a meeting at the agricultural school, away from the main campus.

Anti-fascists began gathering at the nearest parking lot — a mile from the speech venue — on the morning of March 5. By 12:30 p.m., over 500 had gathered. The police had already set up roadblocks around the agricultural center and had a heavy police presence around the school areas and a bank across the street. Patrols were stationed in and around the parking lot.

The crowd marched toward the agricultural center, where they set up close to the entrance where the fascists would later be led into the event by riot police. Richard Spencer was already inside the school where he sent out tweets for many hours.

There were police on the roofs, possi-

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

Celebrating liberation and revolution

By Workers World bureaus

International Working Women's Day is celebrated on March 8 in countries around the globe. Here in the United States, Workers World members helped organize and participated in activities in a number of cities, including those mentioned here.

Workers World Party in **Detroit** hosted an International Working Women's Day speakout for justice and revolution on March 10, Harriet Tubman Day. The heroic freedom fighter and abolitionist, born into slavery in Maryland on an unknown date, died on March 10, 1913. An engaging and political talk on Tubman was given by Wanda, an activist walker and poet. The audience also heard about the revolutionary origins and history of International Women's Day in a talk by WWP youth organizer Jamie, with comments from other speakout participants.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of Warrior Woman awards by WWP leader Debbie Johnson to three African-American workers, retirees and organizers. Lula Millender, Margaret Harris and Yvonne Jones were honored for their tireless commitment to the struggles of Detroiters and the oppressed worldwide. Their dedication includes passing out thousands of flyers, picketing the banks and eviction courts countless times, and raising money to help continue the ongoing struggle against austerity and



BELOW, WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN; RIGHT, WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITIE



racism led by their organization, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs.

The Women's Fightback Network-Maryland/D.C. gathered for a celebration of IWWD in Baltimore at People's Park on Charles Street and then marched to an indoor dinner and rally. The keynote speaker was Takiyah Thompson, the Durham, N.C., freedom fighter charged in 2017 with taking down a Confederate statue outside the Durham County Courthouse. That action came three days after neo-fascists and KKK members assaulted anti-racist demonstrators in Charlottesville, Va., killing activist Heather Heyer. Thompson's arrest, along with other freedom fighters in Durham, sparked months of rallies, marches and acts of solidarity. Their slogan, "Fighting racism is not a crime," was successfully upheld when all were acquitted or had their charges dropped on Feb. 20.

For International Working Women's Day in **Buffalo, N.Y.**, women's rights and women's liberation supporters from several

groups defied a snowstorm to demand justice for Indigenous, Black and Brown women; full access to health care, including the choice of abortion, for all women; an end to racism and violence against women and against immigrant workers, and more. The March 8 demonstration lined a major traffic-clogged street during the evening commute and received non-stop honking, raised fists and delighted applause from car, truck and bus drivers going by.

The International Working Women's Day Coalition held a "Women in Rebellion" march on March 10 in **New York City**, beginning at Penn Station, home to famed Madison Square Garden. Those marching included delegations from Women Workers for Peace, Honduran Department 19 USA, Ecuadoran Women's Forum, Stop FBI Repression, GABRIELA NYC, Workers World Party and others.

The boisterous demonstration went downstairs into Penn Station where trav-



WW PHOTO: KRIS BALDERAS HAMEL

Detroit Warrior Women (left to right) Lula Millender, Margaret Harris and Yvonne Jones.

Students fight creation of private police force

By Ben Anderson
Baltimore

Johns Hopkins University President Ronald J. Daniels sent an email to students on March 5 detailing the school's path to "establishing a university police department, specifically trained to meet the unique needs of a university environment." Sen. Joan Carter Conway has proposed a bill in the Maryland Legislature — spearheaded by the Johns Hopkins administration — which would allow private universities in Baltimore to institute their own private police forces.

This news was met with enormous opposition by students, many of whom view the creation of a private university police department as a way to further entrench white supremacy on campus — and endanger Black, Brown, queer and trans students, and community members. This news follows the announcement that Melissa R. Hyatt, the former Baltimore Police Department head of Homeland Security, would be named head of security for Hopkins' un-

dergraduate and medical campuses.

The Baltimore Police Department has a long history of racial profiling and unrestrained brutality against Black and Brown people. The creation of this private police force would only serve to increase these attacks on oppressed people.

Johns Hopkins University has also been the primary engine driving gentrification and displacement in Baltimore through the school's "Live Near Your Work" program for faculty and staff. This has led to displacement of working-class Black and Brown Baltimoreans from their neighborhoods, such as Remington — which is directly south of the university's Homewood undergraduate campus — and areas in East Baltimore, which are directly adjacent to Hopkins' medical campus. The university is systematically gentrifying and encroaching upon these neighborhoods.

Because this private police force would "strengthen public safety in and around our campuses," as university President Daniel's email states, areas of Baltimore

bordering the campuses would be patrolled by police with even less accountability to them than the corrupt Baltimore Police Department.

The university has a history of not paying its workers a living wage. Cafeteria and sanitation workers, security guards and the school's other subcontracted workers receive unjust, low salaries and are quite often forced to live in poverty because of these unlivable wages. If the school has enough money to create, hire, train and pay an entirely new police force, then it surely has sufficient funds to pay a living wage to its subcontracted workers.

Students say: 'More community, fewer cops!'

For these reasons and many more, university students say this decision is dangerous and irresponsible. So they formed a coalition called Students against Private Police, comprised of a variety of student groups, including the Black Student Union and leftist, environmental and LGBTQ organizations.

SAPP organized its first action on

March 8 — a rally on a busy spot outside the university's main library. Speakers from many student groups, as well as community activist Rev. C.D. Witherspoon, talked about why this initiative would be disastrous for Hopkins and the Baltimore communities. Students carried handmade signs with slogans like "Not Tryna Get Shot!" "More Community, Fewer Cops!" "Who R U Here to 'Protect'?" "Cops Don't Make Us Safer!" and "Pepper Spray Me!"

Following the rally, students chanted while marching through Gilman Hall, one of the busiest study spaces on campus. They made their way to President Daniels' mansion, where they expressed their anger by chanting outside his front door. Over 100 students participated, as well as some influential members of community organizations.

SAPP's next action took place March 11, when students phonebanked at several Hopkins' graduate and undergraduate campuses. They called Maryland representatives, demanding they vote against this horrible bill. □



Buffalo, N.Y.



Boston

WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

Baltimore and Boston hold meetings to honor Durham liberation fighter Takiyah Thompson.

elers waiting for Amtrak, New Jersey Transit and Long Island Railroad trains saw and heard them. Many passengers raised their fists or clapped in solidarity. The marchers stopped in front of restaurants like KFC and Dunkin' Donuts to pass out flyers while chanting "Justice for fast food workers!"

Along the protest route, two male construction workers, one Black and one white, stopped jackhammering when they saw the "No War on Women" lead banner, giving their strong approval with the thumbs-up sign.

After the demonstration, an indoor roundtable discussion was led by representatives from some of the groups who had marched. They spoke about their struggles and why it is important to build a united front against patriarchy, capitalism, racism and imperialism. Male supporters fixed a delicious lunch for the gathering.

Contributing to this roundup were Sharon Black, Ellie Dorritie, Kris Baldas Hamel and Monica Moorehead.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Part of the crowd participating in the March 10 Mumia event.

Communities rally around Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Ted Kelly
Philadelphia

Philadelphia's West and Southwest neighborhoods came together as a community on March 10 at the Kingsessing Free Library in solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners. Dozens of residents took part in an afternoon of hands-on learning and political discussion centered on Abu-Jamal's latest book, "Have Black Lives Ever Mattered?"

Hosted by community activist and radio host Gabe Bryant, the event was organized by a coalition of groups, including the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Workers World Party, Socialist Action, Friends of Kingsessing Library, Mobilization-4Mumia, Sankofa Community Empowerment and Food Not Bombs Solidarity. The multimedia presentation included several video clips and documentary footage related to the Black Lives Matter movement and Abu-Jamal's own arrest and struggle for freedom.

Those in attendance also heard an audio recording of Abu-Jamal reading a section of the introduction to his new book. It ended with his thanking attendees and

expressing his love for each and every one engaged in the struggle.

Participants in the event formed breakout groups to discuss various subjects covered in the book, including the meaning of the uprising in Ferguson, Mo., the murder of Trayvon Martin and police violence in schools. Each group reported back to the assembly and joined in a spirited discussion on the book's themes and the future of the movement.

Workers World member Deandra Patrice Jefferson discussed the connection between Abu-Jamal's case and that of Philadelphia rapper Meek Mill, who recently returned to prison on false pretenses. She noted that many youth in Philadelphia are familiar with the campaign to Free Meek and emphasized bringing this new generation of energy and interest to the movement for Mumia.

Anthony Smith, with Philadelphia REAL Justice, also discussed the generational divide and stressed the importance of creating space for younger organizers and activists who are so disproportionately the target of state violence. Smith also encouraged people to be involved in the fight to stop gentrification, including Temple University's push for a sports stadium

in North Philadelphia's predominantly Black community around the campus.

Betsey Piette, with the Mobilization-4Mumia, gave updates on the state of Abu-Jamal's health and his legal battle. Pressure has mounted on District Attorney Larry Krasner's office to release files related to Abu-Jamal's case that should expose former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille's duplicity concerning Abu-Jamal's appeals. A status hearing is scheduled for March 27, where supporters will continue to voice their basic demand: Free Mumia Now!

While a victory was achieved in 2011 when Mumia was taken off death row, the need to free him from prison is as urgent as ever. The state of his health is dire after nearly 40 years in prison with horrendous neglect by prison medical staff.

The Friends of Kingsessing Library was formed over a decade ago and won a successful fight to keep open their branch of the Philadelphia Public Library. Food Not Bombs Solidarity provided delicious meals to all those in attendance. With the support of his friends, family and community, both in Philadelphia and internationally, Mumia Abu-Jamal will one day soon walk out of prison a free man. □

Global actions call for Mumia's freedom

By Joe Piette

A call for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners is picking up steam, with solidarity actions planned for the end of March.

Abu-Jamal has a status hearing on March 27 in **Philadelphia**, plus a court hearing on April 30, which could eventually lead to his freedom. After years of global community meetings, protests, petitions and legal challenges, the people's movement succeeded in taking Abu-Jamal off death row in 2011. The reinvigoration of that mobilization is necessary in order to pressure Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner and Common Pleas Court Judge Leon Tucker to do the right thing.

Toward that end a coalition of Mumia support organizations has created a petition calling for the District Attorney to release all DA and police files on Mumia to the public and to release Mumia because he's factually innocent. (mobilization-4mumia.com/actions/)

A coalition for an "International Offensive to Free Mumia and All Political Prisoners" on the weekend of March 24-27 is gaining momentum.

In **Houston**, the Texas Death Penal-

ty Abolition Movement will do a banner drop for Mumia over Houston's busiest freeway, on Dunlavy Bridge over Highway 59, on March 26, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

In **Detroit**, at the National Conference to Defeat Austerity, March 24, organizers will play recordings from Mumia on prison labor and express solidarity with the movement to Free Mumia. The event is at St. Matthew's-St. Joseph's Church, 8850 Woodward Ave.

In **Oakland, Calif.**, after a March 26 forum organized by the Bay Area Mumia Coalition, a rally and march will take place on April 28 at Oscar Grant Plaza. For information, email jackheyman@comcast.net, phone 510-501-7080, or call Terri Kay at 510-600-5800.

Also in California, a March 24 forum is being held at the Vallejo JFK Library from 1 to 4 p.m. For information contact the New Jim Crow Movement (Vallejo), 707-652-8367.

A number of events will take place in **New York City**:

March 23: Break Down Walls & Prison Plantation: Mumia, Migrants & Movements for Liberation, 6 to 9 p.m., Holyrood Episcopal Church, 715 179th St. (bringmumiahome.com).

March 24: Jericho Amnesty Movement 20th Anniversary, 5 to 9 p.m., Holyrood Episcopal Church, 715 W. 179th St.

March 25: Gather at noon at U.S. Mission to the U.N. (799 UN Plaza, 1st Avenue and 45th Street), march at 1 p.m. to Times Square for 2 p.m. rally. This event has been endorsed by Bronx Community Greens, Universal Zulu Nation, Morales-Shakur Community & Student Center, Safiya Bukhari-Albert Nuh Foundation and many other groups.

Rallies are also being organized in France, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, Mexico and other countries.

A protest will take place in **Toronto** at 1 p.m. on March 24 at the U.S. Consulate,

360 University Ave. In **Johannesburg** organizers are staging a rally on March 25 at Freedom Park RDD with poetry, hip hop, Kwaito music and drama.

In Philadelphia, local supporters are asked to help pack the court at 8 a.m. on March 27 at 1301 Filbert and again on April 30, when supporters from outside Philly are expected to converge on the court to demand freedom for Mumia. A number of other local activities are taking place; for details contact mobilization-4mumia@gmail.com or 215-724-1618.

Other cities are still in the process of organizing actions. To add your local Mumia event to the growing list, fill out the form at freemumia.com/march-24-27-events □



Solidarity with Korea



WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

Speakout connects U.S. threats to war profits and racism at home.

By Boston Workers World bureau

Activists gathered in downtown Boston on March 10 for a speakout led by women from the Boston branch of Workers World Party to push back against war rhetoric and say, “U.S. hands off Korea!” They gathered at the corner of Park and Tremont streets with signs, a loudspeaker and a banner decrying U.S. military expansion around the world, especially against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The southern half of the peninsula has been occupied by U.S. military forces since 1945.

Phebe Eckfeldt from the Women’s Fightback Network told the crowd: “This is why north Korea needs to and has a right to defend itself.” She held up a map detailing sites all over the Korean peninsula where the Pentagon organized massacres of tens of thousands of Korean ci-

vilians and liberation fighters in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Eckfeldt was part of a delegation to south Korea, sponsored by the Korea Truth Commission, that uncovered and exposed the massacres.

Speakers angrily raised connections between U.S. military expansion around the world and the need for capitalism to find new markets for private businesses. The imperialist need to profit from the global class war has led to initiatives like the U.S. government’s 1033 program. For almost 20 years, billions of dollars in military vehicles and equipment have been funneled through the Defense Logistics Agency to local police departments. This has led to mine-resistant armored vehicles in places like the streets of Ferguson, Mo., and the Standing Rock Sioux land, which brings home that this continent has always been a war zone for nationally oppressed people. □



WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY
Youth say “Hands off Korea!”

Youth defend Korean self-determination

By Roy Warren
Portland, Ore.

A lively group of Portland Workers World Party members and friends was joined by a contingent of new party candidates from Washington state on March 10 to demand “Hands Off Korea” and reunification of the Korean peninsula. Hundreds of Korea fact sheets were distributed while the group marched through the crowds at Saturday Market along the Willamette River.

It was evident from the responses and conversations with people along the way that, despite the extreme demonization

of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea by the media, a surprising number of people were in support of self-determination for the DPRK. They also want an end to the permanent U.S. military presence in south Korea.

A 17-year-old high school student, who said she was a Marxist-Leninist, found the event through social media; she’s interested in getting involved with the Portland branch. Another student talked about the lack of funding for her school and connected that to money spent on U.S. wars — money that should be used for education on how to stop those wars. □

Unions, students, faculty tell Harvard: Act to save TPS

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Cambridge, Mass.

Sixty workers marched on Harvard University President Drew Faust’s office Jan. 31 demanding she take action on behalf of those who hold temporary protected status.

The newly formed Harvard TPS Coalition consists of members of UNITE HERE Local 26, representing dining hall workers; Service Employees 32BJ, representing custodians; Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3650; the Harvard Graduate Student Union; plus faculty and student supporters.

Two Latinx lead organizers, Martha from UNITE HERE and Doris from SEIU 32BJ, both of whom are from El Salvador, led the group to the door of Faust’s office to deliver a letter. The letter read in part:

“As you know, the Department of Homeland Security announced, between Nov. 6, 2017 and Jan. 8, 2018, that TPS would be terminated for Nicaragua, Haiti and El Salvador. These decisions affect 5,300 Nicaraguans, 59,000 Haitians and about 250,000 Salvadorans, with potentially more terminations coming in the future, such as for Hondurans and others. “Haitians and Salvadorans, who are the majority of TPS workers at Harvard, also have, respectively, 27,000 and 195,000 children who were born in the United States. Since the devastating earthquakes in 2001 in El Salvador and 2010 in Haiti, these hardworking immigrants, many who arrived here eight to 17

or more years ago as kids, have become very connected in their local communities. Most Salvadorans have been here much longer, for 20 or more years since fleeing the Civil War, and we all should remember America’s role in this conflict.

“The Boston area is a center of the Salvadoran and Haitian community, and we Harvard workers are also part of the University community. Between feeding Harvard students and cleaning Harvard offices, we are the first to greet the students at breakfast and the last to see departing researchers each evening. Like many from Haiti and El Salvador across the country, we cook, clean and provide for American children that dream of more opportunity than we had back home. We also actively contribute to the economy: we buy cars and take on mortgages, start businesses and pay into Social Security.

“However, opportunity is not our only concern. We will be targeted for violence and could even be killed if we return to what, for many of us, are unfamiliar countries. We are Americans who deserve permanent residency here in the United States.”

The letter, signed by more than 300 union members, student groups, students and faculty, asks that Faust hold a press conference supporting the transition to permanent residency for TPS workers; write a letter to the House, the Senate and the president advocating permanent residency; and encourage other college presidents to take these same steps.

At the end of the letter are photos and short bios of seven workers and their families that detail the political, social,

economic and emotional anguish and hardship that canceling TPS will have on them. Put together by TPS workers on the coalition committee, this narrative is designed to confront Faust with the realities of workers’ lives. The narrative will be used as an outreach tool to workers and their unions at other universities; it also provided information for unions rallying and lobbying in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 5.

The Harvard TPS Coalition is deliberately and methodically talking with other union members on campus to educate them that an attack on TPS workers is an attack on the unions and that the same forces pushing “right to work” (for less!) legislation, which will demolish unions, are the same forces pushing attacks on immigrant workers.

The Harvard TPS Coalition has vowed to continue to build on campus, join allies on other campuses and join with other unions to stop these vicious attacks on immigrant members, on all immigrant workers and on the existence of unions. □

WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

“By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity.”

— Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann, President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009; Foreign Minister of Nicaragua’s Sandinista government.

Available at all major online booksellers. PentagonAchillesHeel.com



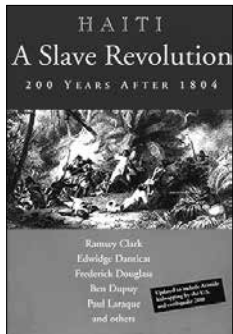
Expanding Empire

The global war drive of big business and the forces that will stop it

Vince Copeland’s “Expanding Empire” tells the story of U.S. imperialism from its beginnings in 1898 up to the Vietnam War. The pamphlet was written in 1969 during the Vietnam War and became one of Workers World’s most popular titles. It went through several printings.

The purpose of the pamphlet was to show that the war was not caused by any particular politician. Rather it was a product of the capitalist system.

The same is true today. In the end, it all comes down to profits. “Expanding Empire” explains how the capitalists’ insatiable greed for increased profit inevitably produces war. And it shows how the only way to prevent future wars is to destroy capitalism at its roots.



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A uniquely capitalist crime

Growing homelessness alongside luxury towers

By Jeff Sorel
Chicago

The goal of “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family” is embedded in the federal Housing Act of 1949. Yet, on a single winter night in 2016, according to a federal agency count, “544,084 people experienced homelessness in the United States.”

Of that total, some 200,000 lacked access to nightly shelter and instead inhabited cars, tents, viaducts or doorways. (U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Report on Hunger and Homelessness, December 2016)

The number of homeless people is actually much larger. The federal government’s count omits many people who lack a fixed home, including those doubled-up with friends or relatives, sleeping in temporary quarters like hostels, and adopting other informal and short-term strategies. Given the tensions that inevitably arise in these overcrowded conditions, in time many do wind up on the streets.

Taking a more inclusive approach, housing advocates found last year that over 82,000 people were homeless in Chicago alone. Families made up half of this homeless population. Likewise, in Los Angeles County there are “more than 57,000 people who lack a fixed, regular or adequate place to sleep on any given night.” (Chicagohomeless.org; L.A. Times, Feb. 25)

Young people are hit especially hard by homelessness. Some 1.6 million youths in the U.S. experience it annually. The most oppressed — children of color, children with disabilities — are most likely to be homeless. LGBTQ youths, who constitute an estimated 7 percent of the total population, make up 40 percent of homeless youths. (Washington Post, March 29, 2017)

A walk through any big city will confirm the reality of these shameful statistics in the form of live human beings entrapped in inhuman suffering.

Causes of homelessness

Politicians and the corporate media too often blame the victims, portraying homeless persons as lazy, unmotivated and undeserving of anything better. But people do not choose to live without a home voluntarily. No one welcomes a life that is inevitably too hot, too cold or too wet, separate from loved ones, and blighted by fear, anxiety and stigma.

The threats of sexual assault and physical violence by police and others, as well as infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis and AIDS, are ever-present. A hepatitis A outbreak among homeless people in southern California prompted officials to declare a state of emergency last year.

It is no surprise that life expectancy for the homeless is short: about 47 years, compared with an average of 78 years in the population as a whole. (L.A. Times, Feb. 25)

Shelters are no answer. There are not enough to meet the need, and many people prefer the streets and feeble protection of encampments to often unsafe shelters.

How can so many people be without a home in a land of plenty? Each homeless person has a unique story. But, at bottom, people are homeless because capitalism treats them as dispensable.

Many were laid off and got evicted when they could no longer afford rising



rents. They may be young people forced into the streets by the juvenile injustice system or abusive foster care. They may have been incarcerated without being taught skills needed to make a living on the outside. They may be patients released from public hospitals with untreated infections or otherwise too ill to find work and a stable abode.

They may have fled an abusive relationship. The city of Chicago reported in 2016 that 26 percent of shelter residents were domestic violence victims.

Homeless does not always mean unemployed. Many homeless people have jobs — often part-time or seasonal — but still don’t make enough for rent. Immigrants are particularly likely to be forced to work for far less than a living wage.

Notwithstanding the diversity of circumstances that lead to homelessness, one glaring statistic is fundamental to understanding why so many people in this resource-abundant country are without a home: Income is simply too low in relation to housing costs.

According to a 2017 study by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, full-time, minimum-wage workers cannot afford to rent or own a house or apartment in a single U.S. state. The nationwide “housing wage” for a two-bedroom apartment is \$14 higher than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, and \$5 higher than the average hourly wage earned by renters.

In Illinois, the state minimum wage of \$8.25 an hour requires a household of two minimum-wage earners to work at least 101 hours a week to afford a fair-market rent for a two-bedroom unit. And Chicago’s higher \$11 minimum wage still does not bridge the gap. (Out of Reach, June 2017, nlihc.org/oor)

For many, minimum wage is the only attainable wage. Technology and outsourcing are obliterating the bulk of better-paying jobs. Workers who lose their jobs often also lose their homes and have few if any options to return to housing stability.

So while there are many reasons why specific people are homeless, the underlying cause is the lack of housing that is affordable in relation to income.

This gap is growing. Gentrification has taken vast numbers of once-affordable rental units off the market. Rent controls and Section 8 vouchers are disappearing, and public housing options and social services are shrinking. The result is widespread homelessness.

Housing is built for profit, not need

There is nothing necessary about the

lack of affordable housing. The \$700 billion military budget alone could cover 3.5 million modest homes at \$200,000 each.

But building homes for the working class is not where big profits lie. Under capitalism, housing is treated as a commodity, not as a human need. Its main purpose is to generate developer profits and serve as an instrument for financial accumulation.

Affordable and public housing is badly needed, but this is not a need that registers with profit-hungry developers. In fact, since the 1990s, buildings across the U.S. that had almost 300,000 public housing units have been sold to private owners.

Under capitalism, providing low-income housing is not as profitable as building homes for the wealthy. In 2015, a limited liability company bought a single penthouse apartment in Manhattan for over \$100 million. Hedge fund billionaire Ken Griffin recently paid \$58.5 million for a four-floor unit in a new Chicago luxury condo tower. This “is not high-rise housing so much as global wealth congealed into tower form.” (Marcuse & Madden, “In Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis”)

A decent place to live is a universal need, but under capitalism ability to pay profit-producing rents is limited. This unavoidable contradiction — an example of what Karl Marx called the conflict between use value and exchange value — is the foundational cause of homelessness.

This conflict is especially harmful because a place to call home is so fundamental. Without a home, it is tough even to begin to address such specific problems as employment, poverty, mental health and domestic abuse. Yet a growing proportion of the working class — the class that produces all the wealth that the capitalists enjoy and flaunt — is unable to secure a decent home.

Housing under capitalism vs. socialism

The inability of capitalism to meet the need for affordable housing is longstanding. Frederick Engels, the close collaborator of Karl Marx in the development of modern socialist theory and practice, explained in an 1872 pamphlet that the working class was then experiencing “a colossal increase in rents, a still further aggravation of overcrowding [and], for some, the impossibility of finding a place to live in at all.” (“The Housing Question”)

Engels was familiar with early forms of gentrification in which workers’ homes were “pulled down and replaced” by more profitable properties. He viewed the resulting shortage of affordable hous-

ing as “a necessary product of the bourgeois social order” in which technological advances and capitalist crises condemn workers to low pay and frequent unemployment.

By contrast, socialist countries have proclaimed decent housing a social right, with state-owned housing replacing private profiteering. The Cuban Revolution early on rolled back rents to a maximum 10 percent of a family’s income. Mansions of the rich were seized and used to house the homeless.

This reporter spent six weeks in 1973 helping to build new houses for peasants in a town outside Havana. When the homes were ready, social workers helped the new residents adjust to modern appliances. To celebrate this leap through centuries, the peasants burned their old mud-floor huts in ceremonious fashion.

To be sure, Cuba’s current housing situation is far from ideal. The U.S. blockade has limited expansion and upgrades, and recent hurricanes have destroyed tens of thousands of units. But homelessness is unknown, and the government has prioritized housing expansion in the coming period. Meanwhile, all Cubans enjoy free health care, quality education, cheap public transport and one of the lowest violent crime rates in the Americas.

What is to be done?

Does the systemic foundation of homelessness in this country mean that we must await the revolution to address it? Not at all. In fact, we can hasten the overthrow of capitalism by raising “transitional demands” that point to that end. The demand that housing be deemed a right, not a commodity, is a vital transitional demand.

The fight for affordable housing is also part and parcel of the fight against racism. The high percentage of people of color who are homeless reflects the racism that permeates this system.

We should insist that government bodies allocate resources both to ensure adequate housing and to meet the medical, clothing, employment and other needs of homeless people. Too many municipalities instead use loitering and panhandling laws to harass and arrest homeless people for the “crime” of living where they can and trying to survive. That pettiness extends to placing a third armrest in the middle of public benches to prevent homeless people from bedding there. (“How Cities Use Design to Drive Homeless People Away,” Atlantic, June 19, 2014)

We also can demand a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, as Detroit’s Moratorium NOW! Coalition is doing. We should support community-based organizations that assist the homeless with shelter, medical care and schooling. And we can organize tenant unions and anti-gentrification campaigns to fight for rent rollbacks and decent housing. (See “Rent strike wins in East LA,” WW, March 8)

Engels offered even more militant tactics in “The Housing Question,” calling for the seizure and occupation of buildings by the workers and “homeless.” He also emphasized, however, that isolated measures cannot fully resolve the housing crisis. There is “only one means” to redress it, he stated — “to abolish altogether the exploitation and oppression of the working class by the ruling class.” The horror of homelessness must be a prime target in this broader battle to put an end to the many horrors of capitalism. □

WORKERS WORLD
editorial

Trump promotes extreme right

Bigot in chief Donald Trump’s firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and his replacement by former CIA Director Mike Pompeo is recognized by all the major bourgeois media as a clear shift to the right.

That might sound strange to many workers, oppressed people and progressives. Didn’t Tillerson, the former head of ExxonMobil, personify the corporate ruling class of rich, white, cis men who go into politics to promote the fortunes of U.S. imperialist banks and corporations around the globe? Absolutely.

But there are different schools of thought in the ruling class over how to achieve this objective, and Pompeo is a racist, anti-Muslim, reckless warhawk on the extreme right. He has especially pushed hard for a more aggressive posture against Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Pompeo, as head of the CIA, has cultivated a close relationship with Trump. He has been closeted with Trump every day, sometimes for 45 minutes, to “brief” him on what’s going on in the world. That’s plenty of time to stroke the ego of this erratic, impulsive and egocentric billionaire and reinforce his vilest prejudices.

Here’s what the bourgeois media are saying about Pompeo.

On Korea: “Tillerson was thought to be a voice that cautioned Trump against striking North Korea while Pompeo has come off consistently hawkish. ... The U.S. has a tricky patch of diplomacy coming up with North Korea as Trump and Kim Jong Un prepare to meet, and if diplomacy fails, the U.S. could get even tougher on Pyongyang. The most pressing North Korea issue is currently the upcoming May summit between Trump and Kim Jong Un, one in which Pompeo has declared the U.S. will make ‘no concessions.’” (Business Insider, March 13)

“Pompeo recently declared that the U.S. would not soften its stance on North Korea ahead of planned talks between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Trump. ‘Make no mistake about it,’ Pompeo said on Fox News Sunday. ‘While these negotiations are going on, there will be no concessions made.’ Pompeo has previously suggested he

favors regime change in North Korea.” (NPR, March 13)

On Iran: “Pompeo has been a leading critic of the nuclear deal with Iran.” (NPR)

On Muslims: “Amid rumors Pompeo was being considered as a Tillerson replacement, the Atlantic in November noted the CIA director’s alliances with anti-Muslim activists including Brigitte Gabriel and Frank Gaffney. [Gabriel] runs ACT for America, an organization that scours textbooks in an effort to eliminate references that equate Islam with Judaism and Christianity, and urges its members to protest the sale of halal food. In 2016, Pompeo won ACT’s ‘highest honor,’ the National Security Eagle Award.” (Washington Post, March 13)

On racism: “[Pompeo] made the Sunday show rounds to defend the president’s response to a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, last August, even as other administration officials went silent.” (Politico, Nov. 11)

Who will replace Pompeo as deputy director of the CIA? Gina Haspel, who as a clandestine CIA officer in 2002 “oversaw the torture of two terrorism suspects and later took part in an order to destroy videotapes documenting their brutal interrogations at a secret prison in Thailand. ... [Haspel] oversaw the brutal interrogations of two detainees, Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. Mr. Zubaydah alone was waterboarded 83 times in a single month, had his head repeatedly slammed into walls and endured other harsh methods before interrogators decided he had no useful information to provide.” (New York Times, Feb. 2, 2017)

Pompeo is also for torture and the hellhole prison at Guantánamo, as well as advocating the death penalty for whistleblower Edward Snowden.

With these two monsters heading the State Department and the CIA and whispering in Trump’s ear every day, there can be no illusions that the U.S. government is moving toward any easing of tensions it has created in the world. On the contrary, we must be prepared to organize and fight like hell to mobilize against war abroad and reaction at home. □

Disability groups sue for elevator access



WW PHOTO: SOPHIA ADAMS

Wheelchair users chant “Accessibility is a right!”

By Mary Kaessinger
A wheelchair user in New York City

Led by the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York, several individual plaintiffs and other disability rights’ organizations joined forces March 5 to sue the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New York City Transit and the city of New York for elevator access to each and every subway station in the city.

Of the 472 stations, currently only 110 have elevators, making New York’s transit system the least accessible in the entire nation. In addition, the rate of repair of broken elevators is abysmal, so not all 110 stations are usable at any given time. An average of 25 elevators break down each day. Not all subway lines that go through a station are accessible. For instance, a wheelchair user cannot get on the 4, 5 or 6 trains at the busy Union Square station in Manhattan, despite the fact that the station itself is accessible.

The court hearing on March 5 was preceded by a rousing 9 a.m. rally and press conference co-sponsored by Rise and Resist, CIDNY, the People’s MTA and Diversability, in front of the 60 Centre St. courthouse. Speaker after speaker denounced the lack of access to the city’s subway system. Wheelchair users are directly affected, but so are parents with strollers, disabled children going to school, seniors, riders struggling with heavy packages, workers with an injury who have to use crutches or other assistive devices, and workers who are just plain tired.

The MTA has also reduced the number of litter baskets on the platforms because they cannot be easily emptied by MTA workers when there’s no elevator to carry heavy bags up to the street. This was done at the height of a campaign against litter, which causes track fires.

Shouts of “Accessibility Is a Right!” echoed throughout the area. Susan Doo-ha, executive director of CIDNY, said that lack of subway accessibility is “one of the top two barriers to employment for people with disabilities.”

Following the rally, activists moved upstairs to the packed courtroom, which was standing room only. Three wheelchair users had to be seated in the so-called well, a portioned-off section of the courtroom where lawyers sit.

Activists held up copies of the New

York Daily News so the judge could see the headline of the lead editorial, “Let Them Ride.” The paper, not generally regarded as disabled friendly, appealed to a basic notion of fairness: “All they want is the same lousy service we all enjoy.”

The MTA legal team spoke first, trying with various legal maneuvers to get the lawsuit dismissed. Among their arguments, such as that the MTA is a state agency and the city does not have jurisdiction, they said the MTA was not opposed to putting in more elevators. It just had to prioritize where to spend its money: signal upgrades or elevators. The MTA lawyer’s actual words were: “Let’s say you decide to install 100 elevators. Then there won’t be resources for signal upgrades.”

In a report following the hearing, the subway activist group the People’s MTA addressed this directly: “What a disgusting, transparent attempt to pit riders with disabilities against other riders. And the fact is, multiple exposes have shown that the MTA is already spending a paltry amount on signal upgrades.

“A recent New York Times expose showed that the big emergency Subway Action Plan allocates only 9.5% of its operating budget to signals. This was supposed to be the plan that fixed the subway and stopped all those frustrating delays.

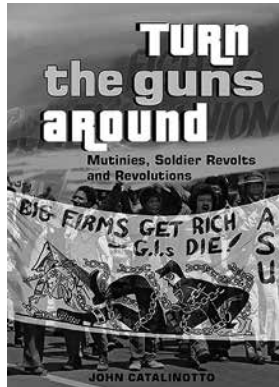
“Another Times article, this one from December, noted that debt service to the banks amounted to \$82 a second -- which adds up to \$7 million a day, \$2.6 billion a year.”

Two women lawyers for the disabled organizations, one in a wheelchair, countered the MTA’s jurisdiction argument, saying the NYC Human Rights Law of 1995 applies. They quoted a legal decision holding that the law should be interpreted broadly and a decision on a similar case in Boston. That case, settled by a conference between the two parties, specified a timeframe for all Boston subway stations to be accessible.

Justice Shlomo Hagler interrupted frequently, asking the MTA lawyer to “speak from the heart” rather than read from a script. He also admonished the MTA for its failure to maintain an up-to-date transit system in New York City, which he called “the economic engine of the country.” He also decried the bad impression the unreliable system had on tourists.

Hagler said it wasn’t fair that the subways were not 100 percent accessible and told the MTA to spend its money more wisely.

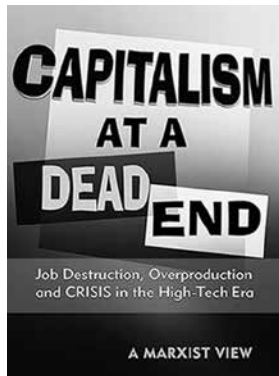
The hearing concluded with the suit still in place. Judge Hagler ordered a settlement conference before making major decisions in the case. Monica Bartley, outreach organizer for CIDNY, said she was “cautiously optimistic.” □



TURN THE GUNS AROUND
Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions
by John Catalinotto

Weaving together GI letters, interviews and first-hand narratives with historical research, the author brings to life GI resistance in the Vietnam War era, shows its relation to capitalist state power and highlights why breaking the military chain of command is an essential step to ending oppression around the globe.

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For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to **LowWageCapitalism.com**
Available at all major online booksellers.

Climate change and class struggle

By G. Dunkel

Workers and their allies throughout the world argue that it is possible to make climate, meaning the patterns of daily weather events, less violent, less dangerous, more comfortable, more human. Their bosses argue that come what may — come high heat, high water, frigid cold — workers have to get to work to make money for them and, in addition, bear most of the costs of violent weather.

That's the nub of the argument over climate change: Making profits by ignoring risks versus making a livable environment for human life.

Global warming is one of the most significant factors in climate change. It is a major factor in events like wildfires and droughts.

But Jennifer Francis, a research professor at Rutgers University, is one of the sci-

entists who also feel that “rapid warming and wholesale melting of the Arctic may be playing a role in causing persistent cold spells.” (www.skepticalscience.com)

The winter of 2017-18 has been marked by violent and rapid changes in the weather. According to Francis, citing four of the last five years, December and the first few weeks of 2018 in the central and eastern parts of Canada and the United States were very cold. States like Louisiana, Texas and Florida, usually snow-free, received significant amounts of snow, along with record low temperatures.

Though February in the U.S. Northeast was one of the warmest Februaries on record, most of Europe, from Madrid to Moscow, faced weeks of brutal cold, with temperatures unusually well below freezing. Snow and freezing rain made road and rail travel treacherous. Thousands of cars and trucks were trapped on

highways in southern France, and snow actually coated Mediterranean beaches.

In western Europe, prosperous and highly developed, the cold was mainly dangerous for the homeless, often immigrants and refugees, and the poor, whose shelters don't have enough heat or insulation. Many workers, especially in Great Britain, demanded to be paid for the days they couldn't get to work, with mixed success.

In far less prosperous eastern Europe, the situation was graver. Polish authorities reported at least 58 deaths due to hypothermia in February. In Bosnia, 11,000 villagers were cut off by heavy snow and avalanches, with helicopters bringing in food and fuel. Romania, Ukraine, Macedonia and Albania all reported heavy snowfall and far-below-freezing conditions, making it hard for workers to get to jobs and threatening the poor, the homeless, the elders and the very young.

Global warming and colder winters

For a couple of days at the end of February, Cape Morris Jesup, the weather station at the northern tip of Greenland, was warmer than Zurich, Paris or Rome. Cape Morris Jesup is about 450 miles from the North Pole. The sun sets there in October and doesn't rise again until the end of March.

Temperatures in the Arctic in the last week of February soared to about 35 degrees Fahrenheit, 50 degrees higher than normal. Similar temperature anomalies were noted throughout the Arctic.

Francis explained that arctic warming significantly reduces the ice cover of the Arctic Ocean. That reduces the difference in atmospheric pressure between the Arctic and mid-latitudes, weakening the jet stream, which normally keeps the most frigid cold in the Arctic, and causing lengthy cold snaps in North America and Europe.

“This is what we've been talking about; it couldn't be more classic,” Francis told the Associated Press March 10. “If you look at the whole picture, the whole jet stream around the Northern Hemisphere, it's had these very large excursions north and south and that's led to all of the wacky weather.”

“The underlying disease that's causing this is getting worse,” Francis said, referring to heat-trapping gases from the



PHOTO: CITMA

A symbol of Cuba's Tarea Vida (LifeWork) initiative against climate change catastrophe.

burning of coal, oil and gas. “These are just the symptoms.”

Climate change policies in U.S., Cuba and China

Trump has rolled back some regulations set up to combat climate change in the U.S. He questions the reality of climate change and promotes the fossil fuel industries, particularly coal. On June 1, 2017, he even withdrew the U.S. from the nonbinding and not really effective 2015 Paris Accords on climate change.

The major European countries have not renounced the Paris Agreement, but they have not taken any significant steps to combat global warming. They don't want to put limits on what their companies can do to make profits.

China, the world's second-largest economy, has installed about a third of the world's current capacity to produce wind power, according to the Global Wind Energy Council. China already produces over half of the world's energy by solar power and intends to achieve the goals set for it under the Paris Accords years ahead of schedule.

Cuba spent 10 years developing Project Life (Tarea Vida), officially adopted in the spring of 2017, to address climate change issues. The major environmental problem Cuba faces as an island nation is sea-level rise.

Tarea Vida is designed to prepare Cuba for environmental challenges for the next hundred years.

“It's impressive,” marine scientist David Guggenheim, president of Ocean Doctor, told the magazine Science. (Jan. 10) “Cuba is an unusual country in that they actually respect their scientists, and their climate change policy is science driven.” The Cuban plan stresses resilience and adaptation, rather than massive and costly infrastructure projects. □



Visit Cuba, break the blockade!

By Cheryl LaBash

IFCO/Pastors for Peace has announced its 29th Friendshipment Caravan to take place this July in Eastern Cuba. After a mandatory orientation in Toronto July 16-18, a flight to Santiago, Cuba, will begin the 11-day visit.

On July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro and other revolutionaries launched their attack on the Moncada Barracks of the Batista dictatorship. This delegation will take part in the 65th anniversary celebration of that event in Santiago.

The program in Cuba also includes a trip to Guantánamo province where participants will learn about the impact of the notorious and illegal U.S. naval base on the Caimanera community next to the base. They will also see how the province has recovered from Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and learn about Cuba's advance preparation for such natural disasters. IFCO invites people to “explore how the Cuban people are moving forward in fields such as health care, organic farming and sustainable tourism, as well as their efforts to tackle the legacies of racism, sexism and homophobia. ... Witness and explore the role of organized religion in Cuba.”

The program costs \$1,650. Round trip travel to Toronto from the U.S. is not included. The application deadline is May

1. Forms are available from friendshipmentcaravan@ifconews.org or by calling 212-926-5757, extension 5.

Before the Cuba trip, Caravan educational events will be held throughout the U.S. from June 22 to July 1.

IFCO points out that “U.S. citizens are free to travel anywhere in the world, except Cuba. To travel to Cuba you need permission, a license, from the U.S. government. This has been the case for over 50 years. In his final years, President Obama made licenses very easy to get, as well as taking some steps to reduce the underlying U.S. economic blockade of Cuba. However, President Trump has adopted a very hostile stance toward Cuba, partially reversing Obama's actions, and reducing the possibilities for individual licensed travel.

“IFCO/Pastors for Peace believes that licenses should be scrapped and we should be freely able to travel to Cuba and meet our Cuban sisters and brothers. Since 1992, we have taken 28 Caravans of people to Cuba without a license as a conscious act of CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.”

Space is still available with the earlier International May Day Brigade, which travels to Cuba from April 22 to May 6. For more information, contact ICanGoToCuba@nnoc.info. Applications and full payment are due by March 23. □



Guerra de clases en Virginia Occidental

Continúa de página 12

la Universidad de Harvard que apoyan a las/os trabajadores inmigrantes que pierden el estatus de protección temporal; y Padres y Madres para un mejor transporte escolar con sede en Nueva York.

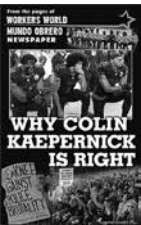
El ejemplo de VO ya está siendo seguido. Alrededor de 1.400 miembros de Communication Workers en VO y Ashburn, Virginia, salieron del trabajo el 4 de marzo a la medianoche y están en huelga en Frontier Communications.

Muchas/os de ellos estaban aprendiendo acerca de las huelgas mediante el piquete junto a las/os maestros. Están luchando por la seguridad laboral ya que Frontier ha eliminado 500 empleos desde que adquirió las líneas fijas de Verizon en 2010.

El mundo está observando la guerra de clases en Virginia Occidental. ¡Poder para las/os miembros sindicales de base dirigiendo su ira ardiente contra la crueldad del sistema capitalista!

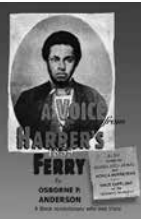
Otis Grotewohl contribuyó a este artículo.

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WHY COLIN KAEPERNICK IS RIGHT

Articles from Workers World/ Mundo Obrero Newspaper



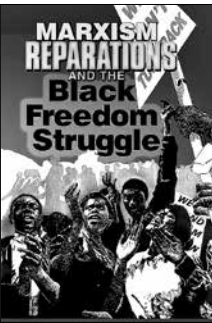
A Voice From Harpers Ferry

Osborne P. Anderson's account of the raid on Harper's Ferry appeared in pamphlet form in 1861 right after the start of the Civil War.



The Klan & Government: Foes or Allies?

Examines the special relationship with the state that has allowed the Ku Klux Klan to exist for over a century despite its criminal history of lynchings, murders, and intimidation.



COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

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Guerra de clases en Virginia Occidental

Trabajadoras/es escolares ganan aumento tras huelga

Por Martha Grevatt y Minnie Bruce Pratt

ACTUALIZACIÓN, 6 DE MARZO: Después de nueve días consecutivos de huelga, las/os militantes maestros de Virginia Occidental (VO) y el personal de la escuela se enfrentaron al gobernador derechista y a la legislatura para ganar un aumento salarial del 5 por ciento, no solo para ellas/os mismos, sino pero para todas/os los trabajadores del estado. Habían jurado permanecer fuera hasta que ganaran. El proyecto de ley que autoriza el aumento pasó la Cámara y el Senado y fue firmado por el gobernador esta tarde. Las/os maestros y el personal probablemente vuelvan a trabajar el 7 de marzo, pero la posibilidad de una acción renovada permanece, especialmente en relación con la financiación del seguro de salud. Para seguir las luchas de las/os trabajadoras/es de Frontier representados por CWA, que aún están en huelga, vaya a FB: WWP West Virginia - Strike Support.

5 de marzo: En Virginia Occidental, famosa por las batallas campales entre mineros sindicalizados y los señores del carbón, se está librando una guerra de clases. Esta vez son maestras/os y todas/os los empleados de la escuela por un lado y los políticos capitalistas de derecha en el otro. Para citar la vieja canción sindical, “¿De qué lado estás?” - “no existen neutros”.

Las/os trabajadores de la educación seguían en los piquetes al final del día, continuando su histórica huelga estatal por mejores salarios, así como por el cuidado de la salud y en contra de otros ataques que destruyen los sindicatos. Virginia Occidental ocupa el puesto 48 en los EUA en lo que respecta a los salarios de las/os docentes: ganan menos en sólo otros dos estados. El salario inicial es de alrededor de \$32.000 por año, y las/os maestros con familias a menudo deben solicitar asistencia alimentaria.

La huelga en los 55 condados, que comenzó el 22 de febrero, continuará indefinidamente hasta que el Senado estatal apruebe un proyecto de ley que otorgue a las/os trabajadores de educación estatal un aumento del 5 por ciento.

El 28 de febrero, la Cámara aprobó el aumento salarial del 5 por ciento, que multimillonario gobernador republicano Jim Justice aprobó en conversaciones con los tres sindicatos el día antes. Pero el 1 de marzo, el Senado de derecha propuso quitarle el aumento y desviarlo hacia supuestamente el “arreglo” del plan de seguro médico. La legislatura creyó que esto engañaría a las/os trabajadores. Pero la falsedad capitalista solo enfureció más a las/os trabajadoras.

Los miembros de la Cámara de Representantes y del Senado están fuertemente influenciados por los propietarios de compañías del carbón, gas y petróleo de VO.

Por tres días, incluso un sábado cuando se convocó una sesión especial, el Senado no aprobó el aumento del 5 por ciento. Luego intentaron sustituir por un

aumento del 4 por ciento bajo el cuento de dárselo a todas/os los trabajadores del estado.

Una declaración conjunta de los sindicatos en huelga explicó por qué era inaceptable: “Uno no iguala el pago para diferentes grupos simplemente tomando de un grupo y pasándolo a otro. El propósito de esto es claro: dividirnos y enfrentarnos el uno contra el otro”.

Los tres sindicatos son la Federación Estadounidense de Maestros-West Virginia, la Asociación de Educación de West Virginia y la Asociación de personal de Servicio Escolar de West Virginia.

Un error administrativo del Senado de hecho aprobó el aumento del 5 por ciento brevemente antes de que los senadores pro negocios se apresuraran a borrar el aumento. Un comentario en los medios sociales de las/os huelguistas dijo que los legisladores parecían necesitar un maestro para ayudarlos a revisar sus figuras y su lenguaje.

El impacto de las/os huelguistas se sintió temprano cuando el gobernador aprobó, y la Cámara, de mayoría republicana, pasó el aumento salarial. El gobernador tuvo que dejar de empujar los proyectos de ley que destruyen la antigüedad, promueven escuelas autónomas, evitan que los sindicatos deduzcan cuotas sindicales de los sueldos de sus miembros, y expanden “Teach for America”, un programa que contrata nuevas/os graduados universitarios sin grados de docencia a un menor pago. Este tipo de proyectos de ley forma parte de una campaña nacional antisindical financiada en parte por los hermanos multimillonarios y ultraderechistas Koch.

La oferta del gobernador no creaba una solución permanente para la Agencia de Seguros de Empleados Públicos, solo proponía una “congelación” temporal de las primas de seguros de atención médica y un “equipo de trabajo” para encontrar más fuentes de financiación. Sin embargo, los peores cambios legislativos a ASEP -principalmente varias excusas para aumentar las primas - están pausados por el momento.

La fuerza de lo que es esencialmente una huelga general de trabajadoras/es de la educación se demostró el 2 de marzo cuando 45 superintendentes escolares de los condados dijeron a los legisladores republicanos que las escuelas permanecerían cerradas hasta que se aprobara el aumento del 5 por ciento. Ahora 55 superintendentes han tomado esa posición.

Huelga en todo el estado

Las/os huelguistas se han manifestado alrededor de la consigna #55Strong. Las/os huelguistas multinacionales, en su mayoría mujeres, insatisfechas por la propuesta del gobernador, consideraban que merecían una mayor participación en el contenido del acuerdo. Así que el miércoles 28 de febrero, las/os trabajadoras siguieron protestando con gritos de “¡No permitiremos que nadie cruce esta línea!”. Algunos que votaron por Trump y los republicanos en las últimas elecciones ahora apuntan a la traición de

los ricos, gritando “¡Haz que paguen en mayo!”, cuando se celebren las elecciones primarias. (USA Today, 1 de marzo).

Según la ley estatal, las huelgas del sector público son ilegales, pero las/os trabajadores de West Virginia conocen la historia laboral. La Batalla de Blair Mountain en 1921 en el condado de Logan fue el levantamiento laboral más grande en la historia de EUA, con 10.000 mineros armados enfrentando a 3.000 policías y rompehuelgas. A lo largo del siglo XX, United Mine Workers fue una poderosa fuerza, con huelgas frecuentes, incluidas miles durante los años setenta. Algunas/os huelguistas llevan pañuelos rojos como los que los mineros usaron durante la revuelta de 1921.

El jueves 1 de marzo, las/os trabajadores desafiadamente comenzaron su segunda semana en huelga. Un miembro del sindicato dijo a WW-MO que la mayoría de los huelguistas quieren que las grandes empresas, especialmente del petróleo, paguen impuestos a una tasa más alta para que el estado pueda pagar a las/os trabajadores de educación mejores salarios y beneficios.

Los días 2, 3 y 5 de marzo, los mítines atrajeron a miles de personas a Charleston, la capital del estado. El 2 de marzo, cientos de estudiantes marcharon para apoyar a sus maestras/os, sosteniendo carteles y gritando: “Los maestros nos apoyan, apoyamos los maestros”. Se han unido a las/os maestros para ocupar el interior del edificio del Capitolio durante varios días.

Mond Jones, organizador de la conferencia “Derrotar la Austeridad” de Workers World-Mundo Obrero en Detroit el 24 de marzo, describió su día en VO: “La mañana del 5 de marzo desayunamos justo en VO. Las/os profesores en las mesas cercanas tenían camisetas de huelga. Dijeron que ahora es más fácil organizar una huelga con las redes sociales. En el Capitolio había alrededor de 10.000 personas, 4.000 ocupando el interior y 6.000 afuera. En su mayoría eran mujeres, todas muy militantes. Nuestra literatura fue bien recibida. Todos los sindicatos tenían una fuerte presencia, junto con la Asociación de Maestros Jubilados”.

Jerry Goldberg, de la Coalición ¡Mortatoria AHORA! en Detroit, dijo a las/os huelguistas: “Estamos 100 por ciento con ustedes”.

Esta lucha histórica no es sólo entre trabajadoras/es a favor de la unión y políticos antisindicales. Es trabajo vs. capital. Todas/os los trabajadores de VO se enfrentan a peligros para su salud y sus medios de subsistencia debido a las depredaciones del Banco y las industrias del Petróleo. El Informe del Presupuesto Ejecutivo del estado de 2018 establece: “El porcentaje del ingreso de cada ciudadano asignado al pago de la deuda estatal a los bancos e instituciones financieras es del 2,8 por ciento o \$1.020 por ciudadano”.

Luchando por el sindicato

Los sindicatos benefician a todas/os. Su estructura ofrece asistencia de com-

bate, recursos y comunicación organizacional. Los sindicatos permiten a sus miembros conectarse y construir militancia desde abajo.

Si bien la ira de las/os trabajadores se ha extendido a los principales líderes sindicales, que parecían dispuestos a poner fin a la huelga prematuramente, las/os huelguistas están reaccionando positivamente al anuncio oficial de los sindicatos de que la huelga continuará hasta que el aumento del 5 por ciento se convierta en ley. Lucharon por tener sindicatos y ahora luchan para hacerlos pelear.

El profesor y activista sindical Phil, que se manifestó en el edificio del Capitolio el 1 de marzo, dijo a WW-MO: “Ha habido muchas conversaciones antisindicales entre ultraizquierdistas y conservadores. La gente necesita luchar dentro de sus sindicatos, para hacerlos más progresistas y conscientes de su clase. Necesitamos radicalizar y transformar a los sindicatos desde adentro a nivel local.

“Algunos creen que los líderes de la asociación están negociando directamente con el gobernador. En realidad, los legisladores logran acuerdos y venden a los trabajadores. Estos políticos tienen los intereses de las compañías de energía y el capital privado.

“La lucha de las/os trabajadores de la educación y las/os docentes es una lucha de clases por la justicia social, una lucha social contra el racismo y el capitalismo y contra la austeridad. Esperamos construir la idea de conciencia de clase a través de la participación de los sindicatos locales. Cuando las personas abandonan los sindicatos, no construimos conciencia de clase. Afortunadamente, después de esta lucha, la gente continuará participando y fortaleciendo y radicalizando sus sindicatos”.

A pesar de las fallas en el liderazgo de alto nivel, la unión no es el enemigo. ¡El enemigo es la clase capitalista multimillonaria!

Solidaridad se multiplica

Una tremenda solidaridad ha venido de otros sindicatos: Teamsters, Mine Workers, Communication Workers e incluso sindicatos en otros países.

La Asamblea de Trabajadores del Sur emitió un mensaje de solidaridad: “En los días que esperamos la decisión de la Corte Suprema sobre el caso Janus, que afectaría a los trabajadores del sector público en todos los estados antisindicales del sur, se nos recuerda que incluso los trabajadores en estos estados concentrados en el sur de EUA, pueden construir sus sindicatos, luchar y ganar. El tipo de acción de masiva presentada por las/os educadores de VO es un ejemplo que todos podemos seguir”.

Han llegado más mensajes de solidaridad, incluso del Sindicato de Conductores de Autobuses Escolares de Boston, United Steelworkers Local 8751; Harvard TPS Coalition, un grupo de cocineras/os sindicales, custodios y trabajadoras/es administrativos de

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