

Cypriots say 'no!' as bank crisis rocks Europe



ABC News

By ANDREW POLLACK

The outrage of workers in Cyprus against a plan to “save” the country’s finances by seizing cash in small depositors’ accounts forced the country’s parliament to vote unanimously in late March against it. The plan was intended to avert the wrath of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission.

This “troika” of powers had settled on the island nation as next in their list of “debt-ridden” countries whose finances needed to be re-arranged to try to restore the profits and wealth of the continent’s richest and most powerful.

A week later a new plan was put forward, one tailored to not require government approval, and putting more of the main burden on bigger depositors—especially Russian magnates who have used the country as an offshore

tax haven—and on the banks’ bond and share holders. But there is no doubt in anyone’s mind that those being directly soaked will find indirect ways to recoup their losses by dipping into the pockets of the island’s workers.

Still, just the fact that Cypriots loudly and repeatedly said “No!” has inspired workers throughout the region. Such inspiration is all the more crucial as the spillover from the Cyprus crisis will be quick and massive both inside and outside its borders. That spillover includes expected runs on banks, not only in Cyprus but in every European country on whose finances the troika have cast scornful eyes. The recurring theme among workers interviewed is, “They threatened to steal our cash once; who’s to say they won’t actually do it next time?”

Radical author Thanasis Kampagiannis wrote that “Cyprus bank deposits

will take a dive. Ironically, that makes the cost of recapitalizing them even greater.” This, in turn, means further extractions from depositors as well as austerity measures, which then means further deepening of the recession, which weakens profits and tax revenues, and on and on.

Some of the more oblivious and/or duplicitous business columnists (such as *The New York Times’* Andrew Ross Sorkin) argued that Cyprus was so small and unique that its crisis would have little impact elsewhere. But in fact the biggest blow to Cypriot bank stability was a product of the country’s very interconnectedness, i.e. the “haircut” imposed on Greek banks—which hold huge amounts of Cypriot bank deposits—in return for the “bailing out” of Greece. This is symptomatic of “fixes” to crises under capitalism. The schizophrenic mutual dependence on the one hand, and competition on the other, of economic and political institutions mean “solutions” to one entity’s problems must take place at the expense of others—with, in times of crisis, snowballing devastation.

The forcing of losses on bank investors, and big rather than small depositors, was viewed by the troika as easier to put over politically, while still knowing that they could come back later and demand further austerity measures to be imposed on the country’s workers by other means. (The Germans went so far as to appear to be the saviors of the country’s pensions, rejecting a Cypriot government plan to seize them.)

Besides political expediency, the continent’s wealthiest and most powerful forces wanted to use the occasion to partially rein in speculative capital. It’s worth noting in passing, however, that the biggest of these Russian investors,

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Socialist Action Regional Educational Conferences

April 27 • Kansas City

9:30 am — Leninist Strategy in 2013. 11:15 am — U.S. Socialists and the Labor Party Question. 1:15 pm — Working-Class Battles in Greece. 3 pm — Climate Change. 4:30 pm — Marx, Lincoln & German Immigrants.

Location (first 4 sessions): North Kansas City Library, 2251 Howell St.
Info: (816) 221-3638, kcsa@workernet.org

April 26-28 • Oakland

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Saturday, April 27, 1 pm — Capitalism’s Social, Economic, and Environmental Crises. 3:30 pm — Civil Liberties Under Attack. 7 pm — Imperialist Wars, Recolonization of Africa & Middle East.
Sunday, April 28, 12 noon — Leninist Theory of Organization.

Location: Niebyl Proctor Marxist Library, 6501 Telegraph, Oakland, Ca.
Info: (510) 268-9429, imackler@lmi.net

Dmitry Rybolovlev, made his fortune not in financial speculation, but in the down and dirty fields of potash fertilizer extraction—a fact deserving to be mulled over by those obsessed with the supposed supremacy of finance capital (or even more narrowly “debt”) in today’s global economy.

In any case, the real reason for the Eurozone’s instability is not speculative capital. The mushrooming of the latter is only a symptom of a prolonged global crisis leaving fewer avenues for productive investment, a crisis playing out in a market system that puts inherent barriers in the way of cross-national institutions, much less actual unification.

Such barriers can be seen in the contending pulls facing a country like Cyprus, which is integrally connected to the region as a whole yet is also forced by other nations’ ruling classes to stand on its own—at the expense of its workers—in a crisis. For instance, Nicos Trimikliniotis, a professor at the University of Nicosia, pointed to the geostrategic importance of the island. He wrote in *The Bullet*: Cyprus “is well-integrated in the regional economic system; in this sense it is also a border economy, operating as a bridge and a hub in the eastern Mediterranean. It is

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N. Dakota rolls back reproductive rights

Stand Up for Women



(Left) March 25 rally in Bismarck, N.D. against North Dakota anti-abortion bill.

health clinics, and the closure of Red River could create an 800-mile-long abortion clinic free area.

North Dakota already has a 24-hour waiting period for abortions, as do nearby states—South Dakota (South Dakota is pushing a bill this spring to extend the waiting period to 72 hours), Minnesota, and Nebraska. Montana's waiting period has been permanently enjoined by court order. Legislatures across the nation are continuing their war on women and reproductive freedom.

State Rep. Bette Grande (R), admitted that legislators "didn't look at [the measure] from the financial side of things" in regard to the taxpayer funds that would be used to defend the bill. The Liberty Counsel, a non-profit legal defense organization out of Florida, has announced that they will defend the bill pro bono. However, the New York-based Center for Reproductive Rights has countered that they will challenge North Dakota's fetal heartbeat provision, also pro bono.

On the mass movement front, reproductive rights supporters have been holding rallies across the state. In Bismarck, more than 300 people rallied against the bill, and the group Stand Up for Women had planned rallies in Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot. On March 25, despite the cold, pro-women groups marched both inside and outside the state Capitol. Women and workers across the nation need to stand up at this critical juncture, occupying the streets and demanding that reproductive rights be guaranteed to all.

— ALICE RICHARD

On March 26, North Dakota Gov. Jack Dairymple signed a bill, HB 1456, to drastically restrict access to abortion and to directly challenge the rights given to women under *Roe v. Wade*. The bill, which could take effect on Aug. 1, will ban abortions for fetuses with genetic defects such as Down Syndrome, ban abortions as soon a fetal heartbeat is detected (which can be as early as six weeks), and require that doctors have hospital admitting privileges in order to provide abortions.

Gov. Dairymple said that the intention of the bill was to challenge "the boundaries of *Roe v. Wade*." If the bill survives legal challenges, it could result in the closure of the state's only abortion clinic, the Red River Women's Clinic in Fargo.

Along with this bill, North Dakota has moved forward on other legislation to define life as starting at conception and to ban abortions after 20 weeks. All of this combined effort could result in North Dakota having the strictest abortion laws in the country. The Great Plains region is already facing a shortage of women's

Court considers marriage equality



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear two cases this spring that have a crucial bearing on the issue of same-sex marriage.

One would deal with Proposition 8, which was on the ballot in California in 2008 and added to the state constitution the phrase, "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." The measure was essentially a ban on same-sex marriage. In 2010, U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn Walker overturned Prop. 8, finding that the law would violate same-sex couples' right to equal protection and due process under the U.S. Constitution. The decision was affirmed by appellate courts in 2012.

The second issue before the Court is DOMA (Defense Of Marriage Act), signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996. It states "[f]or federal tax purposes, a marriage means only a legal union between a man and a woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' means a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife." This means that over 1100 federal programs that have a spousal benefit, such as Social Security, are denied to same-sex couples.

The coalition United For Marriage: Light The Way For Justice" organized rallies in Washington D.C. on March 25-27. They suggested that those who could not come to Washington might want to organize a candlelight vigil in their own state. The grassroots stepped up and organized rallies, marches and vigils in all 50 states—a total of 180 actions. The traditional national and statewide LGBT organizations seemed to appear late in organizing efforts. They sent out e-mails to their members, and appeared on Facebook two days before the events. It was the energy at the grassroots that made these events happen.

Regardless of the Supreme Court's decision (due at the end of June), one of the changes that can already be seen is reflected in the argument of the opposition. They are taking a "states' rights" stance, maintaining that these decisions should be made state by state. As one young man from Mississippi stated at the 2009 Equality March, "A state-by-state strategy will always leave some of us out." — ANN MONTAGUE

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 withdrawal of all U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! No war on Iran! 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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After the death of Hugo Chavez: Which way for socialism?

By MARC ROME

Hugo Chavez, the outspoken and charismatic anti-imperialist president of Venezuela for the past 14 years, passed away on March 5 after succumbing to heart failure and a two-year bout with cancer. About 2 million traveled from across Venezuela to pay their last respects, some demanding that they be armed to defend what they had gained under the Bolivarian government.

The crowds certainly included those who had mobilized more than a decade ago and brought Chavez's regime back from the brink of defeat by the right-wing capitalist opposition and imperialism. Their struggle pushed Chavez further to the left, a turn that coincided with a 660% rise in the price of oil, the bedrock of the Venezuelan economy, allowing the construction of many state-run social programs. Chavez dubbed the process the "Bolivarian Revolution" and "21st century socialism."

During Chavez's time in office the Venezuelan masses gave U.S. imperialism and the native capitalists two black eyes through their mobilizations in 2002-2003.

The first blow was given in April 2002, when Chavez was saved from almost certain execution in a military coup that received the "blessing" of Washington, according to *The New York Times*. *The Times* later reported that Venezuelan journalist Eva Golinger "obtained reams of documents from the National Endowment for Democracy, a non-profit agency financed by the United States government, that show that \$2.2 million was spent from 2000 to 2003 to train or finance anti-Chavez parties and organizations." These same documents show that American officials knew of the planned coup before it was put in motion.

Later that year, in December, workers and sections of the military sympathetic to Chavez restarted and secured key industries crippled by a two-month sabotage of oil production. The reactionary oil strike was actively supported by the state trade union, CTV, and organized by native rentier-type capitalists, who were subordinate to more powerful imperialist interests like ExxonMobil and France's Total corporation, shaken by Chavez's 2001 Hydrocarbons Law.

The law increased royalty rates paid by multinational oil corporations to the state oil sector, PDVSA, from 16% to 30%—a rate still below those paid by oil companies in Canada, the Middle East, and Africa. However, for corporations used to the relatively tax-free oil rates during the 40 years of the neo-liberal bonanza before Chavez's presidency, this relatively small cut into their profits was intolerable. Even a few extra cents for wages, as was proposed by Jean Bertrand Aristide in Haiti, was enough reason for U.S. imperialism to spirit him away in a military coup in 2004.

During the past 65 years, at least, Venezuela's masses have used their own strength to demand land from the landlords and an end to rip-offs by imperialism. In 1958, the Venezuelan army crushed their cries for implementation of a land reform law, and in 1989 they mobilized in 21 cities, the Caracazo rebellion, to protest a rise in basic fuel and bus services, the result of IMF structural adjustment measures. The Caracazo in particular had a strong impact on Chavez.

In 1992 Chavez led a small group of army troops in a coup attempt against President Andres Perez, who during the Caracazo had sided with the pillagers of Latin America and called out the military to massacre 5000. Chavez's adventure landed him in prison. But before he was put behind bars, he appeared on national television to say that the struggle against imperialism and its allies among the Venezuelan bourgeoisie was over only "por ahora" (for now).

Upon release from prison, he sought the presidency and challenged imperialism's favored twin parties of the Coordinadora Democrática (CD)—Acción Democrática and COPEI—who ruled together uninterceptedly from 1958 until they were soundly defeated by Chavez in the 1998 elections. The most powerful among the global corporate elite were willing to give Chavez a chance to prove whether he would be a threat to their centuries-old extraction of trillions of dollars of wealth. Would Chavez side with Venezuela's workers, peasants, and the poor or with its capitalist class?



(Above) NY memorial meeting for Hugo Chavez.

For 14 years Chavez sided with both.

U.S. and other foreign corporations were uneasy when Chavez became the head of a capitalist state, but stock markets rose after the newly elected president reassured them that their large private stakes in Venezuelan oil, land, and finance capital would remain untouched. In 1999, Chavez created a new constitution whose Article 115 guarantees private-property rights.

During Chavez's first five years in power, UN quality of life indexes slightly declined. And unemployment rose during his first three years, from 14% to 20%. It was not until after Chavez's narrow escapes from the brink of defeat at the hands of imperialism and bourgeois oppositionists that he accelerated reforms that made slight inroads into global and native capitalist property and profits.

The deep social polarization in Venezuela—combined with mass mobilizations of workers and peasants against their imperialist-aligned governments in Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia between 2001 and 2005—helped to create the conditions that pushed Chavez further to the left. His rhetoric became more radical; in 2007 he even claimed to be a Trotskyist, but so did his former labor minister, who presided over the post in 2008 when the National Guard was called out to attack workers demanding the nationalization of the SIDOR steel plant.

Billionaire benefits from "socialism"

A December 2012 article in *Bloomberg News* should give pause to anyone genuinely interested in discussing the strategy and tactics of fighting to create an economy and government based on the majority, workers and peasants. The writer quoted a Caracas financial-risk consultant, who sought to allay fears of giant investment banks that operate in Venezuela: "Chavez's socialist project depends on capitalist banks. He needs institutions such as Escotet's [a Venezuelan billionaire] to fund Venezuela's ballooning public debt. That's what feeds the social programs that have cut poverty and made the president popular."

This echoes sentiments that Chavez broadcast on his television program, "Alo Presidente" (No. 151): "We need bankers that can be committed to our national project [in order to show] that we can make a revolution peacefully." Currently, 80 percent of all bank holdings are controlled by international and national finance capital (the state bank holds roughly 20 percent of all deposits).

Social programs for the poor while allowing "socialism" to benefit billionaires characterize Chavez's course of balancing between the two classes, a middle of the road course not unprecedented in Latin Ameri-

can politics during the past 80 years. Chavez summarized his orientation, as quoted in the on-line journal, *Rebelión*: "Only through a coordinated effort among the community's actors, the State, the Government, the social actors, workers, industrialists, who at the same time are economic actors, only in a coordinated and powerful manner will we come out ahead."

During the 1940s and '50s in Argentina, in a similar manner to Chavez, Juan Peron carried out a populist program that combined anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist rhetoric, very limited industrial nationalizations, and agrarian reforms. Peron and Chavez alike developed programs that contained a hard kernel of the nationalism of the oppressed, who also benefited from real material progress and social reform.

Communal councils and unions

Under the Bolivarian regime, participation of the workers and the oppressed in political organizing has increased through communal councils and other popular organizations. But these groups are not governmental bodies and can do little more than present demands or recommendations to public officials. Thus, bureaucrats in the government and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) are allowed a relatively free hand to advance their own narrow interests.

Socialism is the most democratic participation of organized workers. But if Venezuela is building "21st-century socialism," one important section was glaringly absent among the 900 delegates that met in May 2012 at the nationalized SIDOR steel plant in Puerto Ordaz for the first national conference of the Socialist Workers Councils. *Aporrea* reported that no representatives from any of the national unions were present.

This may be owed to the fact that there is no strong independent trade-union movement in Venezuela today, which has gone through a series of splits since the National Union of Workers (UNT) was created after the pro-government union (CTV) sided with the capitalists during their oil strike in 2002/2003. State repression, whereby the National Guard attacked workers attempting to organize workers' control or state-worker co-management (a relationship where, by law, the state retains 51% control of the industry and the workers 49%) at SIDOR and Sanatorios Maracay, has further beleaguered the union movement.

Meanwhile, the CSBT (Central Socialista Bolivariana de los Trabajadores), is the only union recognized by the PSUV, giving the state party considerable influence in its affairs and diminishing the CSBT's character as a

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Women and the coming working-class fightback

By CHRISTINE MARIE

This article is based on a portion of the resolution on the oppression of women, written by the author, that was approved by the 2012 Socialist Action convention.

“Such demands [from the women’s liberation movement] go to the very heart of the specific oppression of women exercised through the family and strike at the pillars of class society. They indicate the degree to which the struggle for women’s liberation is a fight to transform all human social relations and place them on a new and higher plane.”

— Resolution of the 11th World Congress of the Fourth International, 1979

In our last pre-convention discussion [in 2011], we noted that the ruling-class effort to recoup its rate of profit led them almost everywhere to try to severely reduce the social wage and to reassert the individual working-class family’s crushing responsibility for child care, senior care, education, and health care. As has been the case throughout history, the main burden of this care will fall on women.

We also noted that structural adjustment measures and the increasing drive for privatization, including even social functions like the procurement of water, inevitably increased the double burden of working women. We noted the degree to which the Chinese miracle was dependent on the super-exploitation of young female rural migrant workers. We can now chart a parallel process occurring in the European nations undergoing the deepest austerity drives.

Logically flowing from these changes is the increased vulnerability of women; their increased availability for the most contingent and irregular work. Thus, their use as temporary, part-time, and contract labor force creates wedges that further divide and weaken the class as a whole.

We have been able to watch this process escalate on both a world and a national level. At the same time, we have seen ideological campaigns mount against women on many fronts—abortion and contraception; projects to indict Black women for genocide and South Asian-American women for femicide; Malthusian prescriptions for climate control; propaganda about motherhood and work, i.e. “the new mommy wars;” and the notion that single motherhood is the cause of poverty. These ideological campaigns against all the advances of the Second Wave feminist struggle steadily gain momentum and fury.

It has become clear that this economic crisis, like all other major capitalist economic crises and structural shifts historically, is going to be accompanied by major efforts by the ruling class to use sexism and gender inequality as weapons in their drive to prevent the kind of working-class fightback capable of ending their rule.

One factor that must be considered when assessing the degree to which the ruling class is prepared to use romantic and religious notions of the role of women and the family to retard the working-class struggle is the startling new ratio of employment to population size

in the United States.

In May 2012, a number of commentators on the financial blogs noted that the percentage of the U.S. population that is working is now just about what it was around 1970. That is, the percentage of the population lucky enough to have jobs today is about the same percentage that had jobs just before the ruling class created the conditions that pushed a massive wave of women to go into the workforce. At that time, although many women worked, the number of women who did not work was sufficient to bolster the ideological notions that women worked for “pin money” or that women belonged in the home, preventing teen delinquency and saving civilization through the nurturing of children.

This ideology made it easier for the bosses to super-exploit women on the job, to deepen divisions in the working class, and to use this division to drive down wages as a whole.

Non-working women remaining in the home constituted a massive reserve army of labor. Maintaining this setup required constant reinforcement of all the myths of patriarchal societies, including the most fundamental, that women must be either mothers or whores.

Today, women make up over half of the U.S. workforce. But the mainstreaming of all the old propaganda about the dangers of reproductive choice/justice and the dangers of alternatives to the nuclear family suggest that the ruling class sees driving some percentage of women out of the workforce as part of the solution for their current crisis.

Moreover, the government-sponsored or protected social services that partially supplant the traditional family—including public education, after school programs, school meal programs, social security, pensions, public housing, food stamps, and Medicaid—have been on the chopping block. The big investors holding government bonds are demanding that the funds that could go to these services be directed exclusively to their own financial health and maintenance.

In addition, private educators demand that less money go to public schools. Insurance companies fight public health care. In other historical periods of retrenchment, all these factors have resulted in the ruling class trying to convince the working class that women belong in the home.

However, the nuclear family that the capitalists fundamentally rely upon to hold down wages and supplant society-wide services has been put under incredible stress due to the attempt by the ruling class to use women to directly boost surplus value. Forty percent of children in the U.S. are being raised by a single parent.

It is this contradictory situation that is fueling what seems on the surface to be an irrational war against women in the United States. Of course, all sectors of the ruling class may not be in complete agreement on exactly what measures must be taken to maximize the exploitation of women and utilize their continued subordination for maximum economic effect.

The virulence of the Republican Party-sponsored measures to restrict reproductive choice and deny

any claims for reproductive justice represents one approach. The softball approach of the Democratic Party, which propagandistically defends women’s rights with token measures like the Lily Ledbetter Act or Health Reform clauses that would “allow” state funds to cover some abortions, is another.

What is certain is that there is unanimity on the need to use the “woman” card as part of the ruling parties’ efforts to make the system sufficiently profitable once again. And this offensive is occurring at a moment when due to unequal wages, employment discrimination, and other tools of economic marginalization, adult women are about 30% more likely to be officially “poor” than adult men.

This political offensive provides the context and tools for the most reactionary cultural shifts and the revisiting of some of the oldest ideological obsessions associated with the oppression of women. Thus, young working women are being forced to grapple with maturation in a culture that condemns reproductive choice, blames mothers for the psychologically damaged youth raised in the culture of austerity, shames the victims of rape, and simultaneously demands that they look and perform like the ubiquitous corporate porn stars whose success is determined by their ability to fake sexual pleasure.

Women in the labor movement

Women are half of the labor force but continue to earn 76 cents on the dollar earned by men. Women remain underrepresented in highly skilled blue-collar jobs in industry and transportation, i.e., jobs where the class is most able to exert decisive economic power. If domestic work is counted as part of the work-week, most working-class women *still* work nearly double the hours put in by men.

This double burden continues to limit the ability of many women to struggle successfully for political leadership in their workplace organizations. The unions that organize the service industries in which women predominate are as top-down, staff-driven, undemocratic, and paternalistic as any out there. The AFL and SEIU leaderships ignored the effort of the national nurses union to call a political demonstration (to tax the rich) at the NATO summit last June in Chicago.

The labor movement of today, shackled by its Democratic Party leadership, still refuses to campaign for national health care, affirmative action, or reproductive choice, to say nothing of the demand for 24-7 child care, which was seen as the immediate order of the day when the Second Wave began. It is difficult to believe that the rebuilding of the labor movement into a militant and effective one will occur without a conscious political effort to truly champion the fundamental needs of the half of the ranks who desperately need the relief codified in these historic demands.

The fight to win all working-class organizations to understand the centrality of breaking down the divisions in our class between women and men is one of the many key questions that must be taken on by those who want to build a successful fightback of the entire working class. This requires an embrace of gender equality and an agreement to fight against their economic subordination to men, and for the social alternatives to women’s double burden (working on the job and at home).

To fundamentally change the position of women, we are going to have to do away with the entire profit system that is dependent on their second-class status and dependent on withholding from society as a whole the simple means to satisfy the basic human needs for sustenance, shelter, human warmth and nurturing. To accomplish this will require a massive movement of working people, led by a wing of militants that understands that women’s historic demands for child care, for full reproductive freedom, for reproductive justice, for equal wages, and for affirmative action, are all central to any program for workers power.

Women must be at the center of the fight for this kind of movement, where working people can use their power at the controls of the transportation system, at the point of manufacturing and energy production, at the point of where profits are made, to force this rotten ruling elite out of the picture.

Conversely, any movement of working people that does not place in the foreground the demands of the female half of the workforce and does not create the culture that will foster their seizure of leadership will fail dismally. At every great moment of crisis of the capitalist system, the right wing has grown on the basis of the most reactionary but dramatically successful appeals for the dignity of women and the sanctity of the family, motherhood, and the child.

The longstanding demands of women for child care and social services cannot but be the demands of the whole working class in its fight for a sane and humane social order that takes care of all its members and that is the opposite of the patriarchal nightmare proposed

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Connecticut officials join anti-immigrant crackdown

By DANIEL ADAM

HARTFORD—Josemaria Islas is facing deportation. A resident of New Haven, Conn., Islas was arrested last July 2 for attempted bicycle theft. There was absolutely no evidence for the charge. The accuser could not identify Islas, and never lost possession of his bike. Islas' defense even produced evidence that he was at work and then lunch during the incident.

Still, the arrest alone gave court marshals the right to turn Islas over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement for deportation. Islas had remained in jail for four months attempting to avoid such an outcome. When he finally resolved his initial case the marshals moved in.

The court marshals derived their right to seize Islas from a program that the Obama administration recently imposed upon every single jurisdiction in the United States and its territories. The program is called "Secure Communities," or S-Comm. It requires local law enforcement to turn over to ICE the identifying information of all detained persons. If a person does not show up on ICE's national database, ICE can detain and then deport them.

In its essence, the program is a politically streamlined version of Arizona's SB 1070. It connects every state and local police department directly to federal immigration enforcement. It is difficult to understate the significance of this program.

Obama is on track to deport a record 2 million people by 2014—as many as were deported between 1892 and 1997. S-Comm has been an invaluable tool in reaching this record. It allows deportations to be made more quietly and under



(Left) Undocumented workers rounded up by U.S. Border Patrol in Arizona. Local officials have now become enforcers of federal anti-immigrant policies.

the ruse of deporting "dangerous criminals." Yet nearly half of the individuals deported in 2012 had no criminal record whatsoever. Of those with records, one-fourth had only traffic convictions, and one-fifth had been convicted of nothing more than immigration-related crimes like "illegal entry."

This is not carelessness, but conscious policy. The ACLU has recently obtained e-mails showing that top Obama administration officials in 2012 instructed ICE to round up more immigrants through traffic violations and other minor offenses in order to fill quotas for deportation of "criminals."

For years immigrants and their allies have advanced the slogan "we are workers, not criminals!" and this has made an impact on the political landscape. The federal government no longer feels confident justifying its repression solely via the idea that all immigrants (or at least undocumented immigrants) are crimi-

nal outlaws.

The Obama administration has adapted itself with a line from the playbook of mass-incarceration and the new Jim Crow. As in Black communities, repression of immigrants is now carried out under the guise of targeting only the "dangerous criminals." This justification is directed toward not only immigrants' allies, but towards immigrants themselves. It assures some that S-Comm is not a threat to them but protection against the criminal elements in their own community. It serves to divide not just native workers from immigrants, but also immigrants from each other.

Of course, S-Comm does not require ICE to check whether a person has been convicted of anything. A person whose name is not on ICE's database need only be arrested (falsely or otherwise) in order to be detained by ICE and deported. The program creates a legal means for circumventing due process since no trial

by jury is required for such deportations.

When Islas was arrested, Gov. Dannel Malloy had already begun a policy of only giving ICE people who met certain conditions—those with felonies on their records, "known gang members," and those on terrorist watch lists. Islas didn't meet any of these conditions, but the court hierarchy under which the court marshals operate refuses to follow this policy. In this sense, the case highlights some limitations of attempting solutions through local arrangements.

Local measures like these, which restrict who can be deported under S-Comm, only allow for even sharper divisions among immigrants, as such policies promote the development of more concrete distinctions within the community.

Those with felonies become more vulnerable than those without. Young people are especially vulnerable to the vague charge of "gang affiliation." Terrorist lists are wildly arbitrary, and overwhelmingly target members of Muslim and Arab communities. These policies are calculated to discourage people from identifying with victims of state repression. To succeed, the immigrant rights movement cannot swallow this bait. It must establish a consistent principle of "an injury to one is an injury to all."

Led by Unidad Latina en Acción, a steady campaign continues to demand Islas' release. Protests are taking place in New Haven and Hartford. ■

SEIU proposes living wage for Oregon workers

Once again we see gender-based pay inequity

By ANN MONTAGUE

SEIU 503 has announced it supports a living wage for its workers in Oregon, and is taking the issue to the bargaining table and possibly to the streets. While President Obama has proposed an increase in the Federal Minimum Wage to \$9 an hour, SEIU doesn't believe that is the solution. Oregon's minimum wage is already close to what Obama is proposing, and still 800,000 Oregonians are receiving food stamps and 30% of the applicants are currently working.

The union is saying that no state employee should continue to qualify for public assistance. They propose raising the wages to at least \$30,000 per year, which would be slightly above the threshold for a family of four to receive food stamps.

Heather Hoffman, the *Statesman Journal's* columnist assigned to keep an eye on those pesky state workers, actually dug up some interesting statistics. In comparing salaries among different state agencies, she found that "many of the people in the pay sector below \$30,000 work for the Department Of Human Services (DHS)."

But she didn't pursue research on the gender breakdown of the workers in the agency that has the most number of workers who are not receiving a "Living Wage." Anyone who has worked for DHS knows the answer. And anyone who has walked into an office where food stamps or other poverty-level assistance applications are being received knows the answer. These workers are women.

So here we are again. In 1987, when SEIU went on strike, one of the main issues was pay equity for women who were in job classifications that were predominantly female and undervalued. Many were on food stamps. In organizing for that strike, women workers spoke out in public hearings, met with women workers across the state and then voted overwhelming to strike. In fact, Michael Krivosh, the chief strategist of the strike, affectionately referred to our strike as "my mother's strike." Not only did the workers win pay in-

creases for those undervalued job classifications but it changed the face of the union—literally.

Now in 2013, they are not looking at predominately female job classifications, as in 1987, but at the agen-

stamps. We are living in a system that continues to use women as a source of underpaid labor. We fought against it 26 years ago, and we need to fight against it again.

No changes of any magnitude will come about without organized pressure from women. Certainly, no effective strike will happen without women activists stepping forward. The fight against gender-based wage discrimination requires a prolonged and consistent commitment. It didn't end in 1987, and it won't end in 2013; but there can be victories along the way if we don't give up. ■



... Women & fightback

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by the far right. The fight for full democratic rights for LGBTQI workers and for gender equality are necessary corollaries that limit the ability of the ruling class to use the nuclear family as an ideological tool to attack the working class as a whole.

An effective working-class program for jobs and social services must include the appropriate demands for child care, for reproductive freedom and reproductive justice, for full female and child health care, for adequate maternal and paternal leave for childbirth, child rearing, and elder care, for a full and rich education for all children, and for affirmative action to achieve gender equality in all trades and professions that we are fighting to maintain.

These demands, and others like them, could not only heal one of the most dangerous divides in the

ranks of the working class, but could make crystal clear the nature of the society that will benefit all working people. It would be a system in which society as a whole, not the individual household unit, takes responsibility for the basic human needs of its members.

It would be a society in which those who produce the wealth have the power to channel resources into social projects that enrich the youth and comfort the elderly, and afford 100% of the population the time and means to develop as full and productive beings, free to use their talents and creativity to shape a better world.

Currently, there is no sizeable movement for women's rights in the streets. Nevertheless, the small mobilizations, conferences, and discussions occurring among young feminists, at Occupy gatherings, and in the labor movement are part of the broad political process by which an effective class-struggle movement and revolutionary organization will be built in the next period. ■

Activists discuss how to stop fracking

Jesse Brown / www.protectingourwaters.com



(Left) Philadelphia activists demand that Pennsylvania Gov. Corbett support a moratorium on fracking.

(PAHs). A sink hole in a salt dome cavern in Bayou Corne, La., caused the mandatory evacuation of a community of 350 because of migrated crude bubbling out. Similar subsidence occurred under a Dallas suburban schoolyard. Animals—livestock, pets and wildlife—are getting sick and dying. Poultry and songbirds are showing signs of endocrine disruption. It is very likely that our children are also.

Another serious health hazard is exposure to low frequency noise (LFN) at 500 cycles per second, which is well below human hearing. This comes mostly from the motors on compressor stations, and it travels five to eight miles in all directions. LFN exposure causes Vibro Acoustic Disease (VAD), the main symptom of which is constriction of the blood vessels that affects the heart and nervous system with an alarming array of symptoms. It is considered a whole-body pathology, and it affects 70% of the people in Texas who are exposed to LFN because there are no standards that require the industry to stop it at the source.

Government default

Because governments at all levels are in the back pocket of the Energy Giants, the industry is allowed to get away with murder. As a result, there is no regulation of the fracking process, not only thanks to the Halliburton Loophole, which allows wholesale violations of the Clean Water & Air Acts, but also because of a major failure on the part of the national Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and similar state agencies throughout the country.

Because of this default, corporations can continue to deny they are polluting and conveniently blame people's health problems on "prior existing conditions." This was made clear by a panel of keynote speakers. To back up their claims, victims of shale gas pollution have to jump through a lot of hoops to get beyond "anecdotes" when there are releases of toxic gases by systematically logging odor events and related health symptoms. Then it is up to them to report the releases to local agencies in a timely manner.

When monitoring is either nonexistent or inadequate, people have taken to conducting their own air and water sampling. Unfortunately, many can't afford to, so a few independent, low-cost testing entities have sprung up out of the grassroots movement. In collaboration with Earthworks, they recently conducted an epidemiological study in Pennsylvania, collecting data on 108 health symptoms and correlating them with 34 air and water tests for various hazardous substances released from the fracking process. They found a direct relationship between levels of exposure, intensity of symptoms, and the distance people are living from shale gas infrastructure.

These efforts on the part of the movement have become necessary to get the truth out, especially in places like Pennsylvania, where the state government acts like a subsidiary of the oil and gas industry, and investigations into fracking impacts have been shut down and reports shelved to cover up the damage done.

The most flagrant example is when the EPA tested for seven contaminants and ruled that the water in the town of Dimock, Pa., was safe! The residents there now drink bottled water graciously supplied by the gas drilling company, which still denies it's polluting the environment. For more information on fracking impacts, view the report, "Gas Patch Roulette," at <http://health.earthworksaction.org>.

Democratic rights suppressed

When confronted with the daily assault of living in a fossil-fuel extraction zone, people are faced with two choices—move and give up everything or stand and fight. Many have courageously chosen to stand and fight, as was evident at the conference. On the other hand, a family that has lived in an area for some four or five generations may decide to pack up and leave because there's a wellhead 250 feet from their bedroom window,

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By CHRISTINE FRANK

DALLAS—Three hundred grassroots activists met here the first weekend in March to share information, network, and strategize over how to end the hydro-fracturing of shale gas in their rural and suburban communities. The Marcellus, Utica, Eagleford, and Barnett shales were well represented, the latter two being in Texas. It was in the Barnett Shale, where frack fever first caught on with horizontal drilling and fracking technologies having been perfected there. Consequently, there were many local people at the summit relating their horror stories.

The event was sponsored by Earthworks, an organization that focuses on preventing the environmental and health damage caused by the extraction industries. Activists were pumped up by the 50,000 who had demonstrated in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 17, and found the two days of keynote addresses and workshop sessions very useful.

As the reserves of conventional hydrocarbons are rapidly declining, reliance upon extreme forms of energy—shale gas and oil, tar sands bitumen, deepwater petroleum, and nuclear power—are more and more becoming the norm, placing ever greater stresses upon ecosystems and human health. As "Gasland" filmmaker Josh Fox stated, the oil and gas industry has now leased the mineral rights under an equivalent land mass comparable in size to the states of California and Florida combined.

Gas leaseholder Chesapeake Energy is currently the largest landowner in the U.S. Developers have invaded American communities much like a foreign power would the colonial world in a rapacious grab for resources. As author Michael T. Klare has aptly pointed out, North America is being transformed into an Energy Third World.

Communities under siege

Numerous "fracktivists" testified at the summit that life in a frack zone is a living hell, as farms, ranches, residential neighborhoods, parks, and public lands are being bored from underneath by horizontal drilling and surrounded by drilling pads, compressor stations, processing plants, and pipelines on the surface. Nothing is sacred, with gas infrastructure installed near schools, day-care centers, and hospitals and located well within "setback" limits.

In fact, its concentration in urban areas is mind boggling. In Texas especially, where the oil and gas industry dominates politics, city councils have conveniently passed industry-friendly zoning ordinances despite massive opposition. They are now proposing to allow horizontal drilling under city parks in Dallas, against which activists are mobilizing at council meetings.

A frack attack in an area results in numerous toxic ex-

Numerous 'fracktivists' testified at the summit in Dallas that life in a frack zone is a living hell.

posures that undermine the health of all life. People are exposed to methane that has migrated into their water wells, enabling them to ignite their taps or wellheads and making the water undrinkable. Methane collects in basements, presenting the very real risk of explosion.

The accidental and routine venting or blowdowns of methane (CH₄) into the atmosphere cause a plethora of health problems. Its flaring is also widespread. Gas flares are so numerous in the Bakken Oil Shale in western North Dakota that they can be seen by satellite shining at night more brightly than the nearest urban center, which is the Twin Cities.

The inefficient flaring of CH₄ at 95% is another source of air pollution. Its incomplete combustion gives off Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) as well as nitrous oxides (NO_xs). In addition, NO_xs are automatically released from compressor stations, either deliberately or because of valve failure with up to 32,500 tons allowed per year. They contribute to the formation of deadly smog in combination with ground-level ozone that together are photochemically altered by sunlight.

Gas extraction causes increased tropospheric ozone levels that lead to the destruction of the alveoli of the lungs, which never recover. Ozone also kills crops and wild vegetation. Gas treatment plants release hydrogen sulfide, which causes acid deposition as rainwater turns the gas into sulfuric acid.

Another hazard is the chemical cocktail of radioactive, flowback water that's stored in leaky surface pits or trucked and spilled along the way to deep injection wells, around which earthquakes are common. Highly toxic spent water has even been released onto city streets and roads and into ditches.

Water usage is enormous. One wellhead can suck up to five million gallons of freshwater. During the epic Texas drought, the frackers were allowed to use all the water they wanted while farmers and ranchers were being ruined and municipalities imposed rationing. Once this essential resource is polluted, it is extremely difficult to recover and purify it.

Land subsidence has also occurred, causing exposures to VOCs and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons

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and they can't stand it anymore. In such instances, homeowners are frequently forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement with the gas company to whom they've sold their property.

Royal Dutch Shell is notorious for imposing such gag orders to silence people. It only goes to show that they are afraid of the truth.

Many small municipalities have passed zoning ordinances, forbidding fracking within town limits. This form of rebellion is not permitted anymore so some states are passing legislation to block the right of towns and cities to defend themselves from a frack attack.

They can also ignore the thousands of comments submitted on Environmental Impact Statements. New York residents submitted 204,000 comments in 30 days, which was more than those who voted for Governor Cuomo in his home borough of Queens, yet he is still considering turning certain counties into sacrifice zones. Other ways democratic rights are being suppressed is by denying the opportunity to comment at public hearings where the opponents of fracking can register their protests.

If victims publicly speak out, they are threatened with legal action by the frackers. The water well of Steve Lipsky was and still is contaminated with lethal levels of methane and benzene. The Weatherford, Tex., homeowner dared to complain and posted a video on YouTube showing a two-foot flame coming out of his wellhead when he applied a lighter. Isotopic analysis proved that the CH₄ was coming from the nearby drilling operation of Range Resources.

Feeling some pressure to act, the EPA filed an endangerment order against the company, but then dropped the action after cutting a deal in exchange for a token amount of monitoring. Range Resources has sued Lipsky for defamation to the tune of \$4 million. On behalf of the driller, a Parker County judge ruled that the video was "deceptive," but the corrupt judge, Trey Loftin, has since recused himself from the case because he bragged openly during an unsuccessful re-election bid that he'd stuck it to the plaintiff.

Lipsky has had to shut down his well and transport water to his home. To add insult to injury, he's been hit with a gag order, yet he spoke at the summit. The Texas Railroad Commission, the body that oversees fossil fuel extraction in the state, has backed up the gas driller, of course, denying any contamination. Sadly, on every front, ordinary people are losing the battle against the Energy Giants, and as they say, the first casualty of war is always the truth.

Frack-sand mining

Two farmer activists who spoke from northeastern Iowa termed silica (SiO₂) frack-sand mining the bastard child of the hydrofracturing industry. The mineral most sought after is quartz, which makes up common beach sands and has many uses—in concrete, abrasives, glass, and ceramics. Its hardness is second only to that of diamond, and the near-perfect roundness of the grains, combined with its durability, make it an ideal "proppant" to hold open the fissures blasted in the shale formations since it is able to withstand pressures of 10,000 psi.

The fine quartz allows the gas to flow out freely, and is essential to the chemical-water-sand mixture that's injected into the horizontal well after the shale is fractured with explosives. That is why there has been a boom in the extraction of silica frack sand in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, and elsewhere.

Cheap and plentiful, the mineral is either quarried, strip mined, or excavated out of bluffs from underneath. With strip mining, depending upon how the sandstone deposits were laid down in the geologic past, there can be more than 20 feet of overburden that has to be removed, along with soil and vegetation. That means the habitat and its wildlife are gone forever.

Sand extraction leads to sediment loading in streams that kills aquatic life. Milling also uses a lot of freshwater that can draw down ground and surface water, exacerbating droughts. Frack-sand mining, milling, storage, and transport lead to high levels of silica dust in the air. The dust is similar to microscopic shards of glass, and its inhalation causes silicosis of the lungs, an eventually fatal disease. The alveoli are literally shredded, making it impossible to get enough oxygen. An afflicted person eventually suffocates to death.

Workers in the industry are not provided with any protective gear or ventilation equipment, and are the most vulnerable sector of the population in addition to nearby residents. Airborne silica dust is a known carcinogen, yet only four states regulate it to any degree. With fugitive dust blowing off of great thumping heaps of sand strewn across the landscape, it is a serious hazard.

The frack sand is hauled in heavy uncovered diesel trucks pounding local pavements 24/7. Eventually, it is shipped to gas fracking zones by train in open box-cars. In some communities, the train traffic is so heavy, the vibrations crack windows. The noise level is that of any heavy industrial zone, disturbing the peace and quiet of small towns and rural areas. Once your life is overtaken in that way, you never get it back.



Given the accelerating pace of climate change, it is suicide to extract ever more fossil fuels.

To stay the hand of the mine operators, many counties have passed moratoria on frack-sand extraction. However, they are only temporary until the environmental impacts can be determined. Eventually, the dollar signs start rolling in the eyes of local officials and they succumb to the false promise of jobs and prosperity no matter what the real costs are to ecosystems. Eager to have sand gouged out from under the beautiful bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, the mayor of Red Wing, Minn., was finally forced to resign because it was revealed that he is a lobbyist for the industry at the state legislature.

More irreparable damage to the climate

Given the accelerating pace of climate change that is evident in melting ice masses, rising sea levels, and extreme weather, it is sheer suicide to be extracting ever more fossil fuels. We are on the verge of runaway global warming because greenhouse gas emissions are rising at the rate of two parts per million per year despite a worldwide economic recession. Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations are at 393 ppm, well over the level considered safe.

The biggest myth of all is that natural gas is a "clean" bridge or transitional fuel and a safe substitute for coal—when there is nothing clean about it. For years, established environmental groups such as the Sierra Club perpetuated that fairy tale while disgracefully accepting millions of dollars from natural gas developers. Thirty-eight percent of coal and oil electrical generation has been replaced by natural gas. However, when burned for electricity, it still gives off 50 percent of the carbon emissions of coal.

When released straight into the atmosphere, methane is a greenhouse gas whose potency is 33 times greater than that of carbon dioxide (CO₂) over 100 years and 105 times greater over 20 years. This is because CH₄ oxidizes into CO₂ over time. Because of melting methane hydrates in the Arctic continental shelf and permafrost, factory farming, rice cultivation, and shale oil and gas fracking, methane emissions are skyrocketing, and since 2010, have risen sharply, largely due to out-of-control development.

The accidental leaking and purposeful venting of methane is the same as burning all of the recovered CH₄ twice, and as we see from its potency level, small amounts have a large climate forcing. This is the dirty truth behind so-called clean natural gas.

Bubblenomics of drill, baby, drill

The shale gas boom is proving to have only short-lived economic benefits, accompanied by long-term environmental and health problems. According to financial analyst and fractivist Deborah Rogers, it comprises only 1/20th of one percent of the U.S. labor market despite the promise of 600,000 temporary jobs over 30 to 50 years. (In their frackonomic projections, advocates actually include in their employment statistics prostitutes and strippers working in the man camps, the sexual exploitation of women apparently being a growth industry.)

Much of the investment is only on paper, with one-quarter of the reserve growth coming through mergers and acquisitions and massive share repurchases by the majors, giving the illusion of profitability. In other words, the industry is thriving on fake growth, much like

the financial market.

The energy return on energy invested is ridiculously low. Conventional crude oil at the peak of production in the U.S. once reaped 100 barrels of oil for every one expended. Today, that has declined to a ratio of 11:1. For extreme energy such as tar sands, it's 3:1, and shales 5:1, meaning an enormous carbon-intensive footprint for both.

In order to be at all profitable, shale gas operators must seek customers who will pay the most, and those are the foreign markets in Asia. As soon as the liquefied natural gas (LNG) ports are in place, they will be able to charge \$18/1000 cubic feet as compared with \$3.80, the domestic price. They are now committed to fulfilling these long-term contracts to fuel Asian factories from a rapidly depleting commodity.

The economic law is drill or default. With hundreds of thousands of wells in 34 states and new leases being sold in Michigan, Illinois, and elsewhere, this does not bode well for the environment. Once the toxic genie is let out of the bottle, the pollution will be migrating through the water table, contaminating the surface, and plaguing us for generations to come.

How to stop the frack attack

As expressed in one workshop, some activists believe that the situation can be rectified by getting Big Gas and Oil's dirty money out of the elections, since they heavily bankroll the candidates of both capitalist parties. However, because the ruling class controls every aspect of the government, reforming campaign finance would make little difference.

They can always avoid public disclosure by slipping the money into greasy palms under the table. Politicians who don't play along with their plans to perpetuate the fossil-fuel-based economy until every last barrel of oil, tank of gas, and boxcar of coal is burned don't last long.

Plus, President Obama has made it clear that he is for fracking and said in his State of the Union Address that all energy options are on the table. That includes filthy tar sands dilbit imported from Alberta, Canada. This pronouncement came alongside dubious promises to deal with the climate crisis.

Admittedly, for every dollar spent on Congress, Big Oil & Gas gets a shocking 5800% return on its investment, if one divides the \$347 million in campaign contributions by the \$20 billion in subsidies. The latter come in direct form in tax breaks and loopholes in environmental regulations, and indirect form through military protection of oil shipping lanes and out-and-out robbery of other nations' energy resources through imperialist wars.

In the long run, it is more useful for the movement to forge powerful alliances among grassroots groups, workers, students, and oppressed nationalities and get out into the streets. It is hoped from the summit and the Feb. 17 Washington D.C. demonstration that this process is in its formative stages.

This will enable masses of people to unite and demand an end to all fossil-fuel subsidies, the divestment of college and union pension hydrocarbon portfolios, and the taxation to the max of big polluters and destroyers of the climate, using the funds for clean-up. This can be done while simultaneously waging national and local struggles against extractive operations, including Trans-Canada's Keystone XL2 pipeline.

The effort to draw down carbon, cool down the planet, and preserve and restore our ecosystems must be waged on many fronts. Ultimately, the only realistic solution is to make an ecosocialist revolution that puts planetary and human needs before profits.

The first act of the revolution must be to nationalize the Energy Giants and other productive forces by putting them under democratic workers' control so they can be retooled and converted to clean, renewable sources of power and green manufacturing, while leaving all hydrocarbons in the ground where Mother Nature put them. ■

Capitalism damns the environment



By JEFF MACKLER

Capitalism, the system—Chinese, American, or European style—has struck yet another devastating blow against all humanity.

One of the world's largest solar-panel manufacturing plants, employing 10,000 Chinese workers at the city of Wuxi on China's east coast, has declared bankruptcy—a victim of its own "success" and capitalism's inherent drive to destruction. The Wuxi plant is the major and dominant subsidiary of SunTech Power, one of the world's leading solar-panel manufacturers. (The plant is owned and controlled by SunTech but "legally" separate from it.)

SunTech increased the production of solar panels tenfold from 2008 to 2012 and drove down the cost of solar panels 75 percent, "undermining the economics of the business," according to the March 21 *New York Times*.

The fact that cheap solar power has the potential of making a qualitative dent in the still increasing and life-threatening carbon footprint of virtually all nations did not figure into the financial equations that brought down SunTech. For SunTech's competitors the question was how to establish their own monopolies over the industry.

The U.S. and the European Union retaliated by imposing massive tariffs—which increased the cost of importing Chinese solar panels by 40 percent or more—and by granting billions in loans to U.S. manufacturers, the most infamous of which was the Fremont, Calif.-based Solyndra Corporation. Solyndra received more than \$500 million in loan guarantees at the behest of the Obama administration, only to file for bankruptcy itself—but not before granting super-bonuses to its top brass and cooking the books so that its creditors were placed first in line to collect whatever funds remained, while the U.S. government was last.

SunTech did the same thing, organizing its Wuxi plant as a legally separate subsidiary to minimize its vulnerability to creditors. Meanwhile, SunTech stashed its profits in Cayman Island Banks to avoid paying taxes to the Chinese government, just as some 6000 Russian corporations used the Cyprus tax haven to shield themselves from Russian government tax collectors. Indeed, an estimated one-third to perhaps one-half of the funds held by Cyprus banks was of Russian oligarch origin.

Solyndra's solar panels were state of the art, using cylindrical panels that were said to be 20 percent more efficient than any other on the market. But in capitalism's mad scramble for control and domination of world markets, life-sustaining technological advances are subordinate to profit. In the case of solar panels, this new industry couldn't compete against the new technologies that extract so-called clean natural gas from shale deposits that were previously inaccessible from the point of view of profit making. The fact that the relatively new fracking process threatens to pollute with deadly chemicals the fundamental ground water systems of the entire country is of no interest when natural gas (and oil as well) profit margins are compared to the cost of sustainable energy from the sun.

The SunTech bankruptcy comes after a dozen U.S. solar-panel manufacturers and another dozen in Europe have either failed or cut back production when

Solar panels pose a threat to the industries whose production of fossil fuels puts a question mark over humanity's future.

they found that they could not cover their costs given the dramatic fall in prices for solar panels. Here we have a contradiction that runs through the entire capitalist system of production for profit. Low-cost and planet-saving technologies fail because the profits of the energy that their products produce are too low.

In the March 21 *New York Times* article entitled, "China's Solar Panel Giant Is Tainted By Bankruptcy," this phenomenon is explained quite clearly: "The industry's problem is that most of the cost of a solar panel lies in building a factory, not in operating the equipment." Indeed, today's super-modern Chinese plants are operated largely by robots, as opposed to low-cost migrant labor that is paid near-starvation wages, as is the case with so many other Chinese and U.S.-owned corporations operating in China.

The Times continues: "When the industry has severe overcapacity, as it does now, each company continues running its factories to cover its tiny operating costs, and at least a small part of the interest on the loans it took out to buy the costly factory equipment. But when every company pursues that strategy, the whole industry loses money and virtually no business is able to cover its full interest costs." Imagine that! A world where robots at virtually no cost other than the price of their production produce solar panels to power the world, and yet the industry goes bankrupt.

A spokesperson for *Bloomberg Business News* put it more bluntly: "The winner emerges through constant competition between different approaches and the workings of a free market as it allocates capital."

In this case, as in the world system of competitive capitalist production as a whole, there are no winners other than perhaps the last mega-corporation standing. No matter how improved the technology, to stay in the game, the lesser players must introduce yet another level of efficiency and/or to combine resources of the weaker competitors. Competing capitals, today ever more in the form of great monopolies, constantly drive down the cost of production while simultaneously building more and more factories that employ less and less labor.

The result? The rate of profit, based always on the exploitation of human labor as the source of all profits, is ever declining, thus forcing competing capitalists to invest in schemes aimed at beating the low rates of return on their investment in manufacturing.

In today's crisis-ridden capitalist world, investment has shifted dramatically from industry to massive speculation in previously unheard of financial instruments. Money creates more money in the gambling casino of modern capitalism without the intermediary of working people producing commodities that have a use for all humanity. As with the 2007 worldwide crash, the speculative game must end in disaster as the house of cards fall and compliant governments make workers pay.

There is a hidden hitch when it comes to sustain-

able energy. Since the capitalists have not yet been able to meter the sun for corporate gain, they much prefer investments that *are* profitable. This is where the highly monopolized fossil fuel industry enters the picture.

Today some six massive oil and gas corporations dominate world production. They have a similar power and influence over the world's governments that their corporate elite, the less than "one percent," control. In this scenario, solar panels and all other forms of sustainable energy pose a threat to the very industries whose continued and increasing production of fossil fuels puts a question mark over humanity's future.

It is not an accident that global warming was barely mentioned in the recent highly orchestrated presidential debates. Indeed, President Obama went to great lengths to present himself as the top gun and unswerving advocate of the oil and gas industries, bragging that under his reign the U.S. has produced more and opened more drilling sites on public lands and in the ocean than any previous administration in history.

Meanwhile, the workings of capital, operating at breakneck speed, sent an initial several billions to "glut" the world with solar-panel factories only to discover that cheap and sustainable energy was highly unprofitable.

The Chinese capitalists won no awards for producing solar panels in abundance. In fact, only a tiny percentage is put to use in China itself, the second largest coal-based CO2 polluter in the world. While top Chinese officials like Fu Ying, spokesperson for the National People's Congress, publicly stated that she opened her curtains daily to check for smog and wore a protective face mask on particularly horrible days, while strapping her children with the same, China's solar-panel production was aimed at beating the competition worldwide and *exporting* its products at prices that undercut its competitors, driving many to bankruptcy. The use of solar panels in China today remains minimal.

No doubt, the world's oil monopolies play a determining role in the failure of the solar panel business. The last thing that these monopolies want is relatively free power from the sun, one object that at least to date they have not been able to meter. In a similar vein, the very water that people drink in a growing number of nations is owned, or controlled, by giant U.S. corporations that charge small fortunes for its delivery and "production" after capitalist industry has drastically reduced and fouled the planet's water supply.

Some pundits have recently pointed to the fact that U.S. CO2 production has fallen by 13 percent since 2007, the steepest decline of any of the advanced capitalist nations. But this decline has little to do with increasing energy efficiency or a turn toward sustainable energy technology. Only 7 percent of U.S. energy today comes from these sources.

A better explanation was presented by *New York Times* staffwriter Eduardo Porter in his recent "Economic Sense" column. Says Porter, "The main reasons [for the decline in fossil fuel use] are economic. The great recession and the world's sluggish recovery have depressed energy use. As in the 1970s, high oil prices have encouraged people to drive less and switch to cars and trucks with better fuel economy."

"There is a new force as well," says Porter, "high prices [monopoly controlled] underpinned the widely trumpeted investment in hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, of shale rock rich in oil and natural gas, which pushed the price of gas to some \$2 per thousand cubic feet last April, down from \$9 four years ago. Cheap gas, in turn, has encouraged power companies to switch to the cleaner fuel, replacing the most heavily polluting source of energy that we know, coal."

There you have it. U.S. capitalism has not reduced CO2 emissions by a conscious effort to curtail fossil fuel production and massively substitute available sustainable energy producing technologies. The slight reduction has come instead by an unexpected and unplanned, yet inevitable, worldwide depression that has brought misery to billions, and by *increasing* the production of "cleaner" natural gas through a technology that produces deadly methane and inserts poisonous chemicals into the very drinking water that is essential for life itself.

Meanwhile, capitalism's irrationality portends other disasters in the years ahead. The charred body of a rat was found in late March in a vital electrical switchboard that regulates the cooling system of the still crippled and jury-rigged Fukushima Daiichi nu-

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... Cyprus banks

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a southern European economy open to the west as an EU member since 2004, which is connected to north-east Africa, Middle East and Asia, drawing on the labor reserves, tourism and financial services exported from its neighbors...

"With the collapse of Beirut as a financial center in the early 1980s, its geographical location, good relations with its Arab neighbors and with the eastern bloc, and later the collapse of the USSR and its allies, allowed the sector to grow massively."

He also pointed to a wide array of regional and global players with potential stakes in newly discovered gas reserves off the Cypriot coast, such as the U.S., the EU, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, and Israel. (The Cyprus government's first plan would have pledged profits from these reserves to rich bank depositors in exchange for the money seized from their accounts.)

All these connections mean that the economies concerned feel the bruises when Cyprus stumbles, yet each can only see its way clear to telling the island to pick itself up without any assistance.

A workers' solution to the crisis

Several radical authors have pointed out that these events present both the need and the opportunity to forge a genuine workers' alternative, drawing its potential from the willingness shown by Cypriot workers (and their allies in Greece and elsewhere) to mobilize against such outrages as the proposed deposits theft.

Commenting on the proposed seizure of small depositors' cash, Kevin Ovenden, a leader of the UK's Respect party, wrote: "What was meant to be sacred—private property and the essential private contractual relationship—has become profaned; not at the hands of some North Korean 'communist terror,' but by the partisans of re-turbocharging the neoliberal model."

A Left seriously claiming to defend workers, he wrote, would have to lead a fight to take control of the banks, using the crisis as proof of the realism of such a proposal: "The Cypriot state ... has just shown that this is not only possible but ... is actually how this free market system operates." It would also mean nationalizing the currency in "a direct break or rupture with the Eurozone and EU."

"That is to say that if the agencies of capitalism, in the interests of capitalism, can take over the banks and seize deposits, then so can the Left for entirely different interests and with different effect."

And he argued against managing the crisis on behalf of capital, as many reformist left parties on the continent propose: "If the liberal capitalists cannot succeed in protecting rights of private property, there is no reason to imagine that we can. Rather, there is every reason to base our arguments and agitation on an anti-capitalist position. Depositors in banks are not a social class. [Listen closely, Strike Debt activists!]



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

(Left) Protesters mock the banks on Wall Street. Some ask: If capitalist governments can take over banks and deposits, as in Cyprus, shouldn't working people discuss how to take them over—in their own interests?

Nationalize the banks under workers' control!

ard Wolff told "Democracy Now": "[T]here is surely one argument here for the left—if they can seize banks and deposits to benefit bankers and other big depositors, then so can the left, but for other purposes."

Dimitris Hilaris, a member of OKDE, Greek section of the Fourth International, also warned of illusions in reformist "solutions" that shy away from breaks with the rulers' euro-solutions. He predicted that the deal's reduction of the national income "will hit the working class. If the big capital funds lose about 40% of their investment, the insurance funds of the workers will collapse together with a number of small-medium enterprises. Unemployment will rise. And the upcoming memorandum will reduce the workers' wages for a second time."

This scenario, wrote Hilaris, increases the urgency of forging "an antisystemic and workers' alternative. It is the only way that the argument over the public control of the banking system can be implemented. It is an inevitable condition for a left which is actually fighting to change the balance of forces now and does not postpone the fight for one remote and uncertain future."

Hilaris said a government could claim to be genuinely "left," not to say communist, "only under the condition that it paves the road of rupture with the ruling economic and political framework. And this requires an extra-parliamentary and extra-institutionalist action that can produce new structures of workers' self-organization."

An OKDE-Spartakos statement argued that a workers' solution should begin with the demand for nationalization of the banks without compensation in a single public banking entity under workers' control, combined with the unilateral cancellation of the debt and the nationalization of foreign trade, "requests objectively leading to the rupture with the EU and the Eurozone."

Such steps can only avoid being reversed if they are part of motion toward fighting for workers' power in society as a whole—and, in the Cypriot context, throughout the Mediterranean region, especially given the myriad ties to that region mentioned above.

Fortunately, signs of potential receptivity to such a radical vision have come not only in the form of Cypriot workers' brave "no!" but also in the regional political and solidarity meetings occurring at the very same time in the late March World Social Forum in Tunisia. Among those in attendance are revolutionaries from across southern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa who are using the forum to discuss just such crises and how to meet them with broader solidarity, fiercer militancy, and a more revolutionary analysis and program. ■

They are not a uniform interest group, and are not a potential bloc that the Left can mobilize, lead and rest on. For us, nationalizing the banks means protecting working people and the middle class at the expense of big business and finance."

The Cypriot heist, he argued, poses the question of whether there needs to be "a renegotiation of austerity or a radical rupture with it—not as a policy dilemma of government, but as a political argument around which masses of people may be mobilized to have political effect." [emphasis added]

In contrast to this stance, he points to statements by officials in the former Communist Party government—which had approved a draconian austerity plan and was then voted out—that bank takeovers were at best provocations "that would prevent winning broader [i.e. middle-class or even ruling-class] political support," and were at worst "futile." But, Ovenden pointed out, the futility was in *not* taking radical measures, which resulted not only in demobilizing workers but in the CP's own dismissal by voters.

Ovenden concluded: "What the Left says and does now matters. First, can it encourage radical mass mobilization that can shift the political calculus. If it does not, the rise of the fascist Golden Dawn in Greece shows that there are others who will. "Cyprus and our response to it is a moment to advance an argument for just such a break."

In the same vein, radical economics professor Rich-

By MARGARET KIMBERLEY

Obama's torture of Bradley Manning

"He (Richard Nixon) would probably also feel vindicated (and envious) that all the crimes he committed against me—which forced his resignation facing impeachment—are now legal." — Daniel Ellsberg

One phase of Bradley Manning's torture is coming to an end and another is beginning. PFC Bradley Manning did this country and the world a great service when he leaked footage of the carnage carried out by the United States in Iraq. Manning's video showed Iraqi journalists and a family with small children under fire from an Apache helicopter. The audio of the footage featured the servicemen who we are told to worship laughing about the fate of the people they had killed.

The only remarkable thing about this footage is that we were able to see it. Occupation always brings with it atrocities, and the occupation of Iraq was no different in that regard. What is different and much worse about the United States is that lawlessness has now become perfected and normalized under the Obama administration.

George W. Bush began the process of destroying the rule of law as it relates to the executive branch. As he said, he was "the decider," and his administration worked tirelessly to make the presidency unaccountable to any other branch of government or to the American people. Beginning in the aftermath of the Sept.

11 attacks he claimed that executive privilege gave him the right to declare anyone an enemy combatant who immediately lost the right to due process. He invented the "black sites" in nearly every part of the globe where enemy combatants were subjected to torture. These actions were counter to all moral norms, international law and the Geneva Conventions. Before the Bush era, these standards kept even the worst American intentions in check.

Bush committed these crimes with the help of craven Democrats like Nancy Pelosi, who were informed of torture and rendition and gave full approval. Not only did they prove themselves to be as evil as Bush but their incompetence deprived them of the ability to even exact political advantage when the time was ripe.

The worst aspects of the Bush administration were not undone by Barack Obama, and they were perfected and made a permanent part of United States government policy. Simply put, Barack Obama has done more damage to civil liberties than any other president in American history.

Bradley Manning is but one victim of the Obama regime. The Obama administration has prosecuted more whistle blowers than any other president. Bush claimed the right to capture and torture but he didn't claim the right to kill at will like his predecessor. Even Dick Cheney



didn't have a Tuesday kill list meeting.

Manning was held for nearly three years without being charged, and in solitary confinement. He was forced to sleep without clothing or blankets, and was denied visits, even from members of Congress. This treatment has always been considered torture, and the fact that it was meted out by Obama shouldn't change the definition.

Manning's torture, from being charged with aiding and abetting the enemy to solitary confinement, can be laid at the feet of Barack Obama. Bradley Manning did not kill anyone, he didn't lie to the people or the media. He only revealed what his country was doing. In his words, he wanted to "spark a domestic debate of the role of the military and foreign policy in general and cause society to reevaluate the need and even desire to engage in counterterrorism and counterinsur-

gency operations that ignore their effect on people who live in that environment every day."

Those words are not particularly noteworthy. They describe a rather pedestrian and sensible desire to do what any citizen of a democracy should want to do. Yet in this era of ever expanding imperialism and the crushing of people here and abroad those words are dangerous.

The Obama administration decided to crush Bradley Manning's spirit and to make an example of him. They still hope to find some way of prosecuting WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and post his head on a spike alongside Manning's. After PFC Manning spends the rest of his life in jail, no one is likely to consider revealing even the most innocuous information to the public.

As Barack Obama makes good on the fantasies of Reagan and the Bushes, it would be important to know that his crimes might be revealed. Instead, he has made certain that they will remain secret forever. Manning and Assange are not only the best heroes but they will be the last too. ■

This is reprinted from BlackAgendaReport.com. Margaret Kimberley's "Freedom Rider" column appears weekly in BAR. She also maintains a blog at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>.

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Holy smoke! How about equal time?

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Saturation coverage by the corporate media of a recent resignation and election in Vatican City showed how the ruling rich impose certain ideas.

Even in an increasingly secular world, privileged elites continue brazenly to push ideological opiates. It helps them, I suppose, that in Pope Francis the patriarchal plutocracy has found a super-salesman for its damaged goods. The inconvenient fact that the former Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio cooperated

with a brutal military dictatorship in his native Argentina seems overshadowed by other scandals—such as Catholic Church protection of child molesters in its priestly ranks.

But how can the gross extent of the fawning coverage the Catholic rite received be explained? Is all that attention somehow due to its “popularity?” Not according to the numbers.

The conservative Pew Research Centre reports that Christianity encompasses 2.2 billion people, 32 per cent of the total world population. About



half that number, 16 per cent, is Roman Catholic—which is, by the way, a very generous estimate given the acres of empty pews on Sunday. Pew says that Islam claims 23 per cent, Hinduism 15 per cent, Buddhism 7 per cent.

Well, guess which philosophical outlook equals or surpasses most of those? Atheism, agnosticism or “no religious affiliation.” That is the fastest growing section, at 16 per cent.

But can you recall the last time a “free thinker,” a non-believer, or a flaming atheist got equal billing with a pope, a primate, an ayatollah, a dalai lama, or a chief rabbi? Can you think of a time, even in the so-called “Western democracies,” when someone representing a scientific outlook on philosophy or ethics was given equal time with, or the opportunity to rebutt, religious superstition on mainstream TV or radio?

Off course you can't. That is because religious propaganda is promoted by the establishment. Whether the individual big shots believe in it or not, they know religion massively supports the institutions of a racist, sexist, increasingly unequal society—the one not so affectionately known as capitalism.

Surely, one hopes, things will change. And indeed they will. After all, nothing is permanent but change. But don't hold your breathe for radical church reform. A world socialist revolution is much more likely than the advent of a Black, lesbian, feminist pope. Besides, the revolution will be much more socially satisfying. ■

By BARRY WEISLEDER

“We have nearly six unemployed workers for every vacancy. Even if a (skills training) policy somehow succeeded in filling every current vacancy, more than a million Canadians would remain unemployed.” That's what Erin Weir, an economist with the United Steelworkers Union, told the *Toronto Star* on March 21, the day before the federal Conservative government tabled its budget in Parliament.

But Tory Finance Minister Jim Flaherty would not be swayed. The stated goals of his budget are to cut costs, reduce the deficit and balance the books by 2015—so he can deliver more tax cuts to the well off. His mantra is “bolster confidence and growth.” Sadly, the main thing growing is the gap between the affluent few, and the many who are struggling to survive.

Like his Conservative and Liberal pre-

decessors, Flaherty chooses to keep the corporate tax rate low (less than half the U.S. rate), which costs Ottawa some \$14 billion in revenue annually. This would not change under Justin Trudeau, who is set to be crowned Liberal Party leader on April 14, if he follows past business-tax-chopping Liberal Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Paul Martin. Low tax revenue from corporations and the rich, and continuing high expenditures on the military, bolster the deficit, and fuel the argument for austerity.

Flaherty is trimming the \$25.9 billion deficit by another \$7 billion next year through more federal service cuts and job losses. That will only dampen growth. Instead, the government should boost demand by investing heavily in infrastructure, poverty reduction, child care, and the like.

More austerity for all

As the social democratic Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives argued, “Canada has a growth problem, not a deficit problem.” The CCPA urged a \$40 billion-plus program to create 300,000 jobs, to be paid for, in part, by tax hikes on the wealthiest.

A Workers' Agenda would challenge corporate control decisively. It poses the need for public ownership under workers' control, starting with the banks and giant resource corporations. But even the CCPA's timid demands are in stark contrast to the actual direction of capitalist governments, like Harper's.

As NDP Leader Tom Mulcair said about the budget, the Tories are playing a “shell game” by moving around previously committed funds (e.g. for transit, roads, bridges, ports, etc.) and gambling on a business-led “recovery.” More tax

relief for Ontario manufacturers, a job training fund that relies on provincial matching monies, and a crack-down on tax cheats just won't cut it—unemployment, that is.

Neither will folding the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which wasn't mentioned in the budget *speech*. That policy move nonetheless exposes the government's “aid” agenda as being totally subservient to promoting Canadian business interests abroad, especially the labour-abusive, environmentally destructive mining sector.

Finally, the deepening crisis in Europe shows that austerity isn't working—unless its purpose is to slash the wages, job security, benefits and pensions of working people. And that purpose is reason enough to oppose this federal budget with militant mass political action. ■



National Geographic Channel — Canada

Reality TV shows harassment of migrant workers

In March, the TV series “Border Security,” which airs on the National Geographic Channel, participated in a raid by border agents at an East Vancouver construction site.

The Canada Border Services Agency's inland enforcement team arrested eight workers from a number of countries for alleged immigration offences. The CBSA claimed it was looking for one individual at the condo development site, and not attempting to sensationalize the situation.

However, “documentary” filmmaking of this type, produced by the Vancouver company Force Four Entertainment, seems to dovetail nicely with the federal government's obsession with intensified security, more prisons, longer jail sentences, stripping some dual citizens of their Canadian citizenship (Bill C-425),

and depriving migrant workers of health benefits and civil rights.

Diana Aviles Hernandez, the wife of one of the detained men, said her husband was working to support their family in Honduras and their daughter living with them in Vancouver: “Our family's suffering is a private matter and should not be broadcast as entertainment.”

After the raid, a petition garnered 2600 signatures in 48 hours demanding National Geographic ditch the show. Coincidentally, in Ontario, Students Against Migrant Exploitation (SAME), which has 10 local chapters, released a documentary series, titled “Permanently Temporary,” to kick off Migrant Worker Awareness Week on March 18.

Migrant workers, from Chinese miners and Filipino caregivers to Mexican fruit-pickers, are brought into the country to temporarily fill jobs, often with low pay and poor living conditions, and little opportunity to apply for permanent residence status.

That, too, is a feature of the neoliberal agenda that increasingly liberates capital and constrains labour.

— BARRY WEISLEDER

... Chavez

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genuine independent representative of the workers. Among the members of the CSBT are former leaders of the UNT, the union formed after the CTV had discredited itself in the 2003 oil strike. It too shattered in many pieces before the CSBT absorbed some of its remaining parts.

Lessons of Cuba, Guatemala

U.S. imperialism finally met its match in 1961 when it attacked revolutionary Cuba, which soundly defeated the invasion of the island by mobilizing a politically conscious and armed population. Cuban leaders understood that rallying the people for victory would largely depend on economic and political measures; the revolution had led to the total expropriation of the capitalists, while the rural poor gained land, jobs, and basic social services.

Moreover, the Cuban revolutionary leadership had absorbed the lessons of Guatemala, whose president, Jacobo Arbenz, was overthrown by a U.S.-backed invasion in 1954 after he had expropriated over 70% of United Fruit's (a U.S. corporation) land and distributed it to the peasants. Arbenz rose to power with backing by the army and took for granted that he could rely on it to defend the land reform. Although the workers and peasants were prepared to defend the country, Arbenz failed to mobilize them against the U.S.-backed coup, while the military just stood by.

The military that overthrew Chavez was backed by U.S. imperialism; it remains largely intact. The military officers who led the coup were freed a few months later when the Supreme Court refused to

indict them. Meanwhile, no popular militias of workers have been created to defend the country against imperialism and the armed bodies of the Venezuelan state, who have more than once fired upon radical mobilizations of workers at the point of capitalist production.

Even poor peasants, who have demanded that the state give them arms to stand up against the mercenaries of the landlords (at least 170 peasant leaders have been killed), remain largely defenseless. Meanwhile, 75% of the most fertile land is still in the hands of the rich landlords, while Venezuela imports up to 76% of all of its food. If Chavez had even hinted at a massive land-expropriation (some landowners did accept Chavez's payments at the market rate for limited amounts of less valuable land), the military would have mobilized against him once again.

The emergency general election is scheduled for April 14. Meanwhile, Chavez's vice president and current president, a former bus driver, is predicted to be the “new driver” of the Bolivarian revolution.” According to *La Jornada*, Nicolas Maduro has a 14% advantage over the right-wing governor, Henrique Capriles.

Should Maduro defeat Capriles, he will inherit the rule over a capitalist state and capitalist economy, defended by a capitalist army. The allies of imperialism inside Venezuela will never content themselves with the relationship of forces created under Chavez's rule. Until the capitalist institutions within Venezuela are smashed and a revolutionary process based entirely on the workers and dispossessed is widened throughout the region, imperialism will always remain a threat to radical regimes, and capitalism will remain a yoke on the masses. ■

Tuition battle at Connecticut state universities

By KORY YORKE and DANIEL ADAM

WILLIMANTIC, Conn.— The students walked through an unfamiliar campus. Attempts by one of the more experienced marchers to start up chants were met with self-conscious and infrequent responses. They had travelled an hour by bus from Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) to Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) to protest impending tuition hikes that will affect over 100,000 students.

The March 21 board of regents meeting (where the increase was to be voted up) had been moved from its original central location in Hartford to the more remote ECSU only a week earlier. It was well known that the only CSU that had not held a protest against the hikes (and the only CSU with a student government in support of the hikes) was ECSU.

Moreover, the campus was about an hour farther from all other CSU campuses than Hartford—not a small difference for a 10 a.m. weekday protest. Many students who signed up for the two CCSU buses didn't show.

Finally, the group turned a corner and met a crowd of some 250, waving numerous beautiful placards and banners. Two animated young men paced back and forth with bull horns leading the rowdy assembly in chants like "Regents, come out! We got something to talk about!" Veteran protesters may know the chant well, but most of those shouting had never demonstrated before, and to them it was anything but routine. This day was not like all other days.

Despite the best efforts of the ECSU student government to prevent tuition-hike opposition on their campus, a handful of independent ECSU students had broken through. In the last two days before the regents'



(Left) Central Connecticut State University students rally against proposed tuition increase.

vote they made contact with those mobilizing from other campuses and managed to turn out a sizable force on their own turf. Other demonstrators hailed from Western Connecticut State University, Southern Connecticut State University, a variety of community colleges, and even the better funded University of Connecticut schools.

The Board of Regents had originally floated a tuition increase of 12.4% before making clear their intention to pass an increase of 5.1%, which will cost students up to \$800 more a year. The increase comes amidst cuts in funding for public higher education that have to-

taled more than 15% over the last two years (about \$93.2 million). These cuts have been accompanied by a cumulative tuition increase of 11.8% during the same period (when the new increase is included). Since 2004, tuition and fees for in-state students at the four Connecticut State Universities have risen from about \$5000 to nearly \$9000 a year.

This assault on public education is part of a larger austerity drive led in the state by Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy, and nationally by President Obama. Malloy's proposals also include shifting responsibility for faculty medical benefits and pensions from the state of Connecticut to the univer-

sity system. This would mean handing the universities \$337.5 million to cover benefits and leaving them on their own. If medical costs go up the state would no longer have to cover the difference (as it does now); this would instead be the responsibility of the university system, which could only respond by raising tuition and fees or cutting services.

Such costs are likely to go up. Medical costs routinely shoot up beyond expectations. If all faculty members simply switch pension plans, costs will go up \$78.8 million more a year. Malloy's plan is designed to pit students against faculty, who would have to fight for the same funds.

While Connecticut students have mobilized against tuition hikes before, this year has seen a higher level of communication between campuses and far more involvement from members of student government. Their participation has opened up useful resources like campus-wide e-mail blasts.

The week before the regents' meeting students rallied on three separate campuses. Such a rally at CCSU drew some deeply angry, but hesitant layers; a picket line of some 50 students attracted a much larger crowd of spectators. When asked about the situation, members of this audience expressed their anger with the hikes, but always found an excuse to stay on the sidelines. As speakers for the day took their places, the pickets joined the other onlookers, who then accepted their new role as participants in a rally.

Throughout the protests some students felt it important to stick to the message that public investments in higher education yield lucrative returns, and should be prioritized for that reason alone. Still, in numerous signs and wildly cheered speeches, participants pointed to the political context of the attacks on education and the enormous wealth that is diverted to the military, the wealthy, and corporate profits.

Outside the board of regents' meeting, CCSU freshman Nicole Lopriore asked the crowd, "What does it do to the workforce when we're all so heavily in debt? ... It means you will do whatever you can to keep a job—any job. ... They want us to pay more every year for lower quality education, only to face worse conditions in the workplace. ... And this is what students are facing across the world."

When it became known that the board was in the process of voting, and that there would be an open mic afterward for students to voice their concerns, the demonstration moved within the courtroom-like confines of the regents' meeting.

A vote passed in favor of the hike. Students were then given 20 minutes to respond with short statements. Within seconds a line formed 30 deep and was continuously repopulated. Students spoke about working many jobs to afford to go to their schools, and how now they would have to question their ability to continue. Others spoke about flooding dorms and program closures. Frequent applause and cheers punctuated the remarks. All the while, the regents sat stone-faced like well-tailored golems.

After 20 minutes, with a long line still waiting, the chair of the board stopped the students and asked if there were any faculty members who would like to speak. Immediately, two professors stood up and demanded that their time be ceded to the students. The crowd cheered, and the students won another 20 minutes.

The open mike ended with passionate remarks from a student government treasurer, who said he was paying for college by contracting six years of his life to the National Guard, something that he said, "no one should ever have to do." He ended with "we will be watching, and we are not going away," and walked off to a standing ovation. He was right. Students are now planning a statewide march on the state Capitol for April 16.

New York forum for the Cuban Five

Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Attorney Martin Garbus, at the podium, lead attorney in the case of the Cuban 5, along with civil rights attorney Michael Warren (center) explain the legal aspects of the of the U.S. government frame-up of the five Cuban heroes, imprisoned in the United States for alleged espionage. The event took place at Columbia University in New York on March 29. Recent information has come to light showing that a large part of the \$37 million annual budget of Washington's counter-revolutionary propaganda arm, Radio Marti, was used to pay journalists in various news organizations to disseminate false information in Miami and nationally at the time of the trial.

The attorneys highlighted many of the irregularities in the initial trial and subsequent appeals, and Washington's continued pressure and intervention in the case, which began during President Clinton's tenure and continues through Obama's.

Also in attendance were Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez, the Cuban ambassador to the UN; Venezuelan Deputy Ambassador Julio Escalona; Nancy Cabrero, director of Casa de las Americas; Puerto Rico independence fighter Luis Rosa, and student and solidarity groups. About 200 people attended, while another 100 or so were refused entrance due to Columbia University's bureaucratic pre-registration requirements.

... Environment

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clear power plants in Japan.

The "accident," which might have led to a new and deadly release of radiation into the atmosphere, dramatically raised the temperature of the cooling pools that stored 8200 spent-fuel-rods, causing a blackout at the reactors that have yet to be fully repaired and secured following the catastrophic triple meltdown of March 2011. Yet the Japanese capitalists, as with their Chinese counterparts, pressed by a paucity of fossil fuels, have every intention of pressing on with their nuclear-power projects.

As the above instances demonstrate, the drive for poisonous but profitable energy sources takes increasingly deadly forms. From the race to re-colo-

nize Africa to secure its oil and mineral reserves to the endless wars in the Middle East and beyond—the "oil wars"—to the conscious ruin or subordination of promising sustainable technologies, capitalism cannot be other than the grim reaper, the personification of death and destruction until it is forever abolished by the conscious action of the billions that it exploits and oppresses.

There is but one alternative, a society based on the collective satisfaction of human needs as democratically determined by the world's producers, the working classes determined to live well and prosper in the course of building a new world that preferences the health, well-being, and full development of all as against the profits of the rapacious few.

This is the socialist credo and is well worth fighting for.

NY cops gun down another Black youth

By MARTY GOODMAN

The African American community is reeling from the cop murder of Kimani "Kiki" Gray. The killing has sparked outrage that has resulted in street protests from New York City to San Francisco.

Kimani was shot dead on March 9 in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, when two NYPD cops fired 11 shots at the 16 year old. Seven bullets found their mark, three from behind.

Kimani, a student at the Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction, was with a group of friends on the street while reportedly returning home from a baby shower. Suddenly, a little before midnight, according to witnesses, two plainclothes officers approached the grouping in an unmarked sedan. The cops yelled: "Don't move!" and drew their guns.

Police say Kimani pointed a gun at the officers, and they have displayed a .38 revolver allegedly recovered at the scene—a gun that many suspect is a "throw down" or a plant. Most witnesses insist that Kimani was unarmed.

Even NYPD top cop Ray Kelly, when asked by the press if anyone saw Gray with a gun, answered "no." Yet Kelly has maintained that there was "nothing to indicate that this shooting was outside the guidelines." The two officers involved, Sgt. Mourad Mourad and Jovaniel Cordova, were both assigned to desk duty pending "investigations." Both faced five federal lawsuits charging illegal stop-and-frisks to physical abuse, costing the city \$215,000.

Multiple witnesses state that Kimani was heard to have said, "Please don't let me die," as he lay wounded. *The New York Times* reported that one witness who lives across the street from the shooting, described only as Vanessa, recalled that the officers barked at Gray, "Stay down, or we'll shoot you again." Witness Sharon Smith told *The Village Voice* that she saw the shooting and that her daughter was outside when it happened: "[She] heard him say 'don't kill me, don't kill me.' And they say 'stay still' or they going to shoot you again."

One eyewitness, Tishana King, 39, who was interviewed by *The Village Voice* newspaper, said that she had observed the incident from her third-floor apartment. King said she saw "about seven to eight" young people, who congregated for "maybe a minute or two" before cops arrived. "There was no suspicious behavior. The worst they were doing, laughing out loud and, you know, talking loud. That's about it." King said that the cop who did the most shooting, "just kept shooting while [Gray] was on the ground." King explained that he was, "right over him." She heard Gray scream, "Help me. Help me. My stomach is burning. Help me. They shot me."

Kimani's devastated mother, Carol Gray, has called for peaceful vigils in her son's name. Kimani's family and supporters have called for an independent investigation into the killing. Hundreds attended the March 23 funeral for Kimani at the St. Catherine of Genoa Catholic Church in Brooklyn.

The autopsy result, released March 13, sparked three days of protest and rebellion that police and the capitalist press branded a "riot." What the press described as "a splinter group" went into a Rite-Aid pharmacy, and damaged goods and a cash register. Two altercations with individuals, one a store manager, were reported. No money was taken. Dozens were arrested and some brutalized. Later, Ray Kelly retracted the term "riot" to describe the protests. City Councilman Charles Barron called the neighborhood a "powder keg."

In Brooklyn, a daily demonstration has been main-



tained at 55th St. and Church Ave. in the face of a massive police presence intent on intimidating protesters. Protesters chant, "NYPD KKK, how many kids did you kill today?" "No justice, no peace, no racist police!" "Justice for Kimani Gray!" On March 24, cops were stationed on each block on Church Ave. within a mile of a protest that ended at the notorious 67th police precinct. Cops were staked out on rooftops, motorcycles, on foot, and on horseback, their belts bulging with plastic handcuffs. Their presence resembled a military occupation of the community.

On March 21 in Oakland, Calif., protesters gathered in Oscar Grant Plaza in solidarity with Kimani Gray and his family, at a rally sponsored by the Justice 4 Alan Blueford Coalition. (Blueford was an 18-year-old Black man killed in May 2012 by an Oakland police officer who had a history of racist violence.)

New York's Black and Hispanic communities historically have been shooting galleries for the NYPD's racist thugs. On the route of daily protests, which often end at the notorious 67th Police Precinct, is the intersection where Shantel Davis was shot and killed by cops nine months ago.

The list of Black and Hispanic youth murdered by racist cops is a long one, sparking mass protest. An unarmed Ramarley Graham, 18, was shot dead by cops last year in his Bronx home in front of his younger brother and grandmother. Video revealed the cop version of events to be all lies. Cops fired 41 bullets at unarmed African immigrant Amadou Diallo in 1999, Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, was beaten and sodomized with a broomstick by NYPD thugs in 1997. Fifty shots mowed down an unarmed Sean Bell in 2006.

Mayor Bloomberg has backed the police version of Kimani Gray's killing. Bloomberg also stands behind Kelly's racist "stop and frisk"



policy, widely condemned as racial profiling. Last June, several thousand protesters marched to Bloomberg's home on the exclusive Upper East Side in Manhattan. Said NAACP President Ben Jealous, a march organizer, "Stop and frisk is the most massive local racial profiling program in the country."

According to 2012 "stop and frisk" statistics released by the NY ACLU based on NYPD data, New Yorkers were stopped by cops 533,042 times. 89% were found totally innocent; 55% were Black, 32% were Hispanic and 10% white.

Despite widespread condemnation of his racist policies, Mayor Bloomberg hypocritically serves as a prominent spokesperson for gun registration and background checks, spending \$12 million of his own money on national TV ads.

Recently, a lawsuit filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, revealed for the first time secret tapes of top cops ordering police to racially profile minority youth to fulfill stop and frisk quotas. As reported in the *New York Daily News*, March 27, a tape made by Officer Pedro Serrano caught Deputy Inspector Christopher McCormack saying that officers should stop "male blacks 14 to 21."

The tapes also revealed the direct cooperation of the Police Benevolent Association, the phony cop union, in maintaining racist arrest quotas. PBA complicity shows once again that cops are not workers, but the hired guns of the 1%.

Resistance to racist police brutality will depend on building a united, inclusive mass movement. The corporate press and a few activists have tried to divide the movement by redbaiting the participation of radical and socialist groups; this must be rejected.

Our massive numbers in the streets are the best way to make killer cops think twice about brutalizing and killing minority youth. We must build a movement to keep the pressure on the racist court system to win justice for Kimani.

Ultimately, police repression can only be eliminated by replacing the capitalist system, which relies on the police to keep oppressed people in line, and thrives on brutality both here and abroad. Justice for Kimani Gray! Stay in the streets!

Socialism 2013: Concessions No More!

**Educational Conference May 10-12
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4 p.m. Arab Revolution

7 p.m. Aboriginal Rights, Pipelines and the Environment

Saturday, May 11 —

10 a.m. Why the Rulers Attack Civil Liberties & Immigrants

12 noon What is the Socialism that SA Fights For?

1 p.m. Mali, Libya and the Imperial Scramble for Africa

4 p.m. Women Stand up to Violence & Anti-choice Bigots

7 p.m. How to Change the World in 2013, Leninism and the Revolutionary Party

Sunday, May 12 —

11 a.m. Concessions No More! Unions and the Austerity Drive

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