

RAY O' LIGHT NEWSLETTER

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Lessons of Trump's Government Shutdown So Far

TRUMP'S USA: NO COUNTRY FOR WORKERS

by RAY LIGHT

President Trump chose Christmas week to launch an unprovoked attack on 800,000 innocent U.S. Federal workers and their families. Without due process, the billionaire bully suddenly cut off their paychecks. Indeed, President Trump himself did not try to cover up the fact that this cruel and unusual punishment, this federal government shutdown, had nothing to do with any actions of these almost one million workers.

Moreover, about half these workers were compelled by Trump to keep working without pay. On the face of it, this latter act seems clearly a violation of the minimum wage provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Even more draconian, this is an apparent violation of the Thirteenth Amendment rights provided by the U.S. Constitution. This amendment prohibits "involuntary

servitude" (slavery) except when one has been convicted of a crime.

What is going on in the USA today?! How has Trump gotten away with this frontal attack on the U.S. working class? And how has Trump been forced to back off at least for a three week period? Finally, where do we go from here?

-Trump Demonizes Latino Immigrants Trying to Deepen Division in the U.S. Working Class-

The Trump Regime has made a sustained effort to create an hysteria among the largely ignorant white and Afro-American citizens of the USA, with its three
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Yemen Can't Wait

by CINDY SHEEHAN



According to credible sources, over 18 million people in Yemen are on the brink of starvation and could already be gone by the time this newsletter comes out.

According to the NGO, Save the Children, upwards of 85,000 children have died since one of the U.S. Empire's "best friends,"

Saudi Arabia, got involved in a political conflict in Yemen that could have been termed as a "Civil War." However, since the Saudis became involved in protecting and supporting what many Yemeni would call an illegitimate government, they have knowingly targeted civilians and blockaded a port to prohibit much needed aid from entering the beleaguered country.

Tragically, a child in Yemen dies from starvation and other preventable causes every 10 minutes. Over one million additional children are going to perish because their hunger is too far gone to go into remission with nutrients. These children have reached the point of no return. An immediate end to the war and blockade would not save most of them at this point.

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Trump Regime's "Peace Offensive"

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Hoffa Leadership Sells Out UPS Teamsters ... pages 10-11
Education—Not Indoctrination page 12

Do you know who said it??

"First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me."

Hint: One of the most oft-cited quotes of the twentieth century, its author was a pastor reflecting back on his personal responsibility for and experience with the rise of fascism to absolute power in his native Germany.

—Still stumped? See page 6 for the mystery answer.

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hundred million people. This hysteria is concerning a few thousand men, women and children seeking economic relief and asylum, fleeing from hard-pressed Central American countries dominated by U.S. imperialism and paramilitary gangs. Leading up to the 2018 midterm elections, Trump employed inflammatory rhetoric and the connivance of the monopoly capitalist media and deployed several thousand federal troops to the Mexican border, creating a crisis in a situation where the flow of immigrants has already been sharply diminished for a number of years.

Trump's moderate success with this ploy in stemming a major electoral disaster for himself and the Republican Party encouraged his renewed emphasis on this anti-immigrant hysteria as he seeks to fulfill his 2016 anti-immigrant campaign promise to build a wall to keep Mexicans and all Latin Americans out. While Republicans have traditionally been for small and cheap government, neither Republican nor Democratic politicians have focused on Trump's wasteful expenditure of hundreds of millions of tax dollars to deploy and maintain U.S. combat troops at the southern border against an *imaginary* invading army composed of a small number of desperately poor Latin American families. Here the U.S. military presence is the main source of the crisis.

It is vital for Trump's continued kleptocratic rule that he retain the loyalty of his mobilized right wing, white supremacist and great nation chauvinist base "against Wall Street's federal government" and its ongoing and intensifying congressional and FBI ("political police") investigations. The key to retaining this base is the anti-immigrant hysteria connected to "the Wall."

So Trump called on the Republican Congress, still dominated by the *U.S. Empire's Wall Street ruling class*, including his Democratic Party enablers led by Schumer and Pelosi, to agree to fund with U.S. tax dollars the Wall that he had originally promised would be paid for by Mexico. But Wall Street sensed an opportunity to push back against the *Trump Empire's drive to autocratic, one man dictatorship*. Thus, Pelosi and Schumer, on behalf of the U.S. Empire, refused to go along with Trump.

What had been fabricated already was clearly not sufficient. The Trump regime needed to foment a greater crisis, to stir especially the white working class to greater enmity against the Latino immigrant working people, to try to get Pelosi and the Democrats to cave in on the Wall funding.

-Trump's Federal Government Shutdown-

On December 22, 2018 the federal government shut down. The shutdown didn't end for thirty-five days until Friday, January 25, 2019. It was the longest U.S.

government shutdown in history. It was clearly an act of desperation for the Trump Regime as there was no direct connection between the 800,000 government workers and the Democratic Party. There is much chauvinism among the working class as well as all other classes in this imperialist society, after more than five decades of U.S. global hegemony. Nevertheless, the Trump forces need to have the suffering federal workers and families and other impacted people blame the immigrants or at least the Democratic Party that Trump claims is "soft" on immigration—even though President Obama was tougher on immigrants than any modern U.S. president before him.



"Let Them Eat Cake"
Marie Antoinette (Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross)

It is remarkable how thoroughly lacking in empathy were the billionaire Trump and his top aides for the suffering his shutdown inflicted on the federal workers. (Trump's Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, a long time Wall Street financier, callously advised the federal workers that they should "apply for loans." This is reminiscent of Marie Antoinette's advice to the rebellious French poor, "Let them eat cake," shortly before meeting her violent end.) This is in stark contrast with the corporate democrats who are past masters of phony "sympathy and support" for the working class. And it is clear that rather than blaming the immigrants or the Democratic Party, most federal workers blame Trump and the Republicans for the suffering they and their families have experienced. Trump's reactionary base still seems in place. But there has been no expansion of the U.S. population that blames the immigrants for their hardships. And federal worker resistance has been rising. So Trump had to back off the shutdown for three weeks at least.

-How has Trump gotten away with his frontal attack on the U.S. working class?-

Trump has bullied his way through his first two years as President. He has deliberately appeared to be all-powerful. Unlike the Democratic Party leadership that is now looking to the 2020 presidential election, Trump

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(No Country for Workers continued)

is still looking at winning or intimidating hearts and minds. Even in relation to the government shutdown, Trump has needed for Congress to *not* appropriate the funds so that the government would grind to a halt. Thus, Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell's unwillingness to bring appropriations bills up for votes in the Senate made Trump seem like he was shutting down the U.S. government by himself.

Trump had already threatened that he would cause a government shutdown if he didn't get his wall funding. Moreover, he claimed he wouldn't blame the Democrats but be proud about his responsibility for it. All the while, Trump planned to sign a clean continuing resolution until he listened to the criticism from Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh, influential leaders of his right wing base and then provoked a shutdown anyway. After trying to bully his way through, it was then difficult for him to blame the Democrats for the shutdown.

The treacherous misleadership of the AFL-CIO and the other major unions largely tails the conservative (not left or even liberal) corporatist Democrats who are too corrupt themselves to seriously challenge Trump in his drive for a Trump Dynasty dictatorship. All this has combined to give the workers and oppressed peoples within the USA the idea that they have no rights to defend and fight for and with.

Trump can only exercise one man dictatorial rule in a government shutdown if he declares a National Emergency, invoking the National Emergencies Act or some other emergency executive decree. But in that instance he would be subject to a challenge protocol. And in this situation, his fabricated series of crises might be more likely to be exposed than upheld. Indeed, it is significant that thus far in this current crisis Trump has *threatened* to declare a national emergency on several occasions trying to bully his way through, but has failed to carry out his threats.

-What power compelled Trump to stop the Government Shutdown?-

Despite Trump's insistence that he would carry on the Government Shutdown until Congress passed an appropriation funding his Great Wall on the Mexican border, he folded after thirty-five days. Mass media pundits representing the Wall Street ruling class promoted the fiction that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had beaten the formerly "all-powerful" Trump in a duel. In fact, Pelosi did not cave in this time to Trump's bullying. But, while Pelosi merely held her position, ***it was the actions of the workers themselves, sometimes in spite of their bankrupt leadership at the national level, that defeated Trump in this battle.***

The key force was the unpaid Air Traffic Controllers union workers at their local airports and the TPS workers who



*individually and increasingly collectively staged sick-outs. This culminated at New York's LaGuardia Airport with the temporary suspension of flights because of staffing issues. It was clearly **heading in short order to a general collapse of the airline industry.** Other federal workers, including 14 thousand IRS workers did not show up for work; again, with every indication that a disruption of tax revenue was on the horizon. Reportedly, there had already been several deaths at closed National Parks across the country. Every day that the shutdown continued was weakening Trump's position further.*

U.S. working class militancy has been on the upswing for the past year or more, beginning with the victorious West Virginia school workers strike that spread to many so-called red states and then to Chicago where the teachers, hotel workers and others fought Obama's right hand man, Mayor Rahm Emmanuel. During the thirty-five day government shutdown, the Los Angeles teachers victoriously struck in defense of students and against privatization and charter school draining of public education in the second largest school system in the USA. Working class courage is contagious.

It is the working class that shut down Trump's government shutdown.

-Trump's Secretary of Labor and Trump's Hatred of the Working Class-

Alexander Acosta has been Trump's one and only Secretary of Labor during these first two years of his Presidency. The Labor Secretary presides over the entire Labor Department. It is the only federal agency that monitors child labor and enforces child labor laws. The office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking is part of the Labor Department.



Acosta

In late November 2018, the *Miami Herald* carried an explosive expose involving Florida millionaire financier Jeffrey Epstein who a decade earlier had abused underage girls "on a near industrial scale" in a "child molestation pyramid scheme." Epstein's

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federal indictment could have put him away for the rest of his life. According to *Herald* journalist Julie K. Brown, Epstein, not his several hundred young victims, was rescued by then Miami chief federal prosecutor, Alexander Acosta. Brown described the Acosta-Epstein “non-prosecution agreement” as “one of the most lenient deals for a serial child sex offender in history.” Incredibly, Trump appointed Alexander Acosta, the *savior* of the worst **exploiter** of “child labor” and promoter of “forced labor and human trafficking” to this very Cabinet post!

Of course, Acosta’s appointment and his continued retention as Labor Secretary, in spite of his scandalous handling of the Epstein case, is an indication of Trump’s contempt for girls and women. It underscores, in the aftermath of Judge Kavanaugh’s elevation to the U.S. Supreme Court, the assertion in our previous issue that “Trump’s USA [is] No Country For Women.” (See *Ray O’ Light Newsletter* #111, November-December 2018) It is important to note that, having selected the monstrous Acosta to be his main functionary dealing with the U.S. working class and labor movement, Trump has made it crystal clear that he is hostile to *all* working people in the USA and *supportive of human enslavement*.

Trump’s utter disregard for the well being of almost a million federal workers and their families in his shutdown power play along with his continued demonization of Latino and other immigrant workers is just the latest and most blatant example of this.

-Where do we go from here?!

Trump’s USA is No Country for Workers! So, will the lawless, out of control Trump Dynasty drive the federal workers, including many unionized workers, into a slave condition as already patterned in the thirty-five day government shutdown? Will Trump’s propaganda about the Wall and his demonization of immigrant workers and their families, especially from Mexico and Central America, continue to drive immigrant and especially undocumented workers down to a status of peonage and slavery? Or will we the workers of the USA, in solidarity with each other and with the workers of the rest of the

world continue to grow in unity and struggle against finance capital and U.S. imperialism? *And will we drive the Trump tyranny out of the USA!?*

The Trump Regime defends Trump’s Empire. The “Republicrat” Democrats and mainstream Republicans defend Wall Street’s Empire. The top AFL-CIO, Teamsters and Change to Win union leadership defend the Democratic Party wing of the “Republicrats” and therefore Wall Street’s Empire. These labor misleaders and traitors to the U.S. and international working class have failed to demand the ouster of Labor Secretary Acosta and many have remained silent during Trump’s shutdown attack on both the Latino immigrants and the almost one million federal workers furloughed and otherwise abused in this period.

At a time of rising worker militancy in the USA in the midst of an out of control presidency—what an opportunity for militant working class fighters, militant unionists, revolutionary socialists to fight for the hearts and minds of *all* the working people—white, Afro-American, Latino, Asian, African, Native American and to fight for their unity in the struggle against monopoly capitalism and imperialism—in the USA today.

As the three week moratorium on the federal shutdown comes to an end let us remain clear that it was the activity of the TSA and Air Traffic Controllers, the school teachers, the IRS workers and other federal workers that took the power into their own hands and stopped the tyrannical Trump Regime in its tracks. The power in the workers hands needs to remain there and grow through the class struggle.

Finally, I remain convinced that in the struggle to defeat the fascistic Trump Regime, the valuable guidance of George Dimitrov and the Communist International (now at the hundredth anniversary of its founding), and the heroic example of the Soviet Union’s people, Red Army and Communist Party led by comrade Stalin that led the global victory over world fascism in World War II, will help us on our path to a brighter future.

**Commemorating the 100th Anniversary
of the Founding of the
Communist International
March 1919**

(Yemen Can't Wait continued)

The genocide in Yemen has been supported by the U.S. government since 2015—when that shining light of love and peace (sarcasm), Obama was president. The U.S. has been supporting the government of Saudi Arabia in these atrocities and has been selling over 100 billion dollars worth of death machines per year to the repressive and brutal Saudi regime!



The humanitarian crisis (genocide) in Yemen is worsening by the day, despite the recent weak, toothless resolution proposed in the U.S. Senate. Resolutions, by their nature, are already non-binding and there is no threat of force behind SJR 54 to require the Pentagon or White House to immediately withdraw U.S. troops from Yemen and/or quit supporting the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates.

SJR 54 which was sponsored by our favorite soft-imperialist Bernie Sanders (I-VT) has been prematurely lauded by many in the Peace Industrial Complex but the Women's March on the Pentagon (of which I am the national Director) has a different analysis. Our analysis wasn't based on any pre-conceived notions of Sanders or the elite band of thugs in the U.S. Senate, but by a careful analysis of the resolution. Part of our analysis read:

The resolution has been falsely lauded as a potential end to U.S. involvement in the war in Yemen. The conclusion of the bill says it all, quite plainly:

“SECTION 1. REMOVAL OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FROM HOSTILITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN THAT HAVE NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED BY CONGRESS.

Pursuant to section 1013 of the Department of State Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1984 and 1985 (50 U.S.C. 1546a) and in accordance with the provisions of section 601(b) of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976 (Public Law 94–329; 90 Stat. 765), Congress hereby directs the President to remove United States Armed Forces from hostilities in or affecting the Republic of Yemen, except United States Armed Forces engaged in operations directed at al Qaeda or associated forces, by not later than the date that is 30 days after the date of the adoption of this joint resolution (unless the President requests and Congress authorizes a later date), and unless and until a declaration of war or specific authorization for such use of United States Armed Forces has been enacted.”

We know full well what this means. “Operations directed at al Qaeda” are under the “war on terror” umbrella - the vague war on a moving target that has resulted in the ruin of entire countries and the loss of millions of innocent lives since 2001.

The situation in Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis. It's in the best interests of the people of the United States for the U.S. government to cease all military operations in Yemen, regardless of target, and all support for the murderous Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as the United Arab Emirates. This means an end to the sale of weapons used against Yemen, an end to sharing intelligence, an end to providing midair refueling assistance, etc.

March on the Pentagon rejects SJR 54 as the means to an end to the war in Yemen.

Some reading this may be thinking, “Well, at least SJR is a ‘step in the right direction’” but I would even disagree with that assessment. I believe the resolution is a dangerous smokescreen to give activists and others a false sense of hope that there is an end in sight to the genocide. It diverts attention from what's really necessary as we outlined above.

The situation with IDPs (Internally Displaced Peoples) is also at a crisis this from: Gisela Vallès, medical team leader at the Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in the district capital of Abs,

“The MSF hospital in Abs city is currently receiving war-wounded [patients] every day. Between August and September, we treated 362 injured people, more than 40 percent of the total number of wounded we have treated in 2018 at this facility. Many are civilians who have been caught in the crossfire of airstrikes and missiles. The intensification of the fighting about 50 kilometers [31 miles] north of Abs, around Beni Hassan, near the border with Saudi Arabia, has caused a massive new wave of displacement. Since August, about 20,000 people have relocated to other parts of the region, joining several thousand others who fled earlier fighting. It is difficult to trace them because there are no formal camps for internally displaced people (IDPs). They are scattered across a very large area. Sometimes there are groups of IDPs living under basic plastic sheets that they buy or that are donated to them. Other times they are mixed with local communities. In any case, they all live in very precarious conditions.”

What I find horrifyingly interesting about the Saudi Arabia issue is that since 2015, the dire situation in Yemen has all but been ignored along with the many imprisonments/disappearances of journalists and citizen journalists of Saudi Arabia (not to mention the

(Yemen Can't Wait continued)

Saud's atrocious record on the oppression of women), the corporate media here in the U.S. and many liberal forces suddenly became concerned about the disappearance and apparent murder of one Jamal Khashoggi.

Khashoggi is/was not from an oppressed community in Saudi Arabia, but indeed, hailed from a very wealthy and highly connected arms dealing family. His uncle was the notorious Adnan Khashoggi.

In short, what allegedly got Jamal Khashoggi killed was his outspoken criticism of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman from an insider forced outside position. What were the innocent people of Yemen in the way of? A port? A pipeline? Was it because they preferred a government that was more receptive to the needs of the people than to the gross profits of a few? Did the U.S. and Saudis need a more friendly (Hadi) government to better represent and protect their interests? All of the above?

In the end, it's always the people who profoundly pay with their lives and security for the evilness of global Imperialism.

The same forces that got so upset and leaked crocodile tears over Khashoggi have shed not tear one for the millions of Yemeni that have been exterminated in a systematic program of genocide for over three years now.

Where are the celebrities and their songs for Yemen?

Where was the Peace Industrial Complex when the Nobel Prize recipient, Obama, was collaborating with the Saudis? For that matter where are they now?

Some of the liberals are proposing that the road in front of the Saudi embassy in DC be named: "Jamal Khashoggi Street."

I think, "U.S./Saudi Genocide of Yemen" would be more appropriate.

**Still stumped?! See answer below
to front page mystery quotation.**

Martin Niemoller is known today mainly for having made this famous confession of personal guilt in the fall of 1945 *after* Nazi Germany and the other Axis powers of Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan had been smashed by Communist and Soviet Union-led heroic forces, including the soldiers of the USA, in World War II.

While many are familiar with Martin Neimoller as the author of this quote, few know that he had served in the German military during the first World War as a submarine captain. Afterwards, he retained a high, chauvinistic regard for the German state and hostility toward the Jewish people and other increasingly marginalized people within the country. In 1939, from inside a concentration camp, Niemoller had even volunteered to join the German navy to fight the allies. And after the war he used his moral authority to lobby for better treatment of defeated Germany while undermining denazification efforts.

Nevertheless, during World War II (1941-1945), Niemoller was lauded by the mass media *in the USA* as the face of Christian resistance to Nazism and the embodiment of the "other Germany." Indeed, he served eight years in Nazi concentration camps from 1937 to 1945. It was his re-examination primarily of the years 1933 to 1937, the years which brought Hitler and the Nazis to absolute power in Germany, that drew forth Niemoller's immortal quote.

As a recent *Wall Street Journal* book review noted, "It was above all in those early years...that he and so

many others had failed....When the first concentration camp was opened in Dachau in March 1933, Germany still had an independent judiciary, police forces had not yet been subordinated to the SS, an internationally respected system of education...even a functioning if frayed civil society. Niemoller and fellow church leaders stood by, busy with their own affairs as the new Nazi leaders and their local supporters infiltrated, co-opted and destroyed those institutions..." (page C8, *Wall Street Journal*, Saturday/Sunday, December 8-9, 2019)



In the USA now, many hold a position similar to Pastor Niemoller's attitude toward rising Nazi power, riddled with bourgeois and chauvinist illusions, who was convinced that the "great" German state would rein in Hitler. Many U.S. Democrats and mainstream Republicans, religious clerics and other civic and political leaders serving Wall Street imperialism today believe that the USA, the hegemonic imperialist power in the world for the past sixty years, "was, is and always will be great." They do not believe that Donald Trump can continue his illegal and reckless conduct in this "great system." Yet none of these forces seems willing to stand up to Trump's fascistic hysterical chauvinism and blatant breaking of the laws and rules of this monopoly capitalist system. *It can happen here.*

—the Editor

The Connection Between the Saudi Regime and The Trump Regime's December "Peace Offensive" During the Decline of the U.S. Empire

by RAY LIGHT

Since its assassination of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 U.S. imperialism has promoted MLK as a harmless icon ("who had a dream") among the Afro-American and other oppressed and exploited peoples here and around the world. At that time the U.S. imperialist ruling class white power structure, most notably including U.S. President Lyndon Johnson, cried "crocodile tears" about King's death, deifying him, and made King's previous non-violence and integration stance into a powerful obstacle to the advancing militant struggle for Afro-American national liberation and socialism. In concert with this development, incumbent President LBJ announced his startling decision *not* to seek re-election and launched an "era of negotiations" projecting U.S. imperialism as a "pacifist" power to the leaders and working masses of the socialist camp and to the militant and revolutionary oppressed peoples of the world.

These facts underscore the importance of proletarian revolutionaries and other militant freedom fighters utilizing and promoting the wise and considered anti-imperialist views King shared in the last year of his life. Formerly, King's bourgeois *pacifism* had been inflicted upon the oppressed (but rising) Afro-American people by a *grateful U.S. imperialism*, engaged as it was in Indochina in one of the most violent wars in modern human history. Under the mass pressure of the rising Afro-American people and his own conscience, as well as the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese national liberation movement, in the 1967-68 period, King's bourgeois *pacifism* was somewhat transformed into a militant, anti U.S. imperialist war position.

On April 4, 1967, exactly one year to the day before his assassination, Reverend King made his landmark speech at Riverside Church. There he declared his opposition to the U.S.



Martin Luther King Jr. at the Riverside Church

government war against the people of Vietnam. In this speech King famously declared, "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today [is] my own government."

In the month or so prior to MLK Day 2019, two exceptional actions – one by the U.S. Senate and the other by President Donald Trump himself – made it clear that what MLK declared more than fifty years ago is still true today regarding the U.S. government being the greatest purveyor of violence in the world. *It is this government that still must be opposed today.*

On December 13, 2018 in direct repudiation of President Trump's widely publicized efforts to whitewash the Saudi Royals' responsibility for the cold-blooded murder of U.S.-based *Washington Post* journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, the U.S. Senate, *by unanimous agreement*, passed a resolution asserting its belief that the Saudi Crown Prince was responsible for Khashoggi's murder and demanding that the Saudi Regime "ensure proper accountability." More importantly, a second Senate Resolution, passed the same day by a 56 to 41 margin, attempted to cut off U.S. government support for the bloody Saudi Arabian-led war against the people of Yemen. This second vote was in direct opposition to Trump and his key subordinates, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and (then) Secretary of Defense (and retired U.S. general) Jim "Mad Dog" Mattis. *This second Senate vote represented a rare push-back from within the U.S. federal government against the ever-expanding U.S. military presence in the Middle East.**

On December 20 an even more stunning "decision" was announced by U.S. Commander in Chief Donald Trump himself. With no advanced warning to the U.S. military command, to affected U.S. imperialist allies, etc., Trump announced his intention to pull all U.S. military forces out of Syria. Moreover, Trump announced his intention to remove half of the current U.S. military occupation forces out of Afghanistan, signaling a move toward ending the longest war in U.S. history! It is no wonder that Secretary of Defense Mattis, just a few hours earlier, had announced his resignation effective at the end of February. Trump then showed he "means business" when he "trumped" Mattis by *immediately* replacing Mattis (that is, two months early!).

(contd. on p. 8)

*And it represented a reminder, for those in Congress as well as for the working people of the USA, that it is Congress and not the President who is empowered by the law of the land to declare war. The House of Representatives, however, by a three vote margin, passed a bill that included a ban on taking such a vote on Yemen in 2018. This made it appear to the U.S. population at large that Congress had no power.

“Peace Offensive” continued)

These two political actions, by the Senate on December 13 and by Trump on December 20, are the first “apparent” steps or “feints” toward a *diminished* presence of the U.S. Empire in the Middle East. They are in direct contradiction to the ever *increasing* presence of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East ever since the end of the Second World War over seventy years ago!

The vote by the U.S. Senate to stop U.S. funding/support for the Saudi-led war against the people of Yemen was virtually the first official government repudiation of any major U.S. military aggression in the Middle East in the entire post World War II period of U.S. imperialist hegemony and then U.S. Empire. It was also the first open political repudiation of Trump in his role as Commander in Chief of the U.S. military. Trump had done everything in his power to maintain U.S. government support for the Saudi regime’s bestial war on the Yemeni people. Trump argued that the business and military ties between the two governments is too important to interrupt over the Saudi Crown Prince’s cold-blooded murder of U.S. advisor, Khashoggi. Clearly, both the Trump Regime and the Saudi Regime have strong ties to the Israeli Settler state. And just as clearly all three of these reactionary and blood-thirsty regimes have close ties to *Trump’s business empire*.



Saudi Crown Prince Salman

One week later, all of a sudden and with no preparatory work, Commander in Chief Trump announced his intention to pull all U.S. military forces out of Syria *and* half of the much larger and more entrenched U.S. military presence out of Afghanistan, the longest war in U.S. history. ***It appears that Trump was trying to force the U.S. Senate to surrender its opposition to a continued Trump Regime (and Trump Family) alliance with the Saudi Royal Family under the threat of moving the U.S. imperialist military out of the Middle East entirely, if the Senate persists into 2019 in its effort to withdraw U.S. Empire support for the Saudi Royals.*** [See *Postscript* at end of article.]

While it is hard to conceive of a powerful Empire’s dictator “playing with war and peace” on a global scale, we may recall that Emperor Nero “fiddled” while Rome burned. *Currently, and much closer to home, Emperor Trump* has on his own authority alone, taken away the paychecks of 800,000 U.S. federal workers in an attempt to demonize Latino immigrant workers, divide the U.S. working class and scare his political adversaries into paying (with our tax money) for the construction of a wall of hatred on the Mexican border. And behind this anti-foreigner hysteria, Trump is stripping U.S. workers of whatever union and other rights we still possess.

Whatever the tactical rationale behind the two decisions of December 13 and December 20, the U.S.

Senate and Commander in Chief Trump have given the lie to all the justifications for the U.S. Empire’s presence in the Middle East. For exactly one year from April 4, 1967 until April 4, 1968 when U.S. imperialism assassinated him, **Reverend M.L. King, Jr. taught that the U.S. government is “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world.”** As 2019 appeared on the horizon, Trump and the U.S. Senate once again confirmed the truth that what Martin Luther King, Jr. had spoken to and about U.S. power in 1968 still applies today!

U.S. Empire — Out of the Middle East! Arabia for the Arab peoples!

POSTSCRIPT: ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR TRUMP’S ANNOUNCED PULLOUT PLANS FROM SYRIA AND AFGHANISTAN AND THE TREACHEROUS ROLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

1. Since Trump assumed the U.S. presidency, I’ve consistently pointed out that, “despite Trump’s fascistic attacks on those of us within the heartland of U.S. imperialism, he has been much less aggressive internationally than his two predecessors, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.” In a May Day 2017 leaflet, signed by Cindy Sheehan and myself, we observed that, “In 2013, Obama and Clinton tried to launch a U.S./British war on Assad and Syria. The British Parliament and the U.S. people, including many “red state” [Republican] supporters, successfully blocked the event. And Vladimir Putin of all people saved Obama from a major political defeat when he convinced Assad to turn over his stores of poison gas, etc. But the military strategy of Wall Street imperialism remained as follows: to remove the Assad Regime from Syria so that Iran, the main regional competitor for Saudi Arabia (and U.S. imperialism) in the oil-rich Middle East would be vulnerable to be bombed, invaded and defeated by the Israeli settler regime in combination with U.S. imperialism. This would have the effect of pushing Russian influence back out of the Middle East and leaving the U.S. Empire once again in a position to dictate to much of the rest of the world.”

“Regarding Trump’s April 2017 unprovoked bombing of Syria, we also observed:

‘Finally, after being hidden away from the U.S. public for the past five months since the election, Hillary Clinton ... incredibly reappeared hours before Trump’s war crime against Syria. Even more incredible, she seemed to ‘go public’ in order to give Trump the very specific direction to try to destroy the Syrian air force, the very course Trump then followed!’ So in the 2017 U.S. bombing attack on Syria it was the Democratic ‘loser’ Clinton who led the Republican winner Trump. And many Democratic

(contd. on p. 9)

“Peace Offensive” continued)

bigwigs, including Congressional leaders Pelosi and Schumer, as well as mainstream Republicans, praised Trump’s war-crime as ‘presidential.’ And even so-called progressives such as Bernie Sanders and Noam Chomsky condemned Assad and justified Trump’s war crime.

In April 2018, almost exactly one year later, Trump along with British Prime Minister May and French President Macron, launched more than one hundred missiles in an unprovoked attack on Syria, committing another war crime. Once again, the justification was alleged Assad Regime chemical weapon attacks on ‘his own’ people. This time a day before the media allegations about chemical weapons appeared Trump had announced that he was pulling the U.S. out of Syria!” (“The Current State of U.S. Society and of the U.S. Empire’s Government,” *Ray O’ Light Newsletter* #107 and #108, March through June 2018, Double Issue)*

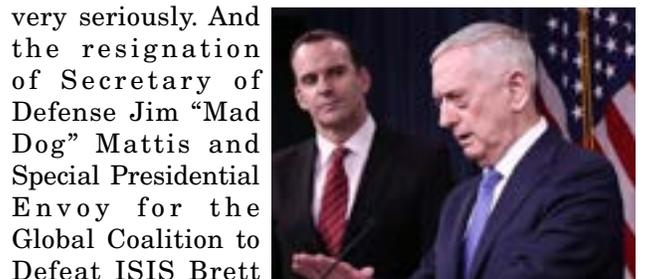
“And yet Trump immediately reversed course and joined his French and British counterparts in the act of war ... Whatever Trump’s motive for reversing course, Macron and May, as well as Trump, ... launched the attack on their own individual authority without waiting one day to give their Parliament/Congress the opportunity to debate and, in the case of the U.S. Congress, vote the action up or down. *Very dangerous and dictatorial conduct by the leaders of all three powers.*

“Letting ‘the cat out of the bag,’ Macron bragged that, ‘Ten days ago President Trump wanted the United States of America to withdraw from Syria. We convinced him to remain.’ So once again, in attacking

*As comrade Jose Maria Sison, leader of the International League of Peoples’ Struggle (ILPS), observed at the time, this allegation that Assad was gassing his own people was “clearly a false flag operation.”

Syria, Trump was a more reluctant war criminal than more social-democratic and mainstream political figures who, like Hillary Clinton, are ever ready to carry out unprovoked attacks in pursuit of maximum profits and territory on behalf of their global capitalist masters.” (*ibid, R. O. L. Newsletter* 107/108)

2. In light of the above, on December 20, 2018, the Wall Street ruling class had every reason to take Trump’s threat of a pull out from Syria and Afghanistan very seriously. And



the resignation of Secretary of Defense Jim “Mad Dog” Mattis and Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Brett McGurk (*an Obama appointee*) on that same day reflects the seriousness of Wall Street in pushing back against Trump. But the support given Wall Street by the big Democratic Party leaders who criticized Trump for his pullout announcement (“despite” their liberal and pacifist credentials) and the silence of the so-called anti-war movement in the USA in failing to support Trump’s anti-war posturing is deafening. It screams out the validity of comrade Cindy Sheehan’s position that there is no U.S. anti-war movement; there is only an anti-Republican Party war movement.

3. We still don’t know whether Trump reached an “understanding” with Republican and/or Democratic Senators allowing his Regime *and* his Family Dynasty to retain their close and extremely profitable relationship with the bloody House of Saud. But we do know that Trump quickly backed away from his announced withdrawal from Syria and from any sudden withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Has Too Much POWER in CA!

by CINDY SHEEHAN

There is more than a strong suspicion that PG&E and its faulty equipment have caused many of the tragic fires in California (as well as polluting the water with toxic waste and blowing up neighborhoods with old gas pipelines). But the Democrat-controlled government of California refuses to hold them accountable, and is in fact, protecting them from liability.

Governor Jerry Brown has vetoed legislation that would force PG&E to bury its power lines. The California Utility Commission is also giving PG&E permission to raise its rates so we the people who are killed, displaced and poisoned by its crimes against humanity are forced to pay for the devastation it causes.

An independent California, or a revolutionary government that cared more about the people than profits could/should/ would seize PG&E and put it under the democratic control of the people, as utilities are the public commons and should not be run for private profit.

I think communities are more concerned about public safety than corporate bottom lines. I know that Jerry Brown and the California Democrat Political machine is more concerned about profits than the people it murders, displaces and makes very ill.

Fight the Power (Company)!

Hoffa Leadership Sells Out UPS Teamsters – AGAIN!!

by CASEY COLE

(Introduction: I first wrote about the concessionary 2013 UPS/Teamsters contract in the Ray O' Light Newsletter #84 May-June 2014 issue immediately after the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) amended their constitution in order to ram a concessionary contract down the throats of the members that voted against it. This is a follow-up article related to the 2018-2023 contract that was recently implemented in a similar fashion.)

Building upon the fight back centered around the concessionary UPS 2013-2018 National Master Agreement that covers UPS operations in the entire United States (except for Locals 705 and 710 in Chicago, IL), and reflecting a recently reviving U.S. workers militancy, rank and file Teamsters organized for a better contract in 2018. Concrete demands included linking up with the "Fight for \$15" by fast food workers in demanding a \$15/hr. starting rate for part-timers, 10,000 new full-time 22.3 combination jobs*, a catch-up raise for existing part-timers, and capping the work week at 60 hours for package car delivery drivers after the company unilaterally implemented 70 hour work weeks during the 2017 peak season.

Ken Hall, the General Secretary-Treasurer of the IBT and chief negotiator of every national UPS agreement for over 20 years, had recently stepped down as Package Division Director due to ethics issues related to an Internal Review Board investigation.** He was replaced with Sean O'Brien, the president of Boston, MA Local 25 and widely thought to have aspirations of running for General President of the IBT. While O'Brien had served as Hall's Assistant Director and had a hand in the railroading of the membership under the 2013-2018 agreement, he appeared motivated to

*These jobs are often called "22.3's" after the contract article that created them. These jobs take two part-time jobs and create a single full-time position; these were won in the victorious 1997 strike led by Ron Carey against UPS. After Carey's ouster (led by the U.S. government with assistance from the Democratic Party) UPS has been allowed to eliminate and reduce the number of these jobs. There are no new 22.3 positions in the 2018-2023 contract.

**The IRB was installed as part of the consent decree between the U.S. Federal Government and the IBT due to the rampant corruption in the union. Hall repeatedly refused to turn over documents related to the IRB's investigation of Rome Aloise, an IBT Western Region International Vice President and Willie Smith, Hoffa's Executive Assistant. Aloise was ultimately suspended and Smith resigned and retired.

deliver a good contract to the members in order to solidify a run for General President. O'Brien reached out to several local union presidents in areas that had voted down their supplements in the last round of negotiations and even requested



that Teamsters Local 89 president Fred Zuckerman be appointed to the UPS National Negotiating Committee as a show of good faith and union solidarity.

Zuckerman, the president of one of the largest UPS locals in the country that covers workers at the UPS Worldport Air Hub, ran against Hoffa for General President in 2016 and nearly won; Zuckerman only lost by the roughly 5,000 votes for Hoffa that came from Teamsters Canada. Multiple international vice presidents on his slate however won in the Central and Southern regions.

Instead of this good faith and solidarity being rewarded, Hoffa immediately fired Director O'Brien via e-mail. O'Brien was replaced with Denis Taylor, a Hoffa functionary and International Trustee with over 30 years as a Teamster official from Local 355 in Maryland.

Early on in negotiations during the spring of 2018, Taylor stated that the company was refusing to bargain and called for a strike authorization vote, seemingly out of nowhere. Local unions were informed mere days before the strike authorization ballots would be mailed out with no explicit reason being given for the vote. This vote passed by over 90% for the UPS Package agreement with an even higher return from the UPS Freight membership. After the strike authorization vote, Taylor primarily negotiated in "side bar" fashion with the company's chief negotiators along with a few hand-picked Teamster officials, bypassing the National Negotiating Committee.*** When several members of the National Negotiating Committee spoke out about this practice and leaked some of Taylor's concessions to the members, Taylor removed them from the committee.****

(contd. on p. 11)

****"Bargaining with UPS Behind Closed Doors" UPS Teamsters United: https://www.upsteamstersunited.org/bargaining_behind_closed_doors

*****"Denis Taylor Doubles Down on Givebacks, Brownout" UPS Teamsters United: https://www.upsteamstersunited.org/denis_taylor_doubles_down_on_givebacks_brownout

(UPS Teamsters continued)

The result of this lack of transparency with the membership and open collaboration with the company resulted in the most concessionary tentative agreement in recent memory: The union agreed to enshrining a 70 hour work week for package car drivers in the contract with double time being paid after 60 hours, a new underclass of delivery driver called a “hybrid 22.4 driver” that creates two-tier package car delivery jobs for less pay and with even fewer scheduling protections, a new pay scale for part-timers that won’t see a \$15/hr. starting rate until 2022, no new 22.3 full-time inside jobs, and increased subcontracting year-round (allowing UPS to utilize non-union contract/independent drivers outside of peak season) in exchange for a higher mileage rate for premium service runs. On the surface, this appeared to be a concession from the company as UPS will eventually be paying the highest mileage rate in the country (over \$0.90/mile by 2022). However, the company isn’t held to creating a set number of these routes and has already been eliminating many of these runs and “returning them to the rail” as of late 2018.

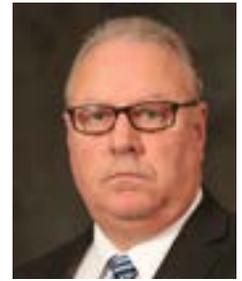
The concessionary agreement was loudly denounced by O’Brien and Zuckerman, who during negotiations announced their joint candidacies for General President and General Secretary-Treasurer, respectively. It was also denounced by Teamsters United (Zuckerman’s campaign machinery that was diverted to a campaign for a good contract) and Teamsters for a Democratic Union. More importantly, the working Teamsters at UPS also widely denounced the agreement as every aspect of the bargaining unit was negatively affected; junior part-timers would see new hires making the same pay rate upon being hired, senior part-timers received no “catch-up” raise as was proposed, harassment grievances would be diverted and held up for months in a national “Article 37 Committee” with minor pay penalties for excessive violations instead of clear-cut punishments for harassment conducted by management, package car drivers could be forced to work 70 hour work weeks, and feeder drivers would see even more subcontracting of their over-the-road work.

The agreement was ultimately voted down October 5th, 2018 by a margin of 54.30% (50,248) to 45.70% (42,356) on a live conference call with Taylor observing the votes being counted live. The UPS Freight contract was voted down by an even larger margin (62% to 38%). UPS immediately sent out a press release stating that while the company was “disappointed” by the vote, they looked forward to renegotiating in order to avoid a work stoppage. Taylor then made the unprecedented move mere hours after the company’s statement of invoking Article XII of the IBT constitution and declaring the UPS Package agreement ratified as less than 50% of the membership had voted and less than 2/3rds had voted against the contract after a strike authorization vote had passed. Suddenly, the reasoning behind the mysterious strike authorization vote conducted during

the summer was clear: ***Hoffa and Taylor knew the concessionary agreement would never be voted through and needed a way to override the will of the members.***



Hoffa



Taylor

In spite of this open collusion between UPS and the class traitors Hoffa and Taylor, there are “green shoots” and bright spots in the fight back against concessions and the struggle against opportunism within the Teamsters. The voter turnout for the contract increased by over 30% from the previous contract vote count, which is an astounding increase for a largely transient workforce consisting primarily of part-timers who often quit in droves due to the working conditions and miserable pay at UPS. Several local union elections have taken place since the vote count, wherein pro-Hoffa officials who rubber stamped the National Master Agreement and openly supported it have been voted out; this has already taken place Teamsters Local 767 in Fort Worth, Texas, which is one of the largest UPS locals in the country. Local 804 in New York City (the same local that initiated a wild cat strike against UPS in at the Maspeth, NY center in 2014) recently voted out their pro-Hoffa leadership (elected in the interim between the strike and the current negotiations) and the new leadership there will be negotiating one of the six supplementary agreements that was voted down and is preventing the National Master Agreement from being fully implemented. And from personal experience within the Teamsters, I can attest that militancy among the masses at UPS is on the rise with rank-and-file members becoming emboldened and more willing not only to challenge management and their own miserable working conditions but their corrupt union leadership as well.

No matter what, we’ve got to fight the powers that be!

End Class Betrayal Unionism!

– Newsletter Delay –

We are sorry for the three week delay in the publication of the current issue of *Ray O’ Light Newsletter* # 112.
- The Newsletter Staff

Working People Need Education—Not Indoctrination

by DRIKE JONES

I am totally outraged and disappointed by the joke labeled “education” in the U.S.A. The propaganda presented as historical fact is keeping our sons and daughters ignorant, powerless and easy prey to be forced into being a tool of world oppression in the armed forces.

I’ve been an educator in both North and South Carolina public school systems (two of the lowest paying states in the U.S.) for 15 years and ten years supporting a local charter school (another negative force bleeding our school systems). After being exposed to the real U.S. History on unions (“*Labor’s Untold Story*”) and the true history of socialism and communism, I now recognize capitalism as an evil octopus with tentacles around the world squeezing all of the life from it. Even the leader of one of the largest capitalistic structured organizations in the world (The Pope and the Catholic Church) has identified the evils heaped upon the masses by capitalism. Capitalism, imperialism, and fascism are all systems structured in the interest of the few and not the masses. With a leader like Donald Trump a lot more of the snake of individualism/nationalism and its poisons are in the open but many are blinded by propaganda fed to us by our school systems and other institutions.

My own sons felt forced to join the terroristic U.S. Army due to our crippling education/economic systems where draconian student loans and expensive tuition costs

make military service often seem compulsory. Now one of my sons suffers from depression (PTSD) and is getting little to no help from the “republicrat” capitalist health care system and he has a no-way-to-go-up-the-ladder job. But I wonder how devastated he would have been if he’d gone to college and ended up in debt to the tune of \$100,000 or more and working the same job (college students not finding work in their fields of study, high cost of college debt). We need to change the status quo where “Making America great” means giving our youth only the choice between drowning slowly or slowly drowning. Working people need to challenge the powers that be such as was done by the successful West Virginia school workers strike and now by the imminent Los Angeles teachers strike.



* * * * *

*“The great appear great to us
Only because we are on our knees:
Let us rise.”*

— Camille Desmoulins

Revolutionary Organization of Labor (ROL), USA is a revolutionary working class organization that fights for working class power and the elimination of all human exploitation. **Ray O’ Light Newsletter** is the regular publication of ROL, USA. We believe, with comrade Lenin, that the working class “... needs the truth and there is nothing so harmful to its cause as plausible, respectable petty bourgeois lies.” In the spirit of Karl Marx who taught that “our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action,” we welcome your comments.

Comradely the Newsletter Staff,

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