

Teachers' walk-outs spread across U.S.



Ralph Fresco / Getty Images

By MARK BRUNT

When West Virginia teachers walked out over health insurance premiums, few people predicted that, after feeling betrayed by union bureaucrats, the rank-and-file teachers would rebel and turn the strike into a wildcat action that would substantially increase their gains. Fewer still anticipated that the walkout would spark coordinated labor actions across the country amongst public educators in a wave of strikes on a scale that hasn't been seen in America in years.

Yet this is precisely what came of it. After West Virginia's teachers demonstrated their power, teachers in other states followed suit. First, Oklahoma and Kentucky took the reins. It is no surprise that these three states—among the lowest in teacher pay and education funding—saw no way out but direct action, and demonstrated to the country that when workers fight, we win.

Strikes in the United States, while unusual, are not unheard of. Chicago teachers struck in 2012. The

power of the West Virginia strike lies in its wildcat action. The teachers shook the soul of U.S. labor when, after being told they were headed back to work by their union bosses, they refused. Offered a five percent raise for teachers (far less for other public employees) and the empty promise of a task force to seek out ways to improve the insurance system, they continued to occupy the state's capitol building. They sang, in response to the weak offer, "We're Not Gonna Take It," which soon became the unofficial anthem of the movement.

West Virginia Governor Jim Justice at one point criticized the teachers, suggesting there was only so much money in the state for him to find, and that he was "not king." Justice, the richest person in West Virginia, has a net worth of over \$1.7 billion, stemming largely from his ownership of over 50 companies. Unsurprisingly, the possibility of taking his businesses into public control and democratizing the wealth they produce did not occur to him as a solution.

On the heels now are Colorado and Arizona, and as

(Above) 75,000 Arizona teachers marched on the capitol in Phoenix, April 26, at start of their strike.

of this writing, rumblings are being heard in Louisiana. In Arizona, when adjusted for inflation, teacher salaries are approximately \$9000 lower than they were in 1990. Further, at just \$7489, Arizona has the third lowest per pupil spending in the United States.

Colorado teacher pay ranks 46th, and the state spends \$2500 less per student than the national average. But the images of Arizona's #RedForEd movement, the flood of working-class people in the streets in front of Arizona's capitol building, give an idea of what is possible. At the rally, members of other unions showed up in support. Some of them vowed not to complete any work at public schools until the teachers' demands were met.

Arizona's teacher walkout highlights the power of working-class solidarity. The state's Republican governor, Doug Ducey, tried to avert the strike by offering

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Socialist candidate Fred Linck speaks at UConn

By CHRISTINE MARIE

"Karl Marx once said that there must be something rotten in the very core of a social system which increases its wealth without decreasing its misery."

With these words, the Socialist Action candidate for U.S. Senate from Connecticut, Fred Linck, began his April 28 talk to a roomful of students at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. Linck's theme was "How Workers in Power Could Transform Society," and he pointed out that it was a future much easier to imagine now than before the massive wave of rank-and-file led teacher strikes currently rocking five states.

"In the recent teachers uprisings in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Colorado, Kentucky and Arizona," Linck said, "the teachers took over the preparation of food for their students while on strike. They made demands for increases in the pay of other workers, they struck not only for higher pay but for more education funding, and they have made demands over the type of taxation that should be used to increase school funding. Specifically, they targeted the fossil fuel industry."

Imagine what it might be like, Linck continued, if workers connected not only for this one strike but to take power into their own hands. Imagine that they established assemblies for the management of not one mobilization, or one social service in one state but for all businesses and for all aspects of society.

Imagine, he said, if these workers' assemblies connected with each other



and debated the big questions of how to use the wealth we produce for society's good.

On Day One, Linck said, before spending a penny, workers in power could stop all deportations and grant citizenship and full rights to every person living in the country, end the refugee ban, arrest all killer cops, end all restrictions on abortion, outlaw all discrimination against women, and all discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation, and establish full civil and human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex communities.

In short order, workers could immediately close all military bases and bring home all troops from overseas.

Such actions, according to the socialist campaigner, would set the democratic basis for engaging the vast majority in the major decisions about how best to utilize the massive wealth stolen by the 1% for education, housing, health, and the creation of a fossil free infrastructure.

The event was sponsored by the UConn Youth for Socialist Action and opened with remarks by YSA member Richmond Apore. Apore grew up in Ghana and linked his support for the Socialist Action campaign to his opposition to what capitalism and imperialism have meant for his place of origin. "You might be mistaken to assume the independence of various African nations from the European colonial impe-

rialist claws," he said, but it is an illusion "called neo-colonialism."

Apore asked the audience to look at the abundant natural resources of the continent and then said, "Why are Ghana, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, and others still languishing while barren economic deserts like Switzerland, Belgium, and France are ultra-wealthy and prosperous?" It is, he argued, because Africa is treated as "pawn" in the game of capitalist competition. Further, he said, "our struggles are so ever intertwined. The destruction of the neocolonialist states in Africa and Latin America, as well as the Caribbean nations and Puerto Rico, will only be ended by a collective awakening of the masses there and the workers here to our shared demons."

Apore and Linck invited all those attending to help Socialist Action to get on the ballot by participating in the collection of the approximately 15,000 signatures of Connecticut voters. At least 34 volunteers have so far pledged to go out to festivals, fairs, demonstrations, and busy thoroughfares, asking for support and distributing campaign literature.

In the next three weeks, Linck is scheduled to speak to the New Britain American Federation of Teachers, the Norwich Connecticut Education Association, and in the Local 217 union hall in Stamford (May 25). On May 12, he will speak to the Western CT DSA, in Danbury, Conn. To follow the campaign, visit www.VoteSocialistAction.org. ■

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Teachers' class-struggle defiance inspires millions

By JEFF MACKLER

It's been a long while since anyone alive has seen working people successfully fight back against capitalist cruelty with winning class-struggle strategies and tactics. Today, teachers, and their allies among state workers and working-class families in West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Colorado have set an inspiring example for the entire U.S. labor movement. Their example goes far beyond the organized sectors, where the percentage of workers in unions today has dwindled to the lowest point since the early 1930s, at some 10 or 11 percent at best.

The ongoing wave of unprecedented statewide teacher strikes has demonstrated in real time that working people retain the power to change the course of history and win major gains for themselves and worker class allies in their state.

Contrary to the corporate media's efforts to portray these teacher mobilizations as a reaction to Republican Party cutbacks, striking teachers have documented with mathematical precision that the most intense attacks on public education, social services, and teacher pay began with the Great Depression of 2008 and were implemented under the Democratic Party administration of Barack Obama.

Under Obama's reign, 2008-2016, trillions in taxpayer dollars were transferred from working people to the ultra rich corporate elite—the 1 percent. The nation's banking institutions, almost all of which were technically bankrupt or nearly so, were bailed out to the tune of trillions of dollars, as were the associated insurance companies, giant corporations, and mortgage entities, public and private.

In the course of President Obama's eight years, millions lost their homes, college tuition skyrocketed along with unprecedented student debt, wages were frozen or cut, pensions gutted, education funding crippled, part-time "flexible" low-wage service sector work exploded, and 2.5 million immigrants were deported, while expenditures for privatized-for-profit prisons soared. At the state and federal levels, capitalism's decision makers sought to resolve their inherent contradictions at the expense of workers.

Teachers take class-struggle road

The accumulated frustrations, anger, and resentment over this seemingly unending across-the-board assault on working people found its initial and confused expression in the 2016 election of "outsider" Donald Trump. Corporate America's Hillary Clinton was the obvious target to express the mass hatred generated by the Democratic Party. It didn't take long, however, for the reactionary "moron" Trump, whose poll ratings have dropped to historic lows, to show the mass of working people, teachers in the Republican "Red States" included, that there are no saviors in either of the twin parties of capitalism.

The longstanding gap between workers' anger at capitalism's heinous assaults on every aspect of their being and their willingness to take the field of action was slammed shut, almost overnight, and on a national basis, as teachers took the class-struggle road.

The striking teachers and their allies have shaken ruling-class institutions and emboldened workers everywhere as they broke with decades of class-collaborationist business unionism foisted on them by an entrenched and hardened pro-capitalist and highly paid bureaucracy. Their example has opened the door to a

resurgence of labor in every arena of social life. Here are just a few of the groundbreaking lessons they are teaching the nation's exploited and oppressed:

"20 percent or nothing"

The teachers have shattered the ruling-class-created lie that there are no funds available for public education, related social services, teacher pensions, affordable medical coverage, and adequate salaries to live a decent life. For decades, local school boards have cried poverty in the face of teachers' union contract proposals for fully justified pay increases and maintenance of pension and medical benefits, as well as remedies for ever-increasing class size limits and every other aspect of public education.

With the exception of outrageous expenditures for school administrators, public education has been skunked. The remuneration scales for administrators have seen exorbitant growth as they present themselves as endowed with skill sets that require salaries on a par with top-paid corporate executives.

In a disgusting example of "divide-and-rule" tactics, the West Virginia teachers' demand for an immediate 20 percent pay increase was initially characterized by state officials as a prime example of teacher greed and contempt for their students' educational needs, as well as the needs of other public employees. The teachers immediately rejected this lie and fully justified their demand. They began by pointing out that state funds for public education had been slashed by the same 20 percent and that these funds had been transferred to the corporate elite's billion-dollar enterprises in the form of tax breaks, subsidies, and outright grants.

They went even further, insisting that important pay increases be granted to state employees and for public education in general. They demanded that the funds for all of the above be raised by effectively taxing the rich—that is, by returning to the working class the funds "stolen" by the super-rich via legislative fiat, in order to advance quality public education!

Mass strike action vs. lobbying politicians

Teachers broke with the crippling arguments pressed forward by their local school boards and state and national union misleaders that they were compelled to retreat from their local contract demands based on the fact that local school boards have no funds to grant even modest improvements. The union tops' fundamentally flawed strategic orientation was to lobby and/or to fund and help elect so-called progressive Democrats, who supposedly would more adequately fund public education.

Instead, teachers confronted state legislators directly and immediately in the form of coordinated and democratically planned statewide strikes and massive mobilizations in state capitals, which drew tens and hundreds of thousands. Aside from one such statewide effort in Michigan in the early 1970s, and perhaps a few short-lived others, these were the first statewide teacher-union strikes in the nation's history. Labor's most powerful weapon was put on national display and deployed in the interests of all working people.

Teachers demand, "tax the rich, not us"

Abhorrent to working-class politics has been the formal NEA and AFT leadership policy of repeatedly supporting, if not championing, every type of regressive school funding measure, including endless state property and sale tax increases. The brunt of these fall on working-class families, as do other regressive revenue

raising measures, from statewide lotteries and legalized gambling to local city and county bond measures. None of these significantly apply to the corporations of the ruling elite; all are designed to disproportionately extract funds from working people.

Organized on a statewide mass mobilization basis aimed at forcing state legislatures to return what they considered stolen funds to their rightful place—public education in all of its manifestations and other social services—the striking teachers have opened a new battlefield to improve their lives along with the entire public education system.

Public education in the U.S. is largely funded at the state level, with regressive tax measures accounting for the vast majority of funds expended. In contrast, the federal government accounts for some five percent of all funds for public education. It is only a matter of time until teachers and their allies see the trillion-dollar corporate tax breaks at the federal level in the same light as their expression in the context of state budgets. No doubt Trump's bipartisan \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts for the rich has not gone unnoticed.

Class struggle collective bargaining

The teachers' "all or nothing" demands sent a shock wave through ruling-class circles. The norm for nearly all modern-day collective bargaining negotiations with regard to teachers and nearly every other organized sector of the working class has been to begin the process with a "wish list" series of demands that almost everyone considered "excessive" or absolutely unattainable. The idea was to come to the bargaining table and, hopefully, reach a "reasonable compromise" with the employers that would fall somewhere between the unions' initial demands and the employers'—which in recent decades have been most often proposals for massive cutbacks.

In the end, the result was almost always "settlements" to the employers' great advantage, which were then sold to the ranks by both the bosses and the politically bankrupt union bureaucracy—ever "partnering" with the bosses on one or another spurious basis. This ingrained class-collaborationist "modus vivendi" was to sell the agreement to the ranks on the grounds that there was no other choice, other than perhaps to engage in a "futile" strike. Strikes, in their view, were obsolete, a relic from a bygone labor past that was no longer relevant.

The parasitic bureaucrats matched their words with deeds, overseeing an era in which each year the number of strikes has declined to historic lows, with union membership ever declining in relative proportion. The five statewide teacher strikes to date represent a clarion call to reject this kind of "unionism."

When West Virginia teachers said "20 percent or nothing" to the state legislature and courageously stuck to this demand, they trumpeted a new beginning for the entire labor movement. The same holds for much of the other emerging rebellious teacher fighters. They refused to succumb to the bosses' entreaties. They refused to accept their publicly presented offers of a few or even one percentage point less than their demands. They refused to accept promises to submit their proposals to various state committees, or implement them over the course of several years, or to drop their demands to include important pay raises for non-teaching state workers, or to subordinate their support for public education funding in general to raising their own salaries only.

Each and every one of these class principles had the effect of solidifying and qualitatively increasing mass support for the teachers' cause. State employees joined their picket lines along with students and working-class parents. Labor's historic maxim, "An injury to one is an injury to all," became the guiding principle in the hearts and minds of millions across

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the country as hundreds of thousands of the nation's teachers and hundreds of thousands of their supporters mobilized in unprecedented numbers to give birth to a new and vital unionism.

Teachers challenge bureaucratic leadership

The striking teachers in many respects forced their always reluctant and complacent "leaders" to pose as champions of their cause or be seen as sellouts. The level of spontaneity and independent power that teachers unleashed was decisive to overcoming their unions' bureaucratic lethargy, its tightly-controlled usually impenetrable internal structures, and its fear of engaging in decisive confrontations with employers whom they see as endowed with invincible power.

In place of these "leaders" a self-acting, open, inclusive system of organization emerged, in which rank-and-file took the initiative in sounding out the mood of their co-workers, including in mass decision-making and in imposing wide open methods of teacher-controlled voting systems to register and democratically mobilize the mass support that was heightened with their every move to make their cause the cause of every worker – teacher or not.

Defying anti-workers laws

Critical to the success of every aspect of their fight-back, teachers openly defied every anti-union law on the books. They struck in the face of laws that banned teacher strikes as illegal, that mandated jail sentences and massive fines for striking teachers and their unions, and that threatened to void striking teachers' certification credentials so as to ban them from working as teachers in the future. This collective and angry defiance, coupled with their massive mobilization of working-class support for their just and heroic struggle in the interest of all workers, effectively made them impermeable from ruling-class retaliation.

No politician dared to place a single teacher in jail or to remove a single credential. Bluster and threats aside, no laws were hurried to the floor of state legislatures to punish or infringe on what teachers had accomplished in the streets; no court injunctions were issued or implemented to uphold state laws banning teacher strikes. Threats to do so were tempered by more sophisticated capitalist politicians who understood that any form of collective repression was highly likely to result in deeper and broader support for the striking teachers' cause.

The teachers militantly recalled the past victories of their class, from the distant battles of striking class struggle coal miners who defied both union bureaucrats and capitalist laws to emerge victorious in wild-cat strikes almost a century ago to the unprecedented recent mobilization of five million women and their allies in Washington, D.C., and across the country who repudiated President Trump's virulent sexism, racism, and homophobia. The fact that two-thirds of the striking teachers are women was not lost on anyone aware of the fact that working women today suffer from a generalized and systematic across-the-board discrimination in capitalist America. The emergence of women as central strike leaders served notice that the ongoing fight for women's equality is sinking sunk deep roots in the workers' movement.

Door opened to era of militant trade unionism

The teacher strikers served notice on AFT and NEA misleaders that they were fully capable of organizing themselves to defy moves to "settle" their struggles short of victory—that is, short of the unqualified acceptance by the powers that be of their central demands. Repeated calls by frightened and concession-minded union officials to end the strike and return to work were openly defied and accompanied by teach-



ers' threats to quit the union should it stand in the way of victory.

While we have no data on the number of striking teachers who have actually left the NEA and AFT, likely just a tiny percentage, the rank and file's defiance of their misleaders' acts of capitulation is a sure sign that the future bodes well for the emergence of a new and militant leadership in the arena of teacher and public-employee unionism, not to mention in the highly bureaucratized trade-union movement more generally. The same and more can be said with regard to the vast numbers of workers who have no unions at all, almost 90 percent of the workforce.

As opposed to the snail's pace of "union organizing" that is at best contemplated by the present bureaucracy, the striking teachers gave testimony to the capacity of workers everywhere to seize the moment and surge onto the stage of history to fundamentally

(Above) Cops attacked the huge May Day march in Puerto Rico with tear gas and rubber bullets. Teachers joined a one-day strike over austerity plans. The government plans to privatize and close over 300 schools, lay off thousands.

transform the present unions, significantly alter the relationship of class forces, and establish new institutions and relationships aimed at realizing their hopes and dreams for a better life. Teachers and their new allies stormed the heavens to do so. They contributed massively to opening a new page in labor history.

Indeed, any serious study of this history reveals that massive and independent rank-and-file explosions of worker militancy and union organizing in the face of ruling-class arrogance, exploitation, and violence has always been key to taking the next giant step forward for all workers and for all struggling humanity. ■

... Free Mumia!

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to execute Mumia legally, is trying to execute him through medical neglect.

Krasner the savior?

Larry Krasner, a long-time critic of police excesses, ran for Philadelphia district attorney as a reformer. He promised to end the death penalty and to reform the bail system. Liberals and the local Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) chapter enthusiastically supported his election bid. Within days of his victory, Krasner was already mending fences with the head of the Fraternal Order of Police. He has already backed away from his total opposition to the death penalty.

Krasner promised to negotiate parole for juvenile lifers during his campaign, but judges have recently rejected several of these deals. Pennsylvania incarcerates more than 500 people who were sentenced to life without parole for offences committed when

they were juveniles. Of these, almost 180 are from Philadelphia. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against life without parole for youthful offenders in 2012 in *Miller v. Alabama*. In a subsequent decision in 2016, the Court ruled that *Miller* should be applied retroactively.

Krasner's advisory board includes Castille and former Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson—an indication of the limitations the ruling class will place on Krasner's attempted reforms of the criminal justice system. The inclusion of Castille on the Krasner team should be seen as a signal to cops and the ruling class that the new DA will not disrupt business as usual.

Mass struggle is necessary to win Mumia's freedom. The fight to free Mumia should be seen as part of the larger struggle against the racist death penalty and to end the regime of mass incarceration. Workers and oppressed people can't rely on the capitalist courts. Grassroots mobilization and organizing are the way forward in the struggle for justice. Mass action is what kept Mumia alive and out of the clutches of the executioner. The struggle must continue until Mumia is free.

Free Mumia and all political prisoners! End mass incarceration! Jail killer cops! ■

... Teachers

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the teachers a 20 percent raise over three years. The union rejected the proposal, stating that they were not acted solely in the interests of their own salary, but were also seeking better funding from the schools. Criticisms of the strike actions—alleging that teachers are being selfish, and not acting in the interests of the students—fall flat when this fact is highlighted.

Further, teacher walkouts teach students the power of the masses of people to demand change. A post on one of the walkout Facebook groups reads, "Your children's teachers didn't stop teaching. The lesson plan just changed."

It would be presumptuous to call this wave of strikes a nail in the coffin of post-World War II labor peace, but there are still signs of panic amongst the ruling class. For example, Colorado legislators proposed a

law that would give jail time to striking teachers. The bill is not expected to pass, but its mere proposal highlights the rising state of class conflict in the United States.

The struggle is also highlighted in the conflicts between teachers and union bureaucrats. West Virginia teachers refused the mandate of their union leaders when they felt the deal was not the best they could get—and they proved right.

In Oklahoma, numerous teachers felt betrayed when the union called an official end to the strike without their full demands being met. The teachers had called for an extra \$200 million in funding, and the state promised only \$50 million. However, most returned to work regardless, for fear of losing their jobs. Many chose to drop their union membership—which is legal in Oklahoma, as a right-to-work state.

These conflicts are extraordinarily important in the coming period, because they are part of the contradictions of labor peace and right-to-work laws. Agency fees empower unions, but at a cost. Mandatory union

dues protect workers, but also give the capitalist class more control over the union, as union bureaucrats do not have to be militant in order to command membership, and usually have close relationships with politicians.

It is no surprise that teacher strikes have occurred primarily in right-to-work states (Colorado being the exception). These states have fewer protections for workers, but far less ability to corral militant labor action. With the *Janus* case, in which agency fees and the ability to collect union dues via the check-off system are seemingly on the chopping block (their survival depends on the vote of SCOTUS Justice Neil Gorsuch, who has never been a friend of labor), the path ahead for labor is murky, but teachers are providing a way forward.

The wave of walkouts, while perhaps not the equivalent of the massive labor actions occurring in France, nonetheless represent a class that is awakening, that for decades has been on its heels but is prepared to re-engage in the class struggle. ■

Marxism & the social reproduction of labor



By LISA LUINENBURG

When I became a mother three and a half years ago, I began to feel my oppression as a woman in capitalist society more acutely. All of the endless demands on my time began to add up—the sleepless nights, the feedings, child care, cooking, housework, errands and laundry around the clock. And then there were the demands at work—no paid maternity leave, the pressure to go back to work as soon as possible after giving birth, pumping in a bathroom.

Don't get me wrong, I love my kids and I love being a mother, but I began to think deeper. Have women always been oppressed? Where does my oppression as a woman stem from? And isn't there a better way to do things that spreads out all the work that women do more evenly?

The book that ultimately helped me the most to understand my own oppression as a woman is "Marxism and Women's Oppression" by Lise Vogel. Originally written in 1983 and since updated, the book gives a comprehensive overview of the evolution of socialist feminist theory since the time of Marx and Engels. It delves into the debates between radical and socialist feminists in the 1960s and 1970s and ultimately offers a detailed explanation of a socialist feminist way of understanding women's oppression—social reproduction theory. I would urge anyone who is interested in the subject to give Vogel's book a close read for a deeper understanding of this important subject.

Before we look into the origins of women's oppression, let's dispel a central myth in our society—that women have *always* been oppressed. This viewpoint claims that women's subordination is inevitable because it is a function of their biology or psychology. But history shows that women have not always been oppressed.

While their childbearing function has always remained the same, women's social status has changed dramatically throughout history. Before the rise of class society, social production was organized communally and products shared equally, and the material basis for the exploitation of one group over another did not exist. Thus, the origins of women's oppression are economic and social in character, and the development of women's oppression is intertwined with the transition from pre-class to class society.

Socialist feminism starts from the assumption that there is a material root to women's oppression, and that the family is a major terrain. Social reproduction theory considers two concepts of Marx's work as a point of departure—labor-power and the reproduction of labor power. Basically, workers sell their labor power on the market as a commodity. Labor power is realized when workers produce something with a

Exploring the roots of women's oppression

use-value, which may or may not be exchanged. But workers also suffer wear and tear and eventually die. They must renew themselves on both a daily (individual) and long-term (societal) basis—this is the reproduction of labor power.

There are three types of processes that make up the reproduction of labor power in class societies: daily activities, the maintenance of non-laborers (for example children, the sick, and the elderly), and biological/generational replacement.

The reproduction of labor power can take place in many locations, such as labor camps or barracks, and through many different processes, such as replacing laborers through slavery or immigration. However, most capitalist societies primarily reproduce labor power through kin-based family units and through biological procreation. These heterosexual family norms are most often institutionalized in class-based societies and backed up by male domination and structures of female oppression. They are constantly reinforced and made to seem like they've been around forever, even though (as we have seen) this is not historically the case.

It is women's special role in the biological reproduction of labor from which their oppression stems. This role rests on a capitalist contradiction—capitalists need women to have babies to reproduce the labor pool, but when women give birth, it temporarily decreases their ability to contribute both as direct producers and in daily maintenance activities. Men also have to spend more time maintaining women during this period of time, which means they are less able to spend time producing commodities. This cuts into the capitalists' ability to accumulate even more profits.

Let's return to the concept of labor for a moment. There are two types of labor in capitalist society: necessary labor, and surplus labor. *Necessary labor* is the labor needed to renew a worker so they can continue to work the next day (this can be on an individual or societal scale). For example, cooking food, taking care of children, or preparing for the next day's work. When workers work for their capitalist bosses, part of their work during the day is necessary work (the work they do to earn wages). Workers need wages in order to buy the products of capitalism for their personal consumption and renew their labor.

The other part of their work is *surplus labor*. This is the extra labor they are essentially doing for free—

the labor the capitalists bosses appropriate for their own profit.

Necessary labor has two parts: the *social component* (the part that earns wages) and the *domestic component* (unpaid labor in the home). Because of the contradiction in women's roles in the reproduction of labor power and the institutionalization of the family structure, men are often primarily responsible for earning the wages, while women become primarily responsible for domestic labor. In capitalist society, the realms of productive and domestic spheres become spatially, temporally, and institutionally isolated from each other.

It is important to note here that women also play an important role in production and have often worked outside of the home (both in the present and historically). But it is through their role in the reproduction of labor that their oppression arises. Family members who are not working and are maintained by the family wage also help make up a reserve army of labor that capitalists can draw on when they need more workers.

In fact, it benefits capitalists to have women as a mobile workforce they can exploit on demand, and women entering the workforce doesn't necessarily mean that a family's circumstances or wages will improve. For example, capitalists can use this as an excuse to pay everyone lower wages if more members of a family are working (and the lower wages historically go to women and children). The entry of women in the workforce has also been a controversial topic in socialist feminist debate.

So now that we understand where women's oppression comes from, what can we do about it? Domestic labor has often been a class battleground, and working people strive to win the best conditions for their personal lives and the renewal of their labor. Efforts to organize and expand equality can also reveal the fundamentally exploitative character of capitalism while moving everyone towards a more equal footing. Despite the family's base for the exploitation and oppression of women, families can also have a protective aspect for the working class—they can be centers for organizing against exploitation and provide social ties and supports to working people.

It is important to recognize here that there are democratic demands that we can fight for now that *can* be achieved under capitalism. For example, we can fight for a breakdown in institutionalized gender norms and a more equal sharing of domestic labor in the family home. We can fight to expand democracy and equal rights for women and all oppressed groups. We can fight for special treatment for women due to their biology—for example, lighter work during pregnancy

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Human beings are not a problem

By CHRIS TEI

Capitalism's endless pursuit of profits for the few continues to destroy the ecosystems upon which human beings base our very existence. And while one political wing of the capitalist class ceaselessly denies climate change, those capitalist politicians who do acknowledge the science make attempts to shift blame for it away from themselves. Misanthropic explanations for the state of the world, holding all humans to account for our original sin of being human, help reduce the risk that the exploiters will have to answer for the unique crisis that they have created.

Foremost among these misanthropic explanations of climate change is populationism, which holds that the growing population is responsible. In the words of Ian Angus and Simon Butler, who have worked diligently on refuting this idea, "populationist policies focus on symptoms, not causes. Worse, they shift the blame for climate change, and the burden for stopping it, onto the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world."¹

This perspective is, rather unfortunately, popular on both the left and right. And if we assume that our nature, as a species, is inherently harmful, we will inevitably push for policies that are harmful to humans.

Empty half the Earth?

Kim Stanley Robinson recently contributed a piece to the Guardian with the provocative title and call to action, "Empty half the Earth of its humans. It's the only way to save the planet."²

Robinson is a science fiction novelist, and this writer is a huge fan of his work. His books combine hard science, involving an immense amount of personal research, with speculation about the social and political ramifications of developments such as climate change and planetary colonization. He tells stories of future histories and addresses how the oppressive institutions of our present day might evolve, be challenged, or even be eliminated.

A lot of popular science fiction imagines how the world will only get worse for humanity, but Robinson very consciously does something different: "Anyone can do a dystopia these days just by making a collage of newspaper headlines, but utopias are hard, and important, because we need to imagine what it might be like if we did things well enough to say to our kids, we did our best, this is about as good as it was when it was handed to us, take care of it and do better. Some kind of narrative vision of what we're trying for as a civilization."³

Robinson therefore assigns a great deal of importance to the work of imagining a more progressive future. "I do consider my books to be a political work. It seems to me that the more stories out there that encourage these kinds of actions, then the better off people would be."⁴ From his books and his personal activism, it's clear that Robinson has an affinity for liberation movements, the political left, and of course climate justice.

His call to action is to "leave about half the Earth's surface mostly free of humans, so wild plants and animals can live there unimpeded as they did for so long before humans arrived." How this is to be accomplished is left somewhat to the imagination, although he appears to favor "repricing" and perhaps new cultural and legal frameworks that would govern threatened areas: "Many villages now have populations of under a thousand, and continue to shrink as most of the young people leave. If these places were redefined (and repriced) as becoming usefully empty, there would be caretaker work for some, gamekeeper work for others, and the rest could go to the cities and get into the main swing of things."

Anyone who finds this notion to be obvious, that humans must be removed from the land to save the environment, and specifically the world's biodiversity, would be wise to look at indigenous political movements around the Earth. In 2016, during the Native American-led protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), the Standing Rock encampment was visited by indigenous activists from Latin America who came to express their solidarity. A Sarayaku activist named Nina Gualinga, who has been a leader in her people's fight to keep the Ecuadoran government from allowing oil drilling on their ancestral lands, illustrated in remarkable terms the outsized role that native peoples have played in preserving the global environment: "The statistics say that we are 4 percent of the world's population but we are protecting more than 80 percent of the world's biodiversity."⁵

The conclusion we should draw is clear: to preserve the world's biodiversity, it is also necessary for us to support the indigenous in their struggle for self-



We don't need to be removed from nature. We need to radically change the way we relate to it.

determination and, importantly, lend our assistance to prevent any effort to remove them from the lands they inhabit.

Yet this is, in effect, the opposite of what Robinson calls for. It's not at all obvious that humans need to be removed from the land to preserve biodiversity. It's certainly not true of indigenous people, who are the vanguard of movements for environmental justice in the world. And while it's true that sensitive ecosystems should be removed of industrial agriculture companies, logging companies, and oil extraction companies, those profit-making entities are not the result of an essential "human nature." They result from a social system directed toward the accumulation of private profit, something that is neither eternal nor predetermined by our biology. It is capitalism that we need to remove, not people.

"Half-Earth"

The inspiration for Robinson's piece was Edward O. Wilson's book "Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life." Wilson is the world's leading expert on ants, but for many critics he is more well-known for the biological determinism of his "sociobiology" idea.

In 1975, a group of scientists responded to Wilson's ideas of sociobiology, saying that he offered up a "particular theory about human nature, which has no scientific support." They explained that views of biological determinism similar to Wilson's become fashionable from time to time, not because of their scientific validity, but because of their usefulness to those in power: "The reason for the survival of these recurrent determinist theories is that they consistently tend to provide a genetic justification of the status quo and of existing privileges for certain groups according to class, race or sex. Historically, powerful countries or ruling groups within them have drawn support for the maintenance or extension of their power from these products of the scientific community."⁶

In "Half-Earth," Wilson continues to paint humanity with broad strokes, and insist that most of our behavior is biologically determined. In his view we were driven by our genetics to multiply and strain the Earth's resources "like a hostile race of aliens."⁷

When speaking on social issues, his use of the pronoun "we" shows that he has no understanding of class. He wonders how humans can be so knowledgeable yet make decisions against our own interests.⁸ Indeed, his explanation of capitalist society's negative impact on the planet is that it is "largely due to the excess of the many quotidian activities we perform just to get on with our personal lives. Those activities have made us the most destructive species in the history

(Above) The Masai, a pastoral people, were removed from their traditional lands in the Serengeti by British colonialists, largely in order to reserve the land for big game hunting and tourism. The Masai are resisting similar removal practices by the Kenyan and Tanzanian governments.

of life."⁹ Thus, responsibility for the negative effects of industry is shared equally among the members of our species, even those who, due to the class divisions in society, have no decision-making power.

He devotes woefully little of his book to his actual proposal. How it could be enacted, whether enforced by state repression or encouraged by Robinson's "pricing", or both, is left to the imagination. Wilson just wants us to know it should be done.

There is a link between human health and biodiversity. And, of course, there are complexities to ecosystems, involving the participation of countless species, which make our existence possible. We are, therefore, self-interested to protect Earth's biodiversity. So, while it may indeed be necessary for that purpose to create new protected areas, it's not obvious at all that masses of people will need to be removed to do so.

We should be asking, first and foremost, who specifically would be removed from the land if Wilson's dream becomes reality. And given the proximity of many indigenous peoples to threatened ecosystems, it's clear that they would be uniquely impacted by Wilson's proposal.

Conservation and expulsion

The proposal to empty half the Earth of people would have an enormous impact, and it would be naïve to think it could be enacted without causing a great deal of suffering. In fact, there is already a long history of much smaller conservation projects leading to forced expulsions, violence, and the shredding of native people's rights.

The creation of nearly all of the world's national parks involved expulsions of indigenous people. These areas are now, ironically, considered to be the closest examples of "pristine" nature, of "wilderness," and of the true nature that existed before human despoilment. In reality, they stand as examples of ecosystems that have never existed in such a people-less state. And the sudden departure of humans from ecosystems where they lived for thousands of years led to rather serious ecological problems.

Though Serengeti National Park is known to many as a pristine and people-less wilderness, the Masai people called it home for thousands of years before they were evicted by the British colonial government. The Masai leader Kissale Ole Serupe remembers it thusly: "The Brits razed our houses to the ground ... we did not dare to fight back."

And though the stated purpose for removing people was to protect wildlife, in actuality the Masai were responsible for the survival of the great Serengeti herds. With their abrupt departure from the land, poachers found it much easier to hunt and kill animals such as elephants and rhinos. Their numbers dwindled. "I am surprised by the accusations against us," said Lomayani Ole Pose. "Had it not been for our ancestor and us, these wild animals would not be here. Despite

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Gaza protests continue in the face of Israeli violence

By STEVE XAVIER

On Friday, April 27, hundreds of unarmed Palestinians approached the fence between Gaza and Israel as part of the “Great March of Return.” Israeli troops opened fire with live ammunition and rubber bullets, killing at least three protesters and wounding 1000.

So far, the death toll in this series of protests is more than 43. Over 5500 have been injured or wounded. Throughout these protests, Israeli snipers have targeted journalists, children, and other unarmed protesters. Not one Israeli soldier or civilian has been killed or wounded.

The 45-day nonviolent mobilization will end on May 15, the anniversary of the founding of the Israeli state, known to Palestinians as the Nakba (catastrophe). U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo voiced U.S. support for Israel on Monday, April 30.

Because of these indiscriminate attacks on protesters, Israel is losing the PR battle. Human rights groups are calling for consequences for these criminal acts. In a letter sent to United Nations General

Secretary António Guterres, the head of the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem called on the UN to do “all that is in its power—and its responsibility in order to protect Palestinian lives and uphold international norms.”

The head of the UN human rights body, Zeid Ra’ad al-Husseini, criticized Israel’s use of “excessive force” and the “staggering” number of injuries. Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has called for a review of Britain’s arms sales to Israel. Britain has sold \$445 million in weapons, including sniper rifles, to Israel since 2014. Amnesty International has called for an arms embargo against Israel.

The violence of the Zionist colonial-settler state has its roots in the dispossession and ethnic cleansing of the 1948 Nakba, when more than 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes and forced into exile. Israel is an apartheid state that treats its Palestinian citizens (living inside the 1948 border) like second-class citizens and is creating the conditions in the occupied territories for annexation, in violation of international law.

Construction of illegal settlements on confiscated Palestinian land continues unabated. Settler attacks on Palestinians go unpunished. Meanwhile, Israeli politicians openly advocate the “transfer” or ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

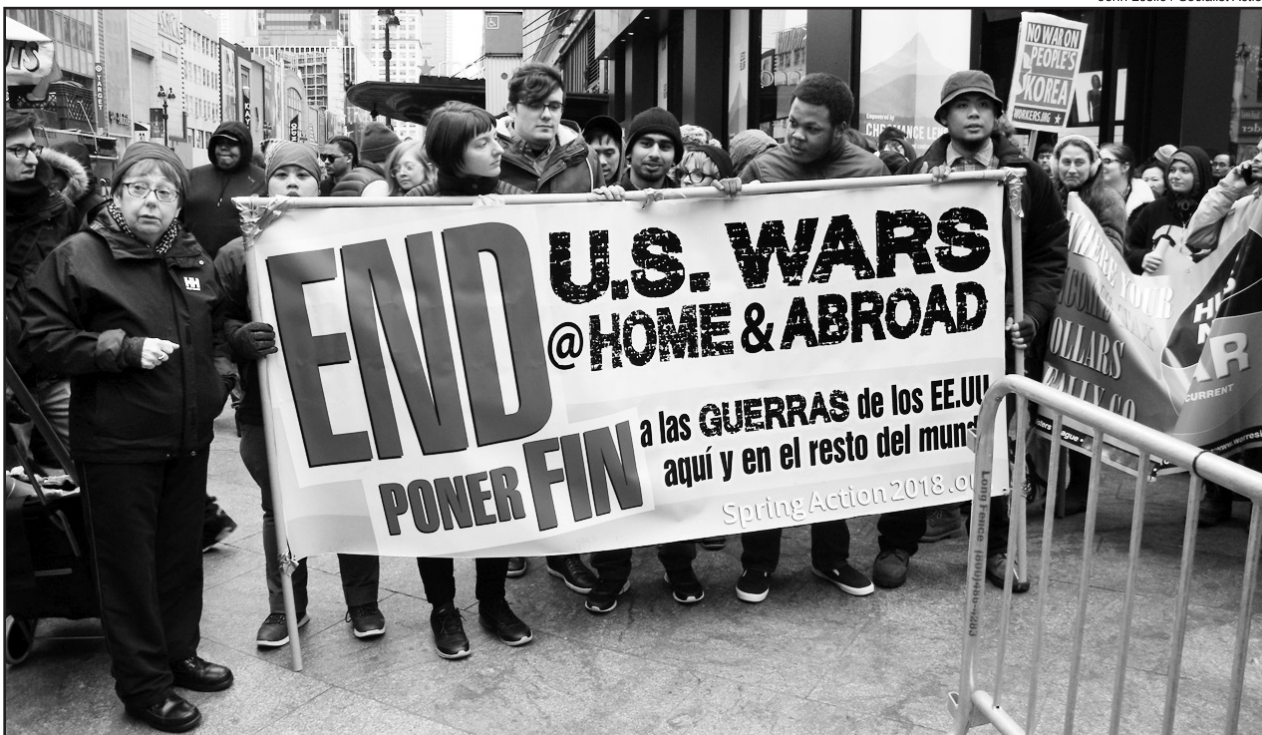
The Israelis have ramped up their saber rattling against Iran in conjunction with Pompeo and Trump. On April 17 and April 29, the Israeli air force bombed what they claimed were Iranian bases in Syria.

The success of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in recent years has compelled Israel and their supporters to slander the movement as anti-Semitic. These smears against BDS are a concerted effort to torpedo the movement and must be rejected. Of course, anti-Jewish attitudes still persist in society, and it is necessary to struggle against these racist attitudes.

Stop the violence against Gaza; end the blockade! Free all Palestinian prisoners, including the over 400 children! For the right of Palestinians to return! End military and economic aid to Israel! For a democratic and secular Palestine with equal rights for all! ■

Spring antiwar actions protest Syria bombing

John Leslie / Socialist Action



(Left) Lead banner in New York protest, April 15.

ald Trump and returning the Democrats to majority status in the House and Senate.

He added that today’s wars—drone wars, special operations wars, covert and proxy wars, privatized mercenary army wars, sanctions and embargo wars—are largely kept from public view. “People don’t see body bags coming home,” he noted. Lombardo also pointed to the unfortunately still-divided U.S. antiwar movement, but noted that this was a minor factor and that the April actions had the broadest backing in recent years, with some 500 organizations on board in support of the mobilization’s key demands.

I would add that another factor explaining the very modest turnout is the virtual absence of the organized labor movement. Incapable of defending its own interests, not to mention the interests of workers under attack by imperialism in other countries, the terribly bureaucratized, pro-capitalist, and often corrupt labor fakers contributed nothing to this worthy national effort that included a major focus on defending working people in every aspect of social life.

With regard to the Oakland April 15 mobilization, for example, the Central Labor Council of Alameda County, while approving a last-minute resolution supporting the basic April 15 demands, consciously excluded the key demand to end U.S. aid to Israel. At best their token resolution brought a mere handful to the Oakland protest. The labor council’s virtually exclusive effort of late has been to mobilize, finance, and elect warmongering Democrats to office.

Tied hand and foot to the Democratic Party, the entrenched bureaucracy has proven incapable of defending its ranks from yet another bipartisan attack in the form of the expected decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the Janus case, which would prohibit unions from collecting agency fees and/or union dues via the check-off system.

UNAC’s efforts, however modest the result, were an important contribution in winning new and organized but previously disparate forces together to fight for principled demands in united-front-type mobilizations. They will serve the movement well in the future, and indeed, as a model in antiwar and social justice organizing.

Socialist Action played an important role in building the Spring Action 2018 actions. It was well represented in the various planning and preparation meetings and on the speakers’ platforms. Youth for Socialist Action at the University of Connecticut chartered a bus that brought 25 young people to the New York City protest on April 15. ■

By JEFF MACKLER

Antiwar and social justice activists mobilized for the April 14 and 15 spring regional protests across the U.S. to demand an end to “U.S. Wars at Home and Abroad.” The broadly sponsored and nationally coordinated protests were organized in some 40 cities, in an effort initiated by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) and the Coalition Against U.S. Foreign Military Bases.

Although hundreds of organizations joined in endorsing these actions, most were extremely modest in size. Estimates of the crowd in Oakland ranged from 750 to 1000, while over 500 assembled in New York. A related Chicago protest a week later drew some 300 people and was organized by a new coalition that affiliated to UNAC. Planned actions in Minneapolis were limited to less than 100 due to a snowstorm. About 100 mobilized in Washington, D.C.

Despite the modest size, many new and young activists took part and played key roles in organizing the demonstrations in several areas. Many who have lived their entire adult lives with U.S. wars, which have tragically become normalized in the U.S. to a significant extent, were enthusiastic about the actions and state that they are looking forward to building a strong antiwar movement in the future.

The April actions were a test of the capacity of antiwar forces to return to the streets in significant numbers to challenge U.S. imperialism’s ongoing wars in seven countries, as well as the deepening attacks on working people at home. Official demands included opposition to racism in all of its manifestations, Islamophobia, sexual and gender oppression, and global warming-induced environmental destruction. Speakers at the main coastal rallies scored U.S. military intervention on every continent while denouncing the government’s ongoing attacks on trade unions, social services, and trillion-dollar “gifts” and tax breaks to the corporate elite. A central Spring Action 2018 demand was to “End All U.S. Aid to Apartheid Israel.”

The spring mobilizations were undertaken in the hope that the ever-escalating U.S. interventions and threats of war abroad—from the Middle East to North Korea, Venezuela, and Iran—coupled with the deepening attacks on workers and the oppressed at home, would provide at least an initial opportunity to return the antiwar movement, which has

been largely dormant in recent years, to the streets. This was sadly not to be the case.

Joe Lombardo, national co-coordinator of UNAC and a leading antiwar activist for decades, told *Socialist Action*, “We were fully justified in planning and preparing to mobilize in the street the mass sentiment that exists against U.S. wars at home and abroad. We had a moral and political obligation to do so. But we were not able to bridge the gap, at least at this juncture, between the mass antiwar and anti-government sentiment that exists today and the willingness of the same forces to take to the streets in large numbers in independent actions.”

Lombardo noted that the April actions took place in the immediate context of the U.S. bombing of Syria and the Israeli murder of close to 40 unarmed Palestinians protesters at the Gaza border. He offered a series of explanations for this still modest capacity of antiwar and social justice forces to mobilize. These included the concerted efforts of the Democratic Party and associated corporate media to channel social discontent into the upcoming 2018 and 2020 elections, with the objective of defeating Republican Don-

... Women’s oppression

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cy, paid time off for maternity leave, or the right to express milk during the work day.

But at the same time, we must also recognize that a true end to women’s oppression can only be achieved through a socialist society. Socialist society will give us the freedom to re-think and re-distribute labor, which is the only way to eliminate the material root of women’s oppression. The need for domestic labor will never go away, but socialist society will allow us to socialize domestic labor under worker’s control.

It is interesting to think here about what will happen to the institution of the family under socialist society. Once the material basis for women’s oppres-

sion is gone, the family will also begin to naturally shift and take on new forms and shapes.

I would like to end with a quote from Vogel’s book (page 181-182): “Historical materialism poses the difficult question of simultaneously reducing and redistributing domestic labor in the course of transforming it into an integral component of social production in communist society. Just as in the socialist transition ‘the state is not “abolished,” it withers away,’ [a famous quote from Frederick Engels] so too, domestic labor must wither away... In the process the family in its particular historical form as a kin-based social unit for the reproduction of exploitable labour-power in class-society will also wither away—and with it both patriarchal family-relations and the oppression of women.” ■

Big stake in Syria war for the 1% and the 99%

By BRUCE LESNICK

The U.S. and its Gulf and NATO allies have been fighting a war of aggression against Syria for over five years¹. Plans to replace the Syrian government with one more subservient to the needs of U.S. corporate interests began well before that². The Pentagon has spent \$41.1 billion in Syria since 2001, according to a study³ by Brown University. U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar have funneled huge additional sums⁴ to ISIS and Al-Qaeda⁵ affiliated “rebels” in Syria since at least 2011.

The Pentagon, prone to understating its footprint, admits to 2000⁶ uninvited soldiers currently stationed in Syria against the will of the Syrian people. The real number is likely more than twice that⁷ when one accounts for secret operatives, contractors, support operations and the like. Meanwhile, the U.S. currently occupies 30%⁸ of Syrian territory against the will of the Syrian people, including significant water, oil, and natural gas reserves.

As with Iraq, Libya, and a long list of other wars⁹ before it, U.S. illegal¹⁰ intervention in Syria is based on lies. We’re told that U.S. political and military leaders—who have no concern for poverty, unemployment, declining living standards, rampant inequality, racist murders by cops, a manifestly corrupt and undemocratic political system, poison air and water, crumbling infrastructure, decaying social services, and environmental devastation at home—care deeply for the health and wellbeing of the Syrian people. We’re asked to believe that our government—which supports right wing, business-friendly repressive governments around the world, from Saudi Arabia and Israel to those installed by US supported coups in Egypt, Ukraine and, Honduras—is deeply concerned about freedom and democracy in Syria. Nonsense!

And what of charges that the Syrian government represses its own citizens? Well, given that Syria is a capitalist country—which means that the majority work to produce the wealth while a small elite controls all the wealth and power—it’s a foregone conclusion that there is repression and exploitation. (The same could be said of the U.S., with our history of Native American genocide, slavery, Jim Crow segregation, school-to-prison pipeline, racism, sexism, and declining living standards for the majority amidst mushrooming fortunes for the few at the top.)

Still, most¹¹ crimes the Assad government is accused of have not been proven¹², including the three alleged chemical attacks¹³ that were used to justify U.S. threats and missile strikes. We know the imperial aggressors cannot tell the truth about their wars for profit and still hope to avoid opposition to those wars at home. So, they have every incentive to lie and exaggerate the supposed transgressions of their victims. For this reason, the rational approach is to treat all claims of the U.S. war makers as false until categorically proven to be true. But any crimes or deficiencies clearly attributable to the Syrian government are for the Syrian people to address; it’s not for outside servants of the 1% to hypocritically assert the right to invade and “fix” Syria.

Self-determination

The world is divided between strong nations, with global economic and military reach—the U.S. and most EU nations, for example—and those with much less power and influence. Just as within each country the rich exploit the poor, on the world stage the rich, powerful, imperial nations exploit the weaker nations. When an imperialist country like the U.S. attacks a semi-colonial country like Iraq, Libya, or Syria, the moral landscape is no different



(Above) Children evacuated from Douma, Syria. Their mother told CNN that the family had been victims of a chemical attack.

than an armed thug attempting to rob a hapless pedestrian. We have no need—indeed, no right!—to concern ourselves with the moral character or past transgressions of the pedestrian. The pedestrian has the right to defend him/herself, as Malcolm X put it, “by any means necessary!” Malcolm explained, “I don’t think when a man is being criminally treated, that some criminal has the right to tell that man what tactics to use to get the criminal off his back. When a criminal starts misusing me, I’m going to use whatever necessary to get that criminal off my back.”

The same holds for Syria’s fight against the U.S., Saudi, EU aggressors and their ISIS and al-Qaeda plenipotentiaries. It is in the interest of the 99% to oppose the U.S. aggression and support Syria’s right to self-determination unconditionally. That means irrespective of the flawed, capitalist government currently in charge in Syria. It also means, as Malcolm argued, that the Syrians have the right to fight off the onslaught as effectively as they can, including by enlisting the help of Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and anyone else willing to lend a hand to their side.

Adopting this principled stance implies no political support to the Assad government. But it does recognize that if there are governmental changes to be made in Syria, this is for the Syrian people and no one else to undertake. Moreover, when it comes to replacing standard governments or institutions, it makes a big difference to the working majority in Syria, the U.S. and the world in general whether such a replacement happens from the right—which would be the result if the U.S. and its jihadi allies were to overthrow the Syrian government—or from the left—which would be the case if the Syrian people, unhindered by outside aggression, organized to replace the Assad government with a government of, by and for the working people of Syria. For this reason, the most conscious workers in Syria understand that defeating the U.S. aggression is a top priority and a prerequisite for opening any space for progressive change within Syria.

Same enemy, same fight

Of course, the Syrian people have a huge interest in the outcome of the current war. But both the 99% and the 1% in the U.S. also have a gigantic stake in the outcome of this conflict. Here at home, the 1% is pitted against the 99% in every conceivable way, and it is a zero-sum game: when

they win, we lose, and when we win, they lose. The 1% profits by war, racism, sexism, and economic exploitation. They maintain their unnatural minority hold on power through force and repression. Exploiting people in Syria and other countries is part and parcel of how they maintain their power over us here at home. A victory for the U.S. and its allies in Syria would be a victory for the 1% here at home as well. A defeat for the U.S. in Syria, on the other hand, would mean a defeat for the 1% here at home, and would aid us in our own fight for social, economic and political justice.

Every movement—from Black Lives Matter, Me Too, climate action, labor organizing, workers’ rights and defending civil liberties—will be affected by the outcome of the fight in Syria because all of these movements confront the illicit power and influence of the 1%. And the power of the 1% is directly connected to its ability to exploit working people abroad as well as at home.

Hands Off Syria! U.S. Out Now! Not One Dollar, Not One Bomb, Not One Bullet for the Wars of the One Percent!

- 1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timber_Sycamore
- 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RC1Mepk_Sw
- 3 http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2017/Costs_of_U.S.Post-9_11_NC_Crawford_FINAL.pdf
- 4 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-saudi/saudi-arabia-and-qatar-funding-syrian-rebels-idUSBRE85M07820120623>
- 5 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/middleeast/jihadists-receiving-most-arms-sent-to-syrian-rebels.html>
- 6 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/11/world/middleeast/syria-military-us-russia-iran.html>
- 7 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/10/31/a-top-us-general-just-said-4000-american-troops-are-in-syria-the-pentagon-says-there-are-only-500/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.813a9c183d7d
- 8 <https://www.mintpressnews.com/how-the-us-occupied-the-30-of-syria-containing-most-of-its-oil-water-and-gas/240601/>
- 9 <https://dissidentvoice.org/2017/07/fake-news-on-russia-in-the-new-york-times-1917-2017/>
- 10 http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/view_from_chicago/2013/08/the_u_s_has_no_legal_basis_for_its_action_in_syria_but_that_won_t_stop_us.html
- 11 <http://www.moonofalabama.org/2017/02/amnesty-report-hearsay.html#more>
- 12 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-has-no-evidence-of-syrian-use-of-sarin-gas-mattis-says>
- 13 <http://medialens.org/index.php/alerts/alert-archive/2018/868-douma-part-1.html>

... Human beings

(continued from page 7)

these facts, we are still being demonized.”¹⁰

Stories like this abound. Even the creation of Yellowstone, the world’s first national park, involved the expulsion and destruction of land-use rights for native Crow, Shoshone, and Bannock. Glacier National Park was created with the expulsion of Blackfeet, Yosemite with the expulsion of Yosemite Indians, and Grand Canyon with the expulsion of Havasupai. When Havasupai gained part of their land back from the government in the 1970s, they did so despite many self-avowed conservationists, who fought against it.¹¹

At worst, the dispossession of native peoples for conservation purposes was based on an intentional erasure of native history and claims to the land. At best, it was based on a flawed definition of nature, which holds that it is exogenous to human beings. Indigenous people have played a crucial role in the maintenance of their native lands, such as in fire management and the protection of wildlife. In fact, they often see their fight for sovereignty as being directly aligned with the need for conservation.

Misanthropic views about humanity have the real

potential of precluding the solidarity we should be building to address climate change. There’s little hope for that kind of solidarity if people in the industrialized countries accept the nonsense that poor women in the underdeveloped world are to blame for the crisis for having too many children. And there’s little hope for it if the basic rights of indigenous people are opposed by conservationists asserting the superiority of their own demands regarding their lands.

We want a revolution in our relationship to the environment, and that is something that can only come about with a revolution in our relationship to each other. Che Guevara once said, “At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality.”

The misanthropy at the root of populationism, as well as Wilson’s view that we need to remove people from the land, is not one that holds great love for humanity. If it doesn’t entail outright hatred for our species, it certainly entails great fear and suspicion of one another.

This is not the compass that points us in the correct direction. Solidarity is the answer to alienation. We need to build broad movements to address our collective material and ecological interests.

And ultimately, the source of humanity’s destructive behavior is the system that directs all of society’s productive power toward the accumulation of profits for a tiny minority. Only socialism can redirect our collective labor toward the fulfillment of all human needs, including the need to preserve the Earth’s delicate ecosystems.

- 1 Angus, Ian and Simon Butler. “Too Many People? ...”: 4
- 2 Robinson, Kim Stanley. “Empty half the Earth of its humans. It’s the only way to save the planet.” The Guardian, US edition, 20 Mar. 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/mar/20/save-the-planet-half-earth-kim-stanley-robinson>.
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Northern Lights

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Toronto van attack, toxic masculinity & the military



By YVES ENGLER

Progressive on-line commentary about the April 23 van attack in Toronto has focused on the influence of "toxic masculinity." The analyses should be expanded to include the alleged perpetrator's ties to a powerful patriarchal institution that is Canada's biggest purveyor of violence.

Early reports suggest alleged mass murderer Alek Minassian may have targeted women and been motivated by sexism. Before carrying out his horrific attack he posted on Facebook about the "Incel Rebellion," a community of "involuntarily celibate" men who hate women and praised misogynistic U.S. mass murderer Elliot Rodger.

Minassian reportedly wrote: "Private (Recruit) Minassian Infantry 00010, wishing to speak to Sgt 4chan please. C23249161. The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!"

It should surprise no one that alongside his call for an "Incel Rebellion" the misogynist Minassian cited his (short) military service. Last fall he joined the Canadian Forces (CF), which has 100,000 active members and 300,000 retired members. A 2015 investigation led by former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps found a "culture of misogyny" in the CF "hostile to women and LGBTQ members."

While women now represent 15 per cent of military personnel, the Deschamps report concluded that "the over-

all perception is that a 'boy's club' culture still prevails in the armed forces."

Until 1979 women were excluded from the Royal Military College. Until 1989 women were excluded from combat roles in the CF. In 2000 the submarine service finally opened to women.

A 1992 Department of National Defence survey found that 26.2 per cent of female CF respondents were sexually harassed in the previous 12 months. Subsequent investigations have shown steady improvements, but 27.3 per cent of women in 2016 still reported having been victims of sexual assault at least once since joining the CF.

The Deschamps review found that there is an undeniable problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the [Canadian Armed Forces]. In 2017 plaintiffs in five separate cities united to sue over sexual assault, harassment and gender-based discrimination in the CF.

When Nichola Goddard became the first female CF member to die in Afghanistan it came to light that she wrote her husband about sexual violence on the base. Goddard wrote about "the tension of living in a fortress where men outnumbered women 10 to one" and "there were six rapes in the camp last week, so we have to work out an escort at night."

But, the CF only admits to investigating five reports of sexual harassment or assault in Afghanistan between 2004 and 2010. Valerie Fortney, author of "Sunray: The Death and Life of Captain Nichola Goddard," said she "hit a brick wall" when

Toyota workers fight paid-leave exemption

By BRUCE ALLEN

About 100 autoworkers, led by workers from Toyota, and their supporters rallied in front of Queen's Park in Toronto on April 22. They were protesting the Liberal government's decision to allow an "exception" for the auto industry for personal emergency leave (PEL) days. The exemption was brought into effect in January 2017. When the government ushered in a series of reforms to labour law in the province through Bill 148, it kept the PEL day exemption for the auto industry.

Under Bill 148 workers in the province are entitled to 10 days of personal emergency leave. This leave can be used for sickness, bereavement, family emergency. In the event of an illness no doctor's note is required. The first of these two days used are paid. Under the exemption autoworkers are entitled to seven days a year of personal emergency leave and three days for bereavement. None of these days will be paid. Scrapping both flexibility of how workers use PEL days and the removing the two paid PEL days is a boon for the auto industry.

The government agreed to this exception, bowing to pressure from Toyota. Toyota claimed the PEL days provided for in Bill 148 would keep its operations from being competitive.

Unifor responded to the workers' protests, which began late last year, by starting a petition calling on the government to give autoworkers the same entitlement to emergency leave days as other workers. However, Unifor did not support the April 22 rally. Top Unifor leaders were conspicuous in their absence. This made it a protest staged by rank-and-file autoworkers from both non-union and unionized plants supported by some retired autoworkers

who had held or still hold leadership positions in their local unions.

The absence of top Unifor leaders was due to a government commitment to study and review the issue in response to the petition and protests.

The autoworkers at the rally were totally unwilling to accept this outcome. They insist there is nothing to study. They want the same rights as all other workers. The autoworkers were supported in this position by several New Democratic Party members present who were either sitting MPPs or candidates in Ontario's June 7 election. The New Democrats present pledged that if the NDP forms the next Ontario government the law will be changed to end this injustice.

Significantly, if the Liberals lose power on June 7 their study of the issue will die with their government. Likewise, if the Tories, who lead in the polls, win power, autoworkers will be stuck with just seven unpaid emergency leave days a year while other workers get 10 with two paid. It is no wonder then that the protesters insisted on seeing the legislation change now while the Liberals retain a majority government.

Insofar as the April 22 protest was organized by autoworkers who work in a non-union workplace and supported by other autoworkers who backed their action despite the absence of continued Unifor support, the protest was unprecedented and historic. Non-union autoworkers in Canada have never organized a protest to back a political demand before.

The workers who built the protest remain determined to continue to fight to get the same entitlement to personal emergency leave days as other Ontario workers. Should they go on to link this fight to the \$15 and Fairness campaign, which is continuing to fight for more gains for Ontario workers beyond those won in Bill 148, the historic significance of what they did on April 22 can become much more profound. ■

seeking to investigate sexual harassment in Afghanistan.

Male veterans have repeatedly engaged in gender-based violence. Last year Lionel Desmond killed his wife, daughter, mother and himself while Robert Giblin stabbed and threw his pregnant wife off a building before killing himself in 2015.

After the worst incident of patriarchal violence in Canadian history, members of the elite Airborne Regiment reportedly held a celebratory dinner to honour Marc Lepine. In 1989 Lepine massacred 14 women at the Université de Montréal while shouting, "you're all a bunch of feminists, and I hate feminists!"

Not only is the CF a patriarchal social force, it is the country's greatest pur-

veyor of violence. The Canadian military spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year promoting militarism and during the past quarter century it has fought wars of aggression in Libya, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, and Iraq (not to mention helping to overthrow an elected government in Haiti and engaging in gunboat diplomacy in a number of locations).

To a large extent the CF is the institutional embodiment of toxic masculinity, and therefore it's not surprising that Minassian was drawn to it. His connection to an organization that receives over \$20 billion a year in public funds while upholding patriarchy and promoting violence ought to be part of the discussion of this horrible act. ■

Kinder Morgan: Should Canadian taxpayers invest in a bailout?

By GARY PORTER

Prime Minister Trudeau has instructed Finance Minister Bill Morneau to begin discussions about a bailout of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline project from the Alberta Tarsands to Burnaby BC for the purpose of exporting bitumen to foreign markets.

Kinder Morgan announced on April 8 that it had stopped all essential work on the project, citing delays and risk associated with sustained, legal, economic and political opposition. Trudeau's eagerness to invest in the \$7.4 billion CAD is seen by pipeline proponents and critics alike as a "terrible idea."

Kinder Morgan reports it has already invested 1 billion in the project. Trudeau argues the bailout is in the "national interest" but offers no evidence to show how taxpayers would benefit from pouring their dollars into a profitable mega corporation based in the United States. It seems obvious how KM shareholders and bosses would benefit.

Let's do a little due diligence before putting a nickel into this massive corporation. Firstly, it is in the busi-

ness of providing transmission infrastructure for the oil and gas companies to move product to refineries and to consumers. This business is the most destructive of the global environment. Secondly, Texas billionaires Richard Kinder and Bill Morgan, formerly of the massively corrupt and crooked Enron Corporation, built this business out of an Enron subsidiary.

Kinder Morgan's management team, to this day, contains many prominent former Enron executives. Their business has an interest in or directly operates 137,000 kilometres of pipeline and 152 terminals

Kinder Morgan (KM) is a major borrower. It operates at a risky rate of 1/3 of its assets financed by debt. It has a reputation of running on the cheap. Hedgeye Risk Management on Wall Street accused the company of installing cheaply built pipelines, and under-spending on maintenance and safety technology. For example, they are unwilling to provide British Columbia a guarantee of even a 24-hour response to oil spills in the province.

At the 2014 National Energy Board hearing in Ottawa, KM said it would provide 100 per cent of the

financing for Trans Mountain. As oil prices fell it failed to find credit or a joint venture partner. The job of raising funds was shoved onto KM Canada. KM Canada raised \$1.6 billion in an offering in 2017, but in true Enron fashion this money was taken by the US corporation to pay off its debts, rather than to finance the Canadian project.

Meanwhile, KM Canada has been extremely busy lobbying 19 different agencies to get technical tax changes for its benefit, support for increased tanker traffic, and support for its pipeline. KM has a history of paying little or no tax, just like Enron. In 2017, for example, they paid zero tax in Canada. Over the past three years their tax rate has been less than 1%. So, they contribute nothing to Canadian taxpayers, but seek a bailout.

One of the major benefits of such intense lobbying is that the NEB allowed only KM to increase pipeline tolls from \$2.50 a barrel to \$5.90 a barrel generating a cool billion annually in pipeline traffic in Canada. For BC

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By DAVID KIELY

Annette Gagne: Socialist & LGBT activist

Our dear comrade Annette Gagne died in Providence, R.I., on March 14, the 135th anniversary of Karl Marx's death in 1883. In her last moments, Annette was surrounded by friends and comrades. All were people who, as a close friend of Annette said, "meant the world to her."

Annette's political legacy as a dedicated revolutionary socialist and party builder is inspiring. She came from a French-Canadian working-class family and spent her entire political life in Providence. In the 1970s she joined the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) and Socialist Workers Party. She was integrated into industry work as a postal worker and assisted in getting the SWP on the ballot.

Her friend and comrade David Walsh recalled that when comrades would come down from Massachusetts to petition for ballot access, Annette was always warm and friendly and found places for comrades to stay. David remembered spaghetti dinners that Annette prepared: "There would be a lot of laughs, and it was a wonderful time. It might not have been so wonderful if we didn't have this wonderful French-Canadian comrade."

In the early 1980s the SWP began to collapse. The party wanted to consolidate all at-large members and small branches together. In Annette's words, the party organizers told her to move to a city with a branch and enter industry—or leave the YSA and SWP. But An-



nette remained in Providence, preferring to stay in a place where she had roots for the long haul. From that point on she was not in a socialist organization until she joined Socialist Action around 2004 after reconnecting with her comrade David.

Yet being outside of a socialist organization did not stop her from doing political work. She continued work as an activist in Providence's gay liberation movement of the 1970s and '80s. She participated in the first Providence Pride March in 1976, was on the pride

committee until the mid 1990s, and also was an editor for *Gay Community News*, a left-wing LGBT newspaper.

In 2016, on the 40th anniversary of Providence Pride, Annette and other marchers of Pride's first march in 1976 were celebrated in front of a crowd of tens of thousands. When David had spoken to Annette about being recognized, he said she tried to play down her role, stating that a Bolshevik shouldn't be worried about recognition.

Yet I can't imagine how proud and happy Annette must have been on stage

with her fellow marchers. Providence pride is one of the largest LGBT celebrations in the Northeast. As Annette put it: "From 75 lone marchers in 1976 to 40,000-plus in 2016!"

Perhaps the best attribute of Annette we can aspire to uniting diverse people in struggle along principled political lines. Annette really abhorred the petty factional differences that would stop such unity. Instead, she was ready to work with anyone who was ready to help build the new social vision she saw.

Even in her later years, while on dialysis and having trouble walking, Annette still kept going, whether it was building an Assata Shakur reading group or helping Connecticut comrades flyer for the first "The Solution is Socialism Conference" in Connecticut.

Her comrades Hutch and myself came up from Hartford, Conn., in October 2016 to put up posters and flyer for the conference. As Hutch recalls, "It was a cold and windy day, but she was dedicated to introducing new people to socialism. We set up a literature table for her and she would sit and talk to people while we posted and flyered Brown and Rhode Island University. After we wrapped up for the day, we dropped her off at her dialysis appointment."

Annette never stopped moving. She will be dearly missed by Providence organizers and by her comrades in Socialist Action. ■

... No troops to the border!

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pulls people from rural areas into cities), we must examine the role of imperialist foreign policy. The U.S., whose primary economic periphery is Latin America and the Caribbean, has sought to dominate "our backyard" for over 200 years.

Collectively, Hispanics or Latinxs make up the largest immigrant population in the U.S. The various immigrant groups—Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Central Americans, and now Columbians—are all here because of U.S. policy in the region. These groups are the "harvest of empire," as Juan Gonzalez calls them in his "Harvest of Empire: A history of Latinos in America" (revised edition, 2011).

The current flow of immigrants from Central America to the U.S. exemplifies this pattern. Before 1980, there were very few Central Americans in the U.S. During the 1980s, the U.S. fought a series of proxy wars and "low intensity conflicts" against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and revolutionary movements in El Salvador and Guatemala, in the process turning Honduras into a veritable U.S. military garrison state.

Low-intensity conflict is a military euphemism. These wars were "low intensity" from the perspective of the vast destructive power of the U.S. military. They were anything but low intensity for the victims of U.S. intervention.

In the 10 years that the Central American wars raged, over 250,000 Central Americans were killed, five times the U.S. death toll in Vietnam. The U.S. wars also destroyed these countries economically. From 1980 to 1990, per capita GDP (in constant 1990 U.S. dollars) fell from \$1219 to \$1026 in El Salvador (a 16% drop), from \$1044 to \$857 in Guatemala (an 18% drop), and from \$979 to \$645 in Nicaragua (a 34% drop). The economies of Central America have never recovered.

Since 1980, the number of Central Americans living in and coming to the U.S. has skyrocketed. And while the number of immigrants varies according to the economic and political conditions in both the U.S. and Latin America, the push and pull will never cease, no matter how many troops are stationed at the border or high how the walls are built.

Life imitating art imitating life

Many U.S. citizens are ignorant of the Central American Wars, in spite of the large Central America Movement (CAM) that organized against U.S. intervention. Two independent films give you a glimpse of the conflicts and the connection to immigration. The first, "El

Norte," traces the journey of two Guatemalan siblings who flee to the U.S. after their family is killed by the military. Traveling through Mexico, the pair eventually cross the U.S. border and end up in Los Angeles. Made in 1983 and released in 1984, the film is preserved in the U.S. National Film Registry because of its cultural and historical significance.

The second film, "Sin Nombre," traces the journey of a young Honduran woman, Sayra, from her home in Tegucigalpa through Mexico. The film also focuses on the Mara Salvatrucha gang. Much of the activity takes place in Tapachula, a Mexican town near the Guatemala border that is an important train hub. The immigrants ride the trains north toward the U.S. border. Made in 2009, "Sin Nombre" portrays the violence and dangers immigrants face as they travel to the U.S. In a case of life imitating art imitating life, the caravan of immigrants demonized by Trump travelled through Tapachula.

Defend Immigrant Rights!

Contrary to Trump's claims, Mexican officials did not stop the caravan of mostly Honduran immigrants in response to his threats. Mexican immigration officials work with Central American immigrants, offering them either a 20-day transit permit to leave the country or a 30-day permit that allows them to apply for formal legal immigration status in Mexico. Many of the immigrants decide to stay in Mexico, settling in large cities such as Mexico City or Puebla. Other continue north, in the hopes of crossing into the U.S.

The caravans themselves are a response to the nu-

merous dangers from drug gangs and criminals that threaten the immigrants as they move north. This is portrayed in a powerful fashion in the film "Sin Nombre." As documented by *The New York Times* (April 5, 2018), the immigrant caravans are fed and housed along the way by Mexican citizens and NGOs such as Pueblo Sin Fronteras (People without Borders), the groups that organized the caravan attacked by Trump and the right-wing media.

The presence of National Guard troops on the U.S.-Mexico border clearly increases the risk of conflict between the two countries. These troops also increase the likelihood of violence against those seeking to escape the poverty and violence created by imperial policy. Karl Marx, in his discussion of Irish immigration to England noted that capitalists use immigrants to drive down and control native workers, creating a class divided against itself.

The working class is also divided by racism and the racial caste system in the U.S., by sexism, and by homophobia as well, all to the benefit of the capitalist elite, and these scourges must also be opposed.

The denial of human rights to immigrants, labeling immigrants with the absurd concept of "illegal human being," and militarizing the border enables the capitalists to super-exploit immigrants, further weakening and dividing the U.S. working class. Only when we all, native born and non-native born, defend immigrants in the U.S. and the rights of people everywhere to a just and decent life, will the U.S. gain the strength to shape its own future.

No troops to the border! Defend immigrant rights! No ser humano es ilegal! Solidarity forever! ■

Lazaro Monteverde has lived in Honduras, Spain, and Chile. He currently resides in the "belly of the beast."

... Kinder Morgan

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especially, this means permanently high gas pump prices and the siphoning off of \$100,000,000 annually from the BC economy to the benefit of this huge US dirty oil business. BC residents would pay the cost of the pipeline through higher gas and heating oil prices.

In the U.S., since 2000 KM has been hit with fines totalling US\$162,000,000, with many cases still in progress, and no doubt, more to come. These involve repeated violation of environmental laws, energy market manipulation (just like Enron), pipeline safety violations and labour violations.

Incidentally, but importantly, eight Canadian institutional investors own \$2 billion in KM. Sadly, both from an ethical perspective and from a prudent investment perspective, one of them is the Ontario Teachers' Pension fund. It likes investing in a Trump enterprise. OTP, you should know better. You are going to get screwed. Richard Kinder, by the way is said to be worth \$8 billion, enough to pay for the pipeline himself.

Not a single dollar of taxpayer money should be invested in this company. This project is crooked from start to finish. Stop the pipeline and throw KM out of Canada. Nationalize and operate its assets as part of a democratically developed plan to rapidly reduce oil dependence and build a green energy infrastructure instead. ■

No troops to the border! Defend immigrant rights!

Victoria Razo / AFP / Getty Images



By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

Declining empires are dangerous, and the U.S. is an empire in decline. If the U.S. ruling class can avoid the Thucydides Trap with China (the tendency for a declining empire to go to war with a rising empire), they still must face their own decline as the center of the capitalist system. In the face of the decline they are acting more and more as a class without solutions to their own problems, much less the broader problems facing the country and world. This bodes ill for all peoples. Case in point: Trump's (further) militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Trump authorized the National Guard to "defend" the U.S.-Mexico border on April 4. The first troop deployments have already taken place, according to an April 12 *New York Times* report. Trump made the decision after Congress denied his \$25 billion request for a border wall in the recently passed budget. Instead, he got only \$1.6 billion.

He also seemed to be reacting to racist and sensationalized stories on Fox News and other right-wing media about a caravan of 1500 immigrants, mainly from Honduras, moving north toward the U.S. (The immigrants arrived at the border at the end of April, and most are facing tight restrictions against gaining entry into the U.S.)

While possibly an impulsive decision, it is also a cunning one. Sending troops to the border plays to Trump's base and covers up his failure to deliver on one of his chief campaign promises—to build a "big, beautiful wall" and have the Mexican government pay for it. As a policy, it divides Americans (those in the

U.S.) from Mexicans and divides and weakens the U.S. working class.

Viewed historically, sending troops is nothing new. The border region has always been a locus of conflict. As the U.S. settler state expanded into the Southwest, it fought two wars against Mexico, first in 1836 in the so-called Texas Revolution (remember the Alamo?) and later in 1846 to 1848 with the U.S. invasion of Mexico. Conflict continued along the border for another 70 years, including extensive violence against the Native American and Mexican inhabitants of the region and an insurrection by Mexican-Americans in South Texas in 1859-60, the Cortina War.

Following World War I and the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, the U.S. restricted immigration. The Immigration Act of 1924, most notorious for the racial quotas on Jews and Eastern Europeans that trapped millions in Europe during the Nazi Holocaust, established the paramilitary Border Patrol to control the flow of immigrants into the U.S. from the south. For the next 65 years the U.S. adopted a revolving-door policy toward mostly Mexican immigrants: allowing them into the country when needed for primarily agricultural or unskilled labor, kicking them out when they were not needed or caused "labor unrest."

This revolving door policy produced conditions of super-exploitation of Mexican workers in the U.S. (see the now classic history by James Cockcroft, "Outlaws in the Promised Land," published in 1986, for extensive details). Mexican immigrants feared La Migra, as the border patrol was known in Spanish, for its violence and human rights abuses.

(Above) Immigrants, mainly from Honduras, in a large caravan heading to the U.S. border in April.

Beginning with the Reagan presidency in 1981, the Border Patrol became militarized, with military-grade weapons and helicopters. This trend accelerated with the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act [IRCA] of 1986. With IRCA, Reagan framed border control as an issue of national security and the war on drugs. Using racist language, he warned of hordes of Latin Americans flooding across our borders should the U.S. lose the wars in Central America.

At the same time, Reagan demonized drugs as an evil coming from outside the U.S. and corrupting our society, instead of viewing drug abuse and addiction as a major public health problem. Unsurprisingly, Reagan hid the role of the CIA and the U.S. proxy troops, the Nicaraguan Contras, in fostering the importation of cocaine into the U.S. Thus, from the long view of history, Trump is just upping the ante, employing the same racist tropes and the same policy solutions of his predecessors.

Harvest of Empire

Imperialism, in both the economic and political sense, drives modern-day immigration flows. Poverty and unemployment in the capitalist periphery pushes people away from their homelands. Wealth and jobs in the capitalist core pulls those workers in. The push and pull is a general feature of the 20th and 21st centuries.

In addition to this general push and pull (which also

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