

Stop NATO strikes on Libya!

**No to Gadhafi!
No to imperialist
intervention!**

By THE EDITORS

Socialist Action stands solidly for the victory of the Libyan masses in their fight to overthrow the dictatorial regime of Muammar Gadhafi. But to achieve their goals, and to avoid a derailing of the still-growing revolution in northern Africa and the Middle East, the war of the U.S. and NATO against Libya must be stopped.

This is a position shared by key forces in the anti-war and solidarity movements. The United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC) has taken a clear position against any form of intervention, whether by “no-fly zones,” bombing, troops on the ground, or sanctions.

The U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN) expressed its “unequivocal support for the uprising by the Libyan people,” but added that Libyans do not need the imperialist powers “to intervene on their behalf ... we warn against and are opposed to any attempt to misuse the Libyan people’s struggle in order to serve imperial interests. In particular, we note the greed of multinational corporations—particularly the oil industry—and call for the strongest opposition to any attempt to prevent the Libyan people from taking charge of their national wealth instead of Gadhafi and his family.”

UNAC, USPCN, and other critics of intervention are well aware of the circumstances that have led many in Libya to call for “no-fly zones” or even bombing of Gadhafi’s troops. But while understanding their desperation, we do the Libyan masses no favor by being silent on the dangers of reliance on imperialism.

After one day of bombing focused on antiaircraft weapons and control centers, the war predictably turned



Tyler Hicks / NY Times

from “no fly” to “no drive.” Said one rebel fighter, “We have information that Gadhafi’s tanks are ahead and we also have information that [Western forces] will bomb them, so we are waiting for the air strikes before we push forward.” In other words, rebel forces are counting on the United States et al. to win the war for them—a far cry from the scenario in the rest of the Arab revolution.

But as one young activist in Tunis told British *Guardian* correspondent Jeremy Corbyn, when asked if he wanted Western help: “No, we will do it ourselves; the problem with the West is, it never knows when to leave.”

Other Arab voices against intervention include Mogniss Abdallah, an Egyptian writer and filmmaker, who wrote in *International Viewpoint* (the Fourth Interna-

(Above) Funeral procession for rebel fighters killed by Gadhafi forces in Brega, Libya, March 3.

tional’s English-language journal) of the hypocrisy of imperialist governments’ attacking Libya while supporting the invasion of Bahrain by the Saudi army and the massacres of protesters there—measures backed by the U.S. Said Abdallah: “I would like to say frankly to sincere Libyan friends ... we unconditionally condemn the massacres of the population in Libya by Gadhafi and his regime. But I am outraged by the slogans ‘One, two, three, Viva Sarkozy’ shouted in Benghazi.”

Abdallah also asked progressive Libyans to condemn

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April 9 & 10 protests herald a new antiwar and social justice movement

By CHRISTINE MARIE

Outrage against the U.S./NATO attack on Libya has provided new support for the April 9 antiwar march and rally in New York City and the April 10 demonstration in San Francisco. Over 500 organizations have endorsed the dual protests, initiated and sponsored by the United National Antiwar Conference (UNAC). Buses from as far away as Minneapolis are scheduled to make the trip to the New York demonstration.

The April 9 and 10 protests will underscore the integral link between Washington’s wars abroad and its war on working people and oppressed groups at home. As part of its propaganda for endless war, government repression within the United States has reached a new level with the federal grand jury witch hunt against antiwar activists in Minneapolis and Chicago, as well as with the long-standing

campaign to demonize U.S. Muslims under specious charges of “terrorism.”

A press conference at City Hall in New York City last month demonstrated that the Muslim American community is ready to fight back against Washington’s attacks. Representative signers of a statement by 100 imams, accompanied by the Reverends Robert Coleman of the Riverside Church, Stephen Chinlund of the Episcopal Church, and Mark Hallinan of the New York Society of Jesus, called on supporters to march on April 9 to condemn the war and Islamophobia.

The organizing statement, initiated by Malik Mujahid of the Muslim Peace Coalition USA, urged supporters “to stand in solidarity with our neighbors for justice at home and abroad; for peace and jobs; against wars and terrorism, and to bring our troops home.” Further, they expressed their solidarity with the struggles of working people in the U.S.,

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Tony Savino / Socialist Action

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The Abandonment of Camden

By WAYNE DELUCA

CAMDEN, N.J.— The home of poet Walt Whitman has closed two of its three public libraries, including the main branch of the Free Public Library. In 2010 all three had been slated to close but an outcry has saved one.

Since the 1960s, Camden has shed jobs and residents in unprecedented ways. It used to be a hub of industry, with 23 RCA Victor electronics factories. All have been closed or relocated, as have the shipyards that once lined the Delaware River and employed thousands. Campbell's Soup still has its headquarters in Camden but is no longer the mass employer it was.

Racial tensions and deindustrialization have bled the city dry. Immigrant communities that thrived in decades past are simply gone today, as the children of Polish and Italian workers drawn here nearly a century ago left for the suburbs. Today, Camden has among the highest unemployment, homelessness, and high school dropout rates in the country. Two out of five residents are below the poverty line. The violent crime rate is over five times the national average, with 2380 per 100,000 residents.

"Transition Park," a tent city that was described by journalist Chris Hedges in *The Nation* magazine (Jan. 28, 2011), sprang up in 2009. It has since been removed, but the grinding poverty and homelessness that it represented have not gone with it.

Over the years, millions in reinvestment funds, including grants and tax incentives for the corporate developers, were directed to a narrow strip of the waterfront, but failed to change the city for the working people who live here. An aquarium, marina, en-



(Above) Feb. 13 anti-violence march in Camden for Anjanea Williams, killed by a stray bullet.

tertainment complex, stadium, and a small amount of restored housing have created a tiny, gentrified bubble removed from the blight and accessible by freeways. Most of the city is stunning in its desolation, broad streets devoid of hope, while the pet projects of city and state bureaucrats have only generated a handful

of low-paying jobs.

Failure has become the hallmark of civic leadership. Three mayors—all Democrats—have been jailed for corruption, the most recent in 2001. From 2002 to 2010, the state of New Jersey directly administered the city's government, and since 2005 the police and school system have been run by the state.

Mayor Dana Redd has joined Newark's Corey Booker in shifting the burden of budget shortfalls onto public employee unions, a trend that has sparked controversy across the nation. The Democrats have moved from their former rhetoric about being "friends of labor" to promoting open attacks on public workers. Meanwhile, the union officialdom, mired in the Democratic Party, has proven unable to mount any defense.

In January, Camden laid off over 400 city workers (a quarter of the total), including 167 police officers and 68 firefighters. In April, emergency state funds will cover rehiring 50 police and 15 firefighters—but only for six more months. Like so much of the tragic history of Camden, this is a token gesture to save face. All this represents an historic abandonment of the people of Camden. In a city already stretched to the limit, the brutality of the cuts demanded by tough-talking New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is at its most transparent.

In many ways Camden is a picture of the grim future awaiting all American cities abandoned by big industry. Only a workers' fightback that aims at the creation of durable, high-paying union jobs can begin to revitalize Camden and the other cities that have been abandoned by the capitalist system. ■

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A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

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400,000 rally in London against government cutbacks

Akira Suemori / AP



In the largest British union-organized event in 20 years, 400,000 swelled into central London on March 26 to protest cutbacks of social services. Local government budgets will be slashed by up to 9 percent, with libraries and youth clubs closing; £7 bn. is being cut from welfare and social security spending. Thousands of public workers will lose jobs. Coalitions backing the protest say that working people should not pay for the government's wars and tax breaks to the wealthy.

U.S. workers battle nationwide assault on public unions

By CARL SACK

Workers in Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and elsewhere are continuing to battle massive neoliberal austerity measures and attacks on their organizing rights. But in the absence of any strikes, and with the almost universal capitulation of the labor leadership on wage and benefit concession demands, the bosses' offensive seems to be spreading and gaining confidence.

In Ohio, after weeks of pro-labor protest throughout the state, Gov. John Kasich signed a law on April 1 destroying collective bargaining rights for 360,000 public workers. The law removes seniority-based pay raises, mandates a 15 percent co-pay on health-care premiums, outlaws public-sector strikes, allows easier union decertification, and nullifies contracts in school districts in towns or school districts that declare a "financial emergency." Rather than striking to protect their rights and pay, unions are backing a Democrat-led attempt to put the law before a voter referendum.

The assault on public workers goes hand in hand with deep cuts to the unemployed and the poor. Michigan has passed a law to reduce unemployment compensation from 26 weeks to 20 despite an official unemployment rate of over 10 percent, while Florida and Arkansas are considering similar measures.

The Indiana legislature backed off of an open-shop law after weeks of protest and a walkout by Democrats, but advanced bills reducing unemployment payments, rolling back project-labor agreements in construction, massively expanding school vouchers, cutting school funding for poorer urban districts, and banning local minimum wage increases.

In Minnesota, the Senate passed a budget bill that would eliminate 15 percent of the state's workforce and freeze wages for all other state workers. The bill would require state workers making an average of \$38,000 per year to pay over \$6000 more toward health insurance premiums. The House approved a bill eliminating teacher tenure and instituting merit pay based on student test scores.

Coupled with the attacks is a massive propaganda assault aimed at erasing the gains of organized labor from official recognition. In the most egregious case so far, Maine's Republican governor, Paul LePage, had a mural depicting the history of the state's labor movement removed from the capitol. The Maine legislature is also considering a bill that would allow companies to pay \$2.25 less per hour than the state's minimum wage to workers under age 20 and eliminate the maximum number of work hours for teenagers over 15.

Wisconsin remains the state with the most dramatic showdown over anti-union measures. On March 11, Gov. Scott Walker signed the bill that strips collective

bargaining rights and reduces public workers' pay by 8 percent. The law is in limbo as of this writing, as a Dane County (where Madison is located) judge issued a restraining order preventing the bill from going into effect. Walker's administration initially attempted to ignore the order, claiming the bill had been published on-line and was therefore in effect, but backed off implementing it later in the week. Multiple court challenges to the law are based on its passage having violated the state's open meetings statutes, because a Senate committee gave less than the required two hours' notice for a hearing to pass the bill.

The indefinite halt to the Wisconsin law has been thanks to the most massive and sustained fightback of any state. Some 185,000 protesters took to the streets around the state capitol on March 12, the largest protest in the state's history. That event included a worker-farmer solidarity tractorcade. The same day, 3000 protesters came out in tiny Washburn, in far northern Wisconsin, to "greet" Walker at a Republican Party fundraiser.

Although street actions in Madison have since ebbed, there continue to be creative forms of protest regularly. These have included everything from labor ballad singalongs and free speech actions inside the capitol building (now guarded by state troopers with metal detectors at the entrances), to Union Cab taxi parades, to running protests and a "Zombie Walk" against Walker. Around the city, many shops have pro-worker slogans plastered to their windows, and it's hard to go anywhere without seeing solidarity buttons or shirts worn by pedestrians.

Solidarity protests continue to ripple across the state, albeit of a much more modest nature than previously. In several cities, activists have taken to picketing M&I Bank, whose board of directors all gave the legal limit in contributions to Walker's election campaign, making them his second largest source of funds. During the height of the protests at the state capitol, M&I allowed Walker to use an underground tunnel connecting the building to their bank to avoid contact with protesters.

Unfortunately, the focus of pro-labor action has been parried by union officials and the Democratic Party away from the streets and toward electoral efforts, including petitioning to recall Republican state senators and campaigning for Democrat JoAnne Kloppenburg in the April 5 Wisconsin Supreme Court election.

A broad call for mobilization on April 4 initiated by the AFL-CIO, dubbed, "We Are One," will likely draw tens of thousands into actions nationwide, ranging in character from street protests to phone banking for Democrats. This day is appropriately symbolic as the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during

Gred DeRuiter / The State Journal / AP



(Above) College students rally at Michigan capitol against budget cuts to higher education.

the Memphis sanitation workers' strike. A one-day general strike does not appear to be on the agenda, although such an action—like the "Day Without Immigrants" on May Day, 2006—could have demonstrated the power of a united working class to repel the ruling-class attacks.

While Socialist Action supports the recall of any politicians who have participated in the attack on worker's rights, electing Democrats is the last thing that will serve workers' interests. Ironically, the much-vilified Koch brothers, major funders of the Tea Party, also contributed over \$12,000 to the Wisconsin Democratic Party and individual Democratic candidates in 2009 and 2010. M&I Bank executives gave almost \$4000 to Democrats over the same time period, according to data collected by the Center for Responsive Politics.

The Democrats are beholden to the same ruling rich as the Republicans, but position themselves as an opposition party by softening their neoliberal agenda and dressing it in pro-labor rhetoric. Unions should use the momentum generated on April 4 to call together a broad Congress of Labor to found a real Labor Party based in the unions and representing the interests of the working class rather than corporate campaign donors. ■



(Left) Libyan rebel soldier passes burning tank that was bombed by NATO near Ajdabiya, March 23.

... LIBYA

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racism against immigrant workers, and to support those in Bahrain, Yemen, and elsewhere who are “victims of a terrible repression carried out with the direct complicity of those who claim to be coming to your rescue. ... International solidarity friends ... let us not be afraid of debates between us, including with our Libyan comrades. No to unity on a minimal basis! Let us not be an accessory to the balkanization of Libya and the countries in the area.”

On April 1, Reuters reported a conversation with the Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli, Giovanni Innocenzo Martinelli, who stated that recent NATO raids had killed at least 40 civilians in Tripoli. Yet some insist that the U.S. and NATO are “saving” Libyan lives. We ask: What concern did the U.S. show for the lives of the three children and grandfather in Gaza murdered by the Zionist army on March 22 while playing football? Or for the 1400 massacred in Gaza in 2008-9, or the hundreds murdered by Israeli snipers since then?

The millions dead in Iraq and Afghanistan from decades of sanctions, war, and occupation—added on to the tens of millions murdered by U.S. or U.S.-backed wars and repression around the globe over more than a century—should be more than enough proof that the United States and its Western allies care nothing for Libyan lives.

But we will add to this the recent record of “humanitarian intervention” in Haiti. Here too, many claimed that without U.S. or UN troops, huge numbers would be massacred by Duvalierist forces. The result of the invasion by U.S. and UN troops was cold-blooded murder by those forces, death from cholera or starvation, blocking of humanitarian relief supplies after the 2010 earthquake—and the kidnapping and exile by the U.S. of the country’s elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The UN resolution authorizing the “no-fly zone” says force may only be used to protect Libyan civilians, but heads of state in the U.S., Britain, and France, and their top diplomats and military chiefs, have all repeatedly said that “Gadhafi must go.” The goal of regime change has been made clear by the character of the U.S./NATO war—the bombing of all possible Libyan targets regardless of their position, direction, or activity.

Socialist Action categorically rejects all forms of imperialist intervention in Libya, “no-fly zones” included. We lend no credence to the language employed by the UN/NATO and U.S. imperial wordsmiths, who are skilled at justifying the use of deadly force in all its manifestations behind the cover of resolutions that broadcast fake “humanitarian” intentions.

Recent days have seen a repeating pattern as imperialist air strikes force a retreat by Gadhafi’s forces—which then counterattack against under-armed and poorly coordinated rebels and retake the lost ground. This pattern almost guarantees escalation of the war, i.e., the introduction of new types of weaponry, perhaps ground troops, and increased civilian casualties.

It has also provoked a debate within U.S. government circles about whether to arm the rebels—a debate centering on whether Washington can continue to control a well-armed Libyan force. Obama, Clinton,

and military chiefs have all said they are open to supplying weapons and training. The media has speculated, however, that for diplomatic purposes it might be left to France, or even the Egyptian military, to funnel arms into Libya.

Reasons for imperialist intervention

Gadhafi was never a genuine anti-imperialist, much less a socialist, but rather one of a long list of bourgeois populists who kept tight control over the masses while doling out rivulets of revenue from the country’s sale of its resources, served up with meaningless bombast against imperialism.

But despite Gadhafi’s open turn to the West in recent years, he is still a wild card for imperialism, unpredictable and difficult to control, along the lines of Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein. So why not kill two birds with one stone, and launch a war to put in place a more reliable flunky while showing the world once again who calls the shots? And by trying to derail the Arab revolution, Washington’s war in Libya also aids its junior partner, Israel, thrown into a panic by the rolling Arab uprising.

For the U.S. government, “humanitarian” intervention in Libya has the added benefit of deflecting anti-war sentiment at home. The U.S. triumph in the first Gulf War helped to end the “Vietnam syndrome”—i.e., the abhorrence of people in the United States for the government’s near-genocidal wars. But now that the U.S. is bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington hopes that its fake “humanitarian” escapade in Libya will end the “Iraq syndrome.”

In *Time* magazine, Massimo Calabresi wrote: “President Barack Obama says he’s intervening to prevent atrocities in Libya. But details of behind-the-scenes debates at the White House show he’s going to war in part to rehabilitate an idea. Administration and human rights organizations admit that reports of potential war crimes [by Gadhafi] remain unconfirmed. Instead, interviews with senior administration officials show that the rehabilitators convinced Obama to go to war ... to bolster America’s ability to intervene elsewhere in the future.

“The president and some of his advisers are so eager to rehabilitate the idea of preventive intervention that they’re exaggerating the violence they say they are intervening to prevent in Libya. ‘The effort to shoe-horn this into an imminent genocide model is strained,’ says one senior administration official.”

Of course, the Libya war is likewise a boon for the arms industry—costing \$550 million as of March 29, the majority of which has gone to the manufacturers of Tomahawk missiles. A cartoon in the *Hartford Courant* depicted teachers watching a cruise missile flying toward Libya and one saying, “There goes 20 years of paychecks.”

Instead of ending the “Iraq syndrome,” what Washington has likely created is yet another quagmire, in which soldiers on all sides and Libyan civilians will face years of death and suffering. A post-Gadhafi, pro-U.S. regime is guaranteed to repress any movements seeking to take control of the country’s revenues for use of its people.

On March 29 the rebels’ Interim National Council issued its eight-point plan for the country. It included promises to use the nation’s economy “for the benefit of the Libyan people”—a claim put in doubt by the same document’s tribute to a “free private sector.” The British *Guardian* observed that the statement wording

indicated crafting by imperialist advisors. And it was issued as Western officials such as Hilary Clinton and UK Prime Minister David Cameron were meeting with Council leaders, as well as conferring amongst themselves to plot the next stages of the war.

Solidarity among the Arab people

One way or another, it is the masses of Libya who alone can decide their own fate. Those who claim that they can’t do so without imperialist aid ignore the ability of the masses in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere to face down vicious militaries of their own. They ignore too such examples of decades-long resistance to murderous repression by internal and external foes as the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people.

The flip side of this is that they ignore the unfortunate truth that even bloodier confrontations are coming in Egypt and the other Arab countries, as none of those revolutions are yet complete—and in those confrontations the West will seek to use its role in Libya to disarm both ideologically and materially those who say the working masses can run their own countries. So regional solidarity is crucial for the fate of each country’s revolutionary process, and of all of them taken as a whole.

There are, however, some heartening examples of the kind of solidarity that can begin to turn back the tide in favor of the region’s masses. Grassroots groups in Tunisia and Egypt, on their own initiative, set up collection points for food and medical supplies for the Libyan people, and arranged their own transport of these supplies into Libya.

Many Egyptians who were working in Libya when the conflict broke out stayed to fight with the rebels. Al Ahram quoted an Egyptian grandmother who, along with her family, is aiding the rebels in various capacities: “I feel so proud to be Egyptian and Arab. Now that the Arab people are defending their lives and freedoms, no one will be able to stand in their way.”

The paper cited an Egyptian supermarket owner in Benghazi who donates goods every day to the rebels; he regrets that he didn’t join the Egyptian revolution and is proud to be part of the Libyan uprising. Said one Libyan: “I didn’t use to like Egyptians; I used to think they only cared about their own interests, but after the revolution, I saw many of them volunteering with us and supporting us in an unprecedented way. I fell in love with Egyptians.”

A medical volunteer spoke of “very poor Egyptian laborers, wearing light clothes in the cold, and coming to donate blood, or even notes of 10 and 15 dinars. I was so touched by their generosity and solidarity,” said the volunteer, “who thinks the revolutions will bring Arab and African peoples together in their struggles against totalitarian regimes.”

The walls of Benghazi also speak to growing international solidarity, with graffiti such as “Thank you Tunisia, thank you Egypt,” “Greetings from the Libyan February 17 to the Egyptian January 25 revolution,” and “Benghazi is freed by Libyan and Arab revolutionaries.”

Rank-and-file Libyans have shown great bravery in confronting the snipers, tanks, and artillery that Gadhafi has thrown against them. But the proceeds of their struggle are being usurped by pro-capitalist figures, such as those in the Interim National Council, who have placed themselves at the forefront of the rebel leadership and are now playing into the hands of imperialist officials.

For their part, the imperialist butchers of the world, now led by the United States, seek to re-establish and expand their domination of their former colonies in African and the Middle East. If the U.S. and NATO are able to gain a foothold in Libya, the type of chaos, misery, terrorist incidents, and repression typical of post-invasion Iraq and Afghanistan is virtually guaranteed.

Only the reassertion of the Libyan masses themselves as leaders of the uprising, aided by workers from around the region, and the removal from the uprising’s leadership of the traitorous collaborators with imperialism, can avoid such outcomes.

Democratic popular councils should be established in the areas held by the rebels, and empowered to take measures that deepen the Libyan revolution and fully address the democratic and economic demands of the masses. Such measures, and the knowledge that the councils will fight for them against both Gadhafi and the quislings, are needed to give the masses inspiration and confidence in completing the uprising they began.

And such measures can also effectively appeal to the interests of those among the oppressed masses—including immigrant workers—who are mistakenly siding with the Gadhafi regime.

Ultimately, to ensure victory for working people and the oppressed in Libya, it will be necessary to construct a revolutionary party, which can lead the struggle forward to socialism. ■

By ANDREW POLLACK

As the imperialists began their war against Libya, their Zionist junior partners were stepping up attacks on Gaza and openly threatening to launch an assault exceeding the murderous onslaughts of 2008 and 2009. In the most criminal episode of the current wave, on March 22, Israeli missiles killed eight Palestinians, including three children and their grandfather who were playing soccer outside their home.

These attacks occur in a context of stepped-up theft of land and building of settlements, destruction of farms and orchards, eviction from homes, detentions, beatings by soldiers and settlers, and assassinations. At the end of March Israel's parliament passed laws criminalizing commemoration of the Nakba (the 1948 expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and establishment of the colonial-settler state of Israel), and legalizing refusal of towns to admit Palestinians as residents.

On March 21, *Haaretz* reported that Israeli Military Intelligence is spying on U.S. activists in the Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions movement, on coalitions trying to break the siege of Gaza, and on other peaceful solidarity efforts. USPCN noted that the U.S. government had maintained complete silence on this outrageous violation of its own citizens' civil liberties by a foreign government. U.S. silence is no surprise, of course, since the main targets of the current FBI and grand jury persecutions are Palestinians and Palestine solidarity activists. This pattern is only the most visible example of a decades-long policy of repression, and has been demonstrated once again by the criminal prosecution of 11 Muslim students at UC Irvine for yelling during a Zionist official's speech.

But Palestinians continue organizing and mobilizing in the face of these attacks, and in fact have taken several crucial new initiatives.

On Feb. 28, activists delivered a "Notice of Termination" to Palestine Authority officials in New York and Washington, DC. Noting that the PA had failed to keep its oath to represent the wishes of the Palestinian people, the notices demanded termination of the Oslo Accords, dissolution of the PA and the resignation of Mahmoud Abbas, an end to the blockade of Gaza, an end to all security arrangements with Israel, release of all Palestinian political prisoners from Palestinian jails, and unification of the resistance by building "a national platform upon which to coalesce Palestinian political parties and formations in their resistance to apartheid, colonialism, and ethnic cleansing."

The latter demand is the continuation of a campaign launched by USPCN after *Al Jazeera's* publication of the "Palestine Papers," which revealed the PA's complete and repeated capitulation in negotiations with Israel to all the latter's demands, and to its insistence that the PA help stamp out all forms of resistance. The activists noted that this surrender was only possible because of the lack of democratic representation for Palestinians—because of the exclusion of refugees and those within pre-1967 Israel, the cancellation or postponement of elections, and the undemocratic nature of the PA and its existence as a creature of the Oslo accord.

The group called for new elections to the Palestinian National Council in which all Palestinians around the world could participate. They also demanded the resignation of all members of the current PNC and of the Executive Committee of the PLO, and the establishment of a transitional national leadership body composed of representatives of all segments of the Palestinian people.

The significance of such elections was detailed in a March 29 column in the British *Guardian* by longtime Palestinian activist and author Karma Nabulsi. Referring to the uprising throughout the region, she wrote, "Since January Palestinians in the refugee camps and under military occupation have all been asking the same question: is this not our moment too?"

"The solution to this fierce dilemma lies in a single claim now uniting all Palestinians: the quest for national unity. Although the main parties might remain irreconciled, the Palestinian people most certainly are not. Their division is not political but geographic: the majority are refugees outside Palestine, while the rest inside it are forcibly separated into three distinct locations. The demand is the same universal claim to democratic representation that citizens across the Arab world are calling for with such force and beauty: each Palestinian voice counts."

This is far different from the new elections—for the PA and/or legislative councils in the West Bank and Gaza, not the PNC—promised by Abbas after demonstrations for Palestinian unity took place in Gaza and the West Bank on March 15. In contrast, the PNC, as Nabulsi writes, "is the institutional body that gives both legitimacy and a mandate to the PLO, which is still recognized internationally as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

"The PNC, as the parliament of the PLO itself, was once the heart of the Palestinian national movement;

Palestinians plan protests for their right of return



Hatem Moussa / AP

(Above) Women in Gaza City mourn for family members killed by Israeli airstrikes on March 22.

made up of the resistance parties, unions and independents, it could claim the legitimacy of a national liberation movement. But there have not been proper elections to it for decades: most of the seats are quotas, reserved for the factions; members have died of old age; there is not even a definitive list showing who the current members are.

"This crumbling hollowed-out mausoleum once housed a vibrant and well directed Palestinian struggle for freedom, full of dynamism and debate. Now only the mobilizing power of direct elections can make it the representative institution Palestinians demand.

"The call for PNC elections ... is also the single revolutionary principle that can overturn Palestinians' current political imprisonment, because it reassures them that each voice contributes to determining national platforms, policies and strategies. Organizing around this demand takes the decision-making out of the hands of the few and puts it back into the hands of the people themselves—Islamist and secular, one-state or two-state supporters, conservative or radical."

Nabulsi also noted that a reconciliation of Fatah and Hamas, which some pro-"unity" protesters fixate on, would not solve the problem of representation and revitalization of the liberation movement.

On March 15, youth in the West Bank and Gaza tried to replicate the mass sit-ins spreading throughout the Arab world, with their sole demand being the call for "unity"—that is, unity among all political groups to better fight the occupation. Turnouts were modest but spirited. Participants were brutalized by the security forces of both the PA and Hamas. In addition, although organizers had called on participants to only bring Palestinian flags, and not flags or signs for any political parties, Fatah activists came with their group's flags and tried to outshout organizers with their own slogans.

We must note for future reference that the call for no flags raises longer-term strategic questions. As a tactic to reinforce the theme of unity, it was a useful call

for the March 15 action. But grassroots Palestinian organizers and groups are confronting the inevitable need for political formations of their own, rooted in the working masses of Palestinians around the world.

It is too soon to say whether this is more likely to happen through revitalization and radicalization of existing left groups or the forming of new ones (and certainly the formation and activities of the USPCN are an encouraging sign of the potential). But it will certainly be the product of the gathering together of the best of those who are right now organizing at the base in the face of the PA's capitulation and the quiescence and repression of Hamas.

Development of a political alternative will also come through clarification of what unity is for—i.e. what concrete goals and long-term vision can best unify the masses. Again, the demands of the USPCN for dissolution of undemocratic, collaborating structures and the enfranchisement of all Palestinians, all in the service of genuine liberation, including the right of return, are a good example.

The right of return is the central plank of upcoming activities on May 15. Through "Third Intifada" Facebook pages and other means, organizers are calling for Palestinians and their allies around the world to mobilize on that date, the anniversary of the Nakba. As we go to press it appears there will be efforts to organize actual attempts at return—i.e., attempts by refugees to actually cross borders and return to the homes from which they were evicted.

If refugees turn out in numbers giving the actions only symbolic meaning, that would still represent a turning point in global awareness of the right of Palestinians to return. And if on May 15, or subsequently, large numbers try to exercise this right in practice, it would represent a qualitative advance in the struggle, perhaps taking it to a level not seen since the first Intifada (1987-1993) or the Great Revolt of 1936. ■

Iraq's 'Day of Salvation'

On April 9, as protesters join the national antiwar march in New York, a new coalition in Iraq will hold a "Day of Salvation" against the occupation. The event will build on recent protests against the Iraqi government's failure to provide services and jobs, especially the Feb. 25 "Day of Rage," in which close to 70,000 rallied. The coalition has called for protests targeting the force most responsible for the country's destroyed economy, the U.S. occupation. They will hold rallies at U.S. military bases and at Iraqi government institutions.

Their demands include the departure of occupying forces, revocation of the security agreement with the U.S., revocation of the sectarian and ethnic quota system in the political process, transparent elections without the interference of occupation forces, release of political prisoners, and jobs.

The coalition also announced that April 9 would mark "the launch of a long-term sit-in in all Iraqi provinces to mark the eighth anniversary of the

brutal American occupation. ... This sit-in will not last hours or days, but will continue night and day until the protesters demands are met. ... For our sit-ins we will set up tents in front of U.S. military bases, which are located in every Iraqi province."

On the Feb. 25 "Day of Rage," 14 were murdered by government forces; the brutal repression pushed protesters to go from demanding reform and better conditions to demanding that the government resign.

Unions and unemployed organizations have been rallying for years against the lack of electricity and drinking water, against hunger and unemployment, and faced in retaliation imprisonment, torture and murder. Joblessness is said to be in the range of 60 percent to 70 percent of the workforce.

Connections to the revolt throughout the Middle East are made in banners warning the government: "O inhabitants of the Green Zone—think about the others," and, "Remember the fate of Arab dictatorship regimes and how their people revolted."

— ANDREW POLLACK

Capitalism's rape of the environment is basic to its system of exploitation

Tony Savino / Socialist Action



(Left) Rally against nuclear power, held in New York City, April 2.

By DANIEL ADAM

In the last 11 months the world has been shaken by the BP oil spill and the Fukushima nuclear-plant crisis—possibly the two greatest catastrophes of oil drilling and nuclear power in history. This moment is critical for the formation of a successful environmental movement.

The anti-ecological nature of the prevailing social order is being exposed more sharply and openly than ever before. The Fukushima disaster demonstrates the desperation of the capitalist class in an especially clear light, as nuclear power has been one of its most favored remedies for climate change.

The avowed attempt to slow climate change with nuclear power is yet another scheme thrown up by capitalism to partially ameliorate environmental crises in the short term by creating ever greater, less manageable crises in the long term—at best. It is a “solution” that metes out the bulk of its destruction against working and oppressed people. It is not the first such “solution” of this kind, and it is not the only such “solution” proposed in relation to climate change.

For example, capitalist factory-style agriculture, which relies on vast monocrop farms, tends to rapidly deplete the soil. As a “solution,” huge amounts of chemical fertilizer are applied. However, the phosphorous and nitrogen that this pumps into the ecosystem wreaks havoc, especially in lakes and oceans, where it has created vast dead zones. Scientists such as James Hansen and Johan Rockstrom have projected that the continued dumping of nitrogen or phosphorous from fertilizers into the oceans could result in ecological disasters on a similar scale to those created by climate change.

Of course, dependence on increasing amounts of chemical fertilizer is good for capitalist profits. It has aided corporate farms against the small ones while providing a lucrative outlet for chemical manufacturers.

And in comparison with nuclear power, chemical fertilizer is not so bad for

Preventing imminent ecological catastrophe means shutting down capitalist institutions & ending capitalist rule.

the rest of us. It actually manages to replace some nutrients as advertised. But nuclear power doesn't slow climate change one iota. Neither do any of the other capitalist solutions to climate change. And there's no sound reason to believe they ever will.

Bio-fuels were never close to carbon-neutral. And there isn't enough land on earth to supply even a fraction of present energy needs and at the same time feed everyone. But the recent spike in bio-fuel production did help drive up food prices, and help throw hundreds of thousands more into starvation.

Other proposed solutions include dumping massive amounts of iron slurry into the oceans in an attempt to promote plankton growth, and blasting the moon with nuclear weapons in order to envelop the earth in light-reflecting dust.

But what about renewable energy based on wind, solar, water, and geothermal sources? A November 2009 *Scientific American* article, for instance, more or less demonstrated that it is entirely possible to fuel all present human activity with these energy sources using present technology, and that it could be accomplished within 20 years.

Still, there's no reason to expect fossil fuel use to cease if the present governments and corporations were somehow forced into building such a renewable energy system. Without closing down the existing fossil fuel infrastructure, the supply of energy would simply increase. This would lower the price of energy until energy-based economic activity expanded to absorb the greater energy pool. Indeed, this is the only material impact building such technology

has in the immediate term. What else could be expected from an economic system based on perpetual growth?

If the available energy is doubled with renewable technology, what will happen when the oil runs out and the world economy has developed to require twice as much energy as is supplied by renewable sources? There aren't enough rare earth minerals on this planet to provide all the parts and batteries necessary for such an enormous amount of power. What would people do then? Turn to nuclear energy?

The problem is not merely technological; it is in fact fundamentally social. The present profoundly anti-ecological technological structure is only one manifestation of this social crisis. The self-identified environmental movement is brimming with strategies to curb fossil fuel use within the bounds of capitalism: Create small eco-friendly businesses that out-compete polluting corporations; cap-and-trade agreements; institute government rationing of consumer goods that create or require green-house gas emissions.

While these proposals are very likely to degrade the condition of working and oppressed people (by raising the cost of living, expanding government powers over working people, or simply limiting fulfillment of needs), they pose no credible threat to the corporate and financial powers who depend on the destruction of our ecosystem for their survival.

There's about \$10 trillion in fossil-fuel infrastructure available, which is expected to last 10 to 50 more years, according to an estimate by journalist Paul Roberts. It is owned by people and institutions with even more trillions at their disposal. Without decommissioning or converting this infrastructure, climate change will not slow an inch—no matter how much fuel efficiency or renewable energy is introduced.

Small businesses, market-based solutions, and capitalist governments do not have the will or ability to take away that \$10 trillion or the future profits anti-

ciated by the companies in question.

We must be frank: Preventing imminent ecological catastrophe on a scale never before seen means taking over or shutting down a significant amount of capitalist property, seriously encroaching on their power, and ending their rule as soon as possible.

Rather than call for workers to sacrifice more, we must call for workers' power over the economy. Instead of depending on markets and privately owned businesses to save us, we must call for public ownership and workers' control of natural resources and the largest industrial and financial institutions.

Instead of merely regulating the purchase of environmentally hazardous commodities by working people, why not outlaw the production of such commodities in the first place? The enterprises that build such commodities should be nationalized and their production converted into something useful for humanity.

The March 26 marches against nuclear power of some 210,000 in Germany demonstrate that it is possible for masses of people to mount a serious political challenge to the capitalists' ability to determine what technology we use. The future of nuclear power everywhere is now in question. The Japanese government, following the Fukushima crisis, is already considering nationalizing Tokyo Electric Power Company. The logic of this challenge to nuclear power must be extended to the fossil fuel industry and all other central enemies of our ecosystem.

The only force capable of leading a direct, fundamental challenge to the possessors of capital are those who create the capital—the working class. Of course, social groups like young people, indigenous people, and the middle classes can take the lead initially and play important roles throughout the struggle. But to succeed, the movement for ecological sustainability must find a basis in the interests and aspirations of workers.

And here the movement must demonstrate another central truth—development of ecological sustainability does not require the degradation of the lives of working and oppressed people, or the reversion to an earlier social system. In fact, such a transition could very well be a part of a dramatic improvement in the lives of billions, and the development of a new society.

Demands for workers' control over workplace safety, a 30-hour workweek for 40 hours pay (to create more jobs), quality mass transit, walkable cities, the elimination and conversion of military production, fresh poison-free food, publicly provided quality home insulation, public ownership and conversion of the entire fossil-fuel industry, and a massive emergency program to reorganize the economy along ecologically sustainable lines (while employing tens of millions) all would simultaneously benefit working people and drastically improve the state of our ecosystem.

A movement built on demands like these would expose how the ecological destruction created by capitalism is tied to the exploitation and oppression of working people. It would identify the long-term goals of ecological sustainability with the immediate needs of the social forces capable of making it a reality. ■

... NO NUKES!

(continued from page 12)

26 days at those levels is equivalent to a cumulative exposure of 100,000 microSieverts, fating all who are contaminated to cancer.

There is no doubt that Fukushima radiation levels are approaching those of Chernobyl. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBT), based in Austria, has a worldwide network of detectors used to monitor atomic bomb blasts and sniff out the tiniest traces of radionuclides. Its readings indicate that daily levels of Iodine-131 are 73% of the 1986 disaster and Cesium-137 is 60%.

The radioactive plume has definitely reached North America via winds blowing across the Pacific Ocean. CTBT stations in Alaska, Hawaii, California, and Quebec all agree with the high I-131 and Cs-137 Becquerel readings taken at Takasaki, Japan.

So far in the U.S., 14 states have reported elevated radiation levels. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), which is also nothing but a promoter of nuclear power, has told us it's perfectly harmless. Many Americans are not swallowing it and have scrambled to purchase potassium iodide tablets to prevent thyroid cancer, placing a strain on the three suppliers.

The hazards of exposure to radiation have been consistently downplayed by the Japanese government to the general public, admitting it is way above the NBR, yet assuring them it's harmless. This is a lie and the height of irresponsibility. There are no serious plans to evacuate the thousands of people who will be in harm's way in the event of a catastrophic multiple meltdown. People in the outer perimeter are merely told to seal their homes and stay indoors, remaining trapped while running out of provisions. Those who have somewhere else to go have wisely fled the area on their own.

The seawater around the plant is crackling, yet there has been no ban on eating seafood. Tap water has been irradiated, but the government has deemed it unsafe to drink for only infants, no one else. Nonetheless, there has been a run on bottled water because everyone is skeptical. Vegetables grown in the northeast are not fit to eat, and a number of nations have banned food imports. Even the rain is radioactive because of heavy atmospheric concentrations.

Helicopter crews dropping water on the crippled reactors have had to abort missions because it is too hazardous. Even airlines are rerouting international flights to avoid the plume. A Russian cargo vessel that sailed past the plant on its return voyage was quarantined, with 19 crew members under medical supervision because of high radiation readings. In addition, the U.S. Navy pulled back a carrier that was flying rescue missions because it feared radiation would be taken in through the ship's vents if it was anchored too close to the plant.

The beleaguered Japanese people are justifiably expressing their fear, anger, and frustration over being lied to by TEPCO and the government and are demanding to know the truth. They have begun to publicly protest in Tokyo and other cities because they know nuclear power is not safe and money-grubbing utilities such as TEPCO do not have their best interests at heart.

Three associated press reporters have exposed the company's fudging on its earthquake/tsunami risk assessment despite more than ample experience from the past for both to occur. TEPCO made up its own computer model and chose to ignore all geological evidence from prior to 1886 in calculating risk. No wonder the nuclear power industry has an abominable safety record, with regulatory agencies always turning a blind eye to violations.

The tragic outcome of this deadly game of nuclear roulette has been another "Oops!" moment in the continuing nightmare of disaster capitalism. All of Japan's 54 reactors are similarly situated near the sea on an island complex that is prone to frequent and intense earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. The U.S. likewise has at least 10 nuclear power sites sitting on fault lines.

Three Mile Island

Since their inception, the nuclear weapons and power industries have been enshrouded in secrecy and lies with their propaganda mills churning out falsehoods and fairy tales. Those born in the immediate post-World War II period can recall the scary and thoroughly ridiculous "duck-and-cover" ads run regularly on TV, showing school children how to protect themselves by diving under their desks in the event of an atomic blast. We needn't mention the Miss Atomic Bomb beauty queens that were grotesquely paraded around annually in swimsuits up until 1957.

They are still lying to us today. The media is repeating the claptrap from the government, saying, yes, there was a partial meltdown in 1979 at Three Mile



(Above) Japanese woman in shelter for tsunami refugees is screened for radiation.

Nuclear power is neither safe nor green. It is a hazard because of the regular venting of radioactive steam and hot water. Greenhouse gases are generated at every stage of the nuclear cycle.

Island (near Harrisburg, Pa.) but no radiation escaped because the containment held. But in fact, members of the surrounding farming community exposed to the radioactive emissions from the plant all reported a similar set of symptoms—metallic taste in the mouth, burning and blistering skin, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, rectal bleeding, and hair loss. Clearly, they were afflicted with radiation sickness.

Many near Three Mile Island also witnessed deaths, stillbirths, and deformities among their livestock and pets, which had been outside for much longer. When they reported these things, the authorities told them that they were suffering from mental anxiety and fear of radiation, and their symptoms were merely psychosomatic! From that we may assume that they had also hallucinated the deaths and deformities of their animals.

Since then, epidemiologists have proven otherwise, showing that subsequent cancer rates were higher where the radioactive plume was most dense compared with cancer rates of areas that were not as heavily irradiated.

The legacy of the 1986 Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster is much worse. The reactor had no containment vessel, so when it exploded it sent an intense radioactive plume 10 kilometers into the air that spread over the entire Northern Hemisphere. Parts of Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus were heavily irradiated, with the latter having received 70% of the fallout. The terrible health consequences in the region persist to this day.

The UN World Health Organization (WHO) estimated the death toll from the cataclysm to be only 4000. However, a new book co-authored by three Russian scientists—"Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment"—challenges that gross underestimation, saying it is more like 985,000 fatalities, mostly from cancers. They base this on health data, radiological surveys, and scientific reports from 5000 sources.

The IAEA and WHO have had an understanding that requires underreporting of the hazardous effects of nuclear radiation. In fact, 20 years after Chernobyl, in 2006, WHO presented a whitewash of its health impacts that was scathingly criticized by epidemiologist Rosalie Bertell and others. The editor of the "Chernobyl" book, Janette Sherman, who is a physician and toxicologist, characterized the role of WHO in this case as being "like Dracula guarding the blood bank." The book also documents disturbing and freakish alterations in the plant and animal life in the region's ecosystems and its alarming decline in biodiversity.

The steadily deteriorating situation in Japan has touched off another debate over nuclear power around the world because people are tired of greedy utilities gambling with their lives. The conservative government in Germany headed by Angela Merkel has promised to shut down its older reactors, and the Green Party scored an election victory in her home state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, where it doubled its vote over the Christian Democrats. China is rethink-

ing its plans to build new reactors, and Switzerland is holding off on replacing some of its older facilities. That is, at least for now.

The Obama administration, on the other hand, is going full steam ahead with six new nuclear power stations and \$35 billion in loan guarantees plucked from taxpayers' wallets. Obama's pro-nuke Energy Secretary Stephen Chu is still insisting that nuclear power is a necessary part of the nation's "carbon-neutral" energy portfolio. Meanwhile, the Nuclear

Regulatory Commission supposedly has launched a series of inspections of the fleet of 104 badly aging and dilapidated reactors, no doubt to justify the extension on their licenses. Congress has likewise gotten busy in holding safety hearings. It's all a show, of course, to assure us that we can stop worrying about radiation poisoning and learn to love nukes.

There are no safe levels of radiation, no matter how small the amount or what the form, be it gamma or medical x-rays, alpha or beta particles. All of the most common isotopes associated with nuclear reactors—Iodine-129 & 131, Strontium-90, Cesium-137, and Plutonium-238—will harm the human body and other living organisms. When it comes to radioactivity penetrating living tissue, every dose is an overdose that can have mutagenic or carcinogenic effects.

Nuclear power is neither safe nor green and never will be, no matter where the reactors are located, fault lines or not. They are a hazard because of the routine venting of radioactive steam and the regular discharge of tritium-contaminated hot water that harms aquatic and marine ecosystems and pollutes drinking water. Because of their vast complexity, they are plagued with constant equipment failures regardless of how smart the geniuses were who designed them.

Operator error is also a serious problem. The partial meltdown at Three Mile Island was a combination of equipment and operator snafus. The seemingly endless build-up of radioactive wastes threatens all life in the biosphere, now and for thousands of millennia.

Nukes can never be a viable alternative to fossil fuels because, from cradle to grave, greenhouse gases are generated at every stage of the nuclear cycle. Along with radon gas, uranium mining gives off methane emissions. Milling the ore, converting the uranium to yellowcake, its conversion to hexafluoride gas, the enrichment of the hex, the fabrication of the fuel pellets and zirconium tubes, reactor construction, fuel processing and conditioning, the interim and permanent storage of wastes, and the lengthy decommissioning of the plants (over some 60 years) are all highly energy-intensive endeavors.

Plus, nuclear power stations are the most ludicrous and expensive way imaginable to boil water when we could be using the wind and Earth's more benign geological forces—tides, waves, free-flowing streams—to drive turbines for electricity.

Since the beginning of the Atomic Age, the entire planet has been irradiated to one degree or another. It is high time it stopped, before life as we know it becomes unrecognizable. These abominations must be shut down immediately and decommissioning begun at once. Ultimately, all energy comes from the sun, and we already have the clean technologies to harness it.

The priority should be the conversion to clean, safe, renewable, nonradioactive energy that powers an economy in which the necessities of life are produced according to ecological and human needs, rather than private profit. ■

No coalition with Liberals! Fight for socialist policies! Vote NDP on May 2!

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The defeat in the House of Commons of the most hated federal government in a long time triggered the fourth election campaign in seven years. Voters across the Canadian state go to the polls on May 2 to choose their pill for continuing economic maladies. With unemployment at nearly 9 per cent officially (double that figure if one includes discouraged workers and the chronically underemployed), with the average person in debt to the tune of \$100,000, with homeless shelters and food banks strained to the breaking point, voters have much to ponder.

The Stephen Harper-led minority government Conservatives, mired in election financing and deceit scandals, booted from office for being found in contempt of Parliament for refusing to disclose the cost of their corporate tax cuts, and their plans for new prisons and stealth combat jets, are asking for a majority.

Harper began his campaign in full attack mode, hyping the threat of "a coalition of free-spending opposition parties." He portrayed his agenda of social cut-backs, war spending, and gifts to the rich and powerful as "staying the course"—this in the midst of a dismal economic "recovery."

The Liberals under Michael Ignatieff donned populist vestments. While skewering Harper's undemocratic suspension of Parliament (twice), Ignatieff championed support for more child-care spaces, and for more aid to students burdened with rising tuitions. He claims to be for stronger public pensions and health care. His hope is that the electorate will forget, or at least forgive, the Liberal sponsorship scandal, the severe social cuts of Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Paul Martin in the 1990s, and Liberal decisions to send the Canadian military and police to Afghanistan and Haiti.

Gilles Duceppe's Bloc Quebecois advanced its demands for more federal transfer payments to Quebec, downplayed the Bloc's commitment to bourgeois sovereignty, and put a "progressive" veneer on a pro-system perspective.

The Green Party's Elizabeth May concentrated on trying to win a first seat for the party. Her policies would force working people to pay for the mess created by capitalism, with a regressive carbon tax, and measures that favour "greening" of the private sector. Notwithstand-



Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks to media following fall of his government on March 25, following Parliament vote of no confidence.

ing her platform, exclusion of May from the TV leaders' debate, which is posed again, would be outrageous.

Jack Layton and the labour-based New Democratic Party had a golden opportunity to offer a refreshing and radical alternative. But Layton started off with the totally uninspiring slogan "take the strain off your family budget, make everyday essentials less expensive."

It is commendable that Layton wants to help seniors, extend the ecoEnergy Retrofit programme for homeowners, remove the federal sales tax on home heating bills, and put an 8 per cent cap on the interest that can be charged by

credit card firms. But this is comparatively small stuff. The timidity of these proposals reveals something else—that the labour party brass is unwilling to reverse the huge tax concessions to big business of the past 20 years; that it lacks the courage to challenge the agenda of capitalist austerity. The NDP campaign even shies away from a call for dismantling the country's war budget and ending Ottawa's participation in US/NATO aggression. Sadly, this is reflected in Layton's decision to back the Western intervention into Libya (see article below).

Given the failed state of globalized capitalism, the need for an alternative is evident. Instead of "strained family budgets," the NDP should decry the one-sided class war being waged from the top down. It should stress the need to fight back with bold socialist measures, instead of paltry reforms. Workers who vote NDP in their millions have the power to shake up their party, toss away its Liberal-look-alike policies, and make the NDP fight for society's vast majority, the working class and the poor. Direct involvement in the NDP campaign now is critically important to that end.

Participation in a coalition government would be a dead end for labour and the left, notwithstanding the fact that coalition is perfectly legal in Canada and common around the world. Harper's attempt to demonize the notion of coalition is a crude attempt at self-preservation by exploiting political ignorance and anti-Quebec chauvinism (although the BQ has never actually been proposed as a coalition partner by any party). The fuss he's made over a possible Liberal-NDP coalition is doubly hypocritical because Harper proposed an alliance of Conservatives, New Democrats and the Bloc as an alternative to the faltering Paul Martin Liberal minority government in 2004.

Socialists oppose coalition for a radically different reason. Coalition with the Liberals or with any capitalist party would seriously undermine the tenuous orga-



(Above) File photo: March 2010 Toronto assembly sponsored by the NDP Socialist Caucus. In the May election, the NDP should advance a program committed to socialist policies—advocating strong antiwar, environmental, and working-class measures.

nizational independence of the NDP as a party of the labour movement and working people. As a partner in a Liberal government, the NDP would have to carry the can for austerity and corporate bailouts at home, and for imperial wars of occupation abroad.

The central issue today is not the morality or behaviour of the Tories (repugnant as they are). It is the continuing capitalist crisis and the assault on working people. The answer should be to make capital pay for the crisis it created. If the goal is a just and sustainable society, it only makes sense to institute a steep tax on wealth, to reverse the corporate bailouts, and to democratize the economy.

Instead of trying in vain to tame an irrational system, it is time to break the logic of the capitalist business cycle, to get off the treadmill of capitalist waste and oppression. It is time to put an end to profit from war and environmental destruction. It is time to dump the whole G20 agenda overboard.

To that end, Socialist Action advocates a number of concrete measures, policies in the interest of working people and the vast majority of NDP voters, which the NDP should be pushed to advance: Put people, and the preservation of nature, before profits. Nationalize the banks, mining companies, Big Oil and Big Auto. Create jobs through public investment, public ownership, democratic planning and workers' control. Convert industry, transportation, and homes to green energy efficiency.

Rapidly phase-out nuclear power and tar sands development. Repair our disintegrating roads, bridges, railways and port facilities. Make Employment Insurance more generous and accessible. Raise the minimum wage to \$17/hour. Shorten the workweek to 30 hours without loss of pay or benefits. Double the benefits in the Canada Pension Plan and Guaranteed Income Supplement. Abolish student debt. Make all education free. Fund health care and the arts. No corporate bailout.

Open the company books. Steeply tax corporations, speculators, and the rich. Abolish the HST. Uphold aboriginal land claims and local self-governance. Abolish the Senate and institute direct Proportional Representation in Parliament. Stop the deportations, full rights for migrant workers. Impose boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israeli apartheid. End the occupation of Afghanistan and Haiti. Hands off Libya. Reduce the Canadian military to a disaster-relief and rescue force. Get Canada out of NATO now!

It is a delusion to think that economic expansion will fix everything, that there is a market solution to the recurring crises of capitalism. *The capitalist market created the problem.* Only a social revolution can solve it. Only by taking control of the major means of production, only by instituting broadly participatory, democratic planning, only by effecting a rapid green conversion to meet human needs, fully in tune with nature, does humanity have a hope of survival.

That means challenging the pro-capitalist direction of the labour and NDP leadership. It means fighting for an NDP government committed to socialist policies. It means opposing an NDP coalition with the Liberal Party or with any capitalist party. It means fighting for a Workers' Agenda and a Workers' Government, and organizing to win that programme inside the unions and the NDP. It means fighting for freedom for oppressed nations, for eco-socialism, feminism and LGBT liberation.

None of that is possible without a leadership committed to doing it. Indispensable is the building of a revolutionary party to campaign for fundamental change, everywhere and everyday. Central to that is the forging of a new leadership of the working class and oppressed nations that can win. It cannot be done without you.

So, please don't wait for the next economic crash, or for the next environmental catastrophe. Isn't the situation dire enough? Rebellion is in the air, from Egypt to Wisconsin, from Venezuela to Palestine. Join Socialist Action. Together we can make the world a place fit for humanity. ■

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- Thursday, May 19, 5:30 p.m.: registration
- 7 p.m.: End the Occupations! Permanent War or Permanent Revolution
- Friday, May 20, 7 p.m.: Civil Liberties Under Attack – Fight Back!
- Saturday, May 21, 10 a.m.: After Cancun, the Fight for Climate Justice
- 1 p.m.: What's Wrong with our Workers' Movement?

- 4 p.m.: Origins of Sexism and the Fight for Women's Liberation Today
- 7 p.m.: Marx Was Right: Capitalism Doesn't Work. Deepen the Global Resistance!
- Sunday, May 22 11 a.m.: Aboriginal and Quebecois Aspirations – National Liberation in the Canadian State
- 1 p.m.: Lunch break, with film
- 2 p.m.: Closed session for SA members and invited guests. SA/LAS Convention.
- 4 p.m.: Founding Convention of Youth for Socialist Action.

Tickets: \$20 in advance for weekend; \$30 at door for weekend; \$5 per session (or PWYC). For more information: www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com, (416) 535-8779, baryaw@rogers.com

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The tragedy of NDP support for NATO bombing of Libya

The NDP Socialist Caucus federal conference held on March 17 at U of Toronto declared its opposition to the imperialist intervention into Libya (the bombing and rocket attacks to impose a “no-fly zone” and impose “regime change”). The SC will campaign across the country for the anti-intervention position reflected in the resolution below, leading up to and at the NDP federal convention, June 17-19 in Vancouver:

“NATO Hands off Libya! Whereas the mass uprising of the people of Libya that began on Feb. 15, 2011, which seeks to oust dictator Muammar Gaddafi and end his police state, is part of the wave of popular democratic revolt sweeping the Arab world; And whereas Gaddafi for the past decade has cooperated with Washington and NATO, been compliant with the U.S.-led wars of occupation, while privately pocketing billions of dollars of oil revenue;

“And whereas Washington and its NATO allies seek to control Libya’s future, and can use the claim to providing ‘humanitarian aid,’ including a ‘no fly zone’ that would be accompanied by extensive bombing and inevitably massive civilian casualties, to launch an armed invasion of the country,

“Therefore Be It Resolved that the federal NDP actively campaign against any U.S. or NATO intervention in Libya, against the proposed ‘no fly zone,’ and demand the withdrawal of Canadian warships from Libyan waters, and demand an end to Canadian firms selling/exporting military equipment, munitions and supplies to the region.

“And Be It Further Resolved that the NDP actively encourage the opening of Libya’s borders with Tunisia and Egypt so that partisans of the Arab democratic revolt can come to the aid of the Libyan insurgency, and that the NDP organize solidarity with the movement of the Libyan and Arab peoples for democracy and self-determination.”

Sadly, NDP MPs joined the business-class parties in Parliament in support of the Western military intervention in Libya, which now is conducted by NATO under the command of Canadian Lt.-General Charles Bouchard. The lessons of history seem to be lost on Leader Jack Layton and his NDP Caucus.

For generations, the Canadian state has been consistently on the side of Israel, and against Egypt and the Arab countries. That includes during the Israeli wars against Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Ottawa has condoned (sometimes with mild criticism) Israeli atrocities committed repeatedly in Gaza and the West Bank, the construction of the Apartheid Wall, the ongoing confiscation of Palestinian homes and farms, and the threats to bomb Iran.

Whether Conservative or Liberal, the federal government has overseen, promoted and facilitated Canadian military exports to 16 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Those countries included Mubarak’s Egypt, Gaddafi’s Libya, and Netanyahu’s Israel. Between 1990 and 2006, the value of these exports of weapons, munitions, armoured vehicles, jets, helicopters, drones, surveillance equipment and more, was about \$1.8 billion.

Today, Canadian warships ply the waters of the Per-



Andreas Lazarou / AFP / Getty Images

(Left) Qatari jet takes off from Cyprus for Libya action.

Sometimes NDP MPs, including the Leader, speak wistfully about “redeployment” of Canadian forces to Darfur or elsewhere in Africa where oil or gold or other valuable commodities cannot be harvested due to obstruction by pesky nationalists who want to control their own resources. That brings us to the current wave of uprisings across the Arab world.

In early January, when the Tunisian masses launched their revolt, the federal NDP issued a statement supporting the Tunisian people. It said, “stop

attacks on civilians,” but failed to demand that dictator Ben Ali step down. On Jan. 28, NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Paul Dewar released a statement on Egypt that expressed hope that democratic aspirations would be peacefully realized. But again, it said nothing about what millions of Egyptians demanded: Mubarak out!

On Feb. 11, Jack Layton issued a statement that Mubarak’s resignation had opened the door to meaningful change. It urged the government of Canada to use diplomatic means to ensure the process is legitimate and acceptable to the Egyptian people. But what about pledging support for the demands of Egyptian workers? Their unions ask that all the companies and resources Mubarak privatized be now returned to public ownership under democratic control. Democracy is about the economy too, not just about parliament.

On Feb. 22, an NDP statement on Libya expressed concern for protesters and condemned the regime’s use of deadly force against civilians. But instead of urging support for the struggle of the insurgents, the NDP urged the UN Security Council to establish a no-fly zone in Libya’s airspace. That required, as U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates openly stated, extensive bombing of Libya by U.S. and allied forces—and still could lead to armed invasion.

NDP leaders are caught in a life-long contradiction. Their interests in becoming mainstream politicians conflict with the interests of millions of workers who look to the party for social justice, equality, human rights, peace, environmental sustainability—in other words, for socialism.

The Socialist Caucus is dedicated to shining a light on that contradiction, to winning the fight for socialist policies, and to challenging the cancerous global system known as capitalism. That starts with opposing the war makers at home. The uprisings in Egypt, and across the Arab world, show that the days of imperial rule, of capitalist rule, are numbered. NDP members should be part of that awakening. ■

sian Gulf in support of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, and in support of the U.S. embargo and its military threats against Iran. Now the *HMCS Charlottetown* is anchored in waters off the coast of Libya, in support of a bombing campaign involving Canadian CF18s, in the name of a “no fly zone.” It is a prelude to an armed occupation by U.S./NATO forces (or their control of the rebel regime by other means), which is why socialists oppose it.

In opposing imperialist intervention, and the diplomatic charade that usually accompanies it, socialists uphold the principle that injustice knows no boundaries; solidarity knows no borders. But solidarity starts with opposition to our own capitalist rulers, including their interventions for power, plunder and profit abroad.

This brings us to the NDP, the only mass labour-based political party in North America. Has the NDP leadership consistently opposed imperialist intervention, the arms industry, and militarism? Certainly, that approach would correspond to the interests of its 100,000 members, its 300,000 labour-union-affiliated members, and its 2.4 million mainly working class voters. Sadly, the opposite is the case.

It took years for the Canadian movement against the war in Vietnam to win the federal NDP to an “Out Now” position, to get the party to adopt a policy expressed in the slogan “NATO, NORAD, ICC, End Canadian Complicity.” It took years to convince the party at convention to adopt “Canada Out of Afghanistan Now.” The NDP Socialist Caucus and allies succeeded in achieving this at the federal NDP convention in Quebec City, September 2006.

And even now, NDP MPs sometimes say, “Canadian forces can play a role as trainers or infrastructure builders in Afghanistan”—though that would mean supporting the corrupt, U.S.-imposed Karzai regime. Canadian Forces would still be engaged in combat “outside the wire,” since insurgents do not, as a rule, recognize military “training” or “building” by an occupying power as friendly activity.

Just say no to Canada Post demands

By ELIZABETH BYCE

A strong strike mandate is a good antidote to the breath-taking concessions now demanded by the Canada Post Corporation (CPC). That is the message of the leaders of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) to their 54,000 members.

The last postal strike occurred in 1997. Collective agreements signed in 2000, 2003, and 2007 contained rollbacks to severance entitlements, utilization of sick leave benefits, and included introduction of “team incentives” that undermine solidarity. Now, it appears, the union is drawing the line—which may become a mass picket line this summer—and none too soon.

Management demands include the following: the elimination of thousands of jobs (by reduction of the internal full-time staffing ratio to 72% from 78%, reducing full-time positions at wickets, elimination of both wash-up periods, and the introduction of new mechanized equipment), slashing the pay of new hires by nearly 30 per cent, the reduction of vacation leave, a new “cost-sharing formula” for retirees that would require employees retiring after Dec. 31, 2011, to pay 100% of the premiums of the Extended Health Care Plan instead of 25%, limiting the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) to instances when inflation increases by

8 per cent or more, the “adjustment” of injury-on-duty pay from 100% down to 75%, and no pay for short-term illness (absences of less than seven days).

For the last 15 years CPC has made a profit—an achievement beyond its mandate, accomplished on the backs of postal workers and by eroding service to the public. The union’s demands at the negotiating table include that the profits should be put back into Canada Post to improve service to everyone and to improve working conditions and wages of the workers that provide the services. CUPW is negotiating to improve service at corporate retail counters, to increase the door mail delivery, and to introduce postal banks in communities that currently have post offices but no banking institutions.

Canada Post has not only tried to impose rollbacks on its workers, but also on all Canadians with the introduction of “community mail boxes,” reduction of post offices, service disruptions due to inadequate staffing, introduction of automation which removes a letter carrier’s ability to ensure accuracy of delivery, reduction of street letter boxes, and so on.

So a lot is at stake in this round of collective bargaining. CUPW can revitalize itself by mobilizing its members and supporters, and return to its proud heritage of class struggle. It can return to the exemplary role it played as a militant, dem-

ocratic union in the 1960s through the 1990s. CUPW can show the whole labour movement how to stand up to concession demands, as the bosses everywhere try to make workers pay for the global capi-

talist crisis. The fightback starts with a strong strike mandate. ■

Elizabeth Byce is a retired postal worker and activist in the Toronto local of CUPW.

Dudley Laws, Toronto anti-racist fighter

By NORMAN “OTIS” RICHMOND

The author has been a radio broadcaster for 25 years and is a Black community activist in Toronto.

Dudley Laws was known as a fear-free activist who would stand up to police brutality when many of us were too afraid to step up to the plate. He joined the ancestors on March 24 after battling kidney disease. The Jamaican-born Laws had stared death in the face many times. It is amazing that he lived 76 years. I always said, “Dudley was like a cat, He had nine lives.”

He was born in St. Thomas Parish, Jamaica, on May 7, 1934, to Ezekiel and Agatha Laws, and was a brother to three siblings. A welder and mechanic by trade, he worked at Standard Engineering Works until he emigrated to the United Kingdom in 1955 and became involved in defending the Caribbean community. In 1965, he relocated to Toronto, Canada, where he worked

as a welder and taxi driver.

Laws was most known for founding the Black Action Defence Committee in 1988, following the Toronto police shooting of Lester Donaldson. He was once the head of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, a Marcus Garvey-inspired organization. Under his leadership its name was changed to the Universal African Improvement Association. He was deeply concerned with the education of youth and helped many young people, including my son.

Laws became prominent in the 1970s and 1980s as a critic of the then Metro Toronto Police Force, due to a number of young Black men being shot by police constables, as well as leveling other allegations of racist practices against the police.

He was also prominent as an advocate for immigrants and refugees, and worked as an immigration consultant in the 1990s. He was able to travel to Cuba and spoke highly of what he saw in that society. ■

Where's Phil Ochs when we need him?

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"Phil Ochs: There, But for Fortune," a documentary film written and directed by Kenneth Bowser.

Director Kenneth Bowser's stirring documentary, "Phil Ochs: There, But for Fortune," couldn't have come at a better time. The film leaves you both inspired and depressed.

While watching the film, I couldn't help but feel that we need a protest singer like Ochs today. There are, for instance, popular rappers, hip-hop artists, with messages addressing inner city life in the streets, gang wars, and police brutality, but whose style tends to put off a majority of people. Bowser's film has you wanting to play Ochs's music publicly—and loud—to rally others to protest the atrocities going on in the world today: the U.S. and NATO "wars" in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and soon, perhaps, Syria?, "austerity measures," cutbacks in education and public services. Where are the activist talents whose lyrics address these issues?

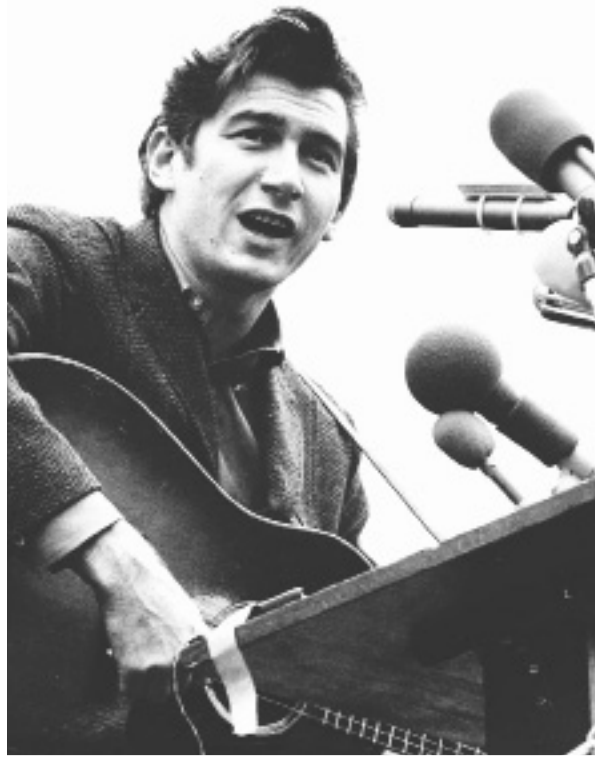
These days, only one comes to mind—Michael Franti. He has appeared on "Democracy Now," has given interviews to *Mother Jones*, and produces the Power to the People outdoor festivals each year not only to stir awareness around death-row inmate Mumia Abul Jamal, wrongly imprisoned for allegedly killing a police officer, but also global issues. Franti travels to developing countries, including in the Middle East, focusing on Palestine. He has coined the phrase seen on protest signs at antiwar rallies: "You can bomb the world to pieces, but you can't bomb it into peace."

Bowser's documentary is made up of archival film footage of Phil Ochs's life and concerts, including revealing past and current interviews with Ochs's brother, Michael; Joan Baez; Tom Hayden; Sean Penn; Christopher Hitchens; Dave van Ronk; Alice Skinner Ochs; his daughter, Meegan Ochs; his sister, Sonny Ochs; and record company executives.

Ochs, who began writing protest (he preferred the term "topical") songs during the 1960s civil rights era, suffered from bipolar disorder and depression, exacerbated in 1968 as a result of the Chicago political riots, which led him to drug dependency, alcoholism, and eventual suicide in 1976.

Ochs played guitar and sang in a strident, rather flat, forceful manner that you couldn't ignore. There was hardly a civil or federal political, social, labor, or race issue he did not address. He was generous with his time and talent, showing up at rallies, union meetings, and other gatherings simply because he was asked. To those that knew him, he appeared to be a "liberal dude," to others—"uncool, but ultimately lethal," behind his stinging lyrics. He hung out with the hip of New York, but because of his "uncoolness," he was shunted off with other "uncools," one of whom was his future wife, Alice Skinner.

Having sung about the wrong-headed involvement of the U.S. in Vietnam as early as 1962-63, he eventually signed with Elektra Records. So great was his appeal



that he appeared with others at Carnegie Hall in 1963, and in a solo performance in 1966. He also performed at Town Hall hootenannies, gleaning ideas for songs by reading *The New York Times*—"All the news fit to sing," which became the title of an Elektra album. "All the News" became his most influential antiwar song, along with other tracks that appeared on subsequent Elektra issues: "I Ain't Marching Anymore," written in protest of the wars and the draft, and "Phil Ochs In Concert."

In the early stages of protests and civil rights activism, he displayed optimism about the outcomes. Invited to the first Newport Folk Festival, he sang "Too Many Martyrs" (co-written with Bob Gibson), "Talking Birmingham Jam," about the Birmingham bombing during the civil rights struggle, and "Power and the Glory," the Guthrie-esque anthem that earned a standing ovation. Also on the bill were Peter, Paul, and Mary; Joan Baez; Pete Seeger; and friendly rival Bob Dylan.

Later, his brother, Michael, who narrates most of the film, became his manager and signed him with A & M records. One of his well-known epithets is: "Don't blame the older generation for getting you into war—politicians get you into war."

His wry, often biting, sense of humor is evident in his song "Love Me, I'm a Liberal," a satire on liberalism, which includes the word, "ridiculous," thus offending liberals and, at the same time, feeding the clueless egos of the social and political right. He used film and entertainment idols to illustrate his remarks, articles, and songs, e.g.: "John Wayne plays Lyndon Johnson, and Lyndon Johnson plays God." Clips are shown in the film of Ochs singing about the deaths of Medgar Evers,

John Kennedy, and Malcolm X.

Ochs was well known only in certain circles, yet his albums sold surprisingly well. Still, he didn't achieve the acclaim that Bob Dylan had. One interviewee stated that Ochs was too resentful to become famous; he didn't make you feel warm and fuzzy, like Dylan. He never crossed into the mainstream like The Weavers (Pete Seeger), the Kingston Trio, Harry Belafonte, or the Limelighters.

Ochs felt he'd become a "victim of the bonds of change." He left New York for California, feeling that the Village (Greenwich) was dying. The "air got sucked out of it." The 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese in view of neighbors who apparently did nothing to intervene, for which Ochs wrote the ballad, "Outside of a Small Circle of Friends," factored into his decision to leave.

Bowser included archival clips of heart-wrenching seminal events during Ochs's time: the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and John Kennedy; shots of wounded and dying soldiers in Vietnam; Nixon pontificating from the Oval Office; Ochs singing his "Crucifixion" ballad to Bobby, a paean to his brother's death, which Ochs believed inspired Bobby to run; Bobby's presidential campaign and subsequent assassination.

Also included is footage of the Chicago police beating and tear-gassing protesters at the time of the 1968 Democratic Party National Convention, and the Kent State student murders by the Ohio National Guard. Ochs, who was in Chicago at the time of the police attack, felt deeply depressed; his drinking and pill-popping got worse. An album cover at the time is eerily prescient, showing a tombstone bearing a Phil Ochs likeness and an epitaph.

Disheartened with America, Ochs went to Chile, where Socialist Party candidate Salvador Allende had been democratically elected president in 1970. He befriended Chilean folksinger Victor Jara. But problems with the authorities in Argentina, Uruguay, and Bolivia led him to return to the States.

In 1973, he traveled to Africa. Film clips show him happily playing African instruments with natives. One interviewee states that Ochs created world music decades before it became "the thing." In Tanzania, Phil was beaten and strangled by thugs. His vocal chords damaged, he felt he could no longer sing and believed the CIA was behind the attack. He became paranoid.

When Allende was assassinated that year, Ochs felt certain it was the work of the CIA (he was right). Director Bowser included footage showing the gruesomely horrific events that transpired the day Chilean military officials rounded up Victor Ibara and thousands of others and herded them into a stadium. Ochs pulled himself together and organized "An Evening with Salvador Allende," to raise funds for Chile. Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, and Bob Dylan joined Ochs in concert.

The war in Vietnam ended in 1975. Ochs became even more depressed. In an interview, Joan Baez said, "What are we going to do now?" Ochs hired a friend with a camera to follow him around. The resulting footage appears to confirm what many believed—he'd lost his mind. In 1976, Phil Ochs hung himself.

The film closes with his friend, a melancholy Dave van Ronk, sadly singing "He Was a Friend of Mine." ■

Michigan workers protest EFM

By MIKE KOWALSKI

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.—In January of this year, newly elected Republican Gov. Rick Snyder introduced into the legislature the anti-labor "Emergency Financial Managers Bill" (EFM). On March 9 Michigan's Senate passed the bill, and Gov. Snyder signed it into law on March 17. The law creates a group of super-czars empowered to take control of municipalities and school districts that the governor has decided are in financial trouble and need to be rescued.

EFM gives unelected financial managers dictatorial power over cities and school districts. They would have the power to tear up laws and to fire elected officials. EFM would make it possible to modify, reject, or terminate public employees' or teachers' collective-bargaining agreements. It also would make it possible to slash public employees' benefits, sell off public property, and fire elected school boards and city councils.

EFM has no checks and balances. The governor on his own would appoint the financial managers, and decide who they are going to rescue. Gov. Snyder claims Michigan needs EFM in order to save the state's economy. Yet he has given \$1.8 billion in tax cuts to corporations and the rich.

There have been a number of protests

against the law. On March 8 thousands rallied in front of the capitol building in Lansing. The demonstrators filled all three floors of the building's rotunda.

On March 15 about 1000 people demonstrated against the bill in front of the capitol. About 40 tried to occupy the building after the 5:30 pm closing time but were shut out by capitol security. On March 16 there was a small rally of around 250 people—sponsored by the AFL-CIO, UAW, and MoveOn.org—in front of the capitol.

On March 17, the largest demonstration so far—close to 5000 people—took place in front of the capitol building. It was composed of three waves throughout the day, and included nurses' and teachers' unions, government employees, students, and other concerned people.

A number of smaller actions against EFM took place in Detroit, Grand Rapids and Muskegon. After the bill was passed, however, the fightback movement failed to grow. There were hopes that the Lansing actions would turn into something like what has taken place in Madison, Wis. This, unfortunately, did not happen.

The Democratic Party has circulated a petition against the law. AFSCME has called for local actions on April 4 against this and other attacks on public workers.

Gov. Snyder's attacks on Michigan's working people must be fought. The unions need to break from the Democratic Party and create a mass-based movement of working people to fight the governor and his actions. ■

Teachers Ba-ad!

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Have you noticed that politicians flit from boogey-man to boogey-man, a process of demonization that is usually little more than misdirection from more pressing problems? According to a number of new governors across the country, the newest boogey-men (and I guess boogey-women) are teachers, who are portrayed as greedy, selfish, and overpaid.

Now—honestly—who better fits such a profile: teachers, or politicians? But politicians control the public purse—and the microphones of power. They are thus well placed to scapegoat people who are often the hardest working, least thanked, least respected, and poorly paid public workers of them all: teachers.

Every school year, tens of thousands of teachers dig into their own pockets to purchase pencils, markers, paper—and sometimes books—for other people's children. Each year, some local government or school board slashes staff, divides a budget, or cancels a school construction contract, for they know that teachers—being teachers—will make do. They accept it, because many of them love teaching children, and see it as more of a mission than a job.

At bottom, this is about politics—not economics. It's about crushing teachers unions that trend Democratic, and donate millions to Democratic candidates. It's also about the goal of weakening and destroying public schools, the better to promote the business of private education. Like many political ideas, it's penny-wise and pound foolish. For it discards the central role of every society, since antiquity, to teach the young how to survive in the world to come.

Public education is failing today not because teachers are paid too much, or educational institutions are awash in too much public money; rather, they are getting too little. This is especially so where the need is greatest, in America's central cities, where funds are raised through property taxes and many parents dwell in rental housing.

The erection of the business model means those who can afford the luxury of education—and only they—will be able to buy it. It also means the further crumbling and erosion of the empire. ■

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By ANDREW POLLACK

Washington sides with Syrian regime

Muzaffar Salman / AP

Syria has joined the ranks of countries participating in the regional uprising. The largest and most frequent protests against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad have been in the southern city of Deraa. But protests also occurred in Damascus, Latakia, and other cities. Human rights activists say that over 100 protesters may have been killed by the regime in March.

On March 30, Assad gave a speech that ended up being just a reprise of slanders against protesters as agents of imperialism, or Zionism, or even Palestinians trying to start a civil war!

In keeping with its goal of regional "stability," Washington has stuck with Assad. Hillary Clinton told the press that the United States would not intervene in Syria militarily. She quoted Congress members who had recently visited Syria and who called Assad "a reformer." The Syrian president has grown closer to the United States in recent years, earning his reward in the form of the return of an American ambassador to Damascus after a six-year hiatus.

Syria has accepted prisoners from the U.S. under "special rendition," i.e. the program of sending prisoners to countries where they can be tortured by friendly regimes when it's too risky to have U.S. inquisitors at Guantanamo to do it. Seymour Hersch, in several *New Yorker* articles in recent years, has portrayed the eagerness of Assad to mend fences with the U.S., including by talks with Israel, even if carried out mostly behind closed doors. Bassam Haddad, director of Middle East Studies at George Mason University, has also pointed to Assad's adoption of neoliberal economic policies "that have created huge gaps between different segments of Syrian society."

Hard on the heels for his expressions of support for Muammar Gadhafi, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez



came to the defense of Assad after the killings, calling him a "humanist" facing violent protests backed by the U.S. and its allies. Chavez said he had spoken to Assad and referred to him as "our brother."

Like Gadhafi, Assad throws out meaningless anti-imperialist rhetoric, and provides just enough material support for some resistance fighters in exile to buy their silence. But you can't fool people all the time: The

(Above) March 25: Thousands in Damascus rally for reforms and against government killings of protesters.

Angry Arab blogger quoted a Reuters report that "protesters in the Syrian city of Der'aa shouted slogans denouncing Maher Assad, brother of the Syrian president and head of the Republican Guard. 'Maher, you coward. Send your troops to liberate the Golan.'" ■

Egyptian workers reject crackdown on protests

In mid-March the Egyptian cabinet issued a decree (which still has to be approved by the military junta ruling the country) criminalizing "protests, sit-ins and gatherings" that supposedly interfere with normal business operations. The bill was immediately rejected by worker and youth organizations, who said they will continue protests.

The cabinet claimed protests must end because it has answered most workers' demands and would address the rest through future legislation or regulations.

The bill was motivated by the continuing actions of workers against

corrupt and incompetent officials and executives at their workplaces, and the determination to use newfound political organizing space to achieve economic and social goals.

On March 20, a military-sponsored referendum for constitutional changes was passed overwhelmingly in the face of opposition from most of the forces that led the uprising. Those forces feared that the changes left in place an undemocratic constitution crafted by the dictatorship, and would call snap elections without giving time for new parties to be formed.

A number of new parties and alliances are in various stages of for-

mation, including social-democratic and revolutionary groups.

Opponents of the amendments also pointed out that rather than amend a constitution drafted by dictators, a constituent assembly should be formed to write an entirely new one. In the end it seems the measures passed precisely because the old ruling party and the Muslim Brotherhood still have a massive organizational headstart over the new parties in formation.

Meanwhile, youth leaders declined an invitation to meet with the visiting Hillary Clinton, pointing to U.S. support for Mubarak.

— ANDREW POLLACK

BAHRAIN: On March 15 Saudi troops entered Bahrain, and the next day government forces attacked protesters, killing at least 13.

Washington has endorsed claims by the Gulf Cooperation Council, which includes Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, that the former's troops entered Bahrain legally, to protect against alleged threats from Iran.

The country's trade-union federation called an open-ended general strike until foreign troops had left, but it was halted after a week following assurances that workers would not be attacked at checkpoints. Meanwhile, some unions and activists have called for protection for South Asian immigrant workers, targeted by vigilantes angered at use of Pakistanis in the regime's security forces. This is another sign of the need for regional Arab-African-Asian workers' solidarity to cut across indigenous and immigrant divides created by dictatorial regimes in the service of capital. —A.P.

... Antiwar

(continued from page 1)

including the rights of unions to bargain, the rights of undocumented workers to due process, and the fight against the criminalization of the Black community.

The issue of Libya was prominent in Harlem on March 29, when New York City Councilman Charles Barron stood with around 150 others outside of a Democratic National Committee fundraiser for Barack Obama and shouted, "We did not elect Barack Obama for him to bomb Africa!" The \$30,800-a-plate re-election affair was held at a new upscale restaurant symbolic of the gentrification that is displacing Harlem's Black population, and dissipating the potential of Black political power being wielded independently in the community's defense.

Harlem housing activist Nellie Bailey said, "We want money—not for war—but for our children and our seniors here at home." The demonstration followed by a week the very public withdrawal of support for Obama by the African American poet Amiri Baraka via a new work, in which he said:

So it wd be this way
That they wd get a negro
To bomb his own home
To join with the actual colonial Powers,
Britain, France, add Poison Hillary
With Israeli and Saudi to make certain
That revolution in Africa must have a
stopper

The bombing of Libya was the first U.S. military action actually directed by the relatively new U.S. African military command center known as Africom. The activation of Africom, which at this moment links the attacks on Africa with the attacks on the Black community in a manner instantly understandable to the street, has created new opportunities to build an antiwar movement capable of outreach to one of the communities most victimized by the shuffle of funds from social services, education, and housing to war.

The relationship between the war against working people at home and the wars abroad was a theme in the resolution passed in the same week by the Hartford, Conn., city council. Over \$453 million in tax revenues from residents of the city of Hartford, one of the poorest cities in the nation, has gone to fund the wars and occupations in the Middle East.

The council resolved, in addition to demanding of the federal government that it bring the war dollars home, to urge Hartford residents to participate in the April 9 march in New York City.

More surprisingly, they noted that "budget deficits, largely due to war spending, have been used as a pretext to force concessions from public sector unions" and resolved to support the right of unions to collectively bargain.

While the Hartford city council plainly laid out the relationship of the state budget deficits to war spending, most labor leaders nationally have refused to integrate the demand to end the wars into the fight to defend public workers' right

to collective bargaining. Their refusal to take up this demand reflects their deference to the Democratic Party.

There are increasing exceptions to the rule, however. At a recent union rally at the New York state house, Transportation Workers Union Local 100 President John Samuelsen felt compelled to call for ending the war. He and George Gresham, the president of 1199 Healthcare Workers East, are keynote speakers at the April 9 antiwar rally in New York City. Also speaking is Mike Keenan, president of the Troy, N.Y., Area Labor Council.

The attacks on the Muslim American community, the Black and Latino communities, and the unions are not the only issues that are more and more organically being integrated into antiwar organizing. The relationship between the government's deadly and destructive wars for oil and its support for nuclear power has been brought home by the ecological and human disaster in Japan.

Historically, nuclear power was used to normalize nuclear production for weaponry. The "peaceful uses of the atom" were promoted as part of an ideological campaign to quell the horror aroused by the U.S. nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The plutonium-laden MOX fuel made from recycled reactor rods has similarly been justified as a barrier against nuclear weapons proliferation and, in turn, as part of a discourse to ramp up fear of nuclear terrorism.

The confluence of five factors—the Japanese nuclear disaster, the U.S.-European-Japanese failure to invest in green

energy, the escalation of investment in nuclear power, the brutality of a new oil war in North Africa, and the dumping of depleted-uranium shells on Libya—have all brought a new interest in the April 9 and 10 antiwar marches from anti-nuke activists.

In San Francisco, Pacifica radio station KPFA endorsed the April 10 antiwar march and is vigorously building a No Nukes! No War! Contingent. In New York, well known anti-nuke activist Harvey Wasserman is speaking. The United National Antiwar Committee, in response to these developments, formally added a No Nukes! No War! Demand for the national actions.

All of these developments, coming as they do as a result of or in conjunction with the new U.S./UN/NATO threats to the embryonic Arab revolutions and upsurges against dictatorial rule, suggest that a new and vigorous antiwar movement is within our reach.

At this moment, the United National Antiwar Committee, born out of the democratic one-person, one-vote assembly of over 800 activists in Albany last July, and committed to mass action independent of the Democratic and Republican parties, is leading the way in this process.

UNAC is planning a second national conference, where the lessons of organizing the April 9 and 10 actions will be drawn and plans for the future mapped out. Your group can find out how to join the UNAC Coordinating Committee now by visiting the website at www.unac-peace.org. ■

From Three Mile Island to Japan NO MORE NUKES!

Barry Thumma / AP



Kyodo News / AP



(Above) Woman in Japan hears of relative's death.
(Left) Three Mile Island, Pa., in March 1979.

By CHRISTINE FRANK

The powerful magnitude 9.0 earthquake that struck the northeast coast of Japan on March 11 has led to a cascade of disasters for the Japanese people. Its epicenter was located on a subduction zone where the Pacific Plate is diving beneath the Eurasian Continental Plate into the Japan Trench. The earthquake was Japan's most powerful and the fifth most powerful ever recorded globally.

The nation sits precariously on the edge of three tectonic plates—the Pacific, Philippine and Eurasian—creating a triple junction of intense seismic activity. It is also located near the Median Tectonic Line, which consists of a series of strike-slip faults of horizontal movement. To build nuclear reactors where such tectonic geological forces are at work is sheer suicide.

Because the quake was shallow enough, it caused the seafloor to heave up and away from Honshu Island, resulting in an enormous 10-meter (32.5 ft.) high tsunami that swept inland across the Plain of Sendai. The water was funneled through the streets of seaside port cities and towns three times higher and with even greater force, turning buildings along the wave's path into piles of toothpicks.

The tsunami extended up to 10 kilometers (6 mi.) inland killing well over 10,000 people, with over 17,000 missing and 500,000 homeless. The northeast coast of Japan is particularly susceptible to tsunamis not only because of tectonic activity but also because of the many deep coastal embayments that amplify the waves and cause great inundations. This is another reason why the placement of nuclear reactors in the region was particularly foolhardy.

The human-made disaster

The human-made part of the disaster is still unfolding at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant One, which consists of six boiling water reactors and seven spent fuel rod storage pools. Three of the reactors were already in cold shutdown for routine maintenance. When the quake struck, seismic sensors tripped and activated the neutron-absorbing boron control rods to shut each core down in the working reactors. However, the residual heat from the nuclear piles, whose fissile byproducts continued to split and generate energy, still needed to be dissipated by the electrically-powered water cooling system. Moments later, the tremor felled the power lines that fed the water pumps. The backup diesel-powered generators automatically kicked in and powered the pumps.

Then, the tsunami struck, overflowing the plant's woefully inadequate seawall and swamping the diesel generators. The next line of backup was a set of batteries, which kept the pumps running for only a few hours before the reactors had nothing to cool them down. Oh, the irony of a power plant without power!

The only option of the plant operators was to pump in seawater with remote fire hoses to cool the reac-

People have begun to protest in Tokyo and other cities because they know that nuclear power is not safe and the big utilities do not have their interests at heart.

tors. That worked for only a while. As pressure in the cores rose, the seawater evaporated faster than it could be pumped in, exposing the fuel rods to the air. At that point, they began to overheat, with xenon and krypton gas inside the rods exerting pressure, causing the zirconium alloy cladding to swell and crack. In addition, the increased temperature turned more water to steam, which had to be vented into the atmosphere outside. That steam was full of radioactive Iodine-131 and Cesium-137.

At the same time, the intense heat caused the zirconium to interact with the steam and split some of the hydrogen away from the water. The hydrogen gas, set off by a spark, ignited in the remaining oxygen, and exploded. There were hydrogen gas explosions in all three reactors, which shattered the roofs and/or sides of the secondary containments. Reactor No. 3, which uses MOX fuel—plutonium/uranium oxide mix—has a long, vertical crack in its primary containment vessel. And the torus—the doughnut-shaped pressure-suppression chamber—at the base of No. 2 is ruptured.

Because there was no functioning cooling system, hot spent fuel rods began to boil off the cooling water in their storage pools, which drained rapidly, exposing the fuel assemblies. The storage pools are located haphazardly on a mezzanine above the reactors and are shielded by only sheet-metal siding, which is to say, they are not quake-proof. They contain 400 to 700 fuel rod assemblies stacked on racks.

After one year on-line, used fuel still emits 10 kilowatts of decay heat energy per ton and requires continual cooling under at least 30 feet of water. It takes only 140 hours for the water to drop to dangerously low levels with rods six months old. Roughly 100 hours after the quake and power loss, the storage pool of Unit 4, which has fresh fuel only four months old, experienced a fire because the zircalloy began to spontaneously combust like a Fourth of July sparkler. The oxidation reaction that occurs becomes locally self-sustaining at high temperatures.

According to David Lochbaum, director of the Nuclear Safety Program of the Union of Concerned Scientists, the side of each storage pool has a gate, which opens to allow a crane to transfer spent rods from the reactor core to the pool underwater. The gates have

inflatable rubber seals, but the air compressing system that maintains them probably went down with the power outage. Consequently, the seals on the pools could very well be deflated, allowing the coolant to drain out.

There has been a constant struggle to pump water in to cool both the reactors and spent fuel assemblies. Efforts to do so by frantically injecting seawater laced with boric acid—boron, for its neutron absorption capacity—have not been successful. The use of the boron to moderate fission is a clear sign that fission is still occurring and some of the fuel has melted and slumped to the bottom of the containment vessels. Salt from the seawater has encrusted on the fuel rods and is insulating against the cooling effects of the water, making for a wasted effort.

An enormous amount of radioactive water continues to leak into the turbine buildings, basements, outside trenches and into the sea. Obviously, the containments have failed. Former Three Mile Island nuclear engineer Arne Gunderson, who calls Fukushima "Chernobyl on steroids," believes that there are partial meltdowns underway and there has very likely been 70-80% damage to the reactor cores because they went for so long without coolant. As a result, the radioactive molten slag lying at the bottom of the reactors is eating through the graphite seals on the control rods. The seals are also corroding from the extremely hot temperatures and salt, hence, the large amounts of water escaping through damaged pipes into other areas. So now, they have the enormous task of pumping water both in and out.

Radiation levels are off the charts inside and outside the plant. The contaminated water in which workers are sloshing around measures at over 100 REMs per hour. Three or four hours at that exposure is a lethal dose. The deadly levels have made it nigh impossible for workers to access the system and get the runaway facility under control. The radiation spikes have interrupted work many times. Plus, they must toil in small skeleton crews of 50 for very short shifts under constant fear and duress.

According to an anonymous Japanese physicist, who spoke to *The New York Times*, many of the workers are subcontractors, who are paid a small daily wage to risk their lives, are poorly equipped and trained, and lack full protective gear. Pity them all and their poor families. At least three have suffered radiation burns serious enough to be hospitalized. It is highly likely that there have been many more injuries than TEPCO, the utility that owns the plant, has reported to the media.

In addition to contaminated seawater, plutonium has been found in soil samples around the plant. The inhalation of one microgram of the isotope will kill. Because it is a byproduct of uranium fission, Gunderson believes the plutonium probably volatilized in the zirconium fire in pool No. 4 rather than from the MOX fuel in Reactor No. 3.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an arm of the UN that functions largely as a booster for the global nuclear power industry, has sent two testing teams to Japan. They reported radiation levels of 1600 times above natural background radiation (NBR) 12 miles from the plant. Constant exposure for

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